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Reconsidering Modernism: the exile poems of Giannis Ritsos

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The aim of the present paper is to explore the exile poems of Ritsos, from the perspective of style and intertextual dialogue with Modern Greek poems hitherto unrelated to them, drawn from the ranks of literary modernism. Ritsos's ordeals with post-war rehabilitation camps for Left-wing ideologues came as a result of his life-long commitment to the Greek Communist Party. He was initiated into the communist ideology in 1927, when he was an inmate of the sanatorium "Sotiria", where he met a plethora of the bohemian intellectuals of his time. He became a *de facto* spokesman for the Communist Party in 1945 with the publication of his long epic encomium of the Party's head, "Ο Σύντροφός μας Νίκος Ζαχαριάδης", upon the latter's release from Dachau.¹ By the time the Greek Civil War erupted in 1945-46, Ritsos was a reasonably well-known poet,² having already published eight collections, namely *Τρακτέρ* (1934), *Πυραμίδες* (1935), *Επιτάφιος* (1936), *Το τραγούδι της αδελφής μου* (1937), *Εαρινή συμφωνία* (1938), *Το*

¹ See Angeliki Kotti, *Γιάννης Ρίτσος: Ένα σχέδιασμα βιογραφίας* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata 2009), p. 54 ff. on Ritsos's initiation to the communist ideology and trade unionism; p. 105 ff. on his involvement in the formation and voicing of the party line through his poetry.

² On Ritsos's reception by Modern Greek criticism, which shaped the public response, see Christina Dounia, "Ο Ρίτσος και η κριτική", in Aikaterini Makrynikola and Stratis Bournazos (eds.), *Διεθνές Συνέδριο: Ο Ποιητής και ο Πολίτης Γιάννης Ρίτσος* (Athens: Benaki Museum-Kedros 2008), pp. 220-41. Alafouzou and Karvounis, official Party critics of the time, were reserved about *Τρακτέρ* and *Πυραμίδες*. Ritsos's most positive early critic was Chourmouziou.

εμβατήριο του ωκεανού (1940), *Παλιά μαζούρκα σε ρυθμό βροχής* (1943), and *Δοκιμασία* (1943).³

It is worth recalling the chronicle of Ritsos's years of exile, which runs as follows: in July 1948, when the third and by far the bloodiest round of the Civil War began, Ritsos was arrested and displaced to Limnos, where he was kept for nine months, an inmate of the camp of the town of "Kontopouli"; in May 1949 he was transferred to the harsher camp of Makronissos⁴ from which

³ Chryssa Prokopaki, in her "Εισαγωγή", *Ανθολογία Γιάννη Ρίτσου* (Athens: Kedros 2000), offers a reliable periodization of Ritsos's work, according to the dominant stylistic traits of each phase: (i) 1930-36: apprenticeship phase. During this phase Ritsos oscillates between socialist realism and modernism, between the decapentasyllabic couplet and free verse; (ii) 1937-43: phase of "lyric explosion". Surrealist elements are fruitfully integrated in his poetry, now mainly written in free verse; (iii) 1944-55: phase of political commitment and bifurcation of lyric production. Two types of poems will from now on be discerned in his output: short, lapidary poems on imagist or mythological themes, and long, frequently confessional, *poèmes-fleuves*; (iv) 1956-66: phase of "sophisticated meditations" and "inventive lyric tropes", i.e. the dramatic monologue; (v) 1967-71, while stylistically repeating traits of phase (iv), this phase witnesses a higher degree of irony, sarcasm and the use of the absurd in his poems, by way of response to the Colonels' dictatorship; (vi) 1972-83: phase of recollection and self-reflection. His love poems become more "open" now. He also tries his hand at prose: nine novels are left behind when he dies on 11 November 1990. His heirs also found fifty unpublished collections in his Nachlass (some of which were recently published in *Ποιήματα ΙΔ'* [Kedros: Athens 2007]). According to this literary-historical map of his work, by the beginning of the Civil War Ritsos had completed the second phase of his stylistic development, and was heading for the third.

⁴ Concerning "Makronissos", the first post-war concentration camp in Western Europe, see: Stratis Bournazos and Tassos Sakellaropoulos (eds.), *Ιστορικό Τοπίο και Μνήμη: Το παράδειγμα της Μακρονήσου* (Athens: Philistor 2000). According to Bournazos, "Το 'Μέγα Εθνικόν Σχολείον Μακρονήσου' (1947-1950)", in *Ιστορικό Τοπίο και Μνήμη*, pp. 115-45: 117, the uniqueness of the Makronissos experiment consists in three factors: (a) the scale of the operation, which, by most accounts, dealt with some 50,000 detainees, over a period of three years; (b) the intensity of the physical and emotional tortures employed there; and (c) the organized nature of state propaganda implemented on the island, with the aim of securing the detainees' renunciation of communism. Also of interest is the article by G. Papatheodorou, "Η Ίπυκνοκατοικημένη

he was released in July 1950 on account of health problems, only to be rearrested and deported back there a few months later. By 1950 the Makronissos rehabilitation camp was falling into disuse, so the poet was, soon after he was rearrested, transferred to Agios Efstratios, from where he was released in August 1952. At this point his suffering for being a vocal supporter of the Greek Left during the Civil War came to an end. The next round of imprisonments for Left-wing dissenters began in 1967, a result of the Colonels' *coup* of 21 April 1967. A few days after the *coup*, Ritsos was deported to the island of Giaros, and on 30 June to Leros. But by this stage, Ritsos was far too famous to be treated as an ordinary political prisoner. The French Marxist/surrealist poet Louis Aragon headed an international campaign for his release, while Ritsos's own failing health provided ample excuse for special conditions of confinement in the comfort of his wife's home in Samos, to which he was moved in October 1968 (after a few months' hospitalization in Athens). There he remained virtually until the fall of the dictatorship on 24 July 1974.

Ritsos was continuously writing during these seven years, and some of his most brilliant short poems, namely the collection *Πέτρες, Επαναλήψεις, Κιγκλίδωμα*, were produced during this second phase of confinement for political reasons. But since, by this stage, Ritsos had reached the status of a poet-laureate, who, while being a *persona non grata* for the establishment, could still afford to produce poetry in the comfort of his own home, his production in this period falls outside the scope of my examination here. This is because I consider as core examples of "exile

Ερημιά' των ποιητών της Μακρονήσου: Γραφές της Εξορίας", in: Bournazos and Sakellaropoulos, op. cit., pp. 227-44, which reads the poetry of Ritsos, Patrikios, Alexandrou as informed by a poetics of resistance from within the censored discursive domain. See also: Yannis Hamilakis, "The Other Parthenon: Antiquity and national memory at the concentration camp", *The nation and its ruins: antiquity, archaeology, and national imagination in Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), pp. 205-41, with special reference to the Janus-faced discourse of classical inheritance, used both by the detainees and the oppressors on Makronissos.

poems”: (a) texts that have been produced in the harsh physical, mentally taxing, conditions experienced by an ordinary camp prisoner, and (b) texts that deal explicitly with the theme of exile and related themes (such as the reasons that brought the inmate to his/her fate, and the expected outcome of his/her resistance), and hence reflecting/refracting the conditions of their production in their choice of subject-matter. It should be finally noted that I am aware of the theories that posit that the trauma of deportation and torture may be *denied* by its victim, and therefore “represented” in his/her creative output only by virtue of its meaningful absence, which has then to be read as a vestige of the trauma’s ghostly presence. Yet the motive for writing in these dreadful conditions is precisely to keep suffering at arm’s length, to reorganize trauma as rational explanation. So, while from the point of view of Ritsos’s readership trauma may here be redeployed as redemptive suffering, as far as authorial intention goes, I would be wary of a “hermeneutics of suspicion” that would treat thematically unrelated poems from that period as pertinent to his “exile poetry” (e.g. the 21 short, impressionist poems of *Παρενθέσεις* [1946-47]), as codified chronicles of this experience. The fact that the communists offer pride of place to *socialist realism* as regards writing and reading literature,⁵ and given that Ritsos is explicitly committed to Communist ideals at this stage (he is in exile for not renouncing them!),⁶ makes more obvious my view that any

⁵ Christina Dounia, “Το Συνέδριο των Σοβιετικών Συγγραφέων”, *Λογοτεχνία και πολιτική: Τα περιοδικά της Αριστεράς στο μεσοπόλεμο* (Athens: Kastaniotis 1996), pp. 311-64, offers a detailed account of the formation of the dogma of *socialist realism* at the 1st Congress of Soviet Writers, which took place in Moscow, in September 1934. She also comments on the way the Greek Communist Party castigated Ritsos for not following it closely enough (pp. 442-50).

⁶ On Ritsos’s adventure with the compulsion to make a “repentance statement”, see Kotti, *Γιάννης Ρίτσος*, pp. 111 ff. For a theoretical reading of its instrumentality in destroying solidarity among Greek communists, and its negative impact on the prisoners’ subjectivity, see P. Voglis, “Ανάμεσα στην Άρνηση και την αυτοάρνηση: Πολιτικοί κρατούμενοι στην Ελλάδα, 1945-50”, in: Mark Mazower (ed.), *Μετά τον Πόλεμο: Η ανασυγκρότηση της οικογένειας, του έθνους και του κράτους*

cryptic reading of his Civil War poetry should be put aside. Having defined the material that falls within the scope of my paper, it is now time to look at the texts as such.

The data Ritsos's biographers offer us,⁷ in conjunction with the reading premises I posited above as regards the production of his "exile poetry", are as follows:

1) November 1948: *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας I (27 Οκτωβρίου-23 Νοεμβρίου)*. The collection comprises thirty diary entries irregularly scattered over a period of four weeks; it consists of poems of different length; the opening poem of the collection, which is its shortest, has fourteen lines ("27 Οκτωβρίου 1948"), the longest has fifty-two lines ("14 Νοεμβρίου 1948").

2) January 1949: *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας II (24 Νοεμβρίου 1948-31 Ιανουαρίου 1949)*. It comprises forty-nine diary entries distributed across sixty-eight days; the poems are much shorter than those of *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας I*, more elliptical in nature, and made up of very short lines (e.g. six to seven syllables is the rule).

3) February 1949: *Καπνισμένο τσουνκάλι*, later placed as postscript to *Μετακινήσεις*, a collection originally conceived in 1942.

4) September 1949: *Πέτρινος χρόνος* (begun August) and early parts of *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου* (completed in 1951).

5) June 1950: *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας III (18 Ιανουαρίου-1 Ιουνίου 1950)*. The collection comprises thirty-eight diary entries, consisting of poems that thematically adhere to the minimalist poetics of *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας II*, yet tend to run to some length. (They are composed of more parts than the poems in either of the two previous diary collections, even though the parts are brief and they consist of short lines.)

6) November 1950 (the poet is now in Agios Efstratios): *Γράμμα στο Ζολιό Κιουρί*.

στην Ελλάδα, 1943-60, trans. Eirini Theofylactopoulou (Athens: Alexandraia²2004), pp. 87-104.

⁷ More scholarly in outlook, though less pleasant to read than Kotti's biography, is: Aikaterini Makrynika and G. P. Savvidis, *Εργογραφία Γιάννη Ρίτσου - Χρονολόγιο Εργογραφίας Γιάννη Ρίτσου* (Athens: Kedros 1981).

7) July 1951: *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου*, a composition of epic aspirations, which takes the reader on a tour of 20th-century European history, from the battle of Stalingrad (1943) to the establishment of NATO, assessing the role of proletarians worldwide, but primarily of the Greek people in materializing the ideals of justice and peace.

It is time for some preliminary observations. First, let us note that, in the more humane conditions of Agios Efstratios, the poet is able to take his mind off the emergency situation that dictated *Ημερολόγια*, and produce works of wider scope, even if still fixated on the topic of war. A further proof of this opening-up of the poet's thematics in the improved living conditions of Agios Efstratios, as Civil War reprisals are drawing to a close, comes in "Το ποτάμι κι εμείς", composed in late 1951. The composition, later incorporated in *Αγρόπνια* (1954) along with "Ρωμιοσύνη" (1945-47), deals with the Heraclitus-like topic of the passing of time, through the fragmentary recording of the experiences of a young couple; it is hence totally unrelated to the exilic situation from which it springs. Secondly, let us notice that Ritsos's exilic output comprises both short and longer collections. More importantly, Ritsos's exilic output comprises both collections that adhere to the pattern of engaged poetry that the Communist Party would have wished for, and collections that strike more subversive tones. On closer observation, one realizes that the "engaged" texts tend to be longer, and more narrative in scope, the "disengaged" texts (if I may call them so) tend to be shorter, fragmentary and cryptic. The shortest of all positively "engaged" texts related to the Civil War ordeal is *Καπνισμένο τσουκάλι* (written in 1949 on Limnos; published in *Μετακινήσεις* [1961]), in which the poet presents scenes of the daily life in the prison and the camp, along with his feelings of solidarity for his comrades, boosted through the reminiscence of common resistance acts against the Germans during the Occupation. Certain extracts of *Καπνισμένο τσουκάλι* have acquired proverbial status, thanks to their literary merits. Such is the following:

Και να, αδελφέ μου, που μάθαμε να κουβεντιάζουμε
ήσυχα-ήσυχα κι απλά.
Καταλαβαινόμεστε τώρα – δε χρειάζονται περισσότερα.
Κι αύριο λέω θα γίνουμε ακόμα πιο απλοί
θα βρούμε αυτά τα λόγια που παίρνουν το ίδιο βάρος σ' όλες
τις καρδιές, σ' όλα τα χείλη
έτσι να λέμε πια τα σύκα: σύκα, και τη σκάφη: σκάφη,
κ' έτσι που να χαμογελάνε οι άλλοι και να λένε: “τέτοια
ποιήματα
σου φτιάχνουμε εκατό την ώρα”. Αυτό θέλουμε και μεις.

Γιατί εμείς τραγουδάμε για να ξεχωρίσουμε, αδελφέ
μου, απ' τον κόσμο
εμείς τραγουδάμε για να σμίξουμε τον κόσμο.⁸

The longest of all the exilic collections, positively “engaged” with the ideals of the Greek left, is, as we saw, *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου*. It is an epic synthesis on the prehistory of the Greek Left, which runs to 4,000 lines and occupies fourteen cantos of uneven length and uneven numbers of stanzas. *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου* offers a panorama of modern European history, from the battle of Stalingrad (3 February 1943) to the Greeks’ unanimous Resistance to the Germans in Athens (terminating the Occupation on 12 October 1944), and from there on to the Truman Doctrine (1947) and the days of the Marshall plan (1948), concluding with the 1949 establishment of NATO. It is clearly an “exilic” composition, even if it does not thematize Ritsos’s camp surroundings, since it is rooted in the communicative situation from which it springs: *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου* aimed at providing Ritsos’s fellow prisoners on Makronissos and Agios Efstratios with a comprehensive narrative of their battles and their goals, which would make their suffering meaningful. Some sections of *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου* strike one as too programmatic and lacking in inspiration. Yet the collection as a whole boasts several merits, not least among them the successful, deliberate depiction of the anonymous, everyday, Elpenor-like individual, as main agent of

⁸ Now in: *Καπνισμένο τσουκάλι* (Athens: Kedros ¹⁰1976), p.12.

historical change. This strategy consciously undermines the significance so far attributed to the eponymous, Odysseus-like hero of the more orthodox, liberal strand of Greek modernism, and the repressive ideological repercussions harboured by his use, i.e. the view that only socially, or biologically, privileged individuals can make history.⁹ To illustrate this point, let us look at two indicative extracts from *Οι γειτονιές του κόσμου*. The first comes from section *Γ* of the composition, and refers to the time of the German Occupation of Athens, when a son's loss to the Germans turns the mother into an active member of the Resistance. A resurrection of the lost youth thus occurs, figuratively, in the ideological domain:

Η θεια-Καλή ντυμένη στα κατάμαυρα –
 φούσκωνε η φούστα της μπροστά γιομάτη παράνομο τύπο.
 Ο εργάτης με το ζεμπίλι της δουλειάς την καλημέρισε.
 Είταν βρεγμένα τα μαλλιά του εργάτη.
 Κάτι σταγόνες πέσαν καθώς έσκυψε το κεφάλι του να
 χαιρετίσει.
 Κι έσφιξε δυνατά το ζεμπίλι του.
 Η κυρά-Λένη μισόκλεισε τόνα της μάτι και την πείραξε:
 “Πότε με το καλό, ο καινούργιος γιος,”
 “Αμ όπου νάναι” λέει η θεια-Καλή.
 “Όπου νάναι” και τράβηξε το δρόμο της.¹⁰

⁹ The point was first raised by G. P. Savvidis, *Μεταμορφώσεις του Ελπήνορα: Από τον Πάουντ στον Σινόπουλο* (Athens: Nefeli 1990). Savvidis suggestively notes that the anti-hero's revalorization began in 1917 (the year of the October revolution in Russia), with Pound's revival of Elpenor in the *Cantos*. He argues that Ritsos's re-valorized Elpenor dates from 1964-65 and is related to his mythological collection, *Μαρτυρίες (Δεύτερη σειρά)*. Projecting this argument backward in time, I would suggest that Ritsos's view that the populace is the real agent of historical change (a view later on nicely expressed through the Homeric frame), was formed earlier on, during his first engagement with communism.

¹⁰ Now in: Giannis Ritsos, *Τα Επικαιρικά* (Athens: Kedros ¹²1987), p. 50.

The second comes from section *E* of the composition and refers to the suffering on Makronissos, strategically coupled with the visualization of a better future, so as to make the prisoners' sacrifice meaningful.¹¹ The importance of the anonymous hero in procuring sociohistorical change is foregrounded in this stanza through the skilful, mixed reference to both fictional members of the proletariat worldwide, and to the real, historical personages, Ritsos met on the island:

Έτσι έφυγε κι ο Πέτρος σε μια δύση ολόχρυση.
 Έτσι έφυγε κι ο Φούτσικ κι ο Περί κι η Ζόγια
 βγάζοντας απ' τις τσέπες τους χιλιάδες προκηρύξεις
 και τούτος ο άνεμος στριφογυρίζοντας τις προκηρύξεις
 πάνω απ' τις στέγες της πολιτείας
 πάνου απ' τα καράβια
 πάνου απ' τα κράνη των Ναζήδων
 μπροστά στα καμένα παράθυρα
 μες στις πλατείες των μαχαλάδων
 μες στα στρατόπεδα συγκέντρωσης
 καρφώνοντας ο άνεμος τις προκηρύξεις στα συρματοπλέγματα
 ανεβάζοντας ο άνεμος τις προκηρύξεις
 ως το κελί του Λαμπρινού και του Θέμου Κορνάρου...¹²

Οι γειτονίες του κόσμου adheres nicely to the definition of "Resistance poetry" given by the relevant specialist critics: the collection exudes a high degree of comradeship, a solidified feeling of the collective; this is achieved by recourse to the ritualistic invocation of shared ideological battles.¹³ But this is only one side of the coin, as we shall soon come to realize.

¹¹ Voglis, "Ανάμεσα στην Άρνηση και την αυτοάρνηση", argues that the aim of the farewell letters left behind by those about to be executed was to vindicate their imminent executions, to make them meaningful. (That this process should take place through writing is related by Voglis to the fact that the humiliating renunciation of communism was also a textual act: the signing of the *repentance statement*.)

¹² *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 60.

¹³ For a comprehensive account of post-war poetry in Greece with special emphasis on the political strand, see Dora Menti, *Μεταπολεμική*

Ritsos's exilic output also comprises, at the other end of the spectrum, collections of shorter poems in which fragmentariness, at times bordering on speechlessness, becomes a compositional rule, mirroring the poet's loss of faith in the power of *grand narratives*. Such is the case of his diary-like *Ημερολόγια Εξορίας* I-III (Limnos–Makronissos, 1948-49), consisting of at times extremely short, minimalist poems that can be fruitfully read as “τετράδια γυμνασμάτων” towards the creation of his more accomplished (though only one year “younger”), yet no less disillusioned *Πέτρινος χρόνος* (written 1949, published 1957). In order to illustrate the extremes to which such poetic brevity can go, let us look at the first part of the tripartite, eleven-line poem: “4 Δεκεμβρίου”, from *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας* II:

Πρόβατο, πρόβατο της αγωνιάς
 μικρό ποίημα
 πιάσε με απ' το χέρι.
 Η αυγή έχει τ' αγκάθι της
 και το σκαμνί της.
 Ως το βράδυ ας πιστέψουμε.¹⁴

We may compare the bipartite poem “2 Δεκεμβρίου”, from *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας* II, which consists of just five lines:

Ο ουρανός είναι μια τρύπα.
 Δεν χωράμε.

πολιτική ποίηση: Ιδεολογία και ποιητική (Athens: Kedros 1995). Menti defines “Ποίηση της Αντίστασης” (op. cit., pp. 121-61) – as opposed to “Ποίηση της Δοκιμασίας” and “Ποίηση της Ήττας” – by making reference to its proponents’ (a) ideological commitment to the Left; (b) sense of collectivity, and nearly simultaneous first appearance in letters; (c) thematics, related to their contemporaneous historical background; (d) moderate stylistic modernism; (e) variegated class provenance; (f) differentiation vis-à-vis the Thirties poets as regards the programmatic value they attached to their poetry. Menti argues that, contrary to what one would have anticipated, post-war poets are *less* committed than the Thirties poets to maintaining their ideology intact in their poetry, when reality fails them.

¹⁴ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 228.

Ξαγρόπνια. Το τσιγάρο. Ο αγέρας.
 Δε θέλω να μιλήσω.
 Ποιος ακούει έτσι;¹⁵

Combining the two aforementioned tendencies of Ritsos's earlier exilic poetry, i.e. his tendency towards compression, and his tendency to expand to epic dimensions, *Πέτρινος χρόνος* comprises twenty-four poems of some length, ostensibly on a variety of themes ("Γνωριμία", "Πάντα", "Έτοιμοι", "Ο Ντικ", "Οι ρίζες του κόσμου", "Βράδυ", "Μεσημέρια", "Σήμερα", "Ο Αλέξης", "Συμβάντα", "Οι γερόντοι μας", "Αλλαγή", "Χρέος", "Φεγγάρι", "Ο μπαρμπα-Μήτσος", "Τα παιδιά μας", "Ξημέρωμα", "Χρόνος", "Ο μπαρμπα-Καράς κι ο γιός του", "Κάθε βράδι", "Λίγο-λίγο", "Ωστόσο", "Τα χέρια των συντρόφων", "Α.Β.Γ."), which share the common underlying feeling that memory and comradeship are annihilated when confronted with the sight of torture. This is a collection produced in Makronissos, and most definitely about Makronissos. It comes as close as one can get in Ritsos to the definition of the sub-genre of "exilic literature".¹⁶ In *Πέτρινος χρόνος* the poet removes all traces of verbosity and old-style lyricism, in an attempt to dramatize, at the level of form, diction and choice of futile subject-matter, the devastation caused by separation and death, immanent in the camp experience. He also – on occasion – points to the new configurations of the self that can potentially arise from the exilic experience. Let us look at two characteristic poems from this collection, beginning with "Ο Ντικ":

Η πέτρα σταυρωμένη απ' τον άνεμο –
 ο άνεμος, η σιγαλιά –

¹⁵ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 226.

¹⁶ For an historical overview of the notion of exile both as enforced banishment and as voluntary withdrawal, and some penetrating remarks on the changes the exilic situation brings to the exile's self-perception and to his/her texts (also in terms of devising a literary mode that would procure a sense of continuity to the alienated self), see R. Edwards, "Exile, self and society", in: Maria-Ines Lagos-Pope (ed.), *Exile in literature* (London: Associated University Presses 1988), pp. 15-31.

δεν ακούγεται τίποτα
μόνο το καρδιοχτύπι της πέτρας
κι η πέτρα της καρδιάς που δουλεύεται
με το θυμό και με τον πόνο
βαριά, σιγά και σταθερά.

Μπόλικη πέτρα
μπόλικη καρδιά
να χτίσουμε τις αυριανές μας φάμπρικες
τα λαϊκά μέγαρα
τα κόκκινα στάδια
και το μεγάλο μνημείο των ηρώων της Επανάστασης.

Να μην ξεχάσουμε και το μνημείο του Ντικ –
ναι, ναι, του σκύλου μας του Ντικ,
της ομάδας του Μούδρου,
που τον σκοτώσαν οι χωροφυλάκοι
γιατί αγάπαγε πολύ τους εξόριστους.

Ένα μνημείο για τον Ντικ –
ένας πέτρινος σκύλος
με φαρδιά καπούλια,
με δύο σταγόνες αφοσίωση στα μάτια
μ' ανασηκωμένο το πάνω του χέιλι
δείχνοντας το ζερβί του δόντι
έτοιμος να δαγκάσει
τον αστράγαλο της νύχτας
ή τη σκιά του χωροφύλακα
ή τη στενόμακρη παύση του κλεφτοφάναραου
πούβαζε μια πλάκα σιωπή
ανάμεσα στα λόγια και στα χέρια μας.

Να μην ξεχάσουμε, σύντροφοι, τον Ντικ,
το φίλο μας τον Ντικ
που γαύγιζε τις νύχτες στην αυλόπορτα άντικρυ στη θάλασσα
κι αποκοιμιόταν τα χαράματα
στα γυμνά πόδια της Λευτεριάς
με τη χρυσόμυγα του αυγερινού
πάνω στο στυλωμένο αυτί του.

Τώρα ο Ντικ κοιμάται στη Λήμνο
δείχοντας πάντα το ζερβί του δόντι.

Μπορεί μεθαύριο να τον ακούσουμε πάλι
να γανγίζει χαρούμενος σε μια διαδήλωση
περνοδιαβαίνοντας κάτω απ' τις σημαίες μας
έχοντας κρεμασμένη στο ζερβί του δόντι
μια μικρή πινακίδα “κάτω οι τύραννοι”.

Είταν καλός ο Ντικ –
να μην ξεχάσουμε, σύντροφοι, τον Ντικ
το φίλο μας τον Ντικ που σκοτώθηκε στις γραμμές μας
το φίλο μας τον Ντικ που τον σκότωσαν
γιατί αγάπαγε πολύ τους συντρόφους μας.¹⁷

The poem's specificity in time-and-place depictions makes it characteristic of Ritsos's exilic poetry of the Civil War (Moudros, in line 16, is a sizeable town on the island of Limnos, referred to in line 38, which also hosted a post-war rehabilitation camp). It is this particular aspect of Ritsos's poetry that I consider fully intentional and radically anti-modernist, when read against the monumentalization of place and time, primordial but by definition Greek, that one gets in Seferis's *Μυθιστόρημα* (1935) or Elytis's *Προσανατολισμοί* (1940). In “Ο Ντικ” the lyric subject addresses his fellow exiles (line 31: “σύντροφοι”) enmeshed in the problematic present they are all facing; for this reason he has no need to masquerade, hide, or bowdlerize any of the painful aspects of their common experience. Exposing is a way of castigating and exorcizing their shared, troublesome present. The collective subject of the comrades has nothing to hide; a subject that, incidentally, has little in common with Seferis's trans-historical “σύντροφοι”, vested in Homeric overtones (cf. “Η μορφή της Μοίρας”, “Ο Στράτης Θαλασσινός ανάμεσα στους αγάπανθους”, *Logbook* II). The immediacy of the poem's language likewise reflects the urgency of the situation from which it springs. On the other hand, the choice of the lowly, kitschified subject-matter of the dead dog

¹⁷ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, pp. 264-5.

and its monument hints at the debunking of the communist ideology some of his fellow inmates may have privately undergone in the face of extremities such as a body in pain. What is more, this poem, through the use of the trope of self-referencing, narrativizes an accentuation of earlier perceptions of exile by Ritsos himself, such as we get in *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας* I, where this very same dog, “Dick”, is depicted alive, and friendly with the inmates (the poem “23 Νοεμβρίου”).¹⁸ I should finally like to note that two echoes of earlier poems in “Ο Ντυκ” validate its reading as a critique of Ritsos’s own earlier, at times too programmatic, exile poetry of the type of *Οι γειτονίες του κόσμου* (1957), and of his poetry of projected national univocality of the time of the Occupation. The first echo is of Karyotakis’s¹⁹ anti-war satire “Ο Μιχαλιός”, from *Ελεγεία και Σάτιρες* (1927).²⁰ In this poem on the futility of the Great War, the unwilling victim of the battlefield, Michalios, is given the honour of a soldier’s funeral, but as he is too tall (a total misfit) everything goes wrong:

Απάνω του σκεπάστηκεν ο λάκκος,
μα του αφήσαν απέξω το ποδάρι:
Ήταν λίγο μακρύς ο φουκαράκος.

Are we allowed to read dead Dick’s ever-protruding “ζερβί δόντι” (lines 24, 39, 43) as a jocose, if party-tainted, allusion to Michalios’s protruding leg? How are we to interpret the parallel? The next echo comes from Ritsos’s own *Επιτάφιος* (1936), a funeral poem on the death of a tobacco-worker during the 1 May 1936 strike in Thessaloniki. The poem ends with the mother’s vision of a triumphal march in which the resurrected young worker, her son, also takes part:

¹⁸ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 221.

¹⁹ On the early influence of Karyotakis on Ritsos, see Prokopaki, “Εισαγωγή”, *Ανθολογία Γιάννη Ρίτσου*, p. 12.

²⁰ Now in: G. P. Savvidis (ed.), *Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκης, Ποιήματα και Πεζά* (Athens: Ermis 1984), p. 105.

Ανάμεσά τους, γίόκα μου, θωρώ σε αναστημένο, –
το θώρι σου στο θώρι τους μυριοζωγραφισμένο

reads one of the last decapentasyllabic couplets of the poem.²¹ It is clearly the same motif: both mother and comrade experience an allegorical moment of resurrection of their beloved, dead fighter (the son, the dog), who is then visualized in full splendour amidst the crowds of a triumphal march (line 40: “να γανγίζει χαρούμενος σε μια διαδήλωση”). One may find the parallel risky or disrespectful; yet it illustrates the point that in certain instances of the exilic poetry of Makronissos, Ritsos appears disillusioned, hence parodic, as regards his earlier attempts at monumentalizing the struggles of the Greek Left through the lyrical diction, lofty themes and mythical landscapes of poems such as “Ρωμιούση” (1945-47). It is a point I shall return to after the discussion of my second example, the poem “Α.Β.Γ.”. The view that I am trying to put forward is that the reference point of the poems in *Πέτρινος χρόνος*, the “state of exception” in relation to the torture and execution that comrades are faced with, separates meaning from language and ideological belief. Poetry proves unable to compete with the extreme situations it is called to represent. “Α.Β.Γ.”, the final poem of *Πέτρινος χρόνος*, amply illustrates this:

Τρία μεγάλα γράμματα
γραμμένα μ’ ασβέστη στη ραχοκοκκαλιά της Μακρόνησος.

(Όταν ερχόμαστε με το καράβι
στριμωγμένοι ανάμεσα στους μπόγους και στις υποψίες μας
τα διαβάσαμε πάνου απ’ το κατάστρωμα
κάτου απ’ τις βρισιές του χωροφύλακα, τα διαβάσαμε
εκείνο το ήσυχο πρωινό του Ιουλίου,
κι η αρμύρα κι η μυρουδιά της ρίγανης και το θυμάρι
δεν καταλάβαιναν καθόλου τι θα πουν αυτά τα τρία
ασβεστωμένα
γράμματα).

²¹ Anthologized in: Prokopaki, *Ανθολογία Γιάννη Ρίτσου*, pp. 42-8, the specific quote on p. 47.

Α' Τάγμα.

Β' Τάγμα.

Γ' Τάγμα.

ΜΑΚΡΟΝΗΣΟΣ

Κι η θάλασσα του Αιγαίου ήταν γαλάζια όπως πάντοτε
πολύ γαλάζια, μόνο γαλάζια.

Α'—

Α, ναι, μιλούσαμε κάποτε για μια ποίηση αιγαιοπελαγίτικη,

Β'—

για το γυμνό στήθος της υγείας κεντημένο με μian άγκυρα και
μια γοργόνα

Γ'—

για το γαλάζιο φως που πλέκει τα κουρτινάκια των γλάρων.

Α.Β.Γ.

300 σκοτωμένοι.

Μιλούσαμε, ναι, για μια ποίηση αιγαιοπελαγίτικη—
ο κάβουρας που ρεμβάζει στο νοτισμένο βράχο,
αντίκρυ στη μαλαματένια δύση,
καθώς ένα μικρό μπρούτζινο άγαλμα του Ωκεανού.

Α.Β.Γ.

600 τρελλοί.

(Οι γυάλινες γαρίδες κυνηγώντας στα ρηχά τον ίσκιο του
πρωινού άστρου,

το χρυσό και γαλανό καλοκαίρι πετροβολώντας με
κουκουνάρια το μεσημεριάτικο ύπνο των κοριτσιών,
τα παλιά πεύκα ξύνοντας τη ράχη τους στην ασβεστωμένη
μάντρα.)

Α.Β.Γ.

900 κουτσοί.

Ζήτω

ο βασιλεύς Παύλος.

(Κι η Παναγιά του πόντου φλωροκαπνισμένη απ' το σούρουπο
να σεργιανάει ξυπόλητη στην αμμουδιά
συγκυρίζοντας τα σπίτια των μικρών ψαριών

καρφώνοντας μ' ένα θαλασσινό σταυρό τη φεγγαρίσια της
πλεξούδα).

A.B.G.

A.B.G.

(Μιλούσαμε για μια ποίηση αιγαιοπελαγίτικη, ναι, ναι).

ΜΑΚΡΟΝΗΣΟΣ –

ΜΑΚΡΟΝΗΣΟΣ – ΜΑΚΡΟΝΗΣΟΣ

Κι η θάλασσα είναι ακόμη γαλάζια όπως πάντοτε
κι ο αμερικάνικος στόλος ταξιδεύει στο Αιγαίο
ήσυχος, ήσυχος, ωραίος,
και τ' άστρα ανάβουν κάθε βράδυ μικρές φωτιές
να ψήσουν οι Άγγελοι την ψαρόσουπα της Παναγίας.

A.B.G.

A.B.G.

Κι από κάτω απ' τ' αστέρια περνάνε
καραβιές-καραβιές οι εκτοπισμένοι
και τσουβάλια με κομμένα ποδάρια
και τσουβάλια με κομμένα χέρια
και τσουβάλια με νεκρούς
ξεβράζουν οι φουρτούνες στις αχτές του Λαυρίου.

(Αιγαιοπελαγίτικο τοπίο
χρυσό και γαλάζιο).

A.B.G.

Σε τούτα τα βράχια τουφεκίστηκαν οι 300 του Α' Τάγματος,
τούτα τα φύκια είναι μια τούφα μαλλιά ξεκολλημένα μαζί με το
δέρμα
απ' το καύκαλο ενός συντρόφου που αρνήθηκε να υπογράψει
δήλωση.

A.B.G.

Τα συρματοπλέγματα.

Οι νεκροί.

Οι τρελλοί.

A.B.Γ.

(Γαλάζια, η θάλασσα - πολύ γαλάζια.
Χρυσό αιγαιοπελαγίτικο τοπίο.
Οι γλάροι).

A.B.Γ.

Μαύρη, κατάμαυρη θάλασσα
Μαύρο, κατάμαυρο τοπίο.
Τα συρματοπλέγματα.

A.B.Γ.

Μαύρο, κατάμαυρο τοπίο με σφιγμένα δόντια,
κόκκινο, κατακόκκινο τοπίο με σφιγμένη γροθιά,
μαύρη και κόκκινη καρδιά πηγμένη στο αίμα της
κι ένας κόκκινος ήλιος πηγμένος μες το αίμα του.²²

It is a remarkable poem as regards the degree of formalist “abstraction”, stylistic “nakedness”, verbal minimalism Ritsos has achieved in it. Despite the fact that “A.B.Γ.” presents itself, in terms of typesetting, as a long poem, much of its length derives from the partial or total repetition of its lines. Repetition is here a stylistic device employed to connote the impoverishment of a poet’s language when faced with the inconceivability of the camp experience (it can be read as a depiction of stuttering, of compulsive repetition as sign of trauma). Let us also note the poem’s “letteristic” element:²³ capital letters that do not mean much (unless they are rehearsed in the context of the poem), are thrown in the raw on the page, in order to suggest the impossibility for language

²² *Τα Επικαιρικά*, pp. 299-304. The poem runs to 134 lines, of which I have quoted 81, adhering to the choice of Prokopaki, who in *Ανθολογία Γιάννη Ρίτσου*, pp. 104-11, suppresses the second, and even more laconic part of “A.B.Γ.”.

²³ *Lettrisme* is a French avant-garde movement, established in Paris in the mid-1940s by Romanian immigrant Isidore Isou. It is called *Lettrisme* from the fact that its proponents’ early works centred on letters and other visual or spoken signs.

to signify, in the face of terror. At the same time, to the historically aware reader, the three capital letters in the text form an exemplum of the poetics of specificity of landscape informing Ritsos's Civil War poems.²⁴ Each of the three letters refers to one of the three battalions in operation on Makronissos, and to their respective wards; this division would be one of the first things one would become aware of upon arrival on the island. The same aesthetic principle applies to the use of Arabic numbers in the text, as opposed to writing them in full Greek script, when counting the poet's lost comrades to torture (cf. the dismembered limbs, lines 55-6) and executions. The quantification of casualties offers a commentary on the absurdity of loss and the impossibility for language to account for them. At the same time, it operates in very pragmatic ways; it may represent an instance of historical realism, almost testimony. I should finally like to note the conscious redeployment of an Aegean Sea "counter-discourse" in "Α.Β.Γ.", a counter-narrative that targets Seferis's and Elytis's depictions of the "quintessentially Greek" landscape of the Archipelago, and Ritsos's own earlier non-specific (in terms of time and place) landscape depictions of *Ρωμιοσόνη*. This stance becomes clear in the self-commentary of line 17: "Α, ναι, μιλούσαμε κάποτε για μια ποίηση αιγαίπελαγίτικη" (repeated with small alterations in lines 24 and 43), which refers to Ritsos's past concessions to liberal-style modernism, forging links with Right-wing poets that proved treacherous. It is by no means the only instance of a renunciation of the poetics of the Archipelago in Ritsos's exile poems, but it is by far the most prominent and most often quoted.²⁵ Other such instances include the hints in the poem "Αλλαγή" (lines 3-4):

²⁴ Christopher Robinson, "The presentation of place and space in the poetry of Yiannis Ritsos, 1934-1947", *Κάμπος: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 2 (1994) 73-94, discusses the various poetic languages Ritsos uses to articulate his personal perception of space. Robinson is one of a handful of critics to note Ritsos's temporality, i.e. his historical consciousness, in representing landscape.

²⁵ See E. Garandoudis, "Τα νησιά του Αιγαίου ως τόπος μιας αντίθεσης: Από την ποιητική γενιά του 1930 στη μεταπολεμική ποίηση", *Από τον*

Αλλιώς κοιτιέται η θάλασσα απόνα παράθυρο
αλλιώς πίσω απ' το συρματοπλέγμα.²⁶

or the depiction of the arid landscape of the camp island through the lenses of a Sinopoulos-like nightmare (as in “Φεγγάρι”, lines 3-4):

ένα τοπίο μισό μαύρο, μισό κίτρινο
ένα κομμένο πόδι ψάχνοντας για το σώμα του.²⁷

Let us, finally, note the haunting repetition of the place-name “Makronissos”, in lines 2, 13, 44 and 45 of “Α.Β.Γ.” (miming and subverting, in its striking use of capital letters, the feeling that a traveller gets from an approaching signboard at the entrance of a port to be visited on holiday). The haunting repetition of the place-name “Makronissos” stands as a signpost to an alternative Aegean islands geography, a dystopic topography, where civic consensus is replaced by conflict, travelling is overrun by torture.

Ritsos’s aesthetic positioning against his ideological opponents, the literary modernists, appears decided and consistent in his exile poems.²⁸ For some critics, the defining feature of the modernist text is the rhetoric of the visionary employed by the poet. For others, modernism in Greek letters can be best understood through an enquiry into the poet’s particular employment of myth, landscape-depictions, and the trope of orality. For a third group of critics, it is modernism’s relation to tradition that should

Μοντερνισμό στη σύγχρονη ποίηση (1930-2006) (Athens: Kastaniotis 2007), pp. 227-46, specifically p. 236. Though in scope very similar to Papatheodorou’s earlier article on the matter referred to above (n. 4), this study offers the benefit of a more detailed account of the presence of the Aegean sea counter-discourse in a variety of post-war poems.

²⁶ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 277.

²⁷ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 281-2.

²⁸ This stylistic division of labour between liberal modernists and anti-modernist radicals, was first suggested by Mario Vitti, in his historic article “Οι δύο πρωτοπορίες στην ελληνική ποίηση”, *Ο Πολίτης* 1 (1976).

lie at the centre of critical attention.²⁹ On all three fronts, Ritsos's exile poems present the reader with a counter-statement on the stylistic choices made by his liberal, bourgeois contemporaries, mainly Seferis and Elytis. Beaton has convincingly shown that in composing his tableau of the Greek landscape, in 1945-47, Ritsos pays tribute to the landscape of Seferis's *Μυθιστόρημα* (1935) (with special reference to sections 2, 15 and 17), Elytis's *Προσανατολισμοί* (1940) and *Άσμα ηρωικό και πένθιμο για το χαμένο ανθοπολοχαγό της Αλβανίας* (1946), and further back in tradition to the landscape of Palamas's sonnet on Athens from his "Πατρίδες" (1895) and Solomos's *Ύμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν* (1823). Beaton considers "the depth of intertextual allusion in *Romiosini* [...] an integral part of the poem's treatment of its subject-matter, because all those poetic precedents, as they accumulate through the length of the text, come to be included in the overarching concept of 'Hellenism' as conceived within the poem".³⁰ Beaton attributes, correctly, the poet's all-inclusiveness in his choice of literary (and hence political) allusions in *Ρωμιοσύνη* to the fact that its writing coincided with a period of truce in the Civil War, a truce that began with the Varkiza agreement in February 1945 and ended with the outbreak of the third round of hostilities of 1947-49. He also notes that, as in the parallel case of Seferis's almost contemporary "*Κίχλη*" (1947), in *Ρωμιοσύνη* Ritsos makes abundant, yet carefully imprecise, reference to the recent experience of the Second World War. It is also left purposefully ambiguous throughout the poem whether the concluding demand for justice should be understood in political or in national terms; i.e. whether the essential trait of *Greekness*, which is understood in this poem to be resistance, should be read as resistance against the outsider (national consciousness) or

²⁹ For a general overview of Greek criticism's theses on literary modernism, see D. Tziouvas (ed.), *Greek Modernism and beyond: Essays in honor of Peter Bien* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield 1997).

³⁰ See Roderick Beaton, "Modernism and the quest for national identity: The case of Ritsos's *Romiosini*", in: Makryníkola and Bournazos (eds.), *Ο Ποιητής και ο Πολίτης Γιάννης Ρίτσος* (see note 2), pp. 109-24, at p. 116.

against the oppressor (political or ideological consciousness). To make his point, Beaton characteristically explains that, in the line “Όταν σφίγγουν το χέρι, ο ήλιος είναι βέβαιος για τον κόσμο”, “the words themselves are ambiguous: the Greek could equally refer to the warmth of a friendly greeting, or to the iconic clenched fist of communist posters and slogans”.³¹ Well, if the Axis Occupation presented Left-wing poets with the opportunity of a fantasized coalition across the political spectrum, the Civil War severed any bridges.

It is my contention in this paper that, in the fragmentary narratives of his poems of (on) exile, Ritsos reconsidered the tropes of modernism, “setting the record straight” both vis-à-vis the depictions of the national psyche proposed by his political opponents, the Greek bourgeoisie, and vis-à-vis his own earlier concessions to the tropes, language and rhetoric of modernism. Moreover, while adhering to Beaton’s argument, I should like to argue that this dialogue is deeper and more extended than has been suggested. For example, three of Ritsos’s exile collections identify already by their title the project of rewriting Seferis’s stylistic premises and related ideological bias. *Ημερολόγια Εξορίας* I, II, III make conscious allusion to Seferis’s collections: (a) *Ημερολόγιο Καταστροφώματος Α΄*, a collection that contains poems written between 1928 and 1940, the best known among them being “Ο Βασιλιάς της Ασίνης”. In this poem, the persona of the poet, strolling through the ruins of the Homeric king’s castle, contemplates the eventual disappearance of a work’s creator (published Athens 1940); (b) *Ημερολόγιο Καταστροφώματος Β΄*, a collection that covers, in the covert style of Seferis, major World War II events, such as the German invasion and occupation of Greece, the flight of the Greek government to South Africa and to Egypt, the horrors of war, the April 1944 uprising in the Greek army stationed in the Middle East, etc. (published Alexandria 1944); (c) *Ημερολόγιο Καταστροφώματος Γ΄*, Seferis’s “Cypriot” collection, which negotiates his views on colonialism and

³¹ Ibid, p. 121.

nationalism (published Athens, 1955). It has been noted that the repeated title word of Seferis's three most political collections, *logbook*, hints at the notion of a captain leading his ship through turbulent times to a worthy, hopefully safe, destination port. So, clearly, a shred of the Ulysses myth still accompanies Seferis as late in his poetic career as 1955. By contrast to this visionary conception of history and of the poet's almost messianic role in it, Ritsos's textualized poet in *Ημερολόγια Εξορίας* has nowhere to go. He finds himself stranded on a wasteland, a desert land where:

Εδώ τ' αγκάθια είναι πολλά –
αγκάθια καστανά, κίτρινα αγκάθια
σ' όλο το μάκρος της μέρας, ως μέσα στον ύπνο.

and where:

Τα λόγια που μας φάνηκαν όμορφα κάποτε
χάσαν το χρώμα τους σαν το γιλέκο του γέρου στο σεντούκι
σαν ένα λιόγευμα σβησμένο στα τζάμια.

This kind of desolate landscape, as Savidis has observed, bears a lot similarities to Sinopoulos's landscapes:³²

Οι άνθρωποι περπατάνε με τα χέρια στις τσέπες
ή κάποτε χειρονομούν σα να διώχνουν μια μύγα
που ξανακάθεται στο ίδιο μέρος πάλι και πάλι
στα χείλη του άδειου ποτηριού ή πιο μέσα
σ' ένα σημείο απροσδιόριστο κι επίμονο
όσο κι η άρνησή τους να το αναγνωρίσουν.³³

The parallel is overwhelming. In his three *Ημερολόγια Καταστώματος*, Seferis, the diplomat, travels the world over and con-

³² Savidis, op. cit., p. 29.

³³ This is the opening poem of *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας* I, "27 Οχτωβρίου 1948", minus the second, more lyrical stanza, which I have omitted in the above quotation: "Όταν περνούν το συρματόπλεγμα οι νύχτες / αφήνουν μικρά κουρέλια απ' τη φύστα τους." See *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 201.

templates on issues relating to poetry, memory, collective history vs. private passing of time, as well as on nationalism, colonialism and war justice. Chained to his desert land, the implied poet of “27 Οχτωβρίου 1948” has no other option but to turn inwards, and to his minute surroundings (lines 10-11: “μια μύγα / που ξανακάθεται στο ίδιο μέρος πάλι και πάλι”) for a source of comfort and, if possible, for inspiration. As suggested in the opening poem to the three collections, the subjects of these collective “*journaux intimes*” are faced already from the first day of their coercive displacement with the threat of meaninglessness that mindless violence, and implicitly the enforced signing of the *repentance statement*, thrusts upon them (lines 13-14: “[...] σημείο απροσδιόριστο κι επίμονο / όσο κι η άρνησή τους να το αναγνωρίσουν”).³⁴ It would be impossible for the poet to find refuge in the monumental, generalizing world of myth (even in the Brechtian use devised for it in Ritsos’s later work),³⁵ in the face of such symbolic deprivation. It would likewise be impossible for a poet to fantasize for himself the role of a visionary, leading a nation.³⁶ As the lyric “I” repeatedly notes in *Ημερολόγια Εξορίας*, reality around them hardly makes the stuff of poetry. The penultimate, self-referential stanza of “13 Νοεμβρίου”, *Ημερολόγιο Εξορίας I*, is revealing in this respect:

³⁴ Is it too fanciful to read Ritsos’s line 8 of “27 Οχτωβρίου 1948” as a semi-conscious echo, and hence inversion, of the epigrammatic lines 15-16 (“The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes / The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes”) of “The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917), Eliot’s first major modernist poem? The poem became celebrated in Greek letters through Seferis’s 1936 translation.

³⁵ On Ritsos’s use of myth, see G. Veloudis, “Αυτοβιογραφία, μύθος και ιστορία στο έργο του Γιάννη Ρίτσου”, *Προσεγγίσεις στο έργο του Γιάννη Ρίτσου* (Athens: Kedros 1984), pp. 43-74, esp. p. 58.

³⁶ Despite the somewhat Quixotic quality of the representation, or even because of that (line 18: “Προχωρεί, παραπατώντας, δαχτυλοδειχτούμενος”), the image of the discredited yet proud walker of the end of “Μέρες τ’ Απρίλη ’43”, *Ημερολόγιο Καταστροφώματος Β’*, now in: *Ποιήματα* (Athens: Ikaros 1994), p. 208, may be read as a version of the poet/visionary, a leader of his nation, that Seferis at times reserved for himself.

Αυτά βέβαια δε γίνονται ποίημα
 κι εδώ τα ρίχνω στο χαρτί σα μια άχρηστη πέτρα πάνω στις πέτρες
 που ίσως μια μέρα θα βοηθούσαν να χτιστεί ένα σπίτι.³⁷

The parallels with (and the inversions of) *topoi* of seferian modernism can be easily multiplied. But it is not my aim in this paper to be exhaustive. All I am trying to do in it is raise the point that any reading of Ritsos's exile poetry would be incapacitated, unless its interpretative frame of reference shifts from the socialist realist paradigm propagated by his political allies, to include also the modernist paradigm of his political opponents. The topicality of Ritsos's exile poems, the specificity of the place names used in them, the historical specificity of the very recent events recorded in them, all target the mythical freeze-frame of history, and the universality of Greek landscape depictions in Seferis's poetry,³⁸ read by the communist poet as a stratagem of liberal, potentially repressive, "humanism".³⁹ So as to extend the argument to hitherto uncovered territory, I should also like to note that the "futility" of many of the exile poems' topics, the "poverty" of their language, coupled with consistent attempts to subvert

³⁷ *Τα Επικαιρικά*, p. 214.

³⁸ The most self-reflexive, and in this sense less suspicious of ideological bias, landscape depiction of Seferis is *Μυθιστόρημα* IB' ("Μποτίλια στο πέλαγο"): "Τρεις βράχοι λίγα καμένα πεύκα κι ένα ρημοκλήσι / και παραπάνω / το ίδιο τοπίο αντιγραμμένο ξαναρχίζει. / τρεις βράχοι σε σχήμα πύλης, σκουριασμένοι / λίγα καμένα πεύκα, μαύρα και κίτρινα / κι ένα τετράγωνο σπιτάκι θαμμένο στον ασβέστη. / και παραπάνω ακόμη πολλές φορές / το ίδιο τοπίο ξαναρχίζει κλιμακωτά / ως τον ορίζοντα ως τον ουρανό που βασιλεύει. / Εδώ αράξαμε το καράβι να ματίσουμε τα σπασμένα κουπιά, / να πιούμε νερό και να κοιμηθούμε. / Η θάλασσα που μας πίκρανε είναι βαθιά κι ανεξερευνήτη / και ξεδιπλώνει μιαν απέραντη γαλήνη. / Εδώ μέσα στα βότσαλα βρήκαμε ένα νόμισμα / και το παίξαμε στα ζάρια. / Το κέρδισε ο μικρότερος και χάθηκε. / Ξαναμπαρκάραμε με τα σπασμένα μας κουπιά".

³⁹ "Humanism": a system of thought criticized as being centred on the notion of the rational, autonomous self and ignoring the un-integrated and conditioned nature of the individual. (Humanism's potentially repressive nature relates to its enforcement of universal principles, rationally deduced, to the neglect of particularity and locality.)

received ideas on what passes as poetic form (these poems' lines can be very short, or very long; embedded "metrical" verses are very rare and randomly thrown into them), offer a corrective to Ritsos's earlier concessions to Thirties modernism, in *Ρωμοσύνη*. Interestingly, Ritsos's neglected poems of the Civil War period provide the seed of most post-war political poetry, making a *de facto* case in favour of their oddly avant-garde nature. By way of conclusion, let us remind ourselves of Titos Patrikios's short poem "Π", from "Προσχέδια για τη Μακρόνησο", which indicates the extent to which the father-poet's anti-modernist Civil War poetry proved a viable path for poetry of years to come:

BETO, ΑΕΤΟ, ΓΕΤΟ, ΣΦΑ, το Γάμμα Κέντρο
 απ' την κορφή ως τα νύχια πέτρα
 τ' αντίσκηνα σα βόλοι λάσπη
 ένα κομμάτι λάσπη οι άνθρωποι
 τρεμόσβηνε η ψυχή γινόταν χώμα
 φασματικές λάμπες κόβανε τα πρόσωπα
 φωτίζοντας μάτια τρελλών
 στόματα που ξεχύναν έντομα
 κι ο άνεμος με τις χοντρές αρβύλες του βασανιστή
 μαστίγωνε το άγριο βουνό με τη ζωστήρα του.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Titos Patrikios, *Ποιήματα I (1948-1954)* (Athens: Themelio 1990), p. 175. The parallel is also noted in Papatheodorou, op. cit., p. 236.

Aspects of modern and postmodern Greek fictional biography in the 20th century*

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My current project aims to study the relations between biography and the novel in 20th-century Greece and, more specifically, novels with historical persons as protagonists, particularly artists. What follows is a summary sketch of the main European trends and their impact on Modern Greek literature.

In the years following World War I, there was a flourishing of biographical writing in Europe. It first appeared in England with Lytton Strachey and his iconoclastic portraits in his *Eminent Victorians* (1918), and spread to France with the work of André Maurois, to Germany and Austria with the writings of Emil Ludwig and Stefan Zweig respectively, to limit myself to some of the most famous practitioners. It is known as Modern Biography (in contradistinction to the Modern Novel), New Biography (the term coined by Virginia Woolf),¹ Contemporary Biography, or rather pejoratively *vie/biographie romancée* (to describe Maurois's *Ariel ou la vie de Shelley*)² and *Historische Belletristik*

* Slightly modified versions of this paper were given in October and November 2008 at the Universities of Birmingham and Oxford and at King's College London (as well as at Cambridge). I am grateful for the discussions on all these occasions.

¹ Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography" (1927), in *Granite and Rainbow* (London: Hogarth Press 1981), pp. 149-56.

² The publishers of *Ariel* characterized him as the "founder of a new school of romantic biography"; quoted by Mark Longaker, *Contemporary biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

about men who were deeply involved in great historical moments, began with the concept of character, but he then searched in the archives for what he took at bottom to be the corroboration of his intuition, intuition being something of an innate gift.⁹ Strachey also used his sources in such a way as to uncover the internal world of his biographees.

Virginia Woolf in her criticism claimed that the “real life” is essentially internal and therefore beyond the reach of non-fiction. Consequently New Biography’s tendency to render the character from within blurred the line between “the truth of fact and the truth of fiction”.¹⁰ If the real life cannot be seen from the outside (as in biography) it can at least be *understood* from within.

3) Understanding became a central concept of New Biography and received various configurations from its practitioners: it became interpretation in Strachey (“uninterpreted truth is as useless as buried gold; and art is the great interpreter”),¹¹ means of expression in Maurois (“it does seem possible [...] that the biographer may be able to express some of his own feelings without misrepresenting those of his hero [...]. In every psychological truth there is, and there must be, an element of divination”),¹² empathy in Ludwig: his primary concern is the “human heart” (preferably of great men) because “he feels that in the lives of the great he could feel more acutely the vibrations of his own nature and of mankind”.¹³

4) All of them considered biography an art, especially as regards its modes of presentation. “Allusion, judicious selection, good

See André Maurois, *Aspects of biography*, trans. Sydney Castle Roberts (New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1930), pp. 201-2.

⁹ Longaker, *Contemporary biography*, pp. 133-4.

¹⁰ Woolf, “The New Biography”, p.155.

¹¹ The quote is from Charles Richard Sanders, “Lytton Strachey’s conception of biography”, *PMLA* 66.4 (Jun. 1951) 313.

¹² Maurois, *Aspects of biography*, p. 132-3.

¹³ Longaker, *Contemporary biography*, pp. 130-1.

structure and good style”¹⁴ are some of the prerequisites of a good biography. They mostly focused on point of view (since it is difficult to match “the truth of fact with the truth of fiction” it is better “to hang up looking glasses at odd corners” according to Virginia Woolf),¹⁵ or on the patterning of life according to major rhythmic motives. Strachey insisted that he used a clearly defined, dispassionate point of view but he is considered to have used his wit and vigour to make his characters “re-enact their lives on a stage of his own devising turning them to caricatures”.¹⁶ Ludwig separated the external activities, which are historically defined, from the internal world (“the human heart”, which is eternal) and shaped the inner life as a three- or five-act drama, underlining the “symbolic scenes”. By being sensitively impressionist his prose conveys a direct sense of immediacy that provides the reader with clear visualizations of settings, persons and actions. Maurois insists on refraining from imposing the biographer’s retrospective knowledge on to the subjects’ life, the selection of detail, the pattern that appeals to our aesthetic sense and the rhythm that is “established by the recurrence, at more or less distant intervals, of the essential motifs of the work. A human life is always made up of a number of such motifs”,¹⁷ which provide it with the unity of the poetic truth.

Who read these biographies? We know that English biographers were limited to an English-speaking public (only Strachey’s *Queen Victoria* has been translated into Greek).¹⁸ On the other hand, Maurois, Ludwig and Zweig were translated into

¹⁴ Sanders, art. cit., p. 304.

¹⁵ Virginia Woolf, “The Art of Biography”, in: *The Death of the Moth and other essays* (London: The Hogarth Press 1981), p. 125.

¹⁶ Sanders, “Lytton Strachey’s conception of biography”, p. 306.

¹⁷ Maurois, *Aspects of biography*, p. 71.

¹⁸ Lytton Strachey, *Η βασίλισσα Βικτωρία*. Μετάφραση Νάτας Κοκκόλη (Athens: Ikaros 1952).

many foreign languages (Zweig into thirty)¹⁹ and were widely read in Europe and America until after the Second World War.

The same happened in Greece: all their biographies were translated, mostly between 1935 and 1955 and often by more than one translator. Some of the translators were themselves well-known authors, like Yannis Beratis and Nikiphoros Vrettakos (who translated for financial reasons),²⁰ while some of the translations were introduced by the authors themselves or by men of letters with whom the New Biographers had some connection. This is the case with Kostas Ouranis and Ludwig (Ouranis wrote Ludwig's sketch),²¹ Pratsikas and Maurois (Maurois wrote the preface to Pratsikas's translation of *Disraeli*),²² Meranaios and Zweig (Meranaios has written introductory texts and articles on Zweig).²³ Besides, all three had visited Greece; Ludwig actually

¹⁹ Randolph J. Klawiter, *Stefan Zweig, An international bibliography* (Studies in Austrian Literature, Culture and Thought ²1991) and *Addendum I*, 1999.

²⁰ Beratis translated, apparently from French, Zweig's *Έρασμος* (Athens: Govostis 1949), *Μπαλζάκ* (Athens: Govostis: 1950?), *Μέσμερ* (Athens: Govostis 1950), *Φεοντόρ Ντοστογιέβσκη* (Athens: Govostis 1950?) and Ludwig's *Βίσμαρκ* (Athens: Govostis 1958). Vrettakos translated Zweig's *Ρωμαίν Πολλάν: Ο άνθρωπος και το έργο του* (Athens: Vivlioekdotiki 1955)

²¹ Kostas Ouranis, "Πορτραίτο του Έμιλ Λούντβιχ", in Emil Ludwig, *Μπετόβεν. Μετάφραση Γεωργίου Ν. Δρόσσου* (Athens: Omega 1965), pp. 11-14, and Dimitris Kallonas, "Λίγα λόγια για τον συγγραφέα", in his translation of *Beethoven* (Athens: Chryssos 1959).

²² André Maurois, *Άριελ. Η ζωή του Σέλλεν (Μοθιστόρημα)*, trans. and introduction Yorgos Pratsikas (Athens: Govostis 1950) pp. 5-12, André Maurois, *Ντισραέλι*, trans. and introduction Giorgos Pratsikas. *With a letter from the author for the Greek edition* (Athens: Govostis 1947).

²³ Stefan Zweig, *Ιωσήφ Φουσέ*, trans. and introduction K. L. Meranaios (Athens: Petros K. Ranos 1945), pp. 5-7. The Introduction is presented as an excerpt from his study "Ο Στέφαν Τσβάιχ και η αγωνία της ευρωπαϊκής πνευματικής συνείδησης". Stefan Zweig, *Εμίλ Βεράρεν. Ο ποιητής της Νέας Εποχής*, trans. and preface by Mina Zographou and Kostis Meranaios (Athens: Kedros/Rodaki 1955). K. L. Meranaios, "Ο Στέφαν Τσβάιχ και η κρίση της ευρωπαϊκής συνείδησης", *Ο αιώνας μας*, 2 (April 1948), pp. 39-40.

composed a concise portrait of Eleftherios Venizelos, “Venizelos, The Greek Odysseus”, which is included in his book *Führer Europas* (Amsterdam 1934).²⁴

Another important question is why they were so widely read and what the Greek (and other European) readers discovered in these international best-sellers, which started with the ambition to imitate the modern novel and turned into popular literature. Let me suggest a few reasons:

- 1) The genre of New Biography often served as a means to enhance the reader's knowledge and satisfy his curiosity. Ludwig said that in America he had found “his ideal public [...] the man in the streets who wants to find something useful to himself in a book, some bit of practical wisdom for the conduct of life, an example, or a model”.²⁵ Alternatively, from the viewpoint of the modernist novelists Gertrude Stein “observed that ‘biographies have been more successful than novels’ in the 20th century precisely because they have taken over the role that used to be fulfilled by the ‘novels of the 19th century’ in their depiction of ‘characters’ which ‘were more real to the average human being than the people they knew’”.²⁶
- 2) These biographies, according to Kracauer, were addressed to a bourgeois readership, whose members were disoriented after the Great War. As the literary form of the new bourgeoisie, biography was an evasion of the current problems. The portrayal of great figures and the seeming objectivity of their subject matter aimed to show the triumph of the individual even in catastrophe. Thus “history which had gotten the people into a mess emerged

²⁴ Translated into English under the title *Nine etched from life* (New York 1934). Venizelos: pp. 253-310.

²⁵ Longaker, *Contemporary biography*, p. 127.

²⁶ The quote is from Elena Gualtieri, “The impossible art. Virginia Woolf on modern biography”, *The Cambridge Quarterly* 29.4 (2000) 358, n. 11.

ironically as solid land [...] condensed in the lives of its highly visible heroes.”²⁷

3) The depiction of the inner self was praised as a means of gaining a better understanding of a subject’s personality; nonetheless in the way it was conducted it often reduced the biographees to stereotypes.

4) They presented the reader with an historically singular individual with whom he could identify, but at the same time they showed this individual as nothing but a variation of the reader and his way of life. Instead of gaining a view of differences the reader was given a justification for his continued parochial and passive stance.²⁸

5) It has also been suggested that Maurois, Ludwig and Zweig, being Jews, chose to play what they regarded as a special Jewish role as mediators or translators among the different European national cultures. So they encouraged their readers to transcend their national characteristics and to aspire to a European identity.

6) Of particular interest is the selection of artists as protagonists of certain literary biographies so that the biographers could incorporate some of their beliefs and pass them on to the reader. Maurois, Ludwig and Zweig promoted the ideal of an intellectual and spiritual aristocracy as the safest answer to the political and social dilemmas of their times. Ludwig’s *Goethe* (1921) with the subtitle “History of a man” becomes a “functional alternative to that of the kings and generals who had constituted the dominant models of social and political education”. He is brought out as a *Kämpfer* (in the sense of an individual struggling for self-realization) and as a *Führer* (in the sense of one “whose spiritual

²⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, “The Biography as an art form of the New Bourgeoisie”, in: *The Mass Ornament: Weimar essays* trans. and edited with an Introduction by Thomas Levin (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1995), pp. 101-5.

²⁸ Helmut Scheuer, *Biographie: Studien zur Funktion und zum Wandel einer literarischen Gattung vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler 1979), pp. 208-17.

and political accomplishments were suited to serve as the guide to others”).²⁹ In 1934 Zweig published *Triumph und Tragik des Erasmus von Rotterdam* (after the biographies of his contemporaries *Verharen* and *Rolland*) in order to project his pacifist ideology on to the life of the humanist intellectual. He attempted, as he confessed in his *Autobiography*, to give “a spiritual portrait of a humanist who, though he understood the madness of his time more clearly than the professional world-reformers, for all his sound reason he was, tragically enough, unable to oppose unreason”.³⁰ Needless to say, it has been criticized by the Left as an example of defeatism in the crucial mid-war years.

7) It is worth mentioning that in Greece Zweig was perceived as a liberal humanist who had very good relations with the Soviet Union. He had been officially invited to visit the country, and his friendship with Gorky led his admirers, for apparently no other reason, to consider him among the intellectuals sympathetic to the Left.³¹

8) Finally, a statement that Zweig made in an interview in the USA as late as 1939:

I have not been particularly interested in biography as such. Only what was tragic actually appealed to me in connection with outstanding characters. I have always avoided writing of successful persons. I do not like the victors, the triumphant, but the defeated, and I believe that it is the task of the artist to picture those characters who resisted the trend of their time and who fell victim to their convictions instead of making millions

²⁹ Franklin C. West, “Success without influence. Emil Ludwig during the Weimar years”, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 30 (1985) 169-89, esp. 176-7 and 182n.

³⁰ Stefan Zweig, *The world of yesterday. An autobiography* (London: Cassell and Co. 1953), p. 288.

³¹ Nikos Marangos, *Ο θρόνος ενός ανθρώπου και η αγωνία μιας εποχής* (Athens: Patsilinakos 1956).

of other people the victims of their own convictions as is done by despots³²

may have affected both the Right and especially the Left in Greece shortly after the Civil War. Zweig had in the meantime committed suicide.³³

The genre of the New Biography influenced Greek biographical writing. Between 1930 and 1960 (and less frequently nowadays) many texts followed the techniques to which I have referred. Today, these texts are classified as “μυθιστορηματικές/μυθοποιημένες/ρομαντικές βιογραφίες” and follow – at least in their titles – the tendencies of *vie romancée*.³⁴ Nonetheless, some of the subtitles, such as “novelistic biography historically and bibliographically documented” (Kostas Sardelis, Dimitris Stamelos),³⁵ or “lyrical chronicle” or “novelistic representation”

³² Lionel B. Steiman, “The Worm in the Rose: Historical destiny and individual action in Stefan Zweig’s vision of history”, in: Marion Sonnenfeld (ed.), *Stefan Zweig: The world of yesterday. Humanist today. Proceedings of the Stefan Zweig Symposium* (New York: Albany State University Press 1983), p. 151.

³³ Leopold Stern, *Στέφαν Τσβάιχ, Ο άνθρωπος – ο συγγραφέας: Η τραγική αυτοκτονία*, trans. Ag. Vasilikou (Athens: Keramefs n.d.).

³⁴ Olmos Peranthis, *Ο τσέλιγκας, Μυθιστορηματική βιογραφία* (Athens: Saliveros 1943), Michalis Peranthis, *Ο κοσμοκαλόγερος, Μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή του Αλέξανδρου Παπαδιαμάντη* (Athens: P. Dialismas 1948), Michalis Peranthis, *Ο αμαρτωλός (Κωνσταντίνος Καβάφης). Μυθιστορηματική Βιογραφία* (Athens: Mavridis 1953).

³⁵ Kostas Sardelis, *Κοσμάς ο Αιτωλός. Βιογραφικό μυθιστόρημα* (Athens: Ekdotiko Typografeio 1958); 2nd ed. subtitled *Μυθιστορηματική βιογραφία* (Athens: Estia 1970). Dimitris Stamelos, *Μακρυγιάννης: Το χρονικό μιας εποποιίας* (Athens: To elliniko vivlio 1964); 2nd ed. subtitled *Μυθιστορηματική βιογραφία, ιστορικά και βιβλιογραφικά τεκμηριωμένη* (Athens: Estia). It is worth mentioning the alterations in the generic subtitles of Dimitris Siatopoulos’s book, *Γκρέκο. Ο ζωγράφος του θεού. Τεκμηριωμένο ιστορικό μυθιστόρημα* (Athens: Paradosi 1977); 2nd ed. *Τεκμηριωμένη μυθιστορηματική βιογραφία* (Athens: Chryssaphis-Pandelis 1987); 3rd ed. after Smaragdīs’s film, *Ελ Γκρέκο, ο ζωγράφος του θεού. Η ζωή του σαν μυθιστόρημα* (Athens: Kastaniotis 2007).

(Tassos Athanassiadis),³⁶ or “biographical romances” (Mitsos Alexandropoulos),³⁷ either bespeak an industrious search for historical sources or direct us to various (generic) compilations of facts. As a rule, historical facts are assimilated into the conventions of a literary plot. Protagonists conform to the typology of the novel, romance or tragedy, or to character-stereotypes such as the *God’s pauper* (for St Francis) or *The sinner* (for Cavafy). In other words these texts do not forge reality and become fictions through the process of their emplotment. This is achieved by merging discrete facts of a real life into a plot structure so that the parts form a new whole identified as story, to quote Hayden White. The protagonists are usually known figures of the Greek historical and cultural past.

The first popular novelistic biography, Spyros Melas’s *Ο γέρος του Μωριά, Βιογραφία* (Athens: Saliveros, 2 vols. 1931) was written at the time of the centenary of the Greek War of Independence; it was praised by Palamas as a “historical biography” that performed the national and institutional function of transmitting to new generations the achievements of historical individuals.³⁸ The dramatic structure of Melas’s later biographies (focusing on the love-story) explains their popularity, mainly through their easy adaptation to the stage and screen.

It could be argued that the Greek version of “novelistic biography” is greatly indebted to Plutarch and not directly to the New

³⁶ Tassos Athanassiadis, *Ταξίδι στη μοναξιά (Λυρικό χρονικό από τη ζωή του Καποδίστρια)* (Athens: Aetos 1944), *Ο Ντοστογιέβσκη από το κάτεργο στο πάθος (Μυθιστορηματική αναπαράσταση)* (Athens: Estia 1955). Compare the title *Ο Ντοστογιέβσκη στο κάτεργο*, trans. N. Andrikopoulos (Athens: N. Geronikolas 1943), part of Henri Troyat’s biography of Dostoevsky, which was published independently.

³⁷ Cf. his explanation of the term in the introduction of his *Ο μεγάλος αμαρτωλός. Ο Ντοστογιέβσκη και τα ιερά του τέρατα. Βιογραφική μυθιστορία* (Athens: Kedros 1984).

³⁸ See Evgenia Kefallinaïou, “Ο ‘Γέρος του Μωριά’ του Σπ. Μελά. Οι πηγές του έργου”, *Επετηρίς του Ιδρύματος Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών* 5 (1987-8) 487-500.

Biography. I would nonetheless suggest that Plutarch's influence on Modern Greek Biography was mediated by Europe, which received his work from the 17th century onwards in different cultural contexts: in the tradition of anecdotes in the 18th century, as an ethical model in the 19th and, in the 20th, as a painter of souls who devotes himself "rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by means of these [he] portrays the life of each, leaving to others the description of their great contests" (from Plutarch's, *Alexander*, opening paragraph).³⁹

The most innovative Greek example, *Αυτοτιμωρούμενος, Ο Κάρολος Μπωντλαίρ ως τα τριάντα* (1935), was written by Beratis when he was at the same age.⁴⁰ Here, instead of a biography from cradle to deathbed we have a biography which stops short, without justification, at the age of thirty. The time span of thirty years is condensed into the duration of one day (as happens in certain novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce), from morning to twilight, and is arranged in four chapters. Instead of the presentation of the protagonist's public activity and random speculations on his private life, here we find an insistent description of his inner life. Instead of the narration of Baudelaire's life the way it unfolded, we have the description of the way Baudelaire experienced it. What is more, the biographer and the biographee seem to share the same level of speech. The extended use of substituted direct discourse (a kind of free indirect discourse) implicates the biographer, the biographee and the reader in the French poet's life.

³⁹ Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, fact and form* (London: Macmillan 1984), pp. 15-21.

⁴⁰ *Αυτοτιμωρούμενος, Ο Κάρολος Μπωντλαίρ ως τα τριάντα*. Preface by K. Th. Dimaras (Athens: Kastalia 1935); 2nd ed. without the preface: Govostis 1945. See my "Ο Αυτοτιμωρούμενος του Μπεράτη: ένα νεωτερικό δείγμα της Μοντέρνας Βιογραφίας" (forthcoming in the Proceedings of the 12th Meeting of the Department of Medieval and Modern Greek Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, dedicated to Sophia Scopetea).

The picture I have drawn is far from complete. If I had the time I would mention the heated opposition to the trend and, what is more interesting, the parodies that appeared when New Biography became codified, and opened up a new road to the biographical experiments of the last decades. Vladimir Nabokov with his *Real life of Sebastian Knight*, *Pale fire* and *The gift* imitates (with fictitious characters) the practices of New Biography in order to criticize them, and Virginia Woolf in her dialogized hybrids *Flush* and *Orlando* subverted the basic assumptions of biography with respect to person, chronology and the mode of narration. It is not surprising that her work has been widely discussed only recently, in a period of controversy over the issues of subject, totality, synthesis and binary oppositions.

Biography might be expected to vanish in our postmodern era with the death of the subject and, particularly, the death of the author. Nonetheless, it is hale and hearty⁴¹ and, under the names of fictional biography, biographical metafiction, fiction as biography, metabiography and biofiction, it is developing new relations with the novel; the boundaries between them are not always clear, while mixed forms can be observed.⁴²

⁴¹ For examples in England, Germany and France see e.g. Ina Scabert, "Fictional biography, factual biography and their contaminations", *Biography* 5.1 (Winter 1982) 2-3, and Dominique Viart, "Fictions biographiques", in: Dominique Viart and Bruno Vercier (eds.), *La Littérature française au présent. Héritage, modernité, mutations* (Paris: Bordas 2005) pp. 99-124.

⁴² Smaller or larger variations of meaning can be traced. *Fictional biography* is "a separate literary genre. Its authors proclaim their narratives to be novels. As novels on historical individuals, however, they have a more complex relationship with factual reality than the novel in general"; Ina Scabert, "Fictional biography", p. 2. *Biographical metafiction* is similar to Hutcheon's term "historiographic metafiction": "Those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages"; see Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge 1988), p. 5. The interchangeable (*Fictional*) *metabiography* focuses on the (usually failing) attempts of fictive biographers to

While New Biography drifted towards the novel, postmodern fictional biography has questioned the assumptions on which the realistic novel has been based. While in New Biography the novelistic pattern took over the specificity of human reality, postmodern fictional biography renounces narrative pattern for the sake of the self, a self that is, however, not unified but multi-faced and contradictory. While the characters in New Biography conformed to stereotypes or novel types, the characters in postmodern fictional biography are presented as a conglomeration of all the varying conceptions of themselves: their memory images, their anticipated selves, their ideal selves, the selves they dream of. While New Biography focused on great men even in their inner, all too human conflicts, postmodern fictional biography deals either with individuals who have liminal identities, or with great men, albeit in revisionary ways. While New Biography was oriented towards the past, postmodern fictional biography has a double temporality (the past of the biographee and mainly the

coherently reconstruct someone else's life, thus raising issues of reconstruction and representation; see Ansgar Nünning, "Von fiktionalen Biographie zur biographischen Metafiktion", in: Christian von Zimmermann (ed.), *Fakten und Fiktionen: Strategien fiktional-biographischer Dichterdarstellungen in Roman, Drama und Film seit 1970* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr 2000), p. 19. *Fiction as biography* is a novel which applies fictional discourse to bring a historical figure to life or, in reverse, it applies historical discourse to bring a fictional figure to life; see Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1999), p. 29. *Biofiction* was coined by Alain Buisine, "Biofictions", *Revue des sciences humaines: Le Biographique* 4, no. 224 (1991) 7-13, in the sense of fictional biography. It is used by Martin Middeke and Werner Huber (eds.), *Biofictions: The re-writing of romantic lives in contemporary fiction and drama* (Suffolk: Camden House 1999), p. 3, as a generic term "for the re-writing of the lives of British Romantic writers [...] Contemporary biofictions [...] either comment self-reflexively on the process of writing, or meta-biographically centre on the epistemological problem of recounting a life." Nowadays the French use the inclusive term "le biographique" for biography, autobiography, autofiction, etc., roughly equivalent to the English term "life-writing".

present of the biographer). While New Biography presented greatness as an inherent human feature and incited the reader to identify with the illustrious subject, postmodern fictional biography operates in a double way: it presents the biographee (who is a historical figure for whom we usually have little verifiable knowledge) alongside considerations on cultural construction or epistemological uncertainties, at the same time urging the reader to perceive and reflect on the biographee as a constructed object. While New Biographers were mostly second-hand compilers of facts, postmodern fictional biographers are indefatigable researchers of (forgotten) persons and facts, and, at the same time, they reflect on contemporary ideas and theories (on subjectivity, identity, gender, culture, narrative etc.).

Greece assimilated the new trend rather quickly; one could mention quite a number of examples.⁴³ I shall limit myself to three novels representative of some of the above-mentioned categories.

My first example is *Γλαύκος Θρασάκης* by Vassilis Vassilikos, a novel in parts which was started in 1972 and took its definitive form in 2008, after many additions, alterations and revisions (in its various editions by different publishers).⁴⁴ The

⁴³ Alexis Panselinos, *Η Ζαΐδα ή η καμήλα στα χιόνια* (1997), Aris Marangopoulos, *Οι ωραίες ημέρες του Βενιαμίν Σανιδόπουλου* (1998), Diamantis Axiotis, *Το ελάχιστον της ζωής του* (1999), Foteini Tsalikoglou, *Εγώ, η Μάρθα Φρόντι* (2000), Yorgos Xenarios, *Σμιλεύοντας το φως* (2001), Kostis Gimosoulis, *Βρέχει φως* (2002), Philippos Philippou, *Οι τελευταίες ημέρες του Κωνσταντίνου Καβάφη* (2003), Philippos Philippou, *Ο θάνατος του Ζορμπά* (2007), Thanassis Valtinos, *Άνθη της αβύσσου* (2008).

⁴⁴ *Γλαύκος Θρασάκης* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata 2008). Abridged versions of the novel have been translated into French (*Un poète est mort*, trans. G. Jeanperine, 1978) and English (*The few things I know about Glafkos Thrassakis*, trans. by Karen Emmerich, 2002). Interestingly, on the book-jacket Vassilikos characterizes his book as “bio-fiction, autofiction, antibiography”.

biographic quest is this novel's manifest theme.⁴⁵ The book is not about the reconstruction of a previous life but rather about meta-biographical reflections on whether truth about a life can possibly be known, as well as the difference between life (a historical fact) and its *graphie* (the biographical reconstruction/ fiction). *Γλαύκος Θρασάκης* dramatizes the quest of a biographer-researcher who on the one hand seeks to investigate the odd circumstances of the death of the famous author Glafkos Thrassakis (a persona of Vassilis Vassilikos), and on the other studies Thrassakis's manuscripts kept in the Archives of an American University. In this way the biographer tries to reconstruct his subject's life through the reading of his own texts, obviously committing what is generally dismissed as the biographical fallacy. To the extent that the biographer refers so often to his quest we can consider both the biographer and the biographee as, at once, subjects and objects of the narrative. The text begins as a biography and develops into an autobiography since the researcher is identified with the dead author. This may have happened either during the process of writing or because the biographer deliberately tried, through the biography, to become part of the biographee's life.

Or the other way round: since Thrassakis is identified with his biographer and even his death turns out to be ambiguous, we could consider the present text as one more of Thrassakis's texts, namely an autobiography in the third person. Be that as it may, the biographer's dramatization at once brings biography close to the detective novel on the one hand and to autobiography on the other. The novel's double temporality, its multiplication of narrative levels (*mise en abyme* technique) and the manipulation of the distinction between fiction and reality (Thrassakis's writings vs. his biographer's quest) call into question: (a) the possibility of

⁴⁵ Allen Hibbard, "Biographer and subject: a tale of two narratives", *South Central Review* 23.3 (Fall 2006) 19-36, esp. p. 31. See also G. Farinou-Malamatari, "Β. Βασιλικού, *Γλαύκος Θρασάκης*: Ο εαυτός ως άλλος στη βιογραφία", *Πόρφυρας* 104 (July-Sept. 2002) 211-18.

arriving at the truth, (b) the existence of one unified self, and (c) the capacity of biographical discourse to represent the world at large. In any case, this biographical mode turns into an apt instrument for Vassilikos, and later for Marangopoulos (*Οι ωραίες ημέρες του Βενιαμίν Σανιδόπουλου*) and others, to collect and rescue parts of unfinished works and unpublished materials, which could not have appeared in any other mode.

My second example is Fais's novel *Το μέλι και η στάχτη του θεού* (2002),⁴⁶ a "biography" of the Italian-Jewish painter and man of letters Julio Caimi, a marginal person with a liminal identity. Let me add that Fais, a Greek Jew himself, is the editor of several books by and on Caimi as well as the Exhibition Catalogue of Caimi's paintings.⁴⁷

The book's strange title (honey and ashes standing for life and death respectively) has a striking similarity to Levi-Strauss's book *From honey to ashes*. According to Levi-Strauss, ashes usually stand as a metonymy for tobacco (Caimi being a fanatical smoker) but both words – honey and ashes – have several, even contradictory, meanings. The novel is a conglomeration of fragments in various typographical fonts and forms. Oral narratives of relatives, friends and neighbours, some of them repeated, others contradictory to one another, coexist with extracts from Caimi's underground work, articles on his paintings, newspaper clippings like the ones Caimi amassed during his life and passages from Caimi's fictional diary.

Caimi's life is an impressive collage of evidence, authentic documents and imitations or forgeries some of which are real and

⁴⁶ *Το μέλι και η στάχτη του θεού* is the first novel in Fais's biographical trilogy. The second, *Ελληνική αἰπνία* (2004), is a revisionary presentation of Vizyenos as a version of "minor literature" in the Greek literary canon of the 19th century; see my "Ένας μεταμοντέρνος Βιζυηνός," in: *Ο λόγος της παρουσίας. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Παναγιώτη Μουλλά* (Athens: Sokolis 2005) pp. 167-80. The third, on Nikos Zachariadis under the provisional title "Πορφύρα γέλια", is still awaited.

⁴⁷ More on Fais at his [webpage www.fais.gr](http://www.fais.gr)

perspectival and therefore contradictory conceptions of Eleni's life together with Eleni's subjective experience of herself, while the first person sketches the same events in an interior monologue at turns addressed to the Dead or to her own self in order to criticize the images of herself produced in her former husband's autobiography and in a biographical article by the feminist journalist and writer Kallirhoe Parren.

One can conclude that Galanaki's novel fosters the idea that biography can never meet the challenge of rendering a person's multiple selves, something that can be achieved only by autobiography. However, this idea is undermined by the text itself, first because Eleni starts her monologues when she lives "the after-life of women" (an ingenious metaphor for designating madness); secondly, because what comes up as a remembered version of herself is in fact the negative and positive comments Eleni makes on the two already textualized versions of her life. Whereas in her former husband's autobiography she figures as an out-of-the-ordinary person, in Parren's portrait she appears as an enigma.

Such multiperspectivity suggests that no "life" can ever be definite, because it is subject to its writing and consequently to its reading. Eleni emerges from our reading of Galanaki's text, which is based on Eleni's reading of Kallirhoe Parren's reading of Eleni's life. In turn, we as readers treat this textualized life either realistically or allegorically. Eleni's silencing as a painter and her confinement in Spetses can be read as a sign of maternal caring. It can also be read as an allegory: the impasse of the woman artist who is confined to the male, canonical models of painting. Accordingly, the burning of her paintings can be considered as the act of a desperate mother gone mad. It can also be considered as the symbolic act of a female artist who, by daring to compete with men, oversteps the boundaries of her female propriety and so becomes a kind of monster. As a result, she must be punished. Her paintings are the fruits of her audacity and may have indirectly caused the death of her real children. She therefore punishes

herself by burning her artistic children after the death of her real ones.

To conclude, I have tried to give a somewhat schematic outline of the two main trends in the relations between biography and the novel in 20th-century Europe. I have also tried to indicate the breadth of their appeal in Greece as attested both by the numerous Greek translations of European works and by the publication of original novelistic as well as postmodern fictional biographies.

A more systematic study might possibly reveal the particular characteristics of these Greek works. My impression is that during the first half of the 20th century Greek literary production faithfully followed European models (in their light versions) adapting them to its own historical contexts and avoiding the tensions generated by some of them in Europe. In contrast, from the 1970 onwards Greek literary production, at least in the cases of some of the better biographies, seems to follow no particular model – which after all might not exist. Rather, it falls in with the experiments in postmodern life-writing, addresses the current cluster of theoretical problems on self, politics, culture, knowledge, gender and art, and combines them with a scrupulous examination of primary sources.

Greek Film Studies today: in search of identity

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This essay aims to provide a critical overview of “Greek Film Studies”, a field of knowledge that is increasingly being recognised as important in understanding Modern Greek culture in the 20th century – and beyond. Greek Film Studies focuses on the study of films produced and shown in Greece, as well as on the broader experience of cinema-going in this national context. As part of the wider discipline of Film Studies, it raises similar research questions to other cinemas, but its national focus highlights its formal and cultural particularities, which may or may not have parallels elsewhere. Writing on Greek cinema is not a new endeavour, but until recently publications in this area have been predominantly journalistic, promotional and (auto-)biographical. It is mainly in the last couple of decades or so that some systematic, methodologically consistent and theoretically informed studies of Greek cinema have been produced and published. And it is roughly in the same period that universities in Greece have begun to introduce the critical study of cinema as part of their curricula, opening the path for the institutionalisation of Greek Film Studies. However, despite the significant increase of publications, especially in the last decade, the field remains in the process of discovering its identity not only in terms of institutional presence, but also in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches. In offering an overview of existing bibliography, the greater part of which is in Greek, this essay seeks to identify some trends and tendencies in the field of Greek Film Studies, while suggesting directions for future research and development.

For those unfamiliar with the history of Greek cinema a sketchy periodisation will help navigate through the material. The four-period division suggested below is based on broadly accepted distinctions and is meant to function as a rough guide rather than a definitive schema.

Greek cinema can be divided into the following four periods:

- Pre-War Greek Cinema: defined by the use, predominantly, of silent film technology and the first attempts at a sound cinema, the period refers to films made until 1940.
- Old Greek Cinema: refers to the privately produced, popular cinema of genres and stars of the (late) 1940s to early 1970s.
- New Greek Cinema: refers to the political, art cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, which was often financed by the state.
- Contemporary Greek Cinema: refers to the multifaceted cinema of the 1990s and 2000s with its attempt to regain popularity.¹

As in any historical periodisation, the boundaries between periods are not fixed and absolute. The periods are distinguished with reference to particular decades, but also through some dominant technical, industrial, thematic or formal characteristics. However, not all these characteristics define each and every film that falls within a particular chronological band. The main advantage of such a periodisation is convenience – the ease with which it acts as a reference point; by definition, however, it is fraught with problems, as there is considerable overlap and fluidity among the characteristics that Greek cinema in each period can be seen to consist of.

With this basic periodisation as a starting point, the attempt to chart the current state of Greek film studies will be wide-ranging but also selectively focused. The analysis is based on a review of the current bibliography on Greek cinema, including published monographs, collections of essays and reference materials published in Greek and in English. Examination of this material reveals the significant increase in relevant publications in the last

¹ For a different periodisation, see Constantinidis 2000.

decade. Of the 220 or so books on Greek cinema in print and in libraries, more than half have been published since 2000. Of the remaining titles, more than half were published in the 1990s; less than half of those remaining appeared in the 1980s, with the publishing activity of the 1970s and 1960s being in single figures.²

But this quantitative wealth of publication on Greek cinema does not coincide with work on Greek Film *Studies*. Almost half of these titles consist of biographies, memoirs and albums, which often offer significant primary material for further study on Greek cinema, but no critical analysis. Nonetheless, this increasing rate of publication on Greek cinema has expanded the range of resources that could be used for further study. This has been further reinforced by the extensive digitisation of primary material, by which I mean: the increasing commercial availability of Greek films on DVD (albeit often without English subtitles); the addition of Greek films to the International Movie Database (www.imdb.com); as well as the digitisation of archival material and their availability on line. Both the Greek Film Archive (www.tainiothiki.gr) and the Greek Film Centre (www.gfc.gr) now have websites that contain listings of their film holdings, as well as additional material such as, in the case of the former, a selection of photographs, stills and programmes. The Greek Film Archive has also undertaken the digitisation of a collection of early Greek cinema feature-films, newsreels and documentary footage, which will be soon housed in its new purpose-built location. The Greek Film Centre, which has been the main funding body for feature films in Greece since the 1980s, offers online access to data about its activities past and present, filmographies and its in-house journal *Moteur*. The online availability of databases is increasingly replacing printed filmographies, such as those of Valoukos (1998), Koliodimos (1999) and more recently

² The quantitative analysis is based on a bibliography compiled by the author with the assistance of Olga Kourelou and Mariana Volioti, and does not include essays and articles published individually in journals or collections of essays.

Rouvas and Stathakopoulos (2005), which have been very useful in helping establish serious research on Greek cinema.

Histories

The desire to offer a historical account of Greek cinema has been among the first impulses towards its more sustained study. The year 1960 saw the first published history of Greek cinema, written by journalist, film critic, actor, scriptwriter and later film director Frixos Iliadis. The book consists of a mixture of biographical information, advertising of production companies and their films, previously published reviews, and filmographies. As an early attempt to collect relevant information, the book is laudable; the author's serious intentions are indicated by the fact that he differentiates his book from earlier similar endeavours, which, according to his judgement, were based mainly on personal recollections and oral sources. As a historical project, however, his book, ironically, suffers from similar shortcomings: it provides useful information but often lacks in historical argument. The 1980s saw the publication of three histories of Greek cinema, by Mitropoulou (1980), Soldatos (1979-85) and Kousoumidis (1981). Of these, the first two in particular have been especially influential, as their more recent revised editions also indicate (Mitropoulou 2006; Soldatos 2000 and 2001-2).

Aglaia Mitropoulou's single-volume study is organised mainly as an account of creative individuals. She initially focuses on "pioneers" of silent Greek cinema (Joseph Hepp, Dimitris Meravidis, the Gaziadis brothers). She then moves on to discuss producers who established the industry in the 1950s and 1960s (Filopoimin Finos, Christos Spentzos, Andonis Zervos), as well as some of the most acclaimed representatives – mostly film directors – of that era (Alekos Sakellarios, Giorgos Tzavellas, Grigoris Grigoriou). Clearly influenced by the auteur theory of the 1960s and 1970s, Mitropoulou celebrates the work of three directors – Michael Cacoyannis, Nikos Koundouros and Theo Angelopoulos – to whom she dedicates special chapters. She then focuses on what she identifies as the "Athenian School" –

directors influenced by neo-realism and American cinema, combining the desire to portray an authentic view of contemporary reality with, usually, melodramatic elements. This is followed by an examination of the work of innovator-directors who worked in the period preceding the dictatorship of the Colonels, and who, in different ways, broke away from established convention. A large section focuses on directors who made “political” films, during the dictatorship and beyond. There are smaller sections examining documentary, women directors, Greek directors abroad as well as institutions supporting Greek cinema. The choice of topics offers a (more or less explicit) assessment of the relative value of particular film-makers, placing emphasis on the artistic dimension of cinema. This is consistent with the fact that Aglaia Mitropoulou was the main figure behind the establishment of the Greek Film Archive in the 1960s, and was committed to promoting quality cinema in Greece.

Yannis Soldatos’s multiple and often reprinted volumes on Greek cinema are extremely valuable as collections of primary material, a lot of which belongs to his extensive private collection of film journals, photographs and posters. Soldatos is a publisher, film director, collector and writer. His publishing company Aigokeros is the main press in Greece specialising in cinema, and a significant part of the increase in relevant publications during the last two decades is a result of its activity. Soldatos’s history often relies on the assumption that the material speaks for itself; this is clear from the fact that either images or extensive quotes/reproductions of (at times incompletely referenced) primary sources are used instead of a historical account. His explanation of historical events is often based on commonsense assumptions that reproduce the views of the contemporary press, other film-makers and middle-class audiences. This is particularly evident in his damning account of popular/commercial Greek cinema and especially of melodrama, a genre that was primarily addressed to less educated audiences. His account of films after the 1980s consists mainly of a critical commentary of the films shown at the Festival of Thessaloniki.

Both Mitropoulou's and Soldatos's histories rely on the critical judgement of their respective authors based on their knowledge of the field as archivists, critics, collectors, and, generally, people involved with cinema in Greece. Their response to the material is often instinctive and intuitional. The same applies, to a large extent, to the history written by film critic Ninos Fenek Mikelides (1997; 2001), the main difference being that Mikelides is aware of the fact that he applies subjective critical judgement and highlights his conscious intention to use his history in order to shed light on disregarded and less known films. A succinct but illuminating account of the main historical trajectory of Greek cinema, as well as an examination of such aspects as genre and format (popular film genres, avant-garde, documentary, newsreels, short films) can be found in the entries on Greek cinema in the Educational Greek Encyclopedia (1999), signed by different authors. Finally, a two-volume, luxurious edition published recently on the centenary of the introduction of film to the country in 1905 (Rouvas and Stathakopoulos 2005) consists of an extensive and well presented filmography referring to 2,650 films and documentaries; an album of more than 5,000 photographs; a biographical dictionary of 400 film-makers and members of the industry; and a historical account that reaches to the contemporary era. Written by two cinephiles rather than historians – an animator (Rouvas) and a film memorabilia collector (Stathakopoulos) – the book offers a lively and illuminating account of a number of aspects of Greek cinema, but does not fulfil the need for a clearly documented and methodologically coherent history of Greek cinema.

An article by Maria A. Stassinopoulou (2002), instead, offers an example of such work. It focuses on Greek film production during World War II, a period on which very little information and even fewer films exist. Stassinopoulou argues that certain conditions created during the German occupation of Greece enabled investment in the production of Greek films, which in turn prepared the ground for the "golden era" of the sixties. In other words, she stresses continuities in film business from the

pre- to the post-war era (an example being the figure of distributor-producer Theofanis Damaskinos). This case study provides a valuable example of a historical analysis based on archival material, which foregrounds its argument, its theoretical assumptions and its limitations.

As film historians Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery (1985) identify, there are at least four different ways of writing film history, each of which has different aims and focus: aesthetic, which places emphasis on film as art; technological, which highlights the impact of technologies on film form; economic, which focuses on the economic and industrial conditions that underpin the production, distribution and exhibition of films; and social, which examines the patterns of film reception by audiences (Allen and Gomery 1985: 37). Most of the existing accounts discussed above offer an aesthetic approach with an emphasis on the “great man” and/or “masterpiece” tradition. Stassinopoulou’s approach instead is predominantly economic. Its emphasis is on film as business, and on the production/distribution/exhibition network that supports it.

The field of industrial-economic analysis of Greek cinema is an area ripe for further research. Such research is very closely dependent on relevant archival information – such as contracts and financial data from private production companies – which is often unavailable. Existing publications on Finos films, for example, the main private production company of “Old Greek Cinema”, are largely based on oral accounts from regular collaborators, members of the crew and cast (Triandafyllidis 2002; Zervas 2003). There are two books that cover aspects related to the economic history of Greek cinema. Sotiropoulou’s (1989) study of the institutional and financial framework of Greek cinema in the years 1965-1975 offers some very illuminating statistics about the production and distribution activity in the period and highlights the need for more detailed study of the workings of particular companies, as well as of the system as a whole. Kouanis’s (2001) study of the market for cinema in Greece focuses on the purchase of foreign films for distribution and

exhibition in the period 1944-99. The book highlights the extent to which imported (rather than locally produced) films constitute the main source of income for distribution companies, and analyses some of the processes for the selection of these films.

An altogether different approach to history, based on the social sciences, is adopted by Maria Komninou (2001) in her study of the Greek public sphere in the second half of the 20th century. In this study she examines cinema as a mass medium alongside the press and television. Her account of cinematic transformations highlights the political subtext of the films, and relates them within the contexts of either a conformist or an oppositional public sphere.

While there are relatively few purely historical studies of specific periods or case studies in Greek cinema, history in a broader sense greatly informs Greek film studies as they have developed so far. In some cases this has taken the form of the study of representations, in the sense of the examination of the content of the image and its relation to the society that produced and (originally) consumed it; in others, it consists of the examination of history as a self-conscious theme present in particular films or the work of specific film-makers. The study of representations has been applied predominantly in existing studies of Pre-War and Old Greek Cinema, while history as a theme is extensively present in New Greek Cinema. Below I will provide an overview of key publications on each period of Greek cinema and highlight the ways in which they explore questions of history.

Pre-War Greek Cinema

Silent and early sound Greek cinema is one of the most under-researched areas in Greek film studies. This is largely due to the fact that resources on Pre-War Greek Cinema are significantly more limited and often not available online. For example, there is no silent film filmography indicating how many films were made in Greece, when and by whom. Furthermore few silent films can be found in archives, and even fewer are available digitally. The Greek Film Archive holds a number of titles, although it is

difficult to specify from the website exactly how many. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece has a significant archive of newsreels and documentaries from the period, a published catalogue of which offers chronological and thematic classification (Constantopoulou 2000).

The histories of Greek cinema discussed above offer historical accounts of the era, but these are extensively based on oral testimonies. As there is no public archive containing journalistic or industrial sources from the era, the researcher has to rely on fragmented information and private collections. Soldatos's reproduction of some of his archival material is very useful in this context (2001-2). Eliza-Anna Delveroudi's accounts of pre-war Greek film in the two volumes of the *History of Greece in the 20th century* (Chatziiosif 1999 and 2002) constitute the most thorough historical analysis of the era so far. Often relegated, more or less explicitly, to the status of a "prehistory", Pre-War Greek Cinema is usually discussed as part of a broader historical account. There is, however, one notable exception, and the only book-length study of an aspect of this period: film director Fotos Lambrinos's study of pre-war newsreels as historical evidence (2005).

Lambrinos focuses on the extent to which newsreels can be used to collect historical information and identifies their main value for the contemporary researcher in their function as documentation for the period. Lambrinos organises the book in a loose chronological order, on the basis of the existing material. He examines footage by the Manakia Brothers, the first Balkan filmmakers, identifying their value as ethnographic sources, but also acknowledging the varied and original camera angles used, which indicate the cinematic sensibilities of their makers. He then focuses on footage of the Athens "Olympic Games" of 1906 – the first extant footage shot within the boundaries of what was then Greece – and compares it to Leni Riefenstahl's filming of the Berlin games of 1936. Other chapters focus on the coverage of war, on the Asia Minor campaign, on the extensive footage of national parades and the glorification of the military in their

uniforms (an ironic contrast with the significant military defeats of the early 1920s). He also examines the aborted attempt by the Gaziadis brothers to create a commissioned fiction film celebrating the national victory in Asia Minor, which was thwarted by the military disaster. Other topics include the first attempts to recreate a festival of ancient Greek culture and theatre in Delphi, as well as the footage of the royal family and the Metaxas government. Lambrinos's analysis is very attentive to the material, offering detailed descriptions of the content of the images, but also of some key stylistic choices (such as camera angles, distance, etc.). He highlights the ideological bias and propagandist function of most of the footage, which was commissioned by state institutions. The book conveys vividly a particular view of the nation as experienced and imagined with the help of the moving image in the first three decades of the 20th century.³

Lambrinos's detailed study of pre-war newsreels is not as yet matched by an equally detailed study of pre-war fiction films of the era. These consist of silent short comedies of the 1910s and 1920s, as well as the first feature films of the late 1920s and 1930s, which were folk-costume dramas (*foustanellas*) and melodramas. The absence of a book-length study on this era might be the consequence of the significant archival limitations. A recently published essay on actor Michail Michail tou Michail (Dimitriadis 2008) offers an examination of his career based primarily on the actor's autobiography and the contemporary press. This short but well researched biography portrays Michail as a quixotic character, who tried – rather unsuccessfully – to establish himself as a film actor with his short silent films.

The transition to sound in Greek cinema is examined in an article by Franklin L. Hess (2000), which analyses the first Greek sound film, *Ο Αγαπητικός της Βοσκοπούλας* (*The Shepherdess's Lover*, 1932). Hess examines the film as the locus of tension

³ A significant part of the material discussed in this book has been used to compile the documentary series *Πανόραμα του Αιώνα* (*Panorama of the Century*) produced by ERT, 1982-87, and available at: www.ert-archives.gr

between, on the one hand, the desire for national distinctiveness resulting from the introduction of verbal language and dialogue, and, on the other hand, the aspiration that a film should use a universal language and be able to be consumed anywhere in the world. Hess argues that this film does not offer a successful negotiation of this tension but lays bare the terms in which it was expressed. The article thus throws light on some of the national/ideological problems that came with the transition to sound, and offers a very illuminating example of the ways in which close textual analysis of the sound and image of a film can be used to examine broader cultural and social tensions. It moves beyond the study of representations, towards an examination of history as the interface between film form and social/cultural context.

Despite the acknowledged significance of the Gaziadis brothers in the Greek cinema of the late 1920s and early 1930s, no detailed study of their work has yet been produced. The discovery and restoration by the Greek Film Archive of a copy of their *Αστέρω* (1929), a feature-length *foustanella* that was an important critical and commercial success of the time, opens opportunities for understanding this period. A lot of questions remain unanswered with regard to the pre-war era, especially the silent film period, starting from questions related to production (who made which films, under what conditions, funded by whom?), to questions related to distribution/exhibition (how did these films circulate, who saw them, in what kind of conditions?). However, as Constantinidis (2000) and Hess (2000) forcefully argue, the shift from silent to sound cinema, which started in the 1930s and was completed in the 1940s, is not just about technology, but also about the conception of the medium: the advent of sound turns Greek cinema inwards, towards a nationally defined set of themes and representations. As the introduction of language defines most clearly a national audience, it also opens up opportunities to offer nationally specific narratives. This, as we shall see below, becomes systematised through the genre system. Looking back at the more outward-looking silent cinema, it is worth asking whether it is useful to explore it as “*Greek silent cinema*”, rather

Looking back at the first sustained critical writings on popular Greek cinema in the 1970s, it is notable that they adopted some of the idioms of ideological criticism, producing very condemnatory accounts of what they saw as the products of “dominant bourgeois ideology”. More recently, however, similar theoretical tools have been used to reassess pre-dictatorship popular Greek cinema and to argue in favour of a more complex relationship with their audience. In her book-length study, Athanasatou (2001) differentiates between the films of the 1950s and the 1960s, with regard to the extent to which they are grounded in a “popular discourse”. More specifically, she argues that 1950s films were addressed to an audience that had very vivid memories of the Greek Civil War, and should be seen as instances of “popular culture” that helped the post-war audiences to deal with some of the recent traumas. In contrast, the mass-produced films of the 1960s are addressed to a society that has started to forget these traumas in the light of rapid modernisation and urbanisation. While the former have many traces of an authentic popular culture, the latter embrace a constructed version of popularity (λαϊκότητα). The book offers many acute observations, especially in the close textual analysis of her sample of twelve films, which are nonetheless occasionally compromised by the density of the theoretical framework it embraces.

Genre features as a theoretical tool in Athanasatou’s work, but her argument cuts across generic categories. One of the first publications to highlight genre in Old Greek Cinema was the first volume of *Οπτικοακουστική Κουλτούρα* (Levendakos 2002a), in which most articles address either a particular genre, or a thematic/representational aspect of a genre. Athina Kartalou’s article (2002: 27) sets the parameters for genre studies in Greek cinema, identifying four main genres: comedy, melodrama, mountain films (or *foustanellas*) and musicals – all of which are individually explored in the collection. Elsewhere, studies have focused attention on the “smaller” genres of the war film (Papadimitriou 2004; Tomai 2006) or the *film noir* (Dermetzoglou 2007).

A closer look at the mountain film, a genre with a distinctively Greek iconography, as indicated by its common generic name *foustanella*, illustrates some of the applications of genre analysis. In his essay on the genre, Kymionis (2000) distinguishes between two subgenres and their different ideological emphases. Based on stage plays, the dramatic idylls, on the one hand, represent peaceful, harmonious village communities temporarily torn apart because of parental disapproval of a couple's relationship, and create an idealised representation of the nation's past. Drawing on popular bandit literature and the heroic figure of the bandit, on the other hand, the mountain adventures focus on social injustice and allow the use of violence for the restoration of order; these films foreground conflict and by extension hint at recent historical memories. This work is further continued by Demertzopoulos (2002) in an article on the mountain adventure, which further examines the genre's ideological and social significance.

There are rather fewer book-length studies examining particular genres. My own study of the musical (2006 and 2009), offers a detailed formal analysis of the Greek genre, relating it to both its theatrical predecessors (the *epitheorisi*, the operetta, the *komeidyllio*) and to its cinematic relatives (the comedy). The book explores the common assumption that the Greek musical is a bad copy of its Hollywood counterpart, and refers to studies of the American film musical in order to challenge this claim. Proving inadequate to illuminate the specificity of the Greek musical, the relevant theories are appropriated and adjusted to make them useful for exploring questions relevant to the Greek films. One of the key questions asked is how the Greek musical uses – and develops – its generic conventions in order to express some of the key cultural tensions of the time. Drawing on the distinction between a *Romeic* and a *Hellenic* cultural identity, the analysis is used to demonstrate how elements of the musical express and negotiate their co-existence. It is through the use of its genre-specific dimensions, such as music, dance and plot, that the Greek musical illustrates the tensions between the two versions of

Greekness, and provides utopian solutions for overcoming them. In this way it was possible, in some cases, to map on to some of the formal characteristics of the American musical, such as the use of binary oppositions, a different set of meanings from those used in Hollywood.

Studies of genre in Greek cinema have often been linked with particular themes or aspects of representation. Delveroudi's (2004) book-length study of youth in Greek comedies of the period 1948-1974 uses the films as historical testimonies for the examination of the social roles of young people in this period. The book offers an exhaustive content analysis, examining youth with respect to such social contexts as family, education, marriage, work and leisure. It pays little – if any – attention to the form of the films, aiming to illustrate practices and ideas about youth that were prevalent during the period. A similar methodology, but on a smaller scale, has been used in articles that examine youth in social dramas (Paradeisi 2002a), politics in comedy (Delveroudi 2002) or women in comedies (Paradeisi 2002b).

Gender explorations consist, for the most part, of studies of representations – images of women in a particular group of films. A notable exception is Eleftheriotis's (1995) article on constructions of masculinity in popular Greek cinema of the 1960s, in which he argues against the universalising assumptions of gender theory that developed with the influence of psychoanalysis. More specifically, he indicates that the argument that dominant masculinity (as expressed in cinema, but not only) is associated with power, control and mastery is flawed in that it is based on a white, Western male subject and does not automatically apply to all cultural and historical contexts, such as that of modern Greece, which he sees as related to post-colonialism.

The emphasis on aspects of representation that is evident in most of the published work on Greek cinema is directly linked with the aim of illuminating a social and/or historical phenomenon. Issues around the diaspora and immigration, social phenomena that have shaped the Greek experience mainly in the 1960s and 1990s respectively, have preoccupied scholars

(Sotiropoulou 1995; Tomai-Konstandopoulou 2004; Kartalou et al. 2006). An examination of the themes of occupation and the resistance in Greek cinema (Andritsos 2004) is complemented by a more wide-ranging examination of aspects of war (Tomai 2006). A collection of essays on the representation of children has attracted various methodologies, but its focus is for the most part thematic (Theodorou et al. 2006).

There is, as suggested above, a notable absence in published studies of formal analyses of popular Greek cinema, focusing on its stylistic transformations. This can be largely explained as the result of a persistent perception about the quality of these films – the notion that Greek popular films are simply not good enough to examine as aesthetic objects. In a recently presented paper,⁴ Eleftheria Thanouli argued for a liberating break away from this set of assumptions, with the assistance of Bordwell’s methodological propositions, which argue for a “piecemeal history”, for the writing of the history of film style against reductive “grand narratives” of historical transformation (Bordwell 1997). Thanouli adopted this approach to identify the specific stylistic choices that director Dinos Dimopoulos made in some of his films, examining their relationship to the script and to the options available to him in his working context. She looked closely at stylistic dimensions such as the staging of the action; the editing rate; the adherence (or not) to the principles of continuity editing; the use of stylisation. Far from making an auteurist case about coherence of vision and personal style, this paper located the specific stylistic dimensions of Dimopoulos’s films as the result of particular problem-solving processes.

It would be very encouraging to see more “piecemeal” studies of the formal and stylistic dimensions of particular films in the context of their production. Such focus on detail could eventually lead to revisiting the established historical grand narratives on Greek cinema. It could also help assess whether the use of the term “classical” in the context of popular Greek cinema is suitable

⁴ Presented at the conference “Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities” (Liverpool, 23-24 May 2008).

or not. While the general principles of classicism in cinema, as defined by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985), are certainly present in popular Greek cinema, the specific ways in which they have been achieved does not necessarily follow the American case as identified by the authors. For example, while most Old Greek films place emphasis on character-based plots that prioritise narrative clarity over style and aim to focus the attention on what is happening rather than how this is presented, they do not necessarily follow the principles of continuity editing in the same way, and to the same effect, as the American films. The adoption of the term in the context of Old Greek Cinema removes some of the specificity with which it was used in the American context and generalises it, making it synonymous with “mainstream narrative” cinema. A thorough investigation of the terms of its use and its relation to the original context would be welcome; this should involve a detailed and in-depth account of the industrial and formal characteristics of this cinema – an extensive project that has not yet been conducted in the Greek context.

New Greek Cinema

Questions regarding a possible “group” style emerge with regard to New Greek Cinema, a term that has been used to refer to the modernist, politically aware and sometimes intensely personal cinema that was produced mainly during the 1970s and 1980s. While alternative voices in film-making emerged during the 1960s with the work of, among others, Takis Kanellopoulos, Nikos Koundouros, Alexis Damianos, it was in the 1970s, and with the collapse of the commercial mode of production that supported Old Greek Cinema, that the Greek “new cinema” emerged. Initially, the funding options for film-makers who worked outside the established system were very limited. They often had to rely on private donors or personal and/or family savings. It was only in the 1980s, when the Greek Film Centre became part of the Ministry of Culture, that a systematic project of funding films valued for their cultural – rather than industrial – significance began.

While not being thematically or stylistically coherent, certain trends are evident in New Greek Cinema. On a closer look, a distinction between the two decades also emerges. Thus, broadly speaking, the films of the 1970s often deal with social and political issues, highlighting, for example, the problems emerging from rapid urbanisation. The troubles of the persecuted Left were explored in many films, even if those had to be conveyed cryptically to avoid the censorship of the Colonels. By the 1980s such activism gave way to a pessimistic existentialism. Many films became inward-looking, focusing on their characters' crises and deadlocks (Levendakos 2002b). The opaque style and often depressing subject matter of these films alienated their potential audiences, and, by the end of the 1980s, many Greek films struggled to find distribution.

In an article that examines visual style in New Greek Cinema, Skopeteas (2002a: 92-5) argues that the films from each decade demonstrate different stylistic characteristics. In 1970s films long takes and long shots prevail. Shots are often static, taken from neutral camera positions distancing the audience from the action and the characters. Camera movements are often unmotivated, while handheld camera and location shooting provide a raw edge. The use of lighting and acting is naturalistic, while compositions emphasise deep focus. These stylistic choices indicate the influence of both the Brechtian "alienation effect", and of the realist tendencies of the European New Waves.

Looking at the 1980s Skopeteas distinguishes between two different tendencies: the "expressionist" films, on the one hand, and those that begin to revisit mainstream narrative modes and genres, on the other. The former match their existentialist subject matter with characteristics derived from the original German movement: an emphasis on interiors shot from varied camera angles, the use of symbolically loaded interior sets and chiaroscuro lighting, the placement of the camera closer to the actors, theatrical acting. The use of long takes continues, however, and as the author indicates, it becomes a dominant characteristic of New Greek Cinema as a whole. The second tendency – termed "New

Classical Cinema” by Skopeteas – is a precursor of the trends that would dominate from the 1990s, and will be discussed below.

New Greek Cinema has been a self-proclaimed “cinema of the author”, a fact evident through the numerous interviews of its representatives, as well as through the pages of the film journal *Σύγχρονος Κινηματογράφος*, which explicitly promoted ideas of individual creativity as developed in the European New Waves. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the vast majority of published works in the area consist of studies of individual directors. It is worth noting that many of these books are published with the financial assistance of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, an institution that has historical links with New Greek Cinema. Launched in 1960 under the title “Week of Greek Cinema”, and subsequently renamed as “Festival of Greek Cinema” (1966-1991), it functioned throughout the 1980s as the main exhibition and promotional space for Greek films, which otherwise struggled to find distributors and audiences.

The series includes collections of essays on Antouanetta Angelidi, Theo Angelopoulos, Alexis Damianos, Takis Kanellopoulos, Frida Liappa, Roviros Manthoulis, Tonia Marketaki, Nikos Nikolaidis, Nikos Panayiotopoulos, Giorgos Panousopoulos, Nikos Papatakis, Kostas Sfikas, Dimos Theos, Stavros Tornes and Pandelis Voulgaris, all of which were published in the 2000s.⁵ Incidentally, there are also publications focusing on the work of some Old Greek Cinema directors, whose work has been reassessed in the context of the theory of the auteur. The collections on Michael Cacoyannis, Jules Dassin, Dinos Dimopoulos, Grigoris Grigoriou, Giorgos Tzavellas and Dinos Katsouridis indicate the artistic evaluation of these directors, who worked within a commercial system of production that has traditionally been seen as a hindrance to creativity. Most publications on individual directors include reviews of the films by the contemporary press, functioning as resources for further research rather than as sustained auteur studies. There are few monographs

⁵ www.filmfestival.gr/inst/Festival/gallery/eshop/bookshop_en.pdf

on particular directors, among which Soldatos's study of the body in Koundouros's work (2007), Kyriakos's exploration of the theatrical dimensions in Damianos's films (2007), and Sotiropoulou's analysis of Stambouloulos's oeuvre (2004) may be mentioned.

The discussion above has so far omitted the bibliography on Theo Angelopoulos, Greece's most internationally known and extensively researched film director. Angelopoulos's first feature-length film *Αναπαράσταση* (*Reconstruction*, 1970) is often seen as the starting point for New Greek Cinema because of its critical success that led to both national and international recognition at film festivals (Bakogiannopoulos 2002: 14). Angelopoulos went on to make a series of highly political films, managing to evade the censorship of the Colonels by setting their stories in recent history and presenting them in an oblique Brechtian mode. His four-hour-long *Θίασος* (*The Travelling Players*, 1975) was shot during the dictatorship and screened just after its fall, marking a particularly resonant moment in recent Greek history. The complex interweaving of themes from ancient myths (the *Oresteia*) and a popular dramatic idyll (*Γκόλφω*), as well as thinly disguised references to the Civil War not only encapsulate the director's unique vision, but also provide a very powerful insight into Greek history. Despite somehow changing direction from the mid-1980s towards a more character-based, existentially focused storytelling, Angelopoulos's consistent thematic concerns and stylistic choices render him an archetypal director-auteur.

The bibliography on his work in Greek, English, French and Italian is extensive, reflecting his international appeal. Andrew Horton has published both a monograph (1997a) and a collection of essays (1997b) in English, aiming to make Angelopoulos's work more accessible to those unfamiliar with Greek culture and history. David Bordwell (2005: 140-85) uses Angelopoulos as one of the four case studies in his study of cinematic staging and style, offering a dissection of the ways in which the director organises space through his camera. His close analysis of particular sequences from the director's films, focusing on their recurrent stylistic techniques, locates Angelopoulos's work within the

broader context of European modernism. Methodologically, it offers a good example of an approach based on film form and style that could be adopted more widely in the study of Greek cinema. Among the bibliography in Greek, Irini Stathi's (1999) monograph on space and time in the films of Angelopoulos offers an extensive and methodologically consistent semiotic analysis of his work. This is complemented by a volume that brings together, often in translation, some of the key articles written on his work, together with contemporary reviews (Stathi 2000). It is worth noting here the two collections of critical writings by Vassilis Rafailidis (1990; 1996), a very influential critic who voiced the call for New Greek Cinema and helped establish Angelopoulos as a major figure in this context.

Looking at the writing on New Greek Cinema, and especially on individual authors, it is worth noting that the vast majority aims to offer interpretations, in other words, it tries to unpack the dense, hidden and ambiguous meanings of the films behind their often high modernist form. The opaqueness of many films invites such an approach, and it is in this context that Bordwell's approach is particularly welcome as it offers an analysis based concretely on the stylistic choices in specific films. On the other hand, the increasing historical distance from New Greek Cinema is opening up possibilities for examining the films in the context of the discursive networks from which they emerged. The search for an authentic Greekness that would be expressed through a modernist aesthetic becomes, in this sense, one of the major discursive/ideological contexts in which New Greek Cinema evolved.

Contemporary Greek Cinema

The alienation of audiences from New Greek Cinema that reached its peak at the end of the 1980s was counteracted by the persistent popularity of Old Greek films through their repeat screenings on television. These two factors, arguably, have led to a return to a narrative-centred, genre-based and thematically accessible cinema since the 1990s. While this return to a mainstream narrative

cinema appeared in the 1980s, it has become significantly more prominent in the last two decades. The term “contemporary” to characterise this period is undoubtedly problematic as this is clearly a temporary temporal designation – what is contemporary now will soon cease to be so. It has, however, been widely used and for this reason is adopted in this context (Levendakos 2002c). An alternative offered by Skopeteas (2002a) is “New Classical Greek Cinema”, which focuses on the main stylistic characteristics of most of the post-1990s films, but adopts a loose use of the term “classical”.

The changes in the funding structures and policies in the last two decades have contributed towards the shift in emphasis towards a more mainstream, but also a more globally oriented cinema. In the early 1990s, the Greek Film Centre began to fund films by young directors who sought to examine contemporary social issues without trying to establish an authorial signature. As some of these films (for example, *Τέλος Εποχής/End of an Era*, 1994) increasingly appealed to audiences, the funding options began to expand. Television channels started contributing towards film production, either in collaboration with the Greek Film Centre, in the case of state-owned television, or independently, in the case of private channels (for example, *Safe Sex*, the box-office hit of 1999, was funded by Mega Channel without any state participation). The vast majority of contemporary Greek films are the result of co-productions, as the Greek Film Centre has also shifted its emphasis in this direction. European and international partners have entered the scene, opening questions about the national identity of the films and challenging the concept of national cinemas. Angelopoulos’s films are a good example of such globalisation: since the 1990s his films increasingly involve non-Greek funding partners (mainly from Europe), international stars (Marcello Mastroianni, Jeanne Moreau, Bruno Ganz, Harvey Keitel, Willem Dafoe and Irene Jacob, among others) and even adopt the use of English as the main language (*Η Σκόνη του Χρόνου/The Dust of Time*, *Το Βλέμμα του Οδυσσέα/Ulysses’ Gaze*). Angelopoulos’s films are, of course, clearly “branded” as

auteur films, and in some ways they follow a trajectory of their own. But the role of co-production and the internationalisation of the cast and even the content of the films are also evident in some of the box-office hits of the 2000s. *Πολίτικη Κουζίνα/A Touch of Spice*, for example, was financed by Village Roadshow Productions (the first venture of a distribution and exhibition company into film production in Greece), the Greek Film Centre, and a Turkish company. The film had an international (mostly Greek and Turkish) cast, and also used the English language in parts of the dialogue.

Little has been published, as yet, on Contemporary Greek Cinema, opening a range of avenues to be potentially explored by researchers, one of which is the closer examination of the relation between the changing funding structures, as sketched above, and the form and content of the films. The third volume of *Οπτικο-ακουστική Κουλτούρα* (Levendakos 2002c) is the only collection of essays so far dedicated to post-1990s films, while most of the thematically organised collections discussed above (for example, on immigration, children, etc.) include essays referring to contemporary Greek films. Skopeteas's (2002b) examination of post-1990s films through the perspective of post-modernism offers many insights. The use of pastiche and nostalgia is present in the subject matter and style of many Contemporary Greek films (such as *Τέλος Εποχής*, 1995, *Peppermint*, 1999, *Πολίτικη Κουζίνα*, 2003, all of which focus on nostalgic reminiscences of childhood and adolescence; remakes such as *Ο Ηλίας του 16ου/Elias of the 16th*, 2008). Skopeteas also identifies an "oppositional" postmodernism in films that use inter-textual allusions and a mixture of styles to offer some form of social critique (such as *Από την Άκρη της Πόλης/From the Edge of the City*, 1998, or *Singapore Sling*, 1990). A very different approach is adopted in Maria Paradeisi's (2006) monograph, which offers close analyses of six Greek films chosen because of their thematic reference to transgression, made between 1994 and 2004. This study is inspired by Bordwell and Thompson's formalist analysis of narration and combines it with thematic explorations, such as

representations of gender and transgression. The films of Renos Haralambidis have become the object of Horton's attention in a short monograph (2005) on the young director.

The exceptional box-office success of a handful of Greek films in the last decade, such as *Safe Sex* (1999), *Πολιτική Κουζίνα* (2003), *Νύφες/Brides* (2004), *Λούφα και Παραλλαγή: Σειρήνες στο Αιγαίο/Loafing and Camouflage: Sirens in the Aegean* (2005), *El Greco* (2007), has not as yet led to any extended publications on these films, but it is bound to trigger further academic interest in these and other Contemporary Greek films. This can take a range of directions, among which: the analysis of the formal and stylistic texture of individual films, or specific groups, in the context of the options available at a particular time and place; questions of group style, with the use of such terms as "classical" and "post-classical" carefully considered; a further examination of the industrial parameters of Greek cinema – the funding structures, production companies, distribution and exhibition; the study of audiences.

Last, but not least, a significant question emerges with respect to the study of Greek cinema as a whole: to what extent is it useful to study it as a "national cinema", an approach that implies its uniqueness in content, form, function, development? Should we not examine it (only) in relation to the rest of the cinematic production? As suggested above, such questions become even more relevant with the increasing globalising trends in film production in the last couple of decades, which dilute the commonly understood national identity of films produced, say, with Greek funds, Greek creative personnel, in the Greek language and addressed, predominantly, to a Greek audience. The debate has taken different guises over the years: the Greekness of Old Greek Cinema, for example, has been challenged, because of its extensive – and eclectic – borrowings of forms and styles from non-Greek models, and its failure to develop a "national school". The search for a national identity has also haunted some filmmakers of New Greek Cinema and led to the production of a group of films focusing on explorations of Greekness. More

recently, the terms of the debate have been reversed, with emphasis being placed on unpacking the ideological processes behind seeking a fixed “national identity”. By extension, some national (film) histories have been criticised for their Hellenocentric focus, while emphasis is placed on finding parallel phenomena elsewhere. While this is not the place to develop such debates further, I wish to stress the necessity to examine the history and form of cinema in its specific contexts of production and reception, without necessarily making ideologically charged claims about uniqueness. Greek cinema is bound to have parallels elsewhere, and their exploration is welcome. Greek cinema is undoubtedly the result of multiple formal and cultural influences; it has been used to express multiple ideologies and, at times, to serve particular interests. Its national identity, therefore, should not be seen as unified, but as the product of a multiplicity of factors coming together at a particular time and in particular forms. As such, examining Greek cinema in its own terms and context can only strengthen further attempts to place it in a broader, comparative framework, such as, for example, its recent inclusion in the study of Balkan cinemas (Iordanova 2006).

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Πάθη/Passions: a latent poetic collection by Cavafy

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The present article is an annotated version of a lecture delivered in January 2009 at Cambridge, in which I discussed a latent poetic “collection” by Cavafy, entitled “Passions”.¹ Before proceeding to

In the notes that follow I have adopted the following abbreviations:

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| <i>Unpublished</i> | C. P. Cavafy, <i>Ανέκδοτα ποιήματα 1882-1923</i> Φιλολογική επιμέλεια Γ. Π. Σαββίδη (Athens: Ikaros 1968) |
| <i>Unfinished</i> | C. P. Cavafy, <i>Ατελή ποιήματα 1918-1932</i> , Φιλολογική έκδοση και σχόλια Renata Lavagnini (Athens: Ikaros 1994) |
| <i>Cavafy, Introduction</i> | <i>Εισαγωγή στην Ποίηση του Καβάφη. Επιλογή κριτικών κειμένων</i> . Επιμέλεια Μιχάλης Πιερής (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 1994) |
| <i>MK, A</i> | G. P. Savidis (Γ. Π. Σαββίδης), <i>Μικρά Καβαφικά. Α΄</i> (Athens: Ermis 1985) |
| <i>MK, B</i> | G. P. Savidis, <i>Μικρά Καβαφικά. Β΄</i> (Athens: Ermis 1987) |
| <i>Prose</i> | C. P. Cavafy, <i>Τα Πεζά (1882;-1931)</i> . Φιλολογική επιμέλεια Μιχάλης Πιερής (Athens: Ikaros 2003) |
| <i>Poems I-II</i> | C. P. Cavafy, <i>Ποιήματα. Α΄</i> (1896-1918), <i>Β΄</i> (1919-1933). Φιλολογική επιμέλεια Γ. Π. Σαββίδη (Athens: Ikaros 1963) |
| <i>Passions & Ancient Days</i> | C. P. Cavafy, <i>Passions and Ancient Days</i> , New Poems translated and introduced by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (New York: The Dial Press 1971) |
| <i>Savidis 1966</i> | G. P. Savidis, <i>Οι Καβαφικές Εκδόσεις (1891-1932)</i> . Περιγραφή και σχόλιο. Βιβλιογραφική μελέτη (Athens: Tachydromos 1966) |

¹ I would like to thank Prof. David Holton again here for his invitation to give the lecture and his hospitality. I am also grateful to Mr Manuel Savidis, Director of the Centre for Neo-Hellenic Studies, for giving me

a presentation of the archival material that concerns this “collection”, i.e. the titles of all poems, which, at one point or another, we may assume Cavafy had considered arranging under the title “Passions”, I shall summarise here some general comments on Cavafy’s practice of compiling catalogues and lists – comments which served as an introduction to my Cambridge lecture.

1

“Almost all work of art is done with emotion. I was in emotion in all my poetry’s making”,² Cavafy once wrote, and hence it would be safe to assume that an undiluted expression of some personal experience is to be found in each of his poems.

In his well-known poem “Theodotos”, created in 1915, Cavafy wrote:

And do not be too sure that in your life –
restricted, regulated, prosaic –
spectacular and horrible things like that do not happen³.

Since this poem belongs to the philosophical/didactic area of Cavafy’s oeuvre, and hence is addressed “to everyone”,⁴ *ad*

permission to study and publish the contents of the unpublished folder “Passions”, as well as for authorising the publication here of four photographs of unpublished manuscripts from the Cavafy Archive. Finally, I thank philologist Irena Alexieva for translating the present article into English.

² The quote is taken from a comment in English by Cavafy on the poem “Sculptor of Tyana”, which was transcribed and discussed by Diana Haas; see C. Th. Dimaras, “Cavafy’s technique of inspiration”, *Grand Street* 2.3 (Spring 1983) 156. For more on the personal experiences that underlie each of Cavafy’s poems, see C. Th. Dimaras, “Μερικές πηγές της καβαφικής τέχνης”, first published in the 1932 special issue of the literary journal *Κύκλος* dedicated to Cavafy, and re-published several times elsewhere (now in: Cavafy, *Introduction*, p. 76-8).

³ Unless otherwise stated, all poems are quoted in the translation of Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard in: C. P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*. Edited by G. P. Savidis. Revised ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992).

orbem so to say, it had never crossed my mind that these verses could reflect, along with others, some intense emotional *occurrence* in a life “restricted, regulated and prosaic”, which was only occasionally interrupted by a spectacular or horrible event, such as for instance some “terrible news”⁵ or the unexpected privilege of an accidental encounter with love.⁶

However, as I was researching the contents of the Cavafy Archive relevant to the thematic division “Passions”, I realised that the poet had a pronounced tendency towards organising both the prosaic and the poetic aspects of his life. We knew already, from G. P. Savidis, that Cavafy’s papers were found in an “exemplary order”;⁷ we know also, from in-depth philological studies, such as Renata Lavagnini’s study of Cavafy’s unfinished poems, that “Cavafy’s work manner is [...] quite organised and systematic”.⁸ This persistent daily control and organisation involved the fastidious recording of large and small expenses, of major and minor household repairs, daily chores, etc., which produced the various lists and catalogues that, as we know, Cavafy was particularly inclined to keep.⁹

This practice was perhaps an inherited habit, or as Savidis more aptly put it, “[Cavafy’s] innate instinct and the conditions of his life had taught him early on to keep proper accounts”.¹⁰ Or

⁴ The concept of a poem addressed “to everybody” has been used by Cavafy himself. See G. Lechonitis, *Καβαφικά Αυτοσχόλια. Με εισαγωγικό σημείωμα Τίμου Μαλάνου* (Athens ²1977), p. 30.

⁵ “When I heard the terrible news, that Myris was dead” (see *Poems*, II, p. 74, line 1).

⁶ “He saw a face inside there, saw a figure/that compelled him to go in” (see *Poems*, II, p. 83, lines 16-18).

⁷ See G. P. Savidis, “Για δυο νέες εκδόσεις του Καβάφη”, *Εποχές* 1 (May 1963) 55 and *Poems*, I, p. 9.

⁸ See *Unfinished*, p. 24.

⁹ As early as 1963, in his first informational presentation of the Cavafy Archive, G. P. Savidis notes that a major part of the Archive consists of “lists: a) bibliographical, b) chronological, c) thematic, d) generic – of the poems he either wrote or intended to write – as well as of the names of the recipients of each of his poetic collections”. See *MK*, A, p. 41.

¹⁰ *MK*, A, p. 19.

maybe it was the result of some fear that he might be ruined financially – a logical concern, given the sudden turn for the worse, which the economic situation of the family took after the death of the poet's father; or maybe it was his almost obsessive (I would say English-style) mindset that drove him to control so methodically all practical details of a lonely everyday life. The life of a man who in 1908, at the age of 45, chose to live alone,¹¹ trying hard, on the one hand, to preserve a certain lifestyle in the face of financial constraints, and on the other hand, to practise his art without compromising in any way with his artistic principles and ideas, as they had been shaped over the years. Or maybe it was none of the above and the explanation is much simpler: the fact that Cavafy lived in a time when the concept of orderliness and of “household economy” was a self-evident routine, at least for those who belonged to a certain social class.

The various catalogues and lists in the Cavafy Archive may fall into different categories but they all share one common feature: they are detailed and precise, no matter whether it concerns everyday matters, or the way Cavafy organised his work, i.e. into chronological and thematic catalogues of his poetry.

The practice of recording and cataloguing all kinds of activities seems to have helped Cavafy put his daily affairs in order. Thus, we have for instance: (a) catalogues detailing household tasks; (b) catalogues describing preparations for various trips;¹² (c) catalogues of monthly expenses;¹³ (d) genealogical catalogues;¹⁴ (d) catalogues of recipients of his poetic works.¹⁵

¹¹ On Cavafy's life, see the most well-founded biographical study so far, by Dimitris Daskalopoulos and Maria Stasinopoulou, *Ο Βίος και το Έργο του Κ. Π. Καβάφη* (Athens: Metaichmio 2002).

¹² One such catalogue has been published by G. P. Savidis in his study “Ένδυμα, ρούχο και γυμνό στο σώμα της καθαφικής ποίησης”. See *MK, A*, pp. 222-3.

¹³ Cavafy kept such records for the last 40 years of his life (1893-1933), but unfortunately most of them have been lost, according to information given to G. P. Savidis by Alekos Sengopoulos. See: *MK, A*, p. 35. The researcher who saw this archival material before most of it perished was Michalis Peridis, who used the information that had come to his

Apart from practical or genealogical catalogues, Cavafy also compiled chronological and thematic lists of his poems, such as, for instance: (a) a bibliographical catalogue of rejected poems; (b) the catalogue of 29 unfinished poems;¹⁶ (c) a catalogue of poems in French; (d) a catalogue of poems written in *katharevousa*; (e) chronological lists of poems by composition date; and (f) thematic lists of poems.

From this second group, G. P. Savidis carefully researched and published all chronological catalogues that have to do with the composition of Cavafy's poems, making partial use of the generic and thematic catalogues and providing some information on their appearance and contents.¹⁷ As a result of G. P. Savidis's systematic and research efforts over many years, an essential aspect of Cavafy's publishing system was recognised and documented – namely, that the poet aimed at a more complex reception of his work, and believed that this could be achieved primarily through a *thematic* arrangement of his poems.¹⁸

knowledge for his book *Ο Βίος και το Έργο του Κωνσταντίνου Καβάφη* (Athens: Ikaros 1948); see pp. 55-61.

¹⁴ See Vangelis Karagiannis, *Σημειώσεις από την Γενεαλογία του Καβάφη και ομοίотη αναπαραγωγή του χειρογράφου της "Γενεαλογίας"* (Athens: ELIA 1983). Part of the Genealogical Table, compiled by Cavafy and translated into English by his brother John, has been published in the catalogue of the C. P. Cavafy Exhibition organised by the Hellenic Foundation for Culture, the Centre for Neo-Hellenic Studies and the Cavafy Archive; see the catalogue edited by Katerina Gika (Athens: Centre for Neo-Hellenic Studies 2008), pp. 20-1.

¹⁵ See Savidis 1966: 215-83.

¹⁶ These poems have been published by Renata Lavagnini (*Unfinished*).

¹⁷ See *MK*, A, pp. 49-85.

¹⁸ This complex issue has been thoroughly analysed by G. P. Savidis in a series of studies and in his lectures at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, and has been substantiated in his now classic two-volume edition of Cavafy's *Poems* (1963 and new edition 1991). Savidis's findings and views on the editorial issue in Cavafy have been challenged by Anthony Hirst. See primarily the study "Philosophical, historical and sensual: An examination of Cavafy's Thematic Collections", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 19 (1995) 33-93, as well as the joint article by Anthony Hirst and Sarah Ekdawi "Hidden Things: Cavafy's thematic catalogues", *Modern Greek Studies* (Australia and New Zealand) 4

This aspect relates to another major issue in Cavafy's poetic practice, which the poet himself defined as "great attention to poetic balance" – a balance that he sought to achieve in his entire poetic oeuvre. Cavafy clearly realised the dynamic internal coherence among his poems (underpinned by thematic circles), and perceived his poetry as "work in progress". It is worth recalling here a well-known note by the poet, published in the journal *Αλεξανδρινή Τέχνη*, which is particularly illuminating for the way he worked: "light in one poem, half-light in the other – not haphazardly, but with great attention to poetic balance".¹⁹ In this regard, there is no doubt that the thematic catalogues, along with the chronological ones, are the most important of all catalogues that Cavafy used to compile.

2

The first mention of the existence of thematic catalogues in the Cavafy Archive was made by G. P. Savidis in 1963, in his study "The C. P. Cavafy Archive".²⁰ Subsequently, although Savidis did not delve into this subject, having focused his research efforts in other directions he considered a priority, he also provided quite a few useful comments on the thematic division of Cavafy's poetry.

One of these divisions bears the title "Passions" and constitutes one of the nine "thematic headings", as the poet himself called the thematic categories into which he attempted to classify

(1966) 1-34. Hirst has in fact applied some of his erroneous conclusions in a new English edition of Cavafy's poetry. See C. P. Cavafy, *The Collected Poems*. Translated by Evangelos Sachperoglou, Greek text edited by Anthony Hirst, with an Introduction by Peter Mackridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

¹⁹ See Savidis 1966: 209-10. The unsigned note attributed to Cavafy, published in *Αλεξανδρινή Τέχνη* (May 1927), is quoted here in the translation of Edmund Keeley in his: *Cavafy's Alexandria. Study of a myth in progress* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 186-7.

²⁰ See G. P. Savidis, "Το Αρχείο Κ. Π. Καβάφη", *Νέα Εστία* 74 (872) (1 November 1963) – issue dedicated to Cavafy. Now in *MK*, A, p. 41.

his poems based on a central and particularly prominent feature.²¹ This feature had to do with either the concept of history (“Ancient Days”, “Byzantine Days”, “The Lord of Epirus”), or the concept of religion (“The Beginnings of Christianity”), or the notion of fleeting time and the attrition it brings (“Years Fly By/Anni Volant”), or the idea of confinement (“Prisons”), or the concern about poetics and poetic practice (“Our Art”) or about a specific aspect of poetic art (such as the development of a Parnassian subject in the thematic heading “Three Images”), and last but not least, the heading with the most provocative, and certainly, in my opinion, the most interesting title with regard to the overall understanding of Cavafy’s art: “Passions”.²²

²¹ For more on thematic headings and thematic catalogues see Savidis 1966: 136, 137, 138, 139, 169, 177, and 194; and Cavafy, *Unpublished*, pp. 236-9, 241-5, 248-9. See also Diana Haas, “Αι αρχαί του Χριστιανισμού. Ένα θεματικό κεφάλαιο του Καβάφη”, *Χάρτης* 5/6 (April 1983) 589-608; Haas, “«Στον ένδοξό μας βυζαντινισμό»: σημειώσεις για ένα στίχο του Καβάφη”, *Διαβάζω* 78 (5 October 1983) 76-81; Haas, *Le Problème religieux dans l’oeuvre de Cavafy. Les Années de Formation (1882-1905)* (Paris: Sorbonne 1996), pp. 29, 33-70, 72, 85, 140, 142-3, 147-75, 199, 201, 213, 217, 275-6, 279, 317, 345, 419-20, 422.

The thematic collections and more specifically the archive file “Passions” have been discussed with particular eagerness by Sarah Ekdawi, who, in an unpublished Master’s degree thesis (“The Passions File: A study of eleven poems by C. P. Cavafy”, M.Phil. in Applied Linguistics, Trinity College, Dublin 1995), a research paper (“The Passions File: Cavafy’s private collection?”, *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16/17 (2000/2001) 159-75), and an article co-authored with Anthony Hirst (see note 18 above), has engaged in the study of Cavafy’s thematic organisation and thematic collections. Unfortunately, her research papers, not unlike Hirst’s, leave much to be desired from a methodological point of view and base a number of their arguments, as well as some conclusions, on misconceptions.

²² In the present article, I will not comment on the remaining “thematic headings”, the basic information on which is to be found in an archival document, marked F82; it requires a separate examination, since it poses quite a few challenges, both in deciphering its content and in grasping all the aspects of its compilation and use by the poet. A partial photograph of this document has been published in Lena Savidis, *Λεύκωμα Καβάφη 1963-1910* (Athens: Ermis 1983), a commemorative edition marking the 50th anniversary of Cavafy’s death. Dr Ekdawi studied this photograph

The arrangement of poems under these “headings” began ca. 1891 (for some thematic headings) and was abandoned around 1898, although in some cases it persisted until 1903/1905, while two headings (“Ancient Days” and “Passions”) continued to occupy Cavafy up to 1923/24, albeit undoubtedly at a different level. From a certain point on, it seems that the poet contemplated the prospect of compiling two collections under these titles (or “headings” as he used to call them).

It is worth reiterating here a principal conclusion of Cavafian scholarship, namely that the attempt to organise poems into “thematic headings” does not correspond, in terms of the logic behind it, to the creation of thematic collections in which the poet arranged his acknowledged poems, where an explicitly different (and certainly much more complex) system was followed.

The arrangement of poetic works under “thematic headings” is an attempt to group certain poems under a common title and should not be confused with Cavafy’s subsequent attempts to compile thematic collections founded on a close or remote correlation between two adjacent poems in a collection. In the second case, the degree of correspondence varies: sometimes the similarities are immediately visible, while other times a theme, a pattern or a certain mood simply extends from one poem to the other, and the coherence between the two requires advanced reading to be discerned. As G. P. Savidis observed – he was the first to realise the importance of the thematic arrangement of poems in some of Cavafy’s poetic collections and in his two bound booklets – the poet did not divide his works the way he did in compiling the thematic catalogues (thematic headings), but grouped

almost as if it was a first-hand examination of the manuscript itself, and transcribed its content, overlooking the fact that next to the last entry there is a reference mark, which suggests (to those who are familiar with Cavafy’s practice of organising such documents) that the catalogue continues somewhere else within the same manuscript.

them “into a much more subtle thematic sequence”;²³ one “that would clearly reveal the train of his poetic thought”.²⁴

It should be noted also that the nine thematic headings do not have the same quantitative weight and value, nor do they possess the same dynamics that can be identified in the evolution of Cavafy’s poetry. Two of the nine headings, for example (“The Lord of Epirus” and “Three Images”) seem to be the result of an ad hoc grouping of a specific and very small number of poems, which the poet could not include elsewhere. These headings were never updated afterwards and obviously concern some extremely narrow thematic areas, which Cavafy abandoned, as his poetic pursuits led him to delve deeper and extend the scope of some of the remaining six headings.

Out of these remaining six headings, only two seem to go beyond the early thematic contemplations of the poet, and continue to occupy him up to the last decade of his creative life. These two headings are “Passions” and “Ancient Days”, which differ from the rest in that Cavafy continues to update them until the last decade of his life. The most recent addition to the thematic heading “Passions” (the poem “From the Drawer”, left unpublished by the poet) was written in 1923. The most recent addition to the thematic heading “Ancient Days” is the poem “In Alexandria, 31

²³ Savidis 1966: 177.

²⁴ *Poems* I, p. 11. Ekdawi’s approach to this issue is misleading, since in presenting Cavafy’s thematic collections, she includes not only those entitled “Poems”, but also the two private collections, which the poet gave as a present to Malanos and to Sengopoulos, as well as the two prospective thematic collections “Ancient Days” and “Passions”. See S. Ekdawi, “The Passions File: Cavafy’s private collection?”, pp. 170-1. However, the thematic collections were produced following “thematic and generic” criteria, as Savidis notes as early as 1964 (for instance, the epitaphs and the dramatic monologues constitute a “generic division”, see: *MK*, A, pp. 59-89), while the incomplete “collections” “Ancient Days” and “Passions” were compiled according to quite different criteria, having originated as “thematic headings”, i.e. lists of poems that can be grouped under a thematic title (such as “The Beginnings of Christianity”, “Prisons”, “Years Fly By/Anni Volant”, etc.).

B.C.” which was probably written in 1917 and was published in a single broadsheet in June 1924.

In 1968, studying the publication history of Cavafy’s “feuille volante” entitled *Ancient Days*,²⁵ Savidis arrived at the conclusion that “in 1897-1898, Cavafy had planned to publish a thematically arranged collection [...] which either in its entirety or in part would have had the title: *Ancient Days*”.²⁶

In 1983, in his study “Seven Stages of a Cavafy Poem” («Επτά στάδια ενός ποιήματος του Καβάφη»), while examining the composition and publication history of the poem “The Funeral of Sarpedon”, Savidis referred to the contents of the folder marked “Ancient Days” (F11) and transcribed the titles of the poems, which Cavafy had included in this thematic sequence (or potential collection?), as they were written on the second, third and fourth page of the folder.²⁷

A detailed examination of the documents in the Cavafy Archive related to the thematic heading “Passions” underpins Savidis’s argument that at some point of his creative life Cavafy might have contemplated publishing a thematic collection entitled “Ancient Days”.

First of all, there are obvious similarities in the appearance of the two folders in which the poet kept manuscripts assigned to these two thematic divisions, “Ancient Days” and “Passions” (see Appendix, Plates 1 and 2). One could indeed argue that we are dealing with a thematic pair, which exhibits quite a few common features: (a) similar cover/jacket; (b) similar layout of titles on the

²⁵ We may recall that in his lifetime Cavafy published five pamphlets or “feuilles volantes” (one of which is “Ancient Days” printed in 1898), two bound booklets and ten collections. The pamphlet “Ancient Days”, the thematic heading “Ancient Days”, and the intended but never published thematic collection “Ancient Days” differ and should not be confused. All issues related to Cavafy’s practice of circulating his works are thoroughly researched and clarified in G. P. Savidis’s doctoral dissertation (Savidis 1966). On the pamphlet “Ancient Days”, see specifically pp. 136-142.

²⁶ See Savidis 1966: 138.

²⁷ *MK*, A, p. 277, note 18.

cover of the folder; (c) similar organisation of the table of contents, i.e. poem titles written on the two inside pages of the folders/jackets (in the case of “Ancient Days”, because of limited space, the list continues on the back cover); (d) similar preliminary numbering of the titles (every fifth one in the list), as evidenced by traces in both documents;²⁸ (e) the two folders related to these two thematic collections were kept close to one another in the poet’s Archive (“Ancient Days” in F11, “Passions” in F12).

Such deliberate organisation of the archival material suggests that, from a certain point onwards the poet approached these two thematic headings differently from the rest. Having abandoned the remaining seven thematic headings, Cavafy probably intended to proceed with these two divisions (“Ancient Days” and “Passions”) with a view to producing autonomous editions.

Herein lies the most important contribution of G. P. Savidis to our understanding of Cavafy’s concern with the “thematic headings”. The conception and publication in English, with the collaboration of Edmund Keeley, of the poetic collection *Passions and Ancient Days* is a publishing act which (with the organisation of its contents) substantiates that Savidis had recognised the most essential outcome of Cavafy’s earlier attempt to arrange his poetic works under thematic headings: that the poet at some point abandoned his initial divisions, singling out only two of them to which he accorded a different treatment, beyond simple classification. He regarded them as divisions that had the potential of evolving into autonomous thematic collections.

Why this effort was never brought to fruition remains unclear. However, the traces of this endeavour, which have been preserved in the poet’s Archive, can still provide valuable insights to a variety of issues that have to do with the way Cavafy planned and organised the circulation and reception of his oeuvre.

²⁸ See note 32 below.

3

I shall now focus on the folder in file F12 of the Cavafy Archive, which reflects the poet's attempt to compile a poetic collection under the title "Passions", along the pattern established with the thematic heading "Ancient Days".

F12

The archival item in question is a makeshift folder (33.7 x 21.5 cm), made of grey cardboard, which bears on its front page, i.e. the cover/jacket of the presumed poetic collection, the handwritten title "Passions" (see Appendix, Plate 1).

The title "Passions" on the cover is written in ink in Cavafy's hand and crossed out in pencil in the hand of Rika Sengopoulou, who classified the contents she found inside as "Unknown poems, good" (as she noted in pencil above the title).

The folder today does not contain manuscripts of poems, since those that existed inside, a total of eleven poems,²⁹ were removed by G. P. Savidis and together with other previously unpublished works found in various files of the Cavafy Archive, were published in 1968 as *Unpublished Poems (1882-1923)*.³⁰

Let us now see the titles of the poems included in the handwritten list, inscribed on the makeshift folder "Passions"

²⁹ Here lies the fundamental misconception of Sarah Ekdawi, who assumed that the collection "Passions" comprised eleven poems, i.e. only those that remained unpublished by the poet and were, hence, discovered by Savidis in manuscript in the folder "Passions". It is quite obvious however, that Cavafy's deliberations on the possibility of publishing a collection entitled "Passions" encompassed a larger number of poems.

³⁰ According to information provided by Savidis in his notes to this edition, the eleven poems, the manuscripts of which existed in the folder "Passions", were: "September, 1903", "December, 1903", "January, 1904", "On the Stairs", "At the Theatre", "On Hearing of Love", "Thus", "And I Leaned and Lay on Their Beds", "Half an Hour", "The Bandaged Shoulder", and "From the Drawer". As for "Invigoration", Savidis notes that two poems with this title were recorded in Cavafy's chronological catalogues, one of which was filed "under the heading 'Passions', together with: 'On Hearing of Love', 'Far Away', 'On Beautiful Things' (= 'I've Looked So Much'), 'Thus', etc.)". See *Unpublished*, pp. 236-7.

(F12),³¹ which, I believe, constitutes an earlier version of the table of contents for the intended poetic collection “Passions”, if indeed it was ever meant to reach the printing press (see Appendix, Plates 3 and 4).

Ὁ Σεπτέμβριος τοῦ 1903	
Ὁ Δεκέμβριος τοῦ 1903	
Ὁ Γενάρης τοῦ 1904	
Ἡ φωτογραφία	
Σταῖς Σκάλαις	[[5]] ³²
[[Χθὲς Νύχτα]]	
Στὸ Θέατρο	
Ἄπ' τὰ χέρια τοῦ Ἔρωτος	
[[Μεθυσμένος]]	
[[Ποίημα]]	[[5]]
Ἐπήγα	
[[Λαγνεία]] Ὀμνύει	
Ἐνα βράδυ μου	5
[[Στοὺς δρόμους]]	
Τὸ Κλεισμένο Ἀμάξι	5
Ἐκφυλισμένος Ἔρωτος	5
[[Μάρτιος 1907]] Μέρη τοῦ 1903	
Πολυέλαιος	
[[Γ.]]	
Ἔρωτος ἄκουσμα	

³¹ In the list in Greek that follows, the titles are transcribed as entered by Cavafy, along with all subsequent deletions, insertions, repetitions, and markings, while in the numbered list in English I have attempted to produce a more advanced version of the catalogue, omitting repeated entries and adding, where appropriate, subsequent changes to the titles listed.

³² The numerical index 5 appears five times in the document (twice it is crossed out). As far as I could figure out, the poet initially tried (soon abandoning this idea) to number every fifth poem (for what purpose, I can only guess). Thus, the first index marks the fifth poem, the second the tenth, while the third also follows this pattern (i.e. it again marks the tenth poem if we omit the deleted titles above it). The fourth index, probably an earlier insertion, marks the fifteenth poem (if we number them without omitting any deletions), while the logic behind the last, fifth, index is obscure.

Ἐπέστρεφε
 [[Γιὰ τὰ ὠραία]] Ἔτσι πολὺ ἀτένισα
 [[Ἐνδυνάμωσις]]
 Ἔτσι
 [[Μισομεθυσμένοις]] Ἐν τῇ Ὄδῳ
 [[Τὰ πολύτιμα]] Ὅταν διεγείρονται
 Ἡδονῇ
 Μακρὰ
 Ἡ Ἀρχὴ των
 Κι ἀκούμπησα καὶ πλάγιασα στὲς κλίνες των
 [[Ἀγάπησέ την Πιότερο]] Ἴμενος
 Ἐν Ἐσπέρα
 [[Ἀλεξανδρινόν]]
 Θυμῆσου Σῶμα
 Μισὴ ὦρα
 Γκρίζα
 Κάτω ἀπ' τὸ Σπίτι
 Δώδεκα καὶ μισή
 Τὸ διπλανὸ Τραπέζι
 Νόησις
 Νὰ Μείνει
 Ὁ Δεμένος ὦμος
 Τὸ 23^{ον} ἔτος τοῦ βίου μου τὸν Χειμῶνα
 Ὁ Ἥλιος τοῦ Ἀπογεύματος
 Ἴμενος
 Τὸ Ἴόνιον Πέλαγος
 Τὸ καλοκαίρι τοῦ 1895
 Ἀπ' τὸ Συρτάρι

1. September, 1903
2. December, 1903
3. January, 1904
4. The Photograph
5. On the Stairs
6. [[Last Night]]
7. At the Theatre
8. From the Hands of Eros [= At the Café Door]
9. [[Inebriated]]
10. [[Poem]]

11. I Went
12. [[Lust]] Vow
13. An Evening of Mine [= One Night]
14. [[In the Streets]]
15. The Closed Carriage [= The Window of the Tobacco Shop]
16. Failing Love [= A Young Poet in His Twenty Fourth Year]
17. [[March 1907]] Days of 1903
18. Chandelier
19. [[Γ.]]
20. On Hearing of Love
21. Come Back
22. [[On Beautiful Things]] I've Looked So Much
23. [[Invigoration]]
24. Thus
25. [[Half-Drunk]] In the Street
26. [[The Precious Ones]] When They Come Alive
27. To Sensual Pleasure
28. Far Away
29. Their Origin
30. And I Leaned and Lay on Their Beds
31. [[Love Her More]] Imenos
32. [[Alexandrian]] In the Evening
33. Body, Remember
34. Half an Hour
35. Grey
36. Outside the House
37. Half past Twelve [=Since Nine O'clock]
38. The Next Table
39. Understanding
40. Has Come to Rest
41. The Bandaged Shoulder
42. In the 23rd Winter of My Life
43. The Afternoon Sun
44. The Ionian Sea [= On Board Ship]
45. The Summer of 1895 [= Days of 1908?]
46. From the Drawer

A preliminary examination of the document in F82, which refers to all thematic headings, as well as to other grouping of poems,

reveals that the thematic sequence “Passions” in F82 includes forty poetic compositions, eleven of which are not listed in the catalogue of the F12 folder. These eleven poems are:

Ἡ μάχη τῆς Μαγνησίας
 Μαρ[ικοῦ] Τ[ά]φ[ος]
 Πέρ[ασμα]
 Φυγάδες
 Ἐπάνοδος ἀπὸ τὴν Ελλ[άδα]
 Ἡ Σημ[αία]
 Πρὸς τὴν Πτῶσι
 Τοῦ 5^{ου} ἢ τοῦ 6^{ου} αἰῶνος
 Ἱερ[ωνύμου] Τ[ά]φ[ος]
 Πλὴν Λακ[εδαμονίων]
 Χαρ[μίδης]

1. The Battle of Magnesia
2. Tomb of Marikos [= Kimon, Son of Learchos?]
3. Passage
4. Exiles
5. Going Back Home from Greece
6. The Flag
7. Towards a Fall [= Nero’s Deadline]
8. Of the 5th or 6th Century [= Of the Sixth or of the Seventh Century]³³
9. Tomb of Hieronymous [= Tomb of Ignatios]
10. Except the Lacedaimonians [= In the Year 200 B.C.?)
11. Charmidis [= In a Town of Osroini]

These eleven poems, in my opinion, exhibit a common feature which could provide some insights to the reasons for which Cavafy chose not to include them in the prospective collection evidenced in F12. It is quite obvious that all eleven poems (with the sole exception of “Passage”) are historical or pseudo-

³³ Now in *Unfinished*, pp. 251-5.

historical.³⁴ They do elaborate on the topic of “passions” (the two “Tombs”, “Passage” and “Charmidis” in particular), but their historical setting (with the exception of “Passage”) is quite pronounced and this was probably the reason that led Cavafy to reconsider their inclusion in a collection entitled “Passions”.³⁵ On the other hand, the 47 poems included in the table of contents of the prospective thematic collection “Passions” all belong more or less to the erotic/sensual area of Cavafy’s poetry.³⁶

4

The details provided so far were meant to give a general idea of the poet’s attempt to compile, at some point of his creative life, a thematic collection entitled “Passions”. To conclude, I would like to add some comments which might hopefully contribute to a more developed interpretation.

From the early arrangement of his works into “thematic headings”, Cavafy kept only two categories that he found useful for the thematic organisation of his mature poetry. These were the categories “Passions” and “Ancient Days”. This suggests that at some point the poet must have realised the fundamental importance of these two thematic categories (the sensual and the historical or political Cavafy) for the perception and in-depth reception of his poetry. It is worth recalling that in 1918 Cavafy wrote a lecture, delivered by Alekos Sengopoulos at the hall of the Greek Scientific Society “Ptolemy I” in Alexandria, with which he sought to steer the reception of both critics and readers towards the most daring aspect of his poetry, the sensual one.³⁷

³⁴ On the terminology related to Cavafy’s historical poems, see Michalis Pieris, “Καβάφης και Ιστορία (Θέματα ορολογίας)”, in: Cavafy, *Introduction*, pp. 397-411.

³⁵ I noticed, for instance, that eight of these titles are also included in the intended (but also never published) collection “Ancient Days”.

³⁶ The solution I have opted for in the forthcoming edition of this collection is to publish these 11 poems separately, in an appendix.

³⁷ For a more recent publication of this lecture, see Cavafy, *Introduction*, pp. 47-56.

What emerges from the present discussion is that at some point Cavafy had selected a total of 46 (or 57) poems with a view to compiling a thematic collection entitled “Passions” (regardless of whether he eventually fulfilled these intentions or not).

One is tempted to ask, is there anything new to be learned from this latent poetic collection as it is preserved today, i.e. as an incomplete catalogue of 46 or 57 titles? Incomplete because we have no way of knowing, what the final composition of this thematic collection would have been, had the poet continued to update it until he was satisfied. I believe that even to the extent to which we can recover it, based on the fragmentary evidence found in the poet’s Archive, this collection could lead us to certain valuable conclusions that transcend the mere quantitative aspects (the 57 poems constitute approximately 37 per cent of the 154 titles in the Cavafy canon).

The most important conclusion is that the poetic expression of the erotic in Cavafy is a far more complex affair than some people might assume, especially those who have tried to anthologise the erotic Cavafy, giving weight to only one dimension, that of homosexual love.

This is certainly not the case. Many of the poems catalogued here reveal the importance which Cavafy gave to other passions, such as: the passion for solitary erotic experience, which is embodied in the poem “Chandelier” and seems to symbolise the passion for masturbation;³⁸ the passion for alcohol, as revealed in poems such as “Half an Hour”;³⁹ the passion of lust or of erotic delusion, which is associated with the “hypothetical experience”;⁴⁰ the passion that bridges pleasure and knowledge, as sug-

³⁸ The first scholar who identified this passion in Cavafy’s poetry was C. Th. Dimaras who referred to it as “lonely repetition of the erotic act”. See “Μερικές πηγές της καθαφικής τέχνης”, in Cavafy, *Introduction*, p. 91.

³⁹ On the subject of alcoholism in Cavafy’s poetry, see Savidis 1966: 182, note 106, which refers further to Malanos, Saregiannis and Tsirkas.

⁴⁰ Or “Guess work” as Cavafy himself calls it in his essay “Philosophical Scrutiny”, which Michalis Peridis, somewhat arbitrarily, entitled “Poetics”; see: C. P. Cavafy, *Ανέκδοτα πεζά κείμενα*. Εισαγωγή και μετά-

gested by the didactic tone of poems such as “Invigoration”; the passion for poetry implied in the poem “Understanding” (and probably in the lost poetic composition named “Poem”); the passions kindled by political prejudice and historical consciousness, as in the poem “The Battle of Magnesia”; the passions fed by ethical and political amorality, as in the poem “Towards a Fall” (= “Nero’s Deadline”); the passionate rejection of hypocrisy when it comes to ethnic self-awareness, as in the poem “Going Back Home from Greece”. We can also discern an elegiac feeling of time gone by, as in the poem “Half past Twelve” (= “Since Nine O’clock”) where we have the pair “πάθη”/“πένθη”, i.e. “Passions” are coupled with “Bereavements”.

A more in-depth interpretative approach to the poems included in the thematic division “Passions” would certainly reveal many other strong emotions. Hence, what we can learn from this latent collection is that the erotic and the sensual in Cavafy is not limited to *one passion*, that of homosexual erotic experience, but has to do also with the *passions* of a great poet, a conscious craftsman who was concerned about the quality of his work, about issues of political and artistic ethics, about aestheticism and sophistication, which he had an empathy for.

That the concept of *erotic passion*, which in Cavafy rather relates to a hypothetical experience, underlay his entire poetic practice in terms of both manner and ethics, is clearly revealed in the following excerpt from a note written in June 1910:

My life passes through sensual fluctuations, through fantasies – occasionally fulfilled – of an erotic nature.
My work veers towards the intellect.

φραση Μιχάλη Περίδη (Athens: Fexis 1963), pp. 36-7. G. P. Savidis’s translation of the title is more accurate, “Φιλοσοφικός Έλεγχος” (Savidis 1966:144 and passim), while in the recent edition of Cavafy’s *Prose*, Manuel Savidis rendered it as “Φιλοσοφική Εξέταση” (*Prose*, pp. 256-60, 329). On the concept of “hypothetical experience”, see also Michalis Pieris, *Χώρος, Φως και Λόγος. Η διαλεκτική του “μέσα”-“έξω” στην ποίηση του Καβάφη* (Athens: Kastaniotis 1992), pp. 55-9, 333-4, 339-44, 422. On the topic of lust, see the related poetics and ethics note by Cavafy (*MK*, B, p. 103).

[...]

I work like the ancients. They practised philosophy, they wrote history, dramas of mythological tragedy – love-struck, so many of them – just like me.⁴¹

* * *

A central subject in the thematic collection “Passions” (as it emerges from the table in F12) is the duality of sensual pleasure and lust, which seems to have concerned Cavafy quite a lot, judging by his strong disagreement with Baudelaire’s treatment of it:

I was reading tonight about Baudelaire. And the writer of the book I was reading was somehow épaté with the *Fleurs du Mal*. It has been a while since I re-read the *Fleurs du Mal*. From what I remember, they were not so épatants. And it seems to me that Baudelaire was constricted within a very close sensual circle. Last night, suddenly; or last Wednesday; and so many other times I experienced, and acted upon, and imagined, and silently fashioned stranger pleasures yet. (22.09.1907)⁴²

Cavafy’s “sensual circle” is much broader, as we can see from the poetic compositions included in the folder “Passions”, and this is probably best evidenced in the poem “Half an Hour”.

HALF AN HOUR

I never had you, nor I suppose
will I ever have you. A few words, an approach,
as in the bar the other day – nothing more.

⁴¹ See *MK*, B, p. 122. It is quoted here in the translation of Manuel Savidis, from C. P. Cavafy, *Notes on poetics and ethics*, available in English on the Cavafy Archive website:

<http://www.cavafy.com/archive/texts/content.asp?id=24>

⁴² See *MK*, B, p. 117. This translation, by Manuel Savidis, is taken from the Cavafy Archive website:

<http://www.cavafy.com/archive/texts/content.asp?id=19>

It's sad, I admit. But we who serve Art,
sometimes with the mind's intensity,
can create – but of course only for a short time –
pleasure that seems almost physical.
That's how in the bar the other day –
mercifully helped by alcohol –
I had half an hour that was totally erotic.
And I think you understood this
and stayed slightly longer on purpose.
That was very necessary. Because
with all the imagination, with all the magic alcohol,
I needed to see your lips as well,
needed your body near me.

Written in January 1917, this poem constitutes a rare example of liberating passion, which shows us that with the vigour of fantasy and the power of thought, as well as with the help of certain magical ingredients (such as alcohol), the poet had finally managed to silently fashion stranger pleasures. That is, to join the two facets of his erotic passion, to prove as only a poet can do (with a poetic occurrence rather than an abstract assertion) that for him, *lust* and *sensual pleasure* were not two separate conditions. Because intellectual lust – enforced by fantasy and some magical ingredient (the light of a candle, some half-light, a merciful drink, moonlight, a heavenly noon, a magical afternoon, a divine July, a brilliant night, etc.) – could indeed be transformed, albeit “only for a short time”, into physical pleasure.

APPENDIX

- Plate 1: Cover of the folder “Ancient Days” with the title written and crossed out in Cavafy’s hand, and with a note “Poems marked not for publication”, added by Rika Sengopoulou. The Cavafy Archive, F11.
- Plate 2: Cover of the folder “Passions” with the title written in Cavafy’s hand and with a note “Unknown poems, good”, added by Rika Sengopoulou. The Cavafy Archive, F12.
- Plate 3: Left inside page of the folder “Passions”. The Cavafy Archive, F12.
- Plate 4: Right inside page of the folder “Passions”. The Cavafy Archive, F12.

Photographs © 2009 The Cavafy Archive/Manuel Savidis

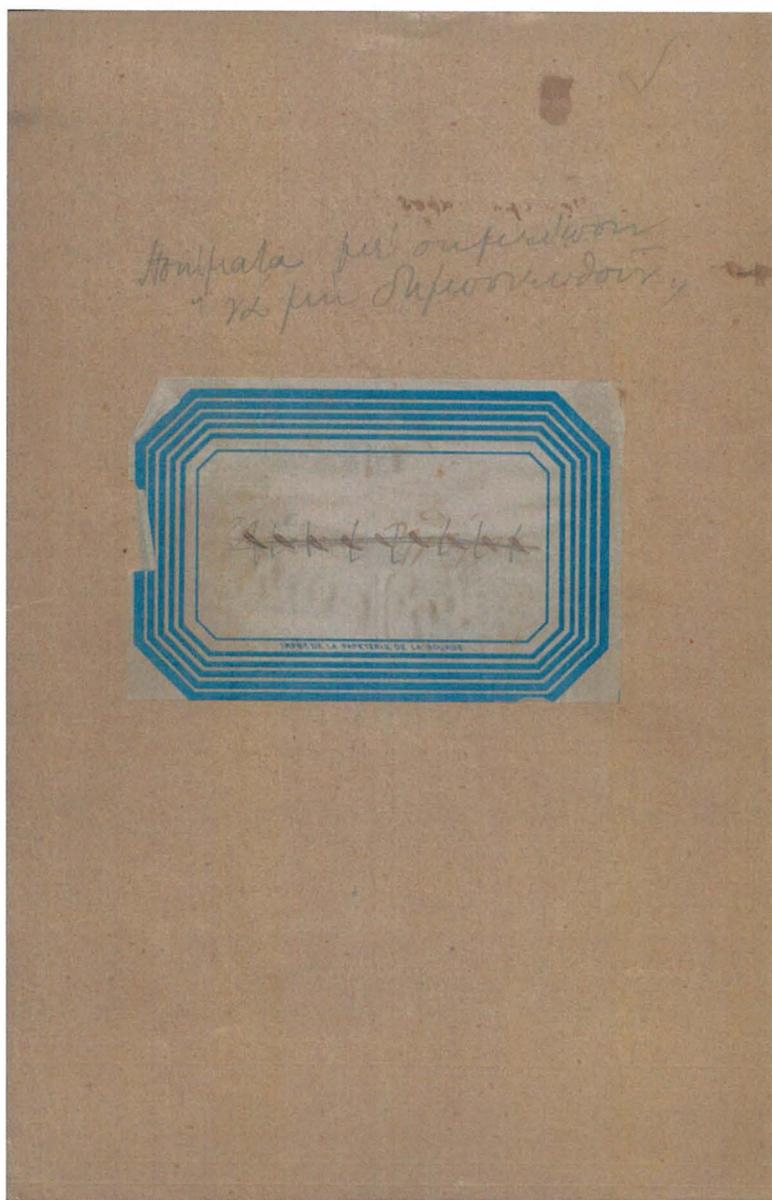


PLATE 1

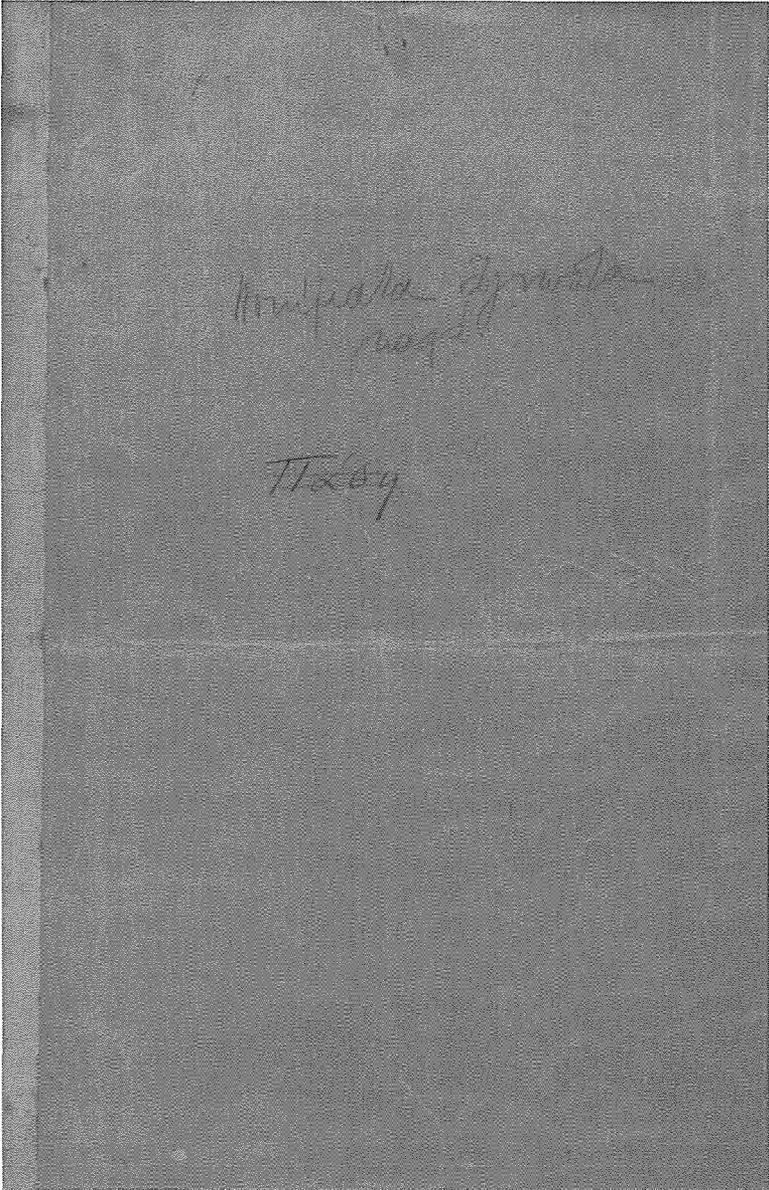


PLATE 2

Ο' Σολομώνας εν 1902
 Ο' Δουμάκης εν 1902
 Ο' Γενναίος εν 1902
 Η' Ευλοφεία
 Ζησίος Σκάγκις ✕
~~Χρ. Χύλη~~
 Στο' Θέλιο
 Ίσολά χίρα εν 1902
~~Χρ. Χύλη~~
 Παιπέ ✕
 Ήρην
~~Χρ. Χύλη~~ Ουρανός
 Ένα Βραδύ περ 5
~~Στα' Αρμέν~~
 Το Κρησίου Αρμέν 5
 Ευλοφείος εν 5
~~Μακρ. 1902~~ ✕ Μακρ. εν 1902
 Πουρμπάν
 ✕

PLATE 3

The year 2008-9 at Cambridge

Students

In Part II of the Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos, Madelaine Edwards took a full range of language and literature papers in Modern Greek, including a year abroad dissertation, and graduated with a II.1, and a mark of special excellence in the oral examination. Carleen Sobczyk and Katharina Walsh each offered one paper in Modern Greek; both were placed in the First Class. Carleen Sobczyk was also awarded a Distinction in the separate examinations for the Diploma in Modern Greek.

Richard Thompson spent his year abroad in Athens, attending lectures at the University.

Matthew Jones achieved a II.2 and Carl Svasti-Salee a First in Part IA of the Tripos.

This was the first year of the new paper “Introduction to Modern Greek language and culture”, which can be taken by MML students in their second year and by final-year Classics students. Four students took the course (three from MML, one from Classics) and all achieved creditable results.

Two students passed the examinations for the Certificate in Modern Greek: Edward Pulford (with Credit) and Katherine Poseidon.

At postgraduate level, Foteini Lika and Stratos Myrogiannis have submitted their PhD dissertations and await examination. The A. G. Leventis Foundation Studentship has been awarded to Eleni Lampaki, a graduate of the University of Athens. She begins her research for the PhD, in the field of Cretan Renaissance literature, in October 2009.

Teaching staff

Following the resignation of Ms Eleftheria Lasthiotaki (who was seconded by the Greek Ministry of Education), Dr Regina Karousou-Fokas continued to teach the full range of courses in Modern Greek language. She also taught the synchronic part of

the paper on “The history and structure of Modern Greek”. Dr Notis Toufexis also contributed to this course, in addition to teaching advanced translation into Greek. Mr Kostas Skordyles gave an introductory course on modern Greek history. A number of other people contributed to the teaching programme, particularly during the Lent Term 2009, when Professor Holton was on sabbatical leave. Thanks are due to: Dr Liana Giannakopoulou, Dr Anthony Hirst, Ms Marjolijne Janssen, Ms Foteini Lika and Mr Stratos Myrogiannis.

Visiting speakers

The 2008-9 programme of lectures by invited speakers was as follows:

- 23 October. Professor Georgia Farinou-Malamatari (University of Thessaloniki): *Aspects of modern and postmodern Greek fictional biography in the 20th century*
- 6 November. Dr Anthony Hirst (Queen’s University, Belfast): *Truth, lies and poetry: Kalvos, Solomos and the War of Independence*
- 20 November. Dr Lydia Papadimitriou (Liverpool John Moores University): *Greek film studies today: in search of identity*
- 22 January. Professor Michalis Pieris (University of Cyprus): “Πάθη”/ *“Passions”*: a latent poetic collection by Cavafy
- 27 January. Professor Gunnar De Boel (Ghent University): *Psycharis: the conflict between the neogrammmarian linguist and the language reformer*
- 19 February. Professor Roger Just (University of Kent): *Marital failures: glimpsing the margins of marriage in Greece*
- 5 March. Professor Kevin Featherstone (London School of Economics): *The enemy that never was: the Muslim minority in Greece in the 1940s*
- 30 April. Dr Victoria Solomonidis (Greek Embassy, London): *“Thou shalt not translate”: the 1901 Gospel Riots in Athens*
- 7 May. Dr Maria Athanassopoulou (University of Cyprus): *Re-considering Modernism: the exile poems of Giannis Ritsos*

Visiting scholars

In the course of the academic year, two scholars from other universities spent periods in Cambridge. Professor Staffan Wahlgren, Professor of Classical Philology at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, was an academic visitor in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages for the Michaelmas Term 2008. Professor Wahlgren's research interests include Byzantine and early Modern Greek language and literature. Ms Rita Emmanouilidou, a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles, was accepted as a visiting student in the Modern Greek Section for the Easter Term and Long Vacation 2009. Her thesis involves a comparative study of English, French, Spanish and Greek texts of the Renaissance.

Exchange Agreement

The existing co-operation agreement between the Modern Greek Section and the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at the University of Cyprus has been renewed for a further five years. The agreement provides for the exchange of undergraduate and postgraduate students for study and research. In this context, Elizabeth Bailey, who took the new "Introduction to Modern Greek language and culture paper" in 2008-9, will spend part of her year abroad at the University of Cyprus.

Graduate Seminar

The Graduate Seminar was again convened by PhD students Foteini Lika and Stratos Myrogiannis. A particularly rich and varied programme included papers by the following scholars: Professor Angeliki Ralli (Patras), Professor Staffan Wahlgren (Trondheim), Professor Michael Paschalis (Crete), and Professor Tzina Kalogirou (Athens). There were also papers by graduate students from other universities: Marianna Smaragdi (Lund), Thanasis Giannaris (Athens) and Rita Emmanouilidou (UCLA), Jason Leech (King's College London), and Eleni Mouatsou (Birmingham); and from Cambridge: Theoni Neokleous.

Reunion

A Reunion Dinner for former students of Modern Greek was held at Selwyn College on 16 May 2009. The guests of honour were HE Dr David Landsman OBE, HM Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic, and Mrs Catherine Landsman. More than twenty former students attended, representing every decade from the 1970s to the present. Professor David Holton welcomed the guests and spoke about the activities and achievements of the Modern Greek Section in recent years, as well as current uncertainties about its future. Dr Landsman, who did his PhD in Modern Greek linguistics at Clare College, proposed a toast. It is hoped to hold further reunion events in the next few years.

“Cambridge in Athens”

More than 120 people attended a public event, organized by the Modern Greek Section, at the Academy of Athens on Wednesday 8 July 2009. The occasion was a twin celebration: both of the 800th Anniversary of the University of Cambridge and of the distinguished contribution of Cambridge to teaching and research in Modern Greek studies over more than seven decades. It was also an opportunity to alert the Greek public and media to the campaign that has been launched to secure permanent funding for Modern Greek at Cambridge after 2013.

The President of the Academy of Athens, Professor Panos Ligomenidis, welcomed an audience that included many Cambridge alumni, as well as leading figures in Greek society, politics, business and education. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom, HE Dr David Landsman OBE, spoke of his time as a PhD student in Greek linguistics at Cambridge, and drew attention to the distinctive contribution of the Modern Greek Section. Other speakers were Cambridge professors David Holton (Modern Greek), Athanasios Fokas (Mathematics) and Paul Cartledge (Ancient Greek Culture), and two prominent Cambridge graduates who hold chairs at the University of Athens and the Panteio University respectively: Nasos Vayenas and Stephanos Pesmazoglou. Another distinguished Cambridge graduate,

Professor Catherine Morgan, Director of the British School at Athens, completed the line-up of speakers. The texts of the speeches will be published in a special volume.

Activities of members of the Modern Greek Section

Professor David Holton was elected as a member of the first Executive Committee of the Society for Modern Greek Studies for 2009, having previously been on the Interim Executive Committee. He served on the judging panel for a children's art and poetry competition organized by the Breathing Life Trust, which supports medical facilities in Cyprus. Speaking engagements this year have included participating in an event in London entitled "Love, war and music in Renaissance Crete: *Erotokritos* after 400 years", organized by the Cretan Association of Great Britain (January 2009); a talk to the Oliver Prior Society (for school teachers of modern languages) on "Why should we teach 'small' languages?" (March 2009); and a lecture at the British School in Athens on "The first modern Greek printed book: *Apokopos* (1509)" (July 2009). In April he attended a meeting, held at Vouliagmeni, of the organizing committee for a major symposium planned for November 2010 by the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, with the title "The Athens Dialogues". Finally, he was one of the speakers at a conference held at Siteia from 31 July to 2 August 2009, on the theme "Ο κόσμος του *Ερωτόκριτου* και ο *Ερωτόκριτος* στον κόσμο".

Ms Marjolijne Janssen is one of the authors of an impressive new two-volume Greek-Dutch/Dutch-Greek dictionary: *Prisma Groot woordenboek Nieuwgrieks-Nederlands en Nederlands-Nieuwgrieks* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Het Spectrum 2009). The project was led by Arnold van Gemert and Marc Lauxtermann.

Dr Notis Toufexis served as an elected member of the Executive Committee of the Society for Modern Greek Studies in 2009; before that, he was on the Interim Executive Committee.

About the contributors

Maria Athanassopoulou completed her PhD thesis, entitled “The Greek sonnet (1895-1936): A study in poetics”, at the University of Cambridge in 1999. She has been recently appointed Lecturer in Modern Greek Literature and Literary Theory, at the Drama Department, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Prior to that she taught for ten years as an adjunct lecturer in Modern Greek Literature, at the Universities of Crete, Cyprus, Patras and Thessaly. Her research publications centre around modern Greek poetry and prose of the 19th and 20th centuries, literature and nationalism, literature of the diaspora, and the history of modern Greek criticism. She has published a Greek translation of Jeremy Hawthorn’s *Unlocking the text: Fundamental issues in literary theory*.

Georgia Farinou-Malamatari is Professor of Modern Greek Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She studied at the University of Athens and holds a PhD from King’s College London. Her recent publications include two edited volumes with introductions: *Εισαγωγή στην πεζογραφία του Παπαδιαμάντη* (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 2005), and *Ο Ψυχάρης και η εποχή του. Ζητήματα γλώσσας, λογοτεχνίας και πολιτισμού* (Thessaloniki: Institutouto Neoellinikon Spoudon 2005). She has also published a translation of Bakhtin’s “Towards a reworking of the Dostoevsky book” with an extended afterword, and several articles on Greek biographical fictions. She is currently preparing a book on Modern and Postmodern biographical fiction in 20th-century Greek literature.

Lydia Papadimitriou is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Liverpool John Moores University. Her monograph *The Greek Film Musical: A critical and cultural history* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland 2006) has recently been translated into Greek (Athens: Papazisis 2009). She has published a number of essays on Greek cinema, on topics ranging from Greek war films, stars, the musical

and a review article on the cinema of Theo Angelopoulos. She is currently co-editing a collection of essays entitled *Greek Cinema: Texts, forms and identities*, to be published in 2011.

Michalis Pieris studied literature and theatre at Thessaloniki and Sydney and has worked at universities and research centres in Europe, Australia and the USA. Since 1993 he has been Professor of Modern Greek at the University of Cyprus. He has published numerous studies on medieval, Renaissance and modern Greek literature. He has also published nine poetic collections, as well as translations of poetry and Ancient Greek drama. He collaborated with the late G. P. Savidis for many years and continues to work on the Cavafy Archive. He is the editor of *Η ποίηση του κράματος. Μοντερνισμός και διαπολιτισμικότητα στο έργο του Καβάφη* (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 2000).

