Drawing Conclusions: Greek Antiquity, The Economic Crisis, and Political Cartoons

Lauren E. Talalay

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Abstract

The recent economic crisis in Greece has generated endless debate, heated discussions, protests, and an outpouring of articles, blogs, and op-ed pieces in newspapers. Just as powerful, but less noted, are a spate of political cartoons that comment on the current turmoil from a satiric perspective. Examples published in the Western media often feature well-known icons, deities, and heroes from Greek antiquity cleverly resituated into the unsettled state of contemporary politics. For the most part, this visual discourse suggests that modern Greece has not only been fiscally irresponsible but has disgraced its patrimony. Viewed as squandering the precious symbolic capital of their past, modern Greeks are cast as wayward descendants of a vaunted ancestry. Attempts to decipher these images raise questions about the deceptively simple nature of the genre as well as embedded ideas about Western Hellenism and Modern Greek identity.

“I don’t care so much what the papers say about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see pictures!”
—Alleged comment from Boss Tweed of Tammany after viewing one of Thomas Nast’s political cartoons (1891) that pilloried the New York politician (quoted in Fischer 1996:2)

Introduction

In his introduction to The Noble Art of Politics, the award-winning and controversial political cartoonist Martyn Turner offers several comments about the nature of his trade. For Turner, political cartoons are a visual form of satire that feeds on turmoil, with the cartoonist attempting to “reverse the function of the tragedian, . . . [trying] to extract something from the misery . . . that
will keep the audience smiling—if not actual laughter, then at least a grunt of agreement or a laugh of desperation” (Turner 1996:i). Other practitioners of the so-called art of ill will would surely agree that clever juxtaposing of misery, humor, irony, exaggeration, and reality form the essence of memorable political cartoons. These features are, however, only part of the complex puzzle and multimodal language of these graphic satires, which have increasingly become the focus of scholarly discussion in recent years (see El Refaie 2009 for a good summary of the issues).

The success of these seemingly simple images also relies on well-defined national identities and memory, readily recognized referents, and preexisting stereotypes. Culture is writ large in these reductive tableaux, and embedded in every effective political cartoon are metanarratives, contingent on a code of highly accessible symbols and associations (Carlson 2008:12–13) as well as ideas and images perpetuated in the “mother lodes of popular culture” (Fischer 1996:xiii).

Given these parameters, the recent economic crisis in Greece would seem to provide a perfect storm for political cartoonists, not least because of the magnitude of the situation; the well-known roster of images linked to Greek identity, antiquity, and ancient mythology; and ongoing allegations (especially in the Western press) of the country’s corruption, fractiousness, and ineptitude. Ancient Greek referents, in particular, provide a well-stocked arsenal for satirists (for a discussion of antiquity in Greek political cartoons, see Hamilakis 2000). While Greece’s modern history may be poorly known by those outside its current political borders, its ancient narratives and imagery have long served as cornerstones of Western education. Depictions of the Parthenon, Herakles, Aphrodite, Zeus, and the Trojan Horse, for example, are immediately recognized by consumers across the world. Even if the viewing public is unaware of the complex stories behind these icons, the general reader likely perceives these images as quintessentially Greek, and probably possesses a superficial understanding of the relevant myths, as well as the heroes who populate those tales.

Not surprisingly, European and American political cartoonists rank Greece very high among nations providing an inventory of familiar visual metaphors. A recent email to me from the British political cartoonist Patrick Blower is instructive as he enumerates those countries that cartoonists tend to enlist in their satires: “USA top of the list . . . Scotland punches well above its weight; France, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, etc. are an embarrassment of riches. Unanimous agreement, though, that Greece is a veritable feast. Thank God for Homer and our civilisation’s collective reliance on the Classics.” (Patrick Blower, pers. comm., 2 March 2012).

Political cartoons, however, do more than just feed from the “veritable feast” of Greek stereotypes and Classical clichés. These visual satires also intersect with the complex discourse of Western Hellenism. To explore that
relationship, this article analyzes a number of cartoons on the Greek financial crisis. The examples discussed here have several parameters: they are confined to images published between 2010 and 2012; they reflect an “outsider’s” viewpoint of the crisis, not the Greek, self-reflective perspective; and they focus on Classical citations. In the case of the current financial crisis, Greece’s conversations with itself and the array of political cartoons that have appeared in the Greek press are, for the most part, different than those published in the Western media.2

By and large, Western cartoons that have drawn from the store of Classical images have skewered Greece. As discussed below, one of the principal visual discourses mediating and structuring the Western press’s view of Greek identity hinges on moving effortlessly through the permeable boundaries of past and present and resituating the cast of ancient heroes and iconic buildings into the unsettled state of contemporary politics. While a very small percentage of these cartoons are sympathetic to the current plight of the Greek rank and file, most are not. In fact, the market-rattling events of recent years are usually recontextualized in such a way to remind consumers of these cartoons that modern Greeks are indeed different from their Classical ancestors (Yalouri 2001:187). In framing the country’s economic troubles through the lens of the ancient world, political cartoonists in the Western press tend to portray the country as fracturing its once proud heritage.

Methodology and sources

Before moving to a presentation and discussion of the cartoons, it is important to briefly delineate the methodology employed in this paper, sources consulted, and justification for the temporal parameters.

Although the images cited here, as well as the overall sample reviewed by the author (consisting of several hundred cartoons) were not statistically derived, they come from a fairly broad range of mostly North American and European newspapers.3 Cagle Cartoons Inc.,4 an online syndicate of political cartoons and commentaries that is updated daily, served as the primary source. Started in 2001 by the American cartoonist Daryl Cagle, it features approximately 150 cartoonists, whose home bases vary and whose work is syndicated worldwide. The site functions as a distributor of political cartoons and commentaries to more than 850 subscribing newspapers across the globe. Individuals can also access the site for free. Subscribing newspapers receive daily packages of cartoons and can choose to publish any image either in hard copy, digitally, or both. In addition to Cagle Cartoons Inc., general internet searches were conducted entering relevant keywords, such as “Greece economic crisis + cartoons,” “political cartoons + Greek mythology,” and “archaeology + cartoons.” Finally, specific newspapers such as The Guardian and The Independent
in the UK and The Washington Post in the United States, all of which feature daily cartoons, were periodically, though not systematically, surveyed (again via the internet).\(^5\)

Unfortunately, it was not possible to identify or categorize the viewing readership of the cartoons discussed below. What can be suggested, however, is that hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people likely saw and reacted to these images, given the distribution numbers from Cagle Cartoons Inc., and circulation numbers from other newspapers consulted. Unlike traditional newsprint media, where distribution is tracked, political leanings are known, and the nature of the consumers are often analyzed, the digital age of cartoon dissemination provides greater challenges for data analysis. The cartoon culture is now part of a complex environment of syndication: political cartoons are accessed on the web by millions of trollers, shared via social media, and often decontextualized from associations with particular papers. That said, the types of images discussed here provide a good idea of the kinds of satires European and North American cartoonists were creating between 2010 and 2012 that reached a large segment of the public.

The examples presented in this paper range from January 2010 through May 2012. Early 2010 roughly marks the beginning of daily discussions in international newspapers of Greece’s unsustainable fiscal debt (although the country had been downgraded by rating agencies the previous year). Austerity measures were announced in 2010; by May, the first rescue package had been tentatively approved. Greece continued to be a source of debate and constant press coverage throughout 2011, with an announcement in June 2011 that Eurozone ministers would require a new round of austerity measures before Greece could receive the next tranche of loan. Pundits feared a “Grexit”—the possibility that Greece might be the first country to leave the Eurozone—and editorials and articles expressed unease that other EU countries might default, “infected” by Greece and its “morally hazardous” behavior (Harrison 2012). Cartoonists and commentators attempted to tease out the causes of Europe’s looming economic crisis and to predict its trajectory: in the Western press many blamed Greece for the debacle, some suggested that incompetency should be laid at the feet of elites in the EU, and still others seized the opportunity to underscore the hazards of a “welfare state,” as Greece was often labeled (Harrison 2012:14). It was a field day for cartoonists. By early 2012, Greece’s coalition government agreed to enact further cuts; then, in the wake of angry protests by Greeks, the nation received its second bailout in March 2012. The two elections that followed in May and June 2012 were again the focus of global coverage by the foreign press. Given the constant play of the crisis in the news from January 2010 to June 2012, those dates were selected as temporal bookends, bracketing a potentially instructive series of political cartoons.\(^6\)
As might be expected, the Parthenon (or some generic version of a Classical temple)—depicted as complete or as *pars pro toto*—figures prominently in this visual discourse. One of the most famous embodiments of Greek identity, the Parthenon (or more generally the Acropolis, with its series of buildings) has been likened to the country’s national flag (Yalouri 2001:58). Satirists, however, delight in the ruined state of these ancient edifices perched on the sacred hill that now presides over the modern, smog-filled capital. The ruins offer an ideal trope for the shattered state of the Greek nation and economy. In addition to portrayals of the Acropolis (or generic Classical temples) are other ancient images and attendant ideas that effectively condense the country’s identity and heritage, all cleverly reconfigured to elicit Martyn Turner’s requisite “laugh of desperation.” These representations include a circumscribed list of images, most frequently Venus de Milo, the Discobolus, the Trojan Horse, Sisyphus, and a small selection of mythological heroes or deities such as Herakles and Zeus. Familiar exemplars of the Classical world, they are easily recognized, taught in schools, popularized in movies, advertisements, and on television, and broadcast by various social media. Indeed, these images, which constitute a major component of Greece’s symbolic capital, are now part of a global language and market of traded images in the international press. Precisely why these particular images have seeded themselves into the global imagination is far from simple, and remains a topic not covered in any detail here. Suffice it to say that the choices featured in the cartoons discussed here fit within the “imagined community” of Greek heritage and ideals constructed by Western Hellenism, with its focus on Classical hallmarks such as democracy, philosophy, freedom, certain types of beauty, and science (Friedman 1992:838). For centuries, the Parthenon has been equated with notions of democracy, order, and rationality; Venus de Milo with feminine beauty and love; and the Discobolus with heroic nudity, athleticism, symmetry, and masculine power—all concepts that helped shape the perception of Greek culture and the idealized Hellenes of the Classical world. While some of the iconic images encountered below are best known from museum collections, others are not linked to any particular ancient piece of sculpture or edifice. Herakles, Sisyphus, and Atlas, for example, seem to draw their appeal from their mythical “biographies”—personal narratives that often highlight the human condition; extraordinary punishments for violating codes of conduct; or profiles of courage, struggle, or redemption—again, topics that are useful in explicating certain ideals of Western culture.
Acropolis/Parthenon/generic Greek temples

Like other architectural structures emblematic of a country’s identity (e.g., the Statue of Liberty, Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, and the Pyramids), the Parthenon—which was, among its other roles, the city’s treasury in antiquity—is fraught with a complex history that is necessarily simplified in graphic political satire (see Yalouri 2001 for a comprehensive investigation of the Acropolis and Greek identity). During the past few years, political cartoonists focusing on the economic crisis have portrayed this quintessential monument—or some standard version of a Greek temple that might be interpreted as referencing the Parthenon—in several modes: crumbling or listing, in disrepair but shored up by restoration, or in a state of complete collapse. Within these parameters, the host of particulars selected by the artist varies, depending on the intended message. In Figure 1 (Dave Granlund, PoliticalCartoons.com, 12 April 2010; Cagle 77040), for example, a temple—prominently labeled as a stand-in for the Greek economy—is under restoration.

A sign, typical of company notices posted in front of construction projects, alerts us to the presence of the European Union (EU) as the ersatz company that is valiantly trying to restore Greece to financial stability. Although cranes struggle to hold up the roof and pediment, with workmen enlisting the help of jacks and wooden struts, the ongoing cracking of the structure and slippages in the columns are almost audible. Even with the help of the EU, restoration seems to be a losing battle (see also, Olle Johansson, Sweden, 4 November 2011; Cagle 100443, where two struts, one labeled “E,” the other “U,” strain to shore up the corner of a Greek temple before it collapses on a fleeing man whose Classical garb reads “Greece”). The situation is portrayed as even more dire in another relevant image (Paresh Nath, The Khaleej Times, UAE, 7 February 2010; Cagle 74393): there the Parthenon or the quintessential Greek temple, again identified with the Greek economy, has collapsed completely. The EU, personified as a gentleman in coat, tie, and top hat (perhaps a pointed symbol of European sophistication), looks on in despair while those trapped within the structure are wondering whether to call the IMF for help. In a series of other Parthenon-related cartoons, the columns of these temples—which have stood tall for centuries, withstanding the ravages of time and war—are replaced by individuals or groups, such as a disgruntled Angela Merkel (e.g., Christo Komarnitski, Bulgaria, 18 March 2010; Cagle 75962; Deng Coy Miel, Singapore, 20 May 2010; Cagle 78156), a weary Nicolas Sarkozy, or, as in Figure 2 (Arend van Dam, PoliticalCartoons.com, 25 March 2010; Cagle 76285), exhausted European taxpayers who strain to stand one atop the other, holding up the upper structure of the building while the Greeks revel with excesses of food and drink in the pediment.
Occasionally, the potential collapse of Greece is portrayed not by a crumbling or fallen structure, but by a temple engulfed in flames. In one such image (https://www.hellenext.org/reinventing-greece/2011/09/even-in-the-heart-of-chicago-theres-talk-of-greek-bankruptcy/) this essence of Greek identity stands in the background emitting smoke and fire while Papandreou and Merkel, who form the main focus of the foreground, desperately maneuver to save the building. Merkel balances on a three-legged stool (with the legs marked €C, IMF, and €CB respectively), energetically priming a water pump; Papandreou kneels in front of the spigot vainly attempting to catch water in a bucket, presumably to quench the fires that rage in the distance. The bucket, however, is virtually useless, filled with holes that leak the Euro insignia.

The catastrophic effect of the Greek economic crisis on global economy is effectively and simply summarized in an example by the British cartoonist Ingram Pinn, who has long served as a cartoonist for *The Financial Times*. The image (http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/f90bca10-1679-11df-bf4400144feab49a.html#axzz21TFc9bDM) depicts the rounded edge of the Earth, with three buildings positioned on the globe’s surface: a Greek temple on the right side, portrayed as the smallest edifice; Big Ben drawn slightly larger and positioned left of the temple; and across the globe on the far side (as if situated on the other
side of the Atlantic Ocean), the United States Capitol, looming large. Emanating from the Classical structure is a series of substantial cracks stretching to the other buildings, clearly threatening to topple them. Despite its relatively small size (read economy in the EU), Greece is seen as the source of global, seismic disaster capable of sending shock waves around the world. The extensive reach of Greece’s economic power appears in other images as well, sometimes with Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Ireland identified as the temple’s pillars. By integrating these countries into the very structure of the edifice, various cartoonists underscore the critical interconnection between countries in the EU and Greece’s role in the global chain of events.

Occasionally, mythological characters find their way onto the Acropolis, although they are more often portrayed in other settings (see below), without reference to the Parthenon or other buildings in the heart of the ancient city. In one example (Olle Johansson, Sweden, 11 May 2010; Cagle 78238), Sisyphus stands uphill from a Parthenon-like structure, having taken a major misstep on his way to the top of his hill of eternal toil. His boulder, labeled “Greek
Financial Crisis,” has escaped his grasp and is clearly on its way to destroy the World Financial Markets, symbolized as a temple. The hapless Sisyphus looks on in dismay with the word “OOPS . . .” escaping his lips. As in other cartoons published in the Western press, the global economic crisis is laid squarely at the feet of the Greeks.

A graphic of the whole Parthenon (or any typical Greek temple) is not a requisite for embodying Greek identity: the country can easily be portrayed synecdochally by the base or capital of one or two columns. In several cartoons, only the foot of a pillar is shown crushing the Euro. One example shows Merkel’s dress, depicted as the EU flag, caught under the bottom of a pillar preventing the Chancellor from moving forward (Olle Johansson, Sweden, 12 May 2012; Cagle 111647). In a more chilling illustration (Figure 3; Olle Johansson, Sweden, 7 May 2012; Cagle 111236), the base of two pillars stand in antis on either side of a “Welcome” mat. Black boot-prints have soiled the mat, indicating that someone has stomped into the building. Labeled “Neo-Nazis Elected in New Greek Parliament . . . ,” this cartoon is slightly different in focus than the others cited above. It does not directly reference the financial debacle, but rather asks the reader to consider the disturbing support of Chrysi Avgi (during the elections of May 2012), surely a consequence of the financial disaster, but also part of the larger picture in contemporary Greece.
Not surprisingly, these cartoons range from simple and abbreviated to more detailed and complex, demanding decipherment on the part of the viewer. One densely illustrated Parthenon-based sketch raises a number of points deserving comment (Figure 4).

Published around the time of the second bailout in June/July 2011, it shows the (then) French president Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel propping up a crumbling Greek temple. The pediment at the top of the temple portrays Greek riot police beating protesters, who have marched against the austerity measures imposed by the European Union and International Monetary Fund. Carved below the pediment is a phrase in faux Latin calling on Zeus to help the profligate Greek people. The Latin reads: “Grandios · Profligatos/Skintos [Britishism for having no money] · Austeritos · Zeus Help Us.” While the people-pillars are certainly intended to indicate the frustration of a disgruntled Sarkozy and Merkel in devising yet another bailout for the collapsing Greek economy, and the Latin to point a finger at the profligate nature of the Greeks, the pedimental portrayal is ambiguous. Is the cartoonist simply recording the demonstrations or hoping to elicit a degree of sympathy from the viewer?
A series of less detailed but equally effective examples depict a Parthenon-like edifice for sale in the manner of the QVC shopping network on television. In one instance (Kipper Williams, http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/cartoon/2010/apr/28/greek-debt-crisis-kipper), a desperate salesman has even offered to deliver the item. In some ways, these cartoons reflect the ultimate insult to the Greeks—their ineptitude has forced them to put the most precious symbol of their cultural capital on the market; the very roots of their global Hellenism are offered to the highest bidder.

After the failure of the Greeks to form a coalition government during the elections of May 2012, one cartoonist chose to depict the active dismantling of a Parthenon-like temple by Greeks in Classical garb, seemingly drawing attention to the failure of the Greeks themselves to maintain any semblance of cohesion in their country (Figure 5: Paresh Nath, The Khaleej Times, UAE, 13 May 2012; Cagle 111669).

The Greeks are portrayed carting off the pillars, one by one, while at the base of the building lies a gasping, Socratic-looking individual, crushed by a fallen pillar, desperately clutching a placard labeled “Economy.” Entitled “The Greek Tragedy,” with an additional tagline that reads “Politics to Form
Government,” this cartoon underscores the idea that Greece in 2012 was a country splintered by opposing forces and crushed by economic disaster. The meta-message seems to be that the very pillars of Greek society, which extend back to the Classical period, can no longer support the state. Competing constituencies are disassembling the country, stymieing any hope for an intact economic or political future. A more humorous example of the country’s disarray (which does not utilize ancient citations) shows a Greek in traditional dress dancing between the Eurozone and Chaos, shouting out his steps; they consist of “Right, Left, Far Right, Left, Right, Far Left” (David Fitzsimmons, *The Arizona Star*, 14 May 2012; Cagle 111708).

In sum, these Parthenon- or Classical temple-based images, which imaginatively resituate the ancient structure in a landscape invoking the Modern Greek financial crisis, are clearly an effective and obvious choice for political cartoonists. As one might expect, this classic icon of Greek antiquity constructs an immediately recognizable sense of place, space, and identity, condensing and reifying abstract notions about an entire nation and its past. Various manipulated or reconfigured, the Parthenon and/or generic temples represent the “Glory that was Greece,” evoking a tangible sense of the country’s historical values, its once vaunted social and political principles, and its authority in the ancient world. Although these buildings sometimes include people and mythical characters, their power derives principally from the structures themselves—the way they stand, list, crumble, or fall—not from individuals who “speak” to the reader.

There is, however, a selective group of Greek heroes, deities, and sculptures that verbalize their thoughts or gestures, expressing a sense of despair, irony, exasperation, or anger. It is to these cartoons that I now turn.

*Other iconic images*

As noted above, the roster of ancient non-Parthenon-like images repeatedly chosen by cartoonists in the Western press is fairly limited and no doubt reflects what cartoonists assume is most readily recognized by the viewing public. Most common are the Discobolous, Venus de Milo, Herakles, Atlas, Sisyphus, a selection of Greek deities, and the Trojan Horse. Other well-known heroes or mythological individuals such as Medusa, Icarus, Prometheus, Pandora, and the Sirens are referenced only infrequently.

*Discobolus.* Myron’s Discobolus, one of better-known sculptures of the Classical world, is a particular favorite among political cartoonists. Recognized internationally as *the* symbol of the athletic ideal, it has also long been viewed as the Greek embodiment of rhythm, harmony, and *symmetria*. The sculpture was equally famous in antiquity, with numerous copies throughout the
Roman world (the original Greek bronze is lost). In most of the cartoons, the Discobolus is fit and trim, either weighted down by or trying to deal with the country’s economic management, often symbolized by the Euro as the discus. In some examples his arm or body is cracking under the burden (e.g., Martin Sutovec, Slovakia, 14 May 2012; Cagle 111720); in others the strain of holding the Euro/discus has caused him to start toppling over (e.g., http://www.toonpool.com/cartoons/The%20financial%20ruins%20of%20Greece_79816); and in still others he has cracked into a pile of fractured parts, bemoaning that he should have let go of the Euro sooner (Rob Rogers, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 20 May 2012). The head of the athlete is occasionally replaced with, for example, that of Papandreou, who is depicted as chained to both the Euro and a disc labeled the International Monetary Fund (http://www.toonpool.com/cartoons/financial%20crisis%20of%20Greece_83385). Alternately, the head is completely missing (as if Greece has “lost its head”). The Discobolus’s reach is potentially far: in
one example by the American cartoonist Clay Bennett, the athlete is portrayed throwing the discus while various ancient sculptures, each labeled a country in the EU, cower in fear (http://www.englishblog.com/2011/11/cartoon-the-statuary-.html#.UA6oUKAQ6Ycr). Chris Madden, a UK political cartoonist, depicts the Discobolus intact but dropping the Euro/discus into a garbage can, with the falling Euro cracking the plinth on which the statue stands (http://chrismaddencartoons.wordpress.com/?s=discus+thrower). The artist suggests on his website that this cartoon is about the possibility of Greece leaving the EU, trashing the Euro, and returning to the earlier Greek drachma as its currency.

A series of other Discobolus-type cartoons present a different view of the Olympic contender (e.g., Figure 6). He is portrayed as bloated, fat, and out of shape (e.g., Martin Sutovec, Slovakia, 16 May 2010; Cagle 74789; Frederick Deligne, Nice-Matin, France, 3 February 2010; Cagle 74203), suggesting that Greece, as a nation, is no longer fit to run its economy. It has become indolent and profligate, feeding off the state’s dole.

Venus de Milo. Equally popular among political cartoonists focusing on the Greek crisis is the larger than life Venus de Milo, which is as famous as, if not more renowned than the Discobolus. A Greek peasant discovered the statue in 1820 and it was brought by the French during Ottoman rule. It is now housed in the Louvre where it is viewed by millions of visitors every year.

The missing arms on this symbol of divine beauty offer an ideal vehicle for cartoonists: how might they be effectively positioned in a more modern setting; who might possess them now; could their discovery and return be used to broker a deal with Greece? Indeed, in many of the cartoons the goddess’s lost arms become the focus of the message. In one example (Dave Granlund, PoliticalCartoons.com, 28 April 2010; Cagle 77715), the International Monetary Fund and European Union (personified as common laborers in overalls) are gluing on her arms in order to make the goddess whole (read the economic body of the country). Other cartoons seem to portray bailout negotiations, with either Germany or a museum curator holding the arms hostage, sometimes guarding them in a locked museum case or simply holding the limbs in a threatening manner, until the goddess agrees to a bailout package on the terms proposed by the Troika. In yet another depiction (Andrew Dyson; http://images.theage.com.au/2011/09/29/2657193/dysonthurs-620x0.jpg), a German Valkyrie stands in front of the statue, grasping the statue’s severed arms in one hand. Gesturing with the other hand, she demands of the angry goddess, “The legs too, please.” The most controversial use of the statue, however, was not technically a cartoon, but “graced” the cover of the German weekly magazine Focus on 22 February 2010 (Figure 7).

The doctored photo, which caused considerable outrage amongst Greeks and spawned a defamation trial against the magazine’s publishers, shows the
famous statue raising her middle finger to Europe, accompanied by the words, “Betrüger in der Euro-Familie” (“Cheaters in the Euro-Family”). Even if one can’t read the German, the meaning is inescapable.

Deities, superheroes, and mythology. Despite a wealth of popular and well-known Greek mythological characters and superheroes, only a few tend to surface repeatedly in European and American political satires; Herakles,
Zeus, and portrayals of the general cohort on Mount Olympus appear most frequently.

Herakles is often shown confronting his “13th” and most impossible labor. In one cartoon (Pat Bagley, Salt Lake Tribune, 15 May 2012; Cagle 111808), a series of small, filmstrip-like representations portray six of Herakles’s labors, including the hero slaying the Nemean lion, eradicating the Stymphalian birds, and cleaning the Augean stables. In the last frame of the strip, however, Herakles is fleeing from a crowd, hands above his head in a protective manner, chased by a horde of Europeans, who assault him with rocks and bottles. This last labor is labeled “Solve the Greek Crisis,” clearly one of the hero’s less successful ventures. In a comparable cartoon (John Trever, Albuquerque Journal, 6 May 2010; Cagle 78084), an angry and perspiring Herakles stands in front of the Augean stables, pitchfork in hand. He faces an ancient Greek magistrate who reads from a scroll. The bubble above the official’s head reads, “Oh, Hercules, I forgot. There’s a 13th labor—clean up the Greek government books.” The exasperated hero responds, “That does it! I QUIT!”

The denizens of Mount Olympus materialize in a number of cartoons, either as a group or singly. Zeus, the most revered of the gods, is frequently (and pitifully) depicted as a homeless individual, dressed in rags, with an imploring, outstretched hand above his dish of coins. Other cartoons show members of the Troika in Olympian garb, as if they have taken over the rule of Greece. The pairing of a personified Germany with Greek gods is, however, a more popular trope. In one example labeled “The Greek God of Austerity” (Mackay cartoons, 3 November 2011: http://www.toonpool.com/cartoons/The%20Greek%20God%20of%20Austerity_148973), six of the better known deities, in typical attire and with easily recognizable attributes, sit on a cloud above the Acropolis, looking shocked and upset. Facing them, in another cloud emanating lightning bolts, rests a well-groomed, suited gentleman. His speech bubble reads: “I am Reinhard, God of Austerity. Guten Tag!” Another example (Chris Riddell, The Observer, 13 February 2010) portrays a dejected and disconsolate Zeus, seated on Mount Olympus and eating from a simple bowl. Lording over him is a large, fierce Valkyrie type, with spear, horns, and an EU shield. Scolding the miserable deity, she announces, “No more Ambrosia. From now on it’s sauerkraut . . .” Hardly appetizing cuisine for the likes of Zeus. The meeting of Greek deities and German characters is, of course, not surprising, in light of the current economic crisis. What is particularly noteworthy, though, is the pleasure cartoonists take in accentuating the contrasting stereotypes of these two countries: an orderly, controlled, and minatory Germany chastising the excesses of a once glorious Greece.

Given their popular appeal in the West, both Atlas and Sisyphus are obvious choices. Atlas is usually portrayed slumping under the Greek debt (often portrayed as a globe) or complaining that holding up the world was an easier
task than solving the Greek financial mess (e.g., Brian Adcock, Scotland, 18 June 2012; Cagle 113654; Tom Janssen, the Netherlands, 3 November 2011; Cagle 100361). The equally iconic Sisyphus is inevitably pictured rolling his boulder up a steep hill. The rock is often labeled with just one word, namely “Greece” (Cameron Cardow, The Ottawa Citizen, 14 May 2012; Cagle 111760), or transformed into a colossal Euro (Martin Sutovec, Slovakia, 23 June 2011; Cagle 94624).

One might expect to find Medusa in this survey, based on her fame elsewhere in popular culture (especially as a universal icon at hair salons around the world). She seems, however, to be summoned only occasionally in these cartoons. The same can be said of Pandora and her “box.” A search uncovered only a small handful of these well-known mythological individuals. In one cartoon (Gary Varvel, The Indianapolis Star, 2010) Medusa is depicted as strangling on her hair-snakes of debt, high spending, and protests, and cast as a welfare state. One Pandora example (Christo Komarnitski, Bulgaria, 7 May 2012; Cagle 111243), labeled “Merkel’s Box,” shows the unhappy Chancellor kneeling in front of a Greek box that she has just opened. Her curiosity has released a black cloud of evil-headed individuals with skinny arms and grabbing hands, seemingly a reference to the imploring hands of the Greeks for bailout money. Icarus is also a rare choice but does appear occasionally. In one example (Jimmy Margulies, The Record of Hackensack, NJ, 3 May 2010; Cagle 77935), he is shown flying too close to disaster, melting his wings, which in this case are plastic credit cards—one MasterCard, the other Visa.

Cerberus, Europa, Prometheus, and the Sirens appear only occasionally, sometimes labeled to help the reader more easily identify these individuals. Cerberus surfaces in two examples by The Guardian cartoonist Kipper Williams. In one of these (http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/cartoon/2012/feb13/greece-austerity-cuts), the hapless creature, standing at the gates of the underworld, has lost one of his several heads; a Greek in Classical garb looks on, holding a sign that reads, “Austerity: 3-Headed Dog now 2-Headed Dog.” In the other, a snarling Cerberus is drawn with all his heads, standing behind Hades, who is being introduced, clearly unhappy, to a figure identified as Moody’s, dressed in a suit and tie and carrying a briefcase (guardian.co.uk, 23 May 2012). The unusual powers of the Sirens are called upon very rarely but one example is worth noting (David Rowe, Australian Financial Review, 18 May 2012). In this cartoon from the Australian papers, Chancellor Merkel, seductively dressed as Lola-Lola in The Blue Angel, and holding a microphone, stands on a rocky promontory. Odysseus (bound to the mast of his boat) and his crew paddle dangerously close to shore, with one sailor asking, “Do You Take Requests?” One can read this cartoon on several levels: a jab at the Greeks who keep asking not only for bailout money, but also for “special requests” vis-à-vis the austerity package, and/or suggesting that the German Chancellor is seducing Greece onto a path of destruction.
In addition to the short list of heroes, demi-gods, and denizens of Olympus, cartoonists have often drawn from other aspects of ancient Greek culture and daily life. Fairly common, for example, is the well-known Black- and Red-figure pottery of Archaic and Classical Greece. Most of these cartoons depict single pots on which a humorous scene is portrayed. Some show sympotic scenes, with Greeks (or just a single individual) dining greedily, accompanied by a dish at the base of a kline (an ancient Greek couch), and requesting Euro donations (Figure 8).

Others highlight a play on words, based on Keats’s well-known poem “Ode to a Grecian Urn.” The puns run the gamut from “Owed by a Grecian Urn,” and “Greece Urnings,” to “How Much Does a Greek Urn.” In one example set up as an old music hall repartée, Sarkozy is portrayed as Oedipus standing in front of a merciless Merkel, who is depicted as the Sphinx on a pillar. The caption reads, “What’s A Greek Urn?” to which a scowling Merkel responds, “Even Less Than Now If They Want Any Help From Us!” (Dave Brown, The Independent, June 2011).

Finally, the Trojan Horse, traditionally associated with trickery and deception, is commonly chosen as an ideal metaphor for the current crisis. Easily recognizable by the general public, the horse takes several guises: a greedy piggy bank that the rest of Europe needs to fill up; a gift that spells future disaster and endless burden; and a vehicle of deceit that is intended to highlight Greece’s lies about the health of its economy (e.g., Adam Zyglis, The Buffalo News, 8 November 2011; Cagle 100674; Patrick Corrigan, The Toronto Star, 5 May 2010; Cagle 78027).

Discussion

While this article focuses on how cartoonists of the Western press deployed Classical references to encapsulate the Greek economic crisis from 2010 to 2012, these graphic satires are moored to more than just particular political events. They partake of larger scholarly debates, and it is instructive to situate the Greek illustrations within at least some of those more theoretical discussions. Long deemed unworthy of academic attention, the study of political cartoons has now moved out from the shadows of triviality, elevated to a legitimate field of research. A few brief but relevant comments on that thoughtful and burgeoning literature are offered here.

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the literature on political cartoons is not the purview of a single academic field; debates straddle disciplinary divides with historians, sociologists, political scientists, media and communication specialists, and art historians all stepping into the fray. Topics are expansive and include studies on particular histories of political cartoons (e.g., Hess and Kaplan 1975; Fischer 1996; Benson 2007; Carlson 2008; Hess
and Northrop 2011), war (e.g., Gamson and Stuart 1992), evolution (e.g., Clark 2009), political elections and national identity (e.g., Edwards 1997; Lewin and Huff 2007), the role of iconography and visual rhetoric in effective cartoon communication (e.g., Gombrich 1963; Morris 1993), the power of persuasive imagery, and the art of reading multimodal texts (e.g., Medhurst and Desouza 1981; El Refaie 2009), to name just a few. Debates often center on whether these visual satires actually change or reconfigure behaviors and attitudes; how cartoons crystallize and record competing views on critical issues; and how the discourse maintains, reimagines, or subverts the status quo. In his recent book The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and their Enduring Power (2013), Victor Navasky recounts not only the power that cartoonists and caricaturists have wielded over the centuries, but the outsized reactions that some artists have received from those they have affronted. The nineteenth-century French lithographer and cartoonist/caricaturist Honoré Daumier, for example, was fined several times by King Louis-Philippe for his visual satires and was eventually imprisoned because of his work. More recently (1987), the Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali was murdered on the streets of London for his portrayals of a child character that symbolized Palestinian defiance. And in 2005, newspapers around the world followed the events sparked by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten: the Danish paper published a series of political caricatures of Mohammed that provoked rampant Muslim protests. Embassies were closed, ambassadors recalled, more than a hundred people killed, five hundred injured, and many of the cartoonists went into hiding, fearing for their lives.
Navasky has compiled a “Timeline” (2013:201–209) of worldwide trials, blacklists, murders, and tortures of cartoonists and political caricaturists that is extensive and unsettling.

Navasky (and others) rightly asks how this often wordless art can generate such impassioned responses, enraging seemingly rational individuals and groups (Navasky 2013:xxi). Precisely how and why does this type of graphic discourse, which cleverly melds memory, politics, emotions, comedic conventions, and cultural symbols, produce such reactions? The answers are multiple and layered, with analysts singling out several salient factors to help explain the immediacy and impact of this particular form of discourse. Subject matter, which is often controversial, is clearly of paramount importance. Beyond that, however, political cartoons have the ability to condense several abstract ideas into just a small square. By effectively compressing heated issues and ideas into a deceptively simple graphic, cartoons force viewers to quickly organize, categorize, and clarify their own ideas, even as they reflect on the meaning of the cartoon. Like photographs, political cartoons are their own “species of rhetoric” (a phrase used by Susan Sontag [2002] to describe war photography, but one that seems equally applicable to these graphic satires). Just as important, cartoons utilize the power of the image to elicit emotions. The authority of images, the visceral responses they generate, and their peculiar fusion of the emotional and cognitive is well recognized, if poorly understood, and the source of a vast literature. As many scholars have noted, the world-as-image is a very different encounter than the world-as-text, deriving part of its power from its ability to simplify. In the case of cartoons, what is simplified is also amplified, adding to the power of the image (El Refaie 2009:183; McCloud 1993:30). Finally, it is no accident that cartoons agitate readers: they intentionally aim to exaggerate, offend, and lampoon. People and events are meant to be “drawn and quartered.”

Although only one of the Greek images discussed above has sparked outrage (the Venus de Milo on the cover of Focus magazine), it is not unreasonable to posit that many of those on the above roster have affected viewers by crystallizing a negative view of Greek behavior; subverting the past glory of the country; or eliciting a sense of dismay, disgust, or, at times, sympathy. For this author, the storm trooper’s boots defiling the threshold of the “Parthenon” will not be soon forgotten. There is, indeed, much more at stake in these cartoons than meets the eye and the Greek images are part of this larger picture of scholarly debate about the power of rhetoric and language in visual culture.

Despite the probing and intriguing literature on political cartoons, very little has been written about the use of Greek antiquity in these graphic satires. Indeed, one is hard pressed to find more than a few articles on the subject, particularly in the archaeological literature, which has recently become increasingly interested in the discipline’s use of visual representation. Hamilakis’s
article “No Laughing Matter: Antiquity in Greek Political Cartoons,” published in 2000, was one of the first to tackle the subject in a serious manner. A pioneering critique, it elevated the topic from the lowly ranks of insignificance to a subject worthy of reflection and debate. Drawing upon more general discussions of the history and impact of the so-called ungentlemanly art, Hamilakis argues that when given careful and thoughtful consideration, Greek political cartoons that import archaeological imagery into their visual metaphors play an important role in the cultural consciousness of the country. According to Hamilakis, these compressed forms of political art function as powerful elements in the Greek media and public discourse, reflecting and shaping “attitudes, mythologies, perceptions, and stereotypes” (Hamilakis 2000:58). As the examples cited above indicate, the Western press has co-opted many of these pieces of Greece’s public discourse and identity, according them just as much authority but reconfiguring them to suit a different consciousness.

Although Greece currently holds the dubious honor of having the largest default in world history, it has not always been viewed as financially irresponsible. To the contrary, its recovery after the economic devastation of World War II and the ensuing civil war, though slow and difficult, was deemed admirable. Nor was Greece of the postwar years ever accused of “cooking the books.” Like other Eurozone countries, however, once Greece entered the EU (1981) and ultimately adopted the Euro, the consequences of its failing economy were potentially dire for the larger European market. Along with all Eurozone countries, Greece has now become tightly threaded into a pan-European financial fabric, opening up greater possibilities of undermining confidence in the global banking system. As Mario Draghi (president of the European Central Bank) commented, Europe’s single currency is a bumblebee—that mystery of nature that shouldn’t fly but does (Krugman 2012). Greece is currently part of the financial aerodynamics that enables the bumblebee to fly, however haltingly; the country is no longer a trivial player in the world’s financial marketplace.

In portraying Greece as a major participant that has taken many avoidable missteps on the financial world stage, cartoonists, as is their wont, have taken no prisoners. Atlas isn’t strong enough to carry the economic burden of his nation and Herakles is on the verge of quitting. In the case of the Discobolus, he has grown either too weak or too fat, an unlikely candidate for the Olympic-level ordeal that now confronts Greece; as for Venus, she implores or gestures rudely, hardly fitting behavior for the goddess of love. The crumbling state of the Parthenon projects a comparable message: this very essence of Greece’s symbolic capital is depicted in shambles, clearly suggesting that the country has disgraced its patrimony, a fear that modern Greeks know all too well. As Yalouri writes, “The heritage with which the Greek state was endowed has been accompanied by the anxiety that modern Greeks have to keep it and, most importantly, to prove themselves worthy of it” (Yalouri 2001:188).
Indeed, the Acropolis casts a shadow over Athens and Greece that “haunts and guards them at the same time” (Yalouri 2001:188). The Acropolis/Parthenon is, therefore, a complex icon: it not only encapsulates the very essence of Greek identity and its layered history, but embodies certain contradictions. It is a highly flexible, collective, and powerful symbol that has been adopted by Europe to symbolize its “superiority over the ‘barbarian’ peoples of the New World . . . the Orient . . .,” and indeed the modern Greeks themselves, who failed to live up to the “idealized image” that the West long ago forged for the nation (Yalouri 2001:188). It is no wonder that political cartoonists find it such a potent candidate for their satires—claimed by both the Greeks and the West, it can easily be enlisted to imply that the country has discredited its legacy, while at the same time serving as Western Europe’s symbol of its own past, with reference to an economy that has supposedly now been crippled by Greece’s economic recklessness.

Evidence of Greece’s bloated bureaucracy, corruption, and tax evasions notwithstanding, the current situation has taken a tragic toll on the poor and lower/middle classes of Greece. Exhausted by several years of austerity measures and cuts to social benefits, the middle class is shrinking and the lower classes are in despair. Despite bailouts, the economy continues to contract rapidly; unemployment in May 2012 was approximately 23% and the jobless rate among youth was nearing 55% (topics.newyorktimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/Greece/index.htm). Although much has been written in the international press about these difficulties—alongside the palpable anger towards Greece—only a few cartoons either specifically lampooned the rich and powerful (Papandreou notwithstanding) or sounded a note of concern for the rank and file. I cite here two examples. In one cartoon the viewer sees an ancient Greek ship sailing the sea with a mast labeled “€ Support.” Sitting on the lower deck are exhausted rowers whipped by an ancient Greek general in a garment emblazoned with the Euro flag. Above these seated rowers, labeled “Poor Greek,” four men are standing on the upper deck, labeled “Rich Greek.” They smile, hold bags of money, sport sunglasses, and barely work, commanding only one oar that rests lightly on the water (Arend van Dam, 3 May 2010; Cagle 77913). The second example (Figure 9) is more ambiguous. It is dated to just before the Greek elections of May 2012 and seems to be part of a slight shift in the most recent cartoons, where some compassion toward the general Greek populace is expressed.

In that cartoon by the Swedish cartoonist Riber Hansson, the artist has drawn four Classical Greek statues, all scantily clad, headless, and missing most of their limbs. They balance precariously in front of ballot boxes on legs that almost look prosthetic, with the Parthenon on a hill in the distance. One way to read this image is that, despite being crippled by economic disaster and austerity measures, the Greek citizens, ever mindful of their democratic powers, will
struggle to cast their votes in the May 2012 elections (Riber Hansson, Sweden, 4 May 2012; Cagle 11112).

Cartoons are a reductive art and the images discussed here clearly demonstrate their ability to skillfully construct, classify, and encapsulate the politics of the moment. This is as true now as it was when political cartoons (or something resembling cartoons) first appeared several centuries ago. As the authors of *Lines of Contention: Political Cartoons of the Civil War* (Lewin and Huff 2007) note about cartoons produced during the American Civil War, cartoonists “attempted to enlighten, to reflect, and, perhaps at times, to persuade public opinion . . . By definition they were forced to oversimplify . . . But in so doing they often cut to the nub of the matter and presented it in terms that were easily understood . . . The humor was broad and not necessarily overly sophisticated. They were commentary on the times” (Lewin and Huff 2007:vii–viii). Moreover, as Lewin and Huff observe, when examined retrospectively, these cartoons allow us to “eavesdrop” on past conversations. By carefully reading the Civil War images, the authors suggest, we can listen in on those debates that probably took place in the “front parlors and barrooms of nineteenth-century America” (viii).
In much the same way, the visual satires discussed here will, at some point in the future, allow us to eavesdrop retrospectively on Greece’s current crisis, as viewed from the perch of the Western press in 2010–2012. As fleeting as these images are, they provide important insights into a critical time in Greek and European economic and social history. Admittedly, these “conversations” are not always easy to decode. As recent studies have shown (e.g., El Refaie 2009), interpreting political cartoons is a complex process, requiring understanding of the political issues at hand, knowledge of a vast repertoire of cultural symbols, experience in reading the language of cartoons, and an ability to think analytically and analogically. Not every viewer of the cartoons presented above will necessarily interpret them the way they have been here. These visual satires are, by nature, ambiguous; they tend to defamiliarize the familiar in ways that are inevitably read by different readers in various ways. That said, the basic messages are inescapable: the Western editorial cartoons, for the most part, lay the current fiscal calamity in Europe at the feet of the Greeks; the Greeks have sown the seeds of their own crisis and even the most powerful of their ancient heroes and deities—the idealized Greece of the past that lives in the imagination of West—cannot solve these outsized problems.

It is also worth reflecting that political cartoons are always snippets from larger ongoing conversations; the nuances of these satires change daily. It is likely that the limited stable of ancient Greek images summoned by the Western press will materialize in different contexts as the crisis continues, recreating new identities for the ancient heroes, sculptures, and buildings as they are transported forth to the present. If the Greek economy eventually becomes robust, no longer threatening to “infect” the rest of Europe, a different set of political cartoons would likely emerge. The Classical roster, resituated in the setting of Modern Greece, might well include the Discobolus fit and gilded, if a bit thinner for meeting the austerity measures; the gods once again dining on ambrosia, albeit the low-fat version; and Venus, having found her arms, wearing some modest bling. In these imagined scenarios the cast of characters, depicted almost as returning heroes to their native land, might suggest that contemporary Greeks are indeed the proper inheritors of their Classical past. For now, however, the cartoons emanating from the Western press are largely broadcasting other meanings: they remind the world of how different modern Greeks are from their vaunted, Classical ancestors, casting them as wayward descendants. On a deeper level, these cartoons may be suggesting something else as well: the West has long been conflicted about Greece’s status as a fully “modern” and “European” nation; these cartoons, thinly disguised with humor, seem to reinforce the idea that Greece is still viewed as situated on the margins of Europe.
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1 Greece’s perception of its history and its place in a globalized world have long been sources of discussion in Modern Greek scholarship (e.g., Fermor 1966:106–113; Herzfeld 1982, 1987; Leontis, 1995:103–131; Hamilakis 2007; Tziovas 2011). While that literature has grappled with the tropes of Western Hellenism, it has, in addition, wrestled with different concerns, such as self-identity and shaping a national cultural idiom (e.g., see Yalouri 2001:12 ff.). Those issues are not the focus of the current paper.

2 A short article in ekathimerini by Christopher Torchia (English version, 28 April 2012) entitled “Greek Cartoonists Draw the Crisis,” discusses the bonanza that the current crisis has created for Greek cartoonists. These satirists have used their art as a useful outlet for current frustrations. As Torchia writes, “Cartoonists have portrayed the Greek economy as the Titanic, that eternal symbol of disaster; Greek leaders as buffoons shielded from mobs by robotic police with gas masks and truncheons; and ordinary Greeks as beggars at the mercy of fat cats in top hats who represent international creditors.” According to Torchia, several cartoonists have lost their jobs because of their social commentary. Unlike some of the examples cited here from the Western press, the Greek cartoons are more likely to express sympathy for the rank and file or attack German plutocrats. The focus on Germany is particularly notable; as Torchia reports, “Students at a Greek high school compiled a cartoon calendar that skewers Germany, which is pushing Greece for austerity measures in return for loans, by recalling the Nazi occupation of Greece in World War II. An image depicts a Euro symbol instead of a swastika on the Nazi flag, and another shows a German officer denying a last cigarette to a condemned man because of the high tax on tobacco.”

3 The images mentioned in this text reflect the work of approximately 30 cartoonists. Their home countries and newspapers range from the US, Canada, the UK, France, Austria, the Netherlands, and Sweden to Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, the UAE, India, and Australia. Their homebase newspapers encompass liberal to more conservative leanings. US cartoonists include, among others, Pat Bagley, staff cartoonist for The Salt Lake Tribune; Adam Zyglis of The Buffalo News; Dave Fitzsimmons of The Arizona Star; and Rob Rogers of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Among the European cartoonists are the French satirist Frederick Deligne; Olle Johansson, Sweden’s leading political cartoonist; Tom Janssen, cartoonist for the Dutch National Daily; Riber Hansson, a freelance cartoonist for Swedish daily newspapers; Martin Sutovec, a well-known Slovakian cartoonist who draws for SME Daily, the country’s second best selling newspaper; Ingram Pinn of UK’s Financial Times; Brian Adcock, whose work appears mostly in Scottish papers and The Prague Post; Chris Madden, a cartoonist for several UK magazines and newspapers; Paresh Nath of India’s National Herald; Andrew Dyson, resident cartoonist for Australia’s The Age; Christo Komarnitski, Bulgarian cartoonist for the daily newspaper Sega; Patrick Blower, former cartoonist for the London Evening Standard and currently cartoonist and multimedia artist for The Guardian and BBC; and Kipper Williams, who often draws for The Guardian.
Cagle Cartoons Inc. has two major manifestations: www.cagle.com, an ongoing post of cartoons and commentaries, and www.politicalcartoons.com, a searchable database of cartoons posted since the site’s inception in 2001.

One other source provided a few telling examples: various colleagues knew of my interest in the topic and periodically emailed me cartoons to add to my register of images.

Although the sample discussed here is not statistically based, some numerical observations are worth noting. A basic and somewhat arbitrary quantification was undertaken in order to determine the extent to which Classical references predominate among cartoons that focus on the Greek crisis. The examples were, again, drawn from the index of cartoons posted on Daryl Cagle’s site www.politicalcartoons.com. From January to June of 2010, approximately 100 cartoons were posted on the topic of the Greek crisis, 49% of which referenced Classical antiquity. The first six months of the following year, 2011, witnessed nearly 50 cartoons on the subject, with approximately 38% containing Classical citations. No attempt was made on the part of this author to determine whether comparable preferences existed before the economic crisis. Nor was a cross-national perspective explored to determine what kinds of country-specific iconographies or cultural clichés cartoonists chose for other European countries experiencing comparable economic difficulties, (e.g., Portugal, Italy, Ireland, or Spain). Both types of studies, which were suggested by one of the reviewers of this paper, would have provided valuable perspectives. Unfortunately, time did not permit such detailed analysis.

Given copyright issues and space constraints, only a few of the images discussed here are reproduced in this article. The in-text citation to Cagle, followed by a number, refers to a large commercial internet site, PoliticalCartoons.com, Daryl Cagle’s searchable website that sells many of these images. His site provides high quality images of each cartoon along with a citation of the cartoonist’s name, and the place and date of publication. If I could not find an image on Cagle’s website, I have noted, where possible, the URL where the image can be found, even if it is not the original source of the cartoon’s publication. If I have not given an electronic source for a cartoon, I have tried, in most cases, to name the cartoonist responsible for the image and idea.

I have not included any examples in this paper of cartoons that reference “Zorba the Greek,” though in some ways Zorba is as much a part of Greek mythology as any of its ancient heroes and deities. In most cases Zorba is portrayed as profligate; in one example (Chip Bok, www.bokbluster.com; 26 March 2010) he is shown smashing plates, some of which are labeled Greece, Spain, and Ireland, while a sour-faced Merkel looks on, sweeping up the debris. In another cartoon, (John Cole, The Scranton Times-Tribune, 11 May 2011; Cagle 78268), labeled “Ex-ZORBA-tant The Greek,” Zorba dances to the edge of a ledge that is just beginning to crack. With one hand he gleefully tosses up Euros, which are labeled “Welfare State Borrowing,” with the other he leads a terrified gentleman to follow in his dance to the edge. The gentleman is suited and holds a briefcase inscribed with the words “Euro Banks.” See also, Patrick Blower’s wonderful “Live Draw” video of Merkel and Papandreou (among others) dancing on the beach, set to Theodorakis’s well-known music from the film Zorba the Greek (Patrick Blower, Live Draw, The Guardian, 12 February 2012).
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