

Historein

Vol 14, No 1 (2014)

On the Edge of History and Philosophy



Review of M. Papathanassiou's Διαδρομές και ταυτότητες περιπλανώμενων τεχνιτών: Δύο ζαχαροπλάστες στην Ευρώπη του 19ου αιώνα [Tramping artisans' routes and identities: Two journeymen-confectioners in nineteenth-century Europe]

Anna Karakatsouli

doi: [10.12681/historein.247](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.247)

Copyright © 2014, Anna Karakatsouli



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Karakatsouli, A. (2013). Review of M. Papathanassiou's Διαδρομές και ταυτότητες περιπλανώμενων τεχνιτών: Δύο ζαχαροπλάστες στην Ευρώπη του 19ου αιώνα [Tramping artisans' routes and identities: Two journeymen-confectioners in nineteenth-century Europe]. *Historein*, 14(1), 139–142. <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.247>

thority and the national question in Greece, 1880–1910], Athens: Alexandria, 2009; Philip Carabott, “Politics, Orthodoxy and the language question in Greece: the Gospel riots of November 1901,” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 3/1 (1993): 117–138.

- 3 M. Iu. Garshin, *Koroleva ellinov Ol'ga Konstantinovna* [Queen of the Greeks Olga Konstantinovna], Prague: Russkaia morskaiia zarubezhnaia biblioteka, 1937. See also, www.archive.org/details/korolevaellino-vo0088001 (accessed 12 Feb 2014).
- 4 Her previous publications include *Rossia na Krite: Iz istorii pervoi mirotvorcheskoj operatsii XX veka* [Russia on Crete: From the history of the first peacekeeping operation of the 20th century], Moscow: Indrik, 2006, and *Gretsiia v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny, 1914–1918 gg* [Greece in the years of the First World War, 1914–1918], Moscow: Nauka, 1990. She is also the editor of *Greki Balaklavy i Sevastopolia* [The Greeks of Balaklava and Sevastopol], Moscow: Indrik, 2013. For a full bibliography, see www.inslav.ru/ob-institute/sotrudniki/746-2011-08-28-12-17-31 (accessed 12 Feb 2014).

Maria Papathanassiou

*Διαδρομές και ταυτότητες
περιπλανώμενων τεχνιτών:
Δύο Ξαχαροπλάστες στην Ευρώπη
του 19ου αιώνα*

**[Tramping artisans' routes and
identities: Two journeymen-
confectioners in nineteenth-century
Europe]**

Athens: Smili, 2012. 290 pp.

Anna Karakatsouli

University of Athens

The tramping system, i.e. the practice of organised journeymen wandering in seek of work, survived well into the industrial era, with distinct functions according to local traditions and conditions. An old and living custom fully institutionalised in continental Europe in the form of the *tour de France* or *Wanderpflicht*, it was the final stage in the craftsman's education after his apprenticeship that gave him his artisan credentials. On the contrary, tramping in Britain served rather as a device for covering seasonal or irregular unemployment needs and to relieve strike funds in periods of struggle. Difficult to determine, the origins of the British variation remain an open question. Was it the expression of the artisan's new-found mobility, as has been suggested, or did it spring from an old and living tradition of journeyman travel? In any case, by removing the unemployed from places where trade was slack, and putting them in circulation, tramping kept the supply to the labour market limited. In Britain and on the continent alike, the tramping system provided the young single male artisan who wished to leave town to look for work elsewhere with a “blank”, “clearance” or “document” showing him to be a member in good

social standing. This he presented to the local secretary of the relevant guild in the strange town, receiving in return supper, lodging and a tramp allowance. He took what work was to be found; otherwise he tramped on. After a period of travelling, the continental journeyman was then able to return to his home town and guild and, starting his own trade, settle there as a master artisan.

Maria Papathanassiou's microhistorical study traces two tramping artisans from the German-speaking world, both Austrian journeyman-confectioners, who travelled across Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. In her extensive introduction, she raises significant methodological issues as to the use of autobiographical records in historical research and especially with regards to identity formation and self-perception awareness. Franz Minichner left his home city of Vienna in 1841, at the age of 23, and worked in various German towns, in Strasbourg and Paris, before his return to the imperial capital in 1845. Ludwig Funder left Graz in 1862 when he was 17 to travel to various towns in the German states, the Netherlands and beyond, reaching Paris and London, before returning to Graz in 1865. They both left extensive autobiographical records, Minichner a diary and Funder an autobiographical narrative intended for his fiancée. These personal records allow the researcher to explore and compare key aspects of their identities and the ways in which these were constructed. Papathanassiou organises her original material in a thematic perspective, following the great axes of "craft and work", "local identities, nationality, religion" and "social stratum and gender". She is thus able to profitably compare the experiences and perceptions of the two journeymen, who travelled in the same area but roughly 20 years apart. When they set out on their travels, they were approximately the same age, while customs

regulating this *Wanderpflicht* effectively remained unchanged during the whole period. The elder, Minichner, prepared his migration in a meticulous way; he corresponded with his prospective employers to offer his services and, checking in advance, went to areas where jobs were available. In the 1860s, Funder adopted a more liberal attitude, followed advice collected on the way from travelling colleagues and, as a result, had to rely more on assistance mechanisms and guild networks and make regular use of his customary right to the so-called "present", the tramp allowance offered by fellow artisans.

In the 1840s, as well as in the 1860s, journeymen were under the close surveillance of the authorities. They had to carry passports and present themselves upon arrival to the police in order to get a residence permit. Most importantly, the two confectioners crossed national borders and moved around mainly German-speaking central Europe long before German unification. The question of their national identity is therefore a pivotal one and Papathanassiou deals with it in detail. Minichner maintained his diary before the revolutionary turmoil of 1848. His national identity appears to have been made up not only of feelings of belonging to a broader linguistic and cultural community but also probably of vague expectations of the construction of a German national state. Funder, too, travelled at a time when the prospect of a Greater Germany, including the Austrian empire, was still a political possibility. However, he compiled his memoirs two years after returning home, in 1867, when this idea had already crumbled. He, therefore, felt first and foremost a citizen of his home town, Graz, and showed a strong affection for Styria. Only then did he feel an Austrian or subject of the Austrian emperor. Funder offers us a very interesting insight into the ethnic complexity of the Habsburg empire as he gives an account

of his experience of alienation in a Bohemian pub where everyone around him was speaking Czech, a language he ignored. Unable to understand, he perceived himself to be in a minority and excluded, a condition well known in postcolonial studies concerning the relationship between the dominant colonial culture and the subaltern indigenous one. The second important feature of their identity was Roman Catholicism. They observed their religious duties conscientiously, even though their travels took them to mostly to Protestant countries. They clearly distanced themselves from Protestantism but, leaving old religious differences aside, they displayed an earnest open-mindedness towards its tenets and followers, did not hesitate to attend Protestant services and were always ready to recognise pious behaviour or an inspired sermon regardless of dogmatic controversies.

Socially and politically, in spite of their young age and journeyman status, these two journeymen-confectioners considered themselves *Bürger*, this special German category that still meant in the nineteenth century a respected inhabitant of a city, enjoying citizenship and, thus, a series of political as well as social and economic rights. They dissociated themselves from the working class, as they lived within the master artisan's household and felt integrated into it. Issues such as long working hours, harsh living conditions or low wages arise sporadically in their narratives, especially Minichner's. Considering the fact that he belonged to an earlier generation, memories of a "moral economy" are more vivid and the contrast with the harsh factory-like conditions more bitterly resented. However, neither of them manifests a stark class consciousness or explicitly calls for a revolt against exploitation and alienation at work. Indeed, they were employed mostly in workshops organised along preindustrial lines where older patterns of work organisation

survived. Only Funder, in the second half of the century, had some industrial experience from small sugar factories, something he didn't remember fondly. He found working with the new machines difficult, exhausting and dangerous. He was injured three times while preparing chocolate and had to be hospitalised for burns. However, his overall assessment was positive, mainly due to the quality of the human relationships in the workplace and the paternal attitude of the master artisan.

Their inclusion as journeymen-confectioners in the *Bürgertum* was further consolidated by the substantial cultural and educational dimension of their travels. Their journey was, moreover, seen as a means of self-education, a unique chance to visit monuments, museums, galleries and famous landscapes, to attend concerts and performances in theatres and opera houses and, hence, an opportunity to attain the level of bourgeois culture expected of a German *Bürger*. To this purpose, travelling journeymen resorted to special tourist guidebooks intended for this particular category of travellers, catering for the needs and inquisitiveness of the self-educated, up-and-coming artisan. This is testimony to the high degree of specialisation of the publishing industry in the mid-nineteenth century and to the extent and variety of tourist migrations in the same period as well.

Finally, Papathanassiou discusses gender perceptions within the exclusive male community of journeymen-travellers. As the institution of the *Wanderpflicht* chiefly addressed young single male artisans, Minichner and Funder travelled alone and lived among fellow artisans and co-travellers, an environment from which women remained excluded even though they surface in the confectioners' recollections. The artisans encountered women at the personal level or in social and professional contexts, but

they never penetrated male communities. This was the case, for instance, of the nurses who took care of Funder or of the female members of the master's family.

Papathanassiou's book is a substantial contribution to our understanding of essential features and complex interactions during the formative nineteenth century. Central European national identities in formation during the age of nationalism, labour consciousness in a rapidly changing work environment, religious attitudes in times of declining devotion, cultural practices as a means of social mobility, as well as gender representations in an age when the impact of the industrial revolution caused a sharp differentiation between gender roles, are eloquently discussed through the autobiographical records of these two Austrian artisans. The comparative approach of the two accounts within a 20-year timeframe also offers a profitable chronological depth to her analysis. The study includes a comprehensive bibliography, a detailed map of the area covered by the two journeymen-confectioners and an English summary.

Emily Robinson

History, Heritage and Tradition in Contemporary British Politics: Past Politics and Present Histories

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. 208 pp

Emilia Salvanou

University of Peloponnese

How does history relate to politics? Does politics take into account the past when planning the future and in what way? In this book, Emily Robinson suggests that although the two are relevant, the way the past is incorporated in contemporary British politics has changed drastically since the 1980s. The past, according to Robinson, is no longer a political force. Being transformed into heritage, it is valued for its ability to be called on to provide an abstract continuity and to legitimise the present, without, at the same time, being "either a radical or a conservative force" (4). It has become a political commodity. Instead of serving as a starting point from which the present is challenged and progress is conceptualised, it largely serves to affirm the present – a condition that applies to all political parties, regardless their ideological orientation. The book's main argument is that, largely due to broader changes related to historical attitudes and the understanding of temporality, in contemporary British political parties the dominant attitude is presentism and history has been transformed into heritage. Politics, "rather than progress towards a promised future or historic destiny ... is based in an eternal, liminal present. It is always *becoming* history, becoming historic" (11).

The book is organised into an introduction and five chapters. The introduction sets the methodological and theoretical context of the essay,