

# Nineteenth-century travellers in Greek lands: politics, prejudice and poetry in Arcadia

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‘I agree’, a friend of mine told me, when I returned to France, ‘that the study of antiquity possesses great interest; but what did you do in Athens for a whole winter?’

Antonin Proust, *Un hiver à Athènes*<sup>1</sup>

After sunset, on the terraces of the palace, Marco Polo expounded to the sovereign the results of his missions.... ‘Tell me another city’, he [Kublai Khan] insisted....

‘Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know.’

‘There is still one of which you never speak.’

Marco Polo bowed his head.

‘Venice’, the Khan said.

Marco smiled. ‘What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?’

The emperor did not turn a hair. ‘And yet I have never heard you mention that name.’

And Polo said: ‘Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice.’

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*<sup>2</sup>

I Does Marco Polo, in Italo Calvino’s fictional recreation, know the cities of the Great Kublai Khan? What is it that he sees in these cities? Why did he leave Venice, the Venice that he so loves? Does he even know Venice now? When can we say we know a place? I have been asking myself these sorts of questions as I approach the subject of nineteenth-century travellers in Greek lands. There are different ways of knowing a place, some of them contradictory, all adding up to

a many-faceted whole larger than the sum of its parts. Taking the position that a place is realized each time it is described, I have tried to respect and incorporate into this account a cross-section of the literature, without privileging the local over the Other, or vice versa.

While this literature has been studied to a large extent as a self-contained genre whose primary responsibility was to answer to itself (other writings by foreign travellers) and to readers back home, I am interested in exploring the *dialogue* that was established, directly and indirectly, between the foreign writers and the Greeks at many different levels. While exploring the larger patterns that developed, I will also describe the discrepancies in the travellers' accounts, often parallel to the discrepancies found in the views of Greeks in the nineteenth century. It is my contention that the impact of writings and artistic depictions by foreign travellers was not confined to their compatriots in northern Europe. The gist of much of the writing reached the Greek populace directly or indirectly. The educated, polyglot élite could read some of these works in the original or in translations, while the general public learned about the most important works through the local press. Serving as a mirror, a report card and an advertisement, travel writings often helped calibrate progress and the distance still to be travelled before Greece could join the company of the 'civilized nations of Europe'.

**II** The War of Independence (1821-27) caused a deep rupture in the patterns of Greek life. The generation that grew up after the 1820s considered the Ottoman past as alien and distant, making few references to it in written sources. 'The history of our own fathers is already considered by many as archaeology', we read in an 1857 account.<sup>3</sup> As General Kolokotronis noted in his dictated memoirs: 'In the time of my youth [he was born in 1770] when I could still learn, there were no schools, or academies, there were barely a few schools where they learned to read and write. The old *kocabaşis*, who were the leaders of the country, could write their name. The majority of the priests only knew how to take a mass, but no one had learning. The people's horizon literally opened up as a result of the Revolution.'<sup>4</sup> Kolokotronis expressed the common sentiment, though not necessarily the reality, at the time. While education was not completely abandoned during the period of Ottoman rule, the impulse to leave the past behind often led to a deliberate exaggeration of pre-liberation conditions.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the rate of change in the years after the Revolution was unprecedented. The Revolution educated the freed Greeks by bringing them into

contact with outsiders,<sup>2</sup> by making them aware of the European diplomatic system, and by acting as a catalyst on established social patterns.<sup>3</sup> Both the foreigners and the Greeks from western Europe who came to participate in the Revolution were the messengers of contemporary social innovations whose impact marked the development of the new nation. European approval served to legitimize the Greek cause and to pave the way for the acceptance of the Greek nation in the family of Europe.

The Revolution itself was oriented towards Europe as much as it was directed against the Ottomans. Greek chieftains often calculated their actions explicitly so that they would make the right impression on the Europeans. 'For there are foreigners here, Europeans watching us', explains Makrygiannis in his memoirs, 'and I want them to see that we are indeed thirsty for freedom and for laws; and not that we are rapacious people.'<sup>6</sup> Kolokotronis makes a similar remark: 'If we kill the [Greek] primates, the kings will say that they [the Greeks] did not rise for freedom, but to kill each other, and that they are bad people, Carbonari, and then the kings might help the Turk and we might end up with a yoke heavier than the one we had.'<sup>7</sup> After the liberation and the establishment of King Otho and his Bavarian administration in Athens, Greek politicians, journalists and the general public maintained an active interest in international events, constantly judging their possible impact on the new state. Within that context, foreign accounts mattered very much to the Greeks: they could potentially influence not only the country's diplomatic affairs with the rest of Europe, but also the Greeks' image of themselves.

**III** While images of the Greek countryside ravaged by the War of Independence were common subjects of Romantic paintings and travel literature, a look at local activities and testimonies reveals a different picture. The analysis of the physical fabric of Athens, as seen by travellers and locals alike, is a case in point. European travellers who visited Athens in the 1830s described a scene of total catastrophe. 'The town of Athens is now lying in ruins. The streets are almost deserted: nearly all the houses are without roofs. The churches are reduced to bare walls and heaps of stones and mortar. There is but one church in which the service is performed', wrote Christopher Wordsworth in 1832-3.<sup>8</sup> 'It would be impossible for me to describe the first impression which this completely devastated town and its protruding ruins made on me at my arrival', wrote the young architect Christian Hansen: 'only a few of the houses had roofs and the streets were completely

unrecognizable, because everything had collapsed in boundless confusion. The beautiful surrounding fields, too, looked as though they had never been cultivated.<sup>9</sup> Some travellers compared the devastated landscape they encountered after the war with the near-idyllic descriptions of Athens in the 1800s, then a picturesque oriental village with magnificent ancient remains as depicted in the well-known works of Chateaubriand and Pouqueville.<sup>10</sup> The resulting literary 'correspondence' is characteristic of the mood of the time:

Since the time, in 1806, that Chateaubriand visited the city of Pericles, each house had its garden planted with orange trees and olive trees. Certain houses in particular did not lack propriety or elegance. The people seemed to him gay and contented. Nevertheless, travellers then bewailed the fate of the city of Minerva. What would they say today, now that the walls of the city resemble the valley of Ezekiel? . . . The bird of Minerva is here but the symbol of silent and solitary desolation.<sup>11</sup>

Did the city create the same impression on its Greek inhabitants? To some extent, the major newspapers echoed the descriptions of the European travellers. We read in 1835 in the liberal paper *Athena*:

There are over 4000 sick people in Athens . . . What is the cause? The ruins, the dust mixed with the air that we inhale which comes from stagnant waters . . . Why don't [the city authorities] water the roads which constantly cause clouds of dust to rise? Inside the ruins there is the rubbish of many years covering the dead bodies of dogs, cats, etc. . . . To tell the truth, the seat of the Greek state does not differ at all from an African or a Turkish city.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the newly instituted centralization of the state, Athens, the capital from 1834, came to symbolize the condition of the Greek nation. The major Greek newspapers representing the different political parties often expressed their dissatisfaction with the administration by scrutinizing the physical conditions of the capital. The argument was that Athens was not as clean, safe or pleasant as a European capital ought to be, and that it was the responsibility of the state to ameliorate the situation. Despite their critical attitude, however, contemporary papers do not provide any evidence of discontinuity in the city's daily life. There

were no descriptions here of ‘deathly scenes of abandonment’: rather, a picture of feverish political and building activity unfolds.

Nor do we encounter expressions of pessimism in the memoirs of General Makrygiannis, one of the few first-hand Greek accounts of the period, though published only in 1907. Courageous, outspoken and uncompromising, Makrygiannis had fought extensively in Athens, returning there in May 1833 to establish his family. In his vivid recollections, a picture of Athenian life emerges that has little in common with the descriptions of European travellers. Alongside the endless party plots and the underlying political instability, Makrygiannis depicts a manifest optimism and burst of energy that charged the country, especially after the arrival of Otho in Greece on 18 January 1833: ‘Today our country, that for so long was lost and wiped out, is born again and stands once more on her feet. Today, there stand upon their feet the veterans, the statesmen, the clergy, and the soldiers, for our King has come, whom we have gained through the power of God.’<sup>13</sup> The fact that Makrygiannis chose to make his home in Athens leads us to believe that, despite its various misfortunes, Athens had an attraction for the Greek population.

The city’s healthy economy is further evident from Wordsworth’s description of the weekly bazaar:

Looking up the street, you command a view of the commodities with which this Athenian market is now supplied. Barrels of black caviar, small pocket-looking-glasses in red pasteboard cases, onions, tobacco piled up in brown heaps, black olives, figs strung together upon a rush, rices, pipes with amber mouth-pieces and brown clay bowls, rich stuffs, and silver-chased pistols, dirks, belts, and embroidered waistcoats – these are the varied objects which a rapid glance . . . presents to the spectator.<sup>14</sup>

The bazaar was the most important economic feature of Athens both before and after the War of Independence<sup>15</sup> (see figure 1, p. 52). This implies that, up to a point, the city was able to recover and grow as an economic centre long before the physical envelope was repaired and rebuilt. I believe that the ‘complete devastation’ that most foreign travellers perceived concerned primarily the built environment. The optimism of the local population, by contrast, was based on the evidence of and potential for economic growth.

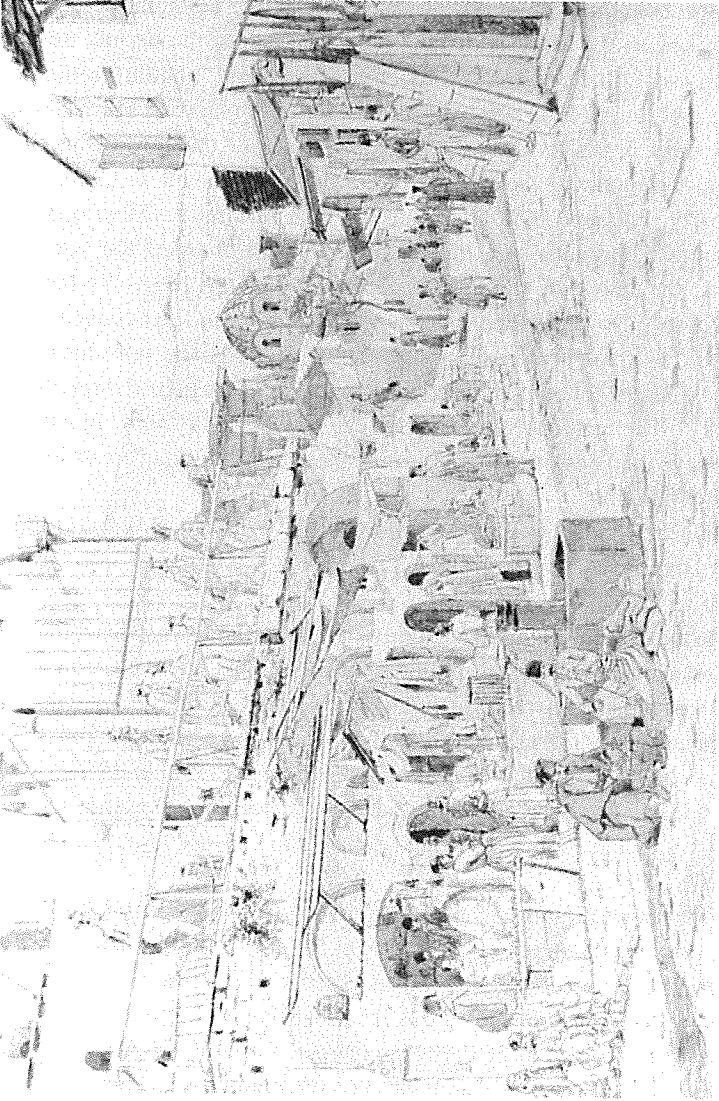


FIGURE 1: *Athens, Monastiraki*. The market place by the Tzisdaraki Mosque, near Hadrian's Library. This had been the location of the market since the Ottoman era. Bavarian soldiers can be seen in the mosque gallery, while merchants, customers, and passers-by mingle in the market. Pencil and ink drawing by M. Rørbye, 1835. Inv. no. 5040 National Museum, Copenhagen, Department of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities.

IV While Greeks were eager to shape a solid future in the years immediately following the liberation, most foreign travellers were primarily interested in the ruins of the past, the classical landscape, and, to a lesser extent, the picturesque Oriental population and its customs. An 1833 letter from the 'Old Man of Dalamanara' to *Athens*, requesting a subscription to the paper, illustrates this diametric opposition in interests and orientation:

What good are they to me, my friend, the natural beauties of the place where I live, of what use are the glorious ruins of immortal antiquity, among which I live like a stranger and an unknown? . . . It is true that many of the so-called travellers often go by my village and I have had the opportunity to get to know them and talk with them. But, what do you want me to learn, my friend, from these odd gentlemen who, when you ask them about the living, want information about the dead?<sup>16</sup>

Ignorant of the new state's planning policies and rebuilding efforts, many foreign travellers continued to focus on the desolation of conditions in Greece after the Revolution and on the unbridgeable gap between classical antiquity and the present. Others scrutinized all new construction, criticizing it as poorly executed or extravagant. The first major government building erected in Athens, Otho's palace, designed by Friedrich von Gaertner (1836-43), was a frequent target of criticism. Writing in the *Revue des deux mondes*, Raoul-Rochette observed cynically in 1838: '[New Athens] is a town which does not yet have a road, but where they started by building a palace – a sufficiently correct image of a country where they first made a king before they were assured that there was a nation'.<sup>17</sup> Similarly critical was another French traveller, Henri Belle, who remarked in the early 1860s that there were 'in Athens educational institutions . . . for a population six times larger than the existing one', acknowledging, however, that there was a national revival under way which, if channelled properly, could help strengthen the position of the government.<sup>18</sup>

While these criticisms were not unfounded, the example of Athens was by no means unique. Other new cities, like St Petersburg, or Washington DC, had experienced similarly grandiose building activities before the urban infrastructure was completed. Of the American capital, Henry Adams commented in 1905: 'As in 1800 and 1850, so in 1860, the same rude colony was camped in the same forest, with the same unfinished Greek temples for work-rooms, and sloughs for

roads.<sup>19</sup> What was novel in the case of Athens, however, and hard to comprehend for a nineteenth-century observer, was not so much the building of an expensive palace or an academic institution *per se*, as the very creation of a new European nation. Under way before the unification of Italy and the independence of most of the other Balkan states, the making of modern Greece was bound to appear unorthodox to contemporary witnesses from established European nations. The political ramifications of nation-building in the nineteenth century fall outside the scope of this study. In reviewing the travel literature, however, one often detects the implicit assumption that the main purpose of the new state was to withstand the scrutiny and satisfy the expectations of foreign travellers, who often act like visitors to a distant colony.

The reaction of the Greeks themselves towards the new public buildings was more complex and often contradictory. While still lacking basic services such as elementary schools, markets, and prisons, Athens was being endowed, through private patronage, with a University, an Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a Library. The Greek press pointed out these discrepancies and attacked many of the new projects more sharply than foreign travellers ever did. On the whole, however, political conditions and national aspirations led to broad support for these building projects, which people hoped to see multiplied and supported by a stronger cultural and educational infrastructure. Many Greek politicians and intellectuals in the nineteenth century believed that the political mission of Greece was to act as a conduit, receiving the light of Western civilization and transmitting it to the East. As Spyridon Komnos wrote in 1867, 'the University, transmitting to the East our language, ideas and institutions, sows, so to speak, Greece in the East . . . and thus prepares the political union of the scattered members of the great Greek family'.<sup>20</sup> Viewed through that prism, then, the role of new buildings was much grander than just serving the population of the newly established state.

Raoul-Rochette's criticisms were shared by other foreign visitors. In Athens, he pointed out, there were unpaved streets without alignment, houses built next to rubble, 'everywhere an image of destruction side by side with [new] activity; an [absolute] chaos, where the old and the new are everywhere jumbled together, where the [ancient] Greek and the modern lean over the Gothic and the Byzantine . . . It seems, judging by their houses, that they are content to live for today, and that they are not sure they will exist tomorrow.'<sup>21</sup> This, of course, contrasted with the surviving architecture from antiquity, built to last for ever. The capital's rapid growth, the short supply of building materials and trained

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FIGURE II: *Athens, Monastiraki area as in figure 1*, showing the Ottoman mosque in the foreground, left, contemporary residences in the foreground, right, and the remains of the Library of Hadrian in the background. Watercolour by H.C. Stilling, 1853. Kunstakademiet Bibl., Copenhagen.

builders, and the government's inability to enforce the new city plans help explain the conditions of the first decades. Yet the issue goes beyond that of material shortages and experimentation with various building styles. What was, I believe, harder for many visitors to accept was precisely the chaos that characterized the building of modern Greece. The close proximity of 'the Greek and the modern', 'the Gothic and the Byzantine', and the fact that new building in Greece did not resemble the projects of Pericles, created a disturbing reality for most foreign travellers (figure II, p. 55).

Greece was changing rapidly. It no longer resembled those timeless depictions captured in the precise linework of Stuart and Revett over a century earlier, or the evocative pre-Revolutionary landscapes of the Romantic painters. Nevertheless, many travellers remained unable or unwilling to describe the state of flux and instability that characterized the new nation. As modern Greece struggled to define its role in modern Europe, shedding first its picturesque Ottoman and then its rugged revolutionary image, it lost that special place it had held in the hearts of many European travellers and politicians.

Foreign travellers who came to Greece before its liberation were in search of the idea of Hellas, as David Constantine has shown in *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal*. 'After Independence', he remarked, 'and under the tonnage of archaeological and scholarly information . . . some of the imaginative urgency goes out of the preoccupation with Greece'.<sup>22</sup> Antoine Grenier, who visited Greece in 1847 and 1863, offered a reflective account of the reasons that led many of his contemporaries to change their attitudes towards Greece. The Greeks, he pointed out, are 'out of fashion'. 'Poor and proud', he continued, 'those are the two vices of the Greeks . . . And whose fault is it? Ours. For three centuries we did not cease to declare that we owe to their fathers our literature, our arts, our civilization . . . For three centuries we visited their country, drew their monuments, deciphered their inscriptions . . . For ten years, our greatest orators and our greatest poets enviously sang their praises as the models of religious steadfastness and patriotism, as heroes and as martyrs! After all this, are you surprised that they are proud!'<sup>23</sup> And, as Deschamps pointed out in his sombre account from the 1890s, 'strict critics blamed it [Greece] for not giving to the world, in its first years of existence, a Pericles or a Phidias'.<sup>24</sup> The humanists, he explained, paid homage to the Acropolis without realizing that there were people there: 'The modern Greeks were considered "a jarring accident, thrown out of place among the sacred ruins of ancient Greece, to spoil the spectacle and the impression".'<sup>25</sup> The

Romantics ‘invented a colourful and motley Orient, where there was a little bit of everything . . . In the fiery sky . . . romanticism imagined the Greeks a little too magnificent and the Turks a little too tartar’.<sup>26</sup> Mishellenism, he contended, resulted from that disproportionate relationship between what was expected from Greece, and what it really was.<sup>27</sup>

Among the best known critical accounts of conditions in modern Greece is the work of Edmond About, whose *La Grèce contemporaine* (1855) was considered the epitome of mishellenic writing. It is also one of the richest contemporary accounts in terms of observations about daily life, national character and political conditions. Certainly About was not an objective critic; a humanist and a liberal, he missed no opportunity to attack the Church and the remnants of the feudal system that exerted considerable power over the Greek population. He aimed equally sharp barbs at the Bavarian monarchy which, he claimed, reserved the best governmental positions for the Bavarians themselves, including one for the Waters and Forests Inspector in the island of Syros, ‘which possesses neither wood nor water’.<sup>28</sup> In his observations of the Greek people he was consciously comparing the local population with northern Europeans, taking jabs, alternately, at both. ‘The coffee-houses in Athens are full of people, and at all hours: but the customers do not take strong liquors – they ask for a cup of coffee at a penny, a glass of water, light for their cigarettes, a newspaper, and a game of dominoes – they have there enough to keep themselves occupied for the day . . . Our sailors on the station at Piraeus become more than half-seas-over when intending only to refresh themselves.’<sup>29</sup> He admired the Greeks’ love for freedom and equality, but found their patriotism exaggerated, as it led them to believe that ‘all the events of Europe have in Greece their centre and end’.<sup>30</sup> And in a piece of vintage About, he retorted: ‘To say the truth, the Greeks like none but Greeks. If they like foreigners, it is in the same way that the sportsman loves game.’<sup>31</sup> Greek newspapers made some equally caustic observations: ‘During the Bavarocracy’, noted *Athena* in 1845, ‘they said that the drunkard Strauffert [sc. Stauffert] made over 80,000 [drachmas] . . . But today there are no Bavarians, yet, nevertheless . . . the violation of the law continues its own path.’<sup>32</sup> Yet these criticisms were directed internally at the Greek population only. This was not the image to be projected abroad. About’s crime was precisely that he was able to decipher and then publicize a view of the interior workings of the new nation, its politics, habits, shortcomings and aspirations, that was meant for domestic consumption.

The continuous exposure and scrutiny of Greek affairs by foreign travellers

inevitably had an effect on how the Greeks, at least the educated and political élite, came to view themselves, progressively adopting the very language of the foreign travellers in their descriptions of the country's condition and achievements, essentially viewing their own situation through the eyes of foreigners: 'If the city of Athens . . . beautified the entrance to the city, the Theseion, the Hill of the Nymphs and the foot of the mountains with tree planting and gardens . . . [then a] visitor, instead of the smell of excrement and latrines would sense the scent of flowers and trees.'<sup>33</sup>

In his *Aperçu sur les progrès matériels de la Grèce* (1866), Emmanuel Manitaky, the general in charge of public works, proudly described the state's extensive accomplishments: 'Greece, when it emerged from the War of Independence was literally a pile of ruins', he wrote. After the liberation and in a third of a century, '23 old cities were rebuilt and 10 new ones founded'.<sup>34</sup> The mud-wall (*pisé*) houses and the narrow and tortuous streets of the Turkish villages gave place to wide, well-aligned streets, lined with 'houses which would not be out of place in Italy'.<sup>35</sup> The visitor who disembarked in Piraeus, for instance, 'would have difficulty imagining that none of what surrounds him, the city, the population, the commerce, the industry, the navy existed before 1835'.<sup>36</sup> Chateaubriand's Turkish Athens, 'a skeleton of a city with winding, tight streets', had now become a modern city of 5000 houses. After seeing all this, Manitaky wondered, how could anyone still insist that Greece had gained nothing from independence? All one had to do was compare 'the sedentary and gloomy population of the former [city] with the tenfold population of the latter, which, in its manner of dressing, living and thinking is so well identified with the great family of the civilized nations of Europe'.<sup>37</sup> Manitaky had adopted the voice of the northern European observer, describing the Ottoman past with the same scorn and detachment encountered in the – what we might call today 'Orientalist' – accounts of foreign travellers. After a while, the Greeks could not see themselves without being aware of European eyes, which began reflecting upon them, to the point of becoming, at times, indistinguishable from their own.

Manitaky was not the only Greek to speak disparagingly of the cultural condition of Greece under the Ottoman rule. The general assumption, however, was that the Greeks had survived the Turkish yoke unscathed and were ready to join the 'civilized nations of Europe' after the liberation as their rightful cousins by virtue of their ancient lineage and their victorious War of Independence. The strongest refutation of this position came from Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, a

historian of Tyrolean origin, who not only rejected the notion that the Greeks were European, but claimed that contemporary Greeks could not be descendants of the ancients, given the successive invasions by Slavs and Albanians since the Byzantine era.<sup>38</sup> His unfavourable views of the nineteenth-century Greeks curiously echo the opinions of many of the Greek writers when referring to the Ottoman years. While the Greeks, however, painted an especially dark picture partly so that they could showcase the country's progress since 1833, Fallmerayer and some other foreign travellers saw absolutely no connection between the glories of ancient Hellas and the rugged, war-torn Greek landscape of the nineteenth century. Fallmerayer's publications gave rise to extensive and concerted attacks by Greek intellectuals, who based their rebuttals on historical and philological evidence. Nevertheless, the duality of ideal and real Greece and the unbearable weight of the ancient legacy have formed the complex backbone of modern Greek culture and identity.

Certainly, several travellers had positive comments to make about modern Greece. Writing in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1864, François Lenormant remarked that Athens had changed for the better, with its 'new squares, recently opened boulevards, beautiful houses . . . except for the wandering dogs, the paved streets and the European boutiques . . . the gas [lights] in the principal streets, in the cafés, the boutiques, and in the market, the Acropolis excavations that have been completed.'<sup>39</sup> Yet it was precisely the capital's European character, coexisting with the vestiges of the Ottoman era, that most travellers found disconcerting. Some came expecting to find the city inhabited still by unspoiled peasants; others expected a full-blown European metropolis. Neither, of course, was the case. As the Earl of Carnarvon, who had visited Greece in 1839, observed: 'Rarely, perhaps, in any age, have citizens of the same country met on a common arena, formed upon such different systems, and cast in such a different mould, as the children of the system now expiring, and those creatures of the new philosophy of France.'<sup>40</sup> 'Athens', remarked A. Proust, who spent the winter of 1857 there, 'has 70 tailors and 50 shoemakers who dress and make shoes according to French fashion, against 6 tailors and 3 shoemakers who follow tradition'.<sup>41</sup> These statistics, however, did not necessarily reflect the actual orientation of the population. 'For thirty years', Proust reflected, 'they tried to make Greece obey the European way of life. I hasten to say that they did not succeed, even if we have to go to a villager's hut or a shepherd's tent to find customs without any western influences. But even in the salons of Athens, where the influence of the western

way of life is deeper, it is a matter of surface treatment, not substance.<sup>42</sup>

Many Greek commentators similarly criticized the often discordant juxtaposition of the old and the new, as well as the slow pace of the capital's transformation. In an 1853 article, the literary magazine *Pandora* blamed the daily press for presenting a distorted view of the city, whereas 'many of the existing good things about our capital remain unobserved and undervalued'. This is a city of great attractions, the article continued, for the Greek who loves his country, but not for the grumbling or impatient citizen who 'wants his hopes realized in no time at all'.<sup>43</sup> Writing in 1887, Charles de Moüy, the French ambassador in Rome, concurred: 'Paris, it is said, was not made in a day: Athens, too, needs time.'<sup>44</sup>

The *Pandora* article reflected the general spirit among the Greeks at the time: Greece was moving towards modernization, and it was only a matter of time before it completely shed any remaining vestiges of the past. In that respect, the travellers' observations on the disparate cultural forces that shaped society pointed to some inherent problems that local politicians and European-trained intellectuals often ignored. Hindsight has shown us that it was not simply a matter of time before Greece joined the family of Europe as an equal member. The insistence of the elderly statesman from the countryside 'with large white moustaches' donning with pride the national dress in Parliament<sup>45</sup> did not completely die out. It can be seen as part of an insistent resistance to modernization which has found many expressions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Family photographs from the middle and late nineteenth century more often than not include some members in European clothes, while others wear their elaborate and traditional regional garb. Old customs die hard. Despite the influx of Greeks from other European states, and their economic and political prominence, the local population remained greatly attached to its provincial, pre-liberation ways of life. A contemporary observed in 1875 that Greece was no longer Greece, but neither was it yet Europe.<sup>46</sup>

In re-examining the travel literature that was critical of modernization in Greece, one might note Edward Said's position in *Orientalism*, according to which Orientalists feared 'not the destruction of Western civilization but rather the destruction of the barriers that kept East and West from each other'.<sup>47</sup> And I think that was, in part, the rationale behind the criticism of the writers. Yet one can also consider these travellers as early anthropologists who had cultivated a distance and a critical stance towards modernity and were more sensitive to the fragility of the cultural fabric that was being ruptured in Greece.

V Romantic preoccupations with antiquity and cultural enrichment, however, were not the only attractions of the land of Pericles and Makrygiannis. Politics, economics, diplomacy, and personal advancement were often the major motives of travel. After addressing ‘the man of pleasure, who, on arriving at Athens, might know how to take advantage of the delights of that city’, George Cochrane concluded his two-volume *Wanderings in Greece* (1837) with a chapter entitled ‘On the colonization of Greece’.<sup>48</sup> There the author explored the financial opportunities that the newly liberated but impoverished country could offer an Englishman who wanted to invest capital to cultivate ‘the present waste lands of Greece’, by employing either ‘natives of the soil’ or foreign labourers. Were the foreign capitalist to opt for Greek workers, Cochrane advised, he should first hire a priest, whose services could be secured ‘for about three hundred drachmas a year, for which he would engage to reside upon the spot’, build him a small house and a church, and then erect a few small cottages nearby for other Greek families. ‘The Greeks’, Cochrane continued, ‘are a very religious race, and their priests have great influence over them. The priest, being interested in the success of my plans, would of course exercise his influence in preventing me from being imposed on.’ An agreement would bind the tenants to cultivate the land and return a portion of their produce to the landlord: either half of the produce if he provided them with an ox and the seed, or one eighth if they provided their own cattle and seed. Cochrane arrived at this plan by studying the Greeks, studying history, and ‘from seeing it actually carried into effect in the Brazils’.<sup>49</sup> ‘Thus, in twenty-five years, Great Britain, France and Russia would have brought Greece to maturity; she would no longer be a burthen to them; and, by her elevation, western Europe would have discharged the debt they owed to that country, for the arts and sciences they formerly received from her.’<sup>50</sup> Repaying the debt to antiquity was a recurrent theme in most travel literature. As Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis has remarked in her study of early nineteenth-century British travellers in Greece: ‘England was generally presented as the place which had replaced Greece as the centre and *omphalos* of knowledge and science.’<sup>51</sup>

Beyond repaying these cultural debts, political and economic support of Greece had another important goal, as Cochrane pointed out: the formation of a strong front against Russia, ‘without infringing on the existing rights of the Sultan, or upon the rights of any other country power’.<sup>52</sup> Lewis Sergeant, in *Greece in the Nineteenth Century*, went even further: ‘If there is a single Englishman who is not convinced of the real importance of Greece to Europe –

which of necessity implies strengthening the Greek kingdom, and extending its borders amongst the surrounding Greek population – he would do well to sit down before a map of Europe, to blot out the name of Greece, and to substitute for it “Turkey,” or “Slavonia,” or one of the letters of the “Russian Empire”. If he is not prepared for such a transformation, and wishes the name of Greece to remain, he ought to be ready for the natural corollary, which is to give the Greeks power and authority to hold their country against all comers, and to strengthen them, as occasion serves, by the addition of territory which is indisputably Greek.’<sup>53</sup> These politically motivated accounts were by no means unique and isolated cases. More widely known are the works of Colonel William Martin Leake, who carried out a most detailed survey of the Greek lands for the British government, as well as the work of Friedrich Thiersch and Georg Ludwig von Maurer, who helped the Bavarian government set the foundations for the country’s legal and administrative system.<sup>54</sup> All accounts, be they government-commissioned, scholarly or personal, contain an implicit or explicit political agenda. Acknowledging that all writing is subjective and politically motivated does not deny its historical contribution; nor does it invalidate, in our case, the travellers’ attraction for and attachment to the ragged and complex country whose secrets they tried to uncover.

**VI** As the nineteenth century progressed, Greece remained a destination for a number of travellers attracted to the country’s pre-modern social conditions and attachment to local customs, thus offering the illusion of a return to an ideal past. And if Athens had ceased to provide this romantic escape to all, the Greek countryside still harboured a relief from the present and an occasional glimpse of that ‘timeless’ Greek villager. In the words of the Earl of Carnarvon:

The evening was delightful, the sheep were grazing in the last light of the setting sun, the grass still preserved its verdure and the mulberry trees their vivid green, while in striking contrast the dark cypresses reared their lofty forms over the richly wooded plain. At a little distance was seen the town of Mistra, climbing the hill, and again above this, the castle conspicuous on its airy height; but higher still, and still grander arose that magnificent chain of mountains, stretching along the horizon like a mighty curtain, and forming the Spartan range. Awful, gloomy, and severe, it is in perfect unison with our ideas of that stern and indomitable race which has left to after ages a name distinctive of all that is inflexible in the mind of man.



We strayed on to the monument popularly known as the tomb of Leonidas, and while examining its huge masses of stone, we observed that a peasant had followed us, and was watching our motions with interest. We asked him whether he knew the name of the monument. 'Yes,' he replied, 'it is the monument of Leonidas.' 'And who was Leonidas?' 'I cannot tell you precisely,' he answered, 'but certainly a very famous man; was he not?' 'He was indeed.' 'A Capitani, surely?' 'Something higher still,' we said. 'Ah,' he replied, brightening up . . . 'He was πρώτος κλέφτ – a first-rate robber.' We laughed, and continued our way. He might have been nineteen or twenty years of age.<sup>55</sup>

'It is only in Athens', wrote Charles de Moüy, 'that one finds that unique, unalloyed inspiration at its own source.'<sup>56</sup> 'For all the dates in the world', he continued, 'Charlemagne seems to me much more ancient than Pericles. The Gallic antiquities which are young next to the Parthenon seem to me plunged in the night of time . . . The Acropolis has the effect on me, if I may say so, of being ancient but not old, and the barbarian people who are our fathers are, for me, more remote in time and more foreign to my civilization than the orators of the Pnyx and the spectators of the theatre of Bacchus.'<sup>57</sup> This comment echoes the position taken by Greek intellectuals as well. The time of Pericles was considered closer to the spirit of the new nation than the immediate Ottoman past.

Some of the narratives take on an almost apologetic tone. In his private correspondence, which, of course, can reveal an intimacy not intended for the public eye, the young architect Christian Hansen, who went to Greece in 1833, described a wider gamut of reactions: 'Greece is a very beautiful country. . . It is characterized by mountains, in an endless variety of shapes and colours. The inhabitants are wonderful and their dress beautiful. At first, all of this made me feel I was in another world. Sometimes Pettrich and I felt truly under a spell.'<sup>58</sup> Writing in 1890, Deschamps confessed that 'no matter what, this city [Athens] is charming . . . For my part, I loved it with all my heart. Three years of intimacy did not dull its charm, nor discourage my fidelity.'<sup>59</sup>

It should also be noted that the new country offered attractive business opportunities to many young itinerant architects, artists, teachers, and politicians, who found positions with the new government and stayed longer than originally intended. Foreign architects were in charge of most major civic and residential building projects in the first decades after liberation, especially prominent among

them the Danish brothers Christian and Theophilos Hansen, Christian being the architect of the University (1839-89) and Theophilos the architect of the Academy (1859-87), the National Library (1885-92), the Demetriou House (1842-3), and the Observatory (1842-6).<sup>60</sup>

Writing to his family over the years, Christian Hansen acknowledged that, although he missed them very much, he saw a brighter professional future in Greece: 'But I go mad at the mere thought that if I were to return to Denmark I would have to earn my bread giving practical advice.'<sup>61</sup> And in another letter: 'If only I were so lucky as to get the post of the Building Inspector [in Athens]! My luck would be especially great were I able to live away from the machinations and intrigues of Copenhagen.'<sup>62</sup> As he slowly removed himself from the professional realities of his native Copenhagen, Hansen was beginning to idealize the Greek situation. While he missed his family, Greece, with its own political intrigues, miserable houses, and building opportunities, had, indeed, cast a spell on him. His hopes for architectural advancement were not unfounded: he stayed in Greece until 1850, carrying out several major architectural projects.

## VII Living conditions in nineteenth-century Greece were often harsh:

The roads [in Athens] are in bad repair, full of ditches, eroded from the rain water that removes the soil and uncovers enormous cobblestones, which jolt and break the carriages. Some roads are absolutely impassable owing to the potholes, which could be filled with a few spadefuls of dirt but which the municipality allows to deepen every day. The pavements, even in the most frequented points and in the richest quarters, are so poorly paved that at night one barely avoids breaking one's neck or twisting an ankle amidst the fragments of rocks that stick out from the street surface; the sewer lines break and are blocked, making the surrounding area stink; the water pipes burst and whole quarters go without water.<sup>63</sup>

Christian Hansen depicted the architect Eduard Schaubert at his drafting table wearing an overcoat and a hat. Hansen's own house shook in strong winds.<sup>64</sup> When it rained heavily, the roof tiles could not keep the water out: 'one must have an umbrella open over one's bed'. In one such heavy storm the river's current carried away forty-five houses.<sup>65</sup> 'Heavy rain clouds hung across the mountain of Hymettos: the weather was gray and cold. The unpaved streets stood in yellow

mud from the rain during the night; the thin walls of the houses dripped with water', wrote Hans Christian Andersen, who visited Greece in 1841.<sup>66</sup> Gustave Flaubert recorded his travel experiences especially vividly:

We set off again under pelting rain, our horses sink in the ploughed earth . . . We stop in one house, it has no fireplace; we go to another one, where in our room there are two blankets laid on the floor, on either side of the fireplace, which at night stifles us with the smoke . . . We have five more hours to go, it's almost night-time, the weather couldn't have been worse, that would have been impossible; my feet have no more feeling, my head is burning.<sup>67</sup>

Arriving in a house did not always offer a great relief, either. 'The building we are in is the priest's house', continued Flaubert:

In the only room there are our two beds, our saddles, all of Francisco's things, heaps of seeds, the kitchen, barrels, a woman and a man who are sleeping, two more children, sieves, tabs, linen, rags, dry onions in the ceiling, etc, etc. Hanging from the wall: a hare and a turkey, etc. etc. Nothing closes, all the draughts that blow through make our candles run, they drip excessively. Through the holes in the roof we can see the sky.<sup>68</sup>

Summer heat was equally relentless for the northern travellers, as Deschamps recorded:

But the torpor of the afternoon makes us like recluses in our room, lying on straw mattresses. And what a room! Two or three cubic metres of hot and stale air, in a cell full of flies, over a stable from which rise, from the cracks of the floor, noises of horses prancing and the smell of manure.<sup>69</sup>

Compared with the beautified views of daily life depicted by the Romantic painters, these vivid descriptions of misery may come as a surprise. Alongside their commentary on contemporary politics, international intrigues, and character studies, many of these travelogues capture also the moisture penetrating the bones, the annoyance and danger of insects, the heat and fevers encountered. Discounting the occasional hypochondriac traveller and the poetic exaggerations

employed even in realist writing, there were still many travellers who took these hardships in their stride and continued exploring new terrains. Most local residents, accustomed to the difficulties of everyday life, recurrent fever or lack of heating in the winter, did not take the time to record them. Struggling for their day-to-day existence and illiterate for the most part, they had little time and energy to dwell on these familiar conditions of their lives. Similarly, only a small part of these hardships found its way into the press, which remained preoccupied with the country's precarious political situation. In that respect, I find these admittedly subjective travel descriptions especially valuable in helping us reconstruct the gritty aspects of daily life in nineteenth-century Greece. Acknowledging the gulf of experiences and motives that separated the travellers from most of the local population, it is important to recognize that physical space in fact united the experiences of the locals and the travellers, often becoming the only common point of reference. Their descriptions of the physical experience of walking, riding, being in the rain or under the sun, finding their way in the dark, being cold at night or choked by the fireplace smoke give us a tangible connection with everyday life. I believe that the travellers knew a part of Greece, their own part, just as Marco Polo knew the cities of Kublai Khan in his own way, just as those of us from Greece who have made our home in other countries would like to believe that we, too, know these countries in our own way.

#### NOTES

While acknowledging the extensive and often excellent secondary sources that deal with foreign travellers in Greece, I have decided to focus on the original travel accounts, concentrating especially on the post-liberation literature that has been less thoroughly studied. Far from offering a comprehensive overview of the field, I have attempted instead to give a cross-section, concentrating on the correspondence between the foreigners' views and those of the Greeks themselves. I have benefited from the insightful suggestions of the journal's anonymous reader and from earlier comments by Randy Bird, Carole Tiernan and Mark Forte.

The term 'Greek' throughout this essay and the cited travel literature refers to the inhabitants of Greece of the nineteenth century; references to the ancient Greeks or twentieth-century Greeks are noted as such. I have maintained the dates as they appeared in the original texts. Most of the references come from original travellers' accounts in English or French; in a few cases I have had to rely on Greek or English translations of sources unavailable to me in the original. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Modern Greek Studies Association meeting at Berkeley in 1993.

1 A. Proust, *Un hiver à Athènes* (Paris ?1858); Ένας χειμώνας στην Αθήνα του 1857, tr. D. Nika (Athens 1990) 59.

- 2 I. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, tr. W. Weaver (New York 1974) 85-6.
- 3 G.G. Pappadopoulos, 'Εκθεσις περί τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ ἐκπαιδευτηρίου (Athens 1857) 8; cited in C.Th. Dimaras, 'Ἑλληνικός ρωμαντισμός (Athens 1982) 327.
- 4 [General] Th. Kolokotronis, 'Ἀπομνημονεύματα, dictated to G. Tertsetis, ed. Th. Vagenas (Athens 1976) 56.
- 5 Among the most recent studies, see H. Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival: British Travellers' Perceptions of Early Nineteenth-Century Greece* (London 1990), ch. 4, 'Education and culture'.
- 6 I. Makrygiannis, Στρατηγῶ Ἐκπαιδευτικῶν ἀπομνημονεύματα, ed. J. Vlachogiannis, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Athens 1947), I, 229.
- 7 Kolokotronis, 'Ἀπομνημονεύματα, 76-7.
- 8 C. Wordsworth, *Athens and Attica* (London 1836) 51.
- 9 C.F. Hansen, 'A letter from Athens', *Dansk Kunstblad* II, 10 (1837) cited in I. Haugsted, 'The architect Christian Hansen and the Greek Neo-classicism', *Scandinavian Studies in Modern Greek* 4 (1980) 70.
- 10 F.R. de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem, et de Jerusalem à Paris* 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Paris 1823). F.-C.-H.-L. Pouqueville, *Voyage de la Grèce*, 6 vols. (Paris 1820-1). For an excellent overview of the pictorial and literary works describing Greece at the eve of Independence, see also F.-M. Tsigakou, *The Rediscovery of Greece: Travellers and Painters of the Romantic Era* (London 1981).
- 11 [J.F.] Michaud and [B.] Poujoulat, *Correspondance d'Orient 1830-1831* (Paris 1833-5) 147, 176.
- 12 *Athena*, 27 July 1835. See also A. Politis, Ρομαντικά χρόνια: Ιδεολογίες και νοοτροπίες στην Ελλάδα του 1830-1880 (Athens 1993).
- 13 The cited passage is from the abridged translation by H.A. Lidderdale, *Makriyannis: The Memoirs of General Makriyannis* (London 1966) 149.
- 14 Wordsworth, *Athens and Attica*, 246.
- 15 For an excellent study of the economy and urban issues of Ottoman Athens, see D. Karydis, Πολεοδομικά τῶν Ἀθηνῶν τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας, Diss. Athens (National Technical University) 1981.
- 16 *Athena*, 13 May 1833
- 17 Raoul-Rochette, 'Athènes sous le Roi Othon', *Revue des deux mondes* 16, 4th series (Paris 1838) 185.
- 18 H. Belle, *Trois années en Grèce* (Paris 1881) 19.
- 19 H. Adams, *Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education of Henry Adams* (New York 1983) 810. I thank David Ricks for the reference.
- 20 S. Komnos, Περὶ τῆς στρατιωτικῆς σχολῆς (Athens 1867) 6, cited in Dimaras, Ρωμαντισμός, 350. See also E. Bastéa, 'Athens. Etching images on the street: planning and national aspirations' in Zeynep Çelik et al. (eds.), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Berkeley 1994) 115.
- 21 Raoul-Rochette, 'Athènes sous le Roi Othon', 185-6.
- 22 D. Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (London 1984) 210.
- 23 A. Grenier, *La Grèce en 1863* (Paris 1863) 34-7.
- 24 G. Deschamps, *La Grèce d'aujourd'hui* (Paris 1901: first published 1892) 396.
- 25 Deschamps, *La Grèce*, 387.
- 26 Deschamps, *La Grèce*, 390.
- 27 Deschamps, *La Grèce*, 395.
- 28 E. About, *Greece and the Greeks of the Present Day*, anon. transl. (New York 1857) 51. Originally published in French, *La Grèce contemporaine* (Paris 1855).
- 29 About, *Greece*, 33.
- 30 About, *Greece*, 42.

- 31 About, *Greece*, 55.
- 32 *Athena*, 24 February 1845.
- 33 *Athena*, 23 February 1856.
- 34 E. Manitaky, *Aperçu sur les progrès matériels de la Grèce*, 1st ed. (Athens 1866); 2nd ed., slightly revised (Athens 1869) 17. Manitaky's report is also cited in C.K. Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today* (New York 1886) 148-9.
- 35 Manitaky, *Aperçu*, 15.
- 36 Manitaky, *Aperçu*, 16.
- 37 Manitaky, *Aperçu*, 17.
- 38 J.P. Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart and Tübingen 1830 and 1836). For an extensive discussion of the political and ethnological impact of Fallmerayer's work, see M. Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York 1986) 75-96.
- 39 F. Lenormant, 'La Grèce depuis la Révolution de 1862', *Revue des deux mondes* (1864) 426.
- 40 Earl of Carnarvon, *Reminiscences of Athens and the Morea: Extracts from a Journal of Travels in Greece in 1839* (London 1869) 17.
- 41 Proust, 'Ένας Χειμώνας', 71.
- 42 Proust, 'Ένας Χειμώνας', 62.
- 43 *Pandora*, 3.67 (1 January 1853).
- 44 C. de Moüy, *Lettres Athéniennes* (Paris 1887) 37.
- 45 Belle, *Trois années en Grèce*, 32.
- 46 *Asmodaios*, 26 January 1875, cited in E. Skopetea, 'Τὸ 'πρότυπο βασιλείο' καὶ ἡ Μεγάλη 'Ιδέα. Ὁψεις τοῦ ἔθνικου προβλήματος στὴν Ἑλλάδα (1830-1880)' (Athens 1988) 162.
- 47 E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1979) 263.
- 48 G. Cochrane, *Wanderings in Greece*, 2 vols. (London 1837); ch. 17, 'On the colonization of Greece', is in II, 323-53. Quotation from p. 324.
- 49 Cochrane, *Wanderings*, 325-8.
- 50 Cochrane, *Wanderings*, 345.
- 51 Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival*, 140.
- 52 Cochrane, *Wanderings*, 352.
- 53 L. Sergeant, in *Greece in the Nineteenth Century. A Record of Hellenic Emancipation and Progress: 1821-1897* (London 1897) 2.
- 54 For W.M. Leake, see *Journal of a Tour in Asia Minor* (London 1824), *Researches in Greece* (London 1814), and *Travels in Northern Greece*, 4 vols. (London 1835). G.L. von Maurer: *Das griechische Volk* (Heidelberg 1835). F. Thiersch: *De l'état actuel de la Grèce et des moyens d'arriver à sa restauration*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1833). See now R. Stoneman, 'German scholars and Otho's Greece', *Dialogos* 4 (1997) 70-82.
- 55 Carnarvon, *Reminiscences*, 118-19. Notice that Carnarvon translates κλεφτ- as robber. It is more likely that the Greek peasant was referring to one of the fighters of the Revolution.
- 56 C. de Moüy, *Lettres Athéniennes*, 37.
- 57 de Moüy, *Lettres*, 39.
- 58 Letter by C. Hansen (4 September 1833) in A. Papanikolaou-Christensen, Χριστιανός Χάνσεν, Επιστολές και σχέδια από την Ελλάδα (Athens 1993) 53.
- 59 Deschamps, *La Grèce*, 24.
- 60 On the architecture of nineteenth-century Athens, see L. Balslev Jørgensen and D. Porphyrios (eds.), *Neoclassical Architecture in Copenhagen and Athens* (London 1987), especially the article by I. Haugsted, 'Danish classicism in Athens', 23-37. See too my 'The Rebirth of Athens: Planning and Architecture in the 19th Century', (Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1989), with extensive bibliography.

- 61 C. Hansen, letter (25 March 1835) in Papanikolaou-Christensen, Χριστιανός Χάνσεν, 62.
- 62 C. Hansen, letter (30 Sept. 1836) in Papanikolaou-Christensen, Χριστιανός Χάνσεν, 69.
- 63 Belle, *Trois années en Grèce*, 18-19.
- 64 C. Hansen, letter (25 March 1835) in Papanikolaou-Christensen, Χριστιανός Χάνσεν, 62.
- 65 C. Hansen, letter (October 1835) in Papanikolaou-Christensen, Χριστιανός Χάνσεν, 64.
- 66 H.C. Andersen, *A Poet's Bazaar: A Journey to Greece, Turkey and Up the Danube*, tr. G. Thornton (New York 1988) 58. Originally published in Danish, *En Digters Bazar*, in 1842.
- 67 Gustave Flaubert, *Voyages*, II: *Voyage en orient: Égypte, Palestine, Asie Mineure, Constantinople, Grèce, Italie (1849-1851), Constantine, Tunis et Carthage (1858)*, ed. R. Dumesnil (Paris 1948) 355, 370, 382-3.
- 68 Flaubert, *Voyages*, 426-7.
- 69 Deschamps, *La Grèce*, 282-3.