

paléographie, les archives, l'histoire économique, les rapports de la Grèce avec l'Occident et l'Orient voilà les principales directions qu'a suivies le Centre des Recherches Néohelléniques. Mis à part la recherche du point de vue philosophique et historique le Centre a mené à bien (et continue de travailler dans ce sens-là) des travaux plus vastes, à savoir l'enregistrement de l'activité spirituelle du Néohellénisme telle qu'elle se présente dans la période allant de 1453-jusqu'au XIX^{ème} siècle. Ainsi le Centre des Recherches Néohelléniques a favorisé l'étude et la synthèse des œuvres-instruments de recherche rendus nécessaires pour l'approche et la compréhension de la littérature de l'histoire et de la civilisation néohelléniques. Dans cette brochure sont mentionnés aussi l'organisation et le mode de fonctionnement du Centre un système basé sur les plans déjà cités, où il convient de mentionner l'enregistrement et l'édition du matériel et des manuscrits et des sources de l'histoire des textes imprimés. Le même brochure cite aussi les chercheurs qui ont travaillé pendant ces deux décennies (1960-1980), pour mener à bien les projets du Centre, et leurs publications.

Institut d'Études Balkaniques
Thessalonique

ATH. E. KARATHANASSIS

C. A. Trypanis, *Greek poetry, from Homer to Seferis*, London 1981, pp. 896 (Faber and Faber).

Arnold Toynbee's last and posthumous work¹ returns to the Greeks, his early interest and the subject of the Professorship he held at London as young man. Being Toynbee, he follows the whole sweep of Greek history from the Myceneans to modern times. Being human he makes a number of errors and misleading generalizations. But his look is full of penetrating insights. He writes like the most brilliant and promising of graduate students, sketching a lifework.

He studies the Greeks in terms of their three breakdowns, the dark age that followed the Myceneans, the post-classical dark age and the dark age after Byzantium. Among the details we now know about the first, many of them coming to light as he was writing, he buzzes like a bee in a bottle. His solution will not convince the specialists. In the Turkish period he exaggerates the bankruptcy of Byzantium and underrates much that survived. But the central insight of the look, its treatment of Greek consciousness, and of how the Greeks in every period have dealt for better or worse with the felt burden of their inheritance, is as brilliant as anything in his writings.

C. A. Trypanis conveys a far deeper and fuller understanding of Greek history, although his subject is only the history of poetry. There has never been so full a study of the vast progression of poetry in Greek, continuous from Homer until today, either in English or in any other language.

Constantine Trypanis is a distinguished poet in English, an old and experienced scholar, and a most inspiring teacher. No one alive knows as much about

1. A. Toynbee, *The Greeks and their Heritage*, Oxford 1981.

as much of this material as he does. But part of what so excites me in this long, fat book is the continual glitter of irony and humour, the continual freshness of curiosity. To have dealt thoroughly and clearly with great poets and great crises of poetry is already more than a little. To have followed intricate pathways and obscure names and yet never to have been deserted by the Muses is much more.

Students and scholars will learn a great deal from Constantine Trypanis, and they will turn his pages with continual pleasure. This is a standard work of reference, and it will last a hundred years. He never departs from his severe clarity of judgement; at the same time he never loses his passionate enthusiasm for the fate and for the possibilities of Greek poetry. He writes not just about poetry but poems and poets with an underlying strength of conviction which arises from the power and sap of the Greek language itself.

At a time when old-fashioned Greek studies are under pressure and have lost ground, and yet the subject itself of Greek poetry has seldom seemed so attractive to so many people, perhaps never since the Roman empire, this is exactly the book needed. Its price, considering its size, is reasonable. In century after century it reveals astonishing treasures that almost no one knows.

Among obscure poets, Trypanis is masterly in his analysis of the Hellenistic Parthenios, the friend of Virgil, and on the modern satirist Souris. On Homer and Greek tragedy, and on the religious poetry of the early Byzantines, he writes with special authority.

I felt he was rather too patient with Kazantzakis, or did I detect a certain dry irony, here as elsewhere? Occasionally I wondered whether some of my own obscurer favourites, the epigrammatist Erucius who gave a line or two to Virgil, and the blood-soaked Cretan tragedy Zeno in the seventeenth century, were undervalued. In the most modern period of all I have fewer reservations than he has about Seferis and more about Sikelianos, but may be that is like preferring Eliot to Yeats, no more perhaps than a profound instinct. Wherever I was in doubt, as among the ballads and epics of the middle ages, I found this book very useful, satisfying and fascinating.

One of its bold and brilliant strokes is the section heading. The Hellenistic Age, which in its subsections covers Greek poetry from 323 B.C. to 641 A.D. That is surely just, Romans or no Romans, and it disposes of one of Toynbee's dark ages. It may be that Virgil was the greatest Hellenistic poet of his time, though he happened to write in Latin, but poetry in Greek was not negligible. (Horace is another matter, may be the first great poet we can name beyond the scope of the Greeks).

Trypanis follows the twists and turns of poetry through these nine and a half centuries with more subtlety than I can indicate, and the resulting supple framework never fails to illuminate individual poems and the careers of poets. This book makes an important case for literary criticism with a historical basis. No other method could have revealed so much. We are not looking at a few mountain-tops, but warlike about in a landscape that has been haunted by the Muses for three thousand years.

Oxford,

PETER LEVI