

## The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 1 (2004)

Vol 1, No (2004)

The Historical Review  
La Revue Historique



VOLUME I (2004)

Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques  
Fondation Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique

Institute for Neohellenic Research  
National Hellenic Research Foundation

**'Topos' and Utopia in Evgenios Voulgaris' Life and Work (1716-1806)**

*Iannis C. Carras*

doi: [10.12681/hr.174](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.174)

### To cite this article:

Carras, I. C. (2005). 'Topos' and Utopia in Evgenios Voulgaris' Life and Work (1716-1806). *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 1, 127-156. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.174>

## ‘TOPOS’ AND UTOPIA IN EVGENIOS VOULGARIS’ LIFE AND WORK (1716-1806)<sup>1</sup>

*Iannis C. Carras*

*clearly he should be viewed  
as the personification of his age<sup>2</sup>  
what then is the effect of place,  
in and of itself? Nothing<sup>3</sup>*

---

**ABSTRACT:** One of the central figures of the Enlightenment in the Greek world, Evgenios Voulgaris (1716-1806) has been criticised for becoming increasingly reactionary in later years. This article argues that an understanding of the importance of place and movement in Voulgaris’ world –as also in his world-view– helps explain elements of continuity and change in his writings more generally.

Rather than a shift from enlightenment to reaction, the article depicts a slow progression from an early Voulgaris intent –both in his writings and in the Athos Academy– on fusing Orthodoxy and Enlightenment, to a later Voulgaris less intent on creating a rational system out of the many influences on his thought and more insistent on the creation of a place for the Graikoi, liberated from the Ottomans.

The complex inter-relation between the geographic, political and social conditions and the thought processes of one particular individual are examined. Given these conditions, and bearing in mind the dangers of a crude geographic determinism, Voulgaris’ attempts to reconcile, indeed create a rational system out of the many influences on his thought, present considerable interest but were inevitably unlikely to succeed.

---

### *Scholars and Merchants*

In 1854 Nicholas Katramis, priest and subsequently Archbishop of the Ionian island of Zakynthos, published an essay proclaiming Evgenios Voulgaris,

---

<sup>1</sup> Τόπος means ‘place’ or perhaps in this instance ‘a sense of place’. Throughout this translation I will transliterate important terms from the Greek rather than limit their meanings through the use of any particular English word. See, further on, the terms ‘genos’ and ‘ethnos’ where I have chosen transliteration rather than translation. I have avoided any uniform rules for transliteration, preferring a more flexible case-by-case approach. Where helpful, I have included the original Greek in the footnotes. I dedicate the article to my teacher of Ancient Greek and much else, Andrew Hobson.

<sup>2</sup> «Βεβαίως πρέπει νὰ θεωρῆται ὅτι προσωποποιεῖ τὴν ἐποχήν του», in Pavlos Kalligas, «Βίος Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρεως» [Life of Evgenios Voulgaris], *Πανδώρα* 1 (Apr. 1850-Apr. 1851), pp. 494-505 and 517-526.

<sup>3</sup> «Τὶ κάμνει ὁ τόπος καὶ ὁ τόπος; Τίποτε.», in Evgenios Voulgaris, «Σοφίας τῶν Ἑλλή-

leading light of the eighteenth-century Greek Enlightenment, to be, not a Corcyran as previously assumed, but, in fact, a Zakynthian. Some twenty-seven years later Michael Idromenos responded, rebuffing Katramis' arguments: "one may however draw some consolation from the fact that pan-Bulgarianism has not to date claimed Evgenios as its own", he quipped, "despite Evgenios' surname –Voulgaris– indicating Bulgarian stock!"<sup>4</sup>

The Katramis-Idromenos dispute over Voulgaris' origins might appear trivial at first glance, reflecting the neuroses of a very different world from Voulgaris' own. Still, it is worth noting the parallels with the search for Homer's roots,<sup>5</sup> parallels made explicit in a letter championing contemporary Greek achievements and claiming that they were comparable to those of the ancient Greeks. Evgenios, the letter argued, "whose mother is from one part (chora) of Greece, whose father is from another, whose grandfather is from yet another, shares Homer's fate"; thus, like Homer, "many regions (chorai) claim Evgenios as their own".<sup>6</sup> Such parallelisms serve to emphasise certain salient features of Voulgaris' world.

First, movement, sometimes across considerable distances, was the norm: Voulgaris' society was above all a society of itinerants. Though there is no need to examine the minutiae of his early life, an overview of Evgenios' wanderings is indicative. He was born in Corfu and baptised Eleftherios, a name that may well be connected to the unsuccessful Ottoman siege of the island in 1716;<sup>7</sup> his parents were refugees from Zakynthos, seeking shelter from Venetian-Ottoman sparring in the Ionian; his childhood was probably spent on Zakynthos, where

νων τοῦ παρόντος αἰῶνος διασκέψεις περὶ τοῦ ποῦ Παράδεισος, καὶ ποῦ Κόλασις, καὶ τὶ ἐστὶ ταῦτα [...]» [On the wisdom of contemporary Greeks concerning the location of Heaven and Hell and the nature of these things], in Georgios Ainian, ed., *Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων συγγραμμάτων τοῦ χοιδίου Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρεως* [Collection of unpublished works of the late Evgenios Voulgaris], Athens 1838, Vol. I, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolaos Katramis, *Ιστορικαὶ διασφήσεις ἐπὶ τῆς πατρίδος Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρεως Ζακυνθίου* [Historical clarifications concerning the homeland of Evgenios Voulgaris of Zakynthos], Zakynthos 1854; Michail Idromenos, «Η Πατρὶς Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρεως» [The place of origin of Evgenios Voulgaris], *Παρνασσός* 5, no. 3 (31 March 1881), p. 216.

<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in locating a hostage's home, «ὅμηρος» meaning a pledge or a hostage.

<sup>6</sup> The letter written anonymously in Italian by Ioannis Donas "in response to Abbot Companioni who contrasted Jews to Greeks", has been published as *Lettera de un Marchese Fr. Alb. Capecelli 1793*. It was printed, translated into Greek, in Venice in 1802; N. Katramis, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>7</sup> Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. xi. See also Andreas Papadopoulos Vretos, *Biographie de l'Archevêque Eugène Bulgari*, Athens 1860.

most of his extended family dwelt; his grandfather was however linked to Crete, and is reported to have spent some time in Patras. Thus Voulgaris' subsequent travels from Padova to St Petersburg and from Kozani to Leipzig reflect, if on a grander scale, his own and his family's earlier migrations and epitomise the transitory nature of populations at that time, forced to move constantly to minimise political and economic risk.<sup>8</sup>

Second, trade accounts for the constant movement of individuals and populations in Voulgaris' world. Evgenios' father and grandfather were both involved in trading;<sup>9</sup> his education and subsequent teaching depended on merchant donations with merchants funding his education in Padova,<sup>10</sup> merchants inviting him to teach in Ioannina,<sup>11</sup> merchants financing his teaching in Kozani,<sup>12</sup> the merchants of Smyrna and Chios endowing the Athonias School on Mount Athos and so on.<sup>13</sup> Yet these observations miss the point. The inhabitants of the Ionian Islands cannot be characterised indiscriminately as merchants or peasants, or indeed as employed exclusively in any particular trade. Rather, trade was the sine qua non, framing economic, political, and cultural transactions; trade was decisive in minimising risks, most frequently –but by no means exclusively– the risk posed by variable climatic conditions in the microclimates of the Mediterranean. Trade permits population clusters, and trade allows surplus products from one microregion to cover the shortfalls elsewhere, hence diversifying consumption and circumventing deficits.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, in addition to specific geopolitical or cultural causes of migration, population movements may be seen as a necessary corollary to the trade in products, or even as a trade in human beings parallel to the trade in products. In their study of the Mediterranean economy, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell note:

<sup>8</sup> Andreas Papadopoulos Vretos, *op. cit.*, Athens 1860. See also Nikolaos Katramis, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. στ'-μ'.

<sup>9</sup> Nikolaos Katramis, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 62-63.

<sup>10</sup> Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. ιγ'.

<sup>11</sup> Pavlos Kalligas, *op. cit.*, pp. 496-497.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

<sup>13</sup> Alkis Angelou, «Τὸ Χρονικὸ τῆς Ἀθωνιάδας» [Chronicle of the Athonite Academy], *Τῶν Φῶτων. Ὁψεις του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού* [Of the Lights. Aspects of the Neo-hellenic Enlightenment], Athens 1988, pp. 120-1, 477-478. I use the terms 'Athonias School' and 'Athonite Academy' interchangeably.

<sup>14</sup> Peregrine Horden, Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford 2000, pp. 88-122.

To the overall picture that would consequently emerge one final touch can again be anticipated [...]: the mobility of Mediterranean populations. That people may have arrived in a given settlement after travelling some considerable distance should be reckoned no less a feature of its ecology than the concentration or dispersal of its food sources. Braudel wrote in his last major work that nothing is more eloquent in this respect than a map of immigrants' origins. Yet settlements lose people to far-flung locations as well; those locations too should be included on the map, which would represent a short period only, such could be the rapidity of Mediterranean settlements' demographic turnover.<sup>15</sup>

Movement may thus be viewed as a tactic to reduce economic, political and cultural risk. The ease with which Voulgaris and his students relocated from one educational institution to another whenever circumstances required –or advantages accrued– exemplifies the importance of movement as a means of reducing risk.<sup>16</sup>

Third, the medium for trade and communication was above all the sea. Trade with pack animals was also significant during the course of the eighteenth century, for example the caravan trade through Central and Eastern Europe that enriched merchant communities in Epirus and Macedonia;<sup>17</sup> indeed when Voulgaris emigrated to Leipzig and later to the southern territories of the Russian Empire, he was following in the footsteps of many Greek-speaking merchants, some of whom were to finance the publication of his work.<sup>18</sup> But sea-trade permitted the connection of distant lands more effectively, at a comparatively smaller cost compared to caravan trade. Thus, in describing the Greek world at the time of the Persian wars, Voulgaris conjures up images of his own world also:

<sup>15</sup> Peregrine Horden, Nicholas Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>16</sup> Alkis Angelou, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-132. In 1758, with Voulgaris as director, the number of students at the Athos Academy approached 200. Interestingly, many of the students were not affluent. Student loss was so rapid following Voulgaris' departure that the Athonite Academy remained closed for a number of years after 1761.

<sup>17</sup> Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", *The Journal of Economic History* (June 1960), pp. 234-313.

<sup>18</sup> For example Voulgaris' translation: *Αἱ καθ' Ὀμηρον ἀρχαιότητες καὶ σὶ Κερκυραῖ-καὶ ἀρχαιολογίαι, ἐκ τῆς λατινίδος ἐπὶ τὴν ἑλληνίδα Φωνὴν Ἀντιμετακληθεῖσαι [...] Παρὰ δὲ τῶν Ζωσιμάδων Αὐταδέλφων Α. καὶ Ν. καὶ Ζ. καὶ Μ. φιλοτίμω δαπάνη τύπους ἐκδοθεῖσαι ἐπὶ τῷ διανεμηθῆναι δωρεὰν τοῖς φιλολόγοις [...] [The antiquities according to Homer and the antiquities of Corfu translated from Latin into Greek [...], through the donation of A. and N. and Z. and M., the brothers Zosima, to be distributed to lovers of literature without charge], Moscow 1804.*

But follow me again, my dear reader, using your imagination, [...] mountains, plains, valleys, dells and dales, both in-land and on the coast: this sea full of military triremes and merchant ships! All that vision can see, and all that is beyond sight also!<sup>19</sup>

A world created by, and conceived through, the sea.

In a world characterised by the centrality of the sea, by the importance of trade as a method for reducing risk, and by their corollary, the instability and relentless movement of population, uncertainty over the place of birth and geographic descent of Voulgaris –and not only– may be anticipated. Thus Evgenios is connected with many homelands. Further, within the context of such a mobile society, the myth of one exclusive place of origin, of one single homeland provided a sense of security for the migrant or merchant, migration and distance animating one's sense of place and deepening feelings for the homeland.

Whereas the merchants of the eighteenth century traded in goods, Voulgaris traded in ideas: alongside business transactions, traffic in words through letters or books or even rumours formulated and united Voulgaris' world. Malice in particular spread swiftly. When some students at Evgenios' school on Mount Athos fell ill “with stomach problems, reports reached Ioannina in no time at all, claiming the pupils had scattered far and wide and the school had been deserted”.<sup>20</sup> Wherever rumours proliferated, ideas could follow; but, with the Greek language a barrier, the import of Enlightenment ideas of the second half eighteenth century required translators. Though Voulgaris' translations disseminated novel ideas through the Greek world, his use of an archaic form of Greek necessarily limited his influence to a select group of scholars.

Whereas the extent of his influence remains an open question, the magnetism of Enlightenment ideas on Evgenios himself is manifest. Population movement and migration –not least his own– brought Voulgaris into direct contact with the diverse currents that characterised his period: Enlightenment, the rationalism of Western philosophy and theology, religious tolerance, religious humanism, the inheritance of the mystical tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the literature of the Eastern Roman Empire, ubiquitous augury prophesying Ottoman demise, anti-Papism, the ideal of the Christian monarch and of enlightened absolutism, passion for the ancients and a deep concern for the salvation of his people to list but a few.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, *Διατριβὴ περὶ Εὐθανασίας* [An Essay on dying well], St Petersburg 1804, pp. 59-60.

<sup>20</sup> Alkis Angelou, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>21</sup> Paschalis Kitromilides, «Η πολιτική οκέψη του Ευγενίου Βούλγαρη» [The political

This essay will concentrate on (a) the duration of Voulgaris' stay on Mt Athos,<sup>22</sup> (b) two texts: *A historical and critical essay on the dissensions of the Churches in Poland and notes on religious tolerance and the toleration of other religions*,<sup>23</sup> and *Reflections on the current critical state of the Ottoman Empire*,<sup>24</sup> both composed either in Leipzig or while in transition to St Petersburg,<sup>25</sup> and (c) in brief, the period when Voulgaris was an exile in Russia.<sup>26</sup> Building on Paschalis M. Kitromilides' analysis of the influences on Voulgaris' political thought, the essay will examine Voulgaris' attempts to integrate these diverse influences, and reveal how these attempts were connected to the places where he lived and worked. Given the geographic, political and social conditions in which he lived, Voulgaris' attempts to reconcile, indeed create a rational system out of the sundry influences on his thought, seem to have been destined for failure.

### *The Academy on Athos*

*Let him who studies geometry enter. I forbid him not.  
To him who refuses I shall bar the gates shut.*<sup>27</sup>

This epigram, engraved over the entrance to Plato's Academy, now graced the

---

thought of Evgenios Voulgaris], *Historica* 12-13 (December 1990), pp. 167-178. Voulgaris' concern for his people is exhibited in his letter «Ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ σοφωτάτου Εὐγενίου πρὸς τὸν ἱεροδιάκονον Κυπριανόν» [Letter of the most wise Evgenios to the deacon Cyprian] in *Παράλληλον φιλοσοφίας καὶ χριστιανισμοῦ* [A Parallel of Philosophy and Christianity], Constantinople 1830, pp. 80-91 where we read: "I urge you to recollect and reinvigorate your long-held desire to prove yourself some day of good use and beneficial to our People (Genos)".

<sup>22</sup> 1753-1759.

<sup>23</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Πολωνίας δοκίμιον ἱστορικὸν καὶ κριτικὸν καὶ σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας καὶ περὶ ἀνοχῆς τῶν ἐτεροθρησκῶν* [A historical and critical essay on the dissensions of the Churches in Poland and a sketch on religious tolerance and the toleration of other religions], Leipzig 1768. References to the *Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας* [A sketch on religious tolerance] are to the 1890 edition printed in Alexandria.

<sup>24</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, *Στοχασμοὶ εἰς τοὺς παρόντας κρισμοὺς καιροὺς τοῦ Ὀθωμανικοῦ κράτους* [Reflections on the current critical state of the Ottoman Empire], Corfu 1851.

<sup>25</sup> 1762-1772.

<sup>26</sup> Voulgaris was in Russia from 1772 until his death in 1806. He became Archbishop of Cherson and Slaviansk (Σλαβωνίου καὶ Χερσῶνος) in 1775. He served as Archbishop until 1779, when he resigned. See Stephen K. Batalden, *Catherine II's Greek Prelate, Evgenios Voulgaris in Russia 1771-1806*, New York 1982.

<sup>27</sup> «Γεωμετρήσεων εἰσίτω. Οὐ καλύπτω. / Τῷ μὴ θέλοντι συζυγώσω τὰς θύρας.»

entrance to the Academy on Athos, indicating Voulgaris’ intentions for the school he directed:<sup>28</sup> his school would engage with contemporary intellectual currents, cultivate a critical approach towards the oppressive dominance of Aristotelianism in Greek circles,<sup>29</sup> and further the revival of ancient Greek thought. And all these on Athos, bonded since the ninth century to the Orthodox Church and the traditions of the Eastern Roman Empire.

While on Athos, Voulgaris concentrated on teaching and did not publish significant works. Nonetheless, he wished to establish a press at the Academy,<sup>30</sup> and much of his work subsequently published in Leipzig matured on Athos.<sup>31</sup> Evgenios’ *Logic* served as an educational manual for his pupils long before it was published in 1766. This, his *magnum opus*, both mirrors and extends the world-view embodied in the epigram at the entrance to the Academy. Here Voulgaris integrates his knowledge of the development of the Enlightenment in Europe with his familiarity with ancient philosophy;<sup>32</sup> here too he stresses the importance of individual freedom for analytical thought,<sup>33</sup> indicating that this demand for freedom “represents no more than a confirmation of, nay a return to, ancient paradigms of thought and judgement.”<sup>34</sup> There are however limits to freedom of thought:

Faith alone transcends the limits of reason. For if we wish to convince through reason that God became man, and entered into a virgin’s womb, but do not base our claim on faith, we would become objects of ridicule [...] It is not wisdom or reason but faith that confirms belief in Christ who died on the Cross.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever contradicts Orthodox dogma cannot be considered a legitimate basis

---

<sup>28</sup> Pavlos Kalligas, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

<sup>29</sup> Paschalis Kitromilides, «Ούτοπία καὶ Κριτικὸς Στογχασμός, ‘Η Περίπτωση τοῦ Tommaso Camponella» [Utopia and Critical Thought, The Case of Tommaso Camponella], *Διαβάζω* 29 (March 1980), pp. 50-51.

<sup>30</sup> Alkis Angelou, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>32</sup> Even a cursory glance at the footnotes to Voulgaris’ ‘Η Λογική’ [Logic] confirms the influence of Enlightenment figures, for example Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Arnold, Wolff, Hobbes, Gravesende, Malebranche, Leibniz and others.

<sup>33</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, ‘Η Λογική’ [Logic], Leipzig 1766, pp. 85 and 120.

<sup>34</sup> Paschalis Kitromilides, «Ούτοπία καὶ Κριτικὸς Στογχασμός, ‘Η Περίπτωση τοῦ Tommaso Camponella», p. 51. Kitromilides quotes from Voulgaris’ ‘Η Λογική’, p. 45: “This does not in any way involve breaking new ground but rather following the trusted path of the ancients, there being nothing more ancient than the truth”. See also G. P. Henderson, *The Revival of Greek Thought 1620-1830*, New York 1970, Chapter 6.

<sup>35</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, ‘Η Λογική’, p. 66, note 2.

for sound philosophising; and philosophy should in no way dispute the truths of divine revelation.<sup>36</sup>

On Athos, at about the same time as his thought matured in preparation for the *Logic*, Voulgaris addressed an open letter to the Orthodox Serb subjects of the Austrian crown, seeking to protect them from the temptations of Roman Catholicism. Though these Serbian subjects enjoyed certain political liberties, Voulgaris noted: “I do not so much envy you the fleeting comforts you now enjoy, as agonise for the eternal life you are in danger of losing”.<sup>37</sup> This anti-Papal tract condemns in no uncertain terms the Pope in Rome, the *filioque*, Roman Catholic art which “depicts the Virgin [...] as though she were an unchaste Aphrodite”, and a whole catalogue of other Roman Catholic deviations. The tract exhibits no trace of Enlightenment, with the exception perhaps of a few references to the ancient world such as the correlation between Papists and Sirens.<sup>38</sup> The *Epistle to the Serbs* was intended for a wider audience than Voulgaris’ *Logic*;<sup>39</sup> what is more, such Orthodox homilies undoubtedly offered Voulgaris some protection from conservative critics. Nonetheless, whereas the *Epistle to the Serbs* resembles the writings of any number of Orthodox hierarchs, Voulgaris’ *Logic* marks a radical departure: the injection of Enlightenment ideals into the eighteenth-century Greek-speaking Orthodox world.

Voulgaris’ inconsistencies reflect, in part, the geographical instability and habitual movement of populations analysed above with constant harassment and migration from one school to another breeding eclecticism and even contradictions in his writings, and with no common space where conservative and radical currents might coalesce. The Academy on Athos represents an attempt to consecrate, both actually on the ground but also theoretically within eighteenth-century Greek thought, precisely such a space for the creative fusion of diverse currents of thought.

<sup>36</sup> See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός, Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες* [Modern Greek Enlightenment. The Political and Social Ideas], Athens 32000, p. 60 and Eugenios Voulgaris, *Ἡ Λογική*, pp. 60-68.

<sup>37</sup> «Ἐπιστολὴ παρανετικὴ πρὸς τοὺς Σέρβους» [A letter of exhortation to the Serbs], in E. Argentis, *Ἀνθος τῆς εὐσεβίας* [The Flowerings of Piety], Leipzig 1757, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> The same applies to *Βιβλιάριον κατὰ Λατίνων* [Manual Against the Latins], Constantinople 1756, also a condemnation of Roman Catholicism, which begins with images of classical antiquity: “Great Hercules wanted to kill that many-headed monster called Hydra”.

<sup>39</sup> As witnessed by the more accessible language of the «Ἐπιστολὴ παρανετικὴ πρὸς τοὺς Σέρβους», pp. 53-90.

Voulgaris himself was fully aware that the establishment of the Athonias School as a centre for the barter of ideas depended on trade and the sea. As noted, the institution depended on merchants for its income; likewise students and scholars travelled to Athos by sea. In a letter to the deacon Cyprian the Cypriot, dispatched in 1756 in a vain effort to persuade his friend to come and teach at the Academy, Voulgaris stresses the importance of the sea. This letter, revealing as it does the ideals espoused by two of the leading scholars of the time, merits careful attention:

Here we find delightfully flowing waters and a wholesome air and a sea-breeze which cools the area around; hither and thither lie thickly shaded groves and ever-green verdure to feast the eye on; all variety of plants too: olive trees, vines, laurel, myrtle, to name but a few, some nutritious, others simply blissful, burgeons of a blooming land [...] A narrow anchorage lies under a hill with a wharf on one side; and there are fish too, for those not too lazy to go down and catch them. The sea all around, stretching far into the distance, at one moment calm as crystal, at another foamy and threatening, at yet another stormy and churned up from its very depths, offering a varied spectacle on each occasion.<sup>40</sup>

Athos becomes arcadian, no longer associated with the Orthodox spirit of prayer, as one might expect in this the Virgin Mary’s Orchard, but with nature and natural diversity, and above all with the sea, enabling the export and import of natural products and people. The sea shapes the land: not merely a means of communication, but as the main “spectacle”, coupling profit with pleasure.<sup>41</sup> The letter continues:

Then, in addition, [imagine] the muses frolicking at will and Pallas [Athena] without her Gorgon, and, if you’re lucky, a theorem sketched out on trunk of a tree, on a leaf and maybe even by chance on the sand; [...] and books and manuals face-up under the shade of the trees; and the black ink drips from the pen; [...] and Hellas coming back to life echoes hither and thither through the forests. Over there [imagine] Demosthenes encouraging the Athenians to struggle against the Macedonians, over there Homer singing of acts of bravery under Ilium, over there Thucydides solemnly chronicles the conflict in Hellas, over there Herodotus, the father of history, uses the Ionic dialect for his pleasing account of ancient peoples (ethni); over here Plato speaks of

---

<sup>40</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, «Ἐπιστολὴ [...] πρὸς τὸν ἵεροδιάκονον Κυπριανόν», *Παράληγαν φιλοσοφίας καὶ χριστιανισμοῦ*, pp. 80-91; Alkis Angelou, *op. cit.*, p. 111, quotes the same passage.

<sup>41</sup> Athos is in fact practically harbourless.

God, here Aristotle busies himself with the law and causes that govern nature, and here too Frenchmen and Germans and Englishmen put forward their more recent theories.<sup>42</sup>

Quite apart from the fertility of the peninsula, Voulgaris indulges in the fantasy of Athos as the epicentre of the ancient world, an imagined world reconstructed through the texts of the ancient Greeks. Pallas Athena “without her Gorgon”, in other words wisdom without fear, supplants the Virgin Mary; Archimedes is conjured up, sketching theorems on a sandy shore; a historical map of Greece emerges with the key locations arranged in a circle around Athos: “over there” Demosthenes and the Macedonians, “over there” Homer and Troy, “over there” Thucydides’ strife and Herodotus’ barbarians. At the centre, “over here” on Mount Athos the ‘topos’ which unites Plato the theologian and Aristotle the naturalist with the new ideas emanating from Europe.<sup>43</sup>

With this emphatic “over here” Voulgaris points to the Academy on Athos and completes his geographical tour; a tour and not a pilgrimage, although it is the future Archbishop of Cherson and Slaviansk and the future Patriarch of Alexandria who are in fact conversing. Yet this tour makes no sense without the sea: the sea as a conveyer of words, concepts and ideas places Mount Athos at the centre of Voulgaris’ historical geography and at the centre of current intellectual developments. This Athos is the ideal ‘topos’ of Voulgaris’ dreams, a ‘topos’ where local intellectual traditions and imported ideas may ferment, before the resulting intellectual product is exported via the printing press and pupils to the Greek world at large.<sup>44</sup> This was a ‘topos’ for philosophy, a ‘topos’ for the conciliation of conflicting currents, Voulgaris’ utopia.

And yet Voulgaris’ sea was not always “be calmed” but also “quivering [...] threatening [...] stormy [...] churned up”.<sup>45</sup> Conservatives equated the inflow

<sup>42</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, «Ἐπιστολὴ [...] πρὸς τὸν ἵεροδιάκονον Κυπριανόν», pp. 80-91.

<sup>43</sup> Geography is sketched out in the same way in «Λόγος ἐκφωνηθεὶς παρὰ τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ ἐπιστημονικωτάτου διδασκάλου, κυρίου Εὐγενίου Βουλγάρεως, κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἁγίου Ἀποστόλου Ἀνδρέου τοῦ Πρωτοκλήτου» [Speech delivered by the most wise and learned teacher Evgenios Voulgaris on the occasion of the celebration of the feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called], in Georgios Ainiān, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 64-86. For example: “Here [we view] the Aegean, here the Sea of Marmara, here the Black Sea and all those regions bordering the Main”, p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> A map of Voulgaris’ pupils’ later wanderings would further illustrate this trade in words and ideas. Unfortunately Voulgaris does not seem to have kept a list of his pupils, although he himself mentions the use of such a list. «Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν πρώην Πατριάρχην Κύριλλον» [Letter to the former Patriarch Cyril], in Georgios Ainiān, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> «Γαληνιῶσα [...] ὑποφρίσσουσα [...] ὑποτραχυνομένη [...] ἐπαφρίζουσα [...] τα-

of radical ideas with corruption. Cyril, the former Patriarch of Constantinople who had overseen the establishment of the Academy, attacked Voulgaris, who in turn protested vigorously in his “Apologia addressed to the former Patriarch of Constantinople Cyril”:<sup>46</sup>

Did you really require such savage missives, enforced witnesses, insults and threats? These have unsettled the regions lying round about the Mountain, and will continue creating an uproar [...] in a considerable portion of the earth.<sup>47</sup>

Athos emerges as a less auspicious centre, the easy dissemination of ideas thanks to the sea ultimately hindering the assimilation of these ideas by society at large, in this case by the religious community of Athos. Foreign ideas did not readily take root, and the “vineyard”, as Voulgaris called his school, withered and dried up:

The establishment and development of my school was always my primary concern. To this end I have used up my life, destroyed my health, wasted my deliberations. What should I have done for this my vineyard, that I have not in fact done?<sup>48</sup>

Under these circumstances, Voulgaris was incapable of “barring the gates shut” to keep his detractors out. The geographical and social framework, which provided favourable conditions for the easy influx of ideas, did not permit it. Voulgaris will not find his “much longed-for anchorage” on the Holy Mountain;<sup>49</sup> rather Voulgaris’ ideal ‘topos’ –the all too real school on Mount Athos but also the inner space where local intellectual traditions and imported ideas might fuse– was to remain unrealised.

#### *Papists and Turks*

Leipzig sheltered Voulgaris from the constraints he experienced in Ioannina, on Athos and in Constantinople; hence his quip, “best avoid any more of those

---

ρασσομένη [...]», in Evgenios Voulgaris, «Ἐπιστολὴ [...] πρὸς τὸν ἵεροδιάκονον Κυπριανόν», pp. 80-91.

<sup>46</sup> Alkis Angelou, *op. cit.*, p. 127. Also «Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν πρώην Πατριάρχην Κύριλλον», in Georgios Ainiān, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 54-64.

<sup>47</sup> «Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν πρώην Πατριάρχην Κύριλλον», in Georgios Ainiān, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 61.

<sup>48</sup> «Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν πρώην Πατριάρχην Κύριλλον», in Georgios Ainiān, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 61.

<sup>49</sup> “But what is this much longed-for anchorage?”, in Evgenios Voulgaris, *Διατριβὴ περὶ Εὐθανασίας*, p. 115.

beards”, meaning of course those turbulent priests.<sup>50</sup> It therefore comes as no surprise that Voulgaris composed and published so many of his writings while resident in Leipzig.<sup>51</sup> This essay will focus on two texts, Voulgaris’ *A historical and critical essay on the dissention of the Churches in Poland and notes on religious tolerance and the toleration of other religions*,<sup>52</sup> and his *Reflections on the current critical state of the Ottoman Empire*.<sup>53</sup> Despite the range of his interests, these two texts should not be considered typical Voulgaris; they are political tracts offering analyses of current events, thus revealing many of the trends that influenced Evgenios’ thought during his sojourn in Central Europe while also delineating his political beliefs.

Printed in Leipzig in 1768, Evgenios’ *Historical and Critical Essay on the Dissention of the Churches in Poland* is a translation of an anonymous text by Voltaire. In introducing the term “anexithriskeia” or “religious tolerance” into Greek, through his translation and extensive commentary on Voltaire, but also through his own essay *Notes on religious tolerance* Voulgaris functioned as a forerunner of the Enlightenment in the Greek world.<sup>54</sup> Translation, text and commentary constitute a debate between Voulgaris and Voltaire, a debate that perhaps took place in person in Berlin a year or so later when these two Enlightenment thinkers actually met.<sup>55</sup>

Voulgaris shares many of Voltaire’s convictions. First, belief in the importance of religious tolerance: “only someone who completely misunderstands the meaning of faith, or who misconstrues the character of the human will, would force another to convert”.<sup>56</sup> Second, aversion towards the Pope and the Roman

<sup>50</sup> See Pavlos Kalligas, *op. cit.*, p. 501. Voulgaris adds, largely in jest: “The chapel is actually in my house, so I’m in danger of becoming a glutton for religious services (φιλακόλουθος)”. This letter is printed in Pavlos Kalligas, *Μελέται και Λόγοι* [Studies and Theories], Athens 1899, Vol. II, p. 299. See also Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> Among other works his ‘*Η Λογική*, Leipzig 1766, tr. *Βοσπορομαχία* [...] τοῦ Κυρίου Μομάρος [The Battle of the Bosphorus by Monsieur Momars], Leipzig 1767, tr. *Τῶν μαθηματικῶν στοιχείων* [...] ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Σενιέρου [Of the elements of Mathematics [...] by Segner], Leipzig 1767.

<sup>52</sup> *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], Leipzig 1768. The *Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας* develops Voulgaris’ own thoughts on religious toleration. References to the *Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας* are to the 1890 edition printed in Alexandria.

<sup>53</sup> *Στοχασμοί* [...], 1851.

<sup>54</sup> Paschalis Kitromilides, «*Η πολιτική σκέψη τοῦ Εὐγενίου Βούλγαρη*», p. 171.

<sup>55</sup> They met in 1769. Anastasios Goudas, «*Εὐγένιος ὁ Βούλγαρος*» [Evgenios Voulgaris], in *Βίοι Παράλληλοι* 2, Athens 1870, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> *Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας*, p. 7.

Catholic Church. Thus Evgenios criticises the merging of spiritual and political power in the Roman Catholic Church: “Having established a secular state, the Church of Rome recognised the need for secular punishments” or, to take another example, “Whenever the Pope has a drink, his Principal Wine Pourer kneels down before him on the ground [...].”<sup>57</sup> Third, both praise Russia, applauding Catherine II’s policies in Poland and further afield.

Yet these similarities barely conceal deeper differences. In his *Notes on Religious Tolerance and the Toleration of other Religions*, Voulgaris explicitly states that no Christian should use oppression in order to change a person’s religious beliefs: “the believer should be a zealot in his own faith, but not scoff at any other religion or sentiment, nor resort to insults”.<sup>58</sup> The Church in particular should possess only “spiritual” powers.<sup>59</sup> A policy of religious tolerance by the head of state or monarch is also justified, on purely theological grounds:

Thus a king becomes tolerant of other beliefs according to the prototype of the all-ruling God who wishes all human beings to be saved and to come to a knowledge of his truth, but wants to achieve this while preserving unsullied human beings’ freedom of belief and ability to choose.<sup>60</sup>

Voulgaris however sets limits to the king’s tolerance, for instance the king should act decisively to prevent the emergence of schisms within the Church. Perhaps surprisingly, Voulgaris is in favour of censorship to protect the faithful from the apostles of “heresy” (tis planis).<sup>61</sup> These objections undermine Voulgaris’ call for religious tolerance also revealing the difficulties involved in conceiving a liberal state, impartial *vis-à-vis* its citizens beliefs. Nonetheless and for all his doubts Voulgaris concludes that, consistent with Christian Law, monarchs “must not persecute the impious and unfaithful”.<sup>62</sup>

Voulgaris’ religious tolerance is thus grounded in the teachings of the Orthodox Church,<sup>63</sup> teachings he attempts to reinforce with Enlightenment

<sup>57</sup> Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν, pp. 24 and 115.

<sup>58</sup> Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας, p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν [...], pp. 194-195.

<sup>62</sup> Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας, pp. 66-67.

<sup>63</sup> For an understanding of religious tolerance grounded in biblical scholarship see *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Πολωνίας [...]*, p. 115. Voulgaris quotes extensively from the Bible without however referring to the deeper existential roots of Orthodox theology, for example the Trinity. Christos Yannaras in *Ορθοδοξία καὶ Δύση στὴ Νεώτερη Ελλάδα* [Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece], Athens 1992, pp. 159-

rationalism. This tolerance is not liberal in the full sense of the term; it does not view all doctrines impartially, indeed “the existence of other beliefs” remains “a negative”.<sup>64</sup> Rather this is the tolerance of a Christian who understands that worldly power disfigures the Church and that only each human being’s free movement towards God is ultimately meaningful.

Voulgaris and Voltaire also diverge over the Roman Catholic Church. Voltaire disparages his country’s dominant religion, but also criticises Christianity in general, notwithstanding a few scattered compliments paid to the Orthodox Church:

On demandera de quelle religion étaient tous ces peuples avant qu’ils fussent Chrétiens. Ils adoraient Dieu sous d’autres noms, d’autres emblèmes, d’autres rites; on les appelait Payens. La grâce de Jésus Christ qui est venu pour tout le monde leur avait été refusé ainsi qu’à plus des trois quarts de la terre [...] Cette idée est grande: tu seras puni à jamais si tu ne penses pas sur le bord du Volga ou du Gange comme je pense sur le bord de l’Anio.

A scandalised Voulgaris protests, combining theology and reason, somewhat unsuccessfully, to press his case:

God’s works are an unfathomable mystery. For human beings to seek an explanation of them from God is provocative indeed, disrespectful, mindless, mad [...] so what if most human beings have not yet witnessed the light [of God]? Should we as a result count all human kind alike as saved? Far from it! This would not only demolish faith to its very foundations but would also go against the dictates of reason [...]<sup>65</sup>

Voulgaris’ anti-Catholicism is therefore much less revolutionary than Voltaire’s, closer to the *Manual against the Latins* than to the radical Enlightenment.<sup>66</sup> Evgenios even praises the Jesuit Petavios and concedes that there have been wise Popes in Rome, revealing a more tempered view of Roman Catholicism as part of the broader Christian family.<sup>67</sup> Though critical of the Roman Catholic Church’s secular power, Voulgaris does not berate imbalances in Church-state

162, criticises this approach to theology. According to Yannaras, Voulgaris “while remaining faithful to Orthodox ‘dogma’ in general terms, nonetheless [...] analyses Orthodox ‘dogma’ in accordance with the mental and ideological requirements of Western academic theology”.

<sup>64</sup> To use Voulgaris’ words, «τὸ τῆς ἐτεροθρησκείας» remains «κακόν». See *Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας*, p. 59.

<sup>65</sup> *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], pp. 96-101. See also p. 194.

<sup>66</sup> *Βιβλιάριον κατὰ Λαζίνων*, Constantinople 1756.

<sup>67</sup> *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], introduction, and *Σχεδίασμα περὶ ἀνεξιθρησκείας*, pp. 31-32.

relations in the Orthodox world, condoning for example Peter the Great’s submission of the Holy Synod to the state in Russia.<sup>68</sup> He also sets limits to another Enlightenment trait, the adoration of the ancients, responding to those who would usher “Heracles, Theseus, Socrates [...] into paradise” that “their view is false and against the dictates of reason”.<sup>69</sup>

Further aspects of Voulgaris’ thinking during this period are also noteworthy: he prefers to identify himself as a Graikos, avoiding “the term Hellenes due to its pagan connotations, and the use of Romaioi to distinguish from the Romanoi”, as he styles the inhabitants of Rome. The real Romans, the Romaioi, migrated from Rome to Constantinople during the reign of Emperor Constantine, whereas the current inhabitants of Rome are called Romanoi since they are not “absolutely and purely Romaioi following their intermixture with the Goths and other barbarian peoples”. Voulgaris justifies his self-identification as a Graikos on the grounds that: “the peoples (ethni) of Europe at this time do not recognise our people (genos) by any other name”.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless there are cases when he uses the term “Hellenes”;<sup>71</sup> the area of South-Eastern Europe inhabited by many Graikoi is called Hellas.<sup>72</sup>

Voulgaris prefers the term “genos” to “ethnos”.<sup>73</sup> He does use “ethnos” – “Christian ethni” – but its meaning is ambiguous.<sup>74</sup> Thus he translates Voltaire’s term «le droit des gens» as “the rights of the Ethni”;<sup>75</sup> yet «La nation était» is

<sup>68</sup> Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν [...], p. 72, footnote 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100, footnote 1.

<sup>70</sup> Graikos is a transliteration of Γραικός, Hellenes of “Ελλήνες, Romaioi of Ρωμαῖοι, Romanoi of Ρωμάνοι. Thus Voulgaris avoids, in his original words, «τὸ μὲν “Ελλήνες διὰ τὴν ἔμφασιν τῆς εἰδωλοθρησκείας τὸ δὲ Ρωμαῖοι πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολὴν τῶν Ρωμάνων». The current inhabitants of Rome are not «ἀκριβῶς καὶ καθαρῶς Ρωμαῖοι μετὰ τὴν τῶν Γότθων, καὶ ἄλλων βαρβάρων ἔθνῶν παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἀνάμιξιν». Voulgaris justifies his self-identification as a Graikos on the grounds that, «τὰ ἔθνη ἀπαντα τῆς Εὐρώπης τὴν σήμερον, δὲν γνωρίζουσι τὸ Γένος μὲ δλλο ὄνομα», *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν [...]*, p. 2, footnote 1.

<sup>71</sup> “Ελλήνες», *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 41, “of the much oppressed Hellenes” or in the Greek «τῶν καταταραννουμένων Ἐλλήνων».

<sup>72</sup> “Ελλήνες», *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 41, “the Peloponnese or some other all too small corner of Hellas” or in the Greek «τὴν Πελοπόννησον, ἡ τινὰ γωνίαν ἄλλην παραμικρὰν τῆς ‘Ελλάδος».

<sup>73</sup> I have translated both “genos” (γένος) and “ethnos” (ἔθνος) with the neutral “people”. The translation of “ethnos” as “nation” is anachronistic for this period when the meanings of such terms had not yet crystallised. The recurrent translation of “genos” as “race” is unacceptable for any period and totally misleading.

<sup>74</sup> «Χριστιανικῶν ἔθνῶν», in *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν [...]*, p. 80.

<sup>75</sup> «Τὸ δικαίωμα τῶν Ἐθνῶν», in *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Πολωνίας [...]*, p. 92.

rendered “the ethnos was”.<sup>76</sup> The Graikoi are called an “ethos” rather rarely, as in: “the ethnos of the once famous and now wretched Graikoi”.<sup>77</sup>

Voulgaris’ terminology indicates confusion regarding the self-definition and identity of the Graikoi. He distinguishes Romaioi from Romanoi due to blood, yet he does not refer to himself a Romaios, preferring to adopt the European Graikos.<sup>78</sup> Although he does not define “genos of the Graikoi”, Evgenios seems to use the phrase to indicate either Greek speakers or the Orthodox,<sup>79</sup> without however clarifying the relation between Greek language and Orthodoxy. Still “genos” tends to stress the religious bonds which tie the Graikoi together, whereas “ethnos” emphasises the historic continuity of the Graikoi from antiquity on.<sup>80</sup> Voulgaris clearly regards the Eastern Roman Empire as an integral part of his heritage, defending Church-state relations throughout the Empire’s history against Voltaire’s accusations, and eulogising Constantine who fell “courageously and with greatness of spirit shedding his own blood” to defend Constantinople in 1453.<sup>81</sup> Yet he also believes the non-Orthodox ancients belong to this same historical tradition.

Evgenios’ attitude towards the Russian Empire points to the primacy of Orthodoxy in his identification of the Graikoi, hence the expectation that Russia will deliver the Graikoi from slavery.<sup>82</sup> If Voltaire –his translator

<sup>76</sup> «Τὸ ἔθνος ἔγτον», in *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], p. 92.

<sup>77</sup> «Τὸ ἔθνος τῶν πότε περιφήμων καὶ νῦν ἀθλίων Γραικῶν», in *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 45.

<sup>78</sup> *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> «Γένος τῶν Γραικῶν». See «Προσφώνημα πρὸς Ἀρχιερέα κατὰ τὴν Μεγάλην Παρασκευήν», in which Christ is presented, “unceasingly orchestrating the onrush of inspiration of our genos”, in Georgios Afinian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 50. Also, *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 42, “the Genos of Mohammed” or in the Greek «τοῦ Μωάμεθ τὸ Γένος». Also, *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], p. 105, in which Voltaire and Voulgaris use the term “Grecs”/“Graikoi” to describe the Orthodox in Poland.

<sup>80</sup> There are of course exceptions, for example in «Οὐολταίρου, Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὴν Αὔτοκράτειραν τῶν Ρώσσων» [Voltaire, Letter to the Empress of the Russians], 1771, in Ph. Iliou, *Προσθήκες στὴν Ἐλληνικὴ Βιβλιογραφία (1515-1799)* [Additions to the Greek Bibliography (1515-1799)], Athens 1973, pp. 303-307, Voulgaris translates: “the descendants of Heracles and the genos of Homer”, or in the Greek, «οἱ ἔκγονοι τοῦ Ἡρακλῆ καὶ τὸ Ὀμήρου Γένος».

<sup>81</sup> *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], p. 71. The in any case dubious practice of dubbing the Eastern Roman as the Byzantine Empire commenced with the German J. Wolf in 1562; the term ‘Byzantine Empire’ is malapropos in Voulgaris’ case.

<sup>82</sup> See Paschalis Kitromilides, «Ἡ πολιτικὴ σκέψη τοῦ Εὐγενίου Βούλγαρη», pp. 172-173. Voulgaris does sense differences between the Graikoi and the other Orthodox in the Balkans. He writes in February 1777: “The diocese entrusted to my care consists of various peoples confessing the Orthodox faith. Into the Russian Empire have migrated and are

concurring— praises Russia for its enlightened government, Russia for Voulgaris remains above all the supreme Orthodox power.

Whereas the boundaries between the Graikoi and others of the Orthodox faith remain indeterminate, Voulgaris is confident in his juxtaposition of the Graikoi with those who are not Orthodox. His opposition to Roman Catholicism has been discussed above. Less pronounced but still noticeable are his differences with the Protestants, portrayed as “latter-day iconoclasts”.<sup>83</sup> Evgenios is well disposed towards Venice, controlling as it did his native Ionian Islands.<sup>84</sup> He narrates the history of the Graikoi dwelling in that city:

which [...] many of our people (genos) following the terrible sack of Constantinople saw as their very own home-land (patrida) and considered a holy shelter.<sup>85</sup>

According to Voulgaris, the most marked defining opposite for the Graikoi were the Muslim Turks. Subservient religious communities in Poland and the Ottoman Empire shared similar predicaments; thus Voulgaris’ translating of Voltaire was quite apart from anything else an anti-Ottoman gesture.<sup>86</sup> *Reflections on the Current Critical State of the Ottoman Empire* discusses the defining opposition between Graikos and Turk in greater detail with Evgenios sighing: “Thank God, I am neither a Turk nor a Turkophile”.<sup>87</sup>

In sum, the translation of Voltaire, Voulgaris’ commentary and his essay *Notes on Religious Tolerance and the Toleration of other Religions* bear witness to the influence of the Enlightenment on the Greek world: they manifest a well-disposed scholar’s interest in the radical European Enlightenment and demonstrate the strength of new words, new concepts and new ideas introduced through translation, ideas which could not easily be assimilated into the world-view even of an enlightened intellectual such as Voulgaris. Above all through the agony and excitement of Evgenios’ commentary on Voltaire, the processes of Enlightenment

---

migrating Greeks, Wallachians, Moldavians, Albanians, Serbs, Bosnians and other nations [...]. See Stephen K. Batalden, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>83</sup> «Οἱ νέοι οὗτοι εἰκονοκλάσται», in *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], p. 159.

<sup>84</sup> *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], p. 180. Voulgaris even calls Venice a “philhellenic city” or as in the Greek: «ἡ ἐν Βενετίᾳ μάλιστα τῇ Γαληνοτάτῃ καὶ φιλέλληνι πόλει».

<sup>85</sup> *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν* [...], p. 180.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen K. Batalden, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>87</sup> *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 38. See also: «Ικετηρία τοῦ Γένους τῶν Γραικῶν» [Supplication of the Genos of the Graikoi], 1771, in Ph. Iliou, *Προσθῆκες στὴν Ἑλληνικὴν Βιβλιογραφίαν (1515-1799)*, pp. 291-300.

<sup>88</sup> «Οσα ἐδῶ λέγει ὁ Συγγραφεὺς καθ’ ἓνα τρόπον εἶναι εὔλογα, κατ’ ἄλλον ὅμως νοούμενα

penetration into Greek thought are laid bare. Especially with regard to theology, where their differences were fundamental, Voulgaris' reserved attitude towards Voltaire should not surprise: “the author's statements are in one sense reasonable, but in another rationalistic and inappropriate (atopa)”,<sup>88</sup> Voulgaris endeavoured to integrate Orthodoxy with Enlightenment, never to undermine the doctrines of the Church.

Yet, despite his reservations Voulgaris translated Voltaire's text. As in his *Logic*, so in the commentary Voulgaris broaches a wide range of subjects, burdening the original text with digressions on history, theology, science, geography, and politics, leaving Voltaire's essay concealed beneath a barrage of counter-arguments. Yet Voltaire provides the stimulus for this debate, and Voulgaris converses with him because he finds his ideas important if at times repulsive. Thence the Enlightenment impregnated the Greek world.

If the translation *Historical and Critical Essay on the Divisions between the Churches in Poland* depicts the processes by which the Enlightenment influenced the Greek world, Evgenios' essay *Reflections on the Current Critical State of the Ottoman Empire*, printed in St Petersburg in 1772, constitutes an effort to influence developments during the 1768-1774 Russian-Turkish war.<sup>89</sup> Voulgaris predicts the forthcoming liberation of the Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire with Russian aid, mirroring the widespread “Russian Hope” that followed Russia's expansion southwards to the Black Sea littoral.<sup>90</sup> Ottoman demise, according to Voulgaris, would not endanger the Balance of Power –“antirropia” another neologism the author bequeaths to Greek– in Europe. There are many examples of shifting borders which maintained the Balance of Power intact, whereas only in this case, Voulgaris protests:

---

εῖναι ἄποπα [...]», in *Περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν [...]*, p. 88.

<sup>89</sup> The Russian-Turkish war of 1768-1774 included the unsuccessful Orlov uprising in the Peloponnese and elsewhere in the Greek world, followed by the naval battle of Chesme in 1770 and the conquest of many of the Aegean islands by Russia. The war was concluded through the treaty of Kioutsouk Kainartzi in 1774.

<sup>90</sup> The term «Ρωσσικὴ προσδοκία» should perhaps be translated “Russian Expectation” or even better “Expectation of Russia”, yet the translation “Hope” seems somehow more satisfactory. For more on this “Russian Expectation” and its effects on Greek political thought in the eighteenth century see Paschalis Kitromilides, *Tradition, Enlightenment and Revolution. Ideological Change in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Greece*, Harvard University Ph.D. Diss., Cambridge, Mass. 1978, pp. 167-194 [= *idem*, Νεοελληνικὸς Διαφωτισμός, pp. 169-197].

<sup>91</sup> Evgenios probably means the Crimea.

if the barbaric and tyrannical Power of the Ottomans is forced to free Tartary<sup>91</sup> and Dacia<sup>92</sup> on the one side, the Peloponnese or some other all-too-small corner of Hellas on the other as a place of shelter, a refuge, for the much-oppressed Hellenes, only then shall the balance of power of Europe instantly [be considered] overturned!<sup>93</sup>

Voulgaris appears to be combating the views of his contemporaries in Leipzig and Central Europe who were opposed to the Russian-Turkish War, since the Russians themselves could hardly have considered the “liberation” of Tartary as compromising the Balance of Power in Europe, whatever their opinions regarding the rest of South-Eastern Europe.<sup>94</sup> Only a reformed and rejuvenated Ottoman Empire, expostulates Evgenios, would pose a real threat to Christian states and consequently to the Balance of Power in Europe.

Detaching Evgenios’ analysis of the current condition of the Ottoman Empire from his aim, the escalation of the anti-Ottoman struggle, may be unwise. Nonetheless, Voulgaris’ investigation of the shortcomings of the Ottoman state is particularly perceptive. He examines two issues in depth: the influence of Islam on Ottoman society and the causes of Ottoman military decay. Alongside his *Catalogue of the Ottoman Sultans* published posthumously in 1812,<sup>95</sup> Voulgaris’ *Reflections on the current critical state of the Ottoman Empire* reveals familiarity with Ottoman state and society, and elaborates upon the defining opposition between Graikos and Turk observed in his earlier translation and commentary.

Voulgaris emphasises the multiple weaknesses of the Ottoman State:

The cause of [Ottoman] misfortune are: the transgression of the laws, the abolition of justice, the overlooking of punishments and corrective measures, the promotion of the unworthy to official positions, the lack of determination in endeavours [...] tardiness in military decision making, lack of skill in the use of arms and in the other techniques of war, the insolence and disobedience of the troops, and, above all, the love of enrichment and endemic corruption, and the accursed lack of knowledge and lack of study of the Laws and of Proper Procedures [...]!<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Dacia was originally Transylvania including all the Carpathian Mountains. For this definition see the Μεγάλη Ἑλληνική Ἐγκυροπαιίδεια [Great Hellenic Encyclopaedia], Vol. VIII, p. 819. It may here refer to Moldavia and Wallachia as well.

<sup>93</sup> Στοχασμοί [...], p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> See Στοχασμοί [...], p. 35, “I direct my arguments against those Politicians [...]”.

<sup>95</sup> Κατάλογος γενεαλογικός τῶν Σουλτάνων τῶν Ὀττανίδων [Genealogical Table of the Ottoman Sultans], Moscow 1812.

<sup>96</sup> Στοχασμοί [...], p. 5. In his analysis of Ottoman decline Voulgaris closely follows Ibrahim Muteferrika’s *Usul al-hikam fi nizam al-umam*, 1732, printed «à l’imprimerie de la

This criticism is poignant; its focus is on the inefficiency of the state apparatus, though Voulgaris is well aware that the army, civil administration, judicial system and so on do not function in isolation but as parts of the wider polity. Thus the Ottoman malady is depicted as all-consuming; indeed, through his analysis of the effects of a deficient legal system and the violation of such laws as do exist and through his portrayal of avarice and corruption as the system of governance *par excellence*, Evgenios identifies some of the most important causes not only of Ottoman decay, but of bad governance and underdevelopment more generally.

As Islamic conservatism prevents state and society from replicating European innovation, Islam is postulated as one of the root causes of Ottoman decay. Muslim society exhibits “systemic”<sup>97</sup> hostility towards Christianity and the Koran incites believers to Jihad against Christians.<sup>98</sup> Confident in their superiority, and protected by the Prophet, Turks eschew not only Western ideas but also all innovation indiscriminately. On this Voulgaris’ reading, the progressive culture of Christian Europe clashes with the conservatism of – interchangeable terms these – the Islamic or Turkish East.<sup>99</sup>

Still, Evgenios indicates Islam is not necessarily conservative. Theology, like philosophy, evolves in time. When coffee first arrived in Constantinople, Voulgaris chuckles, a rather dour *mufti* proscribed it citing the Koranic dictum, “Muslims must not consume coal.”<sup>100</sup> Another *mufti*, somewhat more appreciative of his coffee, revoked the decree, claiming that coffee was not the coal to which the Prophet was referring. This, explains Evgenios, is precisely how Islam develops, meeting the needs of state and people:

They have no difficulty in interpreting the Commandments of Mohammed in accordance with self-interest, and so the same follows concerning the use of the new European tactics in war. Even if there

---

délicieuse ville de Constantinople». The text was translated by Baron Reviczki as the *Traité de la tactique* shortly before Voulgaris wrote his *Στοχασμοί* [...]. See *Traité de la tactique*, Vienna 1769, p. xxxvij.

<sup>97</sup> «Ἐκ συστήματος», see *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” thus follows in Voulgaris’ footsteps. See *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, issue 3 (1993). Voulgaris’ analysis is more perceptive as it discusses the influence of one culture on another and the evolution of culture in general. The opposition between Islam and Christianity is also redolent of the Crusades. In *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 40, Voulgaris reassures: “I am not calling for a crusade, like the ones of old”.

<sup>100</sup> «Οὐκ ἔξεστι τοῖς Μουσουλμάνοις ἵνα ἐσθίωσιν ἄνθρακας [sic!]». See *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 21.

<sup>101</sup> *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 22.

were a whole chapter of Mohammed's laws forbidding the use of these tactics (which most certainly is not the case), this chapter could easily be set aside (if it should seem that the safety of the Ottoman state and the salvation of the people (genos) depended on this [...]).<sup>101</sup>

Islam is conservative at the moment, Voulgaris concludes; should the underlying situation alter, following military defeat for example, Islam will prove more radical and far less reactionary.

Having shown how Islam evolves, just like any other religion, Voulgaris compares the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Turks are “barbarian [...], uneducated, boorish, disorganised”, but so were most peoples (geni) in Europe, including the Russians.<sup>102</sup> Radical reforms during the reign of Peter the Great were not confined to the military, even though their ultimate goal was military reorganisation. The Russians

reformed themselves and achieved good governance (eunomia akrivi) and a healthy polity. They built mighty fortresses, founded academies and developed the trades. They have imported the advanced sciences and crafts. They have taken care to further agriculture and trade, and they have trained and perfected to an astonishing degree military matters [...].<sup>103</sup>

What European influence did for the Russians, it can do for the Turks also. Only leadership is required: an enlightened monarch on a par with Peter the Great, who would adopt European innovations and undertake far-reaching reforms.

Aside from insufficient innovation, the minorities that dwell within the borders of the Ottoman Empire further contribute to its vulnerability. This is a state that “breeds the Graikoi in its bowels, a multitude that has been inhumanly oppressed for so long”.<sup>104</sup> Trade and the crafts are in their hands. As these Graikoi feel “distress at the unbearable burden of tyranny, hope in the liberation of the genos and zeal in their Christian faith,” their support for any Christian monarch challenging the Ottoman Empire is assured.<sup>105</sup> This enmity

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. Voulgaris believes the Graikoi vastly outnumber the Turks in Europe: “I wouldn't go so far as to claim that the Graikoi outnumber the Turks in Europe ten times (as some would have it), the claim that they outnumber them twice suffices”. As elsewhere, so too here it is unclear who exactly qualifies as a Graikos.

<sup>105</sup> «Ἡ θλῖψις τῆς βαρείας καὶ ἀνυποφορήτου τυραννίδος, ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τοῦ γένους ἀποκαταστάσεως, ὁ ζῆλος ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν Πίστεως [...]», in «Ἴκετηρία τοῦ Γένους τῶν Γραικῶν», 1771, in Ph. Iliou, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-300. See *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 39.

towards the Ottoman Turks is not however irreversible: either through forced conversion to Islam or through competent government exercised with “leniency and moderation” the Ottomans could mollify, or silence, their minorities.<sup>106</sup> Since conversion of all the Graikoi would be almost impossible, Voulgaris councils good governance as more likely to succeed.

Evgenios is then a champion of good governance characterised by “reform and innovation”;<sup>107</sup> an advocate of modernisation, to use an anachronistic term.<sup>108</sup> Voulgaris cites Ibrahim Efendi as a harbinger of the spirit of innovation in the Ottoman Empire, indicating that the Ottoman state could potentially embrace such a spirit.<sup>109</sup> Like Voulgaris, Ibrahim Efendi’s concern is for his fellow Muslims.<sup>110</sup> Importing a printing press to Constantinople, “he published a number of books covering a broad range of subjects [...] including Ptolemy’s, Copernicus’ and Tychon’s theories [...]. Insufficient funds were the primary impediment: “No one could be found to follow up in the business, with heavy expenses and scant opportunity for profit.”<sup>111</sup> Ibrahim Efendi, unlike Evgenios, may have lacked the necessary social framework, the merchants who supported Voulgaris’ work and ensured its continuity.

As an exponent of enlightened absolutism, Evgenios believes reform depends on the character of the leader; given charismatic leadership even Islamic states can embrace a reformist spirit. This view however underestimates social resistance to reform and innovation; the leader, too, is the product of his society, and radical reform may put his position at risk. Reform requires a suitable social framework.

<sup>106</sup> “Leniency and moderation” are translations of «ἐπιείκειαν καὶ ἡμερότητα», see *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 39.

<sup>107</sup> “Reform and innovation” are translations of «τῆς καινοτομίας καὶ τοῦ νεωτερισμοῦ». See *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Modernisation’ first appears in the English language in 1770. The Greek equivalent «εκουγχρονισμός» appears considerably later.

<sup>109</sup> Voulgaris is referring to Ibrahim Muteferrika, referred to above. Ibrahim Muterferrika was an Ottoman statesman, diplomat and founder of the first Turkish printing press. He was born in Transylvania of Christian parents probably between 1670 and 1674 and died in 1745. He established a printing press in 1727 which printed works related to secular matters. He was also an editor, compiler, translator and writer and prided himself on being a geographer. His *Usul al-hikam fi nizam al-umam*, Constantinople, 1732, analyses the decline of Ottoman power and is one of the main sources for Voulgaris, probably through its French translation: *Traité de la tactique*, tr. Baron Reviczki, Vienna 1769. See ‘Ibrahim Muteferrika’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, London 1971, Vol. III, pp. 996-998.

<sup>110</sup> His «διοιρήσκους» or those of the same faith, see *Στοχασμοί* [...], p. 19.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>112</sup> The Borysthenes is the Dneiper, hence the name of the ancient slave rhetorician Bion

Voulgaris also underestimates the importance of a state's economic prosperity as the foundation for a modern European army. Still, his analysis identifies some of the key explanatory factors for underdevelopment in general, and Ottoman decay in particular.

Evgenios' attempts to integrate diverse strains of thought through his compositions *A Historical and Critical Essay on the Dissention of the Churches in Poland and Notes on Religious Tolerance and the Toleration of other Religions*, and *Reflections on the Current Critical State of the Ottoman Empire* ultimately met with only partial success. Enlightenment and hostility towards Islam and the Ottoman Empire make unlikely bedfellows, today at any rate. Voulgaris argues Islam retards reform, insists the Ottoman Empire can be reformed yet does not clarify to what extent Islam as compared with Christianity actually encumbers state reform and modernisation. Where Voulgaris' commentary on Voltaire indicates his reservations towards the radical Enlightenment, his *Reflections on the current critical state of the Ottoman Empire* inclines towards the view that Ottoman modernisation and reform are possible, even probable. This position suits the author's arguments for a long-term Ottoman threat to the Balance of Power in Europe, but is also paradoxically closer to optimistic Enlightenment expectations of progress than to the traditional discourses of Christian-Islamic mutual hostility.

Finally, in his writings of this period the migrant Voulgaris forms a new feeling for people and place (*topos*). Thus the Graikoi are contrasted primarily with the Turks and Roman Catholics; their heritage includes the Greek language, ancient Greece, and the Eastern Roman Empire; their identity is above all Orthodox. This the Genos of the Graikoi is now striding towards freedom. Evgenios seems to merge the political freedoms of the European Enlightenment with his desire for a future free Hellas to be Orthodox, but this freedom calls for a real country governed by Orthodox leaders to protect the Graikoi from Turk and Roman Catholic alike. Far from home Voulgaris envisages a new '*topos*'; where before he imagined a place for the fruitful interplay of diverse currents of thought, at this juncture he increasingly imagines a liberated land, a political '*topos*' for the Orthodox Graikoi. Russia is Voulgaris' hope, and it is for this political freedom Voulgaris struggles while in Russia.

#### *Bosporus on the Borysthenes*<sup>112</sup>

In 1778, when the Empress Catherine II journeyed south to inspect her newly-

---

the Borysthenite whose mother was notorious in these far-flung corners of the ancient world.

<sup>113</sup> «Προσφώνημα πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν βασίλισσαν, καθ' ὃν χρόνον ἐπεδήμησεν εἰς τὴν Κρι-

acquired conquests, Voulgaris since 1775 Archbishop of Cherson and Slaviansk delivered the following address:

You fast flowing rivers which gush without interruption from many sources through these lands and you above all renowned Borysthenes near whose banks at this time our most pious Empress rests, visiting her subject peoples and giving them her bounty, arranging and widening political and ecclesiastical rights, bear with your floods these happy and joyful tidings to the farthest salt seas of the world into which your sweet waters flow [...]<sup>113</sup>

As in the earlier letter to the deacon Cyprian, quoted extensively above, so too in this encomium to the Empress Catharine II geography moulds a world-view. Whereas Mount Athos, a peninsula, was at the centre of the imagined cosmos of classical Greece, a cosmos created by and conceived through the sea, the main geographical feature of southern Russia was and is its rivers, above all the Borysthenes, or Dneiper. Rivers facilitated commercial, military, and ecclesiastical exchange; even church building “amongst the barbarians” would not have been possible without these particular channels of communication. Rivers transported migrants, establishing variegated populations along their banks; and rivers connected southern Russia with further a field, facilitating the transmission of Catherine II’s power and policies “to the furthest salt seas”, all the way to the Aegean Archipelago. If Mount Athos was conceived as a centre, these southern Russian territories were passageways: avenues for news, channels for Catherine II’s political plans, outlets to the sea and hence to the wider Greek world. This was indeed a Bosphorus, a passage between two worlds, and not a point of departure or of arrival. Voulgaris continues:

Spread the world that the river Alklos is over-flowing, surging sweetly to the sea, bearing truly golden streams to all those who draw bounteously from it the life-giving floods of piety and good governance (eunomia), of liberty and security, of peace and plenty. Such is the impetus of this river which, as the King and Prophet David said, gives joy and delight to the city of the heavenly king, the ideal Zion, the Jerusalem of Grace, the Orthodox Church, for ‘the river’s rushing flow brings delight to the City of God’.<sup>114</sup>

μαίαν κατὰ μήνα Μάιον τοῦ 1778», in Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 48.

<sup>114</sup> «Προσφάνημα πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν βασίλισσαν, καθ’ ὃν χρόνον ἐπεδήμησεν εἰς τὴν Κριμαίαν κατὰ μήνα Μάιον τοῦ 1778», in Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 48. The original Greek for “[...] the Jerusalem of Grace [...]” reads, «τὴν Ἱερουσαλήμ τῆς χάριτος, τὴν ὁρθόδοξον ἐκκλησίαν, τοῦ ποταμοῦ τὰ ὄρμήματα εὐφραίνουσι τὴν πόλην τοῦ Θεοῦ».

<sup>115</sup> All too real and all too uncertain, since I have been unable to ascertain exactly which

In contrast to his letter to the deacon Cyprian, this panegyric is redolent with religious imagery. Archbishop Voulgaris creates an ecclesiastical geography linking the all too real Alklos,<sup>115</sup> which transfers Catherine II’s worldly powers, to the Ecclesia, the Orthodox Church, which unites all believers, making them one in Christ.

Catherine II is praised for the piety, good governance, liberty, security, peace and plenty, offered through the rivers. The Biblical King and Prophet David is her model, the Old Testament thus justifying Catherine’s manner of government. Ultimately, good governance is equated with the river, with the journey, whereas the final destination, the city, the ‘topos’, is identified as “the Jerusalem of Grace, the Orthodox Church, ‘the river’s rushing bringing delight to the City of God’.”

It would be misleading to claim that Voulgaris’ interests, his sense of people and place change wholesale during this period. As his translations of *Homeric Antiquities*<sup>116</sup> and Virgil’s *Georgics* and *Aeneid* reveal, his interest in antiquity continued unabated during his extended stay in Russia. Evgenios’ archaic Greek usage, especially evident in his translations of Virgil from the original Latin, reflects his understanding of cultural continuity from antiquity up until his time. Similarly, in his dedication of the *Aeneid* to Catherine II Voulgaris compares his translation to Homer’s epics.<sup>117</sup> In tandem to his preoccupation with antiquity, Evgenios engages with theological, historical, and scientific subjects; for example he translates Georg Horn’s “*Brevis et perspicua introductio ad universalem historiam*”.<sup>118</sup> Yet though his interests remain extensive, his earlier effort to integrate such knowledge and influences into a consistent whole is lacking.

As on Mount Athos so at Poltava, Voulgaris attempts to establish an educational establishment, inviting Nikiphoros Theotokis, a teacher at the Academy of Jassy and his successor as Archbishop of Cherson and Slaviansk, to take up the school’s direction.<sup>119</sup> Voulgaris’ conviction regarding the

---

river Voulgaris is referring to.

<sup>116</sup> E. Voulgaris, transl., *Αἰ καθ’ Ὀμηρον ἀρχαιότητες* [...], Moscow 1804.

<sup>117</sup> See E. Voulgaris, tr., *Τῆς Αἰνειάδος Ποιουβλίου Οὐιργιλίου Μάρωνος τὰ ιβ’ βιβλία, ἐν ἡρωϊκῷ τῷ μέτρῳ ἐλληνιστὶ ἐκφρασθέντα* [The Aeneid of Publius Virgilius Maro in 12 Books, translated into Greek in an Epic metre], St Petersburg 1791-1792, dedication.

<sup>118</sup> Among other works he edits «Κριτικὴ ἐπιστάσεις ἐπὶ τῶν ὑπομνηματικῶν παρεκβολῶν Νεοφύτου τοῦ Δ’ Γαζῆ» [Critical Observations on the Commentaries of Gazis], published in Vienna in 1806. Stephen K. Batalden, “Notes from a Leningrad manuscript. Evgenios Voulgaris’ autograph list of his own works”, *O Epaviotis* 13, issue 73 (1976), pp. 1-22. No copy of *Georg Horn’s translation* has been located.

<sup>119</sup> Stephen K. Batalden, *Catherine II’s Greek Prelate, Evgenios Voulgaris in Russia 1771-1806*, Chapter 4.

<sup>120</sup> Through Ivan Ivanovich Martynov, for example. *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

importance of education remains undiminished, yet he never seems to aspire to his previous successes on Mount Athos. Still the School of Poltava made an important contribution to the promotion of classical knowledge in the Russian Empire.<sup>120</sup> Thus, tellingly, while Voulgaris left in his will one thousand rubles to the Academy on Athos, he only left one hundred rubles to Poltava and even these not to the school but to the Monastery of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (Ypsoseos tou Timiou Stavrou).<sup>121</sup>

As already noted, the concept of the Genos of the Graikoi remains important for Voulgaris during this period. While in St Petersburg, Voulgaris struggled fervently for the liberation of the Graikoi from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>122</sup> As before, he did not feel any inconsistency between supporting this cause and supporting the Russian Empire. Freedom for him meant primarily freedom from the tyranny of the infidels. The precise content of the term 'genos' however remained unclear. In a letter to his cousin Dimitrios Valsamos dated to November 1775 in which he describes New Russia, he remarks that "within it the new colony of our Genos of Graikoi and Moldovans and Vlachs and Serbs congregates".<sup>123</sup> In fact, referring to his Slavo-Bulgarian origins –the name Voulgaris suggesting Bulgarian stock– he stresses his links to the Russian Empire and proves that although he sometimes distinguished Graikoi from other Orthodox peoples, he did not invest this distinction with any particular importance.<sup>124</sup>

Further, Voulgaris' endeavours in southern Russia, his combining of Graikoi, Russians and others in the work of his Diocese, could be viewed as a preparative bridge towards a reconstituted Hellas. Hence his dedication of his translation of the *Georgics* to Potemkin:

In truth, how many come one after the other day after day  
How many bring their children and their wives?  
Others have made their homes on the shores of Azov  
Still others where the Borysthenes spews into the sea

<sup>121</sup> Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. xxxv.

<sup>122</sup> Stephen K. Batalden, *Catherine II's Greek Prelate, Evgenios Voulgaris in Russia 1771-1806*, Chapter 4.

<sup>123</sup> «Ἐν αὐτῇ συγκροτεῖται ἡ νέα ἀποικία τοῦ ἡμετέρου Γένους τῶν Γραικῶν καὶ Μολδάβων καὶ Βλάχων καὶ Σέρβων [...]», in C. Th. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνική Ἐπιστολογραφία [Modern Greek epistolography]*, Athens 1955, p. 98.

<sup>124</sup> [Evgenios Voulgaris' address to Catherine II], (27 July 1771), TsGADA, fond 18, delo 249, 1.14; Stephen K. Batalden, *Catherine II's Greek Prelate, Evgenios Voulgaris in Russia 1771-1806*, p. 22. "Slavo-Bulgarian by origin, Greek by birth, Russian by inclination, a servant most humble in fitting obedience and devotion". I had no access to the original text.

<sup>125</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, St Petersburg 1786, dedication.

Where the colonies of Miletus  
And the wealthy city of Olbia were of old?  
Here, once again you can see the Hellas of yore  
Renowned Potemkin, this is your own feat!<sup>125</sup>

This laudation reflects Evgenios’ wish for the resurrection of classical Greece, his desire for the freedom of his people even those along the shores of the Black Sea, his hope for Russian intervention in the Greek world and his belief in enlightened absolutism as a form of government. And all these viewed through the landscape, the framework of rivers connected to the sea that constitute the geography of southern Russia, and also through the prism of social and political events such as the mass migrations from the Archipelago to southern Russia following the unsuccessful uprising instigated by Alexei Orlov during the 1768-1774 Russian-Turkish war.

Voulgaris’ sense of his own particular native land develops during his sojourn in Russia, paralleling the evolution in his perception of the Graikoi; he dedicates for example his translation of *Homeric Antiquities* to the “recently constituted Ionian Republic (politokratia)”. His thoughts meander back to the places, the ‘topoi’, of his youth; he even considers returning home, to his ‘patria’. In another letter to his cousin Dimitrios Valsamos in Zakynthos, Voulgaris sighs:

Ah my dear brother, I wish there were a way for me to come and end  
the long-suffering wandering of my life there amongst you. Believe me  
that your topoi (places) are Paradise.<sup>126</sup>

Twelve years later in 1787, in a letter from Cherson to the Archimandrite Damaskinos Omiros from Smyrna, he expresses similar feelings:

Here suffering and grief follow one after the other, there ease and joy  
dwell forever, here in the land of strangers, there in my homeland  
(patria) [...] we hope to receive the gift of salvation through the great  
mercies of our God [...]<sup>127</sup>

Evgenios’ yearning for his home is merged with his eschatological desire for resurrection in Christ, his final resting-place portrayed as a return to his roots, to his point of departure. Such digressions are not uncommon in a solitary old man, yet they do unveil an Evgenios who conceived of paradise both through

<sup>126</sup> «Ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ Εὐγενίου Βούλγαρη πρὸς τὸν Δημήτριο Βαλσαμό» [Letter of Evgenios Voulgaris to Dimitrios Valsamos], St Petersburg (7 July 1775), in C. Th. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικὴ Ἐπιστολογραφία*, pp. 94-97. See also Nikolaos Katramis, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>127</sup> Nikolaos Katramis, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>128</sup> For Voulgaris’ loneliness see his letter, 3 January 1790: “I rarely venture out, I meet

Orthodox theology and also as a specific imagined place, an idealised image of the land from which he first set out.<sup>128</sup> This image is an idealisation, not a real 'topos', and must therefore remain a utopia, a place to which Evgenios never returned, in this life, for such a place never existed.<sup>129</sup>

### 'Topos' and Utopia

Through his will, the aged Archbishop reviewed his life's work. Voulgaris' places of origin, his homelands, feature prominently. Thus he dedicates treasured relics "for the enrichment of the newly constituted Ionian Republic",<sup>130</sup> one thousand rubles to the Church of Saint Spyridon in Corcyra, and another thousand to the Church of the Phaneromeni in Zakynthos. He bequeaths one thousand rubles each to the Athos and Patmos Academies, centres of Orthodox education. Further from his homelands, but still within the Orthodox community, he makes donations to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and to the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai. He also left substantial sums to his relatives, mostly inhabitants of Zakynthos or Venice.<sup>131</sup> In Russia, he granted a mere one hundred rubles to the Monastery of the Elevation of the Holy Cross in Poltava, and another hundred to the Monastery of the Graikoi in Taganrog. A thousand rubles were contributed as alms to the needy. Finally, he entrusted his manuscripts to the mercantile Zosimas family, for use "according to their wishes".<sup>132</sup>

Voulgaris' testament reveals his emotional hunger for his 'topoi', his places of origin, his homelands. As discussed, Voulgaris came from a society held together by maritime trade; in such a migratory society, Voulgaris' wanderings throughout the Greek world can be interpreted as attempts to minimise risk and to seize opportunities, standard practice for the merchants of his day.

Such a society is receptive of new ideas, and the influence of the European Enlightenment on Voulgaris' thought is evident; yet this blending of new currents

with few people, for the most part I converse with the deceased", in Evgenios Voulgaris, *Βόσπορος ἐν Βορυσθένει* [The Bosphorus on the Borysthenes], Moscow 1810, p. 358.

<sup>129</sup> Letter of Evgenios Voulgaris from St Petersburg, 1 February 1788: "these are the things which hold me back from leaving this place and returning to my homeland (εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν πατρίδα)", in Evgenios Voulgaris, *Βόσπορος ἐν Βορυσθένει*, p. 349.

<sup>130</sup> In the Greek, «εἰς προικισμὸν τῇ νεοσυστάτῳ πολιταρχίᾳ τῆς Ἰονικῆς Ἐπτανήσου ἡγεμονίας». Note the juxtaposition of «πολιταρχία» and «ἡγεμονία».

<sup>131</sup> To Lavrentios Paramythiotis in Venice and the Valsamos family. Dimitrios Valsamos served for some time in the Russian fleet on the Black Sea.

<sup>132</sup> Georgios Ainian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. xxxviii.

<sup>133</sup> The word 'utopia' was coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516, a play on eu + topos (a

with native traditions engenders tensions: the mobility that characterised society in general and Voulgaris and other scholars in particular prevented the gradual, systematic assimilation of ideas. Just as communities throughout the Greek world found the assimilation of diverse currents of thought daunting, so too difficulties in assimilation leading to inconsistencies are visible in Voulgaris' writings. There was no common space where the conservative and progressive currents of the time could over time be brought into a more harmonious, creative relationship.

As noted, the Academy on Athos represented an attempt to establish exactly such a common space; still even here Voulgaris proved incapable of merging the intellectual currents of the time into a harmonious whole, just as he was impotent against the vehement opposition of his detractors. This 'topos', this shelter, was to remain an uncompleted tower of Babel, a utopia.

Voulgaris' testament reveals the importance he attributed to the Academy on Athos even in old age. Voulgaris never wrote a "Utopia" himself, his aim was never radical criticism for its own sake, never simply to defy his society;<sup>133</sup> rather his reserved attitude towards Voltaire is a token of his desire to establish a suitable space for the import of new ideas without rejecting all established ones. Voulgaris' utopia is thus not an impracticable enterprise *a priori* but a failure in practice, a failure due by and large to the geography of his world and the social framework in which he operated. Yet it is precisely because he did not remain a mere tradesman, a peddler of ideas, but strove to combine, albeit unsuccessfully, the freedom of the Enlightenment with Orthodox thought, that Voulgaris still provokes. A tradesman in ideas, then, who dreamed of constructing a factory, but found the ground was not good and the raw materials remained unrefined. The Academy on Athos was Voulgaris' factory, and was to remain his unfulfilled dream. Voulgaris never abandoned this dream of a 'topos' for the creative assimilation of diverse intellectual currents; indeed the varying senses he ascribes to 'topos' overlap somewhat, even though emphasis does change over time. Thus in Leipzig and still later in Russia his desire for a 'topos' to blend diverse intellectual currents is to a certain extent replaced by his understanding of the common 'topos' of the Graikoi suffering Papist oppression and enslaved under the Ottoman Turks; liberation of the Graikoi requires a political 'topos' with real borders and Orthodox rule.

---

region of ideal happiness and good order) and *ou + topos* (meaning no place). In his work of that name Sir Thomas More describes an imaginary island enjoying a perfect social, legal and political system. The term 'ourtonia' first appears in Greek in 1874. On utopia see: Frank and Fritzie Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Cambridge, Mass, 1979.

<sup>134</sup> Διατριβὴ περὶ Εὐθανασίας, St Petersburg, 1804.

Alongside this liberated ‘topos’ for the Graikoi, Evgenios idealises his own particular homelands Corcyra and also Zakynthos; thus the debate with which this essay commenced over Voulgaris’ origins was by no means irrelevant. Far from home, Evgenios sought the comfort of a concrete homeland including both these islands, yet, given the social instability described above, any search for a concrete place of origin, for one particular homeland, represented an idealisation, a just-so story, perhaps even a myth; and so towards the end, Evgenios’ point of departure, his self-nurtured and idealised homeland, converges with the conclusion to his journey, resurrection in Christ.

*On Dying Well*, also composed during Voulgaris’ extended stay in Russia, evinces the same eschatological sense of ‘topos’.<sup>134</sup> Here, Voulgaris depicts human life as a “savage sea” with its “endless” and “wild” waves; yet humans long for a “merciful breath of wind” to set them free from danger:

But what is this so very much desired anchorage? What else than death?  
Yes, without doubt, death is the harbour, because it is death that brings  
the longed-for repose and calm, and the most perfect freedom from  
earthly suffering and humiliation [...]]<sup>135</sup>

Imagine Evgenios struggling throughout to pacify the wild waves, the contradictory trends that epitomised his day; without success, for he did not find refuge in his much longed-for anchorage, did not reach a ‘topos’, a place of rest. And so, as the Christian that he is, he hopes for death and resurrection in Christ. But this *topos*, the place for the meeting of man and God, which is the Church in this life and resurrection in the life hereafter, cannot be one particular place; it is rather a *pantopia*, an everywhere, as opposed to the *utopia*, the nowhere, that was not in the end established on Mount Athos, for it is life in the Holy Spirit. Hence our beginning: “what then is the effect of place, in and of itself? Nothing.”<sup>136</sup>

*Ph.D. candidate*  
*University of Athens*

---

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>136</sup> Evgenios Voulgaris, «Σοφίας τῶν Ἑλλήνων τοῦ παρόντος αἰῶνος διασάφησις περὶ τοῦ ποῦ Παράδεισος, καὶ ποῦ Κόλασις, καὶ τὶ εστὶ ταῦτα [...]», in Georgios Aianian, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 3.