

and international politics and had global ramifications – and indeed, as M.’s subtitle has it, it played a role in the making of modern Europe.

Michalis Sotiropoulos
British School at Athens

Georgia Gotsi, *Ελίζαμπεθ Μ. Έντμοντς, μια βικτωριανή βιογραφεί τον Ρήγα*, Εισαγωγή – Κείμενο – Σχόλια. Athens: E.I.E. /I.I.E., 2020. Pp. 161
DOI:10.1017/byz.2023.31

Those interested in either the work of the late Victorian Philhellene Mrs Edmonds or her rather ponderously titled biography of Rhigas Velesinlis, *Rhigas Pheraios. The Protomartyr of Greek Independence: A Biographical Sketch*, previously had a few options: to seek out the text online and then to peruse it virtually; to track down a library edition, usually in the rare books section; or to turn to the print-on-demand market. None of these made for a particularly easy or enjoyable read.

Edmonds’ role in championing the Greek cause has been overlooked, although it is now beginning to attract critical attention. Georgia Gotsi is at the forefront of scholars working to combat Edmonds’ relative obscurity. (For full disclosure, I admit to being one of these scholars, too.) In this anniversary edition of Edmonds’ Rhigas biography, G. offers her reader an infinitely more gratifying experience than either flicking through the pages of Edmonds’ text virtually or working through a chunky reprinted edition. Besides, in both of these cases, the significance of Edmonds’ work was never immediately evident to the casual reader. G.’s edition, by contrast, goes a good way towards setting both Mrs Edmonds and her subject in context for a Greek audience, not only by making the original English text available and legible, but also by explaining the important role Edmonds played in popularizing Modern Greece back in Britain. G.’s edition has a fine introduction, as well as notes to Edmonds’ text and supplementary material.

G. encourages us to read Edmonds’ biographical mode in relation to other Victorian women’s gravitation towards the genre of biography. G. also considers Rhigas’ earlier appearance in Philip Barnes’ catalogue of heroes in *Martyrs to Freedom* (1889). Besides setting out how far a British audience would have been aware of Rhigas, situating Greek independence more broadly in European thought on the way, G. gives the reader a potted history of Edmonds’ interest in the War of Independence, and in its key figures, from Bouboulina to Kolokotronis. But the introduction is by no means the only attraction of this volume. As well as adding valuable notes to the text suggesting likely sources or correcting dates, G. has included other material connected to Rhigas from elsewhere in Edmonds’ oeuvre; this ranges from unpublished correspondence to Edmonds’ own poetry. G.’s curation of the work enables her to guide the reader

through the development of Edmonds' interest in the War of Independence, and to examine the depth of her understanding of Rhigas and his role in the Greek struggle.

G.'s scholarship shines through in the small details. Buried in a footnote to the introduction she offers insights from what remain of Edmonds' letters to Vikelas in the National Library of Greece. (G. has elsewhere documented that a house fire destroyed much of Edmonds' correspondence.) These footnotes bring to light such gems as Edmonds soliciting Vikelas' approval for her husband (a lighterman) to name a boat after him. The *Vikelas* would be in good company, joining Mr Edmonds' fleet of crafts including the *Rhegas*, *Diakos*, and *Gennadius* (among others) making their way across the Thames. It is through details such as this that G. demonstrates Edmonds' singular campaign to promote Greek independence to a British audience by any means possible.

G.'s notes to the text are meticulous. In just eight pages she manages to compress enough information to guide the reader through Edmonds' dense prose, as well as to unpack allusions to sources Edmonds had not seen fit to reference. This is far from a print-on-demand reproduction: G. has reformatted Edmonds' text, making it much easier on the eye. She has been transparent about her editorial practice in opting for silent correction of typographical errors. However, as well as standardizing the inconsistencies of Edmonds' original, occasionally this new edition seems to mask some of Edmonds' more telling mistakes. Much of the interest of Edmonds' work lies in the fact of her having produced it from a situation firmly outside the academy, both because of her sex, but also because of her position as an autodidact and amateur Hellenist and philhellene. This contradictory position is often revealed by errors such as slips in the Greek, unnoticed by the printer or Edmonds herself: a case in point is the *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Επανάστασως*, which is given as 'υπό Σ. Τρικούπη' in the original, but silently corrected by G.. While ironing out these inconsistencies certainly makes for an easier read, G. runs the risk of turning the finished text into a far more polished edition than Edmonds herself had ever produced.

Much of what makes G.'s copy a delight to read was missing from Edmonds' book: standardized references, consistency of footnotes, a good index. But if it brings Edmonds' work to a wider audience, this may be a sacrifice worth making. It is important that the book gets to be read by Greek readers, and that this chapter in British Philhellenism is attended to. G.'s edition more than ensures its future by turning one of Edmonds' more obscure titles into one of the most accessible. This polished and scholarly contribution to the 1821-2021 series does exactly what it sets out to do, namely to examine the curious impulse which prompted a Victorian woman to introduce Greece's protomartyr to a British readership.

Semele Assinder 
Padua