

MINOR DEBATES

Part 1: The Modern Greek Reality

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The ancient lyric and poetic tradition presents Helen as an eternal model of beauty and contemporaneously as the cause of the Trojan War and Greek suffering. At Euripides' "*Helen*" the tragic poet utilises a tradition, which was probably invented either by the poet Stesichorus or Hesiodus. This tradition differentiates itself, as it combines the presence of an "idol",¹ Helen's idol in Troy, with the parallel hiding of the real Helen in Egypt, where she was placed under the protection of King Proteus. So, Greeks and Trojans remain trapped in an idol, in a deceptive image, for years as it is eventually proved.

This variation of the epic story displays the essential difference between "appearing and being". And this is exactly the characteristic which now imparts to the play a particular value at present. Namely, the current situation shows the modern Achaeans trapped not in the snare of pretty Helen's idol, but the illusion of the idealized Greek country. This illusion is being constantly invigorated by the idea that both the few "lucky" people who live in Greece and the Greek land itself constitute the Greek earthly version of the celestial paradise.

On the other hand, it is certainly true that during the last thirty years the Greek traditional, agricultural and "isolated" society of the 19th century has been transformed into a more urban, democratic, multicultural, European one. However, this is quite far from the almost mythical image we present to ourselves.

Hence, to name but one example, it is noteworthy that, although we are convinced Greece is the most beautiful land on earth, we do not hesitate at the same time to mar its image by all means for the sake of selfish, evanescent and sordid purposes. From the illegal deposition of every kind of sludge and

waste till unorganized and uncontrollable reconstruction, every action constitutes an expression of a schizoid behaviour. This is the case, because the very next minute, we invoke manners and customs, Greek virtues, Greek nature, ancient ancestors etc. in order to preserve the glorified image of the perfect modern Greek land, which has been inculcated in the collective subconscious, while we instantly forget every dark corner of it.

However, the myth of the Greek civilisation is present. Visitors today should only use the road network or even better –in order to maximize the experience- dare move within cities to ascertain the real “progress”, the unique Greek “aesthetics”, but also Greek (co-)drivers’ culture.

Greeks today, like another Menelaus, should stop standing ecstatically on the modern Greek idol. They should rather face the Greek reality in a critical mind and finally remove the veil of fog, that covers it. “_If one **has ears to hear, let him listen!**”²

Footnotes

1. The term is used to indicate Helen’s double. As far as its nature is concerned, it is traditionally mentioned sometimes as ether and sometimes as fog.
2. John’s Apocalypse, 13.9.

Part 2: The course towards paper cups* From “Mr. Medios” to “In Da Club” song

by Konstantinos Melissas

Eurobasket 1987, Greek Track Team, Weight-lifting “Dream Team”, Euro 2004, Olympic Games 2005, European Basketball Championship 2005 and lately World Basketball Championship 2006. The modern Greek reality has been masterly carved by the great athletic successes of Greece, but unfortunately only by them.

The unexpected athletic triumphs, apart from provoking a temporary spiritual exaltation, have been proved incapable of prompting modern Greeks to develop further their capabilities and accomplish great projects with unassailable ardour.

Meanwhile, the accession to the EU and later the EMU (Economic and Monetary Union) was easily and deceptively achieved by hordes of (illegal) immigrants, many unexploited EU funds and several “intelligently manipulated” financial balance sheets of the Greek state.

Hence, modern Greeks almost never did they aim consistently at conquering higher levels of science and culture, nor did they really ever escape from the dark, heavy veil of their miserable reality, as this is composed of the current international unfavourable circumstances (petrol price hike, terrorism, EU’s political future, undisguised infringement of privacy, CIA’s secret prisons etc.), the huge credit-card debts, the unemployment and extinction of work-related rights, the nepotism, the lack of meritocracy, the universal spread of corruption, the unscrupulous state officials, the totally controlled and at the same time uncontrollable mass media, the depreciation of the public higher education and all other kinds of modern Scyllas and Charybdes, which tyrannise us within the framework of a democratic totalitarian regime.

On the contrary, while the merciless modern Greek reality is rapidly formed and deformed at the time of the indiscriminately sweeping globalisation and inexorable capitalism, modern Greeks have been led through the adoption of Western market standards and negative Eastern culture’s elements to an endless and meaningless course of impressiveness for some other insignificant or fake paper cups.

*Paper cup = an award or reward given for an insignificant purpose or feigned cause