

Μουσείο Μπενάκη

A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece



Archaeological etymologies: monumentality and domesticity in twentieth-century Greece

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TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS of this essay I must transgress two assumptions and a boundary. The boundary is straightforward: it is the disciplinary fence that too often separates the interests of archaeology, philology, and social anthropology. The assumptions are both particularly associated with the cultural politics of the classical tradition in Greece. The first is that etymology is a matter of language, and of language alone. The second is that the historical allusions enshrined in the cultural forms exemplified by architecture are nothing more than ideological devices intended to recall a particular kind of past (although I would certainly agree that they are that as well); I shall argue that these elements are – and in the twentieth century have dramatically served as – components in a complex game of authority and subversion. In this game, allusions to a canonical past – its etymological traces – have provided a flexible cover for rethinking important aspects of moral, cultural, and political legitimacy in Greece. In this regard, I am presenting an argument that parallels the recent insights provided by E. Papataxiarchis¹ when he suggests that a measure of tolerance for difference, or alterity, has always formed an integral aspect of Greek social morality, but always on condition of relative concealment or at least discretion. It is also an argument that reinforces what I have said on earlier occasions² about both local moral values and bureaucratic practice: that the more strictly the observance of formal requirements is maintained, the more individuals can exercise their agency in subverting and even reversing the norms these requirements ostensibly express and protect.

Such claims can be disquieting in the Greek context

because, just like the eccentric who refuses to accept the tolerance of complaisance but insists on the right to be heard, they represent a kind of epistemological tactlessness. In the philologically overburdened and logocentric context of modern Greek identity politics, any tampering with the sacred space of etymology, itself deeply ramified in the popular imagination, is liable to provoke disquiet. Moreover, while space and its uses are visible, the uses can be occluded by emphasis on the forms of the space itself, and this is what often happens; while the study of the social uses of space is relevant to architects as well as social anthropologists, it is often regarded as not particularly relevant for architectural *history*. Ironically, this only serves to confirm that architecture, no less than language, is a morally charged semantic field.

While there is now some impressive work in architectural history to set against the canonical works in much the same idiom as critical studies of the nationalistic uses of folklore,³ there has been little reciprocal engagement between that field and social and cultural anthropology.⁴ Because the very notion of ‘architecture’, already problematic as an analytical term,⁵ comes imbued with a heavy sense of its own classical genealogy, and because this genealogy is bureaucratically represented in Greece by the state-run Archaeological Service, it is all the more important to challenge the assumptions that undergird its historical study here in Greece.

The built environment is a crucial domain of ideological contestation.⁶ This being the case, a particular tension may be expected to arise between exterior and interior spaces. While such tensions can be observed in virtually

all societies, they become especially salient in societies where the presentation of a culturally ‘respectable’ face covers a range of extremely familiar cultural practices and habits, not all of which fit that model of respectability. The rise of nineteenth-century bourgeois sensibilities in Athens and elsewhere⁷ produced an immediate need to create, not so much ‘privacy’, as a space for the enjoyment of illicit but culturally familiar pleasures – a need, as I have argued,⁸ that springs less from some deep-seated human desire for perversity than from the realization that these pleasures, not the official forms of patriotism, are the true sources of mutual identification and solidarity. While speech, architecture, and much else were thus calibrated to the censorious eyes and ears of educated foreigners who supposedly represented ‘high culture’, they all concealed alternative forms that would have shocked those foreign observers, and indeed sometimes did so.

Thus, the much discussed tension between the ideal-typical models of Hellenism and *Romiosyni* is not so much a matter of language – *pace* the many excellent studies of Greek diglossia – as it is architectonic, spatial, and heavily coded with symbols only some of which have linguistic referents. These two models are ideal-typical and represent stances rather than groups of people; an individual may emphasize being Romeic in one context and, without any evident sense of contradiction, Hellenic in the next moment. In respect of these contrasts, moreover,⁹ Bakalaki has particularly urged close attention both to the foreign origins of much of what has been taken as indigenous to Greece and to local reworkings of these foreign models. Nor are such contrasts unique to Greece, although their realization as a tension between Greece’s role as the vaunted spiritual ancestor of Europe on the one hand and the often despised cultural backwater of that same Europe on the other gives particular piquancy to the Greek case. Comments on my earlier handling of these notions, notably by Esra Özyürek¹⁰ writing of Turkey and Richard Maddox¹¹ in the Spanish context, have further alerted me to the necessity of historicizing changes masked by an apparent continuity of form. Indeed, the binary structure that we deploy in describing Greek social life in these terms is ultimately a simplification of actual social practice, as is the overworked distinction between public and private.¹²

Because, inevitably, such contrasts also involve the anthropologist’s own status as an outsider or native-born observer, they are often matters of great sensitivity. But that

does not mean that they are any the less real for local actors. The commonly heard classical tag ‘*Ta en oiko mi en dēmo*’ (‘the things of the house [ancient Greek *oikos*] are not to be revealed in public space [*dēmos*]’) immediately reminds us that such distinctions have practical significance for local social actors in Greece, for example, where it is precisely the awareness of a censorious foreign eye that provokes the defensive deployment of the ‘official’ – that is, Hellenic – model and the concealment of familiar alternatives that look, somehow, ‘less Greek’ when judged in the idiom of classicizing models.

Precisely because it is important to respect local interpretations, moreover, and indeed to ask why such interpretations are sometimes denied and derided when outsiders reiterate them, I insist that it remains useful to identify the *codes* whereby public self-display is set off from private familiarity – and whereby, moreover, the private space of an internal intellectual debate in Greece might not welcome such intrusions by outside observers. That concern, however, is but a particular case of the *use* to which these codes are put in observable social interactions; academic discourse is itself a social practice, and when our debates heat up we would do well to remind ourselves of that fact. Discomfort with a range of alternative idioms in sexuality,¹³ ethnic self-ascription,¹⁴ and even dress styles and eating habits¹⁵ can still trigger reactions of embarrassment, denial, and defensive outrage.

Readers may well wonder why I am raising such currently fashionable obsessions of a discipline like social anthropology in a volume devoted to the uses of the ancient past in twentieth-century Greece. The answer is quite simple: the *patterning* of both collective and individual self-presentation has conventionally invoked a Classical Greek model for most of the history of the independent Greek state. That patterning, which includes an image of ancient Greece as itself an ideal-typical exemplar of democratic political values and intellectual freedom, is, by an ironic paradox, the clearest possible indication of Greece’s dependence on Western European cultural norms and stereotypes. In this respect, the situation of Greece is not unlike that of several other supposedly independent nation-states that have been held to cultural models not of their own making. Among these are Nepal, Ethiopia, and, especially, Thailand. The response to my comparison of modern Greece with Asian and African countries¹⁶ has often been one of barely concealed distaste, the implicitly

racist underpinnings of that reaction masked by a politically correct expression of polite surprise; such reactions, while often emanating from relatively liberal circles, reproduce the logic whereby Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*¹⁷ was castigated for daring to posit African roots for supposedly autochthonous Hellenic cultural forms. Ironically, too, this very reaction confirms my interpretation. Many Greeks claim that they are 'not racist'. If that is even partially true, their muted but unmistakable reproduction of Europe-wide idioms of racist talk can logically be taken to reflect their conceptual dependency on a Western-derived hierarchy of cultural values. Why, otherwise, would it matter whether they were 'European' or not? And why would it be considered vitally important to reclaim an ancient heritage, especially one that has been carefully repackaged to reflect Western European ideals, rather than enjoying the comforts of a living modern culture that is in significant respects very different?

By now, to be sure, such reactions have begun to fade; this is why today we can contemplate their implications with greater equanimity than would have been possible a scant decade ago. The twentieth century was a time of rapid change, but also of a very irregular and unpredictable *tempo* in the processes of change. Our own work is inevitably caught up in these dynamics. Perhaps *Black Athena* is not the best example with which to illustrate these attitudinal shifts; it may still be too much for some more conservative souls to swallow, and it has also been the subject of scholarly – if also controversial – criticism.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the dynamic has palpably altered in ways that are clear indexes of a radical change in Greece's international standing and self-perception. No longer does the capacity of a foreigner to speak Greek well occasion astonishment that such a phenomenon is even possible; enough immigrants of clearly non-European origin speak the language fluently that most Greeks today accept this possibility as normal. No longer do Greeks automatically assume that the classical heritage is all that counts in their standing within the European Union. There are, to be sure, plenty of diehard literalists, for whom nothing is negotiable. But they no longer control public discourse to the extent they once did, and many conversational invocations of the classical past today seem ironic rather than literal-minded.

Indeed, the very possibility of writing about such matters represents a rethinking of Greece's relationship both

with its ascribed classical past and with what, in another context, I have described as the crypto-colonial 'global hierarchy of value' – a conceptual successor to the older political and economic structures of colonialism.¹⁹ At the end of my paper, I will return to this theme of crypto-colonialism to suggest that we can now also attempt once-unthinkable comparisons that will further shake, not the importance (which is historically undeniable), but the rigid normativity of the once-authoritative classical model of world civilization. We are in a position to liberate ourselves from those old normative obsessions; but we also face a global context in which some of them are even more entrenched than before, not so much in Greece itself, where an educated public often questions them, but amid the parochialism and ignorance that is the special privilege of powerful nations and where educators continue to purvey outdated images of Greece as the detritus of 'departed worth'.

We should begin with the model of ancient Greece that, for most of the twentieth century, was the benchmark of civilization. It is not, we now know, a model that had much to do with the lived experience of ancient Greece itself. There were always clues to this. The death of the eighteenth-century aestheticist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, in what appears to have been a quarrel between homosexual lovers, in an Italian port – the closest he ever came to Greece – hints at alternative realities, not only in his life, but in the ancient world he did so much to frame and sanitize. The image he did so much to promote underwent long and sometimes absurd convulsions, culminating, as far as Greece itself was concerned, in the conceptual acrobatics of the junta's censors as they sought to glorify the ancient past while denying much of its sexual, political, and aesthetic experience.²⁰ In this regard, the censors followed a pattern of 'respectability' that partially originated in the West and to which the West obstinately clings to this day.²¹

But such distortions were not unique to the colonels, foolish though they were, nor were quite serious scholars free of blame. We anthropologists, for example, focused on the chaste women and heroic men of a public model of respectability – 'honour and shame' – while ignoring, except as shocking 'folklore',²² virtually everything that conflicted with this model. Philology was equally timid. Even so distinguished an example as Cavafy's invocation of the classical past to legitimize 'Greek love' – homosexuality

– ran into repeated self-censorship in the face of a largely derivative set of public values that still sometimes tries to shield the long-standing presence of gay bars and prostitution from foreign eyes trained by a repressive Western tradition of classical scholarship.²³

Yet Greeks have always acknowledged among themselves, and without excessive reference to the classical past (it must be said), that practices regarded as inappropriate, according to both Victorian sensibilities and the ‘Mediterranean traditions’ so beloved of an older generation of anthropologists, are part and parcel of everyday life. Despite a few early and very wary hints,²⁴ it was not until the publication of James D. Faubion’s controversial *Modern Greek Lessons*²⁵ that the issue of multiple sexualities was so much as mentioned in the anthropological literature. Nowadays, clearly, that situation has changed. Especially in anthropological articles and books published in Greek, there is a growing recognition that homosexual couples and groups, as well as single-parent families, are an integral part of Greek social life and even offer solutions to some of the problems – notably the low birthrate – that so deeply trouble nationalist conservatives.²⁶ It might indeed be argued that such an exploratory discussion of the private spaces – of the cultural intimacy as it were, of modern Greek society – only became possible when it was carried out in Greek, a language long regarded, in the same logic of defensiveness, as largely impenetrable to outsiders. If today we laugh at such an idea, we would do well to recall that it is not so long since foreign ethnographers of Greece (and other places) refused to present their work in Greek, never cited Greek colleagues’ publications, and acted as though there was really no Greek work worth taking seriously anyway. The Greek response to this marginalization, which has not entirely vanished, has been almost shockingly magnanimous in its opposition to the simultaneously post-colonial and establishment habit of assuming that foreigners cannot understand ‘our’ culture.²⁷

In this regard, the anthropologists themselves represent an important aspect of the encompassing, tectonic shifts that have taken place in the space of Greek cultural interpretation. The *oikos* is coming out into the *dēmos* – or, at least, out of the closet. Part of this, as E. Papataxiarchis particularly has noted,²⁸ has to do with the fact that there are many more outsiders now living inside the *dēmos* – immigrants, refugees, wealthy expatriates, and scholars increasingly coming from places other than the old

centres of academic power. It is, as Papataxiarchis notes, through the practice of field research – long-term immersion in the most personal spaces of everyday life – that Greek and other scholars have been able to discover a high tolerance for otherness of many kinds – sexual, ethnic, religious – that was hitherto either ignored or considered out of bounds. While in some regards this reproduces the more general anthropological experience of self-alienation through the culture shock of the fieldwork experience, it takes on particular interest in the Greek context because it is recent and thus occurs at a time when anthropology has developed useful instruments and points of comparison for analyzing the phenomenon and coming to terms with its own entailment in that same phenomenon.

So far, the condition of the gradual emergence into public awareness of the various forms of difference has been that such reworkings of traditional family arrangements should remain a matter of discreet, private daily life, rather than of public display and discussion. In short, the architectonics of Greek cultural intimacy is alive and well. But the *structures* that permitted this seemingly fundamental change were in fact, as Papataxiarchis skillfully demonstrates, always in place. The classical façade, or for that matter the aggressively modernist *polykatoikia*, offers far better cover for alternative lifestyles and discourses than was previously recognized. Again, this is not unlike the stern morality of, for example, a Cretan village, where performances of chaste modesty count for far more than reputation, and where the generic assumption of a shared morality actually allows for a great deal of slippage between public display and private actions.²⁹ Perhaps this phenomenon also helps to explain why Greek bureaucrats seem particularly adept at recasting absolute bureaucratic prescriptions as devices for the pursuit of special interests, although the phenomenon can be observed in virtually any society where administration is complex and ramified.

It is important to recognize that these arrangements are far from new; the demonstration by Papataxiarchis and others that they have deep roots in so-called ‘traditional’ social settings alerts us to what might otherwise seem to be the paradox of the coexistence of stern morality and a relatively relaxed attitude to violations of the norms. Indeed, Greek society has long accommodated the very features that its members profess to abhor – this being the *practice* of cultural intimacy behind a shield of respectability composed of the official values of church and state.

The colonels' suppression of aspects of the classical tradition they didn't like, from political subversion to sexual obscenity, was a backhanded – or, as Goffman³⁰ would have put it, 'backstage' – recognition that the Victorian representation of the classical past, like the Victorian representation of so much else, entailed the public occlusion of what in fact everyone 'knew' was already there. In a way, Greek society has long managed to survive rather well by precisely such acts of half-recognition, suppressed in the name of national security and decorum; a good example is the frequent acknowledgment in the eighties and especially at the height of the crisis over the Macedonian name, that 'of course' everyone knew that there were minorities in Greece but that it was just inconvenient to talk about them, especially as they were so small.

The very ferocity of Greek exclusivism undermines its stated goals, and the sense of distance that many Greeks still have from the classical past – in contrast, say, to the warm presence of the ancient world for modern Romans – made classicism the most effective shield against the revelation of such inconveniences. The use of *katharevousa* was one such version of the shield; its extraordinary survival into the seventies (and its continuing perpetuation now as an ironic device) masked the very transitions it was supposed either to hide or to suppress. Because the demotic Greek language is still without question closely related to its classical antecedents, moreover, the gradual emergence of a formal demotic heavily influenced by *katharevousa* in the mixed forms of journalism and the academy served much the same cultural purpose as the subtle slippage between Neoclassical architecture and the *polykatoikia* in the era between the end of World War II and the restoration of a fully electoral democracy in the years following the demise of the junta.

This slippage is, of course, entirely usual in cultures around the world. It is, at one level, a response to globalization, itself still heavily marked by its passage through a long nineteenth century redolent with the adulation of the classical past. Even as far away as Thailand, whose student revolution of 1973 was a source of inspiration for the heroes of the Polytechnic in Athens that same year, classical architectural elements – now often prefabricated in concrete façades – continue to mark that country's 'crypto-colonial'³¹ indebtedness to an occidental tradition launched by Rama V Chulalongkorn in the Italian-designed architectonics of his Grand Palace. Here,

too, the classical elements become a frame for notions of *khwaamsiwilai*, 'civilization'³² in an etymologically more recent rendition of *aryatham*.³³ Within these spaces of a derivative and colonial model of 'civilization', with its linguistic and architectural etymologies of Neoclassical severity, we can track the emergence of a more robustly self-asserting sense of plural identities in everything from architecture and music to food.³⁴

Such changes require at least two conditions. One is a relatively stable freedom from outside pressures. Sri Lanka may find it much harder to resolve such difficulties for the moment than does Thailand or Greece. And, for a long time Greece cited the spectre of the bad neighbour, the *kakos geitonas* (one, moreover, who had 'stolen' Greek classical antiquity even more brazenly than the West that Turkey was now so slavishly imitating) as the main justification for refusing to admit to the existence of a Turkish ethnic minority in Thrace. Such pressures have faded, there is an air of *détente* between the two countries despite continuing aggravations over Cyprus, and some unofficial acknowledgment – aided, it must be said, by an equally *de haut en bas* source of pressure in the EU bureaucracy – that times are indeed changing and that Greece must change too.

The other condition is a more subtle one. It has to do with a more specifically Greek cultural feature, though once again one that is certainly not unique to that country. If we can say that in general rigid moral schemata provide cover for pragmatic adjustments in practice, both the classical formalism and the rural morality converged in Greece to provide just such a façade. The very transliteration of φιλότιμο as *philotimo*, and the frequent local use of *katharevousa* signs on shop-fronts of classical design (persisting in tandem in the diaspora far longer than in Greece itself), suggests this convergence. Behind that front, however, there was a predisposition to adjustment, already secured as that zone of cultural intimacy that we so often, and so fondly, acknowledge as the 'Romeic' side of Greek culture: *poniria* (πονηριά) rather than *eksipnadha* (εξυπνάδα), sexual adventurism rather than the fidelity of Penelope, and so on (and after all, wasn't the Karaghiozis-like Odysseus more Romeic than Hellenic as well, with all that this implies?).

Greeks have always, stereotypical as it may be,³⁵ taken pride in their adaptability, their predilection for the role of fixers and roamers, masking even this with a classical-

sounding tag: *Opou ge kai patris* (any land a homeland). Such pragmatism has eased as well as complicated painful moments in both national crises and the most intimately domestic ones.³⁶

The long-standing tolerance of difference has its own peculiar dynamic, which is grounded in the same kind of dynamic that, for example, leads men to be more aggressive in threatening violence when they know that others will restrain them. An element of risk is always involved, but careful calculation of the odds allows such men to perform their agonistic role without, in most cases, incurring actual damage. In the same way, those most directly affected by some violation of a key norm may initially demonstrate their passionate desire to remove the stain on their reputations by the most immediate and violent means available; but they do so in some degree of expectation that, once the crisis has passed, an accommodation will emerge so as to permit the unthinkable to occur.

A dramatic example from my fieldwork in Crete will illustrate the point with great clarity. I well remember how, in the mid-eighties, a couple composed of two patrilineal first cousins – almost the most incestuous possibility after siblings – eloped from the Cretan village where I had been conducting research and fled to Athens (where by sheer chance I met them that very first evening). At first, the young man's father, who felt betrayed by the fact that his son had violated the trust his brother had placed in them all as guardians of the young woman during his absence abroad, swore he would kill them both, and made a noisy display of searching for them, gun in hand. Meanwhile, as he probably realized, the young lovers had 'gone to earth' at the home of the family with which they had the closest relationship. It probably would have been quite easy to track them down had the father really wished to kill them; his (and his brother's) own father was meanwhile expressing anguish in the wonderfully anthropological sense of a categorical confusion:³⁷ he no longer knew, he lamented, whether the young woman was his *nifi* (in-marrying bride) or his *engoni* (granddaughter)! Time passed, and eventually the couple returned to the village with the first of three babies (all perfectly normal despite villagers' gleefully gloomy predictions of disaster), and there they continue to live in relative peace, have eventually been reconciled with their parents and contained within the community – and, as such, have managed to avoid becoming a collective public embarrassment.

The point of this story is not, of course, to say that Greeks generally condone incest. Such a statement would be even more nonsensical than the generalizations that anthropologists sometimes construct out of existing moral codes; it is clearly also untrue, as this example shows, that Greeks *never* commit incest. But what this story does reveal is the surprising flexibility of a moral world that appears, to a superficial observer, to live according to a very rigid code. In such a world, social skill consists in being able to deploy an appearance of impeccable respectability to cover a wide range of options – flexibility of action requires a thoroughly inflexible mask. The very ambiguity of those notions that have been glossed as 'honour' and the like – considered to be both 'civilized' (as corresponding to Victorian norms of respectability) and 'backward' –³⁸ lends itself to this kind of social dexterity. In much the same way, especially in earlier years, the masculine notion of *eghoismos* – aggressive self-regard – could be adopted by variously located actors, pursuing an astonishing variety of ideological goals, to represent both European individualism and a supposedly oriental fractiousness.³⁹

Thus, the social architectonics of Greek everyday life requires a fixed external signifier and a flexible, sometimes even evanescent internal referent. Anthropological representations of the relationship between citizens and the state have too often implied, or been taken to imply, that these were two entirely separate entities. That is as absurd as claiming that Greece is inhabited by two groups of people, respectively labeled Hellenes and *Romii*. The people who staff the state bureaucracy are citizens themselves; they are well versed in the management of appearances, an activity that requires a capacity to maintain consistent, invariant performances of formal correctness while pursuing highly self-interested goals behind the façade thus created.

Ironically, there is some degree of theological justification for the pattern of dissimulation I have just described. 'God wants things covered up' (*O Theos thelei skepasma*), Juliet du Boulay's informants told her,⁴⁰ perhaps unconsciously echoing such an ecclesiastical authority as the fourth-century St John Chrysostom.⁴¹ Given that bureaucrats are drawn from the people they govern, it is not surprising to find similar attitudes governing the management of embarrassing cultural information; the same logic governed the popular attitude to aspects of national identity and cultural practice that were deemed unlikely to make a good impression in the chancelleries and uni-

versities of 'Europe'. At that level, the covering had to be framed as classically Hellenic, given the architectonics and symbolic geography of respectability into which the modern Greek nation-state had been born.

One of the curious dimensions of this embarrassment is the conviction that an abiding concern with, and preference for, agnatic (patrilineal) kinship represents a stain left over from Ottoman times. Given the considerable emphasis on the patriline (*genos*) in classical Greece as well as the insistence on continuity with the classical past, such a perspective seems quite perverse. Yet in fact it is not hard to see how it must have arisen. For the purpose of determining licit categories of marriageable persons, the Orthodox church recognizes uterine and agnatic links in equal measure. A strong bias toward the agnatic line of descent thus violates canon law, at least implicitly, although it continues to affect local evaluations of closeness.⁴² Many Greeks were no doubt also aware that in the rest of Europe a similar nominal equality between agnatic and uterine links prevailed. Once the state's embrace of Neoclassicism had taken hold, and especially in the context of claims to quintessentially 'European' identity, this sense of the inappropriateness of patrilineal bias seems to have taken on a cultural rather than a purely religious valency, the patrilineal preferences of the ancients conveniently consigned to oblivion. The fact that a strong patrilineal bias prevails in many of the neighbouring Islamic societies will have reinforced this tendency and adumbrated it to the hardening categorical opposition between the Ottoman East and a Greece grown ever more self-consciously European.

Yet the patrilineal bias certainly remains strong, even in bureaucratic usage.⁴³ No one would seriously claim this as 'un-Greek', still less as 'Turkish'. In the countryside – and again especially in Crete – the continuing emphasis on agnatic ties does sometimes occasion embarrassment in the context of discussions of national cultural norms, but it has never become a major issue of public debate. I would argue that this pattern does not so much suggest a level of tolerance as relative indifference to, and elasticity toward, a cultural feature that combines familiarity with triviality – no one, it seems, is going to get terribly excited about kinship terminology, except perhaps for an occasional anthropologist!

Such a shoulder-shrugging response also characterizes the everyday Greek response to comments that recognize the existence of ethnic minorities in the country – a po-

sition that is diametrically opposed to official doctrine. Most people would argue that these minorities are too small to matter, and that everyone acknowledges their presence in any case. What is all the fuss about? Only the logic of respectability – often recast by politicians as ethnic exclusion and 'purity' – has hidden this presence from a larger, international audience, where conceivably such revelations could be used to make trouble for the Greek state with irredentist elements within and outside its borders. Within the intimate spaces of everyday life, however, such geopolitical concerns seem very distant, and the dangers that the state sees in every attempt to claim ethnic self-determination, while perceived in principle by much of the majority population, do not seem to worry many of the latter very deeply.

Such, at least, is the burden of Papataxiarchis' very persuasive argument, which builds on a strong collection of studies by other Greek anthropologists intent on exploring the *eterotita* within a once supposedly homogeneous society, a discovery that resonates with the growing historical evidence for ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity in the background to modern Greek national emergence.⁴⁴ It would be instructive – and appropriately heterogeneous! – to compare Greek with other such claims to homogeneity – notably that of the Japanese,⁴⁵ who have based an entire nationalism on myths of a scientifically inconceivable degree of historical, racial, and cultural isolation. Indeed, as a conceptual move, this challenge to the homogeneous authority of a supposedly unique nationalism, like any comparison we might venture between Hellenism and Zionism, may infuriate some – but their reaction would be testimony to the essential accuracy of such perceptions.

Historically, classical learning was slow to take effect outside the main urban centres. In the nineteenth century peasants often needed interpreters to deal with the *katharevousa* of officialdom. Even in the twentieth century, concealment did not always wear a classical mask, although we can also track the gradual emergence of that association. A feature of Greek village architecture noted early by Ernestine Friedl,⁴⁶ for example, is its capacity to shield individuals from the prying eyes of their neighbours. At the time of her mid-century research, there was apparently nothing classical in the forms and especially the façades of village houses to evoke the classical past, although the invitation of strangers *into* those intimate spaces was justified in terms of Classical Greek mythology

– the role of *Ksenios Zefs*.⁴⁷ Here we see verbal discourse leading other cultural forms and encouraging a retrospective entrenchment of etymological certainty in all areas of social life.⁴⁸ The arrival of such Classical motifs, now to be seen perhaps more frequently in the countryside and in small provincial towns than in Athens or Thessaloniki, was in any case a matter of time – of what Friedl⁴⁹ herself has famously called the ‘lagging emulation’ by peasants of urban models of culture, a much slower process than that described for Italy by Sydel Silverman.⁵⁰ Classical motifs appeared on the façades of urban houses by the middle of the nineteenth century in Athens and Piraeus, masking the ‘village’ or ‘Turkish’ disposition of the interiors.⁵¹ While the vast majority of early Neoclassical buildings in Athens were sites of official business, with the plan to house the royal palace actually within the Acropolis being only narrowly averted,⁵² it was not long before entire neighbourhoods were sporting Ionic columns and *acroteria*.

In the twentieth century, especially as the economic situation began to change dramatically in the late sixties, these Neoclassical buildings were largely displaced by the infamous *polykatoikies* that today constitute the overwhelming majority of Greek urban domestic space.⁵³ Even the Neoclassical buildings, however, were more easily preserved – because they maintained the official fictions – than the illegally constructed houses of island migrants, although the latter eventually came to be incorporated in the larger logic of Neoclassicism as *mnemeia*.⁵⁴ Faubion⁵⁵ describes Athenian zoning as ‘remarkably casual’, but then hints that behind the seeming chaos lies a rather pointed historical determinism. Athens rapidly acquired the face of a tawdry modernity, itself now a ‘European’ claim that assumes, rather than displays, a Classical pedigree, and which it occasionally acknowledges in the names it ascribes to both new and old streets.⁵⁶ Modern building styles came to displace Neoclassical designs only because, like the French and German syntactical devices in *katharevousa*, they were *assumed* to represent a fundamental wisdom and aesthetic stolen from the ancient Hellenes and now reimported into reborn Greece. In the process, however, they served not only to weaken the public hold of the Hellenic prototype on the public imagination but also to provide the private spaces in which Greeks might reasonably ask whether, if they were truly descended from the ancient Hellenes, the latter were so incredibly unlike their modern

namesakes – or whether, indeed, they were really rather amiably naughty. As their suppression of certain classical texts shows, the junta – driven by the need to submerge the internal contradictions of *Ellas Ellinon Christianon* (‘Hellas of the Christian Hellenes’), their own particular perversion of the model launched a century earlier by Pappargopoulos and Zambelios – understood that a more pragmatic perspective would completely undermine the convergence of religious, rural, and Victorian values that then defined public morality in Greece. That process has continued apace, and today we can see that the very classicism of public display has actually served as the enabling device for the emergence of a less constipated society.

The *polykatoikia* clearly played an important role in this transition. Few of these high-rise buildings were designed by architects; indeed, it almost seems as though ‘blaming’ their hideous and utilitarian modernity on the fact that most were designed by civil engineers was a way of retaining some claim on the Neoclassical aesthetic while bowing to demographic pressure and the rising value of urban land. But the rise – in more senses than one – of the *polykatoikia* also had an important effect on social life: it dramatically increased the possibilities of protecting the privacy of the increasingly atomized social units, basically nuclear families whose members have tried, more and more desperately, to escape the clinging and often excessive demands made by more distant kin on the traditionalist grounds of *ypokhreosi*, ‘obligation’.⁵⁷ The *polykatoikia* is a perfect bureaucrat as I have defined this role: at the same time as it seems to impose greater conformity in architectural style, it has actually weakened public surveillance over personal habits and even over the cultural choices that affect interior decoration. Meanwhile, the severity of the archaeological laws in respect of private collecting has limited the extent to which one sees genuine classical antiquities in people’s apartments. Byzantine and folk art is much more in evidence and tends to express a nostalgic reaching for familiar sources of collective affect that have few or no classical equivalents.

Where does this leave us as the new century gets underway? It is clear that for most of the past hundred years, through all the political, military, and demographic convulsions that Greece has undergone, the classical image has retained a literally *spectacular* authority: hence the importance of architectonics to its effective promulgation. Yet it has always retained the potential to offer an

alternative reading of itself: we owe to Giambattista Vico, perhaps more than to any other thinker, the insight that what etymology can legitimize it can also subvert – and much more recently Marcel Detienne⁵⁸ has very clearly pointed out that ‘no etymology can be singled out as infallible’. Thus, the intensely etymological consciousness of many even relatively unlettered Greeks in the twentieth century has come to laugh knowledgeably at its own earlier pretensions. Although Greece is relatively free of local autonomisms such as those that plague Italy, for example, when such claims do arise – as they occasionally have on Crete – they can deploy the antiquity game against its most entrenched and bureaucratic representatives.⁵⁹

If today we are no longer interested in arguing about whether today’s Greeks are the true descendants of the ancient Hellenes, it is not only because the question is less important to an increasingly ignorant and philologically challenged leadership in the Western world and thus less vital to the survival of Greece as an independent nation-state; not only because such essentialisms are now discredited far beyond the specialized confines of social anthropology; and not only because the evidence for some sort of classical connection, whether cultural or genetic, remains incontrovertible anyway. It is also, and especially,

because the increasing privatization of domestic space, modeling as it does the long-standing tradition of secrecy in Greek social relations, has provided the means for rethinking the authoritarian etymologies of the past and for replacing them with the playful subversions of the present. Such increased latitude inspires greater confidence in what a national identity can, despite all the restrictions of the past, encompass and even encourage. Less determined to uphold an insecure sense of autonomy that consists in putting down its self-appointed, crypto-colonial ‘protectors’ by means of disparaging stereotypes,⁶⁰ it tolerates and even welcomes diversity and difference. This more plural vision is an edifying and comforting one; with its newly found willingness to countenance irony and mischief, it is surely a spectacle that a range of ancient exemplars, from Odysseus to Socrates and Aristophanes, would have enjoyed to the full. The Neoclassicists and the crypto-colonizers may have strengthened the classical heritage simply by letting go of it.

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NOTES

1. Papataxiarchis 2006.
2. Herzfeld 1983; Herzfeld 1992.
3. See especially Bastéa 2000.
4. With the important exceptions of Pavlides & Hesser 1986; Caftanzoglou 2001a; Caftanzoglou 2001b; Faubion 1993; Hart 2006; Herzfeld 1991; Yalouri 2001. Note, however, that this bibliography comes mostly from the side of anthropology and is self-consciously critical of politically dominant ideologies of identity.
5. Preziosi 1979.
6. See, e.g., Low 2000.
7. See especially Sant Cassia & Bada 1992.
8. Herzfeld 2005.
9. Bakalaki 1993; and see now Bakalaki 2006.
10. Özyürek 2004.
11. Maddox 2004.
12. See Danforth 1983; and cf. Ferry 2005, 203.
13. E.g., Faubion 1993, 226-32; Riedel 2005; Kantsa 2006.
14. Danforth 1995.
15. E.g. Yiakoumaki 2006.
16. See Herzfeld 2002a.
17. Bernal 1987.
18. E.g. Lefkowitz 1996.
19. Herzfeld 2004.
20. Van Dyck 1997; Van Steen 2000.
21. Detienne 2007; Winkler 1990.
22. Orso 1979.
23. Roilos n.d.; cf. Athanasiou 2006, 242; Faubion 1993, 39; Winkler 1990, 64-70.
24. Tellingly, perhaps, more in the context of Cyprus than in that of the more conservative polity of Greece: Loizos 1975, 286 n. 10.

25. Faubion 1993.
26. Kantsa 2006; Halkias 2004; Halkias 2005; Paxson 2004.
27. And saying so in at least Greek, French, and English. See Bakalaki 1993; Bakalaki 2005; Couroucli 2005; Gefou-Madianou 1993; Gefou-Madianou 2003; Papataxiarchis 2006.
28. See also Petronoti 1998; Topali 2006.
29. Herzfeld 1983.
30. Goffman 1959.
31. Herzfeld 2002a.
32. See Thongchai 2000.
33. The *dharma* of the Aryans, whose mythical pre-classicism now even undergirds Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka, Tambiah 1992, 131.
34. See Yiakoumaki 2006.
35. And thus always with exceptions born in part of cultural embarrassment; see Herzfeld 2005.
36. Delsou 1996; Green 2005; Hart 2006.
37. See Douglas 1966.
38. Because they sometimes lead to violence, Avdela 2002, 175; 234.
39. Herzfeld 2004.
40. Du Boulay 1974, 82.
41. See Papadakis 1994.
42. Especially on Crete, see Herzfeld 1991; Herzfeld 2004.
43. As, for example, in the use of the *genos* to identify a bride's origins for the purposes of registering her marriage.
44. E.g., Liakos 1993; Karakasidou 1997.
45. See Befu 2001.
46. Friedl 1962, 13-14.
47. Friedl 1962, 106.
48. I also recall in the late sixties being very struck by the Cretan villagers' tendency to etymologize the names of their home villages in ways that so effectively obviated Turkish influence – Alikambos, almost certainly the 'field of Ali' in derivation, was recast as 'the field of salt' (*bals*), for instance – in advance of any state classicizing of toponyms such as Friedl reports for Vasilika; and her observation that women tended to stick to the old, non-Hellenic names was also indicative of the gendering of classical knowledge as a male prerogative.
49. Friedl 1964.
50. Silverman 1975.
51. Iakovidis 1975.
52. Bastéa 2000.
53. See Faubion 1993, 39.
54. See now Caftanzoglou 2000; Caftanzoglou 2001a; Caftanzoglou 2001b.
55. Faubion 1993, 92.
56. On this process elsewhere in Greece, see also Herzfeld 1999.
57. See, for an example of resistance to this pressure, Herzfeld 1991, 152; 163.
58. Detienne 2007, 70.
59. See Hamilakis & Yalouri 1996.
60. See Faubion 1993, 49.

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