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Review Essay

Hellenism, philhellenism and classical reception: commemorating the 1821 revolution

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The Greek Revolution of 1821–1829 mobilized the ideas of classical reception and Philhellenism developed over the previous century to appeal for international support for the war. These complicated ideas influenced the ways both Greeks and non-Greeks thought about the nation, its political character, language, literature, history, culture and landscape. How the revolution and post-revolutionary Greece have been interpreted has shifted over the past 40 years, reflecting changes in both critical theory and also in the geopolitical circumstances in the Eastern Mediterranean and globally. The bicentenary celebrations of 2021 have highlighted the complex, competing claims for the authority to give the dominant account of the founding of modern Greece. Reviewing the scholarship on both Western and Greek Hellenism over the past four decades, our article considers the relationship between classical reception, revolution and the act of commemoration and reveals the hybridity of Hellas in 1821 and 2021.

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Classical reception made concrete

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the start of the Greek Revolution, known by non-Greeks as its 'War of Independence'. Two centuries ago, on 7th March 1821,

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Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis, a major-general in the Russian army and leader of the secret diasporic Friendly Society centred in Odessa, issued a declaration calling for a 'simultaneous insurrection throughout Greece' (Robinson 1980: 53–4) and the liberation of his fellow Greeks. According to Percy Bysshe Shelley's translation of the declaration, based upon Alexandros Mavrocordatos's rendition of it in French and published in London's *Morning Chronicle* the following month, Ypsilantis stressed the connection between the ancient Greek 'ancestors' and their modern 'descendants' living in 'European Turkey', as an inspiration for rebellion:

> The civilised people of Europe are busy in laying the foundation of their own happiness, and full of gratitude for the benefits they received from our ancestors, desire the liberty of Greece. Shewing ourselves worthy of our virtuous ancestors, and of the age, we hope to deserve their support and their aid, and many of them, partisans of liberty, will come to fight by our sides .... Let us recollect, brave and generous Greeks, the liberty of the classic land of Greece; the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae; let us combat upon the tombs of our ancestors who, to leave us free, fought and died. (*Morning Chronicle*, 13 April 1821).

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As Roderick Beaton has described in his histories of the Greek revolution and the 'biography of [the] modern nation' (Beaton 2013, 2019), Ypsilantis's uprising was quickly crushed, with the Russians not coming to his aid as he expected. This was not, according to Beaton, so much an organised, systematic 'War of Independence' as, rather, a turbulent 'revolution' with all the violence, 'rage and fear that no power on earth could control' (Beaton 2019: 74). For while Ypsilantis's cosmopolitan, diasporic army with its enlightenment ideals was routed in Wallachia, guerrilla rebellions erupted across the Peloponnese and the islands of Hydra, Spetses and the Cyclades, as well as up in Epirus. The outer islands — Crete, Samos, Lesbos, Chios — joined the revolution. Meanwhile rebellions were mounted in villages in Chalkidiki, in the north, and on the western coast of modern Turkey.

Ypsilantis's declaration had emphasised two principles upon which the idealistic rhetoric of the revolution was founded. Firstly, the Greeks, although dispersed throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans, the Black Sea area and orthodox Russia, were to be considered one 'ethnos', unified by their language, religion, culture and history. This common identity would require some work. As Count Ioannis Kapodistrias acknowledged, 'First we must make Hellenes, and then make Hellas' (Beaton 2019: 71). Secondly, these 'Hellenes' were the descendants of the ancient Greeks and must prove themselves worthy of their ancestors. Ypsilantis's citation of the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae, key victories in the Persian war, was to become typical of the philhellenic rhetoric which made the 1821 revolution a matter of 'recollection', of repetition and memory, of debt owed and liberty supposedly restored. Again, such ideological discourse required strenuous efforts of belief and the careful re-writing and repression of history.

In the disparity and discontinuity between Ypsilantis's approach to Greek independence and that of the leaders of the various rebellions elsewhere in the region, including Theodoros Kolokotronis in the Peloponnese and Laskarina Bouboulina in

Spetses, we can see the tensions between ideology and messy history on the ground which characterised the war. As Mark Mazower has recently argued, this was partly a conflict driven by 'younger men in the thick of the fighting', 'humble Greek revolutionaries' motivated by economics and maritime geopolitics, rather than by 'older Greek savants who wrote serious texts and were in close contact with their counterparts among the philosophes of Paris, London and Göttingen' (Mazower 2021: 13). There continues to be a debate over whether the Greek Revolution was national, transnational, political, ethno-religious, or economic and whether it should be discussed in a Hellenic, Ottoman, Mediterranean or global context. Scholars tend to be selective and do not take a single position, but they often disagree on the importance of different approaches.

Nevertheless, we contend that the Greek Revolution was also both international and ideological in its motivational appeal to the idea of the ancient nation. We can see, in Ypsilantis's declaration, the use and abuse of classical history with the opportunities for recruitment and motivation which its invocation afforded and the limitations of its applicability to the liberation struggle. For while the revolution of 1821–1833 was a war of emancipation from the Ottoman empire, comparable to rebellions in Serbia or Moldavia, it was complicated by philhellenic rhetoric. This was classical reception made concrete, the chance for 'images of Greece' to be 'put dramatically to the test' (Wallace, 1997: 179). Greece, according to the philhellenes, was not just a corner of the declining Ottoman empire engaging in a nationalist struggle but the source of European culture, the origins of its art, history, philosophy, literature, and education. As Leigh Hunt wrote, 'if we know anything at all about the Greeks, we can hardly help being reminded of them at every turn of our lives. We can hardly open a book—we cannot look at a schoolboy—we cannot use a term of science but we read of the Greeks, or have thoughts that can be traced to them, or speak their very language' (*The Examiner*, 7 October 1821).

The classical reception mobilized in the Greek revolution of 1821 had been developed over a long period of time. As Timothy Webb observed in his short essay on British Romantic Hellenism, the 'utopian reading of Greek history had been foreshadowed by a sequence of eighteenth-century works' (Webb 1993: 175). Many historians have charted the European re-discovery of Greek antiquity in the eighteenth century, the renewed appreciation of Homer, Aeschylus and Pindar, and the shift in cultural taste from Rome to Greece, albeit also complicated by the rise of Orientalism and interest in native history and folklore (Webb 1982; Constantine 1984; Wallace 1997: 8–12; Wallace and Vance 2015: 3–8). The new enthusiasm for 'the profoundly overdetermined image of ancient Greece' (Aske, 1985: 33) was influenced by, and went on to shape, ideas of art, history and politics, and indeed the politicization of the aesthetic. Winckelmann had set the agenda. Having proposed a history of ancient art and offering an account of the material or environmental conditions for the production of sculpture and the objects of beauty in general, he essentially idealized Hellenic culture. As David Ferris explains in *Silent Urns* (2000), in one of his ubiquitous enigmatic paradoxes, Winckelmann's '*History of Ancient Art* should be considered as more a model for an aesthetic form of history than a history

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of aesthetic form' (Ferris 2000: 8). As such, it erased the historical and political details behind its formation, while at the same time being taken as a model for just that historical or political interpretation of culture. The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century Hellenic tropes identified by Ferris are silence, fragmentation, the nostalgia of modernity. 'Rather than persist as a historical model of freedom, Greece becomes the model of a freedom that cannot tell its own history' (Ferris 2000: xvi). But the discourse immediately preceding and following 1821 was more urgently political. Abstract ideas about the freedom of the ancient Greeks had to be converted into propaganda and practical strategy. In this conversion of ideas into political enactment, we see the distinctions and convergence of Hellenism and Philhellenism which Gonda Van Steen has helpfully delineated. Philhellenism 'was the more politically minded expression of broader Hellenism. Philhellenism aimed specifically at the liberation of the ethnic Greek territories from the Ottoman Turkish yoke whereas Hellenism denotes the contemporary cultural and intellectual fascination with Greek antiquity' (Van Steen 2010: 5).

It might seem inevitable to some now, as we celebrate the bicentenary of the Greek revolution, that eighteenth-century Hellenism would result in Philhellenism and that the liberation war would call upon all its resources for national and international support, including crucially the propagandistic appeal of classical antiquity. It might seem impossible to imagine it any other way. After all, the decade-long war ended with the 'creation' of a country in the image of western philhellenic ideas of Hellas, to 'correspond with their imagination' (Wallace 1997: 206; see also Grammatikos 2018: 7). The capital was moved in December 1833 from the flourishing port of Nafplio to Athens, even though Athens was in ruins and scarcely more than a village in any case. The new capital of the nascent nation was designed to recall the city of Pericles and Sophocles, its architectural plans revolving around the preservation of its ancient monuments and the grandeur of German nineteenth-century Hellenism, evident in its museum of classical archaeology and its university. The aspiration was to transform Athens into 'at once a perfectly modern city and the reincarnation of its long-lost ancient glory' (Beaton 2019: 118. See also Bastéa 2000). Meanwhile, after heated debate, a decision was taken to reintroduce 'katharevousa' or the purified ancient Greek as the official language of Hellas rather than the demotic vernacular spoken on the streets (Mackridge 2009). The philhellenic destiny of the country was cemented with the installation of a German prince, Otho I, member of the royal household of Wittelsbach, together with his bride Amalia as monarchs of the new nation, supported by a people steeped in the ideas of Winckelmann, Schiller and Hölderlin (Marchand 1996: 34; Güthenke 2008: 244). But, in fact, history could have been very different, and the relationship between classical reception, Hellenism and philhellenism during the revolutionary decades of the early nineteenth century had to be forged with considerable effort. It involved inventing some history and repressing other narratives. Its choices and decisions, which shaped the war and determined the future direction of the new nation, were the product of the historical moment and the concerns and beliefs of the time.

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Just as challenges, opportunities and beliefs influenced the nature of classical reception, Hellenism and philhellenism in the early nineteenth century, so the changing political and cultural environment of the last fifty years have determined how the history of the Greek War of Independence has been told. The memory of a movement and a set of events which were themselves acts of memory, 'recollection' and ideological restoration has morphed with the circumstances, transforming in accordance with the shifting priorities and theoretical currents of our modern times. As Mark Mazower noted recently, the last major commemoration of the Greek revolution in 1971, the 150th anniversary of the uprising, occurred during the period of the military Junta. They declared 'their dictatorship to be "a national-salvationist revolution" ... that would complete the work of its predecessor' and it was claimed that more than three hundred books were to be published on the subject (Mazower 2021: 12. Actually the publication number turned out to be far fewer, a fact not acknowledged by Mazower). But in the last year of the Colonels, Richard Clogg published a collection of essays (*The Struggle for Greek Independence: Essays to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Greek War of Independence*), in which he subversively noted that the 'neglect of the Ottoman background' to the history of the movement for Greek independence had 'led to a one-sided picture' and that it continued to 'remain inaccessible, for linguistic and other reasons, to most historians, including [himself]' (Clogg 1973: 1).

Dividing the overview of publications between us (Jennifer Wallace covered work predominantly on British classical reception while Vassilis Lambropoulos covered work on Greek classical reception), our task in this review article has been to consider the four decades of scholarship since Clogg's volume, which have added many more sides to that 'picture' and to think about the relation between classical reception, revolution and the act of commemoration. How have our ideas of Philhellenism and the birth of the nation of Hellas changed in the past 40 years? How have scholars of Western hellenism and scholars of Greek 'neohellenism' differed in their approaches to these subjects? And what is at stake in the celebrations and (false?) memories in Greece and around the world this year? We recognize that our story is a partial one, determined by our particular areas of interest and expertise in British and Modern Greek Studies, in post-colonialism, Romanticism and classical reception in literature and material culture. We are well aware that there are potentially other narratives to be told of classical receptions and philhellenism around the world. But within our own limitations, we aim to show the complexity of the revolution of 1821 and the multiplicity of forces influencing the development of the nascent state of Greece, a multiplicity which complements the hybridity of the modern nation together with the diversity and ambiguity of what might be called global Hellenism today.

Imagining Greece in the West

Forty years ago, the focus of British scholarship on Romantic Hellenism was centred on the discrepancy between the ideal and the 'real'. Accounts of the Greek landscape and its material culture were said to be held in tension between a Romantic emotional

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or imaginative approach and what was termed 'scientific curiosity'. There was, as Timothy Webb put it in the introduction to his anthology *English Romantic Hellenism* (1982), 'an increasing interest in discovering the reality of Greece both past and present' (Webb 1982: 3). Byron's *Childe Harold*, which mobilized the contrast between the emotive power of the ruins for the western traveller and the neglect and indifference of the contemporary inhabitants to the land, obviously occupied a central place in this thesis:

> Here let me sit upon this massy stone,
> The marble column's yet unshaken base!
> Here, son of Saturn, was thy favourite throne!
> Mightiest of many such! Hence let me trace
> The latent grandeur of thy dwelling-place.
> It may not be: nor even can Fancy's eye
> Restore what time hath laboured to deface.
> Yet these proud pillars claim no passing sigh;
> Unmoved the Moslem sits, the light Greek carols by.
>
> (*Childe Harold*, II.82-90)

The 'Fancy' of the western traveller in contrast with the light Greek; the imagined memory of the 'haunted holy ground' in contrast with the 'defaced' present: these were the conclusions brought back by western travellers to the classic lands which fuelled the philhellenic rhetoric. Webb and others established a canon of philhellenic accounts to show how 'the image of Greece was constantly refined, revised, refuted or reinterpreted' while purporting also to be able to contrast this with the 'facts' (Webb 1982: 32). Accounts of Romantic Hellenism through the 1980s and 1990s repeated an increasingly familiar narrative of the 'discovery' of Greece through reports of travellers (Stuart and Revett 1762-94; Robert Wood 1775; Richard Chandler 1776; Count Choiseul Gouffier 1782; James Dallaway 1797; William Gell 1817), initially funded by the newly established Society of Dilettanti (Constantine 1984; Aske 1985; Tsigakou, Eisner 1993; Wallace 2001; Stoneman 2010; Mitsi 2017). 'The young science of archaeology played a cardinal role' in the development from Hellenism to Philhellenism, for it 'turned the attention of bookish Hellenists to actual sites, where the Romantic imagination was free to play among the ruins with the dream that Greece might still be free' (Eisner 1993: 71). Only the shock of discovering the so-called 'degeneracy' of the modern inhabitants of the land was declared to puncture this dream.

But the development in the 1980s of postcolonial theories of power and the imperial gaze and of feminist theory on desire, fetish and objectification compelled scholars of classical reception and Romantic Hellenism to question the nature of the relationship between the West and Greece. The production of knowledge and the perception of the 'real' country, which critics had reiterated happily the previous decade, now needed to be interrogated. In this theoretical turn, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978),

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with its arguments about the political, imperial force of knowledge 'dominating', 'restructuring', and 'producing' its object, was to play an important role. Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987), which caused controversy on publication, took up Said's postcolonial insights and explored the development of what he called the 'Aryan model' of Greece in the nineteenth century, an effort by the West to repress the Asiatic origins of ancient Greece and to portray it instead as western. 'The establishment of the Aryan model can best be seen as attempts to impose the Romantic ideals of remoteness, coldness and purity on this most unsuitable candidate' (Bernal 1987: 209). Realizing the irreversible effect of theory's ability to 'destabilise the assumption that the relationship with other cultures and other writers is natural and unproblematic', Jennifer Wallace's *Shelley and Greece: Rethinking Romantic Hellenism* (1997) traced the complicated dynamics between British Romantic writers and the idea of Greece, ancient and modern, exploring issues of the orientalizing of Hellas, the absorption of Greece into western 'authority', the push and pull of desire and power (Wallace 1997: 7). For the first time, notions of the Other, drawn from Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Luce Irigaray amongst other theorists, were mobilized to think through the potentially colonialist imaginative project of philhellenism (Wallace 1997, esp. 119–48, 178–209).

In dramatizing the dynamics of power and desire at play in the nineteenth century philhellenic approach to Greece, the western traveller's relationship with a female 'genius loci' became a much-repeated narrative. Indebted to Germaine de Stael's influential *Corinne, ou Italie* (1807), novels such as Sydney Owenson's *Ida of Athens* (1809) combined sentimental fiction with antiquarian, neoclassical detail and national politics to explore the possibilities of Greek–British collaboration in any liberation struggle (Wallace 1997: 135–6). Ida, whose very name blurred 'symbolically the difference and distance between ancient and modern Greece', entices the western Lord B with her classical beauty, her lyre playing and her knowledge of her culture's ancient history so that he becomes committed both to her and to Hellenic freedom (Sifaki 2008: 66). And indeed, as Alexander Grammatikos has pointed out in *British Romantic Literature and the Emerging Modern Greek Nation*, Ida's 'identification with her country's ancient past acts as a form of resistance to an imperial power (the Ottoman Empire)' (34). But, ultimately, she resists Lord B's marriage proposals, both in Athens and London, marries a Greek resistance fighter and thereby throws into question Greece's dependence upon any 'imperial power'. Owenson thus succeeds in both 'introducing the cause of Greek revolution to Britain' while also interrogating colonising assumptions of possession or control. The novel continues to garner increasing scholarly interest although a modern edition is yet to be published (Wallace 1997; Trumpener 1997; Ferris 1998; Roessel 2002; Sifaki 2008; Grammatikos 2018).

As the probable model for Lord B, Byron's subsequent *Oriental Tales* followed Owenson's 'theatrical' (Ferris 1998: 86) lead in both cultivating and questioning the cliché of intercultural romantic relationships. Yet although these narrative poems cemented his poetic celebrity and were formative in the development of philhellenic

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rhetoric, they have been relatively neglected in recent critical accounts of classical reception, national identity, and the Greek revolution (despite Leask: 13-67). *The Giaour* (1813), in particular, suggested the imaginative connection between woman and place, opening with fragmentary glimpses of a ruined and abandoned Greek landscape ('No breath of air to break the wave/That rolls below the Athenian's grave': ll. 1-2) and punctuated by traumatic flashbacks of the beloved Laila's punitive drowning by her jilted Ottoman husband Hassan:

> I gaz'd, till vanishing from view,
> Like lessening pebble it withdrew;
> Still less and less, a speck of white
> That gemm'd the tide, then mock'd the sight. (*The Giaour*: ll. 380–83)

Different voices in the disjointed poem, which supposedly the poet overheard 'by accident recited by one of the coffee-house story tellers who abound in the Levant', accentuate the confusion of trauma and multiplicity of perspective (McGann 1968: 143). But it becomes apparent that the Venetian lover, the Giaour, accepts his responsibility for Laila's destruction, punished as she was for their love, and acknowledges his similarity with Hassan whom he has subsequently killed ('Yet did he but what I had done/Had she been false to more than one': ll. 1062–63). Cursed by Hassan's bereaved family to vampiric eternity, the Giaour's relationship to the land and its people is marked simultaneously by guilt, spiritual hunger, self-disgust and defiance, his memory of his total, passionate possession of Laila's Greek body haunting him still. This is classical reception as Gothic fetish, the conflict over Greece between imperial powers reconfigured as intimate vendetta.

Alongside the gendered theorization of intercultural encounter, Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' and the rise of nationalist conflict and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the 1990s led to a re-thinking of nationalism and the struggles for national liberation (Fukuyama 1992). Symptomized by the differing approaches of Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith, nationalism could be thought of either as a quintessentially modern phenomenon, reliant upon a strenuous effort of collective narrative and willed belief, resulting in an 'imagined political community' (Anderson, 1983: 5–6), or its origins could be traced back further in time, 'stemming from the mutual influence of "layers" of social and historical experience and the derivation of national phenomena from ethnic and territorial symbolism' to develop a hybrid old/new identity (Smith 1995: 6). Greece, in this context, was a great place to think these opposing ideas through theoretically. 'Greece provides a useful case study that sheds light on the processes through which nations are imaginatively engineered', Robert Shannan Peckham declared in *National Histories, Natural States* (Peckham 2001: ix). The philhellenes' demands for the Greeks' national liberation, inspired by the French revolutionary and Napoleonic ideas, were nevertheless 'sanctioned through claims to the inheritance of ancient Hellas' (Peckham 2001: xi). As Constanze Güthenke showed in *Placing Modern Greece* (2008), a landscape of old

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classical traces—the ruins of temples, the sites of classical battles—was mobilized for the new Romantic ideology of incompletion and liberation (Güthenke 2008: 6 and passim). When Byron crossed the frontier of Albania's coastline, he entered a simultaneously Oriental and Occidental sphere, which offered the traveller 'synchronic histories' (Makdisi 1998: 127). On the one hand, the land represented the origin of western Europe's cultural heritage. On the other, it offered an exotic, alluring escape from western modernity. In juxtaposing Illyria (or Epirus) with Attica (or Athens), Byron provocatively allowed the competing mythical places associated with Shakespeare's comedies and Sophocles' tragedies to jostle together with the rubble of material culture in the reader's imagination, disturbing ingrained clichéd assumptions with gentle irony and self-declared limitation: 'scarce noticed', 'rarely seen', 'know not', 'fails . . . to match'.

> From the dark barriers of that rugged clime,
> Ev'n to the centre of Illyria's vales,
> Childe Harold pass'd o'er many a mountain sublime,
> Through lands scarce noticed in historic tales;
> Yet in famed Attica such lovely dales
> Are rarely seen; nor can fair Tempe boast
> A charm they know not; loved Parnassus fails,
> Though classic ground and consecrated most,
> To match some spots that lurk within this lowering coast.
>
> (*Childe Harold* II. 406-414).

Benedict Anderson had pointed out the paradox of nationalism, namely that it is afforded universal validity even while it manifests itself with 'irremediable particularity'. The emergence of Greece in the early nineteenth century highlighted the false binary in this paradox, since the new nation was both dependent upon enlightenment, cosmopolitan ideas of liberty and yet derived its inspiration from a culture which was supposedly both ancient and unique. Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *Ode to Liberty* illuminates this contradiction well. In the poem, the spirit of ancient Hellas is figured as a flame which is passed on from culture to culture through history like fiery beacons. To coin Heraclitus, you cannot put your hand into the same flame twice! The national spirit of 'Hellas' is shared universally, inspiring later revolutions, and yet it also flourished at a particular time and place, and now it is withered and 'wrinkled' by the ages:

> Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
>   Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
> Immovably unquiet, and for ever
>   It trembles, but it cannot pass away!
> The voices of its bards and sages thunder

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With an earth-awakening blast
Through the caverns of the past. (*Ode to Liberty*: ll. 76–82).

The progressive nature of national liberation, which appeared to sustain philhellenic rhetoric, has come under renewed scrutiny over the past decade, in the era of Brexit and what is commonly known as the Greek crisis. What is the political implication of nationalism under globalization? In the debate over Britain's or Greece's relationship with the European Union, those in favour of leaving the EU and regaining national 'sovereignty' came from both the far right and the far left. This contemporary context has prompted us to think again about the arguments and ideologies at play in the 1820s as more and more Western Europeans lent support to the Greek revolutionary war. What did it mean to construct a rhetoric of indebtedness to the Greeks and how can we relate that to the burden of debt owed by Greece to its EU creditors today? (Hanink 2017). We might even want to think about what is at stake in drawing these analogies between Greece's freedom in 1821 and in 2021. Some might say that the shared sovereignty of a federal European Union, with its high standards in human rights and the rule of law, is very different from the autocratic Ottoman Empire, particularly as portrayed by the lurid accounts of Hobhouse, Holland or Byron. But recent publications have painted a very different picture of the 'religious, ethnic, social and linguistic diversity of the Ottoman empire' (Fleming 1999: 26) or even its supposedly cosmopolitan, tolerant way of life (Mazower 2004; Mansel 2011). In this regard, the 'divine work' of Athens, 'gleam[ing] with its crest of columns, on the will/Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set', might appear a conservative retreat to a homogenous, religiously-inflected and ethnically 'pure' culture from the multi-ethnic 'corruption' of a globalized, multilateral social body (*Ode on Liberty*: ll. 69-71).

But, of course, Greece was never 'pure', diamantine or marble, gleaming and glistening through the ages, and in the last couple of decades scholars have wanted to press this invention of the nation in the 1820s and 1830s still further. There is a growing appreciation of the hybridity of Hellas. The degree to which writers of the early nineteenth century portrayed Greek culture not only as the origins of western civilization but also as exotically oriental and seductively different has been the source of critical discussion for some time (Aske 24-32; Wallace 1997: 114–47). As the travel writer William Gell noted in 1810:

> There is no country which offers an opportunity of witnessing and comparing with so much ease the opposite customs of Europe and Asia: or of changing the scene with such rapidity: for when the classic traveller is satisfied with the simplicity of the heroic ages in the mountains of Arcadia, he may descend in the course of one hour into the plain, and, drinking coffee in a cup set with rubies, realise the splendid visions of the Arabian Nights in the court of the Pacha of Tripolizza (Gell 1810: ii–iii, quoted in Wallace 1997: 128–9).

In Greece it was possible to experience the 'overlap' of two imagined cultures, Arcadia and the Arabian Nights, and thus to think about the act of such mythmaking

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itself, highlighted by this encounter. 'A landscape such as that of modern Greece . . . is thus especially suited to induce (and in turn mirror) reflection in its observer and the artist representing it . . . The "Greek cause" was thus essentially always the cause of the spectator' (Güthenke 2008: 32). But recently scholars have been considering not only the orientalism in nineteenth-century travel accounts, but what might be considered the orientalizing of the academic study of philhellenism itself. Note, for example, Penelope Papailias: 'It is not surprising that Philhellenism, with its gushing praises for the Greeks, was taken literally and has proved difficult to recognise as a kind of Orientalism (or Balkanism)' (Papailias 2005: 28). Drawing upon Greek sources as well as Western, and 'dig[ging] into archives', Constanze Güthenke and Gonda van Steen have led the way for western scholars to 'redraw the outlines of mutually dependent Orientalism and Hellenism, imperialism and nationalism' and to 'bring differentiation and heterogeneity—or much needed corrections—to the tendency to homogenise Oriental lands into an inert mass' (Van Steen 2010: 4). The study of Orientalism needs to be afforded more equal weight with the study of Hellenism when it comes to thinking about the development of the discipline of Classics in the early nineteenth century. We need to acknowledge the ideologically driven separation between the two 'sibling' disciplines as philhellenes shored up the boundaries of their imaginative geographies, 'remodel[ing] their rooms and lock[ing] the doors' (Marchand 2012: 167). Such re-calibration is having a significant effect on the way the 'emerging modern Greek nation' is thought about critically (Grammatikos 2018).

Papailias's 'Orientalism (or Balkanism)' points importantly to the intercultural hybridity encountered at all of Greece's borders — east, west, north, and indeed south — and its effects in de- stabilizing (or shoring up) the nation's identity and history. The boundaries of the ancient Greek world span at least as far as, if not beyond, Sicily and southern Italy (or Magna Graecia) in the west, Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria in the north, Turkey, Cyprus and the Levant in the East, and, with Alexandria, Egypt in the south. Recent books on reviving Greek tragedy both in the west (southern Italy) and in the east (in the Crimea) and on the continuing legacy of Cleopatra in Egypt highlight the issue of the geographical range of Hellenic culture and raise the question of the very definition of Greekness (Bosher 2016; Hall 2013; Stothard 2013). Continuing work on the archaeology and cultures of the many Greek islands in the Eastern Mediterranean discloses a history of migration and diversity of populations (Christophilopoulou 2021). These geopolitical and historical pressures upon the Greek sense of national identity challenged a clearcut rhetoric of distinctiveness or sovereignty, and yet they also provoked the strenuous efforts to invent just such a collective myth of antiquity and belonging. The borders became both sites of intercultural encounter, the 'contact zones' referred to by Grammatikos, citing Mary Louise Pratt (Pratt 2007: 7), and yet also defensive boundaries, aggressively guarding Greek from non-Greek. The mobilization of Macedonian archaeology in the border dispute with what has now become Northern Macedonia is an interesting test case in this regard. The excavation of Phillip II's tomb at Vergina, and the development of

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museum displays there and in Thessaloniki, have been entangled with the national need to claim Macedonia as Greek, to emphasise its antiquity and to forge its distinctiveness from the Republic of North Macedonia, ever since the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s led to the nationalist awakening in the Balkans.

The borders of Greece, then, are Janus-faced, to draw on Homi Bhabha's term, looking inwards to defend what is perceived as ancient Hellenic culture and its legacy and at the same time looking outwards to interrogate just such distinctions of heritage and ideology (Bhabha 1990: 1–3). In a similar way, the canonical non-Greek voices of philhellenism such as Byron and Shelley continue to be cited, by both non-scholarly and scholarly writers (such as Muse 2010: 142), as unreflective advocates of the Romantic discourse despite the fact that critics have published extensive studies showing how far they questioned it (Wallace 1997: 178–205; Ferris 2000: 108–33; Grammatikos 2018 105–25). We have already indicated earlier Byron's ironic destabilization of cliché in *Childe Harold* II and *The Giaour*. The quotation from the preface to Shelley's *Hellas*, 'We are all Greeks — our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece', has been cited repeatedly out of context as the primary articulation of uncritical Romantic Hellenism, and certainly the work has been termed 'one of the greatest propaganda pieces of the war' (Wallace 1997: 198). But that propaganda contains its own self-critique and is far from a 'mere repetition of a ready-made history' (Ferris 2000: 110). The implications of the fact that the subsequent 'drama (if drama it must be called)' is modelled on Aeschylus's *Persians* must be reflected on further. While *The Persians* was staged in both ancient and modern Greek by revolutionaries in Constantinople to ferment rebellious zeal in the hearts of Greeks living under the Ottomans, 'glorifying revolutionary violence as purifying and empowering force' (Van Steen 2010: 123), the ambiguities inherent in the original Aeschylean play — the divisions between allies and enemies, the blurred distinctions between history and prophecy, past, present and future — inform the nuanced uncertainties of Shelley's own text. Alexander Grammatikos has looked again at the 'philhellenic' choruses of captive Greek women and shown that, while they appeal to Britons opposed to Greek liberation, they 'come to learn that ancient paganism is discordant with their Christianity and that the myths of the past are rooted in a legacy of violence' (Grammatikos 2018: 108). Shelley registered a scepticism about the supposedly ideal ethics of the ancient Greeks which were also suggested in Aeschylus's original play. Wallace bucked the critical trend by looking not only at the choruses of *Hellas* but also the main protagonist of the drama, the Turkish Sultan Mahmud. Mahmud invokes Shakespeare's Macbeth as much as he does Aeschylus's Xerxes, generating sympathy by his tortured consciousness in victory and defeat: 'Tomorrow and tomorrow are as lamps/Set in our path to light us to the edge' (*Hellas*, ll. 644-5). Wallace showed how Shelley's poetic drama mingled various sources and registers in order to complicate allegiances and identities and to allow the 'dynamics of tragic drama [to] blur and deny ... definitions' (Wallace 1997: 204). Aeschylus is thus both co-opted and displaced in the dialogue with the past, lending

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an extra dimension to the drama's final lines: 'The world is weary of the past/O might it die or rest at last!' (*Hellas*, ll. 1100–1101).

Meanwhile scholarship has now attempted to broaden beyond the canon to look at more marginal philhellenic voices. Besides the more well-known work of Felicia Hemans and Laetitia Elizabeth Landon (L.E.L.), Noah Comet has unearthed fascinating details in nineteenth century women's magazines like *Lady's Monthly Museum* which combined poems and reports about both ancient and modern Greek women and suggested, in *Romantic Hellenism and Women Writers* (2013), that 'the exigencies of Greek independence were far greater than anticipated, since the most disastrous consequence of slavery—the corruption of female virtue—had already occurred' (Comet 2013: 41). Grammatikos rightly points out the classic orientalism behind just this kind of rhetoric (107–8) and draws our attention to some less well-known texts — Catherine Grace Godwin's novel *Reine Canziani* (1825), Hemans' 'The Bride of the Greek Isle' (1828), Tertius Kendrick's *The Travellers* (1825), and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) — to explore the interrogation of philhellenism's assumptions as the war progressed. Other Philhellenic dramas besides Shelley's *Hellas*, such as Nikolaos Pikkolos's *The Death Of Demosthenes* and John Howard Payne's *Ali Pacha*, are being recovered and analysed (Muse 2010; see also Muse's list of other plays in London, New York and Paris which 'promoted a discourse on freedom': Muse 2010: 140). These discoveries of forgotten texts are most welcome, and further research needs to be done in this area. We need a richer cultural history of the decade: the novels, poetry, drama, sketches, and magazine reports that might have made a contribution to the growing support for the Greek liberation movement and the emerging nation based upon the philhellenic invocation of an ancient classical heritage. The female contributions to London-based annuals and giftbooks, which were aimed at women readers, particularly call for further investigation (see, for example, Wallace 2011). But were these voices, now being unearthed again, necessarily more questioning? In many cases, it seems that the 'marginal' voices in the West were often more unquestioningly philhellenic, perpetuating the myth and commercializing it, than the more prominent literary writers such as Byron and Shelley.

Hellenes claiming their hellenic heritage

While the previous section of this review essay focused on scholarship on Western classical reception and Philhellenism, this section surveys scholarly books on Greek classical reception around the time of the Revolution, that is, on the ways people calling themselves 'Hellenes' claimed and negotiated their Hellenic heritage. Though there is no monograph on this subject, the books discussed here have all made a substantive contribution to the scholarly study of Greek classical reception in the period between 1795 and 1835. We do not consider books published, or published first, in Greek, such as the important work of Paschalis Kitromilides, since these deserve a separate survey. The survey shows that Modern Greek Studies has been a laboratory for thinking about classical reception in a transnational and postcolonial context.

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During most of the twentieth century, relations between ancient and modern Greek culture were understood by Greek scholars as part of the lapidary 'classical tradition,' and studied in terms of influence and continuity. Traces of antiquity in folk laments, village architecture, folk customs like 'fire walking', poems by Cavafy and Odysseus Elytis, and modernist paintings by Yannis Tsarouchis and Nikos Engonopoulos were said to testify to the diachronic survival and synchronic unity of national tradition. This critical approach observed the standards of humanistic scholarship and was also addressed to the cultivated Greek audience, confirming its pride in its supposed homogeneous ethnic identity. The interpretation of Greece's classical tradition complemented an imagined exceptionalism based on purity and continuity which dominated Greek academic historiography (of language, nation, art, culture etc.) from the 1860s onwards.

This prevailing view began to change in the 1980s, first within Modern Greek Studies, as post-structuralism challenged the assumptions of the human and the social sciences. The epicentre of the change was a group of British, American, and Greek scholars of literature and culture affiliated with the School of Hellenic and Roman Studies at the University of Birmingham who drew inspiration from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies flourishing then on the same campus as well as other postcolonial directions in critical theory noted earlier in this article. Many of these scholars collaborated in the path-breaking volume *The Text and Its Margins* (1985), co-edited by Margaret Alexiou and Vassilis Lambropoulos, which, because of its radical intervention (and red cover), became known as 'the Little Red Book of Modern Greek'. The volume did not challenge the study of the classical tradition directly but made it possible to rethink it by questioning the limits of the text, the role of the reader, the canon of literature as well as dominant notions of Greekness. The editors identified classicism, belletrism, and empiricism as central issues: 'Three major deficiencies attracted our attention: first, the negative influence of philology, or "the dead hand of classicism," prevalent among so many scholars who have arrived at modern Greek literature from the discipline of the classics; second, the biographical impressionism and romantic dilettantism in so many approaches to Greek authors and texts; third, an almost total disregard for discussing and defining critical approaches' (Alexiou and Lambropoulos 1985: 7–8). Contributors to the volume deployed deconstructive close reading and the interdisciplinary study of power in cultural practices to analyse the construction of Greek identity through the canonization of literary history, the poetic rhetoric of George Seferis, the discourse of nationalistic demoticism, views of nymphomania in folklore analysis, and the performance of verse duelling. The Alexiou and Lambropoulos project placed itself at the juncture of post-classicism, post-structuralism, and postcolonialism.

Two other books from the same decade, both by contributors to the above volume, offered genealogies of the discursive invention of a Hellenic tradition. In *Ours Once More* (1982), Michael Herzfeld pioneered the study of Greek scholarship by exploring how, in the early years of independence, folklore 'addressed what were perhaps

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the most sensitive aspects of national identity, and its political implications were widely recognized' (Herzfeld 1982: 7). His was the first English-language systematic study of modern Greek literature and culture and its invention of antiquity. It was also the first book to argue that contemporary Greece was not inherited, liberated, or resurrected but simply made through the collaboration of several human and social sciences (such as linguistics, philology, history, archaeology, geography) which were mobilized to produce a holistic image of an exemplary nation state. Vassilis Lambropoulos continued this vein of investigation in *Literature as National Institution* (1988) by discussing the politics of criticism involved in the creation and transmission of a canonical literary tradition. His was a book 'about the institutionality of literary criticism—literary criticism as a cultural and national institution with its own sites, mechanisms and jurisdiction, which produces, safeguards, and propagates the truth of literature' (Lambropoulos 1988: 4). Starting in the late eighteenth century — he argued — Greek-speaking Christian Orthodox imperial subjects felt 'under immense external pressure to respond adequately to the inflated expectations . . . of European and American romanticism which, from Goethe to Beethoven and from Shelley to Delacroix, needed to affirm and satisfy its classical yearnings. This pressure to be true Hellenes was presented to the Greeks as their only way or chance to define an acceptable identity and justify their political claims' (8). Intellectuals in the West were already looking into contemporary Greek folk songs for signs of a lingering spiritual vitality so Greek writers, such as Athanasios Christopoulos in his Anacreontic verses, Andreas Kalvos in his Pindaric odes, Dionysios Solomos in his Homeric vision, and Spyridon Zambelios in his tragedy *Achilles*, began 'showing that the ancient spirit was still alive and flourishing, . . . reading and writing in the glorious shadows of Homer, Aeschylus, Thucydides, and Plato. The unparalleled models were still there, but were their inheritors worthy of that treasure?' (8). By questioning the hermeneutics of influence and intertextuality in the formation of the literary canon, the book raised questions of reception in Greek tradition.

Instead of taking some form of Greek cohesion and constancy for granted, the books by Herzfeld and Lambropoulos opened up a terrain for the study of the role of classicism in the production of modern Greeks (see, for example, Tziovas 2014). Should living Greeks be self-defined as *Romioi*, *Graikoi*, Orthodox Christians, subjects of empires, Hellenes, or something else? How many Hellenisms were there? (Zacharia 2008). According to Gregory Jusdanis in *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (1991), the Greek-speaking Orthodox merchant and intellectual elites began to tilt away from the Ottoman and Russian empires in the late eighteenth century toward a modern nation state, using Hellenization as a form of modernizing cultural engineering. 'The Greek modernizers based their nation upon the originary myth of the West. More than any other ethnic community (apart from the Jews) Greeks could demonstrate that they were European and conversely that the Europeans were really Greek' (Jusdanis 1991: 28). The more conservative among them 'regarded ancient Greek as a path to classical Greece and to a rebirth of its civilization. By returning to an uncorrupted form of the ancient

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language, they believed the Greek people would once again assume their rightful place in Europe, a position worthy of their illustrious ancestors' (43). Literature circulating in domains of public culture such as salons, cultural magazines, literary societies, and poetry competitions played a decisive role in the formation of national identity. Furthermore, Jusdanis suggested that, instead of seeking greater recognition through its classical connections, the field of Modern Greek can take advantage of its peripheral academic status and operate as a 'minor' (Deleuze/Guattari), questioning the reign of western scholarship: 'From the margins of Europe it can activate the critical potential of culture to deterritorialize the integrative tendencies of criticism, deny its authority to represent others, and question is universalist strategies' (12). Modern Greek scholarship was mature enough to reflect on its own status and role at a time of a major reconfiguration of the humanities.

Besides rethinking the development of the literary canon and institutions of literature and culture, scholars of Modern Greek studies over the past 25 years have been reconsidering the imaginary space of the nation (see Beaton and Ricks 2009). 'In the modern period, Hellenism has been an ideal for Europeans and Greeks alike', Artemis Leontis declared in *Topographies of Hellenism* (1995). 'Greeks have used Hellenism sometimes to their advantage, though they have also faltered under its weight. It does not seem tenable to suggest that without Western Hellenism there would be no Greek state, yet one could argue that without Hellenism there would be no Neohellenism' (Leontis 1995: 13). Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Leontis offered a topological analysis of the literary mapping of Hellas, comparing the topographies of foreign travellers, scholars, and diplomats, on the one hand, and Greek poets, novelists, and intellectuals, on the other. She studied the contrapuntal relationship of two classical receptions, Western Hellenism (regimes of territorialization) and Neohellenism (strategies of reterritorialization), showing how the Greek construction of modern Greece itself was a grandiose project of classical reception. People who identified as Greek repurposed the land and its ruins as well as the monuments of Philhellenism to build not only the first liberated nation-state but also a new Hellenic world, an imaginary Hellas for the moderns. Neohellenism as 'the *textualized* thoughts of the nation's dreamwork' was further explored by Stathis Gourgouris in *Dream Nation* (1996), drawing on Sigmund Freud and Greek-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis. Modern Greece, as an 'imaginary territory (which may or may not correspond to its actual political and geographical boundaries)', could not be confined to 'the sum of those texts, discourses, or, more generally, cultural practices that account for its historical record', he maintained. Greece 'is something more, something else. Or, simultaneously with its being *there* (*in* history, *in* geography—*in* a narrative), it *is* elsewhere' (Gourgouris 1996: 31). Gourgouris argued that Philhellenism colonized antiquity in a way that made it impossible for the nativist search for an independent discourse to disengage itself from the desire for an irretrievable ancestry (152). There was a 'foundational complicity' (Gourgouris 4) between Philhellenism, Enlightenment, and Orientalism.

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A close topological reading of the map *Charta of Greece* by Rhigas Feraios, printed in Vienna in 1797, illuminates the interplay of the Philhellenic ideal and the indigenous life world and Greece's transition from a polyethnic empire to a nation state. 'The entity "Greece," as represented in this map, is a palimpsest of what was, loosely defined, as "Greek," a "wider Greece," if not necessarily Greece at a definite point in time. It is also an architectural plan for what will be Greece', Vangelis Calotychos commented in *Modern Greece: A Cultural Poetics* (2003). 'The map, with its inclusion of territories as far north as the Danube and as far east as Asia Minor (but not Cyprus), is primarily an imaginary projection that precedes, and seeks the engendering of, such a territory. So which "Greece" is represented here?' (Calotychos 2003: 26). With its allusions to the classical past and its ideals, the map was indebted to the narratives of philhellenes and Greeks of the diaspora, inspired by the Enlightenment and the liberal philosophy of the American and French Revolutions. Calotychos called this mode of mapping Greece and the Greeks a 'discourse of ab-sense' which 'denied presence, immediacy, and specificity to the modern Greeks'. The materiality and specificity of the Greeks' customs and beliefs were erased under the pressure of Europe's obsession with ancient Greece, and consequently 'Greek modernity is crowded out by such imaginings' (47). This was an example of 'self-colonization', internalizing the ideology of Hellenism, which the Greeks perceived as 'both foreign and native, both Other and the Same', and producing 'a poetics of insecurity in the citizens of that new nation-state as well as produced resistances to it' (52). This is a major case of turning classical reception into a lived reality of self-fashioning.

Athens was proclaimed the new capital of Hellas in 1833, as we noted earlier, and scholars of Modern Greek studies have reflected on the role of archaeology, historical memory and civic architecture in forging modern identity. The Acropolis, of course, lay at the centre of this project, a monument important not only to the nation but also to the world. Greeks had to reconcile both global constructions and local understandings of its significance. As Anthony Kaldellis argued in his exploration of post-antique Hellenism, *The Christian Parthenon* (2009), the radiance of the temple, the landscape of the city, and local memory contributed to the emergence of Athenian attitudes in which the classical past was re-inscribed in the framework of a Christian universe. (See also Kaldellis 2007). The Parthenon became a powerful symbol of the nation's sense of itself, a 'vehicle of agency' as Elena Yalouri has put it. But what happens, she wonders in *The Acropolis: Global Fame, Local Claim* (2001), as the large numbers of immigrants, who have been arriving in Greece since the 1980s, make its society manifestly multicultural? 'Will the Acropolis be flexible enough to accommodate these other cultures under its roof or will it become a representation of a certain group of Greeks who perceive themselves as the "real" ones? Will the second generation of these new cultures somehow internalize and adopt the Acropolis or will they attempt to dismiss it totally?' (Yalouri 2001: 196). Recent trends in music, film, literature, and street art provide ample material to address these questions. Meanwhile the streets around the Acropolis, 'the elaborate planning and civic architecture of nineteenth-century Athens, although initiated by foreign-trained architects,

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reflected not only international neoclassical ideals but also the aspirations of the modern Greek nation' (Bastéa 2000: 1). Inheriting a small town in ruins, unfit to be a European capital, the new Greek government commissioned a city plan from the German architect Eduard Schaubert and the Greek architect Stamatios Kleanthis, who had studied in Berlin together. The plan they produced was neoclassical, a German take on an imagined classical ideal, but 'naturalized' by its local setting. 'As the plan became a reality', Bastéa has argued in *The Creation of Modern Athens* (2000), 'it came to be owned by the Greek population, just as the buildings of colonial legacies are slowly domesticated by the local population, enter the native vernacular, and become inseparable from it' (Bastéa 2000: 118). Under perpetual construction since the establishment of the independent state, Athens has been arguably the most concentrated project of classical reception and restoration. Its neoclassical architecture, introduced by the Bavarian court, 'celebrated the return of ancient Greek architecture to the country of its birth and provided a visual link between Athens and the other European cities that the new capital sought to emulate' (Bastéa 2000: 147).

A postcolonial approach to classical reception has also informed Modern Greek scholarship on archaeology and national heritage, beyond Athens, in recent years. In *The Nation and Its Ruins* (2007), Yannis Hamilakis noted that the late eighteenth century witnessed the Hellenization of a new, Orthodox and multi-ethnic social class which 'became known as Greek to itself and to others. It soon developed links with the western European middle classes, adopted some of their lifestyles, and came into contact with classicism and western Hellenism, one of the dominant ideologies amongst the upper and middle classes of western Europe, and a cornerstone of the European Enlightenment. This led them to "rediscover" their classical heritage and portray themselves to themselves and to others as the heirs of that heritage' (75–6). By adopting the ideal of Hellenism, they established classical antiquity as the symbolic capital for the new Greece and reclaimed its heritage. As a consequence, 'the relationship between modern Greeks and the classical heritage was defined by a sense of dual responsibility: a responsibility to prove to the classical Greeks that their modern descendants were worthy of them; and a responsibility towards the western Europeans to be worthy and able stewards of that heritage' (82). Drawing on the new materialism and affect studies, Hamilakis explored the tension between antiquity and daily life: 'The national *topos* structured and defined by antiquities had to be purified and cleansed, re-created, demarcated, and its material truths exhibited. Antiquities were thus separated from the web of daily life; they became the archaeological record, to be gazed at, admired, endlessly reproduced' (122). With the emergence of classical antiquity, the archaeological and the national were fused (120) in the monumental historicity of Greece which eclipsed its nineteenth-century socio-historical context (103; see also Damaskos and Plantzos 2008; Voutsaki and Cartledge 2017).

Archaeological protection actually started in Greece during the last years of Ottoman rule. The first Archaeological Museum was founded in 1829; early efforts to control illegal excavations and the export of antiquities under the first

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archaeological law followed in 1834. At the same time work began restoring and rebuilding ancient monuments on the Acropolis. But, as Argyro Loukaki has shown in *Living Ruins, Value Conflicts* (2008), classical heritage protection brought up areas of conflict generated by tensions between (western) ancient monument and (indigenous) modern ruin. Greeks felt the responsibility to 'preserve and enhance urban palimpsests, monuments and ruins' and yet also to develop a 'modern aesthetic' (Loukaki 2008: 3). Reflecting upon the well-established dialectic between universal claims and regional rights in the self-fashioning of the nation (Yalouri 2001; Bastéa 2000; Hamilakis 2007), Loukaki traced in literature, architecture and landscape-design 'a particular Greek aesthetic in restorations' (Loukaki 2008: 9).

Just as scholars of Western philhellenism have been focusing in recent years on the borders of Hellas, so Modern Greek scholars have also started looking at the hybrid cultures at its boundaries. Whether the focus is on Greek intellectual communities in Constantinople (Van Steen) or the post-Venetian Adriatic poly-ethnic, multilingual intellectual milieu on the border between Italy and Greece (Zanou), the effect is to turn the 'gaze away from the one, all-encompassing "Neohellenic Enlightenment" scheme to the multiple Greek and Mediterranean Enlightenments formed on the verge of the modern world' (Zanou 2019: 200). As both the Venetian and Ottoman empires collapsed, intellectuals and politicians tried to 'reinvent themselves in times of perpetual crisis and change', confronted with 'the emerging vocabulary of nationalism, much of which they themselves had forged' (Zanou 2019: 1). As Zanou shows in *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean* (2019), '"Being Greek" became fashionable everywhere in philhellenic Europe' (139). Many intellectuals with a dual Greco-Italian consciousness asked themselves who they really were: 'An Italian Philhellene or a diaspora Greek?' (133). The figures that Zanou discusses share 'one basic feature, namely, transnational patriotism—loyalties suspended between or across Venice, Italy, the Ionian Islands, Greece, and the Russian, British, and Ottoman empires—accompanied at the same time by a constant, nagging feeling of estrangement from these patriotisms and a sense of being "away" and "outside"' (6). These Romantics never belonged. They remained homeless throughout their lives. They perceived 'the revolution and their new Greek homeland through the eyes of Italian philhellenism' and, in the case of the Greek and especially the Ionian diasporas, a 'new national consciousness was constructed around absence, exile, and estrangement' (133). Hence their 'feeling of estrangement from these patriotisms and their sense of incompletion and defeat' (63) and their 'stammering between languages' (59) and identities.

In contrast, in the East, identities were forged and 'performed' more sharply, accelerated by the urgency of the liberation struggle. As mentioned earlier in this article, the staged reading of Aeschylus's *Persians* in Constantinople in 1820 became a test case for the fashion for performing Hellenism, small in scale but grand in symbolism. The play was transformed 'from a tragedy into a hymn to Greece and its ideals, and it mediated images of Greek ancestry, tradition, and authenticity' (Van Steen 2010: 68). In *Liberating Hellenism from the Ottoman Empire* (2010), Van Steen

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shows that, through the *Persians* performance, they were able to adopt 'not only a political pose, but also a style of profound intellectual, ideological, and strategic mastery of their cultural and other—exploitable—resources, which would allow them to overcome Oriental oppression' (154). On the other hand, Comte de Marcellus, the French diplomat and Philhellene who attended the performance and wrote about it, a year later presented the revolution as 'the rebirth of tragedy, Greek nationhood, and Greek classical conscience' (69). This was the same Comte who also transported the Venus de Milo back to Paris and took it upon himself to speak for the Greeks. He 'relegated the modern Hellenes to a semitheatrical existence, and he placed Greece under the pressure to perform itself' (169). So Marcellus's conduct captured a general colonizing attitude. And yet the local Greeks in Constantinople 'used the play, not to resist western colonialist interests, but to appropriate what these colonialist interests had to offer to them—to "colonize the ideal" for themselves' (154). This one episode, read from all perspectives by Gonda Van Steen, allowed her usefully to 'document, interrogate, and deconstruct the imperialist dominance that underpinned France's interaction with classical and modern Greece' and thus to critique the Philhellenism, Orientalism, imperialism, and colonialism permeating the 1821 uprising.

The authored books surveyed above on classical reception by Greeks around the time of the Revolution share four major characteristics. First, they agree that, instead of engaging with the Western idea of Hellas to create a western-style nation-state, Greek-speaking Christian Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire might have taken other political paths, such as continuing to function within the Empire but in a more dominant capacity by overtaking its administration or alternatively establishing a multi-ethnic state. Secondly, they question basic dualisms of traditional intellectual history, such as empire and nation, East and West, centre and periphery, tradition and modernity, religion and the Enlightenment. Thirdly, they articulate an explicit methodological awareness that interrogates the humanistic assumptions of diachronic Greek studies and enables them to converse with other fields and disciplines. Fourthly, they move in the broad domain of cultural studies, taking a radically inclusive view of modern Hellenism and its Greeks. As we have seen, scholars have been looking at different ways in which modern Greece was made. Using their own terminology, their approaches may be called collecting the nation (Herzfeld 1982), 'canonizing' the nation (Lambropoulos 1988), 'aestheticizing' the nation (Jusdanis 1991), 'mapping the homeland' (Leontis 1995), 'dreaming the nation' (Gourgouris 1996), 'self-colonizing' the nation (Calotychos 2003), 'planning the nation' (Bastéa 2000), localizing the nation (Yalouri 2001), archaeologizing the nation (Hamilakis 2007), curating the nation (Loukaki 2008), 'performing' the nation (van Steen 2021), and 'stammering the nation' (Zanou 2019). This is an impressive range of approaches that interrogates both nationalism and Hellenism while conversing with revisionary Byzantine, Ottoman, Mediterranean, and postcolonial studies. (See also Mitsi and Muse 2013). Such approaches appear in rigorous close readings of Rhigas Feraios' map *Charta of Greece* (1797) by Calotychos, Adamantios Korais's 'Report on the

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Present State of Civilization in Greece' (1803) by Gourgouris, the Kleanthes-Schaubert plan for Athens (1832) by Bastéa, the rebuilding of the Temple of Athena Nike (1835-36) by Hamilakis, and Iakovos Polylas' 'Prolegomena' to the first edition of Dionysios Solomos (1859) by Lambropoulos.

Starting already in the 1830s, Western Hellenism silenced the living Greeks to make sure that they could not contaminate classic ideals (Lambropoulos 1993: 24–78). With very few exceptions, its major advocates believed that any modern enthusiastic philhellene could become classical except the modern Greeks. During most of the twentieth century, the ancients were understood in similar terms set by thinkers like Lukács, Benjamin, Arendt, Strauss, Levinas, and Agamben. These philosophers considered a Greek to be a subject of contention with Hegel or Heidegger rather than a living human being (despite all the Greeks they had met in major metropolitan centres). It is very encouraging that during this century mainstream classical reception studies has shown an increasing interest in the Greeks of modernity, exposing the mechanisms of racialization and temporalization operating in classicizing regimes.

The 1821 commemorations and the present moment

What, then, are we commemorating in 2021? Myths take a long time to die. New ideas and research-led discoveries take many years to filter into the public consciousness. The popular imagination of a nation's origins, based upon cultural heritage, archaeological sites and the stories we tell ourselves, may not be dented easily by critique in the academy. In Israel, for example, archaeologists have long proved the absence of material evidence for the Exodus and are now questioning the historical basis for Solomon's first temple in Jerusalem, and yet the founding myth of the nation — Jewish exceptionalism, the supposed God-given right of the nation of Israel to the Temple Mount and Jerusalem as its capital — continues to be repeated fervently by politicians and the public with crucial geopolitical repercussions (Finkelstein 2001; Abu El-Haj 2001; Wallace 2006). The comparable case of the idea of Greece, forged in the narrative of ancient Greek exceptionalism and the ideology of its 'haunted, holy ground' (Byron 1970), might seem similarly to lag behind the last five decades of scholarship both domestically and abroad. Indeed the ongoing work of Yannis Hamilakis and Rafael Greenberg specifically makes the comparison between Greece and Israel, investigating the shared origins of Classical and Holy Land archaeology as the 'ground zero' of European modernity (Hamilakis and Greenberg 2021).

Moreover, anniversary commemorations are as much about the present moment as the past, if not more so. As Gonda Van Steen has described, each of the previous major anniversaries of the Greek Revolution, in 1871, 1921, and 1971, have occurred during periods of crisis and have utilized a normative ideology of 'authentic' progression from antiquity to the present moment in order to draw the nation together and instil a patriotic spirit and resilience in the young (Van Steen 2021). 'Classicising statues and mass pageantry' have been strenuously co-opted for the Greek state's

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performative 'use of history', precisely when the nation's self-belief and foreign and domestic policy have been most under pressure, whether that be in the irredentist years of the early 1920s or the repressive years of the Junta. It is striking that 2021 occurs at a time when Greece is facing a quadruple crisis: the continuing financial crisis, the refugee crisis, increasing tensions with Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean, and the Covid crisis. Commemorations of the Greek Revolution and any celebration of its supposed origins in classical antiquity have necessarily been inflected by those critical concerns. Videotaped messages from world leaders, for example, sent for the Independence Day celebrations on March 25th, linked comments about the international debt to ancient Athenian democracy to an ongoing commitment to stand by Greece in any provocation from Turkey. Prior to this, delegations of the Greece 2021 commemorative committee travelled to some of the remotest islands of the nation to remind them of the upcoming jubilee and its implication for their sense of patriotism and political resilience. On one such visit, for example, Paschalis Kitromilides, a member of the committee, stressed that the island of Kastellorizo is 'not only the endpoint of the Greek domain but also an islet on which a part of the Hellenism of Asia Minor survives in its ancestral homeland'. (*Greece 2021*).

But the stated aims of the Greece 2021 commemorative committee allude to both the future and the past, to both national developments and the global context, in their frame of reference. The public have been invited to contribute their own proposals for commemoration, their own examples of the Greek past, present and future which deserve to be remembered and celebrated. As our survey of scholarship has indicated, the multi-ethnic nature of Greek society now means that it potentially has the confidence to acknowledge the hybrid history of Hellas, the conflicted narratives of its foundation two hundred years ago and the faultlines in the supposed story of the continuity between antiquity and the present. In addition, the widespread popular acceptance among the young nowadays of the need to decolonize our history means that the postcolonial interpretations of philhellenism and classical reception should already be striking a chord more widely, beyond the academy. Maybe many in Greece and around the world now have a sophisticated theoretical grasp of what is at stake with the claim that 'antiquity won the war for the Greeks' (Tziovas 2021).

The 1821 anniversary celebrations are arguably being conducted as a debate or even as a competition among historical discourses for the authority to give the dominant account of the founding of modern Greece. Political, social, economic, and intellectual history, and different approaches within each one of them, use conferences, television programmes, lectures, interviews, and even access to party leadership to give power and influence to their account of the Revolution. Within this agonistic manifestation of the public humanities, Philhellenic and Greek classical reception are acknowledged and studied further but not problematized. On the other hand, outside the field of history and closer to the social sciences and cultural studies, continuities between Hellenism, Philhellenism, Neohellenism, and Classical Reception Studies are interrogated by the collective international project *Decolonize*

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Hellas, formed in response to the bicentennial of the Greek Revolution, which questions the very idea of Hellas. The 'nomadic platform' articulates its aims thus:

> "Hellas" as the West's construction of an idealized image of Ancient Greece has been central to shaping European modernity — as well as to legitimating the existence of a "Modern Greece." Classicism's values, aesthetics and evolutionary hierarchies have been used to justify Western superiority and rationalize European conquest and enslavement around the world. "Hellas," though, also encompasses the Christian and religious underpinnings of supposedly "secular" Western traditions and the diachronic use of Greece as a buffer zone, cultural frontier and bulwark between Christianity and Islam, East and West, capitalism and communism, "civilization" and "barbarism." To *Decolonize Hellas* thus means to expose the colonial genealogies fueling the orientalism, balkanism, xenophobia, racism, homophobia and sexism articulated in its name. By attending to the active reshaping of "Hellas" through emergent, emancipatory and creative forms of belonging, though, we also hope to inspire the activation and documentation of experiences and practices, memories and movements, genealogies and relations often marginalized, trivialized and rendered unnarratable in dominant memorial and interpretive frameworks, thus opening pathways to more inhabitable and inclusive futures.
>
> (*Decolonize Hellas*)

This radical project illustrates the capacity of classical reception studies to conduct work that explores the uses of 'colonialism' for the study of modern Greeks and at the same time decolonizes modern Hellenism. It will be interesting to see what will happen to the celebratory claims on the Revolution as they begin to merge with the commemoration of the 1922 Greek disastrous defeat in the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–22 which marked the end of the 'Great Idea' of Hellenism and the reterritorialization of several classicisms.

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