Introduction

This work is a study of history, and 'all of history is contemporary history'.[1] Which, then, are the contemporary issues that influence the perception and articulation of this study? Our era is characterised by the exasperating contradictions of the ideology that one could call 'Occidentalism'. Occidentalism is the ideology that there exist clearly bounded entities in world history, such as the West, the Orient and the primitives, and that these metaphysical entities have a genealogy (or rather only the Occident has a true genealogy);[2] that there is a pattern in human history, which leads to the evolution of the modern West, which is the natural path of history, while the history of the Rest of the world is a story of aberrations that have to be explained; that the whole world is actually following the lead of the West and one day it will manage to assimilate; that the conceptual tools and the disciplines created by the West are in some way the natural way to organise experience and analyse reality, and that the reality of the past, and the present outside the West, ought to be explicable in these Western terms.[3]

These are not simply academic arguments; they have a real, deadly impact in the world around us. German Christian democrats and French conservatives oppose the entry of Turkey into the EU, because Europe is a Christian culture;[4] the French Front National argues for the expulsion of African immigrants, because they partake of an alien culture;[5] non-Western countries are invaded to impose liberty and democracy, because they are presumed to be unable to achieve them by their own means;[6] anger and despair among the oppressed of the Middle East are denigrated as religious fanaticism, in contrast to Western liberal secularism.[7]

[1] Croce 1921: 11–26. [2] For this metageography, see Lewis and Wigen 1997.
[3] For these issues, see Chakrabarty 2000: 3–23.
[4] See e.g. *Guardian*, 27 November 2002; also 17 September 2002. [5] *Guardian*, 25 April 2002.
[6] Ali 2002. [7] See a characteristic example: Huntington 1998.

At the same time, the bastions of Occidentalism, evolutionism and the idea of progress seem less and less plausible.[8] Colonialism, once thought of as part of a left-behind past, is again on the agenda. The growing progress of secularism is a mirage; it is not only in the Orient that 'religious fanatics' gain control; for the first time since more than a century ago, leaders of Western powers argue that they owe an account of their actions only in front of the Supreme Being.[9] In an age of globalisation and borders surpassed, nationalism is a more potent force than ever. The growing advancement of civil rights is reversed; habeas corpus is a dead letter even in the country of its inception.[10] The triumph of the modern rational state is reversed; in whole regions of the globe state power has collapsed and 'feudal' groups and interests fight each other and run countries;[11] areas that were safely visited a hundred years ago are as impenetrable now as they were three centuries ago.[12]

Few I hope would dispute that Greek history has played an important part in fostering Occidentalist/Eurocentric agendas in the past;[13] it is equally true that it continues to do so in the present.[14] But this book will not focus on the ways that Greek history has been used to support these agendas in the larger political, cultural and social environment. My subject is to study this process the other way round. The central argument of this work is that the modern study of Greek history has been fundamentally shaped by the perspectives of Occidentalism/Eurocentrism. We can easily point to a number of key aspects. To start with, Greek history is always treated as part of Western or European history.[15] It is not treated as part of the continuous history of an area of the Mediterranean through the ages; it becomes part of a chain of historical evolution that starts in the Near East, moves to Greece, passes to Rome, before moving on to the Middle Ages and the modern Western world. Greece, as part of the Mediterranean, is nothing more than a temporary setting for this chain of evolution. Ancient Greek history is not written from the perspective of the continuous history of this geographical area; rather, the history of this area becomes irrelevant, once the torch has passed to the next bearer of Western civilisation.

As a consequence, the history of the ancient Greeks has been separated from the history of the wider Mediterranean and the Near East; it has

[8] See Albrow 1996. [9] *Guardian*, 4 May 2003. [10] *Guardian*, 26 November 2001.
[11] See Mbembe 2001 on Africa. [12] Hobsbawm 1997.
[13] Turner 1981; Bernal 1987; Canfora 1989.
[14] Hanson and Heath 1998; Berlinerbau 1999; Hanson 2004.
[15] See the two different, but equally characteristic, Occidentalist perspectives on Greek history in Hanson 2002; Meier 2005.

become a segregated and apparently autonomous entity.[16] The story of the opposition between Oriental despotism and Western freedom, which originated with the Greeks, is too well known to be rehearsed here.[17]

Even more, this Eurocentric perspective has created an implicit mentality whereby Europe, in its medieval, early modern and modern forms, has become the sole standard of comparison for ancient Greek history (as a matter of fact, for all areas and periods of history). To give just one example, the economic history of antiquity is still written from a perspective that tries to assess to what extent ancient economies approximated medieval/modern European economies.[18] The implicit assumption is that the path that medieval, early modern and modern European economies followed is the normal path that every economy should have followed; therefore, the issue becomes whether ancient economies did follow that path, and, if not, why not. The idea that there is no reason to take the (northern) European economies as the standard of comparison; the idea that there can exist other, non-European, standards of comparison; or the idea that economies are parts of wider world-systems and conjunctures, which we cannot randomly abstract, seem unimaginable from the viewpoint of the current dominant perspective.[19]

Finally, one of the effects of the appropriation of ancient Greek history for the history of Europe has been the imposition of a quasi-national framework on Greek history. The Greeks had no centre or institution around which their history could be organised; Greek-speaking communities were scattered all over the Mediterranean and they never achieved political, economic or social unity; while their cultural unity was not centred on a dominant institution, such as a church or a temple. Therefore, Greek history could not be written in the way that Roman or Jewish history could, centred on the Roman state or the Jewish temple. The emergence of nationalism and racialism in nineteenth-century Europe, and the construction of national narratives for all European nations, influenced deeply the way modern historians attempted to narrate Greek history; the homogenising fictional entity of the nation was ready at hand. But equally important were the needs of the Eurocentric account of historical evolution. The story of the evolution of the West, passing from one stage to the next and from one locale to another, necessitated a clear story of beginning,

[16] Bernal 1987: 281–336. [17] Koebner 1951; Venturi 1963; Vidal-Naquet 1964; Hall 1989.
[18] Finley 1973b: 123–49. See the comments of Nafissi 2005: 237–43.
[19] For such an approach, see Pomeranz 2000, 3–27.

acme and fall. A homogenising national narrative could serve such a function, and was thus easily adopted.

The concept that came to encompass and serve all these needs of Eurocentric history is the concept of the polis, the Greek city-state. It has served to differentiate the Greeks, originators of liberty and democracy, from Oriental monarchies and despotisms. Moreover, since the Greeks lacked a national state, the city-state served as the equivalent: the various Greek poleis were so many replicas of the common national form of state and society, the city-state. It could thus serve as a handy means of homogenisation.[20] It could also serve ideally the Eurocentric scheme of historical evolution: the polis could be portrayed as a historical form that emerged, prospered and finally declined, passing the sceptre to new forms, such as the Hellenistic monarchies and the Roman empire. Finally, it could be used to pursue all sorts of Eurocentric comparisons. To give an example, the Greek polis, perceived as a consumer city, has been compared to medieval and modern producer cities, in order to explain why ancient economies did not develop the way modern European economies did.[21]

As it is clear already from the title, this work is polemical to a large extent; but the reader is entitled to ask: has it been the case that all study of ancient Greek history so far has been Eurocentric and dominated by the currents of thought and methodologies that you criticise? Am I not constructing straw men, given the variety of views expressed by different scholars? Am I not conspiratorial, when arguing that alternative traditions to the current orthodoxy have been silenced or marginalised?

I am using the term *silencing* to describe the process of the formation of the modern orthodoxy and the exclusion of alternatives in two different ways. On the one hand, it refers to the process by which certain approaches and the people who foster them are put aside and marginalised; but this is the least important for my discussion here, and in the absence of a history of scholarship for the twentieth century it would be impossible to substantiate.[22] But I do not intend this work to be conspiratorial;[23] I hope it is relatively easy for the reader to see that many scholars have supported a variety of alternative views and that there is no concentrated or conscious effort to silence certain views. The problem is indeed deeper and much more difficult to handle: silence is created by the very act of historical writing.

[20] Gawantka 1985. [21] Finley 1977.
[22] The lonely efforts of Karl Christ are not enough: Christ 1972, 1999.
[23] And in this way I differ profoundly from Bernal 1987, as much as I agree with his general theme.

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the first instance).[24]

The silence at the moment of fact creation means that evidence for a subject or an event might exist, and yet not be utilised as a historical fact (e.g. archaeological evidence is underutilised by historians); the silence at the moment of fact assembly implies that there is uneven power in the production of sources (e.g. our literary archives represent the voice of elite Greeks, while subaltern Greeks are generally voiceless); the silence in the making of narratives implies that certain ways of writing a narrative eliminate certain kinds of evidence and certain subjects (e.g. writing Greek history as a story of the rise, acme and decline of the polis silences the history of the Greek communities in the Black Sea, where such a narrative cannot be constructed); finally, the silence at the moment of retrospective significance forces certain questions, while making others impossible (e.g. if Greek history is important, because it is the beginning of European history, then it is worth asking why the Greek polis did not develop economically like the medieval European city, but it becomes pointless to compare the Greek poleis with Indian cities).

There are therefore multiple silences; this is the reason that alternative views and approaches can exist, but without challenging the overall framework. A new fact can be added (e.g. numismatic evidence) without challenging the way of constructing a narrative or the wider metanarrative; a new assembly of facts can be created, which gives voice and opens a window to people and subjects previously underrepresented (e.g. the intensive surveys opening a window to the silent countryside and the lower classes that inhabited it), and still be situated within the same narrative. The varieties of alternative views that are endorsed in this study, along with the variety of views that are criticised, accept and deny different kinds of silences. What has not been done so far is an examination of all these silences and, even more, of the narratives and metanarratives that form the necessary background of writing Greek history.

The purpose of this book therefore is to examine and make explicit the forms of silences employed in writing Greek history. The making of sources and archives is more extensively discussed in the final chapter, suggesting how we can utilise the variety of sources at our disposal, in order

[24] Trouillot 1995: 26.

to overcome the usual Athenocentric and Hellenocentric accounts. The main part of this book though is more concerned with the making of narratives and the metanarratives on which these narratives depend. But it should be clear from the discussion above that the creation of silences is inherent in any kind of historical production. It would be a self-delusion to pretend that one can substitute the bad silences for the light of truth. But it is possible, legitimate and necessary to question certain kinds of silences and offer different criteria, different questions and different forms of silences.

The current study therefore has two aims: to challenge the implicit assumptions and the larger discursive framework behind the study of Greek history; and to offer an alternative analytical and conceptual framework. I argue that the current dominance of the polis as the single organising tool of the study of Greek history is responsible for the problems underlined above. I will examine the various ways in which the polis has been used as the key analytical tool to study the political, economic and social history of the ancient Greeks and show the insurmountable problems that are created. I therefore attempt to supplement an 'unthinking' of the concept of the polis with other analytical levels and conceptual tools.

To achieve the above aims, this study follows developments in the wider historical discipline. Comparative history and the history of historiography are two fundamental aspects of my work. There is a strong tendency among many ancient historians to consider both as optional and rather irrelevant to the day-to-day practice of the historian. In this understanding, comparative history resorts to nothing more than trying to find arguments or evidence in other periods or societies, when we lack them for the period or society that we study; and the history of historiography resorts to the study of first-rate minds from second-rate minds, or otherwise little more than a combination of intellectual curiosity and antiquarianism.[25] In my perspective, they both are an indispensable part of historical thinking. They function as the anthropological conscience of historiography: they remind us that the past is a foreign country, since people do things in a different way there. They challenge and help to rethink (or, indeed, unthink[26]) all that is taken for granted.

[25] The general absence of undergraduate courses in both comparative history and the history of historiography of antiquity speaks volumes about general attitudes. There are of course exceptions; but as always, this reinforces rather than undermines the rule.

[26] The concept of 'unthinking' refers to Wallerstein 1991. My attempt to unthink the foundations of my discipline has been fundamentally shaped by Wallerstein's attempt to unthink the foundations of the social sciences. This does not imply identification with all of his theses; Wallerstein has justly

The history of historiography shows that there is no inevitability in the way we have come to study history; that there have been alternative approaches, which have been silenced, and may be still worth pursuing; and that there are certain metahistorical reasons for which some approaches have been endorsed instead of others. Comparative history helps to illustrate issues and aspects that have not been clearly visible; it allows us to view our subjects from alternative perspectives; and it provides us with controlled and explicit historical assumptions, in order to approach our sources. A fundamental difference between my use of comparative history and that of many ancient historians is the starting point: many ancient historians start from problems encountered in the field of ancient history and turn to comparative study, in order to illuminate these points; their comparative quest is driven from the particular problems of their field, and is seen only from the entrenched perspective of their discipline.[27] Thus, they end up finding what they are already geared to find.

On the contrary, I start from the perception that our colleagues in other fields of history have been devising new approaches, methods, perspectives and issues, which have not found resonance in the world of historians of antiquity.[28] A key issue of this work is to look at the study of ancient Greek history from the perspective of what has been accomplished in other fields of history and to attempt to introduce such concerns to the study of ancient history.[29] There is of course a growing number of other ancient historians who pursue a comparative agenda; but there are differences about which comparative agendas should be adopted and this study makes an argument in favour of certain agendas, instead of others.

Post-colonialism and the critique of Orientalism have by now a long history;[30] yet, until now they had a very limited influence on the study of ancient history. To a certain extent, this is because even the few scholars that have attempted to converse with this current of thought have mainly turned their attention to works dealing with literary criticism, such as the work of Said; very little attention has been paid to the *historical* studies

been criticised as partly remaining within a Eurocentric perspective; see e.g. Washbrook 1990. I also find his economistic outlook often reductive and unsatisfactory. Yet, I find his challenge to the foundations of the modern social sciences both fully justified and highly stimulating. I have attempted to develop some of his many challenges and insights, without necessarily accepting all of his conclusions.

[27] See the remarks of Detienne 2000.

[28] The chief influences on this work are the historiographical traditions of the *Annales*, the *Past and Present* and the *Subaltern Studies*. See Kaye 1984; Dosse 1994; Chaturvedi 2000; Ludden 2002.

[29] To give an example, I attempt to introduce the insights of Braudel's *Civilisation matérielle* (Braudel 1982, 1984) to the study of Greek economic history.

[30] See the pioneering Said 1978.

emanating from post-colonialism, which are far more challenging and relevant. My work attempts to take this historical production into account; in particular, I have found the historiographical production of India extremely stimulating.[31] The other shortcoming is the general indifference towards the work of those scholars studying the ancient societies of the Near East. Many misconceptions are due to the neglect of scholarly achievements in this field in the last fifty years.[32] I present some very important insights coming out of this work, and I hope this will act as a catalyst towards further constructive interaction.

The study and critique of nationalism and ethnocentrism has been an equally strong influence.[33] Since the Historicist revolution of the nineteenth century, the national state has become the unchallenged unit of analysis for historical narrative and analysis.[34] The emergence of social history, gender history and ethnohistory has done much to undermine the coherence of national narratives and present the multiple histories of the lower classes, women and outcasts.[35] There has been a large discussion, in particular among American historians, on the need for new units of analysis and new forms of historical narrative, which will enable us to study and portray the multiple histories of various groups of peoples, instead of the homogenising and subjugating national narrative.[36] I have followed these insights by arguing that the domination of the concept of the polis on the study of Greek history serves to homogenise and submerge these various histories. And I attempt to offer an alternative analytical framework by studying Aristotle's conceptualisation of the polis and its constituent *koinôniai*.

Globalisation is probably the key word of the early twenty-first century.[37] The challenge to the national state as the unit of analysis has not come only from those arguing for levels below the national level; it is equally important to pay attention to those arguing for new conceptual tools in order to study diasporas,[38] international systems of moving goods, peoples and ideas,[39] and the interlinked history of various groups of peoples and states.[40] This study uses the work of scholars on globalisation,[41] world-systems theory[42] and world history[43] in order to argue that Greek history has to be liberated from the Eurocentric narrative of a

[31] Prakash 1990; Chakrabarty 2000; Chaturvedi 2000.
[32] The best reflection of this work is van de Mieroop 1997b. [33] Anderson 1991; Duara 1995.
[34] Iggers 1968. [35] Bender 1986. [36] Bender 2002a. [37] Robertson 1992, 2003.
[38] Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1994. [39] Curtin 1984.
[40] See the innovating Linebaugh and Rediker 2000. [41] Appadurai 2001.
[42] Wallerstein 1974; Abu-Lughod 1989. [43] Wolf 1982; Stuchtey and Fuchs 2003.

segregated and autonomous Greek history. We need to insert Greek history into the interlinking history of the wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern world;[44] but in order to do this, while avoiding the old billiard approach of interaction between autonomous and separate entities, we need new concepts and analytical tools; I attempt to provide a beginning for such a framework. Eric Wolf many years ago asked some questions that I still find relevant:

> If there are connections everywhere, why do we persist in turning dynamic, interconnected phenomena into static, disconnected things? Some of this is owing, perhaps, to the way we have learned our own history. We have been taught, inside the classroom and outside of it, that there exists an entity called the West, and that one can think of this West as a society and civilization independent of and in opposition to other societies and civilizations. Many of us even grew up believing that this West has a genealogy, according to which ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe . . . If history is but a tale of unfolding moral purpose, then each link in the genealogy, each runner in the race, is only a precursor of the final apotheosis and not a manifold of social and cultural processes at work in their own place and time. Yet, what would we learn of ancient Greece, for example, if we interpreted it only as a prehistoric Miss Liberty, holding aloft the torch of moral purpose in the barbarian night? We would gain little sense of the class conflicts racking the Greek cities, or of the relations between freemen and their slaves. We would have no reason to ask why there were more Greeks fighting in the ranks of the Persian kings than in the ranks of the Hellenic Alliance against the Persians. It would be of no interest to us to know that more Greeks lived in southern Italy and Sicily, then called Magna Graecia, than in Greece proper. Nor would we have any reason to ask why there were soon more Greek mercenaries in foreign armies than in the military bodies of their home cities. Greek settlers outside of Greece, Greek mercenaries in foreign armies and slaves from Thrace, Phrygia or Paphlagonia in Greek households, all imply Hellenic relations with Greeks and non-Greeks outside of Greece. Yet, our guiding scheme would not invite us to ask questions about these relationships.[45]

I have used this introduction to present the greater framework within which I situate my study. My debts and reactions to developments in the particular field of ancient history are discussed in much more detail in the historiographical part of this work, and in many other cases in all other parts of the book, of course. I also regret that cultural and religious history have received little place in this study. This should not be taken to imply that they are derivative on the 'deep' economic, social and political structures. But apart from problems of personal competence and familiarity,

[44] A move in this direction is of course Horden and Purcell 2000; see also Gras 1995b.
[45] Wolf 1982: 4–5.

and pressure of time and space, the reader will hopefully agree that the kind of approach, which is espoused here for social, economic and political history, is readily applicable to cultural and religious history as well.[46]

From the perspective defended in this work, it is possible to move beyond national histories into histories of how the interaction and interdependence between various communities and groups has shaped the past; to move beyond teleological and Eurocentric Grand Narratives into an understanding of the multiple, yet co-existing, and co-dependent courses of history; to save the peripheries, the subalterns and the marginal from 'the enormous condescension of posterity',[47] without therefore fragmenting the past into a 'histoire en miettes'. Greek history is an ideal field to apply all these concepts. The Greeks never had a centre around which one could organise their history; their communities were scattered over a wide space; their interactions with other communities and polities played a paramount role in their history; the varying temporal and spatial settings and configurations of their communities makes it feasible *and* necessary to apply the historical concepts that we have described. The Greek *poleis* are fascinating because they defy the obligatory logic of all the great explanatory schemes of Occidentalism. They are the decisive proof that history matters; what greater pleasure for the historian?

[46] See for example the similar approach of Antonaccio 2003.
[47] Thompson 1980: 12.