

# The study of modern Greece in a changing world: fading allure or potential for reinvention?

Tziovas, Dimitrios

DOI:

[10.1017/byz.2015.12](https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2015.12)

License:

None: All rights reserved

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Tziovas, D 2016, 'The study of modern Greece in a changing world: fading allure or potential for reinvention?', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 114-125. <https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2015.12>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

© Cambridge University Press 2016

Checked April 2016

**General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

**Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

## **The study of modern Greece in a changing world: fading allure or potential for reinvention?**

Dimitris Tziiovas

*University of Birmingham*

[D.P.Tziiovas@bham.ac.uk](mailto:D.P.Tziiovas@bham.ac.uk)

Periodically reviewing developments in a subject area and reflecting on the past and future directions of a discipline can be useful and instructive. In the case of Modern Greek Studies, this has rarely been done, and most of the reviews of the field come from USA.<sup>1</sup> So I take this opportunity to offer some thoughts on what has propelled changes in the field over the last forty years, on the fruitful (and occasionally trenchant) dialogue between Neohellenists inside and outside Greece and on the future of modern Greek studies as an academic discipline. During this period modern Greek studies have flourished with a number of new trends, debates and scholarly preoccupations emerging. At the same time many research students received their doctorates from departments of Modern Greek Studies, particularly in the United Kingdom, and were subsequently appointed to teaching posts at Greek, Cypriot or other European, American and Australian universities. Modern Greek departments in the UK have often been the driving force behind the discipline since the early 1980s. New approaches were introduced, challenging ideas were debated and influential publications emerged from those departments, which shaped the agenda for the study of modern Greek language, literature and culture. It should be noted that the influence of those departments in shaping the direction of modern Greek Studies has been out of all proportion to the number of staff teaching in them.

Modern Greek associations and societies outside Greece have contributed substantially to the promotion of the discipline by organizing conferences, publishing journals and launching websites. The American Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA) was founded in 1968 and its *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* first appeared in 1983; the Modern Greek Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand was set up in 1990 and the European Society of Modern Greek Studies in 1995. These associations testify to the growth of Modern Greek Studies at the end of the twentieth century and have

---

<sup>1</sup> See the relevant sections of the special issues of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 15. 2 (1997), 24.1 (2006), 29.1 (2011), 33.1 (2015).

contributed to a transnational dialogue and the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas. During this period more resources for scholars and students became available. Greek language dictionaries, grammars, new editions of texts, introductions to modern Greek literature and history, literary dictionaries, bibliographies (both general and more specialized) were published inside and outside Greece. Rare periodicals, old editions of books and other archival material were digitized and this has facilitated research enormously.

At the same time the field faced disciplinary and institutional challenges with the rise of critical theory and the changing relationship with emerging fields such as European Studies or with other cognate disciplines (e.g. Classics and Byzantine Studies) with which they had coexisted institutionally for a number of years. Though the two endowed chairs in the UK (the Koraes Chair of Modern Greek and Byzantine history, language and literature at King's College London and the Bywater and Sotheby Professorship of Byzantine and Modern Greek language and literature at Oxford) combined Byzantine and Modern Greek language and literature, this symbiosis became increasingly strained as the two subjects developed in different directions and Modern Greek Studies acquired scholarly identity and intellectual confidence.

The conceptualization of Modern Greek Studies as part of a broader field called 'Hellenic Studies' continued at both institutional and scholarly levels. A number of programmes in the USA have taken the name Hellenic Studies while past university departments (e.g. Birmingham's Hellenic and Roman Studies Department) or current centres and institutes (e.g. Centres for Hellenic Studies at King's College London and University of Reading, the Hellenic Institute at Royal Holloway, or the Hellenic Observatory at the London School of Economics) have followed a similar pattern. In 1991 David Ricks proposed a syllabus of Greek poetry from Homer to Patrikios for students of 'Greek' *tout court*<sup>2</sup> while books and anthologies promoted a similar 'Hellenic' approach. In the past it was the language which provided the Hellenic link but this has gradually been weakened as fewer language courses, covering different periods of the language, are now offered by university departments and terms such as 'Byzantine Greek', used for summer language courses, seem to undermine notions of linguistic continuity. So has a new vision of the subject and its institutional position been developed since the 1970s?

As Greece became more integrated into Europe (joining the EEC in 1981 and the eurozone in 2001—notwithstanding the current economic crisis), some tried to set Modern

---

<sup>2</sup> D. Ricks, 'Greek *tout court*?', *Arion*, 1.3 (Fall 1991) 29-44.

Greek Studies within the context of European Studies (the Eleftherios Venizelos Chair of Contemporary Greek Studies at the Hellenic Observatory, which is part of the European Institute, was established at the LSE in 1996) and to follow the trend observed in the teaching of other modern European languages to expand beyond the narrow confines of language and literature to the fields of film, politics, gender and cultural studies.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime scholars teaching and researching in various non-Modern Greek Studies Departments or Centres across the UK contributed influential books and articles on Greece to the enrichment of the field, thus further expanding the horizons of Modern Greek Studies.

In the 1980s and 1990s the proliferation of studies by Anglophone anthropologists working on Greece, most of whom had been students of John Campbell at St Antony's College, Oxford, raised the profile of Modern Greek Studies and had a significant impact on the understanding of Greek society and culture outside Greece. They mark the transition of the field from the *aesthetic*, driven by artistic appreciation, to *ethnographic* era, driven by the 'counter-politics of cultural minorities'.<sup>4</sup> Now that some of these anthropologists have started moving away from Greece to new fields of research, the current economic crisis seems to offer new opportunities for anthropologies of crisis and ethnographic perspectives on public spaces and cityscapes. By comparison with anthropologists the number of historians in the UK universities doing research on modern Greece was and still is relatively small and the numbers have gone down even further in the last few years, despite the fact that in Greece proper the number of history departments has increased and historical studies have flourished.<sup>5</sup> The three histories of modern Greece in English by Richard Clogg (1979, 1992, 2002), Thomas W. Gallant (2001, 2015) and John Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis (2002, 2010), which have appeared or been reprinted in the last few decades together with some other influential studies (notably the work of Mark Mazower), have meant that there are now sufficient bibliographic resources available in English for teaching modern Greek history courses without recourse to Greek

---

<sup>3</sup> Following this trend a number of departments were renamed during the early 1990s (e.g. from Departments of French to Departments of French Studies). In this respect, it should be noted that my chair is the first and only such chair in the UK in Modern Greek Studies and not just in Modern Greek or Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature, notwithstanding the fact that the most recently updated subject benchmark statement for the subject by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (December 2014) refers to 'Modern Greek', not Modern Greek Studies.

<sup>4</sup> V. Lambropoulos, 'Modern Greek Studies in the age of ethnography', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 15.2 (1997), 199.

<sup>5</sup> Compared to the scarcity of historians in the UK and the rest of Europe (with the exception of Greece and Cyprus) there is a slight increase in the number of historians dealing with modern Greece in US and Canadian universities.

sources. Though the lack of books on the Greek War of Independence and the period of Ottoman Rule after the Fall of Constantinople was remedied by a retired English schoolteacher,<sup>6</sup> the range and impact of historical research conducted outside Greece can be compared favourably with that in the area of literary studies or linguistics.

Given the scarcity of Modern Greek historians in the Anglophone world, it was left to a broad-ranging Byzantinist, Anthony Bryer, to offer an alternative vision in his historical overview of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies published in this journal in 1988. There he argued that ‘it was history and the *Tourkokratia*, rather than language and *laographia*, which would most effectively bring Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies together’.<sup>7</sup> Institutionally, Bryer implemented this vision with a ‘new blood’ post in Ottoman Studies in 1984 and the expansion of the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies. Though Bryer’s suggestion was not widely endorsed, there was a convergence between the study of history and literature in the last quarter of the twentieth century due to the fact that the ‘nation’ and the ‘past’ were topics widely debated in both areas and historical fiction in Greece and elsewhere was also revived following postmodernist trends. Fictional invention and authentic archival or oral material have often gone hand in hand in Greek novels since the 1980s, blending literary writing with historiography in various versatile ways.

The increasing interest in constructions of the past and representations of the nation is related to the foregrounding of questions of identity and Greekness and the re-assessment of the Ottoman and Balkan legacies as repressed sites of national trauma. The diplomatic isolation of Greece during the controversy over ‘ownership’ of the name Macedonia fostered the sense of a ‘brotherless’ nation and the perception that outsiders do not understand the Greek position. This, in turn, intensified the nation’s introversion and promoted Greek exceptionalism. *Difference* and *exclusion* emerged as the dominant tropes of scholarly investigation and framed discussions inside and outside Greece. Under the impact of post-colonial studies, Greece has been seen as a semi-colonial site – a case of colonialism without actually having been a colony – and has occasionally been compared with Ireland, one of the few European countries regarded as postcolonial. Since the 1990s the discussion as to whether the discourse of Balkanism is a subspecies of Orientalism has

---

<sup>6</sup> D. Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom: The Greek War of Independence, 1821-1833* (London 2001) and *Greece, the Hidden Centuries: Turkish Rule from the Fall of Constantinople to Greek Independence* (London 2010).

<sup>7</sup> A. Bryer, ‘Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies: a partial view’, *BMGS* 12 (1988) 22.

also contributed to a postcolonial take on the region and its transition from empires to nation-states.

The formation of the Greek nation has been related to an imaginary process or dream work and it has been claimed that ‘to study Greece as a nation is to study a particular historical form or expression of the national fantasy, for the national essence of Greece as such, as ‘Being’, “does not exist”’.<sup>8</sup> Such claims have engendered a good deal of discussion and placed constructions of the nation, cultural memory and the re-imagination of the past at the heart of historical and cultural investigation. Nation-state building has been seen as a dynamic field of scholarship, while Greece has served as a reference point in all major studies on nationalism (e.g. the work of Elie Kedourie, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson). Some Greek historians focus on the history of the Greek state (George Dertilis, Kostas Kostis<sup>9</sup>) while others, particularly non-Greek historians (Thomas W. Gallant, Molly Greene<sup>10</sup>), argue that the focus should be on the Greeks as a broader, diasporic category, susceptible of comparative and transcultural research.

Migration, an emphasis on forgotten communities (e.g. the Greek-speakers of the Caucasus) and the growing awareness of minorities in Greece has led to studies exploring different definitions of what it is to be Greek in recent centuries, the history of the Greek diaspora, and representations of otherness in Greek literature and culture.<sup>11</sup> Issues of identity and the reconsideration of otherness offered new opportunities for social scientists, historians and literary scholars to work together. For example, the growing interest in the Greek diaspora and the rethinking of Greek modernism has contributed to a re-assessment of the work of Nicolas Calas (1907-88) while diaspora communities, particularly in the USA, has provided a lifeline for some Modern Greek programmes.

---

<sup>8</sup> S. Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford 1996) 38.

<sup>9</sup> G. V. Dertilis, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κράτους, 1830-1920* (Herakleion 2014, earlier editions Athens 2004 and 2005) and K. Kostis, *‘Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της Ιστορίας’: Η διαμόρφωση του νεοελληνικού κράτους, 18ος -21ος αιώνας* (Athens 2013).

<sup>10</sup> See the Edinburgh History of the Greeks, the 10-volume series covering the history of Greece and the Greeks from antiquity to the present day, edited by Thomas W. Gallant. Molly Greene has written the volume covering the period from 1453 to 1774.

<sup>11</sup> P. Mackridge and E. Yannakakis (eds), *Ourselves and Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonian Cultural Identity Since 1912* (Oxford 1997), E. Politou-Marmarinou and S. Denissi, *Ταυτότητα και ετερότητα στη λογοτεχνία, 18ος-20ός αι.* (Athens 2000), R. Clogg, *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of Plural Society* (London 2002), D. Tziouvas (ed), *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700* (Farnham 2009), D. Christopoulos, *Ποιος είναι Έλληνας; το καθεστώς ιθαγένειας από την ίδρυση του ελληνικού κράτους ως τις αρχές του 21ου αιώνα* (Athens 2012).

Moreover, studies on Greek women, youth, gender and sexuality proliferated, bringing scholars from various disciplines closer. While the women's movement in Greece in the 1980s was more politically oriented and concerned with changes to family law, researchers outside Greece published some important studies on women and gender.<sup>12</sup> These studies are not an isolated academic phenomenon and their publication can be paralleled in the explosion of fiction (both popular and literary) written by women. In the last thirty years most of the best-selling writers of Greece have been women, whereas in the past the limelight was reserved for their male counterparts.

A further demonstration of the impact of Anglophone Neohellenists is their role in introducing the term 'modernism' to modern Greek literary studies, replacing earlier, by now dated or simply rather vague, terms used by Greek critics. Two edited volumes published in the 1990s were instrumental in this respect while in this journal the question had been raised even earlier as to whether postmodernism was possible in Greece.<sup>13</sup> Similarly it has also been claimed that the absence of a significant avant-garde or an indigenous modernist tradition make postmodernism the 'impossible paradox of contemporary Greek literature'.<sup>14</sup> Since the late 1980s, when these views were first expressed, explorations of modernist and postmodernist trends in Greek literature and culture have proliferated.<sup>15</sup>

It was not simply the introduction of the term 'modernism' which made the difference, but also the attempt to define the features, the representatives and the boundaries of Greek modernism. This coincided with a re-assessment of Ritsos' poetry and its relationship to ancient myth and a revisiting of the work of the Surrealists. In the 1980s linguistic prejudice towards *katharevousa* receded and this facilitated the reassessment of surrealism, which led to the wider dissemination of the Greek Surrealists' work.

The increasing self-reflexivity of this period, when the field displayed an eagerness to examine its critical practices and guiding principles, led to a desire to study the history

---

<sup>12</sup> J. Dubisch (ed.), *Gender & Power in Rural Greece* (Princeton 1986), E. Varika, *Η εξέγερση των κυριών: η γένεση μιας φεμινιστικής συνείδησης στην Ελλάδα, 1833-1907* (Athens 1987), P. Loizos and E. Papataxiarchis (eds), *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* (Princeton NJ 1991), Karen Van Dyck, *Kassandra and the Censors: Greek poetry since 1967* (Ithaca NY 1998).

<sup>13</sup> M. N. Layoun (ed.), *Modernisms in Greece? Essays on the Critical and Literary Margins of a Movement* (New York 1990), Dimitris Tziouvas (ed.), *Greek Modernism and Beyond* (Lanham MD 1997) and G. Jusdanis, 'Is postmodernism possible outside the "West"? The case of Greece', *BMGS* 11 (1987) 69-92.

<sup>14</sup> V. Lambropoulos, *Literature as National Institution: Studies in the Politics of Modern Greek Criticism* (Princeton NJ 1988) 156.

<sup>15</sup> See Y. Kallinis, *Ο μοντερνισμός ενός κοσμοπολίτη* (Thessaloniki 2001), M. Pourgouris, *Mediterranean Modernisms: The Poetic Metaphysics of Odysseus Elytis* (Farnham 2011), G. Katsan, *History and National Ideology in Greek Postmodernist Fiction* (Madison 2013).

of Greek criticism, the reception of texts and writers or the way literary trends had been developed in Greek literature. The transition from the concept of an all-embracing tradition to the eclecticism of the canon in the study of literature was due partly to a familiarity with developments in critical theory and partly to the rehabilitation of some writers who had emerged from obscurity, thus challenging existing literary hierarchies.

Attention turned to idiosyncratically experimental writers such as Melpo Axioti, Yannis Skarimbas and Nikos Gavriil Pentzikis who had been considered representatives of an alternative but overlooked version of Greek modernism. New editions of their work appeared and made them more widely accessible. The re-evaluation of these writers and the explosion in the production of fiction at the end of the twentieth century shifted the focus of scholarly interest from poetry to prose. Since the 1980s growing attention has also been paid to nineteenth-century prose fiction. A number of forgotten novels have been reprinted and the fictional production of the period has been re-assessed. Earlier views about the quality of these narratives have been reconsidered and this has led to a growing number of studies on nineteenth-century fiction. It might even be that the exploration of nineteenth-century popular fiction is related to the explosion of fiction at the end of the twentieth century and the emergence of new categories of fiction addressed to a wide range of readers.

The study of Greek fiction took off during this period and the attention paid to experimental narratives rocketed. While writers of fiction became increasingly interested in narrative techniques and metafictional practices, in poetry there was a return to traditional forms (e.g. the sonnet) and rhyming patterns, accompanied by studies on the versification used by Greek poets.<sup>16</sup> Interaction in the arts also continued unabated, leading to new synergies. In the past it was poetry being set to music; in recent years we have seen a number of prose texts adapted for the stage as well as for the screen.

The international reputations of C. P. Cavafy and Nikos Kazantzakis were consolidated over the same period. English translations of Cavafy proliferated, while his unfinished poems (published in Greece in 1994) were published for the first time in English by Daniel Mendelsohn.<sup>17</sup> More than any other poet Cavafy has continued to attract international interest and it is a matter of urgency that the vast amount of secondary material generated by his work (studies, translations, performances, exhibitions, events) be

---

<sup>16</sup> N. Vayenas (ed.), *Νεοελληνικά μετρικά* (Herakleion 1991) and *Η ελευθέρωση των μορφών: η ελληνική ποίηση από τον έμμετρο στον ελεύθερο στίχο (1880-1940)* (Herakleion 1996).

<sup>17</sup> C. P. Cavafy, *Complete Poems*, trans., with introduction and commentary, by D. Mendelsohn (New York 2009).



collected and archived in one place for future research.<sup>18</sup> Kazantzakis has also continued to be popular; he has attracted the attention of theologians and been read as a modernist and postmodernist.<sup>19</sup> This coincided with a period of extroversion for modern Greek literature in the 1990s and early 2000s. A number of Greek novels were published in English translation (the most inaccessible market for writers not writing in English) and Greek literature was actively promoted at book fairs (e.g. Frankfurt 2001), literary festivals or other events in Europe and in the USA.<sup>20</sup> Younger writers have also displayed a confident cosmopolitanism by setting their stories outside Greece and making an effort to compete on the international scene. Greece's entry into the eurozone and the staging of the Olympic Games in 2004 translated into a kind of cultural self-confidence which was soon to be shattered by the crisis.

Thanks primarily to Anglophone scholarship, two rather neglected genres, travel writing and biography, have attracted scholarly attention. Travel writing has been seen as reflecting the ambivalent position of Greece between Europe and the Orient, the idealized image of the country informed by antiquity and its harsh, modern reality. The study of travel writing offered the opportunity for a re-examination of the discourses of Hellenism and orientalism and challenged old stereotypes by bringing together women's writing, post-colonialism and classical reception. It also led to questioning earlier Greek approaches to travel writing defined in narrow literary terms. Topographies of Hellenism, imaginary geographies and studies on travellers to Greece opened up new avenues in

---

<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the purchase of Cavafy's archive by the Onassis Foundation offers an opportunity for the collection and the archiving of new material related to Cavafy's oeuvre. The Kazantzakis Museum in Myrtia (Crete) could also take a similar initiative for the work of Kazantzakis.

<sup>19</sup> D. J. N. Middleton, *Novel Theology: Nikos Kazantzakis's Encounter with Whiteheadian Process Theism* (Mason GA 2000), *Broken Hallelujah: Nikos Kazantzakis and Christian Theology* (Lanham MD 2007) and R. Beaton, *Ο Καζαντζάκης μοντερνιστής και μεταμοντέρνος* (Athens 2009). A new English translation of *Zorba the Greek: The Saint's Life of Alexis Zorba* by Peter Bien has recently been published (New York etc. 2014). Special mention should be made to Peter Bien's edition of *Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis* (Princeton 2011) because there is no equivalent edition in Greek.

<sup>20</sup> Translation studies also developed during this period in Greece, and the translations of Greek literary texts in other languages have been collected and studied. See E. Stavropoulou, *Βιβλιογραφία μεταφράσεων νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* (Athens 1986), D. M. L. Philippides, *Census of Modern Greek Literature: Checklist of English-language Sources Useful In The Study Of Modern Greek Literature (1824-1987)* (New Haven CT 1990) and V. Vasileiadis (ed.), *'... γνώριμος και ξένος...'* *Η νεοελληνική λογοτεχνία σε άλλες γλώσσες* (Thessaloniki 2012).

Modern Greek scholarship for interdisciplinary connections and for participating in wider cultural and theoretical explorations.<sup>21</sup>

A growing interest in biography, a genre that had never flourished or been much appreciated in Greece, is indeed a notable feature of the period. The demand for biographies (including translations of biographies) and biographical novels increased considerably in Greece. Although Greek scholars have not honed their skills in writing fully-fledged biographies and prefer biographical outlines of major poets (e.g. Kalvos, Cavafy and Karyotakis), the publication in English of biographies of Seferis and Kazantzakis and the reprinting of an earlier biography of Cavafy had considerable scholarly impact, while their Greek translations attracted wide readership.<sup>22</sup>

During the crisis films such as *Dogtooth* (2009) by Yorgos Lanthimos received more international attention than any Greek novel had done in the last forty years, thus suggesting that Greek cinema and the study thereof rose to prominence after 2009. Though the films of Theo Angelopoulos had previously received international scholarly attention, it has been argued that 2009 was a turning point ‘because it marks the beginning of both the crisis and the new international visibility of Greek cinema’.<sup>23</sup> This growing academic interest in Greek cinema and visual culture<sup>24</sup> is attested in the first history of Greek cinema in English,<sup>25</sup> an edited volume on Greek cinema,<sup>26</sup> an international conference on contemporary Greek Film Cultures in London (July 2013) and the new *Journal of Greek Media & Culture* launched in 2015.

The decline in language learning in the UK and other Anglophone universities raises the question whether the study of Modern Greek will remain central to unlocking of the riches of culture.<sup>27</sup> Modern Greek Studies might follow the example of Classics, where knowledge of Greek and Latin is no longer regarded as indispensable and the emphasis has

---

<sup>21</sup> A. Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism* (Ithaca 1995), D. Wills, *The Mirror of Antiquity: 20th Century British Travellers In Greece* (Newcastle 2007), V. Kolocotroni and E. Mitsi (eds), *Women Writing Greece: Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel* (Amsterdam 2008) and D. Tziouvas ‘Indigenous foreigners: The Greek diaspora and travel writing (1880-1930)’ in Tziouvas (ed), *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700, 157-75*, C. Mahn, *British Women's Travel to Greece, 1840-1914: Travels in the Palimpsest* (Farnham 2012).

<sup>22</sup> R. Beaton, *George Seferis: Waiting for the Angel – A Biography* (New Haven 2003), P. Bien, *Kazantzakis: Politics of the Spirit*, 2 vols (Princeton NJ 1989-2007) and R. Liddell, *Cavafy: A Critical Biography* (London 1974, repr. 2000).

<sup>23</sup> L. Papadimitriou, ‘Locating contemporary Greek film cultures: Past, present, future and the crisis’, *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 2 (September 2014) 4.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Carabott, Yannis Hamilakis & Eleni Papargyriou (eds), *Camera Graeca: Photographs, Narratives, Materialities* (Farnham 2015).

<sup>25</sup> V. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema* (London 2012).

<sup>26</sup> L. Papadimitriou and Y. Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities* (Bristol 2012).

<sup>27</sup> D. Holton, ‘Can Modern Greek survive in UK universities?’, *The Anglo-Hellenic Review* 50 (Autumn 2014) 32-3.

shifted to history, culture and classical reception.<sup>28</sup> Is it possible to envisage Modern Greek Studies without language as its core component, relying instead on translated texts, studies in English and the diversification of modules by including a wide range of interdisciplinary material? The discipline seems likely to move from Modern Greek Studies as we know it today to a range of diversified discourses and studies on Greece emerging from different areas of academia. Archaeologists, historians, political scientists, film, media and drama scholars have built up a corpus of studies on Greece which could help researchers to study the country or to include it in comparative studies without knowing Greek.

This in turn raises another question: what makes a subject ‘trendy’ and brings a country to scholarly attention? In the past it was its alluring traditionalism or ‘orientalism’ that made Greece a charming country in the eyes of foreign visitors and scholars, or else the image of a nation fighting against conquerors, invaders or oppressive regimes. Exoticism and resistance gave way to conflicts and crises, which helped to maintain Greece at the forefront of scholarly attention. For example, the disintegration of Yugoslavia brought the Balkans to the fore, the turbulent decade of the 1940s and the challenge of Europeanization produced a decent scholarly output, while the economic crisis in Greece has also generated a good deal of debate and numerous publications. The growth of studies on Greek-Turkish relations and Cyprus reinforce the view that areas of conflict foster academic scholarship and attract international interest.

Are conflicts and crises sufficient to make Modern Greek Studies attractive in the twentieth-first century? It seems that we are moving towards post-national and trans-cultural studies covering wider areas or themes across several countries rather than focusing on national cultures or histories. Broader themes or questions are given priority while secondary importance is assigned to case studies or paradigms in illustrating these themes and tackling the questions. Many Greek writers, publishers and officials have become increasingly aware of this when attending international book fairs, where it seems that international audiences are no longer interested in national literatures but rather in individual authors or genres (e.g. detective novels). Developments in the field of Classical

---

<sup>28</sup> Quoting Gilbert Murray’s injunction that it is the Greeks, not Greek, who are the true object of the humanist curriculum, Edith Hall in her Gaisford Lecture at the University of Oxford argues that Oxford and Cambridge should ‘lead by example and offer challenging classics courses that do not fetishise grammar and consequently repel state-sector students who have been excited by reading classics in English’. Classical knowledge, she claims, should not be limited to reading competence in Latin and Greek, nor should classical civilization modules be treated as ‘intellectual baby food’ (E. Hall, ‘Classics for the people – why we should learn from the ancient Greeks’, *The Guardian*, 20 June 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/20/classics-for-the-people-ancient-greeks> (accessed 1 July 2015)).

Studies have been pointing in this direction for some time now, as separate Departments of Greek and Latin have merged under the title Classics or joined Ancient History and Archaeology. The transculturalism in Classical Studies has long questioned the earlier exclusive focus on Greece and Rome, and Egyptology is now considered a desirable addition to any Classics and Ancient History Department in the UK.<sup>29</sup>

Recently Paschalis Kitromilides attempted a comparison between the study of Greece inside and outside the country, pointing to an asymmetry in academic synchronization. He argued that in Greece, especially since 1974, the field had made significant progress but that in international terms it remained marginal and ‘uncanonized’.<sup>30</sup> By ‘canonization’ he meant the attainment of authority among academics and escaping the syndrome of ethnic scholarship. Kitromilides tends to criticize Neohellenists outside Greece for being too preoccupied with theory and not engaging sufficiently with primary source materials. Though such criticism is not broadly applicable, it could be argued that canonization cannot be achieved simply by demonstrating the use of primary sources but must entail developing insights, tools and theoretical frameworks that are capable of attracting the attention of other scholars. Greece can become a ‘serious paradigmatic case’, not so much by displaying the scholarly use of archives and sources in Greek as by showing its relevance to other fields. Aspiring to place Modern Greek research within a wider framework and engage with wider issues often involves tentative generalizations, bold comparisons and risky abstractions.

As an example I would cite the influential study on the ideological function of Greek *ethographia* by the leading Italian Neohellenist Mario Vitti, which has been reprinted a number of times since its first publication in 1974.<sup>31</sup> This study might now be considered dated and its findings problematic, partly because it did not carry out exhaustive research in the primary sources, yet it had a tremendous impact on the study of Greek fiction because it encouraged students and scholars to see the phenomenon of *ethographia* in broader terms and raise important questions. Though Vitti cannot be ranked among the supporters of literary theory, he was able to offer a perspective on a literary phenomenon and articulate a comprehensive approach that eluded his Greek colleagues at

---

<sup>29</sup> The future of Classics has also been debated over the same period. In this respect see P. Culham and L. Edmunds (eds), *Classics: A Discipline and Profession in Crisis?* (Lanham 1989) and M. Beard ‘Do the Classics have a future’, *The New York Review of Books*, 12 January 2012.

<sup>30</sup> P. M. Kitromilides, ‘Paradigm nation: the study of nationalism and the ‘canonization’ of Greece’, in R. Beaton and D. Ricks (eds) *The Making of Modern Greece* (Farnham 2009) 21-31.

<sup>31</sup> M. Vitti, *Ιδεολογική λειτουργία της ελληνικής ηθογραφίας* (Athens 1974; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1980, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. 1991).

that time. The same could be said about his book on the literary Generation of the 1930s.<sup>32</sup> Thus a scholar from a different academic context was able to make us think differently and more broadly or comparatively about our field.

In the past a number of bright students and promising young scholars took their chances by studying Greek language, culture or history. Nowadays it is difficult to find such students who are prepared to risk their academic future and do research on marginal subject areas. As a result Modern Greek Studies is once again becoming the preserve of scholars originating from Greece or with a Greek background. What is gradually being lost is the perspective of those who approach Greece from a non-Greek academic or ethnic background and offer alternative, refreshing and often challenging views on Greek culture. Modern Greek Studies could end up being taught and researched by Greeks writing in English for an almost exclusively Greek audience. Research on Greece might now emanate from diverse disciplines or academic departments, but fewer non-Greeks, particularly in the Anglophone world, choose to carry out research on Greek topics. Though this may reflect a wider academic trend and the general malaise affecting many small subjects, it could nevertheless lead to the gradual decline of Modern Greek Studies as an independent discipline outside Greece and its transformation into a niche heritage subject.

The field of classical reception might provide new opportunities (though of course not the only ones) for bringing together Classical, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. Neohellenists could look for new ways of making Greece a paradigmatic case for the reception of antiquity, not simply as a source of Eurocentric values or cultural exceptionalism, but for the provision of a range of modern material or ideological uses of the classical past in conjunction with attitudes to other periods of the country's cultural history. Combined with the study of the perceptions of Byzantium and the Ottoman past, classical reception could be seen as a future opportunity and one way for Modern Greek Studies to take advantage of a growing field of research.<sup>33</sup> It could also reconcile the older European pattern of housing Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies in the same academic unit with the American trend for Hellenic Studies programmes.

With the academic landscape rapidly changing, the main challenge for Modern Greek Studies is to demonstrate its relevance to areas of interdisciplinary research and secure its position within a broader academic context. However, the mantra of

---

<sup>32</sup> M. Vitti, *Η Γενιά του Τριάντα: ιδεολογία και μορφή* (Athens 1977; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1997).

<sup>33</sup> For a comparative understanding of what is going on in other disciplines a recent review of Ottoman Studies by V. H. Aksan ('What's up in Ottoman Studies', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 1.1-2 (2014), 3-21) could be helpful.

interdisciplinarity on its own will not bring salvation unless academic institutions, funding bodies and larger subject areas offer support and allow space for smaller fields or specialized areas of research. Historians, linguists, anthropologists and film specialists researching into Greece tend to affiliate primarily with their respective disciplines rather than with Modern Greek Studies. Historians working on Greece will describe themselves primarily as historians, while those working on Byzantium are likely to be identified first as Byzantinists and then as historians. Who then represents Modern Greek Studies? It is often left to literature experts and language teachers to represent the subject, while the move towards cultural studies cannot be easily negotiated due to shortage of staff or institutional constraints. Seminar series, colloquia and conferences in Modern Greek Studies at UK universities tend to have cross-disciplinary range while research projects on Greece seem to be proliferating, dispersed across academic fields and departments. Yet one gets the sense that Modern Greek Studies are shrinking for lack of interdisciplinary connections and an inability to integrate into a larger academic cohort. Perhaps the discipline is too small and insignificant to play the role of a scholarly partner. In short, Modern Greek Studies lacks status and is not listed in the subject categories of research councils. Compared to Byzantine Studies, which can connect more easily with Medieval Studies, Modern Greek Studies faces a more challenging task because its potential partner(s) are neither obvious nor immediately forthcoming. It remains to be seen just what these partners are likely to be: will it be European Studies, Classical Reception Studies, Mediterranean or Cultural Studies or indeed some other category altogether?