HELLENISM IN BYZANTIUM

This is the first systematic study of what it meant to be "Greek" in late antiquity and Byzantium, an identity that could alternately become national, religious, philosophical, or cultural. Through close readings of the sources – including figures such as Julian, Psellos, and the Komnenian scholars – Professor Kaldellis surveys the space that Hellenism occupied in each period; the broader debates in which it was caught up; and the historical causes of its successive transformations. The first part (100–400) shows how Romanization and Christianization led to the abandonment of Hellenism as a national label and its restriction to a negative religious sense and a positive, albeit rarefied, cultural one. The second (1000–1300) shows how Hellenism was revived in Byzantium and contributed to the evolution of its culture. The discussion looks closely at the reception of the classical tradition, which was the reason why Hellenism was always desirable and dangerous in Christian society, and presents a new model for understanding Byzantine civilization.

ANTHONY KALDELLIS is Professor of Greek and Latin at The Ohio State University. He has published many articles and monographs on late antiquity and Byzantium, and is currently completing a related book on the subject of the Christian Parthenon. His most recent titles are *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (2006) and *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (2004).

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HELLENISM IN BYZANTIUM

The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition

ANTHONY KALDELLIS

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I dedicate this book to my uncle Christophoros,
in gratitude and admiration.

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Preface

This book attempts to mediate among different fields, different methodologies within those fields, and my own personal interests and backgrounds. It combines intellectual, cultural, and literary history to answer the following questions: what did it mean to be Greek in Byzantium, how and why did those meanings change over time and across different sites of the culture, and how were those changes related to the reception of the classical tradition? Obviously, its primary audience will be those who are interested in late antiquity and Byzantium, but it also attempts to build bridges to (and between) Classics and Modern Greek Studies. Classicists are increasingly looking beyond the narrow definitions of their field that prevailed in the past and into the extension and reception of Greek culture in later societies (from the Second Sophistic to late antiquity, the Renaissance, and modern Greece). This book offers them a guide to how some familiar ancient themes continued to evolve in Byzantium. Students of modern Greece, on the other hand, have long been intrigued by the way in which Greek modernity has defined itself in terms of classical antiquity, sounding alternating notes of tension and harmony, but ideologies and institutions have not favored giving the same attention to Byzantium, and nonexperts are understandably intimidated by the alien, overdocumented, and understudied millennium that stands between the two canonical poles. This book offers them a study of how the Byzantines coped with many of the same problems that the modern Greeks would face (and still do), especially regarding the contested spaces of Greek identity. My position as a Byzantinist in a classics department that includes a program of Modern Greek has proven an advantage for thinking through these fundamental questions.

Methodologically the book likewise stands in the middle. It basically tells a narrative and rests on research that is primarily philological: reading through thousands of pages of arcane and mostly untranslated sources and examining what they say. At the same time, Hellenic identity is treated as a

historically and discursively constructed entity, not a stable "essence," and therefore as always being reimagined and contested. This is now a conventional approach in the humanities. The parameters and modalities of identity – memory, performance, polarity, rhetoric, ritual, reception, community, nationality, ethnicity, continuity, and many others – have now generated a vast theoretical literature and no longer appear as straightforward as our sources wish to represent them. And to "deconstruct" a text is not merely to refute its truth-claims or to historicize it, but to show what parts of the world it must forget in order to have a presence and how these exclusions are often reinscribed within its basic assumptions. I have, therefore, tried to combine philological, historical, and more theoretical approaches in this study, though I have tried never to deviate from the rule that anything worth saying can be said in lucid English. Too much theory can sometimes make it impossible to say anything straightforward at all, and I have a story to tell.

The study of Hellenism is also caught up in a personal narrative. The Greek educational system taught me biology and physics but caused me to hate ancient Greek. Somehow I ended up a Byzantinist in Ohio. The encouragement of student choice in American colleges and the vastly different approach to the humanities that prevails here contributed to this conversion. It was here that I devoted myself to the Greek literary and philosophical tradition and grasped its challenge to the modern predicament. However, the dialectical tension between modernity and the classics, and among national, philosophical, and professional ideas of Hellenism, superimposed onto a renewed polarization between East and West, has produced in me a series of displacements: I am always outside looking in or inside looking out at what matters. Here I glimpse the Byzantine dynamic of "inner" and "outer" wisdom, that fusion of ideal and alienation. This is the experience that I read in Gregorios of Nazianzos, Michael Psellos, Michael Choniates, and others. In their personal engagement with Greece, they too were neither here nor there. Byzantium has become for me a crucible, as among all historical societies it poses in the most intriguing way the challenge of negotiating the Greek, Roman, and Christian traditions, which challenge most of us face still. This book attempts to tell the story of that Byzantine predicament.

The greatest pleasure in writing is thanking people at the end of a long work. My department has promoted Byzantine Studies, harbored intellectual diversity, and provided friends for debate and discussion. Giorgos Anagnostou and Carolina López-Ruiz deserve special mention here. As department chairs, David Hahm and Fritz Graf have supported my work

in many ways, research trips to Greece and flexible teaching schedules being the most important. The College of Humanities should also be thanked for making all this possible. I am grateful to all who read and commented on parts of this book while it was in preparation, including Mark Anderson, Patrick Baker, Garth Fowden, Gregory Jusdanis, Dimitris Krallis, and Bryan Lauer. Stephanos Efthymiades is the best friend a Byzantinist could hope for and has given me more than I can acknowledge. Ian Mladjov helped me with medieval names, titles, and genealogies. I should thank separately the Press's two readers, whose learned reports and astute criticisms led to improvements on many fronts; their sympathy is appreciated all the more given the rough state of the original submission. Michael Sharp, the editor at the Cambridge University Press, saw the book through the publication process with exemplary professionalism and efficiency. I am very grateful to them all.

Also, I owe an enormous debt to my colleagues in the field from so many countries who publish the primary sources that I use and write the books and critical studies I rely on. This work would not be possible without theirs. It is a further pleasure to know that many of them have supported me personally or professionally over the years, as teachers, friends, or models of scholarship. I want to recognize here Panagiotis Agapitos, Polymnia Athanassiadi, John Fine, Garth Fowden, Traianos Gagos, Timothy Gregory, Antony Littlewood, Paul Magdalino, Paul Stephenson, Warren Treadgold, and Ray Van Dam.

I dedicate *Hellenism in Byzantium* to my uncle Christophoros Kaldellis, in gratitude and admiration. His Hellenism is rather that of Eupalinos and Euclid; still, it is because of him that I understood what Sokrates meant when he said that the richest man is the one with the fewest needs. Our conversations have been wide-ranging and stimulating. I hope this answers some of his questions.