Cómo referenciar este artículo / How to reference this article
Athanasiades, H. (2017). Enlightenment and School History in 19th Century Greece: the Case of Gerostathis by Leon Melas (1862-1901). *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación*, 4(1), 1-27. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.14516/ete.146

Enlightenment and School History in 19th Century Greece: the Case of Gerostathis by Leon Melas (1862-1901)

Ilustración e historia de la escuela en la Grecia del siglo XIX: el caso de Gerostathis por Leon Melas (1862-1901)

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Abstract: Students in present-day Greek schools are taught History as a biography of the Greek nation from the Mycenaean times to the present. Over the course of three millennia, the Greek nation has experienced three periods of cultural flourishing and political autonomy: (i) the period of Antiquity (from the times of legendary King Agamemnon to those of Alexander the Great), (ii) the Byzantine period (from Justinian's ascension in the 6th century to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453), and (iii) the modern era (from the War of Independence in 1821 to the present day). However, in this article we argue that in the 19th century the history taught in Greek schools differed substantially from the tripartite schema described above. In support of our thesis, we examine the most popular school textbook of the 19th century, O Gerostathis, by Leon Melas. In the Gerostathis, the history of the Greek nation is identified with that of Classical Greece (i.e. from the 6th century BC to the 4th century BC), which is held up as an exemplary era worthy of emulation. In contrast, the rise of Macedon under Philip II signals the cultural decline of the Greeks and the loss of their political autonomy, which was not regained for two millennia, until the 1821 national revolution. In that period, the Greek nation ceased not to exist, but survived as a subjugate of the Macedonians, the Romans, and finally the Ottomans. The Byzantine, on the other hand, is described as an unremarkable period of decadence that is only worth mentioning in relation to its final period, that of the Palaeologus dynasty, which bestowed upon the Greeks a legacy of resistance against the Ottomans. We argue that the above reading of the Greek past owed much to the Enlightenment, which as an intellectual movement still exerted a powerful influence (albeit to a gradually diminishing degree) on Greek intellectuals up to the latter third of the 19th century.

Key words: School history; Enlightenment; Romanticism; Education; Greece; 19th century; Gerostathis; Leon Melas.

Resumen: Los estudiantes en las escuelas griegas actuales apreden la historia como una biografía de la nación griega desde los tiempos micénicos hasta el presente. En el transcurso de tres milenios, la nación griega ha conocido tres períodos de floración cultural y autonomía política: el período de la antigüedad (desde el legendario rey Agamenón hasta Alejandro Magno), el período bizantino (desde la ascensión de Justiniano en el siglo VI a la caída de Constantinopla en 1453), y la era moderna (desde la Guerra de la Independencia en 1821 hasta nuestros días). En

este artículo, argumentamos que la historia de la escuela griega en el siglo XIX difería sustancialmente del esquema tripartito descrito anteriormente. En apoyo de nuestra tesis, examinamos el libro de texto escolar más popular del siglo XIX, El Gerostathis, de León Melas. En Gerostathis, la historia de la nación griega se identifica con la historia de la Grecia clásica (es decir, del siglo VI aC al siglo IV aC), que se presenta como una era ejemplar digna de emulación. Por el contrario, el surgimiento de Macedonia bajo Felipe II señala el declive cultural de los griegos y la pérdida de su autonomía política, que nunca se recuperó durante dos milenios hasta la revolución nacional de 1821. En ese período, la nación griega dejó de existir, pero sobrevivió subyugada bajo los macedonios, los romanos y finalmente los otomanos. El bizantino, se describe como un período de decadencia poco notable que sólo vale la pena mencionar en relación con su período final, el de la dinastía Palaeologus, que otorgó a los griegos un legado de resistencia contra los otomanos. Argumentamos que la lectura anterior del pasado griego debe mucho a la iluminación, que como movimiento intelectual aún ejercía una poderosa influencia (aunque de un grado gradualmente decreciente) sobre los intelectuales griegos hasta el último tercio del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: Historia de la escuela; Iluminismo; Romanticismo; Educación; Grecia; siglo XIX; Gerostathis; Leon Melas.

Recibido / Received: 02/08/2016
Aceptado / Accepted: 02/11/2016

1. Introduction

The Greek state was constituted in 1830 when, after the prolonged War of Independence (1821-1827), a part of the Balkan Peninsula was seceded from the Ottoman Empire. The war of independence can be perceived both as a national and a social revolution that was inspired by the French Revolution and the broader set of ideas that emerged from the French Enlightenment[1]. Four years later, the first stage of the state education system, the primary school (in Greek, *demotic* school, *i.e.* the people's school), was established after the Prussian *volksschule*. During the decades that followed, the primary-school network expanded across the country to a considerable scale, given the multiple institutional and financial difficulties of the new-born state. In 1864, just thirty years after the founding of the school network, the percentage of pupils that attended primary education approximated the percentage of the relevant cohort in Western Europe, while at the end of the 19th century six out of ten children attended classes[2]. The key aim of the primary school, apart from reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3 Rs), was the moral and national edification of the youth. The pursuit of this ideological target presupposed that the central administration could control, to a considerable degree, the content and method of instruction as well as the daily school practices in every single school. However, and despite the fact that the legal framework crystallized this aspiration, the overall financial and institutional condition of the state apparatus forced the Ministry of Education to be limited to the minimum, namely, the designing of a syllabus and the setting up of

[1] For details, see Koliopoulos, Veremis (2009).

[2] Expectedly, this percentage was unequally distributed between genders, see Tsoukalas (1976, p. 392 & 396).

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ISSN: 2340-7263

committees that approved books for school use that circulated in the free-market. From the long list of approved books each teacher recommended students one or two – and more often just one in order not to place a burden on the family budget. In most cases, the book combined language teaching with elementary instruction on nature and history as well as with the transmission of dominant moral values. From comments in the press of the time and scholars' testimonies we know that from the early 1860s to the end of the 19th century, a particular book enjoyed considerable popularity: *Gerostathis* by Leon Melas[3]. Its first edition comprised a single volume in three parts. Both its length (578 pages) and its luxurious printing suggest that it was not initially published as a textbook. However, its third edition, released in 1862, comprised three separate volumes (of 195, 215 and 192 pages respectively) and made it suitable for school use in three successive classes[4]. Since then, *Gerostathis* was to be reprinted more than a hundred times and quickly spread not only within the confines of the Greek state, but to the cities of the southern-east Mediterranean where Greek-speaking communities their schools were to be found[5]. Due to its wide popularity, manifested in both its geographical prevalence and longevity, *Gerostathis* is undoubtedly the most appropriate 19th century textbook to consult in order to study the kind of knowledge and values that the Greek education system was called upon to transmit. In this article, I shall almost exclusively focus on the kind of historical material it included. As I shall try to point out, despite the fact that *Gerostathis* was primarily used as a reader, it contained so many historical narrations that it was in fact a Greek history textbook as well. Commenting on these historical narrations, Roudometof suggests that *Gerostathis* «crystallized and established the underlying intellectual justification and social purpose of education in the Greek world. It exemplified the Graeco-Christian ideology that [the historian] Zampelios invented» (Roudometof, 1999, p. 443). Such an evaluation includes *Gerostathis* and his author Leon Melas in the emerging Romantic movement of the 19th century. As I shall seek to establish here, the kind of historical understanding that *Gerostathis* conveyed as well as the image of the Greek nation that it sought to instil into students owe more to the tradition of Enlightenment than to that of Romanticism. From this point of view, it captures the institutional power of the Enlightenment scholars that by the end of the 19th century were still in control, albeit to a declining degree, of the content of education.

[3] See *inter alia* Phaedon [Grigorios Xenopoulos], (1904, p. 371); Scordelis (1885, p. 57).

[4] Specific volumes are referred to separately. See Melas (1862a, 1862b, 1862c).

[5] Cities such as Thessaloniki, Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria *etc.* See Delopoulos (1995, p. 211).

2. Leon Melas and the shaping of the modern Greek

Leon Melas (Constantinople 1812–Athens 1879), the author of *Gerostathis* («Old man Stathis»), was a prominent member of the intellectual, political, and financial élite of 19th century Greek society. He was born into a family of Constantinopolitan merchants, read law at the Ionian Academy of Corfu (1826-29) and at the University of Pisa (1829–32), and later worked in the most important towns of the then newly-founded Greek state: as a lawyer in Syros (1833-35), as an assistant state-attorney for Areios Pagos, Greece's supreme court located in Athens (1835-37), and as a state-attorney for the appellate court at Nafplio (1837-1840). In 1836, while working in Athens, he started giving free lectures in criminal law at the Gymnasium of Athens (the only secondary school at that time). In 1837, he was appointed professor in the School of Law at the recently-founded University of Athens. Yet, he later proceeded to choose in favour of another appointment: that of state-attorney for one of the two appellate courts of Greece – professorships were not particularly appealing, in terms of status and financial rewards, at that time. Leon Melas had achieved that much before he had turned twenty-five. Around the age of thirty he was actively engaged in politics. In 1841, he was appointed Minister of Justice by Prime Minister Alexandros Mavrokordatos, only to be dismissed one year later because of his contention with King Otto. In 1843, he served in the revolutionary cabinet of Andreas Metaxas and participated in the committee responsible for authoring the very first constitution of Greece, of which the final draft was presented to the Greek parliament by Melas himself in 1844. That was the year when he withdrew from politics in disappointment. Four years later Melas left Athens for London and Marseille (1848-57) where he mainly occupied himself with his family's business[6]. It was during that time and between his mercantile activities that the authoring of *Gerostathis* took place.

With Melas's biography in mind, one could hardly think of this multifarious intellectual, statesman, and merchant as an author of children's literature. But this is not as bizarre as it might initially seem. Melas's intellectual foundations were laid in the 1820s at institutions that still functioned as bastions of the Enlightenment: the Ionian Academy and the University of Pisa[7]. Like Adamantios Korais, the most eminent figure of the Greek Enlightenment, Leon Melas pinned his hopes for the uplift and prosperity of his nation on education's transformative power. Education was to shape the modern Greek, who would

[6] On the life and deeds of Leon Melas, see Stouraitis (1924, pp. 7-19); Malafantis (2006, pp. 359-363); Georgiou (2010, pp. 78-87); Salvanos and Salvanou (1949, p. 99); Sideri (1989, p. 436); Lappas (2004, pp. 78, 143-147); Melas (1967); Delis (2007).

[7] On the Ionian Academy, see Henderson (1988, pp. 20-32), Salvanos and Salvanou (1949, pp. 91-92, 185, 193).

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ISSN: 2340-7263

overcome the shortcomings of slave-mentality such as adulation, secretiveness, slandering, and slyness, so as to attain moral integrity, critical thinking abilities and the progress-seeking mentality of a citizen[8]. Melas based his *Gerostathis* on a French book titled *Simon de Nantua,* published in 1818. *Simon de Nantua* aimed at the civic education of youth. It is noteworthy that Adamantios Korais had already picked out *Simon* and included it among the books that ought to be translated in Greek. Indeed, he had urged a young Greek student at Paris named Josep Manuel Doukasto venture such an enterprise. While there was an announcement of the project in *Logios Hermes,* the journal of the hard-core of the Greek Enlightenment, the translation was never completed[9].

Leon Melas, therefore, writes *Gerostathis* in order to contribute to the shaping of modern Greeks into righteous and rational citizens, worthy heirs of their glorious ancestors. Yet he wanted to do it in an enjoyable and experiential manner, thus avoiding the rigidity and unbearable dogmatism of the moral education textbooks that up to that time (1858) monopolized children's literature[10]. To that end, he placed at the centre of his narrative Gerostathis, a much-travelled man, and a group of twelve-year-old boys, all students of the last grade. The time and place are rather clear: a small town near Ioannina (one of the prominent cities of the Ottoman Empire) just before the 1821 Greek national revolution. From scattered references in the text itself, we can determine that the action begins in the spring of 1819 and concludes in the autumn of 1820[11].

From the descriptions of everyday school-life in *Gerostathis*, we gather that educating children in Greek was not prohibited within the Ottoman Empire. We read in the book about the new school's festive opening, complete with «thanksgiving, benediction and procession» Melas, (1862a, p. 11). The syllabus quickly developed to include a range of topics, from language, ancient Greek history, and sciences (physics, chemistry and mathematics) to physical education, for which special equipment was installed in the school-yard[12]. In another

[8] Referring to Melas's generation, Lappas (2004) argues that a common characteristic of these young intellectuals who, having studied in European universities, returned to Athens eager to contribute to public affairs «was their trust in education and science and their optimistic, romantic view of the future of the nascent state» (p. 77). Melas (1862b), using Gerostathis as his mouthpiece, reports a traveller's assessment of the enslaved Greeks: «[Along with praises] he calls them sycophants, sneaks, liars, crooks, vagabonds, secretive, envious and prone to slander and aspersion». Melas claims that all these are true but their root lies «in slavery and poor upbringing» (p. 187), implying that freedom and education can reverse the situation. See also Melas (1862c, p. 131): «May the illumination of education facilitate our task and guide our undertaking».

[9] For more on the *Simon de Nantua* connexion see Patsiou (1995, pp. 66-74), Kontoyianni (2003, pp. 93-117).

[10] For an evaluation of past moral education, see Vaharoglou (2006).

[11] See Melas, (1862a, p. 11) and Melas (1862c, p. 173).

[12] On language see Melas (1862c. p. 67), on history Melas (1862a, p. 177), on science Melas (1862, p. 58) and on physical education Melas (1862c, p. 106).

passage, we read about students, parents and the local authorities visiting the school, after Sunday service, in order to be informed about the students' progress and attend the issuing of report-cards Melas (1862b, p. 25). These passages show that the popular Greek national myth about the existence of clandestine schools, which supposedly operated in the twilight of monasteries so that Greek literacy survives, had not yet been established in the 1850s, when *Gerostathis* was authored[13]. Nevertheless, the tolerance shown by the Empire towards Greek letters did not compensate for its barbarism. According to *Gerostathis*, that barbarism consisted in the Empire's indifference towards secular education and science, not in their prohibition. Therefore, in order to justify the right of Greeks to freedom, *Gerostathis* does not put forward the misery and unhappiness of thesubjugated, but the virility of the Greeks and their intellectual superiority over their despots. It is clear that Leon Melas's arguments and rationale draw on the Enlightenment tradition.

The presentation of the students' character leaves much to be desired. We find out about them only in so far as an occasion arises for Gerostathis to unfold one of his moral tales. Thus, we are presented with someone's notable deed, some other's mistaken action, unhelpful habits, emotional outbursts, and minor conflicts. Surely, this is consistent with the pedagogical views that permeate the narrative: boys of that age were considered of incomplete character, their personalities being still under development. Were they to be left to be swayed by instinct or to the haphazard influence of an uneducated and subjugated society, they would become like crooked trees, which having been swayed violently by seasonal winds when young, have since remained permanently twisted, unable to return to an upright position.

> The virtuous old man knew that the heart of a child resembles soft wax, which easily receives any impression from without; hence, children's hearts are shaped according to the good or bad exemplars that lie before them; […] and thus through imitation they gradually acquire the habit of those they imitate; and finally, the habit becomes to them second nature (Melas, 1862c, p. 25).

The timely and righteous guidance was to be provided – besides school and teacher – by Gerostathis himself. But since the author recommends him as an exemplary figure, his characterization had to be perspicuous and complete. Right from the start, we are informed that he had acquired a solid intellectual foundation by studying up to the age of eighteen at various schools in Ioannina (Melas, 1862a, p. 1). Afterwards, he «departed for foreign lands» (Melas, 1862a, p. 2). And like Homer's much-experienced Odysseus, «many were they whose

[13] Indeed, historical research has indicated that the myth spread during the 1860s to address the need of the Orthodox Church for a place in the national narrative; see Angelou (1997).

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ISSN: 2340-7263

cities he saw, whose minds he learned of»[14]. Trading made him rich, but his gains were mainly moral and intellectual: «He assiduously studied European languages, eagerly engaged with the study of moral, historical and literary works, and the social progress of European life he carefully observed» (Melas, 1862a, p. 2). Nevertheless, his favourite intellectual pursuit was the study of the «beautiful [ancient] Greek writings» (Melas, 1862a, p. 3).

Returning to his birthplace at the age of seventy, Gerostathis took advantage of his accumulated wealth and built a «spacious» school, employed two «able and conscientious» teachers from Ioannina, and sent three young men to study in «the Occident» on condition that on their return to their homeland they would contribute to its prosperity (Melas, 1862a, p. 6). The subjects he encouraged the young men to read are telling: the first was to study medicine so that he could later replace the folk-healer of the town – since a healthy bodily state is the minimum requirement for any further progress (Melas, 1862a, p. 1). The very first part of the book is even titled «Bodily health». The second youth was urged towards agronomy, clearly in order to contribute towards the improvement and rationalization of the material conditions of agrarian life (Melas, 1862c, p. 187). The second part of the book is titled 'Mental health' and the emphasis is on the value of human reasoning. The third was sent to a European arms manufacturer to become an armourer since the time would come for the nation to claim its freedom (Melas, 1862c, pp. 187-188). The third part of the book is aptly titled «The Health of the Heart» and deals with patriotism and passion for freedom. After all, as is revealed in the book's final chapter, Gerostathis was a member of the secret society *Filiki Eteria,* which paved the ground for the Greek national revolution (Melas, 1862c, p. 131). Thus, Leon Melas delineates a portrait of the ideal type of the wealthy, enlightened merchant of the early nineteenth century, who places the resources (wealth, experience and knowledge) he has accumulated during his cosmopolitan, turbulent life at the service of the emerging Greek nation.

Although general references to the «four-hundred year slavery of many sufferings» (Melas, 1862b, p. 51) are not missing, no particular incident is to be found in the whole book where the Turks resort to violence towards the Greeks, or publicly humiliate them. Only once, Gerostathis and the students witness four «men in arms» escorting a «shackled man» to Ioannina's prison. Yet, that was not one of the rebellious *social bandits* (as Hobsbawm would call them), the *klephts* of folk heroic tradition, which eventually became revolutionaries. No mention of the klephts and their deeds is to be found in *Gerostathis*. The prisoner was Nasos, an indolent young man who was left to drift to crime until

[14] Melas (1862a, p. 5) quotes *verbatim* the Homeric text, here in the Lattimore translation.

«he was discovered stealing the church's sacred vessels and now God knows what shall become of him in Ali Pasha's gaol» (Melas, 1862a, pp. 62-63, 99-101). In *Gerostathis,* slavery has less to do with the constant oppression and torment of the subjugated and more with the absence of national political autonomy, a condition with serious consequences for the general course of society and the development of individual personalities.

> It is indeed the truth my children that today we have no free homeland and therefore no autonomy, no illumination and no culture, as none of these goods is possible without freedom and a law-governed homeland. But if we have not a free homeland to defend, we have an enslaved one to liberate, and in this lies the great need for virtue, patriotism, and valour (Melas, 1862a, p. 89).

Slavery hinders social progress but not individual rise to wealth. In *Gerostathis* wealthy Christians occasionally appear, thanking God for their riches and hoping that they need not face turmoil and war and that they carry on their life of indulgence[15]. But again, the outspokenness «with which the free citizen bravely and freely expresses his beliefs, is unknown to the enslaved» (Melas, 1862a, p. 19) and their characters remain incomplete as «the days of slavery deprive the slave of half his virtue» (Melas, 1862a, p. 186). Therefore, winning freedom requires a sort of individual and collective transcendence. Gerostathis's exhortations to the students aim at such a transcendence:

> But if, perish the thought, dishonour does not appal you, if honour and esteem are not the most valuable of your earthly goods, then cease calling yourselves *descendants of the glorious Greeks* and name yourselves *dishonourable servants of dishonourable tyrants*[16].

The glorious (ancient) Greeks are the exemplars. «We must be made in their likeness», Gerostathis advises the students. We must try «through our own works, through our own labours, struggles, and virtues to emerge one day as glorious offspring of glorious forefathers» (Melas, 1862c, p. 63). But in order to resemble them, we must become acquainted with them. Gerostathis's moral exhortations and nation-minded narrations are embellished with dozens of exemplary cases derived from the past. For this reason, *Gerostathis* was used in the classroom not solely as a reading book, but as a history textbook as well.

[15] Melas (1862b, pp. 161-162) has Mr. Thanos, a notable from Arta, saying just a year before the revolution broke out: «but I hope that neither myself nor my Theodor will ever engage in war and as a result we may preserve the ways offered us by God…we want neither war nor enemies for they will make us unfortunate».

[16] Melas (1862a, p. 46), emphasis added.

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ISSN: 2340-7263

3. Gerostathis as a historical read

Gerostathis drew a favourable response from the teaching community and remained a school reader for a long time as it delivered what the times demanded from schooling: well-written material for the forging of a clear and strong national identity. But whence did Gerostathis, Melas's protagonist, draw his nation-minded narrations and exhortations? Melas states in the first two pages of his book that his sources are two: Christianity and Hellenism. On the one hand, Christianity can instil faith, love and hope into youths, qualities useful in dealing with life's adversities. On the other, Hellenic education rewards one with virtue, wisdom and valour, «the only antidotes to the evils of slavery» (Melas, 1862b, pp. 17 and 19). Melas frequently implies that he draws equally from both sources. Yet, the quantitative analysis of the text confutes him. As it is shown in Table 1, of the exemplary episodes and references that Gerostathis deploys to support his moral exhortations to the children, only 10% come from the Bible almost as many as those from daily life (11.6%). In contrast, the overwhelming majority is drawn from history (76.4%) – that is, as we shall see below, mostly ancient Greek history.

TABLE 1

The Gerostathis: exemplary episodes in the whole work

Subject	Number	Percentage
History	191	76.4 %
Religion	26	10,4 %
Stories with animals	4	1,6 %
Everyday-life stories	29	11,6 %
Total	250	100%

Note: By exemplary reference we mean both short phrases (*e.g.* a Socratic saying) and lengthy accounts.

It is not however only the number of references that matters, but also their length and subject matter. References to Greek Classical antiquity (and mythology) are in their majority brief or lengthy episodes from the lives of prominent men. Dozens of famous and not so famous figures and incidents of antiquity (certainly more than those retained by an adult when schooling is over) find their place in Gerostathis's narratives – mainly as exemplars of virtue, wisdom, valour, and patriotism, though quite a few times bad examples are also presented. Leonidas is ever present at Thermopylae to resist the barbarian invasion, Themistocles at Salamis teaches strategy and disinterestedness, Pausanias medizes

after Plataea as fame blinds the «feeble minded» and corrupts «base and ignoble hearts», Epaminondas is «worthy» and «great», but in reality unfortunate «for the circumstances at the time […] forced him to fight not for the whole of Greece, but for Thebes only»[17], and above all stands «the great citizen of Athens, the glorious Pericles, […] the most competent politician of ancient Athens». Then of course we have men of letters and arts. Socrates, who, recognizing the priority of the *polis* over the individual, drank the hemlock and «departed for the life beyond as a martyr to virtue, lawfulness and patriotism»; Aristotle, «the most erudite mind of the ancient and modern world»; Thucydides, the «greatest teacher of historiography». Sophocles, Euripides, Phidias, Praxiteles, and all «excellent poets, philosophers, sculptors and architects» are there too. Even women find a place in *Gerostathis*, if only those meeting the criteria of nineteenth century male-dominated society: *Telesilla* of Argos, Cratisiclea of Sparta and other «many Greek women, [which] inspired by the noble and lofty sense of patriotism, both ancient Greece and their sex honoured and glorified».

In contrast, Biblical references are exclusively made up of brief sayings by Jesus and, secondarily by Paul the Apostle. No parables of Jesus are utilized despite the fact that many would foster the values Gerostathis tries to instil into children. Not even a single miracle of Jesus or any of the dozens of didactic episodes of the two Testaments is to be found in *Gerostathis*. Equally absent are religious narrations of the rich Orthodox Christian tradition and of the religious folk-tradition. As we shall see below, there is only a single episode from the Byzantine Empire, the paradigmatic Christian empire. Even those exhortations of Gerostathis's that are clearly compatible with Christian morality are supported by narrations from ancient Greek history, not the Bible. For example, in order to stigmatize vindictiveness, Gerostathis begins with certain suitable sayings by Jesus such as his call on the cross in favour of his executioners «Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do» etc.[18]. All these take up no more than five lines of text. Yet, in corroboration of even this very Christian call, he then produces sixteen whole pages comprising eight different episodes about deeds of men of classical antiquity (Melas, 1862c, pp. 111-127).

The imbalance between history and religion, Hellenism and Christianity, appears even in the choice of mottos, the fragments of prose or poetry, which Melas prefixes to the beginning of his book and of each chapter, serving to indicate his ideological orientation. The book's epigraph, comprising two maxims, one Biblical and one from classical literature, foreshows a balanced relationship

[17] Melas (1862a, pp. 115-16). The rest of Melas's direct quotations in this paragraph can be found respectively in: Melas (1862c, pp. 74-76; 1862c, p. 156; 19862a, p. 50; 1862b, p. 32; 1862c, pp. 144-145).

[18] Melas (1862c, p. 110) *verbatim* quotes the Bible (Luke 23:34); here in the KJV translation.

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ISSN: 2340-7263

between Hellenism and Christianity. This concomitance is consummated, in the book's ending, by the epitaph on Gerostathis's tombstone, which comprises a quotation from the Gospels and one from *The Apology* by Plato (Melas, 1862c, pp. 190-191). Nevertheless, in what lies between, in the twenty-four chapters of the book (a symbolic gesture towards the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet) the intended balance is decisively undermined: all remaining mottos come exclusively form ancient sages, philosophers, tragedians, and historians[19].

Thus, the text may explicitly pronounce that «in Gerostathis's heart, Christianity unites with Hellenism» (Melas, 1862c, p. 189), but this is rather a tactical appeasement of the then deeply religious society, since when Melas does not altogether ignore the Bible and the orthodox tradition, he utilizes them probably only to save appearances. Indeed, Melas may have anticipated not just objections from his readers, but opposition from the autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church, which by the 1850s had regained a substantial part of its traditional power. Indicative of the institutional powers of the church is a provision from an 1867 Act which determines that for a book to be approved as a school reader, it should not conflict with «religion, morals, and established laws» (Kapsalis & Haralambous, 2008, p. 23)[20].

In any case, whatever may be the reasons behind the discrepancy between the «programmatic pronouncements» and the actual distribution of subject matter in the book, what is eventually of interest is the fact itself that the emphasis (in qualitative and quantitative terms) is placed on ancient Greek history and literature; on Hellenism, or *Ellinismos* (in Greek) which Melas insistently writes – *contra* Greek grammar – with an emphatic capital «E». Echoing Adamantios Korais, and generally the third generation of Greek enlightenment thinkers, Leon Melas urged students to seek models for their moral betterment and for the shaping of their national identity mainly among the figures of Greek classical antiquity, an age of virtue, freedom and splendour.

19 Melas makes references to Plutarch, Euripides, Kleovoulos, Solon, Isocrates, Aristotle, Pittakos, Hesiod, Pythagoras, Anacharsis, Epicharmos, Cleanthes, Vias, Chilon, Periander, Xenophon, Socrates, Sophocles, Plato.

20 Thus, it might seem paradoxical that Melas published in 1870 *Christianikai Deiseis meta Asmation pros Oikodomin ton Ellinopaidon* [Christian Invocations with Songs to Rear Greek Children], a children's book with unambiguously Christian content which was re-published slightly modified in 1877 as *Asmatia Christianika meta dyo Mousikon Melon pros Chrisin ton Ellinopaidon* [Christian Songs with two Music Parts to be Used by Greek Children]. However, Melas had become by that time a member of the leading circle of the Society for the Dissemination of Greek Letters (the battering ram of Greek nationalism in the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire) which worked in close association with both the Greek state and the by then completely «nationalized» Greek Church. Times had changed dramatically and intellectuals like Melas had followed suit. See Papadakis (2006) and Kitromilides (1989).

4. On the Greekness of Macedonia

As mentioned above, Gerostathis's narrations are mainly (76.4%) of historical character. A further analysis (table 2) confirms the claim that the exemplary episodes are mainly drawn from ancient Greek History: 141 out of the total of 191 historical references (*i.e.* 74%) come mainly from the classical and secondarily from the Archaic period. Adding the 16 mythological references raises the percentage to 82%. This adding is justifiable since the references tagged «mythological» come mainly from the Homeric epics, which even if not historical sources, they nevertheless are integral to ancient Greek culture.

TABLE 2

Exemplary historical references in total

Category	Number	Percentage
Mythology	16	8,37 %
Ancient Greek	141	73,82 %
Ancient Macedonian	10	5,23 %
Roman	8	4,20 %
Byzantine	1	0,52 %
Modern general	5	2,62 %
Modern Greek	10	5,23 %
Total	191	100%

The reader will have noticed that the few references pertaining to ancient Macedonia (10 references, 5.23%) form a separate category. In contrast to the mythological ones, these could not be added to the ancient Greek ones. Nowadays, in the school readers issued by the Greek state, the Greekness of Macedonia is viewed as self-evident. In *Gerostathis,* though, Macedonia is presented as a country beyond the boundaries of the Greek world, Macedonians as conquerors of Greeks, and ultimately the Macedonian nation is deemed separate from the Greek nation. Let us examine one of the explicit, unambiguous passages:

> Philip, The King of Macedon, […] after […] he put himself firmly on the Macedonian throne and subdued all peoples around Macedonia and seized all the Greek coastal cities of Macedonia, set his mind to subject to his sceptre what was chiefly called Greece, which unfortunately was paralyzed by internal strife and moral corruption (Melas, 1858, p. 316).

The phrase «Greek coastal cities of Macedonia» apparently refers to the thirty-two cities of the Chalcidian League (Olynthus, Acanthus, *etc.*).

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«Internal strife» refers to the brutal conflicts between Athens and Sparta for the hegemony over the Greek world. The Chalcidians became variously involved in these conflicts, siding with either side at different times. In 348 BC they submitted to Philip and became part of the Kingdom of Macedon. In any case, Macedon is presented as a barbarous world that had set sights on the Greek world. This central aim of Philip's would indeed be accomplished ten years later with his winning the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC. Yet, according to Gerostathis, Philip's dominance over Greece would become complete when the austere Greek mores were corrupted by the pompous extravagance of the Macedonian ones:

> But, followingly, when Philip's Macedonian gold penetrated Athens, Demades and the rest of his ilk, donning purple robes and splendid garments, anointed with costly myrrh, built private homes in Athens more luxurious than public buildings, tarted up their wives and invited Sicilian chefs, *then was the Greek autonomy buried alive at the battle of Chaeronea*! (Melas, 1862b, p.92. Emphasis added).

In the above passage, the primacy of the public over the private is a sign of civilization, the reverse of barbarism. Civilization is identified with austere living and emphasizing what is essential; barbarism is identified with ostentation and arrogant vacuity. Hence Hellenism is identified with civilization and Macedon with barbarism. Philip's onset and the prevalence of barbarian mores signalled the end of the Greek world. Thus, the Macedonians became the first conquerors. The Romans and the Ottomans would later follow:

> Thus, this grim war between Greeks [the Peloponnesian War] brought about the fall of the free Greece and prepared the ground for its submission to the sceptre of Philip of Macedon*, and consequently for its subjection under the Roman yoke, and finally for its bondage in Mehmed's heavy fetters* (Melas, 1862b, p. 33. Emphasis added).

Leon Melas wrote *Gerostathis* in the late 1850s although, as far as the matter at hand is concerned, namely Macedonians and their relation to the Greeks, his writing smacks of the dominant up to the 1840s perspective of Greek Enlightenment thinkers (Koubourlis, 2005). Evidently, he reproduces what was he learnt as a teenager from his teacher at the Ionian Academy, Constantine Asopios, a hard-core Greek Enlightenment figure. Melas had apparently studied the works recommended by scholars of the Koraisian circle, Hesiod, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch among others. Like most of his generation that were educated in the West, he greatly admired Adamantios Korais «for his laudable efforts, devoted to the enlightenment of his compatriots and the instillation of virtue, Hellenism, and love for one's country into their hearts» (Melas, 1862b, p. 135). Moreover, when Gerostathis's mentions Philip, he reproduces Korais's

views, sometimes in his very words. The two passages above differ only slightly from what Korais wrote at various times between 1803 and 1824:

> Yet, incomparably more blameable are those that first among the Greeks became corrupted by the Macedonian gold, those […] that sold the freedom they had inherited (Korais as cited in Koubourlis, 2005, p. 153).

> There is not one versed in Greek history, who does not sadden upon hearing the name Chaeronea; sadden, as there Philip defeatedthe Athenians and their allies, won the tremendous victory that deprived Greece of her freedom (Korais as cited in Koubourlis, 2005, p. 155).

> The Macedonians daily pursued the destruction of freedom [of Greece] […] After the Macedonian domination, they [The Greeks] fell under Roman rule and eventually [under the Ottoman rule] (Korais as cited in Politis, 1998, p. 42).

In 1837, when Leon Melas was appointed university professor, this view on ancient Macedonians remained dominant among Greek scholars. In his inaugural lecture, Constantine Schinas, the first university rector and first history professor, said among others:

> Greece, which during her heroic times, was divided into innumerable principalities and in her heyday of glory in autonomous cities, submitted later to Macedonian rule, retaining only a pitiful shadow of its autonomy, and was finally ruled by the Romans under Mummius; she was consequently bequeathed, so to say, as an estate, coming under the sceptre of the Byzantine successors to the Roman Empire, and some four-hundred years ago was enslaved under that despicable and unbearable slavery…[21].

We can conclude that Melas adopts the view on history, and in particular on Greek history, that was held by the Greek Enlightenment scholars of the early 19th century: Greek history comprises solely and only the history of Greek antiquity, which is of special interest since it constitutes a crucial stage in general world-history[22]. Since history, besides knowledge of the course of humankind, provides (as it should) models to imitate, modern Greeks ought to be acquainted with the history of their ancestors so that they discover ways of thinking and practices that would allow them to emulate the modern civilized nations of the West. This is exactly what Gerostathis tries to achieve with his didactic tales.

This is a *prima facie* coherent schema, but in reality not as much as the above analysis suggests. As mentioned above, references to ancient Macedonia

[21] Schinas as cited in Karamanolakis (2006, p. 53). However, by the end of the 1840s, Schinas adopted the opposite point of view, see Karamanolakis (2006, pp. 82-83).

[22] On general history and its gradual Hellenization see Karamanolakis (2006, pp. 29-84 and 388-393).

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are few, *viz.* only ten, five for each of the most prominent kings: Philip II and Alexander the Great. All references to Philip are disapprobatory. As to Alexander, Gerostathis seems undecided. Some of his narrations imply reservation, others imply acceptance. One of the latter, the most positive and lengthy, clearly deviates from the historical perspective of the Enlightenment supporters. It has as follows:

> [Alexander] managed, when at the age of twenty succeeded his father Philip to the Macedonian throne, to be elected at Corinth E*mperor-general of Greece against the barbarians of Asia (in charge of the Greek arms)* and within twelve years to subject barbarous Asia to the sceptre of Greek civilization, extending his rule from Macedonia to the Indian Ocean.
>
> When Alexander perceived that some of his generals had acquired a taste for the sybaritic living of the Asian barbarians, he addressed them very calmly: «Friends, see you not that barbarians being soft and unmanly are easy to defeat, while we Greeks, fighting, labouring and being hardened, defeat them every day?» (Melas, 1858, p. 68. Emphasis added).

Philip is presented as the barbarian conqueror of Greece, despite the fact that a year earlier was himself appointed in charge of the Greek army for the campaign against the Persians. Alexander though, showing no deviation from his father's tactics, is named leader of the Greek army and representative of Greek culture to barbarous Asia. Gerostathis even has him calling himself Greek and his generals also. This is an apparent contradiction that Melas cares not to resolve. On the contrary, he makes it worse by casting in a positive light the efforts of the Athenians, following Alexander's death, to incite Greek cities to insurrection «against Macedonian despotism» and also by praising Athenians for accepting back Demosthenes, «the Great Athenian orator who, *full of spirited patriotism*, gloriously fought with manly eloquence *for Greek freedom* and against the invasive schemes of Philip» (Melas, 1862c, pp. 120-121. Emphasis added). Hence, Alexander's Greekness does not imply Macedonian Greekness. It rather remains an anomaly in an otherwise coherent schema. In history though, even anomalies have (*should* have) an explanation. But before I test the explanatory schema's limits, it is necessary to take a look at the Middle Ages, always through the eyes of Gerostathis.

5. On the Greekness of the Byzantine Empire

As we have seen, Gerostathis dedicates just 5.23% of his historical references and narrations to ancient Macedonia. What about the Byzantine millennium? In that case, the percentage plummets to 0.52%, corresponding to a sole reference among the 196 historical references and narrations of the book. It is found

at the end of the last volume, in the penultimate twenty-third chapter of the book. Nowadays, the Byzantine period is taught in Greek schools as mediaeval Greek history. Yet in the first two volumes of *Gerostathis,* the Byzantine Empire is nowhere to be found. But as in interpersonal relationships, in history too, silences speak and absences tell their own story.

As we have also seen, Gerostathis drew moral models and didactic episodes mainly from Greek antiquity, thus providing students with not just exemplars, but also with a corpus of historical knowledge and a certain position on the Greek past: *that the history of the Greek nation is the history of Greek antiquity.* Afterwards, during the fourth century, Greece, weakened by internal competition caused by «corruption» and «love of leadership», lost its most precious possession, its political autonomy, and thus «*became Macedonian, followingly Roman, and finally Turkish province*» (Melas, 1862b, p. 161. Emphasis added). This conclusion is explicitly or implicitly repeated in *Gerostathis* at every opportunity. We presented four passages above. Here is another: «[On a Sunday, Gerostathis] presented us with historical depictions of glorious incidents from *Greek, Roman and modern history* as well as with pictures of busts of eminent men of ancient Greece» (Melas, 1862b, p. 59. Emphasis added).

As in the previous passages, the historical timeline does not include the Byzantine period. Or better, the Byzantine period is not separate from the Roman one, and is not deemed a period of political autonomy for the Greek nation. Surely, the Greek nation does not altogether disappear; it continues to exist in a state of slavery *under Roman yoke*. Be that as it may, it is interesting that Melas finds not a single episode worthy of mentioning between the fourth and fourteenth century, as if nothing notable, exemplary, inspiring or didactic happened throughout the whole Byzantine millennium. The few mentions of Roman emperors (8 in number, 4.2% of the total) refer to classical times before Constantine transferred the empire's capital from Rome to Constantinople. The only exception is a digressive reference to Theodosius I. At that point, Gerostathis recounts the history of the Olympic Games which were established «also in favour of the political union among Greek tribes and cities» (Melas, 1858, p. 206). The games were held for centuries after the Greek cities had lost their autonomy, until in 394AD «Theodosius, the Emperor of Constantinople, abolished them» (Melas, 1858, p. 206). Gerostathis does not offer any reasons for that decision, yet his phrasing implies disapprobation. It is interesting that he also avoids naming the state upon which Theodosius rules: a Roman, Byzantine or Greek empire? The ethnic identity of Theodosius himself is also left undetermined: he certainly was no Greek, but is neither described as Roman nor as Byzantine. He is introduced descriptively and rather awkwardly as the 'Emperor of Constantinople'. A noteworthy detail: the aforementioned phrasing

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is found in the first edition of *Gerostathis* (1858). It is removed from the third (the school-reader edition) on which we have based our quantitative analysis. In the third edition, the Olympic Games cease to be held from 394AD onwards, with no one being responsible for their abolition[23].

Leon Melas refrains from ethnologically defining the empire, but he would surely agree that it was the paradigmatic Christian empire. Hence, his reluctance (if not outright refusal) to derive historical exemplars from a period when Hellenism «was the chief apostle and champion of the Word of God» (Pararrigopoulos as cited in Dimaras, 1970, p. 26). contradicts his programmatic declaration to synthesize Hellenism and Christianity. Neither the history of the church nor of the state is short of such exemplars. Of Greek scholarship's most eminent, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus would make an excellent example as he had placed his rigorous philosophical education and rhetorical prowess (*i.e.* his Greek education) to the service of Christian thought. Among the emperors, Justinian satisfies both sides: during his reign, the *Novellæ Constitutiones* were issued, the first legal codes written in Greek, and the Hagia Sophia was built, since then the symbol of the Eastern Church. In general, Justinian's era was central for the predominance of the Greek language and a «great period of Byzantine theology» (Flusin, 2013, pp. 347-348, 357). The fact that Christian thought did not aid much the development of science and that Justinian contributed effectively to the decline of Hellenic education would have to be withheld; but the retrospective smoothing over of inconsistencies is not rare in *Gerostathis*.

Despite the fact that Byzantine history could potentially contribute to the programmatic project of the *Gerostathis,* Melas did not utilize it in the least. I reckon this was a conscious choice stemming from his enlightenment education. Korais, which as we have seen had been an early influence on Melas, deeply despised Byzantine emperors as he viewed their reigns as «despotic yokes» imposed indifferently on both Greeks and Romans, destroying any sense of political freedom. From the point of view of liberal nationalists of the revolutionary period, the fact that Byzantine rulers could be viewed as of the same ethnicity as theirs does not in the least make less negative their influence on the progress of civilization and the emancipation of humankind. Korais, adopting the views of certain prominent enlightenment thinkers on the matter (Montesquieu, Voltaire and Edward Gibbon), paid little attention to ethnic affinities and much to political organization and relations, as well as to the contribution of a regime towards the progress of human civilization[24]. Thus, when Melas writes that after Greece

[23] Melas, (1862b, p. 31). Compare with Melas (1858) that, in passing, refers to «Constantine the Great, Emperor of Constantinople» (p. 258). This reference has been omitted from Melas (1862c).

[24] On Korais and the influence he received from French enlightenment thinkers, see Koubourlis (2012, pp. 49-59).

submitted to «the sceptre of Philip of Macedon», she was consequently subjected «under the Roman yoke», and finally ended up in «bondage in Mehmed's heavy fetters» (Melas, 1862b, p. 33. Emphasis added) he adopts, in essence, Korais's view, on which the history of Hellenism is a series of falls, each worse than the preceding one (Koubourlis, 2005). But if Byzantium constitutes a historical defeat for Hellenism, then it has no place in *Gerostathis*; students had nothing to gain by learning about an era during which crime, corruption, and obscurantism displaced the virtue, wisdom and rationalism of Classical antiquity.

Up to this point we remain within the orbit of the enlightenment. However, in the third volume, in the penultimate chapter of the book, Gerostathis's narration surprisingly, changes course. The militarily and politically defeated Hellenism culturally dominates the Romans and the Empire «gradually» turns from Roman to Greek. This is the passage in full:

> Discord and internal strife brought about external interventions and therefore her [Greece's] enslavement to the Romans. *Yet Hellenism gradually conquered the Roman conquerors, and having Hellenized the Roman Empire established at Constantinople, finally rendered her Greek.* Unfortunately, though, our Greek Empire, having neglected the exercise of her national powers, the raising of national spirit, and the cultivationof patriotism, declined, weakened, and was destroyed; as regards the nation, it languorously submitted to Mehmed's cruel and dishonourable yoke. Nonetheless, whilst the conqueror Mehmed II, slaying and enslaving, was breaching the walls of Constantinople on the 29th of May 1453, *the last of our Emperors,* Constantine XI Palaeologus, was heroically fighting the barbarians upon the city's walls, and on them he was writing in his blood an everlasting protestation against conquest and slavery (Melas, 1862c, p. 129).

With the above passage, Leon Melas adopts the view that the Byzantine Empire was in essence Greek; a view which contradicts everything said, withheld or suggested in all his other historical references. Hence, we have here a second anomaly. This is the right time to test the limits of the explanatory schema.

6. The rise of the romanticists and the last of the Enlightenment

During the 1850s, when Leon Melas wrote *Gerostathis,* the enlightenment, a dominant movement among Greek intellectuals, had already lost its lustre and vivacity of the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods, and certainly its capacity to determine the orientation of state and society. Religious thinking, which was anyhow widespread, enjoyed a new surge of popularity among the populace; at the same time the church enjoyed an institutional re-establishment and empowerment: «Prophetic messages, oracles, religious fever, religious persecution, all have now reached levels unencountered in any other period of

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Greek history» (Dimaras, 1970, p. 23). That new intellectual climate, compatible in many respects with European Romanticism, was in many ways conducive to the conception of *Megali Idea* («the Great Idea»), *i.e.* the vision of a restored Byzantine Empire—a vision which had started to touch increasingly more intellectuals. The new intellectual and national orientation would be expressed within historiography by Constantine Paparrigopoulos in his concise, textbook-like *History of the Greek Nation* which was published in 1853, five years earlier than *Gerostathis*. The main novelty of that work consists in the fact that within it, besides Greek antiquity, two additional periods are recognized as periods of political autonomy for the Greek nation: the period of Macedonian rule (indeed, along with the kingdoms that rose after Alexander's empire had fallen) and the period of the «Eastern Roman Empire» which Paparrigopoulos chose to call «Greek».

Nowadays, school history (but not only) identifies as the beginning of the Byzantine world the year 330AD, when the imperial capital was transferred to Constantinople. In that early work (but also in his later five-volume history), Paparrigopoulos thought more crucial the year AD 476 when Rome submitted to the charging *barbarian nations*. Afterwards, everything contributed towards the eastern part's surviving the barbarian invasions and its eventual Hellenization. Paparrigopoulos reminded his readers that the Greek language had already been prevalent in the East since ancient and Hellenistic times. However, he emphasized the role of Christianity in the further linguistic Hellenization of the East, and also, conversely, the role of Hellenism in the spread of the new religion. The use of Greek in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, *i.e.* in the spreading of God's Word, proved that «even if this [Greek] nation was then enslaved, the will of Divine Providence was that it becomes again renowned and great» (Paparrigopoulos as cited in Dimaras, 1970, p. 101). While the argument is sometimes (as above) presented in religious clothing, it points in essence to a secular reading of history: the Greek language was utilized by Christianity because it was already prevalent in the East by virtue of Alexander's conquests, and later, through Christianity, it penetrated the institutional core of the Eastern Roman Empire. The most important emperors of the early Byzantine period, Justinian, Heraclius, and Leo III the Isaurian, would thenceforth contribute to the ever increasing Hellenization of the state, even if unconsciously, as if they were doing God's will. Until four centuries later, in AD 867, the ascent of Basil I the Macedonian, «the first genuinely Greek king of that state», would signal the beginning of a new era during which the Byzantine state became «completely Greek» (Paparrigopoulos as cited in Dimaras, 1970, p. 105).

As Paparrigopoulos wrote about the past spurred by the concerns of his time and holding expectations of a bright future, he did not just express the romantic

trends of his time; he substantially contributed to their shaping and diffusion in Greek society. His narrative provided a historical grounding for the *Megali Idea.* After the publishing of his *History*, Constantinople would cease to be the capital of a fallen Christian empire and become the capital of the Greek Empire, which was conquered by superior enemies, but only after seven weeks of heroic resistance by a small number of fighters. Constantinople should become the real political centre of modern Hellenism; its recovery should become the new national objective.

Yet the path to Constantinople passed through Macedonia, temporally and spatially. Hence, Macedonia ought to become Greek as well. In that direction, Paparrigopoulos observed that Philip II «was not foreign» and that Alexander's state rightly bestowed upon him the title *King of the Greeks* (Paparrigopoulos as cited in Dimaras, 1970, p. 76). Ultimately, both in terms of self-determination and hetero-determination, Macedonians cannot be excluded from the Greek world: «Macedonians, even if unmentioned in the most ancient times of Greek history, were nevertheless Greek; their kings, in particular, called themselves ancestors of Hercules, and other Greeks thought of them akin...» (Paparrigopoulos as cited in Dimaras, 1970, p. 76). With this reasoning, Paparrigopoulos shifts the date of the *first subjugation of the Greek nation* from 338 BC, and the Battle of Chaeronea, to 145 BC[25], when the armies of the Achaean League were defeated by the Romans in Corinth.

However, when in 1853 Paparrigopoulos submitted his textbook for approval to the Ministry of Education, the institutional climate was unreceptive to his novel view of Greek history. The reviewing committee was chaired by Theodor Manousis, a fellow-historian teaching at university, but also an advocate of *universal (world) history.* Manousis rejected Paparrigopoulos's book giving a series of arguments of which the most substantial was this: the author did not confine himself within the commonly accepted boundaries of Greek history, that is, up to the point when Greek city-states lost their autonomy, «but involved other regions which are not usually considered parts of Greek history, *e.g.* the history of the Byzantine state, which he himself, in another, almost contemporaneous work, names Eastern part of the Roman state»[26].

However, despite the fact that the institutional interventions of the last of the enlighteners prevented the book from being introduced into schools, the

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 89. The date is corrected in the second volume of the *History of the Greek Nation* published in 1862. I owe this information to one of the anonymous referees.

[26] Manousis cited in Koulouri, (1988, p. 164). Indeed, Paparrigopoulos had initially adopted the enlightenment perspective on Alexander's Macedon and the Byzantines. However, since 1849, under the influence of European historians and, in particular, of Johann Gustav Droysen's studies on Alexander the Great, Paparrigopoulos had revised his views; see Koubourlis (2012, p. 25).

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more general intellectual tendencies of the era and the new needs of society (and monarchy) had opened cracks in the established reading of the Greek past. From there Pararrigopoulos's perspective invaded and, in an attempt to show the historical continuity of Hellenism, he endowed the Greek nation with two more periods of political autonomy and cultural hegemony, twelve centuries long in total. That is, he would introduce what was later called the «tripartite schema» of Greek nation's history: Ancient–Byzantine–and Modern.

Let us now go back to Leon Melas who decided to write a book for children, interspersed with historical narrations, during the very period when the most important debates on Greek history occurred, when a new paradigm attempted to displace the previously established one. Melas was no historian. However, he was a rigorously educated scholar and a politician who was concerned about the fortune of Greek letters; as such it was unlikely that he ignored the relevant debates or remained unconcerned about them. If we are granted this assumption, then every thesis on Greek history put forward in *Gerostathis* and every historical episode chosen as a didactic narration must be reckoned conscious choices. That is, it is plausible to assume that Leon Melas consciously kept *Gerostathis* within the up to that time entrenched historical schema of the enlightenment and also consciously attempted certain small but critical concessions to the nascent perspective of romanticism. He must have had his reasons, as his choices produced contradictions that undermined the unity and coherence of the text.

If those reasons were not Melas's own intellectual inclinations, then the answer to why he flirted with the romanticist view should be sought among the political or national priorities of the time. For example, the splendour of the fifth century democracy – itself part of a widely held palaeolatry – remained an ideological thorn in the flesh of divine-right monarchy. Pararrigopoulos' choice to nationalize the Macedonian kings and Byzantine emperors was not only compatible with the contemporary regime, but it also addressed the need of King Otto's monarchy for ideological (and hence historical) justification. In this regard, his historiographical choices were undoubtedly compatible with his ideological and political ones, since he was a monarchist who maintained many and loyal relations with King Otto's entourage. This also explains the fact that in his book (the one-volume version) he refrains from commenting on the military and civilian insurrection of the 3rd of September 1843, which forced King Otto to grant a constitution (Dimaras, 1970, p. 211).

In contrast to Paparrigopoulos, Melas was politically a liberal – the concept of *citizen* appears and reappears in *Gerostahtis,* even if references to democracy

are few and (expectedly) implicit[27]. After all, he participated in the 1843 revolutionary government, presented the final draft of the constitution in parliament in November 1844, and had to resign his position as Minister of Justice, due to his contention with King Otto (Stouraitis 1924, p. 12).

Leon Melas apparently cared more about the national aims of the young Greek state than about the ideological needs of the monarchy. During the Crimean War, when the *Megali Idea* had decisively taken an irredentist turn, Melas was in London, dabbling in his family's merchant enterprises. Apparently though, he was still concerned with the state of affairs in Greece. Just before the breaking out of the war, he published a pamphlet in English titled *Hints on the Solution of the Eastern Question* (Melas 1853a). That work addressed the British political élite and tried to make a case for the necessity of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and for the annexation by Greece of large parts of it so that a large and powerful Greek state be built with Constantinople as its capital. Melas presented a series of geostrategic and mainly financial arguments which he took to show that his solution was the best way in which the West should serve its interests. In further support of his argument he presented social, demographic, and cultural evidence that purportedly showed the vigorousness of the Greek nation and its cultural affinity to the West[28]. To these he also added the «historical rights of Hellenism»; in particular, he raised the claim that since Mehmet II had conquered Constantinople by violence and the last emperor had fiercely resisted the Ottoman siege, Hellenism reserved the right to reoccupy its capital city (Melas, 1853a, p. 38).

Yet, does not a description such as this (similar to the passage in Gerostathis) place Melas among the romantics, which dreamt about the restoration of the Byzantine Empire? Not necessarily. The view that the Greeks have a right to revolution precisely because they had lost their state to violence was one of the main arguments offered by the philhellene writers of the revolutionary period. In the works of quite a few of them, Constantine Palaeologus, the last emperor, is presented as the exception to the rule of corrupt Byzantine emperors, precisely because he died fighting on the city's walls, bequeathing his descendants a legacy of resistance – i.e. an order of everlasting defiance of the Sultan (Politis, 2004, pp. 415-433). This was an attempt at a historical justification of the revolution by enlightenment scholars that obviously played the role of a political argument

[27] For example, Melas (1862c, p. 141) writes: «During the ancient times, the Athenians, before democratization, lived under the rule of kings». See also the implicit and explicit references to Korais and Pericles, «the major citizen and prominent statesman of ancient Athens» Melas (1962c, p. 74).

[28] [Melas] (1853b, p. 31) argues that «the principles of the Orthodox Eastern Church are identical with the principles of the Reformation; and that, in certain aspects, the Greek Church is closer to Protestantism than the Church of England itself».

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against defenders of the status quo such as Metternich, the Chancellor of the Hapsburg Empire – an attempt though that opened a window to a more positive evaluation of the Byzantine past, which would be utilized later by the representatives of national historiography. Thus, we can explain Melas's positive mentions of Constantine Palaeologus without having to place him outside the intellectual framework of the Enlightenment[29].

This is also supported by the fact that Leon Melas makes clear in his pamphlet that a large and powerful Greek state should in any case be of the modern, Western kind – «a kingdom powerful, progressive, civilized, commercial, and eudemonic» Melas (1853a, p. 31). After all, this is why he asks Britain to mobilize her power in order to reduce Russia's influence on Greek politics. Or else, Constantinople would be in danger of becoming Russian and this would have consequences for the geostrategic and financial interests of the West, especially those pertaining to Ellispontos and more generally to the Eastern Mediterranean (Melas, 1853a, p. 26). Melas breaks no new ground in writing this. For to serve the needs of the 1853 conjuncture, he simply utilizes what was common among liberal philhellenes of the revolutionary period, which in turn drew on the work of the French diplomat and traveller Choiseul-Gouffier (Koubourlis, 2012, p. 100).

Already since the 1820s, in order to provide political and ideological legitimation for the Greek revolution, the philhellene enlightenment scholars had attempted revisions of their negative stance towards Byzantine history. Thus, as far as historiography is concerned, the analytical schema «Enlightenment-Romanticism» should be seen less as a polarity and more as a continuum whose ends are dense and the space in between sparse yet not discontinuous. What cohered the historical narratives of both sides, keeping the communication channels open, was nationalism – liberal or romantic, but nationalism nonetheless. In fact, during the 1850s, when the *Megali Idea* – the dominant answer to the eastern question—sought inspiration in popular beliefs regarding the reoccupation of Constantinople, Leon Melas, in line with the last adherents of Enlightenment, propounded a more secular nationalism that aspired to the identification of the boundaries of the Greek state with those of the nation.

To this end, he appropriated the elements of the emerging romanticism that were even marginally compatible with the enlightenment schema and primarily those that referred to Alexander's expedition to the East and to Constantine Palaeologus during the last phase of the Byzantine Empire. By adding to these elements a broad *brush-stroke reference* to the eventual Hellenization of the Roman

[29] On the positive evaluation of Constantine Palaeologus and on the «Hellenization» of the Fall of Constantinople by scholarly historiography and by non-academic writers that captured the popular quasi-religious point of view, see Karamanolakis and Stathis (2005, pp. 232-3 and p. 236, respectively).

Empire (without even setting the date), he expanded somewhat the common ground shared by the last of the Enlightenment and the early romanticists.

Five years later, in 1858, Leon Melas captured this concurrence in his juvenile novel, that is, at the level of «low culture». Melas, with his *Gerostathis*, following the footsteps of the old enlightenment paradigm and simultaneously exploring hesitantly and somehow instrumentally the nascent romantic schema, sought to delineate and ground morally and historically a distinct national identity, attractive to the new post-revolutionary generations of Greeks.

7. Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Katerina Dalakoura, editor of this special issue, for urging me to contribute this article, to the two anonymous referees for their valuable and insightful comments, and to Christopher Daskalis and Alexandros Patramanis for editing the English text. The usual disclaimers apply.

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Espacio, Tiempo y Educación, v. 4, n. 1, January-June 2017, pp. 1-27.
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