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Nerval et les limbes de l'histoire. Lecture des 'Illuminés'. By KEIKO TSUJIKAWA. Geneva: Droz, 2008. xxii + 322 pp. Pb.

This book has, on the surface, a simple structure. A substantial and informative preface by Jean-Nicolas Illouz is followed by an Introduction. Then come seven chapters, one devoted to (or perhaps rather, as we shall see, inspired by) each of the seven parts of Nerval's book *Les Illuminés, ou les Précurseurs du socialisme*. After that, we have a brief Conclusion; then, finally, more than forty pages of complementary information, including a comparative table showing what Nerval borrowed from Restif in writing his 'Confidences de Nicolas', extensive bibliographies, and an index. (One of the book's virtues throughout is in the richness of its cross-references to other modern critics, and to source material from Nerval's day; it would for that reason alone be useful to any research student working on this area.) As Keiko Tsujikawa explains in her Introduction, she aims to derive from her reading of *Les Illuminés* an understanding of Nerval's relationship to history. Her working hypothesis is that history, for Nerval, is of interest primarily not as a series of events whose rational causality needs to be established, but as a repository of examples of a particular type of individual opposition to temporal power, in the name of a certain restless ardour of spiritual conviction. He is not interested in politically viable causes or combats; Tsujikawa demonstrates how, in his portrayal of Cazotte, he ignores Cazotte's dogmatic attachment to the Royalist and Catholic cause; rather, he wants to present Cazotte's religious sentiments as irrecuperable by institutions. Such irrecuperable religious sentiments, for Nerval, are ever varying in form, but belong to an authentic sense of divinity that humanity continually rediscovers: never triumphant, impossible to officialise, locked in an endless struggle with celestial and political authority, and which the 'limbes' of history preserve. This decentred view of history, always mediated by observing the strangeness of the individual, leads Tsujikawa to two

other guiding themes in her book: the nature of realism in Nerval's writing; and the peculiar collusion he manages to establish between plagiarism and poetic originality. Tsujikawa, however, does not limit herself to a reading of *Les Illuminés* in pursuit of these ideas. She allows herself often lengthy discursions, associating themes gleaned from her primary text with developments found elsewhere in Nerval's work and in its context. In her chapter on 'Quintus Aucler', for example, she spends eight or nine pages on Nerval's linking of contemporary theatre with pagan rites, without mentioning Quintus Aucler (or 'Quintus Aucler') once. These digressions, which occupy a substantial proportion of the book, are not only interesting in themselves; they seem somehow entirely appropriate to their subject-matter. Just as Nerval refuses to look in history for a master narrative, but always assumes that what is important should be sought in marginalia preserved in limbo, so Tsujikawa, rather than simply reading the published text of *Les Illuminés*, looks around its edges. The result is thoughtful, respectful, and engaging.