Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the School and Library of Milies

On October 3 the Gennadeion Library organized a colloquium to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the School and Library of Milies on Mt. Pelion. The Library aligns its origins with the 1814 foundation of the School of Milies, indelibly linked with three native scholars of the Greek Enlightenment: Gregorios Constantas, Anthimos Gazes, and Daniel Philippides.

The colloquium, entitled “Cure of the Soul” (from the motto of the Milies Library), featured Professor Bertrand Bouvier of the University of Geneva, Professor Paschalis Kitromilides of the University of Athens, and Dia Philippides, Research Professor at Boston College, who lectured on the important role that the School of Milies played in the development of the Greek Enlightenment. Lorenz Baumer, President of the Association gréco-suisse Jean-Gabriel Eynard of Geneva, honored the event with his presence, while the Embassy of Switzerland in Greece hosted a lovely reception celebrating the close ties of the Milies Library with Switzerland. Gennadius Senior Librarian Irini Solomondi put together a small exhibition of books and manuscripts related to the three scholars, which was displayed in the Mandilas Rare Book Room.

Colloquium participants, along with members of the Philoi of the Gennadius Library, visited the village of Milies on the weekend of October 4-5.

In Memoriam

Ted (Theodossios) Athanassiades died suddenly on February 13 at the age of 74. Born in Athens, he came to the United States on a Fulbright scholarship to attend Princeton University, graduating with a degree in mathematics with the class of 1961. Soon after, Ted joined Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife), eventually becoming its president and chief operating officer and a member of its board of directors, as well as a vice chairman of the company.

Ted was one of the “founding” trustees and vice chairman of the Gennadius Library, and had a key role in shaping the Library into what it is today. His sense of integrity, loyalty, and wise counsel will be deeply missed. A lover of classical music, travel, and good wine, he was among the dearest and kindest of people. His volunteer work also included his role as chairman of the New York Blood Center and chairman of the Alzheimer’s Association of New York Memory Walk.

He is survived by his wife, Elaine; children Karen and Stratos; and grandchildren Theo, Tessa, Chloe, Christos, and Alec.

Even in his death he proved a guardian angel of the Gennadeion Library, as in lieu of flowers the family channeled all donations to the Library. These are being used for the acquisition of rare materials to complement the collections of the Gennadeion in honor of Ted.

A wonderful find has already been acquired in his name: an extremely rare 1513 edition of Batrachomyomachia (The Battle
**Unknown Myrivilis Manuscript Acquired by Archives**

A manuscript of Pagana, a novella published by Stratis Myrivilis in 1945, was recently acquired in auction. The story is set in Athens two evenings after Christmas, in the beginning of what is known in folk tradition as the Twelve Days of Christmas. The encounter of professor Gerasimos Paraskevas with the pagana (kalikanzaro), or goblins, brings back childhood memories and provokes a nostalgic reevaluation of his life and his mistakes.

The papers of Stratis Myrivilis (1892–1969), one of the greatest prose writers of modern Greece, are housed in the Archives of the Gennadius Library.

The new acquisition (29 pages) seems to be an earlier, shorter version of the manuscript owned by the Archives. There are important differences between the three (or more) versions of the story that we possess, which probably have to do with the historical context of each one and the ideological shifts that can be detected between the first manuscript and the final publication. The book was ready to appear on Christmas 1944, but it was not published until the following year. Myrivilis must have made changes to the text before the book finally went to press. The publication of the book was suspended in December 1944 because of the armed conflicts in Athens that officially marked the beginning of the Greek Civil War. Why did Myrivilis add the incident of barba-Lefteris from Florina and the bear (pp. 31-33), reprised in the closing lines of the book, also a new addition, which does not appear in any of the manuscripts kept in the Gennadeion? It would be enlightening to know how the historical events of the time influenced Myrivilis’s approach to the story.

*Leda Costaki, Research Archivist*

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**Following Edward Lear in Thesprotia**

Six watercolors of Edward Lear from the Gennadius collections are on view at the Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa through January 11, 2015. Rendered with photographic detail and poetic spirit, the paintings of Butrint, Philiates and Souli almost bring to life the places that so charmed the artist in the mid-nineteenth century.

*Watercolor by Edward Lear, Corfu, Potamos with the mountains of Epirus in the background, 1866.*

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**News from the Librarian: Rare Materials Acquired**

A generous grant from the Bodossaki Foundation allowed the Library to acquire in auction an album with 85 sketches from the Near East. The collection contains 63 drawings from Greece, 7 from Syria, 3 from Lebanon, and 8 from Egypt. Its approximate date is 1835 and in a recent note at the beginning of the album it is attributed to Théodore Leblanc, a French military captain, historical painter, and lithographer who worked in Turkey, Algeria, and France.

Spelios Charamis donated a number of precious books and periodicals from the library of his family, to complement the gift made by his sister Lily Venizelou two years ago. In 2012, Mrs. Venizelou offered the Gennadius Library a significant number of valuable books of art, history, and politics.

Miranda Katsaraki, descendant of a prominent Constantinopolitan Greek family, donated to the Library her family collection of books: 150 old and rare books, fragments of four Byzantine manuscripts dating from the twelfth to fifteenth century, and an Orthodox indulgence. The last is signed by Athanasios V, Patriarch of Jerusalem (active from 1827 to 1845). It was printed in Moscow in 1834.


*Sketch of Navarino from the newly acquired album of drawings.*
12,000 Visitors Flock to the Library

The art exhibition *A Thousand Doors* organized by the Athens-based NEON Cultural Foundation for Contemporary Art, in conjunction with the Whitechapel Gallery of London, attracted a record number of 12,000 visitors to the Library and the gardens. Fifty volunteers worked around the clock to guide visitors through the show, while readers welcomed this “intrusion” with good humor. The wide-open gates of the Gennadeion invited diverse people into a space that hitherto had been perceived as off limits by the general public.

This successful two-month event is a testament to the new possibilities that the addition of the West Wing extension will bring to the Gennadeion. The new exhibition space will transform the experience and viewing of the library’s treasures in the same way Cotsen Hall has done for the work of the School and the Gennadeion in the last ten years. By allowing daily public access without disturbing the users of the Library and permitting extended opening hours, the West Wing will showcase the unique archives, manuscripts, and works of art of the Gennadius Library. Several materials are already available openly on the web in digital form via the award-winning Turning-the-Pages software. Linking these digital projects with the real things in the new exhibition space will provide new ways of appreciating these treasures.

Athenian Family Photos Come to Archives

Five leather-bound albums and many loose photos document the public and private life of one of the most prominent Athenian families, the Melas. Acquired in 2012, the material covers more than a hundred years’ time (1850s to 1960s). The largest part of the collection documents the family of Leon and Andromache (née Schliemann) Melas and their three children: Michael (1895-1924), Alexandros (1897-1969), and Leandros (1899-1964). The photos include snapshots of family vacations in Greece (Mt. Pelion and Epidaurus), France, and Switzerland. There are also photos of the extended family of politician Michael G. Melas (father of Leon), who was mayor of Athens.

The collection ties in well with the Schliemann Archives in the Gennadeion, as it also includes photos of Heinrich, Sophia, and their son Agamemnon Schliemann.

Eleftheria Daleziou, Historian/Reference Archivist

Andromache Melas with Alexandros (Alex) and Leandros (Lenos) Melas, Switzerland [July 1908].
In Cotsen Hall

Not to Miss

An exhibition on Ottoman Athens will be on view from February until June 2015. It will showcase travelers’ books, archival material, maps, topographical renderings, and archaeological finds portraying aspects of the city of Athens in Ottoman times.

In keeping with the Ottoman theme, the 34th Annual Walton Lecture will be delivered by Cornell Fleischer, Professor of Islamic and Ottoman History at the University of Chicago, who will talk on “The Mystic Lettrist ’Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami (d. 1454) and the Origins of Ottoman Historical Consciousness.”

Myrivilis’s “Song of the Earth” Performed

Written in 1937, “The Song of the Earth” is one of the most lyrical works of Stratis Myrivilis, an ode to the earth’s fertility. A sensitive theatrical adaptation by Stratis Panourios brought to life this powerful Dionysian work. Performed by Panourios and musician Lida Xydia, the play impressed the crowds that flocked to Cotsen Hall on September 29.

Medicine and Cartography Explored

Map collector Panayotis N. Soucacos presented the parallel course of cartography and medicine from prehistoric times up to the present on October 14, stressing the developments of the scientific mind.

200th Anniversary

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of Milles by Director Varvara Koute, followed by three lectures at the local Cultural Association “Gregorios Constantas.” Yannis Kizis, Professor of Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens, discussed the architectural plans and development of the Milles School; Andreas Koukos, Professor of Modern History at the National Defence Academy, spoke on Anthimos Gazes in Vienna; and Vassilis Pappas, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Research Associate at the Center for Greek Language, elaborated on Daniel Philippides and his excellent knowledge of Latin.

The trip concluded with an interesting tour of the newly refurbished Archaeological Museum of Volos.

In Memoriam

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of the Frogs and the Mice), a work attributed to Homer. This edition is the second known copy in the world and it is the first Greek literary work to be published in Germany, demonstrating the prestige this text enjoyed in the early sixteenth century. Its editor, poet Thielemann Conradi (1485–1522), studied in Erfurt, but after a stormy tenure he moved to Wittenberg, where he lectured in Greek and Hebrew.

Trustees Travel to the Cyclades

A small group of Trustees and Overseers took a lovely trip to the islands of Andros and Tinos in June 2014. The fabulous hospitality of Alex and Marine Zagoreos on Andros made the trip an unforgettable experience. The trip included the exploration of archaeological sites, museums, Byzantine churches and monasteries. Highlights were the visit of the historical Kaireios library and the monastery of Panachrantou on Andros, and the Archaeological Museum on Tinos (photos).