


kind constitutes a persuasive counter-discourse to contemporary narratives of ethnic and social division. A fresh, masterly, and pioneering contribution to historical, literary and spatial studies, which all Byzantinists should read.

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Georgia Gotsi and Despina Provata (eds.), *Languages, Identities and Cultural Transfers. Modern Greeks in the Press (1850–1900)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, Pp. 270.  
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2021 marked the bicentenary of the beginning of the Greek struggle for independence. Beyond the timeliness of its publication, this book offers readers far more than a celebratory history. This volume of essays brings together studies on aspects of language, identity, and cultural transfer in the context of encounters between different European literary traditions, exploring modalities of reception, the mediation process, and the roles and motives of the actors involved, whether individuals, groups, institutions, or the print media. It thus offers new perspectives in the field of cultural history.

Cultural circulation has long been regarded as a fruitful area of investigation, not least in assessing how cultural transfers have contributed to the construction of national identity and its depiction in the public sphere. In the Greek case, philhellenism, defined historically as either a political or a transcultural movement, together with its resilience over time, has been much discussed in conferences, workshops and research projects. These have typically addressed definitions and dynamics of philhellenism, from different perspectives, such as European perceptions of the modern Greeks, Greece's relationship with Europe and with European cultural production, and the impact of all this on the formation of Greece's national image. This volume approaches the subject from a different viewpoint: 'the image(s) of Greece emerging through the pages of [the European] press' (p.15). Whilst print media, and in particular periodicals with their potential to reach wider readerships, have emerged as effective cultural mediators and facilitators for the transmission of ideas to various social and national entities, the question of how the European press stood in relation to Greece has not been sufficiently addressed to date, and, as the editors point out, this collection of essays seeks to address this very issue.<sup>1</sup>

1 Cf. the Chrysallis project that focused on the nineteenth-century Greek periodical press and its role in shaping the national character, and related publications: *Ελληνικότητα και ετερότητα: Πολιτισμικές διαμεσολαβήσεις και 'εθνικός χαρακτήρας' στον 19ο αιώνα* ed. A. Tabaki and O. Polycandrioti, 2 vols

The essays in this volume focus on the second half of the nineteenth century, when the romantic philhellenism created by the Revolution had already ceased to be in the spotlight in the West.<sup>2</sup> The editors' Introduction offers an explanation for this shift in Western interest. Philhellene writers, poets and novelists had given way to scholars of Greek language and culture, and to Hellenists and Byzantinists who travelled to Greece to participate in excavations and to staff foreign archaeological schools. Equally enlightening is Marilisa Mitsou's essay which explores the reverse trajectory, namely how foreign literature was investigated in the Greek periodical press of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

This book sheds new light on the subject of cross-cultural and inter-cultural mediations and the cultural impact of the mediators' networks. It aims to enhance our understanding of cultural interactions, cultural transfer, and cultural dynamics, as well as the agenda of cultural mediators in the European press, as represented here by Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. These countries were not randomly selected for study. The fact that most of the volunteers who fought with the Greek revolutionaries during the struggle for Greek Independence originated in those states indicated a solid pre-existing background of philhellenic romanticism and sympathy for Greece and its national cause. The authors analyse the role of journals, periodicals and newspapers in the dissemination of literature and culture, and all the individuals and mechanisms involved: writers, journalists, booksellers, editors, translators, scholars, travellers, and diplomats. The book highlights the role of these agents, the institutions and associations that connected them, and the specific projects in which they were engaged in order better to understand Greece, its culture and its people. By gathering these studies in one volume, the editors provide fresh observations and generate valuable new questions for further investigation.

The contributors, all experts in their fields, offer both the specialist and the general reader an insightful, richly documented and rigorous analysis. Although the authors have previously written and published extensively on aspects on these topics, the book contains a great deal of new scholarship and also sheds new light on earlier research.

Six of the nine chapters in the book are in English, the remaining three in French. The reader may distinguish some methodological differences in the approach to cultural exchanges depending on the language in which the text is written. The predominance of English allows a new English-speaking readership access to debates hitherto found principally in French.

(Athens, 2016), and *Μετάφραση και περιοδικός τύπος στον 19ο αιώνα* ed. A. Tabaki and A. Altouva (Athens, 2016).

2 For philhellenism and its transformations during the period from 1770 to 1870 see G. Toliaş 'The resilience of philhellenism', *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 13 (2016), 51–70.

3 M. Mitsou, "Έστωσαν ημίν ήρωες του Φιλελλητισμού": Η πρόσληψη του ξένου ως οικείου στον ελληνικό περιοδικό Τύπο του 19ου αιώνα' ("Έστωσαν ημίν ήρωες του Φιλελλητισμού") in *Ελληνικότητα και ετερότητα*, 2.87–201.

Identities are constructed and then continually reshaped. This relational concept of identity stands in opposition to an essentialist conception of ‘national character’ or national consciousness. The renegotiation and reinterpretation of the agents and mechanisms involved with the formation of identities in a comparative perspective through the prism of cultural transfer theory can reorientate research into new areas of scholarship. This was evidently the intention of the editors, as is indicated by the title, and by combining previous scholarship with a wealth of new information, it succeeds in doing so. The carefully researched studies in this well-structured and engaging collection are an indispensable addition to the existing literature on cultural mediation and the historical process of identity construction. The volume is highly recommended.

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Gioula Koutsopanagou, *The British Press and the Greek Crisis, 1943–1949: Orchestrating the Cold-War ‘Consensus’ in Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. Pp. xii, 375.  
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‘Public diplomacy’ is a staple of diplomatic life in Britain’s missions overseas and at home. At peace and in conflict, embassies and high commissions court the public in their host countries, while the Foreign Office in London tackles domestic communications. The task, simply put, is to explain key policy goals, so as to influence the policy of foreign governments and shape public opinion abroad and in the UK. In recent years, social media have expanded the palette, while also making the task more difficult. In cases such as Ukraine today, where hostile governments mount sophisticated disinformation campaigns through cyberwarfare, the stakes appear existential.

These disciplines were first forged in wartime, specifically the two world wars. Winning the information war came to be seen as of strategic importance and could not be left to chance. As early as July 1939, six weeks before it declared war on Germany, the Chamberlain government gained parliamentary approval to plan the recreation of the Ministry of Information (first set up in 1917 and disbanded two years later). The efforts of democratic governments to control their media through wartime censorship are a complex and controversial part of this story. Perhaps surprisingly, the importance of the media to warfare has only recently been taken as seriously by historians as it has long been by government. Koutsopanagou’s well-researched study fills this gap in relation to the role played by the British press towards Greece in the period 1943 to 1949.

The book has an ambitious canvas, surveying the stance taken by the British press in the three rounds of ‘Greek Crisis’, as the ‘internal’ civil war morphed into the ‘external’