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Émilie Roffidal

The Connoisseurship Practices of a “Levantine” of Marseille or When Trade Meets Art

Will you allow me, Sir, to tell you that . . . you seem to surrender too easily to Mr. Mariette. His authority may impose itself on those who can only see through his eyes, but you are not destined to keep quiet before him, and in your mouth the αὐτὸς ἔφα would be too modest.¹

These few words addressed by Abbé May to the Marseille merchant Pierre-Augustin Guys (1721–99), in an unpublished letter dated April 10, 1771, compare him with the great connoisseur Pierre-Jean Mariette, and even place him higher in importance in a way.² Referring to the *autos epha*, equivalent to the Latin *ipse dixit* (he said it himself), confirms the authority of his knowledge and suggests that it applied particularly to the “Greek” world.³ This admiration was made public by Abbé May three years later when he dedicated his own book *Les temples anciens et modernes* “to M. Guys, a merchant of the Academy of Marseille.” This tribute to Guys is a confirmation of his reputation as a connoisseur of the Ottoman world in general and of Greece more specifically. Friederich-Melchior Grimm also referred to him in these words: “M. Guys has resided for a long time in Constantinople, he has more judgement in his little finger than M. de Tott [François de Tott who was an advisor to the Sultan Mustapha III at the time] has in his whole skull.”⁴ These few quotations illustrate the personality of a merchant, provided by two different sources, Marseille and the Échelles du Levant, French outposts in the Levant.

Although Guys’ profile might be considered unusual, he was nevertheless part of a milieu, that of wealthy Marseille merchants who had acquired considerable fortunes,

1 “Me permettez vous, Monsieur, de vous dire que . . . vous paraissez rendre trop facilement les armes à Monsieur Mariette. Son autorité peut en imposer à ceux qui ne peuvent voir que par ses yeux, mais vous n’êtes pas fait pour vous taire devant lui, et dans votre bouche l’αὐτὸς ἔφα seroit trop modeste.” Letter from Abbé May to Guys, April 10, 1771, Marseille, Archives de la Chambre de Commerce, Série L XI, Fonds de Barbarie, no. 14 (All translations from French to English are by the author and Jane Mac-Avock).

2 The Abbé May (Mai), whose real name was Louis Avril, a former professor of rhetoric at the Collège de la Flèche, was chaplain (*aumônier*) to the Carmelites of Saint-Denis, in the convent that Louise de France, Louis XV’s youngest daughter had just entered.

3 This expression marking a person’s authority was used with reference either to Pythagoras or Aristotle, depending on the philosophical school. In connoisseurs’ circles, it referred to the most competent authority. See *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis, leur utilisation et leur influence chez les auteurs médiévaux. État de la question 40 ans après leur publication*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and José Meirinhos (Barcelona: Brepols, 2017).

4 Félix-Sébastien Feuillet de Conches, “La marquise de Créquy d’après des documents inédits,” *Le correspondant. Recueil périodique* 130 (1883): pp. 549–65, here p. 562, note 1.

especially through trade with the Levant. Louis-Joseph Borély, owner of the château of the same name in Bonneveine, was also one of them, as was Antoine Bourlat de Montredon, who attended auctions in Paris with his friend Mariette.⁵ As arts lovers and cultured men, members of local academies, they all built up diverse collections, rich in paintings, sculptures, and drawings by old masters or living artists, but also Egyptian, Roman, and Greek antiquities. Among his colleagues and friends, reputed amateurs and collectors, Guys had the distinction of being considered a connoisseur. From this point of view, he is an interesting *persona*⁶ at the intersection of several fields: that of trade, which is the basis of the individual's fortune, that of art as a practice of connoisseurship, bringing together knowledge and competence in judging works, and that of the art market with its problems of identification, origin, and transport of works.

Studying this personality of the Marseille world of commerce, who had broad international trading relationships, provides an opportunity to examine the integration within the art world of individuals who were primarily active outside the major European capitals and who succeeded in constructing their status of connoisseur precisely due to this distance. In this process of “elevation,” several factors appear essential—such as the progressive and methodical construction of a network, which allowed him to acquire theoretical knowledge and learning practices *in situ*. The circulation of this knowledge through publications was also a factor and was the supreme consecration for connoisseurs seeking recognition. Beyond the process of acquiring this status, the question posed here is how connoisseurs maneuvered at the intersection of the arts, archaeology, classical literature, and ethnology, considering intermediary spaces that are neither fully European nor fully Oriental. Eighteenth-century Greece, which had no individual existence because it was part of the vast Ottoman Empire, nevertheless constitutes a space of the mind as the cradle of European art, an imaginative place that had to be distinguished from a “vulgar” modern reality. For this reason, military men and administrators of all kinds who were sent on missions to different parts of

5 For the milieu of connoisseurs in Marseille, see especially the exhibition catalogue, *Marseille au XVIII^e siècle, 1753–1793. Les années de l'Académie de peinture et de sculpture de Marseille* (Musée de Marseille: Somogy éditions d'art, 2016), and also Émilie Roffidal, “Marseille, contacts et relations inter-académiques: les liens entre l'Académie des sciences, arts et belles-lettres et l'Académie de peinture et de sculpture,” in *Les papiers d'ACA-RES*, (Rouen: Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes 2019), <https://aca.res.hypotheses.org/files/2019/06/roffidal-2019.pdf>. For Parisian amateurs generally and Mariette more specifically, see: Kristof Pomian, *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux. Paris, Venise: XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987); Charlotte Guichard, *Les amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2008); Patrick Michel, “Curieux, amateurs, ‘faux connaisseurs’: le débat sur la connaissance,” in *Peinture et plaisir: Les goûts picturaux des collectionneurs parisiens au XVIII^e siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), pp. 17–28; Kristel Smentek, *Mariette and the Science of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Valérie Kobi, *Dans l'œil du connaisseur: Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774) et la construction des savoirs en histoire de l'art* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

6 For this concept, see Lorraine Daston and Otto Sibum, “Introduction: Scientific *Personae* and Their Histories,” *Science in Context* 16 (2003): pp. 1–8, here p. 2.

the world were curious and attentive to all its wealth. With figures such as Pierre-Augustin Guys, the trade milieu seems to have played an active role in the construction of artistic knowledge in a global eighteenth century.⁷

Intermediality as a Method of Acquiring the Status of Connoisseur

In the case of Pierre-Augustin Guys, the question of geography and space is essential for understanding the construction of his status as a connoisseur.⁸ Guys was a trader, a traveler who voyaged widely throughout Europe (France, Italy, Denmark, and the Netherlands), and the Ottoman Empire,⁹ an area that corresponds to present-day Turkey, Bulgaria, Syria, and Greece. Abbé May insists on this aspect of Guys’ character in the preface to his book *Les temples anciens et modernes*. He writes that Guys was on the spot for his observations, in direct contact with what he described and studied. His two anchorage points were Marseille and Constantinople: both cosmopolitan port cities that were reciprocal points of contact between East and West. Historically and symbolically, their two regions were also linked. In fact, the eastern part of the Mediterranean is considered the source of the city of Marseille, which was founded around 600 BC by inhabitants of Phocaea, an ancient city not far from Smyrna.

In Smyrna, and particularly in Constantinople where Guys arrived in 1740 to be trained in international trade by his uncles, he educated his eye and expanded his network over the following years. There, he came into contact with a cosmopolitan society in addition to the large community from Marseille; he was acquainted with Turks,

7 For the voyage to Greece in particular, see Olga Augustinos, *French Odysseys: Greece in French Travel Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Odile Cavalier, *La Grèce des Provençaux au XVIII^e siècle. Collectionneurs et érudits* (Avignon: Musée Calvet, 2007). I am very grateful to Odile Cavalier for her explanations.

8 For Guys, see Henri Guys, “Notice biographique et littéraire sur Pierre-Augustin Guys,” *Répertoire des travaux de la Société de statistique de Marseille* 21 (1858): pp. 32–67; H. Barré, *Voyageurs et explorateurs provençaux* (Marseille: Barlatier, 1905), pp. 110–18; Jacques de Maussion de Favières, *Des matelots de l’archipel aux pachas de Roulémie. La vie quotidienne en Grèce au XVIII^e siècle vue par Pierre-Augustin Guys* (Paris: Kimé, 1995); Roger Millieux, “De l’ancien et du nouveau. Sur les deux voyages (1741–1751 et 1789–1799) de l’académicien marseillais Pierre-Augustin Guys (1721 à Marseille–1799 à Zante),” *Mémoires de l’académie de Marseille* (1989): pp. 139–53; Cavalier, *La Grèce des Provençaux*, pp. 60–72; Alain Messaoudi, “Pierre-Augustin Guys,” in *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française*, ed. François Pouillon (Paris: Karthala éditions, 2008), pp. 473–74.

9 Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1783): “Journal d’un voyage de Constantinople à Sophie, avril–juin 1744” (vol. 2: pp. 245–318); “Voyage de Marseille à Smyrne et de Smyrne à Constantinople, janvier–février 1748” (vol. 2: pp. 215–44); “Voyage en Hollande et en Danemarck, mars–juin 1762” (vol. 3: pp. 75–102); “Journal d’un voyage fait en Italie, mai–novembre 1772” (vol. 3: pp. 103–237). From 1789 and for several years, Guys accompanied Octave Choiseul-Gouffier, the son of the French ambassador to Troy, Athens, and Ithaca. See Iphigénie Anastassiadou, “Les russo-Turcs à Zante en 1798 (d’après un manuscrit inédit de P.A. Guys),” *Balkan Studies* 14 (1973): pp. 12–46.

Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, and also European merchants, representatives of different nations, passing adventurers, artists, and scientists.¹⁰ In Constantinople, Guys made strong friendships, including with the French consul Charles de Peyssonel from Marseille,¹¹ who was a kind of mentor to him. He was also in close contact with the French ambassador Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes,¹² the Dutch ambassador Cornelis Kalkoen, with whom he made a long journey to Sofia,¹³ the English ambassador Everard Fawkenor, also a merchant,¹⁴ the Count of Bonneval, the famous Ahmet Pasha,¹⁵ without forgetting Louis de Chénier, and the latter's wife Elisabeth Santi Lomaca, the author of *Greek Letters*.¹⁶

Guys obviously drew from this cultured and curious milieu, which adopted some of the codes of Turkish society, as seen in Jean-Étienne Liotard's famous painting, which Guys owned, showing the English merchant M. Levett and Ms. Glavani, a daughter of the former French consul in the Crimea, dressed in Turkish style in a house on the Bosphorus strait (fig. 1).¹⁷ The archival sources reveal above all a stimulating and exciting environment in which questions of trade and geo-political relations, which were particularly tense between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, were regarded as the "hard bread" (*pain grossier*) of state duty compared to the "sweet treats of antiquity" (*friandises de l'Antiquité*), as Charles Peyssonel put it.¹⁸ In this quest for direct contact with antiquities, Constantinople also served as a basis from which to radiate throughout the Ottoman Empire. Constantly for twelve years, and then more occasionally, Guys travelled extensively in this part of the world, gathering local experiences, as well as a general and practical knowledge of local life.

Like his compatriots from Marseille, while building his knowledge of the terrain, Guys remained in close contact with his home city as exchanges were frequent and the

¹⁰ The two European sections of Constantinople were separated by the Golden Horn, the old quarter of Seraglio of the Bazaar, opposite Pera and Galata, the residences of ambassadors and merchants.

¹¹ See the chapter "Charles Peyssonel (1701–1757), 'l'antiquaire français,'" in Cavalier, *La Grèce des Provençaux*, pp. 52–55.

¹² Charles Gravier de Vergennes (1719–87) was the French ambassador in Constantinople from 1756 to 1768, before becoming Louis XVI's foreign affairs minister.

¹³ Cornelis Kalkoen (1696–1764) travelled with Guys from Constantinople to Sofia. See Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 2 (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1776), pp. 213–87.

¹⁴ Everard Fawkenor was portrayed by Jean-Étienne Liotard, around 1740. See Anne de Herdt, *Dessins de Liotard* (Paris: RMN, Musée du Louvre/Musée d'art et d'histoire, 1992), p. 66.

¹⁵ Claude-Alexandre de Bonneval (1675–1747) had an adventurous life and converted to Islam. Guys included one of his letters in his publication. See Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1776), pp. 476–79.

¹⁶ Louis de Chénier (1722–96) and Elisabeth Santi Lomaca (1729–1808) parents of the poet Louis Chénier.

¹⁷ Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des peintures, inv. no. RF 1995 14, around 1740.

¹⁸ Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Nouv. Acq. Fr., 6834, letter July 10, 1737, quoted by Cavalier, *La Grèce des Provençaux*, p. 52.



Fig. 1: Jean-Étienne Liotard, *Monsieur Levett et Mademoiselle Hélène Glavani en costume turc*, ca. 1740, oil on canvas, 25 × 36 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. RF 1995 14

postal system between Marseille and Constantinople well organized.¹⁹ When he moved back to Marseille in 1752, Guys easily reintegrated into a society that he had never really left. Yet, distinguished by the prestige of those who had lived and travelled for a long-time in Greece’s ancient territory, he confirmed his status as an amateur and connoisseur of antiquities. He continued to build his knowledge in Marseille since he was, as in the Levant, in direct contact with archaeological discoveries. Founded by the ancient Greeks, Marseille belonged to the cradle of antiquity in France, and antiquities were regularly uncovered there, even if in limited numbers. Excavation was a common practice, either during development works in the city or by private individuals on their properties. The collections of local scholars, such as those of Félix Cary, François Michel de Léon, and Jean-Baptiste Grosson, provided many opportunities to examine and compare objects coming from a wide Mediterranean territory.²⁰ Guys himself gathered an impressive, apparently famous collection in his country house in Marseille. Visitors

¹⁹ Post and correspondence left twice a month, as indicated in the *Almanach de Marseille*, and was deposited in two post-boxes, one of which was at the Chamber of Commerce on the port. See Jean-Baptiste Grosson, *Almanach de la ville de Marseille* (Marseille: J. Mossy, 1777), p. 291.

²⁰ See Émile Perrier, *Les bibliophiles et les collectionneurs provençaux anciens et modernes* (Marseille: Barthelet & Cie imprimeur, 1897).

could enjoy a tour by someone who had experienced the context for, and extraction of, objects from Smyrna, Athens, and elsewhere.²¹ The philologist Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin describes in his travel notes some of the objects from this collection that were placed in the gardens, including the *Funerary Relief of Ursulus*, an inscription mentioning the Nemesis competition, now in the Musée Calvet in Avignon, and a large statue of the *Empress Julia Domna* as a priestess of Isis, now in the Louvre (fig. 2).²²

In Marseille, Guys also found an intellectually stimulating environment, especially among members of the Académie des sciences et belles-lettres who were passionate about numismatics, ancient Greek philology, and local history. Through academic conferences and publications, members of this institution reflected on the Greek heritage of Marseille, the first ancient city in France. This was the case for Félix Cary, who published *Dissertation sur la fondation de la ville de Marseille [et] sur l'histoire des rois du Bosphore* in 1744,²³ or Jean-Baptiste Grosson, who published a *Recueil des antiquités et monuments marseillois qui peuvent intéresser l'histoire et les arts* in 1773; the latter text made abundant reference to the Comte de Caylus and sought to follow in the footsteps of his *Recueil d'Antiquités*.²⁴ Guys found his path in local academic circles, and soon became a member of the Marseille Académie de peinture et de sculpture and the Académie des sciences et belles-lettres, where he took on the role of director in 1754 and then again in 1772.²⁵ These institutions provided him with recognition and official distinction, as well as a place to publish his own work.

Strengthened by his Marseille and Levantine networks, Guys gradually forged links with Parisian connoisseurs and amateurs, as these different circles were closely inter-related; Bourlat de Montredon, Guys' lifelong friend with whom he had "spent the best days of [his] life" in the Levant, and for whom he was the executor, was an intimate of Mariette. The Abbé Barthélémy,²⁶ keeper of the king's cabinet of medals and antiques

21 Jean-Dominique Cassini reports in this terms: "[S]on cabinet . . . ainsi que sa personne n'annoncent [sic] aucune pretention [sic]. Cette simplicité me revint en faveur de M. Guys et je trouvai effectivement beaucoup plus de choses encor [sic] dans sa tête que dans son cabinet. C'est le contraire de ce qu'on rencontre tous les jours chez les pretendus scavans [sic] et amateurs dans ce genre. M. Guys a voyagé en Grèce ou il a fait d'excellentes recherches sur les antiquités de ce fameux pays." Jean-Dominique Cassini, *Récit d'un voyage fait en Italie, 1775*, f° 51–52, *L'Armarium*, <https://www.armarium-hautsdefrance.fr/document/19567>.

22 Avignon, Musée Calvet, *Relief funéraire d'Ursulé*, marbre, Smyrne, inv. no. E 15 and *Inscription du concours des Némésis*, marbre, Smyrne, inv. no. E 23; Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines, *Statue de Julian Domna*, marbre, Athènes, inv. no. Ma 1090.

23 Félix Cary, *Histoire des rois de Thrace et de ceux du Bosphore cimmérien, éclaircie par les médailles* (Paris: Desaint et Saillant, 1752).

24 Jean-Baptiste Grosson, *Recueil des antiquités et monuments marseillais qui peuvent intéresser l'histoire et les arts* (Marseille: Mossy, 1773). Nevertheless, the mediocre quality of the prints in this publication should be noted.

25 He was also chancellor of the institution in 1757, 1766, 1780, and then perpetual secretary from 1781 to 1784.

26 The Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélémy (1716–95), numismatist and philologist, is the author of the *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (Paris: chez De Bure, 1788).



Fig. 2: Unknown artist, *Julia Domna*, ca. 193/209 CE, marble, 202 x 72 x 47 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. LL 36

and a native of the Marseille area, was close to Caylus, but also to Peyssonnel, Bourlat de Montredon, and Félix Carry who had trained him and whose editor he became. Guys, who corresponded with Abbé Barthélémy, was also in contact with Caylus; Caylus, for his part, was an associate-amateur of the Marseille Academy, and procured antiques from Abbé Barthélémy, and so forth. These examples, which could be added to infinitely, make it very clear that we are looking at a close-knit network united by antiquity, located between Marseille, Paris, and the Levant.

Within this network, Guys' advantage was to combine connoisseurial qualities with logistical facilities linked to his activity as a trader. He had outposts in many cities in the Levant and in Europe, storage space in ports, and ships in the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic. His own travels by sea and land provided opportunities to obtain sculp-

tures, paintings, prints, and drawings. In this way, he made himself essential as a supplier to a number of individuals and institutions, particularly for influential personalities such as the Comte d'Angivillier, director of the king's buildings, who asked him, for instance, to receive a case of works of art from Rome in Marseille.²⁷ Simon-Charles Boutin, a tax official and administrator of the royal treasury in the Navy, a great collector of Joseph Vernet, was another of the beneficiaries of his assistance.²⁸ Boutin who had total confidence in Guys' "taste, judgement and opinion" (*goût, jugement et opinion*) received art works and antiquities from him.²⁹ With young Prince Charles-Augustus of Weimar,³⁰ Guys extended his field of action into eastern Europe. It was his friend Jean-Baptiste Anse de Villoison, the knowledgeable publisher of Homer's *Iliad*, who introduced him as a supplier, praising his qualities and experience in the field.³¹ For Charles-Augustus, Guys delivered Greco-Egyptian antiquities. In 1775, he sent a marble bust of Serapis, two bronze statuettes, and a bust of Jupiter Ammon "truly ancient, found in the ruins of Alexandria," where Guys had a trading post. A basalt statue of the god of the Nile holding a crocodile was probably delivered later.³² It should be noted that Marseille, as a port open to the Mediterranean and a place of where antiquities were excavated, was a trading hub for antiquities. Several antiquarians were active there, such as Jean Guérin, who supplied Esprit Calvet and the Comte de Caylus, obtaining stock essentially in Smyrna and around Athos.³³ In the same way, Charles Peyssonnel's shipments on behalf of the king in 1749, including many marbles from Athens, Cyzicus, and Smyrna, passed through Marseille.³⁴

Alongside this role of supplier which brought him into contact with major European collectors, Guys continued to increase his network, integrating experts on antiquity from all over Europe. In addition to his connections with the Abbé Barthélémy, the Abbé May, Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin, and the new generation of Hellenist scholars,

27 Letter from Guys to d'Angivillier, April 2, 1777, in *Les ressources d'ACA-RES, fonds d'archives*, Nakalona/show/294, Paris, Archives Nationales, O/1/1933/B, dossier 6, doc. 59.

28 Simon Charles Boutin (1720–94), cf. Philippe Cachau, *Le fabuleux ensemble de M. Boutin, rue de Richelieu (1738–1740)*, 2016, <http://www.philippecachau.fr/medias/files/texte-illustre.pdf>.

29 Letters from Boutin to Guys, June 7, 1784; November 13, 1784; December 20, 1784; August 11, 1786. Marseille, Archives de la Chambre de Commerce, L XI 13. These letters also refer to drawings by Puget, paintings by Vernet and Greuze being sent.

30 Charles-Augustus of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (1757–1828) reigned at the time over a duchy whose capital was called the "New Athens."

31 Jean-Baptiste Anse de Villoison (1750–1805), see Charles Joret, *L'Helléniste d'Anse de Villoison et la Provence* (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1906).

32 Heinrich Duntzer, *Zur deutschen Literatur und Geschichte. Ungedruckte Briefe aus Knebel's Nachlass*, vol. 1 (Nürnberg: Bauer und Raspe, 1878) p. 97.

33 The "négociant" or merchant Guérin was the first deputy of the French nation in Smyrna in 1720–30. He lost his licence as antique dealer to the King. See Cavalier, *La Grèce des Provençaux*, pp. 20–22.

34 Several of these antiquities appear in Caylus's *Recueil d'Antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines et gauloises*, 7 volumes, (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, 1752–67).

such as Jean-Baptiste Anse de Villoison,³⁵ he corresponded with Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the great theoretician of Greek art and architecture, who himself never travelled to Greece. In his correspondence, Winckelmann mentions “a young and wealthy merchant from Marseille . . . who wrote to him continually praising the beauties of Greece and expressing his desire that he should see them for himself.”³⁶

Knowledge of the Terrain as a Prerequisite to Becoming a Recognized Connoisseur

Guys’ strength was the conjunction of theoretical knowledge linked with his great expertise of the terrain, facilitated by his mastery of the so-called “vulgar” Greek language, which was quite remarkable for his time.³⁷ He was in a position that allowed him to interact directly with the inhabitants, developing an approach that came as close as possible to the objects and monuments, and combined issues of aesthetics and especially use: “For this, I saw, I read, I compared, I took notes about everything,” he writes.³⁸ His *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, published in 1771 by the Veuve Duchesne in Paris was the result of decades of observation. This book allowed him to demonstrate his cultural knowledge by citing many modern authors (including Jacob Spon, David Hume and Montesquieu) and also the strength of his network through the acknowledgments at the start of his publication, addressed in particular to Anse de Villoison, M. de Saint-Priest, who was the king’s ambassador in Constantinople, and also the famous Hellenist Guillaume Dubois de Rochefort, who was a member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres. “The list of my Benefactors honours me as much as it flatters me,” he writes at the start of his text.³⁹

For the previous twenty years, Greek art and architecture had led to many famous publications, including those of Winckelmann, the *Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* by Julien-David Le Roy, winner of the Grand Prix in architecture, and the first volume of the *Antiquities of Athens* by James Stuart and Nicolas Revett. In this way, Eu-

35 Marie-Renée Diot-Duriatti, ed., *Gelehrtennetzwerke in Straßburg am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts: Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin – Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard d’Anse de Villoison (Réseaux savants strasbourgeois à la fin du XVIII^e siècle)* (Leipzig: Leipziger Univ.-Verl., 2007).

36 “Un jeune et opulent marchand de Marseille . . . qui lui écrivait continuellement pour lui vanter les beautés de la Grèce et lui faire part de son désir [qu’il les] voie par [lui]-même.” David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 148.

37 For Guys, modern Greek was a “. . . langue défigurée en apparence, et souvent par des expressions turques qu’on ne peut s’empêcher d’adopter, mais qui conserve tout le fond, toute la richesse et toute la douceur de l’ancienne.” Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, p. 98. See on the topic Patrice Brun, *Charles-Sigisbert Sonnini, Voyage en Grèce et en Turquie fait par ordre de Louis XVI et avec l’autorisation de la cour ottomane (1801)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997), p. 14.

38 “Pour cela j’ai vu, j’ai lu, j’ai comparé, j’ai fait des notes de tout.” Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, p. 2.

39 “La liste de mes Bienfaiteurs, m’honore autant qu’elle me flatte.” (Ibid., p. ii).

ropean elites of the 1750s and 1760s had access to depictions of antiques in their natural context; they had also been marked by the success of the “Greek” tastes and by experiments with ancient artistic practices, such as encaustic painting encouraged by Caylus, who had himself travelled to Constantinople in his youth.⁴⁰ With his *Voyage*, Guys contributed a different approach to knowledge of the ancient world; he was certainly interested in the monuments and objects of antiquity but through the question of everyday activities, using a method that could be described as ethnographic. For him, Greek architecture had been studied sufficiently—“I will not report about the monuments that survive what has already been said before me.”⁴¹ Instead, he proposed a new approach while also updating travel journals from the Levant that had been produced in large numbers in the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century.⁴² He participated in a renewal that is also present in the work of his contemporary Johann Hermann von Riedesel, who expressed his desire to “know the modern Greeks & to remember the ancients for comparison” in his *Remarques d’un voyageur moderne au Levant*, also in 1771.⁴³ As Marc Fumaroli writes, “the French want to relive antiquity itself, men want to feel and act like Plutarch’s heroes, women like Livy’s vestals.”⁴⁴

The forty-six letters that structure Guys’ book describe modern Greek customs and propose parallels with ancient Greece. The aim is to show that in their daily practices, eighteenth-century Greeks were the direct descendants of the ancient Hellas in terms of their habitat, hygiene, clothing, betrothal customs, funerals, dance, music, and so on. Guys treats all these themes seeking to balance the two temporalities: antiquity and the

40 For a general overview, see the exhibition catalogue, *Le goût à la grecque. La naissance du néoclassicisme dans l’art français* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2009), especially the essays by Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, Alain Pasquier, and Vincent Droguet; Jackie Pigeaud and Jean-Paul Barbe, *La redécouverte de la Grèce et de l’Égypte au XVIII^e siècle et au début du XIX^e siècle, Entretiens de la Garenne Lemot* (Paris-Nantes: IUF/CRINI, 1997), pp. 9–16. For Caylus’s voyage to the Levant, see François Queyrel, “Le voyage de Constantinople du comte de Caylus en 1716–1717,” in Manuel Roya, Martine Denoyelle et al., *Du voyage savant aux territoires de l’archéologie. Voyageurs, amateurs et savants à l’origine de l’archéologie moderne* (Paris: De Boccard, 2012), pp. 11–36.

41 “Je ne rapporterai pas sur les monumens qui nous restent, écrit-il, ce que d’autres ont dit avant moi.” Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, p. 4.

42 In particular Jacques-Paul Babin (1674), Jacob Spon (1678), Guillaume-Joseph Grelot (1680), Corneille Le Brun (1700), Paul Lucas (1704), Jean Chardin (1711), Corneille de Bruyn (1714), Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1717).

43 “Connaître les Grecs modernes, & de [se] rappeler en comparaison les Anciens.” Johann Hermann von Riedesel, *Remarques d’un voyageur moderne au Levant . . .* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1773), p. 2. The first section of the publication was conceived as a traditional travelogue, describing the various sites (Chapters 1 to 7), then about thirty pages are devoted to the comparison of the modern Greeks to the ancient, before “réflexions” are developed about different aspects of Turkey and the Levant.

44 “Les Français veulent revivre l’Antiquité elle-même, les hommes veulent sentir et agir en héros de Plutarque, les femmes poser en vestales de Tite-Live.” Marc Fumaroli, “Retour à l’Antique: la guerre des goûts dans l’Europe des Lumières,” in *L’Antiquité rêvée, innovations et résistances au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Louvre, Gallimard, 2010), pp. 23–55, here p. 23. See also: Renaud Serrette and Gabriel Wick, *Vivre à l’antique de Marie-Antoinette à Napoléon I^{er}* (Saint-Remy-en-l’Eau: Éditions Monelle Hayot, 2023).

eighteenth century. He constantly swings between literary travel, which refers to the great authors of ancient literature such as Pindar, Pausanias, Homer, and Virgil, and real travel, that of a merchant who is also a scholar and meets the inhabitants of other countries, proposing to study their “character” and describe their customs. Guys paints vivid pictures that recreate local dialogues, attitudes, and ways of life, transcended by the heroic dimension of ancient grandeur. Hence, in the letter devoted to Greek funerals, Mademoiselle Tigoniti, “the most beautiful Greek” (*la plus belle des Grecques*), is presented in the guise of an eighteenth-century Antigone burying her brother.⁴⁵

Regarding objects, Guys draws close parallels in their functions and uses over centuries. Based on his experience, on direct comparison with the materiality of objects in their original location, he points out, for instance, that Greek and Armenian tombs are often marked by “small funerary columns” (*petites colonnes sépulcrales*) and are decorated with abalone shells, as was the case during antiquity, with reference to Homer.⁴⁶ Describing the interiors of houses, the layout of rooms, and the choice of furniture, such as braziers placed in the centre of a room and sofas presented as small antique beds are all likewise seen as references to antiquity.

From the second edition, published in 1776, engravings enhanced the text. These were supervised by Charles-Louis Clérisseau, who had won the Grand Prix in architecture for 1746, and designed the chateau of Guys’ friend Louis-Joseph Borély in Marseille, and at the same time was preparing the publication of his first volume of the *Antiquités de la France*.⁴⁷ Clérisseau was a member of Guys’s circle, as were the draftsmen associated with the project, who included Antoine de Favray, another Levantine, also a draftsman for Caylus, Joseph-Antoine David, known as David de Marseille, a former student of the city’s Académie de peinture et de sculpture, and Jean-Pierre Houël known for his views of Italy and Sicily.⁴⁸

The images seem to have gradually become associated with the text as the drawings by the various artists became available. They are not the result of a commission but rather were collected, which is indicated by their unequal distribution in the book, as well as their heterogeneous character: the reader passes from illustrations

45 Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, p. 282.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

47 Charles-Louis Clérisseau, *Antiquités de la France. Monuments de Nismes* (Paris: Imprimerie Philippe-Denys Pierres, 1778).

48 See especially Augustin Boppe, “Antoine de Favray, chevalier de Malte et peintre du Bosphore (1706–1792),” in *Les peintres du Bosphore* (Courbevoie: ACR Edition, 1911), pp. 57–67; Stephen Degiorgio et al., *Antoine de Favray, a French artist in Rome, Malta and Constantinople* (Valetta: Fondazzioni Patrimonju Malti, 2004); for Joseph-Antoine David (1725–89), see the exhibition catalogue Madeleine Pinault, *Houël. Voyage en Sicile. 1776–1779* (Paris: RMN, 1990); Madeleine Pinault-Sorensen, *Jean Houël, (Rouen, 1735–Paris, 1813). Collections de la Ville de Rouen* (Rouen: Musée des beaux-arts, 2001).

of Ottoman women,⁴⁹ to genre scenes (*Noce champêtre*; *Pleurs sur les tombeaux*), and then to images of monuments such as the *Fontaine de Saint-Élie*, or the section, elevation, and plan of an aqueduct (Bourgas), with varying formats taking up a full page or pages that fold out (fig. 3 and 4). Finally, no significant “antiquities” are illustrated, but it is also true that the text does not deal with the heart of ancient Greece.



Fig. 3: David de Marseille, “Noce champêtre,” engraving, in: Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1 (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1783) Pl. 13, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence

In reality, this book is like a voyage to the Greek countryside with its habits and customs, its costumes and everyday objects. Although it is in harmony with the poetry of ruins that was fashionable in the second half of the eighteenth century, leading to the description of scattered stones as the “magnificence of an ancient building” (*magnificence d’un ancien edifice*) and arousing meditation on the destructive effects of humans and time,⁵⁰ the aim was above all to illustrate “*tableaux vivants*.” The frontispiece

⁴⁹ For the treatment of Oriental costume in French travelogues, see Irini Apostolou, “L’apparence extérieure de l’Oriental et son rôle dans la formation de l’image de l’autre par les voyageurs français au XVIII^e siècle,” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 66 (2003): pp. 1–14.

⁵⁰ Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, p. 323.

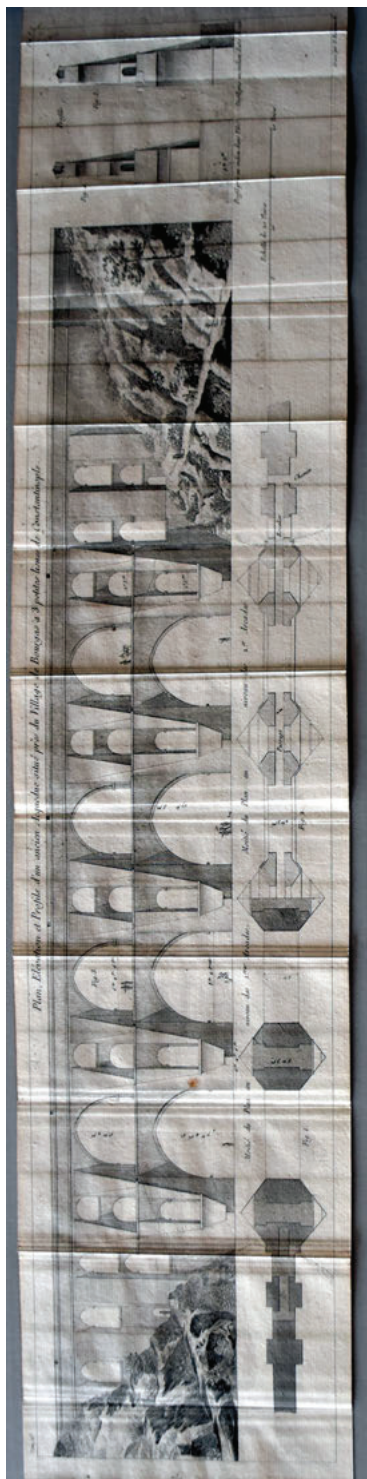


Fig. 4: Unknown artist(s), “Plan, Élévation et Profils d’un ancien Acqueduc situé près du village de Bourgas . . .”, engraving, in: Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1 (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1783) p. 6, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence

of the 1776 edition, which shows Guys writing “to put on paper the thoughts that filled [his] mind” (*pour jeter sur le papier les pensées qui remplissoient [son] esprit*),⁵¹ while his companion the painter Jean-Pierre Houël, is drawing the ruins around them, shows his desire to place himself as a direct witness of what he discusses in the text (fig. 5). The bucolic setting in a single image which concentrates several elements of Greek architecture—the columns of a temple, the arena of an amphitheatre, the remains of an aqueduct—constitutes a context favourable to writing a text *in situ* that concentrates above all on the “ancient and modern Greeks, with a parallel of their morals” (*Grecs anciens et modernes, avec un parallèle de leurs mœurs*), as the book’s subtitle reiterates.

For Guys, ancient Greece lived on in its inhabitants more than in its monuments, many of which had been destroyed and in the signs of transmission, of ways of being and doing that had travelled down through the centuries. This sensitivity to the living character of antiquity has a lot to do with his connection to Marseille. However, in reality, the material heritage of Greece in Marseille, the only Greek city of France, was limited, and the traces collected were always modest, confirmed by the *Recueil des antiquités et monumens marseillois* by his friend Grosson, also published during the 1770s. The fact that his interest in living antiquity was really the driving force of his approach was confirmed by the publication of a new book, *Marseille ancienne et moderne* a few years later. In this publication, Guys applied the same recipe for his success, intending to find evidence of ancient Greece and particularly of Athens among the Marseillais; this time, the Greek city was at the heart of his study.⁵²

The publication of the *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce* played a fundamental part in Pierre-Augustin Guys’ acquisition of the status of connoisseur. In the *avertissement* of the first edition, which was not illustrated, Guys did not address amateurs first, but “*Gens de lettres*” (intellectuals). He did not seek to seduce but to convince. In doing this, he sought to confirm his position in the world of *érudits*, those who did not sequester their knowledge acquired over a long period of time by study and *praxis*, but who communicated it and to exposed themselves to possible criticism from their peers. Guys’ critics were fulsome: several periodicals devoted enthusiastic reviews to his work, including *Le Journal des Savants*, *L’Année littéraire* and *L’Esprit des journaux*. They all emphasized the successful combination of fieldwork and theoretical knowledge. The text, translated into German and English and republished in French in revised and expanded editions in 1776 and then in 1783, was truly successful. It was then revived at the end of the century by Octave Choiseul-Gouffier’s famous *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (published about ten years later) which underlines the author’s “extensive knowledge” and the “long stay in Greece.”⁵³

Through the trajectory of Pierre-Augustin Guys, a change of paradigm over the second half of the eighteenth century took shape: the connoisseur was no longer simply

51 *Ibid.*, p. 325.

52 See Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Marseille ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1786).

53 Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste de Choiseul Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, vol. 1 (Paris: n.p., 1782), p. 49.



Fig. 5: Jean Houël, “J’écris, tandis que mon compagnon dessine,” frontispiece, engraving, in: Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce* (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1783), Bibliothèque Méjanès, Aix-en-Provence

someone who gathers material for their study in their cabinet, they were also in the field, differentiated from the simple traveller through their assiduous devotion to their subjects of study over the course of years. Guys described himself almost as an *antiquary* ethnologist in proposing an analogy from the point of view of method; as an antiquarian is interested in a copper medal in bad condition in order to discover the relief decorating it under the dross, Guys finds the ancient Greeks by the careful observation of the modern Greeks.⁵⁴ This status of direct witness, searching and analytical, ensured him a recognized place in the Republic of Letters and Arts. Voltaire himself, celebrated him as the “eyes” of those who could not make the mythical journey to Greece:

Alas, I must die / Without having seen the home / Of the Virgils and the Platos. / At last, he believes himself on the shore / Consecrated by these demi-gods; / He recognises them much better / Than if he had made the journey, / For he has seen them through your eyes . . .⁵⁵

This passionate and obsessive approach to ancient Greece that was still operating at his time, is underpinned by a notion of energy that was very successful during the final third of the eighteenth century.⁵⁶ Guys himself cites it about twenty times in his book. Probably one should understand this energy, which transcended the usual transmission channels, as motivating Guys’s interest in the most contemporary artistic production,⁵⁷ especially in artists who had assimilated and revisited the themes and codes of classical antiquity. These artists included Clérisseau, of course,⁵⁸ but also the sculptor Jacques Saly, whom he had brought to the Académie of painting and sculpture of Marseille and whose *Goddess of Youth* he owned,⁵⁹ the sculptor Étienne d’Antoine and his *Sitting Life Size Minerva*,⁶⁰ and also the draftsman David de Marseille, for whom he acted as an unpaid agent, introducing him to Parisian art lovers. For him, finally, these artists were animated by the same energy that had been present many centuries earlier in Greece. Antiquity still lives among its successors.

54 Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, vol. 1, pp. 383–85.

55 “Hélas ! Il faut donc que je meure / Sans avoir pu voir la demeure / Des Virgiles, & des Platon. / Enfin, il se croit au rivage / Consacré par ces demi-Dieux ; / Il les reconnoît beaucoup mieux / Que s’il avoit fait le Voyage, / Car il les a vus par vos yeux,” Réponse à Ferney le 22 décembre 1776, in Pierre-Augustin Guys, *Essai sur les Élégies de Tibulle, auquel on a joint quelques Poésies Légères* (La Haye: Veuve Duchesne, 1779), pp. 161–62.

56 See Alain Delon, *L’idée d’énergie au tournant des Lumières (1720–1820)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1988).

57 For example, he commissioned a head from Jean-Baptiste Greuze through Bourlat de Montredon, as intermediary. Greuze promised to create the head as soon as he had finished a painting for the Comtesse du Barry. See Letter from Bourlat to Guys, September 19, 1771, Marseille, Archives CC, L XI 13.

58 In addition to his involvement in the illustration of the *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce*, Clérisseau shipped a trunk to Guys before his departure for London.

59 Étienne Parrocel, *Histoire documentaire de l’Académie de peinture et de sculpture de Marseille*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1889–90), p. 312.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 191.