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Review of: Thomas W. Gallant, Νεότερη Ελλάδα: Από τον Πόλεμο της Ανεξαρτησίας μέχρι τις μέρες μας [Modern Greece: From the War of Independence to the Present], Athens: Pedio, 2017

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Thomas W. Gallant,

*NEOTEPH EΛΛΑΔΑ: ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΛΕΜΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΣΙΑΣ
ΜΕΧΡΙ ΤΙΣ ΜΕΡΕΣ ΜΑΣ*

[Modern Greece: From the War of Independence to the Present],
Athens: Pedio, 2017, 496 pages.

Thomas Gallant's comprehensive history of modern Greece, which originally appeared in English, has been translated into Greek and is now available to the Greek reading public. When asked whether, given the choice, he would have written a completely different book for a Greek readership, the author replied, no; he expects that a book written by a non-native offers Greeks a refreshing insight into aspects of their own history which they often take for granted, challenges their assumptions and calls them to re-examine widely held opinions that have shaped their own self-image.

The book begins with a review of the experience of the Greek subjects of the late Ottoman Empire and ends in the early twenty-first century, with a virtual cliffhanger, namely the events that led to the fateful parliamentary elections of January 2015, which brought the Tsipras government to power. The book offers rich accounts of the Greek War of Independence, the adventures of early state- and nation-building, the complexities of irredentist policies, the traumatic National Schism of 1915 brought about by World War I, and the major rift in the national historical narrative generated by the Greek defeat by the Turks in 1922 and the resettlement

of more than a million refugees. The turbulent years of the interwar period ended in the Greek defence against the Italian attack of 1940 but were followed by four years of oppression under the Axis powers, the emergence and feats of the Greek resistance, and then the country's involvement in the realities of the Cold War and a bitter civil war. The country, however, benefitted from Western assistance, from the country's decision to join NATO and to embark on a path to become part of the European Economic Community. This decisive Western turn generated Greece's ambitious modernisation project, which defined its subsequent international standing as a Western country and its increased prosperity. The book finally summarises the effects of globalisation on Greece's overextended economic dependence following the international financial crisis of 2008. A list of suggestions for further reading complements Gallant's account.

This is a long, unstable period of some two-and-a-half centuries, with frequent political upheavals, international friction and financial dislocation. Gallant keeps his storyline coherent by basing it primarily on a firm grid of political developments. These become intelligible thanks to

the author's talent to intersperse the narrative with references to relevant features of the country's cultural history and also to biographical details about the principal protagonists. Common men, women and young children in towns and countryside people the book with their life experiences, customs, marriage, migration and inheritance patterns, no less than the ideological premises of their choices. The author's anthropological approach enriches his work with insights into lawlessness, perceptions of self, concepts of honour and engendered roles.

The book offers a wealth of primary sources which highlight not only testimonies of Greeks' views of themselves, but also those of friendly or less-than-friendly Western visitors. Documents provide authentic sources on the history of the country's institutions and politics. Besides textual material, a selection of photographs, works of art, historical cartoons and the lyrics of popular songs provide further political and cultural context.

The author dedicates separate chapters with accounts of developments in the country's economy, land-tenure systems and state finances with a sensible amount of numerical tables which help him explain the impact of the economy on people's lives.

Gallant's *Modern Greece* is the latest history of the country following a tradition of histories by English-speaking authors. Its asset lies in that, besides benefitting from recent historical research, the author pays particular attention to social questions and the experiences of the common Greek. Its readership will most certainly include the general public and students looking for guidance to comprehend the country's convoluted past.

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