Reinventing the ancient Greeks : the self-representation of Byzantine scholars in Renaissance Italy

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Conclusion

Reinventing the Ancient Greeks

Chartarum monimenta aut saxa sepulchri,
    Atria imaginibus aut variata patrum
Quaecunque est saeclis nostrum extendentia nomen
    Non nisi naturae deficientis opus. (...)
Scilicet hoc cuicumque datum est instinctu animali,
    Quaerat ut esse aliquis quomodocunque potest.

Paper monuments, tombstones, vestibules variegated with the images of our ancestors, and anything else that preserves our name for posterity, all these things are the product of a deficient nature. (…) Life instinct urged everyone to try to be someone, somehow.

Manilius Cabacius Rallus, 'Confessio erroris', SB, Ham. 561, f. 35^{v}, vv. 37-40, 45.

Manilius Cabacius Rallus of Sparta – who wrote these lines – presents an exception to everything we have seen in this study. Unlike all his fellow Greeks in the Italian diaspora, he rebelled and refused to be Greek. As he pointed out to Janus Lascaris, his Muse – born in Attica – thundered forth in Latin only out of fear to wither away.[799] And even then, Rallus' poetic voice was always at the verge of vanishing and had to be stirred out of silence by Pontanus, by Mnemosyne, by Apollo, by Felice della Rovere.[800] More than once the poet referred to himself as a 'shade', '*reliquiae meae*', a ghost on a funeral pyre.[801]

[799] *IIL* 56.15-21. I refer to the 1520-edition of Cabacius Rallus' *Iuveniles ingenii lusus* (*IIL* in short) in compliance with the table in Lamers (forthcoming b) (see in the meantime Lamers 2011). On Cabacius Rallus' poetry see Lamers (2012a), Nichols (1997, 1993), Manoussakas (1972), Altamura (1947, 1941 = 1956: 127-145). In addition to a selective edition, Lamers (forthcoming b) offers an exhaustive and critical overview of the available evidence regarding the poet's life as well as an overview and collation of printed and manuscript editions of his work.

[800] *IIL* 6.7.39, 55.

[801] See, for instance, his preface to Giulio de'Medici (future Clement VII) in ll. 35-36 as well as his elegiac letter to Jovianus Pontanus (*IIL* 6.7-8).

His talent, the gifts of his mind, were lost with his fatherland.[802] He evoked an image of himself amid oriental slaves, forced to adopt crude manners and strange ways of speech, his ancestral courage ('patrii animi') and Spartan virtue ('Spartana virtus') lying broken and shattered on the side.[803] Meanwhile, Greece crumbled. The Ottomans erased the noble ancient customs of Greece, her language and her habitual dress. They made her ultimately unrecognisable – until she had become as much the poet's *patria* as she was a hostile country ('hostica tellus').[804]

Cabacius Rallus' vocabulary of barbarism and slavery is out of line with the aspirations and self-representation of his contemporary compatriots in Italy and the generation that preceded theirs. His self-image in fact displays exactly those things cardinal Bessarion had tried to avoid for the Hellenes by means of his Greek library: voicelessness, slavery, and barbarism. In Rallus' own time, it was pope Leo X who embraced the ambition to 'restore the language of the Greeks and Greek studies which

[802] *IIL* 6.5-12: 'Quidue animam uexare semel de pectore missam, | Quid cineres pergis sollicitare meos? | Umbra ego sum similisque mei si quaeris imago | Extructis superest sola relicta rogis. | Nec mihi laudis amor mansurae aut gloria famae, | Omnia cum sensu quae periere meo. | Nec placet ingenium uigilataque munera mentis, | Omnia cum patria quae cecidere mea' [*Why do you [Pontanus] continue troubling my spirit now that it has departed from my breast, why do you continue tormenting my ashes? I am a shade and, if you ask, there is only an image of my former self left at my funeral pyre. Neither appetite for admiration nor lasting glory by fame pleases me. They all died together with my experience. Neither my talent nor the restless gifts of my mind pleases me. They all perished with my fatherland*].

[803] *IIL* 2.49-58: 'Hinc patrii cecidere animi Spartanaque uirtus | Fracta iacet, laus hinc, hinc mihi sordet honos. | Hinc etiam duro studium est placuisse tyranno. | Seruorum hinc uario iungor et ipse gregi: | Nam quos Euphratesque tulit, quos misit Orontes, | Hos comites uitae cogor habere meae. | Conferimur conorque rudes effingere mores | Sat bene nec solitus comprimit ora pudor | Iamque malo spreuit natura imbuta decorum, | Iam studia in mores longa abiere nouos' *[Here my ancestral courage lies and here my Spartan virtue lies down broken. Here my praise, my honour deteriorate. Here I labour to please even a harsh tyrant, here I, too, am joined with a diverse band of slaves as I am forced to spend my life in the company of men whom the Euphrates brought hither and the Orontes sent. We are joined, I am forced to adapt to crude customs with fair effect, and an unwonted shame silences me. Nature, imbued with evil, already scorned propriety, unremitting study already dissolves into new customs].* In verse 56, the negative conjunction 'nec' is ambiguous as the negative may apply either to the principal verb (here 'comprimit') or to some other word in the coordinate clause (here 'solitus'). In this case, I decided the matter in favour of the latter option. It is in line with the poetic inertia which Cabacius Rallus voices elsewhere and which is caused by the poet's exile and loss of his fatherland. For similar constructions with 'nec solitus' in poetry see Prop. 2.3.6 and Stat. *Theb.* 8.31.

[804] *IIL* 6.39-52.

[were] in a state of decline and near obliteration'.[805] Very much in Bessarion's spirit, the pope had established a school for Greek boys for this purpose about seven years before Rallus published his poems. Knowing that Rallus was a *familiaris* of Leo X, his self-representation as the very opposite of a successful Greek is highly notable. It entails a subtle criticism of the philhellenic tradition that was the backbone of post-Byzantine Hellenism in Italy. More specifically, his self-representation as a failed Greek in the heart of European Hellenism challenged the politics of cultural conservation and revival that inspired the Greek Academy of Leo X. Without a free 'Graecia', Rallus suggests, original Hellenism has in the end no chance to survive.[806]

But it did. It led some modern scholars to cite the Byzantines in Italy to make claims about Hellenic continuity and Greek national consciousness. Others on the contrary argued that humanist cosmopolitanism eclipsed Greek patriotism in the minds and hearts of the Byzantine expatriates, or that humanist rhetoric impeded the unrestricted expression of patriotic sentiment. A closer scrutiny of the sources suggested a more complex picture. Still, it leaves room for some more general concluding considerations, organised in three pairs of contrasting terms that run through the previous chapters: disownment versus appropriation, sameness versus distinctiveness, and unity versus diversity. Under the heading of these contrasting pairs, these final pages resume and address the two issues raised on the very first page of this study, namely how and why the Byzantine intelligentsia in Italy identified with the ancient Hellenes. By relating these outcomes to the scholarly contexts in which Byzantine scholars have traditionally been studied, they also briefly explain how this study bears upon our understanding of the relationship between Italian humanism and Greek patriotism, the Byzantines' role in the humanist movement, and the common ways of thinking about 'Greek identity' in the interval between the decline and fall of Byzantium and the emergence of the nation state Hellas.

[805] The letter of pope Leo X was written by Petrus Bembus (see Saladin 2000a: 10 with n. 15). On the Academy on the Quirinal see Pagliaroli (2004), Saladin (2000a) 101-122 and Saladin (2000b), Tsirpanlis (1983), Manoussakas (1963), Fanelli (1961). Please note that the book of Saladin cannot be read without the comments and corrections in Pontani's review (Pontani 2002).
[806] On the ideological aspects of Rallus' self-representation see Lamers (2012a).

Disownment and appropriation: Romans becoming Greeks

Ancient Greece had always been one of the places to which Byzantines could return for comfort, answers, or models for the future, apart from Rome and Scripture.[807] In the fifteenth century, for various reasons, the ancient Greek past became more prominent than it had ever been before in the Byzantine tradition. Eventually, it even eclipsed the Roman past. Especially in the Italian diaspora, Latin humanism gave the final push for the Byzantine intelligentsia in exile to embrace the Greek rubric fully and to exploit its self-representational possibilities to the fullest. The impression of continuity with ancient Greece was crucial for this. The previous chapters showed different ways in which Byzantine intellectuals managed to establish this impression. Their sense of belonging to ancient Greece, however, conflicted with the rupture which they equally experienced. The most important origins of rupture with the ancient Hellenes which they themselves noted were the impact of Roman culture on indigenous Hellenic traditions in the remote past, and especially the impact of the fall of Constantinople in their own time. They understood the impact of Roman civilisation in terms of cultural and linguistic alienation from what they perceived as original and native (see chapter 2, pp. 65-69). On the other hand, they saw the fall of their capital not only as the ruination of their fatherland, but also of the ancient Greek tradition and what it constituted: European civilisation at large (see, e.g., chapter 3, pp. 118-119).

The Byzantine intelligentsia in Italy bridged the gap with the ancient Hellenes by creating various forms of what Eviatar Zerubavel has called 'quasi-contiguity' with the ancient Greek past. They had various strategies at their disposal. First of all, they appropriated the ancient Greek past via the language they used (if they wrote in Greek) as well as via the names they applied to themselves. The fact that they called themselves Greeks was in itself a means of bridging the gap with the ancient Hellenes, especially in Greek, where the word "Ἕλληνες' distinguished the ancients from 'Γραικοί' and "Ρωμαῖοι' (see chapter 2, pp. 65-67). Yet their Hellenism was hardly a matter of linguistic usage or naming practice only. In this, it differed from the Hellenism of the majority of Byzantine intellectuals before the fifteenth century (see chapter 1, pp. 35-37). In the footsteps of Gemistos Plethon and also Laonikos Chalkokondyles the Byzantine intelligentsia in Italy made and completed the shift from Hellenism towards Greekness, or from the literary and rhetorical imitation of ancient Greek literature to the ethno-cultural identification with the ancient Hellenes as a people.

[807] Cf. Kaldellis (2007) 317.

The most explicit strategies to secure their connection with ancient Greece were ethnic anchoring (which rooted them in the remote past) as well as their claim to cultural preservation and imitation (which secured a sense of sameness over time). Sometimes they made explicit a relation of ethnic kinship that created the impression of historical continuity with the ancient past (as did, e.g., cardinal Bessarion, discussed in chapter 3, pp. 99-105); sometimes they suggested such a relation by using the vocabulary of familial relations and kinship (as did, e.g., Nicolaus Secundinus in his letter to Andronicus Callistus, discussed in chapter 2, pp. 77-78). Cultural preservation was not only dependent upon the imitation of the language of the ancient Greeks, but also upon the imitation of supposedly ancient ideals such as Hellenic freedom (as in the case of cardinal Bessarion), or the guardianship of 'Aristotelian' orthodoxy (as in the case of George Trapezuntius).

Although they did not write full-blown histories of the Greeks, the Byzantine expatriates did construct smaller narratives of Greek history in which they could position themselves and their fellow Greeks. Such small and *ad hoc* narratives helped them to connect themselves in the present with their Hellenic ancestors in the past. Cardinal Bessarion, for example, reduced the script of Greek history to a continuous battle against slavery and barbarism and the maintenance of various but especially spiritual forms of 'ἐλευθερία'. As we have seen in chapter 3, this was not only an occasional encomiastic theme in his *Encomium to Trebizond*. The motif of Hellenic freedom resurfaced in other works and, more importantly, gave ideological substance to his endeavours to maintain not only the physical and political, but also spiritual freedom of the Greek people. His view on the Greek past as a continuous battle for freedom also enabled him to define his own role in the Greek tradition. He himself did not simply represent, but rather *embodied* the ancient Greek past by his claim to imitate and replicate it.

From very different perspectives, George Trapezuntius and Janus Lascaris also constructed scripts of the ancient Greek past that pasted past and present together and in which they could position themselves. While Janus Lascaris moulded his view on Greek history on the ancient theme of Greek colonisation-annex-domestication of the world, Trapezuntius held more idiosyncratic views on the role of the Greeks – and of himself – in history (see chapters 4 and 5). All these representations of the Greek past were *ad hoc* in the sense that they were the product of the specific contexts in which they were constructed. Janus Lascaris' focus on the dissemination of Greek civilisation underpinned his argument that the Italians should help out those who taught them. It

also tacitly provided a suitable background for his own activities for it placed his own position as an expatriate professor of Greek in a respectable Greek tradition. By framing the Plato-Aristotle controversy as a cosmic struggle between good and bad, Trapezuntius created a basic contrast between Platonic-pagan and Aristotelian-Christian Greece that coloured his perspective on the place of the Greeks and himself in world history.

We must not take the post-Byzantines' claims to antiquity literally. Bessarion, for example, did not so much 'imitate' a pre-existing notion of Athenian 'ἐλευθερία', but infused an old world with new meanings. Similarly, in their representations of the ancient Greek past, the Byzantine intelligentsia in Italy could combine or lump together elements of the Greek tradition that had previously been unrelated. This is particularly clear in Johannes Gemistus' pioneering representation of 'Graecia'. In his poem to Leo X, he suggested that there had existed a country called 'Graecia' in the past that was directly related to the country he lost in 1453 and wanted to restore. To give substance to his lost fatherland, Johannes Gemistus lumped together events and figures from the ancient Greek past and tied these to a specific territory he labelled 'Graecia'. In his representation, the Calydonian hunters and the Argonauts would come to save the Hagia Sophia together with Themistocles and Pericles – a curious conjunction of pasts which makes Gemistus' representation of 'Graecia' a particularly complex site of memory, fusing the ancient Greek past with the Byzantine present as if they formed an unbroken chain (on which see chapter 6).

The Byzantines in Italy did not theorise in any depth about the historical relationship between themselves, the Hellenes and the Romans, a problem that would eventually only be solved in nineteenth-century Greek historiography. They occasionally represented the Romans as a foreign occupier (Theodore Gaza in chapter 2, pp. 66-67), a foreign but good-natured people whose rule the Hellenes had always volunteered to support (Bessarion in chapter 3, pp. 103-104), or as an originally Greek and therefore consanguineous *genus* (Janus Lascaris in chapter 5, pp. 171-176). Instead of really identifying with the Romans, it seems that they saw those whom we now call Byzantines as Hellenes who (had) guarded the *imperium Romanum* and had even adopted Roman features, especially in their language and institutions. The idea that their *Greek* instead of *Roman* ancestors had held the Roman empire was, from a traditional Byzantine perspective, a fundamentally western point of view, even though in the West the Roman legacy of the Greeks in the East was disputed. Unlike Manuel Chrysoloras they did not maintain that they were Greco-Romans, but rather denied that

they were Romans at all. Although beyond the scope of this study, it is notable that at least in the texts discussed here, non-Christian antiquity outweighed Christian Hellas. Although the Byzantine intelligentsia surely saw the Greek Church Fathers as part of 'their' literature, in their representations of ancient Greece they did generally not emphasise Christian elements. Nor did they claim specifically Christian symbols for themselves except for the Church of Hagia Sophia, as in Johannes Gemistus' poem, or the three Theologians, as did Janus Lascaris in his speech for Charles V.

Apparently, then, the Byzantines in Italy had recognised that the real Romans lived in the West. Also, they realised that to be Greek had certain advantages, especially in Italy, where interest in Greek language and literature flourished. The identification with the ancient Greek past naturally enabled the Byzantine intelligentsia in Italy to retain something of their self-esteem now that they had lost their empire. Stressing ethnic links with the ancient Hellenes and emphasising cultural preservation equally served to maintain the coherence of the group in times when it found itself threatened by political fragmentation and cultural assimilation. Already before 1453 the Greeks had been divided over various Italian, Ottoman and even different 'Byzantine' domains, while the fear of cultural assimilation was particularly strong after 1453. It resonates, for instance, in the poetry of Manilius Rallus invoked above. Even so, to properly understand their rejection of Roman Byzantium we must not see their self-representation as Hellenes in Italy outside the context of what Richard Jenkins called the 'external moment' of identification, i.e. the way the dominant Italian target-audience identified and evaluated the Byzantines (see the Introduction, p. 17-18). The Latins welcomed the Byzantines in Italy as Greeks and not as Romans. From the ninth century onwards, westerners had called the Byzantines Greeks, long before they themselves eventually embraced the label in the fifteenth century (see esp. chapter 2, pp. 57-65). Therefore, while Byzantine Greekness was a radical innovation in Byzantium, it was the normal way to frame the Byzantines in the West. The application of the Greek rubric to the Romans of the East had originally been a means to deny the Byzantines' claim to Roman authority. But from the end of the fourteenth century onwards, Italian humanists began to see the Byzantine *Graeci* also in more positive terms, namely as the representatives of ancient Greek language and literature from whom they wanted to learn. This enabled Byzantines to exploit to their own advantage the Greek rubric assigned to them in the West.

Sameness and distinctiveness: Latin humanism as a motor for Greek patriotism

As Italian humanists began to see Byzantines as the representatives of Greek learning, this as it were *forced* the Byzantine intelligentsia to present themselves in those terms. To refuse the Greek rubric assigned to them would have meant to refuse the Italian means of social categorisation. This would have disrupted relations between Byzantines and Italians. Probably the Byzantine intelligentsia realised that the Greekness imposed upon them gave them a huge advantage over, for instance, German and French humanists who claimed ancient Germanic, Trojan or even remote Greek roots, but could not lay claim to the Greek legacy in the same way the Byzantines could. Even so, just as Italian humanists catalysed the patriotism of French and German humanists by stressing their inferiority as non-Italians,[808] they also fuelled the Greek patriotism of the Byzantine scholars in a more negative way. Although they did not generally call the Byzantines *barbari* as they called the peoples of the North, they did stereotype and stigmatise them as *Greeks* just as the Romans had done (see chapter 2, pp. 86-93). The *lotte* or battles between Byzantine Greeks and Italian humanists particularly illustrate that Italian humanists caused Byzantine scholars to defend their Greek in-group against out-group stereotyping. So, for example, when Agaso ridiculed George Trapezuntius because he was a Greek, the Cretan scholar defended Greece out of patriotic *pietas* (see on this affair chapter 2, pp. 88-92 and chapter 4, pp. 139-140). Just as French and later German humanists, the Byzantines had to defend their claims to the cultural precedence of their in-group vis-à-vis Italian cultural hegemony. Therefore, the Byzantines' confrontation with Latin humanists empowered rather than reduced their awareness of the ancient Greek past and so fuelled their Greek patriotism.

Although they accepted the rubric ('Graeci') and role (representing Greek learning) which Italian humanists had assigned to them, this is not to say that the Byzantine scholars of the Italian diaspora simply parroted Latin views on what it meant to be Greek, or that their Greekness was merely a strategy to win the benevolence of their Latin audience. Instead, they manipulated the Greek rubric assigned to them to their own advantage and benefit. This appears from the fact that they used the connection with the ancient Greeks to gain cultural superiority, to formulate their claims of cultural debt, and their tendency to 'Hellenise' the Latins.

Even in their state of political and military disarmament, their privileged kinship with the ancient Hellenes provoked a strong sense of cultural superiority in the Byzantines.

[808] Hirschi (2012) 142-156.

While they were wholly dependent upon western support, they could boast an impressive parade of renowned heroes among their ancestors. This enabled them to maintain a kind of collective honour when their political and diplomatic status was lower than ever. The combination of a diplomatically low but culturally high status probably triggered the Byzantines to exploit and emphasise their cultural efforts also in diplomatic contexts.[809] So, they found that non-Greeks were indebted to the ancient Greeks for their achievements in the most important domains of human civilisation. As they saw themselves as heirs of the ancient Greeks, they claimed a *remuneratio* (compensation) for their ancestors' achievements. Although Chalcondylas referred to a recompense for Greek military support in the Gothic Wars, the post-Byzantines mostly claimed compensation for the cultural achievements of the ancient Hellenes. The claim of cultural debt had already been implied by cardinal Bessarion in his memorandum to Constantine Palaeologus (see chapter 3, pp. 108-109). As we have seen, Janus Lascaris worked out the various political possibilities of this claim, first in a cultural setting in his *Florentine Oration*, and later in a more properly diplomatic setting in his speech for Charles V (see chapter 5 and chapter 3, pp. 120-122).

Obviously, their notion of cultural superiority sat uneasily with competing Latin claims to cultural precedence as classically formulated by Laurentius Valla (see chapter 2, p. 58). Although they did not respond directly to Latin claims to Roman superiority, the Byzantine scholars in Italy did point out to their Italian audience that the ancient Greeks had spread their language and civilisation all over the world *before* the Romans, and that the Romans had themselves recognised this. The ancient Greco-Roman past conveniently erased the memories of the more recent past in which their relations with the Latin West had been much more troubled and even openly hostile, as Manuel Chrysoloras and Manuel Kalekas realised very early (chapter 5, p. 163).

But apart from reminding the Latins of Roman philhellenism, the classical tradition also provided clues to present the Greeks and Latins as a related people not only culturally, but also ethnically. If the Latins had Greek roots, the Byzantines could appeal to the notion of *consanguinitas* to demand for support. This argument entails a strategical problem. The Latins must be made Greek enough to give substance to the argument of *consanguinitas*, but at the same time they must be sufficiently different to maintain Greek distinctiveness and, what is more, superiority.

[809] As Hirschi (2012) 98-101 explains, two eminent measuring sticks of national honour in fifteenth-century Europe were precisely 'internationally certified' heroes and achievements as well as diplomatic precedence.

This tension between intergroup differentiation and assimilation appeared most clearly in the *Florentine Oration* of Janus Lascaris, discussed in chapter 5. In the speech, Lascaris assimilated the Latin out-group to his Greek in-group in terms of their ethnic relations, their shared past and common cultural features. On the other hand, he maintained the boundaries between in- and out-group as he stressed the linguistic and cultural degeneration of the out-group; the Latin language had degenerated from Greek due to the vicinity of the barbarians, while in the domain of Latin literature imitation of Greek examples gave way to mere derivation and translation. Despite their ancient ethnic and cultural relations, then, this degeneration of Latin culture made the in- and out-groups sufficiently different to maintain the positive distinctiveness of the authors' in-group. Janus Lascaris thus harnessed the Latins' admiration for Greek culture and their attempt to appropriate it to the best advantage of the Greeks. In this context, it is notable that the common ground which he found in the ancient past for themselves and the Italians was a *common Greek* and not a really *shared Greco-Roman* common ground as it had been for Manuel Chrysoloras. Constantine Lascaris, for instance, emphasised that everything praiseworthy about Calabria and Sicily was quintessentially *Greek*. Johannes Gemistus also *Hellenised* the inhabitants of Marseilles and the mysterious Iberian 'Gravii'. In his *Florentine Oration*, finally, Janus Lascaris reduced all the successes of Romans and Latins to the successful imitation of Greek examples and ancestors.

What do the Byzantines' various appropriations of the classical tradition as well as their intense identification with the ancient Greeks tell us about their place in the humanist movement? In *Creating East and West*, Nancy Bisaha showed that the Byzantines' approach to the Ottoman Turks indicates their role in the humanist movement, 'specifically their skilfull manipulation of the deepest concerns of their Latin audience'.[810] Their self-representation and usage of the Greek past demonstrates something very similar. It shows them as skilled participants in Latin humanism and at the same time adds to their one-sided image as cultural transmitters.[811] It actually complicates the common way of looking at the textual transmission from Byzantium to Italy. In this sense, it confirms the general idea that cultural transmission is not a simple, one-directional process like 'high-fidelity broadcasting of classical music'.[812] Although

[810] Bisaha (2004) 117.

[811] See also the Introduction, pp. 12-13. Karamanolis (2003) was the first to criticise the fact that Byzantine scholars have too often been denied the role of full participants in the humanist movement (see the Introduction, p. 12 with n. 42).

[812] Grafton in Grafton & Blair (1990) 2.

this might sound commonplace at first sight after decades of cultural theory, even a sophisticated modern critic of modern cultural imperialism observed that, in the Renaissance,

> 'the Greek classics served the Italian, French, and English humanists without the troublesome interposition of actual Greeks. Texts by dead people were read, appreciated, and appropriated by people who imagined an ideal commonwealth. This is one reason that scholars rarely speak suspiciously or disparagingly of the Renaissance.'[813]

The early modern situation is then contrasted with what, according to this author, usually happens in the modern era, where 'thinking about cultural exchange involves thinking about domination and forcible appropriation'.[814] Yet the previous exploration of post-Byzantine self-representation in the Italian diaspora showed some 'troublesome Greeks' at work. Although they did not have much choice other than to embrace the Greek rubric which the Italians assigned to them, they interposed themselves in the process of cultural transmission as the most rightful heirs of the 'dead people' whose texts they claimed as theirs. In this context, the humanist appropriation of the Greek legacy appears far less uncomplicated – if not to say less innocent – than the pictures painted in books as diverse as *Scribes and Scholars* and *Culture and Imperialism*.[815] But even though at least some modern Greeks experience the classical heritage of Greece as a burden, imposed by European philhellenism,[816] it seems that the Byzantine scholars in Italy wholeheartedly embraced the legacy of ancient Greece.

Unity and diversity: 'Greek identity' and the multiplicity of Greekness

As we have seen, the Byzantine expatriates in Italy all identified with the ancient Hellenes and called themselves Hellenes or Greeks. Yet this uniformity in their self-identification must not conceal the fact that they represented their Greekness often in very different ways. To speak of 'Greek identity' in this context would presuppose a

[813] Said (1994) 235.
[814] Said (1994) 235.
[815] Reynolds & Wilson (1974) 108-146, Said (1994) 234-235.
[816] The contemporary critic Nikos Dimou, for example, wrote that 'if any Western import has harmed Greece, it's been neither rationalism, nor the political system, nor technology. It's been the idea of the continuity of Hellenic civilization. Oddly, this idea, which today is waved about like a banner by anti-Westerners, is an entirely Western notion' (Dimou 1998). For a historical account of the transition from western to 'indigenous' Hellenism see esp. Hamilakis (2007) 57-123.

uniformity of vision the sources do not corroborate. If we look closely at the evidence, moreover, we see that there was not one single coherent discourse about Greekness, even though ancient Greece was invariably important. For example, it is very difficult to establish the decisive criteria for Greekness in the first place. We have seen that shared language, education, birthplace and sometimes group character all played their role, but the application of such criteria was highly dependent upon context. This explains that even an Italian could be called a 'Hellene' by virtue of his knowledge of ancient Greek in one context, whereas he was seen as a member of the Latin out-group due to his Latin or Roman ancestry in another.

Also in other respects, the multiplicity of viewpoints is the norm. While, for instance, for Johannes Gemistus territoriality constituted Hellenism, Constantine Lascaris principally dissociated the Greek tradition from its traditional heartland of Greece. While Plethon saw a revival of Spartanism as a solution to further disintegration, his former student Bessarion emphasised the Athenian elements in the Greek tradition. Marcus Musurus saw Plato as one of the protagonists of the Greek people, whereas Trapezuntius imagined him plotting the downfall of the West together with Mohammed. While Bessarion and Janus Lascaris believed that the Hellenes would survive through the preservation of Greek literature, the exile poetry of Cabacius Rallus suggested that the survival of Hellenism was impossible without a free Greece. And so forth and so on.[817]

An explanation for the multiple representations of Greekness is that the post-Byzantines in Italy shaped their views on Greekness in all kinds of different contexts with various purposes that the case studies tried to reconstruct. To recall Erving Goffman's metaphor to explain his notion of self-presentation (see the Introduction, p. 17-18), there was not one single stage on which a well-orchestrated choir of Byzantines wore their pre-fabricated Greek masks, but a multiplicity of stages that forced individual Byzantines to rethink their ways of performance and the use of their attributes. There were moreover no controlling institutions that could have engendered a coherent ideology of Greekness, there was no large-scale propaganda that sustained it, and even

[817] In the light of this wide variety of sometimes diverging viewpoints, it is at first sight remarkable that there was no general discussion about what it meant to be Greek among the Byzantines in Italy. The Byzantine intelligentsia presented themselves as Greeks in various ways, but did not enter into dialogue about the implications for their common understanding of what it meant to be Greek. One reason might well be that they avoided such debates because they did not want to become divided about their Greekness as this was the only thing that properly bound them together.

before 1453 there had not been a state or polity promoting forms of national Hellenism.[818] Therefore, the Hellenic self-representations under study do hardly represent a coherent view on what we would perhaps now call a 'national Greek identity'.

Yet despite the different views on Greekness, the Byzantines' self-representation in Italy, their appropriation of ancient Greece and their identification with the ancient Hellenes, bear upon the heated debate over the emergence of a sense of Greek national consciousness in the interval period between the decline of Byzantium and the rise of the nation state Hellas. It has been one of the aims of this study to redress but not to rewrite the relation between the Byzantine diaspora and the evolution of Greekness after Byzantium. In some respects, the self-representation of the Byzantine scholars in Italy prefigures the self-representation of the Greek intelligentsia that appeared on the European scene in the age of nationalism. This is especially so where it concerns the reinvention of the ancient Hellenes as precursors and ancestors of the Greeks. Yet this fact has generally been overlooked by modernist accounts of 'the making of modern Greece', while nationalist stories of 'the emergence of the Greek nation' often overstress it. The previous chapters challenge both views.

As modernist accounts narrow down their scope to modernity, the early modern period falls outside their scope. The fact that the Greek War of Independence and the new Greek state found their ideological basis in ancient Greece is not to say that the 'Hellenising of the *Romaioi*' is the prerogative of the emergent Greek intelligentsia of the 1790s.[819] Yet in current accounts of the history of the national Greek idea the reinvention of the ancient Greeks has been considered to be the 'distinctive contribution of the Romantic movement', going back to the 1790s. The same has been said about the conjunct notions that the inhabitants of Hellas descended from the ancient Hellenes and that the liberation of Greece was not the creation of something new but the restoration of an ancient status quo.[820] The previous chapters showed that the Byzantine

[818] As Kaldellis (2007) 389 points out, Hellenism (to the degree that it was not understood as paganism) generated the fewest institutions if compared to the Roman and Christian traditions in Byzantium.

[819] Cf. Politis (1998) 1, 8.

[820] Beaton & Ricks (2009) 3. Cf. Beaton & Ricks (2009) 7, where it is emphasised that the notable importance of the idea of national restoration is in the success of the Greeks in establishing, from the 1820s onwards, a link with antiquity 'as first and foremost among the grounds for the legitimacy of the modern nation state'.

scholars of the Italian diaspora used the same strategies to legitimise their privileged link with the ancient Greeks.

As a consequence, their case reminds us that strategies like those mentioned emerged long before the political and cultural ideology of nationalism began to crystallise. Although this study did not aim at rewriting the history of Greek national identity or national thought, it does confirm the increasingly accepted view that symbolical constructions we now construe as specifically 'national' have a history that predates the era in which nationalist ideologists began to re-appropriate them and adapted them to their needs. As such, the reinvention of the ancient Greeks by the Byzantine intelligentsia in Italy points at the importance of studying the archaeology of national symbols and images to understand, historically, the particular symbolical force and cultural significance of modern nationalism.[821] At the same time, however, it is important to stress that the case of the Byzantine intelligentsia cannot be adduced to demonstrate the existence of Greek national continuity in the fifteenth century. Such a view obscures something very important. As national accounts understand the role of the expatriate scholars as part of a teleological evolution towards Greek liberation, they cast a shadow over the specificities of the Byzantines' historical position, concerns and challenges, and often impose nationalist views and attitudes on fifteenth-century minds. However, late- and post-Byzantine appropriations of the ancient Greek past emerged from cultural and historical contexts that were very different from the circumstances in which modern and contemporary Greeks appropriate the ancient past of Greece. A comparative exploration of the various contexts in which ancient Greece was appropriated in different periods would certainly contribute to a more differentiated understanding of what is often lumped together under the monolithic notion of 'Greek identity'.[822] Such an approach emphasises changes in contexts and functions of what are

[821] This is argued with particular force by Anthony D. Smith in his recent criticism of modernist approaches to national symbolism. See, most recently, Smith (2009).

[822] Useful conceptual and methodological cues for further research along these lines can be found in Beaton (2007), comparing evidence from the early nineteenth and mid-twelfth centuries in order to shed new light on the question of Hellenic continuity and national identity. For a similar but less text-oriented approach see Magdalino (1991). Not only cultural and historical circumstances of self-representation differed, but also the objects of appropriation were different in the early modern and modern periods. While, for example, modern Greeks claim ancient works of art and architecture (Hamilakis 2007), the Byzantine intelligentsia in Renaissance Italy asserted their cultural ownership of Greek language and literature more than anything else.

only vestiges or monuments of the ancient past from a narrowly national perspective.[823] As the previous chapters have shown, the reinvention of the ancient Greeks in the Italian diaspora was a conscious revival rather than a clear mark of manifest continuity with the ancient past. If we want to see continuity after all, we may find it in the constant reinvention and reappropriation of the ancient Greeks which in itself testifies to the vitality and significance of the Greek tradition.

[823] Cf. Alexiou (2002) 9-16.