‘Disciplining’ the Neohellenic character: records of Anglo-Greek encounters and the development of ethnological-historical discourse

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the development of anthropological discourse in British travel accounts of modern Greece, and the Greek response. The study has several aims. First, it argues that in British travel accounts ethnographic remarks are encountered which point to a genealogy of the British discipline of anthropology. These remarks on the modern Greek character formulated problématiques in which history and ethnography, as well as Romanticism and Enlightenment ideas, merged. Second, the article examines Greek peasant reaction to British observation and ‘intrusion’, as a rational product of the Anglo-Greek exchange. Third, it maintains that such peasant responses, which are in accordance with counter-hegemonic, Neohellenic ‘high-brow’ attitudes, were not the product of the latter, but their genealogical counterpart. From this it follows that in British encounters with Greek peasants, historians can trace the development of Greek folklore as a nationalist product which defied European hegemonic narratives of modern Greek identity.

Key words anthropology, Britain, ethnography, Greece, history, intimacy, travel accounts
INTRODUCTION

Greece has been more an imagined topos than an actual place for prosperous foreigners since the birth of classicism. Long before the War of Greek Independence (1821–8) that liberated part of the Greek Peninsula from Ottoman rule, travellers with different agendas would visit regions that were burdened by a Hellenic past to compare surviving classical texts with the physical loci of Hellenic civilization (Leontis, 1995). It goes without saying that this coupled reading of ‘monumentalized’ history with observation of the actual place gave meaning to the Grand Tour. This pedagogical exercise, never restricted to Greek regions, began in Italy and soon moved eastwards.

It is worth noting that in late 19th-century travel accounts the notion of the Grand Tour is used progressively less to describe British observations in Greece: terms such as ‘observation’; ‘travel’, or geographical reference, gradually replaced it. This is not simply a linguistic comment: the erasure of the term ‘Grand Tour’ from travel diaries marks a shift in the way scholarly knowledge began to be institutionalized in western Europe. Admittedly it is very difficult to encapsulate this process, still in its infancy during the 19th century, in an introduction. But it would not be injudicious to argue that there is a significant difference between 18th and late 19th-century visits to Greece. On the one hand, the role of the visitor in the Grand Tour was to be acted upon, transformed by the experience of seeing and absorbing the knowledge that was engraved on to the cultural landscape; he was the object of classicist pedagogy. By contrast, the role of later observers was to catalogue, classify and encapsulate this history in their writings. They were acting as subjects who studied the observed landscape, transforming it thus into an epistemological object.

Another change seems to have related to the thematic of travel accounts. Early records focused more on the lifeless statues of the Parthenon, while the study of living Greeks remained largely a sideline, with a number of passing comments squeezed into the ‘marginalia’ of British writings. Gradually, however, their presence, though undesirable and almost always negatively coloured, came to occupy more space in the genre. The presence of the modern Greeks, who called themselves ‘neo-Hellenes’ or modern Hellenes to denote their linear descent from their illustrious forefathers, was deemed undesirable for many reasons. More significantly, they began to be regarded as a half-oriental breed, especially by the British. This was because their attitudes and culture did not match that of their magnificent Hellenic ancestors who were imagined as the paragon of order in Europe. Eventually, the presence of the neo-Hellenes in travel accounts, newspapers, pamphlets and other material became so strong that they constituted the subject of British study. Moreover, after the institution of modern Greece in the early 1830s by Britain, France and Russia (the self-appointed protectors of Greece), this
reading of modern Greek culture ‘for pre-established signs’ (Urry, 1990: 12) was universalized: populations outside the Greek kingdom, who were considered Greek, were now also placed under scrutiny.

This development did not occur in a vacuum. To historicize this interest, we should acknowledge the political turbulence of the second half of the 19th century in the Balkan region. The insurrection of the Cretans (1866–9) against Ottoman rule aimed at Crete’s unification with Greece and threatened the Ottoman Empire. The establishment of the Bulgarian exarchate (1870) liberated the Bulgarian Church from the control of the Greek patriarch, but also enabled the Bulgarians to initiate their own nationalist agenda in the Balkans – yet another destabilizing factor in the region. Both were preludes to the eruption of Balkan revolutions (1878–81) and an indication that the future of the Ottoman Empire was rather grim. The so-called ‘Eastern Question’, that is, the preservation of an intact Ottoman Empire by those who had economic interests in the region, increasingly implicated the great powers of Europe in Balkan affairs. This unhappy coincidence contributed even more to the objectification of Neohellenic culture, because it opened a gateway to British observers of different status and interests. In this respect British travel diaries and records of the period comprised practices we nowadays term ‘anthropological’, even if their creators were not adherents to an academic discipline. What is not acknowledged in these accounts are the biases that determined British reflections.

The origin of these biases sheds light on the links between an emerging ‘anthropological’ interest in Greece, British political involvement in Balkan affairs and the very nature of European colonial projects. Although British economic control over Greece cannot be identified as colonization, it was intertwined with British imperialism. Greece was a stepping-stone to the ‘Orient’ in which the British Empire had economic interests. The flood and cataloguing of new information about this marginal territory of Europe paralleled the ethnographic research and cataloguing of non-European colonized cultures for the sole purpose of maximizing control over the indigenous populations. It has been acknowledged that when studying the genealogy of anthropology we do in fact encounter the history of colonization (Thomas, 1994; Cohn, 1987; Stoler, 1995). Greece occupies a somewhat peculiar place in this history. One should note that the ‘orientalization’ of Greek culture by Europeans was concomitant with their desire to establish a genealogy of European civilization (Herzfeld, 1987). When the ancient Hellenes were considered by Europeans the ancestors of European civilization, in order to justify colonial projects a homology was constructed between the supposed superiority of these imaginary Hellenes vis-à-vis other ancient civilizations, and that of the modern European colonizers vis-à-vis non-European colonized ‘races’ (Said, 1978; Bernal, 1995). Ironically, modern Greece’s ‘shortcomings’ and its strong Ottoman legacy made it less European and more
'oriental'. It was precisely this unresolved ambiguity that attracted British travellers to comment on Neohellenic culture. In conclusion then, we should not dissociate the power relationship between Greece and Britain, an actual form of domination, from British ‘fieldwork’ in Greece, a symbolic form of Greek subordination.

My aim in this article is to explore this symbolic form of subordination within the framework of Anglo-Greek encounters of the third part of the 19th century. My objective is to assess the impact of such encounters on the nature of Anglo-Greek relationships, and the formation of Neohellenic modes of resistance. For this purpose I concentrate mainly, but not exclusively, on British travel accounts of Neohellenic life in the Balkan peninsula and some islands. Other material is used to complement travel records. My purpose is to illuminate hidden ethnographic discourses which we encounter later within British and Greek anthropological milieux. The distinction between ‘ethnography’ and ‘anthropology’ is not artificial and meaningless. Instead of seeing the two as inseparable, we should place them in a dialectical schema: before becoming a scientific tool, ethnographic work (or fieldwork) served as a means through which British observers defined their role and their presuppositions. Simultaneously, however, their ‘fieldwork’ was informed by an unconsciously active, proto-anthropological discourse (see also Herzfeld, 2001: 4–6). This dialectical relationship between action and theory, or theory in action, is closely examined in this article.

The emphasis placed on British encounters with Greek peasants is concomitant with my conviction that, although the latter’s responses did not differ from those of the Neohellenic ‘highbrow’ culture, they should not be seen as the products of a hegemonic nationalism. The thesis contests Gellner’s argument (1983: 57, 72) that national identities are the products of integration of ‘low’ into ‘high’ culture. In fact, peasant appropriation of foreign (British) narratives and attitudes may point to a genealogy of Greek folklore as a product of counter-European hegemony. Henceforth I will proffer the argument that British travellers often observed and recorded without fully understanding – without becoming intimate with their material. Intimacy played a central role in anthropology’s self-recognition as a discipline (Herzfeld, 2001: 23). As opposed to them (and as opposed to the first Greek folklorists), Greek peasants comprehended their responses in Anglo-Greek encounters, granting them with a meaning and a context. In this respect, they were the originary Greek folklorists: their actions were the product of this kind of rationalized reflexivity that we find only much later in Greek and British academic milieux. To explore these issues I have divided the article into two parts. In Part I comes my exploration of British observations and their role in the development of British anthropology. Part II will focus more on the role of peasant resistance and its significant place in the genealogy of the Greek folklore movement. Here I shall discuss the rationale of
this resistance, as well as the way that it was received and described by British observers.

I: PRIMORDIALISM, HISTORICIZATION, (DE)VALORIZATION: THE GREEK NATIONAL COSTUME AS SHORTCUT TO ‘ETHNOHISTORY’

Part I begins by discussing the Greek national costume which was often regarded as part of the essential property of the Greeks. The analysis moves around three axes. The first concerns British perceptions and expressions of sexuality; the second investigates how these relate to British evolutionist ideas; and the third elucidates the relation of the first two axes with a British discourse of cultural origins.

The national dress of women does not produce as much commentary as that of men. More precisely, the degree of engagement changes according to the gender of the observer. The ‘Roving Englishman’, for example, an intelligent observer of Balkan affairs whose work was much appreciated by British politicians, interpreted the complicated ‘toilet’ of women as a sign of vanity, a trait that he attributed to ‘ignorant races’ such as the Greek (1877: 170–1). The coins tied around their forehead (their dowry) were read by Van Lennep, a knowledgeable scholar resident in the Ottoman Empire, as an unnecessary, oriental, exhibition of wealth (Van Lennep, 1870: 237cf). Thus Van Lennep’s discourse places Greek culture in the category of the Ottoman Orient, because it revolves around the typical oriental themes of exhibition and colourfulness (Gallant, 2002: 70).

Comments on women’s dress were less negative when the recorder was a woman. Women travellers gave detailed accounts of the Greek female national costume, and praised Greek women for their charm and their cleanliness (Poole, 1878: 40–1).1 The aversion male British observers expressed might point to an ambivalence of feelings, bringing into play a Victorian puritanism that dictated suppression of desire. Such blocked feelings emerge in descriptions of the Albanian costume adopted by Greek men after the War of Independence:

The kilt is of white linen in multitudinous folds, gathered about the middle, and stiffly projecting in a circle above the knees, giving the Albanian a comical appearance to the stranger. He, himself, however, is supremely unconscious of his comical appearance. He carries himself with a free dignified bearing which it would be plainly dangerous to provoke. (Colbeck, 1887: 92)

The man in the Albanian kilt is supposedly comical, but the masquerade does not efface his brusque, manly demeanour. Apparently, something disturbs the
narrator. We gain more insight into the question if we turn our attention to the Ionian postcolonial context that may in fact suggest the origins of this commentary as the first site of long-term Anglo-Greek encounters. Richard Farrer, in his observations on carnival proceedings on Corfu, recalled that among ‘this motley throng walked blue-breeched contadini and white-kilted Albanians – splendid savages, untamed and untameable’ (Farrer, 1882: 8). We do not know if the ‘white-kilted Albanian dress’ was carnival, because Farrer’s account does not tell us. This is suggestive: the description mobilizes the two conflicting ideas of strangeness and masculinity. It is not a coincidence that for Farrer the Albanian dress at the same time ‘disguises’ and exaggerates masculinity in carnival festivities. Recalling Victor Turner, one could identify the carnival as the ‘anti-structure’ (Turner, 1969; Gallant, 2002: 70-1). In this context, the empowerment of participants in the rite of passage is followed by an ambiguity regarding their identity; hence the man in the Albanian dress is both masculine and comically carnivalesque.

This ambivalence was integral to the romantic debate on Greek tradition and origins in Europe. In such instances, the Albanian dress and its wearer would be transformed into a symbol of pure, if not primordial, Greekness. On such occasions the traveller felt gratified to see how ‘strong patriotic pride’ still prevented many of the Greeks from exchanging the superb national costume of modern Greece for the stiff and artificial fashions of Paris. With all respect for the flowing robes or the warrior’s armour of the Periclean age . . . the Albanian costume adopted by the Greeks before the Revolution . . . is the finest dress ever worn by any people’ (Benjamin, 1867: 208). For James Foster Young, an Oxford student, the Greek national dress which made ‘the peasant look like a nobleman, and [gave] height as well as dignity to the wearer’ seemed also ‘to give him, though unconsciously, a jaunty, self-satisfied air as he mixed with the rest as if he were a better sort of animal altogether’ (1876: 47). Young, prefiguring later academic debates in Scottish and Oxford classicist circles, proffers a romantic conception of Greekness, while also questioning the peasant’s ‘civilized’, human nature. These commentators try to establish a genealogy of the Greek national dress, generating thus a discourse of Greek origins. In this discourse the War of Greek Independence becomes a rupture point for Greek history.

The primordial and masculine, dangerous and comic, character of the Greek in Albanian dress is connected to Victorian constructions of masculinity. It suggests that British travellers generated relationships of analogy between Greek men in Albanian dress and dandy performance (Young, 1876: 47). As Rhonda Garelick (1999) explained, the international phenomenon of dandyism, which originated in Georgian England, presented Victorians with an ambiguous masculine identity. Dandy performance was equally ambiguous: the effete appearance often clashed with exaggerated gentlemanly mannerisms. Victorian puritanism certainly faced a challenge in dandy
performance exemplified by the self-presentation of Oscar Wilde, and contemporary aesthetes discovered a disturbing female counterpart in it. Therefore, images of the comic Greek savage-dandy allude to historical changes in the production of British masculinity. What British observers called ‘comical’ can be interpreted as ‘grotesque’: an artistic style which comprises strangely distorted (gender) images.

There is more evidence to complement and further contextualize the British debate on origins and comparative history: the Albanian-Greek character and appearance were compared with those of the Scottish Highlander. This association was nicely articulated in Van Lennep’s Oriental Album. Van Lennep was not British, but an anglicized missionary by education; however, his Oriental Album was quoted many times in the British textual network, and is worth mentioning for its scrupulousness. Van Lennep believed that not only were the Albanians an Ur-hellenic element but also their costume might have been the first garment of humanity (1862: 57). The ‘man in the Albanian dress’, one of his album drawings, was accompanied by the comment that the dress ‘is a favourite . . . for boys amongst the wealthiest, as the Highland costume is with the English’ (1862: 31). There is a structural analogy here: the kilt symbolizes primordial, pre-British, Scottish-ness, just as the Albanian-Greek costume symbolizes the past of pre-Hellenic, European, humanity.

The comment may explain British persistence in viewing the Albanian-Greek dress as a form of cultural borrowing. From the mid-18th century the Scottish Highlands came to represent in British culture a form of ‘civilised, tamed and controlled wilderness’ (MacKenzie, 1997: 70). Part of the stereotypical Highland image was the kilt, a Quaker invention which eventually attained value as a survival of the universal medieval dress (Trevor-Roper, 1986) – a notion that Van Lennep attributed to Neohellenic culture. This chain of associations discloses an evolution-based methodological approach to Greek tradition. There were other instances in which Britons associated the Greek present with the Scottish past to produce a discourse of comparative social evolution (Tzanelli, 2002: 180-2). British descriptions of the nationalization of the Albanian costume activated evolutionary time: the observer witnessed a process that had taken place in British culture a long time before (Fabian, 1983). The idea that history is written twice, appeared in other contexts. The culture of regions that were still not part of the Greek kingdom, and which had a history of ferocious resistance to Ottoman rule, was also likened to Highland civilization. Crete, which was struggling for unification with Greece, was repeatedly selected for this purpose: Cretans were deemed to resemble the Highland warriors (Skinner, 1868: 70; Spratt, 1865: 53-4). These observers valorized the Cretan ‘type’, a form of marginal Greek identity, by association with the masculine image of the Highlander, a form of romantic British otherness whose role in the production of British identity was central.
But British travellers often overlooked the fact that for Greeks the Greek costume was national and not nationalized. Here I will focus on the analysis of the American Minister at Athens, Charles Tuckerman, and the Greek response. The fact that there are no comparable British writings might be significant but no underlying reasons were identified for this silence. In his famous travel book *The Greeks of To-day*, Tuckerman referred to members of a brigand band as ‘rascally outlaws, clad in a filthy foustanelli [sic], and issuing [their] decrees in illiterate Greek from [their] inaccessible mountain throne’ (Tuckerman, 1872: 256). The brigands to whom Tuckerman referred were involved in the kidnapping and murder of a group of Englishmen (1870) at Pikérmi, near Athens (Jenkins, 1998). Greek state officials and apologists denied the Greekness of this band; instead, they identified them as Albanians/Vlachs who came from Turkey (Koliopoulos, 1987; Herzfeld, 1987). Surprisingly, Tuckerman’s comment offended his Greek translator, who added in a footnote:

The foustanella is Greek, the most Greek thing one can think of, and the Albanians wear it because they are brothers of the same blood and of Pelasgian origin. (Tuckerman, 1877: 213–14)

The ‘non-Greek’ brigands have to be ‘stripped of’ their foustanella, because it is a symbol of the Greek character. However, Albanian identity is presented as Ur-hellenic. Tuckerman’s translator projects Albanian hellenization on to the remote past in order to affirm the Albanian costume’s Greekness. What becomes clear from these observations is that specific histories determine proto-anthropological remarks on the Greek national dress. The dress is never examined separately from certain Greek mannerisms and conduct, but becomes an essential component of the Neohellenic character. This re-infusion of history into anthropological discourse was symptomatic of an epistemological move that Britain shared with other European countries, and which impacted on Greeks. The practice alludes to the absence of British intimacy in fieldwork, since observations on the past replace any attempt to contextualize Greek practices. Lack of anthropological intimacy was also assisted by a selection of discourses from the vast repository of Greek and British histories. Before I examine Greek appropriations of this epistemology, I will have to unfold the methodological practice that accompanied it.

Confused timetables, different routes: progressive and multiple time in British anthropological narration

The subtitle refers to Lévi-Strauss’s metaphor for time-keeping in ethnographic observation. Like the passengers on two different trains, whose span and angle of observation of each other are determined by the vehicles’ relative paths, the anthropological observers’ preconceptions of progress or cultural
incompatibility determine the very nature and quality of their data (Lévi-Strauss, 1971: 190). The point is not minor: British perceptions of anthropological time in Anglo-Greek encounters formed a conspicuous problématique that became constitutive of the thematic in British records. I will maintain that British travellers and observers never confined their comments to Greek rural life; that their negative observations on nascent Greek urban life were concomitant with certain epistemological developments in Britain and elsewhere; and that in these developments one can detect a coexistence of Enlightenment and Romantic modes of thought.

I begin by examining a series of discourses in which Greek rural life was analysed in relation to British social and colonial experience. More specifically, British colonial discourse would often be reinfused into British anthropological comments. On such occasions the Greek peasant would be compared by travellers with the subjected ‘races’ of the great European empires or simply with non-European peoples. Sir George Campbell, himself a colonial administrator in India, and a traveller to Greece in the 1870s, provides interesting insights into this practice:

I liked what I saw of the rural Greeks. They seemed a pleasant good sort of people, with considerable capacity for self-government, and their villages were like Indian villages of a good class plus a church. There does not seem to be any aristocracy among them, only the usual leaders of the village-communes. (G. Campbell, 1876: 70)

Here the Greeks are like Indian villagers, plus Christianity; they are like ‘us’, but not quite the same. Again, this in-betweenness of the Greek rural character alludes to the protean nature of modern Greek identity: European because of its Hellenic past and oriental because of its Ottoman legacy (Todorova, 1997; Herzfeld, 1987). The structure of Campbell’s ideas reappeared in the writings of other travellers who had little to do with colonial administration. In such accounts, the ‘exotic’ Greek peasant was considered superior to the Greek ‘townsmen’.

It is the same wherever strangers are concerned; and after a three weeks’ experience we came to the conclusion that a natural simplicity and freshness of mind, which can be amused and entertained with small things, so long as it does not become blase by contact with townsmen, is the most striking characteristic of the peasant Greeks, both in the Peloponnese and in the North, but more especially in the North. By simplicity I do not mean innocence or freedom from evil passions (of which the Greeks of all classes have their full share), but merely a childlike curiosity and interest, worth[y] of the Sandwich Islands, which they show in the smallest things that happen to be strange to them. (Young, 1876: 58)
In this passage, the Greek peasant is represented as a romantic 'noble savage'. It should not escape attention that Young refers to the peasants 'of the North', possibly by analogy to the 'Highlanders of the North'. The contrast between the 'natural', childlike qualities of the peasant and those of the townspeople, who are corrupted by urbanism, is in accordance with the ethnological interest in primordial forms of culture (Herzfeld, 2001: 171–2). The underlying binary opposition nature vs. culture is profoundly romantic - a comment that will be discussed later.

Indeed, the flattering image of the 'noble savage' was fostered on the 'distasteful' attitude of the Greek townsmen. In Rhodes and Mytilene, C. T. Newton, vice-consul of Mytilene and ex-keeper of the Greek and Roman antiquities at the British Museum, exclaimed that 'there is a feeling of mutual satisfaction when you part with the peasant [but] of mutual disappointment when you take leave of the bourgeois' (Newton, 1865: I, 209–10). Within the Greek kingdom, there existed a hierarchy even for the peasantry itself: according to the traveler and academic Henry Tozer and the British Minister at Athens, Sir Thomas Wyse, the peasants of some rural regions were deemed to be superior to those of others (Tozer, 1873; Tozer cites Wyse, 1871: 88). Often, however, observers felt ill at ease with urban Greeks because of the Athenians' imitation of Frankish styles of dressing and living (Bagdon, 1869: 7, 47; Murray, 1872: 43; Young, 1876: 48–9). British observers were convinced that underneath this modern costume, the 'species' remained the same: ignorant, intellectually pretentious, pompous in its social life, and therefore fake (Farrer, 1882: 48; Young, 1876: 86–7). The discourse on authenticity is prominent here: only those Greeks who preserved vanishing ways of living were valuable scientific objects. This was part of a widespread discourse related to the safeguarding of 'cultural frontiers' and the demarcation of the occidental cultural realm that some European empires shared. Van Lennep, whose analysis covered all the 'races' of the Ottoman Empire, warned the reader in his introduction to the Oriental Album that

No representative will be found in these pages of that mongrel being, the Europeanized, or Occidentalized, oriental. From political motives, a desire of distinction, or an unreasoned and misplaced admiration of the outward garb of European civilisation, many orientals, principally on the seaboard, and most of the craft officials of Turkey, have adopted a costume which resembles the European as a Gorilla resembles a Negro. The oriental man, however, remains unchanged under his maskera...
deny him access to ‘civilization’. The principle of negation (he is not a European) that underscores the discourse is coupled with the certainty that the ‘other’ is playing theatre for us. In our case, like the colonized, the observed upper-class Greek begins to question his own humanity, especially in front of the foreign spectator. Note, for example, Wyse’s reflections on Colonel Theagenis’s demeanour.

We were now on our way to Haliartus, across the plain to the northwest, Col. Theagenis still with us. Our conversation turned a good deal on recent events, as we rode on. . . . He speaks more in sorrow than in anger, though his personal provocations have been grave and continuous, and views these evils in a more comprehensive European sense than most Greeks. The moral was that the whole heart and head is sick, and not to treated by nostrums, or such doctors and regime as have been applied for years. He finds the country deteriorated as to morale as well as to physique, and a ‘progenies vitiosor’ in the present youth compared with the simple barbarism of their fathers. (Wyse, 1871: 301)

It is ironic that those Greeks more receptive to western European ideas were denied access to European civilization. Theagenis, a prominent political figure in Greece and friend of British philhellenes, the ‘least incomprehensible’ Greek, is performing for his interlocutor, rejecting the introduction of French styles and mannerisms in Greece. He uses the British evolutionary vocabulary to address himself to Wyse. Theagenis’s discourse on the virtues of Greek savagery resembles that of the British commentators examined above. His disemia (Herzfeld, 1997: 15) is symptomatic of the Greek schizophrenic attitude. Although Greek fondness for French mannerisms and dressing-codes was an open secret (even more so for Wyse whose sister had married into the French royal house), Theagenis renounces them for a ‘return to tradition’.

During the 19th century, the rural world came to occupy a special place in the British imagination. The Romantic movement expressed a nostalgia for a rapidly disappearing country life (Stocking, 1987) and espoused positive attitudes toward the ‘folk’. In Britain, which was peculiar among industrialized nations in having both a flourishing intellectual culture and an underdeveloped university system, anthropological endeavours found their scholarly expression in the experience of travel. Because the British folklore movement grew out of an antiquarian tradition, amateur anthropologists were obsessed with traces of the past that survived in the present lives of the ‘uneducated’. But Romanticism in its Herderian version questioned this linear time, in which everything could fit into the same hierarchy (Todorova, 1997: 129). The Volksgeist or ‘spirit of the people’, was viewed not as part of a uniform human experience but as a unique entity with its own role and mission in the human drama. This double history, in which a single linear time and a
multiple time coexist, is what the British observer experienced in his study of Neohellenic culture. The Greek in his national costume could be gallant and degenerate, comic and noble, at the same time because the British traveller made a compromise between Enlightenment (evolutionary) and Romantic ideas (Geist, ‘uniqueness’) (McCintock, 1995: 187). While nuances of both times can be found in British accounts, evolutionary ideas seem to triumph. Rural Greek culture is moving in progressive time when it is compared with Scottish and colonial cultures, and Greek urban culture is described in terms of degeneration, a negative aspect of social evolution.

The ‘Occidentalized’ Greek was also rejected as an object of study because the peasantry could better fit into British observations. British social pathologies found their safety valve in observations on Greek rural life. The Greek peasant, who carelessly enjoyed his retsina, was scrutinized suspiciously by British travellers. Alcoholism, a well-known social problem of industrialized Britain, haunted British observers whenever they stopped outside wine shops:

And yet these poor Greeks, whose morality we distrust and whose intellects we despise, absolutely shine in point of sobriety by contrast with our own besotted lower orders. (Young, 1876: 43)

Indeed, the idea that ‘drunkenness is an unknown evil’ in Greece shows the tendency to interpret Greek culture in terms of modern British social problems (Colbeck, 1887: 93; Murray, 1872: 44; Poole, 1878: 26–7). The absence of class distinctions in Greece was also regarded as a unique phenomenon that merited recording (Wyse, 1871: 38). British commentary on class often included a colonial subtext. For example, we have evidence that rivalry between Greeks and Turks was translated into conflict between classes – those of ruled and rulers (Benjamin, 1867: 34). Another example is provided by the Reverend Bagdon, chaplain in Zante in the 1860s, who conceptualized the relationship between Neohellenic ‘low’ (brigand) and ‘high’ (urban) culture in terms of class. In The Brigands of the Morea, his translation of a Greek kidnapping account from Athens, Bagdon invented dialogues between the victim-narrator (whom he presented as a member of the Greek elite) and his captors (whom he identified with a ‘lower’, uneducated, ‘degenerate order’). Bagdon (1868: 251) believed that the hostage (because of his social rank) required a porter whenever the band was on the move or to dress him every morning:

I, who had been accustomed to cleanliness and decency, often suffered as much from the disgusting filthiness and indelicacy of my companions, as from the actual dangers and privations to which I was necessarily exposed. (1868: 261–2)

A discourse of hygiene is mobilized to naturalize social demarcation and civilized manners (Lévi-Strauss, 1974). At the beginning of the 19th century,
a discussion of British civilization that centred on economic, moral, political and class issues resulted in a thorough transformation of the notion itself. What this concept came to mean after this transformation was strongly conditioned by what was going on in British society – especially with regards to the lower, poor classes (Stocking, 1987: 30–6). This process almost coincided with the discovery of the oppressed nationalities in the East, rendering English working-class and Balkan ethnic problems interchangeable terms. Ultimately ‘the East offered easy possibilities of translating in simple terms the complex issues that the English colonial metropolis was facing at the time’ (Skopetea, 1992: 91, 136). We note, then, that aspects of Greek culture become means for British self-observation. This symbolic subjection of Greek, especially rural, culture to scrutiny, recording and interpretation did not go unnoticed by the observed ‘object’, the Greek peasants. We should not even call the peasants ‘objects’, since they responded to British interest in unexpected ways, as the following discussion suggests.

II: SEEING WITHOUT BEING SEEN: VISIBILITY AS A CONSTITUENT OF THE POWER STRUCTURE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

Observation of and meticulous note-taking on Greek social life was not necessarily an easy business. If the British observer was conscious of his task, so was the observed Greek peasant. In practice, the British ‘occulocentric’ technique of ‘domination’ (Fabian, 1990, 1991) could provoke a reaction which, conscious or not, could signify in the British imagination a discursive reversal of role-making. In this symbolic reversal of roles the anthropological subject (the British traveller) would be transformed into an anthropological object (the observed).

Simultaneously, however, some British travellers read this counter-scrutiny as ‘intrusiveness’ (Farrer, 1882: 67, 87–8), a Neohellenic attribute of Ottoman origin. It is interesting that in this instance they regarded counter-observation as an irrational, oriental vice, thereby reserving observation’s epistemological privilege for themselves. Remarkably, they refused to acknowledge that their presence and labours introduced both suspicion and curiosity into the encounter. This denial is first encountered in the Ionian colonial context, just a year before Britain’s decision to cede the islands to Greece (Ansted, 1863: 64–5). In this context, British observation could be regarded as a practice of domination. But, generally, the fact that the Greek ‘type’ ‘did not like to be inspected’ but wanted to inspect the stranger is commonsensical: the traveller was, after all, the real intruder who disrupted the mode of everyday life. The presupposition that Greek peasants are entrapped in an anthropological ‘Panopticon’ (Foucault, 1991) is not right. According to
Foucault, imprisonment in a Benthamite semi-circular prison and constant observation by unseen wardens result in the internalization of the practice of observation: the prisoner (peasant) monitors himself. By contrast in our case, the traveller’s diary (and the Benthamite British recorder) is accessible to the peasants. The following describes the result.

Our dinner was laid inside the khan, and we fondly thought we should be allowed to eat in private; but we little knew the Greek character. In they trooped and stood around us, always respectful but intensely curious. No proceeding on our part could escape their wondering eyes; every movement we made was watched, and every word we spoke was listened to with breathless attention. . . . After eating our dinner to our own satisfaction, and apparently to theirs, we tried to write our diaries; but as this was made the signal for an immediate raid upon us, to discover what we were doing and to examine our diary-books, we gave it up as hopeless. (Young, 1876: 146)

Thereafter, Young writes, the peasants arrange themselves into a circle around the diary-keeper. The inversion of roles borders on irony: it is now the ‘prisoners’ that survey the panoptic ‘warden’/anthropologist.

Access to the sphere of female socialization, which fascinated British travellers and observers, was even more severely restricted. It is worth turning to the clearly postcolonial context of the Ionian Islands which, again, may suggest the origins of British observations on this subject. Ansted, an observer acquainted with Greek Ionian culture, argued that it was impossible to gather any information on women because Greek men ‘guarded’ them zealously, forbidding their interaction with the ‘Lords’ (1863: 58). No more information is provided by this account, but, intriguingly, we encounter the same comment on Greek attitudes in another travel diary by an anonymous expert on the Eastern Question. This recorder travelled in the Greek kingdom before the Crimean War, but his work was edited and modified by John Murray in the 1870s. In the ‘Roving Englishman’s’ narrative, foreigners cannot approach women, who flee the encounter to find refuge in domestic spaces:

I am lightly shod and I do not make much noise, nor am I a very fearful apparition; . . . but I have no sooner entered the street than a change comes over it. When I first turned the corner, young women were gossiping and laughing together in the doorways, and from the windows: now I hear the click of many doors closing stealthily; and the lattices are shut everywhere. A Frank is a rare sight in this obscure quarter, and the women are wild as young fawns. They are watching me from all sorts of places; but if I stayed there for hours, not one would come out till I was gone. I know why the Greek girls are as shy as young fawns,
and it pains me to think of it: a thousand tales are fresh in my memory of harmless young women who, by chance, caught the eye of some terrible Turk, and soon after disappeared mysteriously. (Murray, 1872: 235–6)

The curiosity these women display is similar to the observer’s gaze upon them. Their withdrawal blocks the observer’s gaze, while permitting them to become privileged observers: to see without being seen. Again, one notices that the British narrator is treated by women as an intruder in a ‘forbidden’ world. This reaction is not irrational; on the contrary, it is based on a very rigid code of conduct. As Herzfeld noted in his study of a Cretan village, interaction of women with the other sex was virtually impossible, unless it took place within the ritual of matchmaking. It is interesting that this formalized process of arranged marriage was, and still is, called proksenio (literally, ‘acting for an outsider’) (Herzfeld, 1991: 89). The British narrator lacks the necessary mediator (on mediators in anthropological observation see Greenberg on Evans-Pritchard [1993: 117]), and he is also literally a ksenos, a foreigner in the Greek national community. It is noteworthy that in the writings of female Victorian travellers, Greek women appear to be friendly and communicative (Poole, 1878: 50). It may be significant, then, that the actual intruder is male and a foreigner.

The notion of the ksenos has to be further explicated because it illuminates the process of Britons’ exclusion from many Greek social activities in which women are involved. The phenomenon of exclusion (explored in the writings of Wyse, and by The Times correspondent, a resident of Athens, George Finlay) is encapsulated in the use of the antiquated term xenelasia (from ksenos and the verb elavno, meaning ‘to persecute’), or ‘the disgusting of foreigners’ (The Times, 15 December 1871; Wyse, 1871: 281). This exclusion is perceived by Wyse and Finlay as disgust, an allusion to Greek ‘aversion’ to strangers. In Greek cultural politics, women symbolize ‘home’, the private sphere which has to be rendered impenetrable from the ‘outside’ (Herzfeld, 2001: 217; Gallant, 2002: 64). It could be that from the British observer’s standpoint this barring is already perceived as a discourse of ‘sterilization’ (Douglas, 1993: 125–6). The way the ‘Roving Englishman’ discusses the ‘mysterious disappearance’ of women who ‘catch the eye’ of the Turk fits into the same British pattern of anthropological understanding. The Greek women’s exposure to the Ottoman outsider, who is the site of ‘pollution’ in Neohellenic culture after all, reveals that the British see in their exclusion from the women’s world a Greek discourse of national purification. The acknowledgement of their exclusion from the cherished aspects of Greek life did not stop them from trying to penetrate the protective shield under which one can find what only insiders can enjoy. I will note in advance that, ironically, the shield protected the observers more than the Greek peasants. Those
Britons were just not sufficiently prepared to respond to what they would find underneath it.

The ‘price’ of ‘knowledge’: symbolic exchange, staged authenticity and the formation of Neohellenic symbolic order

The British urgency to find a gateway to the ‘core’ of Greek peasant culture might have been dictated by an unexpressed fear: if industrialization ever reached the Hellenic peninsula, Greek peasantry and its Hellenic remnants would disappear. Britons thus assigned themselves the mission of immortalizing in their writings ‘primitive’ Greek attributes. It is unfortunate that the presence of the ‘Lords’ in Greece was enough to change everything. Ansted was convinced, for example, that the Greek peasant who expected from the British traveller a bakshish, or ‘payment for annoyance’, illustrated the adverse effects of travel.

It must be acknowledged that our country people have brought this upon themselves. Nothing of this kind is observable in country villages out of the way of tourists.... Experience has taught the natives of the frequented spots what they may expect as the reward of clamour.

(Ansted, 1863: 57)

Note that the Ionian Islands, on which Ansted writes, constitute a unique case of Greek marginal identity because they were, for a few decades, under British rule. They were a popular, and possibly more familiar, destination for British travellers. However, the same statement is made about Greek-speaking territories of the Ottoman Empire (Walker, 1864: 230). Such experiences generated panic, and convinced Britons that they should hurry to capture ‘spontaneous’ cultural phenomena ‘condemned to annihilation’. Nevertheless, ‘fieldwork’ itself challenged the validity of the task. The question these travellers posed is the same one that modern ethnology/ethnography asks itself: what is authentic, and what is performative? How much of what we see is made up for us? The feedback 19th-century Britons received would inevitably include pseudo-authentic elements. Soon they found out that they had to pay in order to gain access to Greek social life. In some places they were denied access to events, such as weddings, without a generous ‘contribution’ of money. But access to the private sphere was enough to destroy the spontaneity of social interaction. The alien element that the observers introduced, their civilized manners, their obsession with cleanliness, would discipline the observed. A traveller who washed his hands before lunch was surprised by the consequences of his action:

‘Look how they are being civilised’ said Vivier, as he pointed to one turbulent and moustached Greek, who, seized with the fever of
imitation, was turning his piece of soap in a glass of water. 'Already their habits are softening.' (Leech, 1869: 19)

The picturesque dirt of the peasant was being wiped away by this 'civilizing' process. The binary hard/soft betrays a conflation of natural and cultural attributes. Only the presence of the traveller changes Greek attitudes. It was small wonder that the peasantry responded to British curiosity by inventing a 'front social stage' for the foreign spectator (McCannell, 1973). All those aspects of Greek everyday life which supposedly encapsulated the Neohellenic character were rearranged to produce a new symbolic order (Gourgouris, 1996), a new mode of communication with the British 'other'. We can examine this in the context of dance and music which were performed for the observer. Wyse's initiation into such Greek practices at Achmetaga in Euboia is noteworthy. His participation in a local festival, in which the Greeks danced something that reminded him of the 'Irish jig or Scotch reel . . . with a customary marvellous solemnity', was followed by a symbolic action, whose significance he missed:

On the dance relaxing, I went up with a dollar to the clarionet-player, which he accepted with a dignified air, and then struck up the old tune with renewed energy, placing the dollar on his fez over his forehead, for he was dressed in the usual foustanella style. The clarionet did its outmost, and I soon perceived not without result. (Wyse, 1871: 219–20)

As Achmetaga was the property of the English family of Noëls, we cannot be sure how long back the staged event can be traced and whether its performance related to the Noëls' practices. Yet I must stress a possible discrepancy between the economic nature of exchange and the symbolic function of reciprocity in this particular context (Mauss, 1954, and later Ardener, 1989). The British observer emphasizes the former, whereas the Greek performer vacillates between the two. Wyse's reference to the 'dignified air' of the clarinet-player may be a perceptive comment on this oscillation between modern economic notions of exchange and symbolic reciprocation of interest (De Certeau, 1986). This oscillation is nicely captured in Michael Herzfeld's notion of 'cultural intimacy', 'the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality . . . reinforcing the effectiveness of intimidation' (1997; emphasis added). Dancing and playing music, something that outsiders enjoy, was accompanied by accepting money, a version of the bakshish, whose meaning (performance and symbolic reciprocation as resistance) only Greeks understand. The Ottoman practice of bakshish is an embarrassing stereotyping which the Greek clarinet-player performs nevertheless.

It must be emphasized that the consequence of the observer's 'intrusion'
was not corruption, but rearrangement of the Greek symbolic universe. Dancing and social events which previously fulfilled the needs of the Greek community now assumed a twin value. On the one hand they established a channel of communication with the (British) other: their staged authenticity was nothing but their plausible appropriation to the needs of a foreign audience/readership of signs ('the Lords want to learn about our culture') (Urry, 1990: 9). On the other hand, they helped the rural Greeks to select for concentrated attention experiences whose ritualistic aspect enlivened memory and linked the present with the relevant past, but at the same time modified it (Douglas, 1993: 63–4).

Now we have the chance to trace an archaeology of Neohellenic tradition, noting that once it lost its spontaneous/natural element, not only was it incorporated into national culture, but it also became part of institutionalized knowledge: the discipline of folklore (De Certeau, 1986; Herzfeld, 1997 and 2001: 48; Kyriakidou-Nestoros, 1975: 92–3). Interaction with the 'civilized foreigners' made the rural Greeks conscious of what tradition is, or rather how it is to be performed (though the two would eventually converge). A note is needed here to avoid confusing scholarly and peasant responses: reflection on these processes by Greek academics was crucial in the development of folklore into an autonomous discipline. But peasant responses also ought to be seen as a form of carnivalesque, a conscious resistance mechanism which reconstructs the observer's pretensions to omniscience (on the carnivalesque in literary genres see Bakhtin, 1968: 255–7). Their logic is the rational counterpart of formalized folklore discourses. Every time the peasants would recognize and perform the 'disreputable' aspects of their culture for foreigners, they would not simply reciprocate the observer's interest. They would attribute meaning to their British observers' interest in Greek culture, performing a counter-analysis of British conduct. Peasant reciprocation of British interest is not simply homologous to, but constitutive of, contemporary anthropological practices. At the same time, the peasants would explain to themselves what constitutes their own culture, an enterprise in which Greek folklorists were involved much later. Hence, peasant 'cultural intimacy' activated aspects of a proto-anthropological intimacy until the Greek folklore movement emerged and established itself in the form of an academic discipline. I will return to this debate below. For the moment it is worth examining the British reception of this attitude and situating it in a wider context: that of a grand narrative of the Neohellenic 'character'.

Greeks as 'born actors': performance is power!

British travellers were not always well positioned to understand the change that their remuneration practices introduced. For once this pattern of communication was established, it was difficult to stop peasants from taking
advantage of it. It was then that Britons began to complain that the Greeks are ‘untrustworthy’ (Mackenzie and Irby, 1877: 69; ‘Roving Englishman’, 1877: 355; Young, 1876: 65), ‘thieves’ (Farrer, 1882: 128) and ‘unable to observe the principle of truth’ (Letters of Mr Frank Noël, 1871: 87). Greek reception of this symbolic exchange was read as ‘treachery’ and ‘cunningness’, and the contempt expressed for the peasant became a general reference to the Greek ‘race’. Some observers attributed these vices to a need for self-protection against the cruel Turkish ruler (Poole, 1878: 58–9), inventing thus their genealogy. This allusion to Greek deception formed a controversy in historiography, with some historians simply recording it (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, 1990: 103), and others connecting it to the notorious oriental silence which allowed the occidental observer to speak on behalf of the oriental (Skopetea, 1992: 95). Oriental silence and incapability of accuracy, which some Britons traced in the Greek character, may easily have been connected with lying and deception. In these sophisticated analyses we see a deconstruction of 19th-century narratives on Neohellenic deception. But it is intriguing that the most acute analysis of the Greek poniria (low cunningness), this ‘attitude of insubordination’ to the oppressor (Herzfeld, 1985: 25), refines 19th-century British observations.

This debate should not be viewed separately from comments on the ‘Greek entrepreneurial spirit’, its ‘Odyssean mercantile essence’ (Tozer, 1869: I, 17; Campbell, 1876: 41; Wyse, 1871: 15) and its ‘versatility’ (Tozer, 1869: I, 115, 153, II, 257; Young, 1876: 116; Mahaffy, 1876: 21). The double image of the Greeks figuring in these descriptions was based on the twofold reading of a ‘commercial character’ that the British and the Greeks shared. It was just that those Britons who criticized Greek manners felt uncomfortable with what they called ‘entrepreneurial deception’. Let us not forget that lying/deception affects the distribution of power; that lies ‘add to the power of the liar, and diminish that of the deceived, altering the choices of the deceived at different levels’ (Bok, 1978: 19–28). The ‘crafty’ Greeks continuously undermined the British scientific Panopticon by distorting all the important information that British observers aspired to collect. Greek deception would soon be associated with actual stage performance. According to a traveller, the Greeks were ‘born actors’.

Self-consciousness, which brings with it the usual train of mannerisms and affectations, is said to be the curse of the English stage, if not of English society. On the stage and off the stage it is apparently unknown to the Greeks, who, bumptious and boastful though they often are, do not look conscious or self-absorbed; never seem, when in public, to trouble themselves the least in the world whether or no people are looking at them, admiring them, or criticising them, and, consequently, never appear nervous or ill-at-ease among themselves, as is the case with
so many of our countrymen. Their habit of gesticulation, which we may call forced and exaggerated, is in reality as much part of their nature, as it is part of an Englishman's nature to carry an umbrella! (Young, 1876: 201)

Note that the initial demarcation between rural and urban Greekness is now dropped. Greek mannerisms linked to performance are almost 'instinctual' (Farley, 1876: ix); they comprise a set of inculcated rules that cannot be renounced or replaced (Bourdieu, 1999). We ought to acknowledge the importance of this passage as a piece of ethnological discourse. Like later ethnologists, Young seeks ways to organize his data in relation to the unconscious conditions of social life (Lévi-Strauss, 1967: 25; De Certeau, 1986).

But history is still hidden behind the aforementioned ethnological pretensions. Gesticulation, the bodily language of the 'savage', had been dropped by the British who were perhaps 'poorer in gesture', but 'more civilized' in manners. This discourse, which was articulated by E. B. Tylor (a thinker we will discuss later), automatically placed Greek inculcated values (theatricality) in the lower stages of civilization (Herzfeld, 1987: 137). The passage beautifully demonstrates how ethnology assembles its tools in British travel-writing by selecting precisely those things that might have been ignored in historical discourse: gestures, posture and mannerism - neo-Hellenic habitus - in two words.

However, historical legacies overdetermine the Neohellenic character. I will quote from the observations of John Pentland Mahaffy, a significant academic figure in classics at Trinity College, Dublin. The account in his travel diary is concerned with Greek 'jealousy' - an ill-defined term that should not be examined outside the discourse on Greek performance.

It is idle to deny that this is a prominent feature in the Greek character, and that it has constantly brought them into disagreeable contact with foreigners nationally; so that, while travellers uniformly attest the hospitality and kindliness of the individual Greeks whom they meet, they constantly make reflections upon the general jealousy, which the nation displays towards foreign interference. (Mahaffy, 1876: xii)

This is a reference to Greek 'duplicitious' dealings with foreigners and the rivalry that characterizes Greek society. In contrast to Mahaffy, Wyse presented envy as competition within Greek society, which results in discord (Wyse, 1871: 149). If we link these comments to those on entrepreneurialism, then the meaning of Greek 'jealousy' is not always lost on the British observer. Like any kind of 'performance' for the foreign 'Lord', and like the peasant's expectation to be remunerated for it, jealousy signifies the shift 'from an agro-town and guild economy to one penetrated by . . . the tourist trade' (Herzfeld, 1991: 99). The 'jealousy' which Wyse identifies in 'things
Greek’ has its root in the ‘market-oriented’ relationship of the Greeks with foreign visitors to their country. The very notion of ‘professionalism’ in Greek-European exchange was based on the suspicion (or expectation) that the more experienced party will ‘cheat’ the other (Herzfeld, 1991: 52).

This series of Greek virtues, skills and ‘vices’ (entrepreneurial spirit, lying to foreigners, performance and jealousy) are part of the same apparatus that British observers constructed in order to understand their encounters with Greeks. And by arranging these qualities/vices sequentially, one discovers a pattern of British understanding of the Greek character:

jealousy: a desire for what the rival/other has
entrepreneurial spirit: acting on this desire
performance of mannerisms: the means for acquisition of what is desired
Greek lying: the deceived ‘other’s’ feeling of exploitation/privation
English self-consciousness: because covetous Greeks lack this they might succeed in deceiving the British

This schema conceals an epistemological question. Greeks coerced British observers into acknowledging that they had no control over information they were given. For this reason, Britons mobilized self-perceptions so as to understand Greek character through comparison (i.e. both Greeks and English are commercial people) and contrast (i.e. English self-consciousness vs. Greek natural performance). The discourse is predicated upon the notion of ‘lack’ of Greek self-consciousness, which makes Greek mannerisms ‘natural properties’. As natural properties, however, they are not easily recognizable and make the Greeks powerful deceivers. The discursive pattern of these remarks is embedded in the interchangeability of power and deception: those who can ‘cheat’ hold the power.

Hospitality as a constituent of the Greek character (Young, 1876: 192; Wyse, 1871: 88) should be discussed in the same framework. Hospitality of the poor peasant, especially, was a pattern of ‘social investment’ analogous to the cultural capital of the rich. In intercultural exchange it was also a way to exercise control and assert superiority over the ‘hosted’. By controlling the right to treat, ‘locals maintain moral advantage over strangers who may represent offices and countries of much greater political power’ (Herzfeld, 1991: 84).

This may explain why Greek hospitality is described by Greeks as ‘disinterested’. When in 1870 the Dilessi murders placed in question Greece’s image as an idyllic tourist country, John Gennadios, the writer of a defensive Greek account, was the first to stress that frequent British accusations of Neohellenic profit-making and ‘disgust of foreigners’ clashed with ‘disinterestedness’, the essence of the Greek character. The ‘sacred’ institution of hospitality is traced in Greek culture back to ‘the remotest times’ according
to Gennadios (1870: 175–6). Gennadios’s claim, which historicizes Greek character, is identical to some British observers’ inclination to formulate ethnographic discourse through history. What won out of this conflation was neither history nor anthropology, but historical anthropology. In historical anthropology what passed as the Neohellenic unconscious (though in fact a series of meaningful actions predicated upon experience) was read in a symbolic fashion through history.

This practice of tracing history in the Neohellenic character extended to other habits, among them smoking and the traditional Greek coffee break:

There is a café close to this temple [Zeus Olympos], and small tables and straw-bottomed chairs are scattered about under this shadow of the columns. Here on a summer’s evening the modern Athenians sit, drink, smoke their cigarettes and chatter; and it then requires a very strong imagination to people the ruins with the ancient worshippers of Zeus, and to realise with Byron ‘the latent grandeur of his dwelling-place!’ Who could fancy an ancient Athenian – Socrates or Demosthenes for instance – with a cigarette in his mouth? But to fancy a modern Athenian without one is to fancy a very exceptional thing. (Campbell, 1877: 28)

In such ethnographic work, which is carried out with historical tools, the primary question was that of continuity or discontinuity in Greek history. It may be important that this time the Athenian population was under inspection, and not the rural Greeks. The aesthetic disturbance caused by modern Greek Francophilia is thus nicely explained: what was at stake was the continuity of the Greek character as it figured in Neohellenic life. Indeed, the project of British ethnography was antiquarian, insofar as it traced the past in the present.

British commentators whose stay in Greece fulfilled purposes other than travelling also displayed an interest in Greek character and beliefs. For example, newspaper political commentary of the 1860s and the 1870s was ‘flavoured’ by observations on Greek regional character. In 1868, the Morning Post correspondent in Crete published a series of letters in which, alongside political developments, he recorded Cretan Greek customs and beliefs to entertain his readership (24 September and 11 November 1868). The interest in the ‘Cretan character’ just when Crete threatened Ottoman stability, provides yet another link between anthropological remarks and administrative control. The same practice was applied in editorials during the Eastern Question crisis in 1878 (29 July 1878).

Some British travellers and researchers even managed to devise areas of anthropological research. Religious ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and baptisms (Grey, 1870: 197; Colbeck, 1887: 57; Newton, 1865: I, 66; Bagdon, 1868: I, 180–3) social contracts such as dowry arrangements (‘Roving Englishman’, 1877: 233; Newton, 1865: II, 9; Spratt, 1865: 170–1)
popular beliefs in nereids and vampires (Newton, 1865: 1, 211–12; Spratt, 1865: 364; Walker, 1864: 227, 231) and traditions for the siege and re-conquest of Constantinople (Benjamin, 1867: 7; Campbell, 1877: 29; Van Lennep, 1862: 9) were treated as shortcuts to observations on Greek history.

Because most of the works which are used in this article were produced in the third quarter of the 19th century we could place them in the milieu which gave birth to E. B. Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* (1871). In this work, Tylor discussed the existence of ideas and customs which fulfilled no function in modern societies and were regarded as ‘irrational’ because they had survived from previous periods. The focus of Tylorian research became peasant societies in Europe. This happened because the so-called ‘doctrine of survivals’ enabled Tylor and his contemporaries to identify a happy marriage between modern civilization and primitive man which had been preserved intact in ‘backward’ peasant cultures of Europe.

If we relate Tylor’s antiquarianism to the present debate, we can understand the challenge that the Greeks posed to British observers. The motion of time in Greek culture is double, because of the divide between urban and rural life. Urban time emulated western progressive time unsuccessfully, whereas the rural was almost static. Greek rural culture was burdened by a famous past, which was preserved unconsciously in popular beliefs. Contrariwise, there was a violent historical disruption in urban modes of thought. British observers’ merging of Enlightenment evolutionism and Romantic notions of culture suggest that the separation of Enlightenment and Romantic thought is a very recent discursive game in historiography. The truth is that we are caught between evolutionist history and Herderic romantic ethnography, between Greek historical degeneration and national Geist, in the interstices of ethno-history.

Cultural intimacy as anthropological intimacy: ethnology-history and national self-narration

The negotiation concerning the preservation of rural customs was not an exclusively British concern, but rather a common European one. The idea was that traditions of Hellenic genealogy must cease to be unconscious (and therefore in danger of extinction) and become institutionalized (De Certeau, 1986: 78–9, 216). The Greeks themselves internalized this ‘urgency’: in the late 1860s there were already Greek societies inside and outside the Greek kingdom dedicated to the collection of ‘survivals’ of ancient Hellenic civilization in Neohellenic culture. The Greek Philological Society of Constantinople, an important institution for Neohellenic studies that lost most of its collections during the fire in Pera (Istanbul) in 1870, was recognized as one of the leading Greek institutions in this area (*Palingenesía*, 20 September 1878). Inside Greece, the Philological Society of Parnassos, an Athenian
society for Greek letters, set up in 1870 a journal that was dedicated to the identification of Hellenic survivals (Neohelliniká A näleka, 1870: I, 4). Ultimately, European anthropology became Greek folklore: the gaze on the other becomes the gaze upon the internalized other, the rural ‘people’, to recall Lévi-Strauss.

Some of my remarks rely too much on historical hindsight, and resemble what Foucault called the ‘archaeology of knowledge’. Although the debate about ‘survivals’ appears in Greece in the 1830s as an offshoot of the Falmayer controversy concerning the Greekness of the Greeks (Skopetea, 1999: 99; Gourgouris, 1996: 143), the institutionalization of this scientific interest is detected in the early 1880s. The Greek Historical and Ethnological Society, a national institution for the development of folklore studies, was founded in 1882, and it was not until 1884 (and again in 1909) that Nikólaos Politis gave the first institutional definition of Greek folklore (Kyiakidou-N éstoros, 1976). Significantly, Politis, the first folklore scholar, published his first work (‘A Study of the Life of Modern Hellenes: a Mythology’) in 1871, the date most associated with E. B. Tylor’s Primitive Culture. In this work, he reiterated the importance that ancient survivals in Neohellenic peasant culture had for folklore discourse. Indeed, upon reading Politis’s later definition of folklore (1909), one realizes that the institution of Greek laografía was marked by a combination of the totality and synchronicity of anthropology with the specificity and diachronicity of history (Kyiakidou-N éstoros, 1981: 277). Politis retained the dualism high–low culture, regarding the peasants as objects to be observed, not as subjects to interact with and understand. The idea of peasant irrationality (by analogy to the irrationality of the colonized) was adumbrated in the 19th-century Anglo-Greek anthropological encounters, although the outcome of such encounters was not exclusively the result of Anglo-Greek exchange. Notably then, in its inception, even Greek folklore lacked intimacy with Greek peasant culture: it happily replaced an intense engagement with its material with historical discourse. Only Politis’s student, Stílpon Kyriakidis, managed to escape survivalist discourses by stressing the dramaturgical aspects of peasant culture. In his Hellenikí Laografía: Mnemeía Lógu (‘Greek Folklore: Speech Monuments’), published in the series Laografikó Archeío Mleltón (‘Folklore Archive Studies’) with Politis’s initiative, Kyriakidis was more inclined to challenge the subject–object, highbrow–lowbrow approach of his teacher. In ‘Ti Eínai Lagrafía?’ (‘What is Folklore?’) he explicitly renounced Tylor, explaining that what had been regarded by him as ‘survivals’ were in fact old practices coexisting (symbiómata) with new ones (1948: 139). The emphasis on understanding peasant practice instead of superimposing history on it can be translated into a combination of cultural and anthropological intimacy. Put simply: Kyriakidis denied Tylorian outsiders the right not only to intrude in, but also to appropriate, aspects of Neohellenic identity and belonging. To
be sure, the 19th-century peasants had been there before Kyriakidís: while safeguarding their culture from outsiders, they had granted it an explicit context. This context was conditioned by a dialogue between what British (and certainly other European) survivalists traced (pure, Hellenic Greekness), and what modern cross-cultural exchange demanded (performance of Greek culture as resistance to its appropriation).

The only 19th-century non-peasant reactions in which we can trace the same phenomenon are those of extra-academic circles. Given my concern with Anglo-Greek exchange, I ought to make specific this appropriation of ethnological discourse. It was not just that Greek ballads, which were considered representative of the Neohellenic Volksgeist, were collected and classified in different typological systems, but also that they were reproduced. This practice, which signifies an awareness of the importance these findings had as oral history, configured repeated Greek attempts at stimulating British philhellenic feelings during international crises. The Greek press hosted a series of such recorded ballads, entitled ‘products of the popular Muse’, which were in fact written by contemporary Greek poets in a ‘traditional fashion’. An inspired ‘traditional’ polemic against European intervention, which reads as a brigand ballad, appeared in Palingenesía, a Greek newspaper with an explicit nationalist agenda, during the Cretan insurrection (3 April 1867). A second example can be found, again in Palingenesía, in 1881: it is a ‘folk song’ written by the obscure Marietta Bitsu and dedicated to ‘the famous philhellene and British Prime Minister Mr. Gladstone’ (16 March 1881). Greek poniria, once again: apparently, Greeks had managed to take the British cues.

CONCLUSION

In writing this article, I was interested much less in the formalization of anthropological discourse and more in capturing the moment in which this discourse was still not fully recognizable as anthropology. Two things that emerge from this analysis can form the basis of a conclusion. The first is that British accounts of Greek culture can be read as the ideologically charged counterpart of institutionalized anthropological discourse. Their genealogical value for the discipline of anthropology is identified in the fact that British observers moved between conscious and unconscious modes of articulation. The boundaries between reflexive and unreflexive British observation were already becoming blurred: although British visitors to Greece were still not in a position to engage with peasant attitudes, they were slowly becoming conscious that strange dynamics were at work that denied them access to Greek culture. The second is that the appropriation of these practices in Neohellenic culture is traced back to peasant responses to British outsiders.
Peasant reflections on the nature of encounters with British ‘others’ are constitutive of contemporary anthropological discourses: we encounter this peasant reflexivity only much later in Greek academic or literary milieux. Therefore, for historians the role of peasant response is twofold: not only can it be recognized as a source of inspiration for Greek academics, but it can also be considered as the origins of the Neohellenic counter-hegemonic project of folklore. Greek peasant responses to Anglo-Greek encounters are the counterpart of Neohellenic ‘highbrow’ academic discourse and they ought to be accommodated within debates on the genealogy of Neohellenic resistance to foreign hegemony.

NOTES

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1 On Macedonian Greek women, see Walker (1864: 257).
2 See Jebb (1880: 85–7) and Tozer (1890: 76–7).
3 See also Todorova (1997: 100).
4 See Van Lennep (1862: 73) on links between ‘oriental dishonesty’ and trade.
5 For an academic example, see Tozer (1869: I, 7–8, 72).

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