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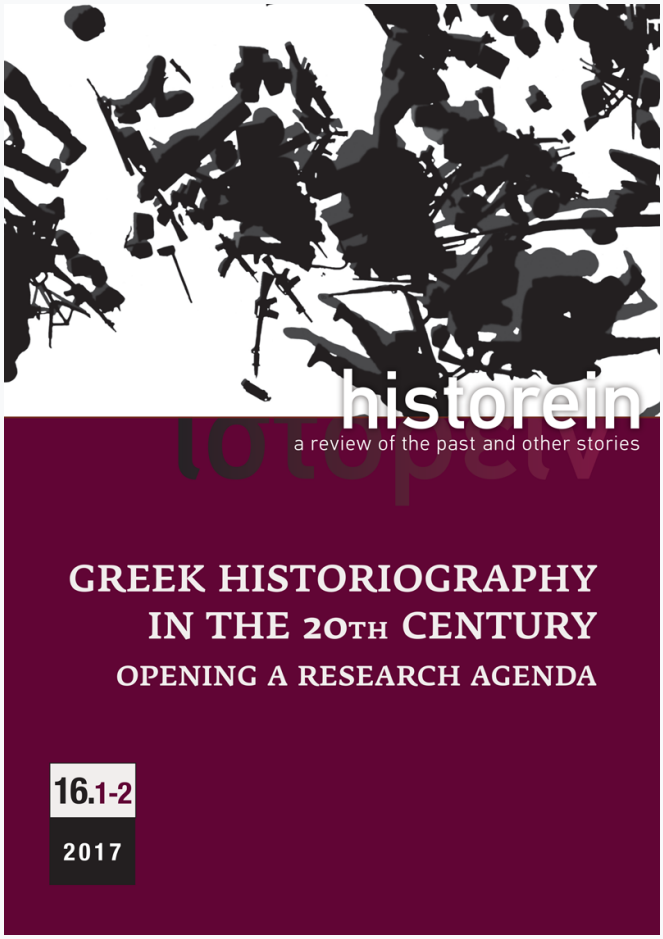
Greek Historiography in the 20th Century: Opening a Research Agenda



Review of Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds, Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century

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course. The book would have also benefited from a more balanced approach, as by undermining the "old voices" and their recurrence within the debate, it fails to contextualise this refreshing new case study within the *longue durée* history of religious ideas.

Overall, Willert's book is a most valuable contribution to the current literature, as it offers a well-written and sober synopsis of both the historical and current developments in Greek Orthodox thought. The author's analytical approach and careful consideration of these delicate topics provides original and much needed insight into the passionate debates and the changes (and the limits thereof) in terms of religion and national identity in Greece.

NOTE

1 Taken from a lecture by Kalaitzidis on "New trends in greek orthodox theology: challenges in the movement towards a genuine renewal of Christian unity" at the University of Vienna, 15 May 2012.

Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds

Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century

London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. xiii + 217 pp.

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This edited volume of ten essays, plus an introduction and an afterword, grew out of a series of workshops held in Nicosia and London, organised around the theme of diasporas and national consciousness. Often such endeavours, in their final published version, are somewhat lacking in cohesion but happily that is not the case here. As Tom Gallant explains in the very useful afterword, the authors want to write a transnational intellectual history of the Mediterranean through the device of biography, and every essay does that. Each author focuses on one or several individuals to explore a set of common questions.

As I understand it, the authors have the following goals, laid out nicely in the introduction written by Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou. They are certainly correct that the nineteenth century remains the orphan of Mediterranean historiography. Historians are not quite sure what to do with it in the age of the nation-state and thus they "give the impression that the Mediterranean ceases to exist as a category of historical analysis when we enter modern times" (3). The volume's first aim, then, and it is an ambitious one, is to make the case that the Mediterranean continues to be a relevant framework after 1800. The editors of the volume deliberately set out to bring together historians who – in spite of the geographi-

cal proximity of the countries they study – tend to work separately and this approach definitely helps the shared history of the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century to emerge. It is not often that we see a volume that brings Smyrna and Albania together with Portugal and Corsica. Second, instead of the more usual focus on trade and economic history, "the originality of this volume lies in the fact that it sees the Mediterranean, first and foremost, as a place of intellectual communication" (3). Part of this insistence has its own very Mediterranean explanation; it is part of the ongoing reaction to Braudel, who has been criticised for writing a history of the sea without people.

As for the concerns and preoccupations of these Mediterranean intellectuals who are at the centre of the work, the authors are interested to document their participation in Hobsbawm's Age of Revolutions (1789–1848) as they formulated both "liberal-imperial" and anti-imperial ideologies as a way of coping with and making sense of "the clash between the existing empires and the newly-born colonial powers" (14) as well as, of course, the rising tide of nationalism. Even as they connect these various individuals to more conventional European geographies such as London or Paris, they are insistent on the distinctiveness of the Mediterranean sphere – for instance the Mediterranean revolutionary age extended far beyond 1848 – and they reject any notion that their thinkers were somehow marginal or derivative. In other words, they are on board with the ongoing project, first laid out by Dipesh Chakrabarty, to "provincialise Europe".

One of the things the volume does best is to document the sheer volume of migration and displacement in the nineteenth-century Mediterranean, as a result of both new colonial endeavours and the political upheavals that are of particular interest to the authors. This information effectively advances two of the authors' goals: it shows how intellectual communities were formed and it effectively dispels the notion that the Mediterranean ceased to be a zone of interaction as, supposedly, each national group retired into the fortress of the nation. As with their ideas, so many of the peregrinations of these oft-displaced intellectuals were outside the geographies we associate with the nation-state. The recovery of (to us) unfamiliar geographies is another great strength of *Mediterranean Diasporas.*

The first essay, by Juan Luis Simal, is devoted to a transnational history of Spain's 1820 revolution. It is rather distinct from all the other essays in two ways: it talks more about "epistolary culture" than about one or two individuals per se and it focuses heavily on the impact of the Spanish revolution on northern Europe – which, he shows, was tremendous: "For three years … the news coming from the South of the continent was the news of the day" (26). The Mediterranean does not come into view as much. Nevertheless, in its focus on intellectual communities, on exile and on displacement, he shares the approach of the other authors. Many of those who wrote accounts of the events in Spain were themselves exiles from other sites of political turmoil, such as Giuseppe Pecchio, who had to flee Italy due to his participation in the conspiracies in Lombardy. Others came to Spain as volunteers and "an increasingly pan-European liberal debate was fostered by trans-continental displacements" (36).

The Portuguese man of letters Almeida Garrett (1799–1854) is the subject of the next essay. Like so many others, he spent years in exile and these years in the 1820s and 1830s "loom large in any explanation of his intellectual development" (55). While the essay provides us with an excellent discussion of Garrett's thought, Gabriel Paquette freely admits

that it is difficult to know how his experience in exile shaped his political views: "He actually said very little about his period of exile in England and France, and still less about the impact of that interval of his life on his politics and literature" (48). This makes the focus on exile as an explanatory device less persuasive than it might otherwise be.

The next two essays are transnational treatments of the Italian world. Grégoire Bron argues persuasively that the Italian liberalism of the Restoration period cannot be understood purely in the context of problems inside what became Italy. If in the first essay we were with Italian exiles in Spain, now we follow them back home. During the 1820s and 1830s Spain enjoyed "an extraordinary prestige in Italy" (61) and what they saw there had a great impact on what they thought possible in Italy. Through a focus on their writings, Bron shows that the Italian exiles and revolutionaries were horrified by Spain's backwardness and subsequently lost faith in the people as a revolutionary force since they supported counterrevolution. As a result, they were more willing to work with the king when they returned to Italy.

With Maurizio Isabella's essay, we broaden out to the rest of the Mediterranean world. Isabella's protagonists are a set of early nineteenth-century Italian intellectuals "whose 'liberal ideas' were shaped by displacement, exile and travel, moving as they did between the continental or insular regions of the Mediterranean affected by the presence of the French and British Empires and by revolutionary circumstances, and their metropolitan centres" (78). Isabella argues that retrieving their voices is important for the history of imperial liberalism and "liberalism *tout court*" (79). It is also vital to engage with their writings because only then do we understand how mistaken it is to consider these figures solely within the context of Greek and Italian national movements. They are better understood as Mediterranean liberals. Here we see a very explicit example of the volume's sustained critique of nationalist historiography.

Ian Coller's study of the statesman Hassuna D'Ghies from Tripoli in North Africa very nicely brings out aspects of the latter's biography that are strikingly similar to so many of the stories in this collection. There is his struggle to find his footing in a very tumultuous world and the close connection (albeit still not well understood) between ideological shifts and personal circumstances. Throughout the book our men of letters are fleeing, or being forced to flee, their countries, then being invited back, and then setting off again. D'Ghies' father sent him to France to travel and learn. Eventually he ended up in London, where he developed a relationship with Jeremy Bentham and became a proponent of constitutional reform. But he abandoned this, and disappointed Bentham, when he was invited back into the government in Tripoli. In the wake of the French invasion of Algeria, it seems that D'Ghies became a strong proponent of reintegration into the Ottoman empire as the only way to resist European imperialism. One of the strengths of Coller's essay is the off-centre view he provides of France's imperial adventure in Algeria. Instead of the usual French and Algerian story, he shows how it was experienced in Tunisia and Libya.

The next two articles – Zanou's on the Greek world and Dominique Kirchner Reill's conceptual piece – are particularly strong. As with Coller, Zanou considers a well-known topic, the Greek Enlightenment, from an unusual geographical perspective and this makes her treatment very fresh. Rather than the direct line from Adamantios Korais' Paris to Athens in 1821, Zanou offers us a "polycen-

tric" account of the Greek revolution (130) and, in so doing, reveals the people and the contours of a world defined by the Ionian islands, the Danubian principalities (today's Romania) and Russia. The nationalism and the Hellenism of people like Giorgio Mocenigo and Ioannis Kapodistrias were quite different from the mainstream story of the Greek national revival. In an article brimming with originality and insights, one of Zanou's most arresting points is the compatibility of imperial and national visions; the men of the Ionian islands imagined a Greek cultural and linguistic community under Russian protection. As she puts it in the introduction, "Cultural and linguistic notions of nationality could readily be reconciled with imperial alliances" (11). Just like D'Ghies, these Greek intellectuals had to make difficult choices when their cultural and intellectual commitments came up against hard political realities. When the tsar, after much hesitation, came out against the Greek revolution, they cut their ties with Russia.

In Reill's essay we encounter now familiar biographical trajectories. It is fascinating, for example, how Niccolò Tommaseo's time in Corsica changed his political and intellectual orientations and commitments. But Reill's is also the most conceptual of the collection. She asks what "home" and "away" meant for three mid–nineteenth-century activists and how understanding this might complicate our understanding of "exile," "diaspora" and "displacement". As she follows their travels, she shows how slippery the notions of home and away are. In all three cases it might seem that they were leaving home but, in fact, all of them "moved along the ebbs and flows of a state that no longer existed" (149). For example, when Pacifico Valussi left Friuli to attend school in Udine, then university in Padua and settle down in Venice, he was following a very ancient trajectory of upward mobility for Venice's subjects. Even though Venice was no longer there, it lived on as a spatial orientation and we miss this if we let ourselves be taken in by contemporary geopolitical borders.

The last three essays take us into the Ottoman world and the second half of the nineteenth century. Andrew Arsan's subject is Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, the Turco-Egyptian prince who became the financial and political patron of the Young Ottomans in Paris in the 1860s. As with so many others in this volume, he spent part of his life in exile and was subject to abrupt shifts in fortune; pushed into exile in 1866, he subsequently patched up his differences with the sultan and headed back to Istanbul. Arsan discusses the various historiographical questions that have arisen over a famous letter that Mustafa Paşa supposedly wrote to the sultan from exile in Paris. This raises this expectation, at least for this reader, that he will answer these questions. When he doesn't, it detracts from the quality of an otherwise admirable essay.

The second last essay makes the original move of considering Albanian nationalism from two different vantage points; that of the Italo-Albanian intellectual Girolamo De Rada and Shemseddin Sami Frashëri, who was born in southern Albania but spent most of his life in Istanbul, where he enjoyed a long and illustrious career. Ottomanists tend to explain the Albanian attachment to the empire as reflective of the privileged position that the Albanians enjoyed within it. The authors are able to show that De Rada, too, eventually decided that Albanian rights would be best protected by the preservation of the empire. Again, this shows us that preoccupations which we might have thought were specific to a particular nation or state were, in fact, shared across a wider canvas.

The final essay is that of Vangelis Kechriotis, whom we lost last year at the young age of

46. His essay is a fitting one to end a volume concerned with upending nationalist historiography. Vangelis devoted his scholarship to the lives of those Ottoman Greeks who saw their future not in the nation, but in a reformed Ottoman empire. This is still a controversial topic in Greece and his patient reconstruction of the lives and thought of Pavlos Carolidis and Emmanouil Emmanouilidis is a tremendous excavation of a history that has been buried. As with so many others in this volume, Carolidis and Emmanouilidis were not committed to the nation-state but in the end they found that they had to surrender to it.

This is an excellent volume that should appeal to many audiences. Anyone interested in the modern Mediterranean, in transnational intellectual history and in the recovery of lost geographies and forgotten points of view will find it very worthwhile indeed.

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1915: Ο εθνικός διχασμός

[1915: The national schism]

Athens: Patakis, 2015. 343 pp.

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The Greek War of Independence started in the spring of 1821. By the autumn of 1823, after some significant military successes and a declaration of independence, a civil war broke out among the revolutionaries. It took a year and a half before this self-destructive civil war came to an end while the invading Egyptian army of Ibrahim Pasha launched a devastating campaign in the Peloponnese.

However, the better known Greek civil war is the one that followed Second World War. It lasted almost six years, from 1943 to 1949, and ended with the defeat of the communist guerrillas by a coalition government of conservatives and liberals. The impact of this civil war is still felt today.

If we study modern Greek history from 1821 to 2015, we may observe a pattern. Greek society and politics tend to extreme polarisation. This is not the usual party politics of a liberal democracy (Greece has been a liberal democracy since 1864 and a fully fledged one since 1875). Political polarisation in Greece very often turns ugly. There are many notorious episodes of extreme polarisation in Greek history, the more recent of them being the referendum of 2015. Despite the animosity, intolerance and fragmentation, these periods do not include widespread violence. They cannot be compared to a civil war.