INTRODUCTION
Fig. 1. Opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Athens: a Cycladic head emerges from the sea
(©Athens 2004; courtesy Michalis Toubis SA).
ON THE EVENING OF 13 August 2004, a gigantic Cycladic head emerged from the waters of an artificial lake built in the heart of the Olympic Stadium in Athens (fig. 1). The city was hosting the twenty-eighth Olympic Games of the modern era, and this was to be the centrepiece of the opening ceremony. This epiphany of sorts was followed by a state-of-the-art, hi-tech spectacle combining men and machines, schemes and ideas, all masterfully visualized and staged by choreographer Dimitris Papaioannou. The Cycladic head cracked open, Zeus-like, to produce a colossal kouros, which then gave way to a Classical torso (fig. 2). A procession ensued, presenting life-like statuary and Leitmotiv ideas, references to familiar images, a celebration of a culture through the spectre of its own beauty (figs 3-4). A ‘precession of simulacra’, in short, to remember Jean Baudrillard, whereby Greek culture was represented through its art, where idea was subjugated to form, where history as experience was paraded as Motivgeschichte.

Papaioannou’s scheme was brilliant, striking just the right notes for the occasion: emphasis on continuity (though with a certain antique bias), a celebration of the all-time-classic Greek ideal (albeit in its consummation through art), an allusion to some of the eternal Greek values – such as democracy, the theatre, or Christian faith – all suitably packaged for worldwide broadcast and PG audiences throughout (with the exception of nudity, certainly, which seems mandatory when it comes to things Greek). A confirmation of Hellenic identity overall, through a rehearsal of Greek history based on tangible archaeological evidence and its aesthetic appeal, and moreover a reaffirmation of this culture’s connection – past, present, eternal – with the land (and the sea, needless to add) that gave birth to the peerless Hellenic spirit.

Remarkable attention was paid to historical accuracy throughout: the Cycladic head of the Olympic show, for example, was a hyper-blown up copy of an actual ancient artefact, one of the most treasured masterpieces exhibited at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens. It was readily recognizable to anyone even remotely familiar with the 39 cm tall figurine, even though the replica of its head alone in the stadium stood 17 metres high. The procession of statuary was crowded with effigies of well-known kouroi and korae, Classical grave stelae, a replica of the Parthenon, and so on, all the way down to Byzantine frescoes and mosaics, Greek folk art and shadow puppet theatre.

Every motif, each portentous symbol, had its place: Cycladic art at the forefront, to be sure, since, from as far back as the last decades of the nineteenth century, it has been being used as the first milestone in the long and fascinating saga of Greek (‘Hellenic’) Culture, as this has been constructed by the modern Greek state. In this continuum, ‘Cycladic’ plays counterpart to ‘Modern’, by standing as the far bookend in a sequence of arts, ideas, and the men who expressed the latter through the former. This idea of continuity in itself, from Cycladic to Classical art, then moving through Byzantium to modern Greece, was essential to the construction of Greek national identity in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, and remains in use with no signs of subsiding. Greek culture (as monitored through its expression in art) and history (as evidenced by its manifestation through culture) are emphatically poised to begin in the depths of prehistory and
culminate in the here and now, on the much celebrated threshold of the third millennium AD. Thus, in order to commemorate its hosting of the Olympic Games, Greece (that is Athens) chose to dress up and, in shamelessly self-worshipping mood, admire her image in the mirror: that is Greece’s own Hellenic view of her own Hellenic (mostly ancient, mostly Athenian) art.5

Notes from oblivion

The scheme proposed by the Olympic procession is, needless to say, an old one, which has been tried and tested by Greek and Western scholars to represent, by way of explanation, historical developments in ancient, medieval, and modern Greece, a reading as good as any other – contrary to the opinion of many of its critics – and one that has arguably proved much more successful than some might have done.6 Yet it is a representation that the ancient Greeks themselves would have found difficult to come to terms with: they, for one, would have been mystified by the pristine whiteness of their paraded statuary, by the strong violation of proportion, context and function. And as for the ancient Cycladic islanders themselves, they would very likely find the grossly inflated head, severed from the body of one of the small-scale (presumably) human effigies so familiar to them, positively grotesque. Be that as it may, we – modern Greeks and Westerners – have learned to recognize ourselves in Greek art, have been taught to reflect on the classical past as our own, and have been instructed to see Cycladic art as beautiful, inspiring, and as a forerunner to our own aesthetic values of simplicity, sophistication, and abstraction. Since the days of Winckelmann, Greek art has been made, through an emotive leap of faith, to function as an emblem of the to-
tality of Greek culture,’ and this has facilitated its use, as the logo, so to speak, for Hellenic culture in total, in the familiar process of (self-)colonizing one’s past in order to promote one’s rights to the present. These images are vital therefore: ostensibly, they are broadcast worldwide even though their primary function is introverted, aiming to touch the nation’s collective imagination so as to ‘give the nationalist struggle something to revive and admire’.9

The conviction that life speaks through art permeates Greek archaeology, surreptitiously having acquired the status of a self-evident truth. A good example is the Benaki Museum itself, the gracious host of both this volume and the original conference: its most recent guidebook maintains that, starting from the Prehistoric room (where a Cycladic figurine may be seen along with other third-millennium artefacts), ‘the visitor will follow, step by step, the historical development of Hellenism as it unfolds through the millennia’.10 Speaking as it does of an ‘exciting journey’ and a ‘true epic’ this idiosyncratic statement prefigures the Olympic procession by several years, offering at the same time an eloquent description of the way modern Greece undertakes its own archaeology, as an exercise – often painstaking but ultimately rewarding – in deep soul-searching and courageous self-cognition. And who could be better qualified to do this than the Benaki Museum, the Hellenic museum par excellence, which – in its own words – strives to illustrate ‘the character of the Greek world through a spectacular historical panorama’?11 This is the scheme that Papaioannou chose to serve with his Olympic procession, just as the Benaki Museum’s exhibition starts with Cycladic art and culminates with modern Greek poetry.12 Both stand as eloquent metaphors for the way Greeks have striven to construct their collective identity through a singular perception of a/their historical past; and, judging by their

Fig. 4. A procession of live ‘statuary’ at the Athens Olympics (©Athens 2004; courtesy Michalis Toubis SA).
success with their respective audiences, this is still an entirely valid reading. We are reminded of Christian Zervos, the Greek-born art critic and influential patron of modernists such as Picasso, who, in his efforts back in the thirties to promote the idea of a culturally continuous and intellectually luminous Hellas, wondered whether ‘a Cycladic figurine, a vase or a bronze artefact of the Geometric period, a statue or a pot of the Archaic period, do [...] not already contain the essential elements of the style of the Parthenon’. His anachronistic understanding of Greek archaeology strikes a note of magnificent absurdity by backdating the notion of Hellenism to a time prior to its actual presence. At the same time, it offers a splendid illustration of the ideological premise underlying the modern narrative of Greek archaeology, expressed in its atemporal – and heavily aestheticized – view of ancient Greek culture.

Such readings, like the linear arrangement of the Olympic procession, serve as vivid reminders of the task undertaken by modern historiography: to produce a straightforward, authoritative, and objective account of the past, inspired by the scientific values of rational assessment and empirical reasoning; in short, a safe, sane, and consensual version of history suitable for a wide, largely uninformed but extremely demanding audience. In the case of Greece, it reminds us that archaeology has been conscripted into establishing a new cultural and political identity for a new nation-state, anxious to broadcast its own singular antiquity.

Custodians in Neverland

The discovery and preservation of antiquities in nineteenth-century Greece was motivated by a number of objectives:

‘[T]o link the young Greek state and the neo-Hellenes with the Classical Greek antiquity of which they, since they spoke the same tongue and inhabited the same land, were the direct heirs and agents; to defend the young nation and state against those who wished its demise; and to put an end to, or at least to reduce, the destruction of antiquities in liberated Greece by its own inhabitants, be they peasants or smugglers, as well as the foreign archaeophiles and antiques traders.’

Since the passage quoted here was written in 1887, we may assume that its author believed Greek archaeology to have served these ends in the intervening one hundred years or so, though it is difficult to imagine a studious body of under-paid civil servants ‘defending the nation’, eager as they may have been to do so (and many certainly were). The passage is of course revealing as to the ways the Greeks themselves perceive their link to classical antiquity and the political-cum-national role they attribute to archaeology. It is also revealing in that, although it lists three ‘objectives’, only one – counted last and presumably least – is, strictly speaking, related to an archaeologist’s actual work: rescuing antiquities from the hands of looters, a task also invested with patriotic significance.

What this text fails to point out is that – from the very beginning of the modern state – Greek archaeologists undertook the task of constructing Greece as a geographical as well as an ideological topos, a heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense. Creating ‘a space of illusion that exposes every real space’, heterotopias are deployed as systems of institutions, discourses and ideologies in order to act as ‘counter-sites’ on which real sites, active within the particular culture, are colonized by this ‘kind of effectively enacted utopia[s]’. Greece has been described as such a Foucauldian heterotopia by Artemis Leontis: ‘a space set apart precisely because it contains classical ruins’, a site expropriated by the colonialist imagination of the West, and eventually recreated, and thus self-colonized, by modern Greek writers, who claim their own (hereditary?) intellectual rights to a magnificent past. Indeed, archaeologists in Greece were inspired by some of the country’s leading intellectuals in their efforts to enhance their nation’s intellectual singularity, based on the promotion of the classical past (the material remains of which had been entrusted to their safekeeping), in the belief that the ruins could bridge the gap between past and present, in a physical as well as a synaesthetic way.

The heterotopia of Hellas, which remains active in modern Greece, and appropriates the country’s realities, strategies and imaginings, has proved to be endowed with the formidable ‘intertwining of enjoyment and oppression that forms the backbone and the interminable energy-source of nationalism’. Classical ruins, their protection, enhancement, even veneration, and the way Greek archaeology has gone about the recreation of Greek landscape as a way of reappraising the past, came therefore to perform, much more than a visual role (accepting the past as an
as a viable way of increasing national revenue. A first tour-
eral between the wars, was seen by the Greek authorities
which emerged in Europe and the Western world in gen-
their land in the first place. Mass tourism, a phenomenon
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archaeology – of modern Greece’s moral debt to its clas-
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aesthetic ideal), a fundamentally political one. As Yannis
Hamilakis put it in his own exploration of the heterotopia
scheme: ‘the material landmarks of this heterotopia oper-
ate not simply as the iconography of the national dream
(however important that role is), but also as the essential
(in both senses of the word), physical, natural, and real,
and thus beyond any dispute, proof of the continuity of
the nation, a key device for its naturalization.’21

Constructing the heterotopia of Hellas was a long proc-
cess; inspired by Bavarian Neoclassicism, Greek archaeolo-
gists worked to ‘purify’ national monuments – meaning
strictly those with a classical pedigree – wishing to em-
phasize ‘the national, emblematic character required by
Greeks as the foundation of their national identity’.21
The ‘purification’ campaign started from – where else? –
the Athenian Acropolis which had to be restored back
to its glory days. The demolition, in 1875, of the Frank-
ish Tower that stood by the Propylaea was one such act of
‘purification’, targeting a monument that was regarded as
emblematic of a foreign occupation that had to be shown –
like the Roman and the Ottoman – not to have left any-
thing behind that was worthy of note, apart, of course,
from those elements which had been ‘rehabilitated’ into
Hellenism through a rigorous process of cultural appropri-
ation. Though it met with strong protests from historians –
mostly foreign, and notably the French who themselves
regarded the Tower as their own national treasure22 – the
demolition of the monument was emphatically supported
by the Archaeological Society who stressed the need to
render national monuments ‘pure and unsullied by any-
things foreign’.25

Behind the ideological premise – so dominant in Greek
archaeology – of modern Greece’s moral debt to its clas-
sical past, lay a much more pragmatic approach: the idea
that the country’s landscape, dotted by antique sites and
monuments, could be exploited to the state’s economic
advantage. The idea that Westerners came to Greece
expecting to find the sites in good order had been a pre-
occupation of Greek archaeology since its early days. As
a matter of fact, it was the example of the Grand Tour-
ists and Philhellenes of the previous centuries which had
encouraged the Greeks to appreciate the monuments of
their land in the first place. Mass tourism, a phenomenon
which emerged in Europe and the Western world in gen-
eral between the wars, was seen by the Greek authorities
as a viable way of increasing national revenue. A first tour-

inst bureau founded in 1914 was succeeded in 1929 by the
Greek National Tourism Organization (EOT), a central
priority of which became the conservation and enhance-
ment of archaeological sites and monuments for the pur-
pose of attracting and entertaining foreign tourists. In the
thirties several sites in Athens and the rest of the country
were ‘cleared up’ or ‘made decent’ by removing later build-
ings (including churches) and manned with tour guides
for the sake of tourists. In 1934 Georgios Oikonomos,
in his joint capacities as Secretary of the Archaeological
Society at Athens and Director of Antiquities at the
Ministry of Education, called for the reinforcement of the
Archaeological Service in the interest of public finances.
He argued: ‘It is fundamentally clear that in our efforts to
establish our country as one of the most important desti-
nations for foreign tourism, we are, at least for the time
being, obliged to support every aspect of this truly national
project of ours relating to the state of our archaeology and
our monuments.’24

An extensive restoration project was launched, primarily
targeting ancient theatres, to serve as venues for the revival
of ancient drama. The Herod Atticus Theatre in Athens
(an odeion of the Roman period) was being used for such
performances – ‘bound to attract the attention and the
interest of foreigners’25 – long before it was massively re-
constructed in the fifties.26 Soon enough, the Greek Tour-
ism Organization was proposing annual revivals of ancient
drama for dollar-paying tourists; and archaeologists, phi-
logenists and theatre companies were happy to oblige.

It was thus that the international imagery for Classical
Greece was created: researched, ostentatious, and thor-
oughly modern. More to the point, archaeologists became
the arch censors of national aesthetics, stipulating what
was to be allowed in modern Greek culture, based on an
improvised hierarchical system of values prioritizing the
(perceived) integrity of classical aesthetics.27 Canonized in
the mind of archaeologists and the Greek people at large,
antiquities have become, even in recent years, the recipi-
ents of quasi-religious veneration that might embarrass
an otherwise typically Western, secular state (even one,
like Greece, marked by some decidedly un-Western, and
rather disconcerting, peculiarities): Greek authorities have
recently introduced a ban on posing for pictures in front of
ancient monuments in museums and archaeological sites ‘as a show of veneration’ to them, usually enforced by en-
raged stewards against flabbergasted (and otherwise most
welcome) tourists seeking, in universal tourist etiquette nowadays (obnoxious as it may be), to immortalize themselves in front of a classical statue or a ruin.28

On many an occasion from the early years of the Greek state, archaeologists working for the Ministry of Culture, the University, or both, were allowed to intervene in situations involving contemporary culture – from events taking place in or near archaeological sites to displays of modern or non-Greek art – and have the last say in the matter. Using the powers of persuasion they draw from a portentous past which they profess to represent, as well as the disciplinary powers invested in them by the state, Greek archaeologists continue to produce and recycle aesthetic value for the sake of the nation. Theirs was the ‘archaeologically correct’ imagery paraded in the opening ceremony of the 2004 Olympics. Theirs is the heterotopic landscape, duly ‘cleansed’ and appropriately ‘archaeological’, crafted across Greece through doctrine, intervention and censorship.

A recent clash, rendering the Acropolis once again a site of conflict, should suffice to show the way Greek archaeology – state or public – views its own and the country’s relationship to the classical past. The decision taken by the Central Archaeological Council to approve the de-classification of two previously listed buildings in the vicinity of the new Acropolis Museum in central Athens has stirred a wave of public controversy. The two buildings, one a rare example of the way modern Greek architecture adopted the achievements of art-deco architecture and the other a Neoclassical building with strong overtones of the Gothic Revival, are part of an urban street preserving valuable examples of private houses of the early twentieth century.29 The decision to tear down the two buildings rested on the ‘needs’ of the new museum for an uninterrupted view of the Acropolis, in order to establish a ‘visual conversation’ with the monument.30 A massive building of (questionable by some)31 international architectural merit, the new museum, designed by Bernard Tschumi, is intended to enhance Greece’s international standing as a host of modern architecture as well as its prospects of seeing the eventual return of the Elgin marbles – a national project indeed.

The inherent visualism of Greek archaeology, deeply embedded in its empiricist tradition, a tendency that has been elevated to the status of the discipline’s primary tool of conviction, cultivates a cultural bias towards the visual (‘what you see is what you get’), an attitude that is fundamentally ideological.32 In the case of the Acropolis museum, the modern has to be given uninterrupted visual access to the ancient, a co-existence that has to be self-evident and eternally present. No intermediaries can be allowed, no interruptions, especially if they are not part of the linear succession from antiquity to the present; most especially if they are unwelcome reminders of foreign interventions unworthy of our merit, as in the case of the Frankish Tower on the Acropolis or the art-deco house classified as a listed building in the seventies by the same authorities which now want to demolish it. Archaeology is thus used to deploy an improvised visual rhetoric, satisfying its public’s (as well as its own) idolatrous tendencies in order to shift the discourse regarding the past towards the pictorial and the aesthetic. Besides being a filial duty towards an imposing past, this heterotopic approach to the development of urban landscapes in modern Greece has been understood by Greeks as a way of meeting outsiders’ expectations of them and a way of achieving international acceptance and financial benefits. In one of the countless texts urging the state to get rid of the two ‘unimportant’ listed buildings for the sake of the ‘common good’ written by various ‘public intellectuals’ catering primarily for the press, we read that ‘no [foreign] visitor will come to Athens in order to see an art-deco façade, though many will come for the Acropolis Museum, provided we promote it appropriately’.33 Several decades on, the best part of a century, Greek archaeology – in the wider sense of the term – struggles to illustrate the nation’s importance through visual reminders of its antiquity, while at the same time striving to satisfy the needs of its visitors in return for their material or moral support. True enough, the fate of the two houses was apparently sealed when it was realized that, although the Parthenon would be clearly visible from the new museum’s galleries (one of which is to remain empty until such time as the Elgin marbles are returned to Greece), the backs of the two buildings obstruct the view to the ‘mother rock’ from the landing which is to become the museum’s cafeteria.34 Archaeology thus provides the theatre and the props for a strategically placed production of modern Greece as a continuation of Hellas. The ideological and aesthetic components of this re-enactment will be discussed below. First, we need to consider the central premise of this enterprise, a ‘passion play’ as it has been called,35 where what is at stake is Greece’s capacity for self-determination and – more importantly – just who, within the state itself, has
the right to set the rules of this process. Needless to say, although this endeavour, one that has led to violent and as yet unresolved conflict in Greek society, affects Greece’s outlook on the future, it is primarily concerned with its definitive reading of the past.

The Greekness of our discontent

The scheme employed at the Athens Olympic ceremony was a long time in the making: as early as the second half of the nineteenth century Greek historians sought to furnish Greece with a national history worthy of a modern European state. The historian and folklorist Spyridon Zambelios (c. 1813-1881) was the first Greek scholar officially to speak of the national character of the Greek people, a character evident throughout its three-thousand-year long history. His references to Greek national consciousness, his emotive invocations of a throbbing national heart he could detect in Byzantium as well as in classical antiquity, echo the rhetoric of German Romantics such as the philosopher Johann Georg Hamann and his disciple Johann Gottfried von Herder, as well as the eighteenth-century Neapolitan critic of the Enlightenment Giambattista Vico, who may have been an inspiration to them. Zambelios assumed the task of constructing a coherent timeline for Greek history, capable of withstanding external (i.e. European) scrutiny. His effervescent rhetoric builds on Romantic rapture, though tacitly claiming this as a purely Greek trait. In one of his many texts on language, published in 1856, Zambelios states, on behalf of his nation, that ‘we live in the present, but have been born many centuries ago, and it is the air of those centuries that we now breathe. Our very idiosyncrasies, our fantasies, and our preposterous aspirations bear witness to us being les enfants gâtés de l’histoire’.

Greek history soon became a national cause – a legitimizing force both at home and abroad. The ancient legacy was now being confirmed by modern science since Romantic Philhellenism, to which the new state owed its independence, was in irrevocable decline. Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, Professor of History at the University of Athens, in a remarkable effort to hellenize Greek history, produced a new synthesis, uniting ancient and medieval (Byzantine) Greece with the present. In his History of the Hellenic Nation, which appeared in many editions and revisions in the period 1860-1876, Paparrigopoulos constructed a tripartite ‘national-time’ scheme for modern Greece as a European nation-state. Thus, Hellenism became the protagonist in the continuum of the Greek narrative; what for the modern historian could (and would) be seen as a revival – following a murky and inglorious medieval intermission – had to be shown in the Greek nationalist reading to be a survival, even if some of the interim stages had to be left to one’s imagination. The sentiment underlying this, and many such historiographical endeavours, was an ambivalence towards the West – contempt for its intellectual inferiority and its many shortcomings, as well as an intense anxiety to be accepted, on equal terms, in its circles. Greek folk studies, initiated in the 1880s by Nikolaos Politis, who strongly believed that local customs and traditions preserved the essence of Hellenism, also benefited from an inherent anti-Western tone: a frank return to tradition, Politis was arguing in 1883, would save Greece from losing its soul to the seductive influences of the West.

These fiercely conflicting views marked most of the twentieth century, affecting readings of the Greek (classical) past and (modern) present. In 1903 the Greek poet and essayist Periklis Giannopoulos (1869-1910) published his Greek Line and Colour, urging his compatriots to reunite with the spirit of ancestral Hellenism and overthrow the ‘tyranny of the West’ through a thorough reappraisal of the national Greek values. According to Giannopoulos, these values had been invested in the Greeks by their own earth, the Greek land that created its people ‘in her own image and likeness’. Inspired by Darwinian and other evolutionist theories of culture developed in Europe, mostly Germany, this vein of determinist reasoning has had a lasting effect on Greek perceptions of history, geography and race. Biological idiosyncrasies and climatic conditions were (and often still are) seen as determining factors for culture, and Greek art – understood as a reflection of the contours and colours of the Greek landscape – was perceived as an expression of this interaction between man and his land. The chief idea expressed by Giannopoulos in his polemical essay is that the Greek soil is the cradle of Greek aesthetics, and that Greek art was the product of the dialogue between the Greeks and their own environment. The nub of his critique was his fierce anti-Occidentalism, a sentiment he shared with many of the young thinkers and activists of his day. Greek cultural identity had to be
regained, as a bulwark against the deceptive forces of the West and the complacency of the East, which had left a deep imprint on Greek soil, with an Ottoman occupation that had lasted four hundred years too long. Giannopoulos and his fellow radicals could not hide their frustration at the westernization of their homeland: in the process of becoming a bona fide Western state, Greece was abandoning its Hellenic destiny.

At about the same time, Greek archaeologist Christos Tsountas (1857-1934) took advantage of Heinrich Schliemann’s and his own discoveries at Mycenae and Paparrigopoulos’ synthesis, in order to talk about the existence of a timeless ‘Greek spirit’, permeating Greek history from prehistory to the present, in an effort to claim that Greece really was the cradle of European civilization. Gradually, Greece was constructing its solidly Hellenic prehistory, enabling its scholars to claim that all things worthy of our attention – from the depths of the prehistoric past to the post-Byzantine present – had been produced by the spirit of the land and the genius of the race. Anything else was what Greece’s multifarious invaders – Romans, Goths, Franks, Turks – had left behind and merited only contemptuous indifference.

Following a humiliating defeat in the war against Turkey in 1897 and the Catastrophe that followed the invasion of Turkish Asia Minor by Greek troops in 1921-1922, the Greeks finally realized that their nation was to remain confined within the territory held by their state. Thus, the nationalist Megali Idea (‘Great Idea’), a highly romanticized claim for a ‘Greater Greece’, a sovereign state that would stretch over every territory inhabited by Hellenes, was finally abandoned more than sixty years after its conception.

Disenchanted by the unceremonious end of the Greek imperialist dream, a younger generation of intellectuals who emerged in the country’s cultural life around 1930 (who became known as the ‘generation of the thirties’), displayed a markedly more introvert attitude. Their influence on Greek culture was strongly felt for the decades to come and many aspects of their legacy remain evident to the present day. These active essayists, critics, novelists and poets devoted their energy to a new central concept for Greek identity, what they called hellenikoteta (‘Greekness’) or Hellenicity. Hellenicity referred to the intrinsic qualities of the Greek psyche which had survived, often undetected, through antiquity and Byzantium, to the present day. Thanks to their middle- or upper-middle class upbringing and studies abroad (in Western Europe, mostly Germany), the members of the generation of the thirties understood well the challenges modernity – modernization even – posed for their country. While striving to reunite modern Greece with its long-lost Hellenic psyche, they endeavoured to promote Greek culture in the West, as a reminder to the European Occident of its cultural debt to the Greek Orient. On the surface at least, one might think that their attempts were generally successful: two of the group’s most prominent poets, Seferis and Elytis, became Greece’s only Nobel-laureate poets to date, in 1963 and 1979 respectively. Evidently, their Greekness had touched some European chords.

Intriguingly, Greek intellectuals in the thirties seemed to believe that the ‘new humanism’ they were after could be further inspired by the environmental-determinist views promoted by Giannopoulos at the beginning of the century, views which they duly revived, along with – to a certain extent – his reckless rhetoric which remains popular to the present day. A new sort of hellenocentric radicalism made it obligatory for Greek intellectuals or artists to declare their fascination with the landscapes of Attica, the colours of Greek nature and certainly the Aegean and its islands: this becomes the cradle and residence of Hellenism, to which all the characteristics which shape Hellenicity are to be credited. Thus, the Greek quest for a national identity veered towards aesthetics.

The Metaxas dictatorship in 1936 pushed for a further ideological swing. Metaxas wrested Hellenicity from the hands of his liberal or communist rivals (effectively silencing the latter through exile, imprisonment, or worse). From then on, the Greek Left and the Greek Right turned Hellenicity into a site of conflict, in a landscape of ideological intolerance, which showed no signs of subsiding in the bitter post-civil war years of the fifties and the sixties. Attacked from the right, liberal intellectuals now had to prove their patriotism by elaborating on stereotypes about the Greek soul and the eternal spirit of Greek culture. Meanwhile, many communist intellectuals, originally indifferent, if not positively hostile to the notion of Hellenicity, were finally forced to subscribe to it, lest they be accused of ‘cosmopolitanism’. Though apparently centred on the past, the issue under debate was present-day relations with Europe; for the liberals ‘Greekness’ could be perceived within a European framework, and
was thus a bona fide ingredient of modernity. For Greek conservatives, on the other hand, modernity was certainly anti-Hellenic. Inevitably, the rift caused was vast, and its impact is still felt in present-day Greece, not to mention the frequent invocation of nationalist rhetoric (with the appropriate emphasis on the amalgam of Greek heritage and Orthodox tradition) by many a self-appointed spokesman of the so-called Greek radical Right. Hellenocentric history, sterile archaeolatry, and frustrated anti-Western rhetoric remain, to the present day, the vital elements of the intellectual ancestry of every conservative in the country, with the Metaxas regime still providing both the ideological stimulant and the visual back-up for such expressions of patriotism.

It was in this cultural and political environment that Greek history, viewed through art, came to be seen as a single entity. Greek Modernism, represented by the intellectuals of the generation of the thirties or internationally renowned personalities like Christian Zervos mentioned above, promoted ideas on the singular essence of Hellenic art – Prehistoric to Byzantine. Greek painters in particular, heavily influenced by the discussion on Hellenicity in the thirties and the forties, turned to the past, inspired (or claiming to have been inspired) by ancient and medieval Greek art, in an effort to establish continuity and thrive on it. Most of these painters also designed for the stage, including performances of ancient drama: Yannis Tsarouchis, Yannis Moralis, Nikos Nikolaou, and Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika became the champions of Hellenicity in Greek painting, combining their cosmopolitan outlook with their idiosyncratic approaches to the Hellenic (ancient, modern, timeless).52 A 'metaphysics of Greek landscape' was thus constructed in art and literature, based on the ideals of an autochthonous Hellenicity and the perennial historical presence of Hellenism.53 Owing to the highly aestheticized rhetoric of these readings, archaeology – which was ex officio the provider of the master-narrative which served as the backbone of Hellenic history (namely ancient Greek and Byzantine art) was encouraged to adopt a similar approach both to the past and its own mission.

Strengthened by the 1936 coup, the Greek Right used Hellenicity as a patriotic index of sorts, in order to silence its political opponents, and to restrict intellectual contacts abroad. This was an anti-modern and anti-Western, xenophobic reading of Hellenicity, susceptible to state control. Konstantinos Tsatsos, a self-styled 'Platonic' philosopher and politician with some presence in Greek politics before and after the 1967 dictatorship, produced numerous essays in which he is concerned with Hellenic creativity. He despises any sign of Modernism in literature and art 'because it excludes Hellenicity'. For him, Hellenicity is a prerequisite of authenticity: 'I don’t need authenticity in order to have a Hellenic work; I want Hellenicity so that the work may be authentic'.54 As it happened, Tsatsos became (reluctantly?) the protagonist in a farcical episode in Greek cultural politics, involving the Liberal Left, the Right, and control over Hellenic antiquity and tradition. On 29 August 1959, a performance of Aristophanes' The Birds by the Art Theatre Company at the newly restored open-air Herod Atticus Theatre was interrupted by angry spectators, when a Byzantine psalm was interpolated in the play's sacrifice scene. The show had been directed by Karolos Koun, Greece's leading avant-garde director at the time, who attempted, with considerable success, to link his work with folk tradition and antiquity – very much in the fashion of the generation of thirties. His collaborators in The Birds included the painter Yannis Tsarouchis and the composer Manos Hadjidakis, all three united by a common vision of antiquity, folklore and contemporary culture. Tsatsos, then Minister of the Interior for a radical right-wing government, personally ordered that the three remaining performances be cancelled, on the grounds that the performance ‘distorted the meaning of the classical text [and] insulted the religious sentiment of the people’.55 Clearly, Hellenicity was too important to be left in the hands of irresponsible intellectuals.

1959 was (yet another) crucial year in Greek politics, when the right-wing National Radical Union party, under the leadership of Konstantinos Karamanlis, was in government. However, in the elections of the previous year, the United Democratic Left had emerged as the official opposition and was severely attacking the government on its handling of the Cyprus issue and the Zurich talks early that year. As Richard Clogg puts it: 'Karamanlis came under fire from the opposition for betraying the cause of Hellenism in the interests of NATO and the Americans'.56 Evidently, Tsatsos and the Greek Right had their own views on Hellenism and the way its interests should be defended, at least domestically. Following the termination of the seven-year military dictatorship in 1974, Karamanlis was elected Prime Minister and Tsatsos President of the
Republic. While no overt references to their ideas were included in the 2004 Olympic Ceremony, Hadjidakis and Tsarouchis were right there in the forefront of things, the former thanks to the use of his dreamy music, and the latter as a not-so-distant inspiration behind many of the costumes or the staged scenes (particularly the navy bands parading by the seafront). The spirit of the generation of the thirties lives on, one might assume, though only in its most conservative, intellectually sterile mutations, calling for repetitive invocations of the past as a mechanistic measure against the discontents of the present. As Alexis Dimaras assessed in 1983, we ended up propagating an ‘official Hellenicity’, enforced by the state educational system through a regime of fear: fear that, through a crack in the system, ‘the real face of modern Greece might be revealed’ or that the character of this official Hellenicity may get tampered with.

Archaeology has been both the instigator and the victim of this development. It was the intricacies of this interaction, creating cultural realities which could not have been anticipated by the discipline’s academic agenda, that intrigued us in preparing this volume, and fuelled the discussion that follows. First, however, we need to explore somewhat further the way archaeology in a young nation-state such as Greece, which was much more than a mere victim of the contradictions inherent in nationalist ideology, becomes the generator of powerful imagery and its supporting narratives.

Greek archaeology and the post-colonial blues

The contemporary world is articulated by national pride. The rediscovery – in effect the invention – of the (national) past was fundamental to the success of the countless nationalist projects in first the West and then the East, as it seemed to guarantee temporal continuity over a spatial unit. Today, following a cascade of border conflicts, humanitarian catastrophes, and waves of ethnic cleansing throughout the globe in the last thirty years or so, nationalism has become a four-letter word. As early as 1973, even before the outbreak of the horrific nationalist wars that were to mar the eighties and nineties, Clifford Geertz was able to state that ‘rather like religion, nationalism has a bad name, in the modern world, and, rather like religion, it more or less deserves it’; and this despite the fact that thinking in a nation-state framework provided the vital ideology that seemed to fulfil, to a great extent, the expectations projected by the Enlightenment – albeit in an exclusively westernized world.

Inspired by the Western European and American model, countless ethnic groups and minorities claimed their rights to ‘one nation-one state’ status in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Africa, and Asia, creating a commotion that still shows no signs of subsiding. The recent (and ongoing) conflicts between Albanians, Serbs, Bosnians and Croats in the territory formerly occupied by Yugoslavia continue the muddled business of the Balkan Wars of the early twentieth century and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth, from which several contemporary states, such as Greece itself, emerged ‘liberated’. Viewed as being ‘outside modernity’, however, non-Occidental nationalisms are perceived as a threat to it or working towards its destabilization. Whereas the nationalist imagination was once thought of as an admirable – indeed heroic – way of exporting European ideals to the rest of the world, Westerners now feel that this very imagination adulterates its owner’s commitment to modernity.

As a discipline devoted to uncovering the past, archaeology is a modern episteme – deeply rooted in a mighty philological tradition (and especially the archaeology of Greece – systematically working within the academic milieu of Classical Studies). Significantly, this tradition was built at a time when the first nation-states were emerging in Europe, and was put to good use as a support mechanism for the nationalist idea itself. Somehow, these once interconnected concepts – nationalist thinking and modern episteme – have now been abruptly divorced from one another, the latter apparently having forgotten where it is coming from, and the former unable to think where it might be going.

If nationalism is widely accepted as a disease, ‘especially when it is someone else’s’, archaeology is then definitely afflicted by it. Since the mid-nineties archaeologists have been increasingly concerned to rescue their discipline from the pitfalls of nationalist thinking, by means of relocating ‘contaminated’ discourses and exposing ‘invented’ traditions. Since the publication of Eric Hobsbawm’s crucial essay on ‘the invention of [some] tradition[s]’ bequeathed to us by our forefathers, we have learnt to be somewhat suspicious of conventional practices or ethical institutions invested with primordial reverence. Nevertheless one can-
not help but sense that according to this and many similar theories, some traditions are less ‘invented’ than others.

When it comes to archaeology, it seems evident that constructions of identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth century have influenced the ‘pasts’ we are meant to study. Several published volumes of collected essays on various combinations of nationalism, ethnicity, and identity explored this problem.64 Whereas these works have invariably been successful in identifying nationalism as the principal force in collective thinking about the past in post-industrial Europe, they seem to me to have failed to see the relevance of archaeology in this discourse. Fair enough, there seems to be little doubt as to the fact that, as Lynn Meskell put it, the past has been deployed by Western archaeologists to construct the non-West, to forge ourselves a cultural line against the past.65 But what now? Are we to assume that archaeology as a discipline transcends the ideologies, convictions and actions of its practitioners – the ‘archaeologists’ blamed in the passage quoted above? Can archaeology be extracted from its imperialist, orientalist cocoon and its counter-imperialist, occidentalist manifestations in various parts of the non-Western world? And if it could, would it matter? If we agree to view the past not as an artefact available to our scientific scrutiny, but a field of contention where group feelings, sentiments, and ideas fight against one another, then we will probably sense that archaeology as it stands now might not take us very far; and if we realize that rather than blaming primordial feelings of intimacy and kinship manifesting themselves in thoroughly anti-modern ways when it comes to ethnically coloured readings of the past,66 we had better gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between history, culture, and sentiment (public or private), then we might come up with an archaeology worthy of the money and energy invested in it. Needless to say, this would require a thorough rethinking – a de-constitution – of the founding concepts of archaeology, as a ‘first step outside of it’, in the way Derrida once urged philosophers to do with philosophy – not as a strictly philological or historical exercise, but as a purely philosophical one.67

Stepping outside of the paradigm is indeed a very demanding task that not everyone is willing to undertake. In 1994 Ian Morris published a thorough and critical survey of the archaeological debate in and about Greece.68 As in the series of collective publications mentioned above, this too tries to rescue archaeology from its lethal entanglement with nationalism and other such horrors of the past (or rather the past abroad). As most of these publications’ titles suggest (Archaeology and Nationalism; Histories and Archaeologies, etc), archaeology is not seen as an actual part of the nationalist discourse, but as an independent agent, seriously and grievously affected by it. Morris is very accurate in his description of the fierce conflict between Western European readings of Classical Greece and its nationalist uses by modern Greeks themselves – ‘a complex matter’, indeed. Intentionally confusing Droysen with Foucault, he talks of ‘Hellenism’, the drive on Europeanness behind what Foucault has described in his Les mots et les choses as the shift from the classical to the modern episteme.69 By concocting ‘Hellenism’ as an addition to Trigger’s three types of archaeologies in modernity (nationalist, colonialist, imperialist),70 Morris seems to me somewhat to obscure (classical) archaeology’s debt to one of modernity’s main – albeit often underestimated – components, namely Romanticism, to which nationalism, empiricism, and individualism, can all be shown to be related. And as we shall see in the papers that follow, all these components have shaped Greek archaeology as we know it: a discipline inspired (as archaeology by definition is) by the conviction that rigorous methodology and positivist discourse is bound to lead to valid, objective results; and that comprehensive analysis of the material remains reveals the national character of the people that produced them.

The German Altertumswissenschaft movement, and the wider tradition of nationalist Romanticism it expressed, can be detected as the primary source of inspiration behind these notions.71 The fact that certain of its spin-offs have been taken up by projects such as Greek nationalism and positivist archaeology, which claim to be irreconcilable with one another, is to be attributed to the particular aims of these projects rather than the essential qualities of Romantic ideas in themselves. Greek archaeology in the twentieth century shared the fortunes, blessings, and tribulations of modernity itself; and the rift created between the ‘metaphysical’ and the ‘positivist’ archaeological discourses, is yet another battle in the post-colonial wars.

Admittedly, Greek art has become a modern commodity, to be enjoyed as image and spectacle, as the charming representation of an imaginary ancestry; this has been the universal fate of art works in late modernity.72 In Greece, it was conscripted into the efforts to forge the nation’s primeval ties with its psyche, lost in the depths of Aegean
prehistory, a quite spectacular notion, as the Olympic ceremony demonstrated. Greek nationalism sought its cultural expression in classical and pre-classical antiquity, and Greek archaeologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries managed to promote the modernity of Greece based on the antiquity of Hellas – both cultural topoi, of course, and quite imagined ones at that. As a ‘political community’ imagined by its members, Greece – represented by its intellectuals – strove to embrace modernity through an idiosyncratic connection with the past, expressed by means of the ideological scheme of Hellenicity; thus, Greece’s glorious past was seen as the guarantor of its splendid future.

Hellenicity, and its subsidiary notions of national continuity, singularity, superiority, are anguished expressions of a deeply rooted Occidentalism, an instinctive – albeit strategically planned and consistent – reaction to the gaze of the West, often disapproving or even scornful. This is a Lacanian gaze, pretty much imagined by the subject in the field of the Other. National identity had to be formed and propagated against a backdrop of (occidental) modernity and the crucial dilemma between modernization (which everybody craved, if surreptitiously) and westernization (feared to be the kiss of death to any non-Western society).

The generation of the thirties balanced the blessings and the horrors of both predicaments, hence the long afterlife enjoyed by their ideas. Similar developments have been observed elsewhere, such as in the early twentieth-century Bengal school of art, whose efforts to define an aesthetic form, at the same time modern and national, for the art of India would appeal to any Greek intellectual from the thirties up to the present day. It is this continuous oscillation between desire for and resistance to the West, that shapes Greek sensibilities towards antiquity and its artefacts, be they Early Cycladic figurines or the Elgin Marbles. Greeks invite the gaze of the West, seeking its approval and challenging its scorn. The discourse of Hellenicity provides a flexible apparatus, through which to bypass modern failings, since antiquity affords ample credentials. The Olympic ceremony described in the beginning of this paper exemplifies this strategy – Greece seeks the approval of the West, which it deserves ... simply for being Greece.

Hellenicity and its instrumental sentiment of archaolatry – shared by intellectuals and laymen alike, conservative, liberal, even communist – find expression in massive, exhilarating displays of patriotism, at once reassuring and therapeutic, Greece’s own experience of an ‘erotics of nationhood’. Big sports events are nowadays commonly associated with such displays where Greek nationality – portrayed through the imagery of the nation’s singular antiquity – is evoked to boost team spirit (fig. 5), or as a consolation against the adversities of fate (fig. 6). Though generally performed in a climate of innocent fun, these
mass rituals can sometimes show a truly menacing face: the Greek football team’s triumph in the 2004 European Cup in Lisbon (a national triumph indeed) was celebrated in the streets of Athens with many chants, all suitably sexist or racist, including one along the lines of ‘Hey, Albanian! a Greek you’ll never be!’, followed by violent attacks against Albanian immigrant bystanders, even though their country was not taking part in the tournament in the first place. Cultural distinction has become the primary function of Hellenicity in national discourse, especially when it comes to ‘national issues’ such as Greece’s disputes with its neighbours. Ancient imagery is time and again employed to suggest ownership of the past and cultural superiority, as in the case of public protests (many of which took place abroad, in countries with a sizeable community of Greek immigrants) regarding the so-called ‘Macedonian issue’ (fig. 7).

Studying antiquity, therefore, entails the study of contemporary culture, through which antiquity is imagined before it even begins to be studied. In effect the ‘antiquity’ we end up studying has become, now more than ever, one of the culture industry’s favourite fields of action. Despising the culture industry as an agent attempting the purposeful integration of its consumers ‘from above’, as Adorno has described it, and rejecting its products as fraudulent ideologies, overlooks the fact that this same industry can spawn ‘moments of conflict, rebellion, opposition and the drive for emancipation and utopia’, perhaps accidentally, innocently or even inadvertently, though genuinely nonetheless. The Greek example alone would suffice to uphold this statement: as imagined by intellectuals (including archaeologists) from as early as the late nineteenth century, the Greek heritage functioned as the mystic’s crucible where the nation’s ‘antiquity’ met its primeval, therefore remarkable, ‘modernity’. Archaeolo-
gists in particular sought to exemplify the nation’s structured past, based on the twin, metaphysical notions of ‘nation-time’ and ‘nation-space’. This produces the kind of frustrated, emancipator archaeology still in evidence in Greece, and other ‘young’ nation-states.

As an imagined community, Greece – contrary to the popular orientalist stereotype which wants to view non-occidental societies as monolithic, singular units reeking of nationalist spite and anti-modern resilience – is split by unfathomable rifts between exponents of traditionalism and progress, invariably expressed through the discourse of Hellenicity within or beyond the West. Most, if not all, national projects in the field of archaeological research or cultural management subscribe to this goal, often including in their official rhetoric statements to that effect.

We have by now learnt to accept that the archaeologies we produce are generated in the mill of controversy, rebellion, and shared fantasy and that, far from dealing with ‘reality’, they are meant to help their audience deal with their own experiences of culture, time, and mortality. However irrational or regressive, such projects are meant to articulate the logos of the nation and at the same time chart its topography. They can also be used to turn cultural stereotypes on their heads: Greece, perpetually seen as ‘Orient’ by its friends and foes alike, behaves as part of the Occident (as one of the West’s founding mothers, so to speak) both to its western and eastern neighbours. Greek nationalists, as early as the late nineteenth century, produced rhetoric of remarkably orientalist overtones, urging the nation to assume its task of ‘civilizing the Orient’.

Whereas the Greeks themselves believe their state to be the direct outcome of their nation’s glorious revolt against its bloodthirsty oppressor, an external view of these events would suggest that modern Greece is a product of the West, sprouting from a happy coincidence of political interests and intellectual preferences. Romantic Philhellenism enabled captive Greeks to make their case appealing to European ears. However, once the great cause was achieved, it became apparent that Greece and its protectors had been working towards different ends. What for Greek intellectuals and their ever growing audience (at home rather than abroad) was the cradle of European civilization, was for their Western patrons the incarnation of a long-lost fantasy, hotly pursued, though orientalist nonetheless. Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Greece emerged as an Orientalist’s Neverland, where truth was ‘stranger than fiction’, and where boys never grew old and poets gained immortality, especially if they met an early death in the marshlands of Missolonghi. (As a matter of fact, had Byron survived his sad predicament, the history of Philhellenism might have taken a quite different turn.) Once the Greek state came to life, it was found to embody all the failings customarily (and naturally) associated with the Orient: it was disorganized, inefficient, and irrational. Today, describing the Greek War of Independence (to stick to standard terminology) as ‘that curious combination of civil war, amateur freedom-fighting and professional atrocity’ seems enough to silence the natives – Greek or other – once more, reserving for the critics the right to represent the Other at will.

Archaeology finds itself unwittingly entangled in this mesh of contradictory agendas, where what is at stake may be the very way we view the world and our role in it. Detached and objective, archaeology is time and again called in to perform the crucial role of producing the ‘facts’ we need in order to represent the past as an artefact available to our scrutiny.

From where we stand...

Although this is not a book about nationalism, orientalism, colonialism or globalization, these issues will emerge in many of its papers. Archaeology in early twenty-first-century Greece carries the burden of its twentieth-century predicament. I chose to describe the Olympic ceremony at the beginning of my introduction as a ritual that, to my mind, attempted to close a traumatic, and short, Greek twentieth century with a flare of introspective resilience. I believe that the ceremony serves as a poignant reminder that collective Greek imaginings remain faithful admirers and enthusiastic consumers of both the metaphysical veneration of the Greek landscape which dates back to the very beginning of the twentieth century, and the even earlier systematization of Greek history as a single, continuous and unmediated phenomenon. Both concepts were fertilized, of course, by the vision and the fervour of the intellectuals who made up the generation of the thirties, though inevitably influenced by the violent political and ideological clashes of the inter-war years.

The Hellenicity discourse as a national project relies on archaeology as purveyor of the necessary imagery and
The supporting scientific documentation. Its poignantly aestheticized rhetoric equates Greek culture with its aesthetics, activated in two separate fields: Greek art (Prehistoric, Classical, Byzantine, post-Byzantine) and the Greek landscape (natural or man-made). Archaeology is in charge of the production of both as cultural topoi, sites of national convergence and (more often than not) conflict. To achieve this, it has had on the one hand to adopt an essentialist view of ‘Hellenic’ art in its various embodiments and on the other to promote a hellenocentric approach to other historical and art historical phenomena. As Greek archaeologists – from their respective standpoints as university teachers or government officials – were claiming an ever increasingly central role in the ideological and actual management of Greece’s cultural capital, research ethics and practices in Greek archaeology were progressively (and unavoidably?) aligned with a markedly antiquarian approach to the past, ignoring newer developments in archaeological science and related disciplines. Thus archaeology in Greece – Prehistoric, Classical, and Byzantine – became predominantly Greek (or Helladic, to be exact). Choosing to steer an introvert, and decidedly conservative course, Greek archaeology would seem in the post-war years to have confined itself to the role of keeper of national ideologies, as they were devised on its behalf by the Greek state and communicated, promoted and propagated through a deeply conservative educational system.

Both the ‘Great Idea’ and the discourse on Hellenicity as moves for national self-determination affected the ideology and the praxis of Greek archaeology. Instigated by intellectuals, though supported, recycled and eventually redefined by the public at large, these moves express the need to articulate the image of the land and its people with respect to Western and global culture, as a way of claiming patrimonial intellectual and political rights.

Since the mid-twentieth century Greeks seem to have defined their relationship with their past somewhere between two opposing extremes: a liberal re-evaluation of heritage on the one hand, drawing its genealogy from Romanticism and its metaphysical aspects, and narrow-minded archaeology on the other, introvert and sterile, and something to fall back on every time the nation is in trouble – whether real or imaginary. Antiquity is invariably used as the scenery of Greece’s present achievements, as well as its frustrations (fig. 8). Politically, archaeology is deployed as an explicit legitimizing force or even a disciplinary measure. In the early nineties, reacting to Greece’s insistence that its hereditary rights be the sole basis for resolving the ‘Macedonian issue’ (and at a time when the state was threatening with prison sentences all Greeks voicing opinions contrary to the official national line, and invoking school history books and the finds from Vergina against the country’s northern neighbours), The Spectator published a drawing of the Parthenon turned into a concentration camp.91 As if to confirm the disciplinary powers of archaeology – let us not forget that Foucault’s heterotopias of deviation include ‘rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, and of course prisons’92 – the Greek state has decided to illustrate the passports of its citizens with images of the Parthenon, the ossuary from Vergina, Mistra and Mt. Athos, presumably as a means to propagate an identity to the exclusion of all others. Interestingly, the recipients of this message are none other than the Greeks themselves, since passports, with the exception of a fleeting surrender at border crossings, remain in the keeping of their own-ers. Like any tradition, invented or otherwise, such visual reminders of cultural and political belonging ‘attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past’.93

The papers that follow endeavour to illustrate developments in Greek archaeology during the twentieth century: formation of ideas and epistemological programme, interaction with other disciplines and projects, involvement with the country’s intellectual and political life, respond-
ing to the public’s desires and dispositions. The two Greek Olympics of 1896 and 2004, as two important landmarks for which Greek heritage was summoned to fashion the appropriate ideological backdrop, will act as symbolic termini for our investigation. The first part of the volume, Antiquity and the Greek Antiquities, explores the ways in which Greece dealt with its historical past and the material remains it inherited as a modern state. The second part, Greek Archaeology: Paradigms and Ideologies explores the epistemic strategies and idiosyncratic tendencies through which Greek archaeology emerged as an independent discipline in the twentieth century. Finally, a third part, The Imagined Realities of Greekness, charts the interaction between the discourse on Hellenicity and Greek perceptions of its classical heritage, which led to the creation of an immensely popular and culturally dominant strain of public archaeology in twentieth-century Greece.

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Notes
5. Admittedly, Papaioannou ‘redeemed’ himself with his closing ceremony for the 2004 Olympics, where he presented a show based on post-classical Greek history and present-day experience – from folk dances to plastic chairs at the beach and from gypsy water-melon vendors to bouzouki night-clubs. In contrast with the opening ceremony, here there was only a passing, sarcastic reference to classical antiquity, alluding to its touristic exploitation by modern Greeks. Needless to say, the closing ceremony received a more lukewarm welcome, from the nationalists and the ‘purists’.
11. As advertised by the Museum’s web site: http://www.benaki.gr/collections/greece/en/, last accessed 1 May 2008. The blurb goes on to specify the time span covered: ‘from antiquity and the age of Roman domination to the medieval Byzantine period, from the fall of Constantinople (1453) and the centuries of Frankish and Ottoman occupation to the out-
12. The recently refurbished permanent exhibition at the Benaki Museum spans several millennia from Cycladic art to the two Nobel and the one Lenin prize won by Greeks in the 20th c., all for poetry. It ends with a Karagiozis screen and figures looming in the background, a spectre, as its Cycladic counterpart, of (an)Other culture which the Greeks made their own through tradition, translation, and inertia. A short tribute to Karagiozis was, naturally, included in the 2004 Olympic procession.
18. Leontis 1995, 44.
29. Cf. the blog http://areopagitou17.blogspot.com, last accessed 21 April 2008, voicing protests against the Ministry’s decision.
30. See the discussion in Lekakis 2007.
34. Though never explicitly stated in official documentation, this is generally understood both in Greece and abroad as the central issue of the debate (cf. The Observer, 29 July 2007); cf. the heated discussion at a web-based chat group of Greek photographers: http://flickr.com/groups/greeks_on_contemporary_greek_life/discuss/72157600869826566/?search=17, last accessed 28 April 2008, where the majority of participating ‘Neo-Hellenes’ claim that the two condemned buildings are not ‘ancient enough’ or even ‘artistic’, ‘beautiful’ or ‘suitably Helenic’ to stand in the way of the Parthenon, thus subconsciously (though quite explicitly) pushing for a ‘cleansed’, historically sterilized and all-Greek Athenian landscape.
46. A reappraisal of national qualities had been the main theme in fascist rhetoric in nearby Italy, where the effort to identify and study italianità may have encouraged at least some of the promoters of Hellenicity in Greece; at the same time Spain was strengthening its own sense of hispanidad, encouraged by General Franco’s regime; cf. Vitti 1984, 200.
47. Tziovas 1989, 73. Tributes to Giannopoulos have now become commonplace among Greek nationalasts, mostly internet-based anthologies of patriotic rhetoric such as: http://ethnikistes.blogspot.com/2008/04/1869-1910.html, last accessed 8 May 2008 (a page devoted to Giannopoulos as a ‘worshipper of Hellas’ uploaded as recently as 22 April 2008). Verging on the ridiculous, a Greek hip-hop band bombasting ultrarightwing rhetoric in their ‘patriotic’ lyrics, feature a homage to Giannopoulos in a recent hit (published nonetheless by the mainstream Greek record company ‘Heaven Music’), campaigning for a ‘renaissance of fundamentalist Greek spirit’ through the adoption of new ‘true’ role models, such as the long-dead exponent of uninhibited Greek Romanticism (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9erDVrWJU, last accessed 8 May 2008).
52. Hadjinikolaoi 1982.
56. As reported by Marios Ploritis in the daily newspaper Elefteria, 1 September 1959.
57. Clogg 1992, 149.
58. ‘Worthy is thy prize’, a clear reference to Elytis’ magnum opus To Axion Esti, was the title of a laudatory review of the Olympic opening ceremony in the daily newspaper Ta Nea, written by the paper’s resident theatre critic Kostas Georgousoopoulos: ‘Ta Nea, 14 August 2004. Cf.: [Papaoannou] grasped the complete consciousness of Greek diachronicity, honouring the profound construction of Greek thought’.
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A SINGULAR ANTIQUITY

DIMITRIS PLANTZOS


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PART I.
ANTIQUITY
AND
THE GREEK
ANTIQUITIES
The Construction of Southern Ruins, or Instructions for Dealing with Debt
By Aristide Antonas

In Greek, the word κείμενο (keimenon) has a double meaning. As an adjective, keimenon describes something that has fallen or toppled over, but the ancient adjective is also the Modern Greek noun for “text,” for words put down in writing. Hidden in the ground of Athens are many strata of foundations from the area’s different epochs: ancient Greek, Roman, Hellenistic, Byzantine, Ottoman. Indeed, in Athens, an accumulation of disparate foundations form diverging extant texts in the ground (decipherable by multiple archaeologies). The modern city can also be conceived as such reading material. When it was inaugurated in its modern version as the capital of Greece, the city was proposed as a single reading of this palimpsest of texts; nevertheless, the palimpsest offers more readings than just this one. Thus does Athens provide ample material for a rough history of ideas: the theory of Western hegemony, the rejection of idealism, the end of logocentrism, and deconstruction. More recently, however, we have encountered from this old material the newest Athenian narrative—that of the post-democratic construction of the hegemonic, with its crude acceptance of the subaltern as the “normal” or “unavoidable” human condition.

The crudeness of this contemporary construction draws its rigidity from a rejection of European antiquity. The elimination of the intermediary, nonexistent world that was ancient Greece—a previously stable and untouchable point of reference—has made the image of the present inescapable and the ability to form transformable views of a different future untenable. If the Athenian present was installed as a reference to the lost past, the so-called immediacy of today is marked by the deletion of the reference to the idealized Greek remains. Today the post-democratic imaginary is built as the impossibility of a return to the European state; in it, ancient Greece might have been an uninteresting idealization but it also formed the fire of instability and a promising negation of the present.
When we wander through contemporary Athens, we experience its collapsed materiality as barely legible, encoded subject matter. We read it as a prophecy that announces the cataclysmic, but nevertheless heroic, collapse of Europe. The modernity of Athens refers immediately to a European project, of course; its constitution as "ancient" is itself a European idea. The city’s collapse materialized when it erected in its current form crystallizes the long-promised decline of the West. Lacking any other suitable decryption code, Athens continues to speak with an emphatic voice about its European past while also pointing to an insecure future. And, as in the past, the city speaks today not with a single voice but as a congregation. In this sense, Athens—a city whose name is plural—does not simply follow in the tradition of a great many other metropolises but also condenses many contemporary aspects of the subaltern, those lands and populations figured as “outside” the hegemony. As the city once again dresses itself in the garments of the subaltern, and—in the imagination of the hegemonic West, at least—abandons its primary leading role, the city loses its sovereignty as well as its meaning, insofar as the West increasingly refuses to recognize ancient Greece as its exceptional ancestor. Simultaneously, however, the city’s decline has become emblematic, its questions global.

The disappointing encounter of Europe with Greece, or, one might say, the hasty and imprudent Western satisfaction with the construct of a half-mythical modern Greece, describe together, with both dissatisfaction and fulfillment, the same structure: that the performance of modern Athens is based on the notion of a “correspondence.” Europe and modern Greece had to correspond to a representation of the past. With respect to the expectations and the actual outcomes of a formerly heroic encounter, Athens was constructed as an experience of disappointment, not least because the modern city was planned with dizzying ambition. For Europe, encountering the city in modern times, Athens appears to have been orchestrated as an exercise in dissatisfaction. Its structure was determined and led by the infinite work of going back to, or getting back, what is lost. Today nothing hints at the grandeur that might once again elevate Athens’s global standing. The promise of a revival of ancient Greece has not been fulfilled, and not only because modern Greece has failed to respond to its ancient inheritance; this project was sabotaged as soon as it was introduced. Furthermore, the city does not convey the same meaning for the global North as it once did for the European West. In order to inspect the present Athens as a very specific stage, then, we cast the direction of our gaze downward, toward the earth, and to the ground that can offer a double reading for the Greek capital.

Athens was invented as a modern agglomeration, but it did not develop as a mere urban phenomenon; it was inaugurated as the phantom of an invisible place. The establishment of the modern city and the new Hellenic capital by the Bavarian King Otto and his team of architects, Klenthis and Schaubert, in the early nineteenth century demanded the promotion of antiquities that led to a series of destructions. What was considered to be the center of the old provincial Turkish town—on the top of the hill, around the monuments we see now, where more than forty houses stood, and also on the northern slope of the Acropolis hill—had to be demolished so that the ruins might show the glorious epoch to which they belonged. Moreover, new archaeological research needed to be undertaken under the very surface of the small Ottoman town. The “construction” of new archaeological sites and the “production” of new finds were the obvious tasks of this operation. This installation of the past was put into motion as soon as the Bavarian Royal Family declared Athens to be the new capital, with the proposal of Klenthis and Schaubert giving the new city a Neoclassical pan. Related to an archaeological investigation, the installation of the capital seems to have been principally concerned with the shaping of “new ruins” out of the visible or invisible Athenian remains. A framing of ruins within urban voids was the result. The Athens archaeological parks in which we observe some ruins today are a result of this cleaning operation that was seeking desperately for more ruins; the modern capital would never have come into being without this definition of its landscape as a field of possible finds.

Accordingly, the modern city of Athens appears to have been designed for the alien gaze of a visitor. Athens has always owed its existence to elsewhere. It did not grow out of an “inner” need, but was consciously and artificially proposed as the relation to a specific location. We encounter the city, then, not as a concrete and autonomous urban congregation, but as both a narrative gap and the system that might fill that gap: a system of words, phrases, fragments of propositions, conceptualizations, catalogues, indexes, palimpsestic narratives, and mythologies. Through a complex inventory of lexemes, Athens is constituted as a reading system of disparate texts. Even if the city has today acquired its specific scent of idiosyncratic decay, it nevertheless keeps suggesting a still-unformed promise, or an ominous accident that would mark the coming history of civility.

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The following excursion into Athens should not be considered as a translation of the specific to the general. Instead, one might imagine the materiality of the city as an articulate distillate, and this text as a critical remark on a global situation first undertaken on and under Athenian ground. The present commentary concerns itself with some structures and mechanisms of forgetting, then, and their relationship to the hegemonies of modernity. The observation of the exact case of Athens and, in particular, its excavations and infrastructural development, describe a twofold allusion to an occupation of the ground. Already at the time when Athens was being rediscovered by Otto and his architects, the installation of a continually expandable infrastructure was becoming fundamental to the construction of their new city. Athens had to correspond to the typical technologies of the infrastructure elaborated below ground in Western cities during the time that follows the mid-nineteenth century. With the connection of households to a system of networks, urban daily life was and is defined as a system of repetitions. The notion of the everyday could be understood as a construct of the very same infrastructure that prioritizes the modern city’s underground space as the major field of its expansion.

The architect Dimitris Pikionis’s 1954 essay Γης να στιγμένος (Earth Disgraced) describes the collision between modern construction and Athens’s historic finds in its grounds as an unfortunate accidental operation that could perhaps have been avoided through careful planning. He does not take into account, however, the systemic character of a conflict that would necessarily explode in the city after the decision by the Bavarian king to glorify the underground past in the process of creating a new modern city. Once Athens was made the modern capital of Greece, it had to necessarily confront the question of the transformation of its idiosyncratic ground to a neutral bearer of modern city infrastructure. Yet, in its function as a constantly extendable subterranean system, the infrastructure of the modern city exhibits parallels to archaeological work
sites: both form infinite endeavors not to be satisfied by completion. Urban infrastructure, in particular, will never quit encompass all the needs demanded of it by its users. It will continually and repetitively prove imperfect. Technical upgr: and the integration of new areas and functions in its realm define the motor for its expansion and the rationale for its endless maintenance. In the same sense that infrastructure can be regarded as an infinite process, the excavations and elaboration of finds in archaeology are characterized by analogous loss of temporal control. In the case of archaeology, the infinite works of representation manifest themselves as the attempt to organize a presentation of the lost. With archaeology an impossible past is targeted. With infrastructure, the same infinite time structure is projected toward a technical future, which remains the inaccessible aim. The inhabitation of the abstract infrastructural space—along with a definition of its user—organizes this more common but also impossible target. While archaeology and infrastructure guaranteed a future and a past of the modern city of Athens, they also formed its field of conflict.

The adaption of all areas of city life to parameters set down by its infrastructure leads to a situation in which the everyday becomes a direct experience of its systems. Accordingly, if the West emerged from a specific relationship to an idea of its past, the inception of the global North occurs in the form of a surrender to infrastructure. Athens forms the node at which these two implausible temporal structures collide, and the Athenian ground below is testimony to the difficult coexistence of these different unreachable and idealized temporalities. The experience of infinite time is followed by a strong concept of unfulfillment that shapes both temporalities of the always unfinished and problematic archaeological excavation, as well as of the multiple expansions of infrastructure. This can be described as a three-stage process stemming directly from the damage inflicted upon the ground. The city loses the promised world it was looking for; it cannot invest in any possible, predictable future; and, finally, the impotence to correspond to the two fold temporal structure of its underground describes the city as the opportunity for an alternative present. In other words, the city overcomes the dilemma of the underground with its living surface. In Athens, a systematically deterritorialized system of data flow redefines the local characteristics of an updated infrastructure, while the dramatic war ceases between the excavating mechanism and the proposed installations of its underground networks.

Indeed, the Athens of today can be understood as a global accident of infrastructure, which creates its new locality. Athens no longer operates as an investment of its underground space. Archaeological research projects are no longer generously funded—they enjoy less support even in the imaginary institution of the public—and the city's infrastructure shows signs of the hegemonic strategies of today, which transform the civic character of sharing to a neoliberal rent rationale; the infrastructure itself becomes a capitalistic machine. Once tasked only with the flow of water and electricity, Athens' infrastructure is now conditioned by the infrastructure of information as well, including the flow of capital. When money becomes transmissible information, the blocking of this flow can form an internal punishment procedure performed by the infrastructure. The regulation of such flows is the new power of the global North, allowing it to exclude the subaltern city from privileges of infrastructure or even punishing the city at the margins of its mechanisms.

Against the backdrop of contemporary concerns, then, any consideration of the founding story of Athens as the capital of a newly formed state appears simultaneously to describe both the concretization of a Western hegemonic scheme and an early definition of the global North. Yet Greece always inhabited the demarcation line between the oppositional poles that the hegemonic narrative organized. It is never totally excluded by the hegemonic side, nor does it ever belong absolutely to the subaltern one; it did not once belong to the East, neither is it the example par excellence of a currently excluded South. Yet Athens was long the city by which the West defined itself—emblematically, at least—as an opposite of the East, despite the fact that the city continued to perform as part of that very East. Within the bipolarity between North and South, Greece situates itself at a point where the threads of the global net tear apart so that a new geographical order might form. And it is within this order that Athens' position remains to be defined, as a regulation of its relation to a global infrastructure, in which a new type of modernization and colonization appeared.

If we seek the locality of this Athenian investigation in our observation of its very ground, this ground proves much more abstract and generic than our local interest. Likewise, if heimeno is the word indicating both a fallen remnant and a lying trace, then walking through Athens corresponds to a certain reading, imposed on the observant pedestrian. A text is an owing mechanism; it always establishes a liquid reference to an always unstable meaning exterior to it. Thus will the observant pedestrian notice: the ground carries debts. But what kind of debts could these be? What does an Athens pavement owe? Athens carries specific debts to its remains from the time of its inauguration as the capital of modern Greece. By prematurely draping a ground of ruins in the robes of urbanity, the pavements and asphalt streets of Athens owe more than just the act of uncovering a number of finds. If one reads the ground as the field par excellence for the realization of contemporary Athenian life, another reference comes to mind: Jacques Derrida's repeated refrain in his book on the city, Demeure Athènes (1996: Athens, Still Remains, 2010), "We owe ourselves to death." (One might call his discourse on photography and meditation on the city a performance of the ruins as well.) But an act that has taken place under the ground of Athens describes not only the idiosyncratic moment of a present that negates both the past and the future; it also describes a visible surface and the moment for it, a different tradition of the find, and offers another consideration of a diverse kind of infrastructure, all of which are the global questions of the local ground.

For it is obvious that the infrastructure of Athens detests the idealization of its ruins. The ruins obstruct its paths and hinder its growth. A few meters below the street surface a system of different acts concerning the ground reveal an invisible war that might schematize an internal conflict of modern culture. The ruin and the infrastructure determine two systems that differently describe modernity. The Athenian ground was the bearer of this discrepancy; it is now the name of a question about the city's surface. Athenian archaeology organized a methodological viewing that can now be addressed to any object: anything might be understood as a find under inspection, any element of the urban city might form a field of investigation. We might lose archaeology, but Athens gets it back as a system of catalogues and archives, matrices and entries. Failed archaeology is an experience of pure art—if anything like pure art could be possible.

The first to write negatively about archaeology in Greece were Greek intellectuals, whose texts cannot be described as supportive of the lost Orient side of the nation or conservative Orthodox Christianity. Quite the opposite seems evident, in
fact: their thinking has been strongly influenced by the Western European tradition. The poet Nicolas Calas, born in 19C Lausanne, was one of the first to propose the actual destruction of the Parthenon, in his 1933 poem "Akropolis." Yorgos Makris, an idiosyncratic poet and intellectual, published a manifesto demanding the detonation of Athenian monuments — statuses: "Our aim is the destruction of the Parthenon, because we want nothing less than to deliver it into eternity, which is an unconscious standardize [sic]' flow, which creates matter in multifarious ways, which we unjustly describe as chaos."

Their point of view reflects another function of Western modernity related to Georg Lukács's idea of transcendental homelessness, in which he criticized the German Romanticists' and the modern novelist's attempt to inhabit the text in order to regain a lost sense of home or a "paradise lost." Calas and Makris's proposition espoused a kind of aesthetics of never accepting what is given as a value, or as a tendency to reject whatever belongs to a homely understanding of the self.

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In the vast and then empty nineteenth-century Athenian landscape, three emblematic points formed the triangle of the modern city plan by Klenthis and Schaubert. The triangle's particularity could be explained by the way that this geometric scheme related to the Acropolis and organized one's gaze toward it. On its points sit the ancient cemetery of Kerameikos and the palace of the Bavarian king (now the Greek Parliament), who had a direct line of sight to viewing the Acropolis. Thus the geometry traced an immediate relationship between the newly planned capital and the ancient Greek ruins, with the triangle casting the city as a regulation of a reference to the remains of ancient Greece, a material performance of a Greek and European origin. The emblematic source of European civilization would then unify modern Greek citizens with their European kings.

A confrontation between the hegemonic and the subaltern is established when the foreigner's view is projected onto this landscape, where the alien gaze functions as a surgical tool of potential uncovering. This gaze plans the symbolic reconstruction of the urban fabric, as an installation of itself. The operation is carried out as a hypothetical disassembly of the powerless and the installation of the powerful: in this particular case through the replacement of Ottoman symbolism in favor of Euro-Hellenic counterparts. In Athens specifically, though, we are dealing with much more than a familiar dissolution of power. Here, the "real" is sacrificed in favor of the "ideal," the material for the immaterial, the visible for the invisible, and this pattern has been implemented long enough for all differences to be clearly marked out. Idealism was one of the most powerful means for establishing Athens as the Greek capital under a Bavarian king, and Athens was situated in a German context more easily than in a local one. Friedrich Schiller's lines from On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry (first published in the literary journal of German Romanticism Die Horn in 1795) go: "All peoples, who have a history, have a paradise, a state of innocence, a golden age." And, he notes, "All reality, we know, remains behind the ideal." In Athens, likewise, the construction of antiquity takes place simultaneously with the birth of the modern city.

If the dominance of the North over the South is determined by the rift between the powerful and the weak, this fault line signifies the material and geographic dimension of a dominant relationship. In the case of Greece, the rift between spheres doesn't represent an actual border, as with Tijuana, for example, where a physical border marks the transition between the United States and Mexico. The rift through Athens resembles an abstract, Freudian duo, as in the relationship between father and son. For Athens, the father figure does not appear as a reference to a natural person who imposes a certain point of view on the self. The father is not the figure who names, creates law, stabilizes the present world; on the contrary, he becomes a given name from a different order. The referral back to the father figure would represent a fundamental requirement for the process of identification, but this is not possible in the Athenian syndrome described here. Observe that these patriarchal relationships can be found in Rome under Mussolini, for example. In Athens, though, any attempt to create a consistent foundation from the ancestor is carried out in a completely different manner. The relationship to the ancestor, which is a foreign construct, can be understood as an idiosyncratic memory transplant. In Athens, we observe the invitation to the autochthonous to slip into the costume worn by the absent European father, who adopted the fabricated appearance of an ancient Greek "ancestor." Involuntarily, the indigenous inhabitant is compared with this strange, transvestite father figure in the artificial robes of the ancient Greek, who thereby amounts to nothing less than a multiply absent patriarch.

The Athenian project, then, and its construction of an adoptable narrative as one of one's own, may be called "The Deteriorialization of the Autochthonous." It might have been an interesting proposition had it meant a refusal to acknowledge a kinship to the aforementioned father figure. We can interpret this perverted gaze at the "same" past in positive terms: The autochthonous Athenians learn to regard their place of birth with the eyes of a stranger, and to attach the same value to their natural environment as those favored by the alien. The project, however, takes an unexpected turn. One should regard this separation from the experience of familiar space as the first age of disappointment for the native Athenian. And this disappointment might be understood, perhaps, as a transference of Hyperion's infamous experiences into a motionless voyage back to one's own homeland. Yet a voyage that does not require movement (and is, therefore, experienced as profound disappointment) etches itself upon the consciousness as an error, as a deteriorialization of the self.

This constitutes the dramatic performance of disappointment with contemporary Greece, which has become a projection screen for Europe. It describes an uprooting from familiar ground, and yet from a completely different kind of nature than described by Oswald Spengler at the beginning of the twentieth century. While Spengler regarded the rejection of tradition as a cause for the uprooting of the Western hero, the uprooting of the modern Greek lies in the fact that their country was introduced to modernity in the form of an amateurish reenactment of antique tradition; this reenactment denies existing local traditions and aims at replacing them with a single ancient European tradition.

Among the ruins on the island of Makronisos, where Greek political dissidents were banished during the dictatorship in the second half of the twentieth century (and which was named the "New Parthenon" by the Generals, in the argot of the army officials and military programs of political "rehabilitation" of the Themistoklis Sofoulis government in the late 1940s), there is a former police headquarters where the words "Η ΤΑΝ Η ΕΙΣΙ ΤΑΣ" are written—"Either as Victor or Dead." For Greece, the ancient ancestors represent more than mere role models—they personify lineages to be defended until death. It would, however, be fatal to ignore the fact that this exaggerated national pride has its roots in fundamental European ideas. It is the
attempt to assign a global cultural tradition to a specific place, and to transform it into a local one. This makes it impossible to observe the place in question with any certainty. If “Greece” is the name designated to the concept of a Europe compr

texts and ruins, it is necessary to investigate the contrast between the immaterial presence of these keimena, and the ubiquitous material presence of Athens’s “ruins,” which, in various states of disarray, negate any ideal configuration of what ancient Greece might have been. The European zeal to construct a place devoid of local characteristics organized finally another type of conservative regionalism: the envisaged universal character of ancient Greece became in Greece a claim for a typical local glorification of its ancestors.

The referential relationship between modernity and antiquity was, of course, primarily established by archaeology, a discipline that has mastered the art of establishing idealizations through its ability to form entire worlds from a scattering of marble fragments. The fact that the Greeks not only accept the idea of an exceptional antiquity, but actively lay claim to it, might not at first be cause for astonishment, since the idea is compatible with internationally recognized points of reference with which states seek their (mythical) legitimacy. It is, however, from precisely this unusual appropriation of a constructed European father that the anguish of the modern Greek derives. If it is indeed the Greeks who from now on claim the fragments of an antique culture for themselves, then we are dealing with a complete reversal of the inherent European refusal to attach significance to a familial relationship or the artificial adoption of a paternal figure: the absolute affirmation of kinship, and the embrace of a father figure, and a family who has already paid doting homage to the father, long before he has encountered his alleged child.

The transition from a hegemony of the West to a hegemony of the North is accompanied by grief or a humiliated suppression of everything that once justified the European logos. It rejects any relationship to tradition, as the imaginary of the West is based on the concept of homelessness. The loss of a home as a stable place of return, and the feeling of powerlessness that goes with it, form the essential experiences of the West. The awareness of being just a small part of an unstable, temperamental planet, armed with little more than logos, is experienced as a sense of underlying directionlessness. Only through referral back to a distant and unreachable place, widely recognized as a point of origin, can this sensation be pacified: thus Greece. In order to exist, Europe needed a loss of the original guaranteed by an instituted distance, but in Greece this originality was found and this distance abolished, and this could be why it fails to be European. Indeed, it was not Hesperia that desperately called for a Greek past, in order to close the gap in their own origin story. It needed the image and the material existence of distant ruins to establish in Western thought the gap of origin as such.

In referencing the Hesperian poet Friedrich Hölderlin, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe formulates a clear stance toward this idea. Hölderlein didn’t just question the image of ancient Greece, he was also the first to consider the search for antiquity as a denial of an urban space under formation. While the West strived for the repetition of a lost ideal and despised everyday life, the North draws its power from everyday life by imposing its infrastructure upon it. In making the organization of daily life
primary, the global North becomes a synonym for infrastructure itself. We might think that such infrastructure is merely a system that simplifies an urban life—a complex network regulating the water supply or providing electricity. We might superficially imagine that regular maintenance is the only requirement guaranteeing its full and functional efficiency. Nevertheless, at the same time we might observe how the infrastructure, through its affiliation with the North, and therefore to the hegemonic order, organizes a governing role. We experience too how many regions, by subjecting themselves to the interactive platforms of the Infrastructure, to the network flows and logistics of the ever-moving commerce, become increasingly subsumed by the global North.

* Both the opposing doctrines we read below the ground of modern Athens demanded that an unassuming Ottoman settlement transform itself into a modern city. In this, they were also both asking for two different deterritorializations. In the logic of the first doctrine, archaeological excavations would bring lost objects and buildings to the surface, driven by the wish for an impossible performance of the lost past. We have not given enough thought to the absurd character of this Western ritual; an idiosyncratic negation of the visible was always integral to it, however. In order for the vanished things to surface, the visible was destroyed in many different ways: whole houses, shops, even entire streets were bulldozed so that a handful of lifeless fragments could once again see the light of day. The act of destruction materialized the inability of the visible to measure up to the expectations of the foreign gaze. The mania for a glorification of the lost, which archaeology realizes as a ritual to homelessness, happened in Athens as a literal act of demolishing. The power of the hidden ruin to support an imaginary world alienates the visible earth. The secret completion of found fragments did not present the absent world but it did abolish the “real.” By dismissing the existing, by rejecting the living, and by giving precedence to the uninhabited ruins, archaeology became a subversive power able to distort extant values.

The second doctrine—of the ever-extendable infrastructure—also establishes the earth as its point of departure, but the work necessitated by its establishment defines a different ground and initiates the process of a different alienation. Even the installation of a relatively simple water management system can be seen to have an effect on a city; the source, or the well, loses its original social performative character within the urban environment. Many houses are now supplied with water simultaneously. The infrastructure's aim is to serve communal use, but in doing so it destroys the communal functions that needed some meeting points for the city's everyday social structure.

The twofold anthropogenic influence exerted upon subterranean Athens results in a modified relationship to evidence, facts, and archives. It is difficult to imagine another discipline that pays as much reverent homage to evidence as archaeology does. Criminology would be an analogue case par excellence, since this discipline has also developed a broad repertoire of "rituals and ceremonies" for the celebration of visual proof, with its recording, archiving, and the combined methodologies regarding it. The subject of criminology can then be seen as an archaeological approach to the criminal act, while archaeology concentrates on the criminology of the bygone. Both disciplines explore clues and traces and operate with similar methodologies.

Likewise, the history of Athens is documented in two kinds of archives, each filled with records of specific entries. On the one hand we find records of projects that include diaries of excavation, with photographs and drawings that document the archaeological procedure. On the other hand we encounter detailed records documenting the subterranean urban network, which deal with its maintenance and expansion, or with the characteristics of the technical oeuvre that functions necessarily through a memory of itself. These two archival versions of Athens, created under the same ground, mirror the schizophrenic perception of the modern and invisible underground place that has been thoroughly and doubly measured and documented. Lists and indexes created in order to structure a particular past or to measure and design a new technology—alien to the ground—are preserved so that this city's urban life may be continuously shaped. These two archival operations of the Athenian underground represent the mania of bringing back a desired world and the different utopias of arranging an increasingly complicated distribution system, respectively. Reflected in these differences are the imaginary configurations of two forms of logic, and their traces. Thus the differences between the West and the global North were already established by the middle of the nineteenth century, in the depths of the Athenian earth.

These two archives form independent productions of an undefined literature. Their documents drive toward very different targets. While archaeology indulges even the smallest traces of the past with keen attention in order to produce monuments out of what was formerly the waste of the land, infrastructure understands the ground as an indifferent field of unimportant waste where networks can be deployed. Indeed, even if the archives of the infrastructure are formed by meticulous and accurate representations of the technical state of its networks, they depend on the most recent evidence. The infrastructure's archive can, of course, include works that have been done in the past, parts of the network that have been replaced or updated. But the functioning part of the infrastructure archive is constructed as an operation of the network. The level of water in a node of the water network or the amount of electricity that is asked by the system in a specific area are the important data that automatically are immediately when archived—control the function of the infrastructure only for that moment. When these measurements become different, an alternative regulation of the infrastructure is performed.

Momentary measurements, the transfer of messages, automated reactions to respective functions which the transfer itself triggered: The technical concerns of the infrastructure become increasingly immaterial since the dark and neutral Athenian ground receiving them in the modern past is substituted now by a much more distant space, the sky, which uses satellites for the functions of data flow. Today, the sky has replaced the Athenian ground of infrastructure in the deterritorialization of urban life, which is still evolving. And its flow of information circulates as an utterly illegible text that is discarded as soon as it is created. This new text of the infrastructure is coded, then, and is performed as an immaterial construction articulated under the same motif of the modernized Athens ground. An invisible support is performed in an invisible way while the technologies of valves and siphons are replaced by high-sequence radiation and satellite performances.

Within a city's infrastructure, all evidence becomes part of a larger, ongoing process that is erased as soon as its services are delivered. In Athens, this removal of evidence contrasts with the tasks of the aim of the other ground works, namely
archaeology. In order to keep infrastructure functioning, by contrast, the removal of evidence is necessary to ensure its existence as a system. It must constantly renew itself while remaining the same. The very time of the infrastructure is regulated by a controlled input and treatment of data flow while its protocols keep performing. Indeed, the metropolitan is linked with the image of infrastructure to the same degree that urban life is staged as the complex performance of a destruction of evidence. That is to say, the very nature of the infrastructure is structured by a repetitive tempo, nested cleat by humanized feature. Thus infrastructure is structured as the passage of evidence that follows the repetitions of a city. The way in which regulations are created in order for a network to operate in certain conditions offers the possibility of a clear function where the remembered does not have the value of an event. This same classification guarantees operations in different circumstances, when the same grid could be filled by other micro facts replaceable by others, and thus, in a sense, forgettable. In other terms, a different concept of function is created when removing all traces constitutes the process of the operation itself.

The global North defines itself by the unmeasured but systematic expansion of its infrastructure, an empire that unifies and divides human time in prestructured ways. In this way it becomes increasingly powerful, commensurate with the increasing difficulty of the nonexpert to inspect or control any part of the deployment of its systemic function. At the same time, boundaries begin to dissolve between different areas of life that are played out within a city's infrastructure. Many areas of life—those islands of knowledge mostly within the web as responses to interactive protocols—can already be described as permanent residencies within the infrastructure itself. Once the boundaries between inside and outside a house are eradicated by always updated shared facilities, urban life tends to be described as an infrastructural repetition. The surrender of urban structures in the face of their infrastructure reveals a powerful performance of the North, which could be easily the name of an "absent" controlling authority or the spirit of its automatisms.

In the Internet-based city of today, one's place within infrastructural systems radically changes the nature of the human inhabitant. The inhabitants of infrastructure can be described as transparent users who exist as simple responders to the protocols of the system. Caught within overlapping protocols, the inhabitants of infrastructure keep a remarkable relation to memory. And this relationship is opposed to the memory on which the Athenian excavations were driving. Instead, these users of this new domain are becoming a sustainable fragment within a disintegrating system. They follow different narrative paths, change position and perspective, and deny any stable reference point. The self-regulating mechanisms of data flows, which leave less and less evidence behind them, create a zero-degree memory paradigm, one where all memory can be abolished and all used platforms of the Internet analog to those beside it. A grandiose inability to exercise control over the infrastructure captures the condition of the new urban life and the transformation of citizens to users.

One would think that if the North determines the condition of participation within one's infrastructure, the concept of the South would be related to an exclusion of it. This does not describe the case of Athens, however. North and South operate as the two faces of the same mechanism in the programmed worldwide flows. Acting in the darkness as in the Athenian past, and speaking in an incomprehensible technical language, the new Northern infrastructure is testing its possibilities to function as a discrimination machine. Even if sharing is its starting point and its raison d'être, our infrastructure is increasingly an ordered system of impasses and code-controlled doors. Invisibly it undertakes to form the continuation of the history of urbaniy. Identity, labor, and one's relation to the city are programmed to be mediated by the users' relation to a centralized and networked system of flows. The time spent in its platforms will form the renting cultures of tomorrow. South is the name of a region in the infrastructure. A different colonization is tested within its realm.

This situation makes Athens an uncomfortable place at the moment. A construction of debt is a form mandated by the infrastructure into current Greek governance. It is its infrastructure that determines the economic situation in Greece today. The war via economic means it is experiencing is perpetuated in its infrastructure, of which the impossible bankruptcy in a common currency that does not form a coincidental frame. The globalization of the economy creates a system in which no bankruptcy would save any economy. Debt has to be homogeneous, perpetual, and circulated. Greece not only suffers the consequences of an attack from its infrastructure, its financial peripheries cannot conclude in the representation of a military defeat even if the numbers show that its financial disaster is analogous to such a destruction. Yet the economic war in which Greece has found itself was not invented to ever conclude. Debt is no longer (if ever was) a simple narrative in which the debtor and the creditor play their roles. We do not wait for this debt to be paid; instead, we become spectators to and participants in this new invisible war, enabled by the infrastructure as an endless debt attack. This is the source of the current Athenian pessimism. The infrastructure possesses the ways to punish the formations that increasingly become dependent on it (such as countries or banks) without producing recordable aggressions other than coded interventions into abstract flows. What is tested in Athens is this new discrimination system that can happen as a function of its infrastructure.

Governed as a fluid part of an always moving capital in the infrastructure, the North is no longer the representation of a concrete geographical order, nor does it possess any concrete form. North and the modernized South, then, both have already an inseparable place in this institutionalized flow of debt.

Contemporary Athens comes to claim now the Hesperian legacy for the South. It is a legacy that the new North not only finds abhorrent but also flatly rejects within its infrastructural functions. One finds parallels here in the fact that the very act of digging in order to implement its infrastructure in the underground of Athens was untranslatable and estranged from the Athenian earth of ruins. The North-South situation, then, defines a field of politics of flow which became to day the politics of debt. The distortion of the established set of procedures—sometimes described as technical improvements of the infrastructure—form the attacks on the city; decisive deviations from the infrastructure's automatic routines or "invisible infrastructure events" (a contradictio in terminis) transcend the already problematic "management of infrastructure" and can operate as mere aggressions. The technical matrix of the system—the one that is invoked as an independent instrument of automation on whose invisibility by specialists is anchored—can instead be regulated arbitrarily by outside entities. The project of infrastructure, to create a set of simplified services that serve the community life, has developed into a different one. Indeed, it shares some characteristics with its modern ancestor: it is still invisible, it continues to structure the normalities of the everyday. On a macro scale, however, it can develop into a unified mode of invisible remote governance, while on the micro scale it becomes a self-serving system; facing the infrastructure all users are alone, their communities schematic subscriptions to rigid protocols.
If Athens suddenly requires clarification it is because it is a testing field. The inexplicable aggression now upon it, whil
the specific case of this city took the form of an invisible debt attack experienced in the frame of the real empirical life of the city, and the unprecedented mediated campaign that took place through the city's infrastructure, has begun to spill out a... into physical space. Governance in Greece, wielding a politics of debt, has shown us what potential the infrastructure has to inflict collective punishment. Even when the infrastructure appears to be a relatively autonomous, self-regulating system, its modus operandi is defined in such a manner as to depend on decisions that do not correlate to its technical functionality. The discrepancy between the technical functionality of the infrastructure and its unstable purpose is the question we read through this short investigation into the Athenian underground landscapes.

While Athens is experiencing a particularly global moment, we insist on the city's most literal aspect of locality: its very ground. The city's infrastructure forms an invisible power structure differently idealized in a place such as Athens, that modern city whose surface has always been less important than its imaginary underground landscapes; this unseen space we are now reading was the reason this city was reconceived in the nineteenth century. In the imaginary extension of the same invisible area we locate now an ending of this circle and a new question about the existing urban surface and its material. The suddenness with which the flow of money was recently reduced in Athens and the rest of Greece has revealed the brutal side of the faceless infrastructure of the global North. Thus has the city revealed that its infrastructure is not as neutral as is often claimed. The fact that a few outsiders have managed to transfer their worldview into the infrastructure itself shows that this supposedly neutral entity can be governed entirely from the outside.

We owe to the Athenian remains of ruins and infrastructure, to these keimenai, different readings. Their literal existence is covered by a city that grew abundantly. The city now might refer to them as a part of its modern history, yes, but even if the remains are now speechless—an accumulation of indecipherable letters—new networks and the deterritorialization of the multiple data reservoirs, with their multiple settings of the city's automatisms, make the everyday Athenian depend on unreadable codes and scripted hieroglyphics to run their lives. A lack of representation forms a huge idealization of the new grounds of urbanism. A text in this sense cannot be a keimenon, as a fallen schematized matter ready for interpretation; it will be an ever-changing weave, an always transformable texture. The most problematic fact in this new theology of the infrastructure is that it is installed as an unnamable priority for the future of any urban construction. Is the reading of this unreachable system an impossible task? Can it propose a new field of investigation? Can infrastructure—and with it the distribution of goods, the logistics of tomorrow, the banking system, the platforms and protocols it installs—form questions about politics and common decisions made by a different democracy? These are the questions that Athens poses today. In order to interpret the present moment we try the technique of pausing, freezing the seductive liquid flow (that is an always unfinished text) to a temporarily still image. And we reflect on the still while the infrastructure is organized as an unreadable element, as something that will keep moving, never forming a keimenon but an ever-transformable text.

In this sense, the contemporary Athenian infrastructure produces a new unreadable field, a new imaginary technical god, and a new analphabets. We are expected to believe in it, yet we cannot read it, interpret it, or criticize it. Athens shows the public side of this already political, technical power. The subaltern part of this structure, meanwhile, the ever-provisory and not always geographically determined South, forms in Athens some new material that can be read as well. As much as the city's normative functions tend to be understood as the construction of the infrastructure's ruins, Athens is not yet to be found in the invisible codes or the inaccessible corridors of this ever-growing entity. The different keimenai that are today's buildings of Athens operate as the open questions and the gaps of this homogeneous field. Forming areas different from the idealized or demonized Athenian ground, and reinvented as a conscious civic perspective, the visible surface of the city is today announced as the enigmatic matter where a living resilience and a positive system of transformative acts might take place, in parallel or sometimes in disagreement with the Northern rationale.
Leo von Klenze, Idealized View of the Acropolis and the Areopagus in Athens (1846), oil on canvas, 102.8 × 147.7 cm. Neue Pinakothek, Munich