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"Another Tyrtaeus": Byron and the Rhetoric of Philhellenism

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On 20 February 1824, two months before Byron's death in Missolonghi on 19 April of that year, a lawyer and political activist named August Davezac (1780–1851) gave a speech before the Louisiana State House of Representatives calling for support for the Greek cause in its War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire (1821–32). He deployed the name "Byron" as part of his rhetorical strategy:

> Those who met as foes in the fatal fields of Waterloo, now advance, side by side, under the banners of liberty; nor will another Tyrtaeus be wanted in the Spartan band; the lyre of Byron, of the poet for whom the muses have woven a wreath of the laurel of Pindar of the myrtle of Ovid, and of the vine of Anacreon, fires the ardor of the combatants, and his lays will give immortality to the conquerors.[1]

There is much to unpack in this single sentence. With a few words, Davezac highlights Byronism, philhellenism, classicism, the Napoleonic wars, and the invention of "Greece," to mention only a few of his cultural and historical allusions. This essay will investigate the rhetorical value of the signifier "Byron" as it appears at the intersection of politics and poetry for those who called themselves "philhellenes," western European and American "lovers of Hellas" who supported the Greek uprising in a variety of ways, from giving money and speeches to writing poems. Some even went so far as to make their way to Greece to take part in the conflict. In particular, I will examine the notion of Byron as "another Tyrtaeus," a comparison that occurs frequently enough within the discursive intersection of Byronism and philhellenism to be considered a trope in its own right.

This metonymic transference of the spirit of a Spartan poet from the seventh century BCE to a famous British poet of the nineteenth, in turn, bolsters certain presumptions on which Davezac's speech depends, a speech not merely in support of

1 Auguste Davezac, "Speech Delivered in the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, the 20th of February, 1824, on Moving the Resolutions in Support of the Greeks," photocopied reissue of the Philhellenic pamphlets (Athens: Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, 1974): 14–16. I am grateful to Mrs. Rosa Florou and the Library of the Messolonghi Byron Society for allowing me access to their collection of philhellenist pamphlets in the summer of 2019.

"the Greeks," but also in furtherance of cultural values that benefit from a particular mode of understanding what it means to be "Greek." What the trope does not say, what it occludes or hides, will prove as important for understanding its cultural significance as its overt declaration of support for the "Greek cause." In what follows I will thus try to explain the cultural formation of the trope of Byron-as-Tyrtaeus itself, by reference to a few international examples, then examine briefly some of the cultural and political values that this, and related philhellenist images, personifications and, metaphors, attempt to support.

"that Greece will become again an independent nation"

In the interest of understanding the rhetorical significance of Byron as a new Tyrtaeus, a bit of background on Davezac and the intersection of Byronism and philhellenism in the 1820s is in order. Davezac himself was born into a French plantation- and slave-owning family on the island of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) as Auguste Genevieve Valentin D'Avezac. After a number of his associates and relations, including two older brothers, were killed in the Haitian Revolution, or slave revolt, of 1791, surviving family members fled the Caribbean island, and ended up in French- and Spanish-speaking New Orleans, which until 1800 was under Spanish control. Auguste, having spent time in school in France, eventually joined his surviving family in New Orleans, now part of the United States following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, where he became a lawyer. During the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812, Davezac (as he anglicized his name) served as an aide-de-camp to General (later President) Andrew Jackson. This began Davezac's life-long commitment to Jackson as well as to the Democratic party, which entailed support for the pro-slavery policies of both. In 1824, along with invoking Byron in the cause of Greek independence before the Louisiana State Legislature, he was also giving numerous speeches in support of Jackson's presidential campaign, which failed the first time around but succeeded on the second attempt in 1828.[2]

There was nothing particularly unusual within the American political scene at the time in a speech supporting the Greek revolt against the Ottomans. Davezac's aim, apart from raising general interest in the cause, was to persuade the legislature to "recognize Greece as an independent nation," a popular notion that, however little good it did to help those actually engaged in the fighting, was meant to encourage broader international efforts to support Greece financially and militarily. This recognition, he points out, was something that the state of South Carolina, "always foremost in what is noble and generous," had already proclaimed (12). Just a month earlier, the US Congress had been involved in its own debate of the "Greek cause," which began when Daniel Webster (1782–1852) of Massachusetts delivered a speech

2 For biographical information on Davezac, I rely on Cornelis A. Van Minnen, "Auguste Davezac," in *Notable U.S. Ambassadors Since 1775*, ed. Cathal J. Nolan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997) and "Major Davezac," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 16 (1845).

in support of the Greek revolution that he wrote together with the Harvard classicist Edward Everett, and that Webster hoped would draw positive attention to his oratory prowess.[3] Davezac notes in the final sentence of his speech that he is in fact following in "the giant footsteps of Webster" (18). Even the President at the time, James Monroe (1758–1831), though firmly non-interventionist when it came to European conflicts (see the "Monroe Doctrine" of 1823), spoke in support of the Greek Revolution in three of his "annual messages" that he pronounced during his presidency (1817–25). Stopping short of officially recognizing Greek independence, he claimed in 1823 that "the object of our most ardent wishes [is] that Greece will become again an independent nation."[4] His use of "again," apart from suggesting incorrectly that there had once been "an independent nation" of "Greece," signals a key aspect of philhellenist rhetoric as it gestures vaguely to a glorious past of which it is in the interest of "the whole civilized world" (as he put it in his message from 1824) to revive in the present (2: 828).

As for any direct involvement, those few Americans who actually made the arduous journey to Greece to fight for the cause did so merely as private volunteers, and had little impact on the course of the war itself. Any direct influence America had on the conflict took the form of financial and material aid, organized by private committees and sent to Greek civilians for whom hunger, exposure, and disease quickly became the most vicious enemies. Those American philhellenes who traveled to Greece followed an international movement of western Europeans who had also volunteered to fight against the Ottomans (in some ways similar to the International Brigades that fought in the Spanish Civil War a bit more than a century later). Sailing from Marseille to Nafplio, a port town on the east side of the Peloponnese that was to become the first capital of a newly independent Greece in 1829, a French battalion arrived in 1821 and a "German Legion" late in 1822, the latter comprised largely of Swiss citizens and Germans from Württemberg—keeping in mind that there was no German nation at the time.[5]

Many of these volunteer soldiers were sadly disappointed by what they found on the ground in Greece, including the lack of any organized military plan, and the discovery that Greeks were committing atrocities against Turkish civilians. More pressing than questions of where they should go and whom should they fight were questions of where they should sleep and what should they eat—resources being already in short supply. Discrepancies between the idealized Hellenism that had

3 Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 210.

4 James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 11 vols. (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1911), 2: 786.

5 William St Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free: The Philhellenes and the War of Independence*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972; Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008), 119. St Clair, estimates that there were "some nine hundred and fifty individual volunteers who set out from Europe or America to lend their strength and skill for the cause of Greek independence" (355). Around 30 per cent of these died—most of them, like Byron, not in battle but of disease (356).

inspired them at home and the reality that greeted the philhellenes on the ground in Greece poignantly underscored the confusion the West had regarding who and what modern Greeks were supposed to be. "Greece," after all, had been but a small backwater of the vast Ottoman Empire for more than four centuries. William St Clair, in his history of the revolution, for example, makes note of the shock and surprise that French philhellenes experienced when they first encountered Greek men sitting "cross-legged on a bare floor," wearing shawls and smoking hookahs. For western Europeans whose knowledge of Greece derived almost exclusively from the classical studies that had formed a central component of their school curricula, what they found upon arrival "were manners more associated with Turks than with the descendants of Pericles" (82). Likely their mental images of Greeks had been formed by popular representations such as Jacques-Louis David's painting "Leonidas at Thermopylae" (1814).

Just as a political speech supporting Greece fell well within the realm of expectations in America in 1824, so would have been dropping the name Byron within the context of the revolution. As Susan Wolfson points out, although Byron never made it to America in body, he "arrived in America, of course, and many times over" in a wide variety of cultural forms. Since 1811, Byron and Byronism "were rampant in literary and social exhibition," as evidenced not only through massive sales of his works but through numerous allusions and imitations in American letters.[6] Even before he went to Greece himself in the summer of 1823, Byronism was inspiring philhellenic fervor around the world. *The Corsair* (1814), at the center of which lies a battle between a western European pirate and the "Pacha" Seyd, was Byron's most popular work and one of the most popular of the Romantic period as a whole.[7] The news that Byron had gone to Greece in support of the revolution, even before his death—as evidenced by Davezac's speech—proved a potent boost to the philhellenic movement.[8] His death may actually have helped to turn the tide of the war.[9]

It is within the context of this intersection of Byronism and philhellenism that we can best understand the rhetorical significance of "another Tyrtaeus." The formulation depends for its effect on the convergence of Byron's immense popularity with the establishment of a firm connection between modern Greeks and their idealized ancient counterparts. To declare Byron the avatar of an ancient Spartan poet is to support the fantasy of the Greek War of Independence as a modern Thermopylae. As we shall see, Davezac was not the only philhellene to associate Byron with the Spartan poet. Dubbing someone a "new Tyrtaeus," or the like, was itself not once uncommon.

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6 Susan J. Wolfson, "Entertaining Byron in America," *The Byron Journal* 45, no. 1 (2017): 3.

7 Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud, "Becoming Corsairs: Byron, British Property Rights and Orientalist Economics," *Studies in Romanticism* 50, no. 4 (2011): 685.

8 Edward Mead Earle, "American Interest in the Greek Cause, 1821–1827," *The American Historical Review* 33, no. 1 (1927): 47.

9 On the impact of Byon's death on the course of the revolution, see Roderick Beaton, *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 89.

Bringing the name Byron in for extra rhetorical support became a prevalent philhellenist practice, particularly after his death in the spring of 1824.

Yet, all of this begs the question of why Americans, or western Europeans, should take such particular interest in the Balkan conflict at all. As Edward Earle points out, no one had seemed to care much about similar uprisings against the Ottomans that had occurred earlier. When Serbs fought to break free from the empire between 1807 and 1817, for example, it caused "hardly a ripple on the surface of public opinion" (44). It may seem self-evident to us that Greece would represent a special case, that its cultural and historical cachet for "Western Culture" would necessarily arouse sympathy for its political plight in 1821. However, Western willingness to view "Greece" as "one of us," even as a proto-nation that was somehow directly connected to a people from whom the West claimed cultural descendance, was not something to be taken for granted in 1821. Supporters of the Greek cause threw themselves into the task of convincing the broader public to see in contemporary Greeks not merely an "illiterate body of peasantry and seamen and brigands [as they had viewed the Serbs]," but rather "the lineal descendants of the ancient Hellenes" (Earle 45). If Western affinity for Greece seems self-evident to us now, it is a testament to the cultural victory of these philhellenes.

And yet, this appeal to an archaic or classical past, to "the glory that was Greece" (as Edgar Allen Poe put it),[10] though of obvious significance for drawing attention to Greece as a special case in global politics, was not in itself sufficient when it came to getting people to donate time and money to the cause. *Hellenism*, as an aesthetic and emotional investment in (a largely imaginary) ancient "Greece," had been in strong evidence since the mid eighteenth century, but translating this reverence and nostalgia for a golden age into political action was no simple matter. In order to garner serious material support, philhellenes needed to persuade their contemporaries to form sentimental identifications with *living* Greeks, and here they met some skepticism and resistance. By way of example, in October of 1823 one of the editors of the *North American Review* gave voice to the fear that modern Greece might perhaps have fallen so low under Ottoman domination that it was no longer worth saving:

> The contradictory and often splenetic accounts of travellers [*sic*], and the unfavorable pictures which they have given us of those parts of the Grecian character, with which travellers [*sic*] and factors become acquainted, have done much to weaken the public sympathy for the Greeks. We have been told that they are barbarous, superstitious, fraudulent; and, in all moral qualities, no better than their Turkish tyrants."[11]

10 See "To Helen," in Edgar Allen Poe, *Complete Poems*, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 166.

11 "Coray's Aristotle," *The North American Review*, 17, no. 41 (1823): 398.

Such fears led the editor to wonder, even though modern Greeks were Christians who read the New Testament in the "original tongue," if they might be "unfit for their freedom" (403).

Writing about the rhetoric of American philhellenes, Jeremy Cox thus argues that "the rhetorical norms of a sentimental reading culture" were additionally put to use in order to create emotional identifications with contemporary Greeks and their plight.[12] Rising print culture, which was already churning out sentimental novels, plays, and poems for an ever-increasing middle-class readership, became a powerful medium for the dissemination of philhellenic poetry as well (257). As Cox points out, a key rhetorical strategy was to treat Greece as if it were a place with only two historical moments of note: one a blending of ancient history and myth, and one that began in 1821 (267). The historical sleight of hand meant to divert attention from several centuries of history functioned to bridge the gap between aesthetic and academic classicism, or Hellenism, and the political philhellenism of the nineteenth century. It functioned likewise as an act of cultural purification in support of the notion that Greece belongs only to the West, masking the complex intersection of cultures, religions, and traditions inherent to Greece of the early nineteenth century.

Deflecting American and western European attention away from the more than two millennia that intervened, say, between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE and the beginning of the Greek uprising, was possible because the public imagination had few associations with the "Greece" that had been part of the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires. There were also so many political, logistical, and financial barriers in the path of Westerners who wanted to travel to Greece in the early nineteenth century that few had been there. Even those who read the "splenetic accounts of travellers" to Greece found depictions that tended to elide all those years of intervening history as they juxtaposed the romantic ruins of monuments and buildings from archaic, classical, and Hellenistic eras—which always drew Western attention—with descriptions of Greece's present deplorable state. Such accounts incorporated the history of Greece into the Romantic myth of a cataclysmic "fall into Division" that presaged a "Ressurection to Unity."[13] The ruined remains of the temples that dotted the Greek landscape thus called out to moderns to "restore" them, even if restoration was possible only in the form of a "classical revival" beyond the borders of Greece.

Chateaubriand (1768–1848), for example, in his account of the 1806 journey he took through Greece and the middle east, which he published in 1811, repeatedly juxtaposes Hellenist idealizations with *la triste vérité*, the sad condition in which he found Greece and the Greeks:

12 Jeremy Cox, "American Philhellenes and the Poetics of War," *Journal for the History of Rhetoric* 23, no. 3 (2020): 254–5.

13 William Blake, *The Four Zoas*, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 301.

> En vain dans la Grèce on veut se livrer aux illusions: la triste vérité vous poursuit. Des loges de boue desséchée, plus propres a servir de retraite a des animaux qu'a des hommes; des femmes et des enfants en haillons, fuyant a l'approche de l'étranger et du janissaire; les chèvres même effrayées, se dispersant dans la montagne, et les chiens restant seuls pour vous recevoir avec des hurlements: voilà le spectacle qui vous arrache au charme des souvenirs.

> [In Greece, one indulges in illusions in vain: sad truth pursues one. Huts of dried mud, more suitable as the dens of animals than the homes of men; women and children in rags, fleeing at the approach of stranger or Janissary; even the goats frightened, scattering over the mountainside, and only the dogs left behind to welcome you with howls: such is the spectacle that robs you of memory's charms.][14]

Although he remained convinced at this point that Greeks would not soon cast off their Ottoman chains—"je crains bien que les Grecs ne soient pas sitôt disposés à rompre leurs chaines" (268)—he leaves the reader with a sense of sad beauty that encourages sentimental identification and empathy, as is evident in his description of a visit to the ruins of the fifth-century BCE Temple to Poseidon at Sounion:

> Je découvrais au loin la mer de l'Archipel avec toutes ses îles: le soleil couchant rougissait les côtes de Zéa et les quatorze belles colonnes de marbre blanc au pied desquelles je m'étais assis. Les sauges et les genévriers répandaient autour des ruines une odeur aromatique, et le bruit des vagues montait à peine jusqu'à moi.

> [I saw far off the sea of the Archipelago with all its islands: the setting sun reddened the coast of Zea and the fourteen beautiful columns of white marble, at whose feet I sat. The sage and juniper trees spread their aromatic scent amongst the ruins, and the sound of the waves barely reached me.] (259)

Just a few years later, Byron would carve his name on one of those "beautiful columns of white marble," a graffito one can see to this day. It is the very temple to which he alludes in the final stanza of the "Isles of Greece" song from Canto III of *Don Juan*:

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14 François René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, vol. 1 (Ixelles lez Bruxelles: Delvigne et Callewaert, 1851), 261. For the translation see the e-book: François de Chateaubriand, *Record of a Journey from Paris to Jerusalem and Back*, trans. A. S. Kline (www.poetryintranslation.com, 2011).

> Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
> Where nothing, save the waves and I,
> May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
> There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
> A land of slaves shall ne're be mine –
> Dash down yon cup of Samian wine![15]

Although Byron, like Chateaubriand, was for a long time skeptical that the "land of slaves" that Greece had become could one day break its chains, his very association with Greece in the popular imagination lent support to the cause. The poems that initially made him famous, after all, *Childe Harold's Pilgramage* and the "Oriental Tales"—the poems that gave birth to the "Byronic hero"—emerged from time spent on the ground in Greece during the poet's tour of 1809–11. As might be expected, this Byronic influence increased immensely once the poet himself landed in Greece in the summer of 1823. Why, after all, would a poet celebrity who had actually traveled in Greece and who drew on his experiences there as the source of many of his most popular poems risk his own life to fight for a people "unfit for their freedom"?

"A Complete Tyrtaeus"

When Davezac suggested (again, only a few months before Byron's death) that "the lyre of Byron … fires the ardor of the combatants," however absurd that image may appear to us, he hoped—by giving Byron a lyre and making him part of a "Spartan band"—to establish a phantasmatic link between ancient and modern. With this rhetorical move Davezac enlists "Byron" in the same sleight of hand that allows several centuries of Greek history to vanish from our sight. We are meant to imagine Byron as the incarnation of a glorious ancient past to which modern Greece might return: if not a "new Prometheus," as he suggested (with typical irony) that he hoped to be viewed, at least a modern Tyrtaeus.[16] Davezac, however, was by no means the only philhellene to connect the names Byron and Tyrtaeus in this fashion. By the nineteenth century the name of the Spartan poet had long been used as a sobriquet for any poet who contributed his pen rather than sword to a martial engagement, well enough established that it could be used casually and ironically. Applying the name to Byron after he joined the conflict in Greece, rather than an unexpected allusion, appears to emerge quite organically from the philhellenist discourse.

Although we have only fragments of his verse, Tyrtaeus was recognized since ancient times as the poet who inspired Spartan troops to victory in the Second Messenian War (*ca*. 660–650 BCE) with his elegiac poetry. The famous orator,

15 Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, 7 vols, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 5: 193. Further references to *Don Juan* cited by canto and line number.

16 On Byron's seeing himself as the "new Prometheus," once he decided to take military action in Greece, see Roderick Beaton, *Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 207.

Lycurgus of Athens (390–323 BCE), for example, when attempting to arouse martial spirit within his fellow citizens, insisted that the Spartans, otherwise not interested in things as refined as elegiac poetry, made an exception for Tyrtaeus:

> And although they [the Spartans] took no account of other poets, they placed such high value on him that they passed a law that whenever they took to the field under arms they should all be called to the king's tent to listen to the poems of Tyrtaeus, judging that by so doing they would be especially willing to die for their homeland.[17]

This is the version of Tyrtaeus that Davezac has in mind: we can imagine Greek revolutionaries, or at least philhellenist volunteers, ordered to listen to passages from Byron's poems as inspiration before going into battle. The contrast between the ironic distance from which we would be inclined to view such a mock heroic tableau today and the utter absence of irony in Davezac's placement of Byron within a "Spartan band" underscores the sentimental identificatory strategy of philhellenist rhetoric. Byronic irony finds itself out of place within this deployment of "Byron."

Byron himself expressed an affinity with Tyrtaeus on a few occasions. The self-deprecating irony evident in these gestures, however, only further underscores philhellenist sentimentality. Thomas Moore relates, for example: "That gentleman [Francis Hodgson] having said jestingly that some of the verses in the *Hours of Idleness* were calculated to make schoolboys rebellious. Lord Byron answers—'If my songs have produced the glorious effects you mention, I shall be a complete Tyrtaeus; —though I am sorry to say I resemble that interesting harper more in his person than in his poesy.'"[18] With the comment "in his person" Byron alludes to his own clubfoot, or *talipes equinovarus*, relying on the legend that Tyrtaeus was actually a lame Athenian schoolmaster. The anecdote is further indication of the familiarity of the trope. Anyone with a basic classical education would be presumed able to catch the allusion to the Spartan poet. Byron's mock heroic irony—rebellious schoolboys standing in for ancient Spartans, with himself as their Tyrtaeus—contrasts starkly with the idolizing turn this trope takes in the hands of the philhellenes, particularly of poets (as we will see below).

The legend that Tyrtaeus shared Byron's disability is of ancient origin. As Pausanias (*ca*. 110–80 CE) tells it, with the war not going as they had hoped, the Spartans consulted the Delphic Oracle, who told them to find their savior in Athens. The Athenians, hoping to thread the needle between granting their rivals too much support and angering Apollo, decided to send one of their own to Sparta, as the oracle had suggested, however, not one from among their best and brightest. Not

17 J. O. Burtt, ed. and trans., *Minor Attic Orators II*, Loeb Classical Library 395 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 95.

18 Thomas Moore, *Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1838), 74.

surprisingly, with this crafty attempt to subvert the prophecy, the Athenians actually helped to fulfill it: “The Athenians, who were not anxious either that the Lacedaemonians [Spartans] should add to their possessions the best part of Peloponnese without great dangers, or that they themselves should disobey the god, made their plans accordingly. There was a man Tyrtaeus, a teacher of letters, who was considered of poor intellect and was lame in one foot. Him they sent to Sparta.”[19] Though voted least likely to succeed in Athens, Tyrtaeus, once in Sparta, became the poet who moved the troops to victory over the Messenians. This aspect of the legend also explains why Lycurgus invoked the name of Tyrtaeus in order to inspire bravery in Athenians: though he gained his fame in Sparta, Tyrtaeus was supposedly one of their own. The implication is that the Spartans, too bellicose and rough to produce poets, had to find one in Athens, or perhaps that the weakest Athenian poet was better than any “harper” that Sparta could produce. The Oracle of Delphi, with one of her typically inscrutable pronouncements, directed the Spartans not to a new Achilles, but to a lame and mediocre poet, who ultimately led them to victory on the battlefield.

Byron alluded to this legend a second time, once again with self-effacing irony, in *Hints from Horace*, a poem composed originally in Athens in 1811, although only published in its entirety posthumously in 1831:

> And old Tyrtaeus, when the Spartans warr’d,
> (A limping leader, but a lofty bard)
> Though wall’d Ithome had resisted long,
> Reduced the fortress by the force of song. (lines 641–4)

“Ithome” refers to Mount Ithome (Ἰθώμη), atop which stood the fortress that supported Messenian resistance to the Spartans. The earliest manuscript version of the parenthetical line, written in Athens, reads: “As lame as I am, but a better bard” (1: 312). The allusion to Tyrtaeus’s, and Byron’s, disability remains in the amended version, although Byron removed the personal pronoun, perhaps finding the original too personal for publication. We might understand Tyrtaeus as the comparatively “better bard,” though his works were known only through a few elegiac fragments, and even those not generally considered to be of the highest quality, as an indicator that at this point, before the publication of *Childe Harold*, Byron was less certain of his own poetic abilities than he was by the time he revised the line a few years later, leaving Tyrtaeus “lofty” (in support of the alliteration) but not necessarily “better.”

19 Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Omerod, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 255. On the legend of Tyrtaeus as a lame Athenian schoolmaster, see also Douglas E. Gerber, ed., *Greek Elegiac Poetry from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, Loeb Classical Library 258 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.

“Les accens du nouveau Tyrtée”

Given the well-known metaphorical function that the name “Tyrtaeus” had acquired over the centuries, as evidenced even by Byron’s own self-referential allusions, it appears almost inevitable that the name would come up in reference to Byron in Greece after the summer of 1823. Across Europe, poets as well as politicians drew on the comparison for rhetorical effect. “In France,” as Peter Cochran points out, “the grief” over Byron’s death “was far more extensive than it was in England.”[20] The land that gave the philhellenes their name, though factionally divided during this Restauration era, found a shared identity in support for Greece. As Eugène Asse argues, the liberation of Greece from “la domination oppressive, cruelle des Turcs” was the one thing that all political factions—Bonapartist, royalist, liberal, moderate—could agree upon.[21]

A few months after that sad day in April, a little-known French writer, named Eduourd Louvet, issued a philhellenist poem commemorating Byron and his commitment to the Greek cause, titled *Byron et la Liberté: Hymne de Mort* (1824). A native of Caldos, Louvet immigrated to America where he for a time edited a French newspaper in New York City, *Le Reveil, journal francais, litteraire, politique, et commercial*. He was also a friend of James Fennimore Cooper and attempted to translate some of his works into French. Like Davezac, he ended up in New Orleans (in 1827).[22] Beyond the trope of the poet who inspires warriors, Louvet turns Byron into a sword-wielding war hero. Perhaps with a gesture toward the prosopopoeia of “The Curse of Minerva,” Athena appears to Byron to issue him a call to arms:

> Viens, dit-elle à BYRON, ta seconde patrie
> T’appelle au plus noble trépas.
>
> O mon fils, prends ta lyre, arme-toi d’une lance;
> Les Grecs ont secoué leur coupable sommeil,
> Que Byron soit leur chef et les murs de Byzance
> Tomberont aux chants du réveil.
>
> [“Come” [Athena] cries to Byron, “your second country calls you to the noblest death. O my son, take your lyre, arm yourself with a lance; the Greeks are shaken from their shameful sleep. Let Byron be their leader and the walls of Byzantium will fall to the songs of rebirth.”][23]

20 Peter Cochran, “Byron’s Writings in Greece, 1823–4,” *Peter Cochran’s Website—Film Reviews, Poems, Byron …* https://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/writings_from_greece.pdf.

21 Eugène Asse, *Les petits Romantiques* (Paris: Librairie Henri Leclerc, 1900), 89.

22 For a brief biographical sketch of Louvet, see Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 485.

23 Édouard Louvet, *Byron et la Liberté: Hymne de Mort* (Paris: Chez Paul Renouard, 1824), 8 (my translation).

Here Byron is not simply the hero who helps to liberate Greece from the Ottomans, but also the force that revives Greece from its slumbers, rousing it from a "coupable sommeil" to reclaim the Hellenist glory that was once its own. It is worth noting also that "les murs de Byzance" is a synecdoche (or toponym) for the Ottoman Empire as a whole, Byzantium having once been Constantinople, before Constantinople was once Istanbul. In the hands of philhellenists it oddly becomes a pejorative appellation, signifying a barbaric past in which the Ottoman Empire remains mired, while the enlightened West has supposedly moved on—a bit like referring to Germans as "Huns" during the First World War. As did Davezac, Louvet calls on the trope of the "lyre of Byron" in order to link the contemporary Byron to a literary golden age of Greece. This connection brings him likewise to the metaphorical use of Tyrtaeus:

> A peine il a paru, Byzance épouvantée
> Croit voir de Marathon refleurir les lauriers.
> BYRON, le fer en main, rappelle de Tyrtée
> Les chants et les transports guerriers.
>
> [As soon as he [Byron] appeared, a terrified Byzantium believes it sees Marathon reviving its laurels. Byron, iron in hand, revives the martial songs and passions of Tyrtaeus.]

Typical of philhellenist mythologizing of history, Louvet takes some liberties when he associates Tyrtaeus with the Battle of Marathon (490 BCE), a conflict between Athenians and invading Persians that took place nearly two centuries after the Second Messenian War (*ca*. 660–650 BCE). With the reference to Marathon, he is perhaps thinking of another stanza from "The Isles of Greece" (published 1821):

> The mountains look on Marathon –
> And Marathon looks on the sea;
> And musing there an hour alone,
> I dream'd that Greece might still be free
> For standing on the Persians' grave
> I could not deem myself a slave (V: 189)

Byron's traveling poet, who sings of Greek freedom on Haidée's island, uses Marathon, as does Louvet, to signify the martial power Greece once held, as evidenced by the Athenian's victory over the invading Persian armies there in 490 BCE. Allowing *Byzance* to imagine it sees Marathon clearly links the Ottomans of the nineteenth century with the Persians of the fifth century BCE, as does Byron's reference to "the Persians' grave." This imaginary identification of Ottomans with Persians is one of the most common tropes of philhellenist rhetoric. It operates also as a further example of the philhellenist temporal elision, or time travel, we have already observed (and is

precisely what Percy Shelley does with *Hellas*, published in the same year as Byron's Canto III of *Don Juan*). The Persians suddenly reappear, two millennia later, as Ottomans, in order to link contemporary Greeks with their illustrious (supposed) ancestors. In Louvet's words, "Byzance," in this imaginary scene of battle, is reminded of "Marathon" just as Byron recalls (*rappelle*) his forerunner "Tyrtée."

Yet, even more favored than references to Marathon as a means of establishing this phantasmatic link between the present and a mythologized past, was the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BCE), with its tragic hero, the Spartan Leonidas. In his ode "La Grèce" (1825), another French philhellene and enthusiastic supporter of *Byronisme*, Édouard D'Anglemont (1798–1876), designates Byron the *nouveau Tyrtée*, as he likewise associates Tyrtaeus with his Spartan compatriot who was a hero of the more famous war, Leonidas:

> Que vois je ! un Dieu chez vous arrive !
> Exile-toi sur l'autre rive,
> Bizance, sauve tes soldats,
> Va, la Grèce est ressuscitée :
> Les accens [*sic*] du nouveau Tyrtée
> Enfantent des Léonidas.
>
> [What do I see! A god has arrived! Exile yourself to another shore, Byzantium; save your soldiers, depart. Greece has awoken to the strains of the new Tyrtaeus, the child of Leonidas.][24]

D'Anglemont's apotheosis of Byron becomes clear from the note he appended to explain what was meant by *un Dieu*. The note reads simply: "Lord Byron" (195). Eugéne Asse's commentary on the passage suggests that D'Anglemont's sentiments reflect "une pensée Générale," given French devotion both to Byron and the Greek cause (218).

The ubiquity of these tropes for philhellenists, including references to Byron, is evidenced by their similarity in poems that appear to have no clear line of influence. In 1825, Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), whose poetry remains famous beyond his lifetime mainly because Schubert set some of it to music—most notably the lieder cycles *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin*—published a collection titled *Lieder der Griechen* (*Songs of the Greeks*) in 1821, all written as persona poems, as if sung by various contemporary Greeks. In line with the trend of connecting the Persian invasion of the fifth century BCE with Ottoman oppression, one of Müller's lieder, "Thermopylä," begins with a chorus of revolutionary soldiers singing praises of Leonidas:

24 Édouard D'Anglemont, *Odes* (Paris: J. C. Blosse, 1825), 38. This was translated by Cochran, who references this passage in "Byron's Writings on Greece."

> Heil! Heil! Nie wird Thermopylä den
> Sieg der Sclaven sehn.
> Heil! Ewig wird Thermopylä, ein Hort
> der Freiheit, stehn.
> Da kreist er mit dem Flammenschwert als
> Wächter um den Pass,
> Den er mit seinem Blut gefeit, der Held
> Leonidas

> [Hail! Hail! Never shall Thermopylae see the victory of slaves. Hail! Eternally shall Thermopylae stand as a refuge of freedom. There he circles with his sword of flame as guard along the pass that he protects with his blood, Leonidas][25]

Although it is prudent to resist historical anachronisms, it is nonetheless chilling to imagine Greek revolutionaries in 1821 shouting "Heil! Heil!" to the ghost of their hero Leonidas. Charles Grair is right to point out a connection between Müller's songs of Greek revolutionaries and "nationalistic ideologies that began to form in the early nineteenth century and that are still current today."[26] Bearing in mind that Germany did not become a nation until Bismarck wrangled a number of German-speaking states together in 1871, there is no question that Hellenism played a vital role in fostering a sense of a broader "German" cultural identity. Certain prominent Germans, over a century before Heidegger, felt that German language and culture had a special affinity with Greece, as evidenced by the fact that it was one of their own, Johann Winckelmann (1717–68), who had started the Greek revival with the publication of *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* in 1755. Another admirer of Byron, Goethe, had instigated the cultural movement of Weimar Classicism after being inspired by Roman copies of Greek sculpture that he had seen in Rome. The Crown Prince of Bavaria, Ludwig I (1786–1868), was busy buying up all the remnants of Greek sculpture he could and bringing them to Munich, where they yet remain as the Glyptothek Museum. Ludwig's second son, Otto (1815–67), became the first King of "liberated" Greece in 1832, part of a political move instigated by the powers ultimately responsible for the Ottoman defeat, England, France, and Russia.

To the second edition of the collection (1825), Müller appended a new poem in commemoration of the poet's recent death, simply titled "Byron." Apparently conflating Byron the poet with a Byronic hero, along the lines of Alp from *The Siege*

25 Wilhelm Müller, *Lieder der Griechen*, 2 vols (Dessau: Christian Georg Ackermann, 1825), 2: 21 (my translation).

26 Charles A. Grair, "The Poetics of National Liberation: Wilhelm Müller's *Lieder Der Griechen*," *Goethe Yearbook: Publications of the Goethe Society of North America* 11 (2002): 307.

of Corinth, Müller has Byron heroically falling in battle (far more romantic, of course, than dying of fever):

> Welche Lieder, welche Kämpfe, welche
> Wunden, welchen Fall!
> Einen Fall im Siegestaumel auf den Mauern
> von Byzanz,
>
> [What songs, what battles, what wounds, what a fall! A fall in the victory-struggles atop the walls of Byzantium] (1: 31)

Müller also takes up a few of the tropes we have seen in the previous two examples, comparing Byron to Tyrtaeus, while also referencing both of Byron's two weapons of choice—the lyre and the lance:

> Flogest du in Hellas Arme, und sie öffnete
> sie weit:
> Ist Tyrtäos auferstanden? Ist verwunden
> Nun mein Leid?
> …
> Sei willkommen, Held der Leier! Sei willkommen
> Lanzenheld!
> Auf, Tyrtäos, auf, und führe meine Söhne
> mir ins Feld!
>
> [You [Byron] flew into the arms of Hellas and she opened them wide to you. "Has Tyrtaeus been resurrected? Has my sorrow come to an end? … Welcome hero of the lyre! Welcome hero of the lance! Rise, Tyrtaeus, rise and lead my sons onto the battlefield!"] (1: 32)

In Müller's mythologizing, Byron as Tyrtaeus no longer requires modifiers such as "another" or *nouveau*, since Hellas immediately recognizes him for who he is, Tyrtaeus resurrected (*auferstanden*), yet another elision of historical distance that is mirrored by the transmutation of contemporary "Greece" into ancient "Hellas." To see Byron as Tyrtaeus is to view modern Greece, not as an "illiterate body of peasantry and seamen and brigands"—perhaps sitting "cross-legged on a bare floor swathed in shawls and smoking long pipes"(St Clair 82)—but as Hellas "resurrected" (*auferstanden*).

"We are all Greeks"

The trope of Byron as "another Tyrtaeus" thus aims to mitigate a public relations problem that persistently nagged the philhellenes. This problem, as we have seen,

emerges as a resistance to the idea that the West, whatever its debt to ancient Greece, should have any special relation with contemporary Greeks at all. Yet, if we can imagine Byron as the (re)embodiment of a Spartan poet, so the logic goes, we can see modern Greece as the direct heir of "the eldest daughter of civilization, the teacher of the arts, and the founder of learning," as Davezac put it (6). Such a move is of course meant to counter the competing notion that modern Greeks (at best) have no special claim on this glorious past, and (at worst) are "no better than their Turkish tyrants" and thus "unfit for freedom," as the *North American Review* suggested.

The international trope of Byron as Tyrtaeus likewise lends support to the notion of the West as the true inheritor of the mantle of ancient Greek glory. Even if the philhellenist dream of restoring Greece to its idealized past were to come true, this resurrected Hellas would be contingent on its Western allies and thus compelled to share its glory with them. If Byron can be the avatar of Tyrtaeus, it follows by extension that modern cities or nations might lay claim to the cultural prestige of the Athens of Pericles or to the Sparta of Leonidas. "Greek revival" architecture, which began in the mid-eighteenth century and rose to prominence in the nineteenth, stands out as only one (though highly visible) example of this cultural trend. Architects began to eschew Roman styles as "imitative and hybridized" while viewing the "Attic" order as authentic and original.[27] Cashing in on this trend, Edinburgh, for example, claimed the title of "The Athens of the North."[28] Berlin, with the help of the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841), tried to position itself as the *Spree-Athen* (in reference to the river Spree that runs through the city) as a means of gaining a bit of "symbolic capital."[29] In America, Thomas Jefferson and the architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764–1820) put immense effort into making the new national capitol building a composite of Greek architectural orders in order to lend the new country political and cultural gravitas (Marks 45–52).

Such efforts to gain cultural clout from association with ancient Greece worked as a two-edged sword for philhellenes after the outbreak of the revolution in 1821, however. On the one hand, they benefitted from the general love of all things Greek, while on the other hand, the fact that the "Greek revival" that had already sprung up in the West might suggest little need to resurrect Greece in the eastern Mediterranean as well. Philhellenes needed to make certain that contemporary Greece was clearly demarcated as "Western," as a part of "us" that has been invaded by the barbarians of Byzantium who are clearly not "us." The rhetoric of cultural identity, as Anna

27 Arthur S. Marks, "A Capital Problem: The Attic Order and the Greek Revival in America," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 103, no. 5 (2013): 7–8.

28 John Lowrey, "From Caesarea to Athens: Greek Revival Edinburgh and the Question of Scottish Identity Within the Unionist State," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60, no. 2 (2001): 136.

29 For a brief overview of Berlin as the *Spree-Athen*, see Marc Reichwein, "Als Griechenland noch für Deutschland bürgte," *Die Welt* (2011), https://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/kultur/article13392675/Als-Griechenland-noch-fuer-Deutschland-buergte.html.

Triandafyllidou argues, always demands a "we" and a "they."[30] Thus, when Percy Shelley tells us that "we are all Greeks" in his preface to *Hellas* (1822), he is saying simultaneously that Greeks *are all us*, highlighting the way that philhellenist identificatory rhetoric, as it tries to establish a link between a Western, post-Enlightenment, and white "us," and an imaginary Greece, is creating "Greece" in its own image.[31]

To return to the idea of Byron as a resurrected Tyrtaeus—with an eye for what is occluded by the trope—is to note that the Messenians of the seventh century BCE, rather than aggressors or invaders, as were the Persians with their vast empire in the fifth century, were actually an ethnic group whom Sparta had long held in serfdom. The wars that the Messenians fought with Sparta between the eighth and seventh centuries were efforts on the part of the Messenians to gain their independence from oppressors who viewed them as inferiors worthy of slave status. Pausanias in fact quotes Tyrtaeus in order to explain the reasons behind the Messenian revolt of the late seventh century:

> As to the wanton punishments which they [the Spartans] inflicted on the Messenians, this is what is said in Tyrtaeus' poems: "Like asses worn by their great burdens, bringing of dire necessity to their masters the half of all the fruits the corn-land bears." … In these straits the Messenians, foreseeing no kindness from the Lacedaemonians [Spartans], and thinking death in battle or a complete migration from Peloponnese preferable to their present lot, resolved at all costs to revolt. (249)

Tyrtaeus, rather than liberating anyone, was thus actually deploying his lyre in the support of the suppression of a slave revolt. After their victory, the Spartans once again divided up Messenian land for themselves as they reduced their rivals to their former status of "agricultural slaves called helots."[32] In fact, Sparta only achieved its prestige as a land of warriors in the fifth century because it had an entire population of helots to do all the manual labor in order that Spartan men could focus on honing their battle skills.

This bit of history helps to explain further why philhellenes preferred to focus on Leonidas, and to hint that Tyrtaeus had been inspiring *those* Spartans in their resistance to the invading Persians a century and a half after the Messenian war in question. When Davezac places Byron/Tyrtaeus within the "Spartan band," he clearly has the Battle of Thermopylae in mind, as is evident from the fact that he referenced

30 Anna Triandafyllidou, "National Identity and the 'other,'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21, no. 4 (1998): 596.

31 Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, eds, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* (New York: Norton, 2002), 431.

32 Nigel M. Kennell, "Conquest, Crisis, and Consolidation," in *Spartans: A New History*, Kindle edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

this more famous conflict just a bit earlier in his speech: "not even the fancy of Homer could have feigned the exploit of Leonidas. Sparta, during the whole of her existence, presents to our observation a series of miracles, scarcely credible, were they not attested by the evidence of contemporary writers" (8). His intent is simply to convince his audience to see contemporary Greeks, if not quite on the level of Leonidas, then at least as direct descendants now ready to reclaim his legacy. With a bit of historical fudging, Tyrtaeus becomes a liberator rather than an oppressor, a liberatory status that Byron is meant to embody as the Spartan's nineteenth-century avatar.

Davezac deploys a further bit of preterition when he calls on his audience members to envision themselves as potential liberators of Greeks from Ottoman slavery while simply glossing over the fact that he is speaking in the capital of a state whose laws support the right to hold fellow humans as chattel slaves. A trip to Greece would hardly be required if one wanted to resist the evils of slavery. This malevolent irony is particularly pronounced in the ultimate appeal he makes as he concludes his speech. Do not weep over the dying heroes of the revolution, he insists, but for their wives and daughters who will become slaves in Turkish harems:

> Reserve your pity, your tears, for the matron doomed in slavery – for the shrieking virgin, dragged to captivity by a lawless soldiery; and finding no refuge, no asylum save the Harem of a Satrap. There, the victim is adorned and awaits the commands of her master. Will Heaven permit the sacrifice of youth and beauty? Are there no protecting angels nigh; no hero, guardian of innocence and honour? No Jackson, calling on freemen to rush to battle, and breathing into every heart the presaging inspirations of his own dauntless mind? Americans! Give to husbands, fathers, brothers, arms to defend their wives, their daughters, their sisters: Give them arms! It is all they ask at your hands: The God whom they and we adore, will give them Victory and Freedom! (16–17)

The force of this sentimental appeal to the horrors of slavery, made from within a slave state in a slave nation, depends on the assumption that certain human beings are naturally fit for slavery while others are not. Since "we are all Greeks," and white European Americans are clearly not meant to be slaves, it follows that the Ottoman enslavement of Greeks is a gross violation of the natural order. Davezac's suggestion that Greeks are in need of their own Andrew Jackson underscores the hypocrisy (as it allows Davezac to make a campaign pitch for his mentor). Jackson made his living as the owner of a cotton plantation, known as the "Hermitage," where by 1829 he had over 100 slaves performing forced labor for him.[33] When elected president, Jackson brought his "house slaves" from the Hermitage to serve him in the White House,

33 H. W. Brands, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 149.

as was the norm of the era. He later also signed the "Indian Removal Act," which forcibly "relocated" more than 45,000 American Indians from their ancestral lands.

Closer to home for Davezac, in 1811 (when he was around 30 years old and living in New Orleans), Louisiana had been the site of the largest slave revolt in American history, the so-called "German Coast Rebellion," which was brutality put down with tactics that included public hangings without trial and the placement of the decapitated heads of escaped slaves on display around New Orleans.[34] Davezac was born on a Caribbean plantation worked by slaves, emigrated to America due to a slave revolt, lived in New Orleans during the time of the largest slave revolt in American history, was an associate of the slave-holding Andrew Jackson, and supported the pro-slavery policies of Jackson and the Democratic Party. He also gave a speech in 1824 calling on his fellow citizens to lend support to a people living on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in a place he had never been, lest they be "doomed in slavery." As rhetorical support for his appeal he turned to the example of a Spartan poet of the seventh century BCE who had played a small part in the enslavement of an entire people for generations.

The hypocrisy of a slavery-supporting nation denouncing an empire on the other side of the world for holding slaves was not lost on all contemporaries of Davezac. When, in January of 1824, the US Congress engaged in its debate regarding "the Greek Cause" that began when Daniel Webster delivered the philhellenist speech before Congress to which I alluded earlier, and which Davezac saw himself as supporting, at least one congressman spoke up in opposition. Webster, having already referred to Greeks generally as "slaves under barbarous masters,"[35] with the concluding words of his speech, called on his colleagues to save Greek women and children from being sold into Turkish slavery:

> They [the Greeks] stretch out their arms to the Christian communities of the earth, beseeching them, by a generous recollection of their ancestors, by the consideration of their own desolated and ruined cities and villages, by their wives and children, sold into an accursed slavery, by their own blood, which they seem willing to pour out like water, by the common faith, and in the Name, which unites all Christians, that they would extend to them, at least some token of passionate regard. (50)

Webster highlights another common aspect of philhellenist sentimental appeals for identification with contemporary Greeks: they are Christians and the Ottomans are not. His speech in fact repeatedly draws a stark line between European civilization, in which America participates, and Ottoman barbarism, for example: "'The Turk,' it

34 Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 115.

35 Daniel Webster, *Mr. Webster's Speech on the Greek Revolution* (Washington City: John S. Meehan, 1824), 29–30.

has been said, 'has been encamped in Europe for four centuries.' He has hardly any more participation in European manners, knowledge, and arts, than when he crossed the Bosphorus" (31).

The congressman to whom I alluded who opposed Webster, John Randolph of Virginia (1773–1833), among other weapons, deployed the one most anathema to philhellenists, *historicizing*, as he claimed that contemporary Greeks have nothing to do with Socrates, et al: "the modern Greeks cannot be identified with the people who produced Aristides and Socrates. Greece has been often conquered, and foreign people have planted themselves there." [36] We are thus "not all Greeks," as Randolph would have it. "Foreign people" (like weeds) have "planted themselves there." He argued further that if our main objection to the Turks is that "they hold human beings as property" then we should consider, before condemning them, "what says the Constitution of the United States on this point" (656):

> But I would ask gentlemen in this House, who have the misfortune to reside on the wrong side of a certain mysterious parallel of latitude to take this question seriously into consideration whether the Government of the United States is prepared to say that the act of holding human beings as property is sufficient to place the party so offending under the ban of its high and mighty displeasure? (656)

Inherent in Randolph's calling attention to American hypocrisy on the question of slavery is a potential reconfiguration of the us-them dichotomy. By arguing that "we" are actually more like the "barbarous" Turks in many respects than we are like contemporary Greeks, he accentuates the arbitrary nature of the cultural lines that philhellenes loved to demarcate, as if tugging on the curtain that occludes the machinery behind the philhellenist fabrication of "Greece."

Certainly, many philhellenists were opposed to slavery in all of its forms (including Byron, Shelley, and Daniel Webster), yet Davezac's speech suggests that it was possible to fight for the liberation of certain peoples while simultaneously supporting slavery for others. With his preface to *Hellas*, while ostensibly arguing against all forms of oppression and slavery, Shelley nonetheless affirms hierarchized delineations of "us" and "other" that potentially support the rhetorical strategies Davezac employs. The very premise of his philhellenist drama, transposing Aeschylus's *The Persians* into the politics of the nineteenth century, relies on the historical, or ahistorical, logic familiar to us with the trope of Byron as Tyrtaeus: if modern Ottomans are Persians, then we are all Greeks. Without the benign influence of the "Greeks," he argues "we" would be either trapped in a savagely barbarian past, or "what is worse," living in a state of "stagnant" misery as he claims do the entire populations of contemporary

36 *Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, from 1789 to 1856*, vol. 7 (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1858), 661.

China and Japan (431). Since these imaginary Greeks have rescued us from Germanic barbarism and "Oriental" mental stagnation, it is incumbent on us to return the favor by rescuing them, but from what exactly?

Shelley's answer brings us back to Davezac's speech—we must save Hellas from the Turkish harem. Chinese, Japanese, and Turkish peoples are not "us." Enslaved Hellas, whether depicted as a "Chorus of Greek Captive Women," as Shelley does, or as the (even more melodramatic) "shrieking virgin, dragged to captivity," as Davezac puts it, do not merit enslavement because they are like us, meaning white and European. Allowing John Randolph to debate Davezac along with Webster, I would point out that the argument against philhellenism, as Randolph frames it, is potentially far more inclusive than Hellas or poetic fantasies that have Byron defeating a cowering "Byzantium" as he channels a Spartan poet. In his reconfiguring of the hierarchized binary of civilized (occident) versus barbaric (orient) Randolph appeals to the supposedly American values of religious freedom that allow members of all ethnic groups and religions the right of citizenship: "The Turk may become a citizen of the United States, and have his mosque in our country, as well as the Jew his synagogue" (661).

Turning in conclusion to the question of *what would Byron think?*—it strikes me that many of his notions regarding the question of Greece might fall more in line with certain aspects of anti-philhellenist rhetoric than they would with those who wish to find in him a new Tyrtaeus. As Roderick Beaton argues in his account of *Byron's War*, though the decision to go to Greece in 1823 was in some sense a "reinvention" of his persona, and thus the playing of a role, it was "not the result of the whims and pressures of the moment" (xvii), nor with illusions that Greece could simply become, through violent revolution, something that philhellenists imagined it once was. The role Byron hoped to play was not with pretensions of "another Tyrtaeus," nor with visions of the return of Leonidas. The archeologist Yannis Hamilakis uses the metaphor of a "palimpsest of multi-cultural material presence" to describe Greece in the early nineteenth century (with specific reference to the Athenian Acropolis), as a way of indicating the numerous cultural, religious, ethnic, and historical strands that were interwoven and materially evident in Greece at the time Byron was there.[37] I find the palimpsest metaphor an apt way of looking at a few of the "Lines Associated with *The Siege of Corinth*," written in 1811. In a semi-autobiographical reference to his first Greek sojourn, Byron describes the nature of his entourage:

> We were of all tongues and creeds;—
> Some were those who counted beads,
> Some of mosque, and some of church;

37 Yannis Hamilakis, "Decolonizing Greek Archaeology: Indigenous Archaeologies, Modernist Archaeology and the Post-Colonial Critique," in *A Singular Antiquity*, ed. D. Damaskos, and D. Plantzos (Athens: The Benaki Museum, 2008), 2.

> And some, or I mis-say, of neither;
> Yet through the wide world might ye search
> Nor find a motlier crew nor blither. (3: 356)

The lines celebrate the complex cultural palimpsest that philhellenes who actually traveled to Greece would have encountered. It does not insist that people living in Greece somehow embody Shelley's notion that "the modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our Kind" (431). Nor does it require that Byron take up his lyre as another Tyrtaeus in a Spartan band. He would no doubt have preferred the "motley crew."