

MODERN GREEK “PREHISTORY”: ANCIENT GREEK MYTH AND MYCENÆAN CIVILIZATION IN MODERN GREEK EDUCATION

The reception of Classical Antiquity in Modern Greek culture is a complex phenomenon, full of nuances, emotions, and ideology.¹ One important aspect of this reception has to do with perceptions of national identity and self-definition. A no less challenging topic, a part of which will be addressed in this chapter, is how Ancient Greek myth and Mycenaean civilization fit into this complex mosaic. Ancient Greek myth permeates many elements of Modern Greek culture; it is most famously employed in poetry, but is in fact deeply felt in almost all spheres of life.² Because myths are detached from the “here and now”, they are often thought to convey general truths. However, because myths remain culturally relevant, they are also a product of their time. Myths are hence both stable and changeable, both traditional and innovative. And so is their reception. In what ways may the retelling of an Ancient Greek myth convey notions of Modern Greek national self-definition? What is the role of the Homeric epics? And how might the Mycenaean world, caught in between the heroic and early historical times, fit into the grand narrative of Hellenism, especially since Linear B was deciphered as a syllabic script of an early Greek language less than seventy years ago?

¹ See, among others, Dimitris Tziouvas, ed., *Re-Imagining the Past: Antiquity and Modern Greek Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, and in particular on archaeology, Yannis Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, as well as Dimitris Damaskos and Dimitris Plantzos, eds., *A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece*, Athens: Mouseio Benaki, 2008.

² On poetry, see Peter Mackridge, ed., *Ancient Greek Myth in Modern Greek Poetry: Essays in Memory of C.A. Trypanis*, London: Frank Cass, 1996.

In order to examine this vast topic, I will look into Greece's educational system, in accordance with the volume's theme.³ Education in Greece is instrumental in creating and perpetuating mainstream perceptions of national self-definition. The subject of history, taught early on, from Grade 3 of primary school, is an infamous platform for the use and abuse of (sometimes competing) historical narratives, perhaps also due to the educational policy of the single textbook.⁴ Suffice it to mention here the notorious public debate, which broke out in the spring of 2006 and received extensive media coverage in the following year, about the history textbook of Grade 6, developed by Maria Repousi (Associate Professor of History and History Education at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and former Member of Parliament) and a team of historians and teachers.⁵ One of the most controversial and hotly debated points of the textbook concerns its description of the destruction of Smyrna in the summer of 1922.⁶

³ On Modern Greek retellings of Ancient Greek myths for children during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Ekaterini Papageorgiou, *Η ελληνική μυθολογία στην ελληνική παιδική λογοτεχνία. Συγκριτική προσέγγιση της ελληνικής μυθολογίας* [I elliniki mythologia stin elliniki paidiki logotechnia. Syngritiki prosengisi tis ellinikis mythologias; Greek Mythology in Greek Children's Literature: A Comparative Approach to Greek Mythology], PhD dissertation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2010. Throughout this chapter transliterations are provided in a format based on the guidelines of the Hellenic Organization for Standardization (Ελληνικός Οργανισμός Τυποποίησης; Ellinikos Organismos Typopoiisis) and adapted for *Grove Music Online*. See "Greek Transliteration", Oxford Music Online, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/greek-transliteration> (accessed 10 July 2020).

⁴ See Ephe Avdela, "The Teaching of History in Greece", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18 (2000), 239–253; Anna Frangoudaki, "Απόγονοί Ελλήνων από τη μυκηναϊκή εποχή: η ανάλυση των εγχειριδίων ιστορίας" ["Apogonoi" Ellinon "apo ti mykinaiki epochi": i analysi ton enchiridion istorias; "Descendants" of Greeks "from Mycenaean Times": An Analysis of History Textbooks], in Anna Frangoudaki and Thalia Dragonas, eds., *Τι είν' η πατρίδα μας. Εθνοκεντρισμός στην εκπαίδευση* [Ti ein' i patriida mas. Ethnokentrismos stin ekpaidevsi; What Is Our Homeland? Ethnocentrism in Education], Athina: Alexandria, 1997, 344–400; and Jurgen Broeders, "*The Greeks Fought Heroically*": *A History of Greek History Textbooks*, MA thesis, Radboud University, 2008.

⁵ Maria Repousi, Hara Andreadou, Aristidis Poutahidis, and Armodios Tsivas, *Στα νεώτερα και σύγχρονα χρόνια. Ιστορία ΣΤ' Δημοτικού* [Sta neotera kai synchrona chronia. Istoria Ektis Dimotikou; In Modern and Contemporary Times: Grade 6 History], Athina: Organismos Ekdoseos Didaktikon Vivlion, 2006.

⁶ Emre Metin Bilginer, "Recent Debates on Greek History Textbooks: The Case of the *Contemporary History Textbook for 6th Grades* by Maria Repousi", *Eckert.Beiträge* 2013.2, http://repository.gei.de/bitstream/handle/11428/103/745117228_2016_A.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y (accessed 25 June 2018). On the term "interference" in history textbooks, used as a more neutral term than "censorship", see Jan Braauw, "Forms of History Textbook Interference", *Educational Practice and Theory* 39 (2017), 53–68. On another famous example of controversy having to do with the Macedonian crisis and school textbooks, see Erik Sjöberg, "The Past in Peril: Greek History Textbook Controversy and the Macedonian Crisis", *Education Inquiry* 2 (2011), 93–107.

The reason I mention the history course in a volume dedicated to mythology is that the latter is hardly taught in Greece as a subject *per se*. Yet it is far from absent in the twelve years of primary and secondary education. Mythology is often integrated into courses on Ancient Greece, and especially in the many courses offered on Ancient Greek literature, whether in translation or, in later years, in the original. It is almost impossible to read Homeric poetry without becoming familiar with the myths that form the basis of the *epos*. Nor may a Greek tragedy be fully appreciated without some serious discussion about the dramatized myth.

There is one notable exception in this picture of the absence of mythology that I have just painted, and on which this chapter shall focus: the history programme of Grade 3 primary school (Γ' Δημοτικού; Triti Dimotikou). As far as I was able to trace the earlier Grade 3 history textbooks online, thanks to the digital collection of the Institute of Educational Policy (Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής; Institutouto Ekpaideftikis Politikis – formerly Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο; Paidagogiko Institutouto), which includes downloadable PDFs of more than 6,000 school textbooks going back to the nineteenth century,⁷ Grade 3 has traditionally been the year that students in the educational system of the Modern Greek state are first introduced to Ancient Greek mythology.⁸ Most twentieth-century textbooks are written in a style that draws on the tradition of ancient mythographical handbooks, such as the *Bibliotheca* attributed to Apollodorus, rather than being based on primary sources in translation – probably an apt choice for this age group.⁹ With minor variations, these textbooks on mythology usually open with an introductory chapter on Greek gods, move on to the heroic myths

⁷ Institute of Educational Policy, IEP Book Collection, <http://e-library.iep.edu.gr/iep/index.html> (accessed 1 July 2018).

⁸ For some earlier textbooks, see, among others, Geor. Myrias and And. Papadakis, *Μυθικά Χρόνια. Για την Τρίτη Τάξη του Δημοτικού Σχολείου* [Mythika Chronia. Gia tin Triti Taxi tou Dimotikou Scholeiou; Mythical Years: For Grade 3 of Primary School], Athina: Kentavros, 1966; Eythymios N. Anagnostopoulos, *Ιστορία: Μυθικά Χρόνια. Για την Γ' Τάξη του Δημοτικού Σχολείου* [Istoria: Mythika Chronia. Gia tin Triti Taxi tou Dimotikou Scholeiou; History: Mythical Years. For Grade 3 of Primary School], Athina: Pechlivanidis, 1974; Vasiliki Lymberopoulou-Tzortzakaki, *Ιστορία Γ' Τάξεως Δημοτικού* [Istoria Tritis Taxeos Dimotikou; Grade 3 Primary School History], Athina: Organismos Ekdoseos Didaktikon Vivlion, 1977.

⁹ On such a handbook based on primary sources (for adults, especially university students), see, e.g., Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, and Stephen Brunet, eds., *Anthology of Classical Myth: Primary Sources in Translation*, 2nd ed., Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016 (ed. pr. 2004).

of Hercules, Theseus, and the Argonautic Expedition, before turning to the Trojan War and the wanderings of Odysseus.¹⁰

There is of course much that can be said about the choice to teach mythology under the heading of a history course, most notably the assumption about the heroic and the historical past being part of one continuum. This is evocative of the Ancient Greek perspective according to which much of what modern scholars would put under the heading of mythology, including the Trojan War, was understood to fall under the much broader field of history.¹¹ In Modern Greece's educational system, the passage from myth to history used to occur for many years at the transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4, with the students being introduced to the early civilizations of Greece in Grade 4, after having spent a year learning mythology.¹² For example, when I attended primary school in Greece in the mid-1980s, the whole textbook of Grade 3 was dedicated to Ancient Greek mythology, despite its somewhat incongruous title – *Ιστορία* [Istoria; History].¹³

¹⁰ I have chosen to use the more familiar Latinized forms of names from Ancient Greek mythology.

¹¹ For famous examples, see the opening of Herodotus' *Histories*, 1.1–5, or Thucydides 1.1–19 ("Archaeology"). What is perhaps more problematic, but goes beyond this chapter's scope, is that the first chapter of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos's influential history is also dedicated to mythology ("Μύθοι. Ερμηνείαι. Ιστορική του Έθνους καταγωγή" [Mythoi. Erminiai. Istoriki tou Ethnous katagogi; Myths, Interpretations, Historical Origin of the Nation]), in his *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* [Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous; History of the Hellenic Nation], 6th ed., corrected and augmented by Paulos Karolidis, vol. 1, part 1, Athina: Eleutheroudakis, 1932 (ed. pr. 1860–1876), 1–61.

¹² These earlier textbooks, however, were eager to pass quickly from prehistory and early history to the end of the Dark Ages and the archaic period in Greece. For instance, in Georgia Kamaterou-Glitsi, *Αρχαία Ελλάδα. Ιστορία Δ' Δημοτικού* [Archaia Ellada. Istoria Tetartis Dimotikou; Ancient Greece: Fourth-Grade History], Athina: Organismos Ekdoseos Didaktikon Vivlion, 1974, the textbook opens with a chapter on "Για τα προϊστορικά χρόνια" [11–16; Gia ta proistorika chronia; Prehistoric Times], only to move on in the next chapter to the "Κρήτες: οι πρώτοι ναυτικοί" [17–22; Krites: oi protoi naftikoi; Cretans: The First Sailors]. In the body of the text, this civilization is eventually named Minoan (18), and is considered a "Mediterranean tribe", which immigrated from Asia Minor (17). In the following chapter, "Η αρχή της ιστορίας μας" [23–32; I archi tis istorias mas; The Beginning of Our History], the terms Achaean, Mycenaean, and Homeric appear to be quite vague, with no clear demarcation of where myth ends and history begins. The Achaeans are called the "first Greeks", they are mentioned as an Indo-European tribe which spoke Greek (24), but only after mentioning the archaeological discoveries of Heinrich Schliemann (26) is this civilization also called "Mycenaean". And while on p. 14 there is something of a clue about the beginning of "history" during this period – understood as coinciding with the discovery of writing – there is no reference to the excavation of the Linear B tablets and their sensational decipherment as a script representing an early form of Greek about twenty years before the textbook's first publication.

¹³ Kostas Kalapanidas, *Ιστορία* [Istoria; History], Athina: Organismos Ekdoseos Didaktikon Vivlion, 1979.

However, this is not the situation in the most recent book currently in use in Grade 3 in Greece, *Ιστορία Γ' Δημοτικού. Από τη Μυθολογία στην Ιστορία* [Istoria Tritis Dimotikou. Apo ti Mythologia stin Istoria; Grade 3 History: From Mythology to History].¹⁴ This specific history course includes a student's textbook, an exercise book, and a teacher's book. I wish to discuss the choice to pass within the *same* school year and the *same* textbook from mythology to prehistory and the so-called protohistory of the Cycladic, Minoan, and Mycenaean civilizations of early Greece. "From Mythology to History" is after all the textbook's subtitle. This choice follows the guidelines of the national curriculum (Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών; Analytiko Programma Spoudon) developed by the Pedagogical Institute (Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο; Paidagogiko Institutouto).¹⁵ It should also be mentioned that the current Grade 4 textbook opens with geometric Greece before moving on to the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods.¹⁶

In what follows, I present in brief this Grade 3 textbook and its treatment of myth. I argue that the presentation of the material may give rise to a blurring between myth and history, as well as between history and prehistory. What is more, Homeric poetry does not receive the special attention it deserves. I conclude with some thoughts about the problematic status of Mycenaean civilization in the grand narrative of Hellenism and Modern Greek national self-definition. Are the Mycenaeans also part of the cultural

¹⁴ Stratis Maistrellis, Eleni Kalyvi, and Marina Michail, *Ιστορία Γ' Δημοτικού. Από τη Μυθολογία στην Ιστορία* [Istoria Tritis Dimotikou. Apo ti Mythologia stin Istoria; Grade 3 History: From Mythology to History], Athina: Organismos Ekdoseos Didaktikon Vivlion, 2015, available online as "Ιστορία Γ' Δημοτικού" [Istoria Tritis Dimotikou; Grade 3 History], Διαδραστικά Σχολικά Βιβλία [Diadrastika Scholika Vivlia; Interactive School Books], <http://ebooks.edu.gr/new/course-main.php?course=DSDIM-C103> (accessed 1 July 2018). Today, all Greek school textbooks are available online at Διαδραστικά Σχολικά Βιβλία [Diadrastika Scholika Vivlia; Interactive School Books], www.ebooks.edu.gr (accessed 1 July 2018).

¹⁵ For the 2003 curriculum (Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών; Analytiko Progamma Spoudon), see "Διαθεματικό Ενιαίο Πλαίσιο Προγραμμάτων Σπουδών (ΔΕΠΠΣ)" [Diathematiko Eniaio Plaisio Programmaton Spoudon (DEPPS); Unified Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework], Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο [Paidagogiko Institutouto; Pedagogical Institute], <http://www.pi-schools.gr/programs/depps/> (accessed 29 July 2018). A new curriculum was announced at the end of 2018 (for Grade 3 history, see "Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών Ιστορίας Γ' Δημοτικού" [Programma Spoudon Istorias Tritis Dimotikou; Grade 3 History Curriculum], Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής [Institutouto Ekpaideftikis Politikis; Institute of Educational Policy], http://iep.edu.gr/images/IEP/EPISTIMONIKI_YPIRESIA/Epist_Monades/B_Kykos/Humanities/2018/2018-11-02_c_dim.pdf [accessed 29 July 2018]), but so far no new textbooks have been produced.

¹⁶ "Ιστορία Δ' Δημοτικού" [Istoria Tetartis Dimotikou; Grade 4 History], Διαδραστικά Σχολικά Βιβλία [Diadrastika Scholika Vivlia; Interactive School Books], <http://ebooks.edu.gr/new/books-pdf.php?course=DSDIM-D103> (accessed 23 July 2018).

construct of *οι αρχαίοι ημών πρόγονοι* (*oi archaioi imon progonoι*; our ancestors), at least as it is reflected in this textbook?

Before I proceed, however, I need to disclose that I approach this topic from the standpoint of a classicist whose main research interest is Ancient Greek myth. I will, therefore, refrain from examining the pedagogical aspects of the textbook or delving deeply into the vast issue of Modern Greek national identity and its reflection in the educational system.¹⁷ Moreover, because I was born, raised, and educated in Greece, but have not lived there permanently since my early twenties, I sense that I am in a good position to analyse the textbook's authoritative version of myth and the past: close enough to be familiar with the culture and the power politics involved in education but, hopefully, sufficiently detached to identify certain idiosyncratic Modern Greek perspectives about mythology, Homer, and early Greece. Yiannis Hamilakis also discusses the possible positive effects of such "distancing" in conducting work on the reception of the classical world (in his case, archaeology) in Modern Greece.¹⁸

The textbook is divided into two large parts entitled "Μυθολογία" [Mythologia; Mythology] and "Προ-ιστορία" [Pro-istoria; Pre-History]. The first part takes up approximately two-thirds of the book; it contains six large units, each divided into several shorter chapters: the first is on "Η δημιουργία του κόσμου" [I dimiourgia tou kosmou; The Creation of the World] – with the title echoing the Judeo-Christian tradition – and deals with the Titanomachy, the Olympian gods and goddesses, Prometheus, Pandora, Deucalion and Pyrrha. Units 2 to 4 are about Hercules, Theseus, and the Argonautic Expedition. The last two units are dedicated to the Trojan War and the adventures of Odysseus. All in all, the choice of stories and their order follow the tradition of earlier Grade 3 textbooks. The second part on prehistory is divided into four units and fills about one-third of the book. The Stone Age is presented in the first unit, while the following units share the title "Η εποχή του χαλκού στην Ελλάδα" [I epochi tou chalkou stin Ellada; The Bronze Age in Greece], with units on the Cycladic, Minoan, and, finally, Mycenaean civilization.

¹⁷ On this aspect, see Savvas K. Gousteris, *Η διδασκαλία της Ιστορίας στο δημοτικό σχολείο. Μια εμπειρική προσέγγιση από την πλευρά των εκπαιδευτικών της πρωτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης* [I didaskalia tis Istorias sto dimotiko scholeio. Mia empeiriki prosengissi apo tin plevra ton ekpaideftikon tis protovathmias ekpaidefsis; The Teaching of History in Elementary School: An Empirical Approach from the Perspective of Elementary School Teachers], Athina: Kyriakidis, 1998.

¹⁸ Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins*, ix.

The textbook is printed in colour and includes numerous illustrations of ancient and modern artefacts related to the topics discussed. In addition, it includes a rich collection of boxed material, with sources and quotations containing further information. While this material is welcome and is meant to expand the main text and enrich the learning process, it seems that adding sources from different periods and media is bound to result in some historical blurring instead. This blurring may sometimes be a direct outcome of a lack of precise information. In other cases, a more general blurring of the different periods of Hellenism's long history is apparent. Often enough, the students cannot get a full grasp of the chronological and cultural range of the illustrations, since the captions are not informative enough and as such do not help develop their sense of (historical) time: they do not provide, when available, information on the name of the artist, year, or period of production, or the museum in which the item is currently located. This is a pity, since such information could perhaps allow for an initial awareness of the varying and rich receptions of Ancient Greek myth in subsequent periods and cultures.

A single but telling example is the case of Atlas. In the unit on the Titanomachy at the beginning of the book, Atlas is shown on an archaic black-figure vase. This is placed side by side with a second-century CE Roman sculpture of the Titan. The captions that accompany the photos are "Ο Άτλαντας σε αρχαίο ελληνικό αγγείο" (Atlas on an Ancient Greek vase) and "Ο Άτλαντας σε γλυπτό νεότερης εποχής" (Atlas as a sculpture of a newer era). These captions fail to mention that the two works of art are about 800 years apart and that the sculpture, commonly referred to as the Farnese Atlas, is a Roman copy of a Hellenistic sculpture now located at the Archaeological Museum in Naples.¹⁹ One may think that this might be considered redundant information for Grade 3 students, and indeed perhaps it is. However, I still think that some of this information could have made its way to the captions, or at least to a list of figures at the end of the book. This point is made stronger once we compare the textbook to a popular sticker book about Greek myths, originally published in English and translated also

¹⁹ Additional information that goes unmentioned includes reference to the fact that Atlas features next to his brother Prometheus, and that both are shown as suffering Zeus' punishment. Also unmentioned is the Laconian provenance of the vase, or the fact that it is now at the Vatican (Gregorian Etruscan Museum). Oddly enough, the vase reappears a few pages down (19), in the story of Prometheus, with both Titans represented this time, and the caption reading "Το μαρτύριο του Προμηθέα. Από αρχαίο ελληνικό αγγείο" (The suffering of Prometheus. From an Ancient Greek vase).

into Greek.²⁰ In the sticker book, intended for an age range that roughly includes Grade 3,²¹ the two pages about the Titans include, among others, stickers with the vase and the sculpture reproduced in the textbook. Strangely enough, however, the captions of the recreational sticker book are more informative than those of the school textbook.

Lack of information is also evident in the boxed material. While some material is no doubt effective, one cannot fail to notice that, in general, it seems to lack the extra information that could help students contextualize or even assess the nature of these additional sources. One example that showcases this lack of information appears in the introductory chapter on Cycladic civilization. The boxed material (107)²² quotes the opening lines of the song “Κυκλαδίτικο” [Kykkladitiko; Cycladic] by Nikos Gatzos, with music by Manos Hadjidakis.²³ The quotation is set against the background of a map naming many of the Cycladic islands and the song could, theoretically at least, help the students familiarize themselves with the names of some of these islands. However, the title of the song is not mentioned, so students cannot look it up if they want to;²⁴ nor does the map name all the islands mentioned in the song. What is apparently more debatable in this combination of song and map is the assumption about continuity between the ancient past and the present, which might ultimately damage the student’s understanding of historical continuities and discontinuities. The Cycladic islands of the song are not quite the same thing as the Cycladic civilization that flourished there about 3,000 years ago – and by this I do not mean geography. This combination seems to overlook cultural differences, in favour of a historical and

²⁰ Rosie Dickins and Galia Bernstein, *Ελληνικοί Μύθοι: Βιβλίο με Αυτοκόλλητα* [Ellinikoi Mythoi: Vivlio me Aftokollita; Greek Myths: Sticker Book], trans. Katerina Servi, Athina: Patakis, 2013 (ed. pr. in English: *The Usborne Greek Myths Sticker Book*).

²¹ The English edition of the sticker book is marketed to children aged between seven and nine, while the Greek edition notes that it is suitable for ages six and over.

²² Page numbers from the textbook are given in parentheses throughout this chapter.

²³ Maira Eua, “Κυκλαδίτικο – Μανώλης Μητσιάς” [Kykkladitiko – Manolis Mitsias; Of the Cyclades: Manolis Mitsias], YouTube, 8 August 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MOpU-VU8LX0&feature=emb_logo (accessed 3 June 2020).

²⁴ The teacher’s book provides some information about the song, but is less precise on how to handle the juxtaposition (85): “Οι μαθητές ακούν από το μαγνητόφωνο το τραγούδι του Μ. Χατζιδάκι ‘Κυκλαδίτικο’ σε στίχους Ν. Γκάτσου από το δίσκο ‘Της γης το χρυσάφι’, όπου αναφέρονται πολλά νησιά των Κυκλάδων και καλούνται να τα εντοπίσουν στον αναρτημένο χάρτη” (The pupils hear from the tape recorder the song by M. Hadjidakis “Cycladic” with lyrics by N. Gatsos from the album *The Land’s Gold*, where many islands of the Cyclades are mentioned, and are invited to locate them on the displayed map).

geographical continuum that embraces all activity that took place on these islands. This perspective both assumes and perpetuates an ethnocentric view of Hellenism, which, as many other contributions have noted, is quite prevalent in the great majority of history textbooks in Greece.²⁵ Yet, oddly enough, it embraces here a culture that, as far as we know, is not "Greek", at least in comparison to the Greek-speaking Mycenaeans of later periods.²⁶

Moving from illustrations and boxed material to content, I would like to examine here two blatant, as I see them, instances of blurring: first, a blurring between myth and history, and then between history and prehistory. I deliberately choose the term blurring, instead of more neutral terms, such as fusion or conglomeration. The latter are used by Anna Simandiraki to describe a similar phenomenon in the presentation of fact and myth in the teaching of Minoan civilization, based on the previous school textbook.²⁷ By using the term blurring, I wish to highlight the obscure outcome, especially for the students, rather than comment on the intended blending together of dissimilar things.

The boxed material that introduces the unit on the Trojan War sets the stage early on, with its tendency to turn mythology into early history:

*Πριν από πολλά χρόνια, οι Αχαιοί που κατοικούσαν τότε στην Ελλάδα ενώθηκαν και με τα πλοία και τον στρατό τους πήγαν να κυριεύσουν την Τροία. Έτσι, άρχισε ο Τρωικός πόλεμος, που κράτησε **δέκα χρόνια**. Ήταν ο μεγαλύτερος πόλεμος της αρχαιότητας κι οδήγησε στον θάνατο αμέτρητους Τρώες κι Αχαιούς. (57)*

*Many years ago, **the Achaeans**, who then lived in Greece, united and went to occupy Troy with their ships and army. Thus began the Trojan War, which lasted **ten years**. It was the *biggest war of antiquity* and led to the death of countless Trojans and Achaeans.²⁸*

²⁵ See Avdela, "The Teaching of History in Greece"; Frangoudaki, "Apogonoi' Ellinon"; and Yannis Hamilakis, "'Learn History!' Antiquity, National Narrative, and History in Greek Educational Textbooks", in Keith S. Brown and Yannis Hamilakis, eds., *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories*, New York, NY and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003, 39–67.

²⁶ On a comparable "Hellenization" of the Minoans, see Anna Simandiraki, "The 'Minoan' Experience of Schoolchildren in Crete", in Yannis Hamilakis and Nicoletta Momigliano, eds., *Archaeology and European Modernity: Producing and Consuming the "Minoans"*, Padua: Bottega d'Erasmus, 2006, 257–274.

²⁷ Anna Simandiraki, "Μινωπαιδιές: The Minoan Civilization in Greek Primary Education", *World Archaeology* 36 (2004), 177–188 (esp. 178, 184–185).

²⁸ Translations from Modern Greek are my own. I have retained the spelling of the original and have used the monotonic system throughout. In all quoted passages, emphasis in bold comes from the original, while emphasis in italics is my own.

The Trojan War is introduced as a historical fact, which took place many years ago and constituted the greatest war of antiquity. The “Achaean warriors” depicted at the bottom of the same page (a detail from the so-called Warrior Vase from Mycenae, now in Athens)²⁹ are supposed to serve as visual proof of this fact.³⁰ Likewise, the following chapter on the beauty contest between the three Olympian goddesses opens thus: “Πριν από πολλά χρόνια, στην αρχαία εποχή, τότε που στον Όλυμπο κατοικούσαν οι δώδεκα θεοί, ο Δίας αποφάσισε [...]” (58; Many years ago, in ancient times, when the twelve Olympians lived at Olympus, Zeus decided [...]). While these are clearly attempts to present the mythological narrative in a vivid manner, they also hinder the historical thinking that this course purports to convey to its young students. In attempting to help them perceive that “to a certain degree, there lies historical truth behind the myths”, as proclaimed in the introduction to the teacher’s book, the textbook often ends up presenting myth as an event of very early history. The transition “from myth to history” is not, as declared, “smooth” in any way.³¹

²⁹ National Archaeological Museum 1426; see “Collection of Mycenaean Antiquities”, National Archaeological Museum, <https://www.namuseum.gr/en/collection/sylogi-mykinaikon-archaiotiton> (accessed 3 June 2020).

³⁰ A photograph of the same vase appears again a few pages down, in the chapter narrating the sacrifice of Iphigenia before the Greeks sailed to Troy (61).

³¹ See the introduction to the teacher’s book, in Stratis Maistrellis, Eleni Kalyvi, and Marina Michail, *Ιστορία Γ’ Δημοτικού. Από τη Μυθολογία στην Ιστορία. Βιβλίο Δασκάλου* [Istoria Tritis Dimotikou. Apo ti Mythologia stin Istoria. Vivlio Daskalou; Grade 3 History: From Mythology to History. Teacher’s Book], Athina: Organismos Ekdoseos Didaktikon Vivlion, n.d., 5: “Με βάση το νέο Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών αλλά και τις επικρατέστερες ψυχοπαιδαγωγικές και διδακτικές απόψεις, με τη διδασκαλία του μαθήματος της Ιστορίας στην Γ’ τάξη επιδιώκεται, μεταξύ των άλλων, τα παιδιά στην αρχή να έρθουν σε επαφή με τους σημαντικότερους ελληνικούς μύθους και ειδικότερα με αυτούς που έχουν παγκόσμια απήχηση, για να χαρούν, όπως τονίζει σε σχετική μελέτη του ο Ι. Θ. Κακριδής, ‘την ομορφιά των αρχαίων μύθων απλά και απροβλημάτιστα, όπως χαίρονται ένα παραμύθι’, και να αντιληφθούν σε ένα βαθμό ότι πίσω από τους μύθους κρύβεται ιστορική αλήθεια, ώστε να γίνει ομαλά η μετάβαση από το μύθο στην ιστορία, όπως άλλωστε υποδηλώνεται και από τον τίτλο του βιβλίου” (Based on the new curriculum and the prevailing psycho-educational and didactic views, the teaching of Grade 3 History aims, among other things, for the children to first come into contact with the most important Greek myths and especially those that have a global impact, so that they may enjoy, as I.Th. Kakridis highlights in a relevant study, “the beauty of ancient myths simply and smoothly, in the same way that they enjoy a fairy tale” and to realize to a certain degree that there lies historical truth behind the myths, so that the transition from *myth* to *history*, as indicated in the title of the book, will be smooth). The book is available at Διαδραστικά Σχολικά Βιβλία [Diadrastika Scholika Vivlia; Interactive School Books], http://ebooks.edu.gr/modules/document/file.php/DSDIM-C103/%CE%94%CE%B9%CE%B4%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%B9%CE%B2%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%BF%20%CE%94%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%BA%CE%AC%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%85/10-0058_Istoria_C-Dim_BK.pdf (accessed 22 June 2020).