The glory that was not: Embodying the classical in contemporary Greece

ABSTRACT
The ceremonial re-enactment of classical antiquity has long been employed by the Greek state in order to commemorate its past as well as promote its much advertised Hellenic inheritance. This article examines two ceremonies devised by the Greek authorities in the framework of the preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games in London, focusing on the technologies of embodiment employed by their makers. Contrary to the strong adherence to neo-classical tastes these ceremonies portray, other, unauthorized revivals of the classical ethos, seem to attempt the emancipation of Hellas from the control of its western admirers – and the trappings of neo-classicism. Through these improvised performances of Greekness, new cultural identities are constantly forged and negotiated, while at the same time the spectre of classical Hellas is seemingly rescued from its neo-classical cocoon.

Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image.

(Nora 1989: 13)

KEYWORDS
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MODERNITY AGAIN

On Saturday, 13 August 2005, Greek national television broadcast the opening ceremony of the Athens Olympics held on that very same date in the previous year. Then, day after day, Greek TV audiences were treated to repeats of the entire Olympic calendar, from day 1 to day 17, 29 August, when the closing ceremony was shown. The idea to mark the anniversary of the events with such quasi-religious dedication did not seem to surprise anyone in Greece at the time, already experiencing the deeply unsettling symptoms of a long, post-Olympic anticlimax. In a way, contemporary Greece seems accustomed to commemorations of the sort, and its citizens rather expect them. Days of national importance, reminders of collective excellence and landmarks of a shared identity, serve to boost the nation’s morale, strengthen the ties among its members, as well as promote its exceptional values abroad, in case anyone is listening. And with the Olympics, you can bet they do: designed as modernity’s answer to antiquity’s model of intellectual superiority expressed through physical prowess, the modern Olympics have managed to mobilize collective imagination on a non-anticipated global scale (despite the fact that, in the process, they have developed into an international corporate fairground, or rather because of that, given the amount of worldwide advertising and promotion that has gone into making the Olympics an event of global importance).

The ceremonial observation of the Olympic anniversary in 2005, of course, was aimed at the country’s interior (Thalasis 2007). Modern Olympics have been a long-term, much invested-in political project for contemporary Greece, already since their revival in 1896. For the young nation state, counting only 50 years or so since its establishment, after a long war of independence strongly encouraged and supported by the European elites of the time, the regeneration of the Games suggested that Greece had a role to play in western modernity after all. Itself a product of neo-classicism, Greece was realizing that its classical heritage – pretty much invented by the European ruling classes in order to forge their own political and intellectual genealogies – was fast becoming its most valuable asset (if not its only one). After a failed bid to host the centenary Games in 1996, a failure duly attributed by the Greeks to unfair corporate dealings and hidden political agendas, the hosting of the 2004 Games in Athens presented an opportunity to recarve the nation’s profile as part of the West, modern as well as modernized, to promote the Greeks as the true Europeans. A blunt strategy of reaffirmation was evident in both the opening and the closing ceremonies held in Athens: a long pageant of contemporary Greece in its fertile relation to an atemporal past. These ceremonies reintroduced artistic re-enactment of the historical past as a way to revive its significance for the present, following the example set in the early years of the twentieth century (Markatou 2008). Hundreds of volunteers impersonated famous Greek statues and re-enacted scenes taken from Athenian pottery, or performed generically ‘Greek’ occasions such as harvest festivals and village feasts. From Pericles and Alexander the Great to Zorba, Greek modernity was thus portrayed as a natural, effortless evolvement from classical antiquity, in a linear narrative employing artistic motifs (the smile of Archaic kouroi, the curves of the Parthenon, the glitter of Byzantine mosaics) and abstract ideas the world knew much about (democracy, the theatre,
sportsmanship); in short, an aesthetic/ideological project that was meant to become the West’s foundation stone (Plantzos 2008; Traganou 2010).

Through a long series of gestures, such as the national TV broadcast in August 2005, this plain, though extremely powerful and utterly convincing, vision of the past has thus been strategically planted into the contemporary Greek calendar. The commemoration of past events through their performative repetition, re-enactment, or revival – the compilation of the national almanac so to speak – generates a new sensibility of historical time, what Andreas Huyssen has described as the shift ‘from present futures to present pasts’, manifesting itself through a persistent focus on memory and temporality rather than on straightforward ‘history’ (2003). According to Huyssen, this has led to a situation where the world has all but become musealized, ‘and we all play our parts in it’ (2003: 15). The repetitive invocation of the unitary, legitimating narratives compiled by political elites traps historical time, and its actors, in a time warp designed to propagate hegemonic discourses through the obliteration of the temporal divide (cf. Lowenthal 1985: 295–301). The duly repeated sermons of national significance collapse the rather uneventful present into the heroic, exceptional and meaningful past. In this article I would like to discuss two such re-enactments that draw their material from the Olympic archive in order to construct Greece as the guardian of Europe’s classical tradition as well as its modern genealogy. Focusing on the three terms employed by Pierre Nora in the introduction to his Lieux de Memoire (1989) quoted in the epigraph to this article – materiality, immediacy, visibility – I want to explore the ways in which collective memory is both forged and performed in contemporary Greece as a pedagogic as well as disciplinary tool. Furthermore, I would like to argue, based on examples from unofficial, unauthorized and irregular uses of the same technologies of re-enactment, that the materiality of the past, when combined with the immediacy of its performative revival and the visibility of its traces onto the bodies of the participants, generates new kinds of discourses, at the same time counter-modern and post-nationalist. Described as cases of peripheral postmodernity (Buell 1994: 325–43), such projects, by no means confined to Greece, attempt the reconfiguration of the global modernity flow from metropolis to periphery, creating new cultural and ideological landscapes in the process.

Nora’s seven-volume project on national memory introduced the ‘site of memory’ as the artificial landscape where national and cultural identities are (re)created. In those landscapes, often rendered into sites of fierce conflict, history is appropriated, reclaimed and reinvented, often beyond recognition as ‘the task of remembering makes one his own historian’ (Nora 1989: 15). Sites of memory are thus ‘moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded’ (Nora 1989: 12, emphasis in original). The oscillation between memory and history, the reinvention of history as memory and the rehabilitation of memory into the historical record, is what marks, I believe, the performances I will be discussing in my article as attempts to render invented memories into authoritative histories. Through re-enactment, the past regains its lost materiality, and although such performances are themselves mediated (based on systematic harvesting of the historical or mnemonic archive) they exude a strong sense of immediacy, as they recreate the past into the present. Owing to their experiential value, these re-enactments create new memories for their viewers and participants, thus consecrating the histories they relate into viable elements of cultural identity.
Performed on the actual sites antiquity itself took place – the amphitheatres and the stadiums, the agoras and the sanctuaries – these projects acquire their historical validation through the materiality of the sites they make use of. Archaeological sites thus attain a discernible heterotopic quality, enabling modern Greeks to ‘form and perform’ their imagined continuity with the ancient past (Ioannidou 2010/2011). In these performances, the Greek present appears conflated with the classical past as an experiential reminder of historical continuity as well as cultural affinity.

In 1999, American art historian Donald Preziosi was asking himself:

> What has it meant to live in a world in which virtually anything could be plausibly ‘exhibited’ in a museum? [...] What kind of places, and what kind of roles were we, as subjects, as bodies, exhorted to fill and play in such a world?

(1999: 27)

In his article, Preziosi was examining how the modern museum performs the ethics and politics of identity in order to support the idea of the modernist nation crafted as the ark of its people, and contemporary Greece would certainly fit this description. Museum-ized back in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century by the desire of western elites to cultivate their eclectic relation with what they imagined as their own classical past, a process that led to the country’s quasi-colonization (Herzfeld 2002; Panourgia 2004), Greece seems condemned to perform its role as a museum-nation in perpetuity. Furthermore, the acceptance of the modern Greeks as bona fide Europeans by the West appears to be conditional upon their commitment to their guardianship of that past, a role Greek authorities (as well as many contingencies within the Greek public at large) seem to have taken very seriously.

In the framework of the ‘Olympic Education’ series of actions undertaken by the Greek state both in preparation of the Athens 2004 Games and in their aftermath, a theatrical revival of the first modern Olympics is presented to high school students every year. It is a massive event, at least as far as attendance is concerned, staged in the Panathenaic Stadium of Athens, the one where the first Games of 1896 were hosted. Originally erected in the fourth century BC, the stadium was famously laid in marble in the 1890s, when discussions for the modern revival of the Games were taking shape. Known as the *kallimarmaron*/beautifully marbled in modern Greek, the stadium serves as a classical/modern Athenian landmark, symbolizing Greece’s accession to modernity (Panathenaic Stadium 2012). Not surprisingly, the modern Olympics revival – in essence, a *revival* of the revival – is staged on the anniversary of the opening ceremony of the 1896 Games – 6 April.

On Friday, 6 April 2012, then, 40,000 Greek students were willy-nilly gathered in the *kallimarmaron* under the scorching mid-day sun in order to watch the poetic re-enactment of the 1896 Games (Figures 1–2). Like every year, the event was organized by the Hellenic Olympic Committee as part of its promotion of the so-called Olympic movement (through one of its divisions, the National Olympic Academy: HOC 2012a). A well-trained company of young actors and actresses performed to a live voice-over explaining what we were looking at: how western intellectuals decided to revive the ancient Games in order to give to the world a new set of athletic-cum-political ideals; how the Greek authorities were involved in that effort; how the *kallimarmaron* – the ‘largest marble stadium in the world’ – was rebuilt; how a Greek won...
Figure 1: Rehearsing modernity: Greek actors in the roles of foreign athletes participating in the 1896 Olympics in Athens (2012). ©Author.

Figure 2: Statues come to life: Tableau vivant from the ‘revival of the first modern Olympics’ show held in Athens (2012). ©Author.
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the Marathon race – the ‘first in modern history’; how some of the foreign athletes cheated; how others excelled in sportsmanship and chivalry; and how ultimately the entire world bowed to the Greeks, Europe’s only true ancient/moderns. There is no way of knowing how much of this remarkable effort actually grabbed the attention of the young audience (not very much, I fear). From what I heard in the stadium that day, not even their teachers were able to grasp the intricate play of the pasts involved: how contemporary Greece performed its early modern self in an effort to appropriate its classical origins. Was this really worth our while?

As performances of cultural identities go, the revival of the modern Games organized by the Hellenic Olympic Committee amounts to more than the sum of its parts. Like a sophisticated game of mirrors, it manages to reaffirm a modern Greek identity based on the appropriation of classical antiquity as well as western approval of the way modern Greeks handle themselves regarding that heritage. The men posing as athletes of the 1896 Games (Figure 1) – with their period-like costume and flags at hand as a stark reminder of the fact that nationalism remains modernity’s political foundation and ideological compass – reiterate a past triumph in order to suggest the way to a future one. By impersonating the historical personalities involved in the 1896 Games, these actors inscribe on their bodies the (wished for) determination of the West to remember its origins through a privileged relationship with classical Greece. Their performance, even in its seemingly desperate attempt to move the indifferent eyes and ears of those thousands of 13-year-olds crowding the stadium on the day, resonates with a sentiment by now so well rehearsed in contemporary Greece as to pass unnoticed: that Greece experiences itself as both superior and inferior to western culture (Gourgouris 1996: 267–82). Superior, as it may still be recognized (and it once certainly was) as both the privileged inheritor and chief guardian of the classical tradition; and inferior, as it finds itself in constant need for the West’s endorsement of that superiority. And as the approval by the national press may be seen to suggest, Greek society remains a subscriber to the point, however stereotypical it may sound by now, that the nation’s future is guaranteed by its past: hence the comment by the daily newspaper Kathimerini, describing the ceremony as ‘Spring, youth and ecumenical Greece’ jumbled up together, ‘a message of exuberance and optimism’ (Kathimerini 2012; cf. Ethnos 2012).

The technologies of embodiment displayed in the revival ceremony are indicative of the ways the Greek state fashions its relation to its ancient history. Already observed in the 2004 opening ceremony in Athens, when young Greeks paraded dressed as sixth-century BC kouros, fifth-century BC Caryatids or Byzantine emperors and empresses, these embodiments become Foucauldian ‘technologies of the self’, which ‘permit individuals to effect […] a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality’ (Martin et al. 1988: 17). Furthermore, the Panathenaic Stadium revival performance acquires a pedagogic significance, since it is expected to teach its viewers how to approach antiquity as a way of establishing themselves in modernity. At one early point of the show, we hear how the discovery of important statues at Olympia in the 1880s generated international interest in classical antiquity and inspired the modern rebirth of the Games. Boys and girls of the company are then seen to perform as ‘statues come to life’ (Figure 2): laurel branches and period sports gear for the men, and a somewhat anachronistic regency-looking kind
of dress with sandals for the women. Is this the impersonation of a generic nineteenth-century West fantasizing about its classical past, or Hellas herself coming back to life through the bodies of her modern offspring? At any rate, the time is now.

The ‘live statues’ sequence from the show, however, has a lot more to offer. As these young men and women strike their classical poses, many will think of Pygmalion – the mythical sculptor whose desire for the marble flesh of a female statue of his own making resulted in the statue coming to life; others, on the other hand, might think of Emma Hamilton, whose life story reads as a modern rendition of the Pygmalion myth, through this time inside-out (Blundell 2012: 656–60). Emma, Lady Hamilton (née Amy Lyon, 1765–1815) was an English girl of humble origins who lived an insecure life as a ‘kept woman’ in Britain until she met Sir William Hamilton, a British diplomat and collector of antiquities, whom she eventually married (one of Emma’s lovers was Hamilton’s nephew and passed her over to him when he grew tired of her). Hamilton was situated at Naples in the 1780s, where he created a sizeable collection of antiquities, chiefly vases, later to be sold to the British Museum (Jenkins and Sloan 1996). That was the time of the Grand Tour, and the Hamiltons played host to many eminent students of classical culture, such as Winckelmann himself. Taught by her husband to appreciate classical art – and realizing that accommodating the neo-classical tastes of a highly demanding audience was paramount for her social survival as well as her maintenance – Emma developed a new kind of performative art, her famous Attitudes. Those consisted of dressing in ancient-like garments and assuming poses in front of an audience loosely inspired from Greek statues and vases.

Figure 3: Francesco Novelli, The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton (1791). ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
An etching made in the 1790s by Francesco Novelli (Figure 3) shows Emma in action: wreathed and veiled, holding an incense-burner (as Electra?); kneeling next to a child (as Niobe?); wielding an axe at a kneeling girl (Medea), praying, weeping and so on. Combined with the literary descriptions of the Attitudes – even Goethe commented on them rather approvingly – the drawing allows us to imagine their entertaining as well as sensual value. Improvising on her predominantly male audience’s neo-classical tastes, as well as satisfying their phallocratic gaze, Emma managed at the same time to enrich the classical tradition by providing new ways of looking at Greek art (or imagining it). Her performances of neo-classical ethos, much more than a mere comment on her contemporaries’ liking of all things Greek, subject her body to the needs of the patriarchal society in the terms of which she is supposed to make a living. Her performative approach seems to have fully taken in the materiality of classical bodies, the pathos of their nudity and the expressiveness of their poise. In the words of Simon Goldhill: ‘Desire needs veils to speak. The classical world provides those veils’ (2011: 63). And, by the way, this does not just apply to eighteenth-century Naples: as classicist Sue Blundell reports, she has heard someone referring to Emma as an ‘eighteenth-century pole dancer’ as late as the 2010s (2012: 659)! For appreciation of Emma’s talents came hand in hand with vehement disapproval of her morals, especially in those quarters where Graecophilia was yet another decadent affectation of the rich and famous. When Emma, in the knowledge of her husband if not at his instigation, became the mistress of Lord Nelson, their ménage received the scorn of the popular press. In many caricatures published at the time, Emma is featured as a Greek statue (of a courtesan nonetheless: cf. Blundell 2012: 659, Figure 34:4) and in one occasion Nelson’s chubby physique is compared to the curves of a Greek vase (Sparkes 1996: 53, Figure II:14).

Emma’s endeavour into the classical archive enabled her to embody a tradition that she made her own. Her performances bore the immediacy and the visuality necessary for her project to be successful, allowing her to enrich modernity’s memories of the classical. Her eventual failure was of course inevitable, when the conditions of her project – love for the classical arts, unreserved support for the neo-classical cause at large – ceased to apply. Similarly, the staging of the Olympic revival carries something of Emma’s naïve, yet poignant interventions: rather than talk about it, the actors and actresses in the stadium perform their own versions of neo-classical ethos in an effort to remind themselves and convince others of the significance of Greece as an agent of classical culture. The staginess of their performance recalls Greek theatrical practices from the early twentieth century, when classical drama was revived in an attempt to establish cultural continuity between modern and ancient Greece (Ioannidou 2010/2011). Originally imported (mostly from European melodramatic traditions) these schemes of embodying antiquity created a deeply entangled tradition within Greece itself, now constituting the nation’s living cultural memory that these actors and dancers were called on to perform. Their own technologies of the (national) self deploy a specific strategy towards the appropriation of the past, as well as articulate the particular attitude effecting this appropriation. Like Emma, they copy poses they have seen on vases or Graeco-roman reliefs: an improvised archaeology. However, their effort is doomed to failure. Like Judith Butler’s ‘bodies that matter’, they execute their ‘ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint’ (2011: 60) as a means of attracting once again the hegemonic gaze of the West. The materiality of their performance enforces a set
of discursive practices onto the intellects as well as the bodies of their unsuspecting audience, through which to embrace modernity as a way of coming to terms with classical antiquity.

International audiences are not of course aware of the revival staging; it is exclusively aimed at the nation’s youth. It is remarkable, however, how its protagonists seem to cast themselves in the role of Emma against the patriarchal gaze of the West (might this explain the eighteenth-century styled dresses of the female participants?). Like Emma, they assume their patrons’ neo-classical sensibilities in order to construct Greece as a model nation, at once Greek and Graecophilic. However, this strategy is bound to backfire. Like Emma before them, the performers in the stadium remain remarkably silent. We hear of Emma Hamilton’s exploits from the letters and memoirs of her friends and lovers, of the gossip of those who once enjoyed her hospitality. We find her immortalized in people’s drawings and sketches, or ridiculed in caricatures published in the popular press; why did she ever not speak?

Whereas the revival show at the Panathenaic Stadium targeted the youth of Greece as its audience, the lighting-of-the-torch ceremony taking place at Olympia prior to the Games aims at global broadcast. The two ceremonies are organized by the same authority (the Hellenic Olympic Committee) and carried out by the same troop of choreographers, musicians, costume designers, actors and dancers. They make an interesting comparison, therefore, especially since their focus is significantly different. While in the revival show the actors impersonate their modern selves of an earlier time, in the lighting show they seem to perform as their ancient others, projected from a mythical past to an eternal present: dressed in long, heavily pleated linen garments, the girls (Figure 4) perform as ‘priestesses’ (to whom?) and ‘vestals’, in obvious anachronistic mode again, whereas the ‘high-priestess’ pleads with Apollo (at Olympia?) for the lighting of her torch (which is ‘miraculously’ achieved when she catches the sun’s rays in a parabolic mirror). At the same time, the boys we remember from the revival show acting as athletes from ‘le monde

Figure 4: Performing the classical: ‘Priestesses’ dance at the torch-lighting ceremony at Olympia (2012). ©Pegasus & SentraGoal TV.
entier’, are now cast as generic ancient Greeks, in rather unfortunate mini-skirt-like tunics, who perform a quasi-ancient soldier dance for no apparent reason (Figure 5). This is pure neo-classicism, and the company’s enthusiastic performance (for the 2012 Games staged on 10 May) cannot possibly hide the fact that this kind of thing has long now had its day. Why this is so, and what this means for contemporary Greece and the way it envisions its relationship with its classical past and its European future are the questions I would like to turn to now.

Strange as it may sound, some Greeks still believe that events such as the lighting ceremony at Olympia provide to the country a rare opportunity of proving its worth (one exclusively based on its classical pedigree nonetheless). Even the President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, Mr Spyros Capralos, cannot help expressing this view in the official, collector’s edition of the ceremony’s programme:

The birth of the Flame and its journey is a great opportunity to remem-ber that everything started from here. Culture, arts, democracy, respect for human existence are still a valuable legacy and a source of pride for the modern Greeks. It is also an answer to every possible effort made to discredit our country.

(HOC 2012b: 3)

Needless to say, most of the points made by Mr Capralos in this statement could be debatable (‘respect for human existence’ is not a phrase most of us would associate with much of ancient Greek thought or practice, for one). However, this is beside the point. What is more interesting is the amount of cultural and political capital invested in the Olympia ceremony: drawing from the western archive of neo-classical tastes and sensibilities, the lighting ritual, with its portentous language and coarse symbolisms, constructs yet again...
Greece as the place where classical spirit still resides – a land that time forgot, so to speak, where the gods of Olympus can, every so often, escape from the confines of their museums and perform a miracle or two. This is Hellas through the romantic lens, the Greece of Byron and Shelley, with Nymphs posing in calligraphic arrangements in every meadow (Figure 4), and male bodies exposed as indexes of masculinity, might and virtue (Figure 5). So far so good; but what is wrong with this picture?

The rather hostile reception of the globally televised lighting ceremony in May 2012, shows that neo-classical taste is out. As these criticisms were primarily British, one could attribute them to a presumed feeling of resentment against Britain’s hosting of the 2012 Games: intellectuals nowadays tend to be hostile against their country’s decision to host the Olympics, resenting their commercialization and outdated ideologies, and this seems true for Britain for the 2012 Games as much as for Greece and the Games of 2004. However, much of the ridiculing rhetoric in Britain was aimed at Greece’s part in all that: Tom Chivers, writing for the Telegraph, spoke of ‘bloody silly dances’ (2012) and a ‘collaborative blog for the Classics grad students of the University of Cambridge’ found that the torch ceremony suffered from ‘inescapable naivety’ (Res Gerendae 2012). Even though authorities such as the BBC (which of course broadcast the event) played in more official tones (Heald 2012), and Helena Smith of The Guardian, a Greek resident, seemed to take the ceremony at face value describing it in a rather celebratory tone (2012), a general sense of unrest was evident across the globe (though mostly in cyberspace): for the Greeks, it was splendour as usual; for almost everybody else, it was the glory that was not. Still, for those present, the embodiment of the classical – however naff, kitsched-up, silly, invented or other – seemed to work:

Those allowed into the sanctuary, the most sacred part of this most sacred place, were dignitaries, and in the hushed silence of the lighting of the flame, as a white dove flew into the skies, the women among them wept.

(Smith 2012)

What we experience in our perusal of the reports, critiques, approvals of and polemics against the lighting ceremony is a war between two colonialisms at work: neo-classical appropriation of the classical past – a process contingent upon that past’s imagining by its very admirers in the first place – meant, on the one hand, that classical tradition was invented by western modernity in order to fit its political agenda; on the other hand, the reclaiming of that past by modern Greece – in order to deploy it as a political and ideological strategy securing its survival – was seen as an act of aggression against classicism’s rightful owners. Michael Herzfeld is right, of course, when he suggests that Greeks need (their) classical tradition ‘if only because it provides one of the few ways of reminding people that the country is still inhabited!’ (2002: 919) and this illustrates the quiet frustration hidden in projects such as the Olympic ceremonies. This frustration is obviously accentuated by the West’s refusal to take Greek neo-classical rhetoric at face value. Like Emma Hamilton before them, preyed upon by middle-class caricaturists, who failed to get the point of her Attitudes, the Greek men and women of the Olympic ceremonies find themselves exposed to the scornful – imperialist, racist and ever so phallocratic – gaze of their ‘fellow moderns’: some commentators to
the Res Gerendae blog joke, quite predictably, about ‘dudes in the buff’ (they want to see more of those in the future). It is a game of wits – and witticisms – certainly, but not merely that. Surely, the boys and girls in Figures 4–5 do not quite measure up to our standards of classical beauty as imagined first by the Greeks themselves, only to be translated into classical art by the Romans and ultimately revered as such by us moderns. Yet, the point of this dispute is inherent in the modernity project and – funny as it may sound – it has nothing to do with Olympia.

‘As subjects, as bodies’ – to remember Donald Preziosi quoted at the beginning of this article – the men and women of the lighting show perform places and roles that their critics maintain do not belong to them anymore (or rather, never did); this is where Lieux de Memoire become sites of conflict. Discussing the interdependence between culture and imperialism, Edward Said pointed out, with reference to classical Greek tradition, ‘the extraordinary influence of today’s anxieties and agendas on the pure (even purged) images we construct of a privileged, genealogically useful past, a past in which we exclude unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives’ (1994: 15). Such systematic deployment of discourses of essentialism and exclusiveness aims to reassert the rights of the self-proclaimed rightful owners of an invented tradition, a process that needs, in order to be successfully completed, to display the vanquished others besides the triumphant selves. And even we, as critics of these strategies, find ourselves inevitably trapped in ‘that ahistorical nineteenth-century polarity of Orient and Occident which, in the name of progress, unleashed the exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other’ (Bhabha 1994: 29). When the Telegraph, or a Cambridge graduate student, advocate the ‘proper’ way to represent, embody or perform the classical, we are once again reminded that the West, with Europe as its rightful leader, remains dominant ‘as the subject of all histories’ (Chakrabarty 2000: 29) – be they ancient or modern, metropolitan or peripheral, colonialist or colonized, sovereign or subaltern. However, even at the risk of self-orientalizing ourselves in order to counter those exclusionary ideologies, or unwillingly reconstructing our subjects as objects under a Eurocentric discourse, we are entitled to the investigation of what Homi Bhabha has described as the ‘Third Space of enunciation’:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.

(1994: 55)

In many ways, the study of classics is all about ‘primordial unity’ and ‘fixity’. Combine this with the Olympics, and you have got the TLS’s self-styled ‘wickedly subversive commentator’, Cambridge classicist Mary Beard. Among other things, Professor Beard seems in the last ten years or so to have undertaken the responsibility of informing the world of the ‘true’ side of things when it comes to the Olympic Games: there were no vestal virgins in Olympia; there was no lighting of the flame either; and – shock horror – the flame ceremony and ensuing torch relay were invented by none other than ‘Hitler and his chums’ (Beard 2008, 2012). Repeated with religious regularity every four years, on the day following a lighting ceremony at Olympia, Professor Beard’s articles have acquired a performative quality of their own: her reiteration of her
otherwise valid and true claims, compiles an Olympic archive of a different sort, a sermon of pedantry to be honest, whereby a historically correct vision of the classical attempts its incorporation into the global calendar, while at the same time reaffirming the authority of its compiler as the archivist-in-chief.

Mary Beard is not the only one to have noticed that something is rather fishy with the Olympic lighting ceremonies and torch relays. Yes, they are not ancient. As has been well established, however, light and lighting was always part of the modern Olympics one way or another: floodlights and a torch-bearing parade were included in the 1896 Olympic ceremonies in Athens, and for the 1906 intermediary Olympic Games, also held in Athens, more illuminations were held and thousands of soldiers ran through the city centre holding lit torches. The ‘Olympic flame’ was introduced in 1928 in Amsterdam and was brought back in 1932 for the Los Angeles Games, before the official establishment of the torch relay ‘by Hitler and his chums’ in time for the 1936 Games in Berlin (Yalouri 2010: 2176, n. 4; Tzachrista 2002). Lit torches – and their bearers – are arguably employed as symbols of white supremacy, male chauvinism and the body-fascist ideals so strongly espoused by modernism (and Nazism, of course, its most horrific offspring; cf. Squire 2011: 16–23). Refusing to acknowledge, however, as Beard does, the ability of symbolisms to develop their own meanings based on their materiality – how they can shape human experience irrespective of widely held cultural constructs – is to neglect the hybridity, multivocality and difference in any culture; and scholars do this only at their peril. Greece is not the only example of a society where specific symbolic elements are claimed and reclaimed by different groups which proceed to invest them with novel (or revived) meanings and significations, whether these are acceptable to our tastes and sensibilities or not (cf. Plantzos 2012). And as discussed by Eleana Yalouri, the flame ritual is continuously renegotiated, translated and resignified, both within Greece and internationally (2010). These rehearsals of the symbolic archive manage in effect to reconstitute it, performing new enunciations of its meanings and symbolisms, constructing Bhabha’s new, hitherto unvisited Third Space. The insistence on an assumed, or rather reinvented and reimagined, essentialized self of classical antiquity waiting to be authoritatively represented by those scholars with the right sort of academic pedigree, betrays a kind of naïve idealism comparable to one these scholars castigate. As such, it is their own discourse that seems both redundant and ‘provincial’. In what follows, I will try to investigate the role unauthorized performances of the classical have started to play in contemporary Greece, in an effort to clarify ‘the connection between violence and idealism that lies in the heart of the process by which the narratives of citizenship and modernity come to find a natural home in “history”’ (Chakrabarty 2000: 45).

ANTiquity now

When Christine Lagarde, Managing Director to the International Monetary Fund, stated in an interview to The Guardian regarding the economic crisis hitting Greece since 2009, that according to her ‘little kids from a school in a little village in Niger […] need even more help than the people in Athens’ – even if they find themselves without a job, their pension, or elementary medical care – because ‘all these people in Greece […] are trying to escape tax’ (Aitkenhead 2012), her Facebook account was flooded with angry messages dropped by Greeks – reaching more than 30,000 in a few days (Lagarde 2012).
Though most of them were merely abusive, a slightly more coherent argument kept reappearing, aimed at convincing its unfortunate recipient that Greece did not deserve such contemptuous disapproval. One of the better articulated texts read:

Madam Lagard, i have to tell you that before to talk so offensive about Greece you should make the effort to open the history of Greece and to know at least that this country offered to ALL EUROPE THE SPIRIT OF THE CIVILIZATION. You should be ashamed about what you have told about us. RESPECT YOURSELF.

Unconvincing as this sort of ranting may be, it is interesting to find it repeats the reasoning offered – in a rather better phrased though hardly more substantiated way – by the president of the Hellenic Olympic Committee quoted above. The incantation of Greece’s worth as the cradle of any concept, idea or value worth anybody’s while in modernity is one of the most tired, and tiresome, stereotypes of our time; yet, it provides indication of the ways the classical archive has been utilized to construct a modern cultural identity.

The historical club ‘Koryvantes’ has been operating in Greece since 2009. Its members study ancient Greek culture, and more specifically classical warfare. According to their mission statement:

[The aim of the club] is to understand the way of ancient fighting by exercising the ancient war tactics, practices and ethics. This is because we feel that the effectiveness of the Hoplite phalanx in the battles of Marathon and Platea was the foundation for the Classic Greece, the Democracy and the Western Civilization.

(Koryvantes 2009, in English in the original)

Perusing the group’s website, as well as its pages in Facebook and Flickr, one quickly realizes that according to the group’s members, the foundation ‘for the Democracy and the western civilization’ was a bunch of guys in brightly coloured weapons gutting each other (Figures 6–7; cf. Koryvantes 2012). Through painstaking reconstruction of ancient weaponry and dress, detailed study of historical topography, literature and mythology, as well as a marked devotion to accuracy, members of the association endeavour to revive the ethos of the past in an attempt to enrich the present. Their presence has been duly noted, as a result, both at home and abroad, and their services are often required in a quasi-educational capacity, from historical jamborees to History Channel documentaries (Iefimerida 2011).

Historical reconstructions and re-enactments are of course nothing new in modernity. By repeating history – based on whatever little portion of it is known and whatever much of it needs to be filled in, imagined or invented – participants seek to find in the past ‘a sense of purpose or excitement lacking in the present’ (Lowenthal 1985: 295). In September 2011, for example, an international crowd of history enthusiasts and ‘die-hard archaeology buffs’ re-enacted the battle of Marathon on site, and great fun was had by all (Hadoulis 2011). Greek attempts like the Koryvantes club, however, carry more than idle entertainment or straightforward historical education. As the website of the ‘Hellenic Troop: Spartan Battalions’ states, ‘the aim of the team is the moral and physical support, as well as the restoration of
Hellenic cultural tradition, the qualities and everyday way of life in contemporary Greek society which suffers under the rule of ignorance and the lack of Hellenic education’ (Spartiatikes Mores 2012); and the team in charge of ‘Prometheus the Fire-Bearer’ have laid out a full ancient Greek(ish) calendar complete with commemorations of historical battles, revival of (invented) ancient rituals, inaugurations of ‘temples’ in classical-looking meadows and

Figure 6: Members of the historical studies association ‘Koryvantes’ in hoplitic gear (2009). ©Koryvantes, Athens.

Figure 7: Members of the historical studies association ‘Koryvantes’ in combat simulation (2009). ©Koryvantes, Athens.
so on (Prometheus Pyrforos 2012). According to a Koryvantes spokesman, most of these groups emerged in the 1990s (Iefimerida 2011); this was the time of the Balkan conflicts, when Greece experienced a surge of nationalism, especially when one of its northern neighbors, formerly part of Yugoslavia, gained its independence as ‘Republic of Macedonia’, a name – and a geographical territory – disputed between the two countries. To both, classical past seemed to safeguard their cultural and political identity and in many ways their sovereignty as modern states seemed to pass through their appropriation of ancient lands, traditions and personalities such as Alexander the Great. Hence, both countries seem to experience a renewed interest in ‘archaeologically correct’ reconstructions of the past. It is therefore not quite surprising to find that revival groups such as those mentioned here often appear to organize seminars on ‘modern geopolitics’ as part of their otherwise strictly historical/archaeological agenda.

Ancient warfare and war-like activities have been included in the Olympic Games, and other modernist revivals of classical antiquity undertaken in Greece, throughout the twentieth century. Young gymnasts performed as half-naked, barefoot hoplites at the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the 1896 Games in 1934 (Yalouri 2004) and the so-called ‘Delphic Games’ of 1930 included displays of classical poses in military gear, photographed by Nelly’s nonetheless (Figure 8, cf. Damaskos 2008; Ioannidou 2010/2011: 393–94). There, an improvised materiality of ancient masculinity was enforced onto the bodies of drafted, possibly unwilling participants (college students, military recruits, hired athletes or models) for the entertainment and aesthetic pleasure of an elite, often foreign in origin and certainly cosmopolitan in persuasion, that had duly espoused modernism’s aesthetic-cum-political fixation with the classical body. With the recently established re-enactment clubs, however, these exercises become much less of a privilege for the elite and they are certainly not cosmopolitan; as a matter of fact, the tone of their official announcements comes across as rather xenophobic and defiantly non-academic. More to the point, one can detect the influence of body-fascist

Figure 8: Elli Souyioutzoglou-Seraidari (Nelly’s), Dancers in ancient army gear performing at Delphi (1930). ©Benaki Museum, Athens.
ideals which, combined with the emphasis on racial purity for contemporary Greeks in these groups’ rhetoric, and with their politics in general, might suggest their affinity (or some of their members at least) with regurgitated national-socialist convictions.

The experiential re-enactment of classical ethos through the performance of Greek warfare – the participants of these activities stage parades, battles and eventually their deaths (cf. Figure 7), they improvise ‘ancient’ rituals, mostly sacrifices and torch relays, but also their own heroic ‘burials’ – inscribe onto the bodies of these men ancient Greece as a homosocial culture. By actively tampering with the myths, the stories, the artefacts and the sites they come across while researching the classical archive, these men construct their own cultural identities through male-bonding rituals underlying ancient (as well as modern) Greece’s paradigmatic value. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has discussed with reference to nineteenth-century European fiction, homosocial rituals are designed to confirm the conservatism of certain contingencies within modern societies (1985: 1–20). Male homosociality functions as an index of class, as well as a heteronormative device based on sexism, racism and homophobia. At the same time, homosociality can also provide a particularly useful set of interpretations for ancient Greek practices regarding sexuality and the body, as well as their reception by the social elites in ancient Rome or modern Europe. In ancient Greece, male-dominated societies perform their heteronormative ethos, appropriating the body as a site of engendered difference. Gender, age and race are subject to these rules, and the hierarchies these rules generate and enforce; to a certain extent we could find them to be the foundation stone of western patriarchy. Pederasty, of course, is a notable, but very telling exception to this: in classical Greece, pederasty functions as a bonding ritual between men, as the consummation of spiritual union and egalitarian friendship, a liaison which may or may not involve sexual intercourse (but when it does no one makes too much fuss about it either). As a homosocial template, it helps segregate men from women, as well other types of social categories such as freeborn from slave, citizen from prostitute, etc.

Although pederasty is of course absent from modern re-enactments of classical Greece (and most participants in these clubs would vehemently resent any reference to its existence in antiquity), these activities ‘between men’ preserve a watered-down version of whatever it was the Greeks did in the company of their peers. By generating an ‘unbroken continuum’ between homosocial and homosexual desire (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1985: 1–2), the pederastic ethos helps define the terms of Greek patriarchy. At the same time, used as an analytical category, it renders classical Greece easier to understand in modern terms. Homosocial discourses were extremely familiar to western elites and seem to have facilitated the translation of ‘Greek Love’ into more plausible schemes. By the late nineteenth century, the return to a ‘Greek way of thinking’ (Hellenism), was promoted by certain contingencies in places such as the University of Oxford as an agent of political change (Dowling 1994; Orrells 2011); although at the time this move was rather misleadingly associated exclusively with aestheticism and homoeroticism, it had a much broader, and ever more lasting, influence on British political thought.

Classical Greece, therefore, the archetypical patriarchal society in the western tradition, provides a certain number of values that may seem extremely attractive to those worrying about ‘ignorance and lack of Hellenic education’ in our lives: segregation according to age, gender and race, militarism as an agent of white-male supremacist ideologies, triumphs of the chosen people.

5. The subject of Greek pederasty (the fact that Greek males, especially of the upper class, were able to have intimate, often sexual, relationships with younger men in their milieu) has become one of the most hotly debated issues regarding classical antiquity, alongside a number of side problems such as homosexuality as an exclusionary sexual identity, male-to-male prostitution, and so on. The literature is vast and – perhaps inevitably – inconclusive, two discernible trends seem to be emerging, however, a postmodern/deconstructionist view following Foucault’s premise that homosexuality was not an issue in classical Greece as it is in modernity (Halperin 1990) and a historicist attempt to contextualize ‘Greek Love’ away from its later reception (Davidson 2008).
over the multitudes of barbarians, as well as the appropriate philosophy/literature/visual arts to support all this. Hence the desire of these re-enactment clubs to commit the bodies of their members to the effort of reviving the classical spirit in an attempt both to educate as well as discipline their members and friends. While the men are out in the fields playing soldiers, their wives and children (women and men not trained in martial arts are not accepted as full members of these societies, but can attend some of the events as ‘friends’) observe the goings on, as a lesson in national exceptionalism and the values of patriarchy. The bodies of their husbands and fathers – at once modern and ancient – deploy the discursive practices necessary for them to absorb the lessons of antiquity: we are the best because our men kick ass better than others. And this is a lesson much more poignant than, say, the modern Olympics revival discussed in the beginning of this article – that was school, this is life! Their reconstructions of ancient artefacts (mostly weapons) and practices reinvent the classical archive: one can simply browse the images uploaded on the Internet (cf. Koryvantes 2012) to find items of dress and accessories, remade to perfect accuracy, displayed as essays in experimental archaeology as well as national pride. It is no wonder then that these people are now called to teach Greek archaeology to interested groups abroad or feature in educational documentaries.

Through the materiality of their performances, and the strong images these generate, such re-enactment societies in contemporary Greece manage to usurp classicism from the hands of its western masters. An obvious rival of these societies, besides Oxbridge intellectuals and rather more threatening than them, is popular culture, especially cinema and television. After a long time when ‘swords-and-sandals flicks’ had fallen out of grace, international audiences rediscovered the merits of classical antiquity as mass spectacle. From Ridley Scott’s *Gladiator* (2000) to Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy* (2004) and Oliver Stone’s *Alexander* (2004) the classical body – Greek or Roman, mythical or historical – made its powerful comeback into our lives. Before that, the syndicated television show *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995–1999) had introduced Greek mythology into the realm of fantasy (*Hercules’* Greece is a somewhat medievalized world of bizarre heroics and tong-in-cheek sexual hints), an achievement confirmed by its fabulous spin-off, *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001).

Greek reception of these shows was ambivalent; on the one hand, Greeks worried about historical accuracy. On the other, Greek audiences – especially male ones – seemed to enjoy the homosocial overtones of the scripts, in essence rendering the movies and TV shows into palatable ‘bromances’, at once homoerotic and homophobic. It is certainly no accident that Patroclus, Achilles’ boyhood friend and companion, is recast into his cousin in *Troy*, the same as with Iolaus and Hercules in *Legendary Journeys*. In *Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur* (1994), one of the TV movies accompanying the *Legendary Journeys*, Deineira and her children find Hercules and Iolaus wrestling, stripped to the waist, somewhere in the farm they all conveniently share. When one of the kids asks ‘Mommy, what’s Daddy doing to Uncle Iolaus?’ she replies ‘I don’t know sweetie, I was wondering the same thing myself’, thus both playing with the expectations of a gay audience (allegedly a strong supporter of these ventures) as well as reassuring its main, mostly young and predominantly straight target-audience of its own homosocial convictions (Nisbet 2008: 63). It is the same audience that would presumably enjoy the perennial references...
to a ‘special relationship’ Xena the Warrior Princes had formed with her female companion, Gabrielle.

And this was as far the Greeks would be prepared to go. When in 2003 rumours came out regarding Oliver Stone’s intention to portray his Alexander as bisexual, the then Greek minister of culture withdrew state support for the project, calling it ‘a disgrace’ and ‘a slur on Greece’ (Paul 2010: 18). Even though most Greeks would appreciate the attention, public culture in the country – or the Greek diaspora for that matter – would find it difficult to stomach Alexander or Achilles’ overtly metro-sexual depiction in these movies: the two boys appear so well groomed and seem to be taking so much care of their fitness and appearance as to make one wonder how they could possibly find the time to conquer the world in between makeovers.

In a sense, personal grooming and tending to one’s body was also what Zack Snyder’s 300 (2006) was all about. Based on Frank Miller’s graphic novel of the same title, it managed to reconstruct classical Greece as a heroic dystopia, anticipating later projects such as Clash of the Titans (2010) and Wrath of the Titans (2012), Immortals (2011) and so on. Greek audiences certainly enjoyed Miller and Snyder’s male-chauvinist, sexist, racist and Orientalist hyperbole (what in the film American audiences were encouraged to read as ‘uncivilized, effeminate Orientals/Iraqis’, the Greeks took the liberty to view as ‘uncivilized, effeminate Orientals/Turks’). As a matter of fact, the 300 poster can still be seen displayed in shop windows in Athens or (of course) Sparta, and references to the movie continue to be made in Greek popular culture and in the performances of the re-enactment groups discussed here. Still, historical accuracy remains an issue: I remember some of my fellow archaeologists complaining about Petersen’s Mycenae furnished with its own harbour (as if the movie, and Homer himself, had to comply with modern understandings of Late Bronze Age topography), and 300 to many seemed offensive in its disrespect for historical accuracy. As a matter of fact, the Hellenic Warriors Living History Group made it its goal to help US under-17 students ‘distinguish fact from fiction’ in the aftermath of 300’s release on DVD (Hellenic Warriors 2012).

Although Hellenic Warriors never discuss ‘Greek Love’, it is extremely interesting to note how 300 exploits its reception among modern audiences. The movie adds the character of Astinos to the plot – a character not in the original comic – as the significant other to the implausibly named Stelios of the book. As Gideon Nisbet observes, the pair emulate Nisus and Euryalus from the Aeneid (2008: 144–48), thus providing the audience with a suitably titillating subtext to classical homosociality, one that proved extremely useful in the film’s afterlife.

Like the performative re-enactments of historical or mythical ‘events’, these movies and TV series enrich the classical tradition in ways imperceptible to our scholarly instincts. When studying a movie such as 300 or Alexander most of us would neglect to check its Nachleben in YouTube or fanfiction.net, where fans create their own versions, often parodist, of the originals, develop sub-plots and spin-offs, debate alternative endings, etc. Members of the Greek public embraced this way of appropriating popular culture, also in an effort to express their own convictions regarding history and its meaning. In one of the most successful attempts, YouTube user gtsaka, a Greek, produced his own sexist/homophobic parody of Leonidas and Xerxes’ scene from 300, attracting more than 1,500,000 views. At the same time, however, he made sure to add, by way of disclaimer, that: ‘in no way was I trying to ridicule our history, of which I am as proud as (I’m sure) every other Greek’
Reliving history, therefore, actually or virtually, enables the subjects of such re-enactments to express cultural identities in the making. The fantasies generated by the movies, the TV series or the improvised rituals performed by amateur history buffs, serve to confirm public sentiment, investing it with the authority of history – and classical history at that. The racism, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia expressed by certain divisions within Greek society are thus validated through novel versions of classical history – and what is more important: these versions are also appreciated by foreigners! The sexism evident in the furious remarks addressed to Christine Lagarde seems much more poignant and emancipatory, then, as it is invested with classical culture’s exceptional strength and appeal; more to the point, performances of classical ethos – from the Koryvantes’ renditions of ancient warfare to the 300’s graphically portrayed slaughter – confirm these sentiments as appropriate and historically justified.

In conclusion, if the Olympic ceremonies discussed here failed, it was because they took no notice of the multivocal, mediary and centrifugal cultural backdrop they were projected against. Where their organizers presumed to display (classical) Greece in splendour, foreign audiences, well versed in the secrets of homosocial theory and practice, only saw ‘dudes in the buff’. In their effort to appeal to western Hellenism, the boys and girls of the Olympic shows instinctively reproduced Emma Hamilton subjecting herself to the socially and sexually superior gaze of her male companions. Since the nineteenth century, ‘Olympic’ bodies (Figures 1–2, 4–5, 8) are forged only to be subjugated to the bio-power generated by neo-classical discourse. The ceremonies, the pageants, the costumes and the choreographies function as regulatory controls, what Michel Foucault defined as ‘a bio-politics of the population’ – a method by means of which to adjust the national subjects to the economies of modernity and its constituent principles of social hierarchization and gender segregation (1990: 135–59). Hence these performative bodies are deployed through the Olympic ceremonies, the pageants and the staged re-enactments: as a message abroad, certainly, but mostly as a pedagogic and disciplinary device at home, as a lesson of what to do with your (national) self. As a result, contemporary Greece deploys a self-made neo-classical bio-politics in order to construct itself as a modern European nation, Hellenist as well as Hellenic.

Intriguingly, similar technologies of bio-power are also employed in counter-hegemonic fashion by dissident groups within the national corps. Their repeated performances, canonized and controlled, constitute a new kind of Greek temporality: this make-believe antiquity, with its simulations of heroism and dying, the quasi-military trainings, the invented rituals and improvised ‘authentic’ situations of classical Greekness, involves both the participants and their audience in the construction of Greece as a site of memory where Hellas is alive and well, at the same time enforcing onto the bodies of its subjects this new version of an ever-present past. Such alternative spaces of enunciation, however whimsical in their execution or even repulsive in their ideological make, threaten the self-assurance of the neo-classical narrative. The decolonization of the classical ideal from its neo-classical confines through historical re-enactment (Figures 6–7) manages to reverse the western gaze, or rather to render it obsolete. As Butler would perhaps agree, this kind of appropriation ‘seeks to make over the terms of domination, a making over which is itself a kind of agency’ (2011: 95), a performative reiteration that may encourage rapture at the
The glory that was not
same time it vies to establish continuity. Like Nora’s lieux, Butler’s bodies are also rendered into sites of conflict in themselves. Through the performance of what I would call, paraphrasing Appadurai, the ‘homo/socio-erotics of cultural identity’ (1996: 89–113), members of the various historical re-enactment societies play with culture the same way they play with their bodies, in an attempt to provincialize the western paradigm. Inevitably, and quite ironically, they resort to classical antiquity as it was invented by the western tradition in the first place, managing to rehistoricize patriarchy as a Hellenic-Greek value. In effect, they by-pass modernity, and its all too serious, academically sound and historically correct approach to the past, in an ‘always already postmodern’ attempt to define culture away from the West/East divide, even if their rhetoric and praxis are both colonialist and Orientalist (see Buell 1994: 324–43). Through tampering with the classical archive, and through the exploitation of its material and visual qualities, these revivals and re-enactments commit the body of the nation to a novel, performative investigation of its cultural identity. Their participants, subject to the agency unleashed by these performances, experience cultural identity as a subversive, emancipatory force; and have infinitely more fun while they are at it.

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I dedicate this article to Panos Tsagopoulou, whose performance as one of the young men participating in the Olympic ceremonies I am discussing here I thoroughly enjoyed (though I do not suppose he agrees with much of what I have to say about them – and why should he). I am, as ever, grateful to Dimitris Papanikolaou for his suggestion that I write this article and the exciting discussions we had on this and related subjects. I have also benefitted from the comments received by the journal’s editorial committee and the anonymous referee.

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