



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

Description of the funded research project
1st Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects to Support Faculty
Members & Researchers and Procure High-Value
Research Equipment

Title of the research project:

Representations of Modern Greece in Victorian Popular Culture

Principal Investigator: Efterpi Mitsi

Reader-friendly title: REVICTO

Scientific Area: Humanities & Arts

Institution and Country: Greece

Host Institution: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Collaborating Institution(s): Oxford Brookes University

**Project webpage:
[https:// revictoproject.com](https://revictoproject.com)**



Budget: 200,000 euro

Duration: 36 months

Research Project Synopsis

This project investigates the ways in which Victorian popular literature and culture represented and interpreted nineteenth-century Greece in magazines, journals, and other publications, with an aim to contribute to the scholarship on the cultural affiliations between Britain and Greece in the Victorian period.

Although scholars have examined the significance of ancient Greece as a symbolic territory for British culture, the role that Modern Greece played in the Victorian popular imagination is relatively unmapped. An investigation of the literary and cultural exchange between Britain and Greece in the period of the latter's formation as a nation state may also lead to revisiting questions such as:

- To what extent does the proliferation of literary and popular texts on Modern Greece forge a new discourse and ideology about Greece and its equivocal position within Europe?**
- Is there an alternative discourse to the dichotomy between a romanticized or reviled Greece?**

Our research seeks not only to explore the representation of Greece in Victorian culture, but also to trace the literary and cultural exchange between Britons and Greeks in that period, documenting an active encounter rather than a passive reception.

Moreover, our project will be facilitated by the advance in digital humanities, especially in Victorian Studies, as many nineteenth-century popular sources, such as journals, newspapers, and ephemera have been digitized; in fact, our research intends to be part of the field of digital literary scholarship.

Finally, this research is relevant to our times because of prevalent anxieties about nationality, borders, and cultural infiltration.

Project originality

Anglophone literary scholarship has so far focused on the role of ancient rather than Modern Greece in Victorian literature and culture. Research has focused on the pervasive presence of Hellenism in the British intellectual and artistic life or the place of women in the discourse of Hellenism in the nineteenth-century. What is absent from this field is the ambiguous position of Modern Greece in the Victorian popular imagination with a few exceptions, such as David Roessel's study of Byronism in Anglophone literature and Georgia Gotsi's and Semele Assinder's exploration of the translation and dissemination of Modern Greek literature in Victorian England.

Similarly, scholars working on Romantic Hellenism have to a large extent centred on Philhellenism and the War of Independence while historians have mainly studied the complex political relations between Britain and Greece. Having discovered numerous texts in Victorian periodicals which probe the modern, hybrid, ethnic consciousness of the Greeks after the War of Independence from the standpoint of the great Empire's metropolis, our project explores the extent to which such samples of popular culture helped forge a new discourse and ideology about Greece.

This project employs an interdisciplinary, comparative, and synthetic study of both theoretical and literary texts that makes use of digital technology, depending on the recent and ongoing digitization of nineteenth-century periodicals and newspapers. Research into the digital archives of nineteenth-century texts and images enables us to locate important texts and examine them within a variety of social contexts. We aim to make use of these new modes of scholarship and tools which rely on complex and flexible technologies enabling comparisons and synthetic analysis of textual and visual material.

Expected results & Research Project Impact

The main objectives of the research project are:

- a) to collect, critically examine and catalogue texts published in periodicals, art and exhibition catalogues, and other media, between 1837-1914, that engage with Modern Greece in a variety of sources and genres, i.e. fiction, travel writing, memoir, poetry, drama, literary and art criticism and material culture in the British popular press;
- b) to map the debates and the controversies surrounding the representation of Greece in British popular culture and literary texts and its emergent identity as an independent European nation;
- c) to map the cultural relationship between Britain and Greece as it develops through the latter's presence in British popular literature and culture;
- d) to explore the role of gender and class in the interpretation of Greece in the Victorian period;
- e) to explore the tension between classical and Modern Greece as it emerges in Victorian Hellenism;
- f) to examine the way in which images complementing articles or short stories convey meaning (social and cultural commentary, political satire or propaganda) through their interaction with the text;
- g) to create a digital index of popular texts about Modern Greece that will encourage literary scholarship as well as innovative teaching practices on the topic and to post our findings online on the project's website. The latter will help us communicate our ongoing research to a wider public and disseminate it through social media with short informative posts.

The importance of this funding

Through this funding we can:

- **contribute to the current research developments in the area of Victorian studies;**
- **offer the participants, who are not Members of Staff, salaried employment in their field of expertise and the opportunity to enhance their academic background and improve their research experience.**
- **offer a collection of digital resources on the topic, through the process of excerpting, cataloguing, indexing, and publicizing findings and deliverables online;**
- **publicize the research through the organizing of an international conference and a conference website;**
- **rethink the crucial for Europe perception of Modern Greece in an intercultural way;**
- **inspire young researchers at the doctoral and postdoctoral level to explore Victorian Hellenism(s) through innovative perspectives and methodologies and familiarize them with the process of archival work through research seminars;**
- **introduce the Greek public to the role of Modern Greece in nineteenth-century Britain through workshops, lectures and a website hosting relevant material disseminated through the social media;**



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