



The visit of the British ambassador Ainslie to the palace of the ruler of Wallachia. L. Mayer, *Views in Turkey, in Europe and Asia, comprising Romelia, Bulgaria, Wallachia, Syria and Palestine* (Palace at Bucaresti, Plate II). London, 1801-1806. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Princess Eleni Soutsou and the ruler of Wallachia Michael Soutsos. From Louis Dupré, *Voyage à Athènes et à Constantinople ou Collection de Portraits, de vues et de costumes grecs et ottomans*, Paris, 1825. (National Historical Museum, Athens)



View of Thrace, the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus and Black Sea, with inset map showing the topography of Olympia, 0.50x0.70 m. National Historical Museum, Athens, no. 6334. A page from the 'Map of Greece, including the islands and showing part of the Greek communities in Europe and Asia Minor...', published by Rigas Velesinlis of Thessaly for the benefit of Greeks and Philhellenes, 1797. Engraved by Francois Miller in Vienna'.

RIGAS AND KORAÏS

RIGAS VELESTINLIS

The total lack of reliable biographical information regarding the formative years of Rigas has been compensated by local legend and tradition. He was born in Velesino, Thessaly (1757?), where he received his basic education. His quest for further education took him to Constantinople (1774?) where he was introduced into Phanariot circles. He became a clerk to the noble family of Ypsilantis (1785) and later went to Wallachia, perhaps having been admitted to Masonic circles. His contact with the Phanariot world, his time spent close to Kartazis, a leading Greek proponent of the Enlightenment, and his knowledge of foreign languages, which enabled him to follow European intellectual developments, all served to broaden his horizons. With the capture of Bucharest by the Austro-Russian alliance he moved on to Vienna for a period of six months (1790), and it was there that he printed his first two books – *The School for Delicate Lovers* and *A Handbook of Physics* – and announced the future publication of a translation in Greek of Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*, although this latter project was never completed. He spent his next five years in Bucharest, again following closely developments in France after the Revolution and studying the new republic's constitu-

continued on p. 71



Theofilos Hatjimichail, *Koraïs and Rigas Pherraios Help Greece to Rise*, on card, 64x44 cm, 1911, a variant of the copperplate engraving on p. 56. (Alexandros Xydis Collection)

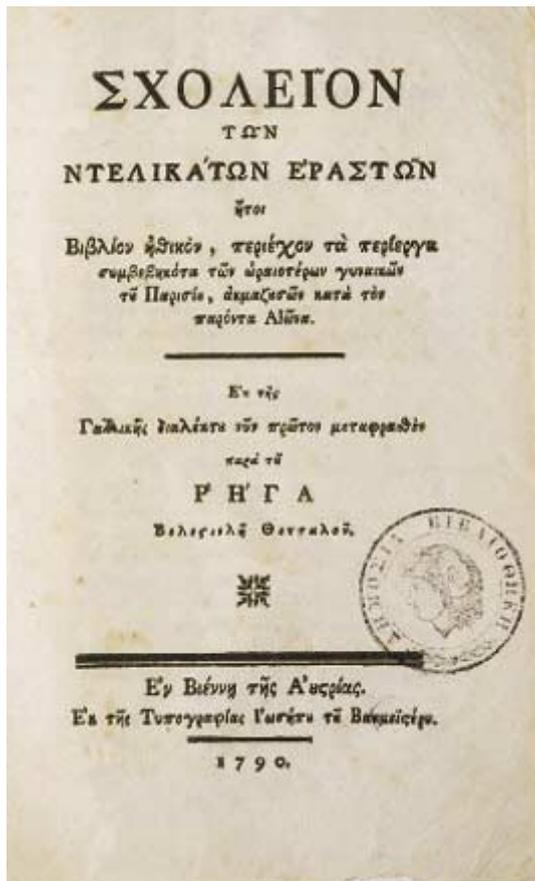


Rigas Velesinlis. Black and white copperplate engraving, from J.P. von Hornthal, *Geschichte der Wiedergeburt Griechenlands*, Heidelberg, 1825. (National Historical Museum, Athens)

ὅστις ἐλευθέρως σκεπτεται,
καλῶς νοεῖ.
Ἰ. Βελεστινλῆ

Whoever thinks freely, thinks well: a phrase from Rigas Pherraios' *Physikes Apanthisma* (A Handbook of Physics), 1790. (National Historical Museum, Athens)

J. Barthélemy's French *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (*Travels of the Young Anacharsis in Greece*, 1788) was extremely popular and went into several editions in all European languages. The author takes the reader on an imaginary tour around 4th-century B.C. Greece in a fictional narrative containing a vast range of detail about ancient Greece, drawn from classical writers. The work was a best-seller in Greece: Rigas Pherraios' enthusiasm was such that he took over the translation started by Sakellarios and published Volume IV in 1797, in Vienna, with a view to setting before his fellow-countrymen the glory that was Greece. The French edition of *The Young Anacharsis* was illustrated with maps and diagrams which were of considerable help to Rigas in the compilation of his own map of Greece. The other volumes remained untranslated due to Rigas' arrest and execution in 1798.



Left: *School for Delicate Lovers*, Vienna 1790.

In his *School for Delicate Lovers* – a translation of six of Restif de la Bretonne's *Contemporaines* – Rigas brought a fresh spirit to Greek letters on both the literary and the ideological levels. Through the new literary medium of the *novella*, the Greek reading public was introduced to the spirit of Romanticism and the radical ideas that were changing European society.



Right: *Travels of the Young Anacharsis* (see pp. 90, 91), chapters 32, 33 and 34 translated by Georgios Vendotis of Zante and chapters 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39 translated by Rigas Velesinlis of Thessaly. Vienna, 1797. (National Historical Museum, Library, Athens)

tion. At the same time he translated Metastasio and Marmon-
tel, and composed his *Thourios* (Battle Hymn) and other patri-
otic songs. A giant and generous personality, he fostered a vi-
sion of a pan-Balkan, multi-ethnic democratic republic. He
eventually went back to Vienna (1796) where he completed
his publishing projects. He published a large cartographical
work as well as various translations which he had prepared
some years before. In his capacity as a revolutionary thinker
he put his name to two revolutionary pamphlets, which he
printed in secret: the *New Political Government*, modelled on
the French revolutionary constitution of 1793 and including
also his *Thourios*, *Rights of Man and the Citizen*, and a call
to revolution, together with a *Military Handbook*. It was
these publications which led to his arrest by the Austrian au-
thorities. He was taken into custody in Trieste along with sev-
en other companions. After spending months in prison in
Vienna he was handed over to the Turks in Belgrade where he
was executed in the summer of 1798. An official encyclical of
the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople was issued at the
same time condemning Rigas' revolutionary plans.

In his *The School for Delicate Lovers*, *Book of morals con-
taining the strange doings of the most beautiful women in
Paris in the present century*, a translation of six of Restif de la
Bretonne's *Contemporaines*, Rigas attempts to convey to his
Greek readership the ethics of a new age and the lifestyle of

the city. His book brought the climate of pre-Romanticism
and the 'new sensibility' to modern Greek prose writing, while
at the same time it constituted a fiery declaration of the rad-
ical ideas that were shaking Europe. Marriage that broke the
barriers of social class, demands for social equality, a new role
for women – indeed, the entire programme of the Enlighten-
ment – filled the sensuous tales of *The School for Delicate
Lovers*, which, 'giving pleasure and instruction', can be seen to
belong to the wider programme of social change and reform
of the day. The 'literature of enlightenment' which Rigas
undertook to bring to the knowledge of his fellow Greeks con-
stantly sought to find a balance between the didactic, the new
ideology, and the social, thematic and technical innovations of
a new literariness. The popular, Constantinopolitan language
of *The School for Delicate Lovers*, as well as the interposed
verses, many of which are to be found in the manuscript an-
thologies of the Phanariots, served to familiarize the reader-
ship with the new literary genre of the novella or short story.
The endeavour met with almost instant success: two years lat-
er (1792), *The Results of Love* were published, a collection of
three Greek tales that clearly imitate *The School for Delicate
Lovers* and even repeat ten verses from the earlier work while
also including many new songs from the Ottoman East that
creatively upset conventional narrative form and give a
foretaste of rhythmic prose, as in a musical production.



Vue de l'île de Syra, from Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (1782-1822), p. 48. (Gennadius Library, Athens: GT 1289a)

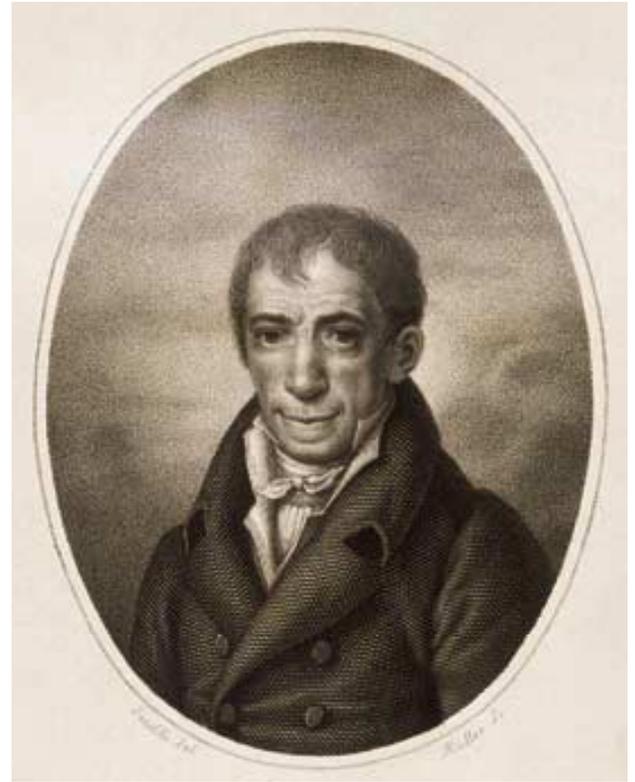
ADAMANTIOS KORAÏS

Adamantios Korais spent most of his long life outside the bounds of the Ottoman state. Born in a large city of the Levant (Smyrna, 1748), he learnt foreign languages at an early age and grew up in an environment that fostered respect for learning and literature. For several years (1771-1777) he worked for his father's business in the cosmopolitan and liberal-spirited northern European city of Amsterdam where he had ample opportunity to explore many of his intellectual concerns, thus beginning his personal process of Europeanization, and also to identify the gaps in his education. Abandoning his business career, he went to study medicine in Montpellier. Subsequently, in 1788, he settled in Paris (where he remained until his death in 1833) occupying himself with classical literature and the dissemination of Enlightenment principles and thinking among his Greek compatriots. The long letters that he wrote to his friends in Smyrna on the events surrounding the French Revolution, which he witnessed at first hand, reveal the very deep impression that these stirring historical moments had on him. The revolutionary achievement of the French stamped his character and thinking for the rest of his life, and contributed to the formation of his democratic ideas and militantly held convictions. From now on, he devoted himself to the cause of national liberation, of an independent Greece.

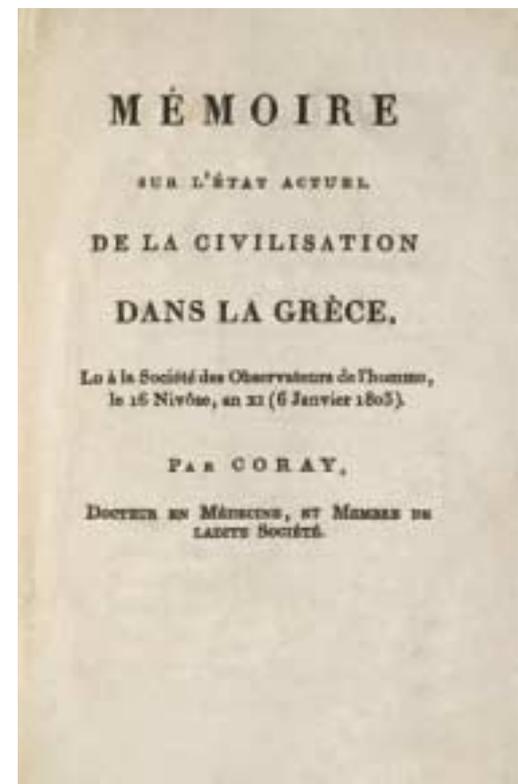
Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce, a paper read before a select audience in 1803, can be viewed as a kind of manifesto for modern Hellenism, which expressed the belief that given the educational, economic and political advances made by the Greeks over the previous fifty years they would soon regain their liberty and march alongside other European nations as a free people. In a series of political pamphlets (*Fraternal Teaching*, *War Song*, *What the Greeks Must Do in the Present Circumstances*, and others) he sought to foster a democratic will and the consciousness of the citizen among his fellow Greeks along the lines of the French ideas of liberty and equality:

*French and Greeks together
In true friendship bound
Are not French and Greek
But FrancoGreek, one nation sound!*

His translations and publishing activity were governed by a desire to give his countrymen access to the learning of the West and also to arouse their interest in the literature of their ancient forebears. In 1804, he gave material evidence of his interest in the ancient writers by publishing an edition of Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*, the first in a series of ancient writers that was given the title *Elliniki Vivliothiki* (Greek Library). The books in this series, which included authors such as Aristotle, Plutarch, Isocrates, Xenophon and Plato, were prefaced with scholarly introductions and supplemented with detailed commentaries. Following the Franco-Turkish rapprochement, Korais came to believe that his people required systematic long-term preparation, above all in the field of learning, in order through their own efforts to gain independence: knowledge of the ancients, he thought, would be a key weapon in



Adamantios Korais. Smolki, black and white lithograph, 0.35x0.25 m. National Historical Museum, Print Collection no. 4948/14.



Coray, A., *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la Civilisation dans la Grèce*, 1803. Title page. (Benaki Museum, Athens)

this struggle. Korais' well-known views on the Greek language question were an integral part of his renewal-reform programme. The solution which he proposed sought to find a *via media* between the Scylla of ancient speech and the Charybdis of the vulgar, modern tongue. In other words, it sought, on the linguistic level, to be democratic too. The mother tongue needed to be cleansed of the linguistic corruptions and foreign elements that had entered it over the centuries. While the form of the language as preserved in the everyday speech of the people

had to be respected, it nevertheless needed to undergo a degree of ‘correction’. However, ‘mellifluous Koraiism’, as the writer Palamas was later to describe this proposed amalgam of registers, served simply to aggravate the dispute over the language question: Neofitos Doukas and Panayotis Kodrikas reacted strongly to Korai’s proposed linguistic unorthodoxies, while the *Korakistika* (1813), a comedy by the Phanariot Rizos Neroulos, satirizes the language of Korai’s and his supporters.

It was part of his prolific work as an editor, publisher and letter writer that Korai created his enticing fictional character *Papatrechas*, an unlettered, philosophically-minded Chian priest who is gradually initiated into the world of learning and the Enlightenment, eventually becoming a fervent advocate of the benefits of education. Originally conceived in a series of fictional letters published as prefaces to successive books of the *Iliad* that appeared between 1811 and 1820, *Papatrechas* had a seminal influence on the fledgling Greek fictional writing of the early nineteenth century, exhibiting narrative skill and a discrete, confident style. Alongside the sensuous lovers of Rigas, Korai is seen to have created a true figure of the Enlightenment – a simple, honest priest fired by the desire to learn and understand.



Greek sailors. Valerio, black and white lithograph, 0.19x0.26 m. (National Historical Museum, Athens, Print Collection no. 135)

Extract from the *Mémoire* of Korai, 1803:

‘Formerly the Aegean islanders used only medium-sized craft in their commercial activities. Their voyages were usually for short distances, from island to island, and their longest journeys tended to be to the Black Sea or to Egypt. However, later, with the expansion in trade, as I have already mentioned, the greater wealth among many Greeks, and the declining prestige of the central [Ottoman] administration, various islanders decided to make larger ships along European lines. These new vessels caused a sensation among all apart from the authorities. Whether through ignorance or disdain or just necessity and convenience, it suited the Sublime Porte to have Greeks build up its fleet and man its ships, seeing as Turks did not seem fit for the job, and, surprisingly for such a suspicious government, it appeared to attach little significance to the creation of this merchant fleet. Furthermore, the situation to begin with seems to have suited the government somehow, in a way not uncommon in the annals of despotism ... Whatever the case, today’s island fleet belongs exclusively to the Greeks, and from the captain to the ordinary sailor they are manned entirely by Greeks.’



Panayotis Kodrikas. Portrait from P. Kodrikas, *Ephemerides* (1787-1797), Hestia Books, 1963. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Panayotis Kodrikas (1762-1827). His celebrated *Diaries* (*Ephemerides*) cover the crucial years 1787-1797. A learned Athenian, he climbed the Phanariot ladder, working in Constantinople, the Danubian principalities, and, from 1797 onwards, in Paris where he died a high-ranking state official. The genre of the Diary, popular throughout the major European cities in the second half of the 18th century, enjoyed something of a vogue among Phanariot circles. Kodrikas’ *Diaries* offer more than a chronicle of his daily activities, however, since they convey a vivid picture of his times and the atmosphere of the Phanariot world. Kodrikas also wrote a somewhat unbridled and vehement personal lampoon, *Sword-bearing Mirror revealing what are a Liar, a Whoremonger, a Thief*, 1789-90.

Training horses in the Herodes Atticus Theatre during the period of Ottoman rule. Coloured copperplate, 0.375 x 0.51 m. National Historical Museum, Print Collection no. 11068.



SECTION IV

THE BUILDING OF A NATION

(1821-1880)

THIS PERIOD, which begins with the Struggle for Independence in 1821 and ends sixty years later when the fledgling Greek State was confronting new situations and challenges, is marked by many important literary works.

Before the state had properly taken shape, the Phanariots and those who had studied at western universities had created a new economic and cultural class in Athens. Romanticism was the dominant movement, and katharevousa established itself as its language. On the other hand, popular song which had endured through the dark centuries of Ottoman domination, a fine example of popular verse started to attract the attention of scholars, both in Greece and abroad. Later, these songs were to achieve special status and were studied systematically, when popular culture began to be taken seriously with the birth of a new science, Folklore. The reading public was introduced to foreign travel literature which, despite its excesses, reinforced national conviction, connecting the glorious past with the uncertain present. It was then that the historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos published his monumental History of the Greek Nation in which he argues for the unbroken continuity and unity of Hellenism.

The dominant figures of this period are Dionysios Solomos and Andreas Kalvos and the Roumeliot General Makriyannis, author of Memoirs. For Solomos the freedom of the nation was connected inseparably with questions of the vernacular and education, something he emphasised in his writing. With his early Hymn to Liberty written in demotic (the first verses are the National Anthem) and with later works from his poetic prime such as Lambros, The Cretan and The Free Besieged (inspired by the siege of Messolonghi) Solomos became the voice of national consciousness, the bard and father of modern Greek poetry. Kalvos penned a total of twenty Odes about the Greek revolution. The language he used is highly poetic, his versification classical, and the ideology expressed within these lines worthy of great poetry. His overriding aim was to achieve a combination of Romanticism and Neo-Classicism and to lend *kydos* to the revolution. Initially his work was unknown, but today the quality of his writing and his importance in the shaping of the modern nation is undisputed. Makriyannis, with his active role in the revolution, his writing of his Memoirs (a marvellous instance of popular narrative discourse and a model of modern Greek writing) and his decisive contribution to the creation of a liberal constitution, is seen to be a major figure in modern Greek culture.



Eugène Delacroix. *A Scene from the Greek Struggle for Independence – A Mounted Greek Freedom Fighter*, 1856. (National Gallery, Athens)

THE GREEK STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

THE ROMANTIC ELEMENT

Romanticism made its appearance as a literary movement in Greece soon after the Greek War of Independence (1821-29). Its orientation towards the study of history (S. Zambelios, K. Paparrigopoulos) as well as folklore (N. Politis) dates to a few decades later.

Scholars agree that the beginnings of the movement should be set in 1830 and it is generally accepted that the Soutsos brothers, Panayotis and Alexandros – young members of a large Phanariote family –, introduced European Romanticism into liberated Greece, influenced by their studies in France during the first years of the Greek insurrection.

Greek 'pre-Romanticism', on which there are certain excellent studies, seems to have played the role of a powerless ancestor who simply foreshadowed the great Romantic movement at its peak. The relatively limited stand of 'pre-Romanticism' in Greek history and literature is both understandable and justifiable. To the extent that Romanticism, as a literary movement, did not only develop a new form of poetry but also expressed a

new aesthetic concept and an all-encompassing cultural reversal, it was only natural that pre-Romanticism did not form an adequate base for the understanding of the subsequent triumph of the Romantic movement. Many elements which, within the context of Greek Romanticism, were considered as 'pre-Romantic', may also be seen as the Phanariote version of Ottoman poetry of the time, a poetry characterized by the Oriental sensitivity of the reigning circles of the Ottoman Empire, and which happened to coincide with the poetic and sentimental models of Western Romanticism.

The exploration, therefore, and recognition of Romantic tendencies during the Struggle for Independence must be directed not only towards the meagre forms of poetic expression, as found in pre-Romantic publications, but also towards forms of cultural ferment, as they appeared prior to and during the Struggle itself. The 'New Athenian School', which embodies the core of the Romantic movement in Greece, attracted mainly young poets and thinkers who, with a markedly stronger European orientation than during the Enlightenment, joined the Romantic movement aware that they were joining a movement of revival, a movement which, one might say, was expected to carry on the spirit of the Struggle for Independence.

Seen in this light, the ties of the Greek Struggle for Independence with European Romanticism may be examined on two levels, the purely political and the literary one.

With regard to the political level, brief reference may be made to the following: upon the substratum of the outgoing Enlightenment, which penetrated the social structure of rulers and their subjects in the Ottoman Empire, there grew up a Romantic movement that had a subversive effect, especially during the last stages of the fruition of the Struggle, thus hastening the process of national self-awareness and revolutionary activity among Greeks. In other words, in place of the enlightened despotism which prevailed in the interior of the Ottoman Empire (contrasting with the reforms or 'new order' of Sultan Selim III, the Phanariots in Constantinople and the Danubian principalities, the Ioannina Enlightenment in the years and the court of Ali Pasha) or the more popular and more liberal forms of Enlightenment among the Greeks of the Diaspora, the new subversive movement of Romanticism emerged to restructure the cultural and social landscape of Greece for approximately the next one hundred years.

On the political level then there arose a new movement of 'revolutionary patriotism' which, hard as it is to isolate it from the wider context of the Enlightenment, it is even harder to identify it with its fundamental principles and ideals as, for instance, the idea of human 'happiness'. New ideals were appearing that were not truly compatible with the rationale of the Enlightenment, for example, spontaneity, sentimentality and mainly the sense of longing for death ('heroic' death) – obviously Romantic ideals pertaining to political actions such as the founding of the Philiki Etaireia or 'Friendly Society', a secret revolutionary organization, and the declaration of the national insurrection. A careful study of these ideals from a similar viewpoint could have provided a tool for understanding the daring venture of the Struggle for Independence. From the



Coloured lithograph by P. von Hess: *Ypsilantis undertakes the leadership of the Greek struggle for liberation.* (Benaki Museum, Athens).



Coloured lithograph by P. von Hess: *Four hundred freedom fighters of the Sacred Band, in the vanguard of the struggle for liberation, fall at Dragatsani.* (Benaki Museum, Athens)

The poets Alexandros and Panayotis Soutsos were the leading figures of the Romantic movement in Greece, which took hold after the War of Independence. They established their first contacts with French Romanticism in 1820 as students in Paris (1820, *Méditations Poétiques* by Lamartine). In 1823 they sought refuge in Transylvania (Brasov) where they produced the first versions of their later poetic works. A little earlier, a third brother, Dimitrios, had joined Alexandros Ypsilantis' Sacred Band and was one of the first casualties of the War of Independence (Dragatsani, 7 June 1821). This popular lithograph depicting the battle of Dragatsani highlights the dress and battle tactics of each side. The traditional garb of Turks on the one side and the modernised apparel of the fighters of the Sacred Band, with their black uniforms and the discipline of a regular army, on the other suggest the cultural conflict between East and West, expressed by the Greek Struggle for Independence which opened in 1821.



Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)



Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)



Alexander Mavrokordatos (1754-1819)



Spyridon Trikoupis (1832-96)

Scholars have pointed out the close relationship between Dionysios Solomos' 'Hymn to Liberty' and the lyric drama *Hellas* by Shelley, as well as the ties of the latter with Alexander Mavrokordatos (Pisa, 1819-1821). At an historic meeting in Zakynthos (end 1822), a friend of Mavrokordatos, Spyridon Trikoupis, urged Solomos to concentrate on writing in Greek. It is believed that at this meeting Trikoupis gave a copy of Shelley's *Hellas* to Solomos. Trikoupis' advice and mediation had a positive outcome since Solomos completed his 'Hymn' a few months later (May 1823).



Panayotis Soutsos (1806-68)



Konstantinos Penedekas (17?-1833)



Alexander Ypsilantis (1792-1828)

Panayotis Soutsos, pioneering Romantic poet, became acquainted with French Romanticism as a student in Paris in 1820. Konstantinos Penedekas, fought in the uprising of the Danubian principalities.

Alexandros Ypsilantis, head of the *Philiki Etairia* (The Friendly Society), came of a distinguished Phanariote family; an officer of the Czar, he was an outstanding leader of the independence movement. His democratic beliefs lead to his involvement in the earliest revolutionary movements in Russia and the Ottoman Balkans.

moderate Adamandios Koraïs to the political extremist Alexandros Ypsilantis or Alexandros Mavrokordatos, a nationally inspired romantic aura possessed many of the pioneers of the Struggle who, however, did not necessarily produce literary works which might have been included in Romantic bibliography.

From a purely literary viewpoint, scattered but not at all inadequate data provide a more distinct picture of the beginnings of the Romantic movement. There is no need for us to repeat what literary research has termed the 'prelude to Romanticism'. Nevertheless, on the fringes of the Struggle, there are some figures of Greek Romanticism who are worth mentioning, if only briefly – predominantly Solomos and Kalvos. These two poets can be considered as the cornerstones of 'Greek Romanticism before the Soutsos brothers': Kalvos as a result of his stay in England prior to the Struggle for Independence and his contact with the English Romantic movement, and Solomos because of his contact with the same movement through the mediation of Shelley and Alexandros Mavrokordatos and, of course, S. Trikoupis. One should also take into account the English presence in the Ionian Islands since 1814, an important factor in understanding Romanticism in Greece, as well as the wider European trend of Philhellenism in the years of the Greek Revolution, a powerful nurturer of Greek Romanticism.

In this context, one should also review the career of the Soutsos brothers. Alexandros and Panayotis Soutsos had been studying in Paris since 1820 and their involvement in the Struggle for Independence soon took a militant form. During a short stay in Stephanopolis (Brasov) in Transylvania, they began to write 'romantically': Panayotis wrote *The Traveller*, first published in 1831, and Alexandros his *Poesies*. They came to Greece in 1825, where Panayotis published his first booklet of poems, *War Songs*, at the printers on the island of Hydra in 1827. That same year Alexandros published his first booklet of poetry, *Satire*, at the same establishment. These first steps in poetry of the young Soutsos brothers were milestones along a certain path.

As we examine the contribution to Romanticism of the two poet-brothers, perhaps it would be pertinent to mention the third brother, Dimitrios, whose life complements the story of the rise of a multi-dimensional movement: a few years older than his brothers, he joined Alexandros Ypsilantis' Sacred Band as an officer, and fell heroically in the battle of Dragatsani (7 June 1821). Was it a question of young, overly-inspired spirits? Were they 'Golden Youth'? When we speak of the sacrifice of the young combatants of the Sacred Band, it is not an exaggeration to link their heroic death with the constellation of Romanticism; and it is not an exaggeration to refer to Dimitrios Soutsos as the first Romantic casualty of modern Greek history.

The fact that all this was eventually forgotten is another matter. The scorn shown for 'Atticism' in later years became – and maybe still is – an obstacle to the evaluation of a movement which marked the entire social life of 19th-century Greece. When 'Atticism', one of the most idealistic and subversive products of the Romantic upheaval, lost its national function and mission, it became the vehicle for more conser-

vative social forces, which resulted in the total collapse of the entire structure.

In conclusion, one should note that in modern Greece Romanticism emerged as a movement with characteristic force, encompassing the elements of subversion, aesthetics

and social reform. Its social character is displayed and strengthened in the circumstances and the fervour of the Struggle for Independence, while in the following decades of the liberated social state it evolved into literary and especially poetic forms.



Théodore Géricault, *Le Giaour*. Black and white lithograph, 0.185x0.24 m. (National Historical Museum, Athens, Print Collection no. 105)

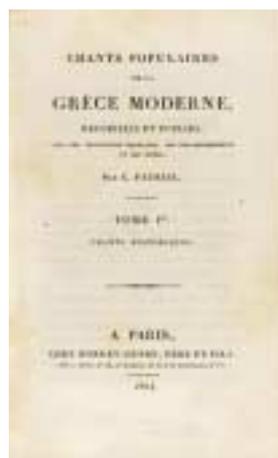
GREEK FOLK SONGS



Theophilos Hadjimichail, *Katsantonis*, wall-painting (1924-1930) in the 'Theophilos Room', Museum of Greek Folk Art, Athens.



Marcellus, Marie-Louis J. A. Ch. du Tyrac, *Chants populaires de la Grèce Moderne*, Paris, 1860. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Fauriel, Claude Charles, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*, recueillis et publiés avec une traduction française, des éclaircissements et des notes par C. Fauriel. Paris, chez Dondéy-Dupré, 1824-1825. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

Folk songs have been the most highly appreciated form of oral tradition both in Greece and throughout the rest of Europe. They first became known during the years of the Greek Struggle for Independence: it was around 1824-1825 that one of the great French scholars, Claude Fauriel, published a two-volume collection of folk-songs with an extremely interesting introduction and poetic translations in prose. This publication made an impression on European scholarly circles and was immediately translated into German (twice in 1825), into English (also in 1825) and into Russian. Writers like Stendhal and Goethe were thrilled – the latter even translated a few of the texts for his own periodical 'Kunst und Alterthum' in 1827. There followed a score of anthologies, initially by Europeans, as for instance by Niccolo Tommaseo (in 1843, with an accompanying translation in Italian), and later by Greek anthologists.

The Greek rural community was then essentially isolated and static, having a poor income and little education. Life and agricultural work proceeded at an extremely slow pace – indeed, almost at a standstill. These characteristics played a determining role in the composition of folk songs: themes, expressions and human types were the creations of a poor, inflexible and virtually immobile population. The frugality of expression of the folk-song and its elemental imaginative scope can be directly correlated with the circumscribed rural reality of the time.

Poetic tools such as themes and images are also limited. When the singer wants to describe a handsome youth, he frequently uses typical stereotype imagery.

He was so tall, he was so slim, he had such arched eyebrows,

or 'laced eyebrows', or something similar – in other words, variations of the same portrait, be it about the proud young son of a rich family or the humble son who has left his mother to seek his fortune abroad. Whenever the heroine must shine with beauty, as in the ballad of 'The Maid of Honour who Became a Bride', or in 'The Two Brothers and the Bad Woman', the stereotype recurs again:

*She lets the sun shine upon her face
the moon upon her breast
the raven's plume upon her brow like lace.*

Nevertheless, this frugality of means and expressive modes led to a significant poetic tradition; Greek folk songs are distinguished by an intense dramatic character, which succeeds in satisfying even our modern aesthetic criteria. Their refinement over the ages has resulted in verse that is devoid of everything superfluous and yet at the same time is both poetic and charming.

Although folk songs are closely associated with the rural world, they do not expressly portray the harsh realities of this world. In their context we find none of the actual daily problems experienced by farmers, such as hunger, fear, taxation, suppression, or even direct and raw violence. Instead we encounter a world of grandeur and wealth, peopled by rulers and princesses, well-to-do families with many children, tall and slender young girls. We see a world where garments are always made of gold, silk or velvet, where herds of cattle are



Leblanc Th., *Chanteurs Grecs*, Coloured lithograph, 0.40x0.28 m. (National Historical Museum, Athens, Print Collection no. 10281)



'Pleurs sur les tombeaux', in Guys, Pierre Augustin, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce ou lettres sur les grecs anciens et modernes*, Paris 1783. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

huge and rams wear bells of silver, where horses are black and fleet of hoof, and where the threshing-floor is always made of marble. A world of intangible desire, coveted and longed for, with no allusion whatsoever to the dire circumstances of daily life.

*Mother with your nine sons and with your only daughter
At night you bathed her and you tied her ribbons in the
pale light
Of the sweet moon
Now that they've sent from Babylon
To ask for her as a bride.*

Or

*A pedlar's coming down the slopes
Leading twelve mules and fifteen she-mules,*

or

Leading twelve mules laden with silver,

or else

The golden-hoofed hinny carries the young master.

Even the tombstone is:

A stone of gold, a stone of silver, a stone gilded and golden.

Of all the pangs of life only the two extreme ones are mentioned, being away from the homeland and death. Yet even then the affair is described in a most realistic way:

Charon's unfair. He is a shrouded pirate.

Or

*Hark to what Charon's mother spoke:
Those who have children, let them hide them,
And those who have siblings, harbor them,
Let wives of worthy men conceal the men,
For Charon's grooming himself now to come out and steal.*

There is nothing metaphysical, only scenes of real death: pirates storming the villages and people running to hide. The picture has its roots in reality and, on top of that, Charon's mother, like the mother of a common murderer, is sorry for her son's victims and does her best at least to reduce their number.

The world of folk songs is therefore neither the real world,



'Noce champêtre', in Guys, Pierre Augustin, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce ou lettres sur les grecs anciens et modernes*, Paris 1783. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

nor a transcendental one. It depicts a down-to-earth reality that is nevertheless elevated up to an ideal plane. The metaphysical notion of Christian religion is absent, as is any other metaphysical concept. Even death itself is but a loss, the loss of life and nothing more. It is this aspect of folk songs that grants them their poetic value.

The oldest group of songs that may be dated by the social circumstances they reflect, must have appeared about 1000 AD. They are called *akritika*, that is, songs referring to the legendary class of warriors, the *akrites*, or frontiersmen. They describe the clashes between the powerful local rulers of Asia Minor with the central administration of the Byzantine Empire. Even though the emperors were the eventual winners of these battles, the songs extol the prowess of the local rulers because they were composed in their small courts.

The next group of songs has a distinctly more urban character and must have been composed mainly in the islands, on Crete and in coastal towns, in the form that has reached us through oral tradition, between the late 15th and early 17th centuries. It is believed, though, that the themes of this group originate in a far

earlier time. This group includes short ballads about the basic dramas of daily life: the faithless wife of the husband absent in a distant land, the unlucky bride, the mother who kills her own child to conceal her adultery, erotic rivalry, the human sacrifice involved in building a bridge, even returning from the Underworld.

The next significant group of songs is the cycle known as *kleptika*, about the deeds of the *klephtes*, or guerrilla revolutionaries, who opposed Ottoman rule. These songs were composed between the mid 18th century and about 1821.

Songs referring to everyday events cannot be classified. Some themes are definitely very old, while others can be traced to more recent times. Poetically, the most important ones are the songs of lamentation. Next, come the Christmas and New Year carols, the wedding songs, love songs, lullabies, single couplets, and so on. Indeed there was no important event that was not sung about and no daily activity that was not accompanied by song. As William Martin Leake, one of the most reliable observers of the Greek region, wrote in 1814: "The Greeks make ballads and songs upon all subjects and occasions".



Greece, Epirus, Sitaria village. Feast of the Virgin Mary, August 15, 1993. (Photograph by Nikos Economopoulos / Magnum)



EUROPEAN TRAVEL WRITINGS ON GREECE AND GREEK LITERATURE

FIRST ENCOUNTERS. SIMILARITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS



Drawing of the Aphrodite of Milos from the book by Marcellus, Marie-Louis J.A. Ch. du Tyrac, *Souvenirs de l'Orient*, Paris 1839 (see p. 92). (Gennadius Library, Athens)

The tendency of Europeans to undertake the long journey to the Levant, with the Greek world as a central point of reference, was already established at the beginning of the 16th century, if not earlier, and it produced an incomparable wealth of travel literature. Inevitably, travellers' experiences were published at an ever-increasing pace, generating, on the one hand, a growing enthusiasm for travel and, on the other, creating a constantly changing image of Greece and the Greek people, as recorded by each writer.

The voyage to Greece represented, above all, a journey into history, a journey into the past. Travellers of different nationality, education and culture would undertake their tours according to individual needs and personal quests, but their fundamental approach to Greece was dominated by a sense of her historical past.

Travel records, with history as a central pivot, evaluated the contribution of the ancient world to European thought and culture, knowledge and information. The travel narrative, or 'voyage littéraire', which evolved from early travellers' accounts and which developed with the passage of time, particularly with the start of the Romantic Movement at the end of the 18th century, went on to dominate the literature of a great part of the 19th century.

Indeed, the diversion of interest away from classical antiquity, which had largely nourished the craze for travel, to contemporary Hellas or, as Korais said in 1803, to the "état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce", was accomplished by the Romantic Movement. Certainly, the passion for antiquity did not subside – the looting of ancient Greek artefacts and monuments continued at a spectacular rate at the beginning of the 19th century –, but it coexisted with elements that expressed contemporary reality.

If we accept that "travellers create the bridges that unite civilisations", then it is natural that we should look for points in common between foreign travellers' texts and the literature of modern Greece. Here though we observe that Greek literary output is still sparse, that few such points are recorded and, where they are to be found, other literary priorities predominate.

Greek literature, following the dazzling period of Cretan poetry during the 17th and 18th centuries, the strong presence of popular literature from the 16th century onwards, and the flowering of folk song passed down in oral tradition, later declined and was replaced by scholarly subjects. Encyclopaedic and didactic texts, devoted to the advancement of knowledge, started to dominate the Greek literary scene – hastening national awakening and confirming national awareness. The implementation of these objectives was aided by translations of works of general learning, though these too appeared only occasionally. They point, however, to some outside contacts, but not on such a scale that they amounted to anything regular.

If we consider the translation of the book by the French abbot, Abbé J. J. Barthélemy *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (1788), as a first intrusion of French literature into modern Greek literature, we should also accept it as a meeting point between early European travel writing and Greek literature. It is interesting to note here that a later translation, published in 1819, refers particularly to the responses of those early travellers as they undertook their journeys through Greece. "...They travelled ceaselessly through the wonderful Greek countryside, looking about with indescribable expressions of joy mixed with regret for a land that had once produced such a fine race of



Dupré, L. *Voyage à Athènes et à Constantinople ou Collection de portraits, de vues et de costumes grecs et ottomans*. Paris, 1825.
PL. XIX, «L'Acropolis vu de la maison du Consul de France M. Fauvel». (Gennadius Library, Athens)

men, whose memory alone has survived throughout the ages.”

This suggests that the journey of Anacharsis was translated primarily for encyclopaedic and didactic purposes, in order that the Greeks should learn about the splendid achievements of the ancient world. Here, I would also add for ‘national’ purposes, since the observations of European travel writers encouraged Greek readers to appreciate their historical heritage and thus affirm their ancient ‘national’ identity.

At the end of the 18th century, it is evident that where the provision of knowledge and an emphasis on ‘national’ beliefs predominated in travel literature, such books succeeded in attracting a wide response and, above all, a Greek readership. At the same time, it should be noted that at the end of the 18th century the literary concerns of the two first translators, Rigas Velesinlis and Georgios Vendotis, were directed towards French and Italian writing.

The *Travels of Anacharsis* was translated twice. First in an incomplete version in 1797 and later the full text in 1819. It indicates particularly well the approach to Hellenism at the time in that it contains a fictitious, though very plausible, picture of

the ancient world, based on the author’s extensive knowledge and familiarity with ancient texts. Elsewhere, national feeling was beguiled and strengthened by accounts emphasising the splendour of the ancient world, whose true descendants, it was not doubted, were the inhabitants of contemporary Greece.

In 1811 *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem et de Jérusalem à Paris* by Chateaubriand was published. The journey had been undertaken between 1806 and 1807 and yielded a text that established, if it did not launch, the ‘littérature de voyage’ and was “exceptional in the field of travel writing of the time”. From that time on it was not only curiosity or a thirst for knowledge that prompted travellers to compare the world of the Levant with that of Ancient Greece. The creative imagination of the writer allowed the reader to savour the pleasure of travelling to a land where myth was more authentic than life itself. Chateaubriand’s account of his travels is indeed a remarkable work that reflects the emotional turmoil, or ‘état d’âme’, experienced by the writer as he confronts a fantastic dream world that exists beyond visible reality. The influence of Chateaubriand’s work is detectable primarily in the writing

continued on p. 93



'La Grèce et les Isles pour le voyage du Jeune Anacharsis par M. Barbié du Bocage'. From the book *Recueil de cartes géographiques, plans, vues et médailles de l'Ancienne Grèce, relatifs au voyage du Jeune Anacharsis*, Paris 1788. (Ekaterini Koumariou Collection, Athens)

Perhaps no other book on Greece published at the end of the 18th century had as warm a reception and appeal as *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (Paris, 1788 - see p. 70).

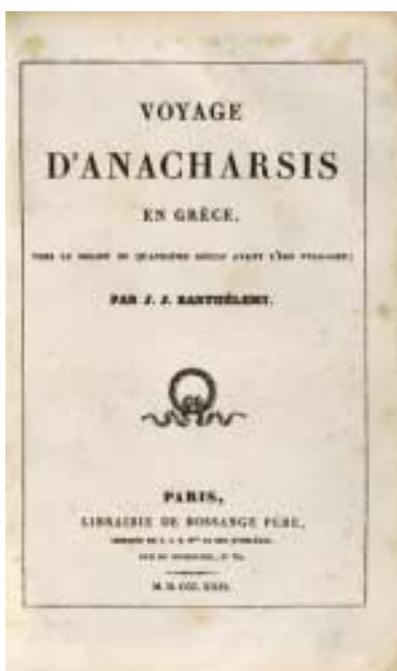
This extensive work, which became the medium through which Europe was introduced to and communicated with the entire Greek world, was the product of the reflections and readings of the French abbot, as well as of his travels in Italy, where he admired the monuments of Greek antiquity. It is indeed noteworthy that although Barthélemy never visited Greece, the narrative which he assigns to the hero of his book, the young Scythian Anacharsis, had an enormous impact on both the European and the Greek public. In the periodical *Hermes the Scholar* (1817, pp.148-149 and especially pp.406-411) a contributor, commenting on the recent translation of Anacharsis, identifies it as "a precious work", "a precious collection of the most important vestiges of Greek Antiquity, a product of brilliant imagination, showing the character of a sensitive soul and more useful than almost all other books on the same subject...". It is interesting to note that the commentator emphasises the literary quality of the book rather than its utilitarian value for the Greek people. The beauty of the text, as well as its strongly Philhellenic content, attracted translators, such as Rigas Pherraios

Velestinlis and Georgios Vendotis, in 1797, and Chryssovergis Kouroplatis, in 1819, who completed the translation of the work whilst also enriching it with illustrations. Perhaps *The Travels of the Young Anacharsis* in its first translation reflects a preliminary though fleeting desire on the part of Greek intellectuals to venture into the world of literature, as in the case of Rigas and Vendotis. "From Patratziki we went to Lamia and as we kept walking in the wilderness, over a bumpy and hilly road, we arrived at Thaumakoi, from where we encountered the most beautiful view which may be found in Greece, since this city too is situated above a vast plain, the sight of which immediately evokes a vivid internal response. Across this fertile and marvellous plain several cities have been built, among them Farsala, one of the largest and most prosperous in Thessaly. We visited all of them, finding out as much as we could about their ancient traditions, their administration, the character and the mores of their inhabitants."

Both the language and style of the above excerpt undoubtedly point to the emerging, if not fully developed, literary endeavours of the two translators. One should also note the use of many footnotes elucidating contemporary reality as well as the use of more recent place-names (such as Patratziki) instead of the respective ancient ones.



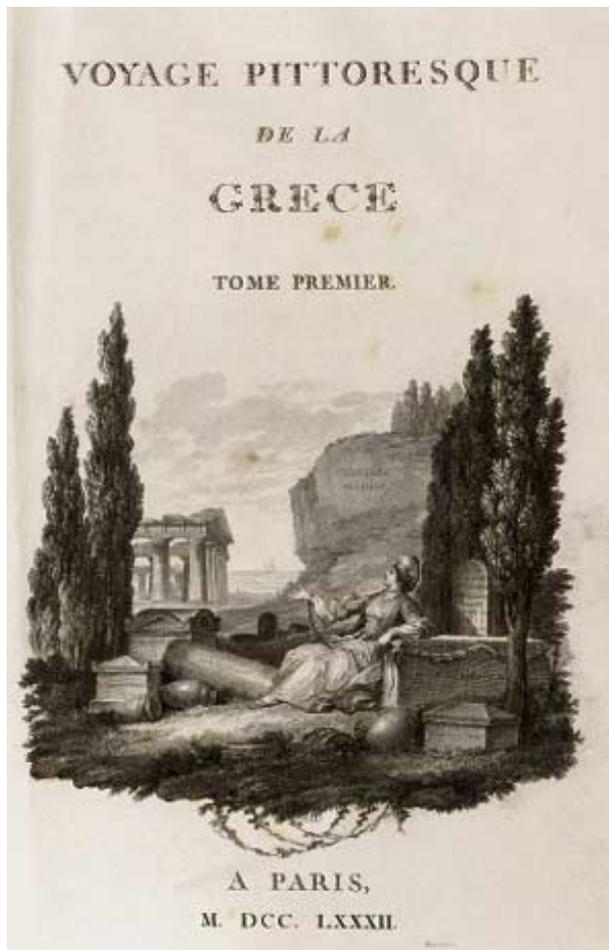
'René de Chateaubriand, taken ill in the neighbourhood of Athens'. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris: cod 67C 33038)



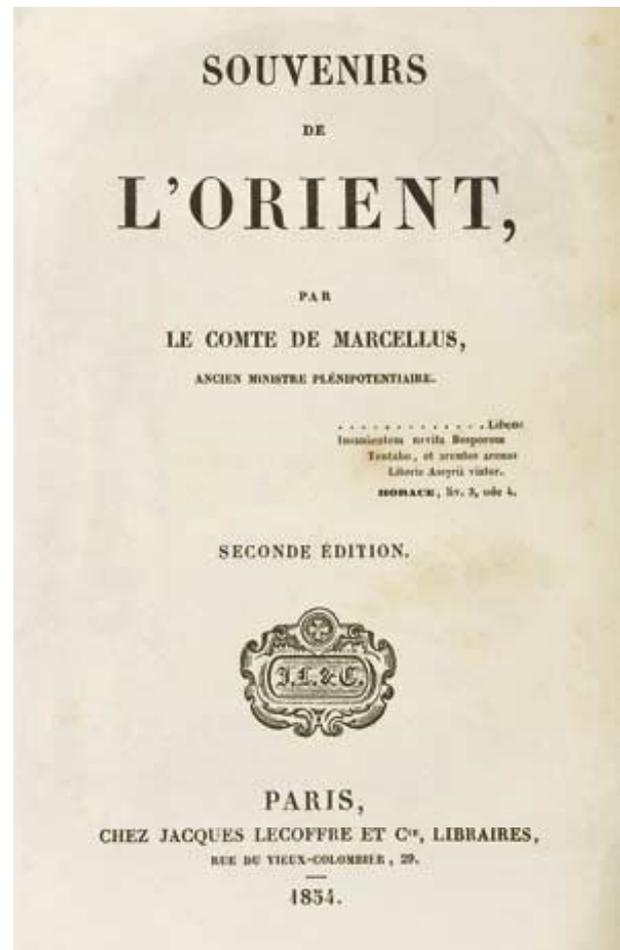
Abbé J. J. Barthélemy, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*, 1788 (see p. 70). (Ekaterini Koumariou Collection, Athens)

“...because I believe that for a nation in the process of acquiring culture, apart from educational requirements, there is the need for creative imagination to stimulate the mind and nurture the heart, I have therefore decided – since no one else more qualified has undertaken the task – to introduce an outstanding author of our century, in order to establish selective criteria in the newly-born field of Modern Greek literature. Having thus set the target, I didn’t hesitate for long as to the selection of an author. I read some of the works of Chateaubriand as a young boy and felt an eager inclination towards this man, which became all the more rational with age and lost none of its intensity. For this author, or rather prose poet, who praises religion, fatherland and nature, kindles the finest of sentiments eternally present in man’s heart.” (E. Roidis in Chateaubriand, *Travel Itinerary*, translated by E. Roidis, 1860, Vol. 1, p.iv.)

With his critical astuteness and his literary sensibility Roidis (see p. 124), in the above brief excerpt, conveys the full meaning of literary creation, viewed within the context of romantic mythmaking. By praising the literary significance and emotional value of the book, he points out – without being didactic – the need to recognise the validity of “creative imagination to stimulate the mind and nurture the heart”. It seems that, albeit belated, Roidis’ observations were necessary in highlighting Chateaubriand’s inventive, gushing and romantic spirit.



Title page of Choiseul-Gouffier's *Voyage Pittoresque de la Grèce* (1782-1822), vol. I. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Marcellus, Marie-Louis J. A. Ch. Du Tyrac, *Souvenirs de l'Orient*, Paris 1854. (Ekaterini Koumarianou Collection, Athens)

“If the desire, or even the hope, to see liberty being awarded to the Greeks some day is but chimerical, these sweet delusions must be forgiven to those who devoted their youth to studying the glory of Greece and admiring its virtues. And if the mere perusal of history inspires an ardent feeling for the Greek people, one can imagine, then, how greatly this feeling grows in the traveller, who wanders across this fortunate land, where so many heroes and famous writers were born... And if any one of my readers has travelled to the country of the Greeks, if, having lived among them, beneath this radiant sky, upon this favoured land, has felt enchanted by their spirit, their character and their delightful qualities, if he has enjoyed the traditional and touching hospitality with which they embraced me every day, if, finally, he has felt the load of the painful contrast between ancient glory and present humiliation, surely then he will cry with them, with me: O! Utinam”.

Texts like this brief excerpt from Choiseul-Gouffier's ‘Discours Préliminaire’ in his monumental work *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (1782-1822) attracted the keen interest of Greek intellectuals, as reflected in the Greek literary periodical *Hermes the Scholar* (Vienna, 1811-1822).

“Despite our silence we are acquainted with and we gratefully acknowledge these writers, nor are we so foolish as not to discern the genuine friends of the Greeks, such as a Choiseul-Gouffier...” (*Hermes the Scholar*, 1816, p.211).

“...the famous Choiseul-Gouffier, this hearty friend of Greece...” (*Hermes the Scholar*, 1817, p.319).

It is evident that national priorities outweigh the brief reference to the literary value of the texts mentioned.

Marcellus came to Greece at a very young age, as an attaché at the French Embassy at Constantinople. Before starting out on his travels, he had already studied the Greek classics and had been impressed by the spirit of Greek antiquity as represented in the classical texts. In his own later writings he expressed his great enthusiasm for Greece in general – not only antiquity.

In 1819, on one of his journeys to the Cycladic Islands, on the island of Milos, he had the unbelievable good fortune to come across one of the greatest masterpieces of Greek sculpture, the Venus (Aphrodite) de Milo (see p. 88). He negotiated its purchase for the French royal collections – regardless by what spurious means. Another Frenchman, Fauvel, great connoisseur of ancient art, and negotiator of Greek treasures himself for over forty years, could not conceal his envy when Marcellus invited him to his ship, in the harbour of Piraeus, and showed him his acquisition: “I came to Greece, young as yourself, Mr. Fauvel said to me, accompanied by men whose sole passion was antiquity. Men who grew old searching and searching. Yet not even Mr. De Choiseul, my patron, nor they, nor I, ever came across such fortune.”

Marcellus published two significant books on Greece in the 19th century: *Souvenirs de l'Orient* (second edition, 1854) and a collection of folk songs, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* (1860), with a valuable introduction, which conveys the romantic writer's love, not only for Classical Greece, but for the Greek people and their culture in general. However, these texts which are read with interest and also with pleasure today, did not have such an impact at the time they were published and were largely ignored even by Greek romantics. Marcellus in his later years reminisces about his experience of Greece: “...amazed by so many images that return to mind, by so many harmonious names, so many classical memories, I still forget myself... In Greece, folk songs do not only reflect the spirit, they constitute an important part of history.” Marcellus makes a deliberate effort to reverse the unfavourable climate towards Hellenism and the Greeks prevalent in the mid-19th century – a climate nurtured by those who had earlier been called Philhellenes.



Portrait of Lord Byron (1788-1824), dressed in Greek costume and with the Acropolis of Athens in the background. The death of the leading romantic poet in Missolonghi on 19 April 1824 revitalized the philhellenic movement in Europe. Oil painting, 0.97x0.74 m. (Benaki Museum, Athens)

In 1819 the Greek literary periodical *Melissa* (Paris 1819-1821) published a vehement attack on the English poet Lord Byron for his approach to contemporary Greece in his poem *The Giaour*. After first acknowledging the “accomplishments of the poet”, the editor quotes a short piece from the poem, translated into Greek, and accompanies his comments with some particularly harsh criticism. “In this poem he insults our poor nation just as Archilochos or Hipponax did. Inevitably, the soul of every sensitive Greek is justly disturbed every time geniuses like Lord Byron speak or write about the Greek people of today in this manner and it is unworthy of such a charitable and noble man.” His commentary continues in the same vein. The article not only attempts to refute “blame”, it also tries to convey to the reader the progress made by Greece at the time.

Sustained by petty-minded didacticism, the writer dismisses the entire offering of Byron as “his liberal, youthful ideas” which, according to a contemporary student, “epitomise the history of the country, faithfully record the potential of its present and prophesy its future”. Byron has been accurately called “the poet of Modern Greece” and this characterisation has never been refuted. Simply, the sensitivity of certain Greeks was so excessive that ‘national’ priorities triumphed over the romantic mood of the poet and they failed to recognise the poetic word when faced by problems dictated by the gravity of historical circumstances.

*Fair Greece! sad relic of departed Worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
And long accustomed bondage uncreate?*

(Childe Harold's Pilgrimage)

The Greek commentator (possibly Konstantinos Nikolopoulos) is unable to respond to the romantic poetic spirit of Byron, which is expressed through comparison of a brilliant past with the miserable present-day conditions in Greece. It is only in later decades that the ‘Byronic’ theme of comparison goes on to influence and characterise the Greek Romantics when a climate of pessimism about the future of the Greek people prevails.

of the French Romantics and is less evident in the work of contemporary Greek writers. In fact, more than fifty years had to pass before it was brought to the attention of the Greek reading public in a translation by Emmanuel Roïdis in 1860.

Translations followed one another, as well as favourable reviews, notably by Sainte Beuve and Comte de Marcellus, but there was also some criticism and negative reaction. This was particularly reflected in the work of Dionysios Avramiotis, a doctor from the island of Zakynthos who had earlier hosted Chateaubriand at his home in Argos. He pointed out mistakes and inaccuracies and accused Chateaubriand of distorting the facts of his trip to the Peloponnese and Attica in favour of imaginative fabrication. Five years after the publication of *Itinéraire*, Avramiotis published his book in Italian with the title: *Alcuni cenni critici sul viaggio in Grecia... del signor Chateaubriand* (Padova 1816).

Even though Sainte Beuve considered that he was mostly correct in his criticism, Dionysios Avramiotis typifies the role of the scholar when confronting the creative writer. It is still too soon for a Greek intellectual to accept an author who prefers the world of fantasy to reality.

A few years earlier, in 1805, Konstantinos Stamatis, a Greek who held the post of French consul in Civita Vecchia, translated the novel *Atalâ* by Chateaubriand. It proved to be a one-off translation with no follow-up. A friendship existed between the two men and this is confirmed by the fact that, two years earlier, in 1803, Chateaubriand had baptised the daughter of Stamatis, giving her the name Atala.

Meanwhile, the poetry of Lord Byron met with a similar response from the Greek public. The Greek literary periodical *Melissa*, published in Paris, launched a bitter attack in which Lord Byron was recognised as “one of the foremost contemporary poets in Europe”, but was violently criticised for the way in which his poem, *The Giaour*, “insults the poor Greek nation like a second Archilochos or Ipponax”. Here, national arguments were triumphantly summoned up to defend the Greek nation against unfair censure.

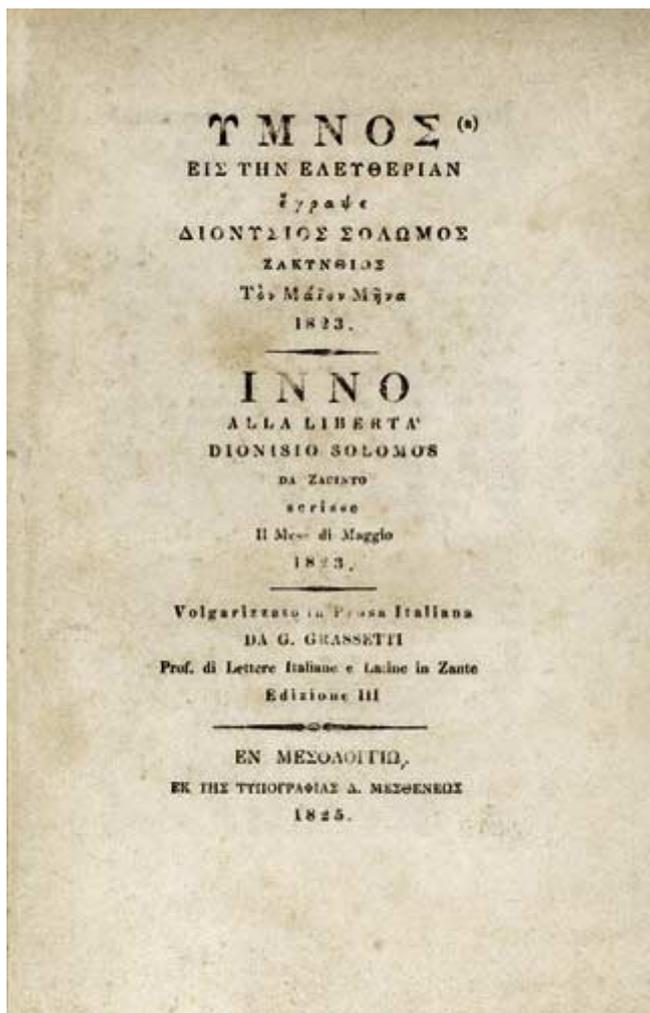
At the time, the travel journal was viewed essentially for its contribution towards promoting the image of both ancient as well as modern Greece and, less importantly, for its influence on the world of Greek letters. Other priorities dominating the consciousness and thinking of Greek intellectuals now featured in articles published in the Greek literary periodicals of the day, the most important being *Hermes the Scholar*, which appeared in Vienna during the years 1811-1821. The monumental three-volume work of Choiseul-Gouffier *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (1782-1822) is typical, but there are other instances of travel writing that contributed much to promoting a spirit of Greek national awareness which was rooted in antiquity. In the decades following the Greek War of Independence and the founding of the modern Greek state few examples of travel writing exist in the Greek language; they started to be published again only at the beginning of the 20th century. A study in Greek by Stelios Xefloudas, entitled *Travel Impressions* (Basic Library Edition No. 22, 1956), reveals that “Travel books of literary merit have started to appear only during the last thirty years”. Amongst the considerable number of authors mentioned are Zacharias Papanтониου, Kostas Ouranis, Photis Kontoglou and Nikos Kazantzakis, but no reference is made to the impact and influence of European travel writing on the Greek literature of the period.

DIONYSIOS SOLOMOS

THE TWO GREAT CHALLENGES: LIBERTY AND LANGUAGE



S. Prosalendis:
Dionysios Solomos,
engraving.



Dionysios Solomos. Title page from the first edition of *Hymn to Liberty*. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

Dionysios Solomos (Zante 1798 - Corfu 1857), whose appearance as a poet coincides with the years of the Greek War of Independence (1821-1826), is generally recognised as the leading spokesman for the great values which inspired the struggling nation. His famous phrase “As if I had any other care on my mind than liberty and language...” sums up his twofold patriotic concern, namely, the liberation of Greece from Turkish rule and the liberation of the living modern Greek language from barren scholasticism and archaic hyperbole. This dual quest for the political and spiritual freedom of the Greek people was served in many ways by his work, which gained him the title of national poet.

Solomos is undoubtedly a special case in the history of modern Greek letters. He was of Greek origin but spent his entire life beyond the borders of the independent Greek state, as a French and English citizen in the multicultural and polyglot environment of the Ionian Islands, which belonged successively to Venice, France and England before they were ceded to Greece in 1864. As all Ionian Island noblemen, he was bilingual (Italian-Greek) since his childhood and went to study in Italy (1808-1818), where he became acquainted with Italian and in general European literature and was introduced to the ideas of the Enlightenment, Classicism and emerging Romanticism. He embarked on his career as a poet with poems in the Italian language, whilst his transformation into a Greek poet began at the age of twenty, upon his return to Zante (Zakynthos) in 1818. Solomos strove to retrieve his mother tongue (the Zakynthian idiom), to become familiar with Greek poetic tradition, and also to formulate a modern Greek poetic language which would replace the confused linguistic and literary forms of the day. His awareness of his role as founder of the reborn nation's literature was strengthened by the outbreak of the War of Independence and also by his meeting with the historian Spyridon Trikoupi, who urged the young poet to write in Greek instead of Italian, stressing, almost prophetically, that “Greece awaits its Dante”. And so it turned out: Solomos' role in Greece scarcely differs from that of Dante in Italy.

Solomos' intentions are made plain in two works of this period, works that complement each other in serving the interrelated causes of language and liberty. In 1823, at a crucial point in the Struggle for Independence, he composed his *Hymn to Liberty* comprising one hundred and fifty eight verses written in the demotic language. This work aspired to encourage the fighters of the war, to attain pan-European promotion of the sacred cause and at the same time to prove the capacity of the embattled nation to develop a literary language. A year later, *The Dialogue* (1824) between the Poet, the Friend and the Wise Scholar was to be one of the first literary works to advocate the power of the popular language of Greece. It is a noteworthy example of a literary prose text in demotic Greek. The nation's enemy (the Ottoman state) is identified with the spiritual enemy of the Greek people (the Wise Scholar), and the Poet (Solomos) emphasises the refinement of the demotic language, the need for it to be the written language and its importance both as a means of emotional expression and as an educational tool. Furthermore, he confutes purists and supporters of archaism in a manner that reveals his wide knowledge of European theory. Solomos views the relationship between poet and popular language with respect: “the form of words used by the people must not be changed by the

continued on p. 98



Dionysios Solomos. Oil painting 0.34x0.265 m. (National Historical Museum, Athens, Catalogue no. 3423)



The Siege of Missolonghi. Coloured lithograph 0.58x0.78 m. National Historical Museum, Print Collection. From I. Gennadius and Fr. Boissonas, *Histoire picturale de la guerre de l'indépendance Hellénique par le general Makriyannis notice historique ...*, Geneva, Paris, 1926.

LORD BYRON AND DIONYSIOS SOLOMOS

After five months in Cephallonia, the English philhellene and poet arrived in January 1824 at Mesolonghi, then still under siege. Solomos was living at the time in Zakynthos, close enough to the invested town to hear the cannon fire. However, the two poets were never to meet, and Byron was probably unaware of Solomos' existence. Solomos' 'Ode on the Death of Lord Byron' which he began to write as soon as he was informed of the poet's death (19 April 1824) reflects not only how deeply moved he was, but also his clear intention to connect the cause of Greek freedom with the philhellenic poet.



George Gordon, 6th Lord Byron (1788-1824), Thomas Phillips, 1835, oil on canvas, 76,5x63,9 cm, 1813. (National Portrait Gallery, London)

writer”. At the same time, he advocates creative freedom – a demanding task, yet with a linguistically productive result: “in order for any word to gain refinement, all that is necessary is the artistic skill of the author. [...] First surrender to the language of the people and then, if you are good enough, conquer it.” Ten years later he was to return to this subject with greater self-confidence and awareness: “It pleases me when I see folk songs used as a starting point. I would prefer, though, that whoever uses the language of the *klephtes* [brigands, men who took to the mountains during Ottoman rule rather than submit] used it in its essence and not merely its form. It is good to root oneself in this living tradition, but one shouldn’t stop there, one should move on and upwards... The poetry of the *klephtes* is beautiful and fascinating, for in this poetry the *klephtes* portrayed their life, their ideas and sentiments in an artless way. Yet, coming from ourselves, it does not have the same fascination. The nation requires from us the treasures of our individual intellect, garbed in national attire.”

Crucially aware of his role as national poet, Solomos turned judiciously to previous forms of national tradition (folk songs, Zakynthian poetry, Cretan poetry, medieval romances in verse) and endeavoured to be uplifted, in other words, to grasp the new dimensions of Hellenism and express them in a new way. He elaborated important critical concepts regarding his own craft, drawing upon European poetry and European thought (with special emphasis from 1830 onwards on the philosophy and literature of German Classicism and Romanticism) which encouraged him in his quest and contributed to the realisation of his artistic ambitions.

By 1828, when Solomos moved permanently to Corfu, he had completed his years of study. He began experimenting with the fifteen-syllable meter of the folk song. He attempted to use various metres, themes and motifs, which reflect mainly his neo-classical education, but also his experience of pre-Romanticism. He composed lyrical and satirical poems inspired by the everyday life around him. His first considerable achievements, the lyrical poetic composition *Lambros* (1824 and after) and the satirical prose poem *Woman of Zakynthos* (1826 and after) brought him to the forefront of modern Greek and European literature. These two works also mark the transition from committed social and patriotic poetry to the poetry of the ‘sublime essences’: the Greek uprising continues to be a leading topic, yet the emphasis has shifted to the presentation of the eternal coexistence and conflict of Good and Evil. Recurring often in the poetry of Solomos, this theme is also dominant in his ambitious though unfinished *Composition* of 1833-1834, a poetic work in eight parts, where the conflict between Good and Evil is presented in four lyrical and four satirical poems. This work remained unfinished, yet its conception and some of its completed parts, such as the epic-lyric *The Cretan*, show that, despite their fragmentary form, the poet has now obtained a superior and novel sense of lyricism, a feeling demonstrated also by leading European poets.

A characteristic example of the thematic and ideological evolution evident in Solomos’ works of his mature Corfu period are the successive revisions (1833 and after) of a previous attempt (1826) to compose a poem on one of the most important events of the Revolution, the siege and fall of Mesolonghi, the town where Lord



University of Padua, where Solomos studied 1815-1818.
(Kathimerini photo archive)

During the 19th century, young people from both the centres and outlying parts of the Greek world left home to study at Italian universities. An extraordinary number of these students were from the Ionian islands. In the first half of the century there were 840 Greek students at the University of Pisa alone, and of these 460 were from the Ionian islands. A similar picture obtains in Pavia, Padua, Sienna and Naples.

This is not simply another chapter in the well-known history of Greek student migration. The young Greeks heading for Italian universities in 1821 were entering the Italy of the *Risorgimento*, and the revolutionary atmosphere there was infectious, shaping much of the ideology of the Greek Enlightenment and a concern for the outcome of the struggle for independence. At the same time, the political and literary currents in Italy clearly had a great impact on these students, especially in view of the fact that Italian universities were then centres of a cultural awakening and hotbeds of revolutionary foment. The Greek students joined forces with their Italian counterparts in enlightened cultural movements of the day, in clandestine organisations and even on the battlefield.

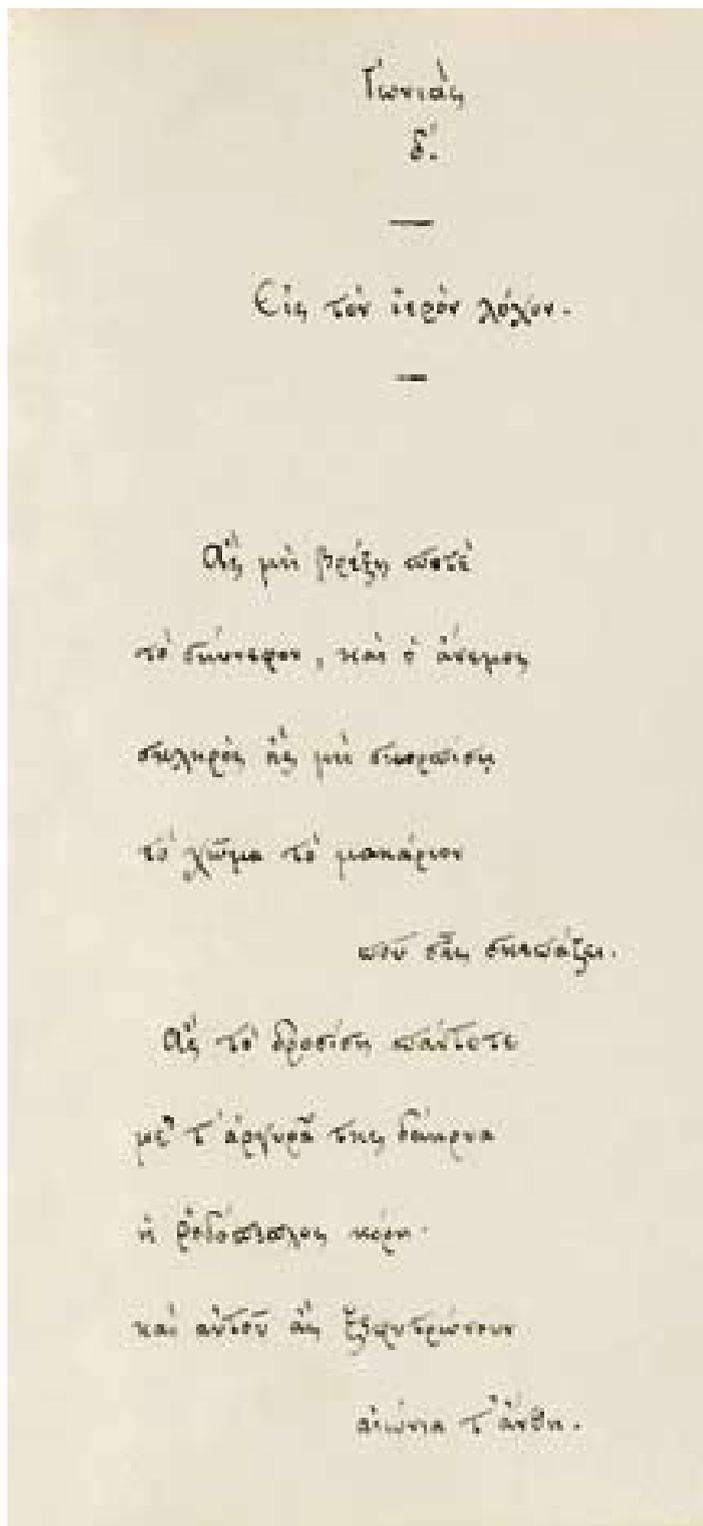
After their studies had come to an end, most of these students returned to Greece, bringing with them not only academic knowledge but a broader cultural foundation in addition to the ideas, the inspiration and the experience of revolutionary struggle which were to prove decisive for the future.

Byron died. The main theme of the poem continues to be the heroic exodus of the inhabitants under siege, yet that which is stressed in the latter versions is human spiritual suffering, strength and moral freedom, as eloquently expressed by the poem’s new title: *The Free Besieged*. What is important, is that national consciousness is interwoven with universality: “Do what you can, so that the small circle, within which the besieged town moves, reveals in its surroundings the greater interests of Greece in attaining the material status desired both by those who want to keep her as well as by those who want to seize her, and, in her moral standing, the greater interests of Humanity. Thus the matter is bound up with the universal system.” The transition from the particular event to its deeper meaning, the General, the Ecumenical, the inner freedom of man, is the goal of Solomos’ mature poetry. *The Free Besieged*, written in demotic Greek and in the traditional non-rhyming fifteen-syllable verse, is a characteristic example of the linguistic, stylistic and expressive perfection sought by the poet.

In his solitary and arduous career, Solomos succeeded in formulating a modern Greek poetic language and in integrating in a novel way Greek tradition with a new set of circumstances. The poet himself, though, remained dissatisfied. In his quest for an unattainable romantic perfection, he left most of his works unfinished and, shortly before his death in 1857, resorted to writing poetry in Italian again. Nevertheless, he had achieved the uplift he had sought, being considered the first significant Greek poet of modern times, of European stature and importance, and the founder of modern Greek letters.

ANDREAS KALVOS

Ἦνος ἰσοπέδου
 Ἀ. Καλῶς



Manuscript of Andreas Kalvos ('Ode to the Sacred Company', from *The Lyre*, first edition 1824. (Saint Geneviève Library, Paris)

The poetic work of the Ionian Islander Andreas Kalvos (Zante 1792 - Louth, England 1856) consists of twenty Odes written in the Greek language. They are contained in two collections he published at a young age, *The Lyre* (Geneva 1824) (Odes 1-10 headed by a short invocation to the Muses in verse) and *Lyric Poems* (Paris 1826) (Odes 11-20). These twenty poems together bear the title of *Odes*. His other, less important, works were written in Italian in the previous decade (1811-1821) and comprise three tragedies (*Theramenes*, *The Danaids*, *Hippias*) and a few odes, marked by the literary influence of Ugo Foscolo and neo-Classicism. During the rest of his life Kalvos published no other poems.

The Odes were inspired by the Greek War of Independence. Most of them are a description, exaltation or critique of the protagonists and events of the Greek national struggle during the years 1821-1826. The thematic arrangement inspired by this contemporary historical adventure is necessarily related, on the one hand, with Kalvos' individual adventures and anxieties, and on the other with his ideology as a poet. In the Odes the struggle to shake off the Ottoman yoke symbolises, in a more general sense, the fight against an oppressive regime. The attainment of freedom for the Greek nation will mean the dominance of justice over injustice, the prevalence of social and political virtue over the blind forces of authority and the promotion of education over barbarity. Kalvos' numerous allusions to ancient mythology and to the glorious Hellenic past, in association with references to contemporary Greece (natural beauty of the land, spiritual qualities of its people), show that he wrote these Odes in the name of the nation, which he attempts to hearten, to uplift and to praise. As the Odes are essentially heroic and admonitory poems, they are structured upon various thematic antitheses. The principal antithesis is freedom vs. tyranny and it is expressed by contrasting the situations that symbolise the two parts of the opposing pair: light-darkness, beauty-barbarity, heroism-inertia, memory-oblivion.

Kalvos' ideology as a young adolescent took shape during his long stay in Italy, England and Switzerland (1802-1825). His solid literary education, fermented in the workshop of Italian neo-Classicism, blended in with the liberal ideas of the French Revolution, which had spread throughout Europe. Moreover, the Odes originated from but also contributed to the strong Philhellenic movement of that time. The belief that Kalvos wrote his Greek poems so as to address them to the European public, which had become sympathetic to the Greek struggle for independence, is a justifiable one. On the other hand though, that he chose to write the Odes in modern Greek, a language unknown to Europeans, shows that Kalvos, a self-taught savant of the Greek diaspora, wanted to serve not only his homeland, but also its Muses.

Some scholars have designated Kalvos as the "poet of the Idea", in the sense that his poetry was intellectual and objective; although it drew its inspiration from the historical circumstances of the time, it in fact focuses on eternal and metaphysical concepts. The core of this absolute idealism was considered to be his praise of Freedom and its identification with Virtue. It has also been maintained that the Odes lack a sensual perception of life, because Kalvos was a puritan or because

the poet himself deliberately undermined his sensuality, since he dedicated his poetry to the sacred goal of serving the insurrection. Conversely, other scholars have projected an image of Kalvos as a poet inflamed by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the political ideals of the democratic movement of his times, whose poetry was essentially political with traces of youthful vigour and sensuality.

Mainly because of his long stay in Italy and in other European countries and the classical education he received there, Kalvos' linguistic awareness of Greek was formulated under the influence of the sophisticated idiom and not of the popular spoken language. Kalvos is the only significant 19th-century poet of the Ionian Island School who did not adopt the colloquial language, or *demotiki*. The Odes were written in the *katharevousa* or 'purist' version of modern Greek enhanced by archaisms, but also by popular word types. Kalvos' language forms an entirely personal poetic idiom ensuing from the combination and ultimate synthesis of linguistic elements stemming from classical Greek, religious texts (the Old Testament and the Psalms), the language of intellectuals of the period and the popular spoken language adorned with idioms. His vocabulary, however, is based on classical Greek words. Various theories have been proposed as to the origin of Kalvos' language. Quite probably he was influenced by Foscolo's theory that the language of poetry should be erudite, fabricated, enriched with archaisms but also embellished with material drawn from the spoken language. The linguistic heterogeneity of Kalvos' poetry is further illustrated by the several Italian forms and solecisms found in his work. Nevertheless, it is these traits of a unique linguistic idiom insubordinate to rules of grammar that are an organic part of the Odes and determine their aesthetic appeal.

From the point of view of style, the main characteristic, which is manifest in the Odes, is the balanced combination of the two principal aesthetic trends of the time, neo-Classicism and Romanticism. The basic difference between the various

interpretations of the Odes focuses on whether their style relies mostly on the one or on the other aesthetic movement. Some scholars have interpreted the Odes as a blend of the external elements of Italian neo-Classicism with the expressive climate of European pre-Romanticism, suggesting that under the neo-Classical surface of *Odes* lies an emotional and spiritual inclination towards Romanticism, traces of which are apparent. Other scholars have classified the Odes as within the sphere of influence of European neo-Classicism. The following features of the Odes may be attributed to neo-Classicism: the balanced structure of the poems (preamble, main part, epilogue), the extensive use of metonymy, Kalvos' idealistic principles, the acceptance of classical requirements in Art, its placement on the top of the value scale and the belief that poetry is an educative form of art. One could add that the high tone, the epigrammatic style and the moralising content of the Odes are also traits of Classicism. Conversely, one could point out elements characteristic of pre-Romanticism, such as melancholy mood, dramatic intensity, visionary situations and the use of the first person in some instances.

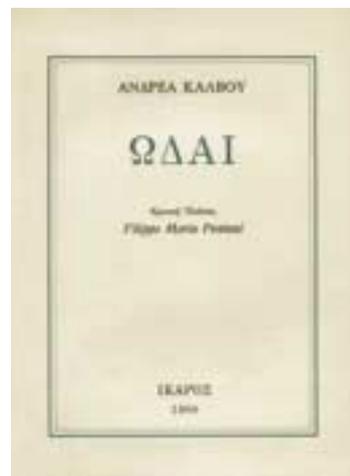
One of the main questions, which still remains open, regarding Kalvos' style, is whether the expressive audacity evident in certain parts of *Odes* is the outcome of the poet's conscious choice or whether it was the circumstantial result of his particular intellectual and literary education. According to textual indications one might say that the Odes aimed at achieving a 'versatile harmony' (the term used by the poet himself), that is, a complex, protean and harmonious rhythmical and expressive effect. The 'versatile harmony' of the Odes was attained by disavowing the musicality of lyric poetry at large and arranging the rhythm according to the internal rhythm of Italian drama. Yet at the same time, the disparity (and in some cases contrast) between metrical forms on the one hand and language and content on the other may be the outcome of Kalvos' invariable need to attune the Italian metrical and rhythmical features of the Odes to the Greek language they were written in.



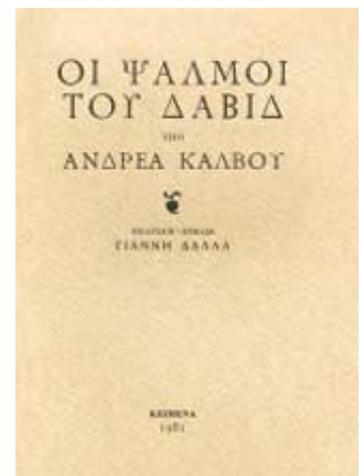
Kalvos, *The Lyre*. First edition 1824. Title page. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Kalvos, *La Lyre patriotique de la Grèce*, 1824. Cover. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Kalvos, *Collected Poems*, edited by F.M. Pontani, Ikaros, Athens 1988.



The *Psalms of David* translated by A. Kalvos, Keimena Publications, 1981.

These two sketches, which are imaginary portraits of KALVOS since there is no known depiction of the poet, were made by two significant modern Greek poets, GEORGE SEFERIS (right, drawn in 1941 - see p. 170) and ODYSSEUS ELYTIS (below, drawn in 1991 - see p. 186). Despite differences between them, both sketches present a remote and stern picture of Kalvos, an image that matches written portrayals of him as a solitary and unsociable individual. Both drawings give us the feeling that Kalvos was in self-imposed exile from his younger public. Perhaps the lasting charm of Kalvos' admittedly outmoded subject matter lies precisely in the emotional intimacy that this self-imposed exile provokes. To Kalvos' readers his exile appears to be unaffected by time. Kalvos renounced the Greek reality of his time as completely foreign to his ideal of Greekness. To confront the Greek reality of his time he found the active antidote: an undefiled and unfalsified vision of an ideal Hellenism, which he exalted and justified.



GEORGE SEFERIS

“No portrait of Andreas Kalvos Ioannidis is known to have survived. When, sometimes, his verse echoes persistently in my mind, I imagine a human shape struggling, with the resigned gestures of the blind, to pass through a high curtain which enfolds it. It never succeeds in revealing itself. Only his voice comes though, closer or more distant. Only the movements of a body suspected and guessed at under the billowing cloth, as though some Odysseus with drawn sword were driving away his soul from the trench of dark blood which would for ever sever him from our own world.”

(GEORGE SEFERIS, 'Preface for an edition of Kalvos' Odes' in *Essays*, vol 1 (1936-1947), Ikaros Publications, Athens 1974 – Translated by John Stathatos).



ΕΛΥΤΗΣ 91
ODYSSEUS ELYTIS

Ταπεινός Δείγμα
Ἀνδρέας Κάλβος Ἰωαννίνης,
Σαμίου

Signature of Andreas Kalvos.

MAKRIYANNIS

MEMOIRS OF THE GREEK STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Memoir writing as a literary form has not been uncommon in Greek literature from ancient and Byzantine times up to the present. Its continued use over the ages and its consistency as a form of writing reflect its heavy dependence on the political, military or cultural circumstances it concerns. It springs from a personal need to recount and explain events and to preserve them from oblivion. It is a means of conveying personal truths and of communicating with the public in an attempt largely to justify individual actions carried out within the framework or even in the name of society as a whole. Memoirs interweave personal and collective history, interpreting history from several viewpoints. The narrative, moreover, often follows the course of the writer's own life story in such a way that historical events form part of his personal experience. Although the intensely subjective character of a memoir detracts from its value as an historical source, it does not undermine its importance as a personal testimony.

A time of personal or collective crisis favours the writing of memoirs. Events that occurred during and after Greece's struggle for independence from the Ottomans belong outstandingly to one such period and drove literate and semi-literate leaders of the time, scholars, combatants and politicians to make their first acquaintance with authorship. Their own role in the uprising and the need to justify their participation created an obligation on their part to record their perception of historical events. Fighters of 1821 attempted either to write their own accounts or to dictate their recollections (Theodoros Kolokotronis). They preserved their memories by writing them down in a more or less personal manner, either in the first person or in the third (Emmanuel Xanthos, Palaion Patron Germanos), sometimes in brief epistolary form (Andreas Mamoukas) or in longer narratives often based on journals kept at the time, or sometimes even in the form of poetry (Daniel of Tripolis). The sheer number of these memoirs proves the necessity and the immediacy of personal records, barely influenced by prevailing aesthetic trends. The desire to document events is so strong that it overcomes all the difficulties inherent in the process of composing a literary work, a process quite foreign to the type of activity that distinguished the fighters of the revolution. Most of them wrote in the language they spoke, that is, *demotiki* or the colloquial language, enriching the written word with the vivacity and idioms of the spoken (Panaghis Skouzes, Makriyannis). There were, of course, more polished but equally direct accounts (Kassomoulis, Fotakos). All are genuine popular literature and addressed to all and sundry. The result was an entirely personal version of history in the quest for justification and communication.

One particularly distinguished memoir writer was MAKRIYANNIS (1797-1864). Ioannis Triantaphylodimitris, or Triantaphyllou, his real name, was born in the village of Avoriti in Doris. His turbulent life, driven by a fighter's spirit and passion and endowed with the genuine sensibility of simple folk, has been rightly seen as a symbol of modern Hellenism.

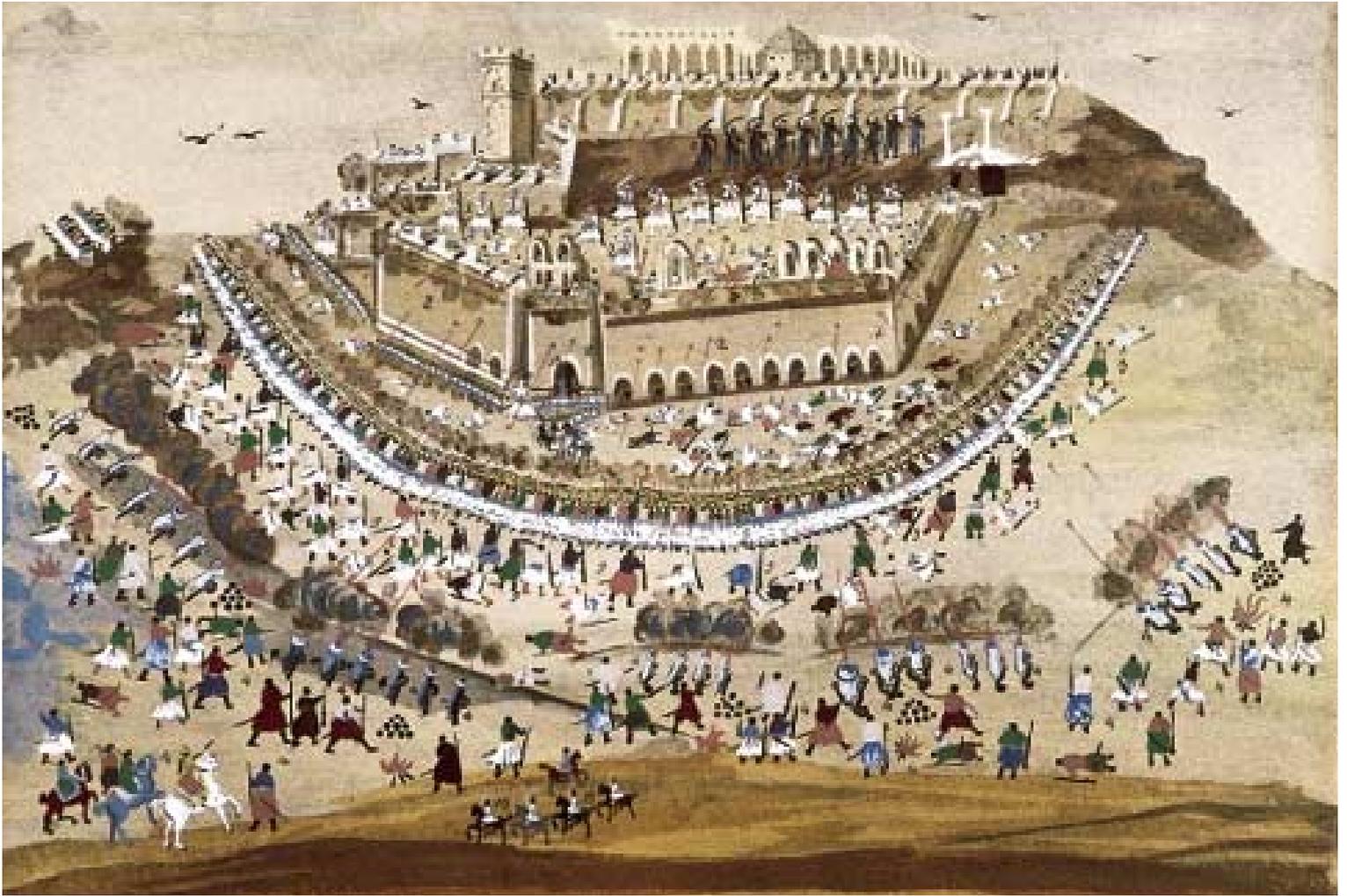
This symbolic role of Makriyannis was further enhanced by the legendary search for the primary source, namely, his *Memoirs*, their discovery and disappearance – an adventure



Flag of the Constitutionalists of Perachora. The words ENOSIS -SYNTAGMA (Union - Constitution) are inscribed on the flag, while in the centre is stamped the figure of the goddess Athena. (National Historical Museum, Athens)



S. Prosalendis, *General Ioannis Makriyannis*, oil painting, 0.81 x 0.465 m. (National Historical Museum, Athens, no. 8525)



The Siege of Athens. Coloured lithograph, 0.58x0.78 m. From I. Gennadius and Fr. Boissonnas, *Histoire picturale de la guerre de l'indépendance Hellénique par le général Makriyannis notice historique ...*, Geneva, Paris, 1926. (National Historical Museum, Athens, Print Collection)

Makriyannis believed that a reconstruction and justification of the Struggle for Independence could not be achieved with words alone but called for pictures as well. That is why he decided to assign the visual depiction of battles and events of the Revolution to a painter. He mentions in his Memoirs that he originally hired a foreign painter, a “Frank”, but was not satisfied with the result. He then commissioned Panayotis Zographos to undertake the work. Zographos came from Vordonia in Lakonia, and was a fighter and popular hagiographer. He came to stay with his two sons in Makriyannis’ house. Following Makriyannis’ explicit instructions and suggestions as to the theme of each painting, he composed between 1836 and 1839 twenty-five works illustrative of the Revolution. In addition to these twenty-five works in

that brought the name of their sole reader Yannis Vlachoyannis dramatically before the public eye. His restoration of the original text in 1907 was inspired by the cultural movements current in the last two decades of the 19th century and by romantic historiography seeking historical evidence to confirm the national identity of modern Greece. Makriyannis’ *Memoirs* were initially published as an important historical document. It was for this reason that his rambling *Visions and Marvels* were ignored at the time, being considered not worth publishing.

Makriyannis had been illiterate. His need to record the events he had lived through persuaded him to acquire just enough knowledge of reading and writing to enable him to set down his memoirs; he was untouched by scholarly tradition.

egg tempera on wood, there were also four sets in watercolour on coarse wrapping-paper. The works of the original series are unsigned, whereas of the fifty-two copies on cardboard forty-seven bear the signature of Dimitrios, mentioned by Makriyannis as Panayotis’ son.

More recent research has proven, however, that the painter of the Revolution was Dimitrios Zographos, Panayotis’ father and not his son, as perhaps mistakenly mentioned by Makriyannis. It is now known that Dimitrios was the fighter and hagiographer who took part in the siege of Tripolis in September 1821. At the time Dimitrios was working on his paintings of the Revolution, Panayotis was apprenticed to his father and from 1839 attended painting lessons at the School of Arts on a scholarship.

Makriyannis was a passionate fighter steeped in popular tradition and lore, endowed with sensitivity and a sense of justice. He loved singing, composed his own rhyming verse and looked upon the past with an artist’s eye. He began writing on 26 February 1829, completely carried away by the events he was recalling to mind. “Makriyannis is not objective. He neither recounts nor describes, he fights”, writes K.T. Dimaras. His writing, dominated by passion, has tone and rhythm, becoming dramatic, notably vivid and often epigrammatic, with condensed dialogues and frequent asides to the reader. His didactic intent requires the active participation of the reader, for he makes an insistent appeal for a collective approach to the subject.

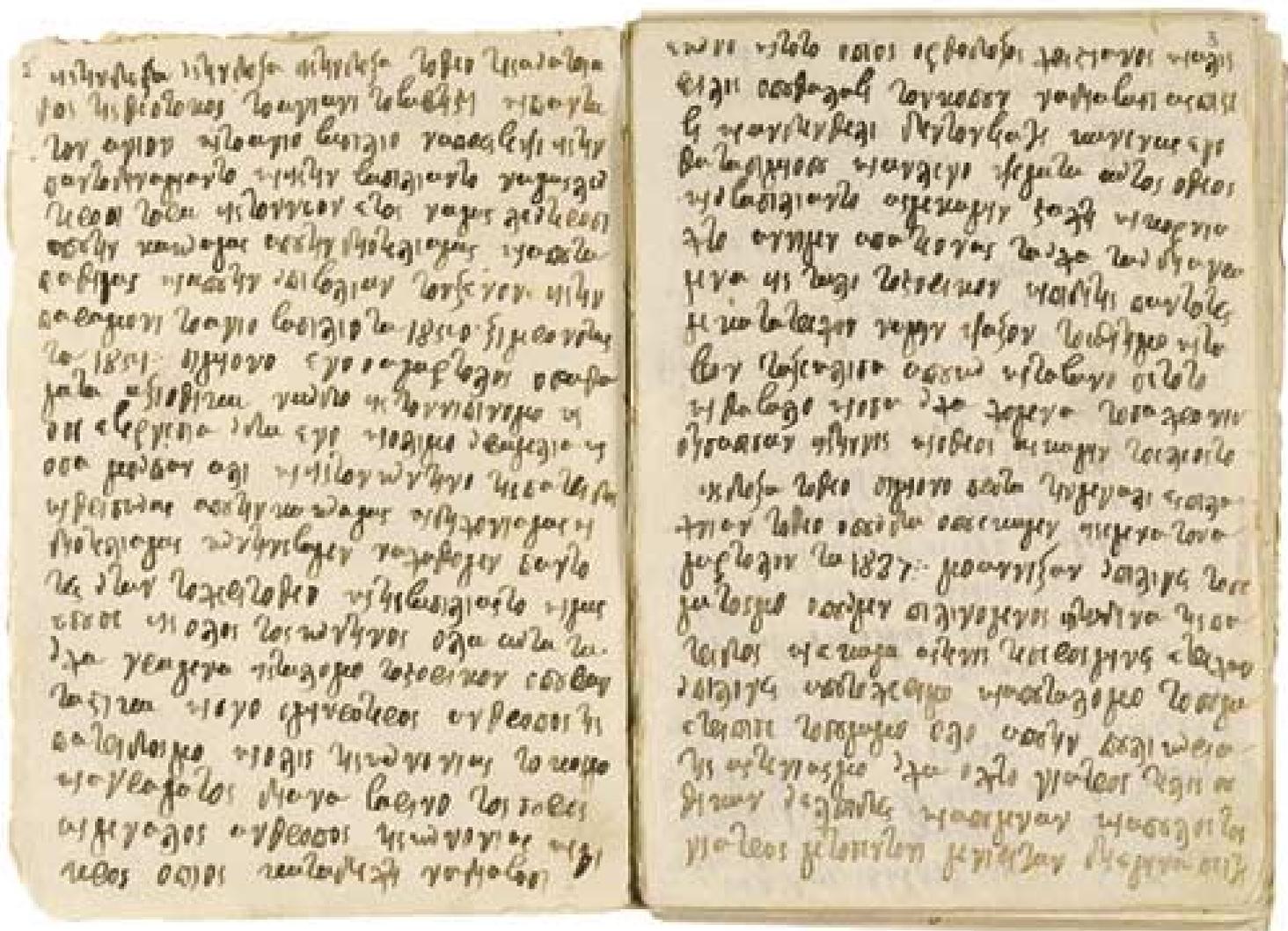
The general restructuring of post-revolution Greek society,

steadily distancing itself from a rural economy, finds expression in the person of Makriyannis. Spyros Asdrahas observes that in Makriyannis' ideology there co-exist "on the one hand that domestic orderliness which was the elemental need of modern Greek urbanity and on the other the spirit of heroism, perhaps in an ideal form of abstraction". However, that Makriyannis' *Memoirs* have been acknowledged and survived is not only because of their importance as an historical source of information or because of their ideology. It is also because of the language in which they were written. The immediacy and passion of his writing as well as his total absorption in popular tradition and popular mores distinguish his *Memoirs* from those of other patriots, making him one of the most authentic writers of modern Greek prose. This is proved by the wide appreciation of his work in later years.

The poet Kostis Palamas described Makriyannis' *Memoirs* in 1911 as a precious gem of the popular language and as an example of uncontrived classical art. Yet the person who in fact lifted

the text from obscurity was George Seferis who, in 1943 during another period of crisis, discerned in General Makriyannis' work the continuity of the Greek race. Thanks to his illiteracy, Makriyannis' writing retains the values of Hellenism intact: his *Memoirs* are the ark of the vast popular tradition of the Greeks. In this spirit and in the feverish desire to define authentic Greekness, the generation of the thirties was to read the *Memoirs* as a true expression of cultural memory, while out of them they constructed new legends of Hellenism.

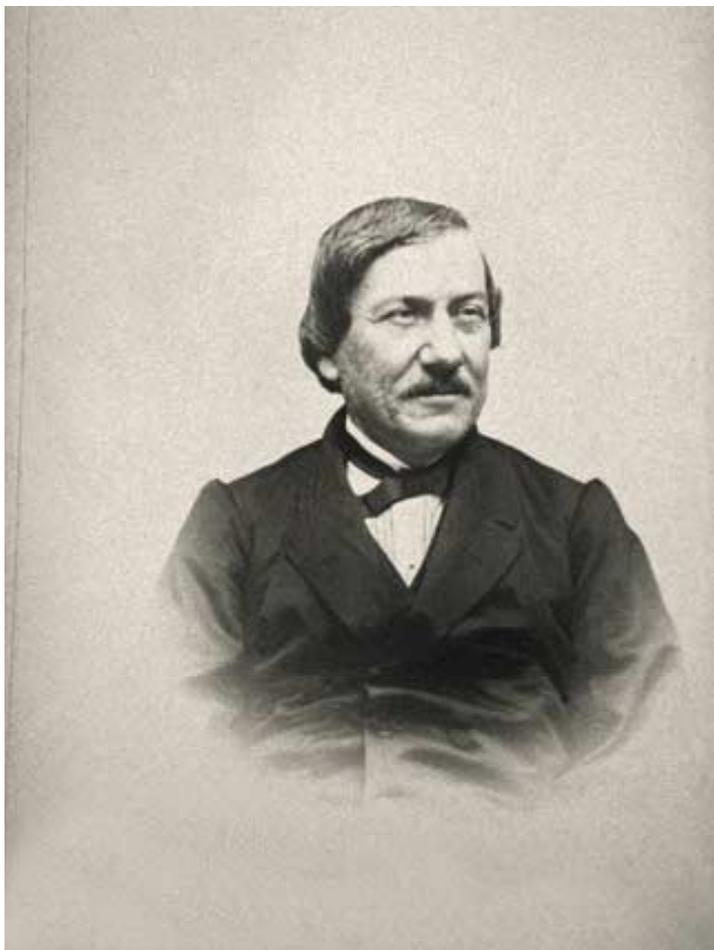
Re-reading of the *Memoirs* in later years was consistent with the intellectual quests and trends of each period; they were more rational and free from the nationalistic exaltation of tradition, while the General's personality was judged rather in the light of his *Visions and Marvels*, published in 1985. The initial readings, however, of Makriyannis' *Memoirs* by the generation of the thirties remain decisive in any assessment of them and in their survival as an historical and literary document of significance in modern Greek letters.



I. Makriyannis, two pages from the manuscript of *Visions and Marvels*. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

K. PAPARRIGOPOULOS

HISTORY AND ROMANTICISM



K. Paparrigopoulos. (National Hellenic Research Foundation Archive)

If any one individual were to be considered responsible for the image the Greeks have about themselves and their history, that person would be Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815-1891). He wrote his five-volume *History of the Greek Nation* between 1860 and 1874 and, since then, his ideas have been promulgated in every conceivable way: incorporated into other texts, repeated by thousands of lecturers, memorised by generations of students and eventually absorbed by the nation, which gradually saw itself in the image conceived by Paparrigopoulos. The success of this work was so great that few remember the image-maker and even fewer are aware of the imagery involved in the formation of the concept of Greekness. Paparrigopoulos succeeded in convincing his public that things had always been so. The picture he presented was seen as a mirror of the collective self. *History of the Greek Nation* was re-issued several times with additions concerning more recent events by other authors. A century later, in 1971, when a new monumental history began to be published, incorporating all the research and studies carried out in the meantime, Paparrigopoulos' *History* retained its title and its original historiographical pattern.

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos was born in the heart of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, in the year of Napoleon's final defeat. He spent his childhood in Odessa and was educated at the famous Lycée Richelieu, the cradle of the intelligentsia of Eastern Europe. He came to Greece as a young boy in 1830, the year Greece became an independent state. Four years later he joined the civil service; he published his first paper on history at the age of twenty-eight, published a newspaper at thirty-two, became a professor at the University at thirty-six, and published a preliminary concise version of the complete history of the Greek nation at thirty-eight. He started to publish his extensive *History of the Greek Nation* at the age of forty-five, finishing it fifteen years later. This period, between 1860-1874, covered not only the prime years of the historian, but also the middle years of the 19th century. From the completion of his *History* up to his death in 1891 when he was seventy-five, Paparrigopoulos enjoyed the prestige of a national historian, without, however, withdrawing into the confines of his library. During this period of irredentism, he practised what he had previously asserted in his writing. He was to be found everywhere: on irredentist committees, in operations providing arms abroad, even involved in the forging of 'national' maps for national reasons. In his life and work he represented the prototype of a thinker whose role has been considered to have been a national one that has had an enduring influence on his country. Furthermore, he could be thought of as a visionary, a Nation Builder, important to any assessment of the nature of nationalism.

To what should one attribute the power of Paparrigopoulos' work? First, to the historical pattern presented in his *History* and, second, to the style of his writing.

The pattern is based on 'continuity'. This is the key word in defining Greek identity and also its symbol. It signifies that the Greek nation has constituted a unified entity for the past 3000 years. It has undergone transformation, changed its setting and the character of its action, each time performing an important mission within the scope of world history, while its influential presence has been continuous since antiquity. This pattern is easily understood and convincing. It becomes even more so, if one reflects how insecure

the issue of national identity was before Paparrigopoulos approached the subject so unambiguously. In the years of the Enlightenment, Adamandios Korais was hesitant in choosing the name of the new nation: Romans, Greeks, or Hellenes? He finally opted for 'Greeks', and when the insurrection of 1821 solved the problem of name, its symbol became the Phoenix rising from its ashes. This rebirth was referred to as 'National Regeneration', meaning the re-appearance of the nation after its extinction. Historians such as Zambelios or Sathas searched for clues linking their contemporaries to the ancient Greeks. Paparrigopoulos, however, presented a sound, unquestionable scheme proving the historical unity of the Greek people throughout thirty centuries. He invested the nation with the reality of its individual characteristics and status, underlining its physical presence. According to Paparrigopoulos, the Greek nation is a Titan who traverses the centuries participating in struggles and politics, victories and achievements, who falls into error or withdraws, sometimes defeated and succumbing, yet always rising up and starting all over again, changing form, moving around in space, from Europe to Asia and back to Europe again. This is the structure of epic mythology. Paparrigopoulos' Titan personifies many, each with a separate life passing through youth, maturity, and old age. At the same time, in each death there is a new beginning. Thus Paparrigopoulos structures the genealogy of Hellenism: Ancient Hellenism begets Macedonian Hellenism, which begets Christian Hellenism, which in turn begets Medieval Hellenism, which begets Modern Hellenism before its own extinction. This structure has a theological basis and origin. Just as God is triadic according to the concept of the Holy Trinity, thus the Greek nation, in its passage through the centuries, derives its significance from the specific period in time.

Paparrigopoulos' style is characterised by the use of the first person plural. History requires a subject. He does not apply the third person to describe those who lived in the past, but uses the first person for ancestors and progeny alike: "We then...". He refers to their accomplishments and setbacks as "our accomplishments". He confronts their enemies with the use of the pronoun 'we', retrospectively assuming an active role in the course of events. His arguments vis-à-vis "foreign science which alienated our country's history" are again phrased with "we". This first person plural is omnipotent. It identifies modern Greeks with their past, their history and their nation and moulds their conscience. His readers are but a division of this great Army proceeding through time. This is the "we" of collective identity and national conscience. If historians have used the third person to recount a story impersonally for the sake of objectivity, with his approach Paparrigopoulos succeeded in highlighting the subject of history without sacrificing its objectivity. His history does not need to be impersonal in order to be objective. The author intervenes and is critical. He compares the role of the historian, that is, himself, to that of the father. He criticises his children at home, but supports them against foreigners. This dimension of familiarity, in its timeless scope, is a subtle yet fundamental element in formulating the concepts of national space and national identity: "we" and "they".

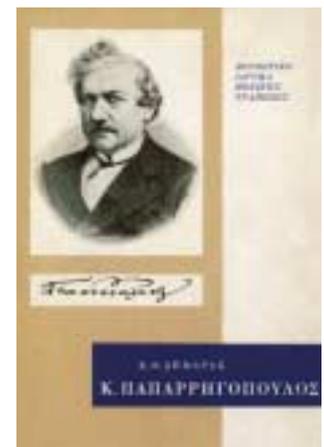
Paparrigopoulos' historical work is one of the best and most typical examples of European Romanticism. After the storm of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic

Wars, Romantic historians rediscovered continuity as opposed to rupture, synthesis as opposed to confrontation, personification of the past and its rational analysis and individuality as opposed to universality, thus arriving at the concept of 'nation' as opposed to abstract intellectual development. Paparrigopoulos is a Romantic historian alongside Ranke, Droysen, Michelet, Guizot, Thierry, Macaulay and Grote. Yet if they felt the need to juxtapose continuity and unity beside a history where every subsequent phase seemed, according to Enlightenment hermeneutics, to negate the preceding one, Paparrigopoulos saw it as his duty to reinstate the concepts of continuity and unity in the history of the Greek nation so as to counter the theories maintaining the latter's disappearance. It was not only Fallmerayer that he had in mind. It was primarily Gibbon, who had recounted a story of decline and fall, whom he wanted to challenge with an equally monumental work of 'continuity'.

The Romantic historians were masters at presenting their accounts as the true version of events. They wove the uniqueness of each event into a grand narrative. They not only sought causes, but also their significance. Explanation went hand in hand with interpretation, the scientific spirit of the nineteenth century with Romanticism. Paparrigopoulos was aware of the difference between historical research, namely, the weighing of evidence, and the "art of narrative" which "rises to those superior approaches seen in the finest work of Thucydides and Macaulay, that both instruct and give pleasure". His writing is not addressed only to fellow historians. Rather, his target is the wider Greek public: "History is written for the many". He makes ample use of metaphor. History resembles a "building", a "monument", a "three thousand year-old drama". For Michelet, the historian was like Oedipus committed to the task of solving the riddle, in this case the riddle of the past. For Paparrigopoulos, however, the historian is a father figure whose role is to protect, defend and criticise. History has a paternal responsibility to its subject and its readership: the relationship between the two, between the nation and the diverse Hellenisms, is that of father and son. As a child of six, Paparrigopoulos watched his father being beheaded in Constantinople by the Ottomans in retribution for the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821. It is little surprise that the father should return, now sanctified, as the father of national history.



Title page of the first edition of the *History of the Greek Nation*.



Cover of the study of K.T. Dimaras on Paparrigopoulos.



Femmes de l'île de Siphanto. From Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage Pittoresque de la Grèce*, 1782-1822. (Gennadius Library, Athens)

FOLKLORE

A NEW FIELD OF STUDY

The publication of the first volume of *Study of the Life of Modern Greeks – Modern Greek Mythology* by Nikolaos G. Politis in 1871 constitutes “the birth certificate of folklore as a science”, according to K. T. Dimaras. Its young author had recently been awarded a prize for his essay ‘On the customs and lore of modern Greece in comparison with those of ancient Greece’. Thus was born Greek folklore as a field of study; to be more precise, the study of folklore was now being born in Greece, for in that same year *The Folk Life of Modern Greeks and Greek Antiquity* by Bernhard Schmidt appeared in Leipzig and signalled a transition from ‘archaeological folklore’. It reached adulthood, however, much later, since twelve years had to pass before it was acknowledged in 1883 and another twenty-five years before its official name ‘laographia’ was validated in 1908.

Be that as it may, when Politis – already a respected professor and powerful influential dean – explained in 1909 in the opening lines of *Laographia* (Folklore), a journal published by the newly founded Greek Society for Folklore, that he had used “the term ‘laografia’ to denote the study of popular traditions, beliefs and habits, of popular oral literature and of any-

thing in any way contributing to a more precise understanding of the people”, he had far-reaching aims. With the word ‘laographia’ [Gr. laos = people, -graphy = documented science] not only did he indicate, in the most symbolic way, the Greek origin of the concept of engagement with the people and their traditions, but also, by adopting a significantly Hellenic term, he avoided taking sides in the rivalries already marking the history of the English-bred term ‘Folk-Lore’ (W. Thoms: 1846, E. B. Tylor: 1865, 1871) and of the Germanic “Volkskunde” (L. Arnim: 1806, W. Riehl: 1858). At the same time Politis introduced the hereditary titles of this unfamiliar field of domestic study and defined its national perspective from a historical standpoint. At a single stroke folklore was weaned away from the world of literature, abandoning its early pursuits in the process and cutting its paternal ties with history. It had now finally become enrolled among the humanistic sciences.

During the second half of the 19th century – a turning-point in the history of Modern Greece – the pressing need arose for an objective consolidation of the identity of the Greek people. Insisting upon its special links with the antique world, however, now posed a risk, because they could no more be proven by the obvious fact that Greece was sited where European civilisation had been born, than by the remarkable rendering of life in modern Greece in the Greek songs published by French Philhellene, Claude Fauriel and in the nationalistic poetry of Dionysios Solomos. The traditional habit of examining curious cus-

toms and superstitions and “every relic of the past” needed to be updated in the light of the newly formed nation-state. The belated yet generalised tendency to question a hereditary and also inherited relationship with antiquity, forced the heirs to measure up to the idols of their famous ancestors at the crucial crossroads of racial purity, national identity and historical continuity. Established sciences, such as history, archaeology, literature and linguistics, took refuge in ostentation in the attempt to handle the past as a living present, whereas others, such as folklore, emerged in national costume in order to portray the living present as rooted in the past in the quest of collecting “historical monuments which are still alive”.

The time had come for the study of folklore. If the prerequisite was to form a symbolic bridging of various discontinuities – territorial, historical, national, linguistic, traditional or social –, the requirement for its establishment was to express, in political terms, the distance separating the ‘people’ from the ‘scholars’.

Meanwhile, modern Greeks had, of course, learnt to measure their distance from their ancient past: they recalled ancient myths, they visited the ancients at their newly discovered monuments: people coming from abroad opened up the paths, locals followed them; they evoked the ancients in their patriotic struggles (as for example in the forward-looking terms of A. Korais and the backward-looking stance of G. Paliouritis) and forgot about them when circumstances dictated it. The prelude to folklore studies had started at the end of the 18th century in the “climate of romantic ethnology”, when the need to establish the roots of Modern Greece in Classical Greece in convincing terms was coupled with the desire to apply Western intellectual developments to Greek letters – a movement first begun by Vico and Herder and pioneered in Greece by T. Manoussis and K. Asopios. The belated but triumphant entry of 19th-century Romanticism into the ‘Levant’ was marked by the publication of one of the most characteristic versions of popular culture of the time: folk songs. Its less spectacular development was the nationalisation of Romantic principles through the projection of a continuous, though not necessarily coherent, popular culture and the creation of a related field of study.

Fauriel and Politis made their imprint on these two epochs. They were both involved in publications and collections of ‘material’ and shared struggles and agonies over the language, identity and origin, as well as the rights and demands of a people who, in striving to prove the concept of a continuous national existence, systematically withheld a wealth of its ideas and its experiences. The canon of modern Greek social tradition was based on a composite vision of a cultural and linguistic unity. For example, a national anthem had to be composed and national borders and national boundaries had to be defined; the national language and its folk songs had to be documented; a national costume and a national identity had to be designed, whereas national architecture, national sites and national landscapes all had to be established. Equally, national iconography, national aims, national glories and national visions had to be collectively represented.

Politis’ commanding figure gave scientific shape to folklore studies and placed them within the framework of scientific re-



Nikolaos G. Politis in the second decade of the 20th century.
(Reproduced from Panayotis Moullas’
The Word of Absence, M.I.E.T., Athens, 1992)



Right: Nikolaos Politis. Left: Sokratis Kouyeas. In the reading room of the University. Standing on the left is the young poet Kostis Palamas, who was secretary of the University at the time (see p. 134). (Sokratis B. Kouyeas Archive)



Shepherds with their flocks at Negri, central Greece, 1975. (Photograph by Takis Tloupas)

search – a modernist approach at the time. Thus folklore, having gained a solid basis, spread and acted as a stimulus to those circles most concerned with the formulation of the terms of national identity. The spread of this newly founded science proved immediately beneficial, although some side-effects of its ideological dependence on dated views fostered a simplified popularisation of folklore, an amateurism in the study of folklore and also the ‘folklorisation’ of national imagery.

Henceforth professionals and amateurs of folklore would have to choose between earlier precepts, such as “recognition of purely national elements, awareness of national character and exposure of alien, parasitical and distorting factors”, and the scientific approach of recording oral traditions. The science of folklore vacillated between an encyclopaedic approach to “restoring the original unity of the Greek soul” and the sporadic recording of folk traditions and elements; the self-conscious portrayal of the latter did not promote the convergence of the concepts of “the land for the land” and “the people for the people”, nor the association of places and their history with the people who were living there. Politis, for what

it was worth, had cautioned “He who loves tradition may not study it and he who studies it may not love it”. Nevertheless, where the inevitable coexistence of overall national uniformity and local idiosyncrasies transformed amateurs into professionals and professionals into amateurs, the robust thinking of the older generation and the concerns of the younger reveal some interesting diversions in search of historical elements in folklore and in detecting marginal fields of folklore.

The poet Drosinis declared that Politis was “the first to open the many worlds of the Greek soul to young Greek poets, the first to turn their attention to the people of Greece and to encourage them to observe and study them and produce work of a purely Greek character”. It is exactly this world too that Politis revealed to the students of folklore. It was the image of the people, perhaps also their spirit, that was highlighted on the stage of Modern Greece – leaving their material existence in the shadows – together with some of the most vital aspects of their daily life, some recently acquired, some handed down from the distant past, so far and yet so near the places of their enactment.



A Greek boy dressed in the traditional freedom-fighter's 'foustanela'.
Postcard from the beginning of the 20th century. (E.L.I.A. Archive)



The ancient Panathenaiko Stadium, restored for the first modern Olympics held in Athens in 1896. (Photograph: National Historical Museum, Athens)

GREEK LITERATURE AFTER 1880

The decade of the 1880s was a critical period in modern Greek literature because it was then that its future development was shaped for approximately the next fifty years. To begin with, it is necessary to establish a framework in which to place texts that at first glance appear bewildering. For this reason we propose three approaches to the interpretation of the poetry and prose of the period. First, a dialogue, so to speak, with *History of the Greek Nation* by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos and then, in the field of literature, with what historiographers have endeavoured to define as the formation of a nation-state. Second, an attempt to determine the illusory centre of the Greek nation at a time when there was considerable distinction between Greeks living within the Greek state, on the one hand, and those living under Ottoman rule or abroad, on the other, whilst not forgetting the numerical and economic superiority of the latter. Third, a reply to the Romanticism of the preceding decades and also proof of romantic survival. More specifically:

1. Romantic historiography took the lead in the effort to formulate the concept of the continuity of the nation of the Greeks (*History of the Greek Nation* was begun in the decade of the 1860s and completed in 1874). Its pioneering nature is explained by the fact that the concept of time was advanced in formulating the concept of 'nation', while the concept of space, characterised by the geographical indistinctness of many centuries of life in the Eastern Mediterranean, posed serious problems in determining the boundaries of the state: from the historiographer's point of view the time-span of the nation appeared to be continuous, though the frontiers of the nation were ever-changing. The aim of historiography was to construct an image of the Greek nation which would have its starting-point in the present, would project that image onto the past and would establish a direct connection with ancient Greece without the need of Europe's mediation. Athens and Constantinople rivalled each other with a common standard in view: the major European cities of the 19th century.
2. The favourable circumstances of the next fifteen years both on the territorial issue (the union of the Ionian Islands with Greece and the annexation of Thessaly and part of Epirus) and in the economic field (investments of Greeks living abroad, in retrospect an



occurrence of questionable benefit). In 1881 the Greeks living in Greece were more numerous than in 1864; similarly, the territory of Greece was more extensive. The Greeks now considered themselves a mature population and that they were playing a pivotal role in the development of Hellenism abroad, even though overseas Greeks continued to be more plentiful and had greater economic power. These circumstances seemed to favour the literary movement of the time. But it enjoyed only a brief flowering before national bankruptcy followed by defeat in the Greco-Turkish war of 1897 dealt severe blows both to the inspiration of Greek writers and to the material well-being of the people.

DIMITRIOS VIKELAS initiated the dialogue between Greeks living in Greece and Greeks living abroad in 1879 with his novel *Loukis Laras*. The two different periods described in the text – the War of Independence begun in 1821 and the 1870s – are compared in two different settings, the Aegean Sea and London, in both of which the main character resides. The tension arising between the Greek of Greece who strives to survive and the Greek merchant of London is the subject of a crucial dichotomy in the 19th century.

GEORGIOS VIZYINOS (see p. 121) structures his writing on a dialogue between Europe and Eastern Thrace, the greater area of Constantinople. For him, the centre of the Greek world is Constantinople, while Athens is the impediment to the formation of a modern Greek culture through dialogue with Europe.

The literary circle of *Hestia*. From left to right: (standing) Y. Psycharis, D. Kaklamanos, G. Kasdonis (editor), I. Vlachoyannis, K. Palamas (see p. 134), G. Drosinis, G. Xenopoulos (see p. 133); (seated) Th. Vellianitis, Perris (editor), N. Politis (see p. 109), St. Stefanou, Mikios Lambros, G. Souris, Emm. Roidis (see p. 124), Emm. Lykoudis. (Photograph: Hestia Publishing Archive)

Many of the writers pictured here with the Acropolis in the background, were members of a new generation of poets, the so-called 'Generation of the 1880s', with Kostis Palamas at their helm. This generation, after the collapse and confusion of the previous decade (as much on the political as the literary level), introduced a positive and optimistic air into their verse, reflecting social and political change. They denounced the grandiloquent romanticism of older poets in favour of the familiar and the simple, in the manner of the French Parnassians. This generation established the demotic language once and for all in poetry.



Dimitrios Vikelas (1835-1908).
(*Nea Panathina*, 15-31 August
1908 - E.L.I.A. Archive)



Michail Mitsakis (1868?-1916).
(Photograph: B. Bozzi & Figlio,
c. 1900 - E.L.I.A. Archive)



Andreas Karkavitsas (1865-1922).
(E.L.I.A. Archive)

ALEXANDROS PAPADIAMANTIS (see p. 128) fashions a dialogue between the provinces – the island of Skiathos and Athens emphasizing lesser features that do, however, colour the overall picture: Skiathos, the “hybrid” province, Athens, the “hybrid” city, the one in direct relation to the other, the one “polluting” the purity of the other. Yet this adulteration is full of surprises and charm.

MICHAEL MITSAKIS is Athenocentric. He systematically describes the capital, full of problems, mud, cart-drivers, mules and foreign artistes entertaining the uncultured public. The capital city will serve as a model for all the developing Greek towns, like Patra, the setting of his interesting short story ‘Suicide’.

ANDREAS KARKAVITSAS places the action of his novels and short stories outside the cities (*orbi*); this outside is, however, an extension of the inside (*urbi*). The cruelty of the city, the persistent principles of profit, and deception and the prevalence of the strongest destroy the idyllic character of the countryside, introducing a naturalistic narrative manner.

3.

Finally, it is interesting to relate these writings to the Romantic movement. Poetry and prose of the 1880s is, on the one hand, a reaction to the romanticism of the Athenian School and, on the other, the continuation of romantic historiography. At the same time, because of the power of realistic and/or naturalistic examples in European literature, they place themselves in opposition, either not learning from it or criticizing it. In the latter case, they either reconsider the Romantic example and adopt it, or else they flirt with emerging Modernism, without excluding a combination of both trends. It would, therefore, be an oversimplification to say that the literature of this period is a reply to Romanticism, as expressed both in historic novels as well as in the poetry of the Athenian School. Outstanding examples of serious dialogue with Modernism and simultaneously with the Romantic tradition, written in a style that imitates the realistic, are the short stories by Vizyinos and others by Mitsakis and Papadiamantis.



Ioannis Altamouras (1852?-1878), *A Beached Ship*, 1874.



The 'Neapolis' district of central Athens, photographed from Lycabettus Hill, c. 1890. The building in the foreground is that of the French Institute of the time. (Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum)

M. MITSAKIS: "We can observe the process of construction as a process of reconstruction in *Under the Fig Tree*. The narrator sees the name of a deceased woman etched on a tombstone in a churchyard and next to it, written in lead pencil, the names of eight women, a date and the phrase 'all were best friends unto the grave'". Two issues are of special interest here: the metaphorical sense of this phrase and the way in which the author unfolds the story of its inscription. He relates that the women were eight schoolgirls taking a stroll on a Saturday afternoon and he reproduces their laughter and chattering, their movements and thoughts, as if he were there himself. He bridges the distance with a series

of adverbs – 'of course', 'undoubtedly', 'obviously', 'perhaps' – and with the use of the conditional – 'they must have come', 'they must have pretended', 'they would have said', 'they would have walked', 'they would have gathered' – and goes on to interpret the inscription and how it came to be written. Like an archaeologist he constructs a story about the past and its people from the relics that have remained. And although there is the illusion that the schoolgirls' walk was the occasion that prompted the writing of the story, the text remains as the sole material reality, since the printed and published paper will resist the passage of time longer than the inscription in lead pencil."



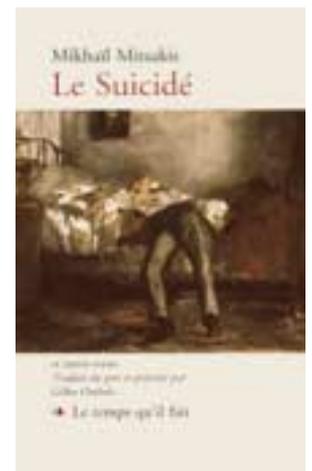
The Netherlands 1924



Romania 1965



England 1881



France 1997

Kydathenaion Street, Plaka (Athens), by Fred Boissonnas. The Acropolis can be seen in the background, 27 July 1919. (F. Boissonnas Archive, Geneva)



SECTION V

STIMULUS AND CREATIVE RESPONSE

(1880-1930)

IT WAS IN THIS PERIOD that the personalities of writers began to play a pivotal role on the literary scene, functioning as the nucleus of aesthetic movements bringing about significant artistic developments. These writers, children of their time, became the interpreters of national history and at the same time produced works which were to define certain periods and movements in national literature. The fifty-year period is one of the most fertile, brightest, and yet most tragic phases in neo-Hellenism. At the beginning of the period, the nation, having secured its Constitution and regained a certain number of annexed territories (such as the Ionian islands (1864) and Thessaly (1881)) envisaged a more enlightened bourgeoisie, improvements in state organisation and a more stable, democratic government. The first modern Olympic games, hosted in Athens in 1896, and the unfortunate Greco-Turkish war a year later were two very telling events, which showed how easily and how quickly the nation was able to fall from the heights of superficial glory to the depths of disaster. However, twelve years later the attempted progressive military coup at Goudi and the arrival of the Cretan politician Eleftherios Venizelos in Athens, the success of the Balkan Wars and of the World War that followed helped Greece regain almost all the territories which it had always considered to be rightfully hers. But the tragedy of the Asia Minor disaster of 1922 was not far off.

This period opens with the so-called '1880s Generation', led by the poet Palamas, who declared Romanticism an outmoded form and insisted on the search for more realistic modes of expression and on the demotic language as the language proper to literary expression, and closes with Nikos Kazantzakis, the outstanding writer of fiction with an international reputation. The intervening years produced a whole host of other great talents, including the consummate stylist Roidis, the well-known short story writer Georgios Vizyinos, renowned for his supple language and integrity of feeling, followed by Alexandros Papadiamantis, the jewel in the crown of Greek prose fiction. The three most remarkable poets of the period were Cavafy, one of the most prominent voices in world poetry, the tragic and sardonic Karyotakis, who marked a new phase in Greek poetry and, finally, the supremely lyrical visionary Angelos Sikelianos.



Viziнос in Germany, 1879. He was born in Vizyi in Eastern Thrace, near Constantinople, attended the Halki School of Theology (one of the Pringiponissia in the Bosphorus), and studied philosophy and psychology in Germany.



Map showing Constantinople, the Dardanelles, Thessalonica and Sofia. Vizi, G. Vizyinos's village, is part of Eastern Thrace, modern Turkey. The map dates from World War I. (The Dora Kalomoiri Collection – Panorama Cultural Society Archive, Athens)

GEORGIOS VIZYINOS

Georgios Vizyinos (1849-1896), author of poems, short stories, children's literature and essays of philosophical, psychological and ethnological subject matter, is thought of as the pioneer of modern Greek prose. According to Kostis Palamas, he is a "short story writer-poet", who "has a penchant for novel writing" and his texts, "if published in a community better prepared to receive them, would constitute a great and unforgettable event". In a span of merely fifteen months (1883-1884) Vizyinos wrote and published five short novels in the periodical *Hestia*, thus opening the way for a new literary form and at the same time demonstrating unique thematic, narrative and structural inventiveness.

Permeating Vizyinos' writing is the concept of difference and the process of defining it. Consequently, it is also the core of any analysis of the structure of difference in the Balkan Peninsula at the end of the 19th century, a period of conflicts, readjustment and great fluidity. His writing focuses on the theme of difference underlining its 'fabricated' character at all levels, such as the religious and cultural and national identity, gender, mental health, social integration and social isolation; within a literary context, it examines what is literature.

The short stories 'Who was my Brother's Murderer?', 'The only Voyage of his Life', 'The Consequences of an Old Story' and 'Moskov-Selim' deal with the controversial subject of relations and the terms of coexistence among Greeks, Slavs and Turks in the Balkans, as well as the dialogue between the Greeks of Greece and the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire and the Diaspora, and also between Europe and modern and ancient Hellenism. The symbolic function of language and the self-referring function of literature are reflected mainly in the short stories 'Between Piraeus and Naples' and 'The only Voyage of his Life'. These issues are also the subject matter of his poems.

Apart from its autobiographical, psychological and detective story character, the short story 'Who was my Brother's Murderer?' is essentially a metaphor regarding the possibility or impossibility of coexistence between Greek Orthodox Christians and Muslim Turks in the Ottoman Empire during the last quarter of the 19th century, following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. The story is composed around two families, one





Landscape of Vizyi. (Panorama Cultural Society Archive, Athens)

Turkish and one Greek, and deals with the relations between them, conscious or subconscious. Ignorance or recognition, disregard or misjudgement of the other person causes complications both on the individual and on the collective level.

The story is about the imagined, or rather quite unimaginable, cohabitation of a Turk and a Greek woman in Ottoman Thrace three years after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. The narrative is in the first person and the narrator Giorgis is the main character in the story. He is the middle son of a Greek woman's family of three children and the only one who has lived in Europe. The other two children are Christakis – the brother murdered in Thrace before the time of the narrative – and Michailos, who lives with the widowed mother in Thrace. The composition of the Turkish family living in Constantinople is similar: the widowed mother has two children, the eldest one is referred to as Efendi (he is a Young Turk, an interrogator of the Zaptieh), the younger one is called Kiamil and he is a dervish. As the story reveals, Kiamil was the murderer of Christakis, whom – because of his resemblance – he had mistaken for the killer of his fiancée's brother. At the end of the story he, an insane dervish, is living in the house of the Greek mother watering the flowers on her son's grave, without her knowing the truth.

The mingling of the innocent and the guilty, the sane and the insane, Greeks and Turks, modernists and conservatives, provides (on a metaphorical level) a very convincing picture of

Ottoman Thrace. And it becomes even more convincing because all events are further complicated and darkened by the Russian invasion of 1877-78 and by the incursion of Slavs into Thrace, which will eventually lead to the Greater Bulgaria of 1881 and will underline the danger of Panslavism at the end of the 19th century.

The three Greek siblings, each with his own point of view, express three different opinions about the coexistence of Greeks and Turks. That is one way of interpreting the short story if we project what happens within and between the two families on a collective level. Christakis emphatically refuses to live under the same roof with the Turk Kiamil. The outcome of this refusal is for him to die at the hand of Kiamil, who has never seen the face of the son of the woman who saved his life. On the other side, Michailos, the prankster, takes a different view of cohabitation. He lives without thinking too much about the reality around him and he survives. The most complicated feeling on the issue of cohabitation is the one shown by Giorgis. He initially refuses the invitation to stay at the Turkish house preferring a hotel, then later he accepts it, though only for one night and stays in the garden kiosk. That night of partial cohabitation was revealing, because it was when he learnt that his brother's murderer was Kiamil, who disclosed the fact to him.

The upshot of all these views on the coexistence of Greeks and Turks is defined by the mother's attitude, who declares

that she wants to find out who the murderer of her son was, while at the same time she does not want to know the identity of the person who is living with her. This is an example of what might be referred to as ‘foreclosure’ in psychoanalysis, since on the one hand she accepts the status quo of cohabitation and on the other denies the reality of this cohabitation. Thus the mother, without being aware of it, expresses what her three sons are consciously mulling over. Here one should note the absence of the father – both physical and for want of naming – which symbolises the lack of an authority to amalgamate the various contradictions.

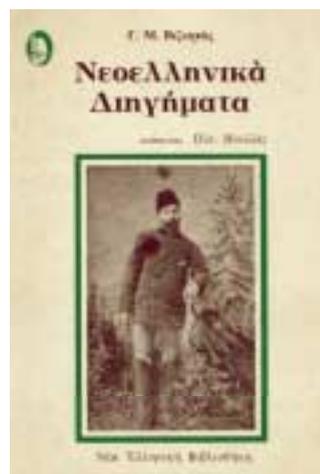
The short story ‘The only Voyage of his Life’ dwells on the significance of the space separating oral speech from written word, metaphor from literal sense, dream state from wakefulness and real from imaginary. This intervening space is in proportion to the controversial distinction between male and female (sex or gender) and is the area of the symbolic, the area of language. The adult first-person narrator of the story – who is the character of the ten-year old grandson many years later – describes a relationship of fascination and disappointment with individuals of the same name as the author, that is

the grandfather and the ten-year old grandson (all called ‘Yorgis’). In this relationship the grandson has believed his grandfather’s fanciful yarns about his voyages to be true stories, even though they were related by a grandfather who up to his tenth year of age had been under the impression that he was a girl. Did he actually believe his grandfather, or is he trying in retrospect to defend what he is, by making up a narrative about the past that presents a series of events as causes and effects? The text does not answer this kind of question. That is why the story does not allow the reader to know whether the grandson’s dreams, in which the grandfather appears as dead, are the realistic element of the story, or whether the meeting described subsequently between grandfather and grandson is a day-dream or the product of delirium.

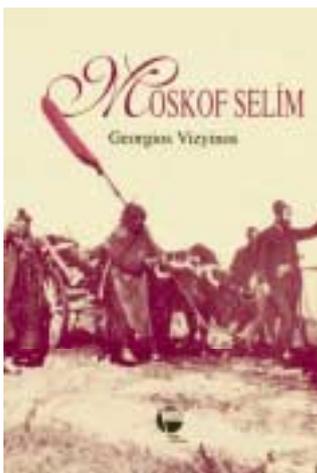
In conclusion, one could say that in his short stories Vizyinos was the first to deal with important issues of modern Greek literature, such as the concepts of ‘structure’ and ‘difference’ and the effectiveness of the literary text. These issues will be dealt with in greater detail when considering the writings of Constantine Cavafy, which the poet had already begun to compose.



Front page of Vizyinos’ Ph.D. thesis in German, published 1881. Munich Library. Combined degree in philosophy, psychology and literature.



Georgios Vizyinos, photograph in *Poikile Stoa*. Illustrated National Annual, Year Ten, 1894. (E.L.I.A. Archive)



Translation of *Moscov-Selim* by Vizyinos in Turkish.



France 1995

Moscov-Selim was published in 1895, the year when its author was committed to a psychiatric asylum. It is the story of a Turkish soldier, who after 20 years of service in the Sultan’s army, is taken captive by the Russians and transported to Russia. Upon his return from captivity he changes his views and becomes pro-Russian. Public opinion considers him as marginal – either insane or a traitor. It is interesting that the Greek narrator and character not only does not subscribe to public opinion, but he reconsiders the prevalent historical view on the fate of Turkish prisoners so as to justify the Russophilia of the main character. Things do not end here: the final phrase “and the Turk remained a Turk”, which accompanies the announcement of Selim’s death, juxtaposes the collective against the individual.



Syros – Miaouli Square. Postcard from the early 1900s. (E.L.I.A. Photographic Archive)

EMMANUEL ROIDIS

AN EVER-MODERN AUTHOR

Emmanuel Roidis (1836-1904), distinguished cosmopolitan writer and great stylist of *katharevousa*, the purist form of the Greek language, is Greece's modernist author, whose work, although he died nearly one hundred years ago, has an undiminished quality of timelessness that persists to the present day. Equipped with an outstanding education and a unique sensitivity, he belongs to the most radical group of writers in modern Greek literature. His work delights us with its intelligence, sparkling style and critical acerbity, while its unconventional spirit is expressed with strength, grace and virtuosity. Precise phrasing, a powerful aesthetic and accuracy of synthesis give an enduring quality to his work which provides a constant source of reference and quotation of undisputed authority for writers of future generations. As unrivalled master of the Greek language, Roidis' oeuvre is still lively and supremely enjoyable and acts as a considerable influence on contemporary literary awareness.

He was born in 1836 in Syros, administrative capital of the Cycladic islands with the most important port in the Eastern Mediterranean and a flourishing urban centre. He was brought up and studied in many cities in Western Europe and visited several Greek communities abroad. After some years, Roidis finally settled in Athens, abandoning his trading activities as well as a successful family business. He became famous at the age of thirty, following the publication of his provoca-

tive novel, *Pope Joan*, in 1866. This sensational book was translated immediately into many European languages and was, until the mid-20th century, the most widely translated Greek novel. Numerous Greek editions have been published up to the present day as well as many new editions of the translations. Lawrence Durrell and Alfred Jarry are two of the many distinguished translators of *Pope Joan*.

Roidis had a wide-ranging Greek and European education. Major literary works of Greek and Roman antiquity as well as the works of leading European authors contributed to his intellectual make-up. Writers such as Dante, Shakespeare, Swift, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Honoré de Balzac and Heine were inspirational to the writing of *Pope Joan*, and *Don Juan* by Lord Byron had an undoubted influence on the novel. The writer drew upon Byron's remarkable poem for satirical and narrative techniques as well as for a sharp critical faculty, surprising imagery, a subversive attitude and a contemptuous view of the world. The same impulse motivated both *Pope Joan* and *Don Juan*: repudiation of established values – political, social and intellectual. This, combined with a provocative cynicism, proved an effective weapon in the conflict with hypocrisy, human folly and corruption.

An astonishingly original and fascinating work, *Pope Joan* is the female Greek version of *Don Juan*. Roidis' ambitious and cynical heroine wanders around medieval Europe in the ninth century. After living in Byzantine Athens disguised as a Catholic monk, Joan eventually arrives in Rome where she is acclaimed Pope. The author's main goals are to produce a satire on the Western and Eastern Churches, and to highlight the subversion of the West during the middle Byzantine period

but, perhaps most important of all, he sets out to achieve a critical analysis of contemporary Greek reality. The famous scandal provides the core of the plot while Roidis' fine language and brilliant expressive powers ensure literary enjoyment as well as extreme aesthetic pleasure. As soon as it was published the Greek Church banned the book and it is denounced even today. At the same time, it is one of the most widely known works of modern Greek literature.

A deeply romantic writer and latter-day representative of neo-Hellenic enlightenment, Roidis exemplifies the *homo universalis* of the world of Greek letters. He not only followed developments in the field of natural sciences, but also studied theology, philosophy and aesthetics in Berlin; in addition he published articles on art, the theatre and music criticism. At the same time, he composed reflections and maxims, engaged in historical research and was systematically involved in writing articles on politics, social problems and the foreign policy of Greece. Roidis was the first to bring the works of Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, Zola, Dostoyevsky and Charles Darwin before the Greek public. He also contributed to literary magazines and political newspapers, he founded and/or managed newspapers, was actively involved in the political life of the country, and was responsible for some outstanding writing in the history of Greek journalism.

Above all, this versatile, multi-talented intellectual was a man of letters. As French writer, Jules Laforgue, was to observe later, "Les lettres l'avaient bien nourri". Literature was, indeed, Roidis' greatest love. All his writings, whether political, diplomatic, journalistic or even encyclopaedic publications, are founded on a deep knowledge of literature and, in their references to other literary works, they reveal him to be a lover and master of the art.

In the last years of his life he became a short-story writer. Much-loved animals and the deluded voters of Greek politicians are the main protagonists in his stories, whereas a hopelessly enamoured husband is characterized in one of the best esoteric soliloquies in the Greek language.

I am ashamed to admit it. Eight months have passed since I got married and I am still in love with my wife, but the main reason why I got married in the first place is that I dislike the state of being in love. No other illness is quite so tortuous. I can neither eat, nor sleep; I cannot work nor find amusement in anything. Apart from Christina I find everything boring, tasteless, dull, insipid and wearisome.

Apart from his endless anguish, the famous husband of modern Greek prose goes on to confess his unshakeable loyalty in a definitive last statement:

The gates to this supreme voluptuousness cannot be opened by a shy virgin, a loving husband or an adoring mistress but only by a coquettish, capricious woman, who is of no use during daylight hours.¹

Roidis, author of *Pope Joan* and *Short Stories from Syros*, was one of the great novelists of modern Greek literature. He was also a foremost translator and introduced many works of European literature into the Greek language. At the same time he was the first modern Greek literary critic – a scholar who contributed to the shaping of a new aesthetic awareness. The

1. *Psychology of a Husband from Syros*, 1894.



Pope Joan, 16th century. Thomas Murner, *Gäuchmatt*, Basel, 1519. (Gennadius Library, Athens)



Emmanuel Roidis, Atelier 'Le Progrès'. (E.L.I.A. Photographic Archive)



Emmanuel Roidis. (National Hellenic Research Foundation)

A handwritten signature in Greek script, reading "Εμμανουήλ Ροΐδης".

critic Roidis was familiar with all the major works of European aesthetics and literary criticism and, to a great extent, he owed his theoretical knowledge to those works. On the extensive list of European critics who inspired him are many celebrated writers, such as Samuel Johnson, Jean-Paul, A. W. Schlegel, Hegel, Sainte Beuve, and Hippolyte Taine. Ten years after the publication of *Pope Joan*, at a time when Greek literature was in a critical state of transition, Roidis found inspiration in the works of European aesthetes and in the method of Taine. He established new orientations, infusing European speculation into modern Greek criticism and imposing a sociological approach on the study of art and literature.

A dominant figure in the cultural life of Greece for forty years, Roidis established a School and had a profound effect on

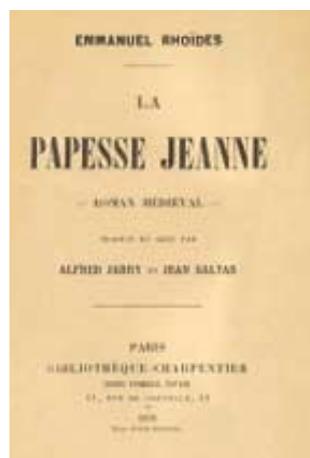
younger writers. His creative influence was also decisive on major writers such as Constantine Cavafy. Earlier, his critics had been sharply divided into either dedicated followers or fanatical opponents. He was labelled “irreverent”, “venomous” and the “despiser of Modern Greece” – whilst at the same time he was praised for being a “pioneer”, “forerunner” and a “fighter”.

Today, Roidis is numbered amongst the great classical and modern Greek authors. A keen wit, a delicate sense of irony, pervasive satire and above all an elegant and original style characterize the products of Roidis’ brilliant career as a writer. His refined literary taste and the combination of Greek learning with the achievements of European civilisation are acknowledged to be the main concerns and significance of his work.

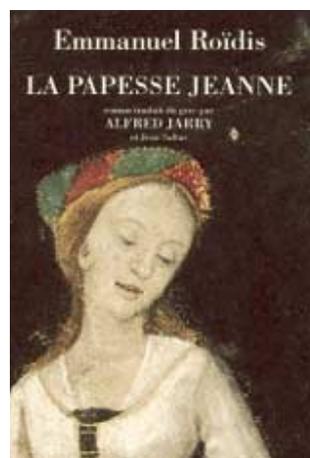
Right: Translations by E. Roidis of short stories of Edgar Allan Poe.

Below: In France Emmanuel Roidis’ *Pope Joan* was translated by Alfred Jarry (in collaboration with Jean Saltas) in 1908. Actes Sud republished in 1992.

In England *Pope Joan* was translated by Lawrence Durrell in 1954.



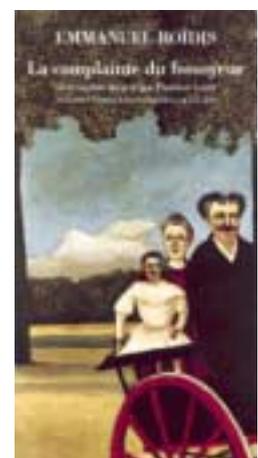
France 1908



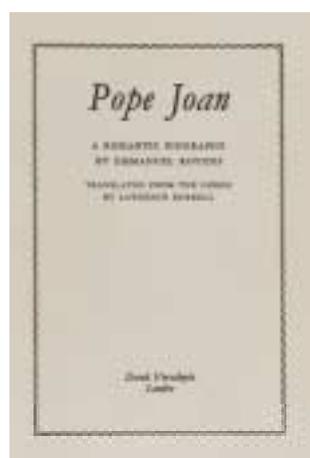
France 1992



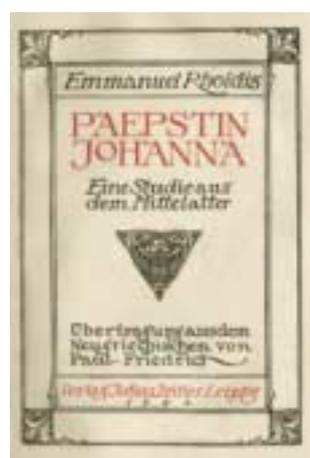
France 1993



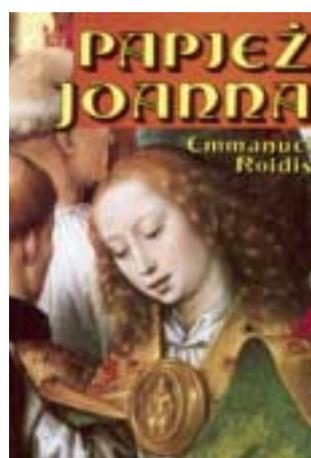
France 1994



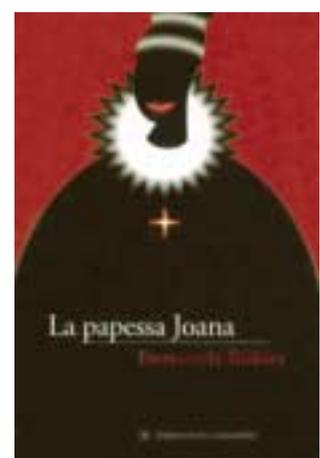
England 1954



Germany 1904



Poland 196?



Spain 1998

ALEXANDROS PAPDIAMANTIS

FROM PROVINCIAL TO INTERNATIONAL

The 19th century was an experimental period in Greek literature. After the heroic war of independence from Ottoman rule which opened in 1821, the intellectual elite of the newly established nation state experienced their first major disappointment. At last, living in a free and independent state, Greek writers began to recognize the enormous cultural gulf that separated them from the rest of Europe. As a result, they attempted to make up for their lack of cultural and artistic vigour by imitating the important European literary trends of the time. Some turned towards the utopia of Classicism while the majority adopted late Romanticism. Most of intellectuals cherished the hope of a second national uprising restoring Greece beyond the shores of Asia Minor. It was against this historical and cultural background that Alexandros Papadiamantis first appeared and started writing. He was probably the only 19th-century Greek author who succeeded in breaking away both from nostalgia for a magnificent past that was lost for ever and from a paralysing provincialism, and who also succeeded “in simply looking around himself”. Consequently, he opened up for his country – just as Gogol did for Russia – an extraordinary new chapter in the art of prose writing, in respect of both the short story and the novel. It would be unreasonable to maintain that before Papadiamantis Greek novelists did not exist. His innovative contribution, however, rests on the fact that he managed to reconcile his Greek thematic material with an autonomous and imaginary universe of his own. In other words, he liberated Greek prose from an aesthetic mould that had developed in Europe over many centuries and which corresponded with a daily life that was bourgeois, highly individual and completely foreign to Greek reality.

Papadiamantis was born in 1851 in Skiathos, an island in the north-west Aegean, where he died in the year 1911. He completed his high school education after considerable delay owing to economic difficulties. His father was the village priest and was only just able to earn enough to support his large family.

In 1873 Papadiamantis moved to Athens and followed courses in philology at Athens University. Soon the need to earn a living forced him to interrupt his studies and turn to translating. He translated from English and French mostly for the daily press and his work included authors such as Dumas, Dostoyevsky, Alphonse Daudet, Kipling, Maupassant, Sienkiewicz, Robert Louis Stevenson, Turgenev, Mark Twain and Zola. His life evolved far removed from the literary salons and petty ambitions of the artistic world of the time. A bachelor all his life, he liked to drink wine with local people and to sing in church choirs, demonstrating his steadfast faith in Christianity and his deep respect for Orthodox spiritual and secular heritage.

Papadiamantis' first novel, *The Immigrant*, was published in serialized form in a Constantinople newspaper in 1880. It tells of a beautiful love affair which is destroyed by local gossip and calumny – two destructive elements that Papadiamantis returns to again and again in his writing. Two historical novels follow: *The Merchants of the Nations* in 1883 and *The Gypsy Girl* in 1884. In the first novel, the Aegean islands under Venetian rule in the 13th century form the background to a



Drawing of A. Papadiamantis by Fotis Kontoglou (see p. 203), 1947.
(C. Diamantouros collection)

tragic love affair. In the second, Papadiamantis tackles the philosopher Georgios Gemistos (otherwise known as Plethon) who advocated in the mid 15th century a return to idolatry.

Subsequently, and until the end of his life, Papadiamantis wrote shorter prose pieces— from one to three hundred pages long. They were mostly short stories but they also included novels such as *The Murderess* and *Rosy Shores*. In this second phase, his central themes of religion, love, history and society were drawn from life on the island of Skiathos and from contemporary Athens. His characters, whether real or imaginary, are based on the small, still enclosed Greek society of the mid 19th century.

Throughout his life, Papadiamantis' work was published exclusively in magazines and newspapers. However, his *Complete Works* were eventually published in 1954. Even though they had appeared piecemeal, the works of Papadiamantis continued to be read by Greek people of every social class. As for the literary world, distinguished writers from Constantine Cavafy to George Seferis were deeply impressed by his originality and creativity.

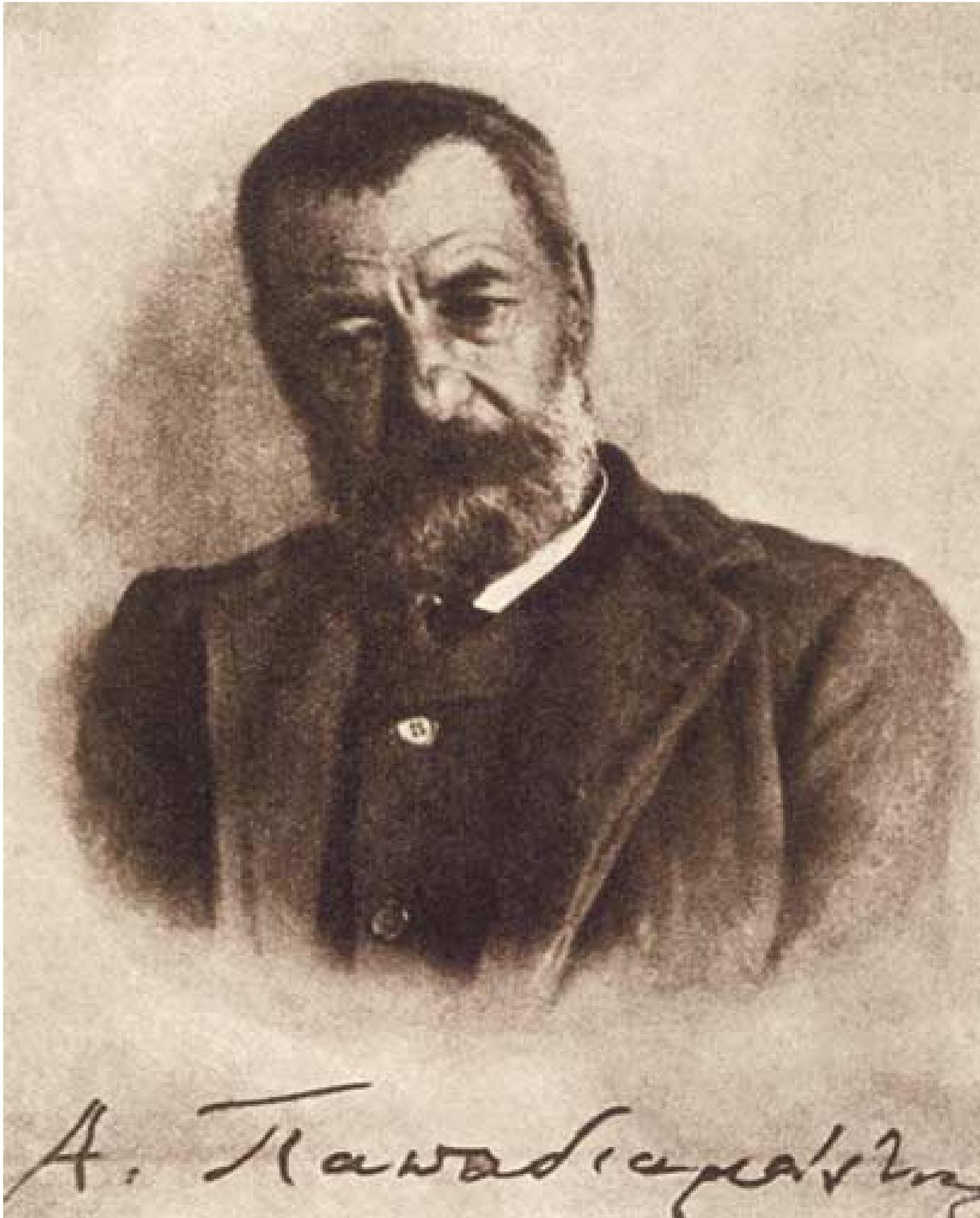
The writing of Papadiamantis has an essentially universal appeal. In works such as *The Murderess* (1903), in which the compassionate grandmother kills the little girls so that they may never know the sufferings of life, *Rosy Shores* (1908), in



Skiathos, c.1960. (Photo by D. Papadimos, E.L.I.A. Photographic Archive)



A. Papdiamantis photographed by the writer Pavlos Nirvanas in Dexameni Square, Athens. (*Panathina* Review, Oct. 1906 – E.L.I.A. Photographic Archive)



A. Papdiamantis photographed by the writer K. Hadzopoulos. (*Nea Zoë* Review, April 1908 – E.L.I.A. Photographic Archive)

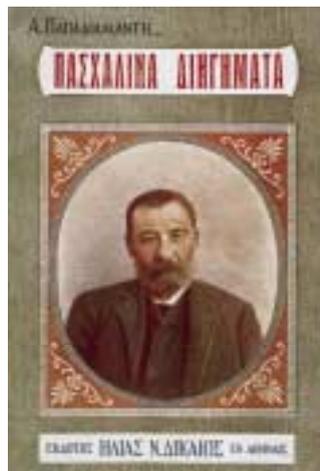
which a private love affair is ridiculed and silenced by public opinion, or ‘The Dead Voyager’ (1910), in which the miraculous Virgin guides a drowned sailor back to his homeland to be buried, Papadiamantis succeeded in reintroducing local features into the mysteries which man confronts and into the wider cultural conflicts secreted in the depths of his soul. He succeeded in imprinting on successive layers of the customs and lore of a small island all the motley of accretions of Hellenism and, in a more general way, of our European legacy: the Christian chapel, ruins of ancient temples, pagan relations with nature, the monastery, the passion for learning, the West, the East, Dionysiac joy, scepticism, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Byron and Rabelaisian laughter.

The work of Papadiamantis has not been sufficiently translated – possibly because its international appeal has not

yet been demonstrated. Also possibly because its idiomatic language – a poetic mixture of Gospel, *katharevousa* (the purist form of the Greek language) and popular expression – alienates today’s publishers. Nearly a century after his death Papadiamantis nevertheless remains the most sought-after author in the world of Greek letters following the formation of the Greek nation-state. There has never been a time when readers were not divided over his standing as an author, but equally there has never been a Greek who did not read and love one of his works. Perhaps, now that Europeans are anxious about their national identity, the time has come to sail this Ark beyond the borders of Greece; this Ark in which are preserved with such abundant artistry, knowledge and love all the remains of our Greek civilization and culture, both those that display our differences as well as those that unite us.



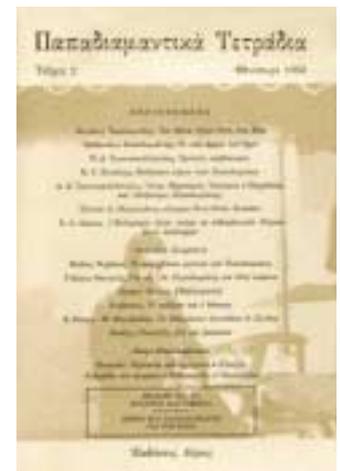
Complete Works, Greece



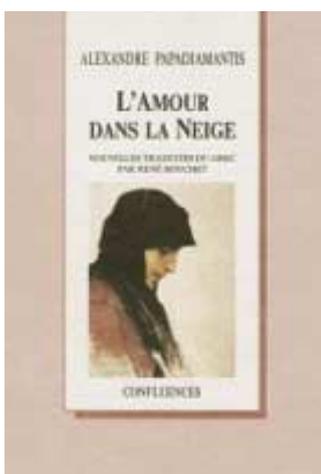
Easter Tales, Greece 1918



Translation of
Crime and Punishment
by Alexandros Papadiamantis



Occasional review dedicated
to Papadiamantis studies



France 1992



France 1996



France 1995



England 1983