

“Am I not a Greek?”
The Emergence of the Ideal Type of “Modern Greek”
from Thomas Hope’s *Anastasius* (1819) to Percy Shelley’s *Hellas* (1822)

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In the early August of 1821, Percy Shelley left Mary Shelley in Pisa, to visit Byron in Ravenna. Shelley's enthusiasm for the Greek Revolution met a very cynical reaction by Byron, who urged him to read Anastasius, or, Memoirs of a Greek; written at the close of the Eighteenth Century, a novel written by an anonymous writer and published in late 1819 (in the second edition, some months later, its author was revealed as Thomas Hope, a 50-year-old Dutch-English merchant). Anastasius was an instant European bestseller; Metternich had already read it and used it against the Greeks in Laibach. Anastasius is a story of a ruthless Greek adventurer and mercenary who becomes a Muslim, and he does not develop a strong national identity like the Greeks who were already fighting against the Ottomans, since the early March of 1821. In his debates with Byron over Greeks and Greekness, Shelley insisted that the picture of the Greeks in Anastasius was outdated. There was a new class of Greeks who were ready to bring back glory to the cradle of civilization and the most important of them was his friend, Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos. Shelley dedicated Hellas to him, while he used Mavrokordatos as the model in his description of the enlightened modern Greek in the Preface of Hellas. This lecture examines the perceptions of the ideal “Greek” in two fictional characters, Anastasius and his literary foil, Spyridon Mavrokordatos, versus a real historical figure, Alexandros Mavrokordatos, one of the leaders of the Greek Revolution. The relationship between the two works and the three characters have exerted a great influence on the image of the Greek Revolution in Europe but also to one person who was initially suspected as the author of Anastasius and he was also a close friend and an antagonist of Percy Shelley: Lord Byron. Byron chose to go to Missolonghi and trust Mavrokordatos, he even decided to come to Greece, with Shelley’s Hellas sway over him, despite his initial infatuation with Anastasius.

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//² On May 8, 1821 (O.S.) a dervish of the Bektashi Order approached an Inn (i.e., a motel for the travelers) at Gravia, a small village in Phocis. The dervish was a negotiator. He was sent as an envoy from Omer Vryonis to his old friend and comrade in Ali Pasha's court, Odysseus Androutsos. The reason Omer sent a dervish to negotiate with a bunch of Christian rebels was that Odysseus had very strong ties with the Bektashi Order and he would treat the dervish with respect. However, the negotiation was not successful. Odysseus addressed the dervish in Albanian and their conversation was resulted in an exchange of insults. Suddenly, Odysseus aimed at him with his rifle and killed him in cold blood. Omer Vryonis realized at that point that Odysseus was not there to bargain but to fight. He could still not understand what Odysseus and the other Romioi in the Inn were doing exactly. If you do not have a specific number of requests or grievances, what is the point of an uprising?

// Another Turk was wondering

Dear Pashas and Beys we are going to perish. We are going to perish; I am telling you! This is not a war against Russia, England, or France. This is a war against the desperate rayah [tax-paying subject] who we treated unfairly, we robbed his property and honor, and he is now rioting against us. And the Sultan, the jerk, is heedless. His advisors are misleading him. We pay good money to find a traitor among the rayahs, but nobody is betraying their goals. What is their secret? Are the rayahs alone or the Powers are helping them? We pay, we impale, we murder them and still we cannot find the truth.

// Eight years earlier, in 1813, an English radical liberal politician, John Hobhouse had published his 1,000-page travel memoirs. Hobhouse had visited Greece with his close friend Lord Byron, 4 years earlier. According to Hobhouse (*A Journey through Albania*):

Any general revolution of the Greeks, independent of foreign aid, is quite impracticable; for, although the great mass of the people, as is the case in all insurrections, has feeling and spirit enough to make the attempt, yet most of the higher classes, and all the clergy, except as far as expressions of discontent may be taken into account, are apparently willing to acquiesce in their present condition. The Patriarch and Princes of the Phanar are at the devotion of the Porte. The primates of the towns and the richer merchants would be cautious not to move, unless they were certain of benefiting by the change; and of this backwardness in the chiefs of their nation, the Greeks are by no means insensible. The prudence, or timidity, of the chief men amongst them, not only diminishes the probability of an actual insurrection, but takes away from the zeal with which we might otherwise embark in their cause; and when we begin to examine the moral power of the nation at large, we shall not be inclined to indulge in any very sanguine expectation of their future success. The Greeks have in many instances shown a desperate frenzy in distress, and a sanguinary ferocity in prosperity, but are certainly not at all notorious for that cool, determined courage, which is necessary for the accomplishment of any great action.

Greeks did not have the moral power nor the determined courage. This was the verdict of a perceptive writer who loved the idea of Greece, but he was rather contemptuous of the

² Change of PowerPoint slide. You can download the lecture slides from here: <https://tinyurl.com/AnastasiusSlides>

modern Greeks. Because Greeks seemed to have settled, they seemed comfortable in being captives, slaves, second class subjects. They were “effeminate” as many travelers and scholars were noticing. They were now the mood-breaking décor of the antiquities, unworthy descendants of a glorious people.

// John William Polidori, Byron’s personal physician, who spent several weeks, during the bleak summer of 1816, at Villa Diodati by Lake Geneva, in the company of Byron, the Shelleys and Mary’s step-sister Claire Clermont, describes this widespread sentiment about the decline of Greece, in his novella *The Vampyre: A Tale* (1819):

Having left Rome, Aubrey directed his steps towards Greece, and crossing the Peninsula, soon found himself at Athens. He then fixed his residence in the house of a Greek; and soon occupied himself in tracing the faded records of ancient glory upon monuments that apparently, ashamed of chronicling the deeds of freemen only before slaves, had hidden themselves beneath the sheltering soil or many coloured lichen.

// Byron said the same thing poetically (1812):

*Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scatter’d children forth,
And long accustom’d bondage uncreate?
Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylæ’s sepulchral strait—
Oh! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas’s banks, and call thee from the tomb?*

// Despite their predictions, Greeks did revolt. And they revolted under the worse possible circumstances. Without a Great Power behind them, without a spiritual or a secular leader, without material resources, without army and ammunition, without unity, central governance, without money. How did that happen?

[slide: “The Greeks! what think you? They are my old acquaintances – but what to think I know not. Let us hope howsomever.” Lord Byron letter to Thomas More (June 4, 1821)]

* * * * *

In this lecture I am not going to try to answer that question. I am not going to trace the transformation of the Orthodox Christian rayah to a Greek revolutionary or the process of the formation of a new national identity. I am going to discuss the change of the image of the Greeks in the European public sphere using two major pieces of literature as main references.

// The first is a now-forgotten best seller of the 1819-1820 literary season, written by a banker and merchant and the other a political poem, written by a radical romantic poet. Both writers

had a model, an actual person, as a kind of an ideal type, a representative, supposedly, of modern Greeks. Thomas Hope, the author of the novel, had as a model Nicholas Papas Oglou, a Greek mercenary. Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet, had as a model of the enlightened modern Greek, Alexander Mavrokordatos, the Greek revolutionary leader. Both pieces of literature had influenced the image of modern Greek in the European mind. Hope's novel unintentionally, Shelley's poem intentionally.

// In my history of the Greek Revolution which was written in English and it's going to be published this year in the U.S., Percy but mostly Mary Shelley are leading characters and Thomas Hope a recurring proactive commentator.

// *Anastasius, or Memoirs of a Greek, written at the close of the Eighteenth Century* appeared in London's bookshops in early December of 1819. It was published by John Murray and the author was, initially, unknown.

Supposedly the novel was the memoirs of a Greek mercenary. If someone had the courage and the determination to read the whole novel, the three volumes, the 1.265 pages (and I am proud to say that I did it twice; it's a fascinating, insightful book), she would have found many instances which proved that the novel has been written much later than the end of the 18th century by someone who was definitely not Greek. It was simply a well-written picaresque novel in autobiographical form, written by an author who wished to remain anonymous.

It is the story of a courageous but also unscrupulous Greek adventurer from Chios, who becomes part of the Ottoman government by serving the Dragoman of the Fleet, an actual person, Nicholas Mavrogenes. After his dismissal from the service, he is doing many odd jobs in Constantinople and elsewhere, he becomes a mercenary and a merchant, he travels to the Aegean islands, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Arabia, he returns to Europe to serve under Mavrogenes, already appointed Prince of Wallachia, and he dies in central Europe, in an obscure mountainous village of the Habsburg Empire. // All this happened during the last decades of the 18th century, "In an age in which whatever prelates to the regions, once adorned by the Greeks, and now defaced by the Turks, excites peculiar attention." [excerpt from the preface]

His adventures are reminiscent of Papas Oglou, a real Greek mercenary, one of the Imperial Greeks, as Yannis Kotsonis named them in his fascinating recent book, *Imperial Greeks* (2021). Like Papas Oglou, Anastasius worked as a mercenary in Egypt and he lost his wife and child in Smyrna. However, Anastasius is a much more complicated case. Because he has a best friend, an alter ego or rather a literary foil. The book evolved into a history of their relationship. Anastasius alter ego was a fictional character. His name was Spyridon. And there is another major difference with Papas Oglou. Anastasius converts to Islamism. He becomes a first-rate Ottoman; he calls himself Turk.

The book had sensational success. The second edition sold out in twenty-four hours. It was translated in French and German. Everybody read it, including the busiest man on the

continent. Klemens von Metternich. // He arrived early in Laibach in January 1821, and he had time to spend on a good novel.

Do you know an English novel called "Anastasius"? In it there is a description of the Greek character [...] which is very good and accurate, as indeed is everything in this book relating to Oriental, and especially Greek, customs. You will find there Capo d'Istria word for word, exactly as he is.

Almost everybody assumed that only Byron could write such a great novel, with so many details and a wealth of information about the Ottoman Empire, with such an unprincipled adventurer as a hero. A novel which was irreverent, original, and modern.

One of the reasons that Byron resented the novel was that he was considered an "expert" on modern Greece. // That is why his first statement was dismissive. No Greek could write such a novel.

Anastasius is good but no more written by a Greek — than by a Hebrew

The truth was that he really liked the novel. // His second reaction was an angry approval:

I thought Anastasius excellent — did I not say so?

Apparently, he liked the novel a lot. If we believe Lady Blessington, Byron was still jealous of the novel and the author, // some months before his arrival to Missolonghi:

Byron spoke to-day in terms of high commendation of Hope's 'Anastasius'; said that he wept bitterly over many pages of it, and for two reasons, — first that he had not written it, and secondly that Hope had; for it was necessary to like a man excessively to pardon his writing such a book — a book, he said, excelling all recent productions, as much in wit and talent, as in true pathos. He added, he would have given his two most approved poems to have been the author of 'Anastasius'. [Lady Blessington, Conversations with Lord Byron (1834)]

One could say that in some respect Byron did write a version of *Anastasius*. Of course, a poet like Byron could never simply plagiarize. But *Don Juan* was written under the shadow of *Anastasius* as Peter Cochran has illustrated. According to Cochran (2010), *Don Juan* indebtedness to Hope is far greater than usually stated. Cochran is not the first to notice. // When Shelley read *Don Juan* in early August 1821, while visiting Byron in Ravenna, his first reaction was bitterness:

It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day — every word has the stamp of immortality. I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending. (letter to Mary W. Shelley, Aug. 10, 1821)

// But then, Shelley read *Anastasius*.

I am reading Anastasius. One would think that L.B. [Lord Byron] had taken his idea of the three last Cantos of Don Juan from this book. That, of course, has nothing to do with the merit of the latter, poetry having nothing to do with the invention of facts. – It is a very powerful, and very entertaining novel, and a faithful picture, they say, of modern Greek manners. (letter to Mary W. Shelley, Aug. 10, 1821)

Now, the question is, why did Byron persist that Shelley would read *Anastasius*? Was his intention to check how “heavy borrowing” from *Anastasius* would seem to a person such as Shelley? No. Byron had another, more perverted purpose. He wanted to disillusion Shelley about the Greeks.

Shelley was enthusiastic about the Revolution; he was even considering travelling to Greece. But Byron’s cynicism could not bear such a naïve enthusiasm. And *Anastasius* could work as a reality check. Modern Greeks are not the romantic revolutionaries, the brave heroes, the Europeans *par excellence* who are fighting against the Asians, the Christians against the Infidels. Modern Greeks had long been integrated into the Ottoman society. They were simply Orthodox Christians who were also Ottoman subjects. Nothing more. The Greek nation was simply thin air.

Shelley was partially shocked. But he did not want to believe that a British merchant could understand the Greeks better than him.

There was another socking detail in *Anastasius* that only Shelley was able to appreciate. The alter ego of *Anastasius*, the noble version of the Greek, was, as you might remember, a fictional character under the name Spyridon. His last name in the novel was Mavrokordatos. Hope chose that particular last name for his Greek noble character. Is there any chance that Hope met Alexandros Mavrokordatos in Bucharest, Geneva or even Pisa? Maybe. I am still trying to trace the moves of both. But it is not unlikely since Hope was already familiar with the work of two leading Greek intellectuals of the time: Adamantios Korais and Athanassios Psalidas. As you know, these two men are leading figures of the Modern Greek Enlightenment.

In his debates with Byron over the Greeks, Shelley (who was excited) emphasized that the picture of the Greeks in *Anastasius* was unfair. There was a new class of Greeks who were ready to bring back glory to the cradle of civilization and the most important of them was his friend, Alexandros Mavrokordatos. He saw in him the representative of the new Greece, a modern Greece equal to its classical past.

// In a letter he wrote to his friend, the poet Horace Smith, on September 14, 1821, from Pisa, his sentiments were clear:

All public attention is now centred on the wonderful revolution in Greece. I dare not, after the events of the last winter, hope that slaves can become freemen so cheaply; yet I know one

Greek of the highest qualities, both of courage and conduct, the Prince Mavrocordato, and if the rest be like him, all will go well.

// After his return from Ravenna to Pisa, Shelley decided to write *Hellas*, a work inspired by the Greek Revolution. What Shelley wrote is now considered one of his greatest works, even though he characterized it “a mere improvise.” It was written with *The Persians* of Aeschylus as a model (“the first model of my conception”) with the Ottoman Sultan as the “Macbeth of Islam” as Edmund Blunden (1946) perceptively noticed. It was essentially a propaganda piece of art. Shelley’s intention was to support the Greek cause, to exert influence on his countrymen for “the descendants of the nation to which we owe our civilization.” His goal was to gain sympathy for the Greeks by writing a lyrical drama with a clear political message, to associate modern and ancient Greeks.

After Mavrokordatos announced the outbreak of the Revolution and gave them the details, Shelley decided to write something short and “Aeschylean”, “full of lyrical poetry”. He sent it to his publishers on November 1st, 1821. The same night Mary added to her diary: “Albé arrives.” Albé was the nickname Shelley used for Byron.

Shelley was not so happy with the literary result because he did not have the time to work more on it. It was first and foremost a political manifesto, the preface was as important to him as the work itself. It was impossible for him to hide his enthusiasm (“Greece might again be free!”). // There is a paragraph in the Preface which is an explicit reply to Hope’s novel and Byron’s cynicism and an implicit reference to Mavrokordatos:

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind, and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded, by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders, and that below the level of ordinary degradation; let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease so soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of “Anastasius” could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

// Percy Shelley wrote *Hellas* under the shadow of Alexandros Mavrokordatos. He even dedicated it to him. According to Marion Kingston Stocking (1968), “Throughout Shelley’s acquaintance with him the Prince was a hero, the living embodiment of the freedom loving spirit of the ancient Greeks.”

It’s impossible to underestimate the political consequences of this poem. One should only keep in mind that Byron chose to go to Missolonghi, he decided to trust Mavrokordatos, he

even decided to come to Greece under the shadow of this poem, under the shadow of his great friend, a poet who literally felt Greek. As Félix Rabbe (1887) eloquently had observed, Greece was Shelley's "true mother-country."

But it is time to see what Anastasius, the fictional character, really feels for his identity.

His family in Chios are loyal Ottoman subjects. // His father fought against the Russians, together with the Turks.

and in the first Russian war he employed all his spare money in fitting out a small vessel to cruise against the enemy; —for so he chose to consider the Russians, in spite of all their amicable professions towards the Greeks. As a loyal subject of the Porte, and an old servant of the French government, he felt no sort of wish to be delivered from the yoke of the Turks; and he looked upon those barbarians of the North, who cared no more for the Patriarch of Constantinople than for the Pope of Rome, as little better than rank heretics, not worthy of being treated even like his silk worms, which every year he got carefully exorcised before their spinning time.

// From the very beginning he hates everything that makes him a second-class subject of the Sultan.

In my fits of heroism, I swore to treat the Turks as he had done the Trojans, and for a time dreamt of nothing but putting to the sword the whole Seraglio—dwarfs, eunuchs, and all. These dreams my parents highly admired, but advised me not to divulge. "Just rancour," they said, "should be bottled up, to give it more strength,"—Upon this principle they cringed to the ground to every Moslem in they met.

// The complexity of captivity puzzles him:

and thus was I, hapless Greek, compelled, in the space of four days, to bear the yoke of four different nations—French, Venetians, Maynotes, and Turks.

// Very early in the novel he is considering conversion to Islamism.

Mavrogenis, the Greek Dragoman warns him.

"You fool," [...] Had you accepted the High Admiral's proposal, you would immediately have received some inferior appointment, and in that you would have been left to waste the remainder of your life. Your first promotion would have been your last. Despised by the Turks and shunned by the Greeks, you would have found support no where; and must henceforth have lived not only degraded, but what is worse, forgotten. Has it never struck you,"' added he in a whisper, as if afraid of being overheard," that if much were to be gained by a Christian turning Moslem, there are others besides yourself sufficiently reasonable not to stick at the difference between Kyrie eleison, and Allah, Illah, Allah?"

This observation set all reply at defiance. I laid by my sword, and resumed my coffee-tray.

Now, this was a rational decision by *Anastasius*. He was not committed to his identity. // He had only contempt for Phanariotes:

[Stephan Mavrogenis'] character presented a singularity among Greeks in public situations, wondered at by all, and disapproved of by most, that of being a perfectly honest man. His enemies rejoiced at it, though his friends still kept hoping that he was not too old to mend.

That is why 140 pages later he is determined.

Now [...] it behoved me [...] with all possible speed to become a Mohammedan. Should there happen to be any personal advantage connected with this public duty; should my conforming to it open the door to places and preferments, from which I otherwise must remain shut out; should it raise me from the rank of the vanquished to that of the victors, and enable me, instead of being treated with contempt by the Turkish beggar, to elbow the Greek prince, was that my fault? or could it be a motive to abstain from what was right, that it was also profitable!

The arguments appeared to me so conclusive, that I had only been watching for an opportunity to throw off the contemptuous appellation of Nazarene, and to become associated to the great aristocracy of Islamism. [...]

*Thus it was that the doctrine of pure reason ended in making me a Mohammedan: but with a pang I quitted for the strange sound of *Selim*, my old and beloved name of *Anastasius*, given me by my father.*

He becomes a Muslim and an Ottoman official. Nevertheless, deep down he cannot uproot his Greek identity. // In a discussion with a complacent Spyridon he explodes:

Here I rubbed my eyes. "Am I alive," cried I, "and awake; and do I hear a Greek, and under the yoke of the Turks, talk of a social compact,—of an agreement intended for mutual benefit, support and protection,—as of a thing actually subsisting; as of a thing that should regulate his conduct to his masters?"

// He admires Mavrokordatos, his friend, for being something he cannot be, a principled character:

I understand, the P—'s and the C—'s³ of the present more enlightened period boast in their recent publications: and in the thick darkness which surrounded him, Spiridion was almost the only person I could have named, who attached more importance to morality than to dogma, and who insisted more upon inward principle than outward practices.

// When he leaves the Levant permanently, he laments

"Glorious sun of the East!" cried I with faltering tongue, "balmy breath of the Levant warm affections of my beloved Greece,—adieu for ever! The season of flowers is gone by: that of

³ Psalidas and Coray, possibly?

storms and whirlwinds howls before me. Among the frosts of the North I must seek my future fortunes: a cradle of ice must rock my future hopes. For the bleak wastes and black firs of Gothic climes I am going to exchange the myrtle groves of Grecian valleys; and perhaps on the further borders of the chilly Neva it may be my fate to cherish the last remembrance of Ionia and of Chio!"

I could stay all day citing passages from this great novel. Passages which I am sure you will find fascinating. Like the connection of liberal ideas with a possible uprising in the Levant and Greece in particular. // Or the eerie description of his change of attire from eastern to western dress. One can really feel that Hope describes the change of attire of Mavrokordatos⁴ two years earlier of the actual change.

Determined to shake off as much as possible all that marked the native of the East, and to adopt all that might assist me to assimilate with the children of the West, I proceeded from the inward to the outward man.

// Or the strangely symbiotic Greek-Russian relation:

Fair as seemed this beginning, the understanding between the two nations was short-lived. The Greeks expected the Russians alone to accomplish the whole task of their deliverance. The Russians had laid their account with a powerful co-operation on the part of the Greeks. Each, alike disappointed, threw on the other the blame of every failure.

// However, there is a passage that is prophetic, the most important passage of the novel. Anastasius is in Rhodes, heavily disappointed, he visits the site of the Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, a rather unlikely place for Greek national consciousness to arise.

In my despondency, my eye caught a piece of broken marble, gorgeously emblazoned with chivalresque insignia. But if the side which lay uppermost displayed the plumed crest of a Gothic knight, the reverse still bore the remains of an Hellenic inscription. It was a work and a record of the ancient Greeks, and had no doubt been brought from the opposite shore, where the ruins of Cnidus furnished the knights of Rhodes with an ample quarry for the monuments of their feudal vanity. At this sight, my own national pride returned in all its force. "And does it then belong to me," cried I, —trying by a sudden start to rouse the dormant energies of my mind— "to envy the borrowed greatness of Goths and barbarians, only able in their fullest pomp to adorn themselves with the cast-off feathers of my own ancestors! Am I not a Greek? And what Grecian blood, even where remotest from the source it runs in the smallest rills, is not nobler than the base stream that flows through the veins of these children of the West, whose proudest boast is to trace their names to the obscurity of ignorance and the night of barbarism, whose oldest houses only date as of yesterday, and whose highest achievements are the exploits of savages!"

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⁴ "The Prince comes in his new dress." (Mary W. Shelley, Diary entry, May 16, 1822).

Shelley was happy with the effect of *Hellas*. But the shadow of *Anastasius* was still present.

// Because he spent time with his friend Edward Trelawney, who visited the Shelley couple in Pisa.

Trelawney had a similar view of the Greeks with Byron:

As you have lately written a poem, "Hellas," about the modern Greeks, would it not be as well to take a look at them amidst all the din of the docks? I hear their shrill nasal voices, and should like to know if you can trace in the language or lineaments of these Greeks of the nineteenth century A.D. the faintest resemblance to the lofty and sublime spirits who lived in the fifth century B.C. An English merchant who has dealings with them told me he thought these modern Greeks were, if judged by their actions, a cross between the Jews and gipsies.

They visited Capitano Zarita, a Trelawny acquaintance. Interestingly enough, the Greek ship had the name "San Spiridione". This was the second reality check.

// The Greek sailors

took little heed of the skipper [...] They squatted about the decks in small knots, shrieking, gesticulating, smoking, eating, and gambling like savages.

"Does this realise your idea of Hellenism, Shelley?" I said.

"No! but it does of Hell," he replied.

The Captain is a good host, he offers them pipes and coffee in his cabin where the two British saw an icon of "Santo Spiridione, the ship's godfather."

//

Shelley talked to him about the Greek revolution that was taking place, but from its interrupting trade the captain was opposed to it.

//

"Come away!" said Shelley. "There is not a drop of the old Hellenic blood here. These are not the men to rekindle the ancient Greek fire; their souls are extinguished by traffic and superstition. Come away!" — and away we went.

Now, Trelawny is not exactly a credible person, and his memoirs should be read with a pinch of salt. But there are other eerie coincidences here. // Mary Shelley writes when she meets him for the first time (Letter to Maria Gisborne 9/2/1822):

Trelawny – a kind of half Arab Englishman – whose life has been as changeful as that of Anastasius and who recounts the adventures of his youth as eloquently and well as the imagined Greek.

Trelawny was, definitely, a version of Anastasius when he met Mary and he became the spitting image of the Greek adventurer. Trelawny travelled with Byron to Missolonghi. He met Mavrokordatos and he did not like the Mavrokordatos' version of the Greeks. He chose Odysseus instead of Mavrokordatos and at a point in time where Odysseus was slowly but steadily joining the dark side. Trelawny hated Mavrokordatos for several reasons. One of them was that Trelawny had a crush for Mary who kept asking him in her letters about Mavrokordatos, whom she really admired, and she was still under his spell:

As word as to your wooden god, Mavrocordato. He is a miserable Jew, and I hope, ere long, to see his head removed from his worthless and heartless body. He us a mere shuffling soldier, an aristocratic brute – wants Kings and Congresses; a poor, weak, shuffling, intriguing, cowardly fellow; so no more about him. [Edward John Trelawny to M.W.S., from Missolonghi, April 30th 1824]

Trelawney is Anastasius and Mavrokordatos his antagonist and his Nemesis. Trelawney cannot appreciate what Mavrokordatos does because he is unable to understand him. But Byron can. Not only because Byron is not a Byronic hero anymore. But because the Shelley effect on him is greater than ever. He could not help but despise many aspects of this Revolution, of these Greeks, even of Mavrokordatos in some instances but he is wise and sensible enough to appreciate the fact that the only chance the Greeks have is if Mavrokordatos' priorities are being respected and endorsed by the Greeks.

// Despite the attempts by both Byron and Trelawney to disillusion Shelley, to deter him from sacrificing himself for these "degenerate" Greeks, Shelley managed to put the spell on them. One could see the famous painting by Fournier [you can now see at the slide] as symbolizing this spell. Byron sacrificed everything for the Greek cause, even his life (according to him), Trelawney accompanied him, and he was enthusiastically involved, Leigh Hunt was the editor of the radical liberal *Examiner*, one of the most pro-Greek weeklies in Britain, the journal where Mary Shelly published anonymously one of the first editorials supporting the Greeks, an editorial that was written by Mavrokordatos himself in French, for her to translate.

// Roderick Beaton (2013) has illustrated in some very moving passages how the Karaiskakis incident was pivotal for Byron's death. Karaiskakis was the opposite of Odysseus. He turned to the light after spending some considerable time in the dark. Byron learned about Karaiskakis while the Roumeliote warlord was trying to undermine Mavrokordatos by committing something that for Byron was high treason (negotiating with both Greeks and the Ottomans for his personal benefit). Mavrokordatos tried to deal with him minimizing losses but mostly by setting an example. Mavrokordatos was successful, Karaiskakis learned a lesson and he eventually became a genuine hero, but Byron was devastated. The Greeks were not worth his sacrifice, Trelawney was right, Shelley was wrong.

The problem with all these Englishmen was that they took *Anastasius* too seriously. Or rather, they took too seriously their own prejudices about the Greeks, their character and their Revolution. They could not appreciate the complexity of the Greek society, the most complex in Europe for many reasons, the most important one being that Greeks lived almost everywhere in the Southeastern Europe and the Middle East but also in places like Moscow, Bucharest, Vienna, Trieste, Venice, Livorno, Paris, London, Amsterdam, and Marseilles. Every Greek experienced the yoke differently, depending on the place of his living, his profession, his education, and his socio-economic status. Every Greek had developed his own survival strategy, and this was not necessarily opportunistic, it was a rational reaction to the constraints of Ottoman rule. They saw Greeks with a mix of a colonial and orientalist attitude, combined with an aristocratic, elitist disdain for this “semi-barbarous dark-skinned race.” This was the result of their own social, intellectual, and cultural constraints, but it was not necessarily the only way they could see the Greeks. It is not a coincidence that Shelley, the radical intellectual, was the one who overcame his prejudices and managed to subvert the *Anastasius* stereotype. His was not the only one.

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The Shelley view in *Hellas*, that Byron endorsed and internalized, was similar with the one presented in a conservative French newspaper which saw the Greek Revolution with suspicion.

For some years past, an extraordinary movement had been manifesting itself in Greece. A swarm of young men were in the habit of migrating from it every spring, and settling in the west. The universities of Germany and Italy were chiefly solicited for their sojourn. There they were wont to prosecute their studies with uncommon zeal and perseverance, and with that intense application to argumentation and syllogistic deduction which distinguished the schools of ancient Greece. Having gone through the usual routine of education, many of them proceeded to Paris and London, to finish their studies, and to acquire some other accomplishments as those capitals could afford under the auspices and tuition of propagandists and genuine radicals. They then returned home inflated with the most exalted ideas of the ancient glory of their country, with the accumulative grievances under which it labored, with the sweets of liberty, and with the necessity of effecting a revolution in it by open force and without delay. (Gazette de France, late April 1821)

Shelley was right after all. Mavrokordatos represented a social class, he was not isolated. One could only compare Shelly’s approach with the one taken by two other democrats, two middle class philhellenes, who managed to familiarize themselves with this society and appreciate its complexities. Two persons with an abundance of good faith. One of them was an American, Samuel Gridley Howe, and the other a British officer, an Irishman, Edward Blaquiere; Blaquiere was the one who persuaded Byron to join the Greek Revolution. Howe was more ready to spot the weaknesses in the Greek character than Blaquiere but they both had one thing in common. They were able to empathize with the Greeks.

But theirs is a different story.