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LITERATURE AND POLITICS, EUROPE AND THE NATION BYRON'S PHILHELLENIC MEDIATION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL AND THE UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICATIONS OF "GREEKNESS" IN THE INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE 1820s

Introduction: Some theoretical problems arising from the conceptual oscillation of philhellenism between "culture" and "politics", "Europe" and "the nation"

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Whether we choose to view philhellenism as a particular moment within the European history of ideas, or as an ideological tradition with a long afterlife after the termination of the Greek War of Independence, the unraveling of its significance presupposes an awareness of two wider conceptual frames of reference, between which the term "philhellenic" constantly oscillates.

The first is the universalistic, cultural realm that concerns the re-negotiation of the identity of modern Europe. Philhellenism (or, more simply, Hellenism as this cultural phenomenon is frequently called in the English and American scholarship on the subject) arose as an aspect of a much wider discourse concerning the re-adjustment of the relationship between European modernity and the classical past, shortly before, but especially during the period that succeeded the vast political and cultural upheaval of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. When used within this frame of reference, the term philhellenic signals an historical moment when the ancient Greek referent acquired a distinct symbolic value within the wider realm of classical allusion, a symbolic value that allowed Hellenists to undermine the traditional cultural and political values associated with Rome and gradually promote Greece as the most appropriate classical analogue of modern Europeanness. Nevertheless, this turn from Rome to Greece should not be understood in absolute terms, i.e. as a substitution of one concrete political and cultural paradigm for another, since, during the early stages of Hel-

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lenism, Greece remained a relatively open field of signification, encompassing multiple and frequently antithetical symbolic loci (for example, around the turn of the nineteenth century, Athens, Sparta and Macedonia had quite distinct political and cultural connotations within the repertoire of classical allusion, despite the fact that they were all considered Greek). It is also crucial to remember that this transposition of emphasis from Rome to Greece historically coincides with a much more fundamental intellectual change, concerning the very *mode* of classical allusion. In the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars the relevance of ancient politics to modern European experience was vigorously challenged, especially in Britain and in France, where liberal intellectuals were struggling to come to terms with recent revolutionary legacies.[1] From this kind of challenge arose a demand for a different kind of scholarly mediation between antiquity and modernity, a mediation that would fully acknowledge the distinction between ancient and modern liberty and would attempt to convey to the moderns the teachings of antiquity, not through direct political exhortation, but through a more comprehensive, historical understanding of the social, cultural and political dimensions of the classical societies. It is also significant to note that this demand for an historiographical approach to the classical past grew hand in hand with the development of national historiographies, aiming to root the cultural and political identity of each modern European nation, not in the common ground of classical antiquity (either Greek or Roman), but in the specificity of their own national past.

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This wider intellectual climate within which philhellenism arose significantly complicates the relationship between the cultural/European and the political/nationalist frames of reference within which the term "philhellenic" resonates. For, undoubtedly, apart from a long- term cultural phenomenon with its own history, the term philhellenism also designates an inter-connected, pan-European, and in the wider sense of the term liberal[2] political movement, that developed in the third

1. On Britain see the classic study of F. Turner, The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981. On France, see Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *La démocratie grecque vue d'ailleurs*, Paris: Flammarion 1990 and F. Hartog, Liberté des Anciens, liberté des Modernes: La Revolution Francaise et l'Antiquité, in Roger-Paul Droit (ed.), *Le Grecs, les Romains et nous; L' antiquité, est- elle moderne?*, Paris: Le Monde Editions, 1991, p.119-141.

2. The liberal ideological underpinnings of the movement are easy to ascertain through the study of its particular organizational history in every country it arose. In Britain, the organizational kernel of the movement was the London Greek Committee, established in March 1823, by a group of Whig and radical MPs. Amongst its earliest members was the political philoso-

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decade of the nineteenth century, in response to the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence. All across Western Europe, the philhellenes of the 1820s adopted the national cause of the modern Greeks, in the name of Europe. While the second part of this equation, i.e. the symbolic identification of Europe and Greece, may be attributed to the cultural connotations of philhellenism I have described above, the first part, i.e. the nationalist/political dimension of philhellenism, does not appear to stem directly from a classically minded ideal concerning the resurrection of ancient political virtue amongst the modern Hellenes. To draw an example from my own research on British philhellenism, a closer examination of the writings of a number of prominent British philhellenes of the 1820s has indicated that, despite their liberal ideological outlook, the kind of Hellenism to which many of them ascribed did not involve an idealization of ancient Greek democracy, but rather a more general faith in the originality, the progressive qualities and the creative potential of the Greeks (ancient and modern), *despite* their (ancient and modern) political shortcomings.[3] Thus, in my view, it is preferable to approach the main ideological parameters of the philhellenic movement as an early and not yet fully formulated expression of nineteenth century liberal nationalism (a strand of nationalism that reached its most concrete ideological formulation in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, by bringing together the universal (i.e. European) values of civilization and progress and the modern, national ideals of political virtue, national specificity and national self-determination), rather than as a direct reflection of a pre-existing, cultural version of philhellenism, which had supposedly already solved the question concerning the relationship between Europe and the nation, and was ready to transpose it as such on the realm of political activism.

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pher Jeremy Bentham, while the radical periodical *Westminster Review* soon became its semi-official public voice. The two main agents of the Committee in Greece were Edward Blaquiere, a well-known international liberal activist, and Leicester Stanhope, a minor political figure in the British political scene, with strong Benthamite ideological leanings and previous political experience in colonial India. The most comprehensive study of the relationship between British philhellenism and early British liberalism remains Frederick Rosen's, *Bentham, Byron and Greece: Constitutionalism, Nationalism and Early Liberal Political Thought* (Oxford, 1992).

3. See Margarita Miliori, "The Greek Nation in British Eyes, 1821-1864: Aspects of a British Discourse on Nationality, Politics, History and Europe", unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1998. The particular point I am making here, as well as the wider argument outlined in this and the following paragraph is elaborated upon in the second chapter of my thesis, entitled "The Greek Nation in the Eyes of British Philhellenism 1821- 1828: Conceptual and Ideological Aspects of British Philhellenic Discourse in the 1820s", *ibid*., p. 62-125.

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By conceptually transposing the significance of the philhellenic movement of the 1820s from its eighteenth century cultural roots to its ideological dynamic within a liberal political tradition that was still in the making, we may approach in a more productive fashion certain problematic aspects of the philhellenic response towards revolutionary Greece that both the writings of the active philhellenes of the 1820s and subsequent bibliography have brought to the fore. For example, this transposition of emphasis allows us to dismantle the myth of philhellenic disillusionment with modern Greek political and societal realities, which has been traditionally ascribed to the classically informed preconceptions of the philhellenes concerning the modern Greek national body. As soon as we realize that philhellenic expectations from the modern Greeks were not informed by concrete political and societal paradigms derived from antiquity, but rather from a strong belief that liberated Greece would be quintessentially European and therefore willing and able to conform to modern, liberal models of political negotiation, *despite* the local particularities that the modern Greek national character had acquired through its fallen, post-classical, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman past, we may begin to understand that the experience of philhellenic activism did not put primarily into question the relationship between Greek antiquity and Greek modernity, but rather the relationship between the universalistic values of political liberalism and the national, patriotic connotations of 'virtue', as well as the nature of European modernity in its relationship with the traditional and/or local underpinnings of the nation. Ultimately, such an approach prompts us to see the actions and the writings of the philhellenes in terms of a double-faceted mediation: a mediation between their own national political and ideological environments and revolutionary Greece, but also as a mediation between the national and the European spheres of culture and politics.

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In this article, I will explore further the ideas outlined above, by focusing on one of the most celebrated philhellenic personalities, Lord Byron. Within Britain, soon after his death in Greece, in 1824, Byron was elevated to the figurehead of a supposedly distinctly British brand of philhellenism. In the first part of the article I will examine the terms of this idealization within the British political and ideological context of the 1820s, bringing to the fore the complementarity of Byron's three philhellenic *personae*, as a Grecian traveller, as a poet of Greece and as an active philhellene. I will argue that, while on the most immediate political level the literature on Byron's last days in Greece was used by the political opponents of the London Greek Committee in order to discredit the liberal and internationalist ideological outlook of its

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most active members, in the longer run, the national significance of this idealization passed through the emphasis that Byron's contemporaries placed upon his philhellenic pragmatism. Thus, Byron's ideal philhellenic persona mediated between the traditional political values of the British environment and the novel challenges of interventionist action on the wider, European plane, and came to represent, on a symbolic level, a distinctly English way of dealing with the ideological ambiguities and the political complexities of Continental politics in a particularly troubled era.

In the second part of the article, I will leave aside the reception of Byron's philhellenic persona and turn to an exploration of Byron's reworking of the philhellenic theme within his poetical work. Byron's literary philhellenism has been analyzed in various contexts, both in terms of Byron's reworking of the traditional philhellenic theme of the Greek fall in such a way as to enhance its relevance to modernity, and also in terms of the creation of images of modern Greece that oscillate between an hellenist and an orientalist aesthetic register. What I will attempt here will not be a survey of the relevant literature on the subject, but rather a closer reading of Byron's reworking of the philhellenic theme in his last poetical travelogue, *Don Juan*, where, in my view, Byron has managed to move beyond the mere exploration of the universal theme of the Greek fall in a topical guise, bringing to the fore and expressing poetically one of the main problems that the philhellenic legacy has left as an imprint upon European perceptions of modern Greek subjectivity: namely, the conflict of authority that arises between the universality of Greece as a central locus in the western intellectual tradition, and the topicality of Greece as a nationally circumscribed, autonomous space.

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1. Byron's ideal philhellenic persona: philhellenism, pragmatism and British self-perceptions

In the bibliography that deals with Byron's political influence in later times, the appeal of Byron as a revolutionary poet in the Continent has been frequently contrasted to his relative insignificance in England as a political poet. As William Ruddick has pointed out, Byron's political views were discredited by his contemporaries as inconsistent or insincere from the time of his death up to the 1830's, and both 'conservative' and 'liberal' critics, adopted a sceptical view to-

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wards his political credo.[4] We may argue that this devaluation of Byron's politics was concomitant with the gradual construction of his persona as an exceptional, individualistic and eccentric personality. Whether his character was perceived as the embodiment of poetical sensibility, characterized by an excessive imagination that came in conflict with the mundane realities of human existence,[5] or his poetry was described as self-indulgent and introspective,[6] Byron's idealisation as a poetical genius could minimize the wider relevance of his political opinions, and even neutralize the critical edge of his unconventional attitude towards the English status quo.

Yet, the attitude of Byron's contemporaries in respect to his philhellenism strongly contradicts this general depreciation of his political views. Soon after his death in Greece, his supposed philhellenic stance was elevated to the pedestal of an ideal version of philhellenism and was described as pragmatic and sincere, as a kind of philhellenism that was not merely idealistic but also practical. While this process of idealization owed much to the publication of memoirs recounting Byron's last days in Greece,[7] it must be seen also as part of a larger effort, carried out in a wider corpus of biographical accounts,[8] to reclaim Byron

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4. See William Ruddick, "Byron and England: The Persistence of Byron's Political Ideas", in Paul Graham Trueblood (ed.), *Byron's Political and Cultural Influence in Nineteenth Century Europe: A Symposium*, London, 1981, p. 25-58.

5. Such for example was Sir Walter Scott's appreciation of Byron's character, in his review of the third Canto of *Childe Harold*, published in the *Quarterly Review*, in February 1817. Reprinted in Andrew Rutherford (ed.), *Byron; The Critical Heritage*, p. 84-97. Scott dismissed Byron's political opinions as "the sport of whim and singularity, or at best the suggestion of sudden starts of feeling and passion, than the expressions of any serious or fixed opinion". (*ibid.*, p. 92).

6. See for example, Hazlitt's essay on Byron in *The Spirit of the Age* (London, 1825), reprinted in Rutherford, *ibid.*, p. 268-278.

7. The main corpus of memoirs on Byron's last days in Greece are the following: Pietro Gamba, *Narrative of Lord Byron's Last Journey to Greece* (London, 1825); William Parry, *The Last Days of Lord Byron with his Lordship's Opinions on Various Subjects, Particularly on the State and Prospects of Greece* (London, 1825); Edward Blaquiere, *Narrative of a Second Visit to Greece: Including Facts Connected with the Last Days of Lord Byron* (London 1825); Julius Millingen, *Memoirs of the Affairs in Greece... With Various Anecdotes Relating to Lord Byron and an Account of his Last Illness and Death* (London 1831). Personal memories of Byron and related correspondence were also included in the revised edition of Leicester Stanhope's report of his own activities in Greece. See *Greece in 1823, 1824 and 1825* (London 1828, first edition: 1824, covering the years 1823-early 1824).

8. A number of popular or controversial biographies were published up to 1830, including Leigh Hunt's, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (London, 1828) and John Galt's, *Life of Lord Byron* (London, 1830). Also, a profusion of articles, poems, pamphlets, and lesser

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as a distinctly "English" personality, a notion that had been challenged during his lifetime, in virtue of Byron's reputation as an international liberal. Thomas Moore, in his influential biography of Byron, published in 1830, introduced Goethe's article on Byron with a comment upon the distance between the "representations of his life and character long current upon the Continent" from the 'real flesh and blood' hero of these pages – the social, practical-minded, and with all his faults and eccentricities, *English* Lord Byron";[9] It was hardly coincidental that Moore ascribed similar qualities to Byron's attitude towards the political situation in Greece during the period he had stayed in Cephalonia:

> *... the coolness, foresight, and self-possession he displayed sufficiently refute the notion that even the highest powers of imagination, whatever effect they may sometimes produce on the moral temperament, are at all incompatible with the sound practical good sense, the steadily balanced views which the business of active life requires.*[10]

By the same token that Byron's philhellenic persona was reconstructed after his death in accordance with widely accepted notions of Englishness, his version of philhellenism was idealized as having achieved a transcendence of the ideological and political vicissitudes of actual philhellenic engagement, by remaining faithful to what was essential in the Greek cause from an objective British perspective, a perspective untainted either by political theorizing or by excessive sentimentality.[11] In other words, in the case of Byron, we are faced with a double-edged process of idealization, whereby the notions of Byronic and British philhellenism became conflated, to the advantage of both. Before we examine the role that Byron's earlier personae as a Greek traveller and as a poet of Greece had played in this double-edged process,[12] it is necessary to test such interpreta-

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memoirs on Byron were published in, or soon after 1824. Chew, in his classic study of English Byroniana, has described this literature at length, but has resigned from listing it all. See S. C. Chew, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame*,(London, 1924), p. 194-219.

9. Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of His Life* (2 vols., London, 1830), ii, p. 331.

10. *ibid.*, ii, p. 677-8.

11. On the centrality of the concept of common sense, as opposed both to theory and to sentimentality for English self-identification since the seventeenth century, as well as on the enhancement of such national self-definitions during the Napoleonic Wars, see David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism and the Revolt Against Theory* (Chicago and London, 1993), especially p. 40-63.

12. For Byron's contemporaries, Byron's attitude towards Greece as a poet and as a Grecian traveller was encapsulated in the views on Greek national regeneration that Byron had expressed

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tions of his philhellenism against Byron's own expressed opinions and actions in 1823-24. First, we should ask, what was distinctive in Byron's attitude towards Greece, in comparison to the attitude of other British philhellenes?

At first sight, Byron's expressed views while in Greece in 1823-24 do not attest to significant ideological disagreement with the majority of the British philhellenes, neither to an unconventional approach concerning the obstacles in the way of Greek liberation. Genuinely worried (like most of his collaborators) about the factional character of Greek revolutionary politics, Byron postponed his arrival in Greece for several months in 1823, until he finally decided to join Mavrokordatos in Mesolongi.[13] His preference for Mavrokordatos was a predictable choice; yet unlike a number of other philhellenes (for example, the agent of the Committee Edward Blaquiere) who appreciated Mavrokordatos' political views and his vision of a Western-oriented Greek state, Byron's admiration for the Greek political leader stemmed mainly from the fact that he considered him to be the "Greek Washington", or the "Greek Kosciusko",[14] i.e. he viewed him as the only personality in the Greek drama who could transcend the contingencies of the moment and become part of an idealized version of the Greek Revolution, in which Byron also placed himself as one of the *dramatis personae*. It is indicative in this respect that in the same letter to Moore, in which he announced his decision to join Mavrokordatos in Mesolongi, he anticipated his own death in Greece as an event that would place him within a long list of heroic poets, consisting mainly of modern heroes, but also including the Homeric Thersander.[15]

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Indeed, a romantic perspective on historical events, as providing above all the opportunity for individual heroic action, was central to Byron's approach as a philhellene. A second distinctive characteristic of his philhellenic stance was the highly rhetorical tone he assumed when he addressed either the Greeks themselves or other philhellenes. This trait of his philhellenism may be considered incidental to

ten years prior to the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, in the second canto of *Childe Harold*. All further references to this poem will be based on Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto ii* (1812) in *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, edited by J. J. McGann (7 vols., Oxford, 1980-93), ii, p. 44-76 and 189-217 (Notes to Canto ii).

13. See in particular Byron to Hobhouse, 27 Sept. 1823, in *Byron's Letters and Journals*, edited by L. A. Marchand (12 vols., London 1973-82), xi (1981), p. 27, as well as his "Journal in Cephalonia", 28 Sept. 1823, ibid., p. 32.

14. Byron to Moore, 27 Dec. 1823, *ibid.*, xi, p. 84, and Byron to Augusta Leigh, 12 Oct. 1823, *ibid.*, xi, p. 44.

15. Byron to Moore, 27 Dec. 1823, *ibid.*, xi, p. 84-85.

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the highly rhetorical character of his political language as a whole, and related to the fact that his earliest and closest connections with the British political environment were with the Holland House circle, which had provided the fermenting grounds for the reinvention of an aristocratic Whig tradition of patriotic commitment to liberty in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[16] Re-inventing a political tradition involves a significant emphasis on political rhetoric, and there were many instances in Byron's career as a philhellene that indicate that he subscribed to the political rhetoric and the political ideals of the Holland House Whigs. For example, he frequently alluded to a particularly English political tradition as the ultimate register for the meaning of the word liberal in his conversations with other philhellenes,[17] while in some of his writings during this period we can clearly discern the imprint of contemporary Whig definitions of liberty as these have been described in other contexts.[18]

Yet, to acknowledge that Byron subscribed to this political tradition should not lead us to interpret his support for the Greek Revolution, or his earlier support for the Italian Carbonari, as mere outlets for political frustrations arising in the context of British political life.[19] Commitment to Whig/patriotic and particularly English definitions of liberty did not preclude a genuinely international dimension in Byron's political thought, and especially a deep preoccupation with Revolution as a general European historical and political phenomenon of his

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16. On this wider issue see T. A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy 1830-1886* (London, 1994), pp. 2-9; L. G. Mitchell, *Holland House* (London, 1980), passim; A. D. Kriegel, Liberty and Whiggery in Early Nineteenth-Century England, *Journal of Modern History*, lii (1980), 253-78. On the implications of Byron's participation in this tradition for his political language see Malcom Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Brighton, 1987), particularly, p. 1-33, 43. Briefly, Kelsall's argument in this respect is that the highly rhetorical tone of Byron's political language must be seen as a response to the political frustrations that arose within this tradition as it found itself competing with more popular versions of liberal discourse.

17. Leicester Stanhope has transcribed Byron's comparison of Sir Francis Burdett's liberal stance with that of "the Statesmen of Charles the First's time", as well as Byron's assertion that he had found "many Englishmen and English writers more imbued with liberal notions" than American ones. See Stanhope, *Greece in 1823, 1824, 1825*, p. 534-5.

18. Note, for example, the conflation of the notions of liberty and property in the following passage, which was included in an unpublished article that Byron wrote for the *Telegrapho Greco* in February 1824: "The Greeks have been downright slaves for five centuries [...] men whose fathers fathers farther than they can reckon, were absolute villains, without property even of their own persons, still move as if they were in fetters", published in *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, edited by Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991), p. 193-4.

19. Kelsall in *Byron's Politics*, p. 84 argues along these lines.

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own times. As John Farrell has argued,[20] Byron's response to the contemporary phenomenon of Revolution can be described in terms of a particular romantic attitude that endorsed the moral and political connotations of revolutionary liberation from oppressive rule, but remained sceptical about the final consequences of revolutionary political action, an attitude that led to a tragic interpretation of the revolutionary process. According to Farrel's analysis, Byron's tragic interpretation of revolution consisted in emphasizing the distance between the concept of revolutionary liberation and its moral dimensions and actual revolutionary political practice, in order to celebrate neither national nor political liberation as such, but the revolt of individual consciousness against the oppressive potential inherent in all 'doctrinaire' positions.

In short, Byron's attitude towards Greece in 1823-24 should be understood both in relation to his romantic conception of history and politics and to the liberal ideals to which he subscribed. His conception of liberty, in Greece as elsewhere, remained both English/patriotic *and* internationalist, and, if the Greek Revolution appeared to him as unique, this was not in the sense that he considered it to be unrelated to other revolutionary phenomena; rather, he found in the Greek cause a unique symbolic potential, a potential which, in his eyes, could elevate modern nationalist action to a higher moral plane.

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Behind this symbolic uniqueness stood the distant shadow of an idealized Greek patriotic past, but also the sense of an absolute absence of inherited political virtue amongst the modern Greeks.[21] Indeed, biographical evidence concerning Byron's education and reading shows that his acquaintance with ancient Greek literature was typical of his social situation and time,[22] while internal evidence

20. J. P. Farrell, *Revolution As Tragedy: The Dilemma of the Moderate from Scott to Arnold* (Ithaca and London, 1980), especially ch. 3, "Byron: Rebellion and Revolution", p. 131-86.

21. See above, note 17.

22. The catalogues of Byron's books that were auctioned in 1816 and 1827 (reprinted in Nicholson (ed.), *Byron: Miscellaneous Prose*) attest to a library well vested in ancient Greek texts, complemented by a few English works on ancient history and topography. According to George Finlay's testimony, who visited Byron in Metaxata in October 1823, Byron's main sources on Greek subjects while in Greece were a translation of Pausanias and William Mitford's *History of Greece* (5 vols, 1784-1818) the standard English historiographical source on ancient Greek history during this period, but also a work of virulent polemic against the vicissitudes of Athenian democracy and its nefarious consequences upon the national fate of the ancient Greeks. See two letters from Finlay to Stanhope, in May and June 1824, in Stanhope, *Greece in 1823, 1824, 1825*, p. 510-9, 523. According to Finlay, Byron had criticized Mitford for "robbing antiquity of all its charms" (*ibid.*, 523); yet there is no evidence that he ever objected to Mitford's indictment of ancient Greek politics.

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from his early poetry indicates that he understood ancient Greek virtue as an early nineteenth century British Hellenist, recognizing its ideal martial, artistic and intellectual dimensions, but not its social or political aspects.[23] Nevertheless, the widely recognized extremity of Greek slavery under the Turks, and its double signification as a sign of political and moral degradation maximized, in Byron's eyes, the liberating allure of the Greek revolutionary process, and elevated the concept of Greek national emancipation beyond the sphere of ordinary politics, to a level of signification within which the political connotations of liberty merged with its wider, moral connotations. In a sense, the Greek case provided Byron with an ideal context within which the revolutionary process could be viewed as a truly poetic act within the political sphere.[24]

Yet, on the level of the reception of Byron's philhellenic persona, such a stance necessarily emphasized the contrast between Greek actuality and an ideal Greek future, discrediting all philhellenic attempts to build a modern Greek state, either on the basis of pre-existing structures of authority, or according to imported models of political organization. Thus, the notion of an unavoidable chasm between the ideal of Greek regeneration and the potential political outcome of philhellenic practice was foregrounded and legitimised in the eyes of British public opinion. Not surprisingly, after Byron's death, this constructed ideological vacuum was exploited both by Byron's collaborators in Greece and by the political opponents of the Greek Committee and used as a mirror upon which to project their own political opinions. The Tory press exploited

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23. For example, introducing his readers to Athena's Temple in the sixth stanza of the second canto of *Childe Harold*, Byron ruminates upon the religious and the intellectual connotations of the 'temple', but he does not present it as the symbol of the Athenian *polis*. On the whole, the main kind of glory that the Greek patriotic ideal represents in the second canto of *Childe Harold* is military glory, virtue in the field, symbolized by grey Marathon, a major point of reference in the poem (see in particular, *ibid.*, st. 88-90, p. 73-4.)

24. Romantic interpretations of revolution as a creative act of genius, are frequently discussed in relation to the generation of romantics whose formative historical experience was the French Revolution. See for example N. L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1987), p. 9-13, who discusses Wordsworth, but not Byron. Despite his moderate stance, Byron was inspired by the poetic dimensions of political action in an historical context. See for example his Ravenna Journal, 18 February 1821, where Byron described the liberation of Italy as "a grand object – the very *poetry* of politics" (*Letters and Journals*, viii, p. 47). As we will see, Byron negotiated the relationship between the poetry of politics and the business of politics by means of a linguistic, formal distinction between poetry and prose.

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the memoirs that described Byron's last days in Greece, and especially William Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron*, in order to denounce the philhellenic activities, the continental ideological framework and the political theory that inspired the radical kernel of the British philhellenic movement,[25] while, within the more restricted context of philhellenic disagreement concerning the Greek political factions and the management of the proceeds of the Greek loans, Byron's actions and his death in Greece were appropriated by diverse philhellenes in support of their particular views.[26] In short, part of the appeal of Byron's philhellenic persona amongst a large section of his contemporaries stemmed from the fact that his apparently apolitical philhellenism proved particularly amenable to political and ideological exploitation.

A further question arises, however, concerning the paradoxical contemporary interpretation of Byron's philhellenic stance as pragmatic. This belief in Byron's pragmatism cannot be attributed to a wider appreciation of his own practical philhellenic activity, since this activity had been obviously fragmentary, short-lived and ultimately ineffective.[27] In order to unravel this paradox

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25. William Parry was sent to Greece in order to supervise the military arsenal which the Greek Committee attempted to set up in Mesolongi in late 1823. In his book, he juxtaposed two supposedly antithetical versions of philhellenism, that of the 'Benthamite' agent of the Greek Committee, Leicester Stanhope, and that of Byron. Building upon certain disagreements that arose between the two men in Mesolongi, Parry presented as the essence of Byron's philhellenism his insistence on the uniqueness of the Greek cause, his reluctance to succumb to political theorizing and his refusal to exploit the cause of the Greeks for wider political purposes, "as a parcel of adventurers mingling up the politics of Europe with the affairs of Greece" had done (quote, *ibid.* p. 83). Concerning the use of Parry's book by the Tory opponents of the Greek Committee see, indicatively, J.G. Lockhart, «Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron*», in *Blackwood's Magazine*, xviii (Aug. 1825), p. 137- 55.

26. For example, Gamba, in his *Narrative*..., p. 94-5, identified Byron's philhellenic stance with support for the Greek legislative body of 1824, while Blaquiere, lamenting Byron's death, argued that "his personal credit and guarantee would have prevented the ruinous delay which has taken place with regard to transferring the loan" (Blaquiere, *Narrative*..., "Last Days of Lord Byron", p. 21-2). On the contrary, another British volunteer, W.H. Humphreys, who was hostile to Mavrocordatos, implicitly blamed the Greek political leader for keeping Byron in a state of inactivity that led him to death (see Humphreys, Journal..., in the collective volume, *A Picture of Greece in 1825: As Exhibited in the Personal Narratives of James Emerson, Esq., Count Pecchio and W.H. Humphreys, Esq.*, 2 vols, London 1826, ii, p. 218).

27. In early October 1823, Byron forwarded the opinion to the Greek Committee, that the Greeks "want a regular force to support a regular system as much as to repel their enemies" (Byron to Hobhouse, 6 Oct. 1823, in Marchand (ed.), *Letters and Journals*, xi, p. 40), but later in the same month he argued that a foreign military force was what was needed, regretting Thomas Gordon's

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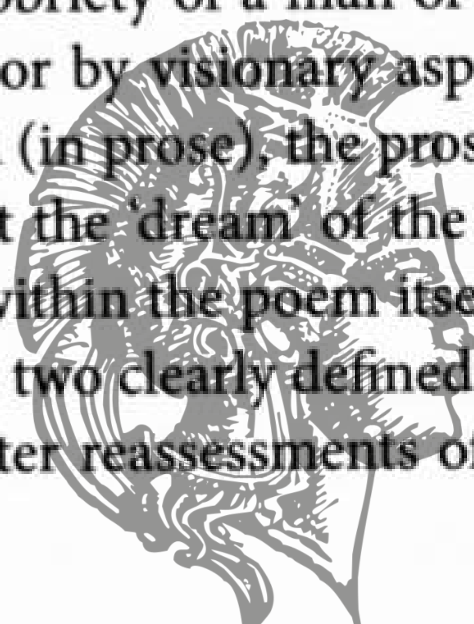
concerning Byron's reception as a philhellene we have to take into account the other two facets of Byron's relationship with Greece, namely his persona as a 'Greek' traveller and as a poet of Greece. Indeed, the key to an understanding of the reception of Byron's philhellenism as *simultaneously* idealistic and pragmatic probably lies in the popularity of Byron's earlier *Childe Harold* (the second canto was first published in 1812, immediately after Byron's return from his first visit to Greece) and in the heightened relevance that this work acquired in the eyes of his contemporaries in the aftermath of his death.

In the second canto of *Childe Harold* Byron had exploited fully the traditional literary locus of philhellenism (i.e. the sadness felt by the Grecian traveller, when contemplating the fall of Greece amongst the ruins of antiquity), managing, amongst other things, to recast these traditional philhellenic feelings in a patriotic guise.[28] At the same time, in the "Notes to the Second Canto"[29] he had assumed the voice of an objective traveller, who had approached the Greeks with the sobriety of a man of the world, influenced neither by classical associations, nor by visionary aspirations about the future.[30] There, he had also discussed (in prose), the prospects of Greek liberation in a way that clearly undercut the 'dream' of the patriotic resurrection of the Hellenes he had expressed within the poem itself (in verse).[31] The coexistence in *Childe Harold* of these two clearly defined –and formally distinguished– voices was crucial for later reassessments of his relationship with Greece.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refusal to go to Greece as a military commander (Byron to Hobhouse, 16 Oct. 1823, *ibid.*, xi, p. 50). Later on, while he was actively involved in military planning in Mesolongi, he settled upon a distinctly individual way of serving the Greek cause, i.e. by financing a body of Suliots to carry out military expeditions in Western Greece under his own leadership; at this stage, his suggestion to the Greek Committee was merely to aid the cause financially (Byron to Bowring, 28 Jan. 1824, *ibid.*, xi, p. 101-2).

28. Especially in the famous stanzas 78-83 of the second canto, where he created the image of an ideal modern Greek patriot lamenting for the fall of Greece in the midst of the mirth of a modern Greek carnival. I will return to these stanzas in the second part of the present article.

29. See Byron, "Notes to the Second Canto" in *Childe Harold, Poetical Works*, ii, p. 189-217.

30. See in particular, ibid., p. 202.

31. See for example, *ibid*, p. 201: "The Greeks will never be independent; they will never be sovereigns as heretofore, and God forbid they ever should! but they may be subjects without being slaves. Our colonies are not independent, but they are free and industrious, and such may Greece be hereafter".

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Byron himself, while in Greece in 1823-24, frequently insisted on his previous knowledge of the country as well as on his identity as a man of the world in order to distinguish himself from philhellenic enthusiasts.[32] He also emphasized the distinction between his persona as a poet (and his voice *in verse*) from his persona as a man of business (and his voice *in prose*).[33] In the accounts that described his last days in Greece these distinctions were reiterated and reinforced. For example, Gamba observed in respect to Byron that "no one could accuse him of being a blind enthusiast. In his travels during his younger days, he had imbibed a greater personal esteem for the character of the Turks than that of their slaves".[34] Similarly, Parry argued that Byron, "of all modern Greek travellers", was the most capable of giving "a correct opinion" on the nature of Greek society, and added that this opinion was "so much opposed also to what may be expected from the *poet* of Greece, so completely free from all romance and delusion, that it was plainly the dictate of close observation and mature reason".[35]

At the same time, viewed from the perspective of the 1820s, the fact that Byron had formulated poetically, ten years earlier, the patriotic dream of Greek national regeneration, was a proof that his commitment to the Greek national cause was ardent and sincere. His love for Greece, viewed as a part, and frequently as a central part, of his identity as a poet,[36] was presented in some cases as a preconception of Greek national emancipation in the realm of imagery, as a 'prophecy' that had come true. For example, Moore commented upon Byron's decision to commit himself to the cause of Greece thus:

> *...it may be well conceived what a relief it was to him to turn his eyes to Greece, where a spirit was now rising such as himself imaged forth in*

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32. See Byron to Bowring, 26 Dec. 1823, in *Letters and Journals*, xi, p. 84: "I can assure you that Col. Napier and myself are as decided for the cause as any German student of them all; but like men who have seen the country and human life, there and elsewhere, we must be permitted to view it in its truth, with its defects as well as beauties…".

33. See Byron to Bowring, 30 Mar. 1824, *ibid.*, p. 147: "I could "mouthe" as well as any of them if I liked it – but I reserved (when I was in the habit of writing) such things for verse – in business – plain prose is best and simplest…".

34. Gamba, *Narrative...*, p. 4.

35. Parry, *Last Days…*, p. 169-70.

36. See Stanhope, *Greece in 1823, 1824, 1825*, p. 548: "Lord Byron loved Greece […] In early youth he was no poet, nor was he now, except when the fit was upon him, and he felt his mind agitated and feverish. These attacks, he continued, scarcely ever visited him anywhere but in Greece".

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dreams of song, but hardly could have ever dreamt that he should live to see it realised.[37]

In other cases, a more simplistic projection of Byron's support for Greek Independence upon his earlier love for Greece served in a more direct way to elevate his philhellenism to an ideal version of Greek national feeling, according to which the degree of patriotism amongst the Greeks themselves could be judged. For example, the author of an anonymous biography of Byron, published in 1825, projected Byron's interest in the Greek cause back to the time of his earlier travels in a direct and unproblematic manner,[38] and, consequently, presented Byron's support for their cause as the highest prize for which the Greeks should have vied.[39] Gamba also represented the degree of acceptance of Byron by diverse political leaders in Greece as the ultimate measure of their own degree of civilization and patriotism,[40] while Moore interpreted Byron's protracted stay in Cephalonia as a consequence of his scepticism about the extent that the Greeks were 'worthy' of Independence.[41] Once the distinction between the sincerity of Byron's philhellenic feelings and his exact judgement was adequately commented upon and related to different facets of his personality, both these facets could be used in a complementary fashion for the construction of his ideal philhellenic persona. In turn, this persona could be used to reassert the authority of the idealized voice of British philhellenism over the meaning of Greek national emancipation.

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Byron's mediation between the gentlemanly values traditionally associated with his rank and the changing social, economic, and cultural parameters of the nineteenth century British environment that embraced his work and elevated his personality to the status of a myth, has been extensively analysed in other contexts,[42] and the issues of genre and reception raised therein are too wide to be

37. Moore, *Life*, ii, p. 652.

38. See Anon., *The Life, Writings, Opinions and Times of the Right Honourable G. G. N. Byron* (3 vols., London, 1825), i, p. 98 and *ibid.*, iii, p. 295.

39. *Ibid.*, iii, 217: "If the Greeks should prove reasonable, tractable, and worthy of his presence and exertions, he was determined to afford it to them, and to aid their cause to the utmost extent of his power and abilities".

40. Gamba, *Narrative...*, p. 34.

41. Moore, *Life*, ii, 654.

42. See in particular, William St. Clair, "The Impact of Byron's Writings: An Evaluative Approach", in Andrew Rutherford (ed.), *Byron: Augustan and Romantic* (London and Basingstoke, 1990), p. 1-25, P. J. Manning, "Childe Harold in the Marketplace: From Romaunt to Handbook", *Modern Language Quarterly*, lii (1991), 170-90, James Buzard, "The Uses of Romanticism: Byron and the Victorian Con-

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discussed here. We may note, nevertheless, that the way in which Byron's idealized philhellenic persona simultaneously appealed to the traditional values associated with Grecian travel, and encapsulated a particularly English way of dealing with nineteenth century politics abroad was part of this wider mediation.

In conclusion of this part of the article we may argue that the contemporary ideological significance of Byron's idealization as a philhellene must be appreciated at two symbolic levels. In the first place, his philhellenic intervention in Greece constituted the protected symbolic ground upon which definitions of liberty derived from self-congratulatory interpretations of the English past could merge with liberal aspirations for British political, commercial and philanthropic intervention in the international arena, while avoiding the dangers of a highly politicized discourse that might have challenged the role of such traditional British self-perceptions as the ultimate basis of legitimation for interventionist action.

Secondly, the idealization of Byron's philhellenic pragmatism meant the consolidation of a particular British approach towards modern Greece, an approach that projected upon Greek modernity the conceptual paradoxes and the ideological ambiguities that characterized British philhellenism, while constantly deferring to the future (and ultimately evading) the disentanglement of the contradictory aspects of British images of a modern and simultaneously national Greece. For, a disentanglement of the modern Greek paradox, would require either an acknowledgement of the unfamiliar and/or unacceptable elements of Greek modernity as part of the authentic national identity of the Greeks (in which case the European connotations of Greekness would be enfeebled), or an explicit acceptance of the notion that the creation of a modern Greek body politic, constructed according to an externally derived model of political formation, constituted the essence of Greek national regeneration and the true aim of Greek liberation. Yet, the latter solution would imply that national liberty could be produced by institutional modelling and political theorizing – an interpretation that would seriously challenge the established historicist British perception of patriotic virtue as an inherent and inherited moral quality, enshrined in very core of the nation.

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tinental Tour", *Victorian Studies*, xxxv/1 (Autumn 1991), 29-49, and Andrew Elfenbein, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge, 1995), especially ch. 1, p. 13-46, and ch. 2, p. 47-89.

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2. Dreaming Haidee; The evolution of Byron's perspective on modern Greek subjectivity from Childe Harold to Don Juan

In the second section of this article, I will complement my previous exploration of Byron's outward philhellenic persona with an examination of Byron's own literary re-workings of the philhellenic theme, as these were informed by his personal entanglement with its universal and topical dimensions. As I will argue here, this entanglement gradually carried his own perspective on the relationship between actual and literary Greece beyond the trite commonplaces of traditional philhellenic literature and towards an original reconstruction of the Greek literary and symbolic *locus*, within which modern Greek national consciousness played a significant role.

Although a full exploration of this issue may require a more comprehensive literary study on Byron, a focused comparative reading of the second canto of *Childe Harold* and the parts of *Don Juan* (cantos ii, iii, iv) that describe the idyll of *Juan* and *Haidee* in Greece,[43] – both parts of longer "travelogues" that formally situate the Greek topos within a wider geographical and literary context– already suggests an interesting evolution of Byron's philhellenic perspective on Greece between 1812, when the second canto of *Childe Harold* was published, and 1819-1821, the period which immediately predates Byron's active engagement with revolutionary Greece. As we will see, in *Don Juan* the wider ambiguities and paradoxes that Byron had from an early stage associated with the Greek *locus* become fully internalized *within* modern Greece as a particular, actual, and internally self-sufficient topos. Nevertheless, even in *Don Juan,* this topos remains open to wider, universal significations and inexorably fraught with the tension that arises from the problematic duality between the literary/universal and the literal/national significations of Greekness. This tension becomes part of *Don Juan's* wider ideological subtext, as well as part of the specific episode's plot. Yet, ultimately, on the representational level, this tension enriches the subjectivity of Byron's modern Greek heroes in *Don Juan – Haidee and Lambro –* situating their own, rather than *Juan's,* consciousness at the very center of Byron's reworked philhellenic theme.

43. For reference to Byron's works I have used the edition of Jerome J. Mc. Gann (ed.), *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, vol. ii (for *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), Oxford, 1980 and vol. iv (for *Don Juan*), Oxford, 1986.

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In her comparative study of Byron's *Don Juan* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, Hermione de Almeida views Byron's adoption of the Homeric model of the *Odyssey* in *Don Juan* as a return to an appropriate archetype of the epic tradition in order to attempt a creative parody of this tradition as a whole.[44] According to her analysis, Byron's attempt had been creative rather than destructive, since Byron's ultimate intention was to rejuvenate the epic mode –to reconstitute its links with human experience– by writing "true epics for modern times through parody".[45] De Almeida's insight captures an important aspect of Byron's poetics that applies equally to the first and to the last phase of his literary involvement with Greece: Byron's literary hellenism consisted first and foremost in an attempt to creatively appropriate certain elements of the ancient Greek literary heritage, as well as the universal and archetypical significations of the ancient Greek *locus*, in order to voice and reformulate his wider concerns with the western literary tradition, with the dislocating effects of temporal and spatial discontinuity, and with the precarious nature of modern subjectivity. The reworking of the traditional philhellenic theme of the Greek fall in his work should be seen primarily in this light, i.e. as an attempt to explore the topicality of the Greece, in order to address wider, universal issues.

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In a similar vein with De Almeida, Frederick Garber places particular emphasis on the Byronic entanglement of the problem of identity with temporality and space, arguing that this constitutes a central dimension of his development as a romantic ironist.[46] Reading *Childe Harold* in this light,[47] Garber views the diverse relationships between the external places that Byron's "pilgrim" visits, the memories these places evoke and the hero's responses to them as a process that concerns primarily the making and the unmaking of the hero's 'self'.[48] Focusing on the second canto, he observes that "Harold is reading the old Greece and the new simultaneously, his text not only the landscape but its history as well".[49] Indeed, in the second canto of *Childe Harold* Greece is

44. Hermione de Almeida, *Byron and Joyce Through Homer; Don Juan and Ulysses*, London and Basingstoke, 1981.

45. See *ibid*., p. 48.

46. Frederick Garber, *Self, Text and Romantic Irony; The Example of Byron*, Princeton, 1988.

47. See *ibid*, ch. 1 «Beginning *Harold*», p. 3-31, passim.

48. See *ibid*., p. 7: "The self will constitute itself even as (and to the degree that) it works out a relationship to the places it passes through. To put it differently, the development of the text of the poem coincides with the thickening of the self of its hero".

49. *Ibid*., p. 17.

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reflected upon the prismatic mirror of Time, and the fragmented image that ensues corresponds to the fluctuation of *Harold's* own consciousness between personal memory, wider civilizational visions and modern existential concerns. The idealized ancient Greek referent, which is represented within the poem by the evocative powers of the landscape and of the relics of the ancient monuments, plays a central role in triggering the oscillation of *Harold's modern* subjectivity between identity and disruption.[50] Yet, Byron's enrichment of the traditional philhellenic theme of the Greek fall with modern and universal significance in *Childe Harold* does not pass only through the construction of his hero's subjectivity, but also through Byron's representation of the actual, living inhabitants of the "sacred land".

At first sight, all the races that people the Greek space, either Turks, Greeks or Albanians, seem to contribute to Byron's general topic in comparable ways; the topical incongruity of their mental attitudes with the Greek *genius loci* serves as a pointer towards the inescapable alienation from the Greek ideal that characterizes modernity as a whole. To enhance the impact of this sense of alienation, Byron's exploits fully the pre-existing national stereotypes attached to the modern inhabitants of the Greece: The "unmovd Moslem" and the "light Greek" in the tenth stanza of the second canto[51] represent oppositional national mentalities and attitudes (consistency versus versatility, solemnity versus frivolity, stagnancy versus innovation, etc.); yet, their shared indifference towards the relics of antiquity amongst which they live indicates that the modern eclipse of the Greek ideal does not depend on their oppositional national dispositions, nor –one may assume– on any potential differentiations in between. Thus, on the symbolic plane of the poem, the Turks and the Greeks may be considered to provide the two poles of a continuous spectrum upon which the mentalities of all modern nations may be reflected. The Albanians, on the contrary, whose barbaric virtue seems paradoxically closer to Ancient Greek heroism, live away from the relics of antiquity

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50. An exemplary passage where we may witness this process at work are stanzas 88-90 of the second canto, where the battle of Marathon seems to come alive in front of *Harold's* mental eye, provisionally exorcizing the cultural and temporal discontinuity between the classical past and modernity, as well as the subjective discontinuity between the hero's past (*Harold* 's dream) and his present (his almost sensual experience of the plain of Marathon as inhabited by the ghosts of the ancients). Yet, this vision is soon dissolved, leaving *Harold* disheartened amidst the emptiness of the present.

51. See *Childe Harold*, canto ii, st. 10, lines 89-90: "Yet these proud pillars claim no passing sigh,/ Unmov'd the Moslem sits, the light Greek carols by".

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and close to the natural inspiration of the land. Their physical alienation from the relics that evoke the Hellenic referent is almost in contrast to the historical alienation of Turks and Greeks, whose identity as conquerors and descendants of the Greeks respectively could render their relationship to the ancient Greek heritage paradigmatic for that of Western Europeans.[52] In short, a projected horizontal axis of continuity between the mentalities of modern races and nations (both internal and external to the Greek space),[53] links the topical and the universal dimensions of the Greek fall, while emphasizing the radical discontinuity of the vertical, temporal axis.

A similar reading may be applied to the way in which Byron approaches the issue of modern Greek national consciousness in the second canto of *Childe Harold*. Byron was well aware of the actual nationalist aspirations of the modern Greeks when he wrote *Childe Harold*, while the national fate of the Greeks remained by definition too close to his general theme to remain unexplored. In fact, the actual nationalistic aspirations of the modern Greeks are overtly commented upon in st. 75-76, where Byron addresses directly the "hereditary bondsmen" of Greece, in order to admonish them for placing their hopes of liberation upon foreign aid. More significant, however, is Byron's construction of an ideal persona of a Greek patriot in stanzas 82-83. Byron attributed to this hypothetical "true-born son of Greece" philhellenic feelings, representing him as capable of sharing *Harold's* sadness and shame for the Greek fall, as well as the hero's (and Byron's) dream concerning the resurrection of ancient Greek virtue. Yet, Byron situates his putative modern Greek patriot in the midst of the "mirth" of a modern Greek

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52. It is worth noting here that Byron's success in rendering the philhellenic, topical theme of the Greek fall paradigmatic of the situation of western modernity as a whole did not necessarily depend upon the complete substitution of Greece for Rome as the direct ancestor of European modernity in the minds of his early nineteenth century readers. Even in the context of more traditional schemas of classical allusion, within which the relationship between Greek antiquity and European modernity was mediated by the Romans –the conquerors of Greece– the conceptual link between the Greek fall and European modernity constructed here would still work. For, if we accept the hypothesis that such earlier schemas of classical allusion were still powerful enough in the second decade of the nineteenth century as to inhibit the direct identification of modern Europeans with the fallen Greeks, then, by the same token, the Turks –as the conquerors of the Greek land– could supply a local analogue to the Roman universal in Byron's paradigm.

53. Byron's denunciation of the dilapidation of Greek monuments by European and British antiquarians, a theme which is brought up both within the second canto and in the notes, enhances further the continuities between the local and the universal dimensions of the Greek fall.

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carnival, presenting his mental alienation from his compatriots, his solitary revolt against their communal indifference to the degradation of their country (feelings comparable to *Harold's* own alienation from "Albion"), as the very incentive that gives rise to his proper patriotic feelings.

Thus, despite later interpretations of Byron's treatment of the theme of Greek resurrection in *Childe Harold*, Byron rather insisted on the discontinuity between the ideal of Greek resurrection and modern Greek nationalism than on their correspondence; the literal modern prospects of Greek liberation were not promoted in the poem as a viable closure of the chasm between antiquity and modernity. On the contrary, the juxtaposition between the ideal/philhellenic and the literal version of Greek nationalism carries the tension between the Ancient Greek referent and Greek modernity to the center of Byron's representation of modern Greek national identity: Both Byron's ideal Greek patriot and *Harold* (the foreign traveller) are capable of holding together, in their visions, the old Greece and the new, but this state of consciousness is hardly engrafted upon the communal identity of the literal modern Greeks, as they appear in the canto. Literal and literary Greece coexist in the poem, but the authority of *Harold's* vision (and Byron's authorial voice) over the moral, political and cultural significance of the Greek *locus* ultimately remains unchallenged by Byron's representation of modern Greek subjectivity.

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We may now turn to the three cantos of *Don Juan* that contain the Greek episode of the mock-epic, in order to discuss the evolution of Byron's perspective on Greek national consciousness during the decade that separates chronologically the two works. The very fact that both in *Childe Harold* and in *Don Juan* Byron situates the relationship of his protagonists with the Greek land within the general structure of a travelogue, allows us to read those two texts comparatively on many levels. The most elemental of these comparisons concerns the evolution of Byron's travelling persona, as it is divested from *Harold's* distanced perspective and becomes incorporated in the plot. Indeed, unlike *Harold, Juan* is not merely a pensive traveller who builds his identity by possessing and being possessed by the intricacies of space and time. *Juan* arrives on the coast of an (anonymous) Greek island due to an internal necessity of the plot; He «Roll» d on the beach, half senseless, from the sea"[54], the only survivor of a terrible shipwreck. Furthermore, his experience of Greece is restricted in space (the Greek island where *Juan*

54. *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 107, line 856.

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lands is the only Greek place he ever sees[55]) and intimate, in the more realistic sense of the term possible: It is mediated by the love affair with *Haidee*, a modern Greek maiden, and by his final enslavement and expulsion by *Haidee's* father, *Lambro*, a modern Greek potentate and pirate. Unlike *Harold's*, *Juan's* experience of Greece passes through his involvement with the people of the land, and, therefore, it is Greek modernity in its supposed autonomy from the Hellenic referent, which has precedence in defining *Juan's* Greek experience.

Byron's detailed descriptions of *Lambro's* and *Haidee's* household, especially in the long narrative on the feast that takes place immediately prior to *Lambro's* unexpected return to the island[56], point out to a Levantine world where food, drink and ornaments from all corners of the earth build up a luxurious and sensual atmosphere; Persian inscriptions on the walls, china cups, Arabian coffee, oriental cuisine and Turkish dresses coexist in harmony in an environment which is –nevertheless– defined as Greek; There is an unproblematic continuity between things 'oriental' and things Grecian, as, for example in Byron's description of the dance of *Lambro's* domestics in st. 29 of the third canto:

> *Seeing a troop of his domestics dancing*
> *Like dervises, who turn as on a pivot, he*
> *Perceived it was the Pyrrhic dance so martial,*
> *To which the Levantines are very partial.*[57]

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Furthermore, *Lambro's* involvement with slave-trade is described as involvement in a Turkish trade[58], and the sense of an almost anarchic fusion of diverse cultures on the island goes as deep as *Haidee's* own origins, when we learn, as late as in the fifty-fourth stanza of the fourth canto that "Her mother was a Moorish maid, from Fez/, Where all is Eden, or a wilderness".[59]

In other words, as the traveller *Don Juan* is dismantled from the distanced perspective of *Harold's* travelling persona, the image of modern Greece that his experience conveys to the reader becomes simultaneously more detailed and

55. The only topographical information that Byron gives about the island is parenthetical, mentioned in passing, in *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 127, line 1010: "(One of the wild and smaller Cyclades)".

56. *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 27-78.

57. *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 29, lines 229-232. In the next stanza Byron enters into a description of a modern Greek dance, which had been known and commented upon frequently by Hellenic travellers.

58. *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 126, line 465.

59. *Don Juan*, canto iv, st. 54, lines 431-432.

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less univocal. This development, however, does not diminish the importance of the Hellenic referent contained in the Greek *locus* on a deeper, structural and symbolic level.

In the first place, the Homeric subtext of the poem informs the reader's conception of the modern heroes and the modern stage of the action in an implicit, yet unmistakable way: the plot and the characters evoke in a direct way the mythical content of the *Odyssey* (both the salvation of *Juan* by *Haidee* and the return of *Lambro* follow closely their Homeric archetype). Furthermore, the position of the episode within the development of the wider plot reaffirms the symbolic significance of Greece as a place of origin, a starting point of human experience. *Juan's* experience of the world (a type of experience that is prefigured in the *Odyssey*, but belongs in its specific aims and contents to modernity, as the coexistence of Homeric references with modern descriptive detail and Byron's frequent digressions into loose commentaries on modern mores constantly reminds the reader[60]) is inaugurated by *Juan's* modern Greek experience; his arrival to the island is almost an experience of re-birth.[61] Furthermore, the connotations of innocence and childhood that *Juan's* modern Greek idyll with *Haidee* conveys enhance the sense that the episode is both a new beginning within *Juan's* own story and a reference to all primordial states of human existence. Greece, therefore, in all its modern disguise, remains in its essence identical with what it once was, in the same way that *Haidee* and *Lambro* remain Greek, despite the lack

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60. Such digressions are very frequent in the poem. See for example *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 22-25, where Byron comments at length on the theme of a husband's return at home after a long absence. The Homeric reference is explicit when Byron comments that "*An honest gentleman at his return/ may not have the good fortune of Ulysses;*" (st. 23, lines 177-178) but both the use of the word gentleman, and the content and tone of what follows, trivialises and modernises the theme. Furthermore, Byron points out repeatedly, through references within the poem itself, to what he is doing as an author on the level of form. There are constant reminders of his movement towards and away from the "story", of his own oscillation between the "epic" form and his «*longueurs*» (see for example canto iii, st. 96-97).

61. Between *Juan's* arrival on the island and his discovery by *Haidee*, *Juan* passes through a state of trance, an ambiguous state of existence between life and death when "...the earth was gone for him, / And Time had nothing more of night nor day" (*Don Juan,* canto ii, st. 111, lines 882-883). The description of this trance enhances the connotations of rebirth that his awakening on the island carries. Yet this new awakening is gradual and ambivalent, since *Juan* retains the memory of the shipwreck, qualifying his rebirth with a transient death-wish (see *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 112, lines 890-894).

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of ancient Greek resonance in their names, in their attires and in their occupations.[62]

Secondly, the Hellenic referent remains a constituent part of the philhellenic theme as it appears in *Don Juan*, and in this sense, it still contributes significantly to the process by which Byron exploits the local ambiguities and paradoxes of the Greek topos in order to foreground the moral and existential ironies that characterize modernity as a whole. The most obvious development concerning the re-working of the philhellenic theme in *Don Juan* is a much more clear projection of the implications of the Greek fall upon the identity and the subjectivity of Byron's literal modern Greek heroes. For example, when Byron comments upon *Lambro's* piratical character in stanzas 53-57 of the third canto, he foregrounds *Lambro's* despair for the degradation of his country as a subjective consideration that qualifies his ferocity. The effect of the comment is to emphasize the moral ambivalence that permeates *Lambro's* character: *Lambro's* vice is described as a reversal of potential virtue, and this reversal is explained as a consequence of his modern Greek fate:

> *Quick to perceive, and strong to bear, and meant*
> *For something better, if not wholly good;*
> *His country's wrongs and his despair to save her*
> *Had stung him from a slave to an enslaver.*[63]

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Lambro's moral ambivalence is therefore rooted in his national identity as a modern Greek. Again, in many instances, the Hellenic referent colors Byron's de-

62. There are specific moments in the narrative, when the modern Greek heroes of the poem are immersed in the light of their ancient Greek descend, a light that enhances their appeal to foreigners (both *Juan* and Byron's readers are foreigners in relation to the Levantine world of the island), but also protects the story from becoming merely another oriental tale. See for example, *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 150-151, where Byron describes *Juan's* first conversation with *Haidee*. *Haidee* speaks in "*good modern Greek*" (line 1198) and yet "*With an Ionian accent, low and sweet*" (line 1199). The aesthetic pleasure of the Greek language, merges in the next stanza with the quality of *Haidee's* voice, and speaks to *Juan*, despite the fact that he does not understand Greek. The aesthetic appeal of Greek, substitutes thus, rational, linguistic communication between the foreigner and the modern Greek maiden. See also *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 56, where, for all the connotations of oriental luxury that the descriptions of *Lambro's* household and of the festivities that take place therein convey, Byron will remind his readers that the "world" that exists on the island is created according to *Lambro's* taste, who is still permeated, albeit unwittingly (in virtue of the impact of the "clime"), with a sense of "Ionian elegance" (line 441-2).

63. *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 53, lines 421-424.

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scription of the pirate's pursuits with a strong hue of parody.[64] Yet, the horizontal axis that connects the modern Greek topos with its universal Western counterpart is not enfeebled, but rather reaffirmed by this internalization of the Greek fall within modern Greek national consciousness. *Lambro's* moral ambivalence may be inherent in his modern Greekness, but his character still remains paradigmatic and comparable to that of other potentates, who act under more official mantles:

> *Let not his mode of raising cash seem strange,*
> *Although he fleeced the flags of every nation,*
> *For into a prime minister but change*
> *His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation;*
> *But he, more modest, took an humbler range*
> *Of life, and in a honester vocation*
> *Pursued o'er the high seas his watery journey,*
> *And merely practiced as a sea-attorney.*[65]

Modern Greek identity, conceived as an ironic version of essential Greekness functions thus in the poem as a focal point where the unresolved contradictions that constitute Byron's ironic perspective on the modern world meet and confront each other. The Greek identity of Byron's heroes foregrounds the relevance of the Levantine socio-political world to Western modernity, while the survival of the ancient Greek spirit in characters who exhibit a wide range of modern vices, retains the Greek ideal at the core of Byron's ironic commentary on the modern fate of the descendants of the Hellenes in the wider metaphorical sense.

Yet, Byron's reworking of the philhellenic theme in *Don Juan* is not limited to the process outlined above, i.e. the internalization of the Greek fall within the consciousness of his modern Greek heroes. What is particularly important in this respect is the subtle enrichment of the philhellenic theme in Byron's later work with an additional level of ambiguity that foregrounds the ambivalent relationship between modern literature and political rhetoric – a problem that Byron addresses in the Greek episode of *Don Juan* through an implicit reference to his own previously acquired status as a poet

64. See for example *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 174, lines 1389-1392: "At last her father's prows put out to sea,/ For certain merchantmen upon the look, / Not as of yore to carry off an Io, / But three Ragusan vessels, bound for Scio".

65. *Don Juan*,, canto iii, st. 14.

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of Greece. It is important to note that this personal reference in *Don Juan* is deeply embedded –we may even say that it is effectively concealed– within an overt nationalization of the content of romantic philhellenism, as it had been expressed earlier, by Byron himself, in *Childe Harold*. Indeed, the content of the "Isles of Greece", the supposedly separate song of the modern Greek bard which is incorporated between the eighty- sixth and the eighty seventh stanza of the third canto of *Don Juan*, evokes quite clearly Byron's own direct admonitions to the Greeks in *Childe Harold*.[66] The content is the same, but the voice of Byron's earlier authorial persona is now identified with the voice of a modern Greek bard. At the same time, the sincerity of this modern Greek philhellenic voice is highly problematized: .

He deem'd, being in a lone isle, among friends
That without any danger of a riot, he
Might for long lying make amends;
And singing as he sung in his warm youth,
Agree to a short armistice with truth.[67]

The literal context within which philhellenic feelings are pronounced in *Don Juan* is not merely different but clearly antithetical to that of *Childe Harold*: The persona who sings the national/philhellenic hymn is neither a foreign traveller nor a solitary modern Greek patriot, but a modern Greek bard who sings in the midst of modern Greek mirth, contributing with his song to *Haidee's* and *Juan's* illegitimate feast. Byron's description of the bard as a pliable entertainer and flatterer of the powerful,[68] and especially the ironic parallels he draws between the Greek bard and the Lake Poets,[69] place the supposed national anthem of the Greeks in a strongly parodic context. The essential truth of what is expressed in

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66. See *Don Juan*, canto iii, "Isles of Greece", verse 14, lines 767-772: "*Trust not for freedom to the Franks-/ They have a king who buys and sells:/In native swords, and native ranks,/ the only hope of courage dwells;/ But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,/ Would break your shield, however broad*". and compare with *Childe Harold*, canto ii, st. 76.

67. See *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 83, lines 660-664.

68. *Ibid.*, canto iii, st. 78 - 86.

69. *Ibid.*, st. 93-95. On Southey in particular see also *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 79: "He praised the present and abused the past,/Reversing the good custom of old days,/ An eastern anti-jacobin at last/ He turn'd, preferring pudding to no praise-/ For some few years his lot had been o'ercast/By his seeming independent in his lays,/ But now he sung the Sultan and the Pacha/ With truth like Southey and with verse like Crashaw".

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the song is not denied – yet it is emphatically qualified and relativized. Indeed, the literal socio-political context that envelops the song appears to ultimately determine its ideological significance. The sincerity of the Greek bard appears to depend upon his age, upon his subjective considerations concerning political circumstance and, finally, upon his national identity: Romantic philhellenism becomes fraught with conceptual and ideological ambiguity, precisely to the extend that the vision of resurrection that it entails becomes a national dream, addressed to the modern Greek community of the island.

Again, in stanza 87, Byron refuses to resolve the tension that arises between the philhellenic trope contained in the song and the nationalized mode of address which is ascribed to the modern Greek bard on the literal level; the truth –value of the "Isles of Greece" continues to oscillate between the realms of reality, desirability, possibility and moral imperative:

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in these times he might have done much worse:
His strain display'd some feeling - right or wrong;
And feeling, in a poet, is the source
Of others' feelings; but they are such liars,
And take all colours - like the hands of dyers.[70]

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In the last lines of the stanza Byron finally resigns from the attempt to settle the relationship between the nationalized voice of the bard and the truth of the song. Gradually, the emphasis slips from determining the truth-status of the national dream of Greek resurrection towards a wider appreciation of the power of poetry to inculcate feelings amongst its audience, irrespective of their truth. Thus Byron's reworking of the philhellenic theme in *Don Juan* leads to an appreciation of the partial and to a certain extend deceptive ideological content of

70. See *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 87. The ambivalence of the word "they" in line 791 ("*they are such liars*") is telling: "they" might correspond to "feelings", "poets" or, even, Greeks, since there are other moments in the poem where the Greeks are characterized as "liars" (See for example, Byron's parenthetical comment on the Greeks as liars par excellence in canto iii, st. 38, lines 297-298). There is a continuity between the pliable character of the Greek bard, his Greek identity, his poetic persona and the feelings he conveys through his song, a continuity which the ambivalence of these lines accepts and accommodates.

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all national literary traditions and "fashions";[71] But also, on a more positive level, it leads towards a re-affirmation of poetry as a literal historical factor that plays a significant role in the intellectual evolution of the modern world. Indeed, we may read Byron's comments here as an overt recognition of the rhetorical potential inherent in every mode of poetical address. Yet, what is even more important for our present purposes is that Byron's own vocabulary on this issue retains the tension between the literal and the literary levels of signification at the center of his exploration of this wider theme. In Byron's own terms, the recognition of the rhetorical potential of all literature is tantamount to an overt acknowledgement of the materiality of words:

> *But words are things, and a small drop of ink,*
> *Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces*
> *That which make thousands, perhaps millions, think:*[72]

The insertion of the "Isles of Greece" in the third canto of *Don Juan* plays, thus, an important role on the ideological level of the poem. Furthermore, it provides internal literary evidence that during the last phase of his development as a poet Byron's perspective towards romantic philhellenism had been significantly altered in virtue of a wider and growing concern with the ideological ramifications of modern literature; an issue that he perceived as closely linked with the ambiguities arising between literary and literal truth, on the one hand, ideological content and poetic form on the other.

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Keeping these observations in mind, it is now time to return to the representational and symbolic levels of the Greek episode in *Don Juan* in order to examine anew how this altered ideological perspective on philhellenism' –which, in many ways, enhances our general appreciation of Byron's achievement as a romantic ironist– prompted him to re-examine the rela-

71. In the stanza that precedes the "Isles of Greece" Byron hypothetically places the modern Greek bard in front of a series of alternative national audiences, in order to emphasize the pliability of his voice according to various literary traditions and fashions. Placed against this background, the ambivalent truth of the dream of Greek resurrection contained in the song becomes paradigmatic and comparable to a wide range of nationalized literary truths. See *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 86: "In France, for instance, he would write a chanson;/ In England, a six canto quarto tale;/ In Spain, he'd make a ballad or romance on/ The last war-much the same in Portugal;/ In Germany, the Pegasus he'd prance on/ Would be old Goethe's – (see what says de Stael)/ In Italy, he'd ape the Trecentisti; In Greece, he'd sing some sort of hymn like this t'ye".

72. See *Don Juan*, canto iii, st. 88, lines 793-795.

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tionship between Greece as a literary *locus* and Greece as an actual place, raising issues of authority and identity that his earlier treatment of the modern Greek theme in *Childe Harold* had largely left unexplored.

As we have seen, in *Childe Harold* Byron's travelling persona retained an unchallenged authority over the significance of the Greek *locus*. It is true that even in Byron's early work this significance appears to be ambiguous and fraught with tension; yet, in *Childe Harold*, this has very little to do with Byron's exploration of the subjective intricacies of modern Greekness in the limited, literal and national sense of the term. Furthermore, the Greek topos does not properly belong to the Greeks in *Childe Harold* – it still remains what Greece actually was at the time, a country enslaved and ruled by the Ottomans. On the contrary, on the Greek island of *Don Juan*, there is a conspicuous absence of any sign of authority either of Turks or Franks; in effect, the only conflict of authority that surfaces on the level of the plot –both literally and symbolically – is a conflict between two modern versions of Greekness. The first corresponds to the philhellenic idyll of *Juan* and *Haidee*, and to their common, temporary rule over the island. The second corresponds to *Lambro's* Greece, a self-sufficient and essentially autonomous modern topos that occupies a much more permanent position within the wider world that the mock-epic as a whole posits.

Let's now examine the relative authority of *Juan*, the "Frank" *Ulysses*, over the two above-mentioned versions of modern Greekness. It is clear that *Juan* is an intimate and indispensable element of the modern Greek topos, as this is constituted through the narrative of his idyll with *Haidee*. When *Juan* is expelled from the island, the idyll ends and *Haidee* dies. Yet, the specific function of *Juan's* persona within the narrative structure of the idyll requires further examination, for, as we will see, it is primarily through the interplay between *Haidee's* and *Juan's* subjectivities that Byron transposes the significance of the philhellenic dream from the realm of the universal to the realm of the national.

Indeed, throughout the narrative of the idyll, *Juan's* persona remains remarkably passive. Not only the development of the plot is totally independent of his actions, but also on the level of consciousness, his subjectivity appears to be totally submerged under the romantic spell of the idyll. Even when he is literally asleep, his capacity to grasp subliminally the illusionary and temporary nature of his salvation is not awoken. Immediately after the first meeting of *Juan* and *Haidee* in the second canto, Byron tells us in stanza

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134 that «Juan slept like a top, or like the dead»[73] and in the following stanza that «Young Juan slept all dreamless»[74]. When *Haidee* falls asleep, on the contrary, her sleep is not death-like but filled with visions:

> *Not so Haidee; she sadly toss'd and tumbled,*
> *And started from her sleep, and, turning o'er,*
> *Dream'd of a thousand wrecks, o'er which she stumbled,*
> *And handsome corpses strew'd upon the shore;*[75]

The dialectic between *Haidee's* alertness of consciousness and *Juan's* death-like sleep continues in stanzas 195-198 of the second canto, when *Juan* sleeps in *Haidee's* arms, whose "soul" is "o'erflow'd" by "Love's and Night's, and Ocean's solitude".[76] Here, Byron's authorial voice identifies itself with *Haidee's* feminine perspective, while the description of her sleeping lover –"So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,/ And all unconcious of the joy 'tis giving"[77]– re-invokes *Juan's* passivity, a recurring state of consciousness which remains ambivalent between existence and non-existence. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that *Juan's* passivity renders his persona particularly susceptible to objectification. Here, as well as in many other instances within the episode, the "Frank" *Ulysses* appears much more like the cherished object of *Haidee's* love, than as her active lover. Sharing *Haidee's* thoughts, Byron literally comments:

> *There lies the thing we love in all its errors*
> *And all its charms, like death without its terrors.*[78]

In opposition to Byron's recurrent references to Juan's 'sleeping' sub-conscious, Byron's accounts of *Haidee's* visionary dreams within the episode construct a conceptual thread that gradually leads us to the very center of Byron's reworked interpretation of modern Greek subjectivity in *Don Juan*.

The sub-theme of dreaming *Haidee* reaches its apex in the fourth canto, immediately prior to *Lambro's* entrance in the room where the lovers sleep. On the level of the plot, the appraisal of the lovers is the crucial event that disrupts the

73. See *Don Juan*, canto ii, st. 134, line 1066.
74. *Ibid.*, st. 135, line 1073.
75. *Ibid.*, st. 138, lines 1097-1100.
76. *Ibid.*, st. 198, lines 1577-1579.
77. *Ibid.*, st. 197, lines 1571-1572.
78. *Ibid.*, st. 197, lines 1574-1575.

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idyll, reconstitutes *Lambro's* authority over the island and promotes the story by expelling *Juan* from Greece. That Byron chooses to introduce us to the closure of the idyllic period of the island with a long narration of a dream may be read as a reference not only to the dream-like quality of the vision of Grecian innocence that the idyll as a whole conveys, but also as a comment concerning the transitory and illusory status of all nostalgic attempts to return to an Edenic state of existence.

Yet, we may note that the content of the dream itself is not idyllic and, furthermore, the dream is clearly and exclusively *Haidee's*: She dreams of herself being tied on a rock and being threatened by the sea; then, emancipated by her own efforts, she fruitlessly pursues along the beach a white apparition that ultimately escapes her grasp. Finally, the dream reaches its apparent climax with the discovery of *Juan* lying dead in a sea-shore cave.[79] At first glance, this seems to be the precise moment when the philhellenic topos constructed by the idyll is shattered within *Haidee's* consciousness, and indeed, *Juan's* 'death' in the dream may be interpreted as a pre-figuration of the abrupt closure of the idyllic period of the island on the level of the plot. At the same time, however, when examined against the background of *Haidee's* earlier dreams, but also against Byron's overall presentation of *Juan's* persona within the episode, *Haidee's* visualization of her lover as a corpse hardly constitutes an abrupt revelation, able to dislocate the identity of the main *dramatis personae* in such a profound way as to disrupt and re-arrange the symbolic infrastructure of the plot. Viewed from a perspective situated *within Haidee's* subjectivity, *Juan's* prefigured loss, appears as the fulfilment of a premonition that was present in the text from the very beginning of our story.

A more careful reading of the relevant stanzas indicates that *Haidee's* real awakening, in effect her awakening not merely from her dream within a dream, but also from a state of consciousness that evades the dislocating ambiguities inherent in her own subjectivity as a modern Greek maiden is not prompted from the mere recognition of *Juan* as a relic, but rather from a further mental step, taken by her dreaming consciousness in its final moments. Still dreaming, *Haidee* focuses on the aspect of dead *Juan's* face,

> *And gazing on the dead, she thought his face*
> *Faded, or alter'd into something new–*
> *Like to her father's features, till each trace*

79. See *Don Juan*, canto iv, st. 31-34.

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More like and like to Lambro's aspect grew-
With all his keen worn look and Grecian grace;
And starting, she awoke, and what to view?
Oh! Powers of Heaven! What dark eye meets she there?
'Tis - 'tis her father's- fix'd upon the pair![80]

The metamorphosis *Haidee* witnesses in the last moments of her dream constitutes a real revelation– a revelation that strikes not only at the center of *Haidee*'s own subjectivity, but also at the center of *Don Juan's* mock-parallelism to the *Odyssey*: Indeed, *Juan* and *Lambro* share a problematic common origin, their inter-textual relationship to the archetype of *Ulysses;* they double an identity, that could not but remain singular if the relevance of the poem to its literary archetype was to remain unilinear and unproblematic. Up to the moment that the two modern *Ulysses* meet on the literal level of the plot, *Juan's* arrival to the island and *Lambro's* return home appear to correspond in antithetical and parallel ways to the Homeric subtext of the poem: *Juan's* arrival and salvation by *Haidee*, follows the Homeric episode on which it is based in an unproblematic, positive manner: We can imagine *Juan* as *Ulysses* and *Haidee* as *Nausica*, despite the altered historical and social context. *Lambro's* return on the contrary is more or less a parody of the Homeric *nostos*. And yet, *Lambro's* return is necessary, for *Juan* to continue his story, to awake from the dream of Grecian innocence and re-enter the world. Through its inter-textual allusions, the poem reaffirms what is also conveyed through its narrative content: If both a nostalgic and an ironic way of relating to the Hellenic referent are possible, the ironic way is fundamental for the progress of the plot.

At the same time, the overall structure of *Don Juan* reminds us that *Juan*, and not *Lambro*, is the universal *Ulysses*. *Juan's* passive role within the philhellenic idyll corresponds to an early stage in the evolution of his modern persona and it is precisely in virtue of this placement of the Greek episode close to the beginning of *Don Juan's* narrative that *Juan's* character within the idyll is capable of evoking much more clearly than either *Lambro* or *Haidee* the Hellenic referent as a universal and multivalent element of the Western literary tradition. *Lambro*, on the contrary, is a much more partial and literal *Ulysses*. The construction of his persona is firmly grounded upon the descriptive level of the episode's plot, while Byron's emphasis on the national facets of his identity does not only mediate between *Lambro's* literality and the symbolic appeal of his persona as a mod-

80. See *Don Juan*, canto iv, st. 35.

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ern *Ulysses*, but also, by the same token, delimits this appeal within a much more fractured, literal, nationalized and politicized interpretation of modernity.

Ultimately, however, amongst the three *dramatis personae* that constitute the core of the Greek episode in *Don Juan* it is neither the Frank nor the Greek *Ulysses* who leads us to a deeper understanding of Byron's interpretation of modern Greek national identity in the last phase of his development as a poet. The key-figure in this respect appears to be *Haidee*. Unlike *Juan* and *Lambro*, *Haidee* does not merely represent on the level of the plot the intricate and complex relationships between literal and literary Greece, the Hellenic referent and modernity, the national and the universal. The construction of her persona is a more elaborate one: it does not only involve the delineation of her identity, but also the construction of a subjectivity able to mediate amongst the multiple levels of signification that Byron ascribes to Greekness. In other words, if *Haidee* is able to discern in the last and transitory phase of her dream the undercurrent familiarity of her lover and her father, the Frank and the Greek *Ulysses*, this is because she already belongs and participates, on the level of Byron's poetics and on the level of her own consciousness, to both Greek worlds, the literal and the literary. Maybe it is superfluous to point out here that her visionary dreams are, in an inverted and introverted way, distinctly philhellenic. She dreams of relics: The recurrent emergence of dead and handsome things in her sleeping consciousness undermines and disrupts the Grecian idyll of her woken life and ultimately renders the Frank *Ulysses* she dreams about a mere dead metaphor. As such, the literary *Ulysses* leads her back, inescapably, to the literal, modern *Ulysses* represented by her father.

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Like *Haidee*, we may argue, modern Greek national consciousness in *Don Juan* is considered capable to grasp the ironic connotations of Greekness – to internalize and move beyond the nostalgic dream of Grecian innocence, towards a deeper acknowledgement of its own complex modernity. Indeed, like Byron's travelling persona in *Childe Harold*, *Haidee* manages throughout the idyll to hold together the old Greece and the new in a state of creative tension; Yet, as the conclusion of *Haidee's* dream tells us, Byron hardly ignores the problem that arises from the total identification of Greek national consciousness with a Byronic/philhellenic frame of reference. Unlike *Harold's*, *Haidee's* Byronic subjectivity is textually situated *within* the national boundaries of the modern Greek topos. Thus *Haidee's* persona cannot survive –neither literally nor formally– the dissolution of identity that the philhellenic conflation of Greek specificity and Greek universality entails: *Juan's* metamorphosis to her father reveals in the most intimate

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manner the instability of her own existence within the multidimensional Greek world: On the psychological level, both her filial relationship to her father and her amatory relationship to *Juan* are irrevocably disrupted through conflation. In this sense, *Haidee's* premonitions of death during the episode do not merely concern the metaphorical status of *Juan's* persona, but also pre-figure her own literal and formal dissolution as the episode progresses towards its end.

Indeed, the last twenty stanzas of the Greek episode in *Don Juan* consist of a long narrative of *Haidee's* gradual mental paralysis and eventual death.[81] In effect, even prior to this final part of the episode –from the very moment of the appraisal of the lovers by *Lambro* onwards– the successive transformations of *Haidee's* persona, both physical and mental, remain at the center of Byron's plot. For example, during the narrative of *Juan's* and *Lambro's* mock-encounter in stanzas 37-49 of the fourth canto,[82] Byron emphatically foregrounds the filial relationship between his two 'modern Greek' heroes, *Haidee* and *Lambro*, rendering it the primary site of conflict upon which the symbolic confrontation between the hellenic/idyllic and the modern/ironic versions of Greekness is staged.[83] During this conflict, *Haidee's* persona undergoes a first metamorphosis: her aspect grows more and more alike her father's, as her opposition to him in defense of *Juan* grows.[84] The narrative of her fatal breakdown after *Juan's* expulsion from Greece starts with a long reference to her "Moorish" origins from the side of her mother – and this is the first time that Byron brings up this dimension of *Haidee's* identity within the

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81. See *Don Juan*, canto iv, st. 54-73.

82. The confrontation between the Frank and the Greek *Ulysses* on the level of the plot is indeed a mock-encounter on the symbolic level, since it does not lead to the annihilation of either of the two *personae*, but merely to the restitution of *Lambro*'s authority over the Greek topos and to the expulsion of *Juan* from Greece.

83. We may identify here one more instance of the textual strategy through which Byron juxtaposes the literary and the literal connotations of Greekness within the narrative of the Greek episode in *Don Juan*. Note that the personal and literal relationship that connects the two modern Greek figures who confront each other here on the level of the plot, functions, at the same time, as an inverted projection of the metaphorical filial line of inheritance that connects Greece and Western modernity on the literary frame of reference addressed by Byron's text.

84. See *Don Juan*, canto iv, st. 44-45, especially st. 44: "He gazed on her, and she on him; 'twas strange/How like the look'd! the expression was the same;/Serenely savage, with a little change/In the large dark eye's mutual-darted flame; For she too as one who could avenge,/If cause should be- a lioness, though tame:/Her father's blood before her father's face/Boil'd up, and proved her truly of his race".

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text.[85] From then on, Byron describes *Haidee's* gradual descend into madness and mental death, the first stage of which corresponds to an ambivalent state of existence, during which *Haidee's* immobile body still remains internally alive and beautiful, like a classical work of art:

The ruling passion, such as marble shows
When exquisitely chisellíd, still lay there,
But fixíd as marbleís unchanged aspect throws
Oíer the fair Venus, but for ever fair;
Oíver the Laocoonís all eternal throes,
And ever-dying Gladiatorís air,
Their energy like life forms all their fame,
Yet looks not life, for they are still the same.[86]

Haidee's further metamorphoses do not need to detain us here in detail. What is important to note, though, is that from the moment of *Haidee's* revelation concerning the undercurrent similarity between *Juan* and *Lambro*, her own persona loses all formal stability and successively slips, in Byron's text, through multiple levels of textual signification, corresponding to different genres of modern romantic literature. Thus *Haidee* briefly becomes an actual modern Greek heroine placed within an historical Grecian tale, an exotic female figure arising from an orientalist context, an aestheticized work of art upon which Byron poetically comments, a phrensied woman and a ghost –like apparition, like the figures encountered in the context of gothic tales[87]; Finally, Byron will take leave of *Haidee's* persona, ascribing it, together with *Lambro's*, to an internal myth of the modern Greek popular tradition: After her death, Byron tells us, philhellenic *Haidee* survives in the context of the modern Greek topos as a local legendary figure: her story is extracted for the context of his own mock-epic to become a literal theme of a modern Greek popular song.[88]

In conclusion, we may observe once more that the visions of Greece and the perceptions of Greek national identity that emerge both from *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* are complex images that acquire their significance from their entanglement with Byron's wider preoccupation with the moral, existential, cultural and

85. See *Don Juan*, canto iv, st. 54-57.
86. *Ibid.*, canto iv, st. 61.
87. *Ibid.*, canto iv, st. 62-68.
88. *Ibid.*, canto iv, st. 73.

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political problems he ascribes to modernity. In this respect, Greece, in all its detailed specificity, remains for Byron from first to last an open *locus*: The multiplicity and openness of its significance might be perceived on all levels of Byron's poetics: Byron links Greece thematically to universal issues, but also involves himself intimately as a poet in the paradoxes he describes. This intimate involvement does not merely pass through the construction of travelling personae that point implicitly to his own biography and status as a poet of Greece, but also through his direct commentaries and digressions that frequently situate his authorial voice beyond the descriptive level of the plot of his travelogues.

Finally, to bring together the questions raised in the first and in the second part of this article, it appears that in order to appreciate fully the mediation that Byron accomplished in the context of British and European philhellenism of the 1820's, between Greek, British and European modernity, between actual and literary Greece, and between the European/universal and the nationally circumscribed connotations of Greekness, it is necessary to take into account both the process by which his outward philhellenic persona was constructed and idealized by his contemporaries, and the internal evolution of his own philhellenic voice. Far from being a static element within his wider ideological outlook, or a static theme within his poetic universe, Byron's romantic philhellenism was simultaneously the product of his long-term personal engagement with actual and literary Greece and a dynamic element of his poetics, closely linked with the wider evolution of his authorial voice. Thus, the importance of his contribution to subsequent European and national discourse on Greek modernity extends by far the creation of the influential orientalist or romantic/heroic images of Greece and the Greeks that are generally construed as Byronic. It passes primarily through Byron's in depth exploration of the subjective ironies involved in the simultaneous contextualization of Greece within multiple and frequently antithetical registers of signification, leading us from the exploration of the internal ambiguities of philhellenic perceptions of Greece, towards the reconsideration of the ambiguous impact that these philhellenic perceptions have had upon the internal evolution of modern Greek national self-perceptions.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

ΜΑΡΓΑΡΙΤΑ ΜΗΛΙΩΡΗ: *Λογοτεχνία και πολιτική, η Ευρώπη και το έθνος. Η φιλελληνική διαμεσολάβηση του Βύρωνα ανάμεσα στα εθνικά και τα οικουμενικά συμφραζόμενα της ελληνικότητας, στα ιδεολογικά και πολιτικά πλαίσια της δεκαετίας του 1820.*

Το άρθρο διερευνά τις ιδεολογικές και εννοιολογικές αμφισημίες που εμπλέκονται στον όρο «φιλελληνισμός», καθώς αυτός παραπέμπει αφενός σε ένα μακρόβιο φαινόμενο πολιτισμικής τάξης, δηλαδή στην σταδιακή οικειοποίηση της αρχαιοελληνικής κληρονομιάς εκ μέρους των ευρωπαίων «φιλελλήνων» ως υπερεθνικό και αυθεντικό σημείο αναφοράς της ευρωπαϊκής νεοτερικότητας, ενώ αφετέρου –και συγχρόνως– σηματοδοτεί ένα φαινόμενο ιστορικά συγκεκριμένο και κατεξοχήν πολιτικό: την νεοτερικού τύπου πολιτική κινητοποίηση του ευρωπαϊκού φιλελευθερισμού των αρχών του 19ου αιώνα υπέρ της «εθνικής» ανεξαρτησίας των νεοελλήνων. Οι δημιουργικές εντάσεις που ανακύπτουν ανάμεσα στα ευρωπαϊκά (και οιωνεί οικουμενικά) πολιτισμικά συμφραζόμενα του φιλελληνισμού και τα εθνικά και πολιτικά του συμφραζόμενα προσεγγίζονται εδώ διαμέσου του παραδείγματος του βυρωνικού φιλελληνισμού. Το παράδειγμα αυτό εξετάζεται τόσο ως προς τους εξωτερικούς όρους κατασκευής του, όσο και από την πλευρά της εσωτερικής, κειμενικής του δυναμικής. Συγκεκριμένα, το πρώτο μέρος του άρθρου πραγματεύεται την κατασκευή της ιδανικής φιλελληνικής περσόνας του Βύρωνα, τοποθετώντας την στα βρετανικά πολιτικά και ιδεολογικά συμφραζόμενα της δεκαετίας του 1820, με στόχο να καταδειχθεί η συμβολική διαμεσολάβηση που επιτέλεσε αυτή η εξιδανικευμένη εικόνα ανάμεσα στις παραδοσιακές εθνικές αξίες του βρετανικού πολιτικού στερεώματος και τις ιδεολογικές και πολιτικές προκλήσεις που αντιπροσώπευε για τους βρετανούς φιλελευθέρους των αρχών του 19ου αιώνα η αναδυόμενη «Ευρώπη των εθνών». Το δεύτερο μέρος του άρθρου διερευνά τον τρόπο που ο ίδιος ο Βύρων αξιοποίησε τη συμβολική δυναμική και τις δημιουργικές εντάσεις του φιλελληνικού φαινομένου στο τελευταίο του έργο, το *Don Juan*, προκειμένου να φέρει σε πρώτο πλάνο ένα από τα σημαντικότερα προβλήματα που συνδέουν την φιλελληνική αντίληψη για την Ελλάδα με τη νεοελληνική αυτοσυνειδησία: την προβληματική της ταυτότητας που ανακύπτει από την ταυτόχρονη εγγραφή της Ελλάδας σε δύο διακριτά και εν δυνάμει αντιθετικά σημασιολογικά πεδία, το υπερεθνικό και οιωνεί οικουμενικό πεδίο της ευρωπαϊκής παράδοσης και το αναδυόμενο πεδίο της εθνικής ιδιαιτερότητας και εντοπιότητας, το οποίο τείνει να περιχαρακώσει και να σχετικοποιήσει τους πολιτισμικούς συνειρμούς της ελληνικότητας στο όνομα της πολιτικής και συνειδησιακής αυτονομίας του έθνους.

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