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The Promise of the 1821 Revolution and the Suffering Body. Some thoughts on Modernisation and Anti-intellectualism

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The Promise of the 1821 Revolution and the Suffering Body.

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Eleni Andriakaina

Abstract

How can we understand and interpret the popular narrative of the 1821 revolution that speaks for the suffering body of the fighter while it reproaches the “Frenchified heterochthons” and conveys a kind of anti-intellectualism (defined broadly and loosely by Merle Curti as “a suspicion of, opposition to, or derogation of intellectuals”)? The popular view of 1821 has its origins in the memoirs of the “freedom fighters” written after the War of Independence. Its main motifs travelled from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth century and lent themselves to multiple readings and various ideological uses. Although it has a socio-political content, it cannot be explained in terms of a grand narrative of class war, as some Marxist historians of the twentieth century argue; neither can it be understood in terms of the grand narrative of Greek modernisation, that is, as a survival from a previous stage of historical development, a relic from the past, even though it draws its motives from traditional sources and idealises the role of chieftains in the War of Independence. I suggest that we approach the anti-intellectualism of the early nineteenth century from an anti-essentialist perspective of Greek history that highlights the Janus-face of modernisation and the ambivalent nature of modern ideologies (especially of popular nationalism) with regard to the relation between the intellectual and the people or the nation.

to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;

P. B. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

The polarity: the head and the arms of 1821

The transmission of Enlightenment ideas into Greek thought and the critique of traditional authorities, both secular and religious, from the perspectives of religious

humanism, political liberalism, and revolutionary radicalism were determining factors in the formulation of the project of national independence.¹ The adoption and dissemination of modern ideas by a mercantile bourgeoisie and diaspora culminated in a tight network among a small but active group of intellectuals within and outside the Ottoman Empire who joined forces against Ottoman rule and religious obscurantism. The thinkers of the Greek Enlightenment highlighted education seen as the means to the spiritual rebirth of the Greeks, as a matter of primary importance for their entry into the modern era. In this context, an awareness of the social and political condition of the Greeks began to develop along with the self-consciousness of a new social strata—a secular intelligentsia—which began to realize its worth, distinctiveness and power.

The Promethean faith in the power of ideas and their ability to change the world and steer the course of history to coincide with the will, plans, and desires of the individual is a key cultural feature of modern intellectuals. The self-images of the thinkers of the Greek Enlightenment were, to a great extent, consolidated in the social and political realities of the European world in the early nineteenth century. Thanks to their commercial activities, the increased social and geographic mobility, the widespread networks for exchanging ideas and communication, intellectuals gradually came to be emancipated from traditional authorities.

Disseminating the value of education and the need for cultural and intellectual reform as a precondition of national liberation, the thinkers of the Greek Enlightenment pinpointed a split between the ideal and the real: a split between their convictions and desires on the one hand, and the social and political reality of the enslaved *reaya*, the subject of Ottoman Empire, on the other. At the same time, they presupposed that their ideas had enough power to overcome that split. The secularisation of transcendence, namely, the proliferation of secular utopias, and the call for an urgent leap from *ought* to *is*, comprised the general lineaments of the Age of Ideologies from which the Greek revolution sprung. The faith in the power of ideas to transform the individual self and collective life that marks all modern ideologies inevitably invested the producers of the ideas, the intellectuals, with great authority.

Yet, abstract ideas, however radical, can produce specific historical results and become a revolutionary force when they are adopted by wider social groups. The

Filiki Eteria (Friendly Society) played a key role in the preparation of the insurgency and the transition from theory and critique to practice. During the later period of Greek Enlightenment, the requirement for liberty and justice connected with the prospect of a radical social transformation was expressed in some major texts imbued with the spirit of political radicalism—in the writings of Rigas Feraios and the treatise *Hellenic Nomarchy* anonymously published in 1806.² These authors, whilst continuing to consider the education process as a necessary condition for change, referred to the prospect of the armed uprising of the enslaved peoples as an urgent and bounden duty. The initial plan of Filiki, as Victor Rudometof notes, “was to create a Balkan Orthodox Christian movement aiming to replace the patriarchate’s religious authority and the Porte’s political authority with a new secular, liberal authority inspired by the French Revolution” (30).

The Filiki Eteria—organized according to the model of Secret Societies, illegal conspiratorial organisations that were flourishing in South-Eastern Europe in the early nineteenth century—led the way for the development of a mass-action political movement that precipitated the revolution of 1821. Its founding members were petit merchants who felt rather uneasy and insecure in an era marked by the aftermath of Napoleon’s defeat and the Restoration. The wider conservative environment and the blocking of their opportunities for upward mobility were possibly some of the factors that contributed to their radicalisation, that is, the adoption of “French Jacobin-style revolutionary ideas” (Rudometof 30). As Pantelis Lekkas notes, it was that “segment of the intellectuals who managed to transmute scholarship into politics” (“The Greek War of Independence” 174) and played a prominent role in the initiation of the masses into the revolutionary movement against the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the type of the engaged, militant intellectual was born and thrived as one who does not just interpret the world and criticise the dominant religious and political doctrines but primarily wishes to mobilise the Orthodox Christians with the direct aim of taking action against Ottoman rule.³

Between 1814 and the eve of the revolution, Filiki Eteria managed to extend the network of the organisation to all the Balkan provinces and to recruit thousands of members. It succeeded in putting people of different backgrounds and from various geographical regions in touch—people with different lifestyles, social experiences, skills and mentalities. As such, it contributed to the construction of new social

relations and novel forms of solidarity that transcended the bounds of local communities and resulted in the consolidation of a larger inclusive entity, of a unity of hopes and expectations that inspired and brought together its various members. Its revolutionary message—abstract, vague, and ambiguous—appealed to disparate social groups thanks to the flexibility of the language in which it was couched; a language that was understood by all its potential recipients, that was able to recycle selected elements of traditional folk culture (messianic myths, prophesies, oracles, etc.) and to reword them in terms of the new revolutionary and secularised ideologies of modernity.

With regard to the specific object of this paper, it is worth mentioning a debate that broke out at the early nineteenth century regarding the issue of leadership and the proper time for the revolution. Alexandros Mavrokordatos and more generally, the members of the “Circle of Pisa,” who were initiated to the Secret Society, shared Korais’s scepticism proceeding from the violent turn of the French Revolution, and were occupied with serious reflections on the maturity of the objective and the subjective conditions for the uprising. Whereas this group of moderate liberal intellectuals stressed the importance of education, feeling rather uneasy about the autochthons’ civic maturity, the members of Filiki around Alexandros Ypsilantis, in a militant and voluntaristic spirit, stressed the power of will and argued that the time was ripe for revolution. Instead of highlighting the tutelage of enlightened pedagogues, they championed the untutored spirit of revolt and spoke for the urgency of mass mobilisation, of determined, tight and organized action. This radical group, whose views echoed the revolutionary fervour of Jacobinism and the Balkan super-national vision of Rigas, perceived the revolution in terms of destruction, as a radical break with the past and as the extirpation of previous inequities. Throughout the struggle for independence, “the Circle of Pisa”—and most of all, Alexandros Mavrokordatos—was in opposition with the Ypsilantis faction (Protopsaltis 12). The importance of this opposition for the subsequent disputes over the meaning of the 1821 revolution has been widely recognized by scholars of Greek history (Petropoulos 356-65; Rotzokos 1996). According to Mavrokordatos, “the ones to blame are those who rashly roused the Nation into this struggle, before preparing it as they should have, and having roused it...they

prevented...the union of the nation by stirring up the illiterate and wicked people” (Rotzokos 267).

The imagery of 1821 and its ambiguities

In the texts produced during the Greek Enlightenment, during the war for national independence as well as in the public sphere of the newly-established Greek state, a tension marks the relationship between the intellectual and the other—the warrior, the illiterate peasant, and generally, the people. This tension, particularly during the early years of the newly-formed Greek state, was comprised of various diverse discourses relating to the ascertainment of the roles each group of the nation played in the revolution. The references to the absence of scholars from the Struggle is a recurrent motif (Skopetea 46). These grievances, in a more subtle way, had already been put forward in *Hellenic Nomarchy* (1806) where its anonymous author urges the scholars to rush and assist in the Struggle with the following:

The Greeks...will not need much time to be conscious of their duty. It suffices to indicate it to them and they will accomplish it straight away. However, they are in need of educators/ pedagogues... []est you, my brothers...wait for them to liberate themselves, and then you go, as you are accustomed to, to rip the benefits gained by the toil and sweat of others? Alas! (Anonymous 208)

An ambiguity is observed here. Although he recognizes the significance of ideas and the intelligentsia in the revolution, the way the anonymous author addresses the scholars bears witness—implicitly and rather suggestively—to an anti-intellectualism, a distrust of intellectuals.⁴ Yet, it is important to notice that this anti-intellectualism appears as the radical egalitarian discourse of *Hellenic Nomarchy*, interpellates the scholars as members of an imagined community, conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship. The apologetic discourses in favour of intellectuals emphasised that it was they who first became aware of the “intolerable yoke⁵ that it was the intellectuals who conceived the idea of the revolution and then introduced it to the people. From this perspective, the autochthonous Greeks, notwithstanding their patriotic feelings, were not by themselves able to achieve a revolutionary consciousness, it had rather to be brought to them from outside by the intelligentsia.

The response to this elitist perception of 1821 was formed in discourses that stressed that the liberation of the homeland occurred because the armed fighters

put revolutionary ideas into action and embodied the national ideals. To his proclamation to Peloponnesians, Theodoros Kolokotronis raised the morale of the people by stating that the military “are the arms and the chest of the nation” (Rotzokos 274). The national rhetoric of ’21, through the use of figurative language, enhances the effective and harmonic collaboration of the ‘pen’ and the ‘sword’ during the War of Independence and strives to wipe out or smooth the tension between them. The sword represents the armed fighter and the man of action, whereas the pen stands for the man of thought, the power of ideas, the printed word and literacy. However, there is another metaphor at work quite telling of a tension between them. The intellectual is often portrayed as the ‘head’ of the nation, with the warrior as the ‘arms.’ This organicist metaphor premises a harmonic relation and interdependence, as if they were two organs of one national body.⁶ At the same time, however, this metaphor speaks for the hierarchical relationship between them (Gouldner 73-8). For when the question arises as to which part is in duty bound to rule the body, *the head or the arms*, no one disputes the proper answer.

To some extent, anti-intellectualism has its historical roots in religion. The ideas of the thinkers of the Enlightenment and the political priorities of the Westernised elites were perceived as a threat to Christian faith. Within the new state, the attempts at secularisation, the confiscation of property from the monasteries, and the Catholicism of King Otto caused lengthy religious disputes and raised popular insurrections. Thus, the distrust of intellectuals possibly draws its sources from the popular suspicion of learning, since it was the desire for knowledge that caused the defiance of God's will and resulted in the fall from paradise. In the context of Christian beliefs, the ‘poor of spirit’ have a place in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the ‘ordinary people’ comprise ‘God's flock,’ the ‘salt of the earth.’ Religious attitudes towards materialism and wealth coexisted with the concept of the poor, simple people representing those blessed by God.

Another source of anti-intellectualism can also be found in folk tradition, primarily in the *demotic* or *kleftika* songs, and its use within romantic nationalism (Politis 1999). Here, references to the gallantry and braveness of the klephts (traditional rebels in Eric Hobsbawm's terms), would be considered evidence of the perennial revolutionary and liberating readiness of Hellenism and, as such, would

be incorporated into the narrative of the historical continuity of the Greek nation. The romantic vision of the heroic masculine and unsubdued warrior responded to the ideological needs of the state and provided a rich mythopoetic symbolism for the construction of the popular narrative of '21. The heroic 1821 and the corresponding values of "gallantry" and "uprightness" that formed part of popular folk culture aligned with the romantic vision of the noble savage, with the philhellenes and foreign travellers (Tzourmana 47-86) as its key carriers and disseminators. Romantic nationalism with its special focus on the folk, or peasant culture as the true, authentic spirit of the nation, promoted the lifestyle of the simple people. The warriors, regarded as bearers of an authentic spirit of revolt, were turned into national symbols. Personal bravery, skilful use of weapons, courage and body strength determined a set of characteristics from which the image of the glorified national hero was painted. The romantic vision of the revolution potentially carries within it not necessarily an opposition but certainly a distinction between the doer and the thinker, the man of action and the man of thought.

The warriors recruited the scholars who came to Greece during the early years of the struggle for independence using similar terms. Thus, in some references, the mountain-dwelling Karaiskakis appears to tell the scholar Panagiotis Soutsos, "young man come with me! I am going to liberate Attica, I wish to fight, you wish to write" (Aggelou 14). The scholar was assigned the art of remembrance. Continuing the tradition of the *klephtika* songs, he would praise the heroic exploits of the warriors in '21 and rescue them from oblivion. Although the national romantic historiography alleviated the tensions between the scholars and the warriors, and created an image where the sword, if not mightier, was equal to the pen, the attitudes of the chieftains, not only towards the heterochthonous intellectuals but even towards their culturally-familiar secretaries, undermined the image of the admirable collaboration and unreserved acceptance. Alkis Aggelou quotes from Kasomoulis's memoirs where Karaiskakis appears to "treat his secretary as a servant" and "belittles the literate and the educated as a bunch of useless cowards" (121).

The pre-eminence of the popular narrative of the Greek revolution and the distrust of intellectuals in the accounts of 1821 (the charges against them for

aloofness from the struggles of the people and the recurring motif of their ‘absence’ compared to the ‘presence’ of the fighters who participated in the war) are also connected to the so-called invisibility of intellectuals in modern ideologies and in nationalism par excellence. As Alvin Gouldner has put it, “in revolutionary processes based on mass mobilization, the prominence of the intellectual’s leadership is out of keeping with the populist, egalitarian, and communitarian emphasis of the movement. As a result, in revolutionary processes, the intellectual strata has been an invisible class” (11). Evoking the principle of fraternity, the nationalist rhetoric enlarges its mobilising power and smooths out the differences within the national body, whilst it tends to suppress the crucial role of the intellectuals in the national movement and their contribution to the Struggle.

However, after the War of Independence, a new type of intellectual was born whose function and future were now linked with the modernisation process, the development of the state, the building of modern institutions, the implementation of necessary reforms and changes originating from above, as well as the handling of the responses, reactions or resistances to these reforms originating from below. Along with the development of this new type of intellectual, a shift in the content and function of nationalism occurred. As Pantelis Lekkas notes, after national independence, once nationalism has become “the official state ideology...it has unavoidably less flexibility [in so far as] it has to assume the role of apologist for the existing order of things, not just for the order of things there ought to be or is about to come” (“Supra-Class Rhetoric” 276). Thus, after the revolution, with the transition of the Westernised educated intellectuals to a new state elite, the intellectuals’ power became visible, or at least less invisible. Thereafter, the relationship between the intellectuals and the *others*—the fighters for the revolution and the common people—took a conflicting turn and the distrust of intellectuals became part of a culture of opposition.

Within the newly public domain, the intellectuals’ eloquence became a systematic target of depreciation. In the context of the struggle for power within the state, and with materials that certainly derived from all the aforementioned cultural traditions, the cultural difference between sword and pen turned into an opposition between the armed fighter, who came to symbolise the ordinary people of the nation, and the Frenchified educated-politician: the ‘plain-speaking’ fighters

are ‘trustworthy’ and keep their word, whilst the Westernised intellectuals ‘speak empty words,’ ‘cheat,’ and ‘speechify.’ Thus the stereotype of the ‘scheming educated politician’ with his eloquence cheating the ‘simple people’ and ‘sowing the seeds of discord’ throughout the nation was created. This image of the intellectual was constructed of materials that relate to biblical narratives; he is the serpent that deceives, the one responsible for Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. But what was the promise that was not kept? With what does the frustration lie? Where lies the deception for which the Westernised intellectuals, the heterochthonous politicians, were blamed? Which law had been violated?

In order to understand the distrust of intellectuals, we should draw a distinction between the past, the various historical and cultural sources of the motifs that display a suspicion of intellectuals and intellectuality, and the present context of their use: namely, the new function these recurring motifs are called to play in the process of articulating a language of social discontent capable of framing modern rights-based claims by appropriating the radical imagery of the revolution of 1821. ‘Hollow speeches,’ ‘empty sacks of air,’ ‘double talk’: these are some of the figural tropes through which the public utterances of the new elite were conveyed, its morality questioned and its claims undermined. The modernising elites were charged and stigmatized on the basis that their utterances remain in the field of abstract appeals and were not implemented in practise; ‘hollow speeches’ mean broken promises.

Passive reaction or creative response to modernisation?

After the fall of the military junta, and particularly during the 1980s, a number of innovative studies were published that revived theoretical reflection on the 1821 revolution and initiated a new phase of development in the field of social studies in Greece (Liakos 2004). Among their merits that still deserve praise is their awareness for the need of interdisciplinary and comparative approaches of Greek history. Therefore, their contribution is undeniable, their influence in both academic and public history is unquestionable. These studies adopted a rather linear evolutionary model of historical interpretation, in which the concept of modernisation played a key part in exposing the “deficiencies” of Greek modernity (Liakos 10-13). The studies in question which began with and ended up verifying

the central hypothesis of an ersatz modernisation, are of broadly Parsonian inspiration and rest on the assumption of long term convergence towards a single model of modern society.⁷

According to this grand narrative, modernisation in Greece met strong resistance from the native regressive elements of traditional society: not only the local notables, but also the masses of illiterate peasants and *klephts*, the primitive rebels in E. Hobsbawm's terms, who had been formed under Ottoman rule. Viewed as passively stuck in the past, unable to follow the pace of progress and accommodate themselves to the requirements and spirit of the new era, the so-called traditional pre-modern reactionary forces restricted development and battled the emerging bourgeois, modernising society. If for some Marxists the driving force of historical development was class struggle, in the above studies, the driving force, the essence of Greek history, is the struggle between the bearers of modernisation, namely the Westernised enlightened intellectuals, and modernity's *Other*, the traditional groups. This grand narrative of Greek history is founded upon a logic of binary oppositions, of mutually exclusive dualisms that have dominated public discourse from the 1980s until present: West vs. East; modernity vs. traditionality; future-oriented/progressive vs. past-oriented/regressive social groups; rational vs. irrational; mind vs. body; agency/reflective activity vs. reaction/passivity; stagnation vs. growth.

Could we approach the popular 1821 from this binary perspective? If we do we would probably end up drawing the conclusion that the narrative of Greek revolution that devalues the modernising efforts of Westernised intellectuals and idealises armed fighters is at odds with modernisation. I suggest instead that we follow an alternative interpretation and deal with the reactions to modernisation (notwithstanding their various, multiple and often contradictory forms) as part and parcel of the modernisation process. We could use the polarity between tradition and modernity as an ideal type in order to understand the transformations brought about within the Ottoman society by the wave of modernisation and to grasp the specific historical conditions under which the Greek exit from tradition occurred (Lekkas, "The Greek War of Independence").

The main concern here is not to stigmatise the reactions to modernisation or denounce them, but to understand their nature; namely, the conditions under

which these reactions came about, the reasons that prompted them, the expectations they embodied and the values that inspired them. Instead of approaching any opposition to modernisation as deviation from a desirable course of historical progress or as digression that held up the concordance of the ideal and the real, we could approach it as part and parcel of the modernisation process: a novelty, a fresh creation inspired by the early modern imaginary, by unprecedented expectations, and by radical demands, nurtured by the 1821 revolution and by the egalitarian promises of modern ideologies and utopias. We could then say that the opposition to modernisation *didn't draw its poetry from the past, but from the future.*

The native power elite and, generally speaking, those truly adversely affected or feeling adversely affected by the changes did not react against modernising tendencies, remaining tied to traditional modes of practice and forms of thought in order to defend their traditional privileges; instead they transformed themselves intervening actively in the process of social change, participating in the War of Independence and in the establishment of new institutions, thus responding creatively to the challenges of modernisation. The indigenous populations, primarily the groups more exposed to new ideas, participated actively in the course of the revolution and attempted to control the implementation of ideas that inspired '21 within the new state. They did this by selectively drawing elements from their cultural heritage in an attempt to understand, participate in and control the ongoing changes. However, the final product of this selective process is not identical with its raw materials: it is a unique historical creation. During the process of integrating the available cultural heritage in order to interpret their experiences, the native social groups produced modern ideological constructions, on which both their participation and resistance to the modernising process were based.

The motifs of the 'wounded body' and the 'somatic participation in the struggle,' in other words the invocation of the rights of the fighters [*agonistes*], founded a new legitimising authority that incorporated modern ideals. The discontent produced in the early nineteenth century not only houses the concrete lived experiences of modernity, but also the unprecedented claims and the radical ideas of the 1821 revolution. Instead of judging history by our own desire of how it should

be and how we would like things to have developed, let us hearken back to these voices from the past and try to understand how things did happen and were experienced and interpreted by the historical agents themselves. If we approach the past from the standpoint of the scholar seeking historical understanding, rather than from the standpoint of the enlightened intellectual who strives to further his educational and civilising vision, we may succeed in de-essentialising modernity.

From the functionalist evolutionist perspective, the reactions to modernisation are, en bloc, discredited because they are considered to be ‘survivals’ from a previous, pre-modern and inferior stage of historical development. In this case, as Michael Oakeshott puts it, “our predominant interest is not in ‘history’ but only in retrospective politics” (165). However, instead of stigmatising, denouncing, and conceptualizing those reactions through an Orientalist lens as remnants of an Ottoman past, we could attempt to understand them. Rather than conceiving any opposition to modernisation as the negative, passive reaction of the so-called traditional world towards the ongoing institutional changes, we could perceive it as an active, creative response inspired by modernity itself.

Modernisation from below

The role of certain popular intellectuals was crucial in the modernisation process and the construction of the narrative of 1821 with anti-intellectual overtones (Andriakaina). These were a group of literate petit bourgeois, such as Fotakos, Spiladis, Kasomoulis, Ainian, Karpos, Papadopoulos and others, who served as secretaries alongside the illiterate chieftains in the Struggle and played an important part in the national revolution. The so-called ‘*kalamaras*’/‘pen-pusher’ (because of the inkwell that each secretary kept in his belt) was a new type of intellectual created during the revolution in view of the political formation of the nation. The secretaries of the Struggle, most of whom formed the ideological backbone of Filiki Eteria, shared the experience of the new social relationships and values that the revolution had brought to peoples’ lives.

Fotakos’s *Memoirs* are a paradigmatic case of the popular interpretation of 1821 (Andriakaina). As the secretary and adjunct of Theodoros Kolokotronis, Fotakos embodied a new type of intellectual who undertook the mission to transcribe into the modern political idiom the widespread expectations, demands, anxieties,

frustrated hopes and fears of a world that feels it is being adversely affected and marginalised in the process of modernisation. The popular intellectual claimed for himself the role of authentic representative of the simple people, able to give voice to the non-literate, and therefore 'silent,' people in the face of societal transformations and the new era's challenges. In the *Memoirs* of 1821, the ordinary fighters and their world were proclaimed to be the real subject of the revolution, the body and soul of the nation. Popular intellectuals appear to write the history of '21 from the perspective of the subaltern. They present themselves as defenders of the 'autochthon poor people' and their natural leaders, 'the heroic fighters' of the revolution, to whom they were bound by strong bonds, familial and friendly relationships, shared experiences and memories. On the basis of their cultural proximity to the indigenous people, they claimed the role of interpreters of the true meaning of the revolution and, in doing so, they challenged the histories of the revolution being written by the modernising elites. They were shown as culturally familiar with the autochthons, able to understand the illiterate peasants and the common people and, more importantly, able to give voice to those people's discontent. Their difference from the Westernised intellectuals was defined in similar terms. The popular intellectuals undertook to mediate and organize the relationship between the natives and the state into a new ideological and legitimising basis. Somatic presence, combat experience, references to sacrifices, the heroic deeds and the wounds of the warriors are recurrent motifs in their memoirs and portray the *agonistis*, the fighter of the Struggle, as a symbolic equivalent of the poor people, the underprivileged and the excluded opposed to the rich and the powerful.

The references to the rights of the Struggle, the rights of the freedom fighter, determined a new scale of values on the basis of which the demands to the state were legitimised and denoted the transition from traditional ascriptive principles to modern achievement principles. Social worth and status were no longer accorded to a person by the position he occupied in the traditional hierarchical structure, but by virtue of his abilities and overall contribution to the Struggle. According to the criterion of participation, for example, a local notable was not to be judged in terms of the superior position he held in the traditional hierarchy of roles but in terms of what he had accomplished, namely in terms of his performance during the War of

Independence. The references to the suffering body of the warrior, the emphasis on the ‘somatic participation’ in 1821, have a radical nature to the extent that it potentially made the ‘poor, ordinary people’ into the subject of power, the anonymous fighter for the homeland into a holder of rights. In Fotakos’s *Memoirs* this shift from traditional ascriptive principles to modern achievement principles is described in terms that relate both to the egalitarian motifs of the Christian gospels and also to the radical revolutionary motifs he gained from his initiation into the Filiki Eteria (20; Fotakos, Peloponnesian Fighters 116, 292;).

Fotakos, the son of a priest from the province of Gortynia, a member of the Filiki Eteria and an admirer of Alexandros Yspilantis, defines the revolution as a radical break with the past, the beginning of a new era in which “everything turned upside down” and “many shall be last that are first; and first that are last” (*Memoirs* 20). These expectations remained alive through the first decades after the establishment of the Greek state, which were also the period during which the memoirs of the fighters were written, and were expressed particularly intensively during the conflict between the heterochthons and autochthons in the National Assembly of 1844. The 1821 revolution symbolised a huge rift with the past since it liberated powers and became a hotbed of unprecedented claims and expectations. The constitution granted by King Otto was welcomed as a vindication of the thwarted hopes and promises of the 1821 revolution, which was conceived as unfinished and incomplete; the revolt of 1843 was shown to be the moment when the real would coincide with the ideal.

The main motifs of the popular version of ’21 were reused in the public sphere and acquired more scholarly and politicised expression as they were adopted by some of the so-called “autochthonic” press of the time. The argument of ‘somatic participation’ in the Struggle supported the ideological construct of Autochthonism and served the polemic against the ‘foreigners’—not just the Bavarians, but primarily the Westernised, heterochthonous intellectuals and politicians. In any case, the people of the State and the people of the Struggle established competing ideological poles that originated from the process of seceding from Ottoman rule and of opening up to modern forms of social organisation. With regards to the conflict between the autochthons and heterochthons, the procedures for determining the rights of the Greek citizen were interconnected with the promotion

of popular demands (Dimakis 140) and crystallised in an antagonism between the people and the corrupt state elite, an opposition between the privileged and the fighters of motherland, that is, the common people. For a large part of the autochthonic rhetoric, the stake of the conflict between autochthons and heterochthons was not determined by place of origin (inside/or outside of the Greek state), but was instead related to the course of the revolution and the frustration of its expectations. This oppositional discourse presented the newcomers in collaboration with the Bavarians, as being responsible for the plight and poverty of the nation, the debilitating taxes, usurious loans, and delayed distribution of national lands. In the autochthon's imagery, the 'newcomers,' including the heterochton Westernised intellectuals who had now assumed important positions in the service of the state, did not appear as brothers, comrades, or companions, but as a new authority, the self-appointed head of the nation, the head of all rule and authority.

It was Alexandros Mavrokordatos who personified the stereotype of the scheming educated-politician and who suffered the greatest number of attacks not only from a large part of historiography in the nineteenth century but also from a section of the Marxist historiography of the twentieth century (Loukos 2010). This may sound paradoxical because one might have expected that Mavrokordatos and his fellows would have been widely respected since the resounding words of the Declaration of Independence were theirs. However, the cultural outlook of intellectuals is not of one piece, a seamless robe; their romantic attitudes towards the people, popular culture, and tradition were often at odds with their self-image, their rationality, the critique of the authority of tradition, and the belief in their own superiority. From this perspective, the people, the *other*, are considered to be an object, rather than a subject.

In 1874, Nikolaos Dragoumis's *Historical Reminiscences* was published. The author's main purpose was to respond to the *Memoirs* of the freedom fighters that sustained a popular account of 1821 and stressed the military accomplishments of warriors. Without challenging their heroism, Dragoumis argues that his intention is to elevate from obscurity the contribution of the modernising elites to the Struggle and the foundation of the nation-state and, more specifically, to do justice to his friends and fellows, Spyridon Trikoupis and Alexandros Mavrokordatos.

Dragoumis's *Reminiscences*, thanks to the blend of an elitist disposition, subtle irony, and sophisticated bitterness that overwhelms it, takes a unique place in the literature on 1821:

The *fustanella*-wearing roaster...chopped down the lamb with fingers instead of a blade and licked them whenever they burned... And he also wiped his hands on his *fustanella*, in the outskirts of which, Lord knows, how many armies of bloodthirsty bugs, the comrades of the Greeks throughout the Struggle. And we, eyes open wide, followed the scene as we greedily ate the pieces of roasted meat (97, vol. A).

This description of a scene in the Greek countryside by Dragoumis is interesting. He does not simply introduce a difference between a 'we'—who, although participating in the feast, observe the event with the eyes of an ethnographer, eyes open wide—and the Greeks with the filthy *fustanella*, who exchange 'ideas for gestures.' He also depicts the manners and eating habits of his *fustanella*-wearing armed compatriots in an intensely ambiguous way; are they vulgar, filthy, and primitive *or* simple, chaste, and unfeigned? There was a scale of various and often contradictory attitudes towards the people: compassion, care and sympathy, true respect and admiration, but also scepticism, mistrust, sometimes repulsion and derision towards the superstitious, recalcitrant, undisciplined, vulgar people who were liable to turn into a threat to public order, an obstacle to modernisation

Greek intellectuals, even when they tried to reconcile contrasting models of national identity and define Greece's individuality between the East and West, were inspired by discourses that maintain a series of dual oppositions between civilisation and nature, rationality and irrationality, reason and passion, high and low culture, the intellectuals and the *rest*.⁸ The relationship between the intellectual and the fighter of 1821 is characterised by a tension and it is marked by an ambiguity inherent in the concept of the nation or the people. Within the new state, when nationalism shifted from a revolutionary ideology to an ideology of power, a divergence "between its egalitarian symbolic values" and "hierarchical operational values" has been brought out (Lekkas, "Nation and People"). In the name of the nation, conceived as a horizontal brotherhood, the Greek people succeeded in overthrowing the regime of social inequalities that existed in the Ottoman Empire, and came to be identified as the foundation of national sovereignty. However, having lived for many centuries under the rule of oriental despotism, the warrior needed to be tamed and disciplined, the people needed to be

educated and civilised. In the radical imagery of the revolution, the intellectual along with the warrior, and both the notable and the anonymous peasant are considered equal organic parts of the same body, the Greek nation; but at the same time, the intellectual, as educator of the people and master of the civilising and modernising process, is superior.

The vague discourse of *The Greek Declaration of Independence* (1822) succeeded in promoting mass mobilisation, and through its appeal to a *We*, a new subjectivity was born:

We, descendants of the wise and noble peoples of Hellas, we who are the contemporaries of the enlightened and civilized nations of Europe, we who behold the advantages which they enjoy under the protection of the impenetrable aegis of the law, find it no longer possible to suffer ... the cruel yoke of the Ottoman power... The war which we are carrying on against the Turk is not that of a faction or the result of sedition. It is not aimed at the advantage of any single part of the Greek people.

Through the interpellation process, the *reaya* was converted to a national subject, a member of an imagined, unified and undifferentiated community (Anderson 6-7) whose struggle “is not aimed at the advantage of any single part of the Greek people.” The imaginary, albeit not illusionary but genuine, identification of individuals with this *We*—the Greek nation/the people—qualified them for conscious social action, was rooted in the experience of real, flesh-and-blood individuals, was embodied in concrete social practices (self sacrifice, strong social bonds, novel forms of friendship and solidarity) and produced real, historical results, an effective national movement and a successful revolution. Yet, especially after the establishment of a public sphere, this very vagueness of nationalistic discourse threatened to turn against its cohesive and integrative function since it exposed its ambiguous and relatively abstract message open to multiple interpretations from the perspective of the various social groups that were contesting for power and hegemony. Paraphrasing Vladimir Volosinov, we could say that the meaning of 1821 became “the arena of class struggle” (23), a struggle over the meaning of the revolution: *we* the people, but *who are we?*

The quest for the fulfilment of the promise of 1821 was the motivating force that inspired the distrust of the Westernised intellectuals and the opposition to the modernising elites of the state. The social discontent and the resistance to modernisation were founded in the gap that was now experienced between the real

and the ideal; between the abstract balancing ideals that motivated the revolution on the one hand, and the reality, the specific experiences of the people in the new state on the other hand. This gap and the need *to make the absent present* caused a sense of disillusionment and frustration amongst all those who felt cheated and unjustified. Their claims, delivered in a more refined and elaborated linguistic code, had been represented in the public sphere by some radical intellectuals and journalists who, speaking in the name of the poor fighter and the people against the elites, participated in the 1844 debate between the autochthons and the heterochthons.⁹ They publicly reproached the status quo for the disparity between its performance and the promises of the revolution, and for its failure to live up to the ideals and standards that 1821 had professed.

The numerous references to the open wounds of the fighter—the stigmata on his body—apart from recalling Jesus's embodied drama, were expressed in terms of traditional folk medicine, where disease is the result of a lack of balance, a loss of harmony. The open sores in the body of the warrior who allows his wounds to be seen performed a social function. Incarnating the nation, the suffering body of the freedom fighter accuses and points out an unfinished modern project: the gap between *what is* and *what ought to be*. The disturbance of the balance between the different parts of the national body legitimised the claim for therapy and cure, the demand for the restoration of harmony and the distribution of justice.

The dispute between autochthons and heterochthons that broke out during the proceedings of the National Assembly of 1844 and threatened the body politic with fragmentation and conflict resolved thanks to the intervention of Ioannis Kolletis and his speech on the *Megali Idea*:

I shudder at the thought of the day we took an oath for the liberty of the country, for which we swore on everything, even to lay down our lives for our country... We have deviated greatly from the great and broad idea of the country which we saw expressed first in the song of Rigas. United in only one spirit, made brothers through that sacred oath, those of us who call ourselves Greeks won part of the entire objective. But now we are pre-occupied with pointless discriminations between Greeks and Greeks (Kyriakidis 494-500).¹⁰

And the paradox is that the struggle over the meaning of this *We*—the Greek nation/the people—resulted in driving inward the struggle between different voices, between multiple and various value judgments and to make again the meaning of

the 1821 uni-accentual. The mastery of the struggle over the meaning of the revolution had as its result the practice of closure. And the story went on ...

¹ On the Neohellenic Enlightenment, see Kitromilides 1996; Dimaras; Mackridge.

² On Filiki Eteria see, Panagiotopoulos. On the radical republicanism of the late Neohellenic Enlightenment, see Kitromilides 2003.

³ On Rigas Feraios and the rise of a new type of revolutionary intellectuals, see especially, Sotiropoulos.

⁴ On intellectuals and modernity, see indicatively: Gouldner; On anti-intellectualism in particular: Curti; Hofstadter. On Greek intellectuals, Pizanias; Petmezas 1999; 2009.

⁵ Nikolaidis's Epistle to anonymous friend (Aggelou 73).

⁶ From the vast literature on body politic and body metaphors, see especially de Baecque .

⁷ To name but a few—Petropoulos; Diamadouros.

⁸ Ignatios's Epistle to Mavrokordatos: "Greece is divided into three classes ...the people, the soldiers and the politicians... The soldiers are independent, they have all the natural passions of an untamed man" (Aggelou 50); P. Sofianopoulos's Epistle to Korais: "My aim is to convert the unfortunate Odysseas Androutsos from a beloved student of Ali Pasha into an ardent follower of your [Korais's] teachings" (Aggelou 56); Georgios Gazis Delvinakiotis: "To Messolonghi...came beasts who lived in the mountains, who, until the Revolution, had lived in the wild, in caves and forests...people who had never seen a town, nor entered a church, or heard Mass...nor [did they know] humanity at all, but then they were converted, they mended their ways and knew God, Faith and Motherland." (Aggelou 24). Newspaper *Synenosis*. Editor Panagiotis Soutsos. Athens. 31-03-1845. 3: "You enlightened scholars of Greece! Come to contribute to the nation in its remodelling... It is not the kings who rule the people. It is the mysterious family of us who rule them... Our pen rules them... You enlightened scholars! Do not despair! You are the mind of the people. If you are not the body, you are the head of the nation."

⁹ I'm referring especially to *Anexartitos*, the autochthonic newspaper of Pantelis K. Pantelis.

¹⁰ For the entire speech of I. Kolettis, see Ep. Kyriakidis, History of Modern Hellenism 1832 - 1892. [Ιστορία του Σύγχρονου Ελληνισμού 1832-1892]. Athens: Igglei 1892. 494-500.

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