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Modern histories of ancient Greece:
genealogies, contexts and eighteenth-century narrative historiography

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Abstract: This essay is a response to Aleka Lianeri's call to reflect on how encounters with antiquity were foundational to modern categories of historiography, by exploring both the idea of the historical and the discipline's concepts and practices. In taking up such questions I chose to focus on the earliest modern narrative histories of ancient Greece, written at the beginning of the eighteenth century. I examine these works' wider contexts and singular features as well as their reception in the discipline. I argue for the formative role of this moment for modern historiography. Although they were often dismissed as simple narratives, these early modern works provided later historians with a sense of their own modernity. These texts prefigured modern narrative historiography's relationship of simultaneous dependence and independence from its ancient models.

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When did modern historiography of ancient Greece start? The question is deceptively simple and betrays assumptions far more revealing than any straightforward answer. Its formulation implies distinguishing between ancient historians and modern ones. But this has long been a slippery endeavor, as Nicole Loraux's title *Thucydides n'est pas un collègue* of some years ago reminds us.¹ Ironically, in telling the history of historical practice, historians' chronology has often been fraught with issues of value and haunted by presentism. In fact, when the origins of modern historiography of the ancient world are sought, the divide between ancients and moderns is repeatedly left behind in favor of privileging some moderns above others. George Grote, the nineteenth-century British banker and political figure turned famous author of the *History of ancient Greece* (1846-1856), is the most frequently cited founder. Many of these claims, moreover, besides highlighting Grote's differences from previous moderns, reinforce this historian's foundational status by attributing contemporary value to his work. It has been well argued that his 'is the earliest history of Greece still consulted by scholars' and that his work has remained influential to most important twentieth-century historians of ancient Greece, including de Ste Croix, Momigliano, Finley and Hansen.² Such analyses have taught us a lot about the development of modern historiography of ancient Greece. But what else is lost by assimilating Grote's work to that of today's historians and by leaving out authors who preceded him?

The nineteenth century – the time of Grote – has long figured at the origins of modernity. Yet many recent insights into defining and understanding the moderns have come from approaches that take a longer perspective, reaching back to the late eighteenth century and well beyond. It is in this earlier period that narrative histories of ancient Greece began to be written. Their authors presented them as distinct from those of ancient times. Nevertheless, these early eighteenth-century histories have been written off by later historians. In fact, they have often provided them with a foil to define their own modernity. There is much to be learned, though, by reassessing both these early works and the process by which they were later dismissed and suppressed. These are the issues that this essay, however briefly, sets out to explore. Peeling back the genealogy of Grote's foundational role is a good starting point. The claims for Grote's modernity, both in the shape they take today and in the way they were first formulated in his own times, point us to earlier eighteenth-century works. Attending to these hints in turn offers a rich view of how the origins of modern historiography on ancient Greece intertwine with a wider framework of modernity.

Arnaldo Momigliano's 1952 essay *Grote and Greek history* has been crucial to recent presentations of Grote as foundational figure. Grote was here conclusively depicted as master of evidence and political interpretation – his work combining 'passionate moral and political interests, vast learning and respect for the evidence.'³ Momigliano also briefly but poignantly sketched the wider reception and impact of Grote's work, ranging from Germany to Italy, as well as contextualizing his approach within British Radical and Utilitarian thought. Political philosophers and scholars of Victorian England have since

Forthcoming in A. Lianeri (ed.), *Ancient History and Western Historical Thought: Theorising Time* (CUP).

¹ Loraux 1980.

² Roberts 1994: 239 and Cartledge 2001: xvi-xvii.

³ Momigliano 1955a: 222.

expanded on these leads.⁴ In studies of modern historiography of ancient Greece, on the other hand, Momigliano's essay has come to play a double role: it has provided the basic framework to assess Grote's *History* and at the same time it has served as proof of its foundational role and enduring influence in the discipline.⁵

To an extent, this double status reflects the essay which both situated Grote historically and appealed to his work to inspire contemporary historical practices. The piece was Momigliano's inaugural lecture at UCL, a university in whose foundation Grote played an important role. The essay spoke of a crisis in ancient history, especially Greek history, and proposed a way to overcome it. The same principles that Momigliano illustrated as those of Grote - that 'Greek History is central to the formation of the liberal mind, but in turn the liberal mind is religious in examining the evidence' -⁶ were the ones along which he invoked progress in the historical study of ancient Greece in his own times. It was characteristic of Momigliano's approach, and fitting to his institutional link with Grote on the occasion of his inaugural lecture at UCL, to introduce future research directions by way of a retrospective examination of the discipline. Yet in order to further our understanding of the development of modern histories of ancient Greece, it is now time to move our emphasis away from Momigliano's inspired appreciation of Grote to his wider insights into the shaping of modern historiography.

Shortly before delivering his lecture on Grote, Momigliano published the essay 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian' (1950). Here he first formulated the interpretation of the origins of modern historical scholarship that he revisited throughout his career.⁷ This essay indeed set off one of the most influential lines of his work, one that has since been repeatedly reckoned with in modern intellectual history and that has been credited with launching the field of antiquarian studies.⁸ Momigliano argued that modern history developed out of the eighteenth-century convergence of traditional historical narrative – what used to be linear accounts of mostly political events – and antiquarian research – scholarship devoted to systematic treatment of a variety of subjects that relied on the skills of paleography, epigraphy and the interpretation of archaeological material. This summary certainly reduces the rich texture of Momigliano's formulation which, at its most ambitious explained Western historiography from classical antiquity to the current age. It was though precisely the interplay between the simplicity and versatility of the dualistic structure of Momigliano's model that led to an extraordinary variety of applications.

By now, Momigliano's thesis has also undergone criticism and, more recently, has been itself placed in its historical context. On the one hand, the development of Momigliano's intellectual trajectory has been deftly mapped.⁹ On the other, Momigliano has been aligned with twentieth-century interpreters of modernity, such as Koselleck or Benjamin, in whose work too, although in varied combinations, fragments or antiquarianism, the narrative and the political were major terms of analysis.¹⁰ The

⁴ See Urbinati 2002, Turner 1981 and Jenkyns 1980.

⁵ For example Cartledge 2001.

⁶ Momigliano 1955a: 230.

⁷ See Momigliano 1955b; for latest formulation see Momigliano 1990: 54-79.

⁸ See for example, Phillips 1996, Pocock 1999a: 140-3, 1999b: 1-25, and the essays collected in Miller 2007a.

⁹ Most recently, Miller 2007b: 12-25, DiDonato 2007 and Grafton 2007.

¹⁰ Miller 2007b: 9, 51 and 2007c; Fumaroli 2007: 156.

intellectual historians engaged in these discussions had at times to remind their interlocutors that, despite the wider appeal of his thesis, the main scope of Momigliano's enquiry – one that explains both some of its chief features and its limitations – was the field of ancient history.¹¹ This conversely reminds us that these wider debates still need to be brought to bear on studies of modern historiography of the ancient world. Momigliano's characteristic dualism is certainly present in his interpretation of Grote as the historian of Greece that brought together political and intellectual history, German scholarship and British narrative.¹² Yet following this essay Momigliano dived progressively deeper into the scholarship of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹³ We risk losing these insights if we do not expand the net beyond the Grote essay to later developments in Momigliano's own work and others' discussions of it.

From the first time Grote discussed ancient Greek history in print, the eighteenth century played an important role in defining his image as innovator. His first foray into Greek history came in an 1826 review article of Henry Fynes Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici: the Civil and Literary Chronology of Greece* (1824). After appreciating in his first page the work's efforts at establishing chronology, however, Grote posed as the issue of true interest that of explaining what lay behind the grandiose and unparalleled cultural achievements that filled Clinton's tables of Greek history. Clinton's name in fact did not appear again in the following sixty-one pages. Grote rather turned to outline briefly his own thesis that Greek cultural success was owed to the ambition for individual excellence fostered by democratic institutions. By and large, the article moved to a lengthy and detailed criticism of William Mitford's *History of Greece* – of which the first volume was published in 1784 while the fifth and last appeared in 1810. Grote initially introduced Mitford offhand, as the author most often quoted by Clinton in reference to Greek society and institutions. But he quickly built him into his main target by stating his concern that the field of Greek history – for which democracy, he argued, was crucial – should be dominated by a work partial to kings.

Grote explained that Mitford's royal bias had infected both qualities needed in an historian, that of 'higher philosophizing powers' and that of 'trac[ing] out and report[ing] the facts of the period he selects'.¹⁴ In the following pages, Grote extensively and in detail called into question Mitford's use of evidence and his political interpretations. These criticisms read also as converse guidelines for composing a 'good history of Greece' such as the one he called for in his conclusion.¹⁵ This is precisely what Grote did in his *History of Ancient Greece*, with its rich scholarly effort rooted in German source criticism that allowed him, among other things, to reformulate the question of Greek heroic age,¹⁶ and its deep engagement of intellectual and political aspects of ancient Greek life. It took though a long time for Grote to publish the first volume of the work he had envisioned in his 1826 critique of Mitford and even longer to finish it. Yet, when in 1846 the first volume was published, its praisers still pitted it against Mitford's *History*. Grote's most illustrious reviewers - John Stuart Mill and George Cornell Lewis, who

¹¹ Miller 2007b: 31-33, 51 and Grafton 2007: 101.

¹² Grafton 2007: 104.

¹³ Miller 2007b: 14-5, 178, and Grafton 2007: 106.

¹⁴ Grote 1826: 280.

¹⁵ Grote 1826: 331.

¹⁶ Morris 2000: 83-4.

knew him well from the circles of Utilitarian and Philosophical Radicals - heralded the opening of a new age in the history of ancient Greece: as Mill wrote, 'finally this was the end of the era of Mitford'.¹⁷

There was more, though, to this passing of eras. For one, Grote had a few fellow travelers in his overtaking of Mitford, such as the Cambridge don Connop Thirwall and the novelist and political figure Edward Bulwer Lytton. Only recently have scholars recovered from oblivion and investigated their books – respectively the *History of Greece* (1835-47) and *The Rise and Fall of Athens* (1837) – an understanding of which is necessary to appreciate more fully the context from which Grote's own work, and its subsequent dominance, emerged.¹⁸ But, the epochal passage from Mitford to Grote also appears more crowded if looking on its earlier side.

Indeed, more than Mitford preceded Grote, as Momigliano already pointed out. Despite the main focus on Grote, Momigliano's inaugural lecture at UCL put, however cursorily, the origins of modern Greek historiography back into the eighteenth century, stating that 'it is uncertain whether Greek history was invented in England or in Scotland.'¹⁹ This uncertainty reflected the alternative posed by taking into consideration, beside Mitford's work, also the *History of ancient Greece* by John Gillies. Chronological primacy between the two is elusive. Gillies published two years later than Mitford, in 1786, but at once put out his complete work in two volumes, while Mitford did not finish his own five-volume work until well into the nineteenth century. Momigliano claimed that it was in their writings that for the first time 'political discussion was embodied in a Greek history.'²⁰ These British historians inhabited, to an extent, similar worlds. Both traveled to Europe and moved within the orbit of philosophical history. Gillies was a Scot who resided for some time in Germany; Mitford visited France at length and was reputedly first encouraged to write a history of ancient Greece by Gibbon. They both were wary of Athenian democracy and favored monarchy.

There were also differences. Mitford was a barrister and a member of the House of Commons who published little beyond his Greek history. John Gillies was elected Royal Historiographer of Scotland upon William Robertson's death in 1793 and authored a number of works that involved Greek antiquity, ranging from a *View of the Reign of Frederic II of Prussia, with a Parallel between that Prince and Philip II of Macedon* (1789) to translations of Aristotle, Lysias and Isocrates, and a *History of the World from Alexander to Augustus* (1807). Momigliano found much innovation in Gillies' work, enough to call for a revision of 'ideas on the development of historiography in the nineteenth century.' He claimed Gillies as precursor to Niebhuhr's discussion of Demosthenes and Philip and to Droysen's analogy between Macedon and Prussia.²¹ He also thought Gillies had more 'political judgment' than Mitford and pointed out that this had been the opinion also of August Boeckh. Momigliano believed that Gillies' work was superseded by Mitford only 'because the latter's history was richer and more reliable in scholarly details.'²² Mitford also surpassed Gillies in anti-democratic bias, which made

¹⁷ In Roberts 1994: 246.

¹⁸ See introductions by Oswyn Murray and Peter Liddel respectively in Bulwer Lytton 2004 and Liddel 2007: ix-xxxii.

¹⁹ Momigliano 1955a: 214.

²⁰ Momigliano 1955a: 215.

²¹ Momigliano 1955a: 217.

²² Momigliano 1955a: 216.

him a better target for Philosophic Radicals. Yet, his absence from this debate and his neglected role in genealogies of Greek historiography since then are puzzling.

Gillies and Mitford considered together allow deeper readings of the contexts from which late eighteenth-century historiography of ancient Greece emerged. Recently Akça Ataç has showed how these works, while discussing Athens and Sparta, deeply engaged questions of empire of contemporary relevance.²³ Momigliano also analyzed how Gillies and Mitford's political assessments owed much to their own times.²⁴ Gillies's comparison between Philip of Macedon and Frederick of Prussia was explicitly thematized in his work. Momigliano further highlighted how the age of revolutions was the major lens that colored these authors' view of Greek history. In 1778 Gillies wrote that if a 'turbulent' government like that of ancient democratic Greece were to be established in 'a new hemisphere' – meaning the American colonies – 'might not the ancient barbarities be renewed; the manners of men be again tainted with a savage ferocity; and those enormities, the bare description of which is shocking to human nature, be introduced, repeated, and gradually become familiar?'²⁵ Mitford, looking back on the Greeks from the new vantage point of the French revolution, claimed that the testimony of the French events 'renders all the atrocious and before scarcely credible violences of faction among the Greeks probable, but almost make them moderate.'²⁶

The passages highlighted by Momigliano not only show the present coloring the views of the past, but its impact on the very way the past is perceived. In both Gillies and Mitford one senses a new relationship to the past, shaped by late eighteenth-century events: what in ancient history seemed unheard of before, became credible, in fact even pale in comparison with the new revolutions. The rupture is similar to the newly skewed parallel between modern and ancient revolutions that François Hartog explored in Chateaubriand's writing from the 1790s.²⁷ It is within the space created by this rupture that Reinhard Koselleck theorized the emergence of a sense of possibility, of acceleration of time, in fact the substance of progress that would constitute modern historicity.²⁸ Late eighteenth-century narrative historiography of ancient Greece can thus be seen to partake in important features in the development of modernity. But what to think about narrative histories of ancient Greece that appeared earlier in the century? Koselleck himself considered the changes brought about by the Revolution and Enlightenment, the new sense of the past and what constitutes the political, as the result of processes that extend back into and can be explained only in the cultural, social and political dynamics of the early eighteenth century.²⁹ The eighteenth-century histories of ancient Greece that preceded Gillies and Mitford cannot be dismissed as pre-modern.

Momigliano highlighted already in the Grote essay that during the eighteenth century 'handbooks of Greek history were not uncommon on the continent, some of the most popular books being in fact vulgarizations translated from English into French, German and Italian' – as examples he quoted Diderot's translation of Temple Stanyan's

²³ Ataç 2006.

²⁴ Momigliano 1955a: 215-17.

²⁵ Gillies 1778: lxiii.

²⁶ Mitford 1790: 670.

²⁷ Hartog 2003: 77-107.

²⁸ Koselleck 2004: especially 9-42.

²⁹ See Koselleck 1988: especially 23-40 and 98-123.

Grecian History in 1743 and ‘the rather low-level’ 1774 compilation of Goldsmith.³⁰ In subsequent essays, Momigliano kept wondering what to make of these works. On the one hand, he clearly identified in the composition of such modern histories of the ancient world one of the major novelties of eighteenth-century historiography. On the other hand, especially for Greek history, he found it hard to answer the question of ‘what value to attribute to schoolbooks?’; while resisting to judge them as derivative from the ancient sources, he saw them as limited to offering moral or political interpretation of the ancient evidence and found their merit possibly residing only in that ‘there was nothing else’.³¹ Since Momigliano, the judgment of these works as derivative and mostly conservative has been maintained by most scholars. But starting rather from Momigliano’s open question, I would now like to take a closer look at these works, to begin at least to grasp their original contexts and to interrogate the role they have come to play in our accounts of the shaping of the modern turn to ancient Greece.

The earliest modern history of ancient Greece that Momigliano mentioned was that of Stanyan. A closer look reveals a more populated scenery. In 1707, the same year in which Stanyan put out the first volume of *The Grecian History*, a similar book, another first volume of a *History of ancient Greece*, was published by Thomas Hind. Hind never brought out the second volume and has been long forgotten, but the coincidence of the title and date of publication of its project with that of Stanyan is tantalizing. The story of Stanyan’s second volume, finally published in 1739, more than thirty years after the first, brings into the picture another figure of early eighteenth-century historiography of ancient Greece, the Frenchman Charles Rollin. Rollin was the author of a 12-volume *Histoire ancienne (Ancient history)*, the first volume of which was published in Paris in 1730 and the last in 1738. That same year Rollin’s work began to be translated into English, and this seems to have spurred Stanyan to complete his *History of Greece* that, in turn, was translated into French in 1743. Momigliano did not mention Rollin, but this historian has since gained a space next to Stanyan in studies that deal, however briefly, with eighteenth-century historiography of ancient Greece. The works of Stanyan and Rollin are remembered as successful handbooks, but also quickly dismissed in similar ways, both judged as didactic and derivative, with Rollin in particular also being deemed politically conservative.³² Studies of the French eighteenth-century, on the other hand, have given Rollin more credit and so have recent insights in eighteenth-century views of the ancient past.³³ Moreover, in times closer to his own, Rollin elicited a variety of judgements. He was alternatively praised as the ‘abeille de la Grèce’ by Montesquieu and accused by Voltaire of merely putting into new words what others had already once said – an accusation that did not detain Voltaire himself from copying abundant segments of Rollin’s work. These early eighteenth-century histories of ancient Greece warrant further investigation.

Rollin (1661-1741) was an educator with a history of clashes with institutional power. His career was chequered by his Jansenist sympathies that made even the funeral oration in his honor difficult to navigate for his colleagues at the *Académie des*

³⁰ Momigliano 1955a: 215.

³¹ Momigliano 1980: 254.

³² Roberts 1994: 154-7, 173-8, Ampolo, 1997, 65-7.

³³ See Grell 1995: 7-17, 877-88 and Cambiano 2000: 271-4, Hartog_2005:

Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.³⁴ Twice elected rector of the University of Paris, his unorthodox religious beliefs, much disliked at Court, led to his dismissal after 1719. It was while forbidden to teach that Rollin turned to composing his published works. First was the 1727 educational treatise *Traité des études* (1726-31) - (translated in English as *Method of teaching and studying the belles lettres*) - in which Rollin advocated a larger role for both the vernacular and history in teaching practices. Rollin then published his own histories to remedy the weaknesses that he perceived in current curricula, the *Ancient History* first and later, in 1741, a *Histoire Romaine* (the *Roman History*). Recent studies praise the *Method* for its originality,³⁵ but it was the *Ancient History* that enjoyed greater success and had a much longer life, being reissued well into the nineteenth century.

The *Ancient History* reveals the tensions and constraints surrounding profane history in absolutist France, starting with its disorienting title. The work was titled in full - *Histoire Ancienne des Égyptiens, des Carthaginois, des Assyriens, des Babyloniens, des Mèdes et des Perses, des Macédoniens, des Grecs* - but it was in fact mainly a Greek history. Rollin finished with the other ancient peoples by half way through the second volume, while he dedicated the remaining eleven to the ancient Greeks - from the origins of Greek states to their subjection to Rome. That Rollin's interest was in Greek history is clear from his first mention of the project in his educational treatise, where he wrote of how necessary an ancient history in vernacular language was for the education of youth and specified that: 'Greek history is in even greater need of rescue than Roman history; the latter is in general better known, [...] whereas we have almost no idea about the former.'³⁶ Yet, as the title shows, Rollin chose to present his Greek history within the traditional and reassuring framework of the succession of empires. Accordingly, throughout the entire work, each book is titled following the current reigning Persian king. In further nods to this traditional framework the origins of the Greek people are sought in Biblical migrations and the main historical junctures - like Alexander's conquests - are explained with Daniel's prophecies.³⁷ To the tradition of Christian universal history Rollin also paid explicit tribute in the preface where, among his sources and models, the only modern he mentioned was Bossuet - the author of the 1681 *Discours sur l'histoire universelle. Pour expliquer la suite de la religion & les changemens des empires*. He also here claimed that the value of profane history is that it reveals the working of divine providence.³⁸

Within the constraints of this framework, Rollin organized a narrative of Greek history very closely based on ancient sources. About his much-decried dependence on sources, Rollin wrote that he was 'pillaging from everywhere, often without even quoting the authors that I copy, because sometimes I take the liberty to make changes on their texts'.³⁹ The adherence to ancient authors also affected the structure of his history. For example, when he first introduced Greece at the end of volume two, Rollin began by outlining Sparta's origins and its history down to the Messenian wars, then moved on to

³⁴ Gros de Boze quoted in Grell 1995: 7.

³⁵ Lombard 1998.

³⁶ Rollin 1728: I 9. My translation for Rollin's French passages unless otherwise stated.

³⁷ See Rollin 1733-39: II, 503-505 and VI, 685-722.

³⁸ See Rollin, 1733-39: I, i-xliii; Rollin also summarizes Bossuet's work in VI, 722-73.

³⁹ Rollin, 1733-39, I, xxxviii.

Darius' kingdom and here he included, on the model of Herodotus, an excursus on the Scythians. He then proceeded to the Graeco-Persian wars and only at this point finally introduced Athens, thus opening another excursus into Athenian history from its origins down to the fifth century BC. In consequence, Rollin's work grew much larger than originally planned - as he repeatedly lamented in each new volume's preface - and certainly offers the modern reader a rather confusing structure.⁴⁰

But what was indeed new about Rollin is apparent from comparison with Bossuet's history. Bossuet's work - dedicated to the Dauphin to whom he was tutor - was divided into three parts: the first was taken up with the description of the twelve epochs of the world - from that of Adam and of creation to that of Charlemagne; part two followed the succession of religions from errors to the Revelation; and part three described the revolutions of empire, regulated by divine providence, in turn dealing with the Scythians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Persian, Greeks and the Roman Empire. In all, Greek history occupied eight pages out of the eighty-page long part three of the book, in which the Greeks are set between the Persians and Philip's conquest of Greece. In these few pages Bossuet emphasized the Greeks' love of liberty and country and how exercise of the body made them much stronger soldiers than the soft Persians. Of Greek governments - an oddity in a succession of empires - Bossuet only said that they were 'republics' and 'conducted their affairs in common and anyone could reach the highest honors.'⁴¹ What Bossuet most underscored about the Greeks' political life was how their internal dissensions worked as one of the turning points in his narrative of succession of empire. He explained that the Persians repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to exploit the Greek lack of political cohesiveness. It was for Philip - the ruler of a united and absolutist state - to succeed in absorbing the Greeks in the Macedonian empire and finally providing them unity and stability.

Rollin drew heavily on Bossuet's authority. In the *Ancient History* he indeed reproduced all of Bossuet's pages dedicated to the Greeks, in part as a coda to his own description of the character of the Greeks and the rest in closing the section on Alexander. Both Bossuet and Rollin brought a teleological Christian perspective to ancient history. In Rollin beyond the providential reading put forward in the preface, what prevailed was a concern for moral issues. The prominent lens through which Rollin viewed history was that of virtue corrupted by power, and this was the main approach that he tested in his Greek history. In the process, moreover, he carved an unprecedented space for Greek antiquity. Within this new space he also discussed at length, for example, the merits of the Spartan versus the Athenian constitutions, a topic that evaded the concerns of princely conduct advocated by Bossuet or Rollin's own moral concerns.

Rollin's projects did not fare as he hoped. His education proposal, despite being inspirational for late eighteenth-century school reform, was not taken up at the time.⁴² The *Ancient History* also did not turn out as expected. It grew well beyond the originally-planned five volumes to be completed in a school year. But, on the other hand, Rollin's history became tremendously successful, reissued well into the nineteenth century and translated into many languages, including Italian (1733-1740), English (1738-1740), Greek (1750), Spanish (1755-1761), Portuguese (1773), German (1778) and even Bengali

⁴⁰ See for example Rollin, 1733-39, I, xxxix and III, i.

⁴¹ See Bossuet 1976: 331-2.

⁴² See Lombard 1998 and Morange and Chassaing 1974: 16-17.

(1847). The work indeed gained audiences well beyond that of school children; Rollin's *Histoire Ancienne* ended by counting among its fans men like John Adams, who, like many others before and after, familiarized himself with ancient history by reading Rollin.⁴³

Stanyan's Greek history differed from Rollin's on many accounts. For one, Stanyan did not share Rollin's concern to conceal the novelty of his Greek history within the structure of a universal Christian one. When Stanyan put out his first volume in 1707 it was precisely the unprecedented nature of his enterprise that he most highlighted. He stressed the new challenges posed by making a single thread out of many, disparate ancient authors, with no established model to follow. Stanyan made this point by comparing his project to that of writing Roman history. A few years earlier, Jacob Tonson, Stanyan's publisher, had put out Laurence Echard's *Roman History* (1697) - a work that Momigliano credited with introducing the popular notion of history by revolutions.⁴⁴ Echard too in the preface made reference to the unprecedented nature and difficulties encountered in composing his Roman history. But Stanyan further argued how much more difficult it was to compose a narrative of Greek history than one of Rome. He thought Roman history easily captured by adopting the perspective of Rome, which always remained at the center, while it assimilated through its conquests progressively more peoples into the Roman dominion. In Greek history, on the other hand, Stanyan wrote: 'it is no easy Task to marshal so many Events in due Order of Time, and Place, and out of them to collect an entire unbroken Body of History.'⁴⁵

In the preface to his second volume - which took the narrative from the end of the Peloponnesian war to the death of Philip - Stanyan put forward a different claim. By the time this concluding volume came out in 1739, Stanyan had to contend with Rollin. From an emphasis on novelty Stanyan moved to differentiating his work from that of the Frenchman. He acknowledged reading Rollin, but denied any influence. He praised Rollin for his 'spirit of liberty,' 'which is well suited to the subject, and which few of his countrymen [...] have attain'd to,'⁴⁶ but proceeded to criticize him for producing a disjointed narrative and for disrupting it with trite observations of moral character. Stanyan claimed that while Rollin's reflections offered useful moral lessons, his own work revealed the Laws of History 'such as naturally arise to the Reader from simple Relation of facts.'⁴⁷

There was indeed little moralizing in Stanyan's account. His 'relation of facts' was also independent of a universal history paradigm: it still placed the 'original' of the Greeks with biblical people, but swiftly left this topic behind after a mere couple of pages. Stanyan had a hard time with early Greek history, the period of Greek kings.⁴⁸ While in the preface he doubted with great skepticism the stories of the Greek heroes, this did not stop him from dedicating to this period his first section, 200 out of a total of more than 700 pages. Here Stanyan dealt in turn with the various Greek 'kingdoms'- Sycion, Argos, Mycenae, Thebes, Sparta, Corinth and Athens. This section closed with the

⁴³ See Gribbin 1972: 611-622 and Winterer 2002: 19.

⁴⁴ Momigliano 1955b: 78.

⁴⁵ Stanyan 1707: [preface 11]

⁴⁶ Stanyan, 1739: [preface 6].

⁴⁷ Stanyan 1739: [preface 6].

⁴⁸ See Morris 2000: 80.

account of Hippias' expulsion from Athens. With this event, the time of legends gave way to that of history, the kingdoms made space for Greek 'commonwealths' and the narrative began to proceed strictly chronologically. Even a brief look at the contemporary volume by Thomas Hind shows Stanyan's narrative to be indeed better articulated and more readable, with sections subdivided in chapters that quickly placed readers in context and led them clearly from one event to another. The facts of the narrative were mostly political and military. A comparison with Hind and Rollin shows the different emphasis in subject matter. Where, for instance, Hind delved at length in his introduction on the origins of the Greeks, Stanyan quickly left that topic for a geographical description – including a map – of ancient Greece and its resources. Stanyan's eight pages on Socrates, as another example, sharply contrasted with Rollin's sixty-page segment on this topic that was at the basis of many eighteenth-century treatments of the death of Socrates.⁴⁹

When Diderot translated Stanyan into French in 1743, the French reviewers indeed lauded the book for its clear rendition of the political dynamics of the reversals of power among the various Greek states.⁵⁰ But what laws of history did Stanyan expect to emerge from his 'simple relation of facts'? The paratext – preface and dedication – helps to formulate an answer more than Stanyan's swift and cursory account. Stanyan, a government officer, and his publisher, Jacob Tonson, both belonged to the Whig intellectual circle of Horace Walpole, actively engaged in supporting the constitution resulting from the 1688 Revolution. Tonson, who had made a fortune with Milton's *Paradise Lost* and promoted Addison, founded *The Spectator*, established and was secretary of the Kit Cat Club, to which Stanyan belonged with Horace Walpole, Addison, and Somers. Divining the growing taste of the public for the classics, he promoted new translations of Ovid – to which Stanyan contributed – and, alongside with Stanyan's work, Echard's history of ancient Rome. Stanyan dedicated his Greek history to Lord Somers 'the defender of modern Liberty.' Liberty was a major theme of Stanyan's history: how the Greeks united to defend it from the Persians invaders, but lost it later, torn apart by their own internal wars and failing to maintain a balance among different states. The book, published in 1707 – the date of the Union – seems to be a cautionary tale for the British Kingdom as well as a reflection on the balance between various European powers.

Stanyan and Rollin's works remained dominant models up to the 1780s. Subsequent narrative Greek histories relied on, drew upon or combined the structure and claims of Stanyan or the style and richer information found in Rollin. Examples abound. British publishers created books that reassembled at will Rollin's volumes: for example, in 1737 a *History of the Arts and Sciences of the Ancients* and in 1750 a *History of Alexander*. Oliver Goldsmith's 1774 *Greek history* combined Rollin's prose with Stanyan's structure. Goldsmith's own contribution consisted mainly in his literary skills: the history reads as a novel, with a cliffhanger at every chapter ending, and displays an impressionistic style but not a single footnote. That Rollin – both the histories and the educational treaty – was a favorite source for Goldsmith is well attested in his other works, such as the *History of England* (1764) or the *History of earth and animated nature*

⁴⁹ Wilson 2007: 171.

⁵⁰ *Journal de Trévoux*, June 1747, 1137 and *Mercure de France*, August 1743, 1803.

(1774).⁵¹ Goldsmith's *History of Greece* was published posthumously without a preface to reveal its sources, but Stanyan and Rollin were obviously present.

But what to make of these works? The categories of school or hand books, derivative and conservative, within which these books are often understood, fall short at a closer look. In fact, Stanyan's French reviewers and many of Rollin's readers show that these texts were not just school books. Rollin had set out to write for schools but failed as his work became too unwieldy. Its eighteenth-century praisers and critics both attest that it was read and commented upon well beyond classrooms. Certainly these histories were eventually much used in schools and this seems to lie behind many of their nineteenth-century editions, as the heavily annotated copies in college libraries suggest. But these were not their primary or original contexts. Were these books derivative? Rollin certainly wrote plainly about his abundant use of ancient sources. Yet, writing off these books as not original runs the risk of applying retrospectively categories that belong to later times. It was precisely in the aftermath of books such as those of Rollin and Stanyan that one began to discuss what a derivative modern history of ancient Greece looked like and, for that matter, to call for alternatives. Two 1759 letters by Hume shed some light on the issue.

These letters were addressed to the Scottish historian Dr. William Robertson days after the successful debut of the latter's *History of Scotland*. The subject at hand was which project Robertson should undertake for his next book following his recent success. Hume judged the topic of Emperor Charles V - which actually became Robertson's next and most influential book - a bad idea, because it 'would be the Work of half a Life'. Rather, Hume recommended 'the ancient History, particularly that of Greece': 'I think', he wrote, 'Rollin's Success might encourage you, nor need you be in the least intimidated by his Merit. That Author has no other Merit, but a certain Facility & Sweetness of Narration; but has loaded his Work with fifty Puerilities.'⁵² Yet, two months later, after considering further the excellent historical narratives that survived from antiquity, Hume feared that they could indeed turn into a disadvantage for the aspiring modern historian: 'For what can you do in most places with these Authors, but transcribe & translate them? No Letters or State Papers from which you could correct their Errors, or authenticate their Narration, or supply their Defects. Besides, Rollin is so well wrote with respect to Style, that with superficial people it passes for sufficient.' On the whole he thought, however, that a 'History of Greece till the death of Philip' 'would be successful, notwithstanding all these discouraging Circumstances. The Subject is noble, & Rollin is by no means equal to it.'⁵³

Hume's letter positions him clearly among the 'philosophical historians'. But it also holds other, more revealing elements. One well senses in Hume's concern for successful topics the flourishing market for history books in his times, on which, before the professionalization of the discipline, authors more and more came to rely in lieu of earlier literary patronage practices.⁵⁴ These changes in status were accompanied by questions of methodology. While the classical model of the historian as political man writing history in his retirement from public life was in sharp decline, a clear successor

⁵¹ Friedman 1966: 332-335.

⁵² Hume 1759a: 47.

⁵³ Hume 1759b: 48.

⁵⁴ See Kernan 1987: 62-117.

was yet to follow. As J.G.A. Pocock put it: would one who studied, edited or rewrote past history be an historian at all?⁵⁵ Hume seems to be engaging some of these concerns. On the one hand, he thought Greek history in need of writing, but, on the other, was still uncertain about what could constitute its authoritative footnotes and scholarship.

Some twenty years later Gillies and Mitford offered possible answers. Their histories of Greece certainly show the marks of very specific political contexts – late eighteenth-century Revolutions and Frederick’s ascent to power in Prussia, as highlighted by Momigliano, and British imperial politics, as argued by Ataç. But these works from the 1780s were also shaped by debates on practices of history such as those that emerge in Hume’s letter. Gillies’ and Mitford’s histories counted as philosophical histories – contemporary reviewers disagreed to what degree they were successful - and displayed learned footnotes well versed both in ancient sources and recent works such as Winckelmann’s. These self-assured quartos did not discuss the novelty of writing a narrative of ancient Greece as much as the quality of their approaches, nor did they mention in prefaces Stanyan or Rollin. Indeed, in all of their volumes, Rollin alone appears but only very sporadically in some of Mitford’s footnotes. Hume’s letter, however, might contain a direct trace of the role played by the earlier works in the later eighteenth-century historiographical turn to ancient Greece. Dr. Robertson did not pick up Hume’s suggestion of a Greek history, but it was his successor as Scottish royal Historiographer, John Gillies, who did. Possibly also Gibbon’s own suggestion to William Mitford originated from the same conversation about Dr. Robertson’s next project in which Rollin, as we have seen, was an important reference.

But Rollin and Stanyan were more than stepping stones to later works. Unraveling the genealogy of Grote’s foundational role shows deeper connections than the linear succession that it suggests at first glance. Once we reach back to the very first modern narratives of Greek history, the initial, fraught question of when the modern historiography of ancient Greece began morphs into the more essential one of what went into its making. While in 1707 Stanyan underlined the unprecedented nature of his enterprise, he singled out a modern author who was helpful to his project. This was the French academician Jacques de Turreil, who first translated Demosthenes’ speeches into a modern language. Turreil’s volume was swiftly translated into English. This edition was, again, undertaken at the initiative of Tomson and with the involvement of Lord Somers’ entourage, for which the rhetoric of freedom that Demosthenes deployed against Philip must have been of great interest. In presenting Demosthenes’s speeches to his modern readers, Turreil thought it necessary to provide a context, to make, in his words, his ‘author understood,’ lest ‘it will remain mere Greek to those who are not acquainted with the country’.⁵⁶ This came as a one hundred page long historical introduction. Here Turreil elaborated an influential four age division of Greek history and described in turn the rise and fall of Athens, Sparta and Thebes, leading to the showdown with Philip. It is in Turreil’s pages that one finds the first modern attempt at a narrative of ancient Greek events. Stanyan praised Turreil for having ‘distinguish’d the most remarkable Periods, discover’d the Genius and unravel’d the Interests of the Several States, and trac’d out the Steps by which they arriv’d at their Turns of Superiority.’⁵⁷ Rollin did not make much of

⁵⁵ Pocock 1999b: 8.

⁵⁶ Turreil 1701: 7. On Turreil’s historical preface see Douhain 1910: 236-253.

⁵⁷ Stanyan 1707: [preface 10].

his novelty, yet referred to Turreil for his four age division and as an authority on Pericles's support of the theater and his role in initiating Athens' decadence.

Stanyan's claim that there was something novel at stake in Turreil is worth closer consideration. Both Stanyan's rendering of his own challenges and his praise for Turreil identify the novelty as the composition of a comprehensive narrative of ancient Greek history. This in turn directly touches upon Momigliano's thesis for the origins of modern historiography with its dual weight placed on narrative and scholarship. It also reminds us that Momigliano, despite his more inclusive formula, in his enquiries into the formation of modern historiography, ended up privileging the antiquarian component over the narrative one.⁵⁸ Momigliano, it has been argued, was suspicious of current narrative studies.⁵⁹ There is also certainly a long tradition in taking the narrative component in Greek history for granted, as Hume seems to have done. Indeed, what can one say about it?

Koselleck has usefully emphasized the development of the narrative element in eighteenth-century historiography. He argued for its role in dismantling the model of exemplary history and in the elaboration of the concept of history *per se* that he attributes to modern historicity.⁶⁰ Rollin and Stanyan exemplify as well as complicate in important ways this trajectory of historical studies and its role in modern intellectual history. The narrative turn is strong in Rollin despite his confusing structure. In fact, Mitford wrote in a footnote that if only Rollin 'had avoided to interrupt and perplex his narrative with anecdotes, biography, and preaching, which might have been better thrown into an appendix, his book [...] might have maintained its reputation as the best epitome of Grecian history that has yet appeared.'⁶¹ In Stanyan the narrative entails the shaping of a new form of history of ancient Greece – not surprisingly it seemed a functional school text even after the publication of Grote's history. With these early Greek histories something took shape that was different from both ancient texts and the modern tradition of universal histories. This appears in comparison with Bossuet but also with the twenty volumes British project of *An Universal History from the Earliest Account of Time to the Present* (1736-1768).⁶² Greek history occupies volumes six, seven and eight, edited by George Psalmanazr in the 1730s: a quick look at the structure shows how it was broken up into the histories of various city-states and disrupted by many chronological and geographical discontinuities. Paying due attention to Rollin and Stanyan allows us to examine the emergence of ancient Greece as an independent subject of history. Moreover, on the one hand, through analysis of Turreil's role, it forces us to appreciate how these new forms had long, subtle roots in the practices of ancien regime's academic cultures and the tradition of textual criticism.⁶³ On the other, we see how, differently than Rome – which became embedded in the Enlightenment project of understanding Europe's emergence from antiquity, to the middle ages and onwards - Greece became a more disaggregated past, but one that could be returned to in utopian ways. Indeed this trajectory well illustrates how history for history's sake would replace the model of

⁵⁸ Phillips 1996: 303.

⁵⁹ Grafton 2007: 104 and Miller 2007

⁶⁰ Koselleck 2004: 34-5.

⁶¹ Mitford 1797: 2.

⁶² See Griggs 2007: 228-37.

⁶³ See Gossman 1968: 175-298 and 349-58.

historia magistra vitae but also – in Nadel’s phrase – ‘support other and perhaps less harmless delusions’.⁶⁴

Resituating the early eighteenth-century narrative histories of ancient Greece within the genealogy of modern historiography of ancient Greece allows us to do many things. For one it can help establish new contemporaneities: Stanyan’s words on lack of focus and clear boundaries in Greek history resonate with those of Momigliano in 1979⁶⁵ and indeed pertain to current efforts to undo some of the traditional fixtures of modern narrative Greek history, as shown in the work of Ian Morris and Robin Osborne.⁶⁶ Moreover, it points us to explore further the contexts of these works: what were the politics and what the scholarship from which they were woven? What were the European intellectual networks that engendered this dialogue on ancient Greek history? For now, it certainly shows that the new moderns could easily distance earlier Greek histories as derivative, apolitical, naïve and conservative. But it was precisely their precedent that allowed the alternative ‘Thucydides or Grote?’ to be formulated in the aftermath of Grote’s publication.⁶⁷ It was within the modern dialogue about ancient Greece initiated by these works that Grote could pass on the word to Thucydides as best commentator on Athens and report fully his Pericles’ funerary oration in the pages of his own history of Greece, without being accused of merely repeating, ‘pillaging’, ancient sources the way Rollin did, but rather presenting his approach as an historicization of antiquity for its understanding by the moderns.

⁶⁴ Nadel 1964: 315.

⁶⁵ Momigliano 1984: 133-34.

⁶⁶ See Osbourne 1996 and Morris and Powell 2005.

⁶⁷ On this alternative as posed in the Shilleto’s controversy see Momigliano 1955a: 223 and Stray 1997. I thank Emma Dench, Miriam Leonard, Alexandra Lianeri and Corey Tazzara for various help in my work for this paper.

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