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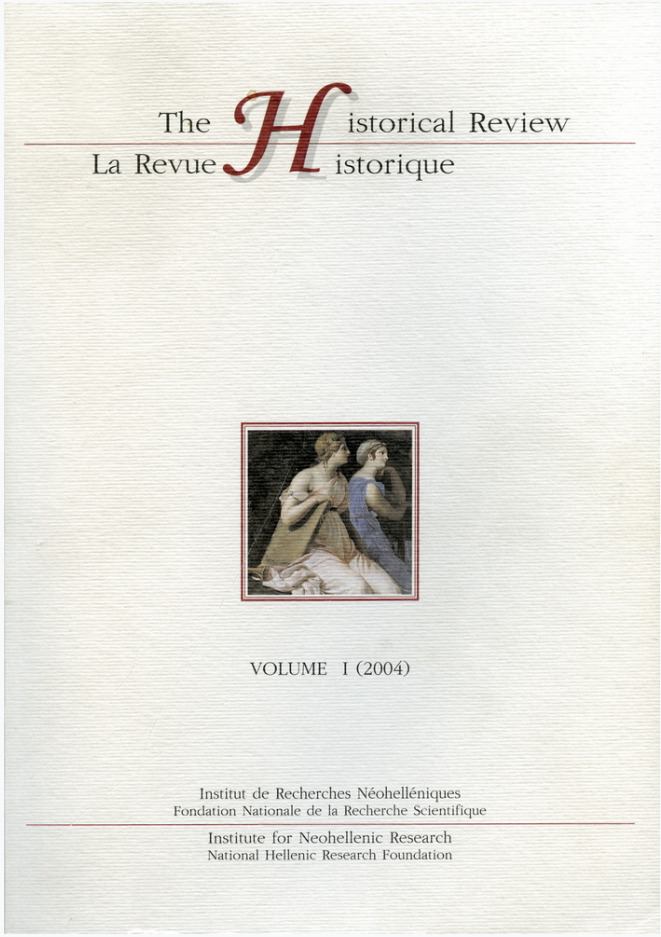

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BRITISH PHILHELLENISM AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF GREECE: A CASE STUDY OF GEORGE FINLAY (1799-1875)

Liz Potter

ABSTRACT: This article offers a case study of George Finlay, a British philhellene whose intellectual make-up deserves more attention than it has previously been given (1). Unlike many Western European philhellenes who returned home disillusioned with Greece, Finlay spent his life in Athens (2); and unlike the overwhelmingly classicising Hellenism of his British contemporaries, his was a Hellenism that insisted on the interest and instructiveness of the history of Greece from the Roman period onwards (3). From a study of his *History of Greece BC 146 to AD 1864* (4), and an analysis of its influences (5) and its uses (6), the article portrays Finlay as a complex, supple and interesting thinker. He is of particular interest to the nineteenth-century historian of political ideas for the ways in which he inherited and re-shaped ideas associated with civic virtue, philosophic history and contemporary liberalism.

1. *British philhellenism and the Greek past*

What did philhellenes from Western Europe actually know about Greece and the Greek past when they came to support her struggle for independence from the Ottoman Turks in the early nineteenth century? What kinds of ideological baggage did they bring with them, and how did they assimilate the new knowledge they acquired from their practical experiences of the country and her people? These broad-ranging questions make an intriguing theme in studies of British philhellenism, and scholars have responded with some markedly different answers.[1]

These questions can be illuminated from a new angle in a case study of George Finlay, who has thus far received rather little attention. Yet as a philhellene he is an interesting and unusual figure. Though he might have come to Greece in the 1820s with a mixture of liberal, romantic and Christian inclinations fairly typical among British philhellenes, he was unusual in settling in the country for the rest of his life –rather than returning home disillusioned– and in his endeavours to understand the ways in which modern Greece had

[1] See F. Rosen, *Bentham, Byron and Greece. Constitutionalism, Nationalism, and Early Liberal Political Thought,* Oxford 1992; W. St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free,* London 1972; C. M. Woodhouse, *The Philhellenes,* London 1969; D. Dakin, *British and American Philhellenes during the War of Greek Independence, 1821-1833,* Thessaloniki 1955.

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emerged from a complex past, most of which, beyond the classical period, was too little known and respected in Western Europe. His *History*, which was the result of these endeavours, is the focus of this article.[2]

Alan Wace and William Miller first noticed the importance of Finlay's archive in the early twentieth century. Both tended to emphasise his disappointment with Greece and his sense of pessimism.[3] Joan Hussey later argued that Finlay was a warmer character than had previously been appreciated. He emerged from her work with romantic and adventurous sides, and "a genial, if sardonically inclined, companion" to the many British visitors to Athens for whom he was something of a magnet (whose number included Gladstone and J. S. Mill). Hussey also made a greater effort to see Finlay's intellectual proclivities in context, appreciating some of the Victorian roots of his depiction of the 'healthy polity' – the importance of economic and administrative good order, of a politically impartial system of justice, and of local institutions.[4]

However, Finlay's ideas bear further investigation. What *kind* of liberal philhellene was he in his '20s, and did he later become a thorough pessimist – even a 'mishellene', as one reviewer suggested in 1861?[5] What light is shed on this question by his *History*, and what were the intellectual roots of its attitudes? In this article, I discuss the central themes of his *History* and attempt to place him more securely in his contemporary intellectual context. In particular, I consider his debts to, and his reconstructions of, traditions of republican thinking, Scottish conjectural history (which notably encompassed both 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' strains) and contemporary liberalism. From

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[2] G. Finlay, *A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time BC 146 to AD 1864*, 7 Vols., Oxford 1877.

[3] See W. Miller, "The Finlay Papers", *English Historical Review* 39 (1924), pp. 386-398; "George Finlay as a Journalist", *ibid.,* pp. 552-567; "The Finlay Library", *Annual of the British School at Athens* 26 (1923-25), pp. 46-66; "The Journals of Finlay and Jarvis", *English Historical Review* 41 (1926), pp. 514-525. Also A. J. B. Wace, "Hastings and Finlay", *Annual of the British School at Athens* 22 (1916-17, 1917-18), pp. 110-132. On his disappointment, see esp. Miller, "The Finlay Papers", p. 397f and Wace, p.130f.

[4] See J. M. Hussey, *The Finlay Papers. A Catalogue,* The British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1973; "George Finlay in Perspective – a Centenary Reappraisal", *Annual of the British School at Athens* 70 (1975), pp. 135-144; "The Historian George Finlay – Readjustments", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 44 (1994), pp. 179-186; "Introduction" to J. M. Hussey, ed., *The Journals and Letters of George Finlay,* 2 Vols, Surrey 1995.

[5] *The Critic* (28 December, 1861) said that, far from showing the "frantic enthusiasm of many Philhellenes", Finlay's tone "frequently disposes us to believe that he has a tendency to mis-Hellenism".

this, I make a case for seeing Finlay as a more complex, flexible and interesting thinker than has previously been suggested, and for considering the question of his optimism or pessimism in terms of intellectual heritage as well as personal character. This reading enables a richer appreciation of Finlay as a philhellene whose practical and intellectual struggle for Greek freedom was informed by a range of approaches to the place and use of the past in the present.

We must begin, however, with a brief account of Finlay's life and works (2). We also need to appreciate the contours of British hellenism and philhellenism at the time he was writing in order to understand the audience to which he was projecting his account (3).

2. *George Finlay: an introduction*

George Finlay was born in 1799 and spent most of his youth in Scotland. From a family of Protestant merchants and bureaucrats, he went on to study law at Glasgow and Göttingen. As a young man he became actively involved in various liberal societies in Glasgow, such as the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, the Literary and Commercial Society and the Speculative Society.[6] Papers contained in his archive include some of the essays he read to these Societies, which demonstrate an early interest in many of themes on which he would elaborate in his *History of Greece*, prominently civil liberty and political economy.[7]

His enthusiasm for liberal causes, combined with a sense of romantic idealism and adventure, prompted Finlay's first visit to Greece as a philhellene in 1823. In his involvement with the Greek struggle for independence, he worked with Byron in the last months of the poet's life and served on board the

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[6] For biographical information, see the works by J. M. Hussey cited above. Further biographical details can be found in G. G. Arnakis, *The Historical Work of Samuel G. Howe and the Historian George Finlay*, Athens 1960 and C. A. Frazee, "The Historian George Finlay and Correspondence with Cornelius C. Felton (1854-1859)", *Südost-Forschungen* 23 (1964), pp. 179-214.

[7] "On the Progress of Civil Liberty in Modern Europe", read to the Speculative Society on 26th March 1821, and "Some Observations on the Commercial Situation and Policy of Great Britain", read to the Literary and Commercial Society of Glasgow on 18th April 1821 (Finlay papers A.1, items 19 and 20). (All references to Finlay's archive in this piece are given according to the reference system used by J. M. Hussey to catalogue the archive: see Hussey cited above.) I was given permission to read in the archive by the Director of the British School at Athens. I am very grateful to the Librarian, Archivist and staff at the British School for the many ways in which they have helped my work.

Karteria with Frank Abney Hastings. He settled in Athens in 1829, married and remained there for the rest of his life.

He became actively involved in the development of the city – he was appointed by Kolettis to assist the nomarch in the rehabilitation of Athens in 1834, for instance; was a member of the Tax Commission and the Provincial Council of Attica in the 1840s; was involved in setting up the Ionian Bank; and actively supported the foundation of the University and the National Library. In tandem with this practical political activity, he wrote prolifically as a journalist in addition to working on his major historical enterprise. Throughout his life, he retained his great enthusiasm for the study of Greece in all her periods, in antiquities, epigraphy, numismatics, archaeology, travel and topography, as well as in the politics and economics of the developing nation state.

At the same time, however, he remained a relentless critic of the developing country, and was never slow to highlight the corruption of its government and its desperate need for social reform. He was also severely critical of what he saw as the damaging nature of foreign interference in Greece. Finlay was thus something of a paradox: he devoted his life to the struggle for the development of the Greek nation, but remained one of its most persistent critics. This fundamental paradox is evident in his writings – in both his journalism and his historical monographs, he was both committed supporter and fierce judge of Greece.

This paradox, or dual perspective –both ('optimistic') supporter of Greece on the one hand, and ('pessimistic') critic on the other– is fundamental to Finlay's historical works.[8] In this article, I shall focus largely on the way this can be seen in his treatment of the long-term build-up to 1821, that is, in the first five of his seven volumes.[9] The first to appear was *Greece under the Romans B.C. 146 to A.D. 716*, in 1844. *Medieval Greece and Trebizond* appeared in 1851, which was fairly swiftly followed by three volumes covering the Byzantine, Ottoman and Venetian periods.[10] Finally came the two-volume work on the Greek Revolution.[11] Each work was revised by Finlay for the seven-volume

[8] It can also be seen in journalistic pieces which there is unfortunately no space to explore here – his many pamphlets, periodical articles and newspaper pieces, including those he wrote as Athens reporter for the London *Times* from 1864 to 1870.

[9] Of Finlay's two volumes concerning the Revolution, there is certainly more to be said on another occasion.

[10] G. Finlay, *Greece under the Romans B.C. 146 to A.D. 716*, 1844; *Medieval Greece and Trebizond,* 1851; *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Vol. I, 1852 ([2]1856), Vol. II, 1854; *Greece under Othoman and Venetian domination*, 1856. (Where I quote Finlay, I use his spelling 'Othoman', but in my own words I use the modern convention 'Ottoman'.)

[11] G. Finlay, *The History of the Greek Revolution*, 2 Vols., 1861.

edition which was eventually published two years after his death.[12] We must now appreciate the context in which this work was created (by Finlay) and received (by his readers).

3. *British Hellenism and Philhellenism*

For Finlay and his British contemporaries, the Greek past was a source of fascination. Viewed in the long term, this fascination had been building in Western Europe since the Renaissance, when Erasmus and his British humanist counterparts such as Colet and More had re-established the classics as useful and relevant to later ages, both as a stimulus to literary and aesthetic 're-birth', and, through that, to social and moral revival. Machiavelli was the first major political thinker to be marked by these Renaissance attitudes to the classical past. An understanding of the tradition of political thought spawned by these developments is particularly important for an appreciation of Finlay.

Using the 'ancients versus moderns' genre which would be influential for centuries, Machiavelli contrasted the ancient Romans with his contemporaries and emphasised the importance of ancient or 'republican' *virtù* in maintaining liberty. The virtuous citizen, that is, put the common good above their own, participating in self-government and so securing the internal liberty of the *res publica*, and fighting in person on behalf of the homeland to ensure external liberty from tyrants. In Britain, a 'neo-republican' strain in thinking about politics developed from this moralistic tradition, and was particularly important in the eighteenth century. It combined with the Polybian or institutional aspect of republican thinking, which emphasised instead that a balance of elements –monarchical, aristocratic and democratic– supported the liberty of the state.[13] This republican tradition will be crucial to this paper.

We must mark at this point, then, that from the Renaissance to the second half of the eighteenth century, Britain was looking largely to Rome, rather than Greece, as a source of positive moral and political wisdom. However, that emphasis would change. With the influence of German literary, historical and philological activity, and the stirrings of liberal democracy, the perceived relevance of Greece rose dramatically. Nurtured by an education system that

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[12] H. F. Tozer, ed., *A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time, B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864*, 7 Vols., Oxford: Clarendon, 1877. All references made in this piece to the *History* are to the Tozer edition, unless otherwise stated.

[13] The classic exposition of the republican tradition is J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,* Princeton 1975.

devoted the vast majority of its time to the classics, it is hard to overestimate quite how much the Victorians –especially the educated classes– thought about Greece. The political, historical, cultural and social history of Britain in the nineteenth century was profoundly marked by ideas and ideals of Greece.[14]

In particular, British social and political thought in the nineteenth century became absorbed in one instantiation of Hellenism above all others – the example offered by fifth-century Athens. She was perceived to embody a democracy which was militarily successful, which had high levels of citizen participation, high cultural standards, works of intellectual genius, social cohesiveness and a 'moral' fibre capable of being maintained without Christian revelation. Almost all of the prominent public figures of the Victorian age reflected on how Athens had managed this, and how her achievement might be replicated in the large-scale representative democracy in Britain.

This absorption in the classical past of Athens should be remembered as the context into which Finlay would be presenting his *History* of later Greece. He published his volumes in the period in which Grote was presenting his monumental history of archaic and classical Greece, Mill was reflecting on Athenian intellectual and political liberties and Arnold was recreating Athens as the incarnation of the 'modern spirit', combining the beautiful, the spiritual and the intellectual.[15]

Moreover, this classicism had been an important factor in British philhellenism in the 1820s, that is, in support for the Greeks' attempts to secure independence from the Ottoman Turks. There was a strong feeling that the Greeks were the descendants of a glorious ancient Greek past which Europe should try to restore. In addition, liberalism, nationalism, romanticism and Christian fellow-feeling were important further aspects of enthusiasm for the Greek cause.[16] These varying strands can all be seen in Finlay's dedication to the Greek cause, and their reverberations felt in his *History*.

4. *Finlay's History of Greece BC 146 – AD 1864*

Finlay opened his *History* with the clearest possible statement of what I have called his 'dual perspective' on Greek history:

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[14] Victorian Hellenism is treated in R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece,* Oxford 1980; F. M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain,* New York and London 1981; C. Stray, *Classics Transformed. Schools, Universities and Society in England 1830-1960*, Oxford 1988.

[15] I have tried to reconstruct this period in my Ph.D. thesis, "Confronting Modernity. Ancient Athens and modern British political thought, *c.*1780s-1880s".

[16] For the impulses that stirred British philhellenes, see the works cited above, note 1.

"The history of Greece under foreign domination records the degradation and the calamities of the nation which attained the highest degree of civilization in the ancient world. [But] Two thousand years of suffering have not obliterated the national character, not extinguished the national ambition."[17]

We hear the almost apologetic tone for taking an interest in Greece in her later periods. The shadow of the "civilization" of the classical period always lingers, against which all other periods represent "degradation". Nevertheless, Finlay was determined that even the "calamities" of two millennia had not destroyed his subject – the Greek 'nation', specifically, and its "national character".

Finlay's conception of the classical period, from which his tale of "degradation" and "calamities" unravels, is clarified by comments made in his *History* and in the notebooks now preserved in his archive. It had much in common with that of other British thinkers in the nineteenth century. He shared the idealization of classical Athens' 'great individuals',[18] and admired the broad basis of her culture (which he explicitly contrasted with modern society)[19] and the 'educative' nature of her public assemblies.[20] He also shared the view that ancient Athens had been a society based overwhelmingly on the productive labour of slaves, one in which there was "a constant enmity between the rich and the poor".[21]

'Decline' from this idealized classical past set in, he said in the *History*, after Plato and Aristotle.[22] However, the nature of this decline is more strikingly illuminated by a comment made in some unbound papers in his archive:

> [...] We must also remember that the history of Greece is the history of a declining nation in morals and politics. The decline commenced at the period when history began to be written. The period of true greatness of the greek nation precedes history. We know little of the time when the greeks filled the Mediterranean and the Black Sea with their colonies. We know nothing of the causes which led to the rapid increase of the greek race. The light of history falls strongly only on the causes of Hellenic decline.[23]

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[17] 1: p. xv.

[18] 2: p. 236.

[19] 1: p. 9.

[20] 2: p. 4.

[21] Finlay papers, E.13: "Reflections suggested by reading Aristotle's *Politics*", pp. 31-33.

[22] 2: p. 4.

[23] Finlay papers, E.58: a collection of hand-written essays and notes. [Capitalisation as given in his note.]

It is important to bear in mind when reading the remorseless tale of 'decline' that Finlay unfolds in his *History* that he in fact envisages not only a general decline from the classical past but an even more monumental fall from grace, as shown here.

However, it is crucial that Finlay did not offer a straightforwardly linear picture of decline. Within the overall framework, periods of rise and fall were envisaged. For instance, within the 'Byzantine' period, which he conceptualized as 716-1204 AD, Finlay argued that the iconoclast era had offset decline by "the moral vigour developed in society" and a series of able sovereigns who attempted to restore national prosperity. This period (716-867 AD) was followed by the Byzantines' "highest pitch of external power and internal prosperity", 867-1057 AD, after which followed "the true period of the decline and fall of the Eastern Empire", 1057-1204 AD.[24] The centuries from the fourth Crusade to the fall of Constantinople were, he thought, utterly abject, with final collapse apparent in the Ottoman period, its indignity epitomized, for him, by the janissary system. Finally, the Revolution and the modern period showed signs of 'regeneration' – though all too slow and beset with corruption, in Finlay's opinion.

It was Finlay's admiration for Leo III that led him to attach such significance to 716 AD. As the first iconoclast emperor, the commissioner of the *Ecloga* (a new legal code to replace the Justinianic legal corpus) and the author of successes in foreign policy against the East, Finlay found him an impressive figure in a number of respects. However, he was emphatic that his legal reforms made him most worthy of admiration.[25] As we shall see, this focus on legal administration is characteristic.

Why, then, did the Greeks 'decline'? How was revival possible in 716 and, later, towards the end of the eighteenth century? These questions provide the backbone to the *History*. I shall use them as an interpretive structure for looking at the text, before moving on to the lessons that Finlay wanted to draw from his account.

4.1. Explaining 'decline'

Certainly, Finlay considered external factors in Greek decline – the kinds of enemies she encountered, for example, and their characteristic vices, such as Roman 'greed'.[26] But he was certain that internal factors were always more

[24] 1: p. xviiff, 2: p. 9ff.
[25] 2: pp. 9, 23, 32ff.
[26] Vol. 1 *passim*.

important: "The misfortunes of nations are generally the direct consequence of their own vices, social or political".[27] Through his seven volumes, he charged the Greeks with being responsible for their own decline, under Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman rule. His treatment of these internal factors might be discussed according to the broad categories into which he separates them: governmental and structural, military, judicial, economic, religious, and social and moral.

For Finlay, decline was overwhelmingly the fault of the system of government itself. It combined and therefore confounded, as he put it, all the legislative, executive and administrative powers in the person of the emperor.[28] He regarded the Eastern Roman Empire as a virtual despotism; Basil I's restriction of the power of both Senate and provinces made it an absolute despotism,[29] cemented by Leo VI and Alexander.[30] Under the Comneni, from 1057 onwards, government by 'imperial placemen' appointed by the emperor became the norm, as opposed to government by skilled public servants.[31]

This despotism split 'the people' from 'the government'.[32] For Finlay, however, popular control of public servants, and the robust exercise of public opinion, were essential for political morality. Further, the despotism involved the systematic oppression of the provinces. The form of government thus tended towards centralisation, at the expense of municipal institutions.

Local institutions were important essentially because they *involved* people, drawing them in to the political process. This made them more likely to turn to political debate, and less likely to revolt, in order to effect change. Further, local institutions stimulated material and commercial benefits for the people,[33] and made them more likely to defend themselves against external threats. Their absence was thus a serious loss, which was made emphatically clear when Finlay accounted for the disaster of 1204 in these terms:

> Never was the national imbecility which arises from the want of municipal institutions and executive activity in local spheres more apparent. Had the towns, cities, corporations, districts, and provinces, inhabited by a Greek population, possessed magistrates responsible to the people and accustomed to independent action, there can be no

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[27] 5: p. 136.

[28] 1: p. 184f.

[29] 1: p. 292, 2: p. 237f.

[30] 2: pp. 259, 283, 302.

[31] 3: p. 3.

[32] Some examples among many: 1: pp. 104, 295ff, 3: p. 283.

[33] See especially Finlay's "Observations on the Characteristic Features of Byzantine History", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, 1851.

> doubt that thousands of Greek citizens would have rushed forward to defend their country.[34]

Here we see aspects of the admiration for the citizen's readiness to fight which was a significant part of the republican refrain. This loss of martial readiness on the part of citizens was set alongside disorder in the army, and the increasing difficulties with funds to enlist mercenary troops, as explanations for Byzantine military decline.

In this admiration for civic military readiness, we see something of Finlay the champion of 'the people'. He commended them for a kind of 'common sense' political wisdom,[35] and for their rural virtues.[36] They were the nation's backbone,[37] and in later volumes the Greek Revolution would be portrayed as emphatically their glory.[38] However, Finlay admitted that we in fact have very little evidence about these 'people'[39] – they were something of a romantic chimera for him. Here he had much in common with his friend E. A. Freeman.[40] It is also relevant that his notebooks show he had been reading Thomas Paine, who was notable for his republican championship of 'the people'.[41]

This is not to cast Finlay as radical, however. He placed too much emphasis on the necessity of a middle class in the development of 'public opinion' for this description to be accurate.[42] He subscribed to the dominant liberal conception of public opinion, in which it was a bulwark of liberty overwhelmingly determined by class and gender.

In contrast, he had venom for the aristocracy. He believed that the 'great nobles of Asia' finally destroyed the "scientific fabric" of the political system and its systematic procedure between 1057 and 1204, buttressing a despotism based on personal influence.[43] From this point through to the modern period, he frequently portrayed the upper classes as the cause of national suffering.[44] Indeed, the slaughter of the aristocracy in 1453 was effectively depicted as a

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[34] 3: p. 282. Cf. 4: p. 264, 5: p. 228f.

[35] E.g. 2: p. 62, 6: p. 410.

[36] 2: p. 215, 5: p. 135, 6: p. 12.

[37] 5: p. 135.

[38] 6: p. 231.

[39] E.g. 4: pp. 166 and 47.

[40] On Freeman, see J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent. Victorian Historians and the English Past*, Cambridge 1981.

[41] Finlay papers, A.30.

[42] See esp. 1: pp. 10, 108, 199, 2: pp. 218f, 457f, 4: pp. 47, 274, 7: p. 2.

[43] 2: p. 10f.

[44] E.g. 4: p. 47f, 5: p. 122, 6: pp. 5, 337.

blessing in disguise, since the aristocracy had, he believed, become an obstacle to national moral improvement.[45]

Thus, centralisation and the absence of municipal participation were harmful to the body politic. Further, they could harm the systematic administration of the law. Although Roman law, which the Byzantines developed, did not have the concept that judicial power should be independent of executive and legislative, Finlay nevertheless admired it. He commented in a notebook: "Had an independent judicial system been formed the Roman empire would probably never have fallen."[46] Conversely, the sign of a bad emperor was failure in the administration of justice: Finlay's hostility to the Comnenian dynasty stems from its perceived impoverishment of the judicial system.[47] In this vein, Finlay remained critical of the lawlessness he perceived in Greece right through to his own day.[48]

Economics sat alongside justice as the twin most important branches of government in civilized society.[49] His interest in the economic realm stemmed from the time he had spent in Scotland in the care of his uncle, the MP Kirkman Finlay, who was well-read in political economy in particular.[50] Finlay's early essays attest a knowledge of Smith, Ricardo and Malthus, among others.[51] He identified financial maladministration and fiscal oppression throughout his work. The taxation of the imperial government was rapacious, making the people merely the "slaves of the imperial treasury".[52] Its effects were far-reaching: "fiscal rapacity was the incurable canker of the Byzantine, as it had been of the Roman government. From it arose all those measures which reduced society to a stationary condition".[53] Greece was thus drained by successive emperors –Constantine,[54] Justinian,[55] Nicephorus I,[56] the Comneni[57]– and by this process

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[45] 5: p. 121.

[46] Finlay papers, D.12.

[47] Esp. 3: p. 6.

[48] E.g. 7: p. 47.

[49] 5: p. 18f.

[50] 1: p. xl.

[51] "Some Observations on the Commercial Situation and Policy of Great Britain", Finlay papers, A.1.

[52] 1: p. 195.

[53] 2: p. 202.

[54] 1: p. 102ff.

[55] 1: p. 193ff.

[56] 2: pp. 93, 97.

[57] 2: p. 11.

she lost not only money, capital and population, but was *morally* devastated, such that servility became a habit, in place of industriousness.[58]

These attitudes culminated in the remarkable comment that no central government could ever really estimate the taxable capacity of a people – only 'the people' could levy taxes on themselves with wisdom. This is a striking proposition, and helps to show why it was so hard for sovereigns to be wise financiers, in Finlay's opinion. Indeed, he thought that no central government in Europe had *ever* yet avoided fiscal oppression,[59] and "excessive financial burdens and constant interference with individual liberty" still characterized all modern centralized states.[60]

Although Finlay was a far from sympathetic critic of ancient Greek religion and of Byzantine Orthodoxy, religion only became a factor in decline in the later volumes. In the earlier periods, *pace* Gibbon, Christianity had in fact helped to stimulate social renewal. However, the term "ecclesiastical bigotry" started to appear in his depictions of the tenth century.[61] By the Ottoman period, he had become excoriating about 'monachism' (monasticism) and the clergy; many social vices were presented as the result of corrupt monastic influence.[62] Their worst crime, in his eyes, was their failure to prompt the Greeks to rebel against the system of the janissaries.[63]

However, Finlay was emphatic that 'moral' causes were overwhelmingly to blame for decline. The political decline of the Greeks was the *result* of moral decline,[64] and this emphasis on the moral sphere is perhaps now the most striking feature of the work. It was a 'morality' that was prior to politics, but which informed both the social and political realm. The grand conclusion of the *History* drove home the point:

> Those who have long studied the history of Greece never fail to observe that, until the people undergo a moral change as well as the government, national progress must be slow, and the surest pledges for the enjoyment of true liberty will be wanting.[65]

As we shall see, this morality had much in common with republican 'civic virtue'.

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[58] 1: pp. 38ff, 55, 80.
[59] 2: p. 322.
[60] 5: p. 33.
[61] Vol. 3 *passim*.
[62] 5: p. 132f.
[63] 5: p. 38.
[64] See e.g. 1: p. 57, 2: p. 319ff.
[65] 7: p. 332.

Finlay emphasized that this 'morality' could not be infused by literature or Orthodoxy alone.[66] Here he was responding to those who argued that either Hellenic culture or Christian religion had been the well-springs of Greek revival. Indeed, for Finlay classical literature had often made the Greeks unjustifiably vain about their heritage – and as such it had proved as much a burden as a boon.[67]

However, neither were any match, in his opinion, for a public-oriented political morality, which stemmed first and foremost from the individual. If Greece had sunk to moral degeneration as a nation, it was, he said, "because they were destitute of virtue as individuals".[68] Finlay's explanation for this compared two episodes of British and Greek history. While the Norman Conquest had led to "English liberty", in his opinion, Greece's experiences of conquest had led to "Turkish tyranny", and the explanation "must be sought in the family, the parish, the borough and the county; not in parliament and ... central government".[69]

Thus, the family and the local socio-religious context ("the parish") first and foremost instilled 'morality' or 'virtue'. At the public level, this morality should be stimulated by activity in local government ("the borough and the county" in the English context). This helped to create that "energy" and "vigour" which sustained liberty. However, Greece had had local institutions, but they had not ultimately proved effective. Finlay had to offer an explanation for this. In part, he targeted the inadequacy of what he characterized as 'educative' support. In other words, to stimulate participation, a certain kind of 'education' was required – one that instilled a respect for the public realm. Too often, Greek education was "pedantic", as he put it, private- rather than public-oriented.[70] Yet this was not just a Greek issue: "The most important, and in general the most neglected, part of national education, *in all countries*, has been the primary relations of the individual to the commonwealth".[71]

However, a further difficulty was the very nature of local institutions themselves. Instead of being the instruments of a public-oriented civic virtue that Finlay had in mind, they could be perverted to manipulate the people. Even in Constantine's time, for example, he saw the local curia partly as a vehicle for

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[66] 5: p. 28f; cf. 5: pp. 245 and 286.
[67] E.g. 1: pp. 25f, 70, 417, Vols. 5-7 *passim*.
[68] 5: p. 8.
[69] 4: p. 227f.
[70] See 2: p. 4 and 4: p. 43.
[71] 4: p. 427 (my emphasis).

extorting taxes.[72] Likewise, later, he argued that those municipal institutions which persisted in Greece in the Ottoman period in fact became the instruments of Turkish oppression and tax-collecting, and hence "this vaunted institution protected the liberties of the people by accident".[73] Similarly, in the nineteenth century, he criticized the king and his "oligarchical elective college" for effectively making local officials an instrument of the central government.[74] We shall return to the importance of this in the next Section.

This 'morality' was the source of Finlay's depiction of what he sweepingly calls "Greek character". He could be extremely disparaging – frequently the Greeks are depicted as "selfish", "vain" and "presumptuous" in terms of individual and national character. Indeed, his comments about Greek 'national character' are one of the reasons he is little read today. However, some sensitivity to contemporary uses of the term 'character' is essential. Stefan Collini's recent work on the nineteenth-century use of the concept character has argued that it was a new articulation, in a different register, of that 'civic virtue' which was the keystone of eighteenth-century political discourse.[75] 'Morality' and 'character', I suggest, were Finlay's terms for encouraging 'virtue' in citizens. Thus his comments on Greek character cannot be read as the straightforwardly chauvinistic criticism they might appear to us now. Further, Finlay's disparaging comments about 'national character' were certainly not confined to the Greeks. His journals and papers contain a number of such remarks about the national characters of others. Indeed, Charles Frazee aptly captured Finlay's critical temper when he said that Finlay "did not spare those whom he felt did not measure up to his ideals. Within this group could be placed the overwhelming majority of mankind".[76]

4.2. Explaining persistence and resurgence

Amid this picture of decline and decay, two significant questions arose. First, how did Byzantium persist for as long as it did? Second, how were periods of resurgence possible? Finlay's answers to these questions used broadly the same conceptual categories as he had deployed in his account of perceived decline, but showed their positive side. I shall offer some brief examples.

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[72] 1: p. 109.

[73] 7: p. 102.

[74] 7: p. 120f.

[75] S. Collini, *Public Moralists. Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, Oxford 1991, esp. Chapter 3.

[76] C. A. Frazee, *op. cit.*

If the fundamental cause of Byzantine decline had been her centralised despotism, nevertheless the Roman body politic, and its system of administration, was regarded as having an inherent strength. This enabled it to withstand manifold wars and rebellions, and to persist despite its gathering weakness.[77] Thus, for example, Basil I might have had few skills and less education, in Finlay's opinion, but "the perfection of the governmental machine" enabled him to function quite admirably.[78]

Likewise, if the 'Eastern Empire' offered a lesson in the dangers of centralization, the corollary was that it survived as long as it did, unlike the Western, *because* the Greeks had had local institutions.[79] These enabled the people to survive in the face of the increasing tendency towards centralization, from Constantine, to Justinian,[80] to the eleventh century, and beyond.[81] The problems with local institutions were rather those that were discussed above – the lack of 'educative' support and their perversion by central government, against which only civic virtue could fight.

Despite his reservations about the inter-dependence of judicial, executive and legislative power, Finlay admired Roman law when it was administered systematically. Thus the laws of Constantine and Justinian provided at least something of a bulwark for 'the people' against the oppression of government,[82] and as such he says that it was the judicial administration that upheld the crumbling political edifice.[83] Further examples that we have already mentioned include the stress placed on Leo III's *Ecloga* and the praise for the period 867-1057 AD as an "era of legislative greatness", offering security of life and property.

Similarly, periods of improvement were characterised by an upturn in commercial policy (involving less taxation and more commercial activity, broadly speaking). Again, commercial activity was one of the factors in his admiration for the iconoclast period.[84]

He further commended the iconoclast period for "moral vigour" and the revival of public opinion.[85] In other words, this was a revival in the key components of 'civic virtue' and 'political morality'. Significantly, in line with

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[77] 1: pp. 184, 395.
[78] 2: p. 230.
[79] 1: p. xxif.
[80] Esp. 1: p. 102ff on Constantine and 1: p. 193ff on Justinian.
[81] Esp. 3: p. 2 and 4: p. 43.
[82] 1: p. 105 (Constantine), 1: p. 213 (Justinian).
[83] 1: p. 296.
[84] 2: p. 209ff; cf. 4: p. 55.
[85] 2: pp. 9, 218f.

the comments on 'education' above, and their relation to virtue, education in the later volumes was depicted as the herald of Greek liberty,[86] and Korais in particular was praised for prising education away from Byzantine pedantry[87] (by which he meant an aping of classical style rather than an admiration of the republican content of classical literature[88]).

In the final resort, however, Finlay showed his religious frame of mind in resorting to 'Providence'. The best example of this is the way in which he ultimately saw the Revolution of 1821 as a "clear manifestation of God's providence in the progress of human society".[89] The two volumes on the Revolution are marked strongly by the sense that the Greek Revolution was inevitable, part of an inexorable tide of events in what he significantly calls "human progress". It is not irrelevant to the consideration of Finlay as an 'optimist' or 'pessimist' that he subscribed to a notion of 'progress' buttressed in part, at least, by faith.

5. *An assessment of Finlay's History in context*

We can now consider Finlay's historical craft, and the varying influences that shaped his attitude to the past. This is important not only for the excavation of this text, but also for the way his outlook on the past coloured his perception of the Greek present. This in turn is important (although not the direct concern of the present paper) because he is a valuable source for philhellenism, the Revolution and the early history of modern Greece, and in this context needs to be understood and used with an appreciation of his intellectual make-up.

5.1. Finlay and his Byzantine sources

Although this is not the place for a full critique of Finlay's treatment of Byzantium, we need briefly to consider his use of medieval sources in order to appreciate him as a historian. For most of the period we are discussing in this piece, Finlay was largely in the hands of the Byzantine historians. He did not take them entirely at face value – there were many times when he criticized various historians for their biased representation of certain emperors, for instance.[90]

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[86] 6: p. 97. Also 5: p. 211 on the effects of Catholic education.

[87] 5: p. 284f.

[88] Esp. 3: p. 55.

[89] 7: p. 181; cf. 6: p. 103. Also 5: p. 3 on the role of 'Divine Providence' in the decline of the Ottomans.

[90] E.g. his discussions of Justin II, Maurice, Nicephorus I and Michael 'the Stammerer'.

Where he was less critical, by our standards, was in reading the historians in the context of their textual tradition and allowing for the representations that these produced. Byzantine historians were highly stylised, and inherited conventional, Eusebian-inspired *topoi* in the representation of the emperor, imperial policy and the role of God in the history of the Empire. It was conventional to make certain points about the centrality of Constantinople as the imperial city of Empire, for instance. As regards the extent of centralisation in medieval times, it certainly seems to us now that Finlay did not allow enough for this convention, giving too small a role to the local people of wealth and power in the conduct of politics.

Further conventional points related to the importance of the emperor's role, as God's vicegerent on earth, in the dispensation of justice, in fair taxation, and so on. Procopius' treatment of Justinian and Choniates' of the Angeli, for example, demonstrate clearly that a stock praise, or stock criticism, was that an Emperor was good at, or deficient in, justice, while Choniates' treatment of Manuel I's increases in taxes exemplify another traditional complaint.[91] Byzantine historians recognised the decline of their empire and sought ways to account for it. Depopulation and oppressive taxation were expressions of the way in which they had, as they saw it, fallen foul of God's favour – they were being punished for ill-faith by bad government.

However, one cannot criticise Finlay by the anachronistic standards of today's scholarship. Nor should we suggest that Finlay was misguided in dwelling on these themes. Although scholars might now have developed a nuanced understanding of Byzantine textual traditions, and the ways in which they might have distorted reality, population decline and economic mismanagement –two of Finlay's key themes– nevertheless remain key themes in discussions of Byzantine decline. Indeed, recent work by Byzantine scholars has shown that population figures remain a difficult problem, and that their relation to economic and political developments is complex.[92]

5.2. Scottish historiographical traditions

Joan Hussey has traced Finlay's romanticism to his rural Scottish upbringing,[93]

Cf. 2: p. 228 on Basil I's historians.

[91] In English translations, Procopius, *The Secret History*; Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, *Annals of Niketas Choniates,* tr. H. J. Magoulias, Detroit 1984 (esp. p. 115f on the increase of taxes).

[92] See e.g. A. Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900-1200,* Cambridge 1989 and W. Treadgold, *Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,* New York 1982.

[93] J. M. Hussey, "George Finlay in Perspective", p. 137f.

but the crucial intellectual influence of the Scottish Enlightenment has thus far been overlooked. The Scots pioneered 'philosophic' or 'conjectural' history, the analysis of the origins and development of society and government. Adam Smith provided the classic statement of the theory that society had developed in four distinct stages, corresponding to the means of subsistence (hunting, pastoral, agricultural, commercial).[94] Finlay's was a philosophic history conceived broadly in this tradition, as his reviewers recognised. This accounts largely, I suggest, for his attempt to demonstrate a 'lesson' or a 'moral' from the vast sweep of Greek history. However, the application of the model to Greek history questions its smooth linearity: Finlay's emphasis on periods of 'upturn' calls into question the notion of a straight-forwardly progressive sweep in history, which was the underlying thrust of the most prominent historians' works in this tradition.

Certainly, as an instantiation of this 'progress', David Hume and Adam Smith argued fiercely for the victory of the moderns *versus* the ancients. Hume derided the classical shibboleth that luxury led to corruption, and argued that the military readiness of citizens was unnatural. Smith largely followed him. On the other hand, Lord Kames, John Millar and Adam Ferguson were less confident about the moral beneficence of this fourth stage of development, or 'commercial society'. Ferguson, for example, continued to champion civic virtue and a citizen militia.[95] Finlay's commitment to political morality thus has more in common with the latter type of 'Enlightenment' thinking.

Further, Finlay derives a broad commitment to the importance of economic motors in historical accounts from the Scots. The Scottish Enlightenment, of course, virtually created 'political economy', Smith's *Wealth of Nations* setting out the supposedly natural, self-adjusting mechanism of the market. However, Finlay was far less confident about the potential of the market to liberate people than they were. Again, he tempers the legacy of the Scots, sitting between the optimistic and pessimistic trajectories of this tradition.

5.3. Nineteenth-century liberalism

Finlay's commitment to civil, religious, commercial and political freedoms was broadly liberal, and in his anti-central and pro-local views, Finlay was echoing a key liberal formulation.[96] His stress on the need for energy and vigour, and

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[94] A. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations,* 1776.

[95] A. Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society,* 1767.

[96] Indeed, in one of his notebooks, Finlay had transcribed a passage from an article by

his fear of 'the stationary', is also clearly influenced by Mill's *On Liberty*, where 'Chinese stationariness' is seen as the main threat to progress.

However, given his application of these ideas to the Greek context, he did not share the concerns of prominent liberal thinkers about *restraining* the effects of 'commercial society'. Tocqueville and Mill were concerned in particular that commercial society would result in the 'tyranny of the majority' and passive individualism. In contrast, for Finlay the majority were so oppressed in Greece that they had not yet developed the sort of 'tyranny' that Tocqueville and Mill had in mind. Further, he did not view the tendency to individualism and an over-concern with the private sphere as the result of 'commercial society' and its political counterpart, 'democracy'. Instead, he had to confront what he saw as apathy in the public realm in a society which was manifestly in an earlier stage of its development. One of his solutions to this, as we saw, was a liberal-inspired stress on local institutions as cultivators of civic virtue. However, where these were concerned, he had to confront, where Tocqueville and Mill and others did not, a belief that these had existed for years and that they had not been effective, as we saw.

This explains his recourse to republican traditions of thought: their emphasis on the *active* involvement of citizens in government enabled him not only to insist, with contemporary liberals, that local institutions were important, but also that they must be organised in such a way as to allow the active flourishing of virtue. This stress on the importance of individual character and virtue in politics accounts for the notion that he developed –discussed above– that there was a 'religio-socio-moral' sense, inculcated by the family, the parish and 'civic education', which was *prior* to politics, but was what politics relied on. This different strain in Finlay's conception of 'the political' is significant and interesting for the way it responds to some of the shortcomings of the traditional liberal model, when only applied to the British context. It further enhances our sense of the complexity and variety of strains of liberalism embedded in British philhellenism, which has been a feature of recent scholarship.[97]

Mill (*Edinburgh Review*, April 1862): "Recent history bears out the assertion, that an over-centralized government is amenable to no check short of a revolution; and it is lured to its ruin by an appearance of unlimited power, up to the very moment when it is abandoned by all mankind" (Finlay papers, A.30).

[97] The variety of liberal viewpoints held by British philhellenes was stressed by Fred Rosen with regard to those British philhellenes he discussed in *Bentham, Byron and Greece* (of whom Finlay was not one).

Finlay's combination of liberal and republican strains of thinking is particularly interesting in the light of recent scholarship in the history of political thought. Liberal and republican characterizations of 'freedom' were traditionally supposed to be what set the two 'types' of thinking apart. However, the neat polarization of 'republicanism' with 'positive' liberty and 'liberalism' with 'negative' liberty has recently come under increasing attack. For example, Quentin Skinner has shown that the republican tradition in fact included a significant emphasis on liberal individualism, while Eugenio Biagini has argued that Gladstonian popular liberalism had a considerable attachment to community and 'positive' liberty.[98] Finlay's intellectual position seems to me to bear out the validity of this scholarly development. Although committed to civil, religious, commercial and political liberties, broadly speaking, his conception of 'liberty' was not merely *freedom from* material insecurity and poverty. It was, as we have seen, significantly indebted to the tradition of republican civic virtue.

5.4. A varied inheritance

Finlay thus owes clear debts to the Scottish Enlightenment and contemporary liberalism, but he has a complex relationship with them, forced by his confrontation with the Greek past to re-mould aspects of their legacy. Further, elements of romanticism about the Greek people are clearly evident in his *History*, and his notions of virtue and progress both have a firm religious imprint. Here again we are cautioned against assuming that Finlay's views, as a 'liberal', are immediately predictable and simple to understand; rather they were tempered by a host of other traditions of British thinking, not least by the supposedly antithetical impulse of republican civic virtue.

6. *The uses of the past*

Drawing on these various elements of his intellectual inheritance, in what ways did Finlay create a history which could be considered, as he hoped it would be, "instructive … [to] the statesman and the political economist"?[99]

First, one of the most important, general consequences of Finlay's historical studies was his commitment to understanding the present as a progression out

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[98] Q. Skinner, "The Republican Idea of Political Liberty" in G. Brock, Q. Skinner and M. Viroli, eds., *Machiavelli and Republicanism,* Cambridge 1990; Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880,* Cambridge 1992.

[99] 1: p. xv.

of the past. This was important because a number of significant philhellenes had a quite different attitude, viewing the past rather as something that could be jettisoned in a new future which was to be unfettered by history. This was most particularly true of Bentham, who had significant involvements with the Greek struggle.[100] For Finlay, though, an understanding of 'modern' Greece required sympathy to, or at least understanding of, context. A practical example is his attitude to Greek economics in the nineteenth century, which he saw as deeply rooted in a fiscal oppression that had been endemic for years (and which Ottoman maladministration had added to, rather than been entirely responsible for). In contrast, others saw it as the result of the temporary dislocation of the 1820s. Finlay's view was the more pessimistic, but, as William McGrew has said, not without its attractions.[101]

Second, and more directly, Finlay wished to emphasize the lesson that centralization was harmful, "separating the feelings and interests of the administration from the sympathies and prosperity of the people".[102] This lesson was particularly potent at the present time, he said, in the light of the European drift towards centralization: for it showed that "Despotism has a powerful agent in administrative centralization, and two strong camps in political servility and popular anarchy".[103]

Byzantium was thus a negative *exemplum*, a lesson in 'how not to be', for free countries. Despite its administrative capacity, no political system would ever nurture 'freedom' if it did not encourage active political responsibility on the part of its citizens.[104] As such, Byzantium functioned as an inverse to the positive *exemplum* of classical Athens in Britain, which rather provided a lesson in 'how to aspire to be'.

However, Finlay argued that, viewed in a different light, Byzantium could offer a useful lesson in political institutions which, although not admirable, were nevertheless *effective*. The Byzantine period taught posterity that "a well-organized central government can with ease hold many subject nations in a state of political nullity".[105] He had made clear in an earlier pamphlet why this could be a useful lesson:

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[100] See esp. F. Rosen, *Bentham, Byron and Greece,* on Bentham.

[101] W. McGrew, "Greek Economic Historiography for the First Part of the Nineteenth Century" in A. L. Macrakis and P. N. Diamandouros, *New Trends in Modern Greek Historiography,* The Modern Greek Studies Association in cooperation with Anatolia College, n.p. 1982.

[102] 1: p. xvf.

[103] 1: p. xvi.

[104] See esp. 1: p. 104 on this.

[105] 1: p. xviii.

> The picture is instructive, as affording the most remarkable example of a government securing to itself a durable existence by the force of its own administrative arrangements, without forming any national ties, or claiming any sympathy of race with its subjects. *It may serve as a lesson to the rulers of India*, and inspire them with the hope, that if their administrative machine be as wisely constructed and their administration of justice as suitable to the exigencies of the times, as at Byzantium, their power may be perpetuated for many centuries.[106]

Byzantium, then, while a negative lesson for the British in their homeland, could provide a positive lesson for the British in the context of their imperial concerns.

Something of the way Finlay was read by his British contemporaries is suggested by his reviewers. Few of them, in fact, seem to have dwelt on these lessons he hoped to transmit. Instead, they praised Finlay for tackling the ostensibly dispiriting topic of Greek decline. As *The Spectator* put it, "The decline of an empire, like the decline of life, is generally considered an unfavourable subject for an author". Other reviewers overwhelmingly accepted that this was a tale of 'decline', using metaphors of senility, decay and disease.[107] Conversely, many cited classical Greece as the reason – the only *possible* reason, it seems – why one might be interested in modern Greece, and acts of personal heroism in the Revolution were seen to elevate the tale to the "glorious days of Grecian liberty and of Grecian valour".[108]

However, although Finlay was praised several times not simply for narrating 'decline' but for explaining it,[109] there was an audible silence among the reviews about precisely what his 'lessons' were. Overall, what is noteworthy about Finlay's notices is how little they commented on the *argument* of the volumes – their focus on continuity, on 'morality' and 'character', on local institutions, on the evils of centralization.

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[106] "Observations on the Characteristic Features of Byzantine History", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, p. 64 (my emphasis).

[107] *The Scotsman* (Saturday, 25 June 1852) talked of the Byzantine Empire's "long senility", while *The Rambler* saw its decline as the inevitable "decay" of the inorganic: "Like all human things which have originally no natural growth, but are the work of arbitrary or external power or compulsion, it [...] was dependent upon its organisation rather than its vitality for its very existence" (*The Rambler*, New Series, Vol. II, no. IX (Sept. 1854), pp. 258-271 (this quote p. 261)).

[108] *The Athenaeum* (14 December 1861). Cf. *The Press* (21 December 1861).

[109] For example, the *Athenaeum* (Saturday, 23 August 1851) put it that the study of 'decline', like that of disease, "may teach many a valuable lesson".

There is a dramatic contrast between these British responses to medieval and modern Greece and those of contemporary Greeks. In Greece, eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking had had something in common with British Hellenism in its Western-inspired animus against Byzantium. Her intellectuals had looked decisively to the ancient world as the defining pole of national existence.[110] Byzantium was triumphantly reclaimed, however, with Paparrigopoulos. His ground-breaking history was published in five volumes between 1860 and 1874 and emphasised both the continuity of the Greek nation, and, crucially, the importance of the Byzantine tradition within that.[111]

Paschalis Kitromilides has characterized this text as "the most important intellectual achievement of nineteenth-century Greece". Its importance lay not only in the historiographical field, but in the ways in which it was used to legitimate new political ideology, encouraging national unity at a crucial moment for the emerging Greek nation state. Kitromilides puts it thus: "Through the feeling of loss [for Byzantium] the reader is also taught to appreciate the great empire's most admirable achievement: the unification of the Greek nation, the healing of classical Hellenism's bitter disunity, the realization in the bosom of the Christian Empire of that most noble and elusive of social ideals, national unity, solidarity and cohesion".[112]

Finlay was aware of these developments in Greek historiography. Broadly, he shared with Paparrigopoulos an emphasis on 'continuity' in Greek history, and a particular interest in the iconoclast emperors. Both thus refuted Gibbon's charges that Byzantium lacked enterprise and the capacity for self-renovation.[113] However, Finlay's tale did not offer the ebullient confidence in national unity that was the key-note of Paparrigopoulos' work. Finlay was more acerbic, and although there was something of a sense of Greek achievement, the

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[110] See A. Politis, "From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors", G. Huxley, "Aspects of modern Greek Historiography of Byzantium", and P. M. Kitromilides,"On the intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Greek idea", in D. Rick and P. Magdalino, eds., *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity,* Aldershot 1998, pp. 25-33.

[111] On Paparrigopoulos, see esp. P. Kitromilides, "On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism", *op. cit.* and his "Historiographical Interpretations of Modern Greek Reality: An Exploratory Essay" in A. L. Macrakis and P. N. Diamandouros, eds., *New Trends in Modern Greek Historiography*. Also C. Hatzidimitriou, "From Paparrigopoulos to Vacalopoulos: Modern Greek Historiography on the Ottoman Period", *ibid.*

[112] P. Kitromilides, "On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism", p. 30.

[113] On this aspect of Paparrigopoulos, see esp. G. Huxley, "Aspects of modern Greek historiography of Byzantium", p. 17.

tale was overwhelmingly less positive about continuity and unification.[114] Not least as a result of these historians' works, the historiography of Byzantium fulfilled very different symbolic and ideological functions in British and Greek society in the nineteenth century.

7. *Conclusions*

Having arrived in Greece an optimistic philhellene, Finlay certainly came to know disillusion. In part this was a general effect of having experienced the bruising realities of political engagement. It was also surely related to his view that good government was so rare and so exceedingly hard to achieve. Nevertheless, he remained in Greece, committed to the cause of national liberty and to the study of the whole range of her past – even if he was also a severe critic of his own work.[115] It seems to me more accurate and realistic to acknowledge that, as a result of his practical and scholarly engagements with Greece, he tended to both pessimism and optimism, disillusionment and enthusiasm. An attempt to cast him as either consistently 'philhellene' or 'mishellene' is reductive.

Further, we enrich our understanding of these strains in his thought if we consider them not merely the result of personal propensities, but of an intellectual inheritance. He reflected on both the optimistic and pessimistic strains of Scottish thought, and tempered them in the light of his study of the history of Greece. He also chose to weld a republican-inspired idea of 'civic virtue' with contemporary liberal propensities in order to meet the challenge of applying liberal thinking beyond the context of Britain. It is not enough simply to label Finlay as a 'liberal': recent scholarship, such as Rosen's and Biagini's, has shown what a complex phenomenon nineteenth-century liberalism could be, and we need to attend to the particular contours of Finlay's case. Moreover, his work shows the influence of his romanticism, Christianity and knowledge of developments in Greek historiography. We thus have a case study of an unusual philhellene who devoted his life to an attempt to understand and articulate the questions with which we began – the place of the Greek past in the present.

British School at Athens

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[114] I hope that further consideration of Finlay's relationship to Greek historians will be a focus of future work.

[115] He often described his work as a "melancholy" task (e.g. 7: p. 125f), and in his papers (Finlay papers, E.58) he calls it a "thankless and dispiriting task". For his harsh judgements of his own achievements, see e.g. the Preface to Vol. 1 and the conclusion in Vol. 7.