

## Book Reviews

Loukia Droulia and Vasso Mentzou, eds., *Vers l'Orient par la Grèce avec Nerval et d'autres voyageurs* (coll. Litterature des voyages, No. 6), Paris, Klincksieck, 1993; pp. 214, ill.

This very interesting little book contains the papers read to the international colloquium "Travel in the Mediterranean during the 18th and 19th centuries", held in Syra from July 3rd to 7th 1988 under the auspices of the Center for Neohellenic Studies of the National Foundation for Scientific Research of Greece, which retains the copyright. This meeting was cosponsored by the Department of French of the University of Athens and by the Society Gerard de Nerval of Paris and had the material support of the Society for the promotion of science and culture of the host city. We suspect that the moving spirit behind it was Mrs L. Droulia, the indefatigable chairwoman of the C.N.S. (Κέντρον Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών) who signs the preface and submits a paper of her own.

From the outset one senses that what is to follow will deal with a particular kind of travel literature. Indeed a first glance at the table of contents reveals a series of twenty-seven short essays on selected pieces of travel testimony by qualified witnesses: intellectuals, artists, poets, even scientists and politicians, all West Europeans, all carrying with them the prejudices of their time and of their socio-political environment, some travelling by duty, some for pleasure and education, some —like most travellers of all times— seeking to escape the drudgery of daily life on their own environment, or even to escape a persecuting obsession, as was the case of Gerard de Nerval.

Twenty-five of the papers were delivered in French, one in Italian and one in English. In this book, which has no index, they are presented in two categories, the first of which is more diversified containing sixteen reports devoted mostly to subjects connected with Greece. The second group of eleven papers is devoted exclusively to Gerard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*, which was made in 1843 but whose account was published in 1851.

Fitting to the site in which the Symposium was held, the collection begins with A. Kokkou's report (pp. 13-19) on 18th century West European travelers,

who made short visits to the island of Syros and wrote about their experiences there. However, since Della Rocca's *Traite complet sur les abeilles* is not a travel document it could have been omitted. The same remark may be made about the very interesting content of its annex: good but out of place.

The director of the collection in which this book has been included, F. Moureau, from the University of Burgundy (Dijon), writes (pp. 21-27) about the travel experience of ambassador Nointel (1670), of the youthful Caylus, "militaire glorieux" (1716), and of father Courmont, the well-known Greek manuscript hunter (1729). Judging the quality of the testimony of the three witnesses from the content of this report one can easily understand why they remained unpublished to date: they are of no interest.

With the authority which comes naturally out of knowledge, E. Kanceff from the University of Turin writes about the so-called "discovery" of Sicily by the West European romantics from the later part of the 18th century on (pp. 29-38). It is difficult not to accept his justified proposal that travel literature about Sicily constitutes an important part of all West European writing of this type for the romantic period: an excellent paper.

In a captivating report, in Italian, C. Spetsieri Beschi of the University of Pisa, presents the landscape artist Simone Pomardi's contribution in helping to illustrate Edward Dodwell's *Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece* (pp. 39-46). Made during the years 1804-1806, this grand "tour" was published in London in 1819. It is unfortunate that the illustrations which were supposed to accompany this text were placed by the editor in the text of the next participant.

In a great canvass, H. Tatsopoulos-Polychronopoulos of Athens presents travel to Greece by West Europeans during the Romantic period as a quest for a "lost" Paradise (pp. 47-55). Though for the majority of the best-known German and French artists and intellectuals of the time travelling to Greece remained an invigorating experience which found positive ways of expressing itself, for some others, like Lamartine, to give a well-known example, this was not the case. But then, it should not be forgotten that those were also the times of political reaction and power politics in which Greece found itself on the wrong side: politics and literature make a strange mixture, indeed.

In 1984, W. Aeschmann and J. Tucóo-Chala presented to the international community of neohellenists a new, annotated edition of Edgar Quinet's *La Grèce moderne et ses rapports avec l'antiquité*, to which they added a 60-page introduction and the unpublished diary which the then 26 years-old author kept during his travels in Greece. Leaning heavily on this publication, the only reference presented, R. Milliex makes an interesting

report (pp. 57-61) on Quinet's impressions from the Peloponnesus, from some islands of the Aegean and from Athens as well. It must be recalled that the voyage in question took place during the period March-May 1829 and lasted about seventy days.

Three big names of French and Polish letters constitute the backbone of the next contribution, which was presented by B. Socien, of the Jagellonian University of Cracow (pp. 63-68). The first is Chateaubriand, whose influence upon the Polish young romantic poet-in-exile, Julius Slowacki (1809-1849), is mostly unknown. Even less known outside Poland is Slowacki's life and work represented by his two rhymed epics, the one a *Voyage to the Holy Land*, the other *On the Tomb of Agamemnon*, both conceived during his voyage which was made in 1836, both written in Polish, both published in 1840. The reason for which Gerard de Nerval's name appears in the title is that both men, Slowacki first and Nerval seven years later, during their visit to Greece, were in the same state of mind and had a common experience.

In this post-humous essay on 19th century Greece, as a land of spiritual pilgrimage for the young French intellectuals of the time, Y.-A. Favre of the University of Pau summarizes (pp. 69-74) the relevant parts of J.-C. Berchet's *Le Voyage en Orient* (Paris, Laffont, 1985), to which all his references point and to which any reader, wishing to learn more about the subject, must eventually turn. It is unfortunate that Berchet's name was not mentioned at all in this report.

M. Menegaki-Kindi of Athens University made a comparative critical analysis (pp. 75-80) of the relevant observations to mid-19th century Greece by two well-known West Europeans, the older, conservative and self-centered Austrian baron A. von Prokesch-Osten and the younger, less conservative and outward looking French count A. de Gobineau. Obviously, the thirty-four years separating the writings of the two men could not but give an advantage to the second who grew up in a society shaped by three successive revolutions. As for Prokesch-Osten's reserved and often critical attitude to modern Greece, one has to consider that he was working for chancellor Metternich and his writing was based upon official austrian documents. Having devoted her doctoral dissertation on an aspect of Gobineau's Greek experience, the author concludes that, before judging the work of any foreign visitor of Greece, one should have a very good intelligence of the questions at issue: she votes for Gobineau.

The next paper (pp. 81-89), read by D. Norman of the C.N.R.S. of Paris, is an outline of a research project upon which he was then working with another colleague. Very different in content from these presented previously,

it is devoted to a non-Greek and non-Nervalian topic: the massive influx of French scholars in Algeria during the years 1840-1860. Recalling Napoleon's short-lived expedition to Ottoman Egypt, this wide-ranging and government sustained scientific "mission", which also enjoyed the material support of the military establishment, had the advantage of unity, coordination and continuity in its work, which contributed in bringing that country into the French cultural orbit for a century to come. We understand that, since the time of this meeting at Syra, some of the results of this research project have been published.

I. Constandulaki-Chandzou of the University of Athens focused her report (pp. 91-96) on an episode from the history of the very old Greek-French relationship, after it had suffered a grievous setback as a result of big power politics and the Crimean War. The one side of the story is represented by no other than Lamartine, whose writings contributed in turning French public opinion in favor of the Ottomans, then the allies of France, and by E. About, whose essays created anti-Greek sentiment. The other side of the story has to wait for more than a generation's time to be told—and even then— by a Greek intellectual who had become French through sentiment and marriage and who contributed in repairing the damage. At a time when France was courting Russia for an alliance against expanding Germany, the climate of public opinion was not only favorable to his efforts but also to Pierre de Coubertin's proposal to revive the Olympic games: politics again.

M. Miguet of the University of Besançon devoted her report on the scientific missions of Dr. A. Proust (pp. 97-104), a French epidemiologist of the last quarter of the 19th century, who was active in searching ways and means for protecting effectively the population of France and Western Europe from the epidemics of plague and cholera. Since the time of the Black Death, it was well known that the usual place of origin of these two terrible scourges of humanity, which swept away thousands of lives every time they manifested themselves, was still the Near and the Middle East. A Proust's not having visited Greece during his numerous travels may be taken to mean that, on that particular point, the Greek state had already joined the European community.

L. Droulia gave a slightly misleading title to her otherwise substantial paper (pp. 105-113). The first four pages, a bird's eye view of the history of travel in the Eastern Mediterranean that only the hand of a few mature scholars can produce, could have found a more natural place at the very beginning of the collection, or even, perhaps, in her own general introduction. The rest of the report is a critical presentation of conditions, ways and means

of travel, travel guides and hand books about Greece during the 1830's and 1840's

Specializing in the history of modern Greek literature, P. Kondoyanni focused her attention (pp. 115-122) to the impressions left behind them, in Greece, by certain West European travelers, as their image is presented in the writings of some 19th century Greek authors. During her researches, she writes, she discovered a great variety of images, both favorable and unfavorable and as variegated as those which we find reproduced in the travel accounts of the foreign travelers themselves.

A. Deisser's (University of Liège) report on mythification, imitation and outright plagiarism, practiced by some West European authors of travel books (pp. 123-129), begins as if it had but slight connection with that particular colloquium's main theme. However, as promised by the title given to his paper the author enters the subject by pointing an accusing finger at some authors guilty of some of the sins mentioned above. Though the corpus of travel literature covering the Eastern Mediterranean region in general and Greece in particular is a mine of information on all those topics, the testimony presented in this paper is rather poor: Nicander's mythification on Liège's mines and miners, though interesting, is beside the point.

H. Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, of the Research Center for Medieval and Modern Greek Studies of the Academy of Athens, reported in English—the only report in that language—about her research project, then in progress: her aim was to identify and catalogue the manuscripts of travel literature relating to Greece, Constantinople, Asia Minor and Cyprus, deposited in British libraries and archives (pp. 133-137). This project may recall previous work accomplished over the years by other researchers working for the Center for Neohellenic Studies. As we understood it this is an enormous task implicating research all over Great Britain for the discovery of mostly unknown, or little known, manuscripts. Given the nature of the project, it cannot be said that Mrs Angelomatis had then arrived at clear-cut decisions as to what was to be included or excluded from her project. In the second part of her report, we have an interesting foretaste of what is to come.

J. Richer of the University of Nice, one of the editors of the French romantic writer Gerard de Nerval's (1808-1855) collected works (Pleiade), inaugurated a second series of eleven more papers, all connected in some way with this writer's oriental experience. The title of his paper (pp. 141-146) was *Orphism* and *Sabeism* (the preislamic religion of the Arabs) in Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* which was published in 1851 and which was a source of inspiration for all his subsequent work. This paper was based mostly on material pre-

sented in his own book: *Nerval, - Experience vecue et creation esoterique* (Paris, 1987), where his intimate knowledge of Nerval's life and work comes out clearly and forcefully.

J. Hure of the University of Haute Alsace presented a paper under the title "Gerard de Nerval: L'Orient et l'Oeuvre" (pp. 147-154). He was probably under the assumption that those who listened to him knew as much as he did about the oriental themes in Nerval's work, which will certainly not be the case for most of the readers of this article. As presented in this paper, Nerval's metaphysical view of the East, "Un Orient qu'il situe aux frontieres de l'Orient qu'il traverse", is so far away from reality that it inevitably escapes the grasp of an average reader who would have appreciated, even in the form of a conventional footnote, an explanation as to the basic reasons which motivated this *Voyage* which, according to all testimony marked profoundly Nerval's subsequent life and work. This would have been much more useful than phrases such as "L'Orient c'est l'œuvre", "Le Temple d'Adoniram c'est l'œuvre", or even "Le Temple d'Adoniram c'est le destin de Nerval".

M.-R. Ansalone, from the "Università degli Studi di Napoli", turned her attention to the role played by the ruins of the Greek landscape in Gerard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (pp. 155-160). Nerval populated those melancholy ancient monuments with spirits and ghosts of men and women who would have some difficulty in recognizing themselves in the roles assigned to them. He was not a historian and did not pretend writing history which is so down to earth and so unpoetical. In the domains of literature, poetry and art in general, which create their own realities, historical truth is replaced by metaphysical truth, or at least by the author's and the artist's truth.

V. Carofiglio of the University of Bari who, during his return from Syra to Piraeus by boat, wrote a poem "To Greece and to Despair" (p. 9), delivered his paper under the title "The Disaster of Cythera". His book on *Nerval e il mito della "purete"* (1966) indicates an old Nerval specialist whose pessimism has deep roots in the disenchantment which follows Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* and which may be found in the works of Beaudelaire and Victor Hugo as well. The paradox of all this is that Nerval himself, during his *Voyage*, did not even land in Cythera and the other two authors mentioned never set foot in Greece. So, whatever they all thought and wrote about Cythera and Greece had little connection with reality of their own time and even less with the past. The answer to this non-problem has been evoked in our commentary of the immediately preceding paper.

M. Marchetti of the University of Rome presented a paper (pp. 169-175) on Nerval's employment of rhetorical devices, chiches and irony in his pre-

sentation of "Oriental" feminine figures as they appear in his *Voyage* which, it must be remembered, was undertaken when the author was 35 years old. First come the wellknown stereotypes created over the years since Galland's translation of *The Thousand and one Nights*. Then come other images in use in his own time, to be followed by those created by himself: a strange mixture of fact, fiction and fantasy from which it is difficult to say to what extent he is persecuted by Jenny Colon's memory, or even by his own libido.

V. Mentzou of the "Panteion" University of Athens focused her attention to those parts of Nerval's *Voyage* which were relevant to his Greek experience and then tried to compare his testimony with that offered by another French traveler, Alexis de Valon, whose book *Une année dans le Levant* was published in 1850. It appears that the only common denominator uniting the two French visitors is their fleeting experiences with Greek women and the only thing one can do with the writings of the two authors is to compare dissimilarities and contrasts. This may become an exercise in futility.

K. Nozaki of the University of Mitotsubashi (Japan), in a captivating way, referred (pp. 181-186) to those parts of the *Voyage* which were outcome of Nerval's actual experiences in the East, and more specially those which were simply invented: here the French author is presented as a man capable of producing a unique scenario made out of his own dreams and fantasies. As Mr. Nozaki writes, so aptly and so epigrammatically, looking back to his oriental escapade, Nerval was only reconstituting his own feelings which had remained engraved into his memory like a dream inextricably intertwined with reality.

In her paper, entitled "The Opening to the East" (pp. 187-192), F. Tabak-Iona states that Gerard de Nerval's segment from the *Voyage en Orient* which refers to Cythera is no less than an exercise in his own *ego*, or, to put it in psychological terms, an exteriorization of his sentiments, a revelation of his inner self. Of course, this is as true as it is evident and, we think, this is what good creative writing is all about.

B. Tritsmans from the University of Antwerp devoted his paper (pp. 193-198) on Nerval's Egyptian experience and more specifically upon this author's fascination with the mystery covered by the hieroglyphics: all arcane knowledge and all the wisdom of pharaonic Egypt was supposed to be hidden in hieroglyphic writing. What is veiled, mysterious and enigmatic is a challenge for Nerval in whose writing it takes the form of mythification and mystification of the unknown and of the unknowable. Jenny Colon's death, after all, had been beneficial to literature by motivating Nerval's going to the East: his total immersion in oriental lore and his writing about his oriental ex-

perience brought out his talents as a great writer.

G. Vanhese, of the "Scuola Normale Superiore" of Pisa, spoke of "Nerval's mythical geography" (pp. 199-205), with special reference to that part of the *Voyage* in which the author writes about the Cabiroi, these pre-hellenic chthonic deities of Samothrace and of Lemnos in the name of whom were performed annual ceremonies and fertility rites comparable to those of Eleusis. Originating with Orpheus, these mysteries were performed with ceremonial round dances, suggesting the movement of the celestial bodies, just like those of the dancing dervishes of Asia Minor in much later times. Eloquently and convincingly, Mrs Vanhese tells us that all this set off Nerval's fertile imagination to a high pitch.

The last report of the series on Nerval's *Voyage* was presented by A. Vougiouklidou, from the University of Piraeus. She focused her attention to questions relating to racial issues as they are handled in this memorable and inimitable book which, as any reader must have understood by now, was much more than an ordinary travel document. Preceding Gobineau by about twenty years on this question and being a man of greater imagination than of scientific knowledge on anthropology, Nerval could not but produce a strange mixture of credible fact and incredible fiction.

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Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism—Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1992, pp. XV+203.

La présente étude de M. P. Kitromilidis est la version anglaise de son livre *Ίώσηπος Μοισιόδαξ - Οι συντεταγμένες της βαλκανικής σκέψης τον 18ο αιώνα*, publié à Athènes 1985, dans la série de la Fondation Culturelle de la Banque Nationale de Grèce.

L'objet de sa recherche est la personnalité du savant des Balkans Iosipos Moisiodax (1725 ci-?) et les facteurs sociopolitico-idéologiques de son époque. À juste titre donc l'auteur cherche tout les témoignages de son protagoniste et les autres sources le concernant pour tracer l'image de son activité didactique dans les Balkans, une activité imprégnée de l'esprit de l'époque des Lumières Européennes. Il en résulte, ainsi, la présentation de la biographie