Chapter 10

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From Winckelmann to Flickr:
The Picture that Took Greece's Soul

1. Introduction

Photography is the art of capturing reality and a means to keep memories alive. Some cultures, however, regard it as a threat, believing it can take one's soul away. This chapter analyzes how photography has metaphorically taken Greece's soul, depriving it of its identities while marking out one way of remembrance. From Winckelmann's aesthetics of Greek art, to Nelly's pictures of dictatorial Greece, and even most contemporary images of the country in the endless reproduction of mass tourism and social networks, there is an astonishing homogeneity based on an idealized image of the Classical past.

Although Winckelmann himself never traveled to Greece, his view on Greek art and beauty has become that of the millions of tourists that visit the country every year. Thus, a vision drawn from the academic elite shapes the experience of the masses. Many contemporary travelers to Greece, as though captive inside Plato's cave, interpret the landscape through that idealizing lens and capture its essence accordingly. By taking pictures of Classical antiquities, the tourists select what is to be remembered, and what will be forgotten, thus reinforcing the construction of a collective cultural memory – and a collective oblivion.

This process is far from innocent, for it connects with ideology and political propaganda. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the West imposed its vision of Classical times on Modern Greece in order to incorporate the country into the European identity, and it ended up encouraging a memory of the past that would suit that ideal. One may think that this image synthesizes everything Greek – Classical beauty, made of light and rationality – but, as I will argue, this is the very pic-

ture that took Greece's soul, neglecting and even completely wiping out its many singularities and traits of foreign influences.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to invite us to consider what kind of memory is being constructed when dealing with Classical Antiquity. Ideal images of Classical Greece that go from Winckelmann to Flickr will serve as a tool to analyze how and if an inherited vision of the past shapes the memories of the present and, thus, contributes to the future meaning of the Classics.

2. Photography as a thief

If photography is about capturing reality, keeping memories and records of real events, how can it also be the thief of a country's soul? In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss these ideas in an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for the historical overview that will follow.

2.1 Capturing reality

Photography is about looking, seeing and experiencing as much as it is about capturing reality and remembering.[1] When we as photographers, either professional or amateur, open the lens of our cameras to a landscape, an ancient monument, or a human face, we are allowing what our eyes see to become a fixed memory. Moreover, in doing so, we are simultaneously creating an objectified reality and a deceiving counterfeit, a photographic image that is 'both the projection of our desires about the world and an accurate record of the world.'[2]

This double-sided potential of photography alone would be enough to render it an attractive object of study. Yet there is another quality of this technique that is essential for understanding the role played by photography when it comes to Antiquity. In this respect 'the term "capture" is telling'[3], for the picture taken becomes a virtual possession and there are few things antiquarians love more than to be able to bring home all the beauties they have seen on their travels. Photography helped provide nonprofessionals with a means to bring 'home' archaeological treasures.[4] As Susan Sontag noted in her seminal study *On Photography*, 'to collect photographs is to collect the world'[5], and it is indeed a much easier, cheaper and safer way to do it than other means of capturing, such as hunting, an activity to which photography has often been compared.

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1   See Bohrer (2015: 95).
2   Elkins (2011: 47).
3   Robinson and Picard (2009: 9).
4   See Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 133).
5   Sontag (2005 [1977]: 1).

Yet, however innocent the gesture of a finger on a camera release may seem, photographic actions have consequences even if they do not get to kill what they take aim on. Perhaps this is why disturbing metaphors related to war – and eventually to death – are employed in the photographic discourse: 'loading' and 'aiming' a camera, 'shooting' a film;[6] the person or thing photographed being the 'target', an *eidolum* or *spectrum*… the 'return of the dead' occurring in every picture, or the very photographers being 'agents of Death'.[7] In the same fashion, it has been said that photography includes something of necromancy, of communication with the ghosts of the past.[8]

In the domains of the living or, at least, of those who have lived, specifically, in the domains of Greece and its past, what does this all mean? What are the consequences of taking a picture of Greek antiquities? Despite the alleged objectivity of the process, by framing alone the photographer selects a partial vision of reality – and there are many more sophisticated ways to manipulate the figure: retouching the negative, digital alterations, etc. Still, the act of framing 'removes a sense of context and the resultant image is disconnected from the wider landscape or chronology of life events.'[9] The specific angle adopted by the photographer may be the result of artistic or political preferences, personal or traditional taste. In the case of Greece, there is little doubt about the influence of tastes inherited from the Western Classical Tradition. In fact, as I will attempt to show, this very tradition has shaped the image and memory of Greece.

2.2 Keeping memories

'Photographs are material memories of the things, persons and events experienced'[10] and they are involved in the process of remembering and forgetting. If we consider, for instance, a summer trip we did ten years ago, we are much more likely to remember places, people and events if we kept a photographic record of them. Pictures will have become repositories of memory; we will have revisited them repeatedly. Just as their imprint on our memory will have deepened, so the traces will have vanished of those other aspects of our journey that we did not capture. Together with 'its capacity to trigger and shape emotions and memories'[11], a photograph can actually block memory, quickly becoming a counter-memory, a fixed memory in which 'nothing can be refused or transformed'.[12]

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6 Sontag (2005 [1977]: 10).
7 Barthes (1981 [1980]: 9, 92).
8 See Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 138).
9 Robinson and Picard (2009: 13).
10 Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 139).
11 Jordanova (2015: 361).
12 Barthes (1981 [1980]: 91).

Pictures of that summer trip will have been used as instruments of storytelling, mnemonic aids to help our personal narratives develop when sharing with others the evidence that something existed and that we were there. Thus, pictures will have become memory itself. As Theodoros Chiotis puts it, 'photography (and, by implication, the photographer's subjectivity) creates a narrative supplement while simultaneously modifying not only actual memories but also the very concept of memory.'[13] Photographs cannot, therefore, be considered mere instruments of memory, but 'an invention of it and a replacement'.[14]

Moreover, we do not only create our personal memories, but also our collective narratives with the mnemonic aid provided by photography: we are in need of building a memory for ourselves as individuals, but also as part of nations and civilizations. Since the West has focused on its inheritance from Classical Antiquity in order to build this kind of identitary memory, it is no wonder that much of what we call our past is made out of the fragmented remains of an era that was lost long ago.

The sense of loss is fundamental here, for when we think about photography, there is often a feeling of nostalgia involved.[15] The same applies to Greece, since nostalgia is a key element of Greek identity, and that is one of the reasons for the country's strong bonds with photography. Since the 19th century photographers of and from Greece have tried to preserve in their pictures the essence of an ideal past: 'the travelers' desire to preserve an indelible memory of the lands they visited corresponded perfectly with the ability of accurate recording offered by photography.'[16] Nostalgia accompanied their focus on Greece, and still does, because by visiting the ruins, one more clearly experiences what once was.[17]

However, how could the memory of the past be preserved if the past itself was already gone when we began missing it? In other words, how could a picture bring to life the ghosts of the past? Perhaps the trick worked, and does work, because photography can show the passage of time and convey much of what we experience when we are aware of its effects, namely, nostalgia, a sense of loss and the futile illusion that we can prevent beauty from disappearing. Perhaps because photography seems to freeze time, and by fixing a moment of the past, it convinces us that it can also bring it into the present, and keep it for the future. Perhaps because even in the digital era we still feel that there is something of the object itself preserved in the picture, a form of sentimentalism that compels us to print those pictures we care about most.

13 Chiotis (2015: 169).
14 Sontag (2005 [1977]: 128).
15 See Sontag (2015: 12).
16 Mamoulaki (2015: 295).
17 Even in Roman times, 'there were sentimental journeys to Greece' (Constantine [1984: 4], see also Alock, Cherry, and Elsner [2001]).

As Carabott, Hamilakis, and Papargyriou explain in *Camera Graeca*, pictures 'are traces, not in the sense of an imprint, but in the sense of a material remnant, of a relic.'[18] This implies that there is something of the materiality of the object preserved in the picture, which of course relates to the idea of photography as acquisition. It also explains why some cultures believe that pictures can take someone's soul and, what matters to us, the soul of Greece.

2.3 Stealing one's soul

'As everyone knows, primitive people fear that the camera will rob them of some part of their being', so Sontag says.[19] She is not alone in making such statements: 'Many indigenous people claim that picture-taking steals one's soul and see the photograph itself as suspect' is a similar assertion by Chong.[20] Yet it is difficult to identify any reliable source of this actually happening. Many speak vaguely about Native Americans or Australian Aborigines, but I have failed to find an anthropological study about the issue. However, Ricardo Moraes, a photographer from Reuters writing about his experience photographing the Brazilian tribe of the Kapayos, tells that in their language, *akaron kaba* not only means 'to take a photo' but also 'to steal a soul.'[21] In addition, other professional photographers, such as John Rosenthal, reflect on this idea that seems to be as widespread as only compelling metaphors can be.[22]

On the other hand, there seems indeed to be a magical quality in pictures, as if they could establish a link between the viewer and whatever is represented in them.[23] As Robinson and Picard argue, 'people in all epochs and times have used specific objects or materials to encapsulate the power and mystical energies associated with places, people or presences and to transport them from one place to another. Specific objects have been used to "capture" spirits and make or help them travel to different places. […] Something similar seems to happen when tourists take photographs and display them.'[24] This ability to both retain something from the object and to bring it into the present is precisely what appeals to the photographer-collector.

18 Carabott, Hamilakis, and Papargyriou (2015: 10). Some of the abundant studies on Greek photography or the photography of Greece will be quoted in this chapter. An updated state of the art and bibliography can also be found in Carabott, Hamilakis, and Papargyriou (2015: 17–22).
19 Sontag (2005 [1977]: 123).
20 Chong (2009: 128).
21 Moraes (2011).
22 See Rosenthal (1983).
23 Sontag (2005 [1977]: 120–121) on the talismanic uses of photograph and its magical powers.
24 Robinson and Picard (2009: 21).

Yet, where does the force of photographic images come from? According to Sontag, it 'comes from their being material realities in their own right, richly informative deposits left in the wake of whatever emitted them, potent means for turning the tables on reality—for turning *it* into a shadow.'[25] And this force can be said to originate in the very physical way in which photography develops, i.e., in light.

Photography is named after it, combining the Greek word for light, *phos, photos*, and that for writing, *graphe*: a Greek word, a Greek light and a Greek script, which together become a rich symbol indeed. Moreover, light is where all the magic of photography comes from: 'In both analogous and digital photography, the physical contact between the recording device (the film or chip) and the photographed realm is established through light' and so 'light continues to be conceived as a possible medium to transport specific qualities attributed to specific realms; as a cause for contagion bringing separated worlds in physical contact.'[26] Thus, the photograph is considered an emanation of the referent and a means to connect with the past.[27] Moreover, the Greek *graphein* means not only 'write' but also 'paint', so photography is the art of 'painting with light'.

Light being the agent, photography was born as an art of reality, which could not but capture what was already in nature. In his book of photographs, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–1846), William Fox Talbot claimed that his were natural images, obtained 'by the agency of Light alone, without any aid whatever from the artist's pencil.'[28] However, no picture can be an exact copy of reality and this is even truer for early photography: the first pictures were necessarily rendered in black and white.

What could have been a handicap proved to be an advantage in the case of Greece. The whiteness of the ancient remains under the Greek light was indeed very convenient, for it was easily captured and represented by the camera.[29] In addition, black and white are the colors of concepts, of ideas, of words written inside books; a world in black and white is a mental image, a fading memory, and a good representation of a distant past. That is one reason why this texture suited the Western outlook on Greece,[30] even if it is no secret that temples and sculptures used to have a colorful pigmentation.[31] Today, however, temples are captured in absolute white against a blue sky, ancient sculptures as pale cold marbles, and Greek islands as an extemporal Mediterranean paradise with their whitewashed houses.

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25 Sontag (2005 [1977]: 141).
26 Robinson and Picard (2009: 11).
27 See Barthes (1981 [1980]: 81).
28 Fox Talbot (2018 [1844]: 5), quoted in Sontag (2005 [1977]: 65).
29 See Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 134).
30 See Carabott, Hamilakis, and Papargyriou (2015: 4).

Summarizing the previous points, if we admit to the magical qualities of photography, we must also admit that Greece's soul might have been taken by pictures. But even if we don't believe in those qualities, we can safely say that the photography of Greece has contributed to depriving the country of some of its singularities. By selecting and framing, by following an aesthetic canon that originated in Classical scholarship, the preferred identity for Greece is that of the 'cradle of the Western civilization'; and each picture a tourist takes home from the Parthenon enhances that stereotyped way of remembrance.

The next section seeks to explain the process by means of which the public has inherited this way of seeing, capturing and remembering Greece. Tourists in Greece carry with them a learned image of the country that does not necessarily account for its variety, and they reflect it accordingly in their pictures: they select what to remember and what to forget according to a pre-established aesthetic canon.

3. From Winckelmann to Flickr

Just as a family keeps a photographic album in order to record and to construct a personal narrative,[32] so do countries when it comes to national identity. Moreover, just as a family may pose in front of the camera in order to look happier, wealthier and handsomer, so nations may pose, metaphorically speaking, in order to convey an idealized image of themselves. In the specific case of Greece, the construction of a national identity is entangled with the very foundations of European identity; hence, Europe has not only claimed to be in that picture, but it has modeled it to match her wishes. The modern country has been in many ways encouraged to bear witness of its connectedness to its glorious past; images of its landscapes, people and ancient sites have been part of that national effort.

This section focuses on four different stages in order to show how an idealized image of the Classical past ended up modelling the experiences of many. These stages involve German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 19th century photographers and travelers to Greece, the Greek female photographer Nelly and her vision of Greece in the 20th century, and, finally, contemporary tourism and online photography repositories such as Flickr.

In the process extending from Classical scholarship to social networks, the ideology of Western colonialism of Greece can easily be traced. On the one hand,

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31 For many decades art historians have proven that polychromy was the norm in classical sculpture and architecture (See Emerson 1892 or Richter/Hall 1944). The fear of color, *chromophobia,* however, persist in Western culture and the issue of whiteness in the Ancient world is still controversial (See Batchelor 2000, Talbot 2018).

32 Tourist pictures used as mnemonic devices for storytelling usually embellish that narrative; see Robinson and Picard (2009: 20).

the Renaissance led to great undertakings of travel and exploration in search of art, culture and the roots of Western civilization. In those enterprises 'discovery, conquest and encounter were not only based upon the physical acts of travel, battle and trade but significantly upon the representations and circulations of these acts to the vast majority of populations who essentially remained "at home".'[33] This means that those who could actually carry out the Grand Tour would try to 'bring' the world home or, at least, to record, capture and order it whilst it was being discovered.

Nowadays, tourists may be unconscious of their colonialist point of view, yet they perpetuate it; by taking pictures they seem to acquire a visual knowledge of the object and thus they seem, in part, 'to have power even if only momentarily, over it'.[34] As we have already seen, due to the physical (yet almost magical) process of photography, light imprints the negative, the image imprints the memory and creates a new materiality that contains something of the object itself. That is probably why almost everyone prefers to take his or her own picture rather than buying one – postcards are normally reserved for sending to others[35] – and that is why the camera becomes an extension of the travelling self.

On the other hand, discovery of Classical art, mainly sculpture and architecture, in the Renaissance was also embedded into the imperialist narrative of the Western nations. Examining the essentialist attitudes of that narrative, one can be tempted to believe that Art history is 'little more than a scholarly elaboration of myths'[36] and a means of cultural colonization. In that sense, high culture becomes the private property of a privileged group, and 'all cultural production is actually determined and measured by the yardstick of the dominant Western civilization.'[37] Nevertheless, even if that were true, this traditional narrative has shaped a beautiful image of Greece that today can be relished by the educated traveler as well as by the *turistas vulgaris*.[38] We are probably after an idealized country, yet, paraphrasing one of the founders of Classical Reception, 'should we give up all this richness – in exchange for little or nothing?'[39]

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33 Robinson and Picard (2009: 2).

34 Urry (2002: 138).

35 See Robinson and Picard (2009: 11).

36 Coutts-Smith (2002: 3).

37 Panayotopoulos (2009: 181).

38 Warning against the risk of treating them scornfully as foreign species, Franklin and Crang (2001: 5) use the term *turistas vulgaris* to refer to those 'only found in herds, droves, swarms and flocks'.

39 Martindale (2006: 12).

3.1 The Hellenist that never set foot on Greece

Classical Reception owes much to the influence of visionaries like Winckelmann, whose work had an impact beyond the discipline of Art history itself, going 'ineradicably into the European consciousness'[40] and becoming responsible for the 'invention of Antiquity'.[41] I will first concentrate on a small part of his heritage in order to highlight how his individual, scholarly and idealized vision of ancient Greece has shaped the taste of many. Then I will deal with the paradox that he never actually went to Greece and examine how this affected attitudes towards the country.

According to Goethe, Winckelmann 'was able to discover in the real world *antwortende Gegenbilder* ("corresponding images") of his imagination's ideals'[42] and with that vision he taught people to look upon Greek art. His reflections on Greek art began by examining the collection of antiquities in Dresden. It was there that he developed his ideas about Greek beauty.

In his writings, Winckelmann claimed that natural beauty was a characteristic of Greek people both in modern and ancient times. Even in his day and 'although mixed with the blood of many foreign races', their outstanding charms permitted 'a reasonable conjecture as to the beauty of both sexes among their ancestors': a physical beauty that, in all probability, 'excelled ours by far'.[43] The most prominent feature of that beauty was, of course, the straight line formed by the forehead and the nose that we still recognize as a Greek profile. Large eyes were also widespread.

Winckelmann admitted that what we see in the sculptures of gods and men, or in Greek coins, are shapes modeled after idealized concepts.[44] He therefore concluded that the highest law recognized by Greek artists was 'to create a just resemblance and at the same time a more handsome one', i.e., to produce a more beautiful and more perfect nature.[45] Following this law, artists and scholars of Greek art alike paved the way to the ideal vision of Greek beauty. Anyone searching today for a Greek profile in the streets of Athens is also in search of the ideal beauty that Winckelmann envisioned.[46]

Such a vision, however, came from afar. Even though the great German thinker considered that good taste had its origins 'under the skies of Greece' and ad-

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40 Constantine (1984: 104).

41 See Harloe (2013).

42 Goethe (1969 [1805]: 209), quoted by Constantine (1984: 100).

43 Winckelmann (1987 [1756]: 9–11).

44 See Winckelmann (1987 [1756]: 15).

45 Winckelmann (1987 [1756]: 17).

46 Yet Winckelmann (2006 [1764]: 351; quoted in Billings [2016: 56]) admitted that when we search for this ideal beauty of the past 'we often act like people who want to meet ghosts, and believe they see them where there is nothing.'

mitting that a search for the man of taste would mean going to Athens, still he was satisfied enough with Dresden antiquities as a substitute.[47] Even later, while living in Rome, he planned several times to visit Greece, but never actually did it. At the end of the day, Rome resembled Greece enough and the works of art available there were more than sufficient. As Constantine points out in his study on early Greek travelers, 'it was exceptional in his day, and until long after his day, to think a journey to Greece essential for a Hellenist.'[48] Even today, there is a significant number of classicists and scholars of Antiquity that rarely visit the country. This attitude can be explained both by the *argumentum auctoritatis* that Winckelmann personifies and by the disappointment that some sectors of the West experience when they confront the 'degradation of the "real" Greece as compared to its classical ideal.'[49] In this sense, there is a remarkable parallelism between the claim made by a 19th century traveler that Athens was 'the dirtiest little town in Christendom'[50], and that of a 2008 *Tripadvisor* reviewer, referring to the Greek capital as the 'dirtiest ugliest city in the world', followed by the advice 'Don't go there!!!'[51]

The consequence, in any case, was that such leading Hellenists as Winckelmann, or the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin, never made the physical journey to Greece, but only the ideal, intellectual one. Winckelmann, who believed he had the best vision and experience to undertake that journey, criticized travel writers for repeating what others had said.[52] And the fact is that travelers were often influenced by the vision of writers who never visited the country. Winckelmann's writings, his aesthetic and cultural ideas, were received by travelers themselves and contributed a great deal to form the image of Greece that would prevail.

In 1767, he was for the last time about to set out on a journey to Greece, but he decided to postpone it and went to Munich and Vienna instead. On his way back to Italy, he was murdered. The ironic tragedy of Winckelmann's destiny is that visiting Greece would have saved his life. Perhaps it would have also altered the course of Art history and rendered a more comprehensive image of Greek Antiquity.

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47 See Winckelmann (1987 [1756]: 3–4).

48 Constantine (1984: 104).

49 Harlan (2009: 423). Additional reasons prevented Germans from going to Greece; see Constantine (1984: 1–2).

50 Usborne (1840: 49) quoted by Tsigialou (2015: 84).

51 See N. N. (2008), https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g189400-r21041157-Athens_Attica.html [last accessed 16 Mar. 2024].

52 See Constantine (1984: 118).

3.2 Travelers and photographers in the 19th century

According to Artemis Leontis, the *topos* of Hellas is a construct of neo-Hellenic Western thought which developed gradually as more and more Western travelers visited the newly founded Greek state in the 19th century.[53] Travel writing, painting and photography produced by those early visitors to Greece promoted a 'stereotyped perception of Greece focusing on antiquities and historical sites'[54] that still prevails. Thus, 'Greece has been more an imagined *topos* than an actual place for prosperous foreigners since the birth of Classicism.'[55]

It is worth noting how circumstances in this period favored the construction of the ideal *topos*. The modern state of Greece and the technique of photography developed simultaneously and indeed 'the photographic coverage of ancient Greek material culture was the primary reason for European and North American photographers' to visit the country in the late 1830s.[56] There is also the fact that the invention of photography coincided with both the golden age of travel,[57] and the bourgeoning of archaeology.[58]

Simultaneously, in the 19th century mass tourism began to develop: there already were tour operators and travel guides, both highlighting the continuity of ancient Greek culture. Thomas Cook and Son began conducting tours to Athens and Constantinople in 1868,[59] whereas 1884's *Handbook for Travellers in Greece* by John Murray III, written for and in the spirit of educated Europeans, became one of those texts that helped the vision of ideal Greece be transferred from the elite to the public. Because of all this, 'long before disembarking, European travelers knew what had to be seen and how it was to be interpreted'[60], but this was, and is today, done 'at a cost to travelers' perception of modern Greece'.[61]

Travel photographs in the late 19th century show that the views were predominantly stereotyped iconographic scenes, as 'excursions' itineraries and standardized, formulaic guides – particularly Murray's handbooks – indicated what ought, not what might be seen, directing the traveler's attention to specific places to be viewed in specific ways.'[62] This topic has been widely studied in recent literature: Tsirgialou deals with the 19th century photographic depictions of Greece and

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53 See Leontis (1995).
54 Panayotopoulos (2009: 184).
55 Tzanelli (2003: 21) quoted by Crang and Travlou (2009: 76).
56 See Carabott, Hamilakis, and Papargyriou (2015: 3), Stathatos (2015: 25–26)
57 See Tsirgialou (2015: 78).
58 See Grossman (2015: 116), Hamilakis (2001), Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 136), Papadopoulos (2005).
59 See Harlan (2009: 423).
60 Osbourne (2000: 24).
61 Grossman (2015: 116).
62 Harlan (2009: 426).

notices that they uniformly focus on archaeological sites and ancient ruins. She highlights how those early travelers followed pre-established routes suggested by travel guides in what became a journey of 'rediscovery'.[63] Also, Szegedy-Maszak gives a detailed account of the photographs of the Parthenon in that period and reaches similar conclusions.[64] Finally, Harlan focusses on clergyman and scientist Thomas R. R. Stebbing's pictures and his own 'particular construction of classical antiquity, which in turn is indebted to the 19th-century tradition of travel guide-books.'[65]

The canonization of the Greek past by those early travelers and photographers began in October 1839, when Frenchman Pierre-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière took the first picture of the Acropolis. He was shortly followed by Joseph-Phillibert Girault de Prangey, also from France, who photographed the Propylaea and the Parthenon in 1842. A mosque could be seen on the inside of the first daguerreo-type by Joly de Lotbinière, whereas Girault de Prangey's picture showed nothing but ancient remains.[66] According to Bohrer (2015), it was the latter's vision that inaugurated the Western conception of the buildings on the Acropolis, clearing the monument of 'foreign' traits.[67] Nevertheless, the preferred angle remained that of Joly de Lobtinière and, in fact, it has been argued that his picture established the paradigm for most subsequent views of the temple.[68]

A decade later, photographs began to include local population as 'decoration' that would show the continuity of the Hellenic spirit.[69] However, most pictures generally excluded human presence. Szegedy-Maszak believes that the photo-graphers' intention was 'to remove from their pictures any unseemly intrusion from the present day that might disrupt the viewer's contemplation of the ancient world.'[70]

Around 1851, Frenchman Alfred-Nicolas Normand's pictures portrayed the same subjects, although from a more innovative and artistic perspective. Yet his attitude toward Modern and Ancient Greece was the same as that of his contem-poraries: Athens was small, wretched, and arid, but the beauty of the Acropolis was a generous compensation for it.[71] In 1853 Scotsman James Robertson depart-ed from the conventionalisms by including figures of men wearing traditional

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63 See Tsirgialou (2015: 78).
64 See Szegedy-Maszak (2005a), (2005b).
65 Harlan (2009: 422).
66 See Bohrer (2015: 97–99), Szegedy-Maszak (2005b: 335).
67 See Bohrer (2015: 98).
68 See Szegedy-Maszak (2005b: 336).
69 See Stathatos (2015: 28).
70 Szegedy-Maszak (2005a: 14), see also Szegedy-Maszak (2005b: 337).
71 See Szegedy-Maszak (2005b: 341).

clothes and admitting into his pictures the essence of Athens 'as a living member in the larger community of the eastern Mediterranean.'[72]

However, Robertson did not set a trend. By the end of 1860, traditionally rendered ancient sites were the main subject of the *Grande collection photographique* by Greek photographer Petros Moraites,[73] whereas American William James Stillman confirmed the Western ideal, imposing it on the monuments, in his celebrated *The Acropolis of Athens, illustrated picturesquely and architecturally in photography* in 1870.[74] Also around that year, Turkish photographer Pascal Sébah was capturing the ancient and medieval sites of Athens. His pictures also transmitted a 'romanticised notion of a bygone Classical Greece'[75] and indicated the 'must see' places for the tourist.

In sum, 19th century travelers helped in shaping a photographic canon that was ultimately rooted in Antiquity, for even Pausanias' *Description of Greece* determined 'what was significant to see and how to see it.'[76] And the same practice went on in the 20th century, reinforcing a stereotyped image of Greece and 'taking' its soul.

3.3 Nelly's vision in the 20th century

If we look into early 20th century photography in Greece, we soon meet with orchestrated efforts to promote an image of Greece based on Classical Antiquity. First came the Boissonas family of Geneva, then, Nelly's vision.

The Boissonas were responsible for the record of the Greek military campaign in Asia Minor, and thus an instrument of the government's propaganda. Frédéric Boissonas, in particular, was among the first to understand that political, commercial and tourism publicity could be generated by photography.[77] Also, the 1919 exhibition *Visions of Greece* in Paris was part of the efforts of philhellenic supporters to raise awareness of the Greek struggle. According to them, Europe had the moral imperative to save the cradle of civilization from the barbaric East. Pictures of ancient sites served as an argument.

From 1929 onwards, official Greek organizations took charge of promoting tourism seriously. Photography was, of course, an extremely relevant task. And it comes as no surprise that among the first posters issued by the Office of Greek Tourism[78] is a photograph of the Parthenon by a Greek female photographer who

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72 Szegedy-Maszak (2005b: 343).
73 See Tsirgialou (2015: 81).
74 See Bohrer (2015).
75 Grossman (2015: 113).
76 Harlan (2009: 436).
77 See Stathatos (2015: 37).

received the assignment to photograph 'the country's treasures and beauty spots'.[79]

Her real name was Elli Sougioultzoglou-Seraidari, but she became famous under the artistic pseudonym of Nelly. Her work has been widely acclaimed and studied; it is acknowledged as reflecting the desired identity of the Modern Greek state in relation to its past, and the very image that the West had constructed for the country. According to Panayotopoulos, Nelly's photographs of dancer Nina Nickolska at the Parthenon, for instance, would represent 'the ancient Hellenic spirit, the harmony, the eroticism, the beauty, the grace and moves of the ancient maidens' and are 'illustrative and symbolic stereotypes of the West with regard to the Orient.'[80] Moreover, Nelly served the political and ideological ideals of the Metaxas regime and therefore she has been compared to the German Leni Riefenstahl.[81]

In her study on the matter, Katerina Zacharia (2015) reveals that Nelly's iconography of Greece contributed to the myth of continuity between ancient and modern Greece: Nelly photographed the Delphic Festival in 1927, the nude dancers at the Parthenon in 1925 and 1930,[82] and promoted the State's early tourism activities through the Under-Secretariat of Press and Tourism. There were official posters with her pictures of the Parthenon, photographs featured in *La Grèce actuelle* (a publication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the magazine *Neolaia*, or the tourist periodicals *In Greece (En Grèce / In Griechenland)*, as well as the fashion magazine *La Mode Grecque*. Finally, her collages were protagonists at the New York 1939 World's Fair Greek pavilion.

In those collages, Nelly established a series of parallelisms between the physiognomy of ancient Greeks and contemporary ones. As Panayotopoulos and Zacharia explain, in her portraits comparing shepherds and village maidens with ancient Kouros and Kores, she was subconsciously searching for 'Aryan' features and herself becoming something of a Riefenstahl director.[83] As Zacharia puts it: 'The official discourse of the Metaxas regime constructed and promoted a national image of contemporary Greeks as descendants of the ancient Greeks, and as perpetuators and preservers of their ancient Greek heritage.'[84] These endeavors to

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78 Somewhere else, I have studied the use of Classical Antiquity by the Greek National Tourism Organization in their posters and campaigns; see González-Vaquerizo (2017).

79 Stathatos (2015: 41).

80 Panayotopoulos (2009: 191).

81 See Zacharia (2015: 233–234).

82 In August 1920, Edward Steichen had photographed American dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan at the Parthenon (cf. Steichen 1981) *The Early Years Portfolio 1901-1927*).

83 See Panayotopoulos (2009: 194), Zacharia (2014: 196).

84 Zacharia (2014: 188).

evidence the physiognomic continuity of the race[85] were drawn straight from Winckelmann's aesthetics of Greek art and his belief that traits such as the Greek profile survived among the Mediterranean population.[86]

Thus, Nelly found in Greece everything she could hope for: 'When I met Greece and saw its many beauties, almost on every step I saw yet another painting in front of me. Wherever I turned, I would encounter pictures ready to be shot.'[87] Those 'paintings' and 'ready pictures' of Nelly's were visions of Greece that had been promoted by Neoclassicism and served a political agenda.

Nowhere is this agenda more evident than in the official campaigns and posters issued by the Greek National Tourist Organization. During the 20th century, renowned Greek artist and photographers, including Nelly, but also Yorgos Varkitzis and Michalis Katzourakis among many others, served the Greek state's narrative in relation to its past: Greece was the cradle of Western civilization and its modern identity was drawn straight from Antiquity.[88]

In addition, foreign photographers such as Alison Frantz and Lucy Talcott, members of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and authors of the illustrated book *This is Greece* (1941), helped promote a standardized image of the country as not so far away from its idealized past.[89] Such an image persists even today in the mainstream tourist guides, and in the snapshots of most visitors.

3.4 21st Century and Flickr

This last section briefly focuses on 21st century tourism and contemporary photographic practices, in particular photo sharing via Flickr and Instagram. Its aim is to evaluate if tourists and photographers of today still reproduce learned ways of seeing and capturing Greece by following the standardized photographic canon in place since the 19th century.[90] The visual aspect of contemporary tourism ('sightseeing') establishes the equation 'tourism is photography.'[91]

As already discussed, the photographic canon not only suggests to the public what is worth capturing, but defines what is worth seeing and appreciating in a country.[92] By doing so, it ignores the possibility of discordant notes in that very same reality and creates a fixed memory and a fixed narrative, resulting in an astonishing homogeneity and an idealized vision. In much the same way, it has been

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85 Cf. Zacharia (2015: 238).
86 Cf. Winckelmann (1952 [1742–1759]: 315), quoted in Constantine (1984: 99).
87 Nelly's autobiography (1989: 79), quoted by Zacharia (2015: 238).
88 See González-Vaquerizo (2017).
89 See Moschovi (2015: 53–54).
90 See Szegedy-Maszak (2005b: 342).
91 Gordon (1999: 111).
92 See Panayotopoulos (2009: 190).

argued that tourism 'spectacularizes' destinations or creates 'myths' about them:[93] the so called 'tourist gaze'[94] has the capacity to shape, if not the landscape itself, at least its perception. Marketing, and the film and tourism industries create desirable images, which tourists then seek out and reproduce. By visiting a country and taking pictures of it, they confirm their expectations about the place, its people and landscape.

Nevertheless, we will see that despite the 'comforting continuity' that holiday pictures display and the persistence of 'historical patterns inscribed within the contemporary circulations of tourism and tourist',[95] there is room to innovate and to challenge the ideal vision of Greece. The Internet is, of course, largely responsible for this.

If ones enters the word 'Athens' in a search engine like Google, most of the images retrieved are of Classical antiquities, especially the Acropolis. The Parthenon in particular soon stands out. Pictures of this emblematic monument, whether by professional photographers and agencies or tourists on holiday, seem to mirror those first, 19th century pictures of the site: most of them take the same angle, and reproduce the monument in the same isolation, removing contemporary Athens from frame.

However, what about specialized photography websites and apps? Flickr[96], where virtual web-based photo albums are accessible to a public audience, is a meeting place for amateur and professional photographers. It is probably the largest online photo management and sharing website in the world, with more than 100 million registered photographers, over 60 million users per month and an average of 1 million of photos shared daily.[97] Although there is no filter as to the aesthetic quality of the pictures that members can upload, the fact remains that Flickr stands out for its high photographic standards.

Research using such a large, ever-changing repository is a difficult task that can only be carried out by means of algorithms,[98] or in an impressionistic way. My approach belongs to the latter, and is based on a simple search for key terms such as Athens, Acropolis and Parthenon.

When typing 'Athens', Flickr displays a variety of pictures where antiquities coexist with graffiti and taverns, among many other topics. Classical Athens would probably win in numbers (if numbers were available), yet the overall impression is that of a multicultural modern European capital.

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93 See Crang and Travlou (2009: 78).

94 See Urry (2002).

95 Cf. Robinson and Picard (2009: 12, 24).

96 https://www.flickr.com

97 Data from DMR Business Statistics: https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/flickr-stats/ (last update 6 Jan. 2024 [last accessed 16 Mar. 2024]).

98 Cf. Kennedy et al. (2007).

Moving on to the Acropolis, and the Parthenon in particular, the Classical ideal regains strength. Most pictures seem predominantly focused on the monumentality of the site and reproduce standardized views, angles and frames. Despite the fact that there are many innovative visions of the site on Flickr, Hamilakis and Ifantidis are right to complain that 'far too many photographs of the Acropolis follow the established photographic canon.'[99] This is why they have developed 'The Other Acropolis Project', which aims to show alternative perspectives of the site, arguing that its photographic and archaeological monumentalisation since the 19th century has caused 'forgetting and remembering at the same time.'[100]

If we turn to Instagram, the primary mobile photo-sharing network worldwide,[101] we find a large number of posts under the hashtags Athens, Acropolis and Parthenon. Even though the monuments still receive standardized treatment and are taken from selective view-points, in a considerable number of cases, a new concept seems to emerge: people and their experiences, not ruins, are the main subject for *instagramers*.

Such a change has been possible because 21st century technology has provided every tourist with a camera and the possibility to share his or her views worldwide. Thus, there has been a 'transfer of "power" from the preserve of relatively few early photographers'[102] to the people. The effects of this on our image of the past can be studied within the context of democratization of the Classics,[103] a trend to make them available to and approachable from popular culture. Now that tourists' snapshots are public, the social impact of their visions of Greece may be expected to rise. Yet, it is too soon to know whether they will bring a conventional or a new outlook on Greece.

4. Conclusions

After reviewing some of the stages in the creation of the photographic canon of Greece and a substantial number of studies on the matter, there seems to be evidence to demonstrate that the image of Greece is the result of an iconographic program and a tradition derived from the limited views of a few. Moreover, the Western Classical Tradition has had an enormous impact not just on the image of Greece held by leading figures such as Winckelmann, the first 19th century trav-

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99 Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 143).

100 Hamilakis and Ifantidis (2015: 153). For 'The Other Acropolis Project' visit https://theotheracropolis.com/ [last accessed 16 Mar. 2024]

101 Data from DMR Business Statistics show that Instagram has 1.3 billion montlhy users [last update 16 Oct. 2021] and an average of 500 million active users per day [last update 23 Mar. 2019]: see https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/important-instagram-stats/ (last update 12 Jan. 2024 [last accessed 9 Nov. 2024]).

102 Robinson and Picard (2009: 6).

103 See Hardwick and Harrison (2014)

elers and photographers, and Nelly, but also on the expectations, experiences and representations of the country in contemporary photography and tourism.

Most of the pictures of the country's landscape, ancient sites and people, are projections of our desires, indeed the desires of Western Tradition, about how the cradle of civilization should look. Such a selective photographic canon leads to the neglect of other Greek singularities, which do not conform to the ideal. As the authors of *Camera Graeca* emphasize, instead of depicting what is there, the lens actually produces it, and when it comes to Greece, what the lens tends to portray is continuity with the ancient world.[104]

As a conclusion, it is safe to say that mass tourism has inherited a way of seeing, capturing and remembering Greece. This learned image does not account for the country's plural soul, because by 'favoring the glorious past over the discordant or diverse present'[105], a substantial part of Greece's identity is discarded.

The picture that took the Greek soul is not a single picture, but an idea of white marble that has fascinated Western minds for centuries. This narrative has shaped a beautiful image of the country that today can be relished by the educated traveler as well as by the common visitor. And it is precisely in the views of such visitors that the future image of Classical Greece is to be created. Time will tell if interaction with the past through modern media will result in a new image of the country or in further canonization of the idealized one. In any case, to paraphrase Martindale again, Greece can be nothing other than what visitors have made of it over the centuries.[106]

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104 See Carabott, Hamilakis, and Papargyriou (2015: 12).

105 Panayotopoulos (2009: 188).

106 Cf. Martindale (1993: 10).

Chong, A. (2009), 'The Photograph as a Receptacle of Memory', *Small Axe* 13.2: 128–134.

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