

Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe*. London: Allen Lane, 2021 and Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Constantinos Tsoukalas (eds), *The Greek Revolution: A Critical Dictionary*, Cambridge MA, The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2021.

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The Age of Revolutions as a field of study is once again in the air. Although scholarly interest in the field is hardly new, recent scholarship has given it a new lease of life by expanding the geographical scope of studies to include revolutionary experiences in the colonial and ‘peripheral’ world, and by embracing the insights of transnational and global history. Although the Greek Revolution was a key moment in the revolutionary age, it is usually absent from this literature. The bicentenary of the start of the Revolution, and many recent studies to which the anniversary has given rise, have played a large role in turning this state of affairs around. The two books under review are among the most exemplary cases of this turn, and both will become indispensable for anyone interested in the Greek revolution.

The first book, by one of the most prominent historians of modern and contemporary Europe, provides us with what is likely the most refreshing, demanding, take on 1821, mainly due to the author’s ability to fuse micro-history with more structural accounts. Targeting a wide audience, M. employs his masterly narrative skills, but without shying away from interpretation. This is the case with both parts of the book – the first focuses on the processes that ignited the Revolution, the second on its ramifications for Europe and the world at large. Three key features characterize the book. The first is the use of different spatial scales (*a jeu d’échelles* in all but name) in an analysis that combines a focus on local contexts alongside regional, transnational, and trans-imperial, frameworks. Both parts of the book open with a discussion of large processes through which the various imperial powers came to the region, transforming the eastern Mediterranean into a theatre of geopolitical transformation and experimentation, before the account gradually zooms in on regional and local contexts. Thus, the first part moves from Russia and the *Philiki Etaireia* to the area ruled by Ali Pasha, the Morea and the outbreak of revolution there, the islands, Rumeli, and, eventually, to the struggle for the establishment of a national government. Then, in the second part of the book, after discussing Philhellenism and the international networks of support for the Greek struggle (including, of course, the agents who facilitated the loans that funded the revolutionary efforts), he moves on to discuss Ibrahim, Missolonghi, and the battles of Athens and Navarino.

The second key feature of M.’s book is its emphasis on historical conjunctures. Much like other recent studies with which, it would seem, the study is in dialogue (such as those of Konstantina Zanou’s *Stammering the Nation: Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800-1850* (2018) or Maurizio Isabella’s *Southern Europe in the Age of Revolutions* (2023)), M. gives considerable weight to Napoleon and his impact on

the Eastern Mediterranean. Avoiding futile discussions about causes and effects, M. in each of his somewhat free-standing, essay-like chapters, offers an anti-teleological tableau of catalysts, consequences (often unintended), and coincidences. Indeed, his emphasis on war and on the movement of populations (often, but not always, the result of war) as two primary mechanisms of change at the local level is emblematic of his approach. And in one particularly noteworthy chapter, 'The nature of the struggle', he takes a more ethnographically oriented look at the causes and effects of these two mechanisms, providing the reader with an especially probing view of the roots of violence; the role of language and ideology, including religious beliefs; the economics of the conflict; the fluidity of identities; the important but forgotten parts played by certain socio-cultural groups (i.e. foot runners, scribe-secretaries); the cultural meaning of artillery; the world of soldiers and farmers. In so doing, he engages with various sources (folk songs, legends, religious teachings) in an attempt better to understand the world inhabited by those who participated in, and were affected by, the Revolution.¹

This is where we encounter the third distinguishing feature of M's book: its emphasis on people. This drives the overarching narrative, and M delves into many personal stories about families and individuals using them to reach broader conclusions. A prime example is the chapter on 'The war in the islands', in which he demonstrates how local political battles, easily construed as micro-conflicts between members of insular elites, were rooted in deeper questions about the meaning of society as well as its overarching structure, boundaries, and the ideal mode of governance. In the end, the author is able to show precisely how these local conflicts found their way into various political projects, on both a local and national level.

Sometimes such stories work more as narrative devices which are left unconnected to important historical developments; thus, the Moreots' request to Napoleon for protection is explained somewhat hastily as a moment of provincial solidarity among the region's Christian and Muslim elites. More importantly, in some cases, the author uses these personal characteristics (often deemed to be unchanging over time) as analytic devices. Apart from his commentary on Ypsilantis, or Kapodistrias' anti-British sentiments, a case in point here is M.'s account of Mavrokordatos who is not only portrayed as 'formidably educated', 'hardworking', 'intellectually energetic', well-dressed and 'instantly recognizable', but also as the one who 'brought politics', in the modern sense, to the rest of the Greeks— (pp. 93-5). Here lies a paradox: although the author does not subscribe to the old modernization paradigm, he does at times draw too sharp a line between Western political languages and local political traditions which 'did not talk this [modern] language nor really understand it' (p. 93). This I think arises from a shortcoming that the author recognizes and that characterizes many relevant studies: the limited engagement with the Ottoman context within which the Revolution took place (the same is true for the Russian context). Indeed, the emphasis on the role that Mavrokordatos played in the Greeks' turn

¹ Mazower translates 'γένος' as 'race' without explanation.

towards Great Britain ultimately obfuscates the respective political, diplomatic, and military roles of Russia and does not fully appreciate developments on the ground. But these are minor observations for a book that should be at the top of the list for all those interested in the Greek Revolution.

Kitromilides' and Tsoukalas' *Critical Dictionary* is a rather different book. This is a multi-authored volume which, though accessibly written, is addressed more to specialists than to the general reader. Influenced by analogous works on other revolutions (e.g. Francois Furet and Mona Ozouf (eds), *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (1989) and Michael J. Braddick (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* (2014)), the volume works as a kind of encyclopedia of the Greek Revolution – a term that it programmatically privileges over War of Independence even though some of the authors opt for the latter. Along with the introduction that seeks to locate the work within the relevant historiography, and to highlight some overarching themes, the book is divided into seven parts, with essays written by a wide array of experts. Compared to previous works on which it draws, the *Dictionary* innovates by opening (Part I) with a number of essays on the different contexts in which the Revolution is located (with two essays on the Balkan Hinterlands, one on Diasporas and Homelands, and one on the Ottoman context). I would argue that Part II, 'On the way to Revolution' (with essays on communities, forms of resistance and secret societies), is also about contexts, just narrower. In that sense, and in a way like Mazower's book but lacking the narrative mode, these two parts provide different space-scales and time-scales in which to locate the revolution. The essays by Matthieu Grenet ('Diasporas and Homelands'), Vasilis Molos ('Homelands') and Vaso Seirinidou ('Communities') in particular provide important new insights. The essays on the Balkan context are more about connections in the wider region, and the repercussions of the Revolution on the Ottoman Empire ('Ottoman Context' by Sucru Ilicak), than about contexts in which to understand the Greek Revolution.

The rest of the volume follows a more conventional structure. Part III, 'Events and Places', includes fifteen essays, ranging from the Morea and Rumeli to Asia Minor and Cyprus and written from different perspectives; Part IV, 'Persons', has seven essays which focus on social groups (clergymen, civilian leaders, diplomats, intellectuals, military leaders, women); Part V has six essays on 'Institutions' conventionally understood (assemblies and constitutions, economics, education, the Orthodox Church, the press); Part VI, 'Ideas and Expression', has four essays on the Enlightenment, literature and print culture, popular culture, and the Revolution as creative experience; Part VII, 'Resonances', has eight essays that address Philhellenism, the Romantic imagination, the musical and visual narration of the Revolution, historiography, commemorations and anniversaries. The volume ends with a Summary Chronology, and includes also a number of maps and pictures beautifully presented.

It goes without saying that it is difficult to do justice to such a diversified and rich volume. What is more, as Mazower wrote in his own review of *The Dictionary*

(*Mediterranean Historical Review*, 37. 2 (2022), 261-3), breadth of coverage sometimes comes at a price: it is difficult for such collective endeavours to arrive at an overarching interpretation or make causal arguments. M. also pointed out some topics that receive little attention: ethnicity (the identities of confessional or ethnic groups are taken mostly for granted); language and more generally communication systems, including religious beliefs but also slang, jokes, and oaths that played a role in how people gave meaning to the revolutionary events; state-building, economics, and political ideas and processes in their wider senses. To be fair, as I think most experts on the Revolution would agree, many of these topics remain in general under-explored. A single volume cannot cover all this long-neglected ground. That said, for future reference, I would add to M.'s list, by highlighting topics some of which one can, in fact, find in analogous works (i.e. on the French Revolution) and which would enhance our understanding of the Greek Revolution. One is gender, a conspicuous absence in the relevant historiography. Another set of topics is related to institutions and political processes such as federalism, elections, centralization, the army, or armies, the navy, or navies (although the essay by Katerina Galani and Tzelina Harlaftis addresses this), national properties (partly addressed by Kostas Kostis in his essay), taxes, the revolutionary government, local administration, piracy and privateering, the civil wars. Another set of topics might be more conceptual: revolutionary time, democracy, republicanism, liberty, regeneration, sovereignty, the rights of man, citizenship, independence, representation, equality. In addition, the historiography of the Revolution and its historians could have been more extensively treated, not least because this would have shown the importance of the *Dictionary* itself, and in particular of its collaborative character.

Last but not least – and this applies also to M.'s book, as noted above – the volume could have treated the Ottoman context more fully. Here it is treated more as a background than as integral for understanding why the revolutionaries acted, thought, and talked in the way they did. A characteristic example of the lack of engagement with this context is the section on 'Places': most of the essays address geographical categories which are more in line with a later spatial imagination, and with institutional structures yet to be created, than with the Ottoman world and the way that contemporaries understood space (with important exceptions such as the essays by Basil C. Gounaris on 'Macedonia', Dionysis Tzakis on 'Epirus', and the 'Morea', Dimitris Livanios on the 'Civilian Leaders', and Dimitris Papastamatiou on the 'Military Leaders', which do partly take into account the Ottoman imperial system).

These criticisms are not meant to detract in any way from the significance of the book and its remarkable achievement. Just like M.'s work, the *Dictionary* both situates the Greek revolution in wider contexts and offers an analysis that gives equal importance to local and wider processes, thus avoiding essentialist claims about the parochialism or primitiveness of people in the region. In fact, both works show that the Greek Revolution and its outcome, the establishment of the Greek state, transformed regional

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, *Ελιζαμπέθ Μ. Έντμοντς, μια βικτωριανή βιογραφεί τον Ρήγα*, Εισαγωγή – Κείμενο – Σχόλια. Athens: E.I.E./I.I.E., 2020. Pp. 161
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Those interested in either the work of the late Victorian Philhellene Mrs Edmonds or her rather ponderously titled biography of Rhigas Velestinlis, *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