

## The Revival of the Greek Ideal and Philhellenism. A Perambulation

A frequent phenomenon in the history of languages, loans and “counter-loans” in the use of terms are of interest because they attest cultural contact and the influence that one culture may exert on another, whether these are cases of voluntary preference due to admiration and acknowledgement of superiority, or the result of conquest and long-term coexistence. Whatever the case, there are instances in which this phenomenon creates problems, since language, as a living organism, is not static: it receives, rejects, varies the charge of its terms, and so on.

These familiar ascertainments come increasingly and ever more persistently to mind when we observe the need that modern Western – and not only – languages had and have to draw upon Graeco-Roman Antiquity, a fact accepted over the centuries. As far as Latin is concerned, after the formation of the national languages in Europe this fact does not seem to have created negative problems. This does not apply, however, to the transformed, national Greek language, whose users are sometimes nonplussed when they come across in other European languages Greek words serving – as neologisms – their new needs, sometimes obliging the Greeks to construct new derivatives in order to render the meaning of a term which had already been established in the Modern Greek linguistic instrument.

The thoughts expressed here are prompted by the controversial term “philhellenism”, a term that is considered to have been born in the nineteenth century, the century of –isms, and which was ascribed to a specific but complex movement which we could say has not yet found its final definition; perhaps because the term “philhellenism” is used today, most probably for reasons of facility-usage, in a widened sense that in some cases can be considered even as an anachronism. This, in any case, is shown by the need of certain researchers to define exactly what they mean when they use it. It is certain, however, that the term has now been generalized and in a way established, encompassing as well as surpassing the specific complex

phenomenon that we believe gave it birth, in many ways echoing the moral, consciousness, intellectual, ideological-political and also material needs of those individuals, groups or governments that were involved in one way or another. I would say, in order to close this deliberation, that the vagueness, intentional or not, derives from various reasons: on the one hand because the term philhellenism very often means simply the amicable feelings of a person towards the Greek people or Greece, as an imaginary concept, and on the other by the diachronic survival itself of the Greek language, in which the same words have at various times different signification<sup>1</sup>, or even because the Hellenes in their historical course have been defined at times by different ethnic names<sup>2</sup>.

The generalized reuse of the ethnic name Hellenes reflects a very interesting semantic, precisely because of its reduction to Hellenic Antiquity, which obviously would not have occurred if Westerners had called their interest in the modern Greeks by a term such as Grecophilism (*grécophilie*, *grécophilisme*, *Grecophile*, and so on). Equally interesting is the transition from the use of the term “Hellenism”<sup>3</sup> (*hellénisme*, *hellenismus*) to that of “philhellenism”.

In my opinion, the term philhellenism, apart from its reduction to Antiquity, is tightly, if not totally, interwoven with “movement” and “action”. Movement in the sense on the one hand of mobility, of the Greeks who begin to escape the stagnancy of the Ottoman Empire. The insurrection of 1770, which preceded the French Revolution, is an indicative event, even if considered to be of foreign instigation. And

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<sup>1</sup> The original meanings of the ancient term *φιλέλλην* were friend of the Hellenes, admirer of the Ancient Greek Letters and Ancient Greek Civilization. This was the case in the Renaissance too, when e.g. Aldo Manutius addressed in his prefaces the “*φιλέλληνες*”, those who loved Ancient Greek literature. Today those amicably disposed towards the Greek people are called philhellenes, regardless of their level of intellectual cultivation. It should be noted that during Antiquity the term was used subsequently also in the sense of one who loves his fatherland, a patriot (Plato, *Republic* 470 E), «καλὸν Ἕλληνα ὄντα φιλέλληνα εἶναι» (Xen. *Ages*. 7. 4).

<sup>2</sup> The Latins adopted as the ethnic name of the Hellenes their earlier name ‘Γραικοί’ (Graeci), as attested by Aristotle (*Meteor*. A. 14), and from them it was “inherited” by the Western Europeans, but with them not using that ethnic name in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to compose the corresponding term relating to their interest in the so-called Modern Greeks. Permit me to refer to my article “Towards Modern Greek Consciousness”, in *The Historical Review*, vol. 1 (2004), 53-55. The neologism ‘*νέοι Ἕλληνες*’ [neo-Hellenes], which has recently been located in a Greek printed book of 1675, was not then current, see Dimitrios G. Apostolopoulos, «*‘Νέοι Ἕλληνες’. Ο νεολογισμός και τα συνδεδεμένα του το 1675*» [‘Neo-Hellenes’. The neologism and its correlations in 1675’], *O Eranistis*, 25 (2005), 87-99.

<sup>3</sup> In the Greek language it means the totality of the Greeks as bearer of a common cultural tradition and creation (see: *Λεξικό της κοινής νεοελληνικής*, Ίδρυμα Μανόλη Τριανταφυλλίδη, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης [*Dictionary of Vernacular Modern Greek*, Manolis Triantaphyllidis Foundation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki]), in other European languages it usually means the totality of ancient Greek civilization and, by extension, its study. It also encapsulates other linguistic significations.

on the other hand, in the sense of “progress”, which was declared by the Enlightenment, to the measure of course of the receptivity and the possibilities of the moment. In the Declaration of the Rights of Man modern Hellenism was to find the expression of its national expectations, and from a people in bondage it prepared to become an autonomous nation. Adamantios Korais (Coray) endeavoured to enhance this contemporary reality most eloquently in the *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce*, which he read to the Société des Observateurs de l'Homme in Paris, in 1803<sup>4</sup>. These were the closing decades of the eighteenth and the opening ones of the nineteenth century, the years of “preparation”, in which the modern Greeks were developing economically through trade, and realizing the value of education, founded more and more schools and libraries, consciously transforming their everyday life and dynamically entering the field of vision of the Western Europeans, whose gaze at that time was focused on the antiquities and Classical Civilization. The “movement” – or “progress” – which brought the turn of Western interest, in correlation with the antiquarianism which was a decisive factor for European self-awareness<sup>5</sup>, created in these years the current that can easily be called a period of “pre-philhellenism”, or “early” philhellenism. That is, a period in which was nurtured the growing interest in the land, the place and the people living in it, even at a premature political level.

The contribution of the stream of foreign travellers, which swelled significantly in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, to acquaintance with the land is frequently stressed. Indeed, many travellers brought with them painters, or used painters settled in the region, in order to draw beautiful landscapes or ancient ruins, which were subsequently reproduced as printed engravings that helped to excite the popular imagination. The travellers' interests were many and varied, reflecting the political ambitions and scientific inquiries of the age: the first transform the Eastern Mediterranean into an important arena of political rivalries between Western powers,

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<sup>4</sup> Korais in his *Memorandum* used the neologism “revolution” 18 times, in the meaning it acquired in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as expressed by George Gusdorf, *La conscience révolutionnaire. Les idéologues*, Paris 1978, ch. “Révolution: le mot et l'Idée”, i.e. the conscious transformation of society, see Loukia Droulia, “La Révolution française et l'image de la Grèce: de l'hellénisme au philhellénisme”, in *La Révolution française et l'hellénisme moderne*, Centre de Recherches Néohelléniques/FNRS, Athens 1989, 57.

<sup>5</sup> See Nasia Yakovaki, *Ευρώπη μέσω Ελλάδας. Μια καμπή στην ευρωπαϊκή αυτοσυνείδηση, 17<sup>ος</sup>-18<sup>ος</sup> αιώνας*, [*Europe Through Greece. A turning point in European self-consciousness, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century*] Estia, Athens 2006, where are discussed the problems concerning the delayed, in relation to the Renaissance, interest of Europeans in ancient Athens and the important role that the “discovery” of this city played in forming European self-consciousness during the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.

in view of the awaited dismembering of the Ottoman Empire. The second, in parallel with the manifested antiquarianism, express an increasing preference for utilitarian issues: natural sciences, economics, history or statistics, and last, whatever approaches the science of man and society. The travel guides compiled at that time instruct travellers to collect material referring to the people they see, their everyday needs and living conditions, and not just to give accurate records and descriptions of the ancient monuments. Uppermost for some is the thought that through studying modern Hellenism one can detect the connecting links that will lead to a better knowledge of Antiquity. Among the first to seek out the connecting links was the French merchant and antiquarian P. A. Guys. As is apparent from his work *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce, ou Lettres sur les Grecs anciens et modernes, avec un parallèle de leurs moeurs* (Paris 1771), Guys, having lived in Constantinople for almost twenty years, and therefore having got to know and studied in depth modern Greek daily life and language, proceeded to further conclusions; in short, that there was no need to long “nostalgically” for Antiquity, to seek evidence of the “ancestors”, since these, as he believed and interpreted, still live on in the “descendants”<sup>6</sup>. Two decades later, the Sicilian Scrofani, during his travels in Greece, not only manifested his antiquarianist interests, but also collected information on agriculture and commerce, presenting in the account of his journey<sup>7</sup> data on the “great ruined nation”, for which he voiced thoughts of its future “resurrection”: “And who knows, if of course other special circumstances do not upset these countries, these memories might sometime be useful for a comparison with the progress these made [Greek lands are implied]. And these lands have whatever is needed to become again what they once were, and perhaps they will become again”.

Similar voices were being heard more volubly, either from adulators of antiquity or out of political-economic interest. The traveller William Eton expressed unequivocally a political view, for he believed that Greece “can no longer submit to the Turkish yoke; she pants for emancipation, and already aspires to be ranked among the independent states of Europe. The rise or renovation of her power will form an

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<sup>6</sup> Olga Augoustinos, *French Odyssey. Greece in French Travel Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1994, 147-157.

<sup>7</sup> Xavier Scrofani, Sicilien, *Voyage en Grèce ... Fait en 1794 et 1795*. Traduit de l'Italien par J.F.C. Blanvillain, Lyon 1834, vol.III : «Conclusion», p. 112-113.

important aera in European politics”<sup>8</sup>. Once again “progress’ is noted, precisely in the period when the idea of the “resurrection”, “rebirth”, “revival” (regeneration, *régénération*, *Wiedergeburt*, renascence, renovation, renaissance, *risorgimento*) of Greece – all words that can be traced back to Antiquity – was ripening in the consciousness of the Greek people itself, as well as of many foreign travellers. It would perhaps be interesting to study all the terms that were used at various times for the awaited phenomenon of the reappearance of the Hellenes as a specific ethno-social group and of Greece as a particular place on the international map.

The intercourse of the diaspora Greeks with other peoples contributed decisively to tempering the adverse impressions hitherto prevailing with regard to the spiritual and moral “wretchedness” of the descendants of the ancient Hellenes. The personal relations and friendships that gradually developed with persons of Greek origin contributed to this too, so that changes were noted in the international attitude towards the enslaved nation. An additional factor in this turn around in the second half of the eighteenth century was the court of Empress Catherine II of Russia, hub of many intrigues and influences. The element of antiquarianism was further added to the expansionist policy of Russia and the organized propaganda for the liberation of Greece. Catherine II, the learned prelate Eugenios Voulgaris, Archbishop of Cherson, and Voltaire represent here, each from his own stance, parallel ambitions, not necessarily starting from the same motives. Thus, Voulgaris with his memoranda to the empress, and Voltaire in his prolific correspondence, systematically kindled the tsarina’s grandiose plans for reconstituting the old Byzantine Empire under her sceptre. Specifically, the French philosopher’s aim was to focus the benevolence of the rulers of Russia and Prussia for the sake of the “pauvres Grecs”. His interest wells, of course, from a boundless admiration for ancient Greek civilization, as well as from an intense aversion to the despotism and tyranny of the Ottoman conquerors of the Classical land. So Voltaire, the pacifist and sceptic philosopher, without having clear ideas on the national rehabilitation of the Greek people – which he always treated in relation to the ambitions of the “enlightened”, according to his expectations, Catherine

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<sup>8</sup> *A Survey of the Turkish Empire*, London 1798, p. 334. The author on the title-page indicates that he was “Many years resident in Turkey and in Russia”. See Terence Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic. Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron*, Cedric Chivers Ltd, 1974 (1st published in 1954), especially chapters X-XII (“Hellenism and Philhellenism”, “Prophets, Sceptics, and Champions of Greece” and “Byron’s Poetical Inheritance”).

– is included among the pioneers of the philhellenic movement<sup>9</sup> that was born in those years.

Nonetheless, it should be noted here that antiquarianism, the enthusiastic adulation of Antiquity or of ancient Hellas, had a different perception at different times. So, for example, whereas the “revolutionary antiquarian fervour” of the French of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution had sought in Greek and Roman Antiquity its regime models, its political discourse and its new value symbols, the Germans for their part, fragmented as they were in the independent petty states, were led towards ancient Greek education and art, following paramount intellectual personalities. By preaching the “return to the Greeks”, who in their view had achieved the climax of artistic beauty and scientific genius, German intellectuals, primarily the art historian and archaeologist J. J. Winckelmann – without ever visiting Greece, he discovered the grandeur of Greek art in Italy and created a new age in the studies of Classical Archaeology –, the philologist F. A. Wolf, the statesman and educator Wilhelm von Humboldt, sought to reformulate the aesthetic, pedagogical and scientific theories according to the social needs of the age. It was then that the ideal of “self-cultivation” (*Bildung*) through cultivation of the arts and sciences was projected; the function of the classical gymnasium was also instituted, which contributed so much to shaping philhellenic enthusiasm<sup>10</sup>, consequence of which, it has been suggested, was the raising of the level of political awareness, contributing to the shaping of German national awareness and liberalism<sup>11</sup>. From the British side, it could be said epigrammatically that the turn of interest to the ancient Greek world and to Greece in particular coincides – is identified to a large extent – with the journey of the architect James Stuart and the painter Nicholas Revett to Greece, in the mid-eighteenth century. Venturing beyond the usual itinerary of the members of the Society of the Dilettanti (1734) to Italy, centred on Rome and her monuments, the two Britons travelled to Greece. There they made measured drawings of the ancient

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<sup>9</sup> Börje Knös, *Voltaire et la Grèce*, Extrait de *L'Hellénisme Contemporain*. 2<sup>e</sup> série, t. IX(1955)6-31. See also Katerina Papakonstantinou, «Το ποίημα του Βολταίρου *Traduction du poème de Jean Plokof* και ο ρωσοτουρκικός πόλεμος του 1768-1774. Μία ακόμα αθησαύριστη απόδοσή του στα ελληνικά» [Voltaire's poem *Traduction du poème de Jean Plokof* and the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774. Still another unknown Greek translation], *O Eranistis*, 25 (2005), 101-118 Q 101-106 where the previous bibliography on Voltaire's relations and correspondence with Catherine II is mentioned.

<sup>10</sup> Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus. Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1996, 3-35.

<sup>11</sup> Gunnar Hering, “Der griechische Unabhängigkeitskrieg und der Philhellenismus”, in *Der Philhellenismus der Westeuropäischen Literatur 1780-1830*, Amsterdam-Atlanta 1994, 54-55.

monuments of Athens, offering to the British public their four-volume work *Antiquities of Athens*, so contributing substantially to the revival of the Greek ideal.

In this pre-philhellenic, pre-Romantic period, Greece utopia, Greece reality emerged in men's imagination through classical studies. Perhaps, however, the scientific works, ever increasing in this period, did not reach out to a wide readership. It is often said that decisive impetus in the turn of interest towards Greece at this time was given not only by the travellers' narrations but also by the numerous literary texts. Inspired by the outcome of the recent excavations at Herculaneum and the wealth of information that the travellers had gathered, their subject matter revolves around ancient and recent Hellenism. Their reception by the public was immediate. This success could be seen easily as a dual relationship (action) of "propulsion" and "reception", which translated exactly what the age was seeking for, since art expresses – usually with foresight – its contemporary society. Even though these works very often present some reservation or disappointment of the foreigners towards the contemporary Greeks, they were to play their part in spreading interest in Greek problems. The failed uprising of 1770, fomented by Russia, was also to arouse conflicting discussions: sometimes the liberationist attempts of the subject Greeks were applauded, and sometimes the responsibility for the *débaîcle* was blamed on the "depraved" Greeks. Contemporary literature would refer to this historical event too.

Thus, J. J. Heinse, setting his epistolary novel *Ardinghello und die glückseligen Inseln* (1787) in contemporary Greece, was one of the first to negotiate poetically the issue of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, that is, the expulsion of the Turks "from that land with the happy climate". Hopes for the Greek political renaissance are expressed through the lyrical, and likewise epistolary, novel *Hyperion: oder Der Eremit in Griechenland* (1797), of the then virtually unknown Fr. Hölderlin<sup>12</sup>. The author had sought and found in Classical Hellas all that he asked of the light that would light up the darkness of the modern world; but the struggle against the Turkish dynasty<sup>13</sup> was also in accord with his liberalism and enthusiasm. Following the fashion of the time, the Englishman of Dutch origin, Thomas Hope, having toured

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<sup>12</sup> Hölderlin had relied on the German translations of the travel narratives of R. Chandler and Choiseul-Gouffier, see Hölderlin, *Hypérion...*, Traduction et présentation de Philippe Jaccottet, Gallimard, 1973, 247.

<sup>13</sup> He refers to the revolution in 1770, *ibid.*, 159: "The world is on the move ... Russia has declared war on the Porte; a fleet is sailing towards the Archipelago. The Greeks will be free if they agree to take part in pushing the Sultan away towards the Euphrates ...".

the Mediterranean countries and Greece, published, anonymously at first – some of his contemporaries ascribed the work to Lord Byron – the three-volume novel *Anastasius, or the Memoirs of a Greek, written at the close of the 18th century* (London 1819). Aim of this most prolix and rather tiring story for the reader, was “to unite the entertainment of a novel with the information of a book of travels”<sup>14</sup>. Hope recorded meticulously a host of details from the contemporary life of the people of Greece, as well as historical events in this region, offering a complete and timely picture of Greek reality.

Concurrently, as the eighteenth century waned, Europe was to communicate with Greek Antiquity through fictional works such as that of the poet Chr. M. Wieland, *Geschichte von Agathon*<sup>15</sup>, of the archaeologist abbé Barthélemy (*Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce vers le milieu du IVe siècle avant l'ère vulgaire*, 1788), which enjoyed much success, with reprints, translations and accompanying maps by J.-D. Barbier du Bocage<sup>16</sup>, and of the Baron De Lantier, *Voyage d'Anténor en Grèce*<sup>17</sup>. The various new editions and translations of all the aforementioned works, as well as of important travel texts too, helped to form the cultural exchanges that had been noted already from the period we have dubbed the period of early philhellenism<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> T. Hope, *Anastasius ...*, vol. I, Paris 1831, ix.

<sup>15</sup> The novel was translated into Greek, in Smyrna in 1812, by C.M. Koumas (Vienna 1814, 3 vols), contributing to the Modern Greeks' acquaintance with their “ancient ancestors” and, obviously, to the formation of a Modern Greek identity and consciousness, which was sought in that period.

<sup>16</sup> *Anacharsis*, a carefully elaborated work in several volumes, in the form of a historically accurate narrative itinerary, was partly translated into Greek by the liberal patriot Rigas Velestinlis and his circle in Vienna, within the same context of Modern Greek self-consciousness, cf. Anna Tambaki (ed.), *Πήγα Βελεστινλή: Απαντα τα σωζόμενα*, vol. IV, *Νέος Ανάχαρσις*, [Rigas Velestinlis, *Complete Surviving Works*] Athens, Greek Parliament, 2000 See now for Anacharsis, also the maps that accompanied him, George Tolia, “Antiquarianism, Patriotism and Empire: Transfers of Cartography of the Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece,(1788-1811)”, *The Historical Review*, Institute for Neohellenic Research, vol 2 (2005), (in print), with earlier bibliography. It is interesting to mention here that long before the circulation of abbé Barthélemy's *magnum opus*, a group of students at the University of Cambridge had compiled a small format two-volume work with about the same aim as *Anacharsis* – to describe the age of Antiquity. Entitled *Athenian Letters, or, The epistolary correspondence of an agent of the King of Persia, residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian War*, it was printed in twelve copies in 1741. The work was reprinted in 1781 in a hundred copies, but not published. It was first published at Dublin and later at London (1798). Evidently offered to abbé Barthélemy, who in his letter of thanks asks “Pourquoi n'a-t-il pas été traduit dans toutes les langues?”. He notes in his *Memoirs* that “Si j'avois eu ce modèle devant les yeux, ou je n'aurois pas commencé mon ouvrage, ou je ne l'auroit pas achevé”, see *Lettres Athéniennes... traduites de l'Anglois*, Paris An XI.=1803, ix-xj.

<sup>17</sup> Easy to read, it too was to enjoy success and frequent new editions.

<sup>18</sup> See the interesting positions in the special edition *Philhellenismes et transferts culturels dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle*, in *Revue germanique Internationale* 1-2 / 2005.



The great names of literature in the West would also have their place in this list. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the famous writers, without having consciously sought to cultivate some kind of philhellenic enthusiasm towards the contemporary Greeks, were to contribute essentially to the current that developed with works referring to ancient Greece and its monuments, sometime also to the contemporary inhabitants of the Classical land. In Germany for example, Schiller's poem *Göttern Griechenland*, Kotzebue's composition *Die Ruinen von Athen* (1812) – which although deemed mediocre enjoyed great success thanks to Beethoven's musical setting – and Goethe's interest in European folk poetry and particularly in the Greek folk songs that had been collected by Werner von Haxthausen, had positive results<sup>19</sup>. In France, on the other hand, Fr. René de Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, when first published in 1811, had the same results, even though no philhellenic disposition can be detected in this text; “J'allois chercher des images voilà tout”, he notes in his preface, and in fact he had no intention of publishing it. Nevertheless, the circulation of the *Itinéraire* immediately invoked a philhellenic climate. In fact, it is said that I. Capodistrias sought its reprinting in Zurich the following year, presumably considering it eminently suitable for forming a favourable attitude to the Greek case. It is not known whether this actually happened, as there were new editions straight away in Paris (1811 and 1812) and London (1812 and 1813). The *Itinéraire* was to take on a totally philhellenic character in 1826, when its author added a new preface to the new edition.

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<sup>19</sup> The birth of interest in folk oral expression in Europe, which is always traced back to Herder, in the case of the Greek folk songs was associated as a rule with persons who showed an interest in the fortunes of the Greek people and in one way or another joined forces with them in the struggle for its liberation. Outstanding, of course, is the name of Cl. Fauriel, but it would be remiss to omit that of John Bowring, subsequent secretary of the London Greek Committee, who had taken a serious interest in publishing English translations of such material, as is apparent from his correspondence with Fauriel, see Alexis Politis, *Η ανακάλυψη των ελληνικών δημοτικών τραγουδιών*, [*The Discovery of the Greek Folk Songs*], Institute for Neohellenic Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens, 1984, 191-194, 369, 370.

Lord Byron, the liberal<sup>20</sup> British Romantic poet, whose fame overshadowed all compatriot poets, was considered from the outset and is considered to this day as the principal instigator and expresser (willy-nilly) of philhellenism. However, it is difficult for him to be characterized yet, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, as a conscious philhellene, with the charge that this term later acquired. Although his poetry hymns the spirit of ancient Hellas, the poet then doubted the possibility of its moral revival<sup>21</sup>. Nonetheless, he expressed in his lines an unequivocal position, a seminal political exhortation: *Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not /Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?*<sup>22</sup>



*Strike the blow!* And so we come to the action, the harsh, violent, national liberationist struggle; to the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, which roused the sensitive, radical, liberal, compassionate and pious public opinion, and put governments in a quandary. Without this action, the political, it would have been difficult for “Hellenism” – antiquarianism, neo-humanism, neoclassicism – to evolve into a dynamic philhellenic movement, a complex, in its expression, cultural, political and military phenomenon, the “philhellenism” that was then identified with the Liberal and the Romantic movement – and even with Byronism; that which

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<sup>20</sup> As F. Rosen points out in his book *Bentham, Byron and Greece. Constitutionalism, Nationalism, and Early Liberal Political Thought*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1992, the use of the terms “liberal” and “liberalism” to define political ideas is an anachronism when referring to the 1820s, when no “established liberal ideology” yet existed. He gives similar clarifications for the anachronistic use of the term ideology, in correlation with the political act, pp. 17, 289, and elsewhere. With regard to the British poet, he notes that “Byron became a liberal icon whose importance to liberalism was not entirely related to his actions in Greece where he was a most moderate reformer, hardly an enthusiast for Greek self-determination ...”. For these early aspects of liberalism in relation to the national self-determination of the Greeks, in the framework of the divergent opinions of the members of the London Greek Committee, see idem, *Greek Nationalism and British Liberalism*, Institute for Neohellenic Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens 1998.

<sup>21</sup> See David Roessel, *In Byron's Shadow. Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 51. The bibliography on Lord Byron is most extensive. For this text I have chosen to refer to the work by David Roessel, which expresses also my own views, aired earlier in Greek texts.

<sup>22</sup> *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto II, LXXVI, 1812. Again it is the “act” that will provoke and will characterize philhellenism in the other Greek liberation struggles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the Cretan uprising of 1886-1889 and the Greek-Turkish war of 1897, and even the First Balkan War in 1912. Through this interpretation too we consider valid the use of the term “philhellenism”, which has recently been discussed, cf. Gilles Pécout, “Philhellenism in Italy: political friendship and the Italian volunteers in the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century”, in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* vol. 9/4 (2004), 404-427 and idem, “Amitié littéraire et amitié politique méditerranéennes: philhellènes français et italiens de la fin du XIXe siècle”, in *Philhellénismes et transferts culturels dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle*, op. cit., 207-218.

disseminated it to the ends of the earth: idolization of Byron then reached North America, arousing Greek Fever, and notwithstanding the cautiousness of state functionaries, invigorating liberal manifestations there<sup>23</sup>.

After all, “action” was Byron’s personal presence in Missolonghi<sup>24</sup> and his death there in 1824. Both – functioning at the symbolic level, as noted by F. Rosen<sup>25</sup> – were to constitute the coordinate between the intellectual expression and the actual action of philhellenism. After the massacres of Chios and the death of Markos Botsaris, which had shaken the international community, the poet’s death was one more shocking, I would say decisive, event that re-ignited the expression of philhellenism, and of course not just in literature and art<sup>26</sup>. For the Greeks, the support of the whole of the Western world was reflected in his person. It is in any case obvious that Byron’s example recruited other great names of the time to the cause, showing the way for their more energetic participation at the political level too. “I know no more beautiful symbol of the future destiny and mission of art than the death of Byron in Greece. The holy alliance of poetry with the cause of the peoples; The union –still so rare – of thought and action which alone completes the human Word”, writes Giuseppe Mazzini in his study *Byron and Goethe*<sup>27</sup>.

Truly, many are the lines of lyric poetry that were published immediately after Byron’s death at Missolonghi, mainly by “minor” poets. Many too are the books of reminiscences of his final days in that town, of conversations with him, which contributed to creating the myth around his person<sup>28</sup>. Minor too are those poetasters

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. ch. 5 “Naval Observers of the Greek Revolution and the ‘Greek Fever’ in America”, in Stephen Larrabee, *Hellas Observed. The American Experience of Greece, 1775-1865*, New York University Press, 1957 and the works by Marios Byron Raizis and Alexander Papas concerning the literary philhellenism in America at the time (*American Poets and the Greek Revolution, 1821-1828. A Study in Byronic Philhellenism*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1971 and *Greek Revolution and American Muse. A Collection of American poetry 1821-1828*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1972).

<sup>24</sup> “La poésie en action de ce noble lord a relevé le prix de sa poésie écrite ...”, as expressed in *Pandore* (2 nov. 1823), cited in Edmond Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français*, Paris, 2nd ed. (n.d.), 117.

<sup>25</sup> See here n. 20, *Bentham, Byron and Greece...*, 191: “The British expedition was of enormous symbolic value and no symbol was more powerful than that of Byron”.

<sup>26</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron. Life and Legend*. John Murray, London 2002, see Chapter 9: “The European Byronists”.

<sup>27</sup> In the *Monthly Chronicle*, 1839, cited in Fiona MacCarthy, op. cit., 546.

<sup>28</sup> A casual search in the bibliography gives for 1824 about 30 pamphlets, with titles such as *Dithyrambe sur la mort de Lord Byron, Chant funèbre, Adieux, Stances, Lines on the death of Lord Byron*, etc., while from 1825, apart from the poems, reference to the poet appears also in books of memoirs about his last days in Missolonghi, discussions with him or other compositions that are sold “for the benefit of the Greeks” (“Se vend au profit des Grecs”) cf. Edmond Estève, op. cit., 533-535; Loukia Droulia, *Philhellénisme. Ouvrages inspirés par la guerre de l’Indépendance grecque, 1821-1833. Répertoire Bibliographique*, Athens 1974.

who expressed themselves with enthusiasm in the early years of the Revolution. With the exception of Byron's friend, the liberal poet P.B. Shelley, who expressed his philhellenic enthusiasm directly in his lyric drama *Hellas* (London 1822); he had dedicated it on 1 November 1821 to Alexandros Mavrokordatos, his friend who visited him in Pisa and who kept him regularly informed of preparations for the Struggle<sup>29</sup>. The same could be said also of the German poet Wilhelm Müller, "Griechenmüller", as he was dubbed, whose poems *Lieder der Griechen* (1821) enjoyed immediate and great popular appeal<sup>30</sup>.

It is perhaps indicative that the acclaimed French Romantic poets, friends and admirers of the British bard, make their appearance in the philhellenic bibliography mainly after his death. Just as Byron's philhellenism in the 1810s has been doubted, so the delay of Chateaubriand, Alphonse Lamartine and Victor Hugo, for instance, to take a stand on this issue has been commented on. The pro-monarchy Chateaubriand owes the title of ardent philhellene to his political change of direction in 1824 and the writing of his *Note sur la Grèce* (1825), which successfully translated public opinion and was essentially received as a worthy philhellenic manifesto. Lamartine, for his part, was to express his philhellenism through the work of Byron. In 1825 he published the poem *Le Dernier Chant du Pèlerinage de Childe Harold*, and as the publisher notes in the preface: "voulant conduire, le poëme de Childe Harold jusqu'à son véritable terme, la mort du héros, le reprend où lord Byron l'avait laissé, et sous la fiction transparente du nom d'Harold, chante les dernières actions ou les dernières pensées de lord Byron lui-même, son passage en Grèce et sa mort"<sup>31</sup>. As for the young conservative V. Hugo, admirer of Chateaubriand, for the 1820s, it had earlier been maintained that he used the stimuli from the Greek Struggle only as a source of inspiration, that he was dilatory in expressing his philhellenic sentiments, since his collection of poems entitled *Les Orientales* circulated after the Greek War of

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<sup>29</sup> It has been demonstrated that this poem was the model-stimulus for the *Hymn to Freedom* by Dionysios Solomos, see E.N. Fragiskos, «Ο σολωμικός «Ύμνος» και το λυρικό δράμα «Hellas» του P.B. Shelley (1822)», *Ο Επαναστής* ["The *Hymn* by Solomos and the lyrical drama *Hellas* by P.B. Shelley (1822)"; *O Eranistis*], vol. 11(1974), 527-567.

<sup>30</sup> Others stand out too, such as the revolutionary troubadour Béranger, idol of libertarianism for many peoples, and the Greeks too, who was imprisoned for his liberal ideas and his exhortative songs, Casimir Delavigne with his *Messéniennes* and *Néo Messéniennes*, and some others.

<sup>31</sup> This work ran through another three editions in the same year. Nonetheless, in the view of contemporary criticism, Lamartine had understood nothing of Byron, "C'est Byron peigné à la Lamartine", see Edmond Estève, op. cit., 126.

Independence was over<sup>32</sup>. Only in 1829, that is the year in which he left the pro-monarchy faction and joined the liberal camp<sup>33</sup>. It is interesting to remark here that although it was the Romantic Movement that favoured the spread of philhellenism, the leading French Romantic poets, supporters of the restoration of the monarchy, joined philhellenic circles only after changing their political position. Thus was invigorated the two-way current between philhellenism and liberalism, characteristic of political activism of the era.



Philhellenism has been qualified here as a cultural, political and military phenomenon. A phenomenon that gave those involved, at the individual and the collective level – whether social groups or institutional bodies – the possibility of “expressing themselves”. The individuals of seeking their own inner or even vital needs, and in some special cases of projecting their philosophical systems or ideological-political theories (e.g. the Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham, the utopian Socialism of the Saint-simoniens), while claiming at the same time their application on virgin soil, such as the Greece that would then emerge; the collective bodies of working for their goals, their aspirations and their corresponding convictions – the chronological comparison of the founding of the various philanthropic committees and philhellenic committees can give a good picture of the mobilization in each country, with whatever obstacles and deferrals they came up against in organizing them, which had an impact on the way in which they operated; the political world, the governments, for formulating and seeking the positive outcome of their political plans. All these, and much more, triggered – with fluctuations of course in the 1820s – an important mobilization in many directions. And first of all, a deluge of written

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<sup>32</sup> His six poems, which are included in the publication and concern the Greek question, had appeared in print previously: 1826 “Les têtes du Sérail”, 1827: “Enthousiasme”, “Navarin”, 1828: “Canaris”, “L’Enfant”, “Lazzara”. During the same year, this poem was also included in an *Anthology* under the title “Le Klephte”.

<sup>33</sup> This change set its seal on his whole career. Although late to manifest his philhellenism, this did not cease with the end of the Revolution and the founding of the new State. He was a staunch supporter and defender of the Greek struggles in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the influence of philhellenism on Hugo’s ideological position in subsequent years, see Leonidas Kallivretakis, «Ριζοσπαστικοποίηση μέσω (και) του φιλελληνισμού: Η περίπτωση του Βικτώρος Ουγκώ» [“Radicalism through (and) Philhellenism: The case of Victor Hugo”], in the volume *Βικτώρ Ουγκώ (1802-1885). Ο ρομαντικός συγγραφέας, ο οραματιστής στοχαστής, ο φιλέλληνας. 200 χρόνια από τη γέννησή του*, [Victor Hugo (1802-1885). The Romantic writer, the visionary thinker, the philhellene. 200 years since his birth] National Hellenic Research Centre, “Society of Science”. Special Educational Events, 2002, 59-97.

discourse<sup>34</sup>, a succession of diverse events that signal social vigilance<sup>35</sup>, and the production of artworks<sup>36</sup>.

In the name of philhellenism were incorporated the ideological-political rivalries in domestic politics, while in their international diplomatic juxtapositions governments found a fertile pretext for mobility so as to consolidate and to enlarge their country's ambit of influence. Delicate games, frequently played on "two boards". In some cases the philhellenic committees were even used for similar aims, without the ideological activists realizing this. Last, in the military sector, many Europeans willing to fight on the side of the Greeks, the recruited or not "volunteers" as they have come to be known, played their part in the Greek Struggle. Later, after 1823, the Americans appeared too, whereas the Russians are strikingly absent from this summons; the effect of the Greek uprising on the liberal nationalist Decembrists, who supported a Russo-Turkish conflict – something the tsar wished to avoid – was obviously an impediment to the recruitment of volunteers to fight in the Greek War of

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<sup>34</sup> See in passim L. Droulia, *Philhellénisme*, op. cit.; for the political and religious pamphlets in support of the legitimacy of the Greek Struggle and the Christian Faith, the literary texts and the poems inspired by the battles and the heroic protagonists, the scientific syntheses referring to the Modern Greek language, the appeals, announcements, subscriptions of the philhellenic associations, the memoranda, the memoirs and the narrations, even the historical treatises that were compiled in the early years, as soon as travellers and volunteers, most of them eyewitnesses to the Greek Struggle, returned home. Almost simultaneously more synthetic treatises of political review, etc., begin to be written. Analogous articles were published also in periodicals, such as the *Revue Encyclopédique*, *Globe*, and others. For the journalistic campaigns of the liberal French newspapers, see Jean Dimakis, *La guerre de l'Indépendance grecque vue par la presse française (période de 1821 à 1824)*, Thessalonique 1968 and idem, *O 'Oesterreichischer Beobachter' της Βιέννης και η Ελληνική Επανάσταση, 1821-1827. Συμβολή εις την μελέτην του ευρωπαϊκού αντιφιλελληνισμού*, [*The 'Oesterreichischer Beobachter' of Vienna and the Greek Revolution, 1821-1827. Contribution to the study of European anti-philhellenism*], Athens 1977.

<sup>35</sup> The reading is completed here or is replaced by visual and "audiovisual" techniques. Panoramas and dioramas, two new inventions of the time, almanacs, prints, music scores with philhellenic songs decorated with engraved vignettes, geographical maps that contribute to the better knowledge of the land, alongside theatrical performances, concerts, charity bazaars, balls, photographic exhibitions "on behalf of the Greeks", and other social events to collect money, appear with increasing frequency from 1825, in European and North American cities.

<sup>36</sup> We cite indicatively: Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1830. Art and Politics under the Restoration*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1989. *La Révolution grecque. Delacroix et les peintres français, 1816-1848*, 1997, Angélique Amandry, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση σε γαλλικά κεραμικά του 19<sup>ου</sup> αι.*, [*The Greek Revolution in French Ceramics of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.*] Athens 1982. It is clear from the bibliography cited here that France claims the lion's share in the production of art works and everyday objects with philhellenic subjects. This practice can be combined with the corresponding one organized during the French Revolution, when the image was used to the utmost as a new language of communication and influence of public opinion. See, e.g. the imitation of the scene of the "Collection of money" (La Quête), from the earlier prototypes of the French Revolution, Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, op. cit., figs 28, 29 and 30.

Independence<sup>37</sup>. The number of individuals who took part in the military operations is estimated at about one thousand two hundred<sup>38</sup>, many of whom either suffered severely or were disappointed by the harsh conditions of Modern Greek reality, or even lost their life on the battle fields and were heroized later, as supporters of a national-liberation struggle. There are, of course, shining examples among them who are distinguished from the rest. Nonetheless, in individual cases the differentiations are frequently so fine that it is difficult to make generalizations. Where the enthusiasm – the adulation of Antiquity, for instance, of the young German students –, the vision and the altruism ends, and where the personal vested interest of the now unemployed soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars penetrates is frequently difficult to distinguish, particularly when dealing with human mentality and pressing vital needs. On the other hand, there are the rivalries and the oppositions between the Greeks and the foreign volunteers, the difference of military tactics and even the irritation of the Greek commands in the face of foreign liberal elements. And this because although the volunteers supported the Greek Struggle, there was the reasonable worry that by their presence the struggle was discredited by some European governments, which intentionally doubted the legitimacy of this national-liberation insurrection, identifying it with the social struggles, for example, of the Carbonari.

Research today relating to volunteerism in times of uprisings and wars is re-examining the issue in the framework of new historiographic approaches which include war and its brutality in the domain of cultural history and history of sensibilities (*histoire des sensibilités*). Beyond the traditional approach, the “heroic”, to the volunteers, the studies examine the mind-set of each individual, linking volunteerism with the “desire for war”, a desire that was in that period associated with travel, exoticism, risk, which legitimized the individual’s place in the world, and with the emergence of a new model of “masculinity”, of the virile man. In this framework

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<sup>37</sup> For manifestations of Russian philhellenism at the political and literary levels, and Pushkin’s interest in Greece, see Theophilus Proussis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, Northern Illinois University Press, Dekalb, 1994, with all the bibliography to that date. See also Greek translations of Russian philhellenic poetry in Sonia Ilinskaja, ed., *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση του 1821 στον καθρέφτη της ρωσικής ποίησης* [The Greek Revolution in 1821 in the mirror of Russian poetry], Athens 2001.

<sup>38</sup> The data are based on the well-documented study by William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, London, where the origin of fighters by state is also cited.

research is being conducted also on the phenomenon of volunteerism in the Greek Revolution<sup>39</sup>.

Last, the naval battle of Navarino, in October 1827, intentionally or coincidentally was considered the climactic expression of philhellenic support, which gave the positive turn about in the fortunes of the by then waning and exhausted persistent Greek War of Independence. A struggle which had been considered premature by the responsible intellectual and political leaders, Coray and Capodistrias, but which was fermented in the “madness” and fever of Byronism<sup>40</sup>: “People called us crazy”, General Theodoros Kolokotronis had said, “if we weren’t crazy, we wouldn’t have made the revolution, because if we’d thought first about ammunitions and supplies, our cavalry, our artillery, our gunpowder stores, our shops, we’d have reckoned our force, the Turkish force”.<sup>41</sup>

In the ensuing years, when martial action was over, philhellenism lost its initial urge, it settled down. Harsh Greek reality then evoked feelings of discontent and disappointment, generating thoughts that led to the doubting of the modern Greeks’ origin from the ancient Greeks, something that was deeply etched in the philhellenes’ imagination. Even so, it could be said that the philhellenism of 1821 left its traces on the international common consciousness, in which the correlation of the modern Greeks with the ancient ancestors and the place, the Classical land that is their homeland, still influences decisions and behaviours. After all, was it not with this credential that Greece was one of the first to be included in the European Community?

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<sup>40</sup> Byron’s poetic *oeuvre* was called disdainfully in France, “genre frénétique”, cf. Edmond Estève, *op. cit.*, 103-108.

<sup>41</sup> G. Tertsetis, *Διήγησις συμβάντων της ελληνικής φυλής από τα 1770 έως τα 1836*. Υπαγόρευσε Θεόδωρος Κ. Κολοκοτρώνης, [Narration of the events of the Greek race since 1770 to 1836. Dictated by Theodoros K. Kolokotronis], Athens 1846, p. 190-191.