



THE HELLENIC WORLD OF HENRY MILLER AND LAWRENCE DURRELL

Diego Delgado Duatis

ADVERTIMENT. L'accés als continguts d'aquesta tesi doctoral i la seva utilització ha de respectar els drets de la persona autora. Pot ser utilitzada per a consulta o estudi personal, així com en activitats o materials d'investigació i docència en els termes establerts a l'art. 32 del Text Refós de la Llei de Propietat Intel·lectual (RDL 1/1996). Per altres utilitzacions es requereix l'autorització prèvia i expressa de la persona autora. En qualsevol cas, en la utilització dels seus continguts caldrà indicar de forma clara el nom i cognoms de la persona autora i el títol de la tesi doctoral. No s'autoritza la seva reproducció o altres formes d'explotació efectuades amb finalitats de lucre ni la seva comunicació pública des d'un lloc aliè al servei TDX. Tampoc s'autoritza la presentació del seu contingut en una finestra o marc aliè a TDX (framing). Aquesta reserva de drets afecta tant als continguts de la tesi com als seus resums i índexs.

ADVERTENCIA. El acceso a los contenidos de esta tesis doctoral y su utilización debe respetar los derechos de la persona autora. Puede ser utilizada para consulta o estudio personal, así como en actividades o materiales de investigación y docencia en los términos establecidos en el art. 32 del Texto Refundido de la Ley de Propiedad Intelectual (RDL 1/1996). Para otros usos se requiere la autorización previa y expresa de la persona autora. En cualquier caso, en la utilización de sus contenidos se deberá indicar de forma clara el nombre y apellidos de la persona autora y el título de la tesis doctoral. No se autoriza su reproducción u otras formas de explotación efectuadas con fines lucrativos ni su comunicación pública desde un sitio ajeno al servicio TDR. Tampoco se autoriza la presentación de su contenido en una ventana o marco ajeno a TDR (framing). Esta reserva de derechos afecta tanto al contenido de la tesis como a sus resúmenes e índices.

WARNING. Access to the contents of this doctoral thesis and its use must respect the rights of the author. It can be used for reference or private study, as well as research and learning activities or materials in the terms established by the 32nd article of the Spanish Consolidated Copyright Act (RDL 1/1996). Express and previous authorization of the author is required for any other uses. In any case, when using its content, full name of the author and title of the thesis must be clearly indicated. Reproduction or other forms of for profit use or public communication from outside TDX service is not allowed. Presentation of its content in a window or frame external to TDX (framing) is not authorized either. These rights affect both the content of the thesis and its abstracts and indexes.

Diego Delgado Duatis

**THE HELLENIC WORLD OF HENRY MILLER
AND LAWRENCE DURRELL**

DOCTORAL THESIS

Supervised by
Dr Dolors Collellmir Morales and Dr Jordi Lamarca Margalef



UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

Tarragona
2015



UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI

DEPARTAMENT D'ESTUDIS ANGLÉSOS I ALEMANYS
Avinguda Catalunya 35
43002 Tarragona, Spain
Tel. 977 559 755

Dr Jordi Lamarca Margalef
Department of English and German Studies
Universitat Rovira i Virgili.

THE HELLENIC WORLD OF HENRY MILLER AND LAWRENCE DURRELL.

We hereby certify that the present study "The Hellenic World of Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell", presented by Diego Delgado Duatis for the award of the degree of Doctor, has been carried out under our supervision at the Department of English and German Studies, Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona, and that it fulfils all the requirements for the award of Doctor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lamarca", with a horizontal line underneath.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dolores Collellmir", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Jordi Lamarca Margalef
Doctoral Thesis Co-Director

Dr Dolores Collellmir Morales
Doctoral Thesis Co-Director

Tarragona, 30th November 2015.

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the literary productions of two interconnected writers, Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell, while paying special attention to their works on the Greek world, and the influence that the Hellenic culture had on both authors through some modern Greek writers. This thesis demonstrates that Miller's and Durrell's contact with the Hellenic World and with certain Greek writers of the first half of the twentieth century strongly influenced them and permeated many of their works. Here, the term 'Hellenic' is employed as used by Cavafy, meaning the Greek culture as a continuum. That is to say, the cultural heritage of the Greek people as a group sharing the Greek language and a common set of values.

This connection is found in three main areas of confluence among Durrell and Miller and the Greek authors that are here studied: the formers' assimilation of the latter's productions, the close intellectual and aesthetic affinities among all of them, and the decisive influence of the country that brought them together.

Miller and Durrell played indeed an important role in spreading the knowledge of some modern Greek writers at an international level which still had not been sufficiently studied. Their personal and literary relationships with some of the members of the Greek "Generation of the 30s" pervaded their productions and philosophical discourses. Consequently, this dissertation also examines Durrell's and Miller's long mutual correspondence and their exchange of letters with some of these Greek intellectuals. This last aspect has involved working in several archives with collections related to Durrell, Miller, Seferis, and Sikelianos, which has resulted in the study of an extensive compilation of unpublished documents.

Acknowledgements

I feel that my first debt of gratitude is owed to the codirectors of my doctoral dissertation, Dr Dolors Collellmir Morales (Universitat Rovira i Virgili), for her help and trust from the very beginning, and Dr Jordi Lamarca Margalef (Universitat Rovira i Virgili), for his guidance in the last part of this undertaking.

My thanks to the scholars working at the Department of English and German Studies (Universitat Rovira i Virgili) for trusting in my research project.

I must also thank especially another professor, Dr M. Àngels Caamaño (Universitat Rovira i Virgili), who taught me to sail the seas of the *imaginaire*.

I am also grateful to the following people: James Gifford (Fairleigh Dickinson University, Canada), Corinne Alexandre-Garner (Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre, France), Penelope Durrell Hope (sorely missed), Karen Birch, Panos Karagiorgos (Ionian University, Greece), Nikos Petrochilos (Ephorate of Antiquities of Phokis, Greece), Ilias Bitsanis, Theodoros Chiotis (Cavafy Archive, Greece), Andriani (for helping in my translation of Sikelianos' "Pericles Yannopoulos"), Maria Voltera (Archives of the National Bank of Greece, formerly Gennadius Library Archives, Greece), and Maria Dimitriadou (Benaki Museum Historical Archives, Greece).

And last but not least, this research paper would not have been possible without the endless encouragement and inestimable support of my fellow traveller in life, Martina, and the patience of our little daughters Dàcil and Dèlia.

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents	6
List of Illustrations	8
Introduction	9
Chapter 1: Durrell's and Miller's Introduction to Greece.	
Kostis Palamas: An Intellectual Reference	16
1.1. Lawrence Durrell's Arrival in Greece	16
1.2. Durrell's First Contact with Modern Greek Literature.....	22
1.3. Kostis Palamas and His Image of the City	24
1.4. Henry Miller, Kostis Palamas, and the Hour of Man	31
Chapter 2: Constantine P. Cavafy: Durrell's 'Poet of the City'	35
2.1. Cavafy's City and Durrell's 'Spirit of Place'	35
2.2. Death, Rebirth and Memory	61
2.3. Cavafy's Hellenism and the Barbarians	86
2.4. The Archetypal Journey.....	91
2.5. The Image of the Eye in Cavafy and Durrell.....	96
2.6. The Notion of Relativity in Cavafy and in Durrell's Quartet.....	103
2.7. Cavafy and the Alexandrian Characters in Durrell	106
Chapter 3: Angelos Sikelianos and Henry Miller: The Poet as a Visionary	114
3.1. The Cycle of Renewal in Sikelianos and Miller.....	114
3.2. The Prophetic Element in Sikelianos' and Miller's Works.....	130
3.3. Eva Sikelianos and the Delphic Idea	142
3.4. The Influence of the Pre-Socratics	158
3.5. 'God in Man' in Sikelianos and Miller.....	172

Chapter 4: Unrenowned Influences: Yannopoulos, Kakantzakis, Prevelakis, Gatsos and Elytis	182
4.1. A Quest for the Deep Essence of the Land and Its People	182
Chapter 5: George Seferis: The Carrier of the Flame of Prometheus.....	199
5.1. The Halcyon Days of Prewar Greece	199
5.2. Durrell’s Pioneering English Translations of Seferis	213
5.3. From the Myth of Orestes to the poem “The Cistern”	225
5.4. The Archetypal Journey.....	231
5.5. Miller in the Work of Seferis: Angels and Miracles	240
5.6. Reading Landscape.....	246
5.7. Seferis’ Translations of Durrell	249
5.8. The Places of the Past.....	255
5.9. Light in Seferis and Miller	266
Chapter 6: Conclusions	276
Appendix: Angelos Sikelianos, “Pericles Yannopoulos”	286
Bibliography	289

List of Illustrations

Image 1. Theodore Stephanides visiting Villa Ambron	17
Image 2. Katsimbalis with Durrell in Athens	23
Image 3. Kostis Palamas	25
Image 4. Palamas' funeral. Sikelianos	33
Image 5. Constantine Cavafy	36
Image 6. Alexander with a horned diadem.....	54
Image 7. Dimitris I. Antoniou	95
Image 8. Angelos Sikelianos	114
Image 9. Henry Miller's tree chart	128
Image 10. Eva Sikelianos	142
Image 11. Prometheus Bound. Delphic Festival, 1930	152
Image 12. Oceanids, Prometheus Bound. Delphic Festival	153
Image 13. Pericles Yannopoulos	182
Image 14. Nikos Kazantzakis	188
Image 15. Pandelis Prevelakis	191
Image 16. Inscribed copy of <i>Crète infortunée</i>	192
Image 17. Nikos Gatsos.....	195
Image 18. Odysseas Elytis.....	196
Image 19. George Seferis	199
Image 20. Miller with Katsimbalis. Hydra, 1939. Photo. by Seferis	205
Image 21. Miller, Ghika and Durrell. Paris, 1967	206
Image 22. Stavros Tsousis	208
Image 23. Lefteris Alexiou.....	208
Image 24. Miller on Hydra, 1939	242
Image 25. Seferis with Durrell in Cyprus, 1953.....	250

Introduction

Ancient Greece has undoubtedly been considered as the cradle of our civilization and the fact that Greek classical works, especially in the fields of philosophy and arts, constitute the roots of this civilization has also been generally recognized. However, around these cultural bases there are still a number of aspects that require a more profound analysis and there are also questions that can still be posed. Two of these questions are related to the circumstances of that moment and to our present attitude towards them: The first one is: What was the cause of such a vast amount of ideas and works of art? And the second one is: Are we still able to connect with and understand our own cultural roots?

Lawrence Durrell, in his personal guide to the Greek islands, while mentioning the thousands of tourists that every year visit the cradle of Western world, argues: '[...] they march off round Delos, like a human sacrifice to a culture which has ceased to identify with its own roots'.¹ Durrell's ironical remark is very appropriate. In the same work, while discoursing upon ancient Greeks, he adds: 'The question is not so much 'What did they have that we haven't got?', it is rather 'What did they start that we have still been unable to finish?''²

Both comments show Durrell's interest in understanding the contribution of the Hellenic world from a contemporary perspective, and at the same time, his attempt to trace those concepts and views from the ancient world that might have been lost in the course of Western history. Paradoxically, it would be mainly contemporary Greece, the country and its people, and some of the greatest modern voices of Greek literature which would give Durrell an insight into that culture.

The Ionian island of Corfu would be the door to Greece for Durrell. In *Blue Thirst*, when dealing with the island, Durrell admits the importance of this place in his life and work: 'You have two birth-places. You have the place where you were really born and then you have a place of predilection where you really wake up to reality.'³

After an invitation from Durrell, another writer would travel to Corfu and similarly find his own way into the country, his friend Henry Miller. In *The Colossus of Maroussi*, Miller confesses that his choosing of Greece as a destination proved being relevant for his own inner life: 'The decision to take a vacation for one year, to abstain from writing during

¹ Lawrence Durrell, *The Greek Islands* (London: Faber, 1978) 228.

² *Ibid.*, 273.

³ Lawrence Durrell, *Blue Thirst* (Santa Barbara, California: Capra Press, 1975) 22.

that time, the very choice of Greece which, as I see it now, was the only country which could have satisfied my inner needs, all this was significant.⁴

During their stay in Greece, Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell met several Greek authors, including, among others, the Nobel laureate poet George Seferis, the editor George Katsimbalis, and the poet Dimitris Antoniou. At the same time, they became acquainted to some other writers, such as C. P. Cavafy, Angelos Sikelianos and Pericles Yannopoulos.

Miller and Durrell played indeed an important role in spreading the knowledge of some modern Greek writers at an international level which still has not been sufficiently studied. Their personal and literary relationships with some of the members of the so-called “Generation of the 30s” pervaded their productions and philosophical discourses. Many of Durrell’s and Miller’s writings and their long correspondence with their Greek friends bear witness to their literary connections.

Durrell himself was among the first translators of modern Greek literature into English. From his early versions of some poems by Seferis, Sikelianos and Cavafy to his later rendering of Emmanuel Royidis’ classic *Pope Joan*, his translations appeared in magazines and collections of poetry, and even he circulated some private editions.

For his part, Miller talks about the strong impression that some of these contemporary Greek authors caused on him in *The Colossus of Maroussi* and the references to them in his work are recurring.

Hypothesis.

My hypothesis, based on my previous research on Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell, is that both authors’ contact with the Hellenic world and certain modern Greek writers strongly influenced them, permeating many of their works. This connection is found in three main areas of confluence among Durrell, Miller and the Greek authors that are here studied: the formers’ assimilation of the latter’s productions, the close intellectual and aesthetic affinities among all of them, and the decisive influence of the country that brought them together.

Therefore, this dissertation examines the literary productions of these two interconnected writers, Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell, while paying special attention to their works on the Greek world, and the influence of the Hellenic culture on both authors through some modern Greek writers.

⁴ Henry Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi* (New York: New Directions Books, 1958) 205. Further references to this work will be from this edition.

Here, the term ‘Hellenic’ is employed in the broadest sense of the word, as used by Cavafy, meaning the Greek culture as a continuum. Thus, it does not refer to the historical period before the Hellenistic age but to the cultural heritage of the Greek people as an ethnic group sharing the Greek language and a common set of values. Actually, some of the Greek-speaking authors in this study, such as Cavafy and Seferis, were born beyond the present borders of the Greek republic, in regions with a considerable Hellenic presence like Anatolia (at present, Turkey) and Alexandria (Egypt).

Objectives and the state of the question.

The initial project for this dissertation originated after completing a previous research work on Henry Miller’s and Lawrence Durrell’s publications on Greece, entitled Travelling in Odyssean Paths: Henry Miller’s and Lawrence Durrell’s Journeys in Greece. That work explored both authors’ journeys of discovery on Greek lands. It was already pointed there that the Greek landscape and their friendship with a group of Greek intellectuals had had a powerful effect on Miller and Durrell. The main objective of this dissertation is to study in depth this aspect of Lawrence Durrell’s and Henry Miller’s works, that is, the links among these writers and the Greek land and its modern voices. Thus, I intend to gain further understanding of both authors’ works and thoughts.

In his essay “Letter to a Foreign Friend”, George Seferis argues that ‘there is no parthenogenesis in art. Each one of us is made up of a number of things, and the lion too *est fait de mouton assimilé*’ [...] It is the assimilation that matters’.⁵ As Henry Miller similarly says: ‘We invent nothing, truly. We borrow and recreate. We uncover and discover.’⁶ In fact, this is the purpose of this dissertation, to uncover several significant aspects of the personal and literary connections involving Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller and some of the modern voices of Greece. Thus, the following chapters show Durrell’s and Miller’s absorption of different themes and thoughts present in the poets here analyzed, as well as of the country itself. Likewise, the different chapters also present some relevant details about the long and close relationship between both authors and, at the same time, between each of them and the Greek writers and intellectuals that they befriended.

At present, the literature on this topic is scarce. The two main contributions are Edmund Keeley’s Inventing Paradise and Anna Lillios’ Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World. Keeley’s interesting work focuses on the Greek literary world between 1937 and 1947, while dealing with some of the main topics in the poetry of the period, the friendships

⁵ George Seferis, On the Greek Style: Selected Essays in Poetry and Hellenism, trans. Rex Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos (Boston, MA: Atlantic-Little, 1966) 175. His quotation in French is from Paul Valéry’s Tel Quel.

⁶ Henry Miller, The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder (New York: New Directions, 1974) 47.

in the intellectual circles and the politics of that time. Durrell, Miller and other philhellenes are also addressed, but Keeley's approach to them is essentially from the point of view of cultural history. With regard to Lillios' edition, it is a remarkable collection of diverse articles by several authors who have written about different aspects of Durrell's life and books related to Greece and its poets.

Instead, this dissertation seeks to address the issue of the Hellenic World in Durrell and Miller from a new perspective that involves both literary history and criticism while considering several significant Greek authors with different associations to Durrell and/or Miller in a single comprehensive research work. In fact, some of these Greek writers, such as Kostis Palamas, Angelos Sikelianos and Pandelis Prevelakis, had not been examined in relation to Durrell and Miller.

Methodology and Sources of Information.

While cultural and literary history uncover some valuable clues about connections and affinities, it is only through an analytical observation of texts that influences can be brought to light in the authors' own words. Therefore, the research process for this dissertation starts from a critical reading of texts and a collection of data. Afterwards, the information has been organized in different blocks of recurring topics or images. In order to study these influences exerted on Miller and Durrell, this dissertation considers those works by Durrell and Miller written after their arrival in Greece; in particular, but not only, their titles about the Greek world.

In Durrell's case, this thesis explores mainly his books on Mediterranean islands or set on them (Panic Spring, The Black Book, Prospero's Cell, The Dark Labyrinth, Reflections on a Marine Venus, Sicilian Carousel, and The Greek Islands), excluding Bitter Lemons, because its political content would exceed the limits of this dissertation; The Alexandria Quartet; some of the author's references to the Greek world in The Revolt of Aphrodite, The Avignon Quintet, and Caesar's Vast Ghost; and also some poems by the author that are connected to the Hellenic world. Additionally, some other publications with essays and articles by Durrell related to Greece are also considered, including, *i.a.*, Spirit of Place and Blue Thirst.

With regard to Miller, this dissertation examines some significant works by him that appeared after his departure from Greece, including, among others, The Colossus of Maroussi, The Wisdom of the Heart, The Air-Conditioned Nightmare, Remember to Remember, The Rosy Crucifixion, The Books in My Life, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird, Henry Miller on Writing, and First Impressions of Greece. Furthermore, three

remarkable titles written by Miller before his stay in Greece have also been considered: Tropic of Cancer, Black Spring, and Tropic of Capricorn. These earlier productions contribute to show the seed of some common thoughts with the Greek writers that Miller would further develop in later works. In addition to Miller's and Durrell's productions, literary criticism and biographies are also considered, as well as the large correspondence between Miller and Durrell (1935-1980).

Regarding the Greek authors, I will preferably use the translations by Philip Sherrard and Edmund Keeley, which are recognized as the standard English versions of the most important modern Greek poets, but Durrell's translations of Cavafy, Sikelianos and Seferis will be equally considered. The Greek works that this thesis analyzes are those which appear in references by Durrell or Miller, and also those which were known by them according to different sources, such as letters, essays, and personal diaries.

My research for this dissertation has also involved working in several archives with collections related to Durrell, Miller, Seferis, and Sikelianos. Archival research has provided an extensive compilation of unpublished material including correspondence, manuscripts, and marginalia, among other documents. The large diversity of locations with holdings associated to this field, ranging from a national library to a private institution, has required a specific work strategy for each archive. Most of the archival materials come from four main sources: the Lawrence Durrell Collection at the British Library (London), the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense), which also holds the writer's personal library, the George Seferis Archive at the Gennadius Library (Athens), and the Eva Palmer-Sikelianos Archive at the Benaki Museum Historical Archives in Kifissia (Greece).

It should also be noted that images, archetypal themes and symbols are explored taking into account the contributions to mythocriticism from Carl Gustav Jung, Gaston Bachelard, Gilbert Durand, and Juan Eduardo Cirlot, among others. All the works considered are very rich in symbolism, those by Durrell and Miller, as well as those by the Greek authors, which are deeply rooted in myth. Although Durrell's and Miller's works have been studied from diverse perspectives, from psychoanalysis to postcolonial or feminist theory, and using several methods, most of them may only offer partial interpretations in this field of research. While discussing, for example, some notions such as "the journey" and "the opposites", a mythocritical approach is used because it offers a more integral view.

Structure.

Taking into account that the scope of confluences is not limited to a few authors and also that some subjects are common grounds for some of them, the following scheme of organization has been adopted. The different chapters of this dissertation focus mainly on a single Greek writer (except for chapter 4, which addresses a group of five authors) and they discuss the points of convergence and divergence between the chosen writer and Durrell or Miller. However, sometimes, interconnections among the chapters make cross-references necessary. Because of that, some ideas flow through separate chapters, helping to reveal the underlying network structure of relations existing among the different authors.

Greek authors appear in a natural chronological order. The same temporal pattern has been applied to chapter 4, which, as said above, deals with various writers. This organization of contents permits to see the inner dialogue among diverse modern Greek approaches to some common topics, granting a better understanding of these questions in their own contexts. Durrell and Miller have not been alien to many of these interrelations either. Therefore, this structural choice makes it possible to offer a richer view of the subject of the current work while also favouring clarity and order.

The first chapter explores Durrell's and Miller's initial contacts with Greece, its people and the language. Then, it focuses on Kostis Palamas, one of the first modern Greek poets that Durrell and Miller heard of. Fundamentally, two aspects of Palamas' poetry are examined, his image of 'the City' and the central role of Man in his work.

Chapter 2 addresses Constantine P. Cavafy and his impact on Durrell, particularly in The Alexandria Quartet but also in some other titles by the latter. The themes that this part covers include, *i.a.*, the city of Alexandria, Durrell's conception of the spirit of place, Cavafy's Hellenism, the themes of death and memory, the image of the eyes in Cavafy and Durrell, and the notion of relativity in both author's productions.

The third chapter approaches Angelos Sikelianos' work together with Miller's interpretation of the former's contribution to literature, as well as Durrell's translations of some poems by Sikelianos. The places of convergence between Sikelianos and Miller encompass several elements of their works, such as the notion of the 'Cycle of Renewal', syncretism, the prophetic role of artists, self-liberation, the impact of the Pre-Socratics, and the divine essence of man in both authors' literary creations. Finally, Sikelianos' 'Delphic Idea', for which Miller developed such an interest in the 1940s, is also analyzed.

Chapter 4 deals with the unrenowned influence of authors such as Pericles Yannopoulos, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Pandelis Prevelakis on both Durrell and Miller. It also explores the personal and literary links that Durrell and Miller established with two poets of

a younger generation, Nikos Gatsos and Odysseas Elytis. All the Greek writers studied in this chapter show a deep quest to find the essence of their land and their people, a quest which Durrell and Miller would also reflect in their own writings.

The fifth chapter is devoted to George Seferis, the poet who had a closer personal connection to both Durrell and Miller. Firstly, this part of the dissertation gives an account of Miller's discovery of the country and his contact with some remarkable figures of the Greek intellectual circles of that time. It also shows Durrell's and Miller's social interaction in Athens, and the later experience of exile from the perspective of Durrell and Seferis. Then, this chapter addresses Seferis' work and Durrell's pioneering translations of the Greek poet. Seferis' poetry and his prose writing (his essays and personal diaries) are discussed in parallel with Durrell's and Miller's exploration of similar issues, such as the notion of 'void', myth, landscape, and each author's conception of 'light'. Seferis' crucial concept of 'journey', as an inner voyage and a collective spiritual pilgrimage, is also analyzed.

Finally, the last chapter draws some conclusions about the results of this research and the contribution of this dissertation to its field of study.

At present, many decades after Durrell's and Miller's arrival in Greece, most of the witnesses of that time have fallen silent. Fortunately, their writings remain and therefore I consider it necessary to weave the links among them, studying their words, and sometimes, even going beyond their silences. As the narrator of Durrell's Justine says: 'Does not everything depend on our interpretation of the silence around us?'⁷ Luckily, like him, we have a palimpsest of voices that allows us to build the picture of that decisive encounter.

⁷ Lawrence Durrell, The Alexandria Quartet (London: Faber, 2005) 195. Further references to the Quartet will be from this edition, unless otherwise indicated.

1. Durrell's and Miller's Introduction to Greece.

Kostis Palamas: An Intellectual Reference

1.1. Lawrence Durrell's Arrival in Greece.

After a rough voyage from England, Lawrence Durrell and his wife Nancy landed on Corfu in March 1935. Less than a week later, Durrell's mother and his three siblings would join them. It was their first contact with the Mediterranean world. The previous summer, Durrell's friends George and Pamela Wilkinson had settled on Corfu, the destination of their honeymoon bicycle trip across Europe. George had finished a book about their travel experience to be illustrated with the photographs Pamela had taken along the way, and he wrote to Durrell to let him know about the island, inviting him to go there 'for a spell'.⁸

Early uprooted from India, where he had been born and spent his childhood, being the son of a colonial engineer, Durrell never felt at home in the land of his ancestors, as he often remarked since his early works and throughout his whole life as a British expatriate. Durrell got excited with the idea of leaving England and moving southwards and he convinced his family that inexpensive Corfu was a perfect place to live for a few years. In a letter to George, Durrell showed clearly his enthusiasm:

Corfu is the ideal place to use as a base for Mediterranean exploration: Nancy is rabid to examine the traces of early Byzantine painting down that coast of Greece, while I am mad to get to Knossos and examine the traces of [the] Minoan civilization [...].⁹

The Durrells soon got used to the island and its welcoming social life. Their blissful existence there would be portrayed by Lawrence Durrell in Prospero's Cell. A Guide to the Landscape and Manners of the Island of Corfu, among other writings, and by his youngest brother, the naturalist and writer Gerald Durrell, in the so-called Corfu trilogy, including the funny bestseller My Family and Other Animals, Birds, Beasts and Relatives and The Garden of the Gods, and also in a pair of short stories, "The Birth of a Title" and "The Birthday Party," published in his collection of memories Fillets of Plaice, a title which was incidentally suggested by his brother Lawrence, punning on Spirit of Place, Lawrence

⁸ Letter from George Wilkinson to Lawrence Durrell, 7 September 1934, Lawrence Durrell Collection, British Library.

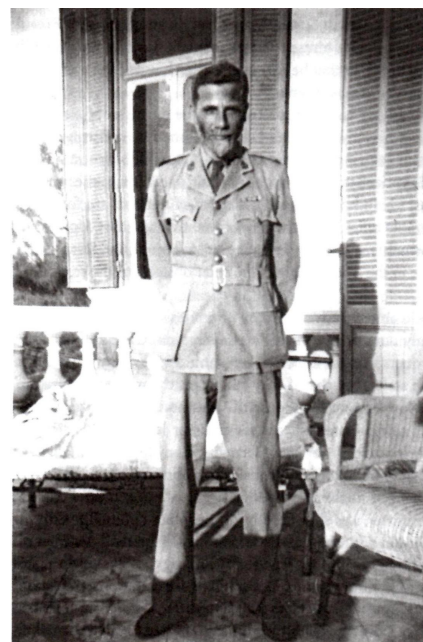
⁹ Lawrence Durrell, Spirit of Place. Mediterranean Writings (London: Faber, 1971) 29.

Durrell's own compilation of letters and other materials which had been edited in 1969 by Alan Thomas.

The family gradually got settled, helped by Spiros Chalikiopoulos, known as Spiro Americanos because he had lived in Brooklyn, where he had learned his basic English. Spiros would be their taxi driver and guide. Durrell and Nancy spent a lot of their time with the Wilkinsons. With them, they started discovering the island. It was precisely George who introduced Dr Theodore Stephanides to the Durrells.

Like Durrell, Stephanides had been born in India, where his father, a native of Thessaly, worked for an international company. His mother, the daughter of an expatriate Greek businessman, had been born and educated in London. After his father's retirement in 1907, they had moved from England to Corfu. Therefore, Stephanides had both English and Greek as his first languages.

Theodore Stephanides (1896-1983) was a radiologist, a scientist and a writer. His wide-ranging intellectual interests included such diverse fields as freshwater biology, astronomy, history or literature, among others. With regard to his scientific research, he worked for the anti-malaria campaign in Salonica and Cyprus, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation; he wrote several treatises and articles on biology and at present, his work is still a quoted reference. He has been credited with the discovery of three microscopic organisms, *Cytherois stephanidesi*, *Thermocyclops stephanidesi* and *Schizopera stephanidesi*; and in recognition of his work on astronomy, a crater on the moon, whose official name is 'Römer A', is also known as Stephanides' Crater.



Theodore Stephanides visiting Villa Ambron (Alexandria) in Sept. 1944.

Theodore Stephanides' production as a man of letters is similarly significant. He was among the first translators of Greek modern poetry into English. In this domain, his widely praised translations of several works by Kostis Palamas into excellent English rhyming verse, such as The Twelve Words of the Gipsy and The King's Flute, and his rendering into English of Vitsentzos Kornaros' romantic epic poem Erotokritos are some of his most notable contributions. As an author, Stephanides gained much praise after the publication of his poetry collections The Golden Face (1965), The Cities of the Mind (1969), and Worlds in a Crucible (1973). He also published a history of Corfu, a play, and a couple of titles of memoirs.

Stephanides was to become a lifelong friend of two Durrells, Gerald and Lawrence. In The Amateur Naturalist, the youngest of the Durrell siblings refers to Stephanides as ‘my mentor and friend, without whose guidance I would have achieved nothing.’ Indeed, it was him who introduced ten-years-old Gerald Durrell to the world of biology.

In 1982, in a talk at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Lawrence Durrell would mention Stephanides as one of his inspirational ‘uncles’, together with Henry Miller, George Seferis and George Katsimbalis¹⁰. Theodore Stephanides introduced Durrell to the local gentry of Corfu and later to the intellectual élite of Athens, where Durrell was able to meet, among others, the above-mentioned George Seferis and George Katsimbalis, and the painter and sculptor Niko Hadjikyriakos-Ghika (1906-1994), who became close friends of Durrell when he left Corfu and moved to the city.¹¹

Gradually, the Durrells started learning the local language in their daily life while interacting with the common people.¹² In the course of time, Lawrence Durrell would particularly reach a good level of fluency in Greek. In a letter sent to Henry Miller in October 1938, Durrell expresses his delight in being a ‘complete foreigner’:

I am alone for the time. Nancy has gone to Athens. I speak nothing but Greek. [...] I am taking with me an *Odyssey*, rewritten in simple Greek for schoolchildren, which I can follow easily. The language tastes sweet and sinewy.¹³

Naturally, many of Durrell’s friends by that time were English-speaking fellow expatriates and refugees: the Wilkinsons; the Armenian writer Gostan Zarian; the American painter Maurice Koster, with whom Durrell and Stephanides would discuss about art; and an American couple, Barclay and Jane Hudson. It was Barclay Hudson who lent Durrell a copy of Tropic of Cancer, a reading that would trigger his lifetime friendship with Henry Miller when Durrell decided to send a letter to him. It was the starting point of a long and fruitful correspondence between both writers.

Through Stephanides, Durrell met some members of the wealthy local families, such as the Aspioti,¹⁴ the Soufís, the Abramis, the Theotockis and the Palatianos. From the latter, Durrell was introduced to Dr Constantine Palatianos, who had a vast knowledge of English and Greek literature. In Stephanides’ opinion, ‘the composite figure of Count D. in Durrell’s

¹⁰ Ian S. MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell. A Biography (London: Faber, 1998) 651.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

¹² See, i.a., Joanna Hodgkin, Amateurs in Eden (London: Virago, 2013) 172.

¹³ Ian S. MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters, 1935-80 (London: Faber, 1989) 103.

¹⁴ His friend Marie Aspioti was a poet, a playwright and a magazine publisher. She was the director of the Corfu branch of the British Council from 1946 to 1955, when she resigned her position in protest against the British policies in Cyprus. In 1965, she published Lear’s Corfu: An Anthology Drawn from the Painter’s Letters, with a preface by Lawrence Durrell.

Prospero's Cell owes more to Dr Palatianos than to any other person.¹⁵ Durrell himself told Miller he had modelled the character of the Count on Palatianos.¹⁶ By the end of 1936, and during 1937, together with Palatianos, Gostan Zarian and a group of lovers of literature, Durrell organized the 'Ionian Banquets', a fortnightly meeting at the Perdika Restaurant¹⁷ in the centre of the town of Corfu. Unfortunately, the impending war forced many of the attendants to leave the island but these successful literary events took place for over a year.

In Prospero's Cell, it is the Count who tells Durrell that Corcyra¹⁸ was the inspiration for Prospero's island in Shakespeare's The Tempest. Sycorax, Caliban's mother's name, would be an anagram of Corcyra. Moreover, the shipwreck is located in the play between Tunis and Naples and Shakespeare's description of Prospero's island seems a fitting sketch of Corfu. The Count also identifies the 'water with berries in't' that Prospero used to give Caliban (Tmp. 1.2.335) as 'βύσσινο—this unusual Ionian drink.'¹⁹

By placing this scene in the middle of his island book, it might be apparently inferred that the expatriate author is trying to find connections between his newfound home and his motherland. Actually, the narrator does allude to some of the many cultural and historical links between Corfu and its last colonisers. Recurrently, Durrell makes reference to its colonial past, its Venetian opulence, and the special characteristics of Corfu that make this island different in some aspects from the rest of Greece:

There are no Cyclopean remains in Corcyra; consequently you are free from the oppressive blood guilt of Tyrins—its blocks of hewn stone drenched with blood: of Mycaenae with its burial grounds choked with bodies, and the obsessive numbing drone of bees in the dark tomb of Agamemnon. You are still in the Latin world.²⁰

However, despite this clear interest in singling out the character of the island, when the author describes the islander, he refers to 'the Greek', using only the term 'Corfiot' a few times.²¹ In fact, the former adjective appears on more than sixty occasions throughout the book. Similarly, Durrell's preference for 'Corcyra', the Latin transliteration of the Greek form 'Κόρκυρα', over the Italian one 'Corfu' is also meaningful. Actually, excluding the

¹⁵ Theodore Stephanides, Autumn Gleanings: Corfu Memoirs and Poems (Corfu, Gr.: Durrell Sch. of Corfu - ILDS, 2012) 35.

¹⁶ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 186.

¹⁷ This tavern was in a cross-street of Nikiforou Theotoki St., leading from the Esplanade to the Spilia, the old city gate by the Old Port. It was destroyed during bombardments in the Second World War. Re. these meetings, see Stephanides, Autumn Gleanings 35-39.

¹⁸ Corcyra [Κόρκυρα] is an ancient form of Κέρκυρα, the name of Corfu in modern Greek.

¹⁹ Lawrence Durrell, Prospero's Cell. A Guide to the Landscape and Manners of the Island of Corfu (London: Faber, 1962) 78-80. βύσσινο is both the juice of sour cherries with sugar water and the liqueur made with them. See also MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

²¹ The alternative word 'Corcyrean' is also used on a small number of occasions.

“Appendix for Travellers”, the word ‘Corfu’ appears exclusively in quotations or when it is used to refer to Corfu town. Only an exception can be found, in the first line of the book, and it is understandable since it helps English readers to locate the island easily.²²

From the first page to the last ones, Greece appears all through Prospero’s Cell. As early as the second page, Durrell reveals the role of Corfu in his approach to Greece:

We have chosen Corcyra perhaps because it is an ante-room to Aegean Greece with its smoke-grey volcanic turtle-backs lying low against the ceiling of heaven.²³

The first chapter, “Divisions upon Greek Ground”, is the picture of an arrival in Greece through the landscape and singularities of Corfu, which are distilled all over the book, but Prospero’s Cell ends in Egypt. “Epilogue in Alexandria” brings readers to the time spent in that city after leaving Greece because of war. This epilogue offers another glance back at his stay on the island and at large, on Greek land, but from the new perspective of distance. The author evokes some memories and emotions from Corfu but, in this last part, the place is only referred to as ‘our island’; on the contrary, Greece is mentioned repeatedly. Durrell voices his longing for ‘Greece as a living body,’ as a whole being amputated from him.²⁴

The narrator certainly leads us to see Corfu as Prospero’s island, brought up as a perfect image of himself on his Ionian home,²⁵ but, as shown above, Durrell’s concern is not with Shakespeare’s play, but with Corcyra, a Greek island through and through, seen against its living traditions and mythological past. This is very clearly seen, for instance, in the author’s recurrent comments to the homeric geography of the island. Durrell actually opens the chapter about its history by making the following remark: ‘Though chronologically we are separated from Ulysses by hundreds of years in time, yet we dwell in his shadow.’²⁶

Many critical and historical studies have argued convincingly that present Corfu was ancient Phaeacia, the land of the Phaeacians, that is, the meeting place of Odysseus and

²² Curiously, in my edition of the work, the word ‘Corfu’ is used in the subtitle on the cover, whereas on the title page, in the same subtitle, it is replaced by ‘Corcyra’.

²³ L. Durrell, Prospero’s Cell 12.

²⁴ ‘The loss of Greece has been an amputation. [...] Here we miss Greece as a living body’ (*ibid.*, 131).

²⁵ In a letter to Miller from July 1940, when discussing The Tempest, Durrell says: ‘Here is this outcast holy man in his cell on Corcyra; his retreat is really voluntary, because he is dealing with reality, his many inner selves.’ See MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 140. Shakespeare was one of Durrell’s favourite readings. A ‘huge facsimile Shakespeare’ was among the titles he assembled in 1934 in order to bring them to Corfu ‘for study and delight’ (see L. Durrell, Spirit of Place 29). In a letter to a friend, the bibliophile Alan G. Thomas, dated 1935, Durrell tells him that his ‘big Shakespeare is the rage of the town’ and that two people want to have facsimile editions like his. Next, he asks him to send a copy of Modern Greek Self-taught (Lawrence Durrell Collection of the British Library, 73113, vol. XXII). In another letter from the same period, Thomas is asked to send ‘a set of the plays [Shakespeare’s] in the Temple pocket edition’ (see MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 114).

²⁶ L. Durrell, Prospero’s Cell 59. See also *ibid.*, 18, 59-60, 62-63, and 64-65.

Nausicaä in Homer's work. As soon as the 5th century BC, the Athenian historian Thucydides, in The Peloponnesian War, identified the old inhabitants of Corcyra as the Phaeacians (1.25.4). In fact, it is such a widely-accepted identification that many of the current Greek editions of The Odyssey refer to the Modern Greek name of Corfu, *Κέρκυρα*, instead of using 'Scheria' or 'Phaeacia'.

In the fifth chapter of Prospero's Cell (60), "History and Conjecture", Durrell surmises about the places of Corfu where Ulysses may have been. In this way, three towns compete for Ulysses and Nausicaa's meeting place, Kassopi (in the north), the bay of Mouse Island (south of Corfu town) and Paleokastritsa (on the north-western coast). Similarly, 'Fano, a few hours north of Paleocastrizza, is supposed to be Calypso's island—the sea-girt isle set with trees' (62). The distances may not coincide with those given in The Odyssey, but as Durrell says quoting Zarian's writings, 'it is necessary to this enchanted island that its landscape should be sweetened by such a fantasy...' (63). In fact, it is Durrell who tells his neighbour Anastasius that his daughter's school story is Homer's The Odyssey and that the story took place in their beloved Kerkira.²⁷ Beyond speculations, the author also makes reference to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus and Samuel Bochart when discoursing on the etymology of the names of the island:

According to Diodorus, the Sicilian, Kerkura, the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys was carried into the island by Neptune. Here she bore the loved Phaex who ruled over it calling it Korkura.

Bochart derives the two names Scheria and Kerkyra from the Phoenecian words 'scara' meaning 'commerce' and 'carcara' meaning 'abundance'. (PC 71)

In Prospero's Cell's journal entry for 28 September 1937, Durrell reminds an old popular legend about the beautiful Mouse Island, where, according to this story, Odysseus' 'weary rowers on their return from Ithaca were swallowed up in the stony wrath of Poseidon' (PC 67).²⁸ Off Paleokastritsa, he mentions another islet which resembles Homer's mythical petrified ship.²⁹ He explains that Zarian always takes his friends 'up the steep road to Lakones to gaze this 'motionless boat' (PC 67). Almost two decades after the publication of Prospero's Cell, in 1964, in a dialogue by letter between Theodore Stephanides and Durrell about the place of Ulysses' disembarkment on Phaeacia, the former expresses his agreement with the latter about Paleokastritsa as the only possible location of that scene,

²⁷ On this matter, see, *ibid.*, Durrell's quotation of Lithgow's description of Corfu (1632), which alludes to Corfu as the land of 'Alcino,' the 'poet who so benignly received Ulysses after his shipwreck' (69).

²⁸ This and further references of parenthetical documentation referring to 'PC' allude to Prospero's Cell.

²⁹ Durrell also mentions Procopius' incredulity about the 'petrified bark of Ulysses' in the sixth century A.D. (PC 71-72).

according to the descriptions provided by Homer. He adds that Dr Palatianos once told him about a low hill near Paleokastritsa called Athana, the Doric form of 'Athena', a word which, in *The Odyssey*, stands for a sanctuary.³⁰

In the following missive, Stephanides gives Durrell additional information on the islet mentioned above, including a sketch map:

NW of Palaeocastritsa there is a small island called Kraviá, very probably from the word karávi, boat. According to some legends this is the ship which was turned to stone when it returned to Scheria after taking Odysseus to Ithaca. And in fact it is very like a ship in full sail as it is made of some sort of white limestone. The first time I ever saw it was from the village of Lákones above Palae[o]castritsa on a fine day with the sun shining. I was told that it was a ship and I actually believed it. It looked exactly, in the distance, like a small ship with a big white triangular sail. It was only when I noticed, after about ten minutes, that it had not moved, that I understood it was a tiny island. It is well worth while going up to Lákones just to see this island and also the really wonderful view from up there.³¹

Theodore Stephanides played a relevant role in Durrell's introduction to Greece. Not only did Durrell learn eagerly from Stephanides' vast knowledge of Greek culture and history, but he also found in him an open door to modern Greek literature. As a lover of poetry, and also as a follower of the liberal ideas of the leader of Greek national liberation movement Eleftherios Venizelos, Stephanides had many friends in the Venizelist literary circles in Athens.

1.2. Durrell's First Contact with Modern Greek Literature.

Although it is known that Durrell had a wide knowledge of Greek and Latin classical works, it is not clear whether he had read any modern Greek author before moving to Corfu. Durrell's first reading of a contemporary Greek writer might have come before his residence in Greece, through E.M. Forster's *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923), which includes an essay on C.P. Cavafy and translations of the poems "The God Abandons Antony," "Alexandrian Kings," "In the Month of Athyr," "The City," and "Ithaca".³² Although it is known that Durrell was well-acquainted with the book,³³ there is no evidence of the date he first read it.

In any case, the first references to Cavafy and other contemporary Greek poets in Durrell's writings, or in the critical and biographical works about the author, are from the

³⁰ Théodore Stéphanides, *Lettres à Lawrence Durrell [1961-1982]* (Paris: PU de Paris 10-Gavrielides, 2006) 92.

³¹ Letter from T. Stephanides to L. Durrell, dated 17 June 1964, Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell (Série Correspondance, Classeur 5, 14), Université Paris Ouest (Nanterre, France). Unpublished in its original language, but it also appears in French and Greek in Stéphanides, *Lettres à Lawrence Durrell* 100.

³² The last two poems are only partially translated.

³³ Durrell mentions it, for instance, in an interview with Robert McDonald, see Earl G. Ingersoll, ed. *Lawrence Durrell: Conversations* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP-Associated UP, 1998) 150.

Corfu period. When Durrell arrived in Greece in 1935, Cavafy had died only two years earlier and as Prof. Marios Byron Raizis (U. Athens) recalls, the old poet from Alexandria ‘was very much in the air of Greece’³⁴ in the 1930s. In an interview of 1975, Durrell himself acknowledges: ‘I first struck him [Cavafy] through Theodore Stephanides when I got to Corfu in 1935.’³⁵

From Ian S. Macniven’s and Gordon Bowker’s biographies, we know that Stephanides often recited poems by Cavafy and Palamas, among other authors, in his meetings with the Durrells.³⁶ The earliest reference by L. Durrell to a modern Greek author is found in an unpublished letter from Corfu to Alan Thomas, dated ‘early 1936’ by the latter. He announces Thomas with excitement: ‘Going to Athens this weekend to meet Kostas Palamas, the Greek Tennyson.’³⁷

This letter might be the only historical trace left of a meeting not mentioned anywhere else. Not only does it inform us about that meeting but it also tells that Durrell was familiar enough with Palamas’ poetry in 1936 to make that comparison with Alfred Tennyson.³⁸ Stephanides was very likely the one who made the meeting possible, as a well-known admirer and translator of Palamas’ works into English. He also shared with Palamas his political views, since Palamas, like many other authors of the Generation of the 1880s, was a Venizelist.

Another firm supporter of Venizelos and good friend of Stephanides who may have been involved in that meeting in Athens was George Katsimbali (1899-1978), who Henry Miller would make world-famous as the central character of The Colossus of Maroussi. Katsimbali and Stephanides had met for the first time during the First World



Katsimbali with Durrell in Athens.

³⁴ Marios Byron Raizis, “Lawrence Durrell and the Greek Poets: A Contribution to Cultural History,” Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World (London: Associated UP, 2004) 241.

³⁵ Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 149.

³⁶ See MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 137-138 and Gordon Bowker, Through the Dark Labyrinth: A Biography of Lawrence Durrell (NYC: St. Martin’s, 1997) 62.

³⁷ Letter by L. Durrell to Alan Thomas, dated early 1936, Lawrence Durrell Collection (73113, vol. XXII), British Library.

³⁸ We find the same analogy between Palamas and Lord Tennyson in another philhellene’s work, Roumeli (1966), by a Durrell’s friend from his time in Egypt, the British writer Patrick Leigh Fermor. See Fermor, Roumeli: Travels in Northern Greece (NYC: NY Review, 2006) 153.

War on the Macedonian front, where both of them served in the same battery of the Greek artillery. Apart from being the great conversationalist portrayed by Miller, Katsimbalis was also a patron and an influential promoter of many Greek writers, such as Seferis and Odysseus Elytis. He was a dedicated bibliographer too. His bibliographies of Palamas,³⁹ Seferis, Cavafy, Angelos Sikelianos, Nikos Kazantzakis, *et al.*, are still works of reference.

Katsimbalis' name is unavoidably connected to his literary journal, *Ta Néa Grámmata* (*New Letters*), which was launched in March 1935. Curiously, in the May-June 1936 special double issue of *Ta Néa Grámmata* on Kostis Palamas (nos. 5-6), there is information about a series of lectures which Katsimbalis had organized that spring in order to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the publication of Palamas' first collection of poems. One of them was given by Sikelianos at the Parnassus Society on the 3rd of April. Unfortunately, Durrell did not use to write the date on his letters, but since we know his aforementioned letter to Alan Thomas was from early 1936, it is clear that Durrell's meeting with Palamas coincided with the period around that anniversary.

1.3. Kostis Palamas and His Image of the City.

Kostis Palamas (1859-1943) was born in Patras (Greece) but he lived most of his life in Athens.⁴⁰ In the 1880s, he worked as a journalist and published his first collection of verses, Songs of My Fatherland (1886). In 1897, he was appointed secretary of the University of Athens, where he worked until his retirement in 1928. In the course of years, Palamas would become a very prolific and highly influential writer.

By the time of the above-mentioned Durrell's letter to Alan Thomas, Palamas was a 77-years-old man and he was considered the national bard of Greece.⁴¹ Durrell had certainly read some of his work in English through Stephanides' and Katsimbalis' translations. In a conversation with Michael Haag, Durrell himself confessed that he had been introduced to Cavafy through the translation of Katsimbalis and Stephanides,⁴² and we may add that his first acquaintance with Palamas came in the same way. By 1925, Stephanides and Katsimbalis had edited and translated the poet from Patras in Poems by Kostas Palamas and by 1926, they had published another collection of modern Greek poetry in English entitled

³⁹ Katsimbalis was the founder and first chairman of the Kostis Palamas Foundation in Athens, which holds the poet's archive and is devoted to publishing and promoting his works. He also worked with Stephanides on the translation of some of Palamas' books into English.

⁴⁰ Sometimes transliterated Kostas Palamas.

⁴¹ See, for example, Edmund Keeley, Inventing Paradise: The Greek Journey 1937-47 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2002) 37. Palamas was fourteen times nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature (1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1940); three of them (in 1928, 1930 and 1935), he was proposed as a nominee by a Nobel Prize laureate, the Swedish poet and novelist Carl Gustaf Verner von Heidenstam.

⁴² Michael Haag, Alexandria: City of Memory (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2004) 217.

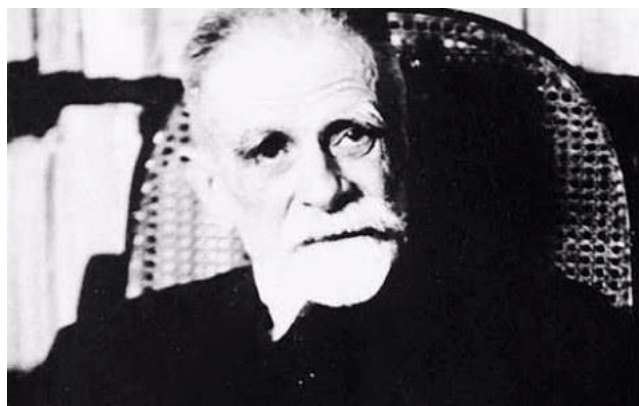
Modern Greek Poems.⁴³ The latter was an anthology of poems by several authors, including, just to name a few remarkable ones, five poems by Palamas (“From *Iambs ans Anapaests*”, “From *A Hundred Voices*”, “From *The Twelve Lays of the Gipsy*”,⁴⁴ “Evening Fire”, and “I Love Thee”), one by Cavafy (“Ithaca”), and one by Seferis’ father, Stelios Seferiades (“I Stand before the North Wind”). The 1926 compilation also included four poems by Stephanides (“The Figurehead”, “The Ancient Song”, “The Tear-jug”, and “The Last Man”).⁴⁵ The book carried the dedication ‘To Kostas Palamas, greatest poet of modern Greece.’⁴⁶ It should be pointed out that Stephanides’ and Katsimbali’s anthology was the first one in the twentieth century focusing on modern Greek writers and it would remain the only one available until 1946, when Durrell privately printed a brief selection of poems by Sikelianos and Seferis.

Stephanides’ and Katsimbali’s 1925 and 1926 editions received good reviews. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, published by Cambridge UP on behalf of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, saluted both translations in its section “Notices of Books”:

These selections from modern Greek poets are very welcome, for this poetry is very little known in England, though it possesses many features which should appeal to lovers of Greece. The renderings seem excellent [...]

Palamas is a deeper poet than the others included in the selections [...]⁴⁷

In that review, Palamas was given special attention and three of his works were highlighted: Songs of My Fatherland, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy and The King’s Flute. In Greece, Palamas was acknowledged as the doyen on modern Greek letters and his prevalence in translations also reflects that position. Apart from two works by Sikelianos and a few poems by Cavafy and other authors, it is mostly Palamas’ work we find in English translation up to the 1940s. Before Stephanides’ and Katsimbali’s translation from 1925, from



Kostas Palamas.

⁴³ Both titles were privately printed in London by Hazell, Watson and Viney.

⁴⁴ This title would be translated by Stephanides and Katsimbali as The Twelve Words of the Gipsy in their later rendering of the whole work (1974).

⁴⁵ The full list of contents is provided by the National Book Centre of Greece (EKEBI) on its website: *Archive of Greek Books in Translation*. EKEBI. Web. 22 Jul. 2014.

<<http://www.ekebi.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=NODE&cnode=470&clang=1&t=701>>.

⁴⁶ Haag, 217.

⁴⁷ Rev. of Poems by Kostas Palamas and Modern Greek Poems, comp. and trans. Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbali. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* Jan. 1926: 287.

1919 to 1923, Aristides E. Phoutrides had already published four titles with renderings of Palamas in English: Life Immovable (first part), “A Man’s Death” (prose), A Hundred Voices and Other Poems (from the second part of Life Immovable) and the play Royal Blossom or Trisevyene.⁴⁸

While dealing with the international circulation of modern Greek authors, and regarding Aristides Phoutrides (1887-1923), it has to be remembered that Phoutrides was the first scholar to publish notable critical works on modern Greek letters in the USA. He taught classical languages at Harvard and Yale, receiving numerous distinctions. Interestingly, his friendship with Palamas would lead Phoutrides from his initial support of puristic Greek (kathareuoussa) to an appreciation of demotic Greek (the spoken language).

In fact, Palamas played an important role in the so-called ‘Language Question’, which had been latent since the second half of the eighteenth century and came to polarize the Greek society during the first decades of the twentieth century. Even today, despite legislation reforms in the 1970s and 1980s, the language issue still is sometimes a matter of discussion. Although two positions are often identified, as Roderick Beaton⁴⁹ argues, there were different proposals. Whereas some advocated a return to Ancient Greek, others were in favour of a purification of the spoken language by replacing all foreign loan words by Greek ones and restoring the ancient spelling and many ancient words that had been long out of use. Finally, demotic Greek would impose itself in all fields, that is, the modern language, the direct descendant of the language used in the Greek peninsula and the islands of the eastern Mediterranean from at least *c.* 1300 BC. Except in his early work, Palamas always wrote in demotic Greek and drew much inspiration for his poetical work from folk-songs and ballads, becoming an important figure in the development of the vernacular language as a means of literary expression.

Being the dominant author in Greek poetry for over fifty years, Palamas’ works were a constant reference for the intellectual life of his time. On Corfu —which by the way, Palamas also identified as Scheria⁵⁰— his name would probably be often mentioned in the literary gatherings at the Perdika Restaurant. In a letter to Alan Thomas, Durrell told him that, together with Gostan Zarian, they were ‘starting a big anthology-journal called EOS

⁴⁸ Life Immovable (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1919); “A Man’s Death,” Modern Greek Stories (NY: Duffield, 1920); A Hundred Voices and Other Poems (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1921); and Royal Blossom or Trisevyene (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1923).

⁴⁹ Roderick Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1999) 296-365.

⁵⁰ About Corfu, Palamas says: ‘the Homeric song holds there more firmly than elsewhere its distinctive characteristics [...] Superior are the poets of the Heptanese [Ionian islands], heirs to the lyre of Demodocus, which gladdened the hearts of the Phaeacians and brought tears to the eyes of Odysseus.’ In a sonnet of his sequence “Homelands” (“Πατρίδες”, 1895), the poet refers to the Ionian islands as ‘there where Homer’s Phaeacians are still living, / and East with a kiss mingles with West,’ qtd. in David Ricks, The Shade of Homer: A Study in Modern Greek Poetry (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004) 48-49.

[...]. English, French, Greek and Italian: an almanac for five continents.’⁵¹ In the same month, in a letter to Miller, Durrell also announced his plans to launch that locally-printed journal but he complained about a certain economic law that apparently made it difficult:

We were on the point of starting a quarterly calendar called EOS, for which we were going to ask you & Fraenkel and Saroyan and others for material, but the Fascists intervened with a comic economic law which doesn’t permit you to send books outside the country unless you receive them back!!! [...] Pity, we had the best poets and writers of everywhere, including Greece, Palamas and Co.⁵²

The severe restrictions imposed by the authoritarian Metaxas regime, which ruled Greece from 4 August 1936 until the German occupation in 1941, and also the departure of some members of the literary group involved in the production of the journal, finally frustrated the project and no issue of *EOS* was ever published. However, it is interesting to read that some Greek authors had been considered by Durrell as contributors to it, and particularly, the only name he gives to Miller, showing Durrell’s interest in Palamas at that time.

In 1937, Henry Miller, the Austrian writer and Miller’s Paris friend Alfred Perlès, and Durrell became co-editors of a golfing magazine called *The Booster*, which was the house organ of the American Country Club of France. Basically, it was intended to publish the club news and some advertisement. Perlès had been given full creative freedom, provided the bulletin devoted two pages of each number to news related to the institution. They published their own work and that of friends, as well as unpaid contributions from several writers. After some issues, when the club’s manager had had enough of the highly provocative free spirit of the new editorial staff, he threatened a lawsuit if they did not stop using the name of the club’s magazine.⁵³ So in April 1938, *The Booster* was renamed *Delta* at Durrell’s suggestion,⁵⁴ perhaps imagining their publication as a river, flowing—or rather overflowing—into the sea.⁵⁵ It was in that first number of *Delta* where Durrell would succeed in publishing Palamas, together with other poets, including Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, and the Swedish writer Artur Lundkvist, *inter alia*.⁵⁶

From 1969 to 1982, Stephanides published four more translations of Palamas’ works into English: Three Poems (including “The Palm Tree”, “The Chains”, and “The Satyr or

⁵¹ Letter by L. Durrell to Alan Thomas, dated December 1936, Lawrence Durrell Collection (73113, vol. XXII), British Library.

⁵² MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 32.

⁵³ See Alfred Perlès, My Friend Henry Miller. An Intimate Biography (New York: John Day, 1956) 175-184.

⁵⁴ Mary V. Dearborn, The Happiest Man Alive: A Biography of Henry Miller (New York: Simon, 1991) 195.

⁵⁵ Under the new name, three more issues would appear, the last one coming out at Easter in 1939, only some months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

⁵⁶ *Delta* Apr. 1938. Rpt. in The Booster (NY: Johnson, 1968).

Song of Nakedness”), The Twelve Words of the Gipsy, A Hundred Voices, and The King’s Flute;⁵⁷ the first two and the last one, being translated by Stephanides in collaboration with Katsimbalis, and the third one, only by himself. Although Durrell in his later years barely kept a small part of his books, his personal library, which has been preserved by the Université Paris Ouest, still holds a copy of Palamas’ Three Poems,⁵⁸ inscribed by Stephanides with friendly greetings from Katsimbalis: ‘X from the Colossus of Maroussi!’

In Palamas, Durrell found a powerful voice calling for a renewal, a revival that could only come from creation and acceptance of life. As Michael Haag argues:

A powerful chord was touched in Durrell, who felt himself a ‘lost fragment’, by Palamas’ longing for rebirth and integration, for which the answer lay, said Palamas, in the poet’s creative powers, his redemption of the world through his affirmation of life, a process requiring him ‘to feel, to suffer and to accept’.⁵⁹

In The Twelve Words of the Gipsy,⁶⁰ which is often considered Palamas’ masterpiece, the poet adopts the voice of a free-thinking gipsy who sets out on a philosophical journey while he pursues his dream. The hero of this long epic poem resembles Durrell’s Lawrence Lucifer in The Black Book. Like Palamas’ gipsy, Lawrence Lucifer ‘is successively a destroyer and a creator,’ as Palamas describes his character.⁶¹ The gipsy is both the prophet who refuses social degradation or fanaticism and the artist who creates a new world. In the same way as Palamas’ protagonist, Durrell’s main narrator escapes death through a process of inner change involving an agon. ‘This is an *agon* for the dead, a chronicle for the living,’⁶² says Durrell’s narrator about his writing. In a 1937 letter to Miller, Durrell revealed his long-term creative scheme. ‘I have planned AN AGON, A PATHOS, AN ANAGNORISIS. If I write them they should be: The Black Book, The Book of Miracles, The Book of the Dead.’⁶³ As we know from their letters, ‘The Book of the Dead’ was the original title of The Alexandria Quartet, and later in his life, Durrell’s projected ‘Book of Miracles’, The Avignon Quintet, would be also published, thus accomplishing his early design which involved *struggle*, *suffering* and *awareness*.

⁵⁷ Three Poems (London: privately published, 1969); The Twelve Words of the Gipsy (London: Oasis, 1974); A Hundred Voices (London: privately published, 1976); and The King’s Flute (Athens: Kostas Palamas Institute, 1982). With regard to A Hundred Voices [Εκατό φωνές], it is a collection of one hundred untitled eight-line poems included in Life Immovable [Η Αστάλυτη ζωή]. Stephanides and Katsimbalis had already published a translation of selection of poems from A Hundred Voices in 1926.

⁵⁸ Numb. 1664 in the catalogue, Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell, Université Paris Ouest, Nanterre, Fr.

⁵⁹ Haag, 218.

⁶⁰ Ο Δωδεκάλογος του Γύφτου (1907).

⁶¹ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 15.

⁶² Lawrence Durrell, The Black Book (London: Faber, 1973) 20. Similarly, in the opening line of the book: ‘The agon, then. It begins.’ (*ibid.*, 19).

⁶³ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 65.

Likewise, in the 1959 preface to The Black Book, the author confesses: ‘The Black Book was truly an *agon* [...], a savage battle conducted in the interests of self-discovery’ (9). Durrell’s novel ends with Lawrence Lucifer’s awareness of his own present existence. In the morning of his Greek island he breathes ‘the durable, the forever, the enormous Now.’⁶⁴ In a similar way, in the Rhodope mountains, Palamas’ gipsy achieves his salvation and finds his place in the world by experiencing the harmony and unity of nature in a single moment.⁶⁵

The main background of The Twelve Words of the Gipsy is ‘the City’ in its decline, before falling to the Turks. It is not ‘the City’ Durrell would try to recreate in The Alexandria Quartet, but the great City of the Seven Hills. As Stephanides and Katsimbalis remind readers in their editorial endnotes, ‘in the Greek world, the City (with a capital “C”) has always meant Constantinople, the peerless queen of cities.’⁶⁶ Literally meaning the city of Constantine in honour of its re-founder, the Roman emperor Constantine I, *Κωνσταντινούπολις* was often shortened as ‘□ Πόλις’, the City.⁶⁷ Indeed, the modern Turkish name for the city, Istanbul, derives from the Greek phrase ‘εις την πόλιν’, meaning ‘into the City’ or ‘to the City’.

Although Palamas’ City is not Durrell’s one, the latter’s Alexandria noticeably echoes the gloomy views of a great Greek city in its decline. Like the ‘City of Sin’⁶⁸ portrayed by Palamas, Alexandria is sunk in vice, dullness and corruption. However, unlike Palamas’ Constantinople, Durrell’s City⁶⁹ seems unable to raise from its historical lethargy.

On the contrary, the City in Palamas’ poem is seen in the gipsy’s prophecy as reaching a new revival by returning to its roots:

Then, having now no other rung
From which to fall still lower
Down the ladder of Misfortune,
You shall be summoned to an upward climb.
Great wings upon your shoulders shall unfold —
Your glorious wings of old!⁷⁰

In poem 43 of A Hundred Voices, the City is also in the poet’s mind:

O City! Vision of the twinned blue seas,
Heart of my Native Land, the Sultan’s yoke

⁶⁴ Durrell, The Black Book 244.

⁶⁵ See Kostas Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy (London: Oasis, 1974) 180-181.

⁶⁶ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 191.

⁶⁷ In The Revolt of Aphrodite, Durrell also uses this name, Polis, to refer to the contemporary city.

⁶⁸ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 23.

⁶⁹ The City in Durrell’s The Alexandria Quartet is also related to Cavafy’s poem “The City”, which will be discussed further on in the section addressing the Alexandrian poet.

⁷⁰ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 134-135.

Has shamed you and Decline has drained your soul,
But the Undying Eagle knows you still⁷¹

From the same collection, poem 30 may as well be read by drawing a parallel between Constantinople and Troy or Mycenae:

“The stubborn and eternal round of January and May
Rules History as ruthlessly as it the Lily rules.
As long as Earth turns in the sun, beneath the careless skies
Mycenae and her sister Troy will ever rise and fall.
Aye, you are not the first, O shards, nor will you be the last
Of cities, radiant in their prime, that paled beyond recall!”⁷²

In Palamas’ work, past is not devoid of life, it may come up again anytime, as fresh as ‘April’s dews’:

“In these coffin-shells imprisoned
And enshrouded in these scrolls,
— Oh mourn them not as dead with bitter sighing —
Are the limpid springs of Thought,
The cloudless skies of Art:
The Beautiful and the Undying.

[...]

“From the coastline of Ionia,
From the breeze of Attic air
That wafts to all a soul, with its own flying,
From Hellas’ soil they sprang,
Rhythm, Wisdom and the Word:
The Beautiful and the Undying.”⁷³

In a like manner, in Durrell’s works, thoughts and emotions are born from the eternal spirit of places. In Justine, Durrell gives a clear image of his notion of landscape: ‘We are the children of our landscape; it dictates behaviour and even thought in the measure to which we are responsive to it’ (39-40). Thus, in both authors, landscape is not a mere background scenery for human actions but rather a view of the Whole to which all beings belong.

While Durrell was writing The Black Book in 1936 and during the first weeks of 1937, Palamas’ hero was very probably in his mind, as was the protagonist of Tropic of Cancer. Henry Miller and Durrell were to become close friends, especially after they met for the first time in Paris in early August 1937.

⁷¹ Palamas, A Hundred Voices 49.

⁷² *Ibid.* 36.

⁷³ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 73.

1.4. Henry Miller, Kostis Palamas, and the Hour of Man.

For a long time, Durrell had been asking Miller to come to Corfu and the latter finally decided in 1939 to travel to Greece.⁷⁴ On 19 July he landed at Piraeus and three days later, at Corfu town. Miller would start his own journey across Greece, an experience as he had never imagined. Guided by Durrell, Stephanides, Katsimbalis and their friends, Miller discovered the land and he was able to listen to some of the voices of modern Greek poetry, becoming acquainted with their names, and also with some of the prevailing issues of debate in the Greek intellectual life of the time. In his journey diary, Miller captures the essence of conversations in those gatherings:

the discussion always seems to revolve about Byzanze. Byzanze is the cultural link. But the pendulum swings back and forth—from Mycenae to Periclean Greece, from Minoan times to the revolution, from Hermes Trismegistus to Pericles Yanopoulos or Palamas or Sekelianos.⁷⁵

The weight of Byzantium in the Greek culture as a connection between ancient Greece and the contemporary country is indeed a crucial theme for many Greek authors in the 30s, but these lines also show some of the writers he was introduced to. Having Katsimbalis as a travelmate and interlocutor, Miller probably heard much about Palamas' work. While on Corfu, we know that Durrell gave Miller The Odyssey to read,⁷⁶ but Stephanides' and Katsimbalis' English translations of the poet from Patras were also most likely in Miller's hands and/or recited to him by Stephanides. In The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller gives a picture of the latter:

One day Theodore turned up—Dr. Theodore Stephanides. He knew all about plants, flowers, trees, rocks, minerals, low forms of animal life, microbes, diseases, stars, planets, comets and so on. Theodore is the most learned man I have ever met, and a saint to boot. Theodore has also translated a number of Greek poems into English. It was in this way that I heard for the first time the name Seferis, which is George Seferiades' pen name. (15)

As Miller relates, Stephanides introduced him to Seferis and other modern Greek authors; among them, inevitably, Stephanides' most admired poet, Palamas.

One of the most striking aspects of Palamas' work is the fact that mortals are sometimes able to reach the level of gods through a creative journey of discovery. The best

⁷⁴ A close friend and neighbour of Villa Seurat (Paris), the American painter Betty Ryan (1914-2003), had also talked enthusiastically to Miller about her stay in Greece. In the first lines of The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller acknowledges that he 'would never have gone to Greece had it not been for a girl named Betty Ryan' (3). Ryan always remained a philhellene and she actually spent the last 25 years of her life in the Greek island of Andros.

⁷⁵ Henry Miller, "First Impressions of Greece," Sextet: Six Essays (London: Calder, 1980) 60.

⁷⁶ MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 216.

example of this is found in The Twelve Words of the Gipsy, when Palamas' hero undergoes a process of resurrection that elevates him to divine worlds.

Approach, O Man; view your reflected face
Within our eyes...
Your violin has upraised you to our own
Supernal skies!⁷⁷

Naturally, this ennoblement of men is only obtained by means of a conscious effort of self-regeneration prompted by their dreams of a higher life, as shown in one of the first poems of A Hundred Voices:

My only dream a surge towards the stars,
Towards You, towards Beauty, towards All!
Yet I, shamed by one urge, doomed by one dread,
I, heir of impure lineage, while I kneel
Disrated by mortality, I feel
A breeze's azure wings above my head.⁷⁸

In Palamas', as in Lao-Tzu's teachings,⁷⁹ the initiate only achieves transcendence through humility:

Bend low if you would rise.
Your victory it will be, rebel, to admit
That you must first submit!⁸⁰

When the gipsy finally becomes 'the master'⁸¹ of himself by practising self-control and acceptance, then, he becomes the new Man. This idea of a unique generation of men and women⁸² called to a 'new full life'⁸³ is recurrent in Palamas'. Henry Miller's The Colossus of Maroussi is precisely the discovery of that new and, at the same time, ancient Man. Ultimately, Miller's Colossus is a revelation of that everywhere-else-forgotten ancient Greek cosmic order in which human beings are an integral part of nature. Those ancient men, being in balance with the world, knowing their place in it, were able to enjoy a fuller existence. This idea would be also developed by Angelos Sikelianos and it will be further discussed in his chapter in relation to Miller's work, but this celebration of the hour of Man is not so evident in any other Greek poet as it is in Palamas.

⁷⁷ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 155.

⁷⁸ Palamas, A Hundred Voices 10.

⁷⁹ Incidentally, an important author for both Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell.

⁸⁰ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 40.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² In poem 95 of A Hundred Voices, Palamas sings the hour of womanhood, which will raise up women and men together, as in the writings by feminist Calirrhoe Parren, to whom the composition is dedicated.

⁸³ Palamas, The Twelve Words of the Gipsy 58.

However, Palamas would not live to see the times he announces at the The Twelve Words of the Gipsy. In his eighties, Palamas would see the beginning of a new world war and darker times awaited his country. In the morning of 28 October 1940, Italian troops invaded Greece. Three days later, on the 1st of November 1940, the national poet addressed Greek young people with a quatrain:

Lightly he carries amid the windstorm
That head aged by the disturbance of the world;
This message I will give you, I have none other to give,
Become intoxicated with the immortal wine of '21.⁸⁴

It was perhaps that same rebel spirit from March 1821, when the Greek War of Independence was declared, that helped the Greek soldiers to stop Mussolini's advance until Hitler's intervention in April 1940. In his preface to The Twelve Words of the Gipsy, Palamas declared: 'I cannot be the poet of myself alone; I am the poet of my age and race, and what I hold within me cannot be separated from the external world' (10). And actually he was, until his very funeral on 28 February 1943.⁸⁵

The event became a major act of resistance against the German occupation. Not only the intellectuals but also common Athenians gathered to stand beside his coffin, about 100,000 people, according to most historical accounts. The church service ended with Angelos Sikelianos' recitation of an elegiac poem written on the occasion of his fellow poet's death. Sikelianos' lines emphasizing the national symbolism of the ceremony: 'The terrible flags unfold in the air! / All of Greece rests on this coffin!' Sikelianos helped carrying the casket until the First Cemetery of Athens. When it was lowered to its resting place, Katsimbalis threw the first handful of earth into the grave and began to sing out the verses by Dionysios Solomos that had become the Greek national anthem, which had been banned by the German authorities. The crowd that crammed the place soon joined in. In a letter to Miller, Durrell recounted this episode as Katsimbalis had told him.



Palamas' funeral. Sikelianos (front left).

⁸⁴ My own trans. from Palamas, "To Our Youth" (Στη νεολαία μας), "Πρόσωπα και μονόλογοι," Άπαντα, vol. IA' (Athens: Μπίρης-Γκοβόστης, 1967) 194.

⁸⁵ See MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 193, and Keeley, Inventing Paradise 203-204.

Other bards would fill the front line of the modern Greek letters, but Palamas achieved to become himself the symbolical figure his gipsy stands for, emerging as the voice of a whole people.

2. Constantine P. Cavafy: Durrell's 'Poet of the City'

2.1. Cavafy's City and Durrell's 'Spirit of Place'.

The 1930s and 40s saw the rise of an author who would become one of the great names of modern literature, the Alexandrian Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933). A positive review by the writer Gregorios Xenopoulos in 1903 had introduced Cavafy to mainland Greece readers but he actually received little attention until the 1920s, when the generation of Kostas Karyotakis appreciated Cavafy's personal language and found it comparable to the new forms of lyrical expression they were seeking. His style was very different from that of Palamas and other Greek mainstream authors at that time, and his work had mainly been privately printed on broadsheets for his close friends in Alexandria, his first bound booklet of poems not appearing until 1917, but he would gradually gain recognition both abroad and in Greece. In 1926, Cavafy was awarded the silver medal of the Order of Phoenix for his contribution to Greek letters.⁸⁶

Cavafy's first collected edition of his 'canon' poems was published posthumously in Alexandria in 1935, two years after the poet's death. So, when that same year Lawrence Durrell settled on Corfu, he doubtlessly heard about its appearance from Stephanides and Katsimbalis. It was in fact the latter who published the first considerable bibliography of Cavafy in 1943.⁸⁷ However, in his literary circle, Cavafy would never replace the weight of Palamas. Curiously, Henry Miller, who acquainted himself with contemporary Greek literature through Katsimbalis and Seferis, does mention many Hellenic authors in his writings, including some great figures and also some who are far less known than Cavafy, but the Alexandrian's name is not quoted in any of his own writings.

On the contrary, in Durrell's case, the poet from the diaspora was probably the Greek writer who influenced him most. Interestingly, the first Greek author that the British lifelong expatriate translated into English was Cavafy, and it was before stepping on Egypt. In 1939, Durrell and Stephanides translated the poem "Waiting for the Barbarians," and published

⁸⁶ Apart from early contributions by Kampani (1903), Brissimizakis (1917), and the above-mentioned one in English by E.M. Forster (1923), the first significant critical and biographical works are from the 1930s-40s: Stavrou (1930), Malanos (1933, 1935), Lechonitis (1942), Panayotopoulos (1946), Pontani (1946), and Peridis (1948). See The Complete Poems of Cavafy, trans. Rae Dalven (New York: Harcourt, 1961) 233-234; and C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems, trans. Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard (London: Chatto-Random, 1998) 197-200.

⁸⁷ Katsimbalis was already working on that bibliography when he met Cavafy in 1932. Cavafy was in Athens, recuperating from an operation related to the throat cancer that would finally kill him. See Robert Liddell, Cavafy: A Critical Biography (London: Duckworth, 1974) 204, qtd. from Γ. Π. Κατσίμπαλη, Βιβλιογραφία Κ. Π. Καβάφη (Athens: 1943) 3.

their version in *The New English Weekly*.⁸⁸ The poem also appeared in *The Listener* (12 Oct. 1939). As early as that, Durrell seems delighted with Cavafy, ‘who does marvellous and uncommunicable things,’⁸⁹ but his arrival at the city of Antony and Cleopatra would definitely reinforce the importance of the Alexandrian in Durrell’s literary universe. It is not surprising, taking into account the central role that the city plays in Cavafy’s work.

Born in Alexandria to Greek parents, Cavafy also lived in England for five years in his childhood, and later, in his early twenties, for three years in Constantinople, where the family moved due to local unrest in Alexandria. In 1885, Cavafy returned to Alexandria and had to face the ruins of his former home, which had been burnt in the disturbances, losing all his books and papers. He would spend the rest of his life in Alexandria, only travelling abroad five times, for short stays in Athens, Paris and London.

Cavafy had his family roots in Constantinople and it was the first place where, after having spent his childhood wandering, he started researching his ancestry and forming his own identity. «Themes of my poetry were fashioned, and the area of my art was mapped out, in the wanton days of my youth», he would write later in his life.⁹⁰ In the historical capital of Hellenism, the so-called



Constantine Cavafy.

Queen City of the Greeks [*η βασίλισσα των πόλεων*], he may have found the inspiration for the image he would create of his own home town. In a poem written in 1896, “The Glory of the Ptolemies,” we read: ‘my city’s the greatest preceptor, queen of the Greek world.’⁹¹ Obviously, by referring to Alexandria as ‘the great preceptor’ (*‘διδάσκαλος’*), Cavafy alludes to the famous libraries⁹² that made of the city the cultural centre of the Greek civilization.

⁸⁸ See MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell* 242. Nevertheless, it must also be pointed out that a couple of poems by George Seferis, the other Greek poet who had most impact on Durrell, would also come out by the end of that year in trans. by Stephanides, Katsimbali & Durrell himself. Further details are given in the chapter on Seferis.

⁸⁹ MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell* 214.

⁹⁰ The Cavafy Archive. Center for Neo-Hellenic Studies. Web. 4 Aug. 2014. According to Robert Liddell, ‘one of the poet’s nieces [...] said that he used to speak with enthusiasm of Constantinople’ (33), where he had had ‘his first taste of freedom’ (48).

⁹¹ C. P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, ed. George Savidis (London: Chatto-Random, 1998) 28. Further references to Cavafy’s poems will be from this edition, unless otherwise indicated.

⁹² After the destruction of the legendary Royal Alexandrian Library, the Library of the Serapeum Temple and the Library of the Cesarion Temple guaranteed the city’s status as the world’s center for sciences and literature between the 1st and the 6th centuries AD.

However, using a very similar epithet to that of Constantinople to make reference to Alexandria is really meaningful. If Palamas' literary 'City' was Constantinople, Cavafy's is clearly his home one.

Two years before writing "The Glory of the Ptolemies," in 1894, Cavafy had written the draft of "The City," a poem that he would rewrite for sixteen years until his first publication in 1910. This was the poem he chose to open his first real booklet. Although the city in the poem is unnamed and no historical or geographical context is given by the author, the image it throws is that of the mythical Alexandria he already had in his mind and subsequently developed in his poetry. All the expressions related to personal feelings and his individual circumstances (*i.e.* 'here where I've spent half of my life') were cut out and replaced by larger images of failure and loss.⁹³

"The City" presents a man who is doomed to 'walk the same streets' where he has wasted his life and where his 'dead' heart 'lies buried.' Escaping is also pointless, since 'the city will always follow' him. As Seferis remarks, such a personification of the city recalls the mythical Furies: 'Cavafy's cities travel. They follow man like Eumenides.'⁹⁴ The city has marked him for life, stamping defeat and absence on his memory; it has become a part of himself. However, is the ultimate picture of the poem a hopeless one?

You said: "I'll go to another country, go to another shore,
find another city better than this one.
Whatever I try to do is fated to turn out wrong
and my heart—like something dead—lies buried.
How long can I let my mind moulder in this place?
Wherever I turn, wherever I look,
I see the black ruins of my life, here,
where I've spent so many years, wasted them, destroyed them totally."

You won't find a new country, won't find another shore.
This city will always pursue you.
You will walk the same streets, grow old
in the same neighbourhoods, turn grey in these same houses.
You'll always end up in this city. Don't hope for things elsewhere:
there's no ship for you, there's no road.
Now that you've wasted your life here, in this small corner,
you've destroyed it everywhere in the world. (22)

Apparently, the poem offers a man's discouraging situation but at the same time, the speaking voice that addresses him acts as an inner voice that leads that man to realize the

⁹³ About these earlier drafts, see Edmund Keeley, *Cavafy's Alexandria* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996) 17.

⁹⁴ George Seferis, *Δοκίμεις* [Essays], 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1974) 414.

futility of leaving, the absurdity of trying to forget or deny one's past. Therefore, the poem is fundamentally an exercise of understanding oneself.

The analogy that the author draws between the restricted 'here, in this small corner' and the much larger 'everywhere in the world' parallels the merging of individual and city, inner world and outer world. Travelling becomes senseless unless it is done inwards. Paradoxically though it may seem, a suffocating city turns to be a door to self-awareness. Essentially, "The City" denies the potentialities of searching a new beginning away, but in doing so, redirects him from eluding to facing his inner state.

In a personal note dated 28 April 1907, which was discovered by the editor George Savidis in Cavafy's archive, the poet reflects again on his city:

By now I've gotten used to Alexandria, and it's very likely that even if I were rich I'd stay here. But in spite of this, how the place disturbs me. [...]

I'd stay here (then again I'm not entirely certain that I'd stay) because it is like a native country for me, because it is related to my life's memories.⁹⁵

This note by Cavafy confirms what he expresses in "The City": his instinctive impulse to go away, and his love-hate bonds with Alexandria, which he regards as his homeland and his past, where his heart 'lies buried,' as the first person voice in the poem reveals. This identification with the city would become crucial in Cavafy's following productions.

One of the English writers who most clearly worked on that identification was Lawrence Durrell. From his very arrival in Alexandria as a new resident, when he was transferred there by the British Embassy in Cairo in October 1942, Lawrence Durrell saw the city as intimately associated to Cavafy. In a letter to Henry Miller dated May 23 1944, Durrell gives him an atmospherical description of the place and refers to his days there as a 'strange transition to Cavafy's Alexandria.'⁹⁶ In fact, in Cairo, Durrell had already had many conversations about Cavafy with Walter Smart, the Oriental Councillor of the British Embassy.⁹⁷ Smart had been the one who had hired Durrell for the post of Foreign Press Officer in the Publicity Section, in order to influence the Greek press in Egypt⁹⁸ and thus,

⁹⁵ Qtd. in Keeley, *Cavafy's Alexandria* 19.

⁹⁶ MacNiven, *The Durrell-Miller Letters* 173. Durrell's first time in Alexandria had been on the first of May 1941, though, when he arrived as a refugee with his wife Nancy and daughter Penelope, after escaping from war in Greece. However, they were soon transported to Cairo, where they spent their first year and a half in Egypt.

⁹⁷ Walter Smart was the Oriental Councillor of the British Embassy in Cairo from 1929 to 1945.

⁹⁸ According to the Greek Community of Alexandria [Ελληνική Κοινότητα Αλεξανδρείας, EKA], the Greek population of Alexandria was over 120,000 in the early 20th century and it reached about 150,000 in the 1940s. According to the official 1937 census, the total population of Alexandria was about 685,700. So the Greek community was a large demographic group in the city. During the Egyptian revolution of 1952, and with the Arab nationalist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, thousands of Greeks were forced to leave their country.

counteract the effects of German war propaganda. Smart was an enthusiast of poetry and the Durrells often visited his house, where they met other artists, among them, the Greek poet Elie Papadimitriou, and the travel writers Freya Stark and Patrick Leigh Fermor, the latter, then, an officer of the Special Operations Executive.⁹⁹ Like Nancy Durrell, Walter Smart's wife Amy was a painter and both women became good friends. As a newly-arrived novice diplomat, in 1926, Walter Smart had had the chance to be introduced to Cavafy and, forgetting his duties at the Cairo Embassy, he had spent several days talking with the poet about literature.¹⁰⁰ So, Durrell found in Smart a rich source of anecdotes about Cavafy and he was fascinated to listen to that living connection with the Alexandrian.

In Cairo, Durrell and two of his fellow exiles, the travel writer Robin Fedden and the poet Bernard Spencer, founded and co-edited a literary journal called *Personal Landscape*. In its eight numbers, from 1942 to 1945, they published some of their own creations and also other British writers', such as David Gwyn Williams, Terence Tiller, Robert Liddell, Dorian Cooke, and Hugh Gordon Porteus. Some Greek poets also appeared in *Personal Landscape*: George Seferis, Elie Papadimitriou¹⁰¹ and Cavafy. The latter would be represented in the journal by Amy Nimr Smart's commentary and rendering of six of his poems in "The Poetry of Cavafy" (1945, no 8, pp 14-20), and by Robert Liddell, Cavafy's future biographer, in his article "Note on Cavafy" (June 1942, no 3, 9-11). In 1945, an anthology based on that journal was published. Personal Landscape: An Anthology of Exile included some translations by George Seferis of another Greek poet, Angelos Sikelianos.¹⁰² Regarding Liddell, his connection to Durrell is particularly relevant. Liddell had been raised in Cairo but had known Durrell and many of his Greek friends, including Seferis, while working for the British Council in Athens, and he was also a good friend of the Smarts. Back in Egypt, encouraged by critic Timos Malanos, he started studying Cavafy.¹⁰³ In fact, Liddell was another key guide to Cavafy for Durrell.

When Durrell was asked in 1977 to participate in a film produced by Peter Adam for the BBC, he had the opportunity to return to Egypt to see again the places of his past. The documentary, which was inspired by Adam's previous production on Durrell's Greece, was called The Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell's Egypt and it was broadcast the following year by BBC2 in the programme "The Lively Arts".¹⁰⁴ Significantly, one of the places Durrell

⁹⁹ See MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 241-243.

¹⁰⁰ L. Durrell, Spirit of Place 72 and Haag, 135.

¹⁰¹ Elie Papadimitriou appeared three times in *Personal Landscape*; the first of them with "Anatolia" (March 1942, no 2), and the last one with "Four Epigrams from Internment" (1945, no 8).

¹⁰² MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 286.

¹⁰³ Liddell, 14; Haag, 220.

¹⁰⁴ In the film, Durrell is interviewed by Adam. A part of that interview was published in *The Listener* in 1978 and it is also rpt. in Peter Adam, "Creating a Delicious Amnesia," Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 173-181.

visited was the Greek Consulate in Alexandria in order to see a recreation of Cavafy's room. The poet's books had been rescued from his old flat in rue Lepsius. Durrell sat at Cavafy's desk, where the Alexandrian had written 'those famous poems, "Ithaca", "The Barbarians", "The God Abandons Antony", or best of all "The City", which is his real monument to modern Alexandria.'¹⁰⁵ At the poet's desk, Durrell scribbled a postcard to Henry Miller:

Here, as a lucky charm, is a line written on the very desk where Kavafis wrote "The Barbarians" and "The City". Alexandria is still full of luciferian charm and magic. Love Larry¹⁰⁶

Both quotations highlight the significance of Cavafy's work in Durrell's image of Alexandria and at the same time give readers a clue about some of the poems that Durrell sees as essential; all of them would surface in The Alexandria Quartet. With regard to "Waiting for the Barbarians", cited twice above, Durrell's second wife Eve would remark that it was 'his favourite of Cavafy's poems' during the time Durrell was in Alexandria.¹⁰⁷ "The City", which is mentioned in Durrell's introduction to Forster's Alexandria as well as in his card to Miller, is particularly important in Durrell's Alexandrian fiction, so it is not surprising that, in the former reference, the author's emphasis makes it stand out from the rest.

"The City" is recited by two of Durrell's characters, the narrator and Pursewarden,¹⁰⁸ and it is in fact the first whole poem that appears in translation by Durrell in the Quartet, at the end of Justine, in the section called "Workpoints". This rendering of the poem, which is also in the author's notebook¹⁰⁹ for the novel, is preceded by a warning: translations in the book are 'by no means literal', the purpose being 'to transplant' rather than to translate (201). After John Mavrogordato's translation of the poem, included in his selection The Poems (London: Hogarth, 1951), Durrell's one from 1957 was the second known full English rendering of "The City", since Forster's from 1923 was only a partial one. In his introductory note to his translations, Durrell praises Mavrogordato's 'fine thoughtful' work, which, according to the former, has 'freed' the poems 'for other poets to experiment with' (201). Anyway, beyond Durrell's personal shades of interpretation, his versions have

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence Durrell, "Introduction," in E.M. Forster, Alexandria: A History and a Guide (London: Tauris, 2014) xvi.

¹⁰⁶ Late October 1977. MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 488.

¹⁰⁷ Haag, 251.

¹⁰⁸ See L. Durrell, The Alexandria Quartet 32 and 77.

¹⁰⁹ Begun in 1943 or 1944. The Book of the Dead, Manuscript I, Lawrence Durrell Underworld: Notes for Alex, 29 left. Lawrence Durrell Collection, British Library.

become an introduction to the poetry of Cavafy for thousands of non-Greek readers¹¹⁰ and they may prove telling about the whole Quartet. Let us consider his rendering of “The City”:

You tell yourself: I'll be gone
To some other land, some other sea,
To a city lovelier than this
Could ever have been a hoped to be —
Where every step now tightens the noose:
A heart in a body buried and out of use:
How long, how long must I be here
Confined among these dreary purlieus
Of the common mind? Wherever now I look
Black ruins of my life rise into view.
So many years have I been here
Spending and squandering, and nothing gained.
There's no new land, my friend, no
New sea; for the city will follow you,
In the same streets you'll wander endlessly,
The same mental suburbs slip from youth to age,
In the same house go white at last —
The city is a cage.
No other places, always this
Your earthly landfall, and no ship exists
To take you from yourself. Ah! don't you see
Just as you've ruined your life in this
One plot of ground you've ruined its worth
Everywhere now — over the whole earth?

(201-202)

A comparative reading of Durrell's and Keeley's-Sherrard's translations of “The City” reveals some aspects of the former's interpretation of Cavafy's composition. At the beginning of the poem, Durrell's version emphasizes the idea that all statements in the first person are inner thoughts of that individual (‘You tell *yourself*’), so it excludes the possibility that these thoughts have been voiced. Likewise, Durrell's translation makes clear, very explicitly, that the image of the city is a metaphor for an inner mood when referring to the Alexandrian neighbourhoods, since he renders them as ‘*mental* suburbs’, adding an adjective which is not present in the original composition. Similarly, in the twenty-first line, Durrell turns the Greek construction ‘για σε’ (meaning ‘for you’) into ‘to take you from yourself’, reinforcing again the same idea.

Another aspect that calls attention to the vocabulary used by the translator is the repetition of the word ‘ruin’ in the tenth line,¹¹¹ which is also chosen as a verb in the

¹¹⁰ With the success of Justine, Durrell's translation of “The City” became very popular. The author's collection at the British Library holds even a family postcard with this version that was privately printed in Birmingham in the 1990s by Peter and Kathy Baldwin. Peter Baldwin has also published limited editions of Durrell's An Irish Faustus: A Modern Morality in Nine Scenes 2nd rev. ed. (Moseley, Birmingham, UK: Delos, 1987) and Henri Michaux: The Poet of Supreme Solipsism (Moseley, Birmingham, UK: Delos, 1990).

antepenultimate and penultimate lines to translate the Greek verb form *ρήμαξες*, which in a literal sense means ‘devastated’, ‘ravaged’ or ‘ruined’ but in a figurative one, would rather be translated as ‘destroyed’, ‘consumed’, ‘devoured’ or ‘wasted’. Although ‘ruined’ is also a proper translation in the poetical context of the sentence, having some alternatives available to avoid repetitions, it is surprising he did not choose ‘wasted’ or ‘destroyed’ like Keeley and Sherrard did. Therefore, it may be inferred from this fact that Durrell’s repetition was indeed intentional, an strategy to emphasize the highly poetical semantic value of the word ‘ruins’ [*ερείπια*] in the seventh line of the poem (tenth in his version). In fact, this deduction is confirmed in The Alexandria Quartet.

The earliest quotation from “The City” is made in the opening pages of the first novel of Durrell’s quartet, Justine. It is also Durrell’s introductory reference to ‘the old poet of the city’ or ‘the old man’, as the author often calls Cavafy in the Quartet.¹¹² At the end of Justine, in his “Notes in the Text”, Durrell makes explicit that both ‘the old poet’ and ‘the old man’ refer to C.P. Cavafy. It is interesting that the two words the author chooses to introduce Cavafy in his prose are from “The City”, and the fact that they are precisely ‘black ruins’:

I had to come here in order completely to *rebuild* this city in my brain—
melancholy provinces which the old man saw as full of the ‘black ruins’ of his
life. (18, emphasis added)

Darley, the narrator of Justine,¹¹³ is a writer who struggles to tell the story of his time in Alexandria from his current place of residence, on a Greek island. These two different narrative settings might be explained by the fact that Durrell had also considered to set the book in Athens and, although he later changed his mind, Greece always remained an important part of the story as his lost paradise while on exile in Egypt. In a 1959 interview, when asked about the reasons why he chose Alexandria as a setting, Durrell says: ‘I considered Athens but it lacked Alexandria’s juxtaposition of races and cultures. And Alexandria finally is the starting point of our civilization.’¹¹⁴ While the first explanation seems a likely motive for choosing Alexandria, the second one would not justify his rejection of Athens. Edmund Keeley provides another cause for that change of location.

¹¹¹ As a noun, ‘ruins’ is the literal equivalent of *ερείπια* in the original text by Cavafy.

¹¹² Although there are profuse references to Cavafy by his name (94, 201, 203, 297, 317, 338, 357, 358, 704, 882, 883, 884), it is also possible to find many other references to him as ‘the poet of the city’ (203, 680), ‘the native poet of the city’ (30), ‘the old Greek poet’ (28), ‘the old man’ (18, 28, 31), ‘the old poet’ (77, 79, 96, 141, 147, 358), and ‘the old poet of the city’ (18, 702, 761).

¹¹³ Actually, Darley is not given a name until the following novel of Durrell’s quartet, Balthazar (356).

¹¹⁴ Dieter Zimmer, “Becoming a Literary Tramp”, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1998) 38.

By the time he reaches Athens in 1945, we learn from his friend Buffie Johnson that he walked the streets with George Katsimbali and spoke of wanting to write a book set in Athens but that Katsimbali told him it would be a mistake: if he did write such a book, he could never live there again, because Athens was too small a world [at that time], and his acquaintances, thinking themselves caricatured, would turn on him with vitriolic rage. This may have confirmed Durrell's earlier impulse to focus his "big effort" on Alexandria.¹¹⁵

In any case, it is significant that, despite choosing Egypt, The Alexandria Quartet starts in Greece. From that Greek island, Darley reveals his attempt to rebuild the past, the eternal literary dream of giving life again to past events and long-lost people through the force of memory and words. Of course, in order to reconstruct his previous existence in Egypt, the narrator has to go through the pain of returning in mind and heart to the 'ruins' of those times and that city. That's the point of convergence with Cavafy's 'black ruins'. In Balthazar, this arduous task of rebuilding the old times is further on mentioned when Darley works on Balthazar's annotations:

So much have I *reconstructed* from the labyrinth of notes which Balthazar has left me. 'To imagine is not necessarily to invent' he says elsewhere, 'nor dares one make a claim for omniscience in interpreting people's actions. [...]' (275, emphasis added)

Once more, Darley faces his writing as a reconstruction; at this stage, memories are completed -and sometimes contested- by Balthazar's written observations about that time. Balthazar's notes have been given to him as a 'great interlinear' (215) on the narrative draft Darley had sent him. In this way, from the fragments of different moments and points of view, Darley will seek to recover his lost world of Alexandria. Just like an archeologist, the narrator finds his way among the diverse remains left to him. About his labyrinthine interlinear Darley says:

It was cross-hatched, crabbed, starred with questions and answers in different-coloured inks, in typescript. It seemed to me then to be somehow symbolic of the very reality we had shared — a *palimpsest* upon which each of us had left his or her individual traces, *layer by layer*. (215, emphasis added)

The idea of a palimpsest surfaces again in Balthazar's words when reflecting on the nature of what Darley has in his hands:

¹¹⁵ Keeley, Inventing Paradise 238. However, Durrell never abandoned his idea of writing a novel set in Athens. In a 1965 letter from Stephanides to him, the former says he is glad to know Durrell is going to write 'a novel about Athens in the 20s' and he shares some memories with him about the city at that time (see Stephanides, Lettres à Lawrence Durrell 118 and 172). The novel would finally become Tunc, which is set in Athens, Constantinople, London, and Paris.

[...] like some medieval *palimpsest* where *different sorts of truth* are thrown down *one upon the other*, the one obliterating or perhaps supplementing another. (338, emphasis added)

The issue which underlies this concept of palimpsest is the real helpfulness of these ‘different sorts of truth’, found ‘one upon the other’ like ancient stones in the ruins of classical Alexandria, which, incidentally, are another recurring element in The Alexandria Quartet.¹¹⁶ Memories, under the form of debris, work as interconnected roots belonging to the same stem, that is, the narrator’s Alexandria in ruins which he tries to rebuild. The following passage illustrates this matter:

Shall I *reconstruct* it — the scene I see so clearly, and which his few crabbed words in green ink have detonated in my imagination? Yes, it will enable me to dream for a moment about an unfrequented quarter of Alexandria which I loved. (314, emphasis added)

As the narrator acknowledges, Balthazar’s ‘crabbed words’ help the former to restore places and peoples in his imagination, which will be the foundations for the city he wants to ‘reconstruct’. Chronological and physical distance give a new perspective, but studying the ruins of that time is what allows the narrator ‘to re-enter, reinhabit the unburied city’ (96).

So far, the role of Cavafy’s ‘black ruins’ in Durrell’s The Alexandria Quartet has been considered from the point of view of the creator. However, ruins also have a parallel reading which is intrinsic to their metaphorical sense. Looking back, ruins are the image of what the city was, but by looking at them around us, in our present, they stand for an individual’s feelings of misery and decay; a decay which might be sometimes seen even as necessary:

Perhaps then the *destruction of my private Alexandria was necessary* [...]; perhaps *buried* in all this there lies the germ and substance of a truth — time’s usufruct — which, if I can accommodate it, will carry me a little further in what is really a *search for my proper self*. (370, emphasis added)

In the archetypal concatenation of destruction and creation, like in the Greek myth of the phoenix, new life is achieved by arising from the ashes. In a similar way, Darley, by rebuilding from what remains of his past, realizes that he is actually searching for his own inner self, and at the same time, Alexandria is also given a new reality. That seems the value of Cavafy’s ‘black ruins’ in Durrell’s The Alexandria Quartet.

The first person speaker of “The City”, Durrell’s character of ‘the old poet of the city’ and Darley himself are primal examples of this feeling of ruinous decay, but there is another important historical and literary character of Durrell’s Alexandrian novels who is

¹¹⁶ Durrell makes numerous references to the ruins of ancient Alexandria in his quartet. See, for instance, 144.

used by the author to exemplify the same subject, the Roman politician and general Mark Antony; obviously, that historical and literary Antony who's at the end of his life, after being declared a traitor and defeated by Octavian at the Battle of Actium.

Once he is defeated at Actium, Antony flees with his beloved Cleopatra to Alexandria, where he awaits his death. In Durrell's words:

His life *in ruins!* And then the passing of the God, and all that, bidding him to say good-bye to her, to Alexandria — a whole world! (831, emphasis added)

It is Plutarch's hero in Life of Antony and Shakespeare's male protagonist in Antony and Cleopatra but it is essentially -and this quotation, among others, makes it clear- Cavafy's Antony, that of his poem "The God Abandons Antony" (writ. 1910):

At midnight, when suddenly you hear
an invisible procession going by
with exquisite music, voices,
don't mourn your luck that's failing now,
work gone wrong, your plans
all proving deceptive—don't mourn them uselessly:
as one long prepared, and full of courage,
say goodbye to her, the Alexandria who is leaving.
Above all, don't fool yourself, don't say
it was a dream, your ears deceived you:
don't degrade yourself with empty hopes like these.
As one long prepared, and full of courage,
as is right for you who were given this kind of city,
go firmly to the window
and listen with deep emotion,
but not with the whining, the pleas of a coward;
listen—your final delectation—to the voices,
to the exquisite music of that strange procession,
and say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing. (27)

Antony's attitude towards his doom is inherited by Cavafy from Plutarch. According to the Greek historian, Antony told Cleopatra before dying that 'she should not pity him in this last turn of fate but rather rejoice for him in remembrance of his past happiness.'¹¹⁷ In the poem, it is the poetic voice that tells Antony how he is to behave.

One of Cavafy's greatest contributions to that dramatic episode in the life of Mark Antony is the nature of the god who abandons him. In Plutarch's narration, the god is identified as Dionysus/Bacchus,¹¹⁸ and in Shakespeare's tragedy Antony and Cleopatra, as

¹¹⁷ Plutarch, Lives, trans. John Dryden, vol. 5 (Boston, MA: Little, 1859) 124.

¹¹⁸ 'Bacchus, the god whom Antony had always made it his study to copy and imitate, had now forsaken him' (*ibid.*, 122).

the divine hero Hercules,¹¹⁹ while in Cavafy's poem, the god is not a classical divinity but Alexandria itself, or rather, Alexandria *herself*. In the "The God Abandons Antony", the city representing Mark Antony and Cleopatra's love is the almost-personified god he has become worthy of worshipping. So, instead of being a chosen object of devotion, this godlike city seems to be given only to those like Antony, 'who deserved this kind of city' [*που αξιώθηκες μια τέτοια πόλι* in the original version]. The meaning of that line in English is not so clear in Keeley's-Sherrard's otherwise great translation, as it is perhaps in Durrell's rendering of the poem, which is found at the end of Justine, after "The City". See the line in italics below:

When suddenly at darkest midnight heard,
The invisible company passing, the clear voices,
Ravishing music of invisible choirs —
Your fortunes having failed you now,
Hopes gone aground, a lifetime of desires
Turned into smoke. Ah! do not agonize
At what is past deceiving
But like a man long since prepared
With courage say your last good-byes
To Alexandria as she is leaving.
Do not be tricked and never say
It was a dream or that your ears misled,
Leave cowards their entreaties and complaints,
Let all such useless hopes as these be shed,
And like a man long since prepared,
Deliberately, with pride, with resignation
Befitting you and worthy of such a city
Turn to the open window and look down
To drink past all deceiving
Your last dark rapture from the mystical throng
And say farewell, farewell to Alexandria leaving. (202 emphasis added)

As argued about his translation of "The City", Durrell's version of "The God Abandons Antony" is not a literal one. However, variation from Cavafy's original poem is far more limited than in "The City". In the tenth line of his translation, Durrell emphasizes the personification of Alexandria by rephrasing the original sentence in order to use the personal subject pronoun 'she' to refer to the city instead of choosing the object pronoun 'her', as Keeley and Sherrard do. Although 'her' is the equivalent word in English for the Greek accusative feminine singular article 'την' in Cavafy's poem, it is equally true that names in modern Greek are usually preceded by an article and *Αλεξάνδρεια* [Alexandria] requires a feminine one, as in the eighth line of the poem ('την *Αλεξάνδρεια*'). English lacks this characteristic, so Durrell's proposal of using the personal pronoun 'she' seems to

¹¹⁹ 'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony loved, / Now leaves him' (*Ant.* 4.3).

compensate for that gender loss while it also reinforces the poet's portrayal of Alexandria as a deity.

Durrell's only other departure of consequence from Cavafy's original composition is found in the former's sixteenth line, 'deliberately, with pride, with resignation', which stands for the last part of Cavafy's twelfth line, 'σα θαρραλέος' [like a brave man]. Keeley-Sherrard translate it as 'full of courage'. Although 'pride' and deliberation are suitable notions for the idea of 'boldness', the last word, 'resignation', does not appear in Cavafy's poem. It might be an adequate reading of the attitude of Antony in the poem, but the concept is not made explicit anywhere in the original text. In any case, let us retain Durrell's use of the word 'resignation' since it may illuminate his use of that poem in The Alexandria Quartet.

Either in direct allusions or indirectly, "The God Abandons Antony" appears in three of the novels of the quartet. The earliest reference is found on the second page of Justine, when, after describing a street of Alexandria at night, he wonders:

Was it in this that Anthony heard the heart-numbing strains of the great music which persuaded him to surrender for ever to the city he loved? (18)¹²⁰

While referring to Cavafy's poem, Durrell brings up precisely the two aspects that have been commented above with regard to his version. Firstly, the notion of succumbing. Antony's 'surrender' here links with the idea of 'resignation' mentioned in Durrell's translation. In Durrell's reading of the poem, Antony's capitulation to his fate parallels his unconditional surrender to the city he is losing, 'the city he loved'. Secondly, the deification of the city in Durrell's interpretation of Cavafy's poem, both in his translation and in the whole quartet, which presents Alexandria as a female god and as the narrator's object of passion, either of love or hate. This image of the city echoes that of Cleopatra, who is directly mentioned in some parts of the quartet and also seems to inspire some features of the characters of Justine, Leila, and particularly, Clea. The representation of the city as a goddess recalls Plutarch's picture of Cleopatra as a semi-divine 'New Isis' for her people (104), and his description of Cleopatra's powerful magnetism and intelligence brings to mind those of Justine and Clea in The Alexandria Quartet:

For her actual beauty, it is said, was not in itself so remarkable that none could be compared with her, or that no one could see her without being struck by it, but the contact of her presence, if you lived with her, was irresistible; the attraction of her person, joining with the charm of her conversation, and the character that attended all she said or did, was something bewitching. It was a

¹²⁰ "The God Abandons Antony" is also directly quoted in Justine (94), Balthazar (317, 358), and also, in Lawrence Durrell, The Avignon Quintet (London: Faber, 2004) 1018.

pleasure merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which, like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another. (76-77)

For example, when Balthazar talks about the love relationship between Arnauti and Justine, he refers to him as a ‘minor Antony’ and to her, as ‘a Cleo’ (82). Another character who is also represented as a strong and protective Cleopatra is Leila Hosnani, the mother of Narouz and Nessim. In the third novel of the quartet, Mountolive dreams about himself ‘warm in the circle of Leila’s arms, as if he were Antony at Actium’ (594).

With regard to Clea, her very name is a variation of the Greek name Cleopatra. Moreover, interestingly, but not surprisingly, Clea is also the name of a well-known friend of Plutarch who held high office among the priestesses at Delphi, and to whom he dedicated his treatise on Isis and Osiris and for whom he composed a selection of stories about the bravery of women, Mulierum Virtutes, as a continuation to their conversation on the equality of the sexes. Clea’s identification with the latter becomes explicit in the scene at the islet with Darley, which recreates Antony’s refuge on the islet of Timon, where the Roman remembered ‘that woman with the extraordinary spells she was able to cast’ (831). At the end of this episode at the islet, after Clea suffers her accident, the narrator tells that some sailors ‘brought a tarpaulin ashore and softly [...] baled her up like Cleopatra’ to carry her onto their ship (852).

Therefore, in Durrell’s quartet, Antony’s ‘surrender’ to his fate is also a lyrical reenactment of his surrender to Cleopatra’s charm and to Alexandria itself. Or in other words, to quote Edmund Keeley when dealing with Cavafy’s poem, ‘the presiding deity of Antony’s late world [is] the greatest gift he was given to know and his greatest loss at the hour of final defeat.’¹²¹ The connection between Cleopatra and the city is a recurring theme in these novels. In fact, in Balthazar, Cavafy, Alexander and Cleopatra are called ‘the city’s exemplars’ (338). When discoursing on his love for Justine, Darley says: ‘A city becomes a world when one loves one of its inhabitants’ (57). Further on, the narrator elaborates on the same idea when talking about his relationship with Clea:

When you are in love with one of its inhabitants a city can become a world. A whole new geography of Alexandria was born through Clea, reviving old meanings, renewing ambiances half forgotten, laying down like a rich wash of colour a new history, a new biography to replace the old one. (832)

Regarding “The God Abandons Antony”, Keeley argues that ‘the poem suggests that Alexandria has always had a godlike power to move the mind of mortals with poetic

¹²¹ Keeley, Cavafy’s Alexandria 23.

conceptions of itself.’¹²² After reading the previous quotations by Durrell on Justine and Clea, it is possible to affirm that the ‘godlike power’ of the city is also manifested through her human ‘exemplars’. About Antony, Durrell’s narrator says he heard ‘the rich poignance of strings and voices which in the dark street welled up — Alexandria’s last bequest to those who are her exemplars’ (94). The perception of a divine force exerted on some chosen ‘exemplars’ recurs throughout the quartet:

we had been trapped in the projection of a will too powerful and too deliberate to be human — the gravitational field which Alexandria threw down about those it had chosen as its exemplars.... (22)

The thought of a ‘gravitational field’ operating on some of the inhabitants of the city, which is presented by the author in Justine, reappears again and again all through the four novels; in the last one, repeating the same terms. Darley feels he is going over the same pattern:

I thought [...] of the long journey we made from this very bed, since last we lay here together, through so many climates and countries, only to return once more to our starting-point, again *captured once more by the gravitational field* of the city. (729 emphasis added)

The ‘gravitational field of the city’ dictates a ‘new cycle’ (*ibid.*) and he wonders where it will carry them; having perhaps in mind that fragment by a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher who fascinated Durrell -and also his character of Justine-, *i.e.* Heraclitus: ‘Ever-newer waters flow on those who step into the same rivers.’¹²³

It has to be pointed out that in Durrell’s picture of Alexandria, individuals are not simply subjects obeying the city’s will. They might rather be defined as objects picked out and influenced by the city, turning them into actors of that sensual Alexandria that Cavafy so lyrically paints in his poetry.¹²⁴ The narrator remembers

feeling through the hot pavements the rhythms of Alexandria transmitted upwards into bodies which could only interpret them as famished kisses, or endearments uttered in voices hoarse with wonder. (182)

Those inhabitants like him, rather than living in the city, they become a part of it. The following quotation from Justine gives a precise description of this condition in the first person voice of the narrator:

¹²² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²³ Fragment DK22B12, qtd. in Arius Didymus apud Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica, 15.20.2. See John M. Rose, “Multiple Truths and Multiple Narratives: Nietzsche’s Perspectivism and the Narrative Structure of *The Alexandria Quartet*,” Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 219; and L. Durrell, The Alexandria Quartet 87.

¹²⁴ In Balthazar, Durrell calls Alexandria ‘the city of sensuality’ (299) and he describes it as an ‘anarchy of flesh and fever, of money-love and mysticism’ (314).

I thought of it not as a personal history with an individual accent so much as *part of the historical fabric of the place*. I described it to myself as *part and parcel of the city's behaviour*, completely in keeping with everything that had gone before, and everything that would follow it. It was as if my imagination had become subtly drugged by the ambience of the place and could not respond to personal, individual assessments. (154 emphasis added)

The narrator clearly illustrates his presence in the city as part of it, seen in many other passages of the quartet,¹²⁵ but it also adds another aspect to this analysis, what might be called the 'collective perspective', that is, the individual as part of the collective historical 'fabric of the place'; his actions are 'in keeping with' those of former and future Alexandrians. This perspective is better explained when the narration reveals that Nessim has started to have 'historical dreams':

At this time he had already begun to experience that great cycle of historical dreams which now replaced the dreams of his childhood in his mind, and into which the City now threw itself — as if at last it had found a responsive subject through which to express the collective desires, the collective wishes, which informed its culture. He would wake to see the towers and minarets printed on the exhausted, dust-powdered sky, and see as if *en montage* on them the giant footprints of the historical memory which lies behind the recollections of individual personality, its mentor and guide: indeed its inventor, since man is only an extension of the spirit of place. (143)

When Durrell refers to Alexandria as 'the city' he never capitalizes the noun, so the exception he makes to this rule in this part of the quartet is relevant in itself.¹²⁶ In this paragraph, the author alludes to the historical and mythical city, the 'queen of all the Greeks' [*ἡ πανελλήνια κορυφή*] to use Cavafy's words, *i.e.* the perennial one. In doing so, he expounds one of the concepts that constantly appears in his works, the 'spirit of place'.

The Alexandria Quartet is perhaps Durrell's best representation of that spirit of place. In his Alexandrian novels, the characters' dreams, desires, behaviours and frustrations are the manifestations of communal wishes and attitudes which may be perceived all over the history of the city. Even the individuals' recollections are 'guided' by the 'historical memory' of the city in a way that brings to mind some anthropological studies of collective memory and the theories developed in the psychology of family systems.

¹²⁵ See, for example: 'To stand lightly there, our little fingers linked, drinking in the deep camphor-scented afternoon, a part of city....' (19).

¹²⁶ Leaving aside all references to Cavafy's "The City", there is only another exception in the whole quartet, when he introduces the character of Balthazar as 'one of the keys to the City,' Mnemjian being 'the archives of the City' (78). In that context, the author also refers to the historical city, and also the eternal one, that is, the permanent essence of Alexandria.

In this context, repetitions in people's behaviours disclose ancient attitudes. What happens is only a view of what 'lies behind'. That seems the meaning of repetition, for instance, in the next quotation from Clea:

It is not hard [...] to realize that it had all *already happened*, had been ordained in such a way and in no other. This was, so to speak, only its 'coming to pass'— its stage of manifestation. But the scenario had already been devised somewhere, the actors chosen, the timing rehearsed down to the last detail in the mind of that invisible author — which perhaps would prove to be only the city itself: the Alexandria of the human estate. The seeds of future events are carried within ourselves. They are implicit in us and unfold according to the laws of their own nature. (828)

If the previous excerpt is read after the preceding one from Justine, it is deduced that, according to Durrell's view in the quartet, 'man is only an extension of the spirit of place', and that this spirit may not be other than 'the city itself', ruling over its inhabitants, as in Cavafy's poem.

Those citizens who are chosen by Alexandria as its 'exemplars' are not so much agents as actors. This idea is presented as early as the first page of the quartet: 'the city which used us as its flora — precipitated in us conflicts which were hers and which we mistook for our own: beloved Alexandria!' (17). That is why the narrator says he does not feel responsible for his actions: 'It is the city which should be judged though we, its children, must pay the price' (*ibid.* See also 44-45). Durrell's probably best-known statement on his notion of 'spirit of place' is also found in Justine:

We are the children of our landscape; it dictates behaviour and even thought in the measure to which we are responsive to it. I can think of no better identification. (39-40)

If the residents of the city are considered 'the children' of that landscape, Alexandria is presented as 'the unconsciously poetical mother-city' (234). Their attachment –and non-attachment– to the city shows the 'ambivalence'¹²⁷ of a mother-son/daughter relationship. In a letter to Darley, Clea refers to her city as 'this cursed city of ours, Alexandria, to which we most belong when we most hate it' (379). It is curiously a love-hate connection that she equally sees in love: 'we are born to love those who most wound us' (*ibid.*).

However, the most striking evocation of these 'children' of the Alexandrian landscape is found in Balthazar:

¹²⁷ In Freud's sense of the word, that is, the state of having simultaneous, conflicting reactions towards some object, not only referring to infancy but also to later periods of life.

I see all of us not as men and women any longer, identities swollen with their acts of forgetfulness, follies, and deceits — but as beings unconsciously made part of place, buried to the waist among the ruins of a single city, steeped in its values; like those creatures of whom Empedocles wrote ‘Solitary limbs wandered, seeking for union with one another,’ or in another place, ‘So it is that sweet lays hold of sweet, bitter rushes to bitter, acid comes to acid, warm couples with warm.’ All members of a city whose actions lay just outside the scope of the plotting or conniving spirit: Alexandrians. (369)

Durrell’s well-known and less-studied admiration for the pre-Socratic philosophers becomes visible again in the author’s references to Empedocles’ fragments 58 and 90 in the previous paragraph. Other pre-Socratic thinkers in the quartet include Heraclitus, who, as mentioned above, appears in Justine (87); then, Pythagoras, who is named in Balthazar (368); and later, Anaximander, in Clea (834). By quoting these fragments by Empedocles, Durrell presents Alexandrians as ‘solitary limbs’ which wander among other lonely ‘limbs’ of the city, seeking for union with their soulmates. Alexandria’s children are here reduced to being ‘limbs’ of a large body. It is also worth noting that Durrell’s use of the ‘ruins’ image in this passage.

Today’s Alexandria has been built over the remains of the ancient city but not much from that time has survived a large number of wars and the earthquake subsidence in AD 365. The inhabitants of the city actually live among the ruins of those who have preceded them over the centuries, but ‘ruins’ in this context has to be read in a broader sense, meaning the history of Alexandria, its myths, traditions and values. In other words, generation after generation, Alexandrians have shared a common place of residence but also that everlasting essential city which is inherited and continually recreated. That eternal city across the ages is also seen in Cavafy’s work if considered, like the poet wanted it to be read, as a whole corpus.

In this way, by way of illustration, Durrell’s Alexandria of the 1940s becomes again for seamen and refugees the harbour of Eunostos [□ *E□νοστός Λιμὴν*], literally meaning the harbour of good return, as in ancient times. Durrell recalls that Eunostos in his introduction to E.M. Forster’s Alexandria: ‘to many of our sailors it was still Eunostos, “port of safe return”, as it had been in Homer’s time’ (xiii).

To Durrell, the twentieth century city is still ‘the city of the Soma’ (67), the place of rest of the body [*σώμα*] of Alexander the Great. Although the tomb of the founder of the city was on display for about 700 years, according to the chronicles, it disappeared in the 4th century and it has been sought for 1600 years. In order to understand the importance of the body of Alexander for the city until its vanishing it is necessary to consult the historical sources for that period. The Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus (325/330 – after 391)

relates an interesting incident which happened about AD 361 while the Christian Archbishop of Alexandria Georgius was walking along the city:

As he was returning from the emperor's court and passed by the beautiful temple of the Genius, attended as usual by a large crowd, he turned his eyes straight at the temple, and said: "How long shall this sepulchre stand?" On hearing this, many were struck as if by a thunderbolt, and fearing that he might try to overthrow even that building, they devised secret plots to destroy him in whatever way they could.¹²⁸

The word 'Genius', meaning the genius of the city, that is, the *genius loci*,¹²⁹ the tutelary deity or *deus loci*, is the keyword to know whose 'sepulchre' he is referring to. Andrew Chugg, who has published several books on the Greek king, argues that 'Alexander is the only figure to whom this expression might apply whose tomb also lay within the city'.¹³⁰ After Julian's accession, Georgius would be finally killed by the Alexandrian Pagans he had so strongly persecuted.

However, after Julian the Philosopher's short reign, Christian religion was reestablished as the state church and thus ended that brief revival of paganism. Although the Soma Mausoleum was probably destroyed by the earthquake in AD 365, it is known from a reference by Libanius of Antioch in an oration addressed to the emperor Theodosius that, a quarter of a century later, in 'Alexandria [...] the corpse of Alexander is displayed' again (49.11-12), probably after the excavation of the tomb chamber. Such may have been the popularity of the divinity of the city. In fact, a year later, in AD 391, Theodosius issued a series of decrees outlawing the worship of pagan gods and forbidding visiting the pagan temples.¹³¹ Those decrees caused new riots and confrontation between Theodosius' supporters and those of the independent Patriarch of Alexandria. The latter group took refuge in the largest temple in the Greek quarter of Alexandria, the pagan temple of Serapeum, dedicated to the syncretic Hellenistic-Egyptian god Serapis. When riots finished, the Prefect ordered its demolition. It is at precisely this point that Alexander's remains disappear.¹³²

Ammianus Marcellinus' and Libanius' allusions to the veneration of Alexander's corpse as the 'genius' or *deus loci* of Alexandria¹³³ provide a rich context for Durrell's

¹²⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History: Books 20-26* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb-Harvard UP, 1940) 22.11.

¹²⁹ As used by Virgil in his *Aeneid* 5.95.

¹³⁰ Andrew Chugg, "The Tomb of Alexander." *alexanderstomb.com*, 2005. Web. 26 Aug. 2014.

¹³¹ Two of them were particularly determining: Theodosian Code, 16.10.10 and 16.10.11.

¹³² This conflict between Christians and Pagans appears in many poems by Cavafy. In "Priest at the Serapeion", the Christian son of a Pagan priest of the Alexandrian Serapeum mourns the death of his father (100). See also 89, 91, 98, 101, 103, 108, 118-119, 133, and 152-153.

¹³³ For further reading, see, i.a., Lily Ross Taylor, "The Cult of Alexander at Alexandria," *Classical Philology* 22.2 (1927): 162-169.

mention of the Soma in the quartet. In the first part of Justine, the narrator makes a reflection on the contemporary city:

Now even the city had two centres of gravity [...]. Its spiritual centre was the forgotten site of the Soma where once the confused young soldier's body lay in its borrowed Godhead; its temporal site the Brokers' Club [...]. The one symbolized for me the great conquests of man in the realms of matter, space and time — which must inevitably yield their harsh knowledge of defeat to the conqueror in his coffin; the other was no symbol but the living limbo of free-will in which my beloved Justine wandered [...] (38-39)

Durrell names Alexander's body as a symbol of that elevated side of the eternal city he wants to portray. His remarks about the soldier's 'borrowed Godhead' and about its 'forgotten site' being the 'spiritual centre' of Alexandria achieve to highlight that Alexander as a young man became something higher than a successful soldier, and that the Soma is far from being 'forgotten' in the city of Alexander, even in the absence of his physical remains.

In The Alexandria Quartet, Alexander the Great is mentioned by the author a dozen times, both as a historical figure, which has even permeated Egyptian oral tradition,¹³⁴ and as one of the 'exemplars' of the city, as mentioned above, but it is his after-death life as a symbol that Durrell really emphasizes. That is the Alexander the author refers to in his reference to the Soma, the man who transcended the human dimension because of his life and deeds, joining that race of divine men like the Homeric heroes from which he had claimed to descend, half-way from the human world and that of the immortals.¹³⁵ The veneration of Alexander's tomb places him among the widespread cults of the dead in the Egyptian and Greco-Roman antiquity. The worship of outstanding men was at the same time an act of communal thanksgiving to them –including offerings, prayers and other forms of devotion– and a ritual seeking to celebrate and preserve the qualities that they represented.

Although Cavafy's characters are usually minor figures on the margins of history, they are used by the poet in an analogous way, that is, as metaphors of eternal attitudes he has chosen to honour by bringing these men back to life in his verses. Those poems whose title starts by the word 'tomb' are remarkably in this mood. This group of poems have often been compared to the epitaphs of The Greek



Alexander with a
horned diadem.
See note below.

¹³⁴ See Narouz's narration of a popular tale associated to Alexander and the *sakkias*, the Egyptian wooden water-wheels (417).

¹³⁵ Alexander's cult started years before his death though. In the quartet, a repeated reference to a portrait of Alexander with the horns of god Ammon illustrates this process (200 and 417).

Anthology.¹³⁶ One of them, “Tomb of Evrion”, is found on an highly-decorated grave of a young man who lies buried in Alexandria:

In this tomb—ornately designed,
the whole of syenite stone,
covered by so many violets, so many lilies—
lies handsome Evrion,
an Alexandrian, twenty-five years old.
On his father’s side, he was of old Macedonian stock,
on his mother’s side, descended from a line of magistrates.
He studied philosophy with Aristokleitos,
rethoric with Paros, and at Thebes
the sacred scriptures. He wrote a history
of the province of Arsinoites. That at least will survive.
But we’ve lost what was really precious: his form—
like a vision of Apollo. (37)

Evrion recalls Alexander in many respects. Both died as young men at the peak of their lives but remain unforgotten by Alexandrians. About Evrion, the poem explains that ‘on his father’s side, he was of old Macedonian stock’, like Alexander, whose father belonged to an ancient Macedonian dynasty. While Alexander was tutored by the philosopher Aristotle until the age of 16, we are told by Cavafy that Evrion ‘studied philosophy with *Aristokleitos*’ (emphasis added). The poet reminds the reader that at least, Evrion’s history of the province of Arsinoites ‘will survive.’ No writings by Alexander are kept but it could be similarly said that his exploits have also outlived him and that some consequences of the large empire he created until the age of thirty are still with us today. Finally, Cavafy compares Evrion’s beauty with Apollo’s. Alexander was also sometimes compared to that god. In fact, on his father’s coins, Apollo was portrayed with the facial features of Alexander. That lead us to what Cavafy sees as our greatest loss, his human form. Unlike Alexander, no statues were erected in his honour, but the poet creates this epitaph to preserve the memory of Evrion’s body. In the end, it is the most perishable part of both men, their body, their *soma*, which remains the source for their eternal life in the memory of Alexandrians.

In the quartet, the Soma becomes the perfect image for Durrell’s concept of spirit of place or *deus loci*, a notion which he had started to define while on Corfu. An earlier echo is found in Prospero’s Cell, when the author says that the remains of Saint Spiridion are the ‘Influence of the island’ or in his metaphorical antimetabole ‘The island is really the Saint:

¹³⁶ Another poem by Cavafy which could be seen in this context is “Days of 1909, ‘10, and ‘11” (117). This is ‘a modern epitaph’, as Keeley calls it in Cavafy’s Alexandria (73), about a man of contemporary Alexandria who died young. The author’s intention seems to keep his memory alive, just like the classical Greek epitaphs do.

and the Saint is the island.¹³⁷ Alexander the Great is also mentioned in Prospero's Cell, not only as traditional character of the Greek shadow theatre (57), but also as an spirit recalled by Greek sailors in a popular charm, as Stephanides tells Durrell:

'It is widely believed that the figure of a woman rising from the sea beside the boat calls out in wild accents "How is it with Alexander?" (*Τί κάνει ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος*). The correct answer for those who do not want their craft overturned by her rage and grief is "He lives and reigns still" (*Ζει και βασιλεύει*).' (58)

This example of Alexander's soul as still living in the Greek imaginary was also included in an article by Durrell on Corfu published in 1939.¹³⁸ Durrell's personal notion of the spirit of place is also reflected in his poetic production. In "Deus Loci (Forio d'Ischia)", Durrell sings the spirit of place he has encountered on the Italian island of Ischia:

All our religions founder, you
remain, small sunburnt *deus loci*
safe in your natal shrine

[...]

Known before the expurgation of gods
wherever nature's carelessness exposed
her children to the fear of the unknown—
[...] only to think of you and you were there.

[...] all
refreshed again in you O spirit of place,
Presence long since divined, delayed, and waited for,
and here met face to face. (fragments)¹³⁹

In the poem, Durrell elaborates on the qualities of the *deus loci*, which is depicted as older than the 'expurgation' of ancient gods by current religions, and unlike religions, as having an eternal existence. Meeting this dateless spirit, whose presence he had 'divined' in other places such as Corfu and Alexandria, makes the poet feel renewed, as if sharing a part of the wisdom stored throughout the centuries. Another reverberation of these *deus loci* is found in Clea when the narrator alludes to 'the old dark gods [...] buried in the moist humus of the chthonian world' (871).

The force of the *deus loci* is that of being so deeply rooted in its landscape as to be its symbolical manifestation. In "Landscape and Character" (1960), Durrell admits to seeing characters 'almost as functions of a landscape' and he argues that 'the important determinant

¹³⁷ Both quotations: L. Durrell, Prospero's Cell 27.

¹³⁸ Lawrence Durrell, "Corfu: Isle of Legend" *The Geographical Magazine* (Mar. 1939): 325-334.

¹³⁹ Lawrence Durrell, Collected Poems: 1931-1974, ed. James A. Bringham (London: Faber, 1980) 214-217.

of any culture is after all—the spirit of place.’¹⁴⁰ Durrell’s conceptualization of landscape develops into what he calls the Heraldic Universe, which has been very clearly defined by Pauline Beard as ‘a world in which the human experience can be transformed into language by using patterns and symbols as one would in heraldry.’¹⁴¹ In Clea, the narrator attributes the authorship of the term to the character of Pursewarden:

I began to see how mysteriously the configuration of my own life had taken its shape from the properties of those elements which lie outside the relative life—in the kingdom which Pursewarden calls the ‘heraldic universe’. We were three writers, I now saw, confided to a mythical city from which we were to draw our nourishment, in which we were to confirm our gifts. Arnauti, Pursewarden, Darley [...] (792)¹⁴²

The explanation that Darley offers of the ‘heraldic universe’ seems based on the premise that life is the result of both variable and fixed elements. No other details are given about these factors –how they interact, whether he refers to the possibilities of individual choice or not, etc– as if the author just wanted to drop some hints about his discoveries and then, refer readers to his fiction for interpretation. However, he brings up his belief that there are elements ‘outside the relative life’ which mould people on their ‘properties’, implying that the characteristics and atmosphere of places have a determining impact on the lives of their settlers. The mythical Alexandria from which the three above-mentioned writers ‘draw [their] nourishment’ is a key part of that ‘heraldic universe’ in so far as myths are the product of cultures, and according to this theory, cultures are born from places. By searching for inspiration and answers in the myths of the city, these writers try to seize the essence of Alexandria and thus, of their characters, who live ‘in a heraldic relation’ to the city and its surrounding landscape (367).

Durrell’s formulation of the ‘heraldic universe’ leads him to hint at the existence of a ‘heraldic reality’ which is only sometimes perceived:

The heraldic reality can strike from any point, [...]. But without it the enigma will remain. You may travel round the world and colonize the ends of the earth with your lines and yet never hear the singing yourself. (773)

By ‘heraldic reality’, Durrell refers to those deepest meanings behind apparent reality, which are perceived unexpectedly, through the ‘strikes’ of life. At the end of the quartet, Darley realizes that interpreting these blows of life on their symbolical level is the

¹⁴⁰ Rpt. in L. Durrell, Spirit of Place 156.

¹⁴¹ Pauline Beard, ““Something harder”: The Discovery of the Self through Greece, Fable, and Fairy Tale,” Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 205.

¹⁴² Durrell developed his conception of the ‘heraldic universe’ while in Corfu. This is proved by a letter to Alan G. Thomas from early 1937 in which he explains this notion to his friend. Unpublished typed signed letter, dated early 1937, Lawrence Durrell Collection, British Library (73113. Vol. XXII).

only way to reach that ultimate reality he is searching. His previous obsession with facts and data seems pointless to him now:

Blind as a mole, I had been digging about in the graveyard of relative fact piling up data, more information, and completely missing the mythopoeic reference which underlies fact. I had called this searching for truth! (791)

That ‘mythopoeic reference which underlies fact ‘ is what shows Darley the way to the ‘heraldic reality’ of Alexandria. Darley is set up against Arnauti, who, according to Balthazar, ‘did not see the spiritual city underlying the temporal one’ (81), remaining always an intruder among them. Almost the same words used in this quotation from Justine are found again in Durrell’s introduction to Forster’s Alexandria when the author credits Cavafy with uncovering the ‘phantom city which underlay the quotidian one’ (xiii). Once more, The Alexandria Quartet is showing us how Durrell elaborates on those aspects of Cavafy which the former considers the poet’s greatest literary contributions.

Apropos of Alexandria, but returning to Cavafy’s “The City”, there is another significant variation in tonality and connotation in Durrell’s translation from the original Greek version, and also from Keeley’s-Sherrard’s version, which should not be left out. In the fifth line of Durrell’s translation, it says ‘where every step now tightens the noose’, whereas the literal translation from Greek would be that by Keeley and Sherrard: ‘whatever I try to do is fated to turn out wrong’. Then, in the eighth line of Durrell’s version, the phrase ‘confined among these dreary purlieus’ tries to paraphrase the idea of Cavafy’s and Keeley’s-Sherrard’s fifth line. The line in Greek might be translated in a quite literal way: ‘how long will my mind remain in this decay’, which is much closer to Keeley’s and Sherrard’s ‘how long can I let my mind moulder in this place?’ Further on, the eighteenth line of Durrell’s rendering asserts: ‘The city is a cage’. Thus, Durrell tries to convey the meaning of the first part of Cavafy’s thirteenth line, which formulates exactly the same prediction found in Keeley’s and Sherrard’s version: ‘You’ll always end up in this city.’ Durrell’s choice of oppressive images like those above-mentioned (‘tightens the *noose*’, ‘*confined* among these dreary purlieus’, ‘the city is a *cage*’) accentuates the gloomy picture that Cavafy’s poem offers of the city by adding a connotation of confinement. This nuance of constraint or captivity may have been suggested to Durrell by other poems written by Cavafy some years earlier, such as “Walls” (writ. 1896) and “The Windows” (writ. 1897), both belonging to the so-called Cavafy’s Canon established by the poet’s 1935 posthumous collection. “Walls” is a very subjective composition expressing the poet’s feeling of immuration:

With no consideration, no pity, no shame,
they have built walls around me, thick and high.
And now I sit here feeling hopeless.
I can't think of anything else: this fate gnaws my mind—
because I had so much to do outside.
When they were building the walls, how could I not have noticed!
But I never heard the builders, not a sound.
Imperceptibly they've closed me off from the outside world. (3)

However, despite the fact that the poet feels 'hopeless' and 'can't think of anything else', he knows there is an 'outside', which is actually mentioned twice. In fact, the poem ends with this 'outside world', recalling a freedom beyond the walls. "The Windows" portrays a similar suffocating situation in a dark place. The speaker cannot find any windows and he hesitates whether there are any; perhaps it is only his incapacity to find a way out:

In these dark rooms where I live out empty days,
I wander round and round
trying to find the windows.
It will be a great relief when a window opens.
But the windows aren't there to be found—
or at least I can't find them. And perhaps
it's better if I don't find them.
Perhaps the light will prove another tyranny.
Who knows what new things it will expose? (11)

It is not certain whether there are any windows in the place, but it is made clear that he is 'trying to find' them. Nevertheless, his later words, 'perhaps it's better if I don't find them', seem to indicate that it might not be lack of ability or strength, but rather lack of will; a lack of will due to fear of the light, fear of exposure or simply, fear of the unknown.

Both poems, "Walls" and "The Windows", show scenes of desperation in enclosed locations which may have inspired Durrell to call Cavafy's city 'a cage'. Although there are no explicit images of enclosures in the original version of "The City", the poem certainly offers a picture of the city as a place where the speaker's soul and life seems inevitably anchored. Therefore, Durrell's projection of the city as a place of confinement in his translation of the poem is not unjustified either. 'You will walk the same streets' pronounces the poet, being echoed by Durrell's narrator in *Justine*, who longs to 'free [himself] from the streets of the city which have begun to haunt [him] of late so that [he] dream[s] that [he is] walking endlessly up and down, hunting for Melissa among the dying flares of the Arab quarter' (182).

In any case, Durrell's rendering of "The City" reveals his interpretation of a poem which permeates through *The Alexandria Quartet*. A very obvious example of a character

showing his wish to break free from the miasmatic ambience of the city is found when Nessim suggests his wife Justine that they should leave Alexandria, his reasoning recalls Cavafy's poem:

'Why don't we leave this city, Justine, and seek an atmosphere less impregnated with the sense of deracination and failure?' The words of the old poet came into his mind, pressed down like the pedal of a piano, to boil and reverberate around the frail hope which the thought had raised from its dark sleep.* (147, the asterisk leads to an endnote that reminds that a translation of "The City" is provided among the "Workpoints")¹⁴³

On the first page of Justine, readers are told by the narrator that he has 'escaped' to an island where he has gone 'to heal' himself (17). At night, he returns 'link by link along the iron chains of memory to the city' (*ibid.*). Like the first person voice in "The City", Darley cannot actually escape from his city. Despite the fact that Darley has 'escaped' physically, taking refuge on his Greek island, he is still shackled to Alexandria by the 'iron chains of memory'.¹⁴⁴ The chains image clearly illustrates Durrell's allegorical use of Cavafy's city to depict the place where the narrator's soul is stranded. In a similar way, in Balthazar, Darley reflects about the power that Alexandria exercises on some of its inhabitants:

I also feel the threads tightening in our sleeves, so to speak, drawing us slowly back towards the centre of the stage once more. Where could this be but to Alexandria? But perhaps it will prove to be a new city, different to the one which has for so long imposed itself on our dreams. (384)

The 'threads tightening' and 'drawing [them] slowly back towards the centre of the stage once more' play the same role as the above-mentioned chains. They bring again to mind the mythological Erinyes in Seferis' simile between Cavafy's city and them, their fingers grabbing, like these 'threads', at those whose fate is to be forever pursued. However, Alexandria is not only the chaser but also, as this passage shows, it is 'the stage' where some of its inhabitants like thread puppets are made perform, under the influence of the city.¹⁴⁵

On the last pages of the first part of Balthazar, the narrator expresses his will to be liberated from the city: 'How will I ever deliver myself from this whore among cities — sea,

¹⁴³ Echoing the same idea of leaving the city, Pombal advises Darley to return to Europe: 'This city will undermine your will' (183). Darley starts thinking about it: 'to start a new sort of life: not a city life this time, perhaps an island' (184).

¹⁴⁴ Although he tries to forget the city, all his effort seems futile: 'I cannot say that I forgot the city, but I let the memory sleep. Yet of course, it was always there, as it always will be, hanging in the mind like the mirage which travellers so often see' (211).

¹⁴⁵ Justine reaches a similar conclusion about the city's power over its inhabitants: 'We are not strong or evil enough to exercise choice. All this is part of an experiment arranged by something else, the city perhaps' (28).

desert, minaret, sand, sea?’ (217). Yet at this stage, Darley has become aware that the only way out of Alexandria is to be found inside himself:

I must know *everything* in order to be at last delivered from the city [...] I must set it all down in cold black and white, until such time as the memory and impulse of it is spent. I know that the key I am trying to turn is in myself. (216-217)

2.2. Death, Rebirth and Memory.

The narrator’s thirst for knowledge is not so much a yearn for totality (note the italics for ‘*everything*’ in the original) as for understanding. In his words, ‘in order to go on, it is necessary to go back’ (210). Building a comprehensive picture of his Alexandrian world seems his only chance to come to terms with it, to turn the pain of memory¹⁴⁶ into a regained world. The narrator has foreseen this possibility of transmuting pain into creation from the very beginning of the quartet:

the taste of this writing should have taken something from its living subjects — their breath, skin, voices — weaving them into the supple tissues of human memory. I want them to live again to the point where pain becomes art.... Perhaps this is a useless attempt, I cannot say. But I must try. (20)

In Cavafy’s words: ‘Bring your drugs, Art of Poetry / —they do relieve the pain at least for a while.’¹⁴⁷ Or as the poet describes it in another of his lines, in “Pictured”: ‘recovering through art from the effort of creating it’ (42).

Durrell’s narrative voice is not sure about the potential results of his attempt, but he is fully-convinced that he has to try it. And he tries it hard indeed, returning again and again to Alexandria, presenting contrasting views and recreating that world, to finally reach the conclusion that ‘the key’ is not to be found anywhere else but inside himself (217). Just like Cavafy in “Understanding”, Darley has realized that the meaning of those past experiences has matured in himself:

My younger days, my sensual life—
how clearly I see their meaning now.

What needless, futile regret...

But I didn’t see the meaning of it then.

In the loose living of my early years

¹⁴⁶ Durrell’s association of memory with pain is a repeated theme in the quartet. See, for instance: ‘I saw that pain itself was the only food of memory: for pleasure ends in itself’ (160).

¹⁴⁷ Qtd. from “Melancholy of Jason Kleander, Poet in Kommagini, A.D. 595” (82).

the impulses of my poetry were shaped,
the boundaries of my art were plotted. (60)

With the passing of time, new meanings arise from a city that evolves like a living organism,¹⁴⁸ while regenerating its eternal essence. In Justine, there is a mother image of the city as an ageing Alexandria:

a city like a human being collects its predispositions, appetites and fears. It grows to maturity, utters its prophets, and declines into hebetude, old age or the loneliness which is worse than either. Unaware that their mother city was dying, the living still sat there in the open street, like caryatids supporting the darkness, the pains of futurity upon their very eyelids; sleeplessly watching, the immortality-hunters, throughout the whole fatidic length of time. (153)

By the beginning of the second part of Clea, Alexandria still calls him but Darley looks more confident about his ability to deal with the city:

So the city claimed me once more — the same city made now somehow less poignant and less terrifying than it had been in the past by new displacements in time. If some parts of the old fabric had worn away, others had been restored. (731)

The city which is portrayed in Clea is not the ‘dying’ mother in its decline that it is described in the last part of Justine, but an Alexandria that has renewed itself and simultaneously ‘restored’ its ‘old fabric’ of poetic essences and associations. Regarding the permanence of past through association, objects are given a consequential function. Even if left behind, some objects remain ‘impregnated with [...] memory’, like Melissa’s empty scent-bottle in the hands of the narrator after having been rescued from the pockets of a deceased admirer of hers, in Justine (26). Objects keep the memory of the past but they can also play a role of consequence in the development of events, as well as in human relationships. The narrator, on the last two pages of Justine, thinks about some objects in his story which may have been more determining than characters themselves:

Sometimes I wonder whether these pages record the actions of real human beings; or whether this is not simply the story of a few inanimate objects which precipitated drama around them — I mean a black patch, a watch-key and a couple of dispossessed wedding-rings... (195)

In the quartet, objects bring old times back, they reveal connections among characters and they even seem to trigger future situations. Balthazar’s lost-and-found watch-key and the wedding-rings Cohen had bought for Melissa very clearly illustrate this.

¹⁴⁸ The city is often given the qualities of a living organism. For example, in Justine: ‘The city unwrinkles like an old tortoise and peers about it’ (22).

In Cavafy's work, objects often have a similar function, being a link that awakens past moments and emotions in the poet's mind. One of the poems that exemplifies this literary use of objects is Cavafy's "The Afternoon Sun":

This room, how well I know it.
Now they're renting it, and the one next to it,
as offices. The whole house has become
an office building for agents, businessmen, companies.

This room, how familiar it is.

The couch was here, near the door,
a Turkish carpet in front of it.
Close by, the shelf with two yellow vases.
On the right—no, opposite—a wardrobe with a mirror.
In the middle the table where he wrote,
and the three big wicker chairs.
Beside the window the bed
where we made love so many times.

They must still be around somewhere, those old things.

Beside the window the bed;
the afternoon sun used to touch half of it.

...One afternoon at four o'clock we separated
for a week only... And then—
that week became forever. (69, emphasis added)

When the poet remembers the furniture and some other details of a very familiar room of his past, he literally refers to those objects affectionately as 'those poor things' [*τα καϊμένα*] since they represent his lost lover, who has equally vanished from his life.

In The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell makes two direct references to this poem. In Justine, when the narrator revisits his old flat, he describes the furniture he used to have in his room and he recalls three missing sofas by quoting Cavafy's fourteenth line: 'No doubt they had been sold or broken up. 'Somewhere' I thought in quotation from a poem by the old poet, 'somewhere those wretched old things must still be knocking about'' (141). Further on, in Clea, Darley quotes the same line again: "'Those old things must be knocking about somewhere' I thought in quotation from the poet of the city' (680). This time, the author adds an asterisk leading to the endnotes of the novel, where a 'free translation' by Durrell of the poem is provided (882). Therefore, the connection between this poem and Durrell's use of several objects in the picture of his heraldic city is fully confirmed in the quartet by the narrator himself.

However, Cavafy's poetry is not only about people and objects from another time, but also about the moments they belong to. In fact, the poetical force of some instants figures prominently as a motif in the Alexandrian's work. In Justine, Durrell refers to this quality of Cavafy's production:

those verses distilled from the shabby but rewarding loves he had experienced— loves perhaps [...] lasting a few moments, yet living on now in his verse — so deliberately and tenderly had he captured the adventive minute and made all its colours fast. (31)

In "Cavafy", the poem that Durrell wrote on the Alexandrian, he highlights again this feature of Cavafy's poetry in similar terms:

And here I find him great. Never
To attempt a masterpiece of size—
You must leave life for that. No
But always to preserve the adventive
Minute, never to destroy the truth,
Admit the coarse manipulations of the lie. (253, fragment)

Capturing those fleeting yet unforgettable moments in the poet's life and thus, making them live eternally, that is Cavafy's greatest accomplishment according to Durrell. In both references, he repeats the same expression, 'the adventive minute'. The author's choice of the adjective 'adventive' to refer to those special moments is suggestive in itself, 'adventive' here meaning 'rare' or 'adventitious', that is, occurring sporadically and unexpectedly, coming to him as an 'advent' –or intimation– of timeless truths. Durrell emphasizes the poet's gift, to 'preserve' what by definition is elusive, those brief instants of his past, making all their colours 'fast'. The lasting colours of Cavafy's portrayal of 'the adventive minute' signal the poet's symbolic victory over Chronos; he has succeeded in making some moments 'live on perpetually' (27). This idea is a recurring one in The Alexandria Quartet. In Clea, the adjective 'adventive' is again used in the same context:

[...] the writer I was becoming was learning at last to inhabit those deserted spaces which time misses — beginning to live between the ticks of the clock, so to speak. The continuous present, which is the real history of that collective anecdote, the human mind; when the past is dead and the future represented only by desire and fear, what of *that adventive moment* which can't be measured, can't be dismissed? (659, emphasis added)

Literature becomes the way to regain awareness and control of that 'continuous present', which is seen by the author as far more real than those mental projections produced by 'desire and fear'. The notion of past is not so easily discarded as that of future because, as

the quartet itself shows, it feeds the present, and quite often, it is re-lived; thus, it never really ceases to be an experience of that 'continuous present'. That is the point where memory draws the dividing line between that part of the past which is 'dead' or forgotten, and that one which can hardly be called past since it has never stopped being present.

In The Alexandria Quartet, the city embodies the concept of memory. It is precisely 'memory' which confers 'reality' to it. In fact, the initial 'all persons fictitious disclaimer' ends: 'Only the city is real' (14). In Balthazar, the narrator insists on this idea: 'The city, half-imagined (yet wholly real), begins and ends in us, roots lodged in our memory' (209). Alexandria is called twice 'the capital of memory', in Justine (152) and in Clea (657). The 'fevered city' which, in Durrell's words, *appropriates* people's memories (152), in Clea, it turns to be:

Alexandria, the capital of memory! All the writing which I had borrowed from the living and the dead, until I myself had become a sort of postscript to a letter which was never ended, never posted.... (657)

Emulating the city's *appropriation* of memories, Durrell's narrator takes other Alexandrians' recollections to build his own book of the dead. Death is indeed a recurring topic in most of Durrell's productions from his very first novel. In Pied Piper of Lovers, he depicts his early encounter with mortality in India when he sees, as a boy, 'a white ankle-bone sticking out of a jumble of ash, new and clean, untouched by fire' and he is 'brought face to face with the meaning of death' (52; see also 56, where after mentioning that ankle, a character fancies a resurrection of his collection of insects).¹⁴⁹ That ankle will reappear as a symbol in subsequent works, as noted by Gifford.¹⁵⁰ In the short piece "Zero and Asylum in the Snow", for example, the ankle appears four times in contexts related to decay or loss of life.¹⁵¹ Interestingly enough, Durrell's dead characters become more alive after dying, when they are restored to life by the power of words, sometimes they even seem to have a more real existence than that of some living characters. Gracie in The Black Book or Scobie in The Alexandria Quartet would clearly illustrate this. Capodistria in the quartet, Iolanthe's robot in The Revolt of Aphrodite or the gnostics' attempts to defeat death in The Avignon Quintet are examples of this idea of going beyond mortality.

When The Alexandria Quartet was still only a project for a novel, Durrell had already conceived it as his 'book of the dead', how he called it, as it has been said above. In fact,

¹⁴⁹ This premature confrontation with death is still recalled by an old Durrell in an interview that Gilles Farcet conducted in Sommières in 1988. See Gilles Farcet, "Using Diversions to Transmit the Essential", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 250.

¹⁵⁰ Lawrence Durrell, Pied Piper of Lovers, ed. James Gifford (Victoria, BC: ELS, 2008) 258. Further references to this work come from this edition.

¹⁵¹ L. Durrell, Spirit of Place 246, 251-253.

Durrell used this title profusely to refer to his future quartet.¹⁵² Two sources of inspiration for this title have been clearly identified: The Tibetan Book of the Dead and the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

The first of the above-mentioned works, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, also called the manuscript of the Bardo Thödol, is a collection of spiritual writings found by the American anthropologist Walter Evans-Wentz in 1919 in Darjeeling (India), where Durrell also spent about two years of his childhood. Evans-Wentz edited and helped translate into English that manuscript, which would be finally published under its current title in 1927. As MacNiven states in his biography, 'it is not known when Durrell first encountered this book, but Tibetan Buddhism was clearly important to him while he was writing *The Black Book* in 1936' (703)¹⁵³ and it would remain a life-long interest for him. According to the Durrellian scholar Anna Lillios, the author's personal library at his last home in Sommières still held a copy of The Tibetan Book of the Dead.¹⁵⁴ The connection between this work and Durrell's quartet is insinuated by the author in a letter to Henry Miller of October 1945 when he refers to his preliminary notes as 'the material for the BOTD (Tibetan way of spelling the book of the dead).'¹⁵⁵ Another evidence of this link is also found in an interview with the author. In 1984, in conversation with Michel Braudeau, Durrell discloses: 'It's Tibet which gave me the idea for a quartet and now a quintet.'¹⁵⁶

In Tibetan, *bar do* means 'between two' and in the Bardo Thödol, it refers to the intermediate state between death and rebirth, the whole title meaning 'liberation through hearing in the intermediate state'. As Carl G. Jung indicates in his psychological commentary on this work, it is a guide whose purpose is 'to fix the attention of the dead man, at each successive stage of delusion and entanglement, on the ever-present possibility of liberation, and to explain to him the nature of his visions'.¹⁵⁷ It is intended to be recited by the *lāma* in the presence of a dying or a recently deceased person.

¹⁵² See, for instance, MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 81, 128, 146, 172, 176, 180, 187, 212. In a 1946 letter to T. S. Eliot, he alluded to his notes for the quartet by using the same title (see Spirit of Place 83). A similar reference is found in "Zero and Asylum in the Snow" (*ibid.* 253).

¹⁵³ Anna Lillios points out that the author read it in the mid-1930s, see "Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria: The City as Nexus", Durrell and the City: Collected Essays on Place, ed. Donald P. Kaczvinsky (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2012) 47. His connections with Buddhism started very early in his life. In an interview with Gilles Farcet, Durrell explains: 'my family owned rather a lot of sacred Buddhist texts, one of which my uncle translated. I was introduced to that tradition at a very young age.' See Gilles Farcet, "Using Diversions to Transmit the Essential", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 250.

¹⁵⁴ Message sent 16 Aug. 2011 to the mailing list of the International Lawrence Durrell Society at lists.uvic.ca. Web. 26 Aug. 2014.

¹⁵⁵ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 187.

¹⁵⁶ Michel Braudeau, "With That, I've Said It All", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 189.

¹⁵⁷ Violet S. de Laszlo, ed. Psyche & Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C. G. Jung (Garden City, NY: Doubleday-Anchor, 1958) 284.

Among other aspects, three central ideas might have aroused Durrell's interest in The Tibetan Book of the Dead: the notion of rebirth; the concept of *karma*, or in Jung's words, the 'psychic structure which is inherited and which necessarily gives a certain form and direction to all experience'¹⁵⁸; and finally, what is according to Jung 'the ultimate and highest truth, that even the gods are the radiance and reflection of our own souls', that is 'soul is the light of the Godhead, and the Godhead is the soul.'¹⁵⁹ These three ideas are found in Durrell's quartet and at the same time, in the author's reading of Cavafy's poetry. Since the Egyptian Book of the Dead addresses similar concepts, the previous notions will be commented after a brief introduction to it.

The Book of the Dead is an ancient Egyptian collection of funerary and spiritual texts. Although a large part of the source material remains unpublished in museums around the world, there have been a number of editions since the first translation by the Prussian Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius (1842)¹⁶⁰, who coined the title of this group of writings. As E. A. Wallis Budge points out, these texts were originally created as 'guides along the road which, passing through death and the grave, led into the realms of light and life, and into the presence of the divine Osiris, the conqueror of death, who made men and women "to be born again".'¹⁶¹

In March 1937, Durrell was reading with intense emotion Wallis Budge's translation of this work when he wrote Miller about it:

Just got the Egyptian BOOK OF THE DEAD. Tremendously moved by the hymns to Ra as he comes forth. That's how I feel. I want to swallow the sun and feel it in my navel this summer. That is something so far from words and works that I expect you have difficulty in understanding it.¹⁶²

This part of his letter, which includes some other references to deities appearing in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, reveals Durrell's interest in this work at the time he was planning his quartet. In an interview with Marc Alyn, when recalling the writing process of The Alexandria Quartet, the author recalls his thoughts at the time:

To my eyes Proust had exhausted the literary potential of our society; I had to find something else, to turn, for example, to Einstein or to go back to the

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 293.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 287 (both). In the text, John Baldock, ed. The Tibetan Book of the Dead (London: Arcturus, 2009) 23.

¹⁶⁰ Cavafy's home for the last 25 years of his life was precisely located in rue Lepsius. He lived there from late 1907 to the 29th April 1933, his 70th birthday and the day of his death. It no longer bears the name of the father of modern Egyptology; it was renamed Sharia Sharm el Sheikh in 1967, and then, C. P. Cavafy Street in 2011.

¹⁶¹ E. A. Wallis Budge, comp. and trans. The Book of the Dead (London: Arkana-Penguin, 1989) xvi.

¹⁶² MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 67.

origins: *The Book of the Dead*, Plato, to the occult traditions which are still alive in the East.¹⁶³

Beyond the numerous differences between the Tibetan and the Egyptian texts, both deal with the issue of rebirth. In the latter, resurrection is symbolized by Osiris' connection with the 'cycle of death and regeneration' in plant life.¹⁶⁴ As David Lorimer has remarked, 'the Egyptian hopes, by means of magical identification, to reenact the resuscitation of Osiris.'¹⁶⁵ In both anthologies, *memory* plays a crucial role in the journey towards rebirth. In his introduction to The Book of the Dead, Wallis Budge quotes a fragment of a spell from the walls of King Pepi I's pyramid which clearly illustrates the importance of memory: 'Thy name shall live upon earth; thy name shall endure upon earth; thou shall never perish, thou shalt never, never come to an end' (lxx). People's remembrance of the dead king's name becomes his guarantee of eternal life on earth.

Lawrence Durrell's emphasis on the concept of *memory* in his Alexandrian tetralogy projects the same idea, memory as a door to eternity. The author's use of Cavafy's poem "Long Ago" in Clea and his own translation of it, which is included in the endnotes of the novel, focuses the reader's attention on this subject. In Clea, the narrator mentally quotes to himself: 'Sometime in August — was it August?' (681) and an asterisk leads to Durrell's personal rendering of the whole poem in the endnotes (882-883). His free version of Cavafy's poem, titled "Far Away", while it is not so close to the source text as Keeley's and Sherrard's one, it retains the meaning of Cavafy's poem and even develops it creatively. Actually, Durrell's translation is five lines longer than the original composition. Apart from those additions which bring new lyrical nuances to the poem, such as 'a skin made of jasmine-petals on a night' (instead of 'a skin as though of jasmine') and 'irrevocably blue, yes, bluer than / a sapphire's mineral gaze' (for 'ah yes, blue: a sapphire blue'), Durrell shows a particular interest in emphasizing the elusive character of Memory. The expression 'this fugitive memory', from the first line of Durrell's version, is not found in Cavafy's, although this idea is also conveyed by the Alexandrian in his two first lines.

As both books entitled Book of the Dead show, the path towards rebirth is never an easy one, but despite the difficulties and uncertainties of Memory as a gateway to eternity, in Cavafy's "Long Ago", it finally achieves to bring the essence of that individual back to life. The poet's memory asserts itself in his last line:

¹⁶³ Marc Alyn, "Listening for the Novel's Fetal Heartbeat", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 136.

¹⁶⁴ See Geraldine Pinch, Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt (New York: Oxford UP, 2004) 178.

¹⁶⁵ Wallis Budge, viii.

A skin as though of jasmine...
that August evening—was it August?—
I can still just recall the eyes: blue, I think they were...
Ah yes, blue: a sapphire blue. (38)

Cavafy's insistence on remembering and thus rebuilding a part of his life is very clearly seen in many other poems. The theme of "Long Ago" resembles that of "Grey":

Those grey eyes will have lost their charm—if he's still alive;
that lovely face will have spoiled.

Memory, keep them the way they were,
And, memory, whatever you can bring back of that love,
Whatever you can, bring back tonight. (54)

Memory has in Cavafy, as in Durrell, a powerful embalming quality. It seems able to preserve and even sometimes, to restore to life. "To Sensual Pleasure" is an open confession from the poet about the value he gives to his reminiscences of early days: 'My life's joy and incense: recollection of those hours' (53). Even if sometimes doubt arises, this same hope in the victory of memory over death/oblivion pervades The Alexandria Quartet. In Justine, while discoursing on the role of letters in his research about the past, the narrator seems to emulate Cavafy in the poet's reservations about his own memory in "Long Ago". Unlike the poet, Durrell's narrator finds in letters a material confirmation of his own recollections.

These letters were useful to me. My feeling of unreality had grown to such a pitch that at times I distrusted my own memory, finding it hard to believe that there had ever been such a town as Alexandria. Letters were a lifeline attaching me to an existence in which the greater part of myself was no longer engaged. (186)

Indeed, letters, and memory at large, work as a 'lifeline' for Darley, defined as a two-way umbilical cord connecting past and present. Through it, the past brings meaning into the present, and at the same time, the present confers new reality on the inhabitants of that past. Similarly, in Cavafy's "Very Seldom", an old poet finds a regained youth and a revival of his past perceptions through literature. In this poem, his verse becomes the 'umbilical cord' which brings the past back; his readers restore it to life.

His verse is now quoted by young men.
His visions come before their lively eyes.
Their healthy sensual minds,
their shapely taut bodies,
stir to his perception of the beautiful. (35)

However, it must be pointed out that the concept of rebirth is also present in Durrell's quartet in other contexts. As Lillios has noted, 'Clea undergoes a form of resurrection at the end of the *Quartet* after her underwater accident; whereas, Darley throws off his egotistical concerns to rescue her. The enlightenment they receive after this near-death experience calms them and reconciles them to perform their proper role in life as artists.'¹⁶⁶ Lillios, while dealing with the influence of The Tibetan Book of the Dead on Durrell, sees Clea going through 'this same cycle [the stages described in the Tibetan manuscript] in the scenes leading up to her accident.' She analyses those scenes while identifying each stage in the after-death journey of the Bardo Thödol¹⁶⁷ and she quotes Durrell describing this process: 'The ego becomes absolutely disintegrated', they start 'swimming in the continuum.'¹⁶⁸ The word 'continuum' points to another related notion from The Tibetan Book of the Dead, that of *karma*, or in Jung's definition, the inherited 'psychic structure'.¹⁶⁹

Beyond the many differences between the Tibetan idea of *karma* and Durrell's belief in the eternal influence of the spirit of place, they share a common conviction by acknowledging a transference of 'psychic structures' between generations. In Clea, readers are told that in modern Alexandria, the weight of the dead is felt even by lovers: 'The simplest of these kisses we exchanged had a pedigree of death. In them we once more befriended forgotten loves which struggled to be reborn. The roots of every sigh are buried in the ground' (833). Similarly, Durrell's characters are sometimes presented as reverberations of others from the past. An example is found when the narrator visits his friend Balthazar, who is presented as a 'fellow-student and close friend of the old poet' living in the same flat of Rue Lepsius where Cavafy lived (79). The narrator, who has previously admitted being 'haunted' by Cavafy's expression on one of his last kept photographs, as if he felt the influence of his personality (31), is then told by Balthazar about a lover of the latter, a Greek actor called Panagiotis. Balthazar says he had seen in Panagiotis 'the personage of Seleucia on whom Cavafy based his poem' (704). The importance of this scene is confirmed by Durrell's inclusion of his translation of the poem in question, "One of Their Gods", among the endnotes for Clea (883).

"One of Their Gods" follows a young handsome man walking along the streets of one of the several Hellenistic cities called Selefkia. Not only the title, but also some lines of

¹⁶⁶ Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 124.

¹⁶⁷ Durrell and the City: Collected Essays on Place 48-49.

¹⁶⁸ Anna Lillios, "Discovering the Algebra of Love", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations, 243-244.

¹⁶⁹ See footnote 158.

the poem suggest that he is really a god¹⁷⁰ in the disguise of a mortal. Changing into any form is a common practice of classical Greek deities. Athena, for instance, appears in The Odyssey disguised as a young girl in order to influence Nausicaa (*Od.* 6). Durrell addresses this matter in an interview for the Canadian CBC:

One of the interesting things about the mythology of the ancient Greeks was that the gods and goddesses were so real; in other words, you believed you offered sacrifices to Aphrodite at the altar up the hill in the woods, but if there was a tap on your front door it could be Aphrodite in disguise. The Greek notion of hospitality created gods and goddesses on the ground.¹⁷¹

But what has that god in Cavafy's poem come to do in Selefkia? The last lines are telling about the implied purpose of his visit to 'the quarter that lives only at night'.

they would wonder which of Them it could be,
and for what suspicious pleasure
he'd come down into the streets of Selefkia
from the August Celestial Mansions. (52)

Human pleasures have never been alien to Greek gods. On the contrary, unlike other deities, what is most characteristic of the Olympians is their human qualities. Apart from their anthropomorphism, they also share with mortals a strong interest in earthly issues and delights. It is possible to see this aspect of the Hellenic pantheon in many other well-known poems by Cavafy. In "The Horses of Achilles", for example, those immortal animals weep about the misery of mortals (5); in "Unfaithfulness", Apollo makes a promise to Thetis and then, he breaks it, showing a very usual human way of acting (13). Leaving aside all these parallellisms and recurrences in behaviour and psychic structures, Cavafy's "One of Their Gods" also leads us to discuss the third one of the ideas mentioned above regarding The Tibetan Book of the Dead, that is, the relationship between gods and human beings.

It has been previously stated that this Tibetan work presents gods as 'the radiance and reflection of our own souls' (see footnote 74 of this chapter). According to Durrell, this is also one of the underlying ideas of his quartet. When interviewed by Huw Wheldon for the BBC in 1960, the author was very clear in this respect:

Wheldon: You have described your *Quartet*, the four Alexandrian novels, as an 'investigation of modern love.'

¹⁷⁰ See lines 4 ('the joy of being immortal in his eyes'), 16 ('they would wonder which of Them it could be') and 19 ('[come] from the August Celestial Mansions') of both Keeley and Sherrard's translation, and the original poem.

¹⁷¹ Fletcher Markle, "Teaching Your Characters That They're More or Less Free", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 102.

Durrell: I wanted really to raise the question of what sort of bridge there was between the world of the human passions, the sort of shadow world in which we live, and, let us say, the world of the Gods, which is the potential world which we all carry in us.¹⁷²

Durrell explained that he had not worked on this concept as a religious one, but in the Freudian context. However, the identification between human soul and potential divinity remains. In Clea, Darley reflects on it:

[...] wasn't the idea of the individual soul grafted on us by the Greeks in the wild hope that, by its sheer beauty, it would 'take' [...] That we might grow up to the size of the concept and grow the heavenly flame in each of our hearts? Has it taken or hasn't it? (768)

While considering the soul of human beings as 'the heavenly flame', that is, the source of spiritual growth, Darley is voicing precisely the author's ideas about the nature of 'the world of the Gods'.

In Cavafy's work, these close connections between gods and men also appear in several compositions of his canon, such as "Interruption" (11) and "Ionic" (28). In the first one, the poet recalls Metaneira and Peleus preventing the goddesses Thetis and Demetra from completing the ritual that might have rendered Achilles and Demophon immortal. The first two lines reveal the degree of interaction existing between Greek divinities and human beings: 'Hasty and inexperienced creatures of the moment, / it's we who interrupt the action of the gods.' The original mythical narration and particularly, Cavafy's evocation of that scene, show deities mingling with mortals to the point of seeing their plans altered by the latter. The second of the poems mentioned above, "Ionic", is set in the times of the Christian persecution of paganism. The poet wants to make clear that gods may have been forced out of the temples but they have not disappeared:

That we've broken their statues,
that we've driven them out of their temples,
doesn't mean at all that the gods are dead.

The whole stanza emphasizes this sense of eternal divine presence; gods can be noticed while flying across the hills of Ionia, a land whose 'atmosphere is potent with their life'. This line of the poem fits so neatly into Durrell's notion of the spirit of place that it might even help to illustrate Durrell's observations about the Greek landscape in this regard. In an interview, for instance, Durrell remarks: 'I think the Greek landscape is absolutely saturated by intimations of the basic type of mind that grew up in it, and in Greece you feel

¹⁷² Huw Wheldon, "Coming in Slightly at a Slant", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 56.

the pagan world is very close.¹⁷³ The eternal breath of the Greek gods on their homeland is a recurring idea in many of Durrell's titles, such as Prospero's Cell, Reflections on a Marine Venus, The Revolt of Aphrodite and The Greek Islands.

When alluding to Ionia, Cavafy may have used the modern Greek name for this province of central coastal Anatolia in today's Turkey, Smyrna (Σμύρνη). Since the poem was first published in 1911, Smyrna had not still known the tragedy that eleven years later would stain its glorious past with blood, fire and destruction, but Cavafy probably preferred to use the ancient name of the region and its settlers to accentuate that even in decay, Greek gods would never abandon their beloved land of Ionia.

Pagan gods and the world view of their culture are felt as a presence by both Cavafy and Durrell in their works, but doubtless, Cavafy was not his only influence in this sense. When mentioning Smyrna, and regarding this same issue, it is unavoidable to refer to another poet with strong connections with Durrell, George Seferis. Therefore, this topic is also explored further on in relation to the latter.

Finally, there is another key aspect of Cavafy's representation of gods which has not been mentioned so far, their connection to sensuality. That being one of the central themes of his poetry, it should not be forgotten that pleasure-seeking is clearly associated to the poet's picture of the Greek gods. In a later poem, "Orophernis", Cavafy returns to Ionia. This composition follows the steps of the false son of Ariarathes IV of Cappadocia, who was sent away to Ionia as a child, in order to protect the rights to the throne of the real son, Mithradates. The third stanza shows the meaning which the poet confers to that land.

Oh those exquisite Ionian nights
when fearlessly, and entirely in a Greek way,
he came to know sensual pleasure totally.
In his heart, Asiatic always,
but in manners and language, a Greek

Orophernis seems 'one of their gods' –to use Cavafy's words– and at the same time, a projection of the image of youth that the Alexandrian Greek offers in many of his poems. This appreciation of sensual desire represented by the pagan deities would be replaced by restraint in the Christian world. In his poetry, Cavafy portrays this encounter of opposing systems of beliefs. Two significant examples are "Kleitos' Illness", about a servant who secretly prays an old idol to save the life of her Christian master, and "Priest at the Serapeion", in which a Christian man mourns his father, 'even though he was—terrible as it is to say it— / priest at that cursed Serapeion' (100), the pagan Temple of Serapis in

¹⁷³ Kenneth Young, "A Poet Who Stumbled into Prose", Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 52.

Alexandria. However, as Joseph Brodsky states, the poet ‘did not choose between paganism and Christianity but was swinging between them like a pendulum.’¹⁷⁴

In his work, Lawrence Durrell shows a very similar attitude towards the Mediterranean Pagan world but, compared to Cavafy’s ironical remarks about certain manifestations of intolerance related to Christianity, Durrell’s view of the Christian church takes a more critical perspective. With regard to the latter’s opinion about this issue, see, for example, Ingersoll (83, 182, and 199-200). In two early letters to Miller sent from Corfu by July 1938, Durrell shows, half-jokingly but very clearly, his own ideas about the divine.

yesterday we discovered a cave with an underwater entrance, in which we are going to build a shrine, [...] to THE UNKNOWN GOD within each of us. His symbol is bull, fish, and scorpion. [...] Perhaps, Henry, you would write a prayer for the initiate, about this style and length:

TO THEE, TWO-HORNED IONIAN PAN¹⁷⁵, I DEDICATE
THIS OFFERING IN RETURN FOR MANY DAYS OF BLUE
BAPTISM IN THESE YOUR WATERS.¹⁷⁶

In his next letter to Miller, sent about the same time, Durrell insists on this matter using very similar words: ‘He is the unknown, the unhonoured, undiscovered god in each of us. We will give him no name. Unless IT.’¹⁷⁷ Behind the author’s sense of humour, his addressee would undoubtedly be able to understand the notion of ‘god within each of us’ that Durrell repeated in both missives, since it is also found profusely in Miller’s work. This topic is again discussed further on in relation to Angelos Sikelianos, regarding Miller’s production too.

Another recurrence in both letters is his reference to the Greek deity of the wild, Pan. This half-goat god emerges in many of Durrell’s works. In Panic Spring, it is represented by the characters’ temptation to make a *panic* jump out of their oppressive realities; in The Black Book (228) it is mentioned in relation to the characters of Tarquin and Lawrence Lucifer with the same connotation. In Prospero’s Cell (105) it is the Count who refers to it in connection with its contemporary analogous figure, the *kallikantzaros*. Pan is brought up in a similar way in Durrell’s article “Corfu: Isle of Legend” (332, and 334), in Reflections on a Marine Venus (57, 101, and 147), then, in Sicilian Carousel (96-98), and also in The Greek Islands (36, 41-42, 115, and 138-139). This picture of the divinity of shepherds and nature, coming into view only in ‘silent glades’, is also found in The Alexandria Quartet (84,

¹⁷⁴ Qtd. in Edmund Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry: Voice and Myth (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983) 12.

¹⁷⁵ In “Oil for the Saint; Return to Corfu”, an essay about the author’s visit to the island in May 1964, he is back to that underwater cave where they had made ‘a clay statue of Pan’ (see Spirit of Place 302).

¹⁷⁶ George Wickes, ed. Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence (London: Faber, 1963) 126-127.

¹⁷⁷ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 100.

658).¹⁷⁸ Likewise, in Mountolive, the ‘panic-stricken leaps’ (emphasis added) of boatmen into Lake Mareotis seem to echo those of the characters of Panic Spring.

However, the most relevant appearances of Pan in Durrell’s quartet are related to two of its primary characters, Balthazar and Justine. Regarding Balthazar, the narrator describes the former’s goatee as ‘the beard of Pan’, thus associating this character to Pan (78, 213). As regards Justine, her ring, which becomes a key element in the quartet, is significantly decorated with ‘a Pan raping a goat, his hands grasping its horns, his head thrown back in ecstasy’ (351). This sexual aspect of Pan, which is indeed a feature of this god in many of his representations, is also accentuated in The Revolt of Aphrodite. The narrator depicts an early spring day and in this context, he alludes to Pan as an image of fertility: ‘The scent of pushing green in the parks, the last melted drops running from the penis of the stone Pan in the public gardens.’¹⁷⁹ In the author’s poetic production, his portrayal of the deity follows the same approach; in “Letters in Darkness”, he is called ‘the little hairy sexer’ (229, see also 42).

Actually, Pan embodies a perfect image of the pagan world in Durrell’s works, that of a civilization which, unlike our current society, was closely linked to earthly issues. It is certainly a view also found in Cavafy’s. In The Avignon Quintet, when discoursing on the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, the author says: ‘It was here our Judeo-Christian culture finally wiped out the rich paganism of the Mediterranean! Here the great god Pan was sent to the gas-chambers of the Popes’.¹⁸⁰ Although Cavafy never deals with that confrontation in these terms, it is undeniable that it is quite present in many of his poems, and also that both authors share a common interest in the pagan unconstrained view of sensuality.

In 1960, Lawrence Durrell publishes “Cavafy”, his poetic homage to the Alexandrian. The first stanza praises the latter’s capacity for holding the memories of his erotic life when those passions are seen afterwards in the distance:

I like to see so much the old man’s loves,
Egregious if you like and often shabby
Protruding from the ass’s skin of verse,
For better or for worse,
The bones of poems cultured by a thirst—
Dilapidated taverns, dark eyes washed
Now in the wry and loving brilliance
Of such barbaric memories
As held them when the dyes of passion ran.

¹⁷⁸ Other references in the quartet include one to the sound of a ‘resurrected Pan’ (566) and another about a certain musical composition, ‘Weber’s *Pan*’ (157).

¹⁷⁹ Lawrence Durrell, Tunc, The Revolt of Aphrodite (London: Faber, 1990) 265.

¹⁸⁰ Durrell, The Avignon Quintet 346.

No cant about the sottishness of man! (252)

Whereas E.M. Forster had admired Cavafy's view of history, it was the poet's hedonism and his ability to distil his personal experiences into timeless lyrical images that excited Durrell. The latter's "Cavafy" is very telling about it, and Durrell's representations of the poet in The Alexandria Quartet corroborate this idea. The suggestive picture in the last stanza of his 1955 poem "Near Kyrenia" also present a very Cavafian and sensual Durrell.

I do not know any longer what to make
Of my feelings; for example, how our bodies
Entangled in water softly floated out
Beyond the limits of freewill, wet fingers
Touching.... No longer to be intimidated
By this empty beach, frail horned stars,
A victim of memory who could not say
How deft, how weightless are the kisses now
Which wake this unknown, the night sea,
Unlimbered here among its silver bars. (239)

Indeed, memory and the transcendence of *eros* are a recurring theme throughout Durrell's work. Of course, Durrell differs largely from Cavafy in his representation of sensuality too. Both authors belong to very different times, and in the case of the Alexandrian, social homophobia cannot be ignored as a determining factor. Although a few of Cavafy's erotic poems are quite explicit about their homoerotic nature, the identification between the poet and his characters is never given as a fact. His choice of the third person for some of his poems allows the poetic voice to keep a distance from them. Moreover, as personal pronouns are not compulsory in Greek, he often omits them, so the sex of the loved one is left unsaid. Whether there is more than one reason for these aspects of Cavafy's work is arguable —these options, for instance, have sometimes been chosen by many contemporary authors to create a more universal view of personal experiences— but they certainly have an effect on the way the author depicts sexuality in his poems.

Another point of convergence between both Cavafy's and Durrell's images of sex is their liminal character. Often occurring in dark taverns or in shabby hotel rooms, always beyond the margins of conventional relationships, imbued with views of both domination and freedom, sexual encounters in the works by these two authors happen in a troubled liminality which leads readers to a wide reflection about human relations. In this respect, in Durrell's quartet, Alexandria becomes 'the great winepress of love' (18), the city where 'the symbolic lovers of the free Hellenic world are replaced [...] by something different, something subtly androgynous, inverted upon itself' (*id.*). This thought is thus asserted from

the opening pages of Justine, and later, it is illustrated by the diverse associations among the characters of the quartet. Indeed, the epigraph chosen by Durrell for this novel deals with androgyny too. His quotation from Sigmund Freud's Letters reads: 'I am accustoming myself to the idea of regarding every sexual act as a process in which four persons are involved' (15). Actually, this notion would be developed more deeply by Freud's disciple Carl Gustav Jung, who influenced Durrell largely, as the latter often admitted in his interviews.¹⁸¹ Jung's concepts of *anima* (men's suppressed female self) and *animus* (women's suppressed male self) might be well-illustrated in his quartet of lovers: Darley, Nessim, Melissa, and Justine.

Nessim, in beginning to explore and love Melissa as an extension of Justine, delineated perfectly the human situation. Melissa would hunt in him for the qualities which she imagined I must have found in his wife. The four of us were unrecognized complementaries of one another, inextricably bound together. (165)

Whether they are seen as 'complementaries' or split-off aspects of their human nature, Durrell's characters and their relationships undermine traditional gender identities. The Avignon Quintet provides many other examples from diverse sexual orientations.

Despite its liminality, sex is presented by both, Cavafy and Durrell, as an element of truth. Even if enjoyed with strangers in a context of prostitution, as depicted in some poems by Cavafy, sexuality is always associated with frankness. One of the most striking characteristics of poems like "Days of 1909, '10, and '11" (117) and "Days of 1901" (107), among others, is precisely the openness with which the poetic voice addresses the subject and his lovers, who are presented as human beings rather than simple objects of desire. In a like manner, Durrell frequently insists on the connection between sex and truth. In Balthazar, the narrator argues that the qualities of a person 'can be analysed or inferred', but not 'the very flavour of his [or her] personality', and he adds that 'nothing except the act of physical love tells us this truth about one another' (248). Balthazar takes this idea even further.

[...] sex is a psychic and not a physical act. The clumsy coupling of human beings is simply a biological paraphrase of this truth — a primitive method of introducing minds to each other, engaging them. But most people are stuck in the physical aspect, unaware of the poetic *rapport* which it so clumsily tries to teach. (292)

In the last novel of Durrell's quartet, it is Clea who raises the topic again: 'Sexual love *is* knowledge, both in etymology and in cold fact; "he knew her" as the Bible says! Sex

¹⁸¹ See, for instance, Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 210: 'I was nourished by Freud and Jung both. [...] It seemed to me that the revelation of bisexuality in Freud was a major assumption.'

is the joint or coupling which unites the male and female ends of knowledge' (739). Her view of knowledge as the product of the unity of male and female perspectives leads readers back to Freud's epigraph to Justine about androgyny, closing the circle initiated by the Austrian at the beginning of the quartet.

Regarding Cavafy's representation of the Alexandrian sensuality, Durrell praises the poet's attitude towards his past. Cavafy never expresses regret, he never tries to forget either. In Durrell's words about him: 'always to preserve the adventive minute, never to destroy the truth'.¹⁸² Indeed, Cavafy's celebration of the past 'for the passions it held'¹⁸³ is a key aspect of his idiosyncrasy as a poet. He relives his intimate moments of joy in the past without remorse, his old passions again awakened in him. This is exactly the narrator's disposition in The Alexandria Quartet. His clearest statement in this respect is found in the last book, when he addresses Justine and says: 'I feel no resentment for the past. On the contrary I am full of gratitude because an experience which was perhaps banal in itself (even disgusting for you) was for me immeasurably enriching!' (693). His words seem to echo those above-mentioned by Clea about love relations as a source of knowledge.

After reading this, one might wonder whether the author generally associates knowledge to love throughout his writings. In The Revolt of Aphrodite, the narrator mentions the three stages of man after the Ancient Greek formula, that is, 'satiety', 'hubris' (ἄβρις, i.e., excess), and 'ate' (ἄτη, i.e., ruin).¹⁸⁴ However, in some of his letters and interviews, Durrell repeatedly alludes to another Greek less tragical sequence, the progression *agon-pathos-anagnorisis*, i.e., *struggle, suffering/recognition and awareness/acceptance*. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, the author applies this classical formula to explain his own writing, identifying his Alexandrian 'investigation of modern love'¹⁸⁵ as his own *pathos*.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, the connection established between human passions and awareness is also confirmed by Durrell's conception of life and literary creation.

As Roderick Beaton remarks, just as Kostis Palamas had identified his 'three lyricisms' in his "Poetics" —that is, those of the 'I' (personal), the 'we' (national), and the 'all' (universal), 'Cavafy, too, divided his poems into three kinds: erotic, historical, and

¹⁸² L. Durrell, Collected Poems 253.

¹⁸³ Qtd. from Keeley, Cavafy's Alexandria 149.

¹⁸⁴ Lawrence Durrell, Tunc, The Revolt of Aphrodite 63.

¹⁸⁵ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 56.

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 190, and 194: 'The three stages of the progression toward fulfillment are *agon*, *pathos*, and *anagnorisis*. *The Black Book* is my *agon*, that is to say, the stage of struggle. *Pathos* is a kind of recognition, and *anagnorisis* is realization and total acceptance. [...] *The Alexandria Quartet* was a *pathos* for me. I am in the process of finishing my *anagnorisis* in *The Avignon Quintet* with the hope of soon accepting everything.'

philosophical.¹⁸⁷ The paragraphs above have explored some confluences between Cavafy and Durrell in the first and third of these three fields of the poet's production, but Cavafy's historical poems also deserve close attention.

Firstly, it should be defined what type of history the Alexandrian addresses in his poetry. It is very well described in Politis' history of modern Greek literature.

Most of the historical poems have to do with the Hellenistic period, and the world created by the conquests of Alexander the Great at its height ('a great new Greek world') and in its decline, in various distant colonies; the Greco-Roman world also takes up some space, and the struggle between Paganism and Christianity (Julian and Apollonius of Tyana), and then the Dark Ages until the Moslem capture of Egypt; finally, some are concerned with the Byzantine period ('our glorious Byzantinism').¹⁸⁸

When the poet deals with the classical Golden Age, Cavafy does not allude to the great victories such as the battles of Marathon and Salamis, but to devastating defeats for the Greeks such as the battle of Thermopylae. More often, his poetry focuses on later defeats of the wider Hellenic world beyond the limits of current Greece, such as the battle of Actium and the fall of Constantinople, and periods of decline, like the last years of the Hellenizing dynasties of Syria or the end of Greek paganism, i.a. In Cavafy's poems, those critical periods of history seem to foster a reconsideration and strengthening of the whole set of values.

Most of the characters appearing in Cavafy's poems are not important figures, but minor or almost forgotten ones on the fringes of history. This sort of characters represent the atmosphere and values of their times but they are also chosen by the poet as metaphors for eternal human attitudes. Despite the fact that he was a king, Kaisarion (i.e. 'Little Caesar', or Ptolemy XV) is a good example of the kind of historical figures that Cavafy prefers. He was the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, and Antony conferred on him the title 'King of Kings'. After Antony's defeat, Kaisarion was killed on the orders of Octavian, following the advice of one of his counsellors. According to Plutarch's Life of Mark Antony, to persuade Octavian, this counsellor quoted a line from the Iliad: 'It is not a good thing to have many Caesars' (II, 204), a line which also appears paraphrased at the end of Cavafy's "Kaisarion". His short reign (he died aged 17) meant his disappearance from history as a major figure. As the poet reminds, 'little is known about [him] from history' (58), only a few lines by

¹⁸⁷ Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature 93. The information about Cavafy dividing his poems comes from a note attributed to the poet which is cited by Giorgos P. Savidis.

¹⁸⁸ Linos Politis, A History of Modern Greek Literature (Oxford, UK: Clarendon-Oxford UP, 1973) 191.

Plutarch and some images of him survive. In the poem, Kaisarion appears when the poet is reading a volume with inscriptions about the Ptolemies.

When I'd found the facts I wanted
I would have put the book away, but a brief
insignificant mention of King Kaisarion
suddenly caught my eye...

And there you stood with your indefinable charm.
Because so little
Is known about you from history,
I could fashion you more freely in my mind. (58)

The brevity of an 'insignificant mention of King Kaisarion' seems to explain why the poet succumbs to the Little King's 'indefinable charm'. The mystery surrounding this figure arouses the poet's interest, who rescues Kaisarion from oblivion while shaping his character 'freely' out of his hazy historical portrait. As David Ricks observes, 'Caesarion's name [...] is at once a threat to his life and his attraction for the poet, whose love is inspired by an object of all-too-human dimensions.'¹⁸⁹ Most of Cavafian characters follow the same pattern, beings of both semi-divine and all-too-human dimensions living on the edges of history.

In a similar way, Durrell's Alexandrian characters are intended to illustrate the spirit of their city and time through their dreams and all-too-human actions. They are common middle class people; the big names of the period are either not mentioned or appear only as parts of the setting. Durrell's picture of Alexandria pays homage to those anonymous people who inhabited the city embodying its eternal values.

This was Alexandria, the unconsciously poetical mother-city
exemplified in the names and faces which made up her history.
Listen.

Tony Umbada, Baldassarro Trivizani, Claude Amaril, Paul
Capodistria, Dmitri Randidi, Onouphrios Papas, Count Banubula,
Jacques de Guéry, Athena Trasha, Djamboulat Bey, Delphine de
Francueil, General Cervoni, Ahmed Hassan Pacha, Pozzo di
Borgo, Pierre Balbz, Gaston Phipps, Haddad Fahmy Amin,
Mehmet Adm, Wilmot Pierrefeu, Toto de Brunel, Colonel Neguib,
Dante Borromeo, Benedict Dangeau, Pia dei Tolomei, Gilda
Ambron.... The poetry and history of commerce, the rhyme-
schemes of the Levant which had swallowed Venice and Genoa.
(Names which the passer-by may one day read upon the tombs in
the cemetery.)¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Ricks, 115.

¹⁹⁰ Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* 234. Also in *Balthazar*, but further on, the same names appear again, in a different order (365). In both cases, the only real name in the lists is their last one, that of Gilda Ambron, a

All these names and those of the main characters of Durrell's quartet are fictional (except for one, see previous footnote). Unlike Cavafy, he creates fictitious names for his characters, who are not historical figures but invented personae. Even if some of them may have been inspired by real people, as MacNiven and Haag, i.a., suggest, often they seem to be inspired by the traits of more than one person each. In any case, writing about the author's contemporary Alexandria entailed the possible risk of legal action for libel, which was reduced by creating new names for all characters. The historical 'city's exemplars' (338) are also in the quartet though. Antony and Cleopatra, Alexander, Hypatia, even the contemporary Alexandrian bard Cavafy, appear profusely, becoming essential background characters who intertwine with Darley, Justine, Clea and the rest of the inhabitants of the city.

This interconnection among the Alexandrians of every period in the history and present of their city is also found in E.M. Forster's 'cosmopolis'¹⁹¹, where figures from different ages such as Cleopatra and Hypatia meet too. Alexandria is presented by both Durrell and Forster as a continuum, as a large family of dwellers. It is indeed an image they both borrow from Cavafy. The poet saw an almost biological connection among the inhabitants and the place throughout its history that pervades his production on the city. 'Mohammed Ali square is my aunt', he liked to say, 'Rue Chérif Pasha is my first cousin and the Rue de Ramleh is my second.'¹⁹² This idea of continuum is coherent with Cavafy's conception of time:

When we say "Time" we mean ourselves. Most abstractions are simply our pseudonyms. It is superfluous to say "Time is scytheless and toothless". We know it. We are time.¹⁹³

That is why talking about the past is reflecting on the present, according to Cavafy's view, since time is inside us. In George Seferis' precise words:

Cavafy is able to identify the past with the present in a simultaneous moment. And this is a very different thing from the use of history which we normally find in the works of other poets, whether Romantic or Parnassian. [...] Diaios, Critolaus, Philip, Demetrius, Ptolemy Lathyrus, the Achaean, are inside us, and inside us now [...].¹⁹⁴

friend of the author and daughter of the owners of the villa where he lived from October 1943 until the beginning of the summer of 1945. She was killed in a plane crash in the Egyptian desert in 1946, long before the publication of the first novel of the quartet.

¹⁹¹ This term with regard to Forster is borrowed from Haag, 84.

¹⁹² Liddell, 203.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁹⁴ Seferis, On the Greek Style 131.

It is precisely Seferis who first realized about the novelty of Cavafy's approach to time. When discussing Joyce's use of 'a continuous parallel between contemporaneity', Seferis states:

I think that I can legitimately maintain that this method is not only adumbrated, but is systematically employed by Cavafy long before the appearance of *Ulysses* and Joyce, and long before Yeats also.¹⁹⁵

After Seferis' essay, many critics¹⁹⁶ have also credited Cavafy with this innovation, which T.S. Eliot coined as the 'mythic method' in his discussion of Yeats and Joyce. Regarding this view of the notion of time, Eliot's description is really illuminating: 'The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence'.¹⁹⁷ This 'simultaneous existence' of different times mentioned by Eliot (*ibid.*) is seen by Seferis as the most adequate image to understand Cavafy, and the Greek tradition at large.

This tradition is not, as some see it, an affair of isolated promontories, some great names, some illuminating texts; instead it is like what others of us see and feel in the little mosaics of a humble Byzantine church — the Ionian philosophers, the popular verses of the period of the Commeni, the epigrams of the Anthology, Greek folk song, Aeschylus, Palamas, Solomos, Sikelianos, Calvos, Cavafy, the Parthenon, Homer, *all living in a moment of time*, in this Europe of today [...]. With this point of view Cavafy will not seem to us alien, rather we shall find him slowly and mysteriously becoming one with his own kind [...].¹⁹⁸

This coexistence of different planes of time, 'all living in a moment of time', is also perceived in The Alexandria Quartet. The past of the characters, the past of the city, and the present time, all planes work as communicating vessels. As in Cavafy, there is a clear intention of illustrating the unchanged essential Alexandria. Time connections are recurrent throughout the quartet, but the idea is very clearly formulated in the "Workpoints" section of Justine by the character of Pursewarden, who asserts: 'Things do not all lead forward to other things: some lead backwards to things which have passed. A marriage of past and present with the flying multiplicity of the future racing towards one' (198). In Clea, the narrator refers to time in similar terms when explaining his new awareness of the city through the lens of 'a time which is not calendar-time' (667).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

¹⁹⁶ See, for example, Keeley, Cavafy's Alexandria 151.

¹⁹⁷ T.S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (New York: Knopf, 1921) 44.

¹⁹⁸ Seferis, On the Greek Style 161. Emphasis added.

One of Cavafy's poems which more distinctly conveys the irruption of the past in the present time of the poetic voice is "Voices":

Loved, idealized voices
of those who have died, or of those
lost for us like the dead.

Sometimes they speak to us in dreams;
sometimes deep in thought the mind hears them.

And, with their sound, for a moment return
sounds from our life's first poetry—
like distant music fading away at night. (15)

In the poem, the voices of the dead bring the departed back, and with these, their memories of a past which is relived both in dreams and 'deep in thought' in wakefulness. It must be emphasized that past-present connections in Cavafy are not one-way, but both feed back into each other. As Keeley observes, 'the focus does not move merely *from* the contemporary *to* the ancient. There is a movement in both directions: an illumination of the present by its analogy to the past, and vice-versa.'¹⁹⁹

In Justine, the narrator explains that on Balthazar's 'old horn gramophone' he had heard with deep emotion an 'amateur's recording of the old poet reciting' and he quotes the following lines:

Ideal voices and much beloved
Of those who died, of those who are
Now lost for us like the very dead;
Sometimes within a dream they speak
Or in the ticking brain a thought revives them.... (118)

Despite the fictional character of the recording,²⁰⁰ Durrell's insertion of his translation of the first five lines of "Voices" is meaningful in itself. The role of the dead in The Alexandria Quartet has been commented above in this chapter in relation to the concept of *karma*, but the Cavafian influence in this respect is considerable enough to be taken into account. Apart from Durrell's use of "Voices", there are many other examples in the quartet of the presence of the dead. In Clea, for instance, the narrator hears 'the echoes of words uttered long since in the past by other *voices*' (667, emphasis added). Further on in the same novel, he says:

¹⁹⁹ Keeley, Cavafy's Alexandria 72.

²⁰⁰ No recording was ever made of Cavafy reciting "Voices". According to Theodoros Chiotis, Project Manager of the Cavafy Archive, 'unfortunately, there are no known recordings of Cavafy himself reading his poetry.' Email communication, 16 Feb. 2015.

The dead are everywhere. They cannot be so simply evaded. One feels them pressing their sad blind fingers in deprivation upon the panels of our secret lives, asking to be remembered and re-enacted once more in the life of the flesh — encamping among our heartbeats, invading our embraces. (833, emphasis added)

In his 1969 pioneering article, and to date still the most detailed published analysis of Cavafy in The Alexandria Quartet, Christopher Katope finds another indirect reference to “Voices” in Justine, when the narrator confesses he is achieving his characters ‘anew’ by taking ‘something from its living subjects — their breath, skin, voices — weaving them into the supple tissues of human memory’ (20), paralleling again Cavafy’s ‘loved, idealized voices’ of ‘life’s first poetry’, but also recalling the lines of another of the Alexandrian’s poems, “Come Back”: ‘Come back often, take hold of me in the night / when lips and skin remember...’ (34).²⁰¹ “When They Come Alive” and “I’ve Brought to Art”, two other poems by Cavafy which deal with the poet trying to ‘hold’ his memories ‘half-hidden’ in his work (48), are also very close in mood and theme to the above quotation from the quartet. The three last lines of the latter call to mind Darley’s ‘weaving’ of memories: ‘Art knows how to shape forms of Beauty, / almost imperceptibly completing life, / blending impressions, blending day with day’ (84).

If recollections from the personal past seem always to be uncertain, partial or ‘half-glimpsed’ (84) for both authors, those about historical figures or events do not have a much different treatment. Cavafy’s historical poems mostly take the least known names and aspects of history and, without altering any facts, highlight and interpret certain characteristics that illustrate the characters and their times, but which are also true of contemporary or eternal attitudes and situations. Therefore, the poet’s use of history remains faithful to the factual data but the purpose is not a historical one. Instead of describing the past, Cavafy builds his own mythology from those names and facts, making them also relevant to contemporary times. One of Cavafy’s historical poems, “Those Who Fought for the Achaian League”, has particularly been read in many interesting ways.

Brave men you who fought and died so nobly,
never afraid of those who were winning every battle.
You weren’t to blame if Diaios and Kritolaos were at fault.
When Greeks are in a mood to boast, they’ll say
“It is men like those our nation breeds.”
That’s how great their praise will be.

Written by an Achaian in Alexandria
during the seventh year of Ptolemy Lathyros’ reign. (86)

²⁰¹ Christopher G. Katope, “Cavafy and Durrell’s The Alexandria Quartet.” Comparative Literature (Spring 1969): 129-130.

This epigram is attributed to a fictional Greek from Alexandria and readers are told it was written in 109 B.C., under the reign of the unpopular King Ptolemy IX Lathyros, who had ordered melting the gold sarcophagus of Alexander the Great and replaced it with a glass one, causing great anger among the Alexandrians. The poem deals with historical events dated 146 B.C., when the Greeks were making their last efforts to maintain their independence but were beaten by the Romans at the battles of Scarpheia and Corinth. The Achaean generals Diaios and Kritolaos are made responsible for the Greek defeat.

One of the most significant interpretations of the poem was made by George Seferis.²⁰² According to him, Cavafy's epigram makes reference to that historical defeat of the Greeks to use it as an illustration of a timeless Greek attitude. As mentioned above, Seferis remarks that Diaios, Critolaus, Ptolemy Lathyros, and the Achaeans are 'inside us now', meaning that contemporary Greeks have inherited those values and echo their manners. In May 1941, while walking the streets of Cavafy's quarter with Nanis Panayotopoulos and Timos Malanos,²⁰³ as their guide, Seferis found new meaning in "Those Who Fought for the Achaian League". In his Egyptian exile, Seferis may have identified with the defeated Achaean who ended up in Alexandria. He realized that the poem had been written only some months before the 1922 Asia Minor catastrophe and read it drawing a parallel between both decisive Greek defeats.²⁰⁴ Although Cavafy was always silent about the Smyrnan tragedy, he may have felt a connection with the Greeks in Asia Minor, being himself a Greek in a changing Egypt where foreign communities had already known the effects of the bombings, fires and lootings in 1882. Perhaps it was his own city which was in his mind when he wrote the poem but, as usual in Cavafy, the poem goes beyond a specific time or place and should be read as Seferis points, as a timeless image. In his biography of the poet, Liddell quotes Bryn Davies, who met Cavafy when he was a professor of English at Fuad I University, Cairo. While recalling a conversation between Cavafy and himself in 1930, Davies makes an interesting remark: 'What struck me at the time was that he spoke of the Achaean League as though it was a purely contemporary event' (193). Davies' observation about Cavafy's words seems to confirm the intentional timelessness of the poem.

²⁰² Like most of the writers in the Katsimbalis' circle, Seferis felt closer to Palamas than to Cavafy, but he also showed a great interest in the work of the Alexandrian. In his biography of Seferis, Beaton reveals that, while in Pretoria, Seferis spent about three weeks in Oct.-Nov. 1941 copying out 'by hand all one hundred and fifty four poems of the Cavafy 'canon,' adding notes on each' (208). All through his life, he produced a considerable amount of critical material on the Alexandrian poet.

²⁰³ Timos Malanos had known Cavafy and his work is one of the earliest sources on the poet. Seferis' poem "Days of June '41" recaptures the walks of these 'three friends' around Alexandria. See George Seferis, *Complete Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (London: Anvil, 1995) 139.

²⁰⁴ See Seferis, *On the Greek Style* 127, and Liddell, 210.

Cavafy's work transcends time but also the geographical boundaries of his native Alexandria. Despite having a crucial role in his work, the city is not limited space of confinement for his poetry, but a personal and literary ground from which the poet explores the Hellenic world. It is essential to define what the term 'Hellenic' means for the Alexandrian though.

2.3. Cavafy's Hellenism and the Barbarians.

In Cavafy, 'Hellenic' does not refer to any specific historical period of the Greek nation and it is not limited by the geographical borders of the modern Greek state either. In the Cavafian context, 'Hellenic' makes reference to the ethnic group sharing the Greek language and a common set of values throughout the centuries. The cultural background is emphasized as the element of unity, regardless of nationality. Most of the poet's characters are not Greeks from Greece, but those living in other cities of the eastern Mediterranean, such as the Syrian Antioch,²⁰⁵ Troy, Tyana, Nicomedia (the three of them in today's Turkey), Selefkia (Iraq), Sidon, Beirut (both in Lebanon), Kyrini (Libya), and of course, Alexandria. When discussing Cavafy in his diaries, Seferis refers to this ethnic group as 'the whole Hellenic nation' and affirms that it was precisely after the Asia Minor catastrophe that people really started to understand the Alexandrian, 'when that drama became conscious, the historic and contemporary drama of the race.'²⁰⁶ As a Greek born outside the limits of the modern Greek state —just like Cavafy— and also having a wide knowledge of the history of his people, Seferis was very aware of the fact that ethnic mixture had been an undeniable factor in the evolution of the Hellenic culture. In his interesting essay "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?", Seferis recalls that:

Hellenism was worked upon, reformed and revived, right down to the time of the Renaissance, by personalities who were sometimes Greek and sometimes not. [...] Our immediate ancestors preserved the treasures of the past and, at the fall of Byzantium, left, as Palamas says, holding

heavy jars full
of the ashes of their ancestors

²⁰⁵ In "Greek from Ancient Times", for example, Cavafy reclaims the highest pride of Antioch, 'to be a city / Greek from ancient times, related to Argos / through Ione, founded by Argive colonists / in honour of Inachos' daughter' (107).

²⁰⁶ George Seferis, *A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951*, trans. Athan Anagnostopoulos (Bridgewater, NJ: Replica-Baker, 2000) 136-137.

and so brought the seed of Hellenism to the West, where it prospered, finding a free and suitable soil.²⁰⁷

Therefore, Hellenism is also the result of the interaction between that ‘free and suitable soil’ and that ‘seed’, representing a whole heritage of values and knowledge. Cavafy’s “In the Year 200 B. C.” illustrates very aptly how the poet becomes a voice of that diaspora: ‘we emerged: / the great new Hellenic world. / We the Alexandrians, the Antiochians, / the Selefkians, and the countless / other Greeks of Egypt and Syria, / and those in Media, and Persia, and all the rest’ (127). In conversation with another Greek born and raised in Egypt, the writer Stratis Tsirkas, Cavafy defines the term ‘Hellenic’ with great precision when he claims it as his own identity:

I too am Hellenic (ἑλληνικός). Notice how I put it: not Greek (ἑλληγν), nor Hellenized (ἑλληγνίζων), but Hellenic (ἑλληνικός).²⁰⁸

His distinction between ‘Hellenic’ and ‘Hellenized’ is particularly meaningful. ‘Hellenic’ does not mean an individual behaving like a Greek (ἑλληγνίζων) but somebody sharing his/her own Greek culture with other people having a common ethnic ground. In other words, a citizen of ‘the great panhellenic world’ (64), as Cavafy calls it in his poem “In the Harbour”. In “Returning from Greece”, the poet addresses this issue in a very direct way:

It’s time we admitted the truth:
we’re Greeks also—what else are we?
but with Asiatic tastes and feelings,
tastes and feelings
sometimes alien to Hellenism.

[...]

We simply can’t be ashamed
of the Syrian and Egyptian blood in our veins;
we should really honour it, delight in it. (145)

In a 1975 interview, Durrell remarks that ‘Greek poets like Palamas and Sikelianos were totally different in tonality from Cavafy who might well have been writing in Paris or Peking or anywhere.’²⁰⁹ Although there is indeed a marked difference in tonality between the three of them, Cavafy’s poetry is Greek and Alexandrian through and through. “Returning from Greece” is an ideal example of how the poet celebrates the ‘honour’ and ‘delight’ of having Greek and Egyptian blood. Cavafy’s themes and mode ultimately belong to the

²⁰⁷ Seferis, *On the Greek Style* 92-93.

²⁰⁸ Qtd. in Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry* 25, from Timos Malanos, *Περί Καβάφης* (Alexandria, EG: 1935) 56.

²⁰⁹ Ingersoll, *Lawrence Durrell: Conversations* 150.

Greek tradition of The Greek Anthology and Plutarch, among others, and are deeply imbued with the Greek experience across the centuries. In contrast to Durrell, Seferis, in his diary for 1941, writes:

It is necessary to go to Alexandria to understand how Cavafy worked. Nowhere else he could have written: ‘We’re a mixture here [Syrians, immigrant Greeks, Armenians, Medes]’ or ‘in part [a heathen], in part [christianized]’, nowhere but from those streets [...]’²¹⁰

Cavafy’s work is the result of that cultural blending, being genuinely rooted in his ethnic heritage. Just like Raphael, the poet of “For Ammonis, who died at 29, in 610”, seems to ‘pour [his] Egyptian feeling into the Greek [he] use[s]’ (51). The last two lines tell us much about their author: ‘so the rhythm, so every phrase clearly shows / that an Alexandrian is writing about an Alexandrian’ (*id.*).

However, Cavafy’s Greek identity remains at the core of his work, and his lines are very clear about it. In his “Epitaph of Antiochos, King of Kommagini”, for example, the poet says about Antiochos that ‘he was that best of all things, Hellenic— / mankind has no quality more precious: everything beyond that belongs to the gods’ (90). Antiochos may refer to any of the kings of that name ruling in Kommagini during the period in which it would be absorbed by Rome, so the poet’s pride in reclaiming the king’s Hellenic origins at the end of the epitaph would be more than justified.

While dealing with Cavafy, and regarding this Hellenic essence, Forster emphasizes that ‘the influence that has flowed from his race this way and that through the ages, and that (since Alexander the Great) never disdained to mix with barbarism, has indeed desired to mix’. The kind of civilization that Forster sees in the poet’s work is one ‘in which the Greek strain prevailed, and into which, age after age, outsiders would push, to modify and be modified.’²¹¹ It is a most suitable definition of Cavafy’s attitude towards this issue, but as shown above, the idea expressed by the words ‘in which the Greek strain prevailed’ seems absolutely fundamental to explain the poet’s view of Hellenism.

On the one hand, as Seferis notes, Cavafy becomes ‘one with his own kind’; on the other, from the Greek experience, he creates universal images such as those provided by “Waiting for the Barbarians” and “Ithaka”. The former poem is particularly important for

²¹⁰ Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Μέρες Δ΄: 1 Φεβράρη 1941 - 31 Δεκέμβρη 1944 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1986) 16 June 1941, my trans. Quotations are from Cavafy’s poems “In a Town of Osroini” (49) and “Dangerous Thoughts” (30). Words between square brackets have been added to complete both lines of the poems; in Seferis’ quotation they were left unfinished ending in ellipses.

²¹¹ Qtd. in Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 28, from E.M. Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy (London: Edward Arnold, 1951) 249-250.

Durrell. He had already translated and published it with Stephanides in 1939. He felt the poem so meaningful in the Alexandria of the war years as to include it in Clea.

From Durrell's second wife Eve, we know that once they walked towards 'to the Rue Lepsius [Cavafy's last address] where Durrell stood outside 'in reverence' and recited "Waiting for the Barbarians" in Greek'. In interview with Michael Haag, Eve recalled that 'the whole time Durrell was in Alexandria this was his favourite of Cavafy's poems.'²¹² In The Alexandria Quartet, it appears twice in its last novel. Firstly, the Barbarians are presented under a contemporary disguise, as the British soldiers in the city.

Bands of aimless soldiers walking about with that grim air of unflinching desperation with which Anglo-Saxons embark upon their pleasures; their own demagnetized women were all in uniform now which gave them a ravenous air — as if they could drink the blood of the innocents while it was still warm. (701-702)

And immediately after, the narrator says his footsteps led him 'back to the narrow opening of the Rue Lepsius, to the worm-eaten room with the cane chair which creaked all night, and where once the old poet of the city had recited "The Barbarians".' As in other quotations mentioned earlier in this chapter, Durrell refers to Cavafy's poem in this shortened way (702). His choice may be telling in itself, Durrell may have been more interested in the image of the Barbarians than in that of expectations, which is also essential to the poem.

Beyond the narrator's criticism about British soldiers, Durrell makes these soldiers and the war responsible for bringing 'an air of tipsy carnival' to the city. Unlike Cavafy's poem, in Clea, it is not the expected arrival of the Barbarians but their presence which justifies people's actions. However, if this seeming difference is seen in the context of that collection of expectations and fears that WW2 engendered in Egypt, it becomes more apparent than real. The uncertainty about the future and its effects on the present is found in both texts.

Many critics have tried to determine Cavafy's opinion about British policies for Egypt. This would be quite a difficult enterprise, taking into account the poet's discretion whenever he was asked about politics. It seems reasonable to affirm that Cavafy had known both sides of the action of British forces in Alexandria, being both an element of order and protection of the interests of minorities in certain times of unrest, and sometimes, a source of conflict, abuse and destruction, as in the 1882 bombings. Like those people in the poem, independently of whom they considered the barbarians to be, whether the British or the Arab

²¹² Haag, 251.

mobs, many Alexandrians may have wondered what would happen to them if they were ever left 'without barbarians', since 'those people were a kind of solution' (15).

Similarly, in Durrell's portrayal of 'the Anglo-Saxons' there is also irony, but at the same time, his narration does not conceal, for instance, their positive impact on local trade. Cavafy's ironical tone and the type of contradictions described in the poem can also be found in a contemporary reading of his lines. In his long biographical poem "Cities, Plains and People", Durrell reviews many aspects of his life and some authors with whom he had a connection. While mentioning WW2, he makes another ironic reference to Cavafy's barbarians, alluding to political leaders:

Now darkness comes to Europe
Dedicated by a soft unearthly jazz.
The greater hearts contract their joys
By silence to the very gem,
While the impertinent reformers,
Barbarians with secretaries move,
Whom old Cavafy pictured,
Whom no war can remove.²¹³

"Waiting for the Barbarians" illustrates one of the distinct traits of Cavafy's poetry, the author's preference for vague or undated contexts. In fact, it is a peculiar option for an author who showed such a sincere interest in history. Even his so-called historical poems are often not set in a specific time but, imprecisely, in longer periods of several years or centuries. In "Waiting for the Barbarians", the action does not happen in any specific time or place, since the poet's aim is to build a universal myth. Words such as 'emperor' and 'praetors' suggest a Roman context, but, as Edmund Keeley observes, Cavafy's purpose is 'to offer an insight into the larger pattern of history that raises particular places and events to the level of metaphor or myth.'²¹⁴ Therefore, a precise time or place becomes useless for the poet, his main objective is to paint an eternal scene, not a particular experience, but a timeless and communal one.

With regard to the term 'barbarians', it should be added that Cavafy also uses it in other poems to refer to non-Greek people, including Tyrrhenians and Romans too, as in "Poseidonians". This people of Greek origin living in the Tyrrhenian Gulf have forgotten their language and customs, becoming thus 'barbarized'. Being 'cut off' from the language and their culture, 'from the Greek way of life', Poseidonians are presented as people who have 'fallen' 'disastrously' (141). The fact of losing contact with their native values and

²¹³ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 169.

²¹⁴ Keeley, *Cavafy's Alexandria* 30.

views of the world has been the cause of their current alienation. The poem focuses on the Greek festival held by Poseidonians as a form of nostalgia, but also as a reminder of their almost-forgotten Greekness. In “Philhellene”, Hellenization is presented as a form of social progress for barbarians, as opposed to being ‘un-Hellenized’ (31).²¹⁵

In The Alexandria Quartet, it is possible to find characters of several nationalities and ethno-religious backgrounds (British, French, Italian, Greek, Egyptian Copt, Jew, etc)²¹⁶ but the Alexandrian Greek community, together with its language and culture, undoubtedly found their way into many pages of Durrell’s work. Greek characters such as Melissa, Capodistria, Alexander and Cleopatra, and the old poet of the city, among others, play key roles in the quartet. Beyond their function in the narration, they are used by the author to address several issues connected to the Greek past and present of the city, and the Greek civilization at large. His close attention to many aspects of Greek culture is not surprising at all, taking into consideration that, in his introduction to Forster’s guide, Durrell refers to Alexandria as ‘the plangently Greek city’.²¹⁷

Having been forced to leave Greece because of war, he never stops listening to the language and even the history of the city brings him back to the old Hellenic world. Durrell thus experiences a sense of continuity which he reflects in the quartet, the narrator’s Greek island representing the Greek nation, and Alexandria, the cosmopolitan capital of Alexander the Great, as described by the narrator in Mountolive:

The Alexandrians themselves were strangers and exiles to the Egypt which existed below the glittering surface of their dreams, ringed by the hot deserts and fanned by the bleakness of a faith which renounced worldly pleasure: the Egypt of rags and sores, of beauty and desperation. Alexandria was still Europe — the capital of Asiatic Europe, if such a thing could exist. It could never be like Cairo [...]; here French, Italian and Greek dominated the scene. (509)

2.4. The Archetypal Journey.

Greeks, their cultural heritage and their most well-known contemporary Alexandrian poet are certainly given considerable weight in The Alexandria Quartet. Taking into account the substantial number of Cavafy’s poems that can be found in this work, it may seem

²¹⁵ In the original version, ‘*ανελληνιστοι*’, that is, ‘not in the Greek language’ or ‘un-Hellenized’.

²¹⁶ The nationality of one of the main characters, Clea Montis, is left unsaid. It is known that this character was partly inspired by painter Clea Badaro, who shared a studio with her friend Gilda Ambron at the latter’s house, where Durrell also lived. Badaro was born in Cairo but her father’s family had Syro-Lebanese roots and her mother was a Greek from Smyrna. Indeed, Clea was known to her friends as ‘Kleaki, the Greek diminutive of Clea’ (Haag, 267).

²¹⁷ Forster, Alexandria: A History and a Guide xii.

surprising that Durrell does not make any single reference to one of the poet's most famous titles, "Ithaca". This fact is particularly remarkable from an author who showed a great interest in Homer all throughout his life. Of course, Durrell knew that Alexandria would not be his Ithaca, he never thought of it as a destination, but as a stopover on his way. However, Ithaca did actually appear in a poem published in 1943 but dated 1937, about the time when the author and his wife Nancy visited that island,²¹⁸ "On Ithaca Standing":

Tread softly, for here you stand
On miracle ground, boy.
A breath would cloud this water of glass,
Honey, bush, berry and swallow.
This rock, then, is more pastoral, than
Arcadia is, Illyria was.

[...]

Turn from the hearth of the hero. Think:
Other men have their emblems, I this:
The heart's dark anvil and the crucifix
Are one, have hammered and shall hammer
A nail of flesh, me to an island cross,
Where the kestrel's arrow falls only,
The green sea licks.²¹⁹

Durrell's poem about Ithaca starts by reminding readers that the island is 'miracle ground'. In this way, it is both the place where everything started, as in Homer's *Odyssey*, and that where any 'miracle' seems achievable, where any new beginning is possible. It is presented as a 'rock' with some natural wealth, springs of fresh water, and pasturelands comparable to those in present Arcadia or ancient Illyria. However, the author's intention is not to evoke Odysseus' homeland. Durrell recommends readers to 'turn from the hearth of the hero' and to experience places by their own.

In *The Greek Islands*, while dealing with Ithaca, Durrell refers to Cavafy's poem as 'one of his finest longer' ones and he includes a translation of its first stanza and its last lines.²²⁰ Unlike Durrell's poem, Cavafy's one is written from the point of departure but it follows the traveller along the way until the inner journey reaches its port.

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,

²¹⁸ See MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell* 153.

²¹⁹ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 111.

²²⁰ L. Durrell, *The Greek Islands* 45-46.

angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbours you're seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean. (29)²²¹

Although Cavafy's Ithaca is apparently 'poor' and has 'nothing left to give', it offers travellers a richer treasure, that of 'experience', that of the knowledge 'gained on the way'. In this regard, it resembles Lord Tennyson's "Ulysses", which also emphasizes the importance of the journey, but unlike Tennyson's poem, Cavafy's does not only imply a purely intellectual search, but a voyage of discovery which offers 'rare excitement', 'pleasure', and 'sensual perfumes'. Like Homer's *Odyssey*, it depicts a journey 'full of adventure', but while Odysseus' few scenes of joy may find an echo in Cavafy's "Ithaka", the latter's picture of the road lacks the many hardships Odysseus has to endure. Although Homer's hero also enjoys certain moments of pleasure found on his way back to Ithaca, his

²²¹ It must be pointed out that Cavafy's "Ithaka" had been published in English in 1924, in G. Valassopoulo's translation, in T. S. Eliot's *The Criterion: A Quarterly Review* II.8 (July 1924): 431-432.

island and family are always in his mind, his most fervent wish is to return to his homeland, leading him even to reject 'Calypso's proposition to make him immortal', as Capri-Karka points out.²²²

In contrast, Durrell's "On Ithaca Standing" comes closer to Cavafy's poem precisely in the Alexandrian's preference for enjoyment over hurrying. As in Cavafy's, Durrell's Ithaca is essentially the reason to 'set out' ('Ithaca gave you the marvellous journey'), to absorb what places have to offer, and to start an 'interior journey', as Durrell himself refers to Cavafy's poem in The Greek Islands (45).

However, there is a very significant difference between Durrell's and Cavafy's Ithacas. The former's one is created from a depiction of the actual Ionian island, whereas the latter's is only a name for a mythical image. As usual in Durrell's work, his poem tries to capture the spirit of place, in order to read it as a departure point for his journey. On the contrary, Cavafy does not provide any description of the island; Ithaca appears as a dream in the mind, and later, as a destination. More interestingly, in the last line of the poem, Cavafy refers to 'these Ithakas', in plural, highlighting the symbolic nature of 'Ithaca'. But, of course, Durrell's Ithaca does not merely deal with the island either; as the author makes clear from the first lines, it is simply a starting point for his exploration.

A Greek friend of Durrell and Henry Miller, the poet and sea captain Dimitris I. Antoniou (1906-1994), would write many years later:

Obstacle to what?

You recognized the ship
with the blond hero's name—
seed of the sea with a landsman's fate—.

We brought you no more than stories
of distant places, memories
of precious things, of perfumes.

Do not seek their weight upon your hands;
your hands should be less human
for all we held in exile;
the experience of touch, the struggle of weight,
exotic colors
you should feel in our words only
this night of our return.

Obstacle to what?
the mast that told you
of our return?²²³

²²² Carmen Capri-Karka, Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis (New York: Pella, 1982) 56.

In Antoniou's poem, the word 'hero' does not refer to Odysseus but, probably, to a steamship on which the poet served as navigation officer in the early thirties, named SS Peleus after the Greek warrior. In any case, the exile feeling found in Homer's *Odyssey* is also present here, and it is also reminiscent of Cavafy's exotic places and 'perfumes' in "Ithaka". However, the image of nostalgia which Antoniou offers is quite different from that of Homer. In this poet of the younger group of the Generation of the 30s, nostalgia is a feeling brought by memories of the journey rather than those of the poet's homeland. Even if the traveller often feels homesick, he cannot stay on land for long. Regarding this feeling Seferis recalls Antoniou's words to him: 'As soon as we're at sea, we sicken with nostalgia for land, and as soon as we tie up in port, we're constantly anxious to be on our way again.'²²⁴ This endless thirst for sailing is closer to Cavafy's "Ithaka" —'don't hurry the journey at all. / Better if it lasts for years'— than to the return of the mythical Ithacan hero.

Nevertheless, the images that both poets have of 'journey' differ considerably at the point when travellers reach their destinations. Unlike Cavafy, in Antoniou's poetry, the only things left after returning are those lyrical recollections of the voyage, shaping a whole life experience.

When Henry Miller was introduced to Katsimbali's circle in 1939, the words and the personality of the Greek sailor poet caused a great impression on Miller. He may have also been able to listen to some of Antoniou's poetry, perhaps translated into English by Katsimbali. In *The Colossus of Maroussi*, Miller's depiction of Antoniou illustrates superbly some of the aspects discussed above:



Dimitris I. Antoniou.

Antoniou is constantly sailing from one island to another, writing his poems as he walks about strange cities at night. (34) [...] To be aware of the weather, to be in it, battling with it, meant everything to me. In Antoniou's countenance there were always traces of the weather. And in Sherwood Anderson's writing there are always

²²³ D. I. Antoniou, "Obstacle to What," *Six Poets of Modern Greece*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (New York: Knopf, 1961) 141. It was published in Antoniou's first collection of poems, *Ποιήματα* (1939).

²²⁴ From Seferis' *Δοκίμις* (1: 168), trans. Roderick Beaton in his work *George Seferis: Waiting for the Angel: A Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2003) 67.

traces of the weather. I like men who have the weather in their blood.... (35)

Although Miller did not have the chance to sail on board of Antoniou's passenger ship like Durrell did,²²⁵ the American was able to perceive the essential nature of the poetic voice of this sailor and bard. The weather of the journey in the poet's blood and lines, the spirit of places and the flavour of experience, those are the fruits of the voyage in Antoniou, as Miller notes in his Greek book.²²⁶ Miller's own travel writing tries to capture the atmosphere of places from the perspective of contemplation and emotions, rather than from plain facts or historical backgrounds. Two different travel narratives like The Colossus of Maroussi and The Air-Conditioned Nightmare share the author's highly personal approach to lands and people and they are good examples of this idea of *journey*.

2.5. The Image of the Eye in Cavafy and Durrell.

Perception and sensations are equally important in Cavafy, his poetry has been written with and for the five senses: from the 'beautiful bodies of those who died before growing old' ("Longings", 16) to 'the exquisite music' of an 'strange procession' ("The God Abandons Antony", 27), or from 'sensual perfume of every kind' ("Ithaka", 29) to the 'strong wine' of a 'brilliant night' ("I Went", 36), by way of 'hands' which 'feel as though they touch again' ("Come Back", 34).

Among the senses, it is visual observation which certainly plays a special role in Cavafy's work. Eyes are mentioned often in his poems. The author refers to eyes not only to indicate he is watching or being watched, but also as windows of the soul, or as mirrors of what they look at.

In a few poems, the poet alludes to his eyes to direct readers' attention to what he is looking at, as in "Kaisarion", when he brings up a 'brief insignificant mention' of that king (58), or when the poet sees someone who attracts his interest, as "At the Theatre" (140). More frequently, Cavafy's references to 'eyes' express qualities or states of the eyes' owner's soul. In his lines, eyes usually tell readers about their owners, like those 'eyes half-closed, soporific' of Sweetwine in "The Retinue of Dionysos" (19), those 'eyes alarmed' of

²²⁵ In a letter to Miller dated 6 Feb. 1940, Durrell announced he was soon going on holidays 'to the islands with Tonio [Antoniou], the captain.' See MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 132. According to MacNiven's biography of Durrell, the journey was in August (226). In The Greek Islands, the author evokes that time: 'I said goodbye to Henry Miller, who was ordered back to the States by his Consul. I posted off the letter which was afterwards to make a postscript to his *Colossus of Maroussi*, and took ship at night for Mykonos, where I hoped to spend a fortnight of quiet with my wife' (232). Antoniou's steamer, the *Akropolis*, is not directly mentioned but this combination of sources seems to indicate that his ship, which operated in the Aegean at that time, was very likely the one they boarded.

²²⁶ Antoniou is also mentioned in the journal which Miller wrote as a present for Seferis, "First Impressions of Greece," Sextet: Six Essays (London: Calder, 1980) 89.

“Things Ended”, the ‘lively eyes’ of ‘young men’ (“Very Seldom”, 35), or the ‘brown eyes looking tired, dazed’ of a man who ‘drifts aimlessly down the street, / as though still hypnotized by the illicit pleasure, / the very illicit pleasure he’s just experienced’ (“In The Street”, 48). Sometimes, they are eyes full of tears, giving voice to desperate souls, as in “Anna Komnina” (79) or in “Kimon, Son of Learchos, 22, Student of Greek Literature (In Kyrini)” (115); sometimes, they express delight, like in the case of the young man of “One of Their Gods”, whose eyes betray ‘his joy of being immortal’ (52).

This use of eyes as an element of communication for the soul is particularly interesting in one of Cavafy’s most sexually explicit poems, “On the Stairs”. In this composition, two people pass each other on the stairs at the door of an ‘ill-famed house’:

And yet the love you were looking for, I had to give you;
the love I was looking for—so your tired, knowing eyes implied—
you had to give me.
Our bodies sensed and sought each other:
our blood and skin understood.

But we both hid ourselves, flustered. (139)

This poem shows the ‘knowing eyes’ of two individuals speaking to each other, as if independent from their minds, which advise caution and hiding. For a second of imaginary freedom, their bodies seem to reach a common physical understanding, but then, they both hid themselves.

On a few occasions, eyes also act as mirrors of what they look at. In “Orophernis”, for instance, the king’s ‘piles of wealth’ glitter ‘before his eyes’ (43). However, mirrors can also be misleading, since they usually reflect what is in front of them, but they sometimes show what the eyes want to see on them too, which leads to the unsolved question: Do people search for the Other in other people’s eyes, or for themselves? It is indeed a dilemma that should not be ignored when dealing with this aspect of Cavafy’s poems.

Whether they are used as windows of the spirit or as mirrors of what eyes watch, eyes are very often a powerfully erotic element too. “At the Café Door”, for example, is a description of a ‘lovely body which seemed / as though Eros in his mastery had fashioned it’ (40). After depicting its ‘well-formed limbs’ and ‘tall build’, the poet highlights the ‘particular impression’ of ‘the brow, the eyes, the lips.’ Another nostalgic memory of a beloved body, “September, 1903”, similarly puts emphasis on ‘those sensual eyes, those lips’ (138). In another poem, “Long Ago” (38), this importance of the eyes is even more accentuated.

I'd like to speak of this memory,
but it's so faded now—as though nothing is left—
because it was so long ago, in my early adolescent years.

A skin as though of jasmine...
that August evening—was it August?—
I can still just recall the eyes: blue, I think they were...
Ah yes, blue: a sapphire blue.

The poet cannot remember exactly the time of his recollection, which is a faded one, but his mind has retained the 'sapphire blue' of the eyes and Cavafy focuses the whole poem on their colour. In "Grey", 'while looking at a half-grey opal', the poet recalls 'two lovely grey eyes' of a past lover and, again, he cannot locate that moment precisely in time. The last two stanzas are especially interesting:

Those grey eyes will have lost their charm—if he's still alive;
that lovely face will have spoiled.

Memory, keep them the way they were.
And, memory, whatever you can bring back of that love,
whatever you can, bring back tonight. (54)

Those grey eyes become the focal point of the whole composition, they are the most missed object of desire. Fearing the effects of time, the poet begs his memory to 'keep them the way they were.' Those eyes also stand for the feeling they embody, the passion he yearns for. There are many other examples of this erotic connotation of eyes,²²⁷ such as a pair of 'deep chestnut eyes, / the rare beauty of his face' (88), in Cavafy's "In an Old Book", those eyes of "December, 1903", and those in "Picture of a 23-year-old Painted by his Friend of the same Age, an Amateur":

He's managed to capture perfectly
the sensual note he wanted
when he did the eyes, the lips ... (111)

In any case, in Cavafy's work, eyes offer readers something to be read or interpreted. In "Body, Remember ...", eyes are called to mind to bring back some frustrated desires in the past so that the body can remember them.

Body, remember not only how much you were loved,
not only the beds you lay on,
but also those desires that glowed openly
in eyes that looked at you,

²²⁷ See also 'the poetic eyes' of "Days of 1903" (56).

trembling for you in voices—
only some chance obstacle frustrated them.
Now that it's all finally in the past,
it seems almost as if you gave yourself
to those desires too—how they glowed,
remember, in eyes that looked at you,
remember, body, how they trembled for you in those voices. (59)

While commenting this poem, Capri-Karka remarks: 'This memory of the body in Cavafy comes very close to D.H. Lawrence's theory of "blood consciousness" as independent from cerebral consciousness.' That is, 'a memory of the flesh without any reference to the brain.'²²⁸ Some lines of other poems, such as "On the Stairs" ('our blood and skin understood') and "Come Back" ('when lips and skin remember...') certainly strengthen this interpretation.

In an article on his friend the painter Hans Reichel, Henry Miller reflects on a recurring item of all his pictures, 'the cosmological eye.'

I was thinking that perhaps this ubiquitous eye was the vestigial organ of his love so deeply implanted into everything he looked at that it shone back at him out of the darkness of human insensitivity.²²⁹

The repeated presence of eyes in Cavafy's work may well be explained in similar terms, as the poet's attempt to come into terms with his missed past. In an letter to Miller from 1941, George Seferis considers war and his situation at the time and he concludes:

But what have you or I to do with history? We are dwellers in the Eye, dedicated to the service of this blue... I think you understand, and I think Maro [that is my wife] understands. Meanwhile this is simply a message in a bottle to tell you that we will meet again in the islands one day; —perhaps islands kinder and lovelier than ever; ... *ώς το τέλος*.²³⁰

In this 'message in a bottle' to Miller —the expression is from Dimitris I. Antoniou, who called his poems in this way— Seferis expresses his engagement, not with history, but with eternity, represented by the 'blue' of the Greek sky. Although a new meeting in the islands was uncertain at that time beyond the possibility of hope, Seferis was right in predicting that symbolic reunion, since the Greek islands represent for both authors the image of that lost paradise they would never forget in their works. His last words in Greek, '*ώς το τέλος*' [until the end], make clear that this is what he really suggests when referring to

²²⁸ Capri-Karka, *Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis* 71 (both).

²²⁹ Henry Miller, "The Cosmological Eye," *The Wisdom of the Heart* (New York: New Directions, 1960) 65.

²³⁰ Letter by G. Seferis to H. Miller, dated 25 Dec. 1941, George Seferis Archive (Seferis' [Copies] Letters, Υποενότητα II.E, box 61, file 3 [1941-1942], letter 8), Gennadius Library, Athens.

their return to the islands. Understanding what he means by ‘dwellers in the Eye’ is a little bit more complex, but, in this respect, Lawrence Durrell can be very helpful, because the whole sentence is quoted by Seferis from the open letter to the latter that Durrell had published in *La Semaine Égyptienne* (28 Oct. 1941).

In the last chapter of Prospero’s Cell, “Epilogue in Alexandria”, Durrell would bring back this image of ‘the Eye’:

The sightless Pharos turns its blind eye upon a coast, featureless, level and sandy. [...] The loss of Greece has been an amputation. All Epictetus could not console one against it.

Here we miss Greece as a living body; a landscape lying up close against the sky, suspended on the blue lion-pads of mountains. And above all, we miss the Eye: for the summers of indolence and deduction on the northern beaches of our island—beaches incessantly washed and sponged by the green Ionian—taught us that Greece was not a country but a living eye. ‘The Enormous Eye’ Zarian used to call it. Walking in those valleys you knew with complete certainty that the traveller in this land could not record. It was rather as if he himself were recorded. The sensation of this immense hairless recording eye was everywhere; [...]. Everything was the subject of the Eye. It was like a lens fitting into the groove of the horizon. Nowhere else has there ever been a landscape so aware of itself, conforming so marvellously to the dimensions of a human existence. (131)

From his Alexandrian exile, like Seferis, Durrell tries to accommodate himself to his situation. He alludes to Epictetus, one of the Greek philosophers of acceptance, to emphasize his futile effort to accept the ‘loss of Greece’ and what it has meant to him. In this regard, the contrast between ‘the sightless Pharos’, turning ‘its blind eye’ upon the sandy Alexandrian coast, and his description of Greece in the following paragraph is quite meaningful.

Durrell refers to Greece as ‘a living eye’, using this noun repeatedly in connection to the country. He attributes the term to his friend from Corfu, the Armenian writer Gostan Zarian, who called Greece ‘the Enormous Eye’. The country is seen as a self-aware land, as an independent ‘living body’ watching their inhabitants and visitors like an omnipresent eye. It is here unavoidable to refer to the ancient Greek evil eye [*μάτι*], still found everywhere in present Greece. Although Durrell does not seem to imply any apotropaic power on people, he does use the expression ‘recording eye’ to mean the land, as if people did not learn, but it was rather the country which stamped its lessons on their memory, thus being a pervasive guarding influence on them.

Seferis starts his 1979 article on Durrell’s poetry by quoting from the same paragraph of Prospero’s Cell, which leads him to define Durrell’s relationship to the Greek landscape.

Larry, in his Greek poems, does not describe Cities, Plains and People –to use the title of another of his works– but rather he himself is recorded. He is not a landscape artist. He is mirrored in the living eye, he and his ‘private domain’. In other words, he uses the GREEK OBJECT (in its oldest possible meaning) to measure his own problems and desires, as a man and as poet of our times, tortured by our Western culture.²³¹

Seferis’ explanation could not be more accurate to identify the nature of Durrell’s connection with places and their perception as an ‘eye’. Further on in the same article, Seferis returns to the figure of the ‘recording eye’.

When I first came across this very active image of the RECORDING EYE, I could not stop myself from thinking of the piercing eyes of the Theban Sphinx putting her riddle: question for question. In ancient times there was a reply to this enigma: the Man. I believe the answer might hold good even for our times, and that Larry heard some of it.²³²

Durrell’s Eye’s omniscience makes Seferis think of the Theban Sphinx. The analogy is again very adequate, since both Durrell’s Eye and the Sphinx at the entrance of Thebes seem to share a common reason for their existence, ‘the Man.’

In Durrell’s poetry, eyes also appear. In “Conon in Alexandria”, which depicts that city, the author uses the image to refer to the waters of Lake Mareotis.

Ash-heap of four cultures,
Bounded by Mareotis, a salt lake,
On which the winter rain rings and whitens,
In the waters, stiffens like eyes.²³³

The round eyes imprinted by winter rain on the sands of the lake seem to echo the author’s notion of the Eye regarding the Greek landscape. In fact, Mareotis is presented as a mirror for the city in The Alexandria Quartet (314), and in this case, the association between eyes and mirrors, which has already been noted when exploring eyes in Cavafy, may prove useful. Actually, an unpublished earlier version of “Conon in Alexandria” kept in George Seferis Archive in Athens seems to confirm this interpretation and its connection with Durrell’s Greek Eye.

Ash-heap of four cultures
Bounded by Mareotis, a salt lake
On which the rain rings and whitens
In the water, stiffened like an eye.

²³¹ George Seferis, “The Greek Poems of Lawrence Durrell,” *Labrys* 5 (1979): 85.

²³² *Ibid.*, 86.

²³³ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 127.

Once here surrounded by sands
The hairy music of reeds before our Pan
Died in us, and before our Greek
Love sickened and turned to politics.²³⁴

In this former version of the poem, the simile is made with the noun in singular ('stiffened like an eye'), clearly calling the 'recording eye' to Durrell's readers' minds. The second stanza, which would disappear in the final version, provides some more connections with Greece, when he links the reeds in the lake with Pan's flute. Throughout Durrell's work, Pan usually represents his image of the eternal Greece. Therefore, the death of 'our Pan' is a reference to the loss of Greece after the German invasion. The next sentence, 'our Greek / love sickened and turned to politics' probably refers to the same period, when the Greek government was in exile and political divergences arose among the Greeks.

With regard to Durrell's use of the eye image, another significant poem is "One Grey Greek Stone" (1965).

Capes hereabouts and promontories hold
Boats grazing a cyclopean eyeball,
No less astounding
Snow-tusk or toffee-round hill
In shaggy presences of rock abounding
Charm the sick disputing will.

Old dusty gems of bays go flop:
Water polishes on a sleeve to buff,
Trembles upon an eyelash into stars.
How strange our breathing does not stop.
One sovereign absence should be quite enough?

Tell me, the codes of open flowers,
Lick up the glance to pocket a whole mind.
Nothing precipitates, is left behind,
The island is all eyes. Shout!
The silence ponders, notes, and codifies.
We discover only what we set out to find.

I am at a loss to explain how writing
Turns this way this year, turns and tends—
But the line breaks off as voices do, and ends.

²³⁴ "Conon in Alexandria", poem signed by Lawrence Durrell, George Seferis Archive (Third Party Texts, Υποενότητα VI.B), Gennadius Library, Athens, first two stanzas. The poem was sent by Durrell to Seferis on the back of an undated short note acknowledging receipt of a letter from Seferis, which may have been sent shortly after the latter had left the Propaganda Ministry. "Conon in Alexandria" was first published in 1945; this earlier version may be from late 1943 or 1944, since the old Propaganda Ministry was abolished in May 1943 and Seferis was appointed Director of the new Central Press Service in June of the same year (see Beaton, *George Seferis* 222).

Image coiled in image, eye in eye,
Copying each other like guesses where the water
Only dares swallow up and magnify,
So precise the quiet spools
Gather, forgive, heap up, and lie.

Under such stones to sleep would be
The deepest luxury of the deliberate soul
By day's revivals or the plumbblue fall
Of darkness bending like a hoop the whole—
Desires beyond the white capes of recall.²³⁵

The title of the poem comes from a letter by Lord Byron to the Earl of Blessington dated April 23rd, 1823. 'I should prefer a grey Greek stone over me to Westminster Abbey; but I doubt if I shall have the luck to die so happily', Byron declares.²³⁶ Durrell's unidentified island is probably Corfu, where he had firstly experienced 'the Eye', the island he revisited for the first time since the war in 1964, returning again the following year. As for 'the white capes of recall', they seem to refer to the 'pearly cliffs' described by the narrator of *Pied Piper of Lovers* (109), that is, the White Cliffs of Dover, the first sight travellers have when reaching England from the south, like Durrell himself when he arrived from India as a boy. Consequently, in the poem they stand for England.

The island is seen as a 'cyclopean eyeball' or 'all eyes', putting emphasis on this symbol. Moreover, other related words such as 'eyelash' or 'glance' reinforce it all through the poem. Durrell seems to build his picture of the island coiling image 'in image, eye in eye', all projections from the Eye spiralling one upon the other. That is why 'we discover only what we set out to find', as he says. The Eye only makes visible what had been forgotten and has been searched, even if not knowing it. This could also be an interpretation of the role of eyes in the work of Cavafy. The poet searches in them what he had apparently forgotten, rediscovering what he had 'set out to find'.

2.6. The Notion of Relativity in Cavafy and in Durrell's Quartet.

When dealing with the poetry of the Alexandrian, it should not be obviated that one of the aspects that makes him essentially different from his predecessors and many of his contemporaries is his irony, which highlights the relativity of values. His poetry is not a rejection of values, it is even sometimes a claim of the Hellenic values, but his irony emphasizes the idea that values are relative, not absolute. In fact, he presents facts without

²³⁵ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 274-275.

²³⁶ Lord Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. E. Rowland et al., vol. VI (NYC: Scribner, 1901) 1074. Byron would not be finally buried at Westminster because the Abbey refused him alleging 'questionable morality'. He is buried at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. A marble slab was given by the King of Greece and laid above Byron's grave.

offering any moral judgement. This way of thinking pervades Durrell's quartet too. In Balthazar, for example, Durrell describes the liberating effects of the city's carnival on its inhabitants:

Concealed beneath the carnival habit (like a criminal desire in the heart, a temptation impossible to resist, an impulse which seems preordained) lie the germs of something: of a freedom which man has seldom dared to imagine for himself. [...] most love affairs begin or end during these three days and nights during which we are delivered from the thrall of personality, from the bondage of ourselves. (343-344)

In his preface to The Alexandria Quartet, Lawrence Durrell affirms that, in the work, he has adopted 'the relativity proposition'. In his declarations about the quartet, Durrell very often acknowledges the influence of Albert Einstein's theory. The narrator's statement that 'everything is susceptible of more than one explanation' (69) is gradually confirmed by the developments of the story. In the last novel, Clea also refers to 'the mutability of all truth', arguing that 'each fact can have a thousand motivations, all equally valid, and each fact a thousand faces' (708). Einstein's relativity may certainly be applied to justify Clea's words, but there is another important influence on Durrell's use of this notion in the quartet, and again, it is the Greek poet of Alexandria.

A poem like "Myris: Alexandria, A. D. 340" can perfectly show this 'mutability' of all perspectives in life, which is a recurring idea in the work of Cavafy. Myris' friend, who is a Pagan, is the dramatic voice of the poem.

When I heard the terrible news, that Myris was dead,
I went to his house, although I avoid
going to the houses of Christians,
especially during times of mourning or festivity.

I stood in the corridor. I didn't want
to go further inside because I noticed
that the relatives of the deceased looked at me
with obvious surprise and displeasure.

[...]

I stood and wept in a corner of the corridor.
And I thought how our parties and excursions
wouldn't be worthwhile now without Myris;
and I thought how I'd no longer see him
at our wonderfully indecent night-long sessions
enjoying himself, laughing, and reciting verses
with his perfect feel for Greek rhythm;
and I thought how I'd lost forever

his beauty, lost forever
the young man I'd worshipped so passionately.

[...]

We'd known of course that Myris was a Christian,
known it from the very start,
when he first joined our group the year before last.
But he lived exactly as we did:
more devoted to pleasure than all of us,
he scattered his money lavishly on amusements.
Not caring what anyone thought of him,
he threw himself eagerly into night-time scuffles
when our group happened to clash
with some rival group in the street.
He never spoke about his religion.

[...]

And suddenly an odd sensation took hold of me:
indefinably I felt
as if Myris were going from me;
I felt that he, a Christian, was united
with his own people and that I was becoming
a stranger, a total stranger. I even felt
a doubt come over me: that I'd been deceived by my passion
and had always been a stranger to him.
I rushed out of their horrible house,
rushed away before my memory of Myris
could be captured, could be perverted by their Christianity. (118-119, fragments)

The preparations of the Christian funeral precipitate the inner conflict in his mind. He even starts having doubts about the real nature of his relationship with the deceased. To protect his memory of Myris from estrangement, in a desperate last act of affirmation, he rushes out of that house. As Keeley comments,

Memory remains the only recourse—the only access to some life after death—for those committed to the Alexandrian ideology. The preservation through remembrance of that lost passionate life in its purity, untouched by doubt or alien influence, seems to be [his] ultimate act of faith [...].²³⁷

Memory is the only way left to him for their passion. It is not only his only chance of preserving it 'untouched by doubt or alien influence', but consequently, it is also a space left for freedom, where his view of Myris and their story can exist freely.

After analysing the role of memory in The Alexandria Quartet and considering the ways it explores the notion of *relativity*, it seems clear that Durrell was also 'indebted' to

²³⁷ Keeley, Cavafy's Alexandria 138.

Cavafy, as Beaton suggests, regarding this question, that is, ‘the essential *relativity* of human experience and perception.’²³⁸ Just like Cavafy in his poem “Understanding” (‘My younger days, my sensual life— / how clearly I see their meaning now’, 60), Durrell’s narrator reorders past events trying to uncover ‘the meaning of the pattern’ (20).²³⁹

2.7. Cavafy and the Alexandrian Characters in Durrell.

In Cavafy, this *relativity* of human perception is very clearly seen in his conflicting but at the same time complementary views of Alexandria. The picture he offers in his poem “In the Evening” is very different from that of “The City”.

An echo from my days given to indulgence,
an echo from those days came back to me,
something from the fire of the young life we shared:
I picked up a letter again,
read it over and over till the light faded.

Then, sad, I went out on to the balcony,
went out to change my thoughts at least by seeing
something of this city I love,
a little movement in the street, in the shops. (53, two last stanzas)

Keeley sees an ‘evolution’ in the poet’s image of the city.²⁴⁰ Beyond doubt, such an evolution may be seen in his work, but if we consider it as a whole, that is, the way Cavafy always insisted it should be done, the picture it provides is a single one, depicted from multiple perspectives, rather than an evolution. It is indeed the view of his native Alexandria, including its confining conditions but also those aspects he knew well and loved, which probably accompanied him during his whole life. From Keeley, we know that ‘the poem was actually written in 1906, under the working title—again to the point here—of “Alexandrinon” [Αλεξανδρινών] (“Alexandrian”).’²⁴¹

In The Alexandria Quartet, Justine recites ‘those marvellous lines of the old Greek poet about a love-affair long since past’ (28). This is Durrell’s use of Cavafy’s “In the Evening”:

And hearing her speak his lines, touching every syllable of the thoughtful ironic Greek with tenderness, I felt once more the strange equivocal power of the city — its flat alluvial landscape

²³⁸ Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature 240.

²³⁹ The last two sentences of part III of Justine address the same idea: ‘Somewhere in the heart of experience there is an order and a coherence which we might surprise if we were attentive enough, loving enough, or patient enough. Will there be time?’ (178).

²⁴⁰ Keeley, Cavafy’s Alexandria 23.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 202, n15.

and exhausted airs — and knew her for a true child of Alexandria; which is neither Greek, Syrian nor Egyptian, but a hybrid: a joint.

And with what feeling she reached the passage where the old man throws aside the ancient love-letter which had so moved him and exclaims: 'I go sadly out on to the balcony; anything to change this train of thought, even if only to see some little movement in the city I love, in its streets and shops!' Herself pushing open the shutters to stand on the dark balcony above a city of coloured lights: feeling the evening wind stir from the confines of Asia: her body for an instant forgotten. (28-29)

'A true child of Alexandria' like Cavafy, Durrell's Justine is also 'a joint', being 'neither Greek, Syrian nor Egyptian'. They are both 'hybrids' in so far as they have mixed origins, being native Alexandrians with their family roots outside Egypt. Their hybridity does not, of course, imply a loss of cultural identity, neither in the case of the Greek poet, nor in Justine's, as this quotation shows. The cultural nature of the Alexandrian is illustrated by the image used by Durrell to define the 'strange equivocal power of the city'. The author refers to its 'alluvial landscape', alluding to its citizens as sediments left by history in its flat but rich coastal plain. Durrell's metaphor describes the cultural diversity of Alexandria very aptly.

In this case, it is Justine who helps the author to recreate the figure of 'the old poet of the city' by performing exactly the same action that Cavafy carries out in the poem,²⁴² but she is not the only character in the quartet who has this function in the narration.

The character of Balthazar has many characteristics that remind readers of Cavafy and he also lives in the poet's old flat in Rue Lepsius, but Balthazar is presented as a 'a fellow-student and close friend of the old poet' who spoke of him with 'warmth and penetration' (79) and who had been with him to 'those little cafés' (18) which appear in Durrell's Alexandrian quartet.

According to Cavafy's biographer Robert Liddell, Balthazar was a character based on Gaston Zananiri.²⁴³ Zananiri was the son of George Zananiri Pasha, an influential Alexandrian of Syrian-Christian descent, and one of the founders of the Atelier des Beaux Arts in 1935.²⁴⁴ The Atelier is mentioned a few times in Durrell's quartet in connection to Melissa, who had been a model there before becoming a dancer; to the narrator, who had given a lecture on Cavafy there; to Justine, who had also modelled 'for a time' in the Atelier;

²⁴² Cavafy's poem does not imply though, as Darley says, that the protagonist 'throws aside the ancient love-letter'.

²⁴³ See Haag, 254.

²⁴⁴ At present, it is known as l'Atelier d'Alexandrie or Atelier of Artists and Writers of the City of Alexandria. The idea for the Alexandria Atelier was inspired by the Athens Atelier, where Zananiri had given a lecture in 1934 (see Haag, 154).

and to Clea, who, like real Clea Badaro, works there as a painter. Apart from his closeness to the character of Balthazar, Zananiri appears with his own surname in the “Workpoints” section of *Justine*; his first name is changed to a fictional one, Ahmed. Zananiri is mentioned there among other ‘character-squeezes’, as the author calls them. After his name, Durrell adds a half cryptic, half humorous identification: ‘pole-star criminal’ (197).

Zananiri had met Durrell through some acquaintances at the British Council and they became friendly. Thus, Zananiri came to be a great source of information on Cavafy for Durrell, since the poet had been a good friend of Zananiri. Much of what Durrell says about the ‘poet of the city’ in the quartet very likely came from him.²⁴⁵ Perhaps that is why Durrell mentions him as a ‘pole-star criminal’, meaning he was a valuable accomplice when drafting his character of ‘the old poet’.

Nevertheless, some allusions to Cavafy in Durrell’s quartet are only fictional elements introduced by the author to enrich his picture, like those ‘new Cavafy manuscripts’ which Darley searches at the library of the Cervonis in order to ‘get a look at the handwriting of the old poet’, to realize in the end that they are ‘all locked up’ (357-358).

Darley’s fascination for Cavafy leads Durrell’s narrator to feel personally identified with the poet. In *Justine*, Darley confesses: ‘I have become one of these poor clerks of the conscience, a citizen of Alexandria’ (22). The association with Cavafy, who was a clerk himself for thirty years, is unmistakable. When Darley gives a lecture on him at the Atelier, he refers to his listeners as not ‘an audience of haberdashers’ assistants and small clerks — his immortals’ but ‘a dignified semi-circle of society ladies’ (31). He is asserting again his professional connection with the poet and a part of his then small local circle of readers.

There is another character of *The Alexandria Quartet*, Pursewarden, who is sometimes associated to Cavafy. From Pursewarden’s notebook, for instance, the narrator quotes this interesting passage:

Brother Ass, let us trace the progress of the European artist from problem-child to case-history, from case-history to cry-baby! He has kept the psyche of Europe alive by his ability to be wrong, by his continual cowardice — this is his function! Cry-baby of the Western World! Cry-babies of the world unite! But let me hasten to add, lest this sounds cynical or despairing, that I am full of hope. For always, at every moment of time, there is a chance that the artist will stumble upon what I can only call The Great Inkling! Whenever this happens he is at once free to enjoy his fecundating role [...] Yes, I believe in this miracle. Our very existence as artists affirms it! It is the act of yea-saying about which the old poet of the city speaks in a poem you once showed me in translation.* The

²⁴⁵ See Haag, 254-256.

fact of an artist being born affirms and reaffirms this in every generation. The miracle is there, on ice so to speak. (761)

Beyond Pursewarden's characteristic irony, these lines of affirmation or rather reaffirmation and his reference to 'the old poet of the city' allude to Cavafy's "Che Fece... Il Gran Rifiuto" ["He Did... The Great Refusal"]. In fact, the asterisk in the text leads readers to Durrell's 'free translation' of the poem, included among the notes for Clea (883-884). The title of Cavafy's poem is borrowed from Dante's Inferno (III, 60) but the Alexandrian deliberately omitted the last words, '*per viltà*' ['because of cowardice'].

For some people the day comes
when they have to declare the great Yes
or the great No. It's clear at once who has the Yes
ready within him; and saying it,

he goes from honour to honour, strong in his conviction.
He who refuses does not repent. Asked again,
He'd still say no. Yet that no—the right no—
drags him down all his life. (10)

In Cavafy's poem, the great 'No' becomes a positive act showing bravery and ethical coherence. It is very ironical—and Durrellian too—that Pursewarden, the most sardonic character of the quartet, is given the honour to recall this poem.

After putting Cavafy's 'great refusal' into the hands of Pursewarden, the author assigns the most intuitive role to one of his most sensitive characters in the quartet, the artist Clea Montis. Clea is the one who seems to 'perceive things about to happen', to use Philostratos' words in Life of Apollonios of Tyana (viii, 7), which appear in Cavafy's work as an epigraph to his poem "But the Wise Perceive Things about to Happen".

Ordinary people know what's happening now,
the gods know what the future holds
because they alone are totally enlightened.
Wise men are aware of future things
just about to happen.

Sometimes during moments of intense study
their hearing's troubled: the hidden sound
of things approaching reaches them,
and they listen reverently, while in the street outside
the people hear nothing whatsoever. (39)

Clea appears up to three times in ‘this maddening air of always *listening* for something’ (839, emphasized in the original). The author shows a very clear intention to build this side of his character.²⁴⁶

She was standing by the window listening, her whole body stiffened into an attitude of attentive interrogation so acute that it suggested something like a crisis of apprehension. Her head was turned a little sideways, as if to present her ear to the uncurtained window behind which, very dimly, a rain-washed dawn was beginning to break over the roofs of the city. What was she listening for? I had never seen this attitude before. I called to her and briefly she turned a distraught and unseeing face to me— impatiently, as if my voice had ruptured the fine membrane of her concentration. [...] The silence, save for our exclamations, was complete. (836-837)

An artist like Clea is able to ‘perceive things about to happen’ because, like Darley, she has perhaps realized that ‘it had all *already happened*’ (828). The notion of history having cyclical patterns is behind many of Cavafy’s poems and it is also central to Durrell’s quartet. Darley’s narration seems to follow the labyrinthine roads of history; even the narrator wonders:

Will this be a new point of departure or a return to the starting-point? (687)

As said above, more than thirty years after leaving the city, in October 1977, Durrell returned to Alexandria, staying at his familiar Hotel Cecil on the Corniche. Like Darley, the author might well have wondered whether his would be also a return to the starting-point. Of course, Alexandria had changed a lot after the years and because of the changes brought by the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser, but Durrell was able to feel again through the ground the old ‘rhythms’ of the country.²⁴⁷

It is very strange to come back after such a lapse of time and to find the country relatively unchanged because the emanations of the ground seem to me on the same frequency, with the same vibrations, and the changes are simply superficial.²⁴⁸

Among other places, he revisited Cavafy’s old address at number 10 of Rue Lepsius (then called Sharia Sharm el Sheikh). The poet had lived on the second floor, in a flat with a balcony; below, on the ground floor, there had been a brothel. In 1977, Cavafy’s flat had become the Pension Amir, ‘a small pension of the kind described in many Middle Eastern

²⁴⁶ See also Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* 833.

²⁴⁷ See Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* 182.

²⁴⁸ Ingersoll, *Lawrence Durrell: Conversations* 176.

novels, modest and somewhat seedy.²⁴⁹ Cavafy's room, which was at that time recreated in a little museum on the top floor of the Greek Consulate, is now back to the poet's old flat, where the Cavafy Museum was established in 1992.²⁵⁰

It was doubtless a very important reencounter with Cavafy's shade for Durrell. If the city is 'the central character' of his most celebrated literary production, as the author himself stated,²⁵¹ Cavafy is, according to him, 'the expresser of the essence of the city.'²⁵² In an interview held in 1975, he remarks: 'People have tried to do the same thing in prose, but I think for conciseness and for penetration he's absolutely *the* guide to the city. [...] I used him as precisely the poet of the city I was trying to build [...] because he expressed the absolute amorality of the city, the irony of it, the cruelty of it, all in a sort of shorthand.'²⁵³

In Lawrence Durrell: A Biography, Ian MacNiven calls Cavafy 'the patron spirit' of The Alexandria Quartet (268). MacNiven is certainly right in calling him so, taking into account the large presence of the poet's work in the quartet. While he was writing about Alexandria, Cavafy could also be called his 'guardian spirit', a merit Durrell keeps though for his third wife Claude in his Greek dedication of Mountolive to her, 'A CLAUDE τὸ
νομα τοῦ γαθοῦ δαίμονος' [TO CLAUDE the name of the good god or guardian spirit].²⁵⁴

In a similar way, in a review of the British edition of Justine appeared in *The Nation* (18 May 1957), Kenneth Rexroth argues that 'the poet who has influenced Durrell most is probably the Greek poet Cavafy' and regarding the novel, he says:

Justine is almost a novelification (like a versification but backwards) of Cavafy's poetry. It is not just an evocation, but a bodily conjuration of Alexandria

Although Cavafy is most strongly felt in The Alexandria Quartet, the poet resurfaces, as shown above, in many other of Durrell's writings. It seems clear the poet's work marked Durrell for life. It is not surprising that, more than twenty years after the publication of Clea, Cavafy appeared again in Durrell's Sebastian (1983).²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹ Forster, Alexandria: A History and a Guide xvi.

²⁵⁰ With the help of photographs and Cavafy's friends, the museum has tried to reconstruct the old furniture and the atmosphere of Cavafy's apartment and it holds a large collection of bibliographical materials. It is run under the auspices of the Cultural Section of the Greek Embassy in Cairo. Cavafy's library and archive were purchased in 1969 from the poet's heir by Prof. George Savidis and they are kept at the Center for Neo-Hellenic Studies (S.N.H.) in Athens. The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archives (E.L.I.A.) also hold in Athens some of Cavafy's manuscripts.

²⁵¹ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 75.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁵⁴ Actually, the last Greek word appears misspelt in the original, as 'διάμονος', see 393.

²⁵⁵ Durrell, The Avignon Quintet 1018.

Leaving Cavafy's native city did not mean that Durrell left Cavafy's poetry behind. Ray Mills, a friend of Durrell while they lived in Rhodes, wrote a very interesting narration about his two years in Rhodes in which he mentions his trips and evenings with the Durrells.

The four of us would have evenings when we would sing Greek folk songs and recite poetry. [...] Larry recited poems of his own and other poets. He would also recite Greek poets, especially Cavafy both in Greek and in translation.²⁵⁶

Also while on the island of Rhodes, Durrell writes to his friend the poet and editor M. J. Tambimuttu about Cavafy:

I would very much like to do a modern Greek anthology and have approached Seferis himself and Katsimbali for collaboration; I have no texts—even if I knew enough Greek to translate them, which I don't.

You ask about Kavaphis. I am on the point of doing a little pamphlet—twenty copies— of translations from Kavaphis love-poems. If you would like to issue the book in England by all means do so. It only a pamphlet but he is certainly the greatest Greek poet—in the European tradition and really ought to be available in England in toto. I once did him with Theodore Stephanides.²⁵⁷

In fact, in 1946, while in Rhodes, Durrell tried to collaborate with Robert Liddell and Bernard Spencer in new translations of Cavafy but it all finally came to nothing. In 1956, Durrell published translations of three early poems by Cavafy in *London Magazine*.²⁵⁸ The three poems are “My Friends, When I Was in Love”, “Flowers of May” and “Dunya Ghiuzeli”. These three poems, which are early productions in *katharevousa* and follow traditional metrical patterns, were unknown at that time. They were found by a local scholar, Andreas Indianos, in an old scrap book kept by the daughter of Cavafy's brother Aristides. Then, in 1960, Durrell would also publish an essay on Cavafy in *3 Arts Quarterly* (Autumn issue, No. 3).

Marios Byron Raizis comments that Durrell mentioned, dicussed, or translated ‘about a dozen modern Greek authors’ in his life.²⁵⁹ Durrell's writings and translations bear testimony to his interest in them; not to mention his vast knowledge of the classical Greek works, which also permeate his production. Among this list of Greek authors, Cavafy had a crucial importance in Durrell's literary career. As Raizis remarks, ‘Cavafy did not help make Lawrence Durrell the major poet of his times [...] but seminally contributed to Larry's

²⁵⁶ Lawrence Durrell Collection, British Library (73145, vol. LIV, ff. 38-67).

²⁵⁷ Unpublished signed typed letter, dated 7 Aug. 1946, Lawrence Durrell Collection, British Library (73122).

²⁵⁸ Lawrence Durrell, “A Cavafy Find” *London Magazine* (Jul. 1956): 11-14.

²⁵⁹ Raizis, *Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World* 241.

becoming the most popular and most discussed English novelist in the second half of the twentieth century'.²⁶⁰

As said above, although much was sold, given or lost, what was left of the author's last personal library was preserved by the Université Paris Ouest. It is interesting to mention that the Bibliothèque Durrell still holds half a dozen titles by or about Cavafy, including the two volumes of his complete poems in the Greek edition, and other kinds of critical materials on the poet that Durrell had kept.

In November 1975, Durrell was brought to London by the London Hellenic Society to unveil a plaque to Cavafy on the house where the poet had lived at Bayswater.²⁶¹ It was the city's homage to Constantine Cavafy but also Durrell's personal tribute to the poet who meant so much to him as a writer. Durrell finished his speech at that ceremony with a few words borrowed from a traditional Greek saying about Alexander the Great, only replacing Alexander with Cavafy.²⁶² Perhaps, those are the best words to close this chapter, they are indeed really true.

Ζήτω ο Καβάφη, ζει και βασιλεύει!

Long live Cavafy, he lives and reigns!

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

²⁶¹ Cavafy lived at 14-15 Queensborough Terrace, Bayswater, London from 1873 to 1876.

²⁶² See Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 149.

3. Angelos Sikelianos and Henry Miller: The Poet as a Visionary

3.1. The Cycle of Renewal in Sikelianos and Miller.

Angelos Sikelianos' tribute to Kostis Palamas at his funeral in 1943 was not only a homage to the national bard, it was also representative of the position Sikelianos had reached as a major voice of Greek poetry and a successor of Palamas. By then, Sikelianos was in his late fifties and he had already produced a large part of his poetical work and half of his tragedies.

Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951) was born and spent his childhood on the Ionian island of Lefkada. In 1901, he moved to the capital in order to study law at the University of Athens. His main interest being literature though, he soon got in contact with the group of the New Theatre of Constantine Christomanos and in 1902, he started publishing his first poems in several Athenian periodicals. In 1906, at his sister Penelope's home in Athens, Sikelianos knew Eva Palmer, a philhellene New Yorker who would become his first wife and lifelong supporter.

Despite the limited number of works by Sikelianos in translation, due to the notorious difficulty of rendering his poetry into other languages, Eva Palmer Sikelianos played a key role in the promotion of her husband's work in Europe and the United States. Her lectures, writings, translations, and extensive correspondence with theatre directors and intellectuals, including Henry Miller, helped to broaden the international recognition of Sikelianos.

It is not clear when Lawrence Durrell met Sikelianos for the first time nor whether Miller ever met him personally while in Greece. In Durrell's case, he probably met him in April 1936, when he went to Athens to meet Kostis Palamas on the occasion of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of Palamas' first collection of poems. As mentioned above, one of the lecturers was Sikelianos,



Angelos Sikelianos.

indeed. In Blue Thirst, Durrell recalls his first impressions of Sikelianos the man and his ‘highly dramatic’ manners.²⁶³ According to Gordon Bowker, Miller might have met Sikelianos in one of his evening meetings in the old Athenian quarter of Plaka with the circle of the editor George Katsimbalis.²⁶⁴ In fact, Sikelianos was published in Katsimbalis’ journal *Ta Néa Grámmata* and they often met. What is certainly evident, though, from their writings is the impact of the poet’s work on both Durrell and Miller.

Actually, Durrell was among the first translators of the poetical work of Sikelianos. The first work to appear into English, The Dedication of the Delphic Word: A Poem of Initiation, was translated by Alma Reed and published in 1928, only a year later than the original Greek edition. Eva Sikelianos’ ‘encouragement’ and ‘assistance’ are acknowledged in its foreword.²⁶⁵ In 1939, Frances Sikelianos, the poet’s daughter-in-law, published her English rendering of his first tragedy The Dithyramb of the Rose (1932) in a limited edition of five hundred copies privately printed by a friend of Eva Sikelianos, the choreographer Ted Shawn. Paul Nord’s English version of Akritan Songs would appear in a bilingual edition of 1944, two years after several handwritten copies of this collection of poems had started circulating underground during the German occupation of Greece.²⁶⁶ Then, in 1946, Durrell published a booklet with his translations of three poems by George Seferis and another three by Sikelianos, including “The Unwritten”, “The Death-Feast of the Greeks” and “Dionysus Encradled”.²⁶⁷ It was printed at the Rhodes government press when Durrell was the Public Information Officer for the Dodecanese Islands. The same year, Octave Merlier, the director of the Institut Français d’Athènes, published his French version of the Akritan Songs, Le serment sur le Styx: Cinq poèmes de Sikelianos (1941-42), and it also appeared Robert Levesque’s Sikelianos: Choix de poèmes, with a preface by the poet Paul Éluard. Much later, in 1979, Edmund Keeley and Phillip Sherrard would publish the first broad selection of poems by Sikelianos in English.

However, it must also be mentioned that his Rhodes edition was not Durrell’s first effort to have Sikelianos published in English. Earlier, in 1945, Durrell ‘was particularly

²⁶³ L. Durrell, Blue Thirst 18.

²⁶⁴ Bowker, 126.

²⁶⁵ Angelo Sikelianos, The Dedication of the Delphic Word: A Poem of Initiation, trans. Alma Reed. (New York: Vinal, 1928). Further references to “The Dedication” will be from this edition.

²⁶⁶ See Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature 179.

²⁶⁷ A. Sikelianos and G. Seferis, Six Poems from the Greek of Sikelianos and Seferis, trans. Lawrence Durrell (Rhodes, Gr.: Durrell, 1946). Durrell’s translation of “The Death Feast of the Greeks” would also appear in John Lehmann’s journals New Writing and Daylight 7 (London: Lehmann, 1946) 44-46, and The Penguin New Writing 33 (London: Penguin, 1948) 89-91.

keen' to include Sikelianos in the anthology of his Egyptian magazine,²⁶⁸ Personal Landscape: An Anthology of Exile and Seferis provided a translation.

In 1946, Durrell was several times in Athens while he was trying to search for a position in Greece, since his job in Rhodes would not be a permanent one. In February, he wrote to Miller telling him that he had just spent a week in Athens and describing the poor post-war conditions of the city and its inhabitants, who were starving, 'Sekilianos among them.'²⁶⁹ Miller immediately sent 'clothes and food' to his 'Greek friends',²⁷⁰ probably through Seferis.

At the end of October, Durrell was back to Athens, and although he 'still did not land a job', he managed to spend an evening in a 'humble tavern' with Sikelianos and Rex Warner. Durrell described the aged poet as 'a sort of phoenix huddled in the ashes of his overcoat.'²⁷¹ Durrell's image seems to fit the poet's life, who knew both fame and misery.

In Sicilian Carousel, Durrell recalls a meeting with Seferis and Sikelianos. Although the text does not give a date for this meeting, it says it happened after Durrell had produced 'a bad translation of one of his great poems', so it is very likely that it refers to their February encounter. Durrell's words reveal his anxiety about the possible reactions to his translation of an author he admires.

I was terrified, but he rapidly put me at my ease by his gentleness. He had just come from the doctor where he had been informed that he was in danger of a thrombosis. A vein in the brain.... But far from being despondent he was wild with elation. "Think of it," he said to Seferis, "a little gleaming swelling in there, shining like a *ruby!*"²⁷²

Indeed, regardless of what he half-jokingly suggests and taking into account the complexity of the poet's language, Durrell's translations of Sikelianos are not 'bad' at all. In fact, Durrell's knowledge of Greek was considerable. In a 1946 letter to Durrell, the Greek-American poet and translator Kimon Friar suggests to him that he translates Nikos Kazantzakis' Last Temptations of Christ and he adds: 'Katsimbalis has given me a copy [of Six Poems from the Greek of Sekilianos and Seferis] (and has also told me that your Greek

²⁶⁸ Bowker, 158.

²⁶⁹ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 193 (*sic*).

²⁷⁰ Brassai, Henry Miller, Happy Rock, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2002) 51. He also asked his friends for clothes and sent them to Crete, where he had befriended Alexandros Venetikos, the guard of Phaestos ruins that appears in The Colossus of Maroussi: 'The museum attendant is the poorest man in the world. Many Cretans still walk around in the clothes I sent them, hundreds of garments, in I don't know how many packages' (Henry Miller, Happy Rock, 86). Miller's letters to Venetikos (1957-1963) are kept in the Henry Miller Papers, U of California, Department of Special Collections (box 63, folder 12, 65 items). The Henry Miller Collection at the U of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, holds a copy of letter to Miller from Venetikos, trans. from Greek, 25 Nov. 1957, and an autograph postcard to Miller signed by Venetikos, 2 Mar. 1959 (container 10.2, both).

²⁷¹ MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 332.

²⁷² Lawrence Durrell, Sicilian Carousel (New York: Penguin, 1981) 142.

is excellent!)' .²⁷³ Panayotis Gerontopoulos has seen some limitations in Durrell's translation from the purist *katharevousa* of Emmanuel Royidis' Pope Joan,²⁷⁴ but as Friar points out, Durrell's command of the demotic language was very good.²⁷⁵

The previous anecdote about Sikelianos' personal view of his health problems may well illustrate his "Agraphon". This poem is the second one of his Ακριτικά (1941-1942). Translated as 'Akritan songs', they get their name from Digenis Akrites, the epithet of Basil, an epic hero of mixed Byzantine Greek and Arab blood who fights in the Eastern borders of the empire, as narrated in one of the most well-known poems of the period. Digenis has remained alive in Greek popular songs and traditions. By extension, the adjective 'Akritan' [*ακριτικά*] refers to the soldiers who, like Digenis, defend the national boundaries, *άκρων* meaning the 'edge'. Sikelianos' Akritan poems were precisely inspired by the Greek resistance to the Italians in the Epirus and the German occupation. "Agraphon" was produced in October 1941, during the most terrible winter of the war.

"Agraphon" [*Άγραφον*], or "The Unwritten", as Durrell literally translated it into English, refers here to an episode in the life of Jesus that is not found in the canonical Gospels. It presents Jesus and his disciples walking outside the walls of Zion at sunset. The group reaches the place where the town dumps its garbage and comes across the central object of the poem: 'There, crowning the highest pile, its legs / pointing at the sky, lay a dog's bloated carcass'.²⁷⁶ Such a stench rises from it that all the disciples draw back, but Jesus walks on toward the rotting dead dog. One of the disciples asks him whether he does not smell the stench.

Jesus, His eyes fixed on the carcass,
answered: 'If your breath is pure, you'll smell
the same stench inside the town behind us.
But now my soul marvels at something else,
marvels at what comes out of this corruption.
Look how that dog's teeth glitter in the sun:
like hailstones, like a lily, beyond decay,
a great pledge, mirror of the Eternal, but also
the harsh lightning-flash, the hope of Justice!' (68)

²⁷³ Kimon Friar, Letter to Lawrence Durrell. 26 Oct 1946. Kimon Friar Collection. American College of Greece, Athens.

²⁷⁴ Emmanuel Royidis, Pope Joan: A Romantic Biography pref. and trans. Lawrence Durrell (London: André Deutsch, 1960). Durrell's translation is dedicated to George Katsimbalis, 'who first brought the book to [his] notice in 1939' (12). Gerontopoulos noted these limitations in his paper "The Myth of Pope Joan, Emmanuel Roidis & Durrell." On Miracle Ground XIII: International Lawrence Durrell Conference, Rhodes, Gr. 29 June 2004. Address.

²⁷⁵ Friar, *ibid.* It is also worth noting that, in his days as a student, Durrell was first in his class of Ancient Greek.

²⁷⁶ Angelos Sikelianos, Selected Poems, trans. and introd. Edward Keeley and Phillip Sherrard (London: Allen, 1980) 68. Further references to Sikelianos' poems will be from this edition, unless otherwise indicated.

Then, the group moves on and the poet addresses Jesus.

‘And now, Lord, I,
the very least of men, stand before You
and ponder those words, one thought in my mind:
give me, as now I walk outside this Zion,
and the world from end to end is all ruins, garbage,
all unburied corpses choking the sacred
springs of breath, inside and outside the city:
give me, Lord, as I walk through this terrible stench,
one single moment of Your holy calm,
so that I, dispassionate, may also pause
among this carrion and with my own eyes
somewhere see a token, white as hailstones,
as the lily – something glittering suddenly
deep inside me, above the putrefaction,
beyond the world’s decay, like the dog’s teeth
at which, Lord, that sunset You gazed in wonder:
a great pledge, mirror of the Eternal, but also
the harsh lightning-flash, the hope of Justice!’ (69)

Beyond the natural variations in tone between translators, Durrell’s translation of the poem does not differ significantly in meaning from Keeley’s & Sherrard’s one and it also remains quite faithful to the original piece. This poem probably rings a bell to readers of Durrell’s The Black Book, as it doubtless did to him. The epigraph to this work is a proverb coming from a Tibetan traditional legend: “Where there is veneration, / Even a dog’s tooth emits light.”²⁷⁷ The story narrates that the aged mother of a trader asks her son to bring her a relic from India. He promises to do so but, being a busy man, he forgets it again and again. When he is returning from his third journey to India, he suddenly remembers his promise and seeing a dog’s jaw near the road, he breaks off a white tooth and brings it to his mother, saying it is a tooth of the great Sariputra. Her mother places it on the altar of the family shrine and starts worshipping it daily. After a time, rays of light shine from the dog’s tooth. Some years after writing The Black Book (1938), when Durrell read Sikelianos’ “Agraphon”, the dog’s teeth in the poem glittered ‘deep inside’ him too.

Just like Jesus and his disciples, the poet walks outside his own Zion, the devastated Athens of 1941. Once a peaceful city, his Zion has been destroyed and death surrounds it. As Polymeris Voglis remarks, more than forty thousand Athenians would die between October 1941 and October 1942 because of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition.²⁷⁸ Like

²⁷⁷ Lawrence Durrell, The Black Book 7.

²⁷⁸ During the war years, about 300,000 people would die in Greece ‘because of famine and malnutrition.’ See Polymeris Voglis, “Surviving Hunger: Life in the Cities and the Countryside during the Occupation,” Surviving

Zion's landscape, the poet's world in war is 'all ruins, garbage, / all unburied corpses'. Therefore, the poem's image of Zion transcends time and place, becoming universal.

Just as that 'little gleaming swelling' in the poet's head, 'shining like a *ruby*', in the same way as the dog's tooth emitting light in Durrell's Tibetan epigraph, in "Agraphon", the 'dog's teeth glitter in the sun' showing there is a way beyond death and 'decay'. Thus, even the most insignificant and disgusting object on earth becomes a 'mirror of the Eternal', revealing both the everlasting cycle of life and the timeless universal deep meanings of our existence. Only this understanding of the little trivial object leads the Tibetan woman in that legend to see beyond it, or Sikelianos to accept the physical decay that ageing involves: the same blood that may kill him through thrombosis shines too, displaying the powerful élan of life.

Several symbolic images reinforce this idea. 'Hailstones' parallel the dog's teeth whiteness, but also stand for winter. Hails cover the earth only to let it bloom again in spring. The dog's legs 'pointing at the sky' are meaningful too. Their verticality is suggestive of elevation, or as Bachelard's disciple Gilbert Durand puts it, '*la fuite devant le temps*', '*la victoire sur le destin et sur la mort*'.²⁷⁹ The dog's teeth are also compared to a white lily. These flowers are associated to the Mother of God, as they are also linked to Aphrodite, because they represent purity, fertility²⁸⁰ and hope.

However, hope as it is sung by the poet does not only refer to a hope in heavenly glory. The poem becomes both a revelation of transcendence and a claim for justice. The dog's teeth glittering in the sun seem to work as a spark in the poet's mind. In this regard, it should be pointed out that when Sikelianos says 'something glittering suddenly / deep *inside* me, above the putrefaction' [emphasis added], he implies that corruption is everywhere, not only outside, as social decadence, but also within himself. Or, to use one of Hermes Trismegistus' principles: as within, so without; as above, so below. The purported author of the Hermetic Corpus was incidentally an acknowledged influence on Sikelianos, Durrell and Miller. Actually, in The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller quotes precisely this same saying (103), but he also makes reference to Hermes Trismegistus in many other works; among others, in First Impressions of Greece,²⁸¹ The Wisdom of the Heart,²⁸² The Air-Conditioned Nightmare,²⁸³ Plexus,²⁸⁴ Quiet Days in Clichy,²⁸⁵ A Devil in Paradise,²⁸⁶ and The Books In

Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2006) 23.

²⁷⁹ Gilbert Durand, Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire: Introduction à l'archétypologie général (Paris: Dunod, 1992) 135.

²⁸⁰ "Lily." J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, 2nd ed.

²⁸¹ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 60.

²⁸² Miller, The Wisdom of the Heart 78-79.

²⁸³ Henry Miller, The Air-Conditioned Nightmare (St. Albans, UK: Panther, 1973) 100.

My Life.²⁸⁷ Trismegistus is also mentioned in some of Durrell's writings. In Justine, for example, he appears in connection with Balthazar (139). In "The Reckoning", a poem dedicated to Blaise Cendrars' daughter Miriam, Durrell also paraphrases from Hermes Trismegistus' Emerald Tablet: 'As below, darling, so above. / In one thought focus and resume / The thousand contradictions'.²⁸⁸ As it will be discussed further on, this dissolution of the conflict of opposites found in "Agraphon" (within/without, oneself/others) is one of the most characteristic features of Sikelianos.

This poem offers readers the chance to reflect on corruption while claiming the 'hope of Justice', but it also puts an emphasis on 'the Eternal'. It is interesting to see the large presence of images of decomposition in both Durrell and Miller which are related to the notion of death as regeneration of life. This is very clearly expounded in Durrell's Nunquam.

In death there is no satiety. Yet beyond the foetal pose and the faecal death the mystery of decomposition offers the promise of renewal [...]. Grave Aphrodite, formed from the manure out of which we are all constructed, has coaxed the gift of fertility—for manure also nourishes; death is defied by a change of code, of form. The smoking midden is also of this world, of this culture, of our time—indeed of all time. The compost generates another life, another echo, to defy with its heat the fateful laws of decomposition, of dissolution.²⁸⁹

Rotting is clearly presented as only a step towards 'renewal' and the byproducts of decomposition, as a compost which 'nourishes' like manure and is able to generate 'another life'. The paradoxical simultaneous occurrence of words associated either with birth, death or excrements in the paragraph accentuates the links among all the stages of this endless life cycle. Moreover, by defying death, the past becomes connected to the present. Miller's words in his preface to Alfred Perlès' My Friend Henry Miller may illustrate these bonds between history and present: 'we were all born of the same mother, drank of the same bitter milk, and will return to the same heavenly bosom'.²⁹⁰ In Tropic of Cancer, while remembering his past, the author reflects on life:

Deep in the blood the pull of Paradise. The beyond. Always the beyond. It must all have started with the navel. They cut the umbilical cord, give you a slap on the ass, and presto! you're out in the world, adrift, a ship without a rudder. You look at the stars and then you look at your navel. You grow eyes everywhere—in the armpits, between your lips, in the roots of your hair, on the soles of your

²⁸⁴ Henry Miller, The Rosy Crucifixion: Sexus. Plexus. Nexus ([Rockville, MD]: Olympia-Disruptive, 2004)

²⁸⁵ Further references to any of these three novels will be from this edition.

²⁸⁶ Henry Miller, Quiet Days in Clichy (New York: Grove, 1965) 68 and 70.

²⁸⁷ Henry Miller, A Devil in Paradise (London: NEL, 1968) 25.

²⁸⁸ Henry Miller, The Books in My Life (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1962) 150 and 279.

²⁸⁹ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 303.

²⁹⁰ Lawrence Durrell, Nunquam, The Revolt of Aphrodite 217.

²⁹¹ Perlès, My Friend Henry Miller 11.

feet. What is distant becomes near, what is near becomes distant. Inner-outer, a constant flux, a shedding of skins, a turning inside out. You drift around like that for years and years, until you find yourself in the dead center, and there you slowly rot, slowly crumble to pieces, get dispersed again.²⁹¹

In this passage, Miller presents birth as separation from mother, and life, as a seemingly contradictory experience of opposites. Ironically, by the time someone finds himself/herself ‘in the dead centre’, he/she then dies and his/her body rots to ‘get dispersed again.’ Here, instead of focusing on an image of reunion with mother earth, he studies life from the complementary view of severance. However, there are a few words which suggest the eternal nature of the cycles of life, such as ‘again’, at the end of his discourse, which implies repetition, and more clearly, the narrator’s first sentence: ‘Deep in the blood the pull of Paradise. The beyond.’

This topic is developed more deeply in “Uterine Hunger”, one of Miller’s most insightful essays about life and creation.

When the individual is wholly creative, one with destiny, there is neither time nor space, nor birth and death. The god-feeling becomes so intense that everything, organic and inorganic, beats with a divine rhythm. At the moment of supreme individuation, when the identity of all things is sensed and one is at the same time utterly and blissfully alone, the umbilical cord is at last cut. There is neither a longing for the womb nor a longing for the beyond. The sure feeling of eternity. Beyond this there is no evolution, only a perpetual movement from creation to creation. [...] The word becomes magic, it produces a contagion. And it is through this miraculous virus that the world is poisoned and dies. It is the miracle of miracles. The world dies over and over again, but the skeleton always gets up and walks.²⁹²

It is necessary to point out that Miller refers to the creative side of people, not only to artists, since according the author, creation is linked to life and it is a potentiality in each individual from birth, whether it is underdeveloped or highly fulfilled. At the end of the first chapter of Sexus, he openly expounds this idea: ‘We all derive from the same source. [...] We are all part of creation, [...] all poets, all musicians; we have only to open up, only to discover what is already there’ (14).

Miller argues that, by creating, individuals project themselves beyond their own births and deaths, beyond the limitations of time and space, to become one with the rest of the world, beating with the same ‘divine rhythm’. Then, the perception of this cosmic unity leads them to see the individuality of objects and beings, including themselves. That ‘moment of supreme individuation’ reenacts the umbilical cord cutting in a joyful recreation.

²⁹¹ Henry Miller, The Obelisk Trilogy: Tropic of Cancer. Tropic of Capricorn. Black Spring ([Rockville, MD]: Olympia-Disruptive, 2005) 137. Further references to any of these three works will be from this edition.

²⁹² Miller, “Uterine Hunger,” The Wisdom of the Heart 191.

The distressing aspects of primordial loneliness are exorcized by the ‘sure feeling of eternity’ provided by creation. Thus, ‘the world dies over and over again, but the skeleton always gets up and walks.’

Similarly, Sikelianos believes that immortal spirit of the world owes much to all generations. In the first piece of the *Akritan Songs*, “Styx Oath” [Στυγίης ὄρκος], the poet descends to the kingdom of darkness —‘*telle est la part entière du créateur*’²⁹³— to summon all the dead Greek warriors: ‘*Ô morts, mes frères*’ [...] ‘*la vie nouvelle [...] viendra dans la lumière de votre sacrifice, mes frères!*’ (*ibid.* 38). Then, he sees the dead warriors dance *syrtos*, one of the most popular dancing styles in Greece, and klephtic dances. Klephtic refers to the Klephts [κλέφτες, meaning ‘thieves’]. They were highwaymen who became anti-Ottoman insurgents, remaining active until the 19th century. Some of them were descendants of Greeks who retreated into the mountains in the 15th century in order to avoid Ottoman oppression. Thus, klephtic dances connote Greek resistance against oppressors. While watching their cheerful dancing, the poet concludes:

*Viendra l’heure où enfin vous briserez ses liens,
d’un coup, dans un élan d’allégresse,
votre élan,
d’un coup, dans votre marche bondissante, votre danse,
danse éternelle de la Grèce! (ibid. 39)*

So like Miller’s world skeleton, the eternal Greece also stands up in Sikelianos’ poem. The unstoppable movements of these dances become the symbol of their indomitable people. In the third poem of this collection, “Greek Funeral Dinner” [ἑλληνικὸς νεκρόδειπνος], or “The Death-Feast of the Greeks”, as Durrell translates it,²⁹⁴ the poet has been invited to a supper because his friends want to hear his ‘new songs of fire’. As they are eating in silence, the wine is opened, a wine ‘full of savour and fragrant in itself / As the black blood of Dionysus spilled’.²⁹⁵ Then, someone asks him for a toast speech and the poet’s voice breaks the silence.

²⁹³ Sikelianos, *Poèmes Akritiques. La Mort de Digénis* (Athens, Gr.: Institut Français, 1960) 37. Further quotations in French from the *Akritan Songs* will be from this edition. The first and last poems of the collection are the only ones which can neither be found in Durrell’s nor Keeley’s-Sherrard’s editions. Although Paul Nord did include them in his 1944 bilingual edition, Merlier’s renowned French renderings will be used for both (“Serment sur le Styx” and “Apologue de Solon”).

²⁹⁴ While being a fine rendering of the poem, Durrell’s translation is not as literal as that of “Agraphon”. For example, the introductory line addressing Dionysus-Hades in the original poem is omitted in Durrell’s version. The poem should start: ‘Oh Dionysus-Hades my protecting god!’

²⁹⁵ Sikelianos and Seferis, *Six Poems from the Greek of Sikelianos and Seferis* 7 (both).

It seems to me that as the winged ants alight
Upon an ear of wheat, this feat has stirred
The souls of the dead, they wake in us,
And deep from their eternal darkness rise.
And deep inside us we can feel their tracks,
As if still higher, above the vigil of death,
They went onwards, silent, over the rocks,
Drinking from wells of courage: and of others
Ancient unnumbered spirits, many, many.
So many filling up the night until
The living are far outnumbered by the dead.
Like moths to candles are they drawn, I feel them
Crowding in every corner, O suffer them only
To come closer, stretch out their hands
Over the table we have set for Pluto,
Over this death-feast, let us suffer them
To enter and be one with us.

And with this cup you gave me, friend,
Full to the brim wherein I see reflected
My image, as if from another world:
And with the wine you brought for me—
How rich and full-bodied like the black
Blood of Dionysus spilled, O let us
Commune here as once the Initiates did,
Dipping in Agathodemon's chalice,²⁹⁶ keeping
Our own deep silence til the time,
And it may not be far, when suddenly
The powers of the God begin to groan in us,
And his shrieks like earthquakes raise
In full array, the dead among the living,
Under the battering of the divine assault...

[...]

Hear O hear,
Dionysus-Hades, Divine Protector,
Hold back our hearts with the black
Wine of your pain, strengthen and save
For the great hour when suddenly Your shout
Rends, like an earthquake, waking us,
Making us one with the dead,
Under the battering of the divine assault.²⁹⁷

The poet's words reveal the feat 'has stirred / the souls of the dead'. The dead have woken within the banqueters. Memory becomes a powerful force leading them along the tracks of the deceased. That night, the departed are back and they outnumber the living. The poet asks his audience to let the dead come closer. It is indeed an invitation to find

²⁹⁶ Like the Roman *genii*, Agathodaemon, the 'good spirit' of vineyards and grainfields in ancient Greek religion, was thought to ensure good luck, health and wisdom.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

themselves in their predecessors, as he suggests when he says he sees his own image reflected in his cup, 'as if from another world'. Then, he calls on them to share some red wine, a symbol of Dionysus' blood, who is invoked as 'Dionysus-Hades, Divine Protector'. By drinking it, they will 'commune' with the ancestors of their race in order to 'be one' with them [*νά γίνουμ' ένα*], meaning 'so that we are one'. As a symbol of their pain, wine will 'strengthen' their hearts and awaken their communal sense.

Therefore, this 'collation for the sacred Pluto', as the poet calls it (*ibid.*, 8), grows into a ritual gathering to raise people's racial consciousness. The dead, contributing their energy and experience, and the living are summoned by the poet to be 'in full array' for a 'divine assault' that has thus transcended the bounds of time and place, becoming an image of people's resistance to injustice and all the obstacles put in their paths. In the historical context of its production, the poem clearly addresses the fate of Greece, from its roots until the years of war and German occupation.

When the Akritan Songs were known in France in 1944, the poet Paul Éluard wrote:

*En pleine Occupation en France, dans la nuit extrême contre laquelle nous combattons, il nous a suffi de lire vos Poèmes akritiques pour nous rendre compte qu'un très grand poète avait su, pour reprendre un de vos vers, "donner une voix à la nuit" — à notre nuit. Une voix antique parlait pour nous; à travers trois millénaires.*²⁹⁸

Éluard's words prove Sikelianos' work does not circumscribe to the tragical situation of Greece in the 1940s; his poetry seeks and achieves a more universal reading.

"Greek Funeral Dinner" also shows the role of the poet in Sikelianos, as a person who is able to perceive and communicate deep truths. His notion of the artist resembles Henry Miller's one. In a 1962 interview with George Wickes, Miller provides a precise definition of his own vision.

What is an artist? He's a man who has antennae, who knows how to hook up to the currents which are in the atmosphere, in the cosmos; [...] we are only intermediaries, that's all, who make use of what is in the air.

[A writer is] a man who [is] possessed of a certain faculty which he [is] destined to use for the service of others. [...] He's only an instrument in a long procession.²⁹⁹

Similarly, in Sexus, the author writes: 'An artist is an instrument that registers something already existent, something which belongs to the whole world and which, if he is

²⁹⁸ Qtd. in Renée Jacquin, L'esprit de Delphes: Anghélos Sikélianos (Aix en Provence, Fr.: U. de Provence, 1988) 204.

²⁹⁹ George Wickes, "Henry Miller: The Art of Fiction XXVIII," Conversations with Henry Miller, ed. Frank L. Kersnowski and Alice Hughes (Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 1994) 49-50.

an artist, he is compelled to give back to the world' (61). This idea of the artist as a 'sensitive transmitter', to quote Miller again,³⁰⁰ is recurrent in his production. In The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder, Miller confesses: 'We invent nothing, truly. We borrow and recreate. We uncover and discover. All has been given, as the mystics say. We have only to open our eyes and hearts, to become one with that which is.'³⁰¹ The analogy with Sikelianos in the "Greek Funeral Dinner" is striking.

Miller's impressions of Greece tell us about another related point of likeness with Sikelianos. While travelling across the country, Miller actually opens his eyes and heart to the Greek people, particularly to the poorest ones, peasants and shepherds. In a letter to Anaïs Nin written aboard the S. S. Théophile Gautier on his journey to Athens, Miller explains that he has had long conversations with a medical student from northern Greece about the 'character and temperament' of Greek people. It seems, the author says, 'the peasant is the real person in Greece.'³⁰² It is only what his intuition tells him, but later, on his stay, he will be able to see by himself and praise the old human values and virtues of rural common people (xenophilia, kindness, wittiness, etc.).³⁰³ They are the same peasants, shepherds and sailors whom Sikelianos is always close to and who so often appear in his works. In certain parts of his poem "Visionary", for example, the poet sings his island and its people, he sees them as parts of himself. As Renée Jacquin remarks, '*pour lui, le peuple possède une infaillible sagesse, léguée par les traditions. Il connaît d'instinct les lois divines et magiques. Si l'on parle avec les bergers, l'on s'aperçoit que leurs paroles sont "pensées profondes" et "d'une grande force"*'.³⁰⁴

In The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller also mentions shepherds when he narrates his visit to Mycenae.

A shepherd with his flock moves about on a distant mountain side. He is larger than life, his sheep are covered with golden locks. He moves leisurely in the amplitude of forgotten time. He is moving amidst the still bodies of the dead, their fingers clasped in the short grass. He stops to talk with them, to stroke their beards. He was moving thus in Homeric times when the legend was being embroidered with copperish strands. [...] For the shepherd the poet is too facile, too easily satiated. The poet would say "there was ... they were ..." But the shepherd says *he lives, he is, he does*.... The poet is always a thousand years too late—and blind to boot. The shepherd is eternal, an earth-bound spirit, a renunciator. On these hillsides forever and ever there will be the shepherd with

³⁰⁰ Robert Snyder, ed., This is Henry. Henry Miller from Brooklyn (Los Angeles, CA: Nash, 1974) 82.

³⁰¹ Miller, The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder 47.

³⁰² Henry Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One: Europe 1931-40, ed. and introd. Gunther Stuhlmann (London: Village, 1965) 194.

³⁰³ See, for instance, Henry Miller, Greece (New York: Viking, 1964) 39. The Colossus of Maroussi also offers many examples.

³⁰⁴ Jacquin, 38.

his flock: he will survive everything, including the tradition of all that ever was.

[...] Only Agamemnon is there. The body fell apart when they lifted the mask from his face. But he is there, he fills the still bee-hive: he spills out into the open, floods the fields, lifts the sky a little higher. The shepherd walks and talks with him by day and by night. (92-93)

Like Miller, shepherds still feel the presence of Agamemnon. He belongs to his landscape as bees and sheep; he is as alive as his myth, which renews itself everytime it is narrated. Shepherds are equally 'eternal', they were on those hills in Clytemnestra's time and they are still there now, having received the knowledge of their forerunners.³⁰⁵

The shepherd, as 'an earth-bound spirit', is able to perceive the deep truths that nature discloses about life and death. That is why, for him, Agamemnon's body still rests near his palace, despite the fact that he was murdered by Aegisthus centuries ago and no physical trace of his bones has been kept. 'Sometimes it seems as though the influence of the dead were more potent than the influence of the living', as Miller notes.³⁰⁶ Shepherds still reverently learn from the life and misfortunes of the King of Argos, knowing his ancient name will outlive them. This is the common folk that permeates the productions of both Sikelianos and Miller.

In his foreword to *Poèmes Akritiques*, Octave Merlier addresses the poet and he observes: '*Par votre voix j'ai entendu parler un peuple. Et c'est sans doute parce que ce peuple, petit par le nombre, est grand dans ses épreuves, qu'il provoque de grands poèmes*' (22). Certainly, after *Akritan Songs*, Sikelianos proves to be the true heir to Kostis Palamas, as the voice of his people.

The fourth poem of *Akritan Songs*, "Dionysus Encradled" [Διόνυσος □π□ λίκν□], is the last one among those chosen by Durrell for his Rhodes edition. Written on Christmas Eve 1941, "Dionysus Encradled" presents a newborn in his cradle who is surrounded by snow, cold and menacing wolves in the darkness of night. The poet says the child is born of the 'eternal god' and he is identified as a 'young Titan', Dionysus and Christ.

'My sweet child, my Dionysus and my Christ:
if You came into the world today, a young Titan,
You wouldn't have a mother's arms to warm You.
For You are the son of the night around us,
of this night, and son of our unsleeping hearts
which, spark of life in the frozen chaos,

³⁰⁵ A similar view of shepherds is found in Lawrence Durrell's poem "To Argos" (1942): 'Only the shepherd in his cowl / Who walks upon them [mythical and ancient beings] really knows / The natural history in a sacred place' (see L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 105).

³⁰⁶ Miller, *The Books in My Life* 37.

fight now with death itself, with our own death
and that of the whole world. And we know,
young Titan, that if You fail tonight to fasten
onto our hearts, to drink their blood drop by drop,
tomorrow You too will be among the dead.
But we hold it better to stay buried
in the upright coffins that freeze our limbs
than for Your pulse to stop in the darkness,
along with all the rest that swell the herd
of indescribable violence, and for savage wolves
from far off to catch the scent of Your cradle.

But as Your cradle is the shield of shields,
so we, Corybantes, begin to circle
around it, to dance our last dance, beating our swords
on our own shields to drive the wolves from You.
The whole night through we'll dance around You,
and however long the night, we'll dance until
the ghouls of the dark have fled, and Your voice □
God's voice that rises out of sleep, voice
of the "great intoxication" □ suddenly calls
the dead into the sun's warmth, while the shadow
of Your single mighty Vine bends, sweet child □
our Dionysus and our Christ □ above Your cradle.³⁰⁷

Night in the poem is both the 'mother-night' (65), the archetypal fecundating darkness, and what the poet calls 'the night around us', that is the gloomy and tragical period of war and occupation in Greece. The 'young Titan' is the son of this ambivalent night.

'Death' is another name for the latter meaning of 'night'. In the poem, 'death' refers to the spiritual death of defeated souls and starving bodies, like those of the Greek people in those years, and also, to 'that of the whole world', that brought by the rider of the red horse of War. From his 'sentry-box' (65), which he also calls his 'upright coffin' (*ibid.*), the poet watches 'legions of the dead' 'pouring out into the night' (66). The dead, like the poet himself, are awakened by the cry of the baby in the still of the night. His voice becomes 'a spark of life', the promise of 'the sun's warmth'. The author's references to 'wolves' and 'ghouls' allude to the forces operating against that hopeful new beginning.

The combination of the symbolic values of 'the night' and 'the cradle' suggests the isomorphic pair of images 'tomb-cradle', and by extension, its equivalent, 'tomb-womb'. This nocturnal inversion of the most common sense of death turns the tomb into the womb of Mother earth, that is, the cradle of eternal rebirth.³⁰⁸ Miller elaborates on this idea in

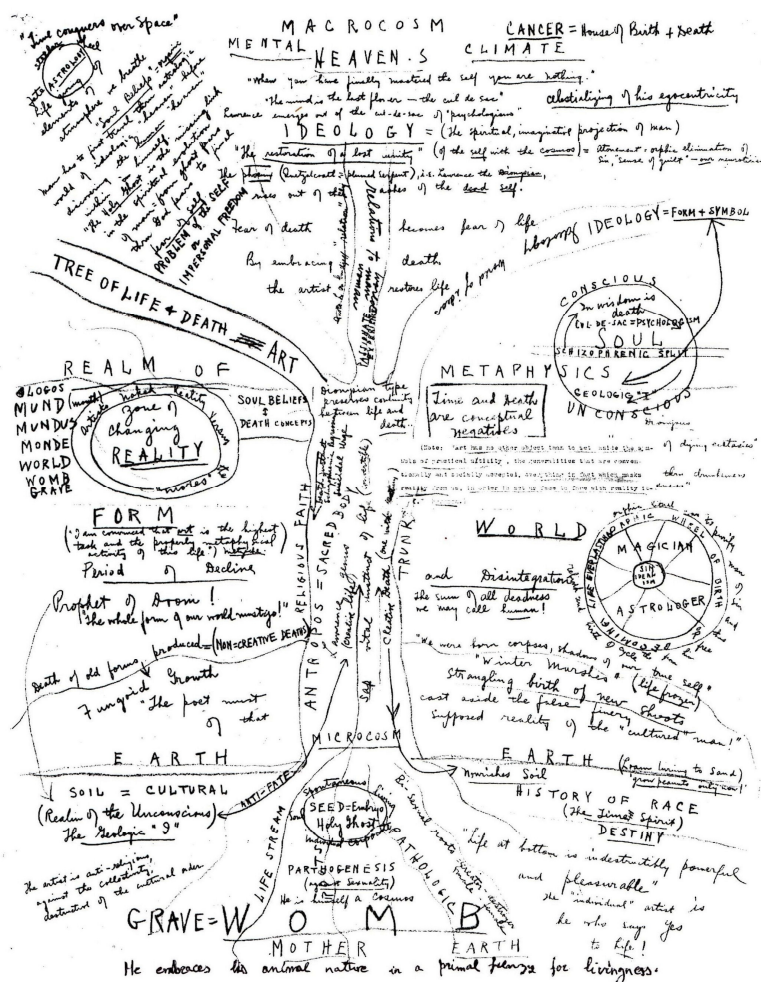
³⁰⁷ Sikelianos, *Selected Poems*, 66-67.

³⁰⁸ See Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* 269-275.

Tropic of Cancer (4) and also in his essay “The Enormous Womb”,³⁰⁹ but it is in Tropic of Capricorn where its lyrical qualities are better seen: ‘I wanted the dark fecundity of nature, the deep well of the womb, silence, or else the lapping of the black waters of death. I wanted to be that night which the remorseless eye illuminated, a night diapered with stars and trailing comets. To be of night, so frighteningly silent so utterly incomprehensible and eloquent at the same time. [...] To be englobed and encompassed and to encompass and to englobe at the same time’ (187).

The triple identification of the newborn (Titan-Dionysus-Christ) illustrates the characteristic syncretism of Sikelianos’ work. The rivalry between the children of Gaia and Dionysus narrated by some myths is here overcome by their combination, as well as that between the Pagan cults and early Christians. The gods of the Golden Age, the later Olympians, and Christ merge into an eternal common divine entity, together with their symbols, such as Dionysus’ ‘mighty Vine’ □also found in the blood-wine that the child drinks ‘drop by drop’ from people’s hearts□, his *intoxicating* voice, and his protective cradle, echoing that of Jesus and at the same time, the shield of the dancing Corybantes who guard Dionysus.

Sikelianos’ long unfinished poem “Easter of the Hellenes” [Πάσχα τ□ν □λλήνων, 1918-19] is his earliest work seeking to synthesize paganism and



Henry Miller’s tree chart. See the pair ‘GRAVE=WOMB’ (bottom).

³⁰⁹ Miller, “The Enormous Womb,” The Wisdom of the Heart 94: ‘First and last there is the womb of Nature; then there is the mother’s womb; and finally there is the womb in which we have our life and being and which we call the world. It is the failure to recognize the world as womb which is the cause of our misery, in large part.’

Christianism. It is an attempt to unify different traditions beyond dogmas that shows a timeless underlying spiritual consciousness. The author's definition of Christianism is telling in itself: '*Un mythe qui remet à sa place l'homme au centre de l'histoire et de la création toute entière, en tant qu'être responsable, libre et créateur.*'³¹⁰ These same words may explain, for instance, his view of Orpheus in his first tragedy The Dithyramb of the Rose (1932), as an image of the powerful creative force of human beings. Probably, Sikelianos' conception of christianism is nowhere more clear than in a less syncretic play, Christ in Rome (1946), which is set in 1st century AD Rome, when the fire of Nero burns the whole city. When Daisan, the Jew character, rescues a baby from the flames, he represents the victory of Christian faith over Caesarism. However, as in "Dionysus Encradled", the baby means people's hope for the future, being thus the young Dionysus when he is saved by Zeus. In fact, according to tradition, this is the origin of Greek tragedy, a ritual celebration of the death and resurrection of Dionysus.

In Greece, as Durrell reminds, this continuity of Pagan gods in Christian saints is a well-known fact: from Poseidon to St. Nicholas, from Demeter to Demetrius, from Artemis to Artemidoros, from Dionysus to St. Dionysios, etc. Regarding the latter, Durrell comments: 'The Christian Church had a good deal of trouble with Dionysus, and was finally obliged to do what Governments do to troublesome opponents – ennoble them. As St Dionysios, he was pressed into service on the side of law and order, and he exists to this day very thinly disguised as this medieval equivalent of a king' (219).

For his part, regarding Greek Easter, Miller says: 'With the coming of Easter the old pagan spirit returns. It is the earth and the bounties thereof which the Greek is really celebrating.'³¹¹ In Miller's works, it is also quite common to find references to a large diversity of religions (ancient Pagan cults, Christianity, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, Taoism, Buddhism, Zen, etc.).³¹² From the ancient Ammonite Moloch, who gives a title to his second novel, to Adam Cadmus in Nexus (543), a mixture of Adam and Dionysus' grandfather meaning 'unity'. Miller's use of the symbols of the Cross is also extensive. In Black Spring, after mentioning some of the places where he has been, the author adds: 'In each and every one of these places I left a dead body on the sidewalk with arms outstretched' (410), heralding what he later would call his Rosy Crucifixion, which, as Thomas Nesbit points out, also includes the X in all its three titles (Sexus, Plexus and Nexus).³¹³ In an interview, Miller explains what he means by *rosy crucifixion*: 'When a man is crucified,

³¹⁰ Qtd. in Jacquin, 86.

³¹¹ Miller, Greece 31 and 38.

³¹² Thomas Nesbit's Henry Miller and Religion (New York: Routledge-Taylor, 2007) provides a good analysis of these different sources of religious content in Miller's work.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 97.

when he dies to himself, the heart opens up like a flower.’³¹⁴ Through acceptance of suffering, defeat and loss are transformed into joy and a new beginning, as he later realizes.

As mentioned above, the conception of ‘a new beginning’ is precisely the core subject of “Dionysus Encradled”. Durrell’s translation of the poem, which offers indeed a good rendering of the original, puts emphasis on this notion. At the end of the fourth stanza, for example, there are a couple of lines which convey this idea.³¹⁵ Whereas Keeley & Sherrard translate them as ‘truly the eternal God is being born/ again tonight as a young child...’, Durrell’s version reads: ‘Tonight in very truth a child is born, / A new babe to the ageless God’, much closer to the original words [*Παιδί γεννιέται απόψε, αλήθεια, νέο / ο απ’ αιώνων θεός*], except for the adjective ‘αιώνων’, better translated by Keeley-Sherrard as ‘eternal’. However, in the context of the poem, the identification between the child and the god is a fact, so Keeley’s & Sherrard’s translation, even if less literal in this part, is also a skilful one.

3.2. The Prophetic Element in Sikelianos’ and Miller’s Works.

In the last poem of *Akritan Songs*, “Solon’s Apologue” [*Σόλωνος* □ *πόλογος*], Solon, as an old man, recalls nostalgically the time when he feigned madness in order to lead Athenians to recapture Salamis. Crowned with ivy³¹⁶ like Dionysus, the Greek statesman manages to awaken their pride and his words spark them off. He yearns for that moment of glory: ‘*Pour une heure immortelle de gloire, / toute ma sagesse, gaspille-la, / pour une heure chargée de victoire!*’ (54). Finally, Salamis island is retaken. Perhaps, the most interesting part is when he reflects on his initial intuition: ‘*Le vœux que mon esprit voyait d’abord confusément se réalise*’ (52). He refers to it (*ibid.*) as ‘*mon délire divin*’ [*το μένος μου*, or ‘my passion’]. In fact, seers play a central role in Sikelianos’ work.

The poet’s first important work, which made him known in his early twenties, is a long poem entitled “Visionary” [*□λαφρο□σκιωτος*]. The title, which literally means ‘light-shadowed’, is borrowed from Solomos’ unfinished masterpiece “The Free Besieged” (1844): ‘– Good visionary [*Αλαφροῖσκιωτε καλέ*], say what you have seen tonight. / – A night full of wonders, a night scattered with magic.’³¹⁷ The visionary romantic poetry of Solomos,³¹⁸ who was a native Ionian like Sikelianos, was clearly an influence on the latter, but, as Roderick

³¹⁴ Kersnowski, ed., *Conversations with Henry Miller* 64. In *Tropic of Capricorn*, it is also interesting to read Miller’s comments of the crucifixion complex and Christ’s martyrdom, see pp. 180-182.

³¹⁵ Almost the same sentence appears at the end of the second stanza.

³¹⁶ Ivy is an old symbol of immortality.

³¹⁷ Qtd. in Ricks, *The Shade of Homer* 58. □λαφρο□σκιωτος is also a word given to those who have visions.

³¹⁸ The Greek poet from Zakynthos Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857) is also known for writing the “Hymn to Liberty”, since its first two stanzas would become the Greek national anthem in 1865, and “The Cretan”, another important poem by this leading figure of the Heptanese School of poetry.

Beaton comments, “Visionary” is also a ‘response’³¹⁹ to Palamas’ The Twelve Words of the Gipsy, which had appeared two years before. Like the gipsy, Sikelianos’s voice in the poem is that of a seer who celebrates individual freedom.

However, in “Visionary”, the focus is not on ideas but rather on the lyrical expression of the poet’s perceptions. It is a joyous autobiography of the young poet written during a trip in the Libyan Desert in the spring of 1907. The work, which was published in 1909 and dedicated to his first wife Eva, is a return to his island, Lefkada, and its people. Sikelianos explores the landscape feeling identified with it and he sings to Eva –as Athena– and his family, but all his images in the poem, rather than simply depict his *locus*, they seem visions that illuminate profound aspects of life. The following lines are from the third part of this work, from the section entitled “Homer”:

And it was as if some unseen hand
rested on my shoulder,
and I thought I was leading some
blind man on the night way.
I could hear in my ear the unwritten,
deep law of creation.³²⁰

Although Sikelianos’ return to Lefkada echoes Odysseus’ one to Ithaca³²¹ and the latter is indeed mentioned in the poem, the allusion to a ‘blind man’ seems to parallel here not Homer but the boy who leads Tiresias, as Savidis remarks.³²² The poet perceives deep truths as if the ancient Greek prophet whispered them in his ear. Visionaries, sages and oracles appear often in Sikelianos’ works, as they do in those ancient Greek authors who influenced him, such as Aeschylus and Pindar (Prometheus, Tiresias, etc.), among others.

³¹⁹ Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature 111.

³²⁰ Qtd. in Ricks, The Shade of Homer 57.

³²¹ One of the sections is actually entitled “Return”. It is one of the two chosen by Keeley and Sherrard for his Selected Poems, together with “The Horses of Achilles”, which deals with the immortal stallions of the hero of the Trojan War.

³²² Qtd. in Ricks, The Shade of Homer 58.

This is another common interest with Henry Miller.³²³ Visionaries and soothsayers often surface both in the author's personal life and in his prose. His friendship with the Swiss astrologer Conrad Moricand –Miller's main character in A Devil in Paradise– and his relationship with Anaïs Nin would contribute to foster his long fascination for astrology. In The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller narrates what was, according to him, the first visit to a fortune-teller in his life. In Athens, at Katsimbalis' suggestion, he consults Aram Hourabedian, an Armenian soothsayer living in a poverty-stricken quarter where many Armenian refugees lived. Hourabedian, who is presented as a polyglot and learned expert in the Kabbala and Arabian astrology, makes his predictions about a new phase in Miller's life. The author says he was 'profoundly impressed by the interview' (205) since the Armenian's comments about his past and relations seemed 'startlingly accurate' to him, but particularly because of his reference to Miller's end-of-life, vanishing 'in the light.'³²⁴ Many years later, he still often referred to that event in interviews.³²⁵

Miller's considerable interest in astrology and esotericism permeates his works too. In The Colossus of Maroussi, for instance, he explains that Madame Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine was one of the few books he read while in Greece (22). In a 1975 interview, Miller recalls a vision he had in Paris in 1934, when, after reading Mme. Blavatsky, he was looking at a photograph of her face and he had the impression that she was actually there in the same room. Miller says that vision made him realize that only him was responsible for his life.

I had a *flash*, I came to the realization that I was responsible for my whole life, whatever had happened. I used to blame my family, society, my wife... and that day I saw so clearly that I had nobody to blame but myself. I put everything on my own shoulders and I felt so relieved: Now I'm free, no one else is responsible. And that was a kind of awakening, in a way.³²⁶

³²³ Pindar is mentioned in works by Miller from different periods of his life, such as Tropic of Capricorn (188), The Books in My Life (67), and Stand Still Like the Hummingbird (New York: New Directions, 1962) 158. With regard to Aeschylus and ancient authors at large, Miller says that in his youth, he had read the Greek plays 'one after another' (The Books in My Life 305). Interestingly enough, the author places the 'Ancient Greek Dramatists' in the first place of his list "The Hundred Books Which Influenced Me Most" (The Books in My Life 317). In conversation with Robert Snyder, Miller would similarly place the 'ancient Greek dramatists' in his literary 'genealogical line' (see Snyder, ed., This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn 119). His letters to Anaïs Nin are often very telling about his reading interests. Brassai alludes to one of them in which Miller asks her for 'a book on mythology and Greek theater'. See Brassai, Henry Miller: The Paris Years, trans. Timothy Bent (New York: Arcade, 1995) 40. This letter, dated Oct. 1932, is included in Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 97. Lawrence Durrell was equally an enthusiast reader of Pindar and Aeschylus. See, for instance, his references to these authors in Sicilian Carousel (82-83).

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 204 and 203, respectively.

³²⁵ See, for example, Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 174, and Christian de Bartillat, ed., Conversaciones con Henry Miller (Barcelona, Sp.: Granica, 1977) 29-30.

³²⁶ Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 197, emphasis added. In another interview of 1977, Miller explains that experience in similar terms, see *ibid.*, 214-215.

In The Books In My Life, Madame Blavatsky and some of her titles are mentioned recurrently by Miller and he lists The Secret Doctrine in his appendix “The Hundred Books Which Influenced Me Most”.³²⁷ The author’s description of his experience with Blavatsky’s photograph in Paris resembles his explanation in “Reunion in Brooklyn” about the process of achieving full consciousness: ‘Real awareness comes intermittently, in brief *flashes of a second’s duration*. The man who can hold it for a minute, relatively speaking, inevitably changes the whole trend of the world.’³²⁸

Madame Blavatsky is not Miller’s only source of esoteric literature. Several visionaries and prophets are mentioned throughout his works, such as the Egyptian Akhenaton, Hermes Trismegistus, Plotinus, John of Patmos, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, among others.³²⁹ Miller also finds this ability to see beyond the immediate reality in painters and poets such as Hieronymus Bosch, William Blake, and Arthur Rimbaud.³³⁰ In Tropic of Capricorn, the author refers to this view of artists and writers as seers by using the expression ‘the race of blind poets’ (185).³³¹

Although Miller usually shows more interest in the present than in the future, in a way, he is also a seer in the sense of ‘a person who sees’ and cannot avoid seeing beyond particular events. In Tropic of Capricorn, he portrays himself at the time of the narration as an ‘eye’:

Above all I was an eye, a huge searchlight which scoured far and wide, which revolved ceaselessly, pitilessly. This eye so wide awake seemed to have made all my other faculties dormant; all my powers were used up in the effort to see, to take in the drama of the world.

If I longed for destruction it was merely that this eye might be extinguished. [...] I wanted that eye extinguished so that I might have a change to know my own body, my own desires. I wanted to be alone for a thousand years in order to reflect on what I had seen and heard—and in order to forget. (187)

This passage only allows –to use an adjective that Miller loved– an *anagogic* reading.³³² It deals with the human conflict between the individual and the world he/she belongs to. The author’s consciousness is so saturated by the aching ‘drama of the world’

³²⁷ Miller, The Books in My Life 317.

³²⁸ Henry Miller, “Reunion in Brooklyn,” Sunday After the War (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944) 104, emphasis added.

³²⁹ See, for example, Miller, The Wisdom of the Heart 78-79, Miller, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird 31, and Henry Miller, Paris 1928: Nexus II (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2012) 90 and 92.

³³⁰ See, for instance, Henry Miller, Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch (New York: New Directions, 1957) *passim*; Henry Miller, The Time of the Assassins: A Study of Rimbaud (New York: New Directions, 1962) *passim*; and Miller, The Wisdom of the Heart 78-79.

³³¹ In a similar way, in the poem “Sirens”, Lawrence Durrell says that both Homer and Milton ‘were punished in their gift.’ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 220.

³³² See Black Spring, 340 and 423. Incidentally, ‘anagogic’ comes etymologically from the Greek word ‘ἀναγωγικός’.

that he has forgotten his own body and self. He longs for loneliness to ‘forget’ the surrounding degradation so that he can have a chance to meet himself. Miller’s eye would never extinguish but this text shows that he realized about the importance of finding a balance in which awareness is so essential as oblivion.

Similarly, Sikelianos considered that poets and artists had an intuitive grasp of the world. As Edmund Keeley observes, ‘Sikelianos saw the poet exercising the role of priest and seer largely through the agency of myth, in the sense that Schelling defined the term, that is, myth not as a fabrication but as a revelation of divine truth, a revelation of what is universal and timeless’.³³³ By perceivig the deep meaning of myths, the poet understands the need for them in his present time and he brings them back as renewed allegories of the contemporary world.

In 1943, Henry Miller wrote an essay on Angelos Sikelianos and published it that same year as a booklet entitled The Gigantic Sunrise. It would also appear in *Athene*, a magazine from Chicago,³³⁴ and later, it would be reprinted in Miller’s Sunday After the War (1944)³³⁵ and, with a different title, in Ernest William Martin’s The New Spirit (1946).³³⁶ Curiously, the work by Sikelianos that Miller singles out in his essay is The Sibyl. Sikelianos’ second tragedy, The Sibyl [Σιβυλλὰ], is the perfect example of what it is being discussed here.

The final version of The Sibyl was written in 1940 and published four years later but it was a project that Sikelianos had conceived and started to work on long before, as early, at least, as 1927, according to a letter of that year from the author to the French writer Édouard Schuré dated 22 Dec. In the same letter, Sikelianos even announced his intention to put The Sibyl on the stage during the following festivals in Delphi, which, by then, were planned for 1929.³³⁷ Although this performance would be finally postponed, it is clear from his words that this play had been in his mind for years.

The historical events that preceded its final writing are relevant enough to be mentioned here. On the 12th of July 1940, two ships, the *Orion* and the warship *Hydra* were bombed by Italian planes based on Rhodes. Then, on the 31st July, the Greek destroyer *Vasilissa Olga* was machine-gunned at the Gulf of Corinth. The next foreign aggression was

³³³ Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 32.

³³⁴ Henry Miller, “The Gigantic Sunrise,” *Athene* 4.5 (June 1943): 50-51.

³³⁵ Miller, “The Gigantic Sunrise,” Sunday After the War 57-62.

³³⁶ Henry Miller, “Anghelos Sikelianos,” The New Spirit, ed. E. W. Martin (London: Dennis Dobson, 1946) 14-17.

³³⁷ Published in Octave Merlier, ed., “La Correspondance d’Edouard Schuré et de Sikélianos,” *Études Néo-Helléniques* II (1969-1970): 103-104. Édouard Schuré was an author who influenced greatly Sikelianos and whom the Greek poet considered a ‘Maître’. At 16, he had discovered Schuré’s The Great Initiates, Woman the Inspirer and Le drame musical, i. a., and he always remained an admirer of his works. See *ibid.*, 97.

on Tinos on the 15th of August, the day of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, also known as the Festival of the Tiniotissa, when the island becomes a centre of pilgrimage for Orthodox believers because of the icon of Virgin Mary held at the Panagia Evangelistria church, the major Marian shrine in Greece. That day, the Italian submarine *Delfino* sank the Greek cruiser *Elli* while it lay at anchor on Tinos, where it was participating in the celebrations. Several officers and sailors were killed or wounded. However, in order to avoid confrontation, the Greek government did not reveal the nationality of the attackers.

Among those visitors attending the festival was Lawrence Durrell, who had decided to spend a night on the island on his way back from Mykonos to Athens. In *The Greek Islands*, he explains his steamer arrived about an hour after the sinking, only ‘a great puddle of dark oil’ and flags and lifebelts floating were left. It is interesting to read his description of what he found as he came ashore:

The whole town had been stirred like a beehive, and it buzzed with indignant life. [...] Strangely, there was no weeping, no public lamentation, as there is so often. The uncanny silence showed me that the weight of this mortal insult went right to the Greek heart and could only be expunged now by war.³³⁸

The Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas, who had been in friendly relations with Nazi Germany, would not declare war until the 28th October, when he rejected the Italian ultimatum, which demanded free passage for its troops to occupy certain parts of Greece. However, as Durrell says, that summer, the tension could be sensed in the air. This was the atmosphere of the country when Sikelianos decided to give shape to his *Sibyl*. He worked on it in August and the first week of September 1940. At the end of November, when Greece was already in war and had unexpectedly been able to defeat the Italian troops after their first offensive, he read his play publicly at the Foyer des Arts et Lettres in Athens, the audience listening to him with emotion.

Unfortunately, the Greek soldiers had exhausted their supply of ammunition and they would be left to defend themselves with all they had seized from the Italians or with cold steel. In that context, *The Sibyl* would become a living myth for a whole people. In the introduction to his French translation of the play, Octave Merlier explains this reception of Sikelianos’ work:

Après Salamine, les Athéniens vainqueurs avaient frémi d’enthousiasme en entendant le chant de victoire qu’étaient les Perses d’Eschyle. Après les

³³⁸ L. Durrell, *The Greek Islands* 245-246.

*premiers combats sur le Pinde en 1940, les Athéniens vainqueurs, en entendant la Sibylla de Sikélianos, ne craignent plus de mourir.*³³⁹

By that time, Sikelianos would become known as one of the Greek intellectuals raising his voice for the freedom of his nation. Some years later, when his Akritan Songs circulated in a clandestine edition in occupied Athens, the poet had transcended the man, becoming a symbol of resistance for his people. His work even reached the Greek exile. When George Seferis got a copy of these poems, he started his own project in order to disseminate the work among the Greeks in Egypt. By using photo-offset technology, he got a reproduction of Sikelianos' manuscript and then, in the summer of 1944, he published a limited edition of the volume with his own handwritten preface, which presented the author as the 'greatest Greek poet since the death of Palamas.'³⁴⁰

In The Sibyl, the confrontation between the Greek spirit, represented by the oracle of Delphi, and the Roman despotism of Nero seem to parallel the conflict between the Fascist imperialism of Mussolini and the Greek people, who would be soon fighting against their subjugation. Sikelianos' words in his introduction to the play explain this dialogue between the present and the past.

Le passé venait ainsi éclairer, dans une correspondance absolue, le présent alors dans son imminence, mais surtout l'éternelle position de mon postulat poétique, absolument solidaire de toute notre histoire, et, à ce moment-là, commun, dans notre subconscient, à nous tous. Aussi, cédant alors à une irrésistible pression intérieure, ai-je choisi, afin d'éclairer dans mon âme comme chez les autres une époque historiquement homologue de la nôtre, le Mythe de «Sibylla». (189)

The play deals with Roman Emperor Nero's excursion to the long-silent sanctuary of Delphi. As a tyrannical and extravagant statesman ruling over a large empire, and as the god of the Imperial cult, Nero wants to achieve more glory by visiting and overpowering the famous Greek oracle of Delphi. Although most of the cult officials, the Hosioi, are ready to please the Emperor, the Pythia, the prophetic priestess of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, refuses to grant the *promantia*³⁴¹ to Nero. That is the part of the play where history ends and myth begins.

As in a classical tragedy, the end is foreseen from the very beginning when Hosios Telesphoros sees destruction in the eyes of the Delphic Sibyl.

³³⁹ Anghélos Sikélianos, "Sibylla: Tragédie," trans. Octave Merlier, *Études Néo-Helléniques* II (1969-1970): 182. Further references to this play will be from this edition, unless otherwise indicated.

³⁴⁰ Beaton, George Seferis 228.

³⁴¹ That is, the privilege of being with the *Hosioi* in the subterranean chamber called the *manteion*, near the Pythia, in order to receive her prophecies.

*As-tu vu dans ses yeux la flamme du regard?
Ainsi, me suis-je dit, avant que vînt le jour
de sa destruction, Troie avait dû déjà
se refléter entièrement au fond des yeux
de Cassandre, embrassée à l'instar d'une torche! (197-198)*

The analogy between the Pythia and Cassandra, the Trojan prophetess of doom, also forebodes the ruin of Troy for Delphi. Next, the play offers the dramatic image of the Sibyl embracing Dionysus' tomb in the holy *adyton*³⁴² of the temple and wondering who will stoke the fire. After such a long silence, the Pythia wonders whether she will have been able to keep the Word alive:

*«Aurai-je su garder, après être restée
«muette tant d'hivers, ton Verbe en moi vivant,
«ainsi que fait la neige habile à conserver
«du grain la vie intacte et chaude dans la terre? (199)*

In contrast with the preceding lines, her simile foretells the possibility of a rebirth of the oracle. Actually, that is just what happens, the Sibyl decides to grant the *promantia* to a poor peasant and her Word emerges:

*«Levez-vous maintenant, humanité nouvelle,
«à l'appel éclatant de ce Verbe nouveau!
«Car la terre pour vous peut s'unir aux étoiles,
«Car le ciel à son tour peut nourrir les épis,
«semblablement aux champs qu'unit un sol profond.
«Le monde un jour t'appartiendra, vieux laboureur! (202)*

Then concluding: '*La promantie que Néron demandait, elle a été donnée a l'esclave de la terre*' (*ibid.*). Nero will learn about this as he approaches the place. Meanwhile, several messengers present him as the divine Emperor, the true God, Apollo '*en personne*' (214). A centurion, on behalf of Nero, demands the sacred Tripod seat of the oracle. So the priests take the holy Tripod out from the *adyton* for Nero, who soon arrives with his retinue.

The Pythia also appears in a state between despair and ecstasy. She then describes the crimes the Roman has committed and, as she begs Apollo for help, she predicts the end of the poisonous horrible dragon. The dragon is here referring not only to Nero, but also to what he represents in the play, the Oppressor. In this way, it is also a clear reference to the dragon-serpent Python that Apollo slain, which gave Delphi its old name, Pytho, and also that of Pythia to the Delphic sybil.

³⁴² The private chamber of the Pythia, where the Tripod seat is kept.

Nero starts laughing and he orders his soldiers to kill the people, destroy the oracle, and sack the place and the nearby village of Kirrha. Sikelianos seems to foresee the Greek famine during the following years when Cluvius Rufus refers to it.

The play ends with the Sibyl's predictions of a liberated humanity. She finally dies while the chorus sings the hymn that celebrates the victory of Apollo over Python, the Paean, as a symbol of the victory of the eternal Word over death.

In his essay on Sikelianos, Henry Miller recalls the Apollonian sword that the Pythia mentions in the following part of her speech:

*Oh! Combien dans la brume obscure qui m'entoure
l'éclat de ta lumière ainsi qu'un coup d'épée
illumine, Apollon, la nuit de ma raison!
Mes yeux un instant voient avant que m'engloutisse
l'ombre encore une fois!*
Je vais où tu m'entraînes! (234)

Miller evokes that allegorical sword when discussing Sikelianos: 'Of and by himself, like that mystic sword-blade he speaks of in *The Sibyl*, he opens Memory like a double wound deep within us.'³⁴³ That is exactly the role that poets and artists have in Sikelianos' philosophy. To see this aspect of his ideas, let us consider first Sikelianos' conception of 'divination'.

In his introduction to *The Sibyl*, he makes clear that he does not address 'divination' as a metaphysical activity but as the ancient thinkers did: '*La divination ainsi comprise n'est pas une vision métaphysique, mais l'expression essentielle de la sensibilité la plus profonde de l'homme*' (187). Indeed, this definition of 'divination' resembles Plutarch's explanation for the Sibyl's prophetic voice.

The voice is not that of a god, nor the utterance of it, nor the diction, nor the metre, but all these are the woman's; he puts into her mind only the visions [*φαντασίας*], and creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration [*ἰνθουσιασμοῦ*] is precisely this'³⁴⁴

This description by Plutarch of the act of divination also fits that of the Sybil as presented in Sikelianos' tragedy.³⁴⁵ However, as the author suggests, he does not only refer to the Delphic priestess, but to those with a similar sensitivity; in his introduction he alludes to prophets, creators and poets. This type of sensitivity,

³⁴³ Miller, "Anghelos Sikelianos," *The New Spirit* 15.

³⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, vol. V (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003) Mor. 397C.

³⁴⁵ Sikelianos' knowledge of Plutarch is well-known. What is less known is Henry Miller's interest in this ancient author. In *Book in My Life*, Miller quotes a description of Sparta by Plutarch while commenting the modernity of that image. Moreover, at the end of this book, Miller includes Plutarch's *Lives* in his list "The Hundred Books Which Influenced Me Most" (318).

prenant racine au plus profond du subconscient de l'homme, l'oblige à se sentir inclus dans une universalité qui le dépasse peut-être, mais qui lui fait comprendre son absolue solidarité avec elle.

C'est grâce à cette [...] sensibilité que Prophète, Créateur, Poète, constatent en eux-mêmes une participation primordiale, non seulement générale ou abstraite, avec la nature, leurs semblables, les êtres, la Vie Cosmique universelle, mais, plus concrètement, et en toute responsabilité, avec l'Histoire même, vécue par l'Homme. (187)

According to Sikelianos, like ancient prophets, creators and poets are able to reach a universal view of the world and therefore, they become responsible for their fellow men, thus participating in the history of humanity. To the light of these words, the 'Hymn of Elevation' sung by the musicians of Apollo and Dionysus becomes central to the message of the play.

*Notre peuple abîmé dans le temps
peut de lui-même se libérer.
Mais il faut tout d'abord
que sa pleine Mémoire
se réveille indomptable et terrible! (251)*

In the course of time, the Greek people seems ruined after having forgotten its own roots. The above chorus works as a collective reminder: when it is asleep, Memory is only the helpless image of a neglected spirit; when awoken, it is indomitable. That is why, the people's worst enemy is the people itself, and the chorus sings it has to liberate itself from itself [*se libérer de lui-même*].

A very similar idea of self-liberation and a common insistence on the need for an inner fight is often found in Henry Miller's works. His visit to Epidaurus comes to Miller as a revelation in many respects. It is at Epidaurus that he realizes that he has been fighting all sorts of enemies without seeing the closest one: 'the greatest enemy of all I had not even recognized—myself' (79). The same idea recurs frequently in Miller's writings, for instance, in Gliding into the Everglades, when he discusses Álvarez Cabeza de Vaca as an example of the uncommon opposite attitude, that of searching oneself in the enemy.³⁴⁶

In "Obscenity and the Law of Reflection", he provides an explanation for the always complex and controversial notion of 'enemy': 'The sordid qualities imputed to the enemy are always those which we recognize as our own and therefore rise to slay, because only through projection do we realize the enormity and horror of them. Man tries as in a dream to kill the

³⁴⁶ See Henry Miller, "Cabeza de Vaca," Gliding into the Everglades (Lake Oswego, OR: Lost Pleiade, 1977).

enemy in himself.³⁴⁷ In “My Two Beginnings”, Miller brings it further by adding Man is not only his own foe, but also his only opportunity to overcome it: ‘Like every man I am my own worst enemy, but unlike most men I know too that I am my own saviour.’³⁴⁸ This swinging between the Self and the Other, not as opposites but as complementary reflections of each other, might be also seen in another characteristic of The Sibyl, its dialectical nature.

The Apollonian sword that Miller recalls in his essay on Sikelianos finds its opposite in the beheading sword-blade (237) which Nero announces for the Greek peasant family that obtained the Sibyl’s *promantia*, and also in that doubleheaded axe mentioned by Cluvius Rufus, which like the Greek *labrys*, strikes ‘*de tous côtés*’ (240). Similarly, the contrast between contraries is found in characters. The poor Greek peasants’ characterization becomes richer by contrast with that of Nero as a ridiculous and bigheaded despot.

This Heraclitan use of contrasting but complementary opposites can be seen throughout the whole tragedy. This swinging pattern seems to follow the movements of the ancient Greek chorus, which also shifts back and forth in the strophe and the antistrophe. This fluctuation, which resembles the ebb and flow of waves, has both balancing and rhythmic effects. It is clearly an influence from Ancient Greek tragedy, probably from Pindar, an author who Sikelianos admired and whose development of the strophe-antistrophe-epode parts of the ode carried this structure to its height.

Nevertheless, Sikelianos’ use of this structure in The Sibyl is not like Pindar’s. They do not only differ in the metrical aspects, but also in structural ones. Before Nero appears on stage, the Coryphaeus of Apollon and Dionysus, who lead their respective Chorus, fulfil this poetic structure in an inverted way. Whereas the epode is usually found as a last part after the antistrophe, here it is the first one. It is equally played by both Coryphaei but before they do their separate performances. Afterwards, the Coryphaeus of Apollon tells his Chorus to sing Dionysus and the Coryphaeus of Dionysus asks his Chorus to sing Apollon, both Coryphaei celebrating the god of the other Chorus.

Of course, this alteration is fully intentional. In this way, the poet emphasizes one of the central themes in The Sibyl, the balance and cooperation between Apollo and Dionysus. According to Greek mythology, Apollo allowed his half-brother Dionysus to stay in Delphi for three months in winter, while he visited the land of the Hyperboreans. During the Dionysian months, the oracle could not be consulted and the sanctuary was given over to the followers of the god of wine and spiritual ecstasy, who worked themselves into a frenzied state. This agreement between Apollo and Dionysus is shown by the pediments of the

³⁴⁷ Henry Miller, “Obscenity and the Law of Reflection,” Henry Miller on Writing, ed. Thomas H. Moore (New York: New Directions, 1964) 183.

³⁴⁸ Qtd. in Miller, Henry Miller on Writing 119.

classical temple of Apollo, the east one depicting Apollo and the west one, Dionysus. Moreover, the latter's tomb was also within the temple.

Earlier, both gods had been in stark contrast, but Delphi reached this integration. Sikelianos often refers to it as the secret of the Delphic success. There were over a dozen famous Sibyls in the ancient world, some of them are mentioned by the Pythia in the play, such as those from Libya, Egypt, Cumes (Naples), Sicily, Chaldea, Thesprotia, Eritrea, Israel, and the Cimmerian one. Some others could be added, such as those from Tibur, Samos, Phrygia, Marpeessos, and the Hellespont. Lawrence Durrell may still add another one, the Corfiot one he mentions in "Corfu: Isle of Legend" after quoting from Virgil's Aeneid in John Dryden's translation.³⁴⁹ However, it is the Delphic Sybil who seems particularly imbued with this fecund association between Apollo and Dionysus.

Although Henry Miller does not refer directly to any of these two gods, he is well-aware of the dichotomies they represent and explores these polarities and the tensions they produce in many of his writings, as Thomas Nesbit remarks.³⁵⁰ The author's interest in this subject probably comes from Friedrich Nietzsche. Miller was familiar with Nietzsche's works since, at least, his early twenties, when he did his first writing, an essay on The Antichrist.³⁵¹ References to Nietzsche are frequent throughout his whole production.

In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche makes his first explanation of the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy. It is a book that was very influential on Miller, as he admits in The Books In My Life, where he says it is 'the one book I have reread more than any other'.³⁵² In fact, Miller's own copy of The Birth of Tragedy is heavily underlined and several quotations from it are found in one of the author's kept notebooks.³⁵³ This work introduced Miller to the Apollonian-Dionysian Nietzschean conception, but also to the mythical figure of Prometheus, which also surfaces now and again in Miller's writings³⁵⁴ and which is another common interest with Angelos Sikelianos.

In The Books In My Life, another interesting association linking Miller, Nietzsche and Sikelianos' first wife is found. In the chapter called "Early Reading", he comments some of the books he has reread recently. With regard to The Birth of Tragedy, he says: 'Only a few years ago, thanks to Eva Sikelianou, I became intoxicated once again with this

³⁴⁹ Lawrence Durrell, "Corfu: Isle of Legend" 331.

³⁵⁰ See Nesbit, Henry Miller and Religion 35.

³⁵¹ See Jay Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller (Santa Barbara, CA: Capra, 1978) 34, and Henry Miller, My Life and Times (Chicago, IL: Playboy, 1973) 123.

³⁵² Miller, The Books in My Life 198. For other references by Miller to this work, see, for example, Brassai, Henry Miller, Happy Rock 74, and Miller, "The Tailor Shop," Black Spring 377.

³⁵³ See Nesbit, Henry Miller and Religion 36.

³⁵⁴ See, for instance, Miller, Henry Miller on Writing 61 (qtd. from Nexus), 189 (qtd. from "Obscenity in Literature"), and 215 (qtd. from "Second Letter to Trygve Hirsch").

extraordinary book.³⁵⁵ Indeed, The Birth of Tragedy was a book that interested Eva Sikelianos –and also Angelos³⁵⁶– all her life. In her autobiography, she included a chapter on it, written when she was at a hospital in her later years and being allowed to have a single book, she chose this work.³⁵⁷

3.3. Eva Sikelianos and the Delphic Idea.

Henry Miller's connection with Eva Sikelianos is essential to understand much of Miller's knowledge of Angelos Sikelianos' works since his return from Europe. Let us consider firstly how Miller became acquainted with Sikelianos' work.

In Greece, Miller got to know about the poet from George Katsimbalis and his group of Greek friends, as he reveals in First Impressions of Greece. In his journey diary, he alludes to the topics of conversation at the time, including, among other, 'Sekelianos' [transcribed like this in the original].³⁵⁸ In The Colossus of Maroussi, Sikelianos is also mentioned [again transcribed as 'Sekelianos']. Katsimbalis is reciting some poems in Greek for Miller, to appreciate how they sound, and after one of them, he says: "That's from Sekelianos. I suppose you never even heard the name, what?" (67). This passage proves that Katsimbalis was the one who introduced Miller to Sikelianos. In all likelihood, while in Greece, Miller was later able to listen to/read some of Sikelianos' poems in translation by either Katsimbalis or Theodore Stephanides and hear about the poet's famous Delphic Festivals and perhaps, about his first tragedy, The Dithyramb of the Rose. Actually, Sikelianos was awarded the Greek national prize for poetry in 1939, the year Miller was in the country, so the poet's work was doubtless in the air.

Back in America, he corresponded with Durrell and his Greek friends and followed with interest all the news that he received from Greece. With regard to Sikelianos, it was crucial when he started a correspondence with Eva Sikelianos in 1943. It would become a voluminous one.



Eva Sikelianos.

³⁵⁵ Miller, The Books in My Life 40.

³⁵⁶ On Angelos Sikelianos' interest in Nietzsche and The Birth of Tragedy, see Jacquin, 106-107.

³⁵⁷ Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic: The Autobiography of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, ed. and introd. John P. Anton (Chur, Switz.: Harwood, 1993) 171-174.

³⁵⁸ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 60.

The University of California - Los Angeles holds among his Henry Miller Papers some of these letters from the period 1943-1946.³⁵⁹ Eva became a close link for him with Angelos Sikelianos' works and also, a penfriend to whom Miller confided many aspects of his life.³⁶⁰ Through her, he may have known about the available English editions of Sikelianos at that time: Alma Reed's version of The Dedication of the Delphic Word: A Poem of Initiation, Frances Sikelianos' translation of The Dithyramb of the Rose (privately printed by a friend of Eva), and Paul Nord's rendering of Akritan Songs. Later, Miller may have been able to read Durrell's booklet of translations from Sikelianos and Seferis.

Although The Sibyl has unfortunately never been published in English translation and Octave Merlier's renowned French translation would not appear until 1970, Miller undoubtedly obtained his English copy of this play from Eva Sikelianos. Sikelianos' first wife translated many of her ex-husband's writings and circulated them among intellectuals in order to make Sikelianos' work known in America. One of her dreams was always to perform his plays in the United States, as she confesses in her autobiography: 'My ultimate hope of presenting Greek tragedies worthily, especially The Sibyl, Daidalos, Asklepios, and Ariadne, by Sikelianos, had always somehow depended on a belief that the thing must first be done in English'.³⁶¹

The Eva Palmer-Sikelianos collection at the Historical Archives of the Benaki Museum (Kifissia, Greece) holds, among other materials, her personal papers and correspondence, her musical compositions for several plays, and also several translations of Angelos Sikelianos' poems, plays, prose writings and speeches. Those translations include titles such as Akritan Songs, Prologue to Life, Daedalus in Crete, Christ in Rome, "Oedipus Tyrannus", "Proanakrousma", and The Sibyl, i.a.

John P. Anton, the editor of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos' autobiography and a friend of hers, explains that 'MacMillan did not accept for publication the translation of Angelos Sikelianos' tragedy *Sibylla*, on the ground that it was not commercially suitable.'³⁶² So, most assuredly, Miller read the play from a private copy of the translation which is nowadays kept at the Benaki archives.

In The Sibyl, Sikelianos brings the Pythia back to life, after centuries of silence, and, unlike the Hosioi, she reappears as pure and resolute as she used to be in the glorious age of Delphi. The author's mythical Sibyl is not only a new coming of the ancient Oracle, he is

³⁵⁹ Henry Miller Papers, UCLA, Library of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Box 54, Folder 2, "Sikelianos, Eva 1943-1946".

³⁶⁰ See, for example, Miller's letter to E. Sikelianos, dated 7-31-43, about his suffering at that time, qtd. in Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 395.

³⁶¹ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 214.

³⁶² Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic xxii.

also certainly claiming her humanist and guiding role as the true duty of poets and creators. That is actually how he closes his introduction to the play.

Elle est surtout la Vérité [...]. Vérité à laquelle, en définitive, en ces temps où il n'y a plus de Pythies, où il n'existe plus de Prophètes, le Poète doit hausser son temps et son peuple, comme à la valeur suprême qui revendique la totale intégration de notre humanisme, et que rien dans le monde n'a le droit d'ignorer, de voiler ou d'altérer. (190)

Later, the Pythia voices this idea in her own desperate words with more dramatic effects. Beyond the historical fact of the ancient oracles, she can see the essential value of their spirit.

*Si je pouvais en vous faire revivre un peu
de l'âme qui vivait au cœur des grands oracles,
qui ne sont plus autour de vous que de la cendre! (247)*

In this way, the Delphic Sibyl expresses her doubtful wish, but she does not realize that the miracle has already started happening through her own words.

*Au-dessus du divin
silence de la mort faites entendre encore
plus puissante que lui la parole éternelle!
Chantez le Péan! (255)*

Sikelianos wants to remind readers that the eternal Word, which preceded and followed the Sibyl's earthly existence, remains one of the holy teachings of Delphi. Her myth embodies that belief in a brotherly dialogue among peoples and the need for vanquishing the dragon of Fear, the Python that Apollo slayed but which always seems ready to counter-attack.

In the dark years of WW2, Henry Miller saw in Sikelianos another embodiment of that Word: 'Coming at a time when the peoples of the earth seem more disunited than ever Sikelianos appears on the horizon like a re-born sun.'³⁶³ In *The Sibyl*, Miller saw, like its author, the very image of the contemporary world, being represented in the play by the Roman new order: 'The quest of mass comfort, or of mass satisfaction, is just as capable of producing rivers of blood as are the mad dreams of the Caesars.'³⁶⁴ Miller shows he has also perceived the teaching of the Pythia, as the daughter of the agreement between Apollo and

³⁶³ Miller, "Anghelos Sikelianos," *The New Spirit* 14.

³⁶⁴ Miller, "Anghelos Sikelianos," *The New Spirit* 15.

Dionysus: ‘To act without regard for the whole of life is to destroy all spontaneous impulse, all rhythm, all polarity.’³⁶⁵

In this respect, one of Angelos Sikelianos’ greatest contributions was his formulation and promotion of what would be known as ‘the Delphic Idea’. The first work which is directly connected with this subject is “Delphic Hymn” (1910). This poem is an hymn evoking the landscape of Delphi before sunrise and then, at dawn. The way he depicts the integration of his body in nature is striking. His words to Apollo seem to foresee what Delphi would later mean to him.

*O! Apollon, de tes mains, invisibles dans la lumière,
un jour je retiendrai encore tes flèches
[...] je chanterai le cœur de l’Homme, mon cœur!*³⁶⁶

These three lines from “Delphic Hymn” already reveal his humanist view of the sanctuary and his intention to address the needs of humanity in his work. In the 1920s, Sikelianos started developing these ideas in his writings. His wife Eva had a house built in Delphi for them and from 1926, they started living there,³⁶⁷ sometimes leaving for short stays in a little house at Eleusis.

In her autobiography, Eva explains how the project for a festival in Delphi came to Sikelianos’ mind. He had been thinking of ways to spread his belief in the need for a universal understanding among peoples, ‘above obscure fanaticisms, and above political intrigues’.³⁶⁸ He thought that a conference would lead nowhere, since after speeches all delegates would separate and forget about the objective. ‘To reach below the surface where speeches cannot penetrate, our action must be organically connected with the very roots of the Greek people. We must use the great medium which alone can unite opposites: ART, and especially DRAMA’, he concluded.³⁶⁹ He had thought of a performance of Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound in the ancient theatre of Delphi, an athletic competition in the ancient stadium, and an exhibition of handicraft. The event would only be ‘a starting point’, Sikelianos and her wife shared the project of founding a Delphic University as a meeting point for different peoples seeking to promote knowledge and peace. Eva’s words show the aims of their international undertaking.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶⁶ Jacquin, 52.

³⁶⁷ The European Cultural Centre of Delphi had the house restored and it is at present the Museum of Delphic Festivals.

³⁶⁸ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 103.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

To make the peoples understand each other. To make them conscious of their sameness, tolerant of their differences, loving instead of hating the infinite variations of the world, and all of them competing nobly for ultimate excellence in God's own Athletic contest for the manifestation of his image on Earth. Here was the way open.³⁷⁰

Sikelianos chose an ancient tragedy for his festival because he believed that this genre was the only one which was able to bring together different cultures and opinions while teaching them the universal meaning of 'love and pity'.³⁷¹ It had also been her wife's dream for years. As Renée Jacquin notes, '*ce qui jaillit de la représentation tragique est un sentiment de joie profonde. Unis par le même enthousiasme, les êtres humains découvrent la fraternité.*'³⁷² Yannis Gryparis' modern Greek translation of Prometheus Bound was chosen; Sikelianos wanted it performed in the living language of his people. Firstly, they would address the world intellectuals, in order to encourage the debate on the Delphic Idea, and also the common people of the region, showing that their project was not only intended for an élite.

The poet's choice of location was of course not an unjustified one. Like Eleusis or Dodona, Delphi had been an important spiritual site. It had been considered the *omphalos*, the navel of the ancient world. Sikelianos was convinced of the suitability of the place.

The ancient site of Delphi has been for centuries, and is today, a strategic center between north and south, connecting Central Europe with the Mediterranean. It was not in vain that Zeus let fly his eagles from the extremities of the earth to find its center, and that these eagles nested together in Delphi.³⁷³

Sikelianos considered that the new home of his ideals could not have another ground, since the new world had to be born from those ancient roots in order to nurture itself from the same values that had made humanity flourish.

Each one of these spiritual centers had reached out in the past beyond its own national or racial boundaries, has enlightened other races to some extent with knowledge beyond themselves, which has remained a part of their spiritual heritage, and therefore connects them still, consciously or unconsciously, with itself and with each other. Thus each of these ancient centers is potentially a home for all those whose constant residue of spiritual attributes has once drawn from its source.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁰ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 104.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Jacquin, 107.

³⁷³ Qtd. in Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 64.

³⁷⁴ Qtd. *ibid.*, 63.

A similar view of the past is found in The Colossus of Maroussi when Henry Miller talks about George Katsimbalis: ‘He spoke frequently of the past, [...] not as something dead and forgotten however, but rather as something which we carry within us, something which fructifies the present and makes the future inviting’ (238). In this way, through Katsimbalis, the author presents this notion of the past as a living seed within, which is equally seen in Sikelianos’ work.

In December 1939, the artist Niko Ghika, who had become a good friend of Miller, told him that they had been invited by Pericles Byzantis, a friend of Ghika, to spend a few days in Delphi ‘at the new pavilion for foreign students which the government was opening up’ (188). Katsimbalis would join them in Delphi too. So, Miller, who thought being ready to visit ‘the extinct navel’ (194), would soon realize that the world of the ancient navel ‘had never really perished but [...] had rolled away like a cloud and was preserving itself intact, inviolate, until the day when, restored to his senses, man would summon it back to life again’ (194-195). That was precisely Sikelianos’ project, which undoubtedly hung over the conversation of that group of friends in their visit to the oracle of Parnassus. A reference by Miller to Delphi in The Books in My Life confirms that was the case: ‘At Delphi, a natural setting for *Prometheus Bound*, I sit in the amphitheatre listening to my friend Katsimbalis recite the last oracle delivered there.’³⁷⁵ These lines reveal that Katsimbalis had talked to him about Sikelianos and the Delphic Festivals the poet had organized there in the previous years.

Just like Sikelianos, Miller saw the powerful meaning of the site. In a letter sent from Delphi to Anaïs Nin, he shows his fascination with that fertile ‘quintessence of contradictions’: ‘This is Dionysian. And from this sprang the Apollonian—’.³⁷⁶ In Tropic of Cancer, Miller had declared that his aim at writing was ‘to erect a world on the basis of the *omphalos*, not on an abstract idea nailed to a cross’ (117). After his stay in Delphi and later, by reading Sikelianos, he would find some more reasons to believe that the world he had envisaged in Tropic of Cancer was a necessary one.

In Tunc, Lawrence Durrell makes his own defence of the world that the Delphic *omphalos* represented. Caradoc is the character chosen by Durrell to voice it. Caradoc talks about the symbolic substitution of the *omphalos* by the *phalos* as a ‘centre’.

I have only once met with it, and then in a somewhat corrupt text—Varro! But perhaps this was mere Roman politics, an attempt to oust the Delphic *omphalos* as the true centre of the world? That would be very Roman, very subtle, to try

³⁷⁵ Miller, The Books in My Life 305.

³⁷⁶ Letter from H. Miller to A. Nin dated Dec. 21 1939, see Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 218.

and oust the deep-rooted matriarchal principle and set up father-rule in order to promote the power of the state.³⁷⁷

As said above, this conflict between the Greek values and the Roman new order is well-depicted by Sikelianos' The Sibyl but it would also find a later echo in Daedalus in Crete (1943). Sikelianos' third play, which was written in 1942, does not deal with Romans but with the confrontation between King Minos' emerging patriarchal order and the existing matriarchal world of Queen Pasiphae. Although it ends tragically in a fire that burns the whole city of Knossos, Daedalus, who is a poet and a philosopher, will be able to escape with his son Icarus flying with artificial wings, like those in Icarus' myth. Therefore, in this allegory on the perennial conflict between oppression and creation, intelligence overcomes violence, showing the author's absolute confidence in artists in poets, which he had also shown when he planned the Delphic Festivals.

Although Angelos Sikelianos was the one who conceived those festivals, it should not be forgotten that it was thanks to his former wife Eva's huge economical and personal effort that they were possible. It is really surprising how only two people were able to organize those impressive events. Both of them worked hard on their Delphic Plan and finally, in 1926, he published his Manifesto of the 1927 Delphic Festivals. In a single page, he expressed the basic postulates of that initiative. Then, the Sikelianos started a campaign of publicity for their festivals by sending articles to Greek and foreign journals and magazines.

In 1927, Sikelianos published "The Dedication" [*Δελφικός λόγος: Η αφιέρωση*], a poem which was intended to be the poetic prologue of a longer work called The Delphic Word. Eventually, lectures and articles would not allow the author to finish his project, but "The Dedication" stands by itself as a poem and as an image of the soul of Sikelianos' Delphic effort, or in his own words, '*la projection lyrique de l'impulsion spirituelle*'.³⁷⁸ The Delphic Word bore the subtitle "The Principle of the Aristoi" [meaning 'the best ones'],³⁷⁹ which was telling in itself about the poet's intention to join forces with intellectuals from everywhere in a collective attempt to propagate the Delphic principles. The English translation by Alma Reed of "The Dedication", which was published in 1928, raised Eva's hope of spreading the Delphic Idea in America.

"The Dedication", which had been partially written in 1924 and finished in 1926, is Sikelianos' first real pronouncement from his voluntary exile in Delphi. The subtitle that

³⁷⁷ Lawrence Durrell, Tunc, The Revolt of Aphrodite 75.

³⁷⁸ From a letter to Édouard Schuré dated 27 Nov. 1928 qtd. in Merlier, ed., "La Correspondance d'Édouard Schuré et de Sikelianos," *Études Néo-Helléniques* 110.

³⁷⁹ In Ancient Greece, the term was used to refer to the noblemen, meaning they possessed the *ἀρετή*, that is, the 'excellence'.

Reed's version bears, "A Poem of Initiation", is also meaningful. The poet sees himself as 'athlete, priest and prophet' who has vowed to raise his 'integral heart to its height' (3).

In his loneliness, Sikelianos contemplates the landscape and perceives 'the ALL—the things of today, tomorrow, eternity—like a vernal cloud bank' (7), which inspires a feeling of 'pity' within him. He looks at the eagles of Delphi, covering 'the earth below with the great shadow of their wings, hearing and seeing all inseparably', a whole vision that the visionary poet is also searching.

It should be said that his depiction of the image of the prophet has very clearly Dionysian connotations too. He feels

Like the prophet who, blinded by cognizance of his great orgy,
yet rejoices in his sacred obscurity,

For the light of day no longer impairs his view of the stars,
and his day is immense, and his night complete,

And it is not a single sound that summons him,
but the entire firmament flooding the vault of all hearing (16)

In this lack of the light of Apollo's star, the poet dreams that Python, 'the Chthonian serpent' is slowly uncoiling and that all the earth is 'like a fruit displaying its seeds' (20). In his vision, he even sees the graves open showing him 'all their dead' (*id.*). All these earthly symbols (the Chthonian serpent, fruit, seeds and the burial ground) illustrate his mystical view of the whole earth in the second part of the poem.

However, 'the cry of the peoples' follows the poet and he feels helpless to prevent their tragedies. In his loneliness, he desperately asks the Earth and the Sky for help and companions.

In the third part of the poem, the poet resigns himself to being alone in his mission and, like the younger poet of "The Visionary", he starts his ascent.

"What matters it if thou art alone! Now that the summit is far,
what else remains for thee than to climb?"

And why therefore seekest companions,
since for thee there is still the ascent and not the return?" (27)

Nevertheless, while walking up, he still thinks about those who may follow his steps: 'For others also thy way may become a road and a path' (30). Then, he makes one of the few references to mythology in the poem. The poet feels like Orpheus, who 'knowing well' what he wanted, 'gazing at the heavens, held / in the palm of his sacred hand a fistful of earth' (31). Despite the fact that he cannot see the summit, his orphic determination leads him

serenely to it. There, he finds peace and the ‘soul’ of joy (32). His mystical experience is better described by Sikelianos’ lines:

And, as the almond instantaneously opens all its blossoms,
my mind blossomed forth its living vow.

And only then, when I knew the pure intoxication
around me had flowered a tangible Olympus

And when all was resplendent, within and about,
in that infinite silence, a trumpet perhaps (or was it a lyre?)

Like a nightingale in the night, like a cicada in the heat
in one voice resounded with the ALL: “Niké! Victory!” (33)

At the summit, his mind blossoms and he seems to meet again the light of Apollo, both ‘about’ him and ‘within’. The Dionysian ‘pure intoxication’ that has led him up makes him then blossom as a ‘resplendent’ Apollonian victory. It is the time of unity. Differences between night and day, or trumpet and lyre,³⁸⁰ do no longer matter since Apollo and Dionysus have reached an agreement, as in the ancient times of Delphi. At the top of the mountain, the poet feels an ‘inundation of power’. There, ‘the will is soul’ (34). It is the time to descend; he does not want to lose his path.

And when each of thy veins is filled with the commandment, and thou art
replete with the immortal hymn, then tarry not, but descend! (34)

In the fourth and last part of the poem, the poet feels radiant with the mystic ‘Rhythm’ vibrating in him (37). Again, it is the Dionysian rhythm which floods his soul, an ecstatic state that does not make him forget his path though.

But, night and day, I mastered the throbs of the orgy,
though I ate from the timbrel and drank from the cymbal (37)

The second line of this distich is a maxim of the Eleusinian mysteries which means that the $\square\acute{\rho}\acute{o}\pi\tau\eta\varsigma$, the initiate who has reached the last rite of Eleusis, has become united with the cosmic rhythms. Having studied the mystery cults of Eleusis, it was another of the ancient sacred sites that most fascinated Sikelianos. Eleusis also interested Lawrence Durrell, who makes references to this site and its rituals in several of his works. See, for example, his poem “Eleusis” (Collected Poems 256), his allusion to the ‘Eleusinian Mysteries’ in Nunquam (The Revolt of Aphrodite 201), and also, his use of the phrase ‘Konx Ompax’ [$\text{Κόνξ} \square\mu \text{Παξ}$], which was pronounced to bid initiates to depart after having

³⁸⁰ Here, the trumpet stands for the $\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$, the woodwind instrument of the Dionysian cult, while the lyre is Apollo’s instrument.

finished the ritual tests to become an epopt [\square πόπησ], in The Black Book (7) and Tunc (The Revolt of Aphrodite 16). Even a sensitive foreign visitor like Henry Miller was able to perceive the pervading influence of the place. In the narration of his visit to the site, he feels the world beneath the madness of modern civilization: ‘At Eleusis one becomes adapted to the cosmos.’³⁸¹

Similarly, in “The Dedication”, the poet feels in harmony with ‘the whole earth’. Here, it is the earth including all beings, either dead or alive: ‘I felt the light of my mind being equally shared by the living, the dead, and the forgotten’ (39). He then realizes that his soul is not alone. ‘From solitude I walked toward the crowd’, he says. When he finally comes across some people, the poet-prophet addresses them:

“[...] Let not the time that was given thee escape.

For the hour of sowing is an impulse, and an impulse is the summer.
Scatter the seeds and time will bear to thee the harvest.” (44)

The poet-priest harangues his audience while sharing with them the teachings he has been given: “Shake off your fear and, coming together, look one another in the eyes” (45). When his speech finishes, they start a ritual dance ‘joining hands’ (48). Then, he hears the ‘last commandment’ from ‘the Father of [his] Land’, a Dionysian voice that encourages him to ‘become a road’ for others (50) and share ‘the secret doctrine’ (51) that the poet has received from him. Sikelianos concludes the poem by reminding readers that those sacred principles are ‘the corner stone of liberation’ (*id.*).

“The Dedication” is the lyrical expression of those principles that animated the Delphic Idea. More prosaically, in his preface to Lyrical Life, the poet explains his project for Delphi.

[It would be] a spiritual Centre which would draw together all the World, from which... on the one hand would flow an enlightening of the conditions for a general educational and moral equilibrium of peoples, and on the other the intensive cultivation of a spiritual climate, thanks to which these same peoples would spontaneously contribute to and cooperate in the miracle and the wonder of a bottomless Spiritual Unity.³⁸²

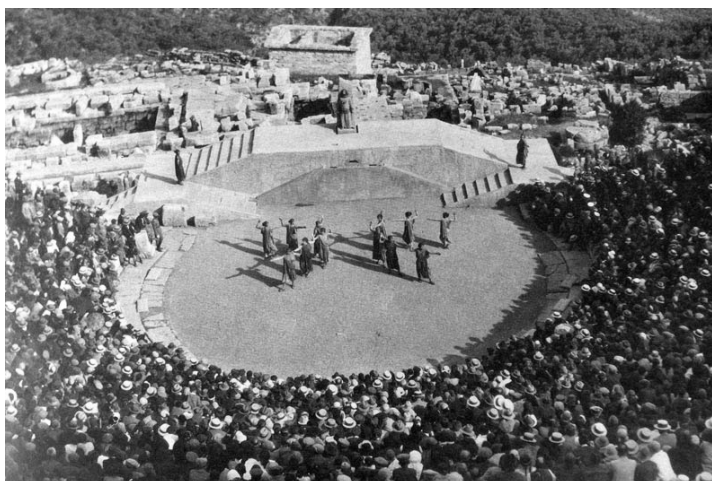
On the 9th May 1927, the Delphic Festival started with the performance of Prometheus Bound, which was a very successful event. Even some eagles came down ‘from the summit of Parnassos, and circled around the hero’s head.’³⁸³ A speech in French by Sikelianos closed that first day of the festival. On the 10th, there were athletic games at the

³⁸¹ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 45.

³⁸² Qtd. in Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature 113.

³⁸³ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 118.

ancient stadium, Pyrrhic dances, a reconstruction of the ancient Venerations and the fight between Apollo and Python, and music. On the third and last day, there was a second performance of Prometheus Bound for the peasants of the region. During the festivals, the village also hosted an exhibition of handicraft. The international reception of the Delphic Festival could not be better,



Prometheus Bound. Delphic Festival, 1930.

about three hundred articles about the event were published around the world and the intellectual élite (among others, Thomas Mann, Paul Valéry, Cérésolle, E. Horwarth) praised the effort of the Sikelianos.

After the festival, while trying to find support from individuals, groups or institutions, the Sikelianos started spreading the ideas that had inspired the event. Eva toured the US giving lectures and Angelos delivered a lecture at the Literary and Art Association of Piraeus and published several articles. In April 1929, the *Ιόνιος Ανθολογία* journal published an article proposing Sikelianos as a Greek candidate for the Nobel Prize. It was the first time, but not the last, that his name was mentioned for this reason.

In May 1929, the author published Delphic University, which would also appear in French in 1930, entitled Plan général de l'Université delphique. It is an essay on his project about a permanent institution with different councils and schools. The document even suggests the formation of support committees abroad, which would seek funding.

Although the debts from the first festival were huge, the Sikelianos finally raised some funds for a second edition with the help of the wealthy art collector Antonis Benakis and the Greek government. So they started planning the second Delphic Festival. On that occasion, the play which was chosen was Aeschylus' The Suppliants. Eva was 'delighted' having 'a play where the Chorus itself was the Protagonist.'³⁸⁴ Angelos' lectures at that time ("The Mission of the Community", "Return to the Land and the People") showed the same interest in focusing on the collectivity. The festival would also include a new performance of Prometheus Bound, among many other activities. That second edition would be longer than the first one. It would involve three presentations of three days each (1-3, 6-8, and 11-13 May 1930).

³⁸⁴ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 130.

The second Delphic Festival was again very successful. This time, the articles focused on Sikelianos' projects rather than the festival. However, the Greek government would not fund the Delphic University, despite the positive feedback from foreign intellectuals and critics (Eugeni d'Ors, Mario Meunier, Gabriel Boissy, and Gregorio Prieto,



Oceanids, *Prometheus Bound*. Delphic Festival.

among others) and some of the most influential figures of the Greek literary scene (such as Kostis Palamas and the editor of the literary magazine *Nea Estia* Petros Charis). The Greek government and Antonis Benakis were interested in organizing a third edition of the festival, but the Sikelianos had a different opinion. Eva expresses it very plainly.

The very insistence of the Greek Government, and of our patrons in Athens, that we continue the play for its own sake showed clearly enough that the Means was in danger of becoming an End. The time had come when the Delphic work had either to stop, or be debased.³⁸⁵

Nevertheless, the Sikelianos thought that the Delphic Effort had to continue and on the 8th of February 1931, the Delphic Union was founded. Their primary aim was creating a nucleus of active people in order to disseminate their ideas and plans.

In 1932, Sikelianos published The Delphic Union: A Prelude [*Η Δελφική Ένωσις: Ένα προανάκρουσμα*]. Later, Eva Sikelianos would produce an abridged English rendering of this work. Her translation, which is entitled The Awakener: A Condensation of "Proanakrousma", also includes an outline of those parts that she has not translated. Nowadays, this typewritten translation is kept at the Historical Archives of the Benaki Museum. Further references to this work will be from this document.³⁸⁶

In The Books in My Life, Henry Miller lists Angelos Sikelianos' Proanakrousma in his appendix "The Hundred Books Which Influenced Me Most".³⁸⁷ Eva Sikelianos' translation is beyond doubt the one that Henry Miller read, since the text has only been published in Greek. Moreover, next to the shortened title he adds, in brackets, 'in manuscript, translated', which confirms the source of Miller's copy.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁸⁶ Angelos Sikelianos, The Awakener: A Condensation of "Proanakrousma", trans. Eva Sikelianos. Benaki Museum / Historical Archives. Eva Palmer-Sikelianos Archive, Inv. Num. 189/f13, Kifissia, Gr.

³⁸⁷ Miller, The Books in My Life 319.

In his writing on Sikelianos, Henry Miller refers to him by using the word chosen by Eva for the title of her translation of Proanakrousma, he alludes to him as an ‘awakener’.

Men are united only through illumination. The true poet is an awakener; he does not promise bread and jobs. He knows that struggle and conflict are at the very core of life; he does not offer himself as a balm. All ideas of government fail in so far as they exclude the poet and the seer who are one.³⁸⁸

Echoing Plutarch’s and Sikelianos’ conceptions of ‘divination’, in his 1965 poem “Delphi”, Lawrence Durrell prefers using the term ‘interpreters’.

Once upon the Python spoke,
Now he lacks interpreters,
Withering in his laurelled fires
All the bitter rock inters,
From within those jewelled eyes
Tells you only what you know,
Know, but dare not realise.³⁸⁹

In any case, these interpreters whose absence Durrell laments –Sikelianos had died fourteen years before– also allow people to *awaken* to at-heart-known but *unrealised* truths. It is similar to Hogarth’s view of the artist in Durrell’s The Dark Labyrinth.

Its true function [of art], after all, is to insist on the existence in us of unused faculties for experience which custom has staled—or compromise to intellectual order of society in which we find ourselves. The artist does not invent or discover; rather does he, by making himself unusually receptive, be discovered and recreated.³⁹⁰

In his later article about Delphi for *Réalités*, Durrell returns to this notion of the poet as a seer or ‘interpreter’ of prophetic visions. After dealing with the Castalian spring, he concludes his writing by referring to some of the modern Greek poets (inc. Sikelianos).

The traveller who stoops to take up some of the sacred water of inspiration should remember to drink to the poets of modern Greece who have now begun to take their rightful place in the European tradition to which they belong; it is a slender chain of gold links... Solomos, Palamas, Sikelianos, Cavafy, Seferis, Elytis....

Perhaps one of them will recover for us the meaning of the oracle we so much need today?³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Miller, “Anghelos Sikelianos,” The New Spirit 15.

³⁸⁹ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 272.

³⁹⁰ Lawrence Durrell, The Dark Labyrinth (London: Ace-Harborough, 1958) 32.

³⁹¹ L. Durrell, “Delphi,” Spirit of Place 277.

Therefore, Durrell could also see Sikelianos the seer beneath what he called ‘the incontestable greatness of his poetry’.³⁹² However, it was Miller, deeply concerned about his contemporary reality, who most insisted on the social role of writers. In Tropic of Capricorn he describes artists in terms of biology.

The hibernation of animals, the suspension of life practised by certain low forms of life, [...] the mystic’s union with the cosmos, the immortality of cellular life, all these things the artist learns in order to *awaken* the world at the propitious moment.³⁹³ The artist belongs to the X root race of man; he is the spiritual microbe, as it were, which carries over from one root race to another. [...] His appearance is always synchronous with catastrophe and dissolution; he is the cyclical being which lives in the epicycle. The experience which he acquires is never used for personal ends; it serves the larger purpose to which he is geared. (314, emphasis added)

This description of artists seems a fitting one for Sikelianos himself, as an artist who saw the devastating effects of two world wars and who worked hard to awaken the immortal cells of knowledge coming from the roots of the human race. Like Sikelianos, Miller experiences creating as an ‘initiation’ (*ibid.*, 262) that makes him grow as a human being, but also his readers. In his portrait of Dostoievski in Tropic of Cancer, Miller highlights precisely this guiding function of this writer: ‘a man placed at the very core of mystery and, by his flashes, illuminating for us the depth and immensity of the darkness’ (123). In Miller’s thought, art is not separated from life, they are connected to each other. So, his image of artists parallels his view of human beings. Regarding modern society, he says: ‘I am convinced that, however black the picture may be, a drastic change is not only possible but inevitable. I feel that it is my right and my duty as a human being to further this change.’³⁹⁴

It is essential to point out that although Miller sees artists as visionary creators who can guide the steps of other people, he does not consider them ‘saviours’. In his opinion, not even Christ had the intention of saving the world, he only wanted to show the path.³⁹⁵ In a like manner, in Maurizius Forever, he says: ‘To cure the sick conscience of the world a totally new outlook on life is necessary. Not a saviour. Each man will have to save himself, now if never before. Because now we know that no other solution is possible.’³⁹⁶ In Sikelianos’ Proanakrousmá, Miller perhaps found exactly that, the insightful poet that seeks

³⁹² L. Durrell, Sicilian Carousel 141.

³⁹³ Regarding the use of obscenity in literature, Miller says that sometimes ‘its purpose is to *awaken*, to usher in a sense of reality’ (emphasis added), which suggests that the author’s use of sexual content in some of his works may have the same motivation. See Miller, Henry Miller on Writing 186.

³⁹⁴ Miller, Henry Miller on Writing 201-202.

³⁹⁵ See Miller, “Cabeza de Vaca,” Gliding into the Everglades.

³⁹⁶ Henry Miller, “Reflections on the Maurizius Case,” Sextet: Six Essays 169.

to explain and share his reflections, rather than a prophet trying to lead humanity to its salvation.

Sikelianos' work starts by considering whether 'the creative mission of the spiritual heritage of Ancient Greece is exhausted or not' (1). Firstly, he examines several studies in Europe, America and Asia which are connected to this issue. All of them showing that the spiritual development of Greece is far from being drained. Here, the author's former wife and translator includes, as a footnote, a very appropriate quotation from C. G. Jung's Analytical Psychology.

We know that, evolution not being uniformly continuous, when a form of creation has been outlived, the evolutionary tendency harks back to resume that form which, after having made a beginning, was left behind in an undeveloped state. (1)

Regarding ancient Greeks, Lawrence Durrell similarly ponders: 'What did they start that we have still been unable to finish? [...] Greece may be all ashes, but the phoenix is still there, waiting for its hour.'³⁹⁷

In Pronanakrousmá, Sikelianos wonders what might have caused these foreign reactions to Greece. He suggests different possible explanations, including an inherited 'admiration', a longing for a much more balanced way of life, and the suspicion that its secrets have not yet been fully explored. The author then adds another one:

Might it not be an intuition that perhaps these secrets are a guarantee, a provision of spiritual seeds, until now unknown and unexploited, for the creation of a new and integral future civilization? (2)

Next, he observes those who abhor the prodigal exhaltation of antiquities, however justified it may be. He reasons that as long as they do not understand and feel 'the real creative Rhythms' and the principles which inspired those works, they will only be able to see the fragments of a bygone era. The author refers to those principles as 'the inexhaustible *dynamic* value of that heritage' (2, emphasis added). His words call Miller's later ones to mind.

Greece is a big world and an inexhaustible one. [...] The farther we advance into the heart of it the more astonished and befuddled we grow. The enigma heightens, not lessens. Such a world can never grow stale. It contains within it all the miraculous qualities of the seed. No matter how much we analyze it, lay it bare, question it, the mystery remains.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 273.

³⁹⁸ Miller, Greece 55.

In Tropic of Capricorn, Miller had also sensed the eternally rich qualities of the ‘ancestral world’. When referring to the importance of Far Rockaway (NY) in his life, he uses the word ‘Xanthos’. In the following paragraph, he adds:

I used the word Xanthos a moment ago. I don’t know whether there is a Xanthos or not, [...] but there must be a place in the world, perhaps in the Grecian islands, where you come to the end of the known world and you are thoroughly alone and yet you are not frightened of it but rejoice, because at this dropping off place you can feel the old ancestral world which is eternally young and new and fecundating. (257)

Of course, Miller had not invented Xanthos. Xanthos [Ξάνθος] is the Greek name of a city in ancient Lycia, in south-west Anatolia. Its current name is Kınık³⁹⁹ and it is located in front of the island of Rhodes, near the city of Kaş, in the province of Antalya (Turkey). The region of Xanthos is mentioned thrice in the Iliad, since it is the birthplace of two Trojan War heroes, the Lycian leaders Glaucus and Sarpedon, and it is also the name of Achilles’ immortal, talking horse. Xanthos appears in many other classical texts too. Although it is unlikely to find the exact source of this name for Miller, it is evident that he had read it somewhere. Miller often denied having a knowledge of classical texts, but it is known that he had indeed read quite a few of them since his youth. His biographer Jay Martin says he had ‘the set of Harvard Classics which his parents had bought him during his second year of high school’ and he spent hours in the upstairs parlor of his house reading the Greeks and other classic authors.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, Miller also visited the New York Public Library almost daily. Mary V. Dearborn explains that ‘he particularly loved the mythology shelf in the Reading Room, the contents of which, he said, he devoured “like a starved rat”’.⁴⁰¹ Therefore, although he carried on reading ancient Greek authors throughout his life,⁴⁰² the name of Xanthos may have come to his hands when he was eighteen, or even earlier.

Apart from the fact that it has also got a long sandy beach, Xanthos bears no other similarity to Far Rockaway. Certainly, Miller’s use of the word Xanthos is a symbolic one based on its ancient connotations and its acoustic semantic value. It stands for that ‘old

³⁹⁹ The Xanthos archeological site is a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1988.

⁴⁰⁰ Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 16. Martin also alludes to Miller’s reading of Thomas Bulfinch’s classic work on Greek mythology (357).

⁴⁰¹ Dearborn, The Happiest Man Alive: A Biography of Henry Miller 42. Interestingly, in The Books in My Life, Miller refers to his visit to Mycenae in the following terms: ‘At Mycenae, standing before the grave of Clytemnestra, I relived the ancient Greek tragedies which nourished me more than did the great Shakespeare’ (97).

⁴⁰² As noted above, Miller often refers to many classical authors in his works, letters and interviews. Miller’s The Books in My Life also confirms Martin’s information (295 and 305). Instead of mentioning the Harvard Classics, the author refers to them using its original name, Dr. Eliot’s Five Foot Shelf, but he replaces the editor’s name (Charles W. Eliot) with a funny pun, ‘Fozzlefoot’.

ancestral world which is eternally young and new and fecundating', that past which can nourish and renew individuals and societies.

3.4. The Influence of the Pre-Socratics.

In Proanakrousma, Sikelianos criticizes those people who deny the importance of the past. As he reminds, 'to possess at all the idea of going forward one must remember that one started from somewhere' (3). Coherently, he starts researching the essence of Greek culture. In the Pre-Socratic philosophers, he finds the kind of unity he is seeking, the linking of *ideas* and *action*, since 'to them, knowledge, feeling and power constituted a simple whole' (6). His analysis leads him to observe the ethical and educational contribution of Delphi and the large number of social leaders and wise men who were directly connected to the sanctuary. He mentions, among others, Solon, Thales of Miletus, Cleobulus, Pythagoras, Pindar and Plutarch. Pre-Socratic thinkers, who are considered to have exerted a clear influence on Sikelianos, are also important for Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller, particularly Pythagoras and Heraclitus.

Pythagoras appears in some of Miller's works, such as The Air-Conditioned Nightmare (100), The Books in My Life (87, 150), Plexus (353), and A Devil in Paradise (52). In an interview from 1964, he acknowledged that Pythagoras had 'opened magic doors' for him.⁴⁰³ Durrell, on his part, feels fascinated by his discovery of the connections between Pythagoras and Eastern philosophy. In The Avignon Quintet, one of his characters, Affad, states that 'Pythagoras took up the Chinese world-system'.⁴⁰⁴ In a couple of interviews, Durrell insists on these links between Pythagoras and Asia. 'It was in Greece that I later rediscovered India. There I discovered Pythagoras and I realized that the Greek philosophers who were our fathers did their university studies in India. [...] So all the beliefs of the Mediterranean are contaminated by Hinduism.'⁴⁰⁵

Although Heraclitus is only mentioned a few times in Durrell's works,⁴⁰⁶ his interest for the Greek philosopher is not unknown. In fact, Richard Pine says that Durrell's own copy of Heraclitus was covered with marginal notes.⁴⁰⁷ Interestingly, in an interview, Durrell

⁴⁰³ Qtd. in Kenneth C. Dick, Henry Miller: Colossus of One (Holland: Alberts-Sittard, 1967) 58.

⁴⁰⁴ Durrell, The Avignon Quintet 1013.

⁴⁰⁵ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 194. See also *ibid.*, 204.

⁴⁰⁶ See, for instance, Durrell, The Avignon Quintet 1013, and 1194, where he refers to him as 'Heraclitus, O Skotinos', using his Greek epithet ὁ Σκοτεινός [the Obscure].

⁴⁰⁷ Qtd. in John M. Rose, "Multiple Truths and Multiple Narratives," Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World, ed. Anna Lillios (London: Associated UP, 2004) 237.

compares him to his admired Lao-Tze.⁴⁰⁸ Just like Sikelianos, Durrell often tries to bridge the gap between East and West.⁴⁰⁹

In Miller's works, like in Durrell's, direct references to the philosopher of Ephesus are not abundant, but Heraclitus' ideas have deeply pervaded many of Miller's works. Heraclitus is mentioned, for example, in Plexus (353) and in The Books in My Life.⁴¹⁰ In Miller's biography, Jay Martin confirms that the author had read Heraclitus in 1914 and found his thoughts 'particularly appealing'.⁴¹¹ In fact, in The Books in My Life, he names him among the 'authors who influenced [him] as a man and as a writer'.⁴¹²

One of Heraclitus' conceptions has been especially influential on Miller, the notion that 'ever-newer waters flow on those who step into the same rivers.'⁴¹³ In Miller's novels, the concept of 'change' is very often associated to that of 'flow'. The clearest example is found in Tropic of Cancer. After citing 'the great blind Milton of our times' and quoting Molly Bloom's motto in Ulysses, 'I love everything that flows', the narrator expresses his love for rivers and fluids at large, as manifestations of life.

I too love everything that flows: rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences. I love the amniotic fluid when it spills out of the bag. [...] I love everything that flows, everything that has time in it and becoming, that brings us back to the beginning where there is never end [...] all that is fluid, melting, dissolute and dissolvent [...]. (123-124)

It is the same love that Sikelianos expresses for life forces and for the past, as an eternal spring of new beginnings, as the seed of both change and permanence. Actually, Tropic of Cancer reaches one of its most lyrical moments at the end of the book by returning to the Heraclitean image of the river, the Seine, which has flowed as an underlying character throughout the whole work.

Here, where the river gently winds through the girdle of hills, lies a soil so saturated with the past that however far back the mind roams one can never detach it from its human background. [...] So quietly flows the Seine that one hardly notices its presence. It is always there, quiet and unobtrusive, like a great artery running through the human body. In the wonderful peace that fell over me it seemed as if I had climbed to the top of a high mountain; for a little while I would be able to look around me, to take in the meaning of the landscape. (152)

⁴⁰⁸ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 252.

⁴⁰⁹ About Sikelianos' interest in this issue, see Sikelianos, The Awakener: A Condensation of "Proanakrousma" 15.

⁴¹⁰ Miller, The Books in My Life 124, 247.

⁴¹¹ Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 39.

⁴¹² Miller, The Books in My Life 124.

⁴¹³ DK22B12, qtd. in "Arius Didymus apud Eusebius," Praeparatio Evangelica, 15.20.2.

The Seine is seen as a symbol of life and, in particular, of humanity. As Jane A. Nelson remarks, the river is also an image of the Mother Earth connecting ‘the individual with the past’.⁴¹⁴ The Heraclitean image that the river suggests, that of flowing and at the same time being ‘quiet and unobtrusive’, in other words, that of movement and simultaneously of stillness, would always be in Miller’s mind.

Later, he would create his own symbolic image to convey this meaning. In Nexus, it already surfaces in a primitive form. While he recalls his past situation as a writer in the making, Miller wonders: ‘How does one know that one day he will take wing, that like a humming bird he will quiver in mid-air and dazzle with iridescent sheen?’ (588). Miller’s essay “Stand Still Like the Hummingbird” presents his image in its full symbolism.

Hummingbirds seem to be quiet in mid-air, but they actually do not stop moving their wings. Their wing-flapping is so quick that, although it is audible, the human eye cannot perceive it. So, just like the Heraclitean river, they do not move and they do move. Interestingly enough, hummingbirds can even fly backwards. In “Stand Still Like the Hummingbird”, he explains his philosophy of change through acceptance and inner evolution. While dealing with the speed of technological progress, Miller suggests: ‘Ought we not first learn to fly backward too, or stand still in the air like a hummingbird?’⁴¹⁵ Like Heraclitus’ river, Miller’s image also implies the notion that movement has a starting point. Hummingbirds’ backward flight illustrates the need for a full and ‘dynamic’ awareness of our past, as Sikelianos says.

Heraclitus’ conception of the unity of opposites is also found in a large number of Miller’s texts. Miller may have equally encountered the notion of *coincidentia oppositorum* in many different authors he acknowledged reading; among others, the Christian mystics Nicholas of Cusa, Meister Eckhart, and Jacob Boehme, and Carl Jung, who is often mentioned in his correspondence and notes.⁴¹⁶ However, the influence of the Pre-Socratic philosopher is again crucial. Heraclitus’ image of the upward-downward path illustrates very clearly his concept of the unity of opposites, which, at the same time, is associated to his notion of change.⁴¹⁷ As in Heraclitus, in Miller’s works, the succession of opposites involves change.

In Miller’s work, for example, descent into the ‘bottomless pit’ must precede ascent, just like utopia follows decay. These opposites are not only necessary steps on the path but

⁴¹⁴ Jane A. Nelson, Form and Image in the Fiction of Henry Miller (Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP, 1970) 44.

⁴¹⁵ Miller, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird 190.

⁴¹⁶ See Nesbit, Henry Miller and Religion 31-32, 80-81.

⁴¹⁷ ‘Cold things grow hot, a hot thing cold, a moist thing withers, a parched thing is wetted.’ Heraclitus, DK B126.

they also give meaning to each other. Miller even goes further, he states that very often ‘truth has this paradoxical quality. You can see it as two opposing things making one.’⁴¹⁸

Heraclitus coined a related term that Jung would develop in his works, the *enantiodromia* [ἐναντιοδρομία, from ‘ἐναντιος’, opposite, and ‘δρόμος’, running course].⁴¹⁹ This concept is really helpful to understand Miller’s interest in the Heraclitan unity of opposites. In Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, a text which Miller often quotes in his letters and notes,⁴²⁰ Jung acknowledges the source of his borrowing and he explains it.

Old Heraclitus, who was indeed a very great sage, discovered the most marvellous of all psychological laws: the regulative function of opposites. He called it *enantidromia*, a running contrariwise, by which he meant that sooner or later everything runs into its opposite.⁴²¹

Although Jung mainly applies the term to psychology, his comments on the notion go beyond this field. Enantiodromia is even found in nature, as a regulative mechanism that restores balance, when the excessive abundance of any force requires producing its opposite element. It is also interesting to point out that, according to the Jungian theory, in psychology, enantiodromia often precedes a rebirth of the personality. Readers of Miller’s Tropic of Cancer can easily see this same phenomenon through the voice of its narrator.

Like Miller and Sikelianos, Jung argues that ‘we should never identify ourselves with reason, for man is not and never will be a creature of reason alone’.⁴²² As Sikelianos reminds in Proanakrousma, this is one of the teachings of the Pre-Socratics. As quoted above, ‘to them, knowledge, feeling and power constituted a simple whole’. Regarding opposites, in “First Impressions of Greece”, Miller postulates that rather than ignore, emphasize or overcome them, contraries should be embraced.

Wholeness is achieved not by overcoming duality, but by embracing it. Only in spirit are we one. In life we are myriad. Insanity is part of life. It is one of the manifestations of wholeness.⁴²³

The paragraph refers to ‘insanity’ but it may also say ‘irrationality’ or ‘passion’ instead and it would work in the same sense. This unity of reason and passion, and of mind

⁴¹⁸ Miller, My Life and Times 21.

⁴¹⁹ The term firstly appears and is attributed to Heraclitus in Stobaeus, Eclogarum, Physicarum et ethicarum, libri duo, vol. 1, 60.

⁴²⁰ See Nesbit, Henry Miller and Religion 31-32.

⁴²¹ Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, vol. 7 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Hove, UK: Routledge, 2014) 72.

⁴²² Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, vol. 7 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Hove, UK: Routledge, 2014) 72.

⁴²³ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 81.

and spirit, which is at the core of the Pre-Socratic philosophy, is also central to the Delphic Idea.

Like Miller in the above quotation, the Sikelianos tried to rebuild a forum in Delphi where diversity and dualities could be embraced rather than overcome. Both Angelos and Eva insisted on the importance of reaching not only people's minds, but also their hearts. As Eva remarks in her biography: 'There must be an interchange between the lungs and the heart, or both will perish.'⁴²⁴ The Sikelianos knew that bridge was called art, and they chose drama, seeing in it a powerful tool which could speak simultaneously to the mind and the heart. The first decades of the twentieth century had shown them that society had been able to achieve a huge scientific and technological progress, but individuals had not followed the same path. The Great War was a clear proof of that. As Miller says, the more we progress in knowledge, the more we become crippled as human beings, becoming capable of generating our own destruction.⁴²⁵ Consequently, the unity of ideas and action becomes an imperative.

Both of them, Miller and Durrell, agree with Sikelianos in the importance of overcoming the discrepancy that often exists between *ideas* and *action*. 'Ideas have to be wedded to action', says Miller in Tropic of Cancer (116). A couple of paragraphs later, he confesses that one of his aims in writing is 'to paint a pre-Socratic being' (117). Likewise, in The Dark Labyrinth, Durrell presents his Greek character of Abbot John as a man showing this mixture of mysticism and action which Greece seems to have inherited from the Pre-Socratics: 'Like all Greeks, he was without difficulty able to combine the mystic and the man of action.'⁴²⁶

While exploring the Pre-Socratics in Proanakrousma, Sikelianos refers to the aphorisms that were left by these thinkers at Delphi. Although about hundred and fifty Delphic maxims have survived, they are a collective corpus of knowledge because their authorship is either unknown, disputed or simply attributed to Apollo. They are a good representation of the collective effort Sikelianos wished for Delphi. Pausanias mentions two of them which were carved in the pronaos of the Temple of Apollo: 'nothing in excess' and 'know thyself'.⁴²⁷ The latter is of particular interest in connection to Miller and Sikelianos.

The aphorism 'know thyself' [γνῶθι σεαυτόν] has been attributed to different authors, including, at least, the Seven Sages of Greece (Bias of Priene, Chilon of Sparta, Cleobulus of Lindos, Periander of Corinth, Pittacus of Mytilene, Solon of Athens, and Thales of Miletus), Myson of Chenae, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus. Lawrence Durrell

⁴²⁴ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 65.

⁴²⁵ Qtd. in Frédéric-Jacques Temple, Henry Miller: Qui suis-je? (Lyon, Fr.: Manufacture, 1986) 164.

⁴²⁶ L. Durrell, The Dark Labyrinth 49.

⁴²⁷ Pausanias, Description of Greece, 10.24.1.

attributes both ‘nothing in excess’ and ‘know thyself’ to Pittacus.⁴²⁸ Beyond the debate about authorship, ‘know thyself’ invites to explore the inner self but at the same time, to learn about the human nature from our own life experience. In Plexus, Miller shows his concern for self-knowledge by quoting this Delphic maxim.

There was a language which never failed to set me off—and it was always the same language. Boiled to the size of a lentil, its whole scope and purport could be expressed in two words: *Know thyself!* (446)

This would remain his lifelong ambition when writing. As he reveals to Robert Snyder, ‘one writes to discover oneself.’⁴²⁹ In an interview from 1963, Miller declares: ‘You write to find out about yourself, who you are, what you are, where you’re going.’⁴³⁰ This may be the ultimate truth of ‘know thyself’, discovering who you were, who you are, and where you are going.

Although this maxim may lead us along an endless path, as Miller suggests in conversation with Christian de Bartillat,⁴³¹ as in Cavafy’s “Ithaka”, the learning is in the path itself. In “Children of the Earth”, the author goes beyond it.

If one must have a goal, which is questionable, why not self-realization? The unique and healing quality in this attitude toward life is that in the process *goal and seeker become one.*⁴³² (emphasis added)

What Miller says about self-realization may be applied to its preceding stage, self-knowledge, since all the processes leading to self-awareness imply this intimate unity of *goal and seeker*.

To know and be able to understand his own self, Miller often tries to relive his past through his writings. As Jay Martin comments, in the early 1930s, the author realized ‘that every event in his past had not only connections with other events but a meaning and purpose in the development of his psyche.’⁴³³ He also realized that his present deserved a similar attention and it might even turn out to be a prophetic experience, ‘for to understand his present was to know the future and fate of his ego.’⁴³⁴

Miller does not only see self-knowledge as an enriching exercise, but also as a humanizing one. In an article published in 1957, he argues that ‘it is the full awareness of our diverse nature and the integration of the myriad elements of which we are composed that

⁴²⁸ L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 185.

⁴²⁹ Snyder, ed., This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn 102.

⁴³⁰ Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 68-69.

⁴³¹ De Bartillat, ed., Conversaciones con Henry Miller 126.

⁴³² Miller, “Children of the Earth,” Stand Still Like the Hummingbird 13.

⁴³³ Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 283.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

make us whole, make us *human*.⁴³⁵ In Prologue to Life, Sikelianos gives the full picture of this humanizing process.

*Ô! Ma secrète descente
jusqu'au suprême abîme de mon moi!
e ô! Ma remontée
jusqu'à la lumière
où, observant l'Homme sous tous ses angles,
je regarde fraternellement, bien en face, mon propre moi!*⁴³⁶

The descent to the inner self is the inverted reflection of its analogical counterpart, the ascent to the whole human race. Getting to know 'the myriad elements of which we are composed', we can understand more easily the diversity of the world, of which we are a manifestation. The path opened by the Delphic 'know thyself', in the end, leads to a knowledge of the wholeness, it leads to see oneself in the others, or to perceive 'the many through the one', as Lawrence Durrell would write in "Near Paphos".⁴³⁷

In this respect, the Dorian 'Principle of Radiance' is particularly interesting. It is the first one of the six basic Delphic principles that Sikelianos formulates in Proanakrousma.⁴³⁸ This principle establishes 'the absolute union of man with the Sun' (12), or in other words, the need of individuals or peoples for a mutual sharing of energy and ideas, and at the same time, of material and spiritual wealth.

This Apollonian cosmic unity brings the individual closer to his/her fellow human beings. In an article from May 1960, Durrell expresses this same idea.

You get closer to your fellow man, paradoxically enough, by trying to get closer to yourself. [...] the act of laying pen to paper, brush to canvas, is an act of mystical participation in the common world to which we all belong.⁴³⁹

Durrell would always remain faithful to this belief. A decade later, in an interview from 1971, Durrell would display exactly the same conviction.⁴⁴⁰ On this issue, in Plexus, Henry Miller explains his own experience in very descriptive terms.

One can become so full with the spirit of another being as to be literally afraid of bursting. Every one, I presume, has had the experience. This «other being,» let me observe, is always a sort of *alter ego*. It isn't a mere matter of

⁴³⁵ Miller, Henry Miller on Writing 194.

⁴³⁶ Jacquin, 71.

⁴³⁷ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 248.

⁴³⁸ The principles of: Radiance, Beneficent Rhythm, Discipline, Necessary Simplicity, Basic Autonomy of Every Soul, and Memory.

⁴³⁹ Michael H. Begnal, ed., On Miracle Ground: Essays on the Fiction of Lawrence Durrell (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1990) 74.

⁴⁴⁰ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 119.

recognizing a kindred soul, it is a matter of *recognizing oneself*. (235, emphasis added)

The above paragraph shows precisely the same encounter that Sikelianos depicts in Prologue to Life, that of finding oneself (*'mon propre moi'*) while observing others. Of course, this conception questions the mainstream construction of alterity. According to the Delphic 'Principle of Radiance', widespread dualities such as me-others, men-nature, and even, body-soul, are ultimately meaningless.

In Henry Miller's works, this Dorian perception of the earth as a whole is strongly felt. In Tropic of Capricorn, for instance, after having been swimming in a river, a fierce storm breaks out and the narrator, in order to amuse his friends, starts performing a comical 'war-dance in the rain' (281). Then, a streak of lightning flashes and strikes a tree and he bursts out laughing. His dancing leads him through a mystical experience of communion with the earth.

I felt that I was standing in the void and it was blue all around and the rain was beating a hot-and-cold tattoo on my tender flesh. All my sensations had gathered on the surface of the skin and underneath the outermost layer of skin I was empty, light as a feather, lighter than air or smoke (281-282)

This passage from Tropic of Capricorn, which according to Miller was inspired by a real personal event,⁴⁴¹ recalls, in a way, the final scene of Tropic of Cancer, when the protagonist stares at the Seine and he gets carried away by his vision: 'The sun was setting. I feel the river flowing through me—its past, its ancient soil, the changing climate. The hills gently girdle it about: its course is fixed' (152). The Heraclitean image of the river here becomes a vehicle for his spiritual union with nature and the past of the place.

Nevertheless, Miller's clearest image of unity and belonging to the cosmos is found in "Un Etre Etoilique", an essay about Anaïs Nin's writings. He depicts human beings inside the belly of a whale, like the biblical Jonah.

We who imagined that we were sitting in the belly of the whale and doomed to nothingness suddenly discover that the whale was a projection of our own insufficiency. The whale remains, but the whale becomes the whole wide world, with stars and seasons, [...] with everything that is wonderful to see and touch, and being that it is no longer a whale but something nameless because something that is *inside as well as outside us*. We may, if we like, devour the whale too—piecemeal, throughout eternity. No matter how much is ingested there will always remain more whale than man; because what man appropriates of the whale returns to the whale again in one form or another. The whale is constantly being transformed as man himself becomes transformed. [...] One lives within the spirit of transformation and not in the act. The legend of the

⁴⁴¹ Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 166-167.

whale thus becomes the celebrated book of transformations destined to cure the ills of the world.⁴⁴² (emphasis added)

Miller's Heraclitean realization that the world is 'inside as well as outside us' gives a key clue to his philosophical conception: In so far as man belongs to the world, it is within him and without him. Like Sikelianos, Miller knows that this view is crucial if the world is ever to meet a real transformation into a fairer place.

This womb-like cosmic image of man inside the belly of the whale finds its complementary inverted one in Black Spring.

As man we contain all the elements which make the earth, its real substance and its myth; we carry with us everywhere and always our changing geography, our changing climate. (405)

Man 'the contained' above becomes here man 'the container'. He literally contains at least three of the four essential elements (earth, water, air) and he certainly contains the fourth one (fire), i.a., from a mythical perspective. The huge diversity of the earth within it, the human race is pregnant with the future, but it also retains its past.

In The Books in My Life, Miller analyses the consequences of his lifelong attempt to 'resurrect the past' in his literary production, concluding that he has finally understood the significance of his work.

I see the meaning of the long Odyssey I made; I recognize *all* the Circes who held me in their thrall. I found my father, both the one in the flesh and the unnameable one. And I discovered that father and son are one. More, immeasurably more: I found at last that all is one.⁴⁴³

His awareness that his biological father and him are one, which comes after years of mutual misunderstanding, parallels Miller's identification with 'the unnameable one.' The 'unnameable one' is both God the Father and Plotinus' 'unnameable One', that is, the transcendent 'One', containing no division.⁴⁴⁴ Both Plotinus' notion of an ecstatic union with the One (henosis, $\square\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$) and its Christian development deal with this connection between the source/unity and its resulting diversity.

Another duality which Miller rejects in his discussion of D.H. Lawrence is the Christian separation between body and soul.⁴⁴⁵ Miller considers 'spirit and flesh' as 'one', as

⁴⁴² Henry Miller, The Comological Eye (New York: New Directions, 1961) 285-586.

⁴⁴³ Miller, The Books in My Life 97.

⁴⁴⁴ Regarding Plotinus, it is interesting to point out that he uses an analogy involving the Sun that resembles the Dorian 'Principle of Radiance'. He says that the One emanates light without diminishing itself. See Plotinus, The Enneads V.6.4. Miller mentions Plotinus as an author who 'influenced' him in The Books in My Life 124.

⁴⁴⁵ See, for example, Erica Jong's comments on this in The Devil at Large: Erica Jong on Henry Miller (New York: Grove, 1994) 217.

he says to Alfred Perlès in Art and Outrage.⁴⁴⁶ If he had had the opportunity, he would have probably read with interest what Eva Sikelianos says in her autobiography with regard to the English word ‘spirit’.

One of the short-comings of the English language is that this word happened to be derived from Latin instead of Greek. Both words ‘spiritus’ and ‘pneuma’ [πνεύμα] originally meant “breath”; but in English the word ‘spiritual’ always connotes something vague and mysterious, and suggests *disembodied* spirits floating about; so that one misses the straight hit of the Greek “pneumatikes” [πνευματικές] which, beside implying immaterial values, also evokes “genius,” “intelligence,” “penetrating insight.” It is a pity for such a word to have fallen to such base uses as to be now only the compressed air in the tire of an automobile.⁴⁴⁷ (emphasis added)

The original meaning of ‘pneuma’ as ‘breath’ is a proof of that primordial unity of the material body and its spirit. In any case, the evolution of the word is telling in itself, tyres remaining the silent evidence of the historical negation of the body.

Erica Jong argues that Henry Miller the character ‘uses the body to transcend the body’⁴⁴⁸ In fact, he does, he uses his body –and all his senses– as a means to reach transcendence, but this does not imply he considers the body as a lower separate entity. On the contrary, Miller praises the Aesculapian times, when ‘man was still a whole being’ and ‘body and spirit were one.’⁴⁴⁹ In “Uterine Hunger”, the author claims the sacredness of the body: ‘Once the sacred character of the body is recognized the cosmos wheels into line. Once the cosmic accent is identified the whole edifice of life bursts into melody.’⁴⁵⁰

It is essential though to clarify what Henry Miller meant by ‘cosmos’. In “First Impressions of Greece”, George Katsimbali asks him precisely about this word and Miller replies:

I mean the world, of course, as does any Greek when he pronounces the word. Only with this difference—that when originally the Greek said cosmos it meant “*the* world”—not *a* world, or world. To-day “world” means anything and everything. There is no world anymore. There are only worlds—plural always. *The* world—“cosmos”—is gone. To make a world again, a cosmos, we must have new men with new eyes. Man must be re-endowed with a soul.⁴⁵¹

Miller makes clear that his notion of ‘cosmos’ involves this unity of all living creatures and inert matter with the world they belong to, the only one that actually exists

⁴⁴⁶ Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, and Alfred Perlès, Art and Outrage: A Correspondence about Henry Miller (London: Village, 1973) 39.

⁴⁴⁷ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 64.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁴⁹ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 67.

⁴⁵⁰ Miller, "Uterine Hunger," The Wisdom of the Heart 191.

⁴⁵¹ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 83-84.

beyond the current fragmentary views of the world. In his works, the author often insists on the need for a new vision in order to alter the present state of the world, but his assertion that man has been deprived of a soul is, at the least, thought-provoking. Perhaps, he suggests that such has been the gap between body and soul that man has alienated himself from both.

Henry Miller realizes that this cosmic *enosis* cannot be found but in a full participation in the present. In his work Greece, the author explains this very plainly.

Life is here and now, ours to make and sustain, ours to change for good or ill. Man lives not in history but in the awareness of his link with the cosmos. Only, alas, when he is naked, lost, and forsaken does he find himself and his true place.⁴⁵²

After all the misery he went through in his own country, Miller's first years in Paris as a penniless expatriate came to him as an awakening experience. It is in Greece, later, that he finds man's 'true place' in the world as a powerful 'seed'.

Who or what is powerful enough to eradicate this miraculous leaven which we bear within us like a seed and which, after we have embraced in our mind all the universe, is nothing more than a seed—since to say universe is as easy as to say seed, and we have yet to say greater things, things beyond saying, things limitless and inconceivable, things which no trick of language can encompass.⁴⁵³

Once Miller opens himself to the world, the Greek landscape offers him many chances to mystically embrace the cosmos. In the island of Crete, for example, on his way from Gortyna to Phaestos, the rain stops, the clouds break and the sky turns blue.

The blue decomposing into that ultimate violet light which makes everything Greek seem holy, natural and familiar. In Greece one has the desire to bathe in the sky. You want to rid yourself of your clothes, take a running leap and vault into the blue. You want to float in the air like an angel or lie in the grass rigid and enjoy the cataleptic trance. Stone and sky, they marry here. It is the perpetual dawn of man's awakening.⁴⁵⁴

Miller's words express wonderfully by themselves his wish to merge with nature, as well as the awakening of his new consciousness of the world. While visiting Epidaurus, the birthplace of Asclepius and the most renowned healing center of the ancient world, the author feels the world's heartbeat within.

At Epidaurus, in the stillness, in the great peace that came over me, I heard the heart of the world beat. I know what the cure is: it is to give up, to relinquish,

⁴⁵² Miller, Greece 47.

⁴⁵³ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 73.

⁴⁵⁴ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 159.

to surrender,⁴⁵⁵ so that our little hearts may beat in unison with the great heart of the world.⁴⁵⁵

In Proanakrousma, Sikelianos explains that the Delphic ‘Principle of Beneficent Rhythm’ allows ‘the enrichment of the general consciousness, the unity of the world, and the inner enrichment of each one of us’ (13). This principle describes the peaceful interconnection between the parts and the whole on the basis of sharing a common universal rhythm. No better illustration may be found than the above passage by Miller. Just like Sikelianos, Miller knows the ‘cure’ is surrendering to ‘the great heart of the world’, to ‘beat in unison’ with its collective rhythm.

The ‘Principle of Beneficent Rhythm’ is the Delphic ethical contribution to cooperation and peace. On this matter, it is necessary to remind that peace and fraternity are recurring topics in the works of Angelos Sikelianos and Henry Miller. Both writers often express a common deep concern about war and conflicts among peoples. In Sikelianos’ case, this issue certainly lies behind his Delphic Effort. Reaching an understanding between peoples and cultures is one of his main objectives of his initiative. With regard to Miller, his references to war and peace are abundant throughout his whole literary career.⁴⁵⁶ In The Colossus of Maroussi, while he enjoys the views of the Cretan plain of Messara from Phaestos, he reflects on the nature of the human being.

Below me, stretching away like an infinite magic carpet, lay the plain of Messara, girdled by a majestic chain of mountain ranges. From this sublime, serene height it has all the appearance of the Garden of Eden. At the very gates of Paradise the descendants of Zeus halted here on their way to eternity to cast a last look earthward and saw with the eyes of innocents that the earth is indeed what they had always dreamed it to be: a place of beauty and joy and peace. In his heart man is angelic; in his heart man is united with the whole world. Phaestos contains all the elements of the heart; it is feminine through and through.⁴⁵⁷

Miller’s reference to man’s heart could be compared to Sikelianos’ allusion to a universal ‘contagious and complete Rhythm’ (13), particularly the former’s affirmation that ‘in his heart man is united with the whole world.’⁴⁵⁸ Miller’s response to Phaestos is a rich source of passages that show this fraternal cosmic consciousness.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁵⁶ See, for example, some of his reflection on this in Tropic of Cancer 69-70.

⁴⁵⁷ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 162.

⁴⁵⁸ Amy Flaxman highlights the ‘strong rhythm’ in Miller’s writing too: ‘First energy builds and then breaks, and there is an orgiastic release of emotion. In its cause and expression this rhythm is like a dance.’ See Amy M. Flaxman, New Anatomies. Tracing Emotions in Henry Miller’s Writings (Belfast, ME: Bern Porter, 2000) 41.

This is the first day of my life, said I to myself, that I have included everybody and everything on this earth in one thought. I bless the world, every inch of it, every living atom, and it is all alive, breathing like myself, and conscious through and through.⁴⁵⁹

These words burst from the author's mind as a blessing of the cosmos he has reencountered in Greece. The kind of love they express fit with Miller's idea of love, as expressed in Nexus.

If energy is imperishable, how much more so is love! Like energy, which is still a complete enigma, love is always there, always on tap. Man has never created an ounce of energy, nor did he create love. Love and energy have always been, always will be. Perhaps in essence they are one and the same. Why not? Perhaps this mysterious energy which is identified with the life of the universe, [...] perhaps this secret, all-invasive force is but the manifestation of love. (489)

This conception of love is not far from Sikelianos' notion of the spirit of 'Creative Love', as a force that makes people move. In fact, he begins his Delphic Appeal [Δελφική Έκκληση, 1930] by referring to it. 'Humanity wants to love', he says.⁴⁶⁰ The poet's 'Creative Love' is a force which has not been fully experienced yet; like Miller's cosmic love, its potential is still unexplored. In a Europe which had recently gone through war and which was approaching another one, these thoughts bear witness to Sikelianos' and Miller's strong belief in man's capacity for love and cooperation.

In his memoir on Henry Miller, Alfred Perlès recollects his friend's firm pacifist beliefs in the 1930s. Miller argued that a spiritual value like liberty could never be gained by war.⁴⁶¹ In his preface to The Air-Conditioned Nightmare, Miller reacts to the militarist discourse at that time (1941). To that war which was justified as a glorious undertaking, the author responded:

The earth is a Paradise, the only one we will ever know. We will realize it the moment we open our eyes. We don't have to make it a Paradise – it *is* one. We have only to make ourselves fit to inhabit it. The man with the gun, the man with murder in his heart, cannot possibly recognize Paradise even when he is shown it.⁴⁶²

When asked what man had to do to 'live in peace with his neighbor', Miller replied: 'To *be* at peace. If you *are* at peace, then you don't have to fight for peace.'⁴⁶³ Like his two

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁶⁰ See Άγγελος Σικελιανός, "Δελφική Έκκληση 1930," Πεζός Λόγος, Β', ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης (Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1980).

⁴⁶¹ Perlès, My Friend Henry Miller 168.

⁴⁶² Miller, The Air-Conditioned Nightmare 18.

⁴⁶³ Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 152.

grandfathers, who had gone to America to escape military service,⁴⁶⁴ Miller would always remain a committed antimilitarist. When WW2 forced him to leave Europe, he promised Perlès to return ‘the first Sunday after the war.’⁴⁶⁵ He would not be able to keep his promise, but it is known that he followed the painful events in France and Greece during the war and its aftermath.

Although Sikelianos was also a well-known pacifist, at the beginning of the war with Italy, on the 3rd December 1940, he went to visit George Seferis’ boss, the Under-Minister of Press Nikoloudis and he asked him ‘to be allowed to go to the front.’⁴⁶⁶ Then, on the 13th, Sikelianos went to Seferis’ office and asked him to be allowed to go to the front with his wife Anna, claiming that they were ‘very united: for everything.’⁴⁶⁷ Of course, Nikoloudis did not accept the poet’s request, replying that he would either go alone or stay home. Sikelianos would not be in the front as a soldier but that winter, he would publish several poems that let see his sympathy for the Greek cause.

The poet knew that it was the time to follow the ‘Principle of Discipline’, that inner call ‘from the depth of the individual, or of the people, saving them from outer and inner tyrannies’.⁴⁶⁸ He realized it was the time for the kind of struggle and balance that this Delphic principle dictates, but like the Pythia, he would fight the battle of words, that of ‘the eternal Word’, as he calls it.⁴⁶⁹

In Proanakrousma, Sikelianos still refers to three more principles: those of ‘Necessary Simplicity’, ‘Basic Autonomy of Every Soul’ and ‘Memory’. The latter is particularly interesting because it is the principle that makes people live according to the preceding ones, while obeying them in their daily lives, and thus, becoming conscious ‘citizens of History’ (14).

Just like Sikelianos, Henry Miller insists on the idea that visions are not enough, unless people choose to live by them, it is a subsequent necessary step. In the author’s words: ‘One sees the light and elects to live by it.’⁴⁷⁰ Miller also believes that principles start being real when people bear them within and live according to them. This is the true

⁴⁶⁴ See Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 4.

⁴⁶⁵ Perlès, My Friend Henry Miller 191.

⁴⁶⁶ Beaton, George Seferis 189.

⁴⁶⁷ Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Μέρες Γ΄: 16 Απρίλη 1934 - 14 Δεκέμβρη 1940 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1984) 265, my trans. Anna Sikelianos (1904 - 26 May 2006), née Kampanari and formerly Karamanis, had married the poet on 17 June 1940.

⁴⁶⁸ Sikelianos, The Awakener: A Condensation of “Proanakrousma” 13.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷⁰ Henry Miller, The Time of the Assassins: A Study of Rimbaud (New York: New Directions, 1962) 85. See also Miller’s comments on Balzac and ‘the vision he failed to live by’ in Miller, “Balzac and His Double,” The Wisdom of the Heart 249.

meaning of his recommendation in “Reflections on the Death of Mishima”: ‘Find the path and become one with it.’⁴⁷¹

That is exactly Sikelianos’ approach too. With this purpose, in Proanakrousma, Sikelianos provides some historical examples of how the Delphic principles were applied in the Delphian organization. He explains the functions of its five different councils, including the Council of the Guardians of the Sacred Archives, the Amphictyonic Council, the Court of Justice, the Council of Communication and the Council of Arbitration. Sikelianos emphasizes that all these councils had political but also educational aims, such as promoting knowledge to undermine fanaticism, and becoming a meeting place for ‘the spiritual encounter of all peoples’ (15). Of course, as Sikelianos says, it is essential to separate, as ‘a two-edged spiritual sword’ (*id.*), what is ‘ephemeral’ and what is ‘eternal and unconquerably dynamic’ (*id.*).⁴⁷² Sikelianos has perceived this ‘dynamic’ value of the Delphic principles and consequently, he is fully convinced that they offer a key to the main problems of contemporary world.

Proanakrousma concludes as a poetic call. In the name of ‘the ancient Apollonian Spirit’, Sikelianos calls readers ‘to be re-baptized in [the] eternal crystal sources’ (25). His hope is always unity, that of the first ‘Principle of Radiance’, so that man’s ‘soul and his body may again be triumphantly one, and that he may, living again in pure Apollonian unity, draw from himself the certainty of secret immortality’ (24).

This last word, ‘immortality’, introduces another important aspect of Sikelianos’ work which must be considered. In the author’s works, ancient gods and heroes often interact with mortals and even, and as Edmund Keeley remarks, he even transforms ‘our everyday creatures into gods’.⁴⁷³ Keeley refers, for instance, to the mother bear of “The Sacred Way”, which becomes an incarnation of Demeter in the poem.⁴⁷⁴

3.5. ‘God in Man’ in Sikelianos and Miller.

Sikelianos explains that the ultimate aim of the Delphic Idea is to embody ‘the Spirit of God in Man.’ Paradoxically, in becoming itself, each people becomes a manifestation of the divinity, and thus, of the oneness of mankind.

Each nation will find that in lifting up its own sacred hope, and in expressing it in its own greatest artistic form, it will become itself and embodiment of the

⁴⁷¹ Henry Miller, “Reflections on the Death of Mishima,” Sextet: Six Essays 52.

⁴⁷² It is the same ‘spiritual sword’ that would appear as Apollo’s blade in The Sibyl, and the one Miller mentions in his article on the poet.

⁴⁷³ Keeley, Inventing Paradise 129.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

Spirit of God in Man. Rooted in its own Earth, and clarifying its own Divinity, each will become a Witness, to itself and to others, of the oneness of man.⁴⁷⁵

George Seferis also observes this merging of man and the divine in Sikelianos' works. Seferis refers to this view as 'an anthropism that is Hellenic and that is holy' and he quotes the following lines by the Lefkadian poet: 'we say that it is possible for earth / to mingle with the stars, like a deep plow with a plowfield, / and for the sky to nurse the ears of wheat.'⁴⁷⁶ To use Eva Sikelianos' words, that is exactly 'what the Greeks meant by making their gods men, and their men gods.'⁴⁷⁷ As Seferis notes,

Just as he refuses to separate death from the most fervent moment of life, just as he refuses to separate his own body from the body of his country, so he struggles to unite the world of the gods with the world of men.⁴⁷⁸

Indeed, Sikelianos struggles to unite gods and men in his works because in his world view they are not separated but closely united as one.

Similarly, in Henry Miller's view, man is 'a reflection of the divine.'⁴⁷⁹ His works show that it was in Greece where Miller really developed his notion of the godly nature of mankind. During his stay in this country, he found serenity and his earlier interest in ancient philosophy, Zen, Tao, and spiritual literature grew into a burning passion. Among his Greek friends, he especially shared this affinity with the artist Niko Ghika, who gave him three books on yoga.⁴⁸⁰ Ghika was witness to Miller's evolution. He told him: 'If you came to Greece as a Parisian bohemian, you have become a pilgrim. [...] Henceforth your writing must be different.'⁴⁸¹ Ghika's prediction would turn right.

Although Miller had promised not to write while in Greece, he was not able to keep it. Among other writings, he produced an essay entitled "Reflections on Writing" which had been 'inspired by a talk with Katsimbalis.'⁴⁸² The latter, who had requested him a contribution for his magazine, translated it into Greek and published it in *Ta Nea Grammata* in 1940. In this writing, Miller's reflections on art lead him to call it a 'substitute'.

⁴⁷⁵ Qtd. in Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 63.

⁴⁷⁶ Seferis, On the Greek Style 19 (both).

⁴⁷⁷ Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 220.

⁴⁷⁸ Seferis, On the Greek Style 19.

⁴⁷⁹ Henry Miller, Remember to Remember: Vol. 2 of The Air-Conditioned Nightmare (New York: New Directions, 1961) 311.

⁴⁸⁰ Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 214. The author's letter to Nin from 11th Dec. 1939 shows his reflections on these readings.

⁴⁸¹ Qtd. in Jong, The Devil at Large: Erica Jong on Henry Miller 151.

⁴⁸² Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 360. In Greece, he would also write a tribute to Hermann Graf Keyserling (see "The Philosopher Who Philosophizes," The Wisdom of the Heart 71-77), his own journey diary, and letters to different people, i.a.

It is only a substitute, a symbol-language, for something which can be seized directly. But for that to become possible man must become thoroughly religious, not a believer, but a prime mover, a god in fact and deed.⁴⁸³

The impressive Greek landscape, the warmth of its people, those long conversations on literature and life with his group of friends, what Greece offered Miller changed both the man and the writer, as the author himself acknowledges in The Colossus of Maroussi. In a letter sent to Anaïs Nin from Delphi, Miller tells her about his new perception of man as a divine being.

Here the human modulates into the godly. It is not God with a capital G any more—it is the god spirit, the god in man triumphing. One has to get beyond ecstasy. One has to conquer all human emotion—even of worship and adoration. One has to become that which one bows down before. One has to be lifted up—up to sheer madness—and either sink back into an endless abyss or sail onward, upward, like the solitary eagles which infest the summits here. This, I feel, is the secret of the Apollonian power and majesty.⁴⁸⁴

While at the home of the ancient oracle, Miller, like Sikelianos, seems to have understood the meaning of Apollo's secret: Man must rise to the heights from where he once fell. The human race has to regain its spiritual nature. In "First Impressions of Greece", the author reaches the same conclusion. 'Man has fallen from his state of grace, but nature remains eternally holy',⁴⁸⁵ reminding him about his equally divine essence. While exploring his native island of Lefkada, Sikelianos had also found answers to his queries in the dynamic significance of nature, later distilling his ideas in his long poem "Visionary". The earth would awaken both authors and let them rise above the ordinary, allowing them to interpret its language.

In The Colossus of Maroussi, which Miller considered his finest work,⁴⁸⁶ he discusses this connection between men and gods in more detail.

The greatest single impression which Greece made upon me is that it is a man-sized world. Now it is true that France also conveys this impression, and yet there is a difference, a difference which is profound. Greece is the home of the gods; they may have died but their presence still makes itself felt. The gods were of human proportion: they were created out of the human spirit. In

⁴⁸³ Miller, "Reflections on Writing," The Wisdom of the Heart 24. 'Prime mover' must be understood in the sense Aristotle gave to this concept [οὐκ κινούμενον κινεῖ, 'that which moves without being moved'].

⁴⁸⁴ Letter from H. Miller to A. Nin dated Dec. 21 1939, see Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 218.

⁴⁸⁵ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 71.

⁴⁸⁶ In interviews, Miller always insists that his 'book on Greece' is the one he likes 'the best of all' his works and the one he would like 'to be remembered by'. See Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 29. See also *ibid.*, 64-65, 96, 146, and 230; and Snyder, ed., This is Henry. Henry Miller from Brooklyn 42. Miller's biographer Erica Jong similarly argues that The Colossus of Maroussi is 'Miller's central book. It explains everything that comes before and after.' See Jong, The Devil at Large: Erica Jong on Henry Miller 147.

France, as elsewhere in the Western world, this link between the human and the divine is broken. The scepticism and paralysis produced by this schism in the very nature of man provides the clue to the inevitable destruction of our present civilization. If men cease to believe that they will one day become gods then they will surely become worms.⁴⁸⁷

It is necessary to mention that Miller had first heard about the notion of “divinity within” while in New York. As early as in 1913, Miller had attended a series of lectures given by the former evangelist Benjamin Fay Mills, who after abandoning his institution had embraced new Eastern spiritual influences and New Thought.⁴⁸⁸ However, as the paragraph above proves, it was in Greece where he definitely formulated his conception of man as a divine being in his writing.

In The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller proclaims that men are no longer God’s children, but those who created gods out of their original divine human spirit. Despite that link was broken at some point, he claims that men ‘will one day become gods’ again, provided they never ‘cease to believe’ in themselves. Miller would never stop pushing this idea. In Plexus, this thought surfaces again.

Despite all our pride and vanity, we behave as if we knew nothing of our true heritage. We protest that we are only human, all-too-human. But if we were truly human we would be capable of all things, ready for all exigencies, know all conditions of being. We ought to remind ourselves daily, repeat it like a litany, that in our being lies concealed the whole gamut of existence. We should cease worshipping and inspire worship. Above all, we should cease postponing the act of becoming what in fact and essence we are. (252)

Miller highlights a curious paradox, whereas the contemporary man, in his vanity, believes that he is the lord and master of the planet, he seems to have forgotten what his predecessors achieved, hence the fact that he increasingly feels a more limited being. In fact, Miller, like Sikelianos, worships mankind because he strongly believes that becoming ‘truly human’ would be developing our full capacities, ‘becoming what in fact an essence we are.’ In Sikelianos, we also find a call to the peoples of the earth and an invocation of their spiritual roots in The Last Orphic Dithyramb or The Dithyramb of the Rose.

Only six years before Miller landed on the Piraeus, in 1933, Angelos and Eva Sikelianos had staged for the first time his play The Dithyramb of the Rose. The Sikelianos had a temporary outdoor amphitheatre set on a slope of the hill of Philopappos, opposite the Acropolis of Athens, and two free performances were given on the 24th and 25th of April. According to the French writer and critic Philéas Lebesgue, about 20,000 people gathered

⁴⁸⁷ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 235.

⁴⁸⁸ See Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 35.

for the occasion.⁴⁸⁹ Miller may have heard about such an extraordinary event from Katsimbalis or Seferis, and later, from Eva, whose daughter-in-law, Frances Sikelianos, had produced an English translation of the play in 1939, as said above.

The Dithyramb of the Rose, which was written and published in 1932, is inspired by the myth of Orpheus. The play is indeed a dialogue between Orpheus and the two coryphaei of his chorus of followers. He announces them that he will ascend to the top of Mount Pangaion in order to offer the Sun (Apollo) a symbolic Rose at dawn, at the risk of losing his life and ending up dismembered at the hands of the Thracian Maenads of Dionysus.

However, unlike Orpheus in the most well-known myth about his death, Sikelianos' protagonist has not rejected Dionysus in favour of Apollo. On the contrary, the poet's Orpheus makes clear laudatory references to Dionysus and his own discourse presents many Dionysian aspects.

Three basic Orphic symbols are mentioned throughout the tragedy: the Ear of cereal, representing the earth and the Eleusinian mysteries; the Wine, which stands for the divine intoxication; and thirdly, the symbol that unifies the other two, the Rose. Sikelianos' Rose is the hundred-petaled one of Orphism [τὸ ἑκατόπελο τὸ κατόφυλλο]. It is a symbol of love and fraternity, but also of reason. The Rose represents the harmony that is able to bridge all antagonisms, unifying 'peoples with peoples, enemies with friends, death with life'.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, the Rose is the *many* in *one*, like the slopes of holy Mount Pangaion, equally called 'the many which become One' (l. 346).

Knowing he may not come back, Orpheus wants to pass his mystical knowledge on. So he makes his followers remember his teachings about the Mystery of the Rose and the liberation they brought, since, as he says, 'Freedom is Knowledge, and Knowledge, Love, / and beyond this Knowledge there is nothing' (ll. 599-600). Finally, the chorus invokes the Mother Night imploring her to help them keep the memory of the Orphic mystery alive.

This Orphic Rose, which blooms among residues and suffering as a symbol of renewed life, is also found in Henry Miller's Sexus. While watching the industrial surroundings of his city, Miller wonders: 'Where are the beasts of the field, the crops, the

⁴⁸⁹ Philéas Lebesgue, "Lettres Néo-Grecques," *Mercur de France* 1 Jan. 1935: 193. According to Eva Sikelianos, 'over fifty thousand people' saw the play. She may refer to the total number of spectators of both performances. See Palmer-Sikelianos, Upward Panic 144.

⁴⁹⁰ Άγγελος Σικελιανός, "Ὁ Διθύραμβος τοῦ Ρόδου," Θυμέλη, A', ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης (Athens, Gr.: Ἴκαρος, 1971) lines 92-93, my trans. Further references to this play will be from this edition, in my own trans. Unfortunately, Frances Sikelianos' English translation has not been reprinted and it is currently a very rare book. A Spanish translation was published in 2001 though: Άγγελος Σικελιανός, El último ditirambo órfico o El ditirambo de la Rosa, pref. Kostas E. Tsirópulos, trans. Isabel García Gálvez (La Laguna, Tenerife, Sp.: II Congreso de Neohelenistas de Iberoamérica, 2001).

manure, the roses that flower in the midst of corruption?’ (7). In Plexus, the image of the Orphic Rose reappears, interestingly, in the closing lines of the novel.

The great open wound which was draining the blood of life closes up, the organism blossoms like a rose. [...] The tree of life is kept alive not by tears but the knowledge that freedom is real and everlasting. (472)

This Rose, associated to the notions of knowledge, freedom and rebirth, seems the Rose of Sikelianos’ Orpheus, while trying to grow amidst the ‘cement blocks’ and ‘chimneys’ (Sexus 7) of American contemporary world. In addition to his admiration for the work of Sikelianos, Miller’s interest in Orphism is well-known.

Bertrand Mathieu’s Orpheus in Brooklyn: Orphism, Rimbaud, and Henry Miller (The Hague, Neth.: Mouton, 1976), for instance, explores many Orphic aspects of the author’s literary production. In fact, Miller’s notebooks include some passages copied from The Hymns of Orpheus and Salomon Reinach’s Orpheus: A History of Religions.⁴⁹¹ Likewise, in a letter to Anaïs Nin from October 1932, he asks her for any title on the ‘Orphic myth’ and he adds ‘*Birth of Tragedy* gives it better than anything’.⁴⁹² Later, in 1952, he also mentions Jane Harrison’s The Orphic Myths among the titles he was going to read.⁴⁹³

Nevertheless, neither Miller nor Sikelianos focus on a single mythology. As discussed above, both of them blend characteristically ancient mythological figures with Christian ones, and even other ones from different sources. The last tragedy that Sikelianos published, The Death of Digenis (or Christ Unbound),⁴⁹⁴ is one of the best examples of this bias towards syncretism. This play picks up the subject of Orpheus’ liberating flame again and passes the torch to the Byzantine hero Digenis Akrites.

In The Death of Digenis, the protagonist is an old man who leads a heretic group of Paulicians. Although little is known about the beliefs of the real Paulicians, and even that is derived from their opponents, Sikelianos’ Digenis and his Paulicians are true Christians who protect the poor and remain critical of a corrupt and powerful Church. On the margins of the Empire, they have built their own Paradise on earth in accordance with their egalitarian principles. They believe in a Christ who resurrects to break the cross and defend freedom and fraternity among peoples.

Emperor Basil I, who sees a threat in Digenis and his followers, goes with his army to the hero’s castle in the Euphratensis [Εὐφρατησία] with the purpose of sounding him out

⁴⁹¹ See Nesbit, Henry Miller and Religion 134.

⁴⁹² Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 97.

⁴⁹³ Miller, The Books in My Life 320.

⁴⁹⁴ It was written and published in 1947. However, the last tragedy that Sikelianos wrote is Asclepius, which the author left unfinished. It was published posthumously in 1955.

and if necessary, invading the region. But Digenis replies his men are ready to fight '*la bataille du pain et de la fraternité*'.⁴⁹⁵ The Emperor's army retreats but Digenis is mortally wounded by a traitor. The dying Digenis bids farewell to his people while saying: '*Courage, mes amis. Un jour le Paradis s'étendra partout*' (121). Then, he tells them to sing a mourning chant: '*Chantez maintenant le chant de deuil, non pas pour moi, / Mais pour le Christ libéré*' (124).

This reference to the liberated Christ is a clear allusion to the subtitle of the play, Christ Unbound, which echoes Aeschylus' third and lost tragedy Prometheus Unbound.⁴⁹⁶ In this way, the half-Greek and half-Arab Byzantine hero is also Prometheus the rebel and Christ, the brother of the poor,⁴⁹⁷ unifying different traditions in his character. Digenis is also the incarnation of the brotherly encounter of East and West that once found its navel in Delphi. His death will only be a sacrifice, mourning gives way to life. This would finally be the author's own testament.

Unfortunately, Angelos Sikelianos would not be luckier than Kostis Palamas in achieving the international recognition of being awarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature. As Renée Jacquin argues, the strong political atmosphere in Greece would not be helpful. Jacquin describes very clearly the manoeuvres of Sikelianos' enemies, both in the country and in Oslo.⁴⁹⁸

Sikelianos was first nominated in 1946, by a member of the Swedish Academy, Anders J. Österling. A long list of intellectuals, both from Greece and abroad, sent their support, such as Georges Duhamel, André Gide, Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, and Henry Miller, among others. Miller sent his recommendation of Sikelianos to the members of the Stockholm Academy and he also sent a list of possible signatories to Eva Palmer-Sikelianos.⁴⁹⁹ The Greek Society of Writers was willing to present a double nomination, Sikelianos and Nikos Kazantzakis. The latter consulted Sikelianos, who accepted to share the possible nomination. George Seferis, who knew it confidentially from Sikelianos, remarks in his diary entry for August 3: 'A strange people.'⁵⁰⁰ That year, Hermann Hesse was awarded the prize.

⁴⁹⁵ Sikelianos, Poèmes Akritiques. La Mort de Digénis 106. Further quotations in French from this play will be from this edition.

⁴⁹⁶ Perhaps, also Percy Bysshe Shelley's homonymous work, as Renée Jacquin suggests (Jacquin, 275).

⁴⁹⁷ One of the characters refers to Christ as '*le premier Révolté*' (131).

⁴⁹⁸ See Jacquin, 256-260.

⁴⁹⁹ These documents are kept in the Henry Miller Papers collection, UCLA, Library of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Box 156, Folder 4.

⁵⁰⁰ Seferis, A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951 35.

In 1947, Sikelianos was nominated with Nikos Kazantzakis, both candidates to share the prize.⁵⁰¹ The government of Konstantinos Tsaldaris soon reacted and presented two more nominations, Georgios Drossiris and Grigorios Xenopoulos.⁵⁰² In 1948, Sikelianos was nominated,⁵⁰³ but again, there was also a nomination of Drossiris. That year, Sikelianos received the support of André Gide, a Nobel laureate, and T. S. Eliot, who would be awarded with the prize that same year. In 1949⁵⁰⁴ and 1950,⁵⁰⁵ he was also nominated, but again unsuccessfully. That year, while living in Turkey, George Seferis met the Swedish archaeologist and academician Axel Persson, who told him that Sikelianos' candidature had been 'torpedoed by the Greek government'.⁵⁰⁶

The following year, Sikelianos was once more nominated.⁵⁰⁷ However, Sikelianos' condition had worsened during the previous years and then, in June, an accidental ingestion of a toxic product, after mistaking it for his regular medicine, would take his life. The author died on the 19th June.

Seferis, who was serving as Counsellor at the Greek Embassy in London, read a tribute to him on the BBC Greek Service. His words emphasized that Sikelianos' work, which had embraced equally death and life, had transcended its author.

The death of the poet is the consummation of a birth. Angelos Sikelianos has passed away. Now his work, outside the shadow of this great man, rises up in its entirety, finding its realization in a light that is absolute,

Like an almond tree dressed only in its blossoms
without a single leaf,
A white mass of flower going down to the depths
of the mind, a silence all of flowers.⁵⁰⁸

At the beginning of December 1952, Seferis spent a rainy weekend in Delphi. Eva Sikelianos had died that June and had wanted to be buried there. Seferis revisited the site, Sikelianos' house, where he had 'met him for the first time',⁵⁰⁹ and Eva's grave. He

⁵⁰¹ By Nikos A. Bees, professor of Modern Greek literature in the U. of Athens.

⁵⁰² See Jacquin, 256.

⁵⁰³ By a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities; Axel W. Persson, and the writer and member of the Swedish Academy Elin Wägner.

⁵⁰⁴ Nominated by the author and member of the Swedish Academy Sigfrid Siwertz.

⁵⁰⁵ He was nominated, as a single candidate, by the Society of Greek Writers and also, in a new double nomination with Nikos Kazantzakis, by the writer and member of the Swedish Academy Hjalmar R. Gullberg.

⁵⁰⁶ Beaton, *George Seferis* 287.

⁵⁰⁷ By the member of the Swedish Academy Sigfrid Siwertz, who also nominated Nikos Kazantzakis. Jacquin explains that again, the Greek government campaigned against Sikelianos and Kazantzakis, see Jacquin, 259-260.

⁵⁰⁸ Seferis, *On the Greek Style* 15.

⁵⁰⁹ George Seferis, "Delphi," *Greece: A Traveler's Literary Companion*, ed. Artemis Leontis (San Francisco, CA: Whereabouts, 1997) 97.

wondered what had made Sikelianos think of resurrecting the Delphic festivals.⁵¹⁰ In her autobiography, the poet's wife reflects on their Delphic Effort. If Eva had still been there, she may have answered Seferis' query by using similar words.

We dreamed of bringing together there those men in the world of today who are again worthy of being called Guardians of the Sacred Archives: which means Guardians of the spiritual attainments of the Human Race. That they, working as the ancient Sanctuary worked, and adding thereto all the experience and knowledge that humanity has since gained, would gradually found a University of Human Sympathy. The fact that a signal so small as ours evoked so great a response, and also elicited so much official antagonism, is sufficient proof of the vitality of the Delphic Idea.⁵¹¹

Sikelianos died like Digenis in his play, leaving his Promethean words of hope for future generations. Like his Sybil, the author indicated a path for readers to discover and experience. His 'return to our deepest historic self' sought to bring the forgotten roots alive. Henry Miller puts it very clearly in his essay on the poet: 'Look within yourselves, he pleaded. You have lost nothing; you have simply forgotten you have been asleep.'⁵¹² About the Delphic project, Miller says: 'The failure of the Delphic Idea is only a seeming one. A seed was dropped which no power on earth can prevent unfolding.'⁵¹³

Like Sikelianos, Miller knows that people's 'attitude towards life has to be fundamentally altered.'⁵¹⁴ It is not a matter of ideas only. In his writing, Miller quotes the poet again: 'Intelligence [...] must enlarge and deepen the power of Love.'⁵¹⁵ Miller would call it 'a revolution of the heart'.⁵¹⁶ In fact, this may also be a meaning of the Delphic maxim, *know thyself*.

On the poet, Miller says: 'Only in the sense that he is concerned with the destiny of all mankind can Sikelianos be said to be a true Hellene.'⁵¹⁷ Miller proves he has certainly understood Sikelianos' message, which is based on the universal view of ancient Greeks. He closes his essay on Sikelianos by referring to the Lefkadian poet. The man died but Miller's expressive words may also apply to the eternal spirit that Sikelianos embodied.

Somewhere today on Greek soil there is an eagle [...]. Time and again he has flown straight towards the sun, and his wings have not melted nor his spirit

⁵¹⁰ Seferis' diary entry for 7 Dec. 1952. Yorgos Seferis, *Días 1925-1968*, trans. Vicente Fernández González (Madrid: Alianza, 1997) 228.

⁵¹¹ Palmer-Sikelianos, *Upward Panic* 239.

⁵¹² Miller, "Anghelos Sikelianos," *The New Spirit* 16.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵¹⁴ Miller, *The Wisdom of the Heart* 129.

⁵¹⁵ Miller, "Anghelos Sikelianos," *The New Spirit* 16.

⁵¹⁶ Miller, *The Wisdom of the Heart* 129.

⁵¹⁷ Miller, "Anghelos Sikelianos," *The New Spirit* 14.

quenched. Neither has he been proved insane. Nor accused of immunity to pain and suffering. He waits, he bides his time'.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

4. Unrenowned Influence: Yannopoulos, Kakantzakis, Prevelakis, Gatsos and Elytis

4.1. A Quest for the Deep Essence of the Land and Its People.

In any author's writings, some names appear more often than others, but among those writers who are less or even hardly mentioned, there are sometimes personal and literary connections that might be easily overlooked. That is certainly the case of Pericles Yannopoulos, Nikos Kazantzakis, Pandelis Prevelakis, Nikos Gatsos, and Odysseas Elytis, with regard to Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller.

The older of them, Pericles Yannopoulos (1869-1910), was a Patras-born aesthete whose works considerably engaged the attention of the Greek Generation of the Thirties. Yannopoulos' essays were published or discussed in many Greek cultural journals. For instance, in *To Tρίτο Μάτι*⁵¹⁹ (Nov.-Dec. 1935), the magazine edited by a group of artists and writers including the above-mentioned Nikos Ghika and the architect Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968). A special issue of George Katsimbali's *Τα Νέα Γράμματα* was also devoted to Yannopoulos in 1938 (Jan.-Mar). Yannopoulos' thought had a strong influence on a whole generation of Greek painters⁵²⁰ and he was also praised by a large number of writers (Ion Dragoumis, Angelos Sikelianos, Kostis Palamas, Miltiadis Malakasis, Theoni Drakopoulou "Myrtilotissa", George Seferis, Odysseas Elytis, etc.). Angelos Sikelianos, for example, would write an essay on Yannopoulos' thoughts in 1919,⁵²¹ and also a poem, "Pericles Yannopoulos", about his death.⁵²²



Pericles Yannopoulos.

Yannopoulos thought that artistic creation in Greece should be inspired by Greek values and rooted in the landscape of the country. He believed that artists and men

⁵¹⁹ *The Third Eye*.

⁵²⁰ Nikos Ghika, Konstantinos Parthenis, Spyros Papaloukas, Konstantinos Maleas, Michalis Ikonou, Nikolaos Lytras, etc.

⁵²¹ Άγγελος Σικελιανός, "Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος," *Πεζός Λόγος*, Α', ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης (Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1978).

⁵²² Άγγελος Σικελιανός, "Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος," *Λυρικός Βίος*, Β', ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης (Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1966) 63-67.

themselves were the product of their land. One of his best-known essays, “The Greek Line” (1903), starts by formulating this theory.

*La base de l'Esthétique Grecque, c'est la TERRE GRECQUE. Toute Terre crée un homme à Son image et Sa ressemblance. [...] En étudiant la Terre et en nous analysant nous-mêmes, nous découvrons que tout ce qu'il y a en elle de beauté, et de noblesse se retrouve en nous. Nous sommes tous faits de la même manière, nous participons tous d'une même essence, toutes nos expressions sont donc les mêmes. En prenant notre Nature Grecque pour guide, en L'adorant comme une déesse, en ayant foi en Elle et en notre propre nature, en préservant l'une et l'autre, en exprimant fièrement et sans obstacle notre monde intérieur et extérieur, nous imprimons dans l'Humanité la perfection de Beauté et de Noblesse de notre propre espèce.*⁵²³

Yannopoulos' clear reference to Adam's creation (Gen. 1, 26) is telling in itself. 'We are the children of our landscape', as Durrell says in *Justine* (39), but in Yannopoulos' thought, that mother land which produces men is seen as divine. Greek nature becomes thus an object of learning, and even of love and veneration. The author's idea of offering humanity the best of his own race is also found, as shown above, in Sikelianos.

Yannopoulos' notion of 'the Greek Line' is directly associated to his observation of the effects of light on the landscape of the country and consequently, on its inhabitants.

*La puissance de la Lumière, sa force de pénétration, la transparence de l'air, le Tracé parfaitement net de la Ligne sont stupéfiants. Sur quelque hauteur que vous montiez, vous embrassez un univers entier. [...] Phénomène naturel, ce Tracé parfaitement net de la Ligne ne peut être que l'idée fondamentale, la base fondamentale.*⁵²⁴

In this way, the author justifies creators' need for simplicity and subtlety. Therefore, according to him, feeling in art or literature should be expressed within these parameters, which are dictated by the powerful light of Apollo's star, 'le roi des rois de terres et des cieux: LE SOLEIL.'⁵²⁵

Yannopoulos explores the Hellenic line on different surfaces. Firstly, he considers a common element of the Greek landscape, rocks. In rocks and mountains, he sees the enveloping character of the Byzantine icons of the Virgin Mary holding her son, the bigger embracing the smaller ones in a continuum. The author argues that artistic creation ought to be in harmony with that encompassing curved line of hills and waves. The whole inertial mass of rocks and mountains seems immaterial and light as clouds to Yannopoulos, who is enraptured by his own view of the land.

⁵²³ Périklis Yannopoulos, *La Ligne Grecque. La Couleur Grecque*, trans. Marc Terrades (Paris: Harmattan, 2006) 23.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

*Pierres, roches et rochers, coteaux et collines: imaginez la masse, combien de terre, de pierres, combien de millions de tonnes de matière il faut pour faire une colline de Philopappos, un Lykabette: ils sont comme les joues d'un enfant qui souffle dans sa flûte, comme de plaisants ballons multicolores s'élevant dans le ciel. Toutes les terres, des sables humides au plus bas du rivage jusqu'aux plus hauts rochers desséchés de l'Hymette, du Pentélique et du Parnès, sont légères comme des nuages.*⁵²⁶

Some critics have seen some points of convergence between Yannopoulos and the French art historian Élie Faure (1873-1937), but the latter's *Histoire de l'Art* would not appear until 1909, when its first instalment was published, so the possibility of Faure being an influence is refuted because Yannopoulos' essays had been published earlier.⁵²⁷ Anyway, it is not surprising that Henry Miller, who had been interested in the writings of Faure since his youth,⁵²⁸ found his friend Katsimbalis' description of Yannopoulos so fascinating as to include it in his Greek journey diary⁵²⁹ and later, in *The Colossus of Maroussi*. In fact, Katsimbalis'/Miller's portrayal of Yannopoulos presents an author who, in a way, recalls Miller's depiction of the 'great French ocean', as he calls Faure in *Tropic of Capricorn* (303).

Yannopoulos was greater than your Walt Whitman and all the American poets combined. He was a madman, yes, like all the great Greek fellows. He fell in love with his own country—that's a funny thing, eh? Yes, he became so intoxicated with the Greek language, the Greek philosophy, the Greek sky, the Greek mountains, the Greek sea, the Greek islands, the Greek vegetables, even, that he killed himself. I'll tell you how he killed himself some other time—that's another story. Have you got any writers who would kill themselves because they were too full of love? Are there any French writers or German writers or English writers who feel that way about their country, their race, their soil? *Who are they?* I'll read you some of Yannopoulos when we get back to Athens. I'll read you what he says about the rocks—just the rocks, nothing more. You can't know what a rock is until you've heard what Yannopoulos has written. He talks about rocks for pages and pages; he *invents* rocks, by God, when he can't find any to rave about. People say he was crazy, Yannopoulos. He wasn't crazy—he was mad. There's a difference. His voice was too strong for his body: it consumed him. He was like Icarus—the sun melted his wings. He soared too high. He was an eagle. These rabbits we call critics can't understand a man like Yannopoulos. He was out of proportion. He raved about

⁵²⁶ Yannopoulos, *La Ligne Grecque, La Couleur Grecque* 48-49.

⁵²⁷ It is not very likely that Yannopoulos was an influence on Faure either, since the former's work was not published in French until 2006.

⁵²⁸ See Martin, *Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller* 43. Miller mentions Élie Faure, among other places, in *Tropic of Capricorn* (303), and several times in *Plexus* (300, 319, 328, 332, 354, 467, 472) and *Nexus* (475, 598, 599, 320).

⁵²⁹ Pericles Yannopoulos is mentioned together with Palamas and Sikelianos. See Miller, "First Impressions of Greece" 60.

the wrong things, according to them. He didn't have *le sens de mesure*, as the French say.⁵³⁰

The passage about rocks quoted above from Yannopoulos' essay "The Greek Colour" (1904) proves Katsimbalis was absolutely right about the former's passionate writing on his land, including its rocks and soil. The parallelism with Walt Whitman (another of Miller's favourites), who also sang enthusiastically his native homeland, is equally appropriate. In The Colossus of Maroussi, Katsimbalis promises Miller that he will read some lines by Yannopoulos. Given Katsimbalis' interest in the former and Miller's decision to introduce these lines on the essayist in his Greek book, it is probable that Miller was able to know more about Yannopoulos' ideas from Katsimbalis.

Katsimbalis acknowledges that Yannopoulos was 'mad', not 'crazy' but mad about his beloved $\square\lambda\lambda\eta\nu\iota\kappa\ \Gamma\ \square$ [Hellenic Land]. Other poets had sung the beauty of Greek nature. In 1902, for example, Kostis Palamas had also celebrated rocks and 'the bareness of the rocky earth' out of which 'columns, friezes, pediments' sprang.⁵³¹ However, Yannopoulos' picture grows unrestrained, sometimes reaching an almost surreal dimension, as in the previous passage about mountains. Katsimbalis thinks 'his voice was too strong for his body: it consumed him.'

Actually, Pericles Yannopoulos' early end might be seen as that of a man consumed with an out of reach desire to wholly embrace his object of love. On the 7th of April 1910, Yannopoulos went out with George Katsimbalis' father, Konstantinos, who was a friend of his. Pericles, who looked more cheerful than usual, told Konstantinos that he was going to leave for a journey the next day. The following morning, a rainy one in Athens, Yannopoulos rented a carriage and he went to Skaramagas, a coastal village to the west of Athens behind the Aigaleo mountain, and only 7 km southeast of Eleusis. At that time, the tiny port of Skaramagas, facing the island of Salamis, was a smaller and lonelier place. There, he had lunch and then he rode one of his two horses straight into the sea. Far from the shore, he put a pistol to his temple and fired. Crowned for death, on his white horse, he disappeared in the waters of the Bay of Eleusis, becoming ultimately united to the nature he had loved with such a passion. The animal swam back to shore, his body was not washed up until two weeks later.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 67-68.

⁵³¹ Palamas, A Hundred Voices 88.

⁵³² On his suicide, see Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος, Άπαντα, Α', ed. Δημήτρης Λαζογιώργος-Ελληνικός (Αθήνα: n.p., 1963) xl-xliii and 283-284. It was George Katsimbalis' father who identified the corpse. Yannopoulos was buried in the cemetery of Eleusis. About this, see Keeley, Inventing Paradise 72.

In “Appeal to the Panhellenic Public” (1907), the idealist manifesto for the regeneration of Hellenism that followed the publication of “New Spirit” (1906),⁵³³ Yannopoulos seemed to offer a visionary image of his death.

A boy who was nothing, running in the light of the sweet mountains of Attica that is like Adonis, saw pass across the pure azure heavens of brilliant noontime the pure-white steed of rebirth with its enormous pure-white wings, and dared, threw himself after it, put out his hand to the base of its wings, and held them upright, burning white. Man and horse descended, trod the earth. [...] With the first powerful clap of its wings, the male child will be struck by its wing and will fall dead voluptuously, his lips drenched in the honey of voluptuousness.⁵³⁴

The day after Yannopoulos’ death, his fellow writer Ion Dragoumis received a card that the former had posted before leaving Athens. The card was illustrated with a reproduction of a fragment of the frieze of the Parthenon, that of young ephebe riding a wild horse. On the card, he had written twice: ‘*Τι Κρίμα!*’ [What a pity!].⁵³⁵ The meaning of these words about the young rider, which are in close connection with Yannopoulos’ ideas, is more clearly perceived in “Pericles Yannopoulos”, the poem that Angelos Sikelianos wrote about him.

Weep for the handsome Hippolytus! Oh youths,
that hold a clear Greece
carved in marble of Paros
or Pentelis, in the light of
naked Athens, or in the rich Olympian
waters and trees; come closer!
Faithful companions to Apollo’s gifts,
to the clear god that is still bending,
holding the divine horses’ momentum,
the bright body, immortal in the West;
those who keep the vision in your mind
of the immortal youth of Pindar,
that the Doric lyre loudly praises
with lively chords, verses like arrows;
come closer to the secluded shore
where he came down crowned with flowers
to meet the sea of April,
in a kiss of death, the whole land’s
spring, as pictured
in the Etruscan tombs, the beautiful

⁵³³ “New Spirit” is the author's announcement of the rebirth of Hellenism through a return to the original sources.

⁵³⁴ Trans. Roderick Beaton from Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος, *Ἐκκλησις προς το Πανελλήνιον Κοινόν* (Αθήνα: Ι. Δ. Κολλαρου, 1907) 3; qtd. in Pericles Lewis, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2011) 234.

⁵³⁵ Yannopoulos, *La Ligne Grecque, La Couleur Grecque* 7-8.

adolescent bodies that descend,
on horses, to the last journey...⁵³⁶

In his work, Yannopoulos celebrated the beauty of young bodies,⁵³⁷ the ever-youthful bodies of Adonis and Aphrodite. Just like Hippolytus and the Etruscan epebi, Yannopoulos would die young with his horse on a last ride to eternity.

In his elegy for him, Sikelianos also calls to mind his unique perception of the Attica: ‘oh Attica, [...] nobody breathed / your delicate myrrhs with such / noble sense’ (ll. 68-69-70). It is equally a recognition of his role in the renaissance of Hellenic culture.

Sadly, unlike Adonis, between Aphrodite and Persephone, Yannopoulos would choose the latter,

who offers to half-open lips
the seeds of the pomegranate, the bloodied
fruit of good death and desire,
as if the red gems sparkled! (ll. 86-89)

As Sikelianos recalls at the end of the poem, Yannopoulos was not washed out ‘like his brother Shelley, on his friends’ hands’ (ll. 107-108). In the end, his idolized Sun would be Yannopoulos’ last critic.⁵³⁸

As George Seferis says, Sikelianos ‘too felt that passionate and burning flame which devoured Yannopoulos [...], but he was also able, with the force of Dionysus running pure in his veins, to raise up a present, a contemporary life from the farthest and the most impenetrable sanctuaries of our tradition.’⁵³⁹

Undoubtedly, Seferis and Katsimbalis let Henry Miller sense the way that Yannopoulos had felt the call of the earth. As Miller quotes Katsimbalis saying, ‘the human proportions which the Greek extolled were superhuman. They weren't *French* proportions. They were divine, because the true Greek is a god’.⁵⁴⁰ That image of a man’s colossal attempt to embrace his whole native land captivated Miller; like Katsimbalis, he also thought that deep down man was a divine being capable of anything.

Yannopoulos and Sikelianos were not alone in that quest for the essence of their land and race. Sikelianos’ friend the Cretan writer Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) pursued the

⁵³⁶ Άγγελος Σικελιανός, “Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος,” *Λυρικός Βίος*, Β', ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης (Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1966) 63-67, ll. 1-22. Unfortunately, Sikelianos’ “Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος” has never been fully published in English. This and all further quotations from this poem are my own translation. The whole poem is given as an appendix in Greek and also, in my trans.

⁵³⁷ Regarding this aspect, the comparison that Katsimbalis draws between Yannopoulos and Walt Whitman would also be very appropriate.

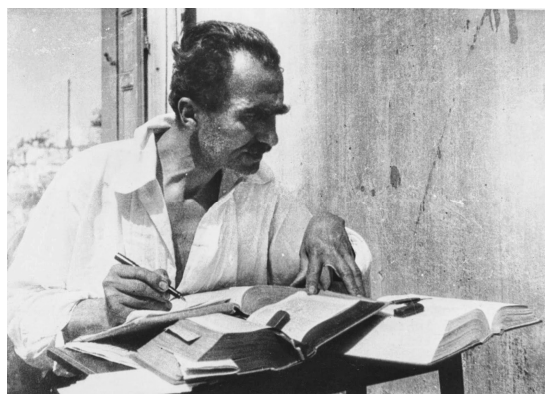
⁵³⁸ See lines 109-113 of the poem.

⁵³⁹ Seferis, *On the Greek Style* 18-19.

⁵⁴⁰ Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi* 68.

same objective in his journeys across Greece with the Lefkadian poet, who he had known in 1914. Together, they stayed for forty days in several monasteries at Mount Athos in 1914, and the following year, they travelled to other parts of the country, including Dafni, Eleusis, Kaisariani, Delphi, the Monastery of Mega Spilaio, Corinth, Mycenae, Argos, Tegea, Sparta, and Mystras, i.a. Some of the impressions that Kazantzakis wrote down in his journey diary about this search for the spirit of his ancestors were later included in Report to Greco, his memoirs. In The Greek Islands, Lawrence Durrell alludes to Kazantzakis' 'moving testimony' about that 'period of religious striving' at Mount Athos.⁵⁴¹ Those years of formation for the Cretan author were fundamental in his evolution as a writer, as he explains in his journal.⁵⁴²

Regarding Durrell and Henry Miller, their correspondence reveals that they became familiar with Kazantzakis' work as soon as his most prominent works appeared in English in the 1950s and early 1960s.⁵⁴³ In a letter from Durrell to Miller dated June 1957, he refers to the distinctive Greekness of Kazantzakis' characters.⁵⁴⁴ By then, Zorba the Greek, Christ Recrucified,⁵⁴⁵ and Freedom and Death⁵⁴⁶ had been published in English translation. Kimon Friar's full verse-translation of Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel would be published the following year. In another letter from Durrell to Miller from the 4th of March 1963, he mentions Friar's translations of Kazantzakis' sequel to The Odyssey and The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises. With regard to the latter, he refers to it as 'the ASKITIKI⁵⁴⁷ which I gave you a copy of at Sommières', and he adds: 'That bears



Nikos Kazantzakis.

⁵⁴¹ L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 167.

⁵⁴² See Jacquin, 64.

⁵⁴³ This period also covers the years of international recognition for Kazantzakis, who was a nominated for the Nobel Prize of Literature in nine different years: In 1947, by Nikos A. Bees, Prof. of Modern Greek Literature in the U. of Athens (together with Sikelianos); in 1950, by the writer and member of the Swedish Academy Hjalmar R. Gullberg (again in new double nomination with Sikelianos); in 1951, by the member of the Swedish Academy Sigfrid Siwertz (who also nominated Sikelianos); in 1952, by the Norwegian Authors Union; in 1953, by Hans Heiberg, Chairman of the Norwegian Authors Union; in 1954, by Henry Olsson, Professor of Literary History and member of the Swedish Academy; in 1955, by the Société des Gens de Lettres Hellènes and by Lorentz Eckhoff, Prof. of English Literature at the U of Oslo; in 1956, by the Society of Men of Letters of Greece, by Johs. A Dale (Prof. of Norwegian Literature at the U of Oslo), and by Samuel Baud-Bovy (Prof. of Greek at the U of Geneva); and finally, in 1957, by the Society of Men of Letters of Greece, and by Samuel Baud-Bovy. That last year, he lost the Prize to Albert Camus by a single vote.

⁵⁴⁴ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 290.

⁵⁴⁵ Published in New York as The Greek Passion.

⁵⁴⁶ Published in New York as Freedom or Death. Its original title is Καπετάν Μιχάλης, that is 'Captain Michalis'.

⁵⁴⁷ Shortened form of its original title, Ασκητική. Salvatores dei.

a close look at if you have the time— a marvellous little book.⁵⁴⁸ Durrell had been previously offered the opportunity to translate Kazantzakis' sequel to Homer's epic by London editor Tambimuttu, but he had declined.⁵⁴⁹ Subsequently, Friar, an 'old acquaintance' of Durrell's, finally did it, 'very well', according to Durrell.⁵⁵⁰

About The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, Durrell says that 'the great journey of Odysseus in the poem by Kazantzaki takes on a heroic and semi-mythical flavour, as if it were an ancient chronicle or a sort of collective poem'.⁵⁵¹ Kazantzakis' prose is also highly praised by him.

With respect to Zorba the Greek, Durrell says it is 'a marvellous evocation of a landscape, and a sketch of a temperament as validly Greek as that of Odysseus himself. It is a captivating book.'⁵⁵² Likewise, Durrell opens the preface to his translation of Emmanuel Royidis' Pope Joan by making reference to Zorba the Greek and Ilias Venezis's Aeolia as novels that show 'how lively is the prose tradition' in contemporary Greece.⁵⁵³

In 1956, Durrell reviewed Kazantzakis' Freedom and Death for the BBC Third Programme.⁵⁵⁴ He argued that the novel confirmed Kazantzakis as 'the greatest living Mediterranean novelist.' The story, which is set on Crete during the Turkish occupation, focuses on the character of Captain Michalis, who embodies the heroic resistance of Greeks in the War of Independence. Durrell emphasizes the richness of the author's picture of his native island in the 1860s and his 'skilful' use of the Cretan dialect. In fact, in Blue Thirst, Durrell recalls Kazantzakis' promotion of demotic Greek in 1945, when he became Minister of Education without portfolio in the government of Themistoklis Sofoulis. Durrell reminds that, during the short time that Kazantzakis was in charge, he 'gave permission for the Greek classics to be turned into modern Greek for the schools'.⁵⁵⁵

Although Durrell only 'met very briefly'⁵⁵⁶ the man, his deep admiration for the author is beyond doubt. In a 1960 interview, Durrell was asked with what modern authors he found himself 'most naturally in sympathy'. He replied: 'In France, with Montherlant and Proust; in America with Henry Miller; in Greece with Kazantzakis'.⁵⁵⁷ Similarly, the Greek-

⁵⁴⁸ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 394.

⁵⁴⁹ Stephanides, Autumn Gleanings 31.

⁵⁵⁰ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 394 (both).

⁵⁵¹ L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 45.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁵³ Durrell wrote the preface of the English edition of Aeolia, which was published in 1949 in E. D. Scott-Kilvert's translation. In The Greek Islands, Durrell also mentions Venezis' Aeolia, as an illustration of how the Greeks felt at home in Anatolia (163).

⁵⁵⁴ It was broadcast by BBC Third Programme on the 5th October 1956.

⁵⁵⁵ L. Durrell, Blue Thirst 14.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁵⁷ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 61.

American poet and translator Kimon Friar would compare Durrell to the Cretan writer in regard to their travel writing.

Only Nikos Kazantzakis, to my knowledge, has poured out so unstintingly of his own creative powers into his travel books as Lawrence Durrell. Ultimately, the books of both men are an exploration of self.⁵⁵⁸

In his last book, Caesar's Vast Ghost: Aspects of Provence (1990), Durrell pays homage to the region where he last settled. Curiously, the author also makes a large number of references to the Greek world. In his reflection about history and eternity, he recalls Kazantzakis' comments while looking at the pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

The great artist looks beneath the flux of everyday reality and sees eternal, unchanging symbols . . . he takes ephemeral events and relocates them in an undying atmosphere . . . This is why not only sculptors but all the great artists of classical Greece, wishing to ensure the perpetuation of every contemporary memorial to victory, relocated history in the elevated and symbolic atmosphere of myth. Instead of representing contemporary Greeks warring against the Persians, they gave us the Lapithae and centaurs . . . Thus a historic event, occurring at a specific time, escaped time and bound itself to the entire race and that race's ancient visions.⁵⁵⁹

Durrell's quotation is taken from the chapter entitled "Pilgrimage through Greece" of Kazantzakis' Report to Greco, which was published in English in 1965, in Peter Bien's translation. Durrell may have also added the following sentence in the original text, which bears witness to the universal perspective of the author's thought: 'Last of all, it escaped the race and became an undying, panhuman memorial.'⁵⁶⁰

Like Durrell, Kazantzakis uses ephemeral events to depict the eternal reality beneath them. In "Pilgrimage through Greece", the Greek author puts it in down-to-earth terms: 'We have but a single moment at our disposal. Let us transform that moment into eternity. No other form of immortality exists.'⁵⁶¹

Durrell's personal library provides another evidence of his considerable interest for Nikos Kazantzakis' work. Among the books that he kept during his later years, the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell at Nanterre still holds seven titles related to Kazantzakis: the English editions of Journeying and The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, the French ones of Freedom and Death and Zorba the Greek, an inscribed copy of Eleni N. Kazantzakis' biography of her husband, and a couple of studies on the author, Peter Bien's Nikos

⁵⁵⁸ Kimon Friar, "In the Shadow of the Parthenon," *Saturday Review* 12 Nov. 1960: 35.

⁵⁵⁹ Qtd. in Lawrence Durrell, Caesar's Vast Ghost: Aspects of Provence (London: Faber, 1995) 13-14.

⁵⁶⁰ Rpt. in Nikos Kazantzakis, "Pilgrimage through Greece," Greece: A Traveler's Literary Companion 55.

⁵⁶¹ Kazantzakis, "Pilgrimage through Greece," Greece: A Traveler's Literary Companion 51.

Kazantzakis⁵⁶² and an inscribed copy of Roger Green's essay "A Frank Says 'Thank You' to Nikos Kazantzakis".⁵⁶³

Just as his friend Durrell, Henry Miller followed with attention the literary production of Kazantzakis. Miller probably felt identified with an author who, like him, embraced the ancient Hellenic conception of art as an activity in close connection with life. As the Cretan writer himself reminds, 'the Greeks never served art for its own sake. Beauty always had a purpose: to be of service to life.'⁵⁶⁴ Their common attachment to life is certainly an element of similarity between them, but there is another essential aspect of both men that also puts them on common ground, the two of them are deeply spiritual writers. This is still a field that deserves further exploration since several studies have been published on each of these authors, but not many from a comparative perspective. In this regard, George Warren Polley's work was a pioneering one. In 1969, Polley's article for the *South Dakota Review*, "The Art of Religious Writing: Henry Miller as Religious Writer" already introduced Kazantzakis' The Greek Passion in his analysis.⁵⁶⁵ More interestingly, among his personal papers, Miller kept a typescript by Polley entitled "Credo for a new age: Henry Miller and Nikos Kazantzakis as religious writers", which has been luckily preserved by the University of California, Los Angeles.⁵⁶⁶

In a letter from Miller to Durrell dated 25 October 1964, he informs him that he has written a prologue for another Cretan author and personal friend of Kazantzakis, Pandelis Prevelakis (1909-1986): 'I wrote a preface for Prevelakis' novel, The Sun of the Death – which I loved. His book on Kazantzakis and His Odyssey is a real gem. Wonder if you ever read it?'⁵⁶⁷ His words do not only show his interest in Kazantzakis' long poem, but also in Prevelakis.⁵⁶⁸

The study that Miller mentions is Nikos Kazantzakis and His Odyssey: A Study of the Poet and the



Pandelis Prevelakis.

⁵⁶² Peter Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis (New York: Columbia UP, 1972).

⁵⁶³ Roger Green, "A Frank Says 'Thank You' to Nikos Kazantzakis," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* Winter 1983, offprint "Nikos Kazantzakis". These seven titles are numb. respectively 882, 880, 22, 2029, 883, 1019, and 1021 in the catalogue. Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell, U Paris Ouest, Nanterre, Fr.

⁵⁶⁴ Kazantzakis, "Pilgrimage through Greece," Greece: A Traveler's Literary Companion 49.

⁵⁶⁵ George Warren Polley, "The art of religious writing: Henry Miller as religious writer," *South Dakota Review* 7.3 (Autumn 1969): 61-73. For his reference to Kazantzakis, see p. 62.

⁵⁶⁶ Henry Miller Papers, UCLA, Library of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Box 103, Folder 6, "Poll[e]y, George Warren", undated typescript.

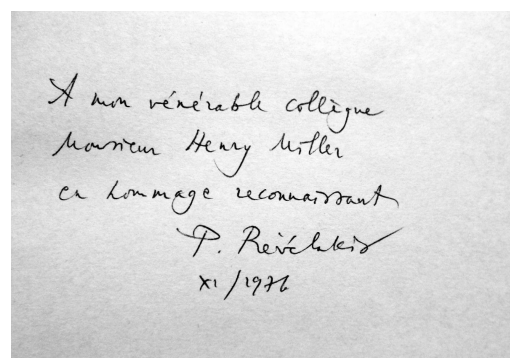
⁵⁶⁷ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 404.

⁵⁶⁸ Miller also refers to Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel in his book Greece 10.

Poem, which was published in English in 1961, three years after its first original Greek edition.⁵⁶⁹ It focuses on Kazantzakis' work but it also covers his life until the publication of the poem in 1938. In his preface to The Sun of the Death, Henry Miller confesses that when he read this novel, the only title he had read by its author was the afore-mentioned work on Kazantzakis, which he 'had annotated and underlined [...] feverishly'.⁵⁷⁰ At that time, he did not know that 'Prevelakis was also the author of plays, poems, essays, historical and aesthetic works, as well as other novels'.⁵⁷¹ Unfortunately, only two of his works had appeared by then in translation, none of them in America, the French editions of Le Cretois (1957) and Chronique d'une cité (1960). Later, these two titles would also be published in English: in 1976, The Tale of a Town (in Kenneth Johnstone's translation), and in 1991, The Cretan (trans. Abbott Rick and Peter Mackridge).

After reading The Sun of the Death, Miller started a correspondence with Prevelakis.⁵⁷² When the Belgian magazine *Synthèses* devoted a special issue to Henry Miller in 1967, the latter contributed an article on him entitled "Prospéro le Jeune".⁵⁷³ Among others by Anaïs Nin, Joseph Delteil, Lawrence Durrell, F. J. Temple, Alfred Perlès, Brassai, Georges Simenon, and the honouree himself, i.a., Prevelakis' piece presents a Miller who, like a young Prospero, finds 'son Paradis'. In Miller's case, his Garden of Eden would be Greece. In 1972, he would still remember that land nostalgically: 'I had been in Greece roughly eight or nine months and had found it a paradise. [...] When I got to Greece, I saw a totally new world. [...] Had the war not intervened, I would have stayed in Greece and made it my home.'⁵⁷⁴ Miller would never return to the country, but he certainly reencountered the land and its people in Pandelis Prevelakis' works.

In November 1976, Prevelakis sent Miller an inscribed copy of Crète infortunée: Chronique du Soulèvement Crétois de 1866-1869, which was published that year in Paris. This novel narrates the 1866 uprisings in Crete. Like the three following



Inscribed copy of *Crète infortunée*.

⁵⁶⁹ Pandelis Prevelakis, Nikos Kazantzakis and His Odyssey: A Study of the Poet and the Poem, trans. Philip Sherrard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961). Trans. of Ο ποιητής και το ποίημα της Οδύσσειας (Αθήνα: Εστία, 1958).

⁵⁷⁰ Pandelis Prevelakis, The Sun of Death, pref. Henry Miller, trans. Abbot Rick (New York: Simon, 1964) 7. This novel, which was first published in Greek in 1959, is the first one of a trilogy, Οι δρόμοι της δημιουργίας [Roads to Creativity].

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁷² See *ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁷³ Pandélis Prévelakis, "Prospéro le Jeune," *Synthèses* 249/250 (Feb./Mar. 1967): 32.

⁵⁷⁴ Miller, My Life and Times 48-49. Actually, Miller spent about five months and a half in Greece.

works forming The Cretan trilogy, Wretched Crete: A Chronicle of the Rising of 1866 is a historical novel, but in Prevelakis' prose, historical events always reveal the human beings that experienced them and the soul of their land.⁵⁷⁵ That is why history often leads to emotion and philosophical reflection in his novels. This is the quality of Prevelakis' writing that Miller finds fascinating. About him, Miller says:

I feel as if I had known him all my life. He is a writer whose mind and spirit excite me [...] Every line breathes passion, eloquence, taste, sensitivity, understanding, wisdom, tolerance.⁵⁷⁶

The story of The Sun of Death is set in a village of Crete during the years of the first World War. The character of Aunt Roussaki is the perfect incarnation of the 'sensitivity, understanding, wisdom, [and] tolerance' that Miller admires in the author's fiction. Despite the fact that she finally loses a son in the war, Aunt Roussaki does not feel hatred for the Bulgarian prisoners, she even brings them some food. She stands for the eternal archetypal Mother.

She takes to her heart the fears, the sufferings and the passions of others. [...] The authorities oppose her. Society knows nothing of her. But she is the salt that preserves nature from corruption.⁵⁷⁷

Aunt Roussaki, who becomes a mother for her orphan nephew, is also the disconsolate mother who is told that her son is dead and cries: 'If mothers knew what lay ahead for their children [...] they would tear out their wombs and throw them to the dogs!'⁵⁷⁸ She loathes those who disregard the value of life and she does her best to protect it in all its forms. Henry Miller's words about this character are illuminating.

In it [the book] I found the mother I was never able to find in life. Perhaps I should say—I found the mother. At the same time I found what I also have never found in life—the great teacher. If on this earth we could all find such mothers, such teachers of life as Aunt Roussaki, what more could we ask, what greater blessing? Through this simple soul the author reveals to us the true nature of wisdom, the true method of education, the true means of implanting faith and love of life.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁵ Regarding Prevelakis, and also Kazantzakis, Durrell says that 'though they spent much of their maturity abroad in Athens and elsewhere, [they] remained obstinately Cretan-souled to the end.' See L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 81.

⁵⁷⁶ Miller, pref. to Prevelakis, The Sun of Death 7 and 9.

⁵⁷⁷ Prevelakis, The Sun of Death 89.

⁵⁷⁸ Prevelakis, The Sun of Death 233.

⁵⁷⁹ Miller, pref. to Prevelakis, The Sun of Death 9. In a letter to Alfred Perlès dated 5-21-65, Miller described Aunt Roussaki in similar terms: 'all love and understanding, plus the wisdom of the earth.' Qtd. in Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 477.

Actually, The Sun of Death was chosen as the ‘Book of Peace for 1962’ by the International Peace Library in Oslo. Perhaps, its author had just sought to present the old human values that he had learnt himself at his own boyhood house in Pigi, the same village that he depicts in the novel.

Of course, The Sun of Death deals with other subjects, such as language, death and creation, but in Prevelakis’ affectionate portrayal of Aunt Roussaki’s world, a world ‘cut down to human size,’⁵⁸⁰ Henry Miller recognized an image of the humanizing character of the Hellenic world that he had discovered and came to love.

Prevelakis, much younger than his friend Kazantzakis, belonged to a younger generation of the Modern Greek letters that, with his exception, has not been mentioned here yet. However, when Miller arrived in Athens in 1939, the first Greek writer that he met was the young poet Nikos Gatsos.

On the 19th of July, after the routine formalities on arrival at Piraeus and a visit to the Acropolis, Miller went on his own to the city centre. Jay Martin’s narration of the meeting between Miller and Gatsos deserves to be quoted.

Henry found his way to a café where Athens literary society often met, the Old Brazil Coffee House on Stadium Street. He wasn’t able to make clear to the waiter what it was he wanted to order until a couple of Greek students who spoke English came to his aid. After some literary talk he asked one of them, Nikos Gatsos, if they ever read American writers.⁵⁸¹ Nikos said “Yes” but explained that Greek students did not care for American literature particularly—it was too flat, too prosaic. Didn’t they admire any American writers, then? Henry asked. “Well, one anyway—someone you have never heard of—” Gatsos said tentatively. And that was? “Henry Miller, an American writer living in Paris!” “But *I* am Henry Miller,” he said flabbergasted. Gatsos was polite. “No, pardon me. The Henry Miller I speak of is a writer, the author of *Tropic of Cancer*, who resides in Paris.” It was a slapstick scene. Miller took out identification, passport, photos, and so on, trying to prove that he was *the* Henry Miller. The student tried patiently to explain that in America “Henry Miller” was a common name, while Miller spun out stories about his life in Paris and New York, trying simply to prove that he was himself. [...] At last Henry wore them down, and they talked on for several hours.⁵⁸²

Henry stayed in Athens for the night but the following morning he was sailing to Corfu to meet the Durrells. Nevertheless, this coincidental encounter of two authors who would eventually renew literature in their countries is at least curious, and it proves that a 27-years-old Gatsos already knew Miller’s Tropic of Cancer.

⁵⁸⁰ Prevelakis, The Sun of Death 73-74.

⁵⁸¹ He may refer to the Loumidis café at 38 Stadiou Street, which at the time was a haunt for actors, journalists and writers, among them, Nikos Gatsos. It was next to the bookshop Estias. The café closed in 1967 and the building was demolished.

⁵⁸² Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 358. Martin got the information from interviews with Charles Halderman and Nikos Gatsos in July 1971.

Nikos Gatsos (1911-1992) had lived in Paris and the south of France in 1935, and it was there where he probably discovered Miller's work, which had been just published the year before. In 1939, Gatsos had published some of his poems in the magazines *Néa Eστία* [New Home] and *Ρυθμός* [Rhythm] and he produced pieces of criticism for the main Athenian literary journals, such as *Μακεδονικές Ημέρες* [Macedonian Days], *Ρυθμός*, and *Τα Νέα Γράμματα*, the magazine of the man who soon would be Miller's Colossus of Maroussi.

In four years, Gatsos would publish his only book, *Amorgos*, which would give him such a great reputation as a poet, being admired by major Greek writers like George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis. Later, he would write renowned song lyrics for the most prominent Greek composers, such as Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, among others. His long poem *Amorgos* is a combination of surrealist imagery and the popular language of Greek folk songs with the background of the Aegean landscape. Written in the atrocious winter of 1941-1942, *Amorgos* portrays the terrible darkness of those years of German occupation but it also offers beauty and hope.



Nikos Gatsos.

Enough if a sharp sickle and plow are found in a joyful hand
Enough if there flower only
A little wheat for festivals, a little wine for remembrance, a little water
for the dust.⁵⁸³

On Corfu, Durrell and Miller met a close friend of Nikos Gatsos, Odysseas Elytis (1911-1996), who was an apprentice officer at the Corfu School of Reservist Officers. As Elytis explains in his *Open Papers*, when he was on leave, he used to meet an always hospitable Theodore Stephanides at Paleokastritsa, which was a real pleasure for him. He also used to visit Lawrence Durrell's house. That is how Elytis got to know Miller too. On the island, Durrell and Elytis, and also Miller, forged a lifelong friendship.⁵⁸⁴

In 1941, Elytis' poems started appearing in English. That year, "Anniversary" was published in *Folios of New Writing* (pp. 68-69). In 1945, his poems "Helen" and "The Age of Blue Memory" appeared in *New Writing and Daylight* (pp. 65-66). In the same magazine,

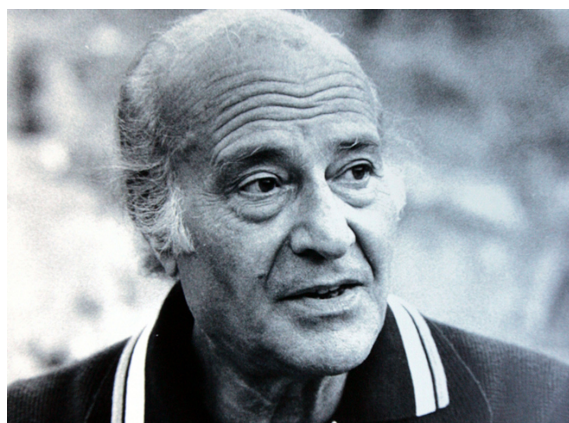
⁵⁸³ Qtd. in Keeley, *Inventing Paradise* 208, fragment.

⁵⁸⁴ Qtd. in Stéphanides, *Lettres à Lawrence Durrell* 32. See also Odysseas Elytis, interview, "Odysseas Elytis: La literatura española y la griega coinciden en el predomnio de la poesía," *El País* 22 Oct. 1980.

Elytis' poem "The Mad Pomegranate Tree" was published in 1946, together with Durrell's translation of Sikelianos' "The Death Feast of the Greeks" and two poems by George Seferis. Elytis' poem was translated by Bernard Spencer and the Greek writer Nanos Valaoritis, who, by the way, had also been a witness of Durrell's and Miller's encounter with Katsimbalis and Seferis.⁵⁸⁵ Three years later, John Lehmann's magazine would also publish Elytis' "Body of the Summer" and "Sadness of the Aegean".

Likewise, in an unpublished 1946 letter from Robert Liddell to Durrell that is kept at the George Seferis Archive of Gennadius Library in Athens, Liddell set forth his idea for an anthology of modern Greek poetry edited by Seferis, Durrell and Liddell himself. This work would include an introduction by Seferis, a selection from Sikelianos and Seferis in Durrell's translation, and among other authors, 'some Elytis' in Valaoritis' translation 'by kind permission of Daylight and New Writing. All with parallel Greek text.'⁵⁸⁶ Although Liddell's project finally did not go ahead, it bears witness to both Liddell's and Durrell's interest in Elytis' work. Later, in 1984, Durrell would contribute a preface to a book edited by Kimon Friar with photographs by John Veltri and commentary by Elytis.⁵⁸⁷

Durrell's esteem for Elytis' poetry would never falter. Among the books that Durrell kept in his last residence, three titles by or about Elytis have been preserved in the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell at Nanterre: the Penguin anthology of Elytis' poems,⁵⁸⁸ and two special issues on the author, those of the Oklahoma quarterly *Books Abroad* in 1975⁵⁸⁹ and the French magazine *Aporie* in 1986.⁵⁹⁰



Odysseas Elytis.

Actually, Durrell himself had contributed an article on Elytis for this *Books Abroad* issue devoted to the author. In his illuminating piece, Durrell writes:

[Elytis has] insisted that at bottom poetry is not simply a craft or a skill but an act of divination. His poems are spells, and they conjure up that eternal Greek

⁵⁸⁵ Odysseus Elytis, "The Mad Pomegranate Tree," *New Writing and Daylight* 7 (1946): 48-49.

⁵⁸⁶ Letter by Robert Liddell to L. Durrell, dated Monday 1946, George Seferis Archive (Robert Liddell Letters, letter 9), Gennadius Library, Athens.

⁵⁸⁷ Kimon Friar, ed., *The Greeks*, photog. John Veltri, pref. Lawrence Durrell, commentary by Odysseas Elytis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

⁵⁸⁸ Odysseus Elytis, *Selected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley, George Savidis, Philip Sherrard, John Stathatos, and Nanos Valaoritis, sel. and introd. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1981).

⁵⁸⁹ *Books Abroad* 49.4 (Autumn 1975).

⁵⁹⁰ *Aporie* 5 (1986).

world which has haunted and continues to haunt the European consciousness with its hints of a perfection that remains always a possibility.⁵⁹¹

The idea of ‘divination’, which also recalls Sikelianos’ work, as well as that of a ‘possible’ world describe very adequately Elytis’ work. However, it should be noted that no definite truth is given, creating that imaginary but also tangible world is only a ‘possibility’ in the hands of readers. In the same piece, Durrell says.

He has a romantic and lyrical mind which deploys a metaphysic of complete intellectual sensuality—the rocks, the islands, the blue Greek sea, the winds; they are at once “real” and also “signatures” in the alchemical sense.⁵⁹²

In this way, in Elytis’ poems, the Greek landscape offers the key to both this world and that one which Durrells calls ‘a possibility’. Let us consider his poem “Body of Summer”, for example. As Elytis explains, ‘it is the idea of summer which is personified by the body of a young man.’⁵⁹³

Who is he that lies on the shores beyond
Stretched on his back, smoking silver-burnt olive leaves?
Cicadas grow warm in his ears
Ants are at work on his chest
Lizards slide in the grass of his armpits
And over the seaweed of his feet a wave rolls lightly
Sent by the little siren that sang:

“O body of summer, naked, burnt
Eaten away by oil and salt
Body of rock and shudder of the heart
Great ruffling wind in the osier hair
Breath of basil above the curly pubic mound
Full of stars and pine needles
Body, deep vessel of the day!”⁵⁹⁴

With regard to that *other* world, Elytis defined it very clearly when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1979. In his lecture for the ceremony, he said:

It is in the inside of this world that the other world is contained, [...] it is with the elements of this world that the other world is recombined, the hereafter, that second reality situated above the one where we live unnaturally. It is a question of a reality to which we have a total right, and only our incapacity makes us unworthy of it.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹¹ Lawrence Durrell, “The Poetry of Elytis,” *Books Abroad* 49.4 (Autumn 1975): 660.

⁵⁹² *Id.*

⁵⁹³ Odysseas Elytis, interview, “Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry,” *Books Abroad* 49.4 (Autumn 1975): 639.

⁵⁹⁴ Elytis, *Selected Poems* 25, fragment.

⁵⁹⁵ “Odysseus Elytis - Nobel Lecture,” *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 25 July 2015. <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1979/elytis-lecture.html>.

Therefore, according to Elytis, even if that ‘second reality’ is ‘above’ our current unnatural existence, it should not be sought but on this earth we live in. The word ‘recombined’ brings Durrell’s comment about the poet’s alchemy to mind. Having the right to live it is not enough, like Sikelianos’ ideal Delphic world, it has to be perceived and felt to come into existence.

Some authors have found a similarity between Elytis’ ‘second reality’ and Lawrence Durrell’s notion of ‘the durable, the forever, the enormous Now.’⁵⁹⁶ In fact, Elytis’ ‘second reality’ is equally eternal and freshly present at the same time. Indeed, both authors’ works have many characteristics in common as argued by George Thaniel⁵⁹⁷ and Konstantinos Gkoutis.⁵⁹⁸

In *Ανοιχτά Χαρτιά* [*The Open Papers*], Elytis makes clear that his ‘second reality’ is not an afterlife following death as he reaffirms the connections between his work and life: ‘*Να γιατί γράφω. Γιατί η Ποίηση αρχίζει από 'κει που την τελευταία λέξη δεν την έχει ο θάνατος.*’ [‘That is why I write. Because Poetry begins where death has not the last word.’ My trans.].⁵⁹⁹ Or to use the author’s words in “Funerary Epigrams”, poetry offers a chance to satiate ‘our thirst for eternity’.⁶⁰⁰

In Elytis’ poetry, life is triumphant, even amidst tragic events and injustice, as in “Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign”⁶⁰¹ and “The Axion Esti”. One of his earliest poems, “Anniversary”, from *Orientations* (1940), may well illustrate metaphorically Elytis’ work, his lines as stones thrown towards infinity.

I brought my life this far
A stone pledged to the liquid element
Beyond the islands
Lower than the waves
Next to the anchors
—When keels pass, splitting with passion
Some new obstacle, and triumph over it
And hope dawns with all its dolphins
The sun’s gain in a human heart—
The nets of doubt draw in
A figure of salt
Carved with effort
Indifferent, white,
Which turns towards the sea the void of its eyes
Supporting infinity.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁶ Durrell, *The Black Book* 244.

⁵⁹⁷ See George Thaniel, *Seferis and Friends: Some of George Seferis’ Friends in the English-Speaking World*, ed. Ed Phinney (Stratford, ON: Mercury, 1994) 85.

⁵⁹⁸ See Konstantinos Gkoutis, “Lawrence Durrell et la Grèce.” Diss. U Paris 12, 2007.

⁵⁹⁹ Οδυσσεύς Ελύτης, “Πρώτα-πρώτα”, Ζ’, *Ανοιχτά Χαρτιά* (Αθήνα: Αστερίας, 1974) 142.

⁶⁰⁰ Odysseus Elytis, “Funerary Epigrams,” *Greece: A Traveler’s Literary Companion* 27.

⁶⁰¹ Like the protagonist of this work, Elytis was also in the Albanian front.

⁶⁰² Elytis, *Selected Poems* 9, fragment.

5. George Seferis:

The Carrier of the Flame of Prometheus

5.1. The Halcyon Days of Prewar Greece.

Among all the Greek authors that Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller knew throughout their lives, George Seferis (1900-1971) certainly plays a prominent role. In an interview in 1968, Durrell acknowledged Seferis as ‘one of the three wise men’ in his life, the others being T. S. Eliot and Henry Miller. About Seferis, Durrell said that the poet had given him his ‘metaphysical Greek education.’⁶⁰³ Durrell would allude again to these three men in 1974, in a lecture at Caltech in Pasadena, CA, while including a fourth inspirational ‘uncle’, George Katsimbalis.⁶⁰⁴ Later, in an address at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1981, Durrell would add Theodore Stephanides, who had been like a surrogate father to him.⁶⁰⁵ For his part, Miller would always consider Seferis as ‘a true poet’⁶⁰⁶ and a man ‘destined to transmit the flame’ of Prometheus.⁶⁰⁷

Although in The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller sets his first meeting with Katsimbalis in Syntagma Square in Athens, this may be a narrative licence. According to other sources, it took place at Katsimbalis’ house in Maroussi,⁶⁰⁸ a suburb in the



George Seferis.

⁶⁰³ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 92. The poet’s real surname was Seferiades but he is best known by his penname Seferis.

⁶⁰⁴ L. Durrell, Blue Thirst 16-17. In “The Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell’s Greece”, a documentary produced for BBC by Peter Adam in 1975 and broadcast in 1976, the author mentioned again Eliot, Miller and Seferis as his ‘three uncles’. Qtd. in Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 169.

⁶⁰⁵ Qtd. in MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 651. Three years later, in an interview for the Parisian *Magazine Littéraire*, Durrell repeated the same names as his ‘uncles’: T. S. Eliot, Miller, Seferis, Katsimbalis, and Stephanides. See Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 196.

⁶⁰⁶ Thaniel, Seferis and Friends 106.

⁶⁰⁷ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 46.

⁶⁰⁸ Katsimbalis’ house, called Trianemi [Three Winds], was a red-brown ‘massive, square, two-story house [...] on top of a pine-clad hillock at the westernmost end of Maroussi’ —a quieter and smaller area at the time— ‘overlooking the entire plain of Attica’. The description is by M. J. Politis, from “In Understanding of Greece,” *The New York Times*, 29 Mar. 1942: Book Review, 24. Unfortunately, the impressive house is no longer there. Today, on the corner of Chaimanta st. [*Χαίμαντρά*] and Esopou st. [*Αισώπου*], a white commemorative plaque recalls that historical building with its full name, as given by Kostis Palamas, “Trianemi, the Navel of Attica”

northeastern part of Athens. Miller and Durrell went there with Stephanides, who, as said above, was a close friend of Katsimbalis. It was on the 2nd of September 1939, on the eve of the declaration of war. Stephanides had been asked to translate some of Seferis' poems for their host, who would read them aloud. According to Seferis, 'there were then in English only the [manuscript] translations of Katsimbalis'.⁶⁰⁹ Therefore, the poems that Katsimbalis read were probably not only in Stephanides' translation but also, some of them, in his own's. In any case, when Seferis joined them, the reading had finished.⁶¹⁰ In his diary, Seferis narrated the event.

I found them all in the dining room finishing tea. George [Katsimbalis] had read them translations of my poems. So, when I arrived I found an air of interest in me. They are, I think, the first English writers that I have met. Durrell, a short and solid young man: the intelligent head of a satirist. [...] Miller, well-known, —although I haven't read anything by him— is clearly an American, more direct when he expresses himself [...]. He is exasperated with his own country. «You have the impression» he says to me «that the level of the men who can really read a literary work is getting lower and lower, like water letting see the stones at the bottom. [...]».⁶¹¹

Years later, in a talk, Durrell also related his memories of the meeting at Katsimbalis' house in Maroussi with his characteristic sense of humour.

When I went to Athens I took up with Seferis and Katsimbalis [...]—he had a sort of Wuthering Heights of a house where numberless barrels of wine always seemed to be leaking all over everything. And on this creaky balcony, first weekend in Athens that I was there, I took Miller and Seferis and Katsimbalis and two other writers met in the evening to read verses. It was extremely memorable because the reading got steadily thicker and thicker because of the *retsina*,⁶¹² which was extremely powerful. And at night our wives came and fanned us with leaves and implored us to stop.⁶¹³

About the 'two other writers', Durrell does not give their names. One of them might be the novelist George Theotokas (1906-1966), who was a close friend of Seferis and Katsimbalis and one of the co-founders of *Ta Néa Grámmata*. Theotokas was a regular in their circle and actually, he was also in the dinner that was held in Plaka (Athens) on the

[Τριανέμι, ο ομφαλός της Αττικής]. The area, then called the forest of Magkoufanas [Μαγκουφάνας], is now known as Pefki [Πεύκη].

⁶⁰⁹ Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry* 199.

⁶¹⁰ See Beaton, *George Seferis* 174.

⁶¹¹ Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Γ'* 131, my trans.

⁶¹² *Retsina* is a traditional Greek type of white resinated wine.

⁶¹³ L. Durrell, *Blue Thirst* 17. In a 1968 interview with Edmund Keeley, Seferis confirms that he first met Durrell with Miller on that occasion. See Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry* 198.

26th December 1939, the day before his departure from Greece, on the occasion of Miller's birthday.⁶¹⁴

Anyway, beyond the uncertain identity of the two other guests, both memoirs about the event, as well as Miller's own recollection in The Colossus of Maroussi, bear witness to the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Seferis and Miller would never meet again after the latter left for America but their correspondence would go on for decades. Durrell would be able to meet Seferis often: while living in Greece; during their exile in Egypt; in London, when Seferis was the Counsellor at the Greek Embassy; in Cyprus, while Durrell lived on the island; and later, in Athens, when Durrell revisited Greece in the 1960s.⁶¹⁵

War, firstly WW2 and then the Greek Civil War, would change the reality of the country in which Seferis, Katsimbali, Miller, Durrell and the other friends had shared such a good time in 1939. Some months before the entry of Greece in World War II, in June 1940, Seferis wrote to Miller describing his uneasiness about the uncertainty of the moment and the effects of that situation on Greek people.

I have just read in the newspapers that a ship is leaving tomorrow for America and that letters should be posted before midnight. Perhaps it is my last chance to communicate with you for a long time. And I take it. [...] The nights at the Constitution Square seem to me an idyllic time lost in the dreams of the Creation. No possibility to express anything, even with closest friends. And the statements I hear from my human-fellows produce upon me the sensation of a speech made in nightmare.⁶¹⁶

In the same letter, Seferis tells Miller that Katsimbali has not changed though. 'Blood never becomes water—as we say in Greek', he adds. He also informs Miller that he has been to Durrells' daughter christening, referring humorously to her as 'Bouboulina-Berengaria.'⁶¹⁷ At the end of the letter, Seferis returns again to their happy days together, which seem distant in time to him. 'We speak about you every time we meet. Your remembrance has acquired the permanence of a myth.'⁶¹⁸ Quite an interesting remark, taking into account the book that Miller would write about that time in Greece.

⁶¹⁴ See Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 363, and MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 484.

⁶¹⁵ At least, in two documented occasions. Firstly, in 1962, as explained by Durrell to Diana Menuhin. Qtd. in L. Durrell, Spirit of Place 154. Then, in 1963, according to Durrell's letter to Miller dated 2nd Oct. 1963. See MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 396.

⁶¹⁶ George Seferis, George Seferis to Henry Miller: Two Letters from Greece (New Haven, CT: Pharos, 1990) n.p., fragment.

⁶¹⁷ A reference to Laskarina Bouboulina, the heroine of the Greek War of Independence, and the female proper name Berengaria, meaning 'bear's spear', which was Durrell's older daughter's second given name. He also used to refer to her as 'Nansopoula' [Little Nancy, see Hodgkin, Amateurs in Eden 257]. Penelope Berengaria Durrell was born on 4th of June 1940. She died in October 2010.

⁶¹⁸ Seferis, George Seferis to Henry Miller: Two Letters from Greece n.p., fragment.

Miller's key mythical figure in The Colossus of Maroussi is Katsimbalis. A good example of his mythmaking of the Colossus is found in the author's picture of Katsimbalis' rich monologue during an evening at the veranda of his house, which recalls indeed their first meeting, as related by Durrell and Seferis.

Seferiades was expected any moment and the captain [Antoniou]⁶¹⁹ with him. I could feel that he growing a bit frantic inwardly, that he was making a rapid calculation to see if there were time enough to get it off his chest before his friends arrived. He was fluttering a bit, like a bird whose wing is caught. He kept on mumbling and muttering, just to keep the engine going until he had decided on his direction. And then somehow, without being aware of the transition, we were standing on the aerial verandah overlooking the low hills, on one of which there was a lone windmill, and Katsimbalis was in full flight, a spread eagle performance about the clear atmosphere and the blue-violet hues that descend with the twilight, about ascending and descending varieties of monotony, about individualistic herbs and trees, about exotic fruits and inland voyages, about thyme and honey and the sap of the arbutus which makes one drunk, about islanders and highlanders, about the men of the Peloponnesus, about the crazy Russian woman who got moonstruck one night and threw off her clothes, how she danced about in the moonlight without a stitch on while her lover ran to get a strait-jacket.⁶²⁰

Along with Miller's central character, his narration of his Greek experience also includes an excellent portrait of Seferis the man and the poet. However, before going into it, let us quote here a letter written by Seferis to Miller after the first victories of the Greek army in the Albanian front, which depicts another interesting aspect of the poet's personality.

My dear Miller,

I thought of you very often since the beginning of this our war. If you were here with us now, you would feel very deeply, I'm sure, this extraordinary spirit which spread all over the country, two months ago, like a fire—the fire which says no to everything we hate, the fire of daring and purification.—Something is happening in Greece now, and I regret this absence of yours.⁶²¹

Although Miller was an advocate of pacifism, he probably understood that spirit of resistance to fear and oppression which inflamed the Greek people. Seferis' reference to

⁶¹⁹ This may give us a clue about one of the two unidentified 'greek writers' mentioned by Durrell in his account of their first meeting at Maroussi. Captain Dimitris I. Antoniou (1906-1994), known as *Takis* or *Tonio*, was a close friend of Seferis and Katsimbalis who spent much of his time ashore with them. He was a seaman and poet. He appears in many writings by Durrell, Miller, and Seferis. The Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell at Nanterre still holds three titles by or about Antoniou: the inscribed Greek editions of his collections Indies [Ἰνδίες] and Haikus and Tanka [Χαϊ-καϊ και Τανκα] and The Poet D.I. Antoniou [Ὁ Ποιητής Δ.Ι. Αντωνίου], a compilation of articles about him by Seferis, George Theotokas, Zissimos Lorenzatos, et al. These titles are numb. respectively 872, 870, and 889 in the catalogue.

⁶²⁰ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 38-39.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, fragment. Dated 29-12-40.

‘fire’ also alludes to the eternal Greece, which in those difficult times seemed to arise as a single people. This interest of Seferis in perpetuity through a dialogue between renewal and continuity is also reflected in Miller’s perceptive portrayal of the poet.

The man who has caught this spirit of eternity which is everywhere in Greece and who has embedded it in his poems is George Seferiades, whose pen name is Seferis. [...] Seferiades, is more Asiatic than any of the Greeks I met; he is from Smyrna originally but has lived abroad for many years. [...] He is the arbiter and reconciler of conflicting schools of thought and ways of life. [...] He is interested in all forms of cultural expression and seeks to abstract and assimilate what is genuine and fecundating in all epochs.⁶²²

What Miller calls the ‘spirit of eternity’ in Greece, and also this peculiar blending of epochs and traditions are certainly typical traits of Seferis’ poetry, as it will be discussed further on. Lawrence Durrell’s observations about Seferis’ poems offer another feature of most of his writing. In the same entry of his diary, that of the 2nd of September, Seferis wrote down:

Then Durrell came and sat next to me. He told me that he was surprised by the absence of sentimentalism («unsentimental in the good sense») in my poems. This he found striking in a Greek. He asked me whether I had been brought up with English literature. He thought it odd when I told him that I had had barely any contact with the English writers before the summer of 1931.⁶²³ He wanted to know where I had found the pseudonym Mathios Paskalis and he was amused when I informed him that I haven’t read the homonymous work by Pirandello and that I had fortuitously found the name in the street, on a cinema poster, in the period in which Mosjoukine played that role.⁶²⁴

At the end of that evening, Miller said to Seferis: ‘What is curious about you is that you turn things inside out.’⁶²⁵ It is indeed an interesting remark about an author who, unlike Kostis Palamas, did not consider the ancient past as a quarry but as living material speaking to the present.⁶²⁶

Durrell’s and Miller’s words point out some of the characteristics of this poet’s work. In an interview, Seferis himself acknowledged the truth in these first comments: ‘It was nice

⁶²² Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi* 46.

⁶²³ From that summer of 1931 until 1934, Seferis worked as Vice-Consul and later, as Consul, at the Greek Consulate in London.

⁶²⁴ Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Γ’* 132, my trans. Seferis refers to the Russian actor Ivan Mosjoukine in Marcel L’Herbier’s film *Feu Mathias Pascal* [The Late Mathias Pascal], the 1925 film adaptation of Luigi Pirandello’s novel *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1904). Roderick Beaton argues that Mathios Paskalis probably made Seferis think of Aeschylus’ dictum *mathos pathei* [learning through suffering]. See Beaton, *George Seferis* 85.

⁶²⁵ Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Γ’* 132, my trans.

⁶²⁶ About this difference between Palamas and Seferis, see, for instance, Ricks, *The Shade of Homer* 55.

to meet them; they were, let's say the first—or if not exactly the first, then the second or third—readers with an understanding of what I was doing.’⁶²⁷

Of course, while in Athens, Durrell and Miller had time for discussion with their Greek friends but also for fun and socializing. The Colossus of Maroussi and Seferis' diary provide many anecdotes about those days. Their circle also included some foreigners. Among them, the Polish count Max Nimiec. They had known Nimiec in Corfu, where he lived as a refugee. Nimiec was terminally ill and he wanted to enjoy his last months spending his fortune. Once, he actually drove his little Morris ‘up the steps of the King George Hotel’, the luxury establishment at Syntagma Square where he lived.⁶²⁸ To top it off, Ian MacNiven informs that Nimiec was marked by German Intelligence as a ‘British spymaster’.⁶²⁹ He would die of heart failure by the end of September 1940, while dancing at the Argentina club, close by the Under-Ministry of Press and Tourism in Filellinon Street.⁶³⁰ In a 2004 article, the writer Nanos Valaoritis, who in 1939 was only eighteen and had just seen his first work published in *Ta Néa Grámmata*, recalls the parties Seferis held ‘in his small apartment in Kidathenaion Street in Plaka’, where Valaoritis had had the chance to meet Miller.⁶³¹ In fact, one of the episodes that he narrates is also a scene of The Colossus of Maroussi: ‘that famous occasion, when all of us piled up in a taxi to the Acropolis, [and] Katsimbalis woke up the roosters at two o'clock in the morning’.⁶³² In his piece, Valaoritis also recollects a young and lively Durrell.

The twenty-five-year-old Larry was always present, always cheerful, all of us whirling around dizzily in the oncoming torment of war. It was a time of excitement and anticipation of something big, something monstrous, vaguely felt that would shape and change our lives.⁶³³

As Valaoritis observes, war was in the air, even if they had to forget about it in order to go on with their lives. In his diary entry for the 24th of October 1939, Seferis explains that after spending the previous evening with Miller in a taverna at Agamon Square, Miller accompanied him on his way home and then, ‘the topic of war came up.’ Suddenly, Miller cut him short. ‘I'd prefer not to talk about it so soon’, he said. Seferis writes: ‘This shocked

⁶²⁷ Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 199.

⁶²⁸ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 178-179. See also Σεφέρης, Μέρες Γ' 244-245.

⁶²⁹ MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 177.

⁶³⁰ See Σεφέρης, Μέρες Γ' 245.

⁶³¹ Nanos Valaoritis, “Remembering the Poets: Translating Seferis with Durrell and Bernard Spencer,” Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 49. Seferis' address was then 9 Kydathinaion St., Plaka, Athens, opposite the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, where he would get married to Maria (*Maro*), née Zannou, on the 10th of April 1941.

⁶³² *Id.*

⁶³³ *Id.*

me. It seemed as if somebody had touched him on a sore spot.⁶³⁴ It was the same reason why Miller had previously returned alone to Corfu in September, while the Durrells stayed in Athens. In a letter to Anaïs Nin from this time, regarding Miller, Durrell says: ‘The war is too big a thing for him to swallow; he must reject it.’⁶³⁵ Although his remark may be that of someone trying to conceal his own anxieties about the issue, it gives a clue about Miller’s decision to be alone on Corfu, trying to find peace by the sea. In another letter from Miller to Nin, dated September 9, he writes:

A week of war and here I am in the dead silence of a tiny Greek village—Kalami—writing you tonight. Strangest of all is that I feel absolutely tranquil, sure somehow that everything will turn out all right. [...] Why I elected to come back here alone, when there were so many opportunities of one sort and another in Athens, I can scarcely say. [...] If nothing else comes of it I shall at least learn the meaning of solitude about which I have spoken so much.⁶³⁶

In the same letter mentioned above from Durrell to Nin, his words hint at the pre-war atmosphere in Athens: ‘We do not speak about the war here, but it is a kind of weight we carry among us, among our frivolities. The radio pours in its news all day’.⁶³⁷

However, after his lonely stay on Corfu, Miller probably missed his conversations with the Athenian friends. After spending some weeks on Corfu, when Nancy went for a while to the island, he decided to return to Athens with her.⁶³⁸

While talking with Katsimbalis, Seferis and the painter Nikos Ghika at the Loumidis Café,⁶³⁹ the idea that war may destroy much of what they loved in Greece again came up. Somebody suggested that they should organize a trip and show Miller their country before the war burst into their lives.⁶⁴⁰



Miller with Katsimbalis. Hydra, 1939. Photo. by Seferis.

⁶³⁴ Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Γ'* 142 (both).

⁶³⁵ Qtd. in Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin: Volume Three 1939-1944*, ed. and pref. Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: Harvest-Harcourt, 1969) 7.

⁶³⁶ Miller, *Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One* 209.

⁶³⁷ Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*, vol. 3, 7-8.

⁶³⁸ See MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell* 220-221.

⁶³⁹ As said above, the Loumidis café was a favourite place for journalists and writers that had been opened the previous year at 38 Stadiou Street. It shut down in 1967.

⁶⁴⁰ See Martin, *Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller* 360.

So, the four of them went via Poros to Hydra, where Ghika had his ancestral home. There, the painter guided his American friend around the island. Afterwards, Miller and Katsimbalis resumed the journey on their own. First, they decided to visit the island of Spetses but they ended in Ermioni, in the peninsula, so they went by car through Kranidi to Portocheli, where they were able to sail under a storm to Spetses. On the island, Miller met a friend of Katsimbalis', who appears in The Colossus of Maroussi, as Kyrios Ypsilon [Mr. Upsilon], 'to be discreet', says Miller.⁶⁴¹ It was Konstantinos Tsatsos, Seferis' brother-in-law. Tsatsos was a professor of law who had taken refuge on the island after having 'infuriated Metaxas by calling for the victory of the democracies then under threat.'⁶⁴² After his stay on Spetses, they went by ferry, via Leonidion, to Nafplio. There, they visited three ancient sites of the region of Argolis (Epidaurus, Tiryns, and Mycenae). After Mycenae, Katsimbalis received a business call from Athens and they returned.⁶⁴³

Athens offered Miller many opportunities too. He stayed at the Grande Bretagne Hotel in Syntagma Square, in the city centre and not far from Seferis' apartment nor from the Durrells' flat at 40 Anagnostopoulou Street. Sometimes, he met Ghika, usually at the old Apotsos café,⁶⁴⁴ and they talked about their common interests (Eastern philosophy, Zen, yoga, etc.). It is also worth noting that their exchange of books reveals much about their readings at that time. Miller, for example, gave Ghika an edition of Lao-Tse and he was given three books on yoga by the painter, as said above.⁶⁴⁵ Previously, while on Corfu, Durrell had given Miller a copy of The Odyssey.⁶⁴⁶ When Miller decided to visit Mycenae, Seferis also gave the American a text by Aeschylus.⁶⁴⁷



Miller, Ghika and Durrell. Paris, 1967.

⁶⁴¹ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 65.

⁶⁴² See Keeley, Inventing Paradise 90. After WW2, Konstantinos Tsatsos (1899-1987) entered politics. He was a member of parliament and held various ministerial posts until the regime of the Greek military Junta (1967-1974). In 1975, he was elected President of the Republic and after his five-year term, he retired.

⁶⁴³ See Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 52-101, and Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 360-361. Miller also refers to his stay in the Peloponnese in The Books in My Life 164 and 304.

⁶⁴⁴ The Apotsos [Απότσος] was one of the legendary *ouzerias* at the centre of Athens, at 10 Panepistimiou. An *ouzeria* is a tavern which serves *ouzo* (a Greek liquor) and *mezedes* (small dishes). At present, the place is a restaurant called Cellier Le Bistrot.

⁶⁴⁵ See Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 361, and Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 214.

⁶⁴⁶ See MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 216. Durrell had three editions of this work while on Corfu. See L. Durrell, Blue Thirst 14.

⁶⁴⁷ See Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 201.

Apart from meeting their friends and showing Miller some of the sights in Athens,⁶⁴⁸ Durrell and Miller were also able to visit the National Observatory of Athens. Stephanides, who got the invitation for the three of them, recalls in his memoir ‘the excitement and enthusiasm of both Lawrence and Henry when, for the first time in their lives, they were able to see Saturn and his rings and the jewel-like Pleiades throughout the big telescope.’⁶⁴⁹ This experience caused such an impression on Miller so as to lead him to include some pages about it in his work. As the author says, it is an ‘emotional photograph’ of what he saw, his own symbolical interpretation of those astronomical images.⁶⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it gives readers an insight into his thoughts at that time. About the Pleiades, Miller says:

The image I shall always retain is that of Chartres, an effulgent rose window shattered by a hand grenade. I mean it in a double or triple sense—of awesome, indestructible beauty, of cosmic violation, of world ruin suspended in the sky like a fatal omen, of the eternity of beauty even when blasted and desecrated. “As above so below,” runs the famous saying of Hermes Trismegistus. To see the Pleiades through a powerful telescope is to sense the sublime and awesome truth of these words.⁶⁵¹

Although the ghost of war remained a permanent threat in his mind, Miller voiced his intention to visit Knossos in a conversation and Seferis generously got him a flight ticket to Crete. It was the first time that Miller flew. He landed at the seaport of Heraklion. One of those days, Antoniou’s ship “Acropolis” moored in that port and Miller ‘met him for a few minutes’. ‘He was still thinking about Sherwood Anderson’, says Miller. Anderson had been the topic of one of their conversations in Athens, and Miller confesses that whenever he later reread him, he was reminded of Antoniou.⁶⁵²

It was not the only writer that Miller met in Heraklion. Katsimbalis had given him a card of introduction to a ‘leading literary figure of Crete’ who was a friend of the former’s. Although he did not remember his name when he wrote The Colossus of Maroussi and he chose to call him Mr. Tsousou, his journey diary lets readers know that Mr. Tsousou’s name was Alexiou (transliterated by the author as ‘Alexion’), his full real name was Lefteris Alexiou (1890-1964). Alexiou was the son of the erudite journalist and printer Stylianos Alexiou. He was the brother of Galatea Kazantzakis (Kazantzakis’ first wife) and the writer and pedagogue Elli Alexiou. Lefteris Alexiou was a poet, playwright, musician, composer,

⁶⁴⁸ See, for instance, MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 219: ‘Larry, Nancy and Theodore took him up the Acropolis and introduced him to their favourites tavernas in Athens and Piraeus.’

⁶⁴⁹ Stephanides, Autumn Gleanings 59. Although Miller says this visit was after his return from Nafplio (The Colossus of Maroussi 101-102), Stephanides holds in his memoir that it was in October (see Autumn Gleanings 76), that is, before Miller departed for Hydra and the Peloponnese.

⁶⁵⁰ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 106. See also *ibid.*, 102-106.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁵² Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 34-35.

translator and high school teacher. Both Katsimbalis and Alexiou contributed to the Greek literary magazine *O Kýκλος* [The Circle], which was published in Athens from 1931 to 1939 and after the war, from 1945 to 1947; the latter being one of its steadiest collaborators.

This polyglot man of letters had a studio in his home town which became a meeting place for the intellectuals of Heraklion and the whole island, among them, the Kazantzakis. His son Stylianos Alexiou (1921-2013), bearing his grandfather's name, also recalls in his memoir that his father's studio was visited by Henry Miller.⁶⁵³ In *The Colossus of Maroussi*, Miller mentions their exchange of views about literature and that visit to Alexiou's studio 'in the loft of a dilapidated building'.⁶⁵⁴ His description of the place, packed with books, paintings and all sort of objects is telling about the cultivated man Miller got to know: 'In this little den of Tsoutsou's [Alexiou's] there was a cross-cut of everything which had gone to make the culture of Europe: This room would live on as the monks lived on during the Dark Ages.' There, Miller was introduced to other Cretan literati. He gives some details of their talk and he says that they were mostly poets but, unfortunately, no names are given.⁶⁵⁵ Later, Miller would explain the event to Seferis, as the poet's diary shows.⁶⁵⁶

The news that an American writer was visiting the island also reached Mr. Tsousis' ears. Stavros Tsousis (1896-1989) was the Prefect of Heraklion.⁶⁵⁷ Alexiou acted as an interpreter at Miller's and Tsousis' meeting. Tsousis, who also appears in Miller's journey diary, is presented in his book on Greece as 'the perfect official', an intelligent 'man of steel', but also a very hospitable one, who even offered Miller his own limousine 'to inspect the island at leisure'.⁶⁵⁸



Stavros Tsousis.



Lefteris Alexiou.

⁶⁵³ See Στυλιανός Αλεξίου, *Κείμενα φιλίας και μνήμης* (Heraklion, Gr.: Δοκιμάκης, 2010).

⁶⁵⁴ Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi* 131. About their talk, see *ibid.*, 115-116. The studio was at 3 Argiraki St., Heraklion.

⁶⁵⁵ See Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi* 131-134.

⁶⁵⁶ See Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Γ'* 152.

⁶⁵⁷ He was the Prefect of Heraklion from the 3rd of June 1939 until the end of the Battle of Crete on the 1st of June 1944. His nephew Panagiotis Tsousis holds an identification card of his uncle issued at Chania (Crete) on 26th of March 1942, which proves that, at least, until March 1942 he was in Crete. Later, he would return to his hometown, Messini (Messenia, Peloponnese, Gr.), where he died on the 1st of March 1989.

⁶⁵⁸ Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi* 166-169.

In Crete, apart from Heraklion, Miller visited Knossos, Gortyna, Phaistos, Hagia Triada, and Chania [Miller uses its Venetian name, Canea]. In Chania, he boarded a ship which stopped at Rethimno, and he returned to Athens.

In Athens, Miller was informed by the American Consulate that he had to leave the country. In order to ‘find out how much time they would accord [him]’, he visited the American Minister, Mr. Lincoln MacVeagh, who told him there was no hurry but he should leave ‘as soon as possible.’⁶⁵⁹ In “Remember to Remember”, the author provides a more detailed account of that meeting.

When the American Minister at Athens forced me to return I was heartbroken. I had used every argument [...] But he was adamant. It was for my protection, he explained. “And if I don’t want your protection?” I asked. For answer he gave me a shrug of the shoulders.⁶⁶⁰

Since his departure was then certain, his Greek friends started organizing Miller’s last trips. Firstly, Katsimbalis, Ghika and him went to Delphi, as said in chapter 3. Then, Miller revisited Eleusis with Ghika.⁶⁶¹ Finally, he spent three days with the Durrells touring around the Peloponnese in Nimiec’s ‘flimsy little English car’.⁶⁶² They were in Corinth, Myceane – ‘which the Durrells had not yet visited’⁶⁶³ – and they headed for the south, where they went through Tripoli to Sparta, where they also visited the Byzantine site of Mystras.

Back in Athens for his birthday, Miller still had the time for a last dinner with Katsimbalis and Seferis. Although Miller does not mention it in The Colossus of Maroussi, Durrell, reminds him in a letter that Robin Fedden, George Theotokas, and the critic and historian of Modern Greek Literature Konstantinos Thiseos Dimaras (1904-1992) were also present that evening.⁶⁶⁴

The following day, Ghika accompanied him to the Piraeus and Miller boarded on the *Exochorda*, unhappily accepting his fate. Of course, there were other reasons behind the author’s acceptance of his departure. Jay Martin points out a few of them. In September 1939, his Paris editor had died and due to war, it was unlikely that he could get his monthly payment of royalties from the editor’s son, taking into account the situation in France and war restrictions on transfers. Moreover, publishing in America seemed possible for the first

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 180 (both).

⁶⁶⁰ Miller, Remember to Remember 319.

⁶⁶¹ As his journey diary proves, Miller had previously been to Eleusis and the monastery of Daphni; see Miller, “First Impressions of Greece,” Sextet: Six Essays 68. For his visit to Delphi, see The Colossus of Maroussi 188-197.

⁶⁶² Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 211.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁶⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 232, Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 363, and MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 484.

time, and Anaïs Nin had also moved to New York.⁶⁶⁵ Miller adds still another good reason in a letter to Seferis dated December 1939: ‘It seems my father is on his last legs’.⁶⁶⁶

At that time, Miller produced several little books hand-written on printer’s dummies as gifts for some of his friends.⁶⁶⁷ While in Greece, he finished one of these booklets, entitled “The Heaven Beyond Heaven”, which he had started in Paris on Anaïs Nin’s 36th birthday, as a present for her.⁶⁶⁸ The last one of these little books was the author’s journey diary in Greece, which he inscribed and gave to Seferis in November 1939. This is the diary that Miller calls ‘the log of the Immaculate Conception’, which he started to write in Hydra and ‘finished for Seferiades at Delphi’.⁶⁶⁹ Almost thirty years later, in an interview, Seferis recalled the event with emotion.

He said to me one day: “My dear George, you’ve been so kind to me, and I want to give you something.” And he produced a diary which he had been keeping during his stay in Greece. I said: “Look here, Henry. But after all, I know that you are going to write a book, and you can’t write the book—I mean you might need your notes.” He said: “No. All those things are here,” pointing to his head. I offered to make a typescript copy for him. “No,” he said, “a gift must be whole.” Well, that’s a splendid way of behaving, I think. And I shall never forget that.⁶⁷⁰

Although Miller did not forget that log about one of the most special periods of his life,⁶⁷¹ he never wrote Seferis to ask for a copy of his present to him. Several months after the poet’s death, he wrote to Maro Seferis, his widow, to request a photocopy of the document, which she sent to him. After asking her for permission to publish it, Miller’s little diary appeared as First Impressions of Greece in 1973.

As stated above, Miller’s departure did not put an end to the friendship between Seferis and himself. Their correspondence shows they carried on exchanging opinions and

⁶⁶⁵ Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 362-363.

⁶⁶⁶ Qtd. in Beaton, George Seferis 448, n54.

⁶⁶⁷ See Miller, “The Waters Reglitterized,” Sextet: Six Essays 92.

⁶⁶⁸ “The Heaven Beyond Heaven” was mostly written in Greece. In fact, the author explained that it was that country which was his ‘heaven beyond heaven’ (see Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 366). This little book, which is kept at the Morris Library, Southern Illinois U (Carbondale IL), has never been published but Karl Orend provides a good commentary about it in “Nothing But Light. Notes on Henry Miller’s Birthday Gift for Anaïs Nin & The Tranquility of Struggle,” Nexus 8 (2011): 15-68. Orend argues that ‘in his descriptions of the place [Greece], for Anaïs, he was already rehearsing The Colossus of Maroussi’ (31).

⁶⁶⁹ See Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 58.

⁶⁷⁰ Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 200.

⁶⁷¹ Miller, for example, makes a reference to that printer’s dummy in a letter to Durrell dated 22 Jan. 1946 (see Wickes, ed. Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence 217). Later, after reading the interview for The Paris Review in which Seferis alludes to the diary, Miller sent him a letter praising the friend and the poet (Feb. 1971), but he did not mention the log either.

thoughts for years.⁶⁷² Despite the fact that Miller and Seferis never saw each other again, they also got news about each other through Durrell, Katsimbali and others.

It is also worthy to note that Miller sent fragments of The Colossus of Maroussi to Seferis before its publication. In a letter dated 31st of May 1940, Miller sent him a few pages of what he called then ‘his essay on Greece’. On the 25th June, he sent him the whole first part of the book, asking him to pass it on to Katsimbali after reading it. On the 15th October, he sent Seferis the other two parts.⁶⁷³ About the poet’s reception of the book, his letter from the 8th of October is quite illustrative. He says that he brought Miller’s typescript up to the Areopagus hill, opposite the Acropolis, to read it there under the sun.

As I turned over your pages I felt the same sensation growing in me, which I had when hearing for the first time Louis Armstrong one foggy night in London. There upon the rock, between some short pine trees and cactuses the negro face with pearls of sweat rolling upon its cheeks, was dancing round me like the head of a modern saint. My cares and sorrows, which are sometimes now rather heavy, went away—gone really gone— my dear friend, with the sound of the enormous trumpet shining in the sky like the sun.⁶⁷⁴

Seferis’ reference to Louis Armstrong alludes to the part of The Colossus of Maroussi that Miller called “Boogie Woogie Passacaglia”.⁶⁷⁵ In an interview, the poet admitted that in the early 1930s he had become ‘a jazz addict’. He adds that Miller’s allusion to Armstrong may have been inspired by listening to records by that musician at Seferis’ apartment.

He had heard Armstrong on a small gramophone—a quite elementary gramophone—that I had then in my home in Athens. I myself had discovered jazz eight or ten years earlier...⁶⁷⁶

After the publication of The Colossus of Maroussi, *The New York Times* published a review by M. J. Politis, who, as a native Greek, argued that Miller’s work was ‘one of the most remarkable books ever written on Greece.’ ‘Here is a book with more Aristophanesque pattern than Sophoclean prosody. Here is the vigor of budding, primeval Greece,’ he added.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷² With the logical interruptions typically found in long-distance friendships, their correspondence spans from early 1940 until some months before Seferis’ death.

⁶⁷³ See Thaniel, Seferis and Friends 124-125.

⁶⁷⁴ Qtd. in *Labrys* 8 (1983): 52.

⁶⁷⁵ By then, Miller had undoubtedly sent him some pages of the second part of the book, since Seferis’ comment refers to pages 138-145 of The Colossus of Maroussi.

⁶⁷⁶ Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 201. Actually, in The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller mentions a ‘jazz seance at the austere bachelor chambers of Seferiades in the Rue Kydathenaion’ and he describes his large collection of albums, including Louis Armstrong and other jazz musicians, such as Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Count Basie and Pee Wee Russell (106-107).

⁶⁷⁷ M. J. Politis, “In Understanding of Greece,” *The New York Times*, 29 Mar. 1942: Book Review, 24.

In a letter started on the 7th of March 1942 and finished on the 11th, Seferis tells Miller he has received a copy of The Colossus of Maroussi. His words about Miller's book show the poet's enthusiasm about it.

I got the Colossus at last (one copy from the Colt Press), in the train at Johannesburg station on my way to Cape Town. It has been like [a] rainbow against the sky. You are a spring of life, Miller. I have already translated a few pages (Poros) and sent them to friends in Egypt. Do send me two or three copies more, if you can. The Colossus must be read on the other side of your continent.⁶⁷⁸

In a previous letter to Durrell from Pretoria, Seferis had also expressed that he 'would like to make [a] translation of the Colossos.'⁶⁷⁹ In fact, he would translate some pages, including, at least, the passage about Poros, which was one of his favourite parts of the book.⁶⁸⁰ In the end, Miller would see the long-yearned-for Greek edition appear in 1965,⁶⁸¹ in a translation by the critic Andreas Karandonis, who had also been one of the earliest promoters of Seferis' work in Greece, having acclaimed his poetry since the publication of Turning Point [Στροφή] (1931), his first collection of poems.

However, that was long after WW2 and the period of exile, an experience that would so heavily influence Durrell's and Seferis' writings of that time. Running away from war, the Durrells and their baby would sail in a caique from Kalamata to Crete, being lucky enough not to be discovered by the Germans. For his part, Seferis would also go into exile with the Greek government. On the island, Seferis would meet them. In a letter dated 15 December 1941, the poet tells Miller about it.

I remember him [Durrell] in Crete. He came from Kalamata, on a sort of boat like the one you used to go to Spetses—with Nancy and Bouboulina [little Penelope]. We were starving when we met that night. Nancy waiting with her child for some food in a very sad hotel. Everything was full up in the town. The taverna stuffed with a queer crowd of soldiers and homeless civilians, sweeping the dishes like grasshoppers on a vineyard. [...] After one or two days he was gone to Egypt.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁸ Letter by George Seferis to Henry Miller, dated 7-8-11 March 1942, George Seferis Archive (Seferis' [Copies] Letters, Υποενότητα II.E, box 61, file 3 [1941-1942], letter 17), Gennadius Library, Athens.

⁶⁷⁹ Letter by George Seferis to Lawrence Durrell, dated 'beginning of Nov. 1941' by Maro Seferis, George Seferis Archive (Seferis' [Copies] Letters, Υποενότητα II.E, box 61, file 3 [1941-1942], letter 4), Gennadius Library, Athens.

⁶⁸⁰ See, for instance, Seferis' remarks about this in Keeley, Modern Greek Poetry 200.

⁶⁸¹ About Miller's wish to have the book published in Greek, see, for instance, Kersnowski, ed., Conversations with Henry Miller 8; also, Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 393, and the author's reference to this matter in a letter to Seferis dated 9 March 1949, qtd. in Thaniel, Seferis and Friends 131.

⁶⁸² Qtd. in Labrys 5 (1979).

Both writers were able to meet in Egypt while Seferis was in the country.⁶⁸³ During that period, Durrell and Seferis sometimes met, either in Alexandria or in Cairo. According to Seferis' biographer Roderick Beaton, Seferis was the one who sent Durrell along to help the Greek Deputy Prime Minister Kanellopoulos improve his English.⁶⁸⁴ Although they were not able to see each other very often, in a letter to Miller dated 22 August 1944, Durrell told him that Seferis was his 'best friend in Egypt'.⁶⁸⁵ Another common Greek friend who Durrell often met while living in Cairo was Theodore Stephanides. When he moved to Alexandria, Stephanides also visited him on many occasions when he was on leave.⁶⁸⁶

5.2. Durrell's Pioneering English Translations of Seferis.

In January 1942, the first issue of *Personal Landscape*, the literary journal that Robin Fedden, Bernard Spencer and Lawrence Durrell edited in Cairo, included "Letter from a Greek Poet", a fragment of one of Seferis' letters to Durrell (10). It was not the first time Durrell had published Seferis though.

In fact, Durrell's earliest published translations of a Greek poet were Seferis' "Message in a Bottle" and "Untitled Poem", both of them in collaboration with Theodore Stephanides and George Katsimbalis. These translations appeared in *Seven* in 1939 (7: 21). The literal translation of the title of the first poem, which is section 12 of *Mythistorema*, is "Bottle in the Sea". As said in chapter 2, 'bottle in the sea' was Dimitris Antoniou's expression to refer to his own poems.⁶⁸⁷ Interestingly, Durrell would again use the expression 'message in a bottle' to end his poem "Byron" (1944): 'A message in a bottle dropped at sea.'⁶⁸⁸ In 1941, Durrell had also published another translation from Seferis, "Myth of Our History", again carried out with Katsimbalis. It appeared in John Lehmann's *Daylight*.⁶⁸⁹ "Myth of Our History" comprised poems 4, 7, 10, 15, and 24 of *Mythistorema*.

In 1944, the seventh issue of *Personal Landscape* opened with "Ideas about Poems", by Mathaios Pascal, Seferis' literary pseudonym. Inspired by the homonymous section at the beginning of each issue, Seferis had sent Durrell his own piece. In this article, the author argues that 'poems do not live alone' (2) because they form large social communities that transcend the boundaries imposed by society and time. Probably, it was the poet's sense of

⁶⁸³ Seferis also lived in South Africa from July 1941, when he was posted to Pretoria, to late April 1942, when he started serving as Press officer to the Greek government in Cairo.

⁶⁸⁴ See Beaton, *George Seferis* 215. Also, MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell* 247.

⁶⁸⁵ MacNiven, *The Durrell-Miller Letters* 174.

⁶⁸⁶ See Stephanides, *Autumn Gleanings* 78-85.

⁶⁸⁷ See Beaton, *George Seferis* 106. In his essay on the seafaring poet, Seferis recalls Antoniou's 'habit of filling up his cabin with empty cigarette boxes covered with verses on every available surface. "My bottles in the sea," he used to call them.' See Seferis, *On the Greek Style* 71.

⁶⁸⁸ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 123.

⁶⁸⁹ *Daylight* 1 (1941): 17-21.

exile that had made him think about the existence of these ‘poemical’ societies, not necessarily corresponding to ‘the accidents of our own human societies’ (*ibid.*). Seferis’ idea may have been in Durrell’s mind when he published “Airgraph on Refugee Poets in Africa” in the December special number of *Poetry London*,⁶⁹⁰ a piece that ‘focused generously on George Seferis and Eli Papadimitriou.’⁶⁹¹

The seventh issue of *Personal Landscape* also included a translation from Seferis’ poetry, “King of Asine” (9-10). This translation appeared unsigned in the magazine, but according to Beaton, it was made by Durrell, who had exchanged drafts of the poem with Seferis during the early months of 1944, in collaboration with Spencer. About this poem, in an undated letter to Seferis of this period, Durrell told him: ‘The King of Asyn is a very great work’.⁶⁹² Durrell would continue working on the poem.

In 1945, two other translations from Seferis appeared in *New Writing and Daylight*: “Island Dances” and “Santorini” (6: 20-22), from the collection Gymnopaedia. The following issue of the magazine (1946) would include “Remember the Baths in Which You Plunged” and “And the Name Is Orestes” (7: 47), Valaoritis’ and Spencer’s renderings of poems 3 and 16 of Mythistorema.

In 1946, as said above, Durrell published Six Poems from the Greek of Sekilianos and Seferis in Rhodes. By Seferis, it included “The King of Asini” (13-14), “In the Manner of G. S.” (15-16), and “Mr Stratis Seafruit Among the Agapanthus Blossoms” (17-18).⁶⁹³

The oldest poem by Seferis of Durrell’s 1946 edition, “In the Manner of G. S.”, belongs to the poet’s collection Book of Exercises (1940). This poem was written in 1936. The first line, which is perhaps one of the most well-known lines of modern Greek poetry, reveals the main theme, the poet’s deep concern for Greece and its people: ‘Wherever I travel Greece wounds me.’⁶⁹⁴

“In the Manner of G. S.” was inspired by ‘a thirty-six-hour trip from Piraeus to Naxos, Paros and Santorini, returning via Syros’ that he had enjoyed in the summer of 1935. He had spent all the journey across the Aegean on the bridge of his friend’s Antoniou’s passenger ship, the *Akropolis*, an experience that would also give him the metaphor for two other poems, “Sirocco 7 Levante”⁶⁹⁵ and “Santorini”.

⁶⁹⁰ Lawrence Durrell, “Airgraph on Refugee Poets in Africa,” *Poetry London* (Dec. 1944): 212-215.

⁶⁹¹ Bowker, 162.

⁶⁹² Qtd. in Thaniel, Seferis and Friends 89.

⁶⁹³ “Stratis Thalassinos Among the Agapanthi” in Keeley’s-Sherrard’s edition.

⁶⁹⁴ George Seferis, Complete Poems, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (London: Anvil, 1995) 52. Further references to Seferis’ poems will be from this edition, unless otherwise indicated.

⁶⁹⁵ The title of the poem is a nautical term meaning the route of a ship sailing from the Saronic Gulf into the Aegean.

In “Sirocco 7 Levante”, which bears a dedication for D. I. Antoniou, Seferis sings all past life events, those ‘things that changed our shape / deeper than thought’ (51). Only their memory remains, like ‘a shade’, the shade that follows ‘the big ship’ of our existence (*ibid.*, both). The subject of memory recurs in “Santorini”, the first poem of Gymnopaïdia. That was a work that Durrell particularly admired. In The Greek Islands, Durrell refers to Seferis’ Gymnopaïdia as ‘a beautiful long poem [...] as classical as a star’ (114). In “Santorini”, the volcanic landscape that has made islands appear and disappear echoes the roads of history, that have equally made ‘the land that was once our land’ sink into its ‘sleep’ (31). The poet cannot forget ‘the sunken life’ and challenges readers to do so—‘Bend if you can to the dark sea forgetting’—knowing it is an impossible task (31). His childhood memories of Skala (Anatolia) before the Smyrna events are clearly implied in this ‘land that was scattered’ (31), but there is also a criticism of ‘injustice’ (*id.*) and the oblivion of old values in Greece at that time: ‘Whoever raises the great stones sinks’ (32). This criticism of his country is also found in the poem chosen by Durrell, “In the Manner of G. S.”

Seferis opens this poem by referring to the Centaur Nessus’ poisoned shirt, that once on, could not be taken off and killed the wearer. The poet feels it around his body, as if misfortune and pain followed him everywhere. Whereas a reference to ‘the great stones’ (52) at Mycenae implies tradition and values, another one to Cassandra suggests times of adversity.

In the second stanza, the poet’s personal feeling shifts to a more general level, to describe the state of his country. ‘In the meantime Greece is travelling / and we don’t know anything, we don’t know we’re all sailors out of work’ (52). Greece seems to sail like a ship adrift because Greeks have forgotten their own roots, as the third stanza emphasizes.

The last part of “In the Manner of G. S.” gives the whole composition its tragical sense by intermingling mythological references and symbolic images about the reality of his country.

Meanwhile Greece goes on travelling, always travelling
and if we see ‘the Aegean flower with corpses’
it will be with those who tried to catch the big ship by swimming after it
those who got tired of waiting for the ships that cannot move
the ELSI, the SAMOTHRAKI, the AMVRAKIKOS.⁶⁹⁶
The ships hoot now that dusk falls on Piraeus,
hoot and hoot, but no capstan moves,
no chain gleams wet in the vanishing light,
the captain stands still like a stone in white and gold.

⁶⁹⁶ Names of real Greek ships. Ironically, Seferis and his wife would sail on the *SS Elsi*—one of the ships that do not move in the poem—to Crete in April 1941, on their way towards exile. See Beaton, George Seferis 195.

Wherever I travel Greece wounds me,
curtains of mountains, archipelagos, naked granite.
They call the one ship that sails AG ONIA 937.

M/s Aulis, waiting to sail.
Summer 1936 (53)

These closing lines reinforce the idea of stasis in the port, which contrasts with that of Greece, which ‘goes on travelling’, even if it seems to have lost direction. The quotation in the second line is from Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (659). It describes the effects of the anger of gods when they threw a storm over the Achaeans, on their return from Troy, but here, it is used to refer to those Greeks who rejected the paralysis of their fellow countrymen and were drowned while they ‘tried to catch the big ship by swimming after it’. Those who try not to forget their values in the contemporary country are then condemned, like the Achaeans, or ignored, like Cassandra. About the latter, Seferis said: ‘Cassandra had the gift of prophecy, as they say, but God wanted nobody to believe her; as we ourselves do not believe her.’⁶⁹⁷

In the last stanza, the poet embraces his whole country, ‘curtains of mountains, archipelagos, naked granite’, as if hugging a beloved who inflicts pain on him. Paradoxically, the only vessel that sails is called AG ONIA 937 [*ΑΓ ΩΝΙΑ 937*]. Taking into account the date added by the poet at the end of the poem, 1936, ‘937’ obviously refers to 1937, that is, the near future. ‘AG’ literally means ‘Saint’ but it must be read in combination with the other word as ‘agonia’ [*ἀγωνία*], meaning ‘agony’. With a slightly different spelling, *στεινία*, the name of this ship would mean ‘sterility’. Homophones are sometimes used by Seferis to give words a double meaning when the poems are read. So, the name of this ship denotes the poet’s anxiety about the future of his stagnant society in the following years. The addition of a place before the date of the poem is also meaningful. ‘*M/s*’ stands for ‘motor ship’, that is, a vessel that is propelled by an internal combustion engine. So, it prefixes the name of a ship called ‘Aulis’, like the port-town in Boeotia where, in the myth, the Greek fleet awaited winds to set off for Troy. The next words, ‘*waiting to sail*’, accentuate the whole image of inaction in the person of the poet himself.

Unlike his ‘free translations’ of Cavafy in *The Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell’s version of the poem follows quite faithfully the original, except for a printing mistake in the number of the ship (537, instead of 937) that unfortunately makes it lose part of its meaning and the fact that Durrell’s edition does not include the place and date of the poem.

The central idea of “In the Manner of G. S.”, that is, ‘immobility’, similarly pervades Durrell’s *The Alexandria Quartet*, so he probably felt identified with Seferis’ perception of

⁶⁹⁷ Seferis, “Delphi,” *Greece: A Traveler’s Literary Companion* 85.

that time. War refugees in Egypt are equally presented as if they were ‘waiting to sail’, while they try to carry on with their lives. The last poem included in Durrell’s 1946 selection is also born from that sense of deracination of refugees.

“Stratis Thalassinos Among the Agapanthi” (or “Mr Stratis Seafruit Among the Agapanthus Blossoms” in Durrell’s edition) was published in the collection *Logbook II* in 1944. This poem was written in 1942 while in Pretoria (South Africa). Stratis Thalassinos is Seferis’ fictional persona. In his biography of Seferis, Roderick Beaton provides an excellent explanation about the connotations of this alter ego, which also gives information about the poetic voice.

‘Stratis’ had [...] emerged as the name for the central character in George’s early attempts at prose fiction;⁶⁹⁸ it is a common Greek name [...]. ‘Thalassinos’ [...] is not a proper name but a noun or adjective, meaning ‘seafarer,’ or ‘seafaring.’ Putting the two together brings out the latent similarity of ‘Stratis’ to the demotic Greek word *strata* [στράτα], meaning a road or journey, and therefore very close in meaning to *sefer* in Turkish [also meaning ‘journey’].⁶⁹⁹

In the poem, Stratis Thalassinos tries to come to terms with his exile in South Africa. The *agapanthi* are dark blue lilies that are common in that country. Seferis probably liked the name that botanists had given to these beautiful plants, formed by the Greek words *αγάπη* [love] and *άνθος* [flower]. Of course, in the poet’s creation, the *agapanthi* represent South Africa.

Stratis opens the poem by wondering how he can ‘talk with the dead’ on a land where ‘there are no asphodels, violets or hyacinths’ (144).⁷⁰⁰ ‘The dead know the language of flowers only; / so they keep silent’ (*id.*). He feels that he has lost contact with his Greek ancestors and his past. However, like Odysseus, he has to ‘ask the dead / in order to go forward any further’ (*id.*). His companions do not help either, like those of the Ithacan hero, whenever he falls asleep, they open Aeolus’ bag. So, Stratis asks the *agapanthi*: ‘Agapanthi, asphodels of the negroes: / How can I grasp this religion?’ (145). His question leads readers to the last stanza.

The first thing God made is love
then comes blood
and the thirst for blood

⁶⁹⁸ Beaton refers to Seferis’ *Six Nights on the Acropolis: A Novel*, trans. and introd. Susan Matthias, fwd. Roderick Beaton (River Vale, NJ: Cosmos, 2007).

⁶⁹⁹ Beaton, *George Seferis* 104. About the connection between the Turkish word ‘*sefer*’ and Seferis’ surname Seferiadis, see *ibid.*, 6. Regarding Durrell’s translation of this fictional name, it should be said that although ‘thalassinos’ can also mean ‘of the sea’, and thus, refer to seafruit, ‘seafarer’ is the most adequate translation of θαλασσινός. Keeley’s and Sherrard’s choice was not to translate it, leaving it as a name.

⁷⁰⁰ That is, the flowers of the dead.

roused by
the body's sperm as by salt.
The first thing God made is the long journey;
that house there is waiting
with its aged dog
waiting for the homecoming so that it can die.
But the dead must guide me;
it is the agapanthi that keep them from speaking,
like the depths of the sea or the water in a glass.
And the companions stay on in the palaces of Circe:
my dear Elpenor! My poor, foolish Elpenor!
Or don't you see them?
– 'Oh help us!' –
On the blackened ridge of Psara. (145)

This part of the poem introduces the theme of sensuality by associating it to the name of those African flowers and to Circe, who also stands for sensual love. There are also clear references to Odysseus' homeland, where his hearth and his dog await his return, but Stratis is not able to find guidance from the dead. Stratis seems on the verge of succumbing to the temptations he comes across on his way, like Elpenor and the other companions of Odysseus.

However, Stratis foresees the dangers of love, when it turns to 'blood'. Blood represents both sensual passion and also, some of its possible consequences, such as jealousy, hatred and violence. His reference to 'the blackened ridge of Psara' alludes to "The Fall of Psara", a poem by Dionysios Solomos about the massacre of the population of that island during the Greek War of Independence. It emphasizes the idea of death that Elpenor's fate implies and, at the same time, it seems to echo the call for help of the poet's contemporary fellow countrymen, who, under the German occupation, struggle to live.

In a passage from his essays, Seferis associates sensuality with the world of the dead and the journey theme.

Those old texts sometimes hide solid wisdom. Consider Circe—the senses of the body, sensual pleasure—sends us to the other world, to the dead, who can show us the way of return. And it is true, what we call sensuality weighs a lot, as many examples show, in the nostalgia and the effort of man for a final liberation that some call return to a lost paradise and others call union with God.⁷⁰¹

This notion of sensuality is not alien to Henry Miller, who has explored it in depth in his works. Of course, the sort of language chosen by the American author is totally different but the idea remains the same one. Miller's notion of 'the metaphysical fuck' must be

⁷⁰¹ Qtd. from the 2nd vol. of the author's collection of essays (49-50) in Capri-Karka, *Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis* 295.

understood in this sense, as he often insisted in his interviews. It is frequently depicted by Miller using many different images expressing a wish for reunion with an all-embracing totality, a wish to be whole. In Tropic of Cancer, it is presented as a union with ‘the Absolute’ (118); in Tropic of Capricorn, as ‘a tunnel through the earth to get to the other side’ (246). The concept of return is found in Miller’s picture of the spermatozoa racing for eternity, ‘the one that makes a home run is assured of life eternal.’ In the following lines, he summarizes it in a single sentence: ‘From the very start the journey is homeward.’⁷⁰²

For Durrell, home had come to mean the Greek world he had discovered in his early 20s on Corfu. He felt the call of that past and his wish for ‘return to a lost paradise’ –to use Seferis’ words– becomes perceptible in The Alexandria Quartet and it is more clearly expressed in his correspondence of that period. In a letter to Seferis dated October 1941, he refers to Alexandria as the Hellenic nexus between the past and the uncertain future after the war.

Do you think we will get back? Not to the past of Greece, I mean, but to our own past in Greece? [...] The past and future join hands here; whatever happens we will get back.⁷⁰³

Durrell’s 1946 edition includes another poem by Seferis that may be equally seen as a nexus with the past, “The King of Asini”. Durrell had tackled its translation in Egypt, producing the above-mentioned English rendering of the poem, in collaboration with Bernard Spencer, for *Personal Landscape*. However, it would not be his final translation. In 1946, Nanos Valaoritis started translating the poem along with Durrell, Spencer and George Katsimbalis. They would produce the version that would appear in print in 1948.

That year, as a result of their joint effort in translating Seferis, Durrell, Spencer and Valaoritis published The King of Asine and Other Poems.⁷⁰⁴ It was introduced by a friend of Seferis, the writer Rex Warner, who later would be the translator of the English selection of Seferis’ essays On the Greek Style (1966). In addition to the poem that gives the work its title (71-73), The King of Asine and Other Poems contains a collection of translations from different works by Seferis, several of them previously published in magazines,⁷⁰⁵ including the whole of Mythistorema (trans. as “The Myth of Our History”) and Gymnopaidia (trans.

⁷⁰² Miller, Tropic of Capricorn 253 (both).

⁷⁰³ Qtd. in Haag, 196.

⁷⁰⁴ Despite the fact that he had collaborated with them, George Katsimbalis’ name would finally not appear on that edition.

⁷⁰⁵ Among them, Durrell’s translations from Mythistorema (see above), but also, “The King of Asine” and “In the Manner of G. S.”, which had first appeared in Durrell’s Six Poems from the Greek of Sekilianos and Seferis. About these two poems, Valaoritis says that they were revised but only ‘a few changes’ were made. See Nanos Valaoritis, “Remembering the Poets: Translating Seferis with Durrell and Bernard Spencer,” Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 52.

as “Ancient Dances”), and a few poems of the following collections up to 1944. In an article, Valaoritis recalls that they had worked ‘in collaboration through correspondence with Seferis, who was by then appointed to a post in Ankara.’⁷⁰⁶

It was Seferis’ first book in English. Durrell considered it a homage to Seferis and the Greek world that he had known in the previous years.⁷⁰⁷ The next one would not appear until 1960, when Rex Warner published Poems, which includes all the poems of Mythistorema, Gymnopaïdia and Thrush, and a selection from other collections of the period 1935-1955. Seferis’ poetry was also represented in Edmund Keeley’s and Philip Sherrard’s Six Poets of Modern Greece, which was brought out the same year.

The King of Asine and Other Poems was a very successful edition receiving a large number of positive reviews. It was a milestone in the promotion of the poet’s work abroad. In a letter to Durrell dated 15 October 1948, Henry Miller tells him that Seferis’ brother Angelos had visited him in Big Sur (California), where the writer lived by then.⁷⁰⁸ Angelos, who was ‘teaching Greek in “The Presidio” (military school) in Monterey near by’, brought him news about his brother and a copy of The King of Asine and Other Poems.⁷⁰⁹

The poem that gave the collection its title had been first drafted in the summer of 1938, when Seferis was on holidays with the woman he would later marry, Maro. It was written at Tolo, near Nafplio, in the northeast of the Peloponnese, where they spent part of their vacations. One morning, they visited the archeological site of Asini, near Tolo, which had been excavated in the 1920s and identified as the kingdom mentioned in the “Catalogue of Ships” in Book II of Homer’s Iliad. Shortly after their visit, Seferis started to write the poem. However, the poem was abandoned for a while. In 1939, when the poet met Durrell and Miller, he was working again on it. The poem was finished at the beginning of February 1940.⁷¹⁰ Seferis included it at the end of his collection Logbook I (1940).

“The King of Asini”, as its epigraph makes clear, deals with the forgotten king that appears in the Iliad when Homer mentions him while describing the different ships forming the fleet that would go to Troy. Those two words placed by Seferis at the beginning of his poem, ‘□ σίνην τε’ [and Asini],⁷¹¹ are the only reference to that king in Homer.

⁷⁰⁶ Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 51.

⁷⁰⁷ See MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 356.

⁷⁰⁸ Henry Miller lived in Big Sur between 1944 and September 1961.

⁷⁰⁹ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 225.

⁷¹⁰ See Beaton, George Seferis 182. He completed it between the 1st and the 3rd of February 1940, but the poem was dated ‘Asini, summer ’38 – Athens, Jan. ’40’.

⁷¹¹ Iliad II.560.

While walking among the ruins of the three-thousand-year-old citadel of Asini,⁷¹² at the top of a rocky cape, the poet searches for any trace of the ancient king.

On the sunny side a long empty beach⁷¹³
and the light striking diamonds on the huge walls.
No living thing, the wild doves gone
and the king of Asini, whom we've been trying to find for two years now,
unknown, forgotten by all, even by Homer,
only one word in the *Iliad* and that uncertain,
thrown here like the gold burial mask.
You touched it, remember its sound? Hollow in the light
like a dry jar in dug earth:
the same sound that our oars make in the sea.
The king of Asini a void under the mask
everywhere with us everywhere with us, under a name:
'□σίνην τε... □σίνην τε...'
and his children statues
and his desires the fluttering of birds, and the wind
in the gaps between his thoughts, and his ships
anchored in a vanished port:
under the mask a void. (134-135)

Homer's single word about the king of Asini is compared to a 'gold burial mask'. Seferis refers to the one known as 'the Mask of Agamemnon', which was uncovered by Heinrich Schliemann in 1876 at the royal shaft graves in Mycenae.⁷¹⁴ The mask is displayed at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, which the author visited on many occasions.⁷¹⁵ Both Homer's 'uncertain' reference to the king and the burial mask highlight an absence, the 'void' behind them. That brief allusion to the king of Asini in the *Iliad* resembles Cavafy's 'brief insignificant mention of King Kaisarion' in his poem about him (58). In this regard, Giorgos P. Savidis pointed out that there was an 'affinity' between both poems.⁷¹⁶

However, whereas Cavafy rejoices that he can thus 'fashion' King Kaisarion 'more freely' in his mind (58), Seferis would like to uncover the man behind the name. In other words, he is not so interested in what the mask shows, but in what it conceals.

The poet asks his companion⁷¹⁷ whether she remembers the 'hollow' sound of the gold mask when she touched it and he compares it to that of 'a dry jar in dug earth' or that

⁷¹² The site is actually older than many of its later Mycenaean remains. The settlement has been dated as from the Middle Helladic period (2000/1900-1550 BC).

⁷¹³ Asinis beach.

⁷¹⁴ However, the mask is currently considered to be from 1550-1500 BC, that is, older than Agamemnon. So, it is thought that it may belong to King Lynceus, Danaus' son-in-law.

⁷¹⁵ In fact, from 1922 to 1934, Seferis had lived very close to the National Archaeological Museum, in an apartment block on the corner of Kyvelis and Mavromataion streets.

⁷¹⁶ Qtd., from Γ. Π. Σαββίδης, *Μι□ περιδιάβαση* (Αθήνα: n.p., 1962) 39, in Ricks, *The Shade of Homer* 166.

⁷¹⁷ As the author's biographer explains, it was Maro Zannou.

produced by ‘oars’ in the sea. In Greece, when the body of a deceased person was taken out of a house for the funeral, an earthen jar full of water was broken.⁷¹⁸ Seferis alludes to that old Greek rural tradition by referring to a ‘jar’ and ‘dug earth’, but the symbol is inverted. In that custom, the jar represented the dead person, who had been full of vitality and, at the end of life, gave fertility back to the earth; in Seferis’ poem, it becomes ‘a dry jar’. Both the sound of the burial mask and the hollowness of the jug suggest emptiness, the ‘void’ that past has left behind. Paradoxically, that ‘void’ seems the only thing living in the place, ‘a void everywhere with us’ (135).

Nevertheless, that ‘void’ is not a barren one, it bears the fruit of art. ‘His children statues’ have outlived him, but the king’s ships will forever remain ‘anchored in a vanished port’, where Homer left them. The ‘everlasting bitterness [of life] has turned to stone’, as the poet says further on.

After all, what is left, he asks himself: ‘Perhaps [...] nothing is left but the weight / the nostalgia for the weight of a living existence’ (135). The poet may be ‘a void’ himself. Then, his unsettling reflections are interrupted by the last stanza.

Shieldbearer, the sun climbed warring,
and from the depths of the cave a startled bat
hit the light as an arrow hits the shield:
‘□σίνην τε... □σίνην τε...’. If only that could be the king of Asini
we’ve been searching for so carefully on this acropolis
sometimes touching with our fingers his touch upon the stones. (136)

As Savidis remarks in the Greek edition of Seferis’ poem, the image of the bat seems to echo the opening lines of the last book of The Odyssey, when the souls of the suitors are summoned by Hermes and the author compares them to bats taking flight (XXIV.1-10). That bat brings him back to the present. Perhaps, in the end, nothing really vanishes and the spirit of the king of Asini is still around, as their fingers have felt while touching the very stones he touched.

In his diary entry of the 10th of September 1940, Seferis writes: ‘The king of Asini is Makriyannis,⁷¹⁹ is me, is you, is... But why do so many people like it? Curious.’⁷²⁰ His words reveal what his lines also suggest, the underlying theme of the poem is man facing the past. With regard to his question, the universal message he achieves to give certainly answers it.

⁷¹⁸ See Capri-Karka, Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis 193.

⁷¹⁹ General Yannis Makriyannis (1797–1864) is mostly remembered by his memoirs, written in demotic Greek. Seferis admired the powerful literary force of his expressive language and considered Makriyannis one of the masters of Modern Greek prose. See, for example, Seferis, “Makriyannis,” On the Greek Style 25-65.

⁷²⁰ Σεφέρης, Μέρες Γ 237, my trans.

In the original Greek text, the three last lines are more ambiguous than in English [*Να 'ταν αυτή ο βασιλιάς της Ασίνης...*]. They can be read as a wish, like in Keeley's & Sherrard's version, or as a question the poet asks himself, like Durrell does in his 1946 translation.

Might it have been the King of Asini
We hunted for so carefully on this acropolis,
Our fingers touching sometimes his very touch upon the stones?⁷²¹

However, even if read as a question, the very possibility seems a thinly-veiled wish to meet the spirit he has been searching stone by stone. In fact, it is the eternal quest of creators. As Henry Miller argues, 'it is never the fleeting mask one seeks to capture, but the everlasting something beneath the mask, the kernel hidden in the husk.'⁷²²

In The Alexandria Quartet, the Mycenaean gold mask reappears in Balthazar (1958) when the narrator reflects about the tentative depiction he has made.

The picture I drew was a provisional one — like the picture of a lost civilization deduced from a few fragmented vases, an inscribed tablet, an amulet, some human bones, a gold smiling death-mask. (210)

As in Seferis' poem or in Miller's above quotation, the death-mask may rather hide than reveal what lay behind. In his poem "The Lost Cities" (1948), Durrell refers to Rhodes as a 'death-mask of a Greek town.' Although the adjective 'lost', used by the author in both quotations, may have controversial implications, in this poem, it refers to a town which had been stolen and then 'disowned by the devastator', the Italians. Taking into account the date of the poem, his allusion to a 'Greece which is not yet Greece' confirms it.⁷²³

Nevertheless, in a country that has seen invasions throughout its history while preserving its identity, there is an issue that permanently arises when discussing contemporary Greek literature: the contradiction between the fragmentary Western European classicist conception of Greece and the Hellenic cultural continuity that modern Greeks poets show in their works. In an open letter to Durrell that was not published until 1992,⁷²⁴ Elytis elaborates on this matter.

You continue, dear Larry, to have in mind the image of a Greece you were taught in your universities; that is why you always approach us through the laments of Antigone and Socrates' last words. Not that these don't exist today—they do exist. Only you will have to look for them on another scale and

⁷²¹ A. Sekilianos and G. Seferis, Six Poems from the Greek of Sekilianos and Seferis 14.

⁷²² Miller, Greece 20.

⁷²³ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 199.

⁷²⁴ That is, two years after Durrell's death.

a different spiritual height. Because these people, that speak the same language and live in the same landscape, managed ... to shape their equivalences in their own vibrant reality and furthermore, to guide them to their original and natural truth.⁷²⁵

Durrell's writings on Greece prove that he has perceived the intrinsic Greekness of its modern authors and the sense of continuity in the society, but it is also true, as Elytis points out, that the conflict between the learnt and the real country sometimes emerges in Durrell's work too. In a way, this discussion is also connected to the broader debate about the notions of 'change' and 'permanence'.

In Durrell's The Revolt of Aphrodite, one of the recurring thoughts in the mind of Felix Charlock, the protagonist, is precisely 'the persistence of objects and the impermanence of people'.⁷²⁶ In the second part of this double-decker novel, Charlock's former lover Iolanthe is resurrected as a robot that has been programmed to be a replica of the real woman. That Faustian creation, which eventually destroys itself, thus becomes a postmodern confirmation of the impermanence of mortals. Nevertheless, Iolanthe seems to live on in his city, just like the other female character, Benedicta, is equally associated with Polis.⁷²⁷

It is not possible for me now to think of Polis again without seeing Benedicta's face superposed upon whatever it is—mosque, graveyard, tilting forest of shipping in the Golden Horn. She owns it as Io owns Athens.⁷²⁸

This association of people to their places certainly echoes Durrell's conception of the spirit of place. Of course, it is strongly present in The Alexandria Quartet, but also in other works. In Sicilian Carousel, for instance, Durrell explores the island through the eyes of her deceased friend Martine because, in his mind, Sicily is connected to the woman that had lived there and had introduced him to her 'own private island' through her letters.⁷²⁹

The most disturbing thought in Seferis' "The King of Asini" is another one though, that of the 'void'. 'That man could ever conceive of «nothingness» always astounded me', Miller says in Plexus (470). In Caesar's Vast Ghost, Durrell reflects on the origin of 'zero', the number and its concept.

⁷²⁵ This open letter was included, among other essays, in Οδυσσέας Ελύτης, Εν λευκῷ [Carte Blanche] (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1992) 210. This trans. is qtd. from Marinos Pourgouris, Mediterranean Modernisms: The Poetic Metaphysics of Odysseus Elytis (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011) 55.

⁷²⁶ Lawrence Durrell, Tunc, The Revolt of Aphrodite 52.

⁷²⁷ As said above, in The Revolt of Aphrodite, Durrell uses the Greek shortened name, Polis, from Κωνσταντινούπολις [Constantinople], to refer to the contemporary city of Istanbul.

⁷²⁸ Lawrence Durrell, Tunc, The Revolt of Aphrodite 155. See also *ibid.*, 160.

⁷²⁹ L. Durrell, Sicilian Carousel 17. In reality, Martine was Marie Millington-Drake (1924-1973), who Durrell had met in Cyprus.

The Arabs introduced the notion and the sign for ‘zero’ into the existing mathematics of the time. Suddenly one wonders what the Romans had done up till then with their idea of nothingness: was it a thing, a tangible element; or just a hole in space, just as for the Greeks the word *Ou-topia* mean literally *Not-a-place*?⁷³⁰

It may be added that, according to the historians of mathematics, the Arabic word for zero, *ifr* [رفص] derives from the Hindustani one *sunya*, which still exists in Hindi [□□□□□] with the same meaning, ‘void’ or ‘nothingness’.⁷³¹ Durrell mentions the Greek work *ουτοπία*⁷³² to illustrate the ancient Greek view of ‘nothingness’. One of the first Western philosophers to consider the idea of ‘nothing’ was a Greek indeed, the Pre-Socratic thinker Parmenides of Elea, who thought that it was a wrong concept. According to Parmenides, things neither disappear nor originate from the void. He contends that ‘it is necessary to speak and to think what is; for being is, but nothing is not’ (*DK B 6.1-2*). However, this reasoning led him to an interesting conclusion. If we can only speak about something that exists, then speaking about the past means that, in a way, the past still exists now. This coexistence of different planes in the present is wonderfully depicted by Seferis in his poetry and, beyond doubt, “The King of Asini” is a good example of this view of the past. Myths, which are old but renewed in the present and thus eternal, are also representative of this perspective.

5.3. From the Myth of Orestes to the poem “The Cistern”.

One of the collections by Seferis that attest the poet’s use of myth is *Mythistorema* (1935). In Greek, the title literally means ‘novel’, but the word also suggests a combination of ‘myth’ and ‘history’, as the poet explains in a note.

It is its two components that made me choose the title of this work: MYTHOS, because I have used, clearly enough, a certain mythology; ISTORIA (both ‘history’ and ‘story’), because I have tried to express, with some coherence, circumstances that are as independent from myself as the characters in a novel. (277)

The title neatly summarizes Seferis’ blending of myth and a collective history/story that transcends the individual experience of the poet. About this simultaneous presence of

⁷³⁰ L. Durrell, *Caesar’s Vast Ghost: Aspects of Provence* 131.

⁷³¹ See, for example, Jan Gullberg, *Mathematics: From the Birth of Numbers* (New York: Norton, 1997) 26: ‘Zero derives from Hindu sunya -meaning void, emptiness- via Arabic sifr, Latin cephirum, Italian zevero.’

⁷³² Although the word is formed from the Greek, ο□ [not] τόπος [place], the word ‘utopia’ was coined by Thomas More in 1516, for his book of the same name.

myth and contemporary reality in Seferis' work, Durrell remarked: 'He is so deeply plunged in the Ancient Greek tragedy but at the same time so modern in his way of approach.'⁷³³

The poems included in Mythistorema were written between December 1933 and December 1934. In April 1934, Seferis had visited Delphi, 'whose ancient sanctuary of Apollo had been a place of pilgrimage for him since at least his late twenties.'⁷³⁴ In that brief visit of 1934, he wrote poem 21 of Mythistorema,⁷³⁵ which curiously opens with a reference to a 'pilgrimage'.

We who set out on this pilgrimage
looked at the broken statues
became distracted and said that life is not so easily lost
that death has unexplored paths
and its own particular justice;

that while we, still upright on our feet, are dying,
affiliated in stone
united in hardness and weakness,
the ancient dead have escaped the circle and risen again
and smile in a strange silence. (25)

Those who peregrinate to Delphi are the living. The plural first person subject of the poem actually opened a new collective dimension in Seferis' poetry. The poet assumes the voice of the living, who become attached to broken statues because they remind them the ephemeral nature of human existence.

Next, the second stanza presents a different perspective, it may be seen as the antistrophe of the first one. While the living are on their way to death, 'united in hardness and weakness' to those 'broken statues', the dead have 'risen again' from their past and 'smile in a strange silence.' So the statues teach them the brevity of life but they also offer a glimpse into eternity. Risen from the earth that covered them, the statues return with an enigmatic smile. Some of the sculptures displayed at the Delphi Archaeological Museum show this facial expression, such as the Kouros and the Chryselephantine statues. Their characteristic smile seems to speak about their former joyous existence, now eternally alive in stone or metal, thus breaking the life-death cycle. Therefore, the Delphic statues show the way, just like the dead guided Odysseus on his journey.

⁷³³ Qtd. from a 1972 speech in Capri-Karka, Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis 227.

⁷³⁴ Beaton, George Seferis 370.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

After another visit to Delphi, with Maro, in August 1961, Seferis wrote an essay with his thoughts and impressions about the place. With regard to the museum, he pays special attention to a statue, the Charioteer of Delphi.

At noon, in the museum, I looked again at the Charioteer. He did not live long in the eyes of the ancients, so we are told. An earthquake buried the statue one hundred years after it was erected—this perpetual dialogue, in Delphi, between the wrath of the earth and sacred serenity. I stayed near him for a long time. As in older times, as always, this motionless movement stops your breath; you do not know; you are lost. [...] What was behind this living presence? Different ideas, different loves, a different devotion. We have worked like ants and like bees on these relics. How close have we come to the soul that created them? I mean this grace at its peak, this power, this modesty, and the things that these bodies symbolize. This vital breath that makes the inanimate copper transcend the rules of logic and slip into another time, as it stands there in the cold hall of the museum.⁷³⁶

The author's words reveal his long fascination for the Charioteer and his 'living presence'. His 'motionless movement' recalls Henry Miller's image of the hummingbird, with its perfect synthesis of movement and stillness. The statue, along with its horses and chariot, was created to commemorate the victory of a charioteer in the Pythian Games of Delphi.

However, the face of the statue does not show the logical enthusiasm of a victorious competitor. Instead, the Charioteer stares with quietness that suggests that his mind may be elsewhere. That is what probably made Seferis think about the ideas, loves and devotions behind that look.

In his diary entry for the 2nd of September 1939, Seferis writes that one of the poems that Miller liked most of those he heard at Katsimbali's home was 'Orestes'. Further on, he quotes a passage from a description of that evening that Miller sent him from Corfu.

Something of Orestes crept into it, something of a race run in a poem and a garden filled with tobacco smoke, and with the smooth mellow voice of Seferiades, his forty-year-old naïveté, his steady exuberance, his subtlety...⁷³⁷

'Orestes' refers to poem 16 of Mythistorema, which bears the following epigraph: 'The name is Orestes'. This quotation is from Sophocles' Electra (694) and it explains Orestes' victory in a race at Delphi. Taking into account that he had visited the ancient sanctuary the year he wrote the poem, it is quite likely that the Charioteer of Delphi was his source of inspiration.

⁷³⁶ Seferis, "Delphi," Greece: A Traveler's Literary Companion 90-91. The Charioteer of Delphi (478 or 474 BC) is cast in bronze but the eyelashes and lips are indeed made of copper. It was unearthed in 1896.

⁷³⁷ Σεφέρης, Μέρεζ Γ' 132 (both).

The poet's portrait of Orestes echoes his interpretation of the Charioteer in many aspects. Both men have achieved victory in the chariot races of the glorious Pythian Games but their thoughts turn to other matters. In Sophocles' play, after being advised by the Delphic oracle to avenge his father's murder, Orestes sends his old tutor to the palace of the Atreus to tell his mother Clytemnestra that her son Orestes has been killed in a chariot race at Delphi. So, the crime in his family is in his mind.

On the track, once more on the track, on the track,
how many times around, how many blood-stained laps, how many black
rows; the people who watch me,
who watched me when, in the chariot,
I raised my hand glorious, and they roared triumphantly.

The froth of the horses strikes me, when will the horses tire?
The axle creaks, the axle burns, when will the axle burst into flame?
When will the reins break, when will the hooves
tread flush on the ground
on the soft grass, among the poppies
where, in the spring, you picked a daisy.
They were lovely, your eyes, but you didn't know where to look
nor did I know where to look, I, without a country,
I who go on struggling here, how many times around?
and I feel my knees give way over the axle
over the wheels, over the wild track
knees buckle easily when the gods so will it,
no one can escape, what use is strength, you can't
escape the sea that cradled you and that you search for
at this time of trial, with the horses panting,
with the reeds that used to sing in autumn to the Lydian mode
the sea you cannot find no matter how you run
no matter how you circle past the black, bored Eumenides, unforgiven. (20)

The 'blood-stained laps' recall the bloodshed in the house of the Atreus, as well as the Eumenides, who, in Euripides' *Electra*, will torment Orestes after his matricide. There is also a person who appears in his thoughts in an apparently romantic image, who in Orestes' myth might be Hermione. The poet is not interested in details though. His Orestes is simply a man who cannot escape a vicious circle, which is represented by the laps on the racetrack. In Orestes' case, it is the endless circle of violence and remorse. Paradoxically, the champion of the Pythian Games feels weak and homeless, in the hands of gods.

Love might be his only way out, as his mental association between the soft grass and a past erotic scene seems to imply. 'The sea that cradled' him in the past was also love, before it turned into pain. He keeps on searching new seas, unable to reach them, trapped in his own circle. When he listened to the poem, Henry Miller may have seen his own odyssey across the tropics in Orestes' fate.

Even if unattainable, Orestes' deep hope is love. It is the force that halts time in Miller's works too, as in Seferis' "Turning Point", one of his first poems.

Moment, sent by a hand
I had loved so much,
you reached me just at sunset
like a black pigeon.

The road whitened before me,
soft breath of sleep
at the close of a last supper...
Moment, grain of sand,

alone you kept the whole
tragic clepsydra dumb,
as though it had seen the Hydra
in the heavenly garden. (231)

This is one of the poems that Durrell and Miller may have also heard from their Greek friends, belonging to Seferis' first collection, bearing the same name, Turning Point (1931).⁷³⁸ Although the poet's words imply that his love story ended, perhaps painfully ('last supper' suggests betrayal or simply, the pain of crucifixion), it was compelling enough to stop the water clock. By mentioning the monstrous Hydra, Seferis conjures the tragic, sometimes poisonous, sense of *erotas*⁷³⁹ and, at the same time, its powerful strength, which grows, like Hydra's multiplying heads, from a single 'moment, grain of sand'.

Turning Point includes other examples of brief and intense erotic moments, such as "Slowly You Spoke" and "Automobile". They depict clandestine encounters that lead to separation, bodies united in 'the forked embrace of a pair of compasses' (234) and 'a dry pitcher' (232), in the poet's words. "Denial", which years later would be set to music by the composer Mikis Theodorakis, similarly deals with the sorrows of a love that was ephemeral, but in this poem, the protagonists think that they have reached a 'turning point' and they decide to change their lives.⁷⁴⁰

Seferis' next publication, "The Cistern" (1932), is a long poem inspired by his secret relationship with a married woman, Loukia Fotopoulou, who the poet used to meet in her basement flat. Their underground love nest would give the poem its name.⁷⁴¹ The main theme of "The Cistern" is the poet's exploration of erotic mysticism. Their impossible romance does not satiate the needs of the heart though.

⁷³⁸ Στροφή, meaning both 'stanza' and also, the first part of the dialogue between choruses in ancient Greek tragedy. The latter meaning has given the book its title in English.

⁷³⁹ Έρωτας, that is, passionate love.

⁷⁴⁰ Its original title, "Άρνηση", also means 'renunciation'.

⁷⁴¹ Lou, in his diaries, and Salome/Bilio, in Six Nights on the Acropolis. See Beaton, George Seferis 74-75.

Here, in the earth, a cistern has taken root
den of secret water that gathers there.
Its roof, resounding steps. The stars
don't blend with its heart. Each day
grows, opens and shuts, doesn't touch it. (255)

These opening lines show the poet's use of organic images to describe the place ('root', 'its heart', 'grows'). Love is no longer a 'dry pitcher' –as in previous poems– but a 'den of secret water'. The 'cistern' becomes a symbol for sexuality and it is associated to the imaginary of the 'vagina', but also to that of the 'grave'. Actually, the poet refers to it as 'the cave of death' (257). In this regard, it is the 'cavern world' in Miller's Tropic of Capricorn, the room Miller shares with June,⁷⁴² but also, the frightful Hades where Odysseus learns his way back too. Finally, their cistern is also the balm for their wound (257). The last stanza rounds off the picture of the Cistern.

But night does not believe in dawn
and love lives to weave death
thus, like a free soul,
a cistern that teaches silence
in the flaming city. (259)

The 'flaming city' alludes to Athens during the orthodox Easter, which also appears in the poem. Thus, the poem associates love to death, but also to resurrection. In his diary, in a clear allusion to this relationship, Seferis would write: 'Silent embraces, like the seed in the earth.'⁷⁴³

George Katsimbalis, who had been Seferis' strongest supporter in his first collection, expressed his reservations to him about "The Cistern". Some of his comments may have influenced the poet in his next work, so it is worth to quote a fragment here.

How much longer are we going to ... hide ourselves away in murky cisterns?
How much longer are we going to consign our souls and our youthfulness to
the depths, instead of elevating them into a sublime burnt-offering upon a
mountain peak under the incandescent sun?⁷⁴⁴

Katsimbalis' remarks, which recall the ideas of Pericles Yannopoulos about the need for an authentic Hellenic art, curiously find their literary counterpart in The Colossus of Maroussi, but there, the roles are inverted. In Mycenae, Katsimbalis and Miller decide to glance at what seems a well.

⁷⁴² Miller describes it as 'an almost perfect womb life'. See Miller, The Obelisk Trilogy: Tropic of Cancer. Tropic of Capricorn. Black Spring 270.

⁷⁴³ Qtd. in Beaton, George Seferis 119.

⁷⁴⁴ Qtd. in *ibid.*, 114.

We have just come up from the slippery staircase, Katsimbalis and I. We have not descended it, only peered down with lighted matches. The heavy roof is buckling with the weight of time. To breathe too heavily is enough to pull the world down over our ears. Katsimbalis was for crawling down on all fours, on his belly if needs be. [...] But I refuse to go back down into that slimy well of horrors. [...] I want to see the sky, the big birds, the short grass, the waves of blinding light, the swamp mist rising over the plain.⁷⁴⁵

Miller may have agreed with Katsimbalis in his literary recommendations for Seferis, but like the latter, Miller had also gone through his own descent to the ‘cavern world’ in New York. In any case, Seferis’ next book, Mythistorema would indeed be a real turning point in his career.

5.4. The Archetypal Journey.

Mythistorema opens with a poem that openly reveals the author’s search and his ultimate intentions. Poem 1 begins with this stanza.

The angel –
three years we waited for him, attention riveted,
closely scanning
the pines the shore the stars.
One with the blade of the plough or the ship’s keel
we were searching to find once more the first seed
so that the age-old drama could begin again. (3)

As Edmund Keeley says, in Greek, the word ‘angel’ does not only mean the spiritual being that announces a religious event, but also ‘the messenger in classical drama.’⁷⁴⁶ In Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, for example, he appears very often on stage bringing news. It is him indeed who precedes action.

In the poem, creators await a sign that helps them find ‘the first seed’ in order to re-enact the eternal myths. The plough or the keel would break up the earth and the sea for the sowing. However, unsuccessful in their quest, they start producing ‘carved reliefs of humble art’ (3), as a diary of their journey.⁷⁴⁷

“Argonauts”, poem 4 of this collection, is a homage to Jason’s companions but at the same time to Odysseus’ ones, including elements of both myths.⁷⁴⁸ In other words, it is a

⁷⁴⁵ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 91. In his next visit to Mycenae with the Durrells, Miller decided to descend again that staircase, since they were ‘equipped with a flashlight’ (*ibid.*, 215), but half-way down, they changed their minds too. This experience offers a contrasting image to that of the country and it allows the author to briefly explore the theme of the underworld.

⁷⁴⁶ Qtd. in Rachel Hadas, Form, Cycle, Infinity: Landscape Imagery in the Poetry of Robert Frost and George Seferis (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP-Associated UP, 1985) 70.

⁷⁴⁷ Of course, referring to the following poems.

⁷⁴⁸ For example, the lines that say that ‘their oars mark the place where they sleep on the shore’, which links the poem to Elpenor in The Odyssey.

tribute to those who died unremembered. Those Others, with their deffects and wrong choices, who are not alien to us either.

And a soul
if it is to know itself
must look
into its own soul:
the stranger and enemy, we've seen him in the mirror. (6)

It is once more the Delphic maxim 'know thyself' and the idea of the enemy in us that has been discussed above in relation to Angelos Sikelianos and Henry Miller. In a similar way, in Caesar's Vast Ghost, Durrell says that 'in each of us there lives another who is the precise counterpart of ourselves'.⁷⁴⁹ In Seferis, the Other is embodied by Elpenor and the rest of unknown sailors like him. They were 'mindless' people (236), as the poet calls them in "The Companions in Hades", and they paid for their mistakes. The last line expresses the poet's opinion: 'No one remembers them. Justice' (7). It is fair that they are forgotten, they were not heroes but perhaps almost too human. However, they would keep on surfacing in other works.

In poem 5, Seferis realizes that the reason why he looks at the past may be still another one. This section of Mythistorema focuses on long-lost friends.

Our friends have left us
perhaps we never saw them, perhaps
we met them when sleep
still brought us close to the breathing wave
perhaps we search for them because we search for the other life,
beyond the statues. (8)

These uncertain old friends may be those from Seferis' childhood in Smyrna, since the expression 'the other life' usually refers to Skala,⁷⁵⁰ near Smyrna, where he used to spend summers, at his maternal grandmother's house, until he was twelve. In his poetry, the world of Skala stands for the paradise of nature and ancient knowledge that was forever lost after the Catastrophe of Smyrna in September 1922. Regarding those tragic events, in his preface to the first English edition of Ilias Venezis' Aeolia (1949), Durrell refers to 'a way of life which has vanished', similarly reappearing in this novel by another Greek son of Asia Minor.

⁷⁴⁹ L. Durrell, Caesar's Vast Ghost: Aspects of Provence 65.

⁷⁵⁰ Today's İskele, near Urla, in the İzmir province, Turkey. Then, Skala was also known as Skala tou Vourla [Σκάλα του Βουρλά], the harbour of Vourla.

The tragedy of his expulsion from Anatolia still weighs heavily upon the heart of the modern Greek, whether he is a metropolitan or an exile from the bountiful plains and wooded mountains of Asia Minor. He cannot forget it. If he is an exile he returns again and again to Anatolia in his dreams: he broods upon it as Adam and Eve must have brooded upon the Garden of Eden after the Fall. The blazing fires of Smyrna lit up the skies of the whole Levant...⁷⁵¹

Beyond the personal level, the friends in Seferis' poem represent the dream of a utopian life 'beyond the statues', the world that lives beneath ancient myths.

Another part of this collection that, according to Keeley, was read for Miller and Durrell is poem 8,⁷⁵² which is a lyrical reflection about the poet's journey.

What are they after, our souls, travelling
on the decks of decayed ships
crowded in with sallow women and crying babies
unable to forget themselves either with the flying fish
or with the stars that the masts point out at their tips;
grated by gramophone records
committed to non-existent pilgrimages unwillingly
murmuring broken thoughts from foreign languages.

What are they after, our souls, travelling
on rotten brine-soaked timbers
from harbour to harbour? (12)

Here, the picture is rich in images of decadence and alienation. Travellers accept their voyage 'unwillingly', without a clear destination, as wandering souls that seem to sail aimlessly. They feel like strangers in their own land ('in a country that is no longer ours / nor yours', 12).

The gramophone, as in Durrell's *Justine*, represents the memory of the past.⁷⁵³ It brings the voices of the dead back, which return as in Cavafy's "Voices". Gramophones appear often in Seferis' poetry with this meaning. In "Fog", "Tuesday", and "Wednesday", for example. One of his "Sixteen Haiku" also expresses this identification: 'Is it the voice / of our dead friends or / the phonograph?' (44). In "Tuesday", this symbol openly displays its semantic value in the author's work.

At every corner a gramophone shop
in every shop a hundred gramophones
for each gramophone a hundred records
on every record
someone living plays with someone dead.

⁷⁵¹ Ilias Venezis, *Aeolia*, trans. E. D. Scott-Kilvert, pref. Lawrence Durrell (London: Corgi, 1949) v-vi.

⁷⁵² See Keeley, *Inventing Paradise* 97.

⁷⁵³ As quoted above, in *Justine*, the narrator explains that on Balthazar's 'old horn gramophone' he had heard an 'amateur's recording of the old poet reciting' (118).

Take the steel needle and separate them
if you can. (77)

The proliferation of gramophones at the time is used here by Seferis to depict the persistent calls of those ‘friends who no longer know how to die’, as he says in poem 19 (23). Like the autumn moon in Durrell’s “Lesbos” and its author himself, Seferis keeps ‘brooding on the dead’.⁷⁵⁴ It is not his choice, they keep talking to him. When the poet visited again Smyrna and Skala in 1950, his diary shows the pull of the dead very clearly.

At every step memories stir within me overwhelmingly; a constant, almost nightmarish piling up of images; incessant invitations from the dead, so many dead branches of the family tree. [...] Everything pulls me backward.⁷⁵⁵

Unlike in Homer’s *Odyssey*, the dead are not met in the underworld. In Seferis’ poetry, it is them who speak to him. In an essay, Miller writes: ‘The dead are still with us, ready and willing to be summoned’.⁷⁵⁶ And so are they in Seferis’ work, even if they are ‘a burden’ for him (23).

While the ship keeps on sailing ‘from harbour to harbour’, the poet voices his question twice: ‘What are they after, our souls, travelling...?’ Perhaps, as the two last stanzas may suggest, they are after themselves, trying to find again their place in the world, to make their country their home, to meet again ‘the sense of touch’.

On the 14th of May 1941, Seferis was on board of another ship on his way from Crete to the exile. Then, the poet wrote: ‘The true journey is this one; you don’t know the destination, you don’t know whether you will reach it.’⁷⁵⁷ In a very different context, of course, it is also the sense Miller gives to travelling in *Sexus*: ‘Recalling the disappointments, the frustrations, the hopes turned to despair, I realized for the first time the meaning of «voyage»’ (25). His notion of journey similarly involves uncertainty, disappointment, wonder, and experience. In Miller’s thought, ‘the open road’ is ‘the way to take in journeying through life’.⁷⁵⁸

In *Mythistorema*, Seferis’ journey is full of restlessness and nostalgia, but it does not prevent him from absorbing the sounds, the lines, the colours, the silence, his ‘soul shattered on the horizon’ (13). On his path, different planes converge, such as myth, the present, the past, and in his anxieties, even the future. One of the poems that best illustrates this aspect is the 17th one, with the epigraph “Astyanax”.

⁷⁵⁴ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 226.

⁷⁵⁵ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 178.

⁷⁵⁶ Miller, *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* 50.

⁷⁵⁷ Γιώργος Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Δ΄: 1 Γενάρη 1941 - 31 Δεκέμβρη 1944* (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1977) 14 May 1941, my trans.

⁷⁵⁸ Miller, *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* 159.

Now that you are leaving, take the boy with you as well,
the boy who saw the light under the plane tree,
one day when trumpets resounded and weapons shone
and the sweating horses
bent to the trough to touch with wet nostrils
the green surface of the water.

The olive trees with the wrinkles of our fathers
the rocks with the wisdom of our fathers
and our brother's blood alive on the earth
were a vital joy, a rich pattern
for the souls who knew their prayer.

Now that you are leaving, now that the day of payment
dawns, now that no one knows
whom he will kill and how he will die,
take with you the boy who saw the light
under the leaves of that plane tree
and teach him to study the trees. (21)

Astyanax, the younger son of Hector and Andromache that was killed in Troy, is here mentioned among some memories that recall Seferis' childhood in Smyrna. The poet presents these events as parallel manifestations of the endless reality of war. The Trojan infant leads to another boy that may be the poet himself.

His request is an attempt to save the child from becoming a murderer and a victim of that blind violence. Ultimately, it is a desperate cry from the depths of the human soul against the perpetuation of war. In contrast with 'trumpets' and 'weapons', 'trees' and 'rocks' stand for life and the wisdom of nature. The last line of the poem ('and teach him to study the trees') emphasizes the idea that the only hope resides in learning and sticking to other principles. This thought is also found in Sikelianos' and Miller's works, but in Seferis' poetry, it comes out of the fires of Smyrna or the walls of Troy, and it resounds like the cries of those 'friends who no longer know how to die' (23).

The two last poems of Mythistorema may be considered as visions at the end of this journey. Poem 23 is a little window of hope in which the poet encourages his fellow travellers and perhaps, even himself, to go 'a little farther'.

A little farther
we will see the almond trees blossoming
the marble gleaming in the sun
the sea breaking into waves

a little farther,
let us rise a little higher. (27)

At the end of this disheartening voyage, the ‘almond trees blossoming’ offer the promise of spring rebirth. The closing lines prove the traveller has learnt the ancient lesson of humility: ‘a little farther, let us rise a little higher.’

The last poem of this collection comes from the underworld. Travellers have understood that unless they share the experience gained in the voyage, it will be senseless. That is why they assume the role of Tiresias:⁷⁵⁹ ‘We who had nothing will school them [the living] in serenity’ (28). For these modern pilgrims, this is the meaning of return, to give back what they learnt in life.

In his diary entry of the 2nd of September 1939, Seferis writes that another of the poems that Miller liked was “Mathios Paskalis”.⁷⁶⁰ He refers to “Letter of Mathios Paskalis”, dated 5 August 1928. It would be published in 1940, in the collection Book of Exercises. It is a poem about the temptation to get away.

At the beginning, the poet compares New York to Kifisia. Although, Seferis would not visit the American city until many years later, he uses it as the opposite image of the cool and then, fashionable northern suburb of Athens: ‘The skyscrapers of New York will never know the coolness that comes down on Kifisia’ (40). It is not surprising that a New Yorker who abhorred his native place like Miller was pleased by Seferis’ comparison.

However, the poem is also very critical about certain aspects of Athens and its atmosphere.

The days go by slowly; my own days circulate among the clocks
dragging the second hand in tow.
Remember how we used to twist breathless through the alleys
so as not to be gutted by the headlights of cars.
The idea of the world abroad enveloped us and closed us in like a net
and we left with a sharp knife hidden within us and you said
‘Harmodios and Aristogeiton’.⁷⁶¹ (40)

The ‘net’ suggests a feeling of oppression that is emphasized by his reference to the ancient Greek tyrannicides Harmodios and Aristogeiton. “Letter of Mathios Paskalis” ends with a romantic picture of the protagonist sailing the Pacific Ocean, which seems to open a whole world for him alone. It illustrates the poet’s wish to ‘look beyond’ (*id.*), where earth meets sky, and discover new territories.

⁷⁵⁹ The poet’s reference to turning ‘the heads of the victims towards Erebus’ (28) is a direct allusion to Tiresias. In The Odyssey, the hero is instructed by Circe to sacrifice a young ram and a black ewe turning their heads towards Erebus in order to summon Tiresias.

⁷⁶⁰ Σεφέρης, Μέρες Γ 132.

⁷⁶¹ Also known as the Tyrannicides, because they killed the tyrant Hipparchus.

However, Seferis' central poem about the notion of journey in his Book of Exercises is "Reflections on a Foreign Line of Verse", which was written at the end of 1931. The first line, which is borrowed from sonnet XXXI of Joachim du Bellay's Les Regrets, has inspired his reflection and given it a title.⁷⁶²

Fortunate he who's made the voyage of Odysseus.
Fortunate if on setting out he's felt the rigging of a love
strong in his body, spreading there like veins where
the blood throbs.

A love of indissoluble rhythm, unconquerable like music
and endless
because it was born when we were born and when we die
whether it dies too neither we know nor does anyone else.

I ask God to help me say, at some moment of great happiness,
what that love is;
sometimes when I sit surrounded by exile I hear its distant
murmur like the sound of sea struck by an inexplicable
hurricane.

And again and again the shade of Odysseus appears before
me, his eyes red from the waves' salt,
from his ripe longing to see once more the smoke ascending
from his warm hearth and the dog grown old waiting
by the door.

A large man, whispering through his whitened beard words
in our language spoken as it was three thousand years ago.
He extends a palm calloused by the ropes and the tiller, his
skin weathered by the dry north wind, by heat and snow.
It's as if he wants to expel from among us the superhuman
one-eyed Cyclops, the Sirens who make you forget
with their song, Scylla and Charybdis:
so many complex monsters that prevent us from remembering
that he too was a man struggling in the world
with soul and body.

He is the mighty Odysseus: he who proposed the wooden
horse with which the Achaeans captured Troy.
I imagine he's coming to tell me how I too may build a
wooden horse to capture my own Troy.

Because he speaks humbly and calmly, without effort, as
though he were my father
or certain old sailors of my childhood who, leaning on their
nets with winter coming on and the wind raging,

⁷⁶² 'Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage.' In the original version of poem, it is used in Seferis' Greek translation: 'Ευτυχισμένος που έκανε το ταξίδι του Οδυσσέα.'

used to recite, with tears in their eyes, the song of Erotokritos;
it was then I would shudder in my sleep at the unjust fate of
Aretousa descending the marble steps.

He tells me of the harsh pain you feel when the ship's sails
swell with memory and your soul becomes a rudder;
of being alone, dark in the night, and helpless as chaff on the
threshing-floor;

of the bitterness of seeing your companions one by one
pulled down into the elements and scattered;
and of how strangely you gain strength conversing with the
dead when the living who remain no longer meet your
need.

He speaks... I still see his hands that knew how to judge the
carving of the mermaid at the prow
presenting me the waveless blue sea in the heart of winter. (42-43)

Unlike many other of Seferis' poems, "Reflections on a Foreign Line of Verse" presents an exultant view of love. Usually, this feeling is yearned or the cause of painful memories of loss or betrayal, but here, it is depicted as a strong emotion that makes the poet feel like he is on a journey. Just like voyages in his poetry, love is described as 'endless' and this is perhaps what makes him think of Odysseus.

Odysseus' portray in the poem is a very human one. He is a sailor with 'his eyes red from the waves' salt', but implying he sometimes sheds tears too. When talking about 'the male Greek of today,' Henry Miller points out precisely this characteristic of the Homeric men: 'He still weeps openly and unashamedly, like the heroes of Homer.'⁷⁶³ Physically, Odysseus appears also as a son of man, with a 'whitened beard', his 'skin weathered' and a 'a palm calloused by the ropes and the tiller'. Beyond all the setbacks on his way, he is a human being. The Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis represent the fears in his heart, which, step by step, he overcomes. As Miller postulates in Plexus, 'the dragon snorting fire and smoke from his nostril is only spelling his fears' (469). The monster's fears are of course the equivalent of the hero's ones. Odysseus is 'a man struggling in the world with soul and body', that is, with his whole being.

At this point, it is necessary to make an aside. Seferis does not conceive 'soul' and 'body' as separate, but forming a unity. He makes it clear in his diaries: 'I am thinking how

⁷⁶³ Miller, Greece 19.

foolish are the philosophies which have tried to separate the soul from the body. As if one could separate the waves from the sea.’⁷⁶⁴

It is a unity that the poet equally emphasizes in the history of the Greek language when he refers to Odysseus’ words as ‘our language spoken as it was three thousand years ago’, thus linking contemporary Greek people to their mythical ancestors. In fact, Odysseus is seen as a ‘father’-like figure. It is an image of the poet’s forefathers that he also sees in ‘certain old sailors of [his] childhood’. The latter is a memory from Seferis’ own childhood in Skala, where he used to listen to the servants ‘singing passages from Erotokritos’.⁷⁶⁵

In Odysseus, the poet finds a man who has felt the pain of memory and the ‘bitterness’ of losing all his companions, someone who has ended up ‘alone’ and ‘helpless’. In short, many of the writer’s own anxieties. That is why he imagines the Itacan sailor teaching him how to ‘build a wooden horse to capture [the poet’s] own Troy.’ Like Odysseus, the protagonist talks to the dead to gain the ‘strength’ and wisdom that the living seem unable to provide.

Seferis’ discussion of Aeschylus’ characters after reading Seven against Thebes also throws some light on his own way of depicting Homer’s one.

It is amazing how Aeschylus leaves aside the sort of psychological description that we find not only in our times, but also in Sophocles himself. In Aeschylus’, next to the man there is always a symbol, an element that thrives on humanity, terribly alive.⁷⁶⁶

In The Oresteia, for instance, the symbol is evil; in The Odyssey, it may be man in the journey of life. Both works actually share deeply human characters, like Seferis’ recreation of the Ithacan hero. In The Avignon Quintet, Constance reflects precisely on the role of this kind of heroes in the contemporary world: ‘We still have a need for heroes. Myths cannot get incarnated and realised fully in the popular soul which seeks this nourishment with sacrifices, for reality is just not bearable in its banal daily form’.⁷⁶⁷ As an explanation, it reveals the psychoanalytical theory that has influenced the mind of Constance, but it also emphasizes the need for these heroes in order to re-enact the old myths in the modern world.

⁷⁶⁴ Qtd. from Seferis’ Μέρης Α’: 16 Φεβρουαρίου 1925 - 17 Αυγούστου 1931 in Capri-Karka, Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis 235-236, n22.

⁷⁶⁵ Beaton, George Seferis 19. Erotokritos is a Cretan romance written in the early 17th century by Vitzentzos Kornaros and a popular work still today. Aretousa is the King of Athens’ daughter and Erotokritos’ lover. In 1946, Seferis wrote “Erotokritos”, a critical study of this epic poem.

⁷⁶⁶ Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Μέρης Δ’: 1 Γενάρη 1941 - 31 Δεκέμβρη 1944 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1977) 1 March 1941, my trans.

⁷⁶⁷ Durrell, The Avignon Quintet 992.

As said above, Odysseus offers the poet both his experience and ‘strength’. The last lines three lines show that the protagonist has found the latter. The hands of the Ithacan guide him through a ‘waveless blue sea in the heart of winter’, a clear promise of a pleasant and peaceful journey.

Seferis’ next collection, Logbook I, was published on the 31st of August 1940. It included poems written since the summer of 1937. Among others, the above-mentioned “King of Asini”; “The Return of the Exile”, a lyrical attempt to recapture the poet’s past; “The Last Day”, a poem about the dark days of Metaxas’ regime,⁷⁶⁸ and a poem dedicated to Henry Miller, “Les Anges Sont Blancs”.

5.5. Miller in the Work of Seferis: Angels and Miracles.

During his stay in Greece, Miller had talked about Balzac very often. While in Paris, he had been writing about the author’s life and when he returned to Athens from the Peloponnese, Miller lent Seferis his notes. In his diary entry of the 16th of November 1939, Seferis wrote some comments on Miller’s ‘according to him’ deeply American approach and added several quotations from his notes on Balzac and Louis Lambert.⁷⁶⁹ That reading led him to Balzac’s Louis Lambert, from which Seferis borrowed the title and the epigraph of “Les Anges Sont Blancs”.⁷⁷⁰ However, the poet had started writing it while in Hydra, probably inspired by a talk with Miller. It was finished in Athens that November. The poem is a homage to Miller from Seferis, but it also reveals some meeting points between both authors.

Like a sailor in the shrouds he slipped over the tropic of
Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn
and it was natural he couldn’t stand before us at a man’s
height
but looked at us all from the height of a firefly or from the
height of a pine tree
drawing his breath deeply in the dew of the stars or in the
dust of the earth.
Naked women with bronze leaves from a Barbary fig tree
surrounded him
extinguished lamp-posts airing stained bandages of the great
city
ungainly bodies producing Centaurs and Amazons
when their hair touched the Milky Way.

⁷⁶⁸ The two last lines of this poem would later become a famous claim for freedom in Greece: ‘I’m sick of the dusk, let’s go home, / let’s go home and turn on the light’ (121).

⁷⁶⁹ See Σεφέρης, Μέρες Γ: 144-146.

⁷⁷⁰ ‘*Tout à coup Louis cessa de frotter ses jambes l’une contre l’autre et dit d’une voix lente: ‘Les anges sont blancs.’* □ BALZAC’.

And days have passed since the first moment he greeted us
taking his head off and placing it on the iron table
while the shape of Poland changed like ink drunk by
blotting-paper
and we journeyed among shores of islands bare like strange
fish-bones on the sand
and the whole sky, empty and white, was a pigeon's huge
wing beating with a rhythm of silence
and dolphins under the colored water turned dark quickly
like the soul's movements
like movements of the imagination and the hands of men
who grope and kill themselves in sleep
in the huge unbroken rind of sleep that wraps around us,
common to all of us, our common grave
with brilliant minute crystals crushed by the motion of
reptiles.
And yet everything was white because the great sleep is
white and the great death
calm and serene and isolated in an endless silence.
And the cackling of the guinea-hen at dawn and the cock
that crowed falling into a deep well
and the fire on the mountain-side raising hands of sulphur
and autumn leaves
and the ship with its forked shoulder-blades more tender
than the dovetailing of our first love,
all were things isolated even beyond the poem
that you abandoned when you fell heavily along with its last
word,
knowing nothing any longer among the white eyeballs of
the blind and the sheets
that you unfolded in fever to cover the daily procession
of people who fail to bleed even when they strike
themselves with axes and nails;
they were things isolated, put somewhere else, and the steps
of whitewash
descended to the threshold of the past and found silence and
the door didn't open
and it was as if your friends, in great despair, knocked
loudly and you were with them
but you heard nothing and dolphins rose around you
dumbly in the seaweed.
And again you gazed intently and that man, the teethmarks
of the tropics in his skin,
putting on his dark glases as if he were going to work with
a blowlamp,
said humbly, pausing at every word:
'The angels are white flaming white and the eye that would
confront them shrivels
and there's no other way you've got to become like stone if
you want their company
and when you look for the miracle you've got to scatter
your blood to the eight points of the wind

because the miracle is nowhere but circulates in the veins of
man.’ (129-131)

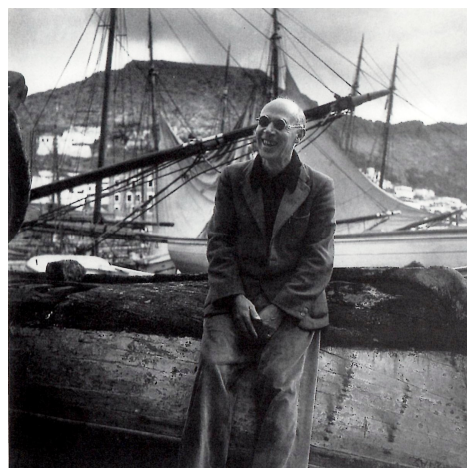
In the first stanza, Henry Miller is presented like a sailor travelling the tropics in a clear reference to Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn. The poet mentions some elements found in his works, such as Miller’s spiritual perspective, his earthliness, the sensual world, and ‘the great city’.

Then, he narrates how Miller opened himself up to his Greek friends⁷⁷¹ and their journey ‘among shores of islands’. The German invasion of Poland and the closeness of war contrasts with the bareness and silence of that landscape. The following lines express the mixed emotions of his soul at that time. Although whiteness increasingly permeates the whole poem, the nightmare of war (‘men who grope and kill themselves in sleep’) alternates with the ‘calm and serene’ isolation of the Argo-Saronic Islands. The colour white, which usually represents purity and the light of the day, here is also used to mean ‘sleep’. As Cirlot remarks, ‘white, in so far as its negative quality of lividness goes, is [...] symbolic also of death [...] and the moon’⁷⁷², and sleep, like the moon, ‘symbolizes that period of life before and after its involution as matter’.⁷⁷³ Seferis’ words are crystal-clear about it: ‘everything was white because the great sleep is white and the great death / calm and serene and isolated in an endless silence.’ This meaning of ‘white’ as ‘the great sleep’ is essential to the poem.

Even though “Les Anges Sont Blancs” is about Miller, the second-person singular pronoun of the poem alludes to Seferis himself. This is very clearly seen when the poet introduces Miller’s picture at the end of the poem: ‘And again you gazed intently and that man, the teethmarks of the tropics in his skin’.

Miller is described with the dark sunglasses he actually wears in a photograph that Seferis took during the days they spent in Hydra together with Ghika and Katsimbalis. Then, Seferis recollects their conversations there about Balzac and the nature of the miraculous.

Although the poet attributes the last words to Miller, the angelic and the miraculous were themes that had appeared in Seferis’ writings too. As said above when discussing the first poem of



Miller on Hydra (1939), as described in Seferis’ poem “Les Anges Sont Blancs”.

⁷⁷¹ ‘He greeted us taking his head off and placing it on the iron table’. The ‘iron table’ alludes to the tables of Athenian cafes.

⁷⁷² Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols 58.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 375.

Mythistorema, in Seferis' works, angels are messengers.⁷⁷⁴ With regard to miracles, on 15 August 1926, he wrote in his diary:

In this our life, inalienable and unique (since it does not belong to anybody else), which nourishes our works making them similar to us, we have to learn to see the miracle.⁷⁷⁵

According to Beaton, it was a lesson the poet had learnt 'from his mother on her deathbed'.⁷⁷⁶ The idea recurs in his diary entry for 28 January 1932 in connection with Seferis' literary alter ego.

Stratis Thalassinos affirms that, having abolished pessimism, has decided, from now on, to work for the miracle. He holds that miracles happen (they are in our life) if they are prepared with love and lots of patience, as soon as you forget that they can happen.⁷⁷⁷

Like Miller, Seferis believes that miracles belong to our life. As the poet says, 'man's salvation is to be found in him; also his ruin.'⁷⁷⁸ It is exactly with this conviction that he closes "Les Anges Sont Blancs": 'the miracle is nowhere but circulates in the veins of man.' In "The Absolute Collective", an essay published in *The Criterion* in January 1939, Miller wrote:

We live on the edge of the miraculous every minute of our lives. The miracle is in us, and it blossoms forth the moment we lay ourselves open to it. The miracle of miracles is the stubbornness with which men refuse to open themselves up. Our whole life seems to be nothing but a frantic effort to evade that which is constantly within our grasp. This which is the very reverse of the miraculous is nothing else but FEAR. Man has no other real enemy than this which he carries within him.⁷⁷⁹

In Miller's thought, it is man's fear that leads him to his defeat and ruin. In his philosophy, the fight is always an inner one. In his 1962 preface to Stand Still Like the Hummingbird, Miller insisted on this idea.

The miracle is that the honey is always there, right under your nose, only you were too busy searching elsewhere to realize it. The worst is not death but

⁷⁷⁴ Angels also appear with a similar meaning in Seferis' poem "Hampstead" (59), whereas in "Monday", they take on a vampirical role in order to represent a life-sucking experience of eroticism: 'Angels run naked in [people's] veins / they drink their blood [...]' (76).

⁷⁷⁵ Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Μέρες Α': 16 Φεβρουαρίου 1925 - 17 Αυγούστου 1931 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1975) 15 Aug. 1926, my trans.

⁷⁷⁶ Beaton, George Seferis 176.

⁷⁷⁷ Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Μέρες Β': 24 Αυγούστου 1931- 12 Φεβρουαρίου 1934 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1975) 28 Jan. 1932, my trans.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1932, my trans.

⁷⁷⁹ Miller, The Wisdom of the Heart 89. This essay was inspired by Erich Gutkind's work with the same title.

being blind, blind to the fact that everything about life is in the nature of the miraculous.⁷⁸⁰

Miracles are often mentioned in Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn too. In the latter work, Miller explains that he had not had the strength to ‘make a new beginning’ in his life until a certain night, when he ‘walked out on [himself]’ (324). His narration emphasizes the miraculous character of that event but at the same time, it offers a good explanation of the meaning that the author gives to the word ‘angel’.

My desire was so great it became a reality. At such a moment what a man *does* is of no great importance, it’s what he *is* that counts. It’s at such a moment that a man becomes an angel. That is precisely what happened to me: *I became an angel*. It is not the purity of an angel which is so valuable, as the fact it can fly. An angel can break the pattern anywhere at any moment and find its heaven; it has the power to descend into the lowest matter and to extricate itself at will. The night in question [...] I was detached, I had wings. I was depossessed of the past and I had no concern about the future. (324)

In this passage, flying becomes a metaphor for the freedom given by detachment, self-confidence and a full awareness of one’s own possibilities. Likewise, in his 1972 essay “Reflections on the Death of Mishima”, Miller defines ‘angels’ as ‘those among us who no longer place such emphasis upon the physical body [...]. The men, in other words, who have discovered that all is Mind, that what we think is what we are’.⁷⁸¹ In Nexus, the author also mentions the ‘angels in disguise’, those ‘fellow’ beings that travellers come across (492, both), even if most of the times they are noticed too late, or never recognized at all. In a way, they may also be seen as those mysterious angelic messengers in Seferis’ poetry.

Out of his notes on Balzac, Miller would publish the essay “Balzac and His Double” in 1941, which focuses mainly on Louis Lambert and the reflections that it provokes in him. Regarding Louis Lambert’s enigmatic words about angels, Miller says: ‘*The angels are white!* It is madder than anything Nijinsky wrote in his diary. It is pure madness, white as the light itself, and yet so thoroughly sane that it seems like a Euclidean statement of identity.’⁷⁸²

Miller identifies ‘white’ with the light that comes to people in ‘moments of illumination’ and paraphrases from another of Balzac’s characters, Séraphîta, who says with ‘blinding clarity’ that such a pure light ‘kills the man who is not prepared to receive it.’⁷⁸³

In Seferis’ poem, ‘white’ represents ‘sleep’ but later, it also has a very similar meaning to that in Miller’s essay. Firstly, it is found in the ‘empty and white’ sky of the Aegean Sea; then, in the whitewashed houses of Hydra. The colour becomes the reflection of

⁷⁸⁰ Miller, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird ix.

⁷⁸¹ Miller, “Reflections on the Death of Mishima,” Sextet: Six Essays 49.

⁷⁸² Miller, “Balzac and His Double,” The Wisdom of the Heart 218.

⁷⁸³ Miller, “Balzac and His Double,” The Wisdom of the Heart 218.

light, its image. It is also seen in ‘the white eyeballs of the blind and the sheets’ that the poet ‘unfolds’. There, it is the white of blank looks and blank pages, the fertile void out of which blind seers’ prophecies and poetry are born. As in Miller’s quotation about Balzac, here the ‘flaming white’ angels can damage those who look directly at them, unless they ‘become like stone’, that is, unless they stay still, in balance. This part recalls the petrifying gaze of the Gorgon. Of course, there is a clear parallel between the terrible large eyes of Medusa and the bright light of angels in the poem; in both cases, it is man alone facing the absolute power of the guardians and messengers of the spiritual world. So, the miracle remains latent in man, it is in his own blood.

It seems Henry Miller did not read the poem that his friend Seferis had written about him until 1954, when he received a translation from Kimon Friar. On the 24th of April, Miller wrote to Seferis telling him that that was the first he ‘knew of it’. Two weeks later, in his reply to this letter, Seferis simply said to him that the poem was ‘an old one... made out of impressions from [the] journey to Hydra and inspired from a reading’ of Miller’s ‘notes on Balzac.’ The poet also asked Miller for French translations of his works.⁷⁸⁴

Several letters show their exchange of translations and their mutual interest in each other’s works. For example, Miller’s letter to Seferis from the 7th of May of the same year. George Katsimbalis had visited Miller in February 1954, and the latter explained their meeting to Seferis.⁷⁸⁵

Katsimbalis was here— for just 2 days, alas!— and seemed more “colossal” than ever. I sat and listened to him for the whole 48 hours. We talked of you, naturally, and he told me of your book, *Three Days in Cappadocia*. I want very much to read it. Can you send me a copy or tell me where I may buy it, whether in French, German or English.⁷⁸⁶

A later card from Miller to him in October proves he had received Seferis’ book.⁷⁸⁷ As said above, together with Miller’s portrait of Seferis in *The Colossus of Maroussi* and the poet’s abundant notes about the former in his diary,⁷⁸⁸ their later correspondence and

⁷⁸⁴ Thaniel, *Seferis and Friends* 132. The second letter is dated 8 May 1954. These letters contradict what Miller’s biographer Jay Martin says about the poem. According to Martin, Miller had been able to hear ‘the finished poem about himself’ one night at Seferis’ apartment, after his journey with Katsimbalis. See Martin, *Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller* 361.

⁷⁸⁵ Previously, in the autumn of 1953, Katsimbalis had also been to the US on a ‘mission of cultural exchange’ and had visited Miller in Big Sur. See Martin, *Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller* 441. Regarding the Feb. 1954 visit, see Temple, *Henry Miller: Qui suis-je?* 91.

⁷⁸⁶ Thaniel, *Seferis and Friends* 133. Miller read Octave Merlier’s French translation, *Trois jours dans les églises rupestres de Cappadoce* (1953). This book was published in English for the first time in 2010, as *Three Days in the Monasteries of Cappadocia*, trans. Peter Mackridge (Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 2010). The poet’s evocation of that landscape, which he discovered in a trip in 1950, is complemented with his own photographs.

⁷⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸⁸ See, for example, i.a., Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Γ’* 138-146, 153-154, and 162.

exchange of works bear witness of their long personal and literary relationship, but they also show those aspects that both writers found more stimulating in each other's productions.

5.6. Reading Landscape.

With regard to the above-mentioned letters, it is not surprising to see Miller interested in Seferis' book about Cappadocia (Minor Asia, Turkey), particularly because Miller admired this facet of the poet's work. In The Colossus of Maroussi, the author elaborates on Seferis' close relation to the landscape, an aspect of the poet that he finds 'thrilling' and 'inspiring.'

He is passionate about his own country, his own people, not in a hidebound chauvinistic way but as a result of patient discovery following upon years of absence abroad. This passion for one's country is a special peculiarity of the intellectual Greek who has lived abroad. In other peoples I have found it distasteful, but in the Greek I find it justifiable, and not only justifiable, but thrilling, inspiring. I remember going with Seferiades one afternoon to look at a piece of land on which he thought he might build himself a bungalow. There was nothing extraordinary about the place—it was even a bit shabby and forlorn, I might say. Or rather it was, at first sight. I never had a chance to consolidate my first fleeting impression; it changed right under my eyes as he led me about like an electrified jelly-fish from spot to spot, rhapsodizing on herbs, flowers, shrubs, rocks, clay, slopes, declivities, coves, inlets and so on. Everything he looked at was Greek in a way that he had never known before leaving his country. He could look at a headland and read into it the history of the Medes, the Persians, the Dorians, the Minoans, the Atlanteans. He could also read into it some fragments of the poem which he would write in his head on the way home while plying me with questions about the New World.⁷⁸⁹

Ian MacNiven has remarked that Seferis 'brought Greek landscape alive' for Miller, which is certainly true.⁷⁹⁰ The passage above makes evident that the poet exerted an influence in this regard. William A. Gordon has also noted the change experienced by Miller's writing on this subject after his stay in Greece. Concerning The Colossus of Maroussi and the author's depiction of the land and its people, Gordon says:

His discussion of the Greek people does not resemble his usual character sketch against a Paris or New York background. The people are not separate from the land, nor seen against the land; they arise out of the land; they are continuous with the soil, the rocks, the dust, the vines and livestock, the olive trees; above all they share and exude the light which bathes the Greek landscape in luminous tones.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁹ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 46-47.

⁷⁹⁰ MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 220.

⁷⁹¹ William A. Gordon, The Mind and Art of Henry Miller, foreword by Lawrence Durrell (LA: Louisiana State UP, 1967) 181.

While reflecting on his own perception of the Greek landscape in May 1960, Seferis writes in his diary: ‘I think that one who did see something was Henry Miller, I mean in the sense of that [Italian] traveller [...] —*les îles grecques sont comme des idées qui se suivent*’.⁷⁹² This, coming from the person who essentially introduced Miller to the Greek land, is a significant recognition of Miller’s interpretation of Greece.

Beyond the Hellenic landscape, it is interesting to compare both Miller and Seferis in their respective use of the image of the ‘river’; the Seine in the former’s Tropic of Cancer, and the Nile in Seferis’ “An Old Man on the River Bank”. In Miller’s work, the river works as the spirit of place of Paris, flowing through its pages until the end, where the image reaches its apogee. In Seferis’ case, it is also a foreign river that becomes the central element in the poem.

“An Old Man on the River Bank”, was written in Cairo in June 1942 and published, among the above-mentioned “Stratis Thalassinós Among the Agapanthi” and other poems of the poet’s exile, in Logbook II (1944).

And yet we should consider how we go forward.
To feel is not enough, nor to think, nor to move
nor to put your body in danger in front of an old loophole
when scalding oil and molten lead furrow the walls.

And yet we should consider towards what we go forward,
not as our pain would have it, and our hungry children
and the chasm between us and the companions calling from
the opposite shore;
nor as the bluish light whispers it in an improvised hospital,
the pharmaceutical glimmer on the pillow of the youth
operated on at noon;
but it should be in some other way, I would say like
the long river that emerges from the great lakes enclosed
deep in Africa,
that was once a god and then became a road and a
benefactor, a judge and a delta;
that is never the same, as the ancient wise men taught,
and yet always remains the same body, the same bed, and
the same Sign,
the same orientation.

I want nothing more than to speak simply, to be granted
that grace.

⁷⁹² Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Μέρες Ζ΄: 1 Οκτώβρη 1956 - 27 Δεκέμβρη 1960 (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1990) 24 May 1960, my trans. The Italian traveller is Giuseppe Pecchio (1785-1835) and his quotation in French is from Tableau de la Grèce en 1825 ou Récit des voyages de M. J. Emerson et du Cte Pecchio (Paris: Eymery, 1826) 372. Pecchio’s exact words in that book are: ‘*Ces îles qui s’élèvent et qui disparaissent à chaque instant sont comme des pensées agréables qui se succèdent.*’ His reference to islands rising and sinking recalls Seferis’ similar image in “Santorini”.

Because we've loaded even our song with so much music
that it's slowly sinking
and we've decorated our art so much that its features
have been eaten away by gold
and it's time to say our few words because tomorrow
our soul sets sail.

If pain is human we are not human beings merely to suffer pain;
that's why I think so much these days about the great river,
this meaning that moves forward among herbs and greenery
and beasts that graze and drink, men who sow and harvest,
great tombs even and small habitations of the dead.
This current that goes its way and that is not so different
from the blood of men,
from the eyes of men when they look straight ahead
without fear in their hearts,
without the daily tremor for trivialities or even for
important things;
when they look straight ahead like the traveller who is used
to gauging his way by the stars,
not like us, the other day, gazing at the enclosed garden
of a sleepy Arab house,
behind the lattices the cool garden changing shape,
growing larger and smaller,
we too changing, as we gazed, the shape of our desire
and our hearts,
at noon's precipitation, we the patient dough of a world
that throws us out and kneads us,
caught in the embroidered nets of a life that was as it should be
and then became dust and sank into the sands
leaving behind it only that vague dizzying sway of a tall
palm tree. (146-147)

In 1942, Seferis was only in his early forties but exile and his worries at the time made him feel exhausted. The Nile and his personal experience as a refugee in Cairo are the starting point of a reflection on the course of life. In this regard, the opening lines of the first and second stanzas are fundamental to understand the purpose of his meditation. To 'feel', to 'think', to 'move' or to take risks in life is 'not enough', it is essential to know 'how' and 'towards what we go forward'. In other words, *quo vadis*, but also *quomodo vadis*.

The poet realizes that observing this matter from the narrow limits of the circumstances of that time (war, pain and famine, exile) would not help. So he decides to consider the question from the broader perspective of life as a whole, like a 'long river' from its sources until its mouth. In this way, the Nile River gives him the opportunity to express his considerations about the changing nature of our existence.

Like Heraclitus, Seferis sees the river as a metaphor of life, which 'is never the same' (a 'god', a 'road', a 'benefactor', a 'judge', a 'delta') and 'yet always remains the same

body’, ‘the same orientation.’ It is that underlying eternal essence that the poet seeks. As he makes clear in the third stanza, the river is used as a means to an end. His intention is not to decorate his thoughts but ‘to speak simply’, probably bearing in mind the plain and expressive language of General Makriyannis, which the poet admired so much. This is an idea that Seferis would not abandon, leading him to the transparent language of his collection Logbook III.

As in Miller’s depiction of the Seine River, the Nile appears in the poem as always moving forward amidst people and nature, flowing through generations, as the very ‘blood of men’. In Miller’s Tropic of Cancer, it is a river winding through ‘a soil so saturated with the past that however far back the mind roams one can never detach it from its human background’ (152). It is the weight of ‘the dead’ that Seferis unavoidably mentions too, from a land where death and immortality have impregnated the beliefs and customs of its inhabitants since ancient times.

However, unlike Miller, who feels the river ‘like a great artery running through’ his own body (152), the poet remains on the margins of the riverside. The forward movement of the current reminds Seferis of those travellers who ‘look straight ahead’ and gauge ‘his way by the stars’. In contrast with them, the poet feels ‘caught in the embroidered nets of a life that was as it should be and then became dust and sank into the sands’. Whereas Miller finds peace by the river, Seferis feels himself left aside. Some months later, in Alexandria, he would again write about the Nile in his diary: ‘Rivers always leave you behind, as they flow, with what you’ve got: bitterness, trouble, despair.’⁷⁹³

5.7. Seferis’ Translations of Durrell.

His African exile was not only ‘bitterness’, ‘despair’ and nostalgia for Seferis. Logbook II as a whole offers many other emotions, thoughts and experiences. The first edition of this collection, which was published in Alexandria,⁷⁹⁴ also included a translation by Seferis of the poem “Mythology II”. This was the title given by Lawrence Durrell to his poem “Mythology” before the former “Mythology I” changed its title to “Coptic Poem”.⁷⁹⁵

All my favourite characters have been
Out of all pattern and proportion:
Some living in villas by railways,
Some like Katsimbali heard but seldom seen,

⁷⁹³ Qtd. from Σεφέρης, Μέρες Δ΄: 1 Γενάρη 1941 - 31 Δεκέμβρη 1944 273 [1 Jan. 1943] in Beaton, George Seferis 213.

⁷⁹⁴ This first limited edition of Logbook II (summer 1940) was a photo offset reproduction of the original illustrated manuscript. See Beaton, George Seferis 209.

⁷⁹⁵ See Thaniel, Seferis and Friends 102 n1.

And others in banks whose sunless hands
Moved like great rats on ledgers.

Tibble, Gondril, Purvis, the Duke of Puke,
Shatterblossom and Dude Bowdler
Who swelled up in Jaffa and became a tree:
Hollis who had wives killed under him like horses
And that man of destiny,

Ramon de Something who gave lectures
From an elephant, founded a society
To protect the inanimate against cruelty.
He gave asylum to aged chairs in his home,
Lampposts and crockery, everything that
Seemed to him suffering he took in
Without mockery.

The poetry was in the pity. No judgement
Disturbs people like these in their frames
O men of the Marmion class, sons of the free.⁷⁹⁶

Seferis had enjoyed reading Durrell's poem and he translated it into Greek while trying to remain faithful to its peculiar style, which made the task particularly difficult. Although this translation did not appear in the subsequent editions of *Logbook II*, it was included in Seferis' *Antigrafes* [*Ἄντιγραφές*, 1965], a collection including some of Seferis' translations.

"Mythology" had been given to Seferis by the Greek Egyptian businessman and intellectual Nani Panagiotopoulos,⁷⁹⁷ among other poems written by Durrell at the time. In a letter dated 24 February 1943 from Seferis to Durrell, he confessed that he had produced 'a Greek version of "Mythology II"' and he also asked him who Marmion, Tibble, Bowdler and the others were, while adding: 'If they are nobody I'll translate their names too – And what do you mean



Seferis with Durrell in Cyprus, 1953.

⁷⁹⁶ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 115.

⁷⁹⁷ Seferis had first met Panagiotopoulos with Katsimbalis in Athens. They would become close friends. For the source of the information about Panagiotopoulos giving Seferis the poem, see next footnote.

exactly by swelled up in Jaffa?’⁷⁹⁸

Durrell replied that ‘all the names except Marmion are imaginary’ and suggested some possible Greek ‘wonderful names’, which sound either funny or surrealistic, such as ‘Christofithi (fidi = snake), Paskalodimitriades, Tsoumbaropoulos, [and] Hadjinekropoulos’. Finally, Durrell let him know that Marmion referred to the ‘chief character of a mediocre heroic poem by Sir Walter Scott – very popular once.’ He proposed translating this reference as ‘men of the Karaghiozi breed’.⁷⁹⁹ Following his recommendation, Seferis would render the last line of Durrell’s poem into Greek as: ‘Ω φύτρα του μεγάλου Καραγκιόζη’ [‘Oh seed of the great Karagiozis’].

Karagiozis is the typical hero of the Greek shadow theatre. In Prospero’s Cell, Durrell describes this popular puppet character as a ‘man getting the better of the world around him by sheer cunning’ (48). Certainly, Karagiozis resembles Walter Scott’s hero in his slyness and bravery, but Marmion, who is not the conventional chivalric hero, is a lot more dishonest than the good-hearted Karagiozis.

‘Ramon de Something’ refers to a real person though, to the Spanish writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna Puig (1888-1963). Gómez de la Serna actually gave a lecture at the Cirque d’Hiver in Paris ‘from an elephant’ and it is also true that he created lyrical evocations of trivial objects found at the Rastro street market in Madrid. Durrell had heard about him from Seferis. One evening in May 1942, the Durrells had been invited to have dinner with him. After an anti-typhus injection, Seferis was ‘slightly delirious’ and he started talking about the Spanish avant-garde author.⁸⁰⁰ Durrell, who was very interested by the story, would later ask him for more details and use them in his poem. In April 1981, Gómez de la Serna was probably still in his mind when Durrell gave a lecture entitled ‘From an Elephant’s Back’ at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Although all the other names in the poem are fictional, they are cryptic allusions to his life at the time. Michael Haag has argued that ‘Dude Bowdler / Who swelled up in Jaffa and became a tree’ would refer to Nancy Durrell, who in the summer of 1942 left for Palestine with their daughter and worked in Jaffa. According to Haag, Shatterblossom would express the author’s pain at losing his daughter.⁸⁰¹ Perhaps, that was also the meaning he gave to his belief that ‘the poetry was in the pity’.

⁷⁹⁸ Letter by George Seferis to Lawrence Durrell, dated 24 Feb. 1943, George Seferis Archive (Seferis’ [Copies] Letters, Υποενότητα II.E, box 61, file 4 [1942-1944], letter 19), Gennadius Library, Athens. Underlined in the original.

⁷⁹⁹ Letter by Lawrence Durrell to George Seferis, dated Oct. 1943 by the latter, George Seferis Archive (Lawrence Durrell Letters, Υποενότητα II.A, φακ. 31 Υποφ. 6, letter 4), Gennadius Library, Athens.

⁸⁰⁰ Bowker, 146.

⁸⁰¹ See Haag, 254.

“Mythology” is a poem written from his feeling of isolation and detachment about men like Katsimbalis and Gómez de la Serna, those free spirits who have lived ‘out of all pattern and proportion’. After reading Miller’s *The Colossus of Maroussi*, Durrell probably got the inspiration for his own homage to Katsimbalis.⁸⁰² He had written his tribute to Seferis much earlier, in Kalamata, before leaving for exile.

“Letter to Seferis the Greek” (1941) is a celebration of what Greece represents for Durrell at a time when those idyllic years were about to come to an end because of war.⁸⁰³ Likewise, it is a monument to the first Greek victories on the Albanian front and those who died there. The poem is written as a long letter in sixteen stanzas.

No milestones marked the invaders,
But ragged harps like mountains here:
A text for Proserpine in tears: worlds
With no doors for heroes and no walls with ears:
Yet snow, the anniversary of death.

How did they get here? How enact
This clear severe repentance on a rock,
Where only death converts and the hills
Into a pastoral silence by a lake,
By the blue Fact of the sky forever?

‘Enter the dark crystal if you dare
And gaze on Greece.’ They came
Smiling, like long reflections of themselves
Upon a sky of fancy. The red shoes
Waited among the thickets and the springs,
In fields of unexploded asphodels,
Neither patient nor impatient, merely
Waited, the born hunter on his ground,
The magnificent and funny Greek.

We will never record it: the black
Choirs of water flowing on moss,
The black sun’s kisses opening,
Upon their blindness, like two eyes
Enormous, open in bed against one’s own.

Something sang in the firmament.
The past, my friend compelled you,

⁸⁰² In a letter to Seferis from Kalamata (1940), Durrell said: ‘My heart goes out to the great Colossus of Maroussi riding off to the wars like Galahad; he is a living piece of mythology and I am going to erect a wonderful memorial to his honour one of these days.’ Letter by Lawrence Durrell to George Seferis, dated 1940, George Seferis Archive (Lawrence Durrell Letters, Υποενότητα Π.Α, φακ. 43 Υποφ. 6, letter 3), Gennadius Library, Athens.

⁸⁰³ On the 15th March 1941, Durrell sent this poem to T. S. Eliot for ‘a projected volume’, so he wrote it earlier that year. See MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell* 228.

The charge of habit and love.
The olive in the blood awoke,
The stones of Athens in their pride
Will remember, regret and often bless.

Kisses in letter from home:
Crosses in the snow: now surely
Lover and loved exist again
By a strange communion of darkness.
Those who went in all innocence,
Whom the wheel disfigured: whom
Charity will not revisit or repair,
The innocent who fell like apples.

[...]

I have no fear for the land
Of the dark heads with aimed noses,
The hair of night and the voices
Which mimic a traditional laughter:
Nor for a new language where
A mole upon a dark throat
Of a girl is called 'an olive':
All these things are simply Greece.

Her blue boundaries are
Upon a curving sky of time,
In a dark menstruum of water:
The names of islands like doors
Open upon it: the rotting walls
Of the European myth are here
For us, the industrious singers,
In the service of this blue, this enormous blue.

Soon it will be spring. Out of
This huge magazine of flowers, the earth,
We will enchant the house with roses,
The girls with flowers in their teeth,
The olives full of charm: and all of it
Given: can one say that
Any response is enough for those
Who have a woman, an island and a tree?

I only know that this time
More than ever, we must bless
And pity the darling dead: the women
Winding up their hair into sea-shells,
The faces of meek men like dials,
The great overture of the dead playing,
Calling all lovers everywhere in all stations
Who lie on the circumference of ungiven kisses.

Exhausted rivers ending in the sand;
Windmills of the old world winding
And unwinding in musical valleys your arms.
The contemptible vessel of the body lies
Lightly in its muscles like a vine;
Covered the nerves: and like an oil expressed
From the black olive between rocks,
Memory lulls and bathes in its dear reflections.

Now the blue lantern of the night
Moves on the dark in its context of stars.
O my friend, history with all her compromises
Cannot disturb the circuit made by this,
Alone in the house, a single candle burning
Upon a table in the whole of Greece.

Your letter of the 4th was no surprise.
So Tonio had gone? He will have need of us.
The sails are going out over the old world.
Our happiness, here on a promontory,
Marked by a star, is small but perfect.
The calculations of the astronomers, the legends
The past believed in could not happen here.
Nothing remains but Joy, the infant Joy
(So quiet the mountain in its shield of snow,
So unconcerned the faces of the birds),
With the unsuspected world somewhere awake,
Born of this darkness, our imperfect sight,
The stirring seed of Nostradamus' rose. (99-102)

Being both an elegy for those fallen in Albania and a song to Greece and its people, in the poem, love interweaves with war, and life with death. The two first lines of the third stanza – ‘Enter the dark crystal if you dare / and gaze on Greece’ – are better explained by a later reference to the same ‘dark crystal’ in the article “A Landmark Gone”.

Entering Greece is like entering a dark crystal; the form of things becomes irregular, refracted. Mirages suddenly swallow islands and if you watch you can see the trembling curtain of the atmosphere.⁸⁰⁴

It is an idea that Durrell had previously expressed, with almost the same words, in Prospero's Cell.⁸⁰⁵ Similarly, in the poem, the Greek soldiers ‘came smiling, like long reflections of themselves upon a sky of fancy’, while Death awaited her victims ‘in fields of unexploded asphodels’. The following stanza visually describe the anxiety and death of many of those men who the stones of history will later ‘bless’. When the ‘kisses in letters

⁸⁰⁴ L. Durrell, Spirit of Place 187.

⁸⁰⁵ See L. Durrell, Prospero's Cell 11.

from home' turn to 'crosses in the snow', lovers seem to reunite in a last lyrical dark embrace.

A sense of loss on the horizon pervades the whole poem, but Durrell also sings the beauty of the land, the language, the people, and a colour standing for them all, blue. In a December 1941 letter from Pretoria to Henry Miller, Seferis uses Durrell's words: 'We are dwellers in the Eye, dedicated to *the service of this blue*... I think you understand'.⁸⁰⁶

The upcoming spring flowers alternate with mourning and 'ungiven kisses', but the 'windmills of the old world' keep on 'winding'. By watching the moon, the poet realizes that history 'cannot disturb' the eternal course of life. By replying to Seferis' 'letter of the 4th', he comes back to his 'small but perfect' happiness. Beyond the mountains, war approaches and is on the point of bursting into paradise. Like many other people, the Durrells, those 'amateurs in Eden' of "The Prayer-Wheel", will soon have to set sail for exile.⁸⁰⁷

Durrell would never forget the land he had discovered in his early twenties. Thirty years after his arrival at Corfu, he would still write about those summers 'in Adam's Eden long before the Fall'.⁸⁰⁸ In the "Epilogue in Alexandria" of Prospero's Cell, Durrell mentions several Greek friends that remind him of the lost country, but Seferis is the only one mentioned by his last name, Seferiades.⁸⁰⁹ In The Alexandria Quartet, it is Cavafy who stands for the Hellenic world, but curiously, two main characters, Melissa and Balthazar, are from Seferis' hometown, Smyrna (53, 80). Seferis –both the man and the poet– would always remain for Durrell an unforgettable image of the country.

With the German retreat, Seferis and Durrell were able to return to Greece. From Big Sur, Henry Miller saluted peace enthusiastically in a letter to Durrell in May 1945: 'I'm writing Katsimbali and Seferiades [...]. I'm writing everyone wherever peace has been restored. I seem to be communicating with the whole world. Peace! It's wonderful!' Miller even hinted that he would be willing to accept Durrell's proposal to move to Rhodes, but postwar restrictions made it impossible: 'No visas, no passports for year or more'.⁸¹⁰

5.8. The Places of the Past.

In August 1946, George and Maro Seferis spent their holidays with her sister Amaryllis on the island of Poros. On a boat trip to Daskaleio, an islet in the channel that

⁸⁰⁶ Letter by George Seferis to Henry Miller, dated 25 Dec. 1941, George Seferis Archive (Seferis' [Copies] Letters, Υποενότητα II.E, box 61, file 3 [1941-1942], letter 8), Gennadius Library, Athens (emphasis added).

⁸⁰⁷ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 83. Nancy Durrell's daughter with her second husband, Joanna Hodgkin, would use the same expression, 'amateurs in Eden', as a title for her mother's memoir.

⁸⁰⁸ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 271. In Prospero's Cell, Corfu is described throughout the book in the same way and the author refers to it as 'this Eden' (19).

⁸⁰⁹ L. Durrell, Prospero's Cell 132.

⁸¹⁰ Wickes, ed. Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence 205 and 204, respectively.

separates Poros from the Peloponnese, Seferis was shown a wrecked small ship that had been sunk during the invasion so that ‘the Germans wouldn’t take her’. Only the top of its funnel rose up above the water. In his diary entry for the 16th of August, the poet describes the ship as he had seen it.

We looked down. The gently rippling water and dancing sunlight made the submerged little ship, seen quite clearly with its broken masts, flutter like a flag or a dim image in the mind. The boatman said: ‘After she sank, the black-marketeers stripped her bare.’⁸¹¹

Its name was *Κίχλη*, the Greek word for a thrush. It would give him the title for his next poem, in which both the sunken ship and the little bird appear. “Thrush”, which was written that year and published in 1947, is divided into three parts. The first one, which bears the epigraph “The house near the sea”, is quoted below.

The houses I had they took away from me. The times
happened to be unpropitious: war, destruction, exile;
sometimes the hunter hits the migratory birds,
sometimes he doesn’t hit them. Hunting
was good in my time, many felt the pellet;
the rest circle aimlessly or go mad in the shelters.

Don’t talk to me about the nightingale or the lark
or the little wagtail
inscribing figures with his tail in the light;
I don’t know much about houses
I know they have their own nature, nothing else.
New at first, like babies
who play in gardens with the tassels of the sun,
they embroider coloured shutters and shining doors
over the day.
When the architect’s finished, they change,
they frown or smile or even grow resentful
with those who stayed behind, with those who went away
with others who’d come back if they could
or others who disappeared, now that the world’s become
an endless hotel.

I don’t know much about houses,
I remember their joy and their sorrow
sometimes, when I stop to think;
again
sometimes, near the sea, in naked rooms
with a single iron bed and nothing of my own,
watching the evening spider, I imagine
that someone is getting ready to come, that they dress him up

⁸¹¹ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 39.

in white and black robes, with many-coloured jewels,
and around him venerable ladies,
grey hair and dark lace shawls, talk softly,
that he is getting ready to come and say goodbye to me;
or that a woman – eyelashes quivering, slim-waisted,
returning from southern ports,
Smyrna Rhodes Syracuse Alexandria,
from cities closed like hot shutters,
with perfume of golden fruit and herbs –
climbs the stairs without seeing
those who've fallen asleep under the stairs.

Houses, you know, grow resentful easily when you strip
them bare. (161-162)

'The house near the sea' is the Villa Galini, the family home of Amaryllis Dragoumi, Maro Seferis' sister. This 19th century Victorian house in Poros, also known by the local people as *το Κόκκινο Σπίτι* [the Red House] because of its crimson colour, is built on a hill with views of the channel.

Both Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller had visited Villa Galini before the war. Seven years after his stay with Miller in 1939, Seferis' poem offers a different perspective. Although Poros is also the beautiful island described by Durrell in The Greek Islands and by Miller in The Colossus of Maroussi, in "Thrust", it is also the setting for reflections on the drama of war and exile, the past, and love.

Probably, Villa Galini gave Seferis the chance to find enough serenity to remember all the houses of his past, including those in Smyrna and Skala, and also those of his exile.⁸¹² The opening line ('The houses I had they took away from me'), and the last one of the second stanza ('... the world's become an endless hotel.') reveal very clearly the author's bitter lack of a real home. Unlike Odysseus, the poet does not have a place to return to. He has become an 'endless' traveller whose roots are never again reachable, wandering through transitory dwellings.

Seferis' references to hunting are an allusion to war. In his case, the Greco-Turkish War, WW2 and the Greek Civil War that had already broke out by the time he wrote the poem. Then, he mentions several small birds such as the 'lark', the 'little wagtail', and the 'nightingale' –which is migratory like refugees themselves– but he feels unable to talk about the victims of 'the pellet'.⁸¹³ So, from the walls of Villa Galini, he moves to houses.

⁸¹² In Greek, 'galini' [γαλήνη] means 'tranquility' and 'serenity'. In an open letter published in Αγγλοελληνική Επιθεώρηση [Anglo-Hellenic Review, July-Aug. 1950], Seferis confessed that Villa Gallini 'gave [him], for the first time in years, the feeling of a substantial home rather than a temporary campsite.' Qtd. in Keeley, Inventing Paradise 241.

⁸¹³ Of course, the thrush that has inspired the work may be added here too.

To think of their inhabitants is too painful, the poet prefers to let houses speak about their emptiness. Places have inherited the sorrows and despair of those who lived in them and will no longer be back: refugees, emigrants, the dead.

At times, when he is ‘near the sea’, looking at ‘the evening spider’, he imagines someone ‘getting ready to come’. It is the open sea that promises new arrivals and departures in his poetry. The ‘evening spider’ refers to the moon. As Gilbert Durand and also, J. E. Cirlot point out, spiders and the moon are often associated.⁸¹⁴ In the text, ‘the evening spider’ implies the archetypal sexual values of the moon.⁸¹⁵ This is confirmed by the following lines of this stanza. The sensuous imagery of this part, which has some Cavafian echoes, includes the ‘many-coloured jewels’ on the male visitor, the bodily description of a female one, and also those ‘cities closed like hot shutters, with perfume of golden fruit and herbs’. This description is abruptly interrupted by the last line of part I: ‘Houses, you know, grow resentful easily when you strip them bare.’ It seems that there is nothing that can fill the void of the houses left behind, their ‘naked rooms’ remain empty and marked by resentment. ‘Greece hits you with its long associations with the past. It reverberates like a seashell the whole time’ observes Durrell.⁸¹⁶ This same phenomenon would always accompany Seferis, wherever he went, in his permanent exile.

The imaginary man and woman in the first part of “Thrush” announce Elpenor and Circe in the second one. The former actually gives an epigraph to the first section of part II, ‘Sensual Elpenor’.

I saw him yesterday standing by the door
below my window; it was about
seven o'clock; there was a woman with him.
He had the look of Elpenor just before he fell
and smashed himself, yet he wasn't drunk.
He was speaking fast, and she
was gazing absently towards the gramophones;
now and then she cut him short to say a word
and then would glance impatiently
towards where they were frying fish: like a cat.
He muttered with a dead cigarette-butt between his lips:

– ‘Listen. There’s this too. In the moonlight
the statues sometimes bend like reeds
in the midst of ripe fruit – the statues;
and the flame becomes a cool oleander,

⁸¹⁴ See Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* 304, and Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l’imaginaire* 360, 362. Similarly, in his poem “Raven”, Seferis alludes to the light of the sun as ‘the golden spider-web’ (95).

⁸¹⁵ The connections between the moon and sexuality are well-known; on those between spiders and the sexual drive and its organs, see Durand, 116.

⁸¹⁶ Ingersoll, *Lawrence Durrell: Conversations* 164.

the flame that burns one, I mean.’

– ‘It’s just the light. . . shadows of the night.’

– ‘Maybe the night that split open, a blue pomegranate,
a dark breast, and filled you with stars,
cleaving time.

And yet the statues
bend sometimes, dividing desire in two,
like a peach; and the flame
becomes a kiss on the limbs, then a sob,
then a cool leaf carried off by the wind;
they bend; they become light with a human weight.
You don’t forget it.’

– ‘The statues are in the museum.’

– ‘No, they pursue you, why can’t you see it?
I mean with their broken limbs,
with their shape from another time, a shape you don’t recognize
yet know.

It’s as though
in the last days of your youth you loved
a woman who was still beautiful, and you were always afraid,
as you held her naked at noon,
of the memory aroused by your embrace;
were afraid the kiss might betray you
to other beds now of the past
which nevertheless could haunt you
so easily, so easily, and bring to life
images in the mirror, bodies once alive:
their sensuality.

It’s as though
returning home from some foreign country you happen to open
an old trunk that’s been locked up a long time
and find the tatters of clothes you used to wear
on happy occasions, at festivals with many-coloured lights,
mirrored, now becoming dim,
and all that remains is the perfume of the absence
of a young form.

Really, those statues are not
the fragments. You yourself are the relic;
they haunt you with a strange virginity
at home, at the office, at receptions for the celebrated,
in the unconfessed terror of sleep;
they speak of things you wish didn’t exist
or would happen years after your death,
and that’s difficult because. . .’

– ‘The statues are in the museum.

Good night.’

– ‘. . . because the statues are no longer
fragments. We are. The statues bend lightly. . . Good night.’ (163-165)

In this part of “Thrush”, the poet becomes an observer. Through his window, he sees a man and a woman talking. The man is described as having ‘the look of Elpenor’. In an essay about the poem, Seferis identifies them as Circe and Elpenor. Both characters had already appeared in “Stratis Thalassinos Among the Agapanthi” and some allusions to them are also found in earlier poems, such as “The Companions in Hades” and the “Argonauts” part of Mythistorema (6-7).

Like Homer’s Elpenor, Seferis’ one is not able to finish his journey. However, this modern Elpenor it is not intoxicated by wine, but by his erotic memories of the past.⁸¹⁷ Both Elpenor and Circe feel anxious, as seen in the first stanza, but each one for different reasons. The dialogue shows their distinct views of sensuality.

Elpenor projects his own lust onto statues. In “Thrush”, the poet’s exploration of the symbolic potential of statues probably reaches its apogee, but they are very common in Seferis’ poetry, from his first works until the last ones. Usually, they are mutilated, like the ‘broken statues’ in poem 21 of Mythistorema (25) or the ‘amputated statues’ which look at him in “Sunday” (86).⁸¹⁸ Their fragmentary beauty always reminds the poet of bodies long lost, those ‘bodies once alive’ in “Thrush”. Similarly, in “Erotikos Logos” (IV), ‘the statue suddenly dawns’, but ‘the bodies have vanished in the sea in the wind in the sun in the rain’ (251).

Therefore, human sculptures in the author’s work come from the past with the knowledge that experience brings. In “The Cistern”, for instance, the marble statues look at people as they walk in the streets at Easter.

‘We are dying! Our gods are dying!...’
The marble statues know it, looking down
like white dawn upon the victim
alien, full of eyelids, fragments,
as the crowds of death pass by. (259)

That is why searching ‘beyond the statues’ implies seeking the deep meaning of myths and also, that of the poet’s past life, ‘the other life’.⁸¹⁹ The marble sculpture of Aphrodite in the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes that inspired Reflections on a Marine Venus is given by Durrell this same role.

⁸¹⁷ In an essay about “Thrush”, Seferis writes: ‘Elpenor is as much mine as the color displayed by the chameleon is his.’ Qtd. in Capri-Karka, Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis 238, n24.

⁸¹⁸ See also the ‘broken statues’ in poem 6 of Mythistorema (9) or the ‘broken limbs’ in “Thrush” (164).

⁸¹⁹ See poem 5 of Mythistorema (8).

Through her we have learned to see Greece with the inner eyes—not as a collection of battered vestiges left over from cultures long since abandoned—but as something ever-present and ever-renewed: the symbol married to the object prime [...]. In the blithe air of Rhodes she has provided us with a vicarious sense of continuity not only with the past—but also with the future [...].⁸²⁰

This ‘marine Venus’ would become ‘the presiding genius of the place’ in Durrell’s book on Rhodes.⁸²¹ As he puts at the end on his work, ‘the wound she gives one must carry to the world’s end.’⁸²² In Seferis’ “Thrush”, the poet cannot forget the statues either. Capri-Karka argues that ‘the ancient Greek statues haunt sensual Elpenor like Erinyes, reminding him with their mutilated limbs of his own mutilated existence, his spoiled love.’⁸²³ Certainly, this interpretation explains adequately his depiction of the ‘broken statues’ but his passionate interest in them goes beyond this explanation; it is their symbolic function as representations of the bodies of the past and their mythical signification that actually haunt the poet.

In his poem, statues imitate the ‘sensuality’ of the lost bodies. The poetic alchemy transmutes the motionlessness and weight of statues into movement and lightness. They ‘bend’ and ‘become light with a human weight’. In “Thrush”, statues ignite erotic passion, ‘the flame that burns one’, and they bring back old memories of intimacies. This image of statues bending like flames seems to echo Seferis’ earlier use of this symbol in “The Cistern”: ‘the statue falls naked on the ripe breast / that softly sweetens it’ (255). This personification of human sculptures is further developed in Seferis’ later collection Three Secret Poems. In its third poem, “Summer Solstice”, the poem watches ‘the statues dripping blood’ (207). They may seem ‘dumb’ like the statues of the Jardin des Tuileries in Henry Miller’s Tropic of Cancer (11), but their bodies speak for them.

Although Seferis sometimes depicts statues as ‘immovable’ or ‘static’⁸²⁴, this expected feature is also at times disrupted. In “Spring A. D.”, the poet alludes to ‘the old men’ that ‘departed like statues / leaving behind a silence / that no sword could cut / that no gallop could break / nor the voices of the young’ (123). Occasionally, not unlike the dead, statues come back. The author had actually been able to see many ancient statues return from the underworld after the war. They had been buried for safety in the National Archaeological Museum. In his diary, he describes that scene.

⁸²⁰ Lawrence Durrell, Reflections on a Marine Venus. A Companion to the Landscape of Rhodes (London: Faber, 1973) 179. See also *ibid.*, 37-38.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸²² *Ibid.*, 184.

⁸²³ Capri-Karka, Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis 332.

⁸²⁴ Seferis, “On a Ray of Winter Light” (201, from Three Secret Poems), and poem 20 of Mythistorema (24), respectively.

Statues, still sunken in the earth, appeared naked from the waist up, planted at random. The arm of some colossal god, curved in toward his thigh, extended below the scaffolding; [...]. It was a chorus of the resurrected, a second coming of bodies that gave you a crazy joy. [...] The bronze Zeus, or Poseidon, lying on a crate like an ordinary tired laborer. I touched him on the chest, where the arm joins the shoulder, on the belly, on the hair. It seemed that I touched my own body.⁸²⁵

As Roderick Beaton argues, this description recalls ‘Aphrodite, goddess of love, rising from the waves’.⁸²⁶ In a like manner to Zeus or Poseidon in this quotation, Aphrodite Anadyomene [Ἀφροδίτη Ἀναδυομένη] rises both as a divinity and a woman, represented in human and fleshly terms. This is also Durrell’s picture of a ‘Marine Venus’ raising ‘as if foamborn’ from the bottom of Rhodes harbour, in her ‘rediscovered youth’,⁸²⁷ which he similarly explored in his poem “Aphrodite” (1961).⁸²⁸ In the reborn statues of the Archaeological Museum, Seferis saw the beauty, passions and concerns of men.⁸²⁹ He wrote the above words in his diary on the 4th of June 1946, only a couple of months before starting to write “Thrush”. His memory of that day at the museum would surface again in the poem.

In “Thrush”, statues ‘pursue’ Elpenor as if they were the Erinyes. Their ‘broken limbs’ remind him of other times and other bodies. Like the mask in “The King of Asini”, their mutilated bodies reveal an ‘absence’. However, people themselves are the real ‘fragments’, the relics of the past.⁸³⁰ In the fourth one of the poet’s “Sixteen Haiku”, he had already explored the same image.

In the Museum garden

Empty chairs:
the statues have gone back
to the other museum. (44)

This idea closes the dialogue between Elpenor, the ‘sentimental sensualist’, and Circe, the ‘sensual realist’ –to use Edmund Keeley’s words.⁸³¹ They part, taking opposite directions. He, ‘toward the North’; she, ‘towards the light-flooded beach’, where a radio bursts in.

⁸²⁵ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 29.

⁸²⁶ Beaton, *George Seferis* 270.

⁸²⁷ L. Durrell, *Reflections on a Marine Venus* 37-38.

⁸²⁸ L. Durrell, *Collected Poems* 255-256.

⁸²⁹ In 1950, Seferis visited with Axel W. Persson (Royal Swedish Institute at Athens) the archaeological site of Labraunda, near the coast of Caria (Turkey). In his diary, he similarly wrote that the mountain of Labraunda had been ‘opened to reveal again th[o]se signs of life.’ See Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 159.

⁸³⁰ In an interview, Seferis quotes these two relevant lines of “Thrush” while explaining that they were used by an English ‘specialist in classical statues’ to illustrate some of his views in a lecture on the statuary of the Parthenon. See Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry* 184.

⁸³¹ Edmund Keeley, “Seferis’ Elpenor: A Man of No Fortune,” *Modern Greek Poetry* 62.

In the next section of this middle part of the poem, entitled “The radio”, Seferis emulates the lyrics of an imaginary popular song on that radio. In a different language, it deals with some of the themes of “Thrush”, such as love and separation, memory, and the passing of time. The singer addresses the woman in the song and he tells her: ‘O woman, O sightless thing, / hear the blind man sing.’ It seems he is singing about Elpenor and Circe, both of them blinded by their own desires. In this regard, the woman of the song is not very different from the ‘eyeless statue’ in Seferis’ “Raven” (1937), which in its motionlessness condenses ‘thousands of people forgotten’ and ‘broken embraces’ (94).

In Lawrence Durrell’s poem “Delos” (1945), statues are similarly depicted with ‘sightless eyes’, but the author contrasts their condition with the eyes painted on the ships sailing the Aegean.⁸³² In The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell refers to ancient Greek blind statues when he describes the character of Liza, Pursewarden’s blind sister.

It was the head of a Medusa, its blindness was that of a Greek statue — a blindness perhaps brought about by intense concentration through centuries upon sunlight and blue water? (438)

Further on, while reading Pursewarden’s verses, Mountolive comes across the following related lines.

*Greek statues with their bullet holes for eyes
Blinded as Eros by surprise
The secrets of the foundling heart disguise,
Lover and loved....* (443)

As Seferis writes in Six Nights on the Acropolis, the Gorgona is ‘half reality and half fiction’.⁸³³ In The Alexandria Quartet, Medusa is also the myth and its embodiment in Liza Pursewarden. Durrell suggests that either ‘sunlight’ or ‘love’ may be the cause of her symbolic blindness. This idea will also appear in the third part of “Thrush”, but the second one is abruptly interrupted by the radio news about the imminent war, which overlap the lyrics of the song. The last word, ‘SOULMONGER’, brings up the selling of souls –and bodies– that wars imply.

The next section, “The wreck ‘Thrush’”, gives the poem a title and opens its third and last part.

‘This wood that cooled my forehead
at times when noon burned my veins
will flower in other hands. Take it. I’m giving it to you;

⁸³² L. Durrell, Collected Poems 132-133. The eyes painted on ships refer to the common Greek evil eye [μάτι].

⁸³³ Seferis, Six Nights on the Acropolis 34.

look, it's wood from a lemon tree. . .'

I heard the voice

as I was gazing at the sea trying to make out
a ship they'd sunk there years ago;
it was called 'Thrush', a small wreck; the masts,
broken, swayed at odd angles deep underwater, like tentacles,
or the memory of dreams, marking the hull:
vague mouth of some huge dead sea-monster
extinguished in the water. Calm spread all around.

And gradually, in turn, other voices followed,
whispers thin and thirsty
emerging from the other side of the sun, the dark side;
you might say they were asking to drink a drop of blood;
familiar voices, but I couldn't distinguish one from the other.
And then the voice of the old man reached me; I felt it
falling into the heart of day,
quietly, as though motionless:
'And if you condemn me to drink poison, I thank you.
Your law will be my law; how can I go
wandering from one foreign country to another, a rolling stone.
I prefer death.
Whose path is for the better only God knows.'

Countries of the sun yet you cannot face the sun.
Countries of men yet you cannot face man. (167-168)

Henry Miller had previously written about the Strait of Poros, where the wrecked 'Thrush' was, in The Colossus of Maroussi. As said above, it was one of the parts of the book that Seferis liked the most and which he had even translated into Greek.

To sail slowly through the streets of Poros is to recapture the joy of passing through the neck of the womb. It is a joy too deep almost to be remembered. [...] Let the world have its bath of blood—I will cling to Poros. [...] my eyes will never close on that scene, my friends will never disappear. That was a moment which endures, which survives world wars [...]. I can see the whole human race straining through the neck of the bottle here, searching for egress into the world of light and beauty. (53-55)

In Miller, that unforgettable moment of sailing through the strait along the coast of Poros becomes an image for the possibility of rebirth, a badly-needed opening for 'the whole human race' into 'the world of light and beauty.' In a letter to Durrell dated 4 October 1946, Seferis explains to him that Poros actually 'means passage' but he wonders: 'Passage to where? So here I am asking this question. After the neutrality, after the war, after the

“liberation”, here I am asking this question.⁸³⁴ It is a thought that he had also written down in his diary two days earlier.

Between the knowledge of life and the knowledge of death, am I
perhaps no more than a feather on top of the wave? ... but to the
oars! The ship whistles— *Πόρος, πόρος, □ πορος*—
[Poros, passage, impasse]⁸³⁵

Both these thoughts and Miller’s narration of their voyage through that passage were probably in Seferis’ mind when, seven years after that crossing, he wrote the third part of “Thrush”. In fact, this part is about a return. In his diary, Seferis had written about his holiday in Poros in similar terms: ‘This voyage is like a return to Greece.’⁸³⁶

Just like Odysseus, after the war, the poet tries to find his way home, and, like Homer’s hero, he will have to visit the land of the dead first. While looking at the sunken ship, which is depicted as a monster of memory, he can hear several voices from the underworld. The first one tells him that he is given a piece of ‘wood’ that ‘will flower in other hands.’ It seems to imply that the poet is given the seed that may find its meaning in his—or other people’s— words.

Among other unidentified voices ‘from the other side of the sun, the dark side’ of death, the poet listens to that of ‘the old man’. The following references to a death sentence to drink poison and the condemned’s reaction to his fate are taken by Seferis from Socrates’ *Apology*, as the author explains in one of his essays about the poem.⁸³⁷ In *The Odyssey*, it is Tiresias who guides the hero on his return to Ithaca; in “Thrush, it is Socrates’ voice that is most clearly perceived.⁸³⁸

In the poem, ‘the old man’ says that he prefers death to an endless exile. His integrity leads him to stay and face his accusers. This is also the sense of the last stanza of this section: ‘Countries of the sun yet you cannot face the sun. / Countries of men yet you cannot face man.’ Those who, like Odysseus’ companions, have ‘eaten the oxes of the Sun’ will never be able to ‘face the sun’. Only those who, like Socrates, show respect for life and justice are ultimately able to ‘face man.’

⁸³⁴ Letter by George Seferis to Lawrence Durrell, dated 4 Oct. 1946, George Seferis Archive (Seferis’ [Copies] Letters, Υποενότητα II.E, file 5), Gennadius Library, Athens.

⁸³⁵ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 39, undelined/emphasized in the original.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸³⁷ See George Seferis “A Staging for ‘The Thrush,’” [*Μια σκηνοθεσία για την “Κίχλη”*] *Δοκίμης Β'* (Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1974) 52.

⁸³⁸ The author said that he had chosen Socrates instead of Tiresias because the ancient philosopher was ‘more human’ (see *ibid.*).

5.9. Light in Seferis and Miller.

It is precisely the light of the sun and the face of man that the poet finds in the last and crucial section of “Thrush”, entitled “The light”.

As the years go by
the judges who condemn you grow in number;
as the years go by and you converse with fewer voices,
you see the sun with different eyes:
you know that those who stayed behind were deceiving you
the delirium of flesh, the lovely dance
that ends in nakedness.

It's as though, turning at night into an empty highway,
you suddenly see the eyes of an animal shine,
eyes already gone; so you feel your own eyes:
you gaze at the sun, then you're lost in darkness.

The Doric chiton
that swayed like the mountains when your fingers touched it
is a marble figure in the light, but its head is in darkness.
And those who abandoned the stadium to take up arms
struck the obstinate marathon runner
and he saw the track sail in blood,
the world empty like the moon,
the gardens of victory wither:
you see them in the sun, behind the sun.
And the boys who dived from the bowsprits
go like spindles twisting still,
naked bodies plunging into black light
with a coin between the teeth, swimming still,
while the sun with golden needles sews
sails and wet wood and colours of the sea;
even now they're going down obliquely
toward the pebbles on the sea floor,
white oil-flasks.

Light, angelic and black,
laughter of waves on the sea's highways,
tear-stained laughter,
the old suppliant sees you
as he moves to cross the invisible fields –
light mirrored in his blood,
the blood that gave birth to Eteocles and Polynices.
Day, angelic and black;
the brackish taste of woman that poisons the prisoner
emerges from the wave a cool branch adorned with drops.
Sing little Antigone, sing, O sing. . .
I'm not speaking to you about things past, I'm speaking about love;
adorn your hair with the sun's thorns,
dark girl;
the heart of the Scorpion has set,
the tyrant in man has fled,
and all the daughters of the sea, Nereids, Graeae,

hurry toward the shimmering of the rising goddess:
whoever has never loved will love,
in the light;
and you find yourself
in a large house with many windows open
running from room to room, not knowing from where to look out first,
because the pine trees will vanish, and the mirrored mountains,
and the chirping of birds
the sea will empty, shattered glass, from north and south
your eyes will empty of the light of day
the way the cicadas all together suddenly fall silent. (168-170)

At the beginning of this last part of “Thrush”, the poet reflects on past love experiences that ended in frustration, and then, on war and its victims: ‘naked bodies plunging into black light / with a coin between the teeth, swimming still, / while the sun with golden needles sews / sails and wet wood and colours of the sea; even now they’re going down obliquely / toward the pebbles on the sea floor, / white oil-flasks.’⁸³⁹ In this first stanza about the departure of the modern Odysseus from the gloomy Hades, images of light and darkness are combined as if the poet was swimming in the opposite direction to those bodies, out of the depths of the sea, where the hull of the *Thrush* rests, towards the light of the sun. Each image is complemented by its own opposite (moon-sun, light-darkness, black-white), as in the oxymoron ‘black light’.

In fact, the last stanza of the poem is opened by another significant oxymoron, ‘light, angelic and black’. This simultaneous presence of both adjectives illustrates the poet’s integral conception of light. His view of this matter is very clearly explained in his essay on Delphi.

In the beginning was the wrath of the earth. Later, Apollo came and killed the chthonic serpent, Python. It was left to rot. It is said that this is where the first name of Delphi, Pytho, came from.⁸⁴⁰ In such a fertilizer the power of the god of harmony, of light, and of divination took root and grew. The myth may mean that the dark forces are the yeast of light; that the more intense they are, the deeper the light becomes when it dominates them.⁸⁴¹

In this way, by presenting darkness as ‘the yeast of light’, these opposites transcend their mutual negation and they establish a dynamic relationship. This issue is again raised in the same essay when Seferis narrates his visit to the Corycian Cave at Delphi.

⁸³⁹ The coin, of course, refers to the obol that the deceased had to pay Charon to reach the world of the dead, and the ‘white oil-flasks’ allude to the ancient Greek funeral urns.

⁸⁴⁰ The ancient Greek verb ‘pythein’ [πύθειν; σαπίζειν, in modern Greek] means ‘to rot’.

⁸⁴¹ Seferis, “Delphi,” *Greece: A Traveler’s Literary Companion* 84. L. Durrell quotes this paragraph in his own essay about the place. See L. Durrell, *Spirit of Place* 275-276.

As you enter the cave, the stone is still preserved with the half-effaced sign to the god Pan and the Nymphs. Then you have the feeling that you have descended into a large womb. [...] Only after you proceed and turn around do you see the rays of the sun like a blessing as they enter, parallel, through the mouth of the cave, striking its walls with a rosy and green iridescence. You rejoice at being born again in the warmth of the sun, certainly not poorer; you know that there is still something behind these things.⁸⁴²

In the following pages, the author contrasts this interpretation of darkness with that brought later by Christianity. He mentions a mosaic of the Pantocrator at the nearby Monastery of Saint Luke in Distomo⁸⁴³ that ‘bears the inscription “I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness.”’⁸⁴⁴ Darkness had come to mean the realm of Satan.

Lawrence Durrell’s exploration of the concept of light in The Greek Islands also includes a reference to the ‘blackness’ in light.

The light! One hears the word everywhere ‘To Phos’ and can recognize its pedigree – among other derivatives is our English word ‘phosphorescent’, which summons up at once the dancing magnesium-flare quality of the sunlight blazing on a white wall; in the depths of the light there is blackness, but it is a blackness which throbs with violet – a magnetic unwearying ultra-violet throb. This confers a sort of brilliant skin of white light on material objects, linking near and far, and bathing simple objects in a sort of celestial glow-worm hue. It is the naked eyeball of God, so to speak, and it blinds one. [...] Flowers and houses and clouds all watch you with a photo-electric eye – at once substantial and somehow immaterial. Each cypress is the only one in existence. Each boat, house, donkey, is *prime*.⁸⁴⁵

However, in Durrell’s case, the ‘blackness’ of Greek light is softened by its ‘magnetic unwearying ultra-violet throb’ and his emphasis on its divine nature. In the same work, he quotes Henry Miller’s comment on this ‘violet light’: ‘The blue decomposing into that ultimate violet light which makes everything Greek seem holy, natural and familiar.’⁸⁴⁶ Miller had already talked about light as a source of spiritual truths in Tropic of Cancer when he had alluded to one of his favourite writers, Dostoevski. As he would write in his booklet

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁸⁴³ Distomo is a village bordering with the Phocis region and Delphi. The mosaic is over the lintel of the west door.

⁸⁴⁴ Seferis, “Delphi,” Greece: A Traveler’s Literary Companion 96. Seferis’ essay on Delphi was firstly published in English in 1963, in Philip Sherrard’s translation.

⁸⁴⁵ L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 18 and 21. See also, L. Durrell, Blue Thirst 18. Another example of Durrell’s use of ‘darkness’ is found in his poem “The Anecdotes”, in its part about Rhodes. After describing a tender scene of two children playing by the harbour, he concludes: ‘twelve sad lines against the dark.’ See L. Durrell, Collected Poems 204.

⁸⁴⁶ Qtd., from Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 159, in L. Durrell, The Greek Islands 85. See also The Colossus of Maroussi 31.

for Anaïs Nin “The Heaven Beyond Heaven”, ‘the word is the light and the truth become flesh.’⁸⁴⁷

I hear again Dostoievski’s words, hear them rolling on page after page, with minutest observation, with maddest introspection, with all the undertones of misery now lightly, humorously touched, now swelling like an organ note until the heart bursts and there is nothing left but a blinding, scorching light, the radiant light that carries off the fecundating seeds of the stars. The story of art whose roots lie in massacre.⁸⁴⁸

This last sentence brings back the reverse side of light and its ‘roots’ in death. Stars, being a glimmer of light amidst the darkness, are the perfect metaphor of this complementary relation.

The firmament sagged and all stars turned black. [...] Out of nothingness arises the sign of infinity; beneath the ever-rising spirals slowly sinks the gaping hole. The land and the water make numbers joined, a poem written with flesh and stronger than steel or granite. Through endless night the earth whirls towards a creation unknown...⁸⁴⁹

As in Seferis, in Miller’s thought, darkness and light are joined like land and water. Black stars represent the endless creative possibilities rising, as an spiral, from ‘nothingness’. The dark wide hole is similarly found on the verge of light. Likewise, Seferis writes in his diary:

There is a drama of blood much deeper, much more organic (body and soul), which may become apparent to whoever perceives that behind the gray and golden weft of the Attic summer exists a frightful black; that we are all of us the playthings of this black.⁸⁵⁰

Next, he refers to the tragedies of the houses of Atreids and Labdacids as examples. In the third part of “Thrush”, the poet mentions precisely two Labdacids, Oedipus’ sons Eteocles and Polynices, who killed each other while fighting for power.⁸⁵¹ The ongoing Greek civil war at that time is illuminated by the timeless reality of this myth about a conflict between brothers. The ‘angelic and black’ light, echoed by the ‘tear-stained laughter’, reminds the poet of Oedipus, in whose own blood that light is ‘mirrored’.

⁸⁴⁷ Karl Orend, “Nothing But Light. Notes on Henry Miller’s Birthday Gift for Anaïs Nin & The Tranquility of Struggle,” *Nexus* 8 (2011): 20.

⁸⁴⁸ Miller, *The Obelisk Trilogy: Tropic of Cancer. Tropic of Capricorn. Black Spring* 119.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸⁵⁰ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 31.

⁸⁵¹ ‘The old suppliant’ is Oedipus and ‘the invisible fields’ [of night] refers to those in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* 1,681. As noted by Capri-Karka, ‘laughter of waves’ is also borrowed from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* 89-90, and ‘tear-stained laughter’, from Homer’s *The Iliad* VI.484.

This connection between light and blood recurs in some other of Seferis' writings. In a letter to Miller dated 7 December 1948, while telling Miller about the civil conflict in Greece, the poet uses similar terms to those in "Thrush": 'I have experienced the sharpest tragedy a human being could experience. The light itself was bleeding. Then life took its course again among disabled men, disabled minds, and disabled houses.'⁸⁵² In this comment about those events, which is curiously his only known explicit reference to them,⁸⁵³ it is not difficult to see some echoes of the poet's broken statues and his notion of light as the blood of man. In his "Letter on "The Thrush" ", the author openly invites readers to think about this latter issue: 'It is so easy, just think: [what] if the light of the day and the blood of man were one and the same thing?'⁸⁵⁴

An earlier parallel image of sunlight bleeding is found in The Colossus of Maroussi, when Miller discourses on light in man's spiritual journey.

The light is no longer solar or lunar; it is the starry light of the planet to which man has given life. The earth is alive to its innermost depths; at the center it is a sun in the form of a man crucified. The sun bleeds on its cross in the hidden depths. The sun in man struggling to emerge towards another light. From light to light, from calvary to calvary. The earth song. . . .⁸⁵⁵

It is perhaps the same paradoxical coexistence of tragedy and light in Greece under its civil war that induced Seferis to write about 'angelic and black' light in "Thrush". In December 1945, the author had written in his diary about this poignant contrast between the brutal reality of the country at that time and the brightness that illuminated it.

It is the light. The most worthless playthings leap and dance in the light; you watch it transforming them, turning them into other things, unstable, having no connection with this misery. Greece is merciless.⁸⁵⁶

To the poet's eyes, the civil war seemed a reenactment of the fratricidal fight between Oedipus' sons that is evoked in "Thrush". Later, in January 1947, after reading André Gide's Theseus (1946), Seferis would write again about the son and murderer of Laius in his diary. 'Reading about the meeting of Theseus with Oedipus, I thought of the ending of the "Thrush": "*obscurité tu seras ma lumière.*" '⁸⁵⁷ As in the case of Python, Oedipus' dead body would bring good fortune to Athens and its founder-king Theseus.

⁸⁵² George Seferis, "Letters to Henry Miller," *Labrys* 8 (1983): 55.

⁸⁵³ See Beaton, George Seferis 280-281.

⁸⁵⁴ Seferis, "Letter on "The Thrush" ", On the Greek Style 104.

⁸⁵⁵ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 57. He had previously referred to the sun bleeding in a 1931 manifesto with Alfred Perlès, "The New Instinctivism". See Henry Miller, "The New Instinctivism (A Duet in Creative Violence)," *Nexus* 4 (2007): 24.

⁸⁵⁶ Seferis, A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951 15.

⁸⁵⁷ Seferis, A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951 70.

In the last lines of the poem, the rebellious spirit of Antigone is called to sing about the end of tyranny and war,⁸⁵⁸ about the hope of love. After his long exile, the poet has found a home in light and later, the blood of man; at the end of “Thrush”, light becomes an image of love.

Then, the poet announces the rebirth of ‘the rising goddess’, Aphrodite is born again out of the sea and light. Recalling the refrain of a Latin pagan hymn to Venus, the *Pervigilium Veneris*, he proclaims: ‘Whoever has never loved will love’; ‘in the light’, he adds. The seven last lines are a life-affirming appeal to enjoy every moment of life, to absorb ‘the light of day’ as long as possible. This is the poet’s message from the ‘large house with many windows open’. In the end, he seems to have found his home in this creative love that light embodies.

Seferis’ next published work, *Logbook III*, would be opened by a line referring to this new found light: ‘And you see the light of the sun, as the ancients used to say’ (“Agianapa I”, 173). In his diary, he had used the same words on 4 June 1946: ‘ “And you see the light of the sun” – as the ancients used to say. I could analyze this phrase and advance toward the most secret love.’⁸⁵⁹

In one of his essays on “Thrush”, the poet discloses that he believes that ‘in the Greek light, there is a kind of process of humanization’.⁸⁶⁰ However, he does not explain how it happens. He says that ‘light cannot be explained; it can only be seen.’ The answer is of course to be found in light itself and in poetry, but poems, like light, are to be interpreted by readers.⁸⁶¹

In an interview, Lawrence Durrell argues that in Greece, ‘sunlight and inner light meet.’⁸⁶² He discovered it while on Corfu while exploring the island. In “Corfu Poem”, he offers a lyrical image of this while describing an evening with Henry Miller and Theodore Stephanides at Kalami: ‘Across the bay, a shepherd’s piping wove / A tune of high thin threads of shivering light.’⁸⁶³

In December 1946, in his diary, Seferis acknowledges: ‘I [...] leave [Poros] with certain “ideas” about the light. It is the most important thing I’ve “discovered” since the ship that brought me home entered Greek waters (Hydra, October 1944).’⁸⁶⁴ Later, in February,

⁸⁵⁸ War is represented by ‘the heart of the Scorpion’. See Beaton, *George Seferis* 245. Tyranny must be understood in its broadest sense. Thus, it also refers to any tyrannical influences that threaten the inner balance of man.

⁸⁵⁹ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 29. The quoted expression is from Homer, *Il.* 18.61.

⁸⁶⁰ Seferis, “Letter on “The Thrush”,” *On the Greek Style* 104.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁸⁶² Lawrence Durrell, *The Big Supposer*, interview by Marc Alyn (New York: Grove, 1972) 128.

⁸⁶³ Stephanides, *Autumn Gleanings* 86-87, but originally pub. in L. Durrell’s *Cities of the Mind* (1969).

⁸⁶⁴ Seferis, *A Poet’s Journal: Days of 1945-1951* 64 (underlined in the original).

he writes that he feels 'like an Argonaut': 'You rise half-dead and keep going, a foolish visionary in the golden light of the sea.'⁸⁶⁵ Light had actually become his own golden fleece and it would play a prominent role in his subsequent works, particularly in Logbook III (1955) and Three Secret Poems (1966).

In Henry Miller's case, light was equally an essential finding of his journey. In a letter to Anaïs Nin written aboard the *Exochorda* on 12 January 1940, on his way back to America, Miller explains his experience with the Greek light.

Greece is fading out rapidly, dying right before my eyes. The last thing to disappear is the light, the light over the hills, that light which I never saw before, which I could not possibly imagine if I had not seen it with my own eyes. The incredible light of Attica! If I retain no more than the memory of this it will do. That light represents for me the consummation of my own desires and experiences. I saw in it the flame of my own life consumed by the flame of the world. Everything seemed to burn to ash, and this ash itself was distilled and dispersed through the airs. I don't see what more any country, any landscape, could offer than this experience. Not only does one feel integrated, harmonious, at one with all life, but—*one is silenced*. [...] It is a death, but a death which puts life to shame.⁸⁶⁶

Miller found in his Greek friends the kind of affinity that he longed for. Not only Seferis, but also Nikos Ghika was 'a seeker after light and truth'.⁸⁶⁷ Ghika himself, while talking about the changes that he predicted in Miller, remarked: 'Above all, the simplicity of life and the absolute purity of line and light here—these have altered your point of view.'⁸⁶⁸

In his journey diary, Miller had already promised to do what he would later achieve in The Colossus of Maroussi: 'I shall make a hymn to the light, the light of Attica.'⁸⁶⁹ In the diary, while narrating his walk along the ancient Sacred Way to Eleusis, he also makes some interesting observations about the light on trees: 'Today, Sunday, I have seen the miraculous phenomenon of light inhabiting trees. The light literally rushes through the foliage, creating a green vaporous shroud, [...]. The soul of the tree stands revealed.'⁸⁷⁰ This reflection about light as a source of spiritual knowledge would also appear in The Colossus of Maroussi.

[Athens] is a city of startling atmospheric effects: it has not dug itself into the earth—it floats in a constantly changing light, beats with a chromatic rhythm. One is impelled to keep walking, to move on towards the mirage which is ever retreating. When one comes to the edge, to the great wall of mountains, the light becomes even more intoxicating; one feels as if he could bound up the side of the mountain in a few giant strides, and then—why then, if one did get

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

⁸⁶⁶ Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 219. See also Miller, My Life and Times 48.

⁸⁶⁷ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 52.

⁸⁶⁸ Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 362.

⁸⁶⁹ Miller, "First Impressions of Greece," Sextet: Six Essays 88.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

to the top; one would race like mad along the smooth spine and jump clear into the sky, one clear headlong flight into the blue and Amen forever. Along the Sacred Way; from Daphni to the sea, I was, on the point of madness, several times. I actually did start running up the hillside only to stop midway, terror-stricken, wondering what had taken possession of me. On one side are stones and shrubs which stand out with microscopic clarity; on the other are trees such as one sees in Japanese prints, trees flooded with light, intoxicated, coryphantic trees which must have been planted by the gods in moments of drunken exaltation. (44-45)

Miller's comment about a 'clear headlong flight into the blue' is a clear allusion to Pericles Yannopoulos' suicide, which becomes significant in the context of his thoughts about the intoxicating purity of light. Regarding this matter, Seferis writes in his diary:

Today I understood why Homer was blind; if he had had eyes he wouldn't have written anything. He saw once, for a limited period of time, then saw no more. In Greece, alas, if you want to see all the time you must keep narrowing the diaphragm, as one does in photography. Otherwise you become a victim like the late Giannopoulos. (I have in mind of course the men who can see with their eyes.).⁸⁷¹

Miller's enthusiasm about his discovery of light did not prevent him from seeing the dangers that lie at the heart of such a force, but he also perceived its creative nature. In The Colossus of Maroussi, he acknowledges: 'The light of Greece opened my eyes, penetrated my pores, expanded my whole being. I came home to the world' (241).

On the one hand, light is for Miller the humanising element that Seferis has also noted in his work. In Greece, he can see that a new 'world of light is born. Man looks at man with new eyes' (*ibid.*, 90). In this sense, light is an earthly manifestation of life. On the other hand,

Light acquires a transcendental quality: it is not the light of the Mediterranean alone, it is something more, something unfathomable, something holy. Here the light penetrates directly to the soul, opens the doors and windows of the heart, makes one naked, exposed, isolated in a metaphysical bliss which makes everything clear without being known. No analysis can go on in this light: here the neurotic is either instantly healed or goes mad.⁸⁷²

This 'transcendental' quality of light is equally found in Seferis. In an essay, the poet says that the light in Greece defies the physical limits between material and immaterial reality: 'An idea becomes an object with surprising ease. It seems to become all but physically incarnated in the web of the sun.'⁸⁷³ In Seferis' opinion, as in Miller's, light also transcends time revealing the eternal reality. In his diary, the poet writes: 'And yet in the

⁸⁷¹ Seferis, A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951 53. Underlined in the original.

⁸⁷² Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 45. See also *ibid.*, 133.

⁸⁷³ Seferis, On the Greek Style 171.

background is this pillar of light, this untouched thing that remains wedged in the heart of change like a diamond in a brook.⁸⁷⁴ In this way, Seferis reshapes the Heraclitan river, creating a new image of change amidst permanence.

Probably, change was also in the poet's mind at that time. In the late 1940s, those years before WW2 seemed to belong to another age. In March 1947, Lawrence Durrell and his wife Eve would leave the country. They spent their last evening in Athens with George Katsimbalis, Nikos Ghika, Rex Warner, and Seferis. All together, they listened to a recording of Henry Miller reading out some passages from Tropic of Cancer. In a letter to Miller from the 9th of July 1947, Durrell narrates the event.

It was so strange in that quiet booklined room to hear your burring voice reading out those long ghostly sequences from *Cancer*, I remembered Paris and Corfu. Sef and Katsimbalis had tears in their eyes. Finally when it got time to say goodbye I gave them the disc and they thanked me as if I had given them a portion of you.⁸⁷⁵

As quoted above, Seferis wrote that Durrell and Miller were among the first foreigners to understand his poetry. They also certainly contributed to the international recognition of his work. When it was announced on 24 October 1963 that the Nobel Prize in Literature had been awarded to Seferis, both of them sent their congratulations to a friend, but also to an author they admired.⁸⁷⁶

Seferis would be the first Greek writer to be honoured with the prize. However, in the award ceremony speech, the Swedish Academy also acknowledged the importance of two other earlier Greek writers, Kostis Palamas and Angelos Sikelianos.

Now that Palamas and Sikelianos are dead, Seferis is today the representative Hellenic poet, carrying on the classical heritage. [...] In honouring you, it has been a great privilege for the Swedish Academy to pay its tribute to the Greece of today, whose rich literature has had to wait, perhaps too long, for the Nobel laurels.⁸⁷⁷

In his Nobel banquet speech, the poet suggested that Oedipus' answer to the Sphinx – Man – may also be the key for the problems of the modern world.⁸⁷⁸ That is perhaps the ultimate meaning of his poetry, that light of his lines which runs in the blood of Man.

⁸⁷⁴ Seferis, A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951 74.

⁸⁷⁵ MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 211. See also MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 334.

⁸⁷⁶ See MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 397 and Raizis, Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World 249.

⁸⁷⁷ "Award Ceremony Speech." Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 1 Oct 2015.

<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1963/press.html>.

⁸⁷⁸ See "Giorgos Seferis - Banquet Speech". Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 1 Oct 2015.

<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1963/seferis-speech.html>

George Seferiades the man died on the 20th of September 1971. In Athens, his funeral became the occasion for a popular demonstration against the Regime of the Colonels that Seferis himself had condemned through the BBC in March of the previous year.

After the author's death, in 1972, Durrell wrote "Seferis", an elegy on him that was published in the collection Vega, and Other Poems (1973).

Time quietly compiling us like sheaves
Turns round one day, beckons the special few,
With one bird singing somewhere in the leaves,
Someone like K.⁸⁷⁹ or somebody like you,
Free-falling target for the envious thrust,
So tilting into darkness go we must.⁸⁸⁰

In "Seferis", the poet of light undertakes his journey towards 'darkness'. Even if the man has been harvested by death, 'his words float off like tiny seeds'. This same thought about seeds and endings appears again in Durrell's The Avignon Quintet: 'A rebeginning of something, or an ending. This is the way that the seed leaves the sower's hand' (1167). About the timelessness of words, Seferis writes:

Our words are the children of many people.
They are sown, are born like infants,
take root, are nourished with blood.
As pine trees
hold the wind's imprint
after the wind has gone, is no longer there,
so words
retain a man's imprint
after a man has gone, is no longer there. (204-205)

The man is no longer there, but the light that the poet found and recreated lives on in his lines and it echoes in other voices. As he wrote, it is now the time to 'summon the children to gather the ash, to sow it' (213).

⁸⁷⁹ Katsimbalis, George.

⁸⁸⁰ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 321 (first stanza).

6. Conclusions

Starting from the hypothesis that Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller were strongly influenced by their contact with a number of Greek writers and with the Hellenic World that they represented, this dissertation has studied in depth the personal and literary connections involving these authors and the country that inspired many of their productions.

By analyzing Durrell's and Miller's assimilation of the works by the Greek authors that are here studied and their areas of intellectual confluence, as well as the decisive influence of the land that brought them together, this thesis has managed to uncover Durrell's and Miller's developments of different themes and thoughts present in the poets here analyzed. This thesis has also brought to light the ways in which they absorbed the spirit of the country. Likewise, the social perspective of this research has not only provided biographical information on all of them, but it has also revealed the background of the links and similarities among certain elements of their works.

Certainly, the structure chosen for this undertaking has finally turned out to be a functional framework that has allowed to address the authors' explorations of some themes and concepts in a natural chronological order. Taking into account that the purpose of this research has been to establish personal and literary associations among several authors, the sequence of time is obviously a determining factor. But Place is equally important. Greece itself, the land and its people, is a meeting ground for Durrell, Miller and modern Greek writers such as Cavafy, Sikelianos, and Seferis, *i.a.* It is not only the actual country, but also the symbolic one. That is to say, the human and physical landscape, but also the creative possibilities that arises in them. As Durrell told the film director Peter Adam, Corfu and the Greek land were like a 'second birthplace' for him.⁸⁸¹ The country became a place of personal self-discovery,⁸⁸² but also a source of inspiration for him as a writer. While talking about his poetry in an interview with the French writer Marc Alyn, Durrell conceded that he had been 'heavily stamped by Greece, ancient and modern' and that it came across in his writings.⁸⁸³ As it has been shown in the previous chapters, this is certainly seen in his poetry and his Greek travel writings, but also in those works set in other places, such as The Alexandria Quartet and Caesar's Vast Ghost. In conversation with his friend the Hungarian photographer Brassai and the latter's wife, Gilberte, Durrell acknowledges openly the weight

⁸⁸¹ Qtd. in MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell 615.

⁸⁸² See, for instance, L. Durrell, Prospero's Cell 11.

⁸⁸³ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 146.

of the country on his literary career: 'It's Greece that counted the most in my life as a writer.'⁸⁸⁴ It's the land where he found his creative voice and also its self-aware landscape, the 'Eye' to which he refers in Prospero's Cell (131), as explained in chapter 2.

On his part, Miller declared in Robert Snyder's biographical documentary that his stay in Greece had perhaps been 'the high peak of [his] life.'⁸⁸⁵ Coming from an author that admits that 'places have affected [him] as much or more than people,'⁸⁸⁶ these words should not be overlooked. His representations of New York, Paris, Greece and Big Sur confirm the fact that places are not merely a setting for his writings but a crucial aspect of his narrations that shapes many of his characters' actions and emotions. Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn and The Colossus of Maroussi clearly illustrate the importance of place in Miller's productions. Regarding Lawrence Durrell, he would find this image of a land that shapes people in Cavafy's and Palamas' depictions of the City; later, he would work on it in The Alexandria Quartet.

In Greece, Miller fell in love with the beauty of the landscape and the cordiality and humbleness of the Greek people.⁸⁸⁷ In that land, he 'made [his] peace with the world'⁸⁸⁸, probably because he was also driven to reflect on his own place in it. On this matter, in a letter to Anaïs Nin from December 1939, he told her: 'I would urge no one to come to Greece unless he is prepared to meet himself face to face.'⁸⁸⁹ As seen above, in The Colossus of Maroussi the author refers to this process of self-discovery on numerous occasions. As he similarly expresses in Greece: 'Every corner reveals some unknown, unsuspected aspect of one's own being' (45). By studying Palamas' and Sikelianos' comparable treatments of self-exploration and man's integration in the cosmos in parallel with Miller's discourse on this subject, the connections between their works have been highlighted, resulting in a better understanding of the latter.

Greece is certainly a meeting ground for Durrell, Miller and the Greek authors considered in this research. However, it is not their only link. Their affinities go beyond the land where they converge. In Nexus, when Miller deals with the years before leaving for Europe, he talks openly about his lack of 'companions of like spirit': 'What I needed were companions who felt the same way' (602, both). It was in Paris, and then, in Greece, where Miller met a significant group of writers and artists that would satisfy that need. In some

⁸⁸⁴ Brassai, Henry Miller, Happy Rock 113.

⁸⁸⁵ Qtd. in Snyder, ed., This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn 90.

⁸⁸⁶ Miller, Durrell, and Perlès, Art and Outrage 33.

⁸⁸⁷ Although he did not return to Greece, the idea of revisiting it sometimes surfaces in his letters. See, e.g. MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 398 and also, Miller, The Books in My Life 253.

⁸⁸⁸ Miller, Remember to Remember 138.

⁸⁸⁹ Miller, Letters to Anaïs Nin: Part One 219.

cases, they would become lifelong intellectual partners, such as Durrell and Seferis. Of course, their associations were also based on sympathy and common values. To a large extent, The Colossus of Maroussi was conceived as a homage to those Greek men of letters and art that he befriended in 1939. About that ‘little band of friends’, the author says:

I love those men, each and every one, for having revealed to me the true proportions of the human being. I love the soil in which they grew, the tree from which they sprang, the light in which they flourished, the goodness, the integrity, the charity which they emanated. They brought me face to face with myself.⁸⁹⁰

Miller’s reference alludes to his Greek friends, but he would later be able to find again these ‘true proportions of the human being’ in the works of Nikos Kazantzakis and Pandelis Prevelakis, in characters such as the former’s Odysseus and the latter’s mother figure of Aunt Roussaki. Miller’s depiction of Greekness in all his writings shows that he was interested in both the spiritual side and the earthly humanizing one that he saw in Greek people. In their modern literary voices, he admired the same quality: ‘their poets still write with their heads in the clouds and their feet firmly rooted in the earth.’⁸⁹¹

In Angelos Sikelianos, Miller found this conjunction of a visionary and a poet that he believed to be the very essence of artists. In the work of this Lefkadian author, spirit, body and earth are a whole, just like the opposites, which are embraced in a recurring dialogue between Apollo and Dionysus. In Sikelianos, as in Miller, all boundaries between within and without vanish. Thus, man realizes that he is his only saviour and, simultaneously, his true enemy. Likewise, both authors think that the individual is ultimately one with the cosmos, so it is not surprising that Miller read with such great interest Sikelianos’ exploration of the ancient Delphic principles in Proanakrousma and that he listed this work among the books that had influenced him most. As it is discussed in chapter 3, the poet’s ‘Delphic Idea’ combined some elements which were also crucial in Miller’s work, such as the quest for a higher awareness, for ethical values, for the necessary connectedness of ideas and actions, and for the essentially divine nature of man. About this latter issue, Miller’s words in “Children of the Earth” encapsulate the common beliefs of both authors in that regard.

In the eternal trigon—God, Man, World—we have the three fundamental aspects of creation. Man is the measure of all three. He *is* that which he has named God and put beyond him. He *is* the world in all its multifarious aspects.

⁸⁹⁰ Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi 210, both. After the publication of Book of Friends (1975), which deals with some old friends of his youth, the author announced that he also intended to write about his later friends of Greece and California. Although he was able to finish two other volumes, one about his friends in Big Sur and another one about some women in his life, unfortunately, he was not able to write his projected book on his Greek friends. See Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller 483 and 485.

⁸⁹¹ Miller, Greece 56.

But he is not yet *man* in that he refuses to accept the conditions of his sovereignty.⁸⁹²

As seen in Sikelianos' The Sybil, only 'the Word' can bridge this gap between man and his full spiritual existence. 'Word is always a reminder of a more perfect state, of a union or unity which is ineffable and indescribable,' Miller writes.⁸⁹³ In their respective worldviews, literature is given this function, to drop the seeds contained in words in order to awaken people to their potential being. Sikelianos' The Last Orphic Dithyramb, for instance, proves that myths are equally thought to serve this purpose. With regard to this, Miller thinks that 'only in the myth does [man] have the courage to acknowledge the glory of his origin, the power of his spirit.'⁸⁹⁴ To use the words of another Greek friend of Miller's and Durrell's, the poet Odysseas Elytis, myth is a door to a 'second reality', that of man's possibilities, which conveys the deepest meaning of his timeless experiences.

In Lawrence Durrell, as in Cavafy, the setting for the exploration of these timeless experiences is Alexandria. The mythical and historical figures of the city become its 'exemplars', as Durrell calls them, that is, the symbolic characters of some eternal attitudes that embody the spirit of the place and, in their most universal meanings, certain recurring archetypal patterns. The City, a real character in itself, breathes new life into them through its contemporary inhabitants and the never-silent ruins of the past. However, the City is also a tyrannical influence over Alexandrians that always leads them back to the old times. As stated in chapter 2, in The Alexandria Quartet, the author refers to it as 'the capital of Memory'.

Beyond any doubt, memory is one of the central themes in both Cavafy's and Durrell's works. As said above, it is indeed a feature of Cavafy's poetry that Durrell has praised on several occasions, that is, the poet's ability for capturing 'the adventive minute'. Durrell means the Alexandrian's talent for reconstructing the past, but also what is equally implied in Cavafy's poems, the eternal life of certain moments depicted in his verses. In The Alexandria Quartet, the author recreates many of the contexts in which the past is recalled in Cavafy's work (through objects, recollections of past lovers, historical references, and through the voices of the dead) and he even adds some other ways of rebuilding it, such as letters and palimpsest-like annotated narrations. In any case, the past in each of the writers' works is not presented as an isolated set of events but as a 'continuum' that reaches to the present. Their interest is not in giving specific details about the context but in representing

⁸⁹² Miller, "Children of the Earth," Stand Still Like the Hummingbird 15.

⁸⁹³ Qtd. in Karl Orend, "Nothing But Light. Notes on Henry Miller's Birthday Gift for Anaïs Nin & The Tranquility of Struggle," *Nexus* 8 (2011): 17.

⁸⁹⁴ Miller, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird 15.

eternal values and situations. Cavafy makes it clear: ‘When we say “Time” we mean ourselves. [...] We are time.’

In the same way as the past may transcend the boundaries of time and become present, erotic experiences go beyond the limits of physical contact and they become sources of awareness and knowledge. Even if usually circumscribed –both in Durrell’s writings and in Cavafy’s poetry– to liminal contexts, sexuality is always accepted without remorse. The transcendence of Eros is never determined by the situation or the characteristics of the relationship; what matters is the instant, its power to remain alive, and the awareness it raises.

In this regard, Cavafy’s and Durrell’s erotic representations do not differ much from the Alexandrian poet’s analogous idea of ‘journey’ in “Ithaka”, in which the destination or the specific details are disregarded as irrelevant in favour of the traveller’s delights and the experience gained on the way. A similar conception of ‘journey’ is found in Henry Miller’s work. However, as it is stated in chapter 5, Miller’s notion of ‘voyage’ rather recalls that of Seferis if we consider both authors’ strong emphasis on the uncertainties, disappointments and wonders of the road.

Another important but less studied element of Cavafy’s poetry that permeates Durrell’s The Alexandria Quartet is relativity. Irony and the relativity of values and viewpoints are two recognizable characteristics of Cavafy’s poems that are also pivotal factors in Durrell’s tetralogy. In fact, what the latter’s character Clea calls ‘the mutability of all truth’ is one of the themes of his work. As shown in chapter 2, beyond the author’s acknowledgement of his interest in Albert Einstein’s theory, the shade of Cavafy is also perceived.

After analyzing exhaustively the numerous references to the ‘poet of the city’ –as Durrell’s narrator often calls him– and to several of the Alexandrian’s poems, we must conclude that Cavafy was a major influence on Lawrence Durrell while he was writing The Alexandria Quartet. This work shows how its author elaborates on those aspects of Cavafy which Durrell considers the Greek poet’s greatest literary contributions. Durrell’s abundant allusions to Cavafy in other prose works, in his own poetry, and also in interviews confirm the enduring impact of the Alexandrian on him.

In chapter 4, this dissertation has also taken into account some Greek writers who, despite being less mentioned by Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller in their writings, have personal and/or literary connections to them. These authors are Pericles Yannopoulos, Nikos Kazantzakis, Pandelis Prevelakis, Nikos Gatsos, and Odysseas Elytis. In some cases, they illuminate certain details of interest for literary history (e.g. Gatsos); in others, Durrell’s and

Miller's attention to them justify their inclusion in this research (e.g. Durrell's interest in Kazantzakis' mastery for depicting the spirit of places, or Miller's in Prevelakis' characters).

Likewise, in the context of Durrell's and Miller's association to the Greek world, the role of some intellectuals such as Theodore Stephanides, George Katsimbali and Niko Ghika cannot be obviated. These men of letters and art are responsible for Durrell's and Miller's first introduction to modern Greek literature. Their exchange of thoughts with Durrell and Miller, in conversation and through their correspondence, sheds some light on their affinities but, as it has been shown, it also helps to understand Miller's and Durrell's reception of several Greek authors and some of the themes developed by those authors in their productions.⁸⁹⁵ With regard to Stephanides, his substantial contribution to Lawrence Durrell's Greek books –by providing information on the folklore, history, geology and biology of some islands– has also been noted.⁸⁹⁶

In his long biographical poem "Cities, Plains and People" (1946), Durrell pays homage to Katsimbali, Stephanides and Seferis: 'My mutinous crew of furies—their pleading / Threw up at last the naked sprite / *Whose flesh and noise I am,* / Who is my jailor and my inward night.'⁸⁹⁷ His lines acknowledge the impact of these men on him as a man and a writer. Miller probably had a similar intention when he told Durrell that he would like to include his paragraphs on 'Katsimbali and Seferis – from *Colossus*' in The Henry Miller Reader.⁸⁹⁸

Among all the modern Greek authors considered in this dissertation, George Seferis was the poet who had a closer personal connection to both Durrell and Miller. This fact has made it easier to explore the links among the three of them, due to the considerable amount of material available. However, some of this material still remains unpublished or has appeared only in Greek. This fact has involved having to do research at the George Seferis Archive of the Gennadius Library in Athens and translating some documents into English. Through my work at that archive, I have been able to locate several letters between the poet and either Durrell or Miller which have never been published in full. Regarding Seferis' personal diary, only a single volume has appeared in English, the one covering the period

⁸⁹⁵ Throughout the years, Durrell would be able to meet his Greek friends either in Athens, London, or in France (e.g. during Katsimbali's visit to Montpellier in 1966, see Temple, Henry Miller: Qui suis-je? 149). As for Miller, as said above, he was visited by Katsimbali in the early 1950s; then, on his visit to Paris in 1967, Miller had the opportunity to meet again Niko Ghika. See Brassai, Henry Miller, Happy Rock 128 and 138.

⁸⁹⁶ Theodore Stephanides' contribution to Prospero's Cell is acknowledged by its author in the same work. As some of Stephanides' letters to him prove, he also provided Durrell with information for The Greek Islands. See, for instance, Stéphanides, Lettres à Lawrence Durrell 232, 234, and 236. Both men maintained a correspondence until some months before Stephanides' death in 1983.

⁸⁹⁷ L. Durrell, Collected Poems 167 (emphasis added). Their names appear as a note in the margin of this part of the poem.

⁸⁹⁸ See MacNiven, The Durrell-Miller Letters 325.

1945-1951. Therefore, all my references to other volumes of his diary have been translated from their Greek original version. Considering the insight that this diary provides into the writer, this document has offered many relevant data for our field of research, particularly – but not only– its third volume (*Μέρες Γ'*, Days III), which comprises the period from 16 April 1934 to 14 December 1940.

In an interview with Marc Alyn in the early 1970s, Lawrence Durrell admitted that he had been ‘profoundly influenced’ by ‘the metaphysical side’ of the Greek poets and, next, he referred to one in particular, Seferis.⁸⁹⁹ Despite the cooling of their relationship as a result of the Cyprus conflict,⁹⁰⁰ Durrell would always refer to him as one of the important men in his life. In this way, in his 1978 book about the Greek Islands, for instance, Durrell alludes to Seferis as one of the men who taught him through ‘his intrinsic Greekness’.⁹⁰¹ Not surprisingly, among the documents from the author’s personal library preserved at the Bibliothèque Durrell in Nanterre (France), it is possible to find up to a dozen titles by or about Seferis.⁹⁰²

As stated in chapter 5, one of the aspects that Durrell has particularly highlighted in his references to Seferis’ work is the poet’s ability to blend myth and present time. *Mythistorema* illustrates this feature very clearly, both in its title and in its lines. It is a characteristic that is also found in many of Durrell’s works, mainly –but not only– in his titles about Greece and Cyprus, in *The Alexandria Quartet*, and also in a significant number of his poems. In Seferis’ “Reflections on a Foreign Line of Verse”, for example, Odysseus appears before the poet and speaks to him as if he were a real sailor. In Durrell’s work, it is possible to find echoes of this mythical or synchronic perspective that harmonizes myth and the past with the present, for instance, in the author’s use of Pan and Aphrodite in his writings about the Mediterranean islands and also in his depiction of Antony and Cleopatra in his contemporary Alexandria.

Seferis’ conception of myths and the past as connected to the present is related to his notion of ‘eternity’. The poet’s definition of ‘eternity’ is quite descriptive in itself: ‘eternity...appears to be an interruption, an opening up of our temporal life, a lightning flash

⁸⁹⁹ Ingersoll, *Lawrence Durrell: Conversations* 142.

⁹⁰⁰ From July 1954 to August 1956, L. Durrell was firstly the Director of the Information Services of the Cyprus colonial government and then, its Director of Public Relations.

⁹⁰¹ L. Durrell, *The Greek Islands* 235. The only other poet mentioned in this paragraph, next to Seferis, is Elytis.

⁹⁰² Including, *i.a.*, Seferis’ poetry in different editions (Greek, English, French), a volume of the poet’s diaries, a trans. of L. Durrell’s poem “Seferis” into Greek by Marios Byron Raizis, Durrell’s article on him for *George Seferis, 1900-1971* (London: National Book League, 1975), and some publications of literary criticism on the Greek poet. See numb. 1747, 1193, Audio 1, 1102, 1101, 1103, 889, 1100, 677, 1045, 888, and 1668 in the catalogue, Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell, Université Paris Ouest, Nanterre, Fr.

that strikes us in the present moment, and not an endless unfolding of time to infinity'.⁹⁰³ This 'opening up of our temporal life' perceived in 'the present moment' brings forward a direct experience of the eternal nature of human existence. As pointed out in chapter 5, in The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller refers to this 'spirit of eternality', which he sees both in Seferis and in Greece. Likewise, in his later work about this country with the American artist Anne Poor, Miller states that in Greece, 'what was lives again.'⁹⁰⁴ In fact, both authors perceive eternity in like manner, as a continuum rather than as a projection towards an unending future. In their works, there is a common emphasis on the present moment. Just like eternity, miracles are to be found in this life, not in the hereafter, because, as we read in the poem that Seferis dedicated to Miller, 'the miracle is nowhere but circulates in the veins of man.' Both authors agree that it is a matter of learning to perceive it.

The peculiar way in which Seferis reads landscape is another aspect of the poet's writing that Durrell and Miller have praised. It taught them a new way of interpreting the Greek land. In his poetry, the landscape is suggestive of mythical, historical, or conceptual associations, and men and their land are inseparable. As said above, Durrell's biographer Ian MacNiven has remarked that Seferis' brought that landscape alive for Miller, and it is also true for Durrell. It is certainly proved by Miller's descriptions of places in his works from the 1940s and onwards, when they are compared to those from his earlier productions. In The Colossus of Maroussi (1941), among others, people are not represented as isolated or separate from their settings, as they are in Tropic of Capricorn (1939).

As for Durrell, although he shows an interest in depicting the atmosphere of settings in his first publications, it is after reading Seferis that he develops his exploration of landscape in connection to myth. The Alexandria Quartet, much of Durrell's poetry after the war, and his travel writings offer abundant examples of this evolution. Roderick Beaton claims that 'through his impact on Durrell, Henry Miller, and other British and American writers, Seferis brought about a revolution in the way later generations have viewed his country: no longer as a museum-piece of the past but as a place of vibrant, dionysiac energy.'⁹⁰⁵ A 'place of vibrant, dionysiac energy' coming from its very roots, we may add, from the fresh and living sap of its mythology and its rich history.

The Greek landscape cannot be understood without considering its light. Actually, in Seferis' poetry, light is a major element. It synthesizes Apollo and Dionysus, light and its complementary, darkness. In "Thrush", the poet achieves to summarize this idea in a single

⁹⁰³ Qtd. in Beaton, George Seferis 110, from Seferis' essay "Monologue on Poetry" (1939, inc. in the 1st vol. of the poet's collection of essays).

⁹⁰⁴ Miller, Greece 20.

⁹⁰⁵ Beaton, George Seferis xi.

line: 'light, angelic and black'. Thus, darkness becomes the fertilizer of its opposite. In his essay "Delphi", the rotten corpse of Python gives rise to Apollo, turning out to be 'the yeast of light', as Seferis calls it. Durrell quotes this passage by the Greek poet in his own article about the ancient site of the Pythian games. Curiously, some years earlier, in The Black Book, Durrell had voiced a very different view of the dead through his alter ego, Lawrence Lucifer: 'I cannot live because the decomposing bodies of my ancestors dog me at every turn. [...] Instead of nourishing us they are the umpires of our defeat, our decline and fall.'⁹⁰⁶ These contrasting pictures of the dead show very clearly the significant effect of Seferis' work on Durrell.

According to Miller, as it has been developed in chapter 5, light was also his greatest discovery in Greece. As in Seferis', in Miller's work, light sometimes blinds people and it leads to violence and the continuous massacre of the human race. In this way, in both authors, light represents the blood of man, a source of life and simultaneously, the reason for his misery. In contrast, light is also found in Seferis and Miller as an image of love and purity. Thus, it is the Greek light that fascinated Pericles Yannopoulos in his mystical love for his homeland. Indeed, Yannopoulos is mentioned by both Seferis and Miller in their writings in connection to this notion of light as an illuminating force that may lead man towards a higher existence. As Durrell puts it, 'sunlight and inner light meet.' This transcendental nature of light that Seferis celebrates in his poetry would also be a source of inspiration for Durrell and Miller. In an interview in the 1970s, Durrell would confess: 'I have tried always to be worthy of the light that shines in Greek metaphysics. Take Seferis' poems: they are painstakingly built up, word by word, but put them in the sun and they are transparent, seamless.'⁹⁰⁷ It seems that the purity of the Greek light has pervaded the lines of its modern bards as it used to do in Homer's time. The poet has learnt the lesson of Greek light, which, according to him, turns easily ideas into objects.⁹⁰⁸ Seferis realizes that 'the final aim of the poet is not to describe things but to create them by naming them.'⁹⁰⁹ Thus, he puts forward the ancient power of the Logos that Sikelianos' Sybil also heralds, and then, 'the word becomes magic', as Miller writes.

In his memoir on Durrell, Seferis uses the former's image of Greece as an Eye to refer to his friend's work: 'He is not a landscape artist. He is mirrored in the living eye, he and his 'private domain'.⁹¹⁰ This is equally true of Miller. In Durrell's and Miller's writings,

⁹⁰⁶ Durrell, The Black Book 157.

⁹⁰⁷ Ingersoll, Lawrence Durrell: Conversations 146.

⁹⁰⁸ In this respect, see his quotation in the previous chapter.

⁹⁰⁹ Qtd. from a 1939 essay in Beaton, An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature 359.

⁹¹⁰ Labrys 5 (1979): 85.

Greece is an opportunity to meet the cosmos, to find their respective places in it, but it is as well an invitation to self-discovery.

We may conclude that Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell were able to read creatively the work of several modern Greek authors and to see their mythical land with a fresh and personal look, finding new meanings for their own lives and literary creations. After exploring these Greek authors' writings in parallel with those by Durrell and Miller, it is now possible to confirm the influential effects of these Greek writers and the Hellenic world on both Durrell and Miller. Moreover, by studying the literary and personal connections among them, this dissertation has also provided some new information about the reception of Miller's and Durrell's works by this group of Greek intellectuals. Their affinities and points of convergence illuminate both sides of this exchange. Therefore, this thesis has contributed to the knowledge of Durrell's and Miller's productions, broadening the scope of research in this field, but it has also contributed to expand the still limited knowledge of this important group of Greek writers outside their own country.

During those years before WW2, Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller were both fortunate enough to meet and befriend some of the greatest names of modern Greek literature, among them, two future Nobel Prize winners, George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis, and one of the central figures of the Athenian literary world, George Katsimbalis, who would become Miller's *Colossus*. Those were the years that marked the rise of the celebrated Generation of the 30s, which would bring modernity to the Greek letters. In this fertile atmosphere, the intellectual and human exchange among these authors certainly enriched Miller's and Durrell's literary creations. In Greece, the rebellious narrators of Tropic of Cancer and The Black Book were able to get reconciled with art, rejecting it as a mere product to embrace the ancient Hellenic conception of art as a creative process in close connection with life. And life would lead them to other destinations, but Miller and Durrell would always return in their writings to the land that had changed them so profoundly.

Appendix

Περικλής Γιαννοπουλος

Κλάψτε τῶν ἰσχυρῶν ἠπλόλυτον! ἰνάτα,

ποῦ κρατῶτε καθάρια μὴν ἠλλάδα
σκαλισμένη στὸ μάρμαρα τῆς Πάρου
ἢ τῆς Πεντέλης, στῆς γυμνῆς Ἀθήνας
τῶν ὕδατων, ἢ μὴς στῆς πλούσιας Ὀλυμπίας
τῶν νερῶν καὶ τῶν δέντρων· ἴδτε ζυγῶστε!
Πιστοὶ συντρόφοι στῶν πολλῶν δῶρα,
στῶν καθάρων θεῶν πᾶσι κόμα γέρνει,
bending,

τῶν θεῶν ἰσχυρῶν ἠρμῶν κρατώντας,
τῶν λαμπρῶν σῶμα ἠθανάτω στὴ Δύση·
ἴσσοι κρατῶτε τῶν ἰσχυρῶν ἠσας
mind

τῆς ἠθανάτης νιότης τοῦ Πινδάρου,
ποῦ ἠλύρα ἠΔωρικῶν ἠχηρῶν δοξάζει
μὴν νευρῶν τῶν χορδῶν, τῶν στίχων βέλους·
σιμῶστε στὸ παράμερο ἠκρογιάλι
πᾶσι ἠνθοστεφανωμένος ἠκατέβη

στῶν ἠπριλιάτικο πέλαγο νῆς σμίξει,
σῶν ἠνα φιλῶν θανάτου, τῶν γῶν ἠλης
land's

τῶν ἠνοιξῆς, ἠμοιοῦς ἠς φαντάζουν
στῶν ἠτρούσκων τῶν τάφους τῶν πανώρια
beautiful

τῶν ἠφήβων κορμῶν ποῦ κατεβαίνουν,
ἠπάνω σῶν ἠτιῶν, στῶν ἠστερο ταξίδι...

ἠ νιοί· ἠδερφοί· ἠεἰς γενικοὶ συντρόφοι!

Ἄν ἠρτεν ἠγγελοῦ ἠπῶ τῶν Τροϊζήνα
μὴν ἠδρωμένο τῶν μέτωπο ἠπῶ τῶν δρόμο
τῶν σκληρῶν τῶν ἠπίδαυρου ἠτοῦ ἠργούς,
μὴν τῶν φωνῶν ποῦ ἠσυφορῶν ἠμορφαίνει
— ἠποια κί ἠν εἶναι — σῶν ἠντάφια λύρα,
lyre,

τῶν χαμῶν γῶν ἠγγεῖλαι μὴς στῶν κόμα
τοῦ πιστοῦ τῶν ἠρτέμιδας· ἠλλῶν ἠρτεν 30
ἠμάταιη φήμη, ἠννευρη καὶ δούλη,
strengthless and

τῶν ἠμορφῶν νῶν ἠποσκεπάσει τοῦ θανάτου
τοῦ ἠπόγονου τῶν ἠθηναίων ἠφήβων,
νῶν ρίξει μοναχῶν μὴν φούχτα χῶμα —

Pericles Yannopoulos

Weep for the handsome Hippolytus! Oh
youths,

that hold a clear Greece
carved in marble of Paros
or Pentelis, in the light of
naked Athens, or in the rich Olympian
waters and trees; come closer!
Faithful companions to Apollo's gifts,
to the clear god that is still

holding the divine horses' momentum,
the bright body, immortal in the West;
those who keep the vision in your

of the immortal youth of Pindar,
that the Doric lyre loudly praises
with lively chords, verses like arrows;
come closer to the secluded shore
where he came down crowned with
flowers

to meet the sea of April,
in a kiss of death, the whole

spring, as pictured
20 in the Etruscan tombs, the

adolescent bodies that descend,
on horses, to the last journey...

Oh youngsters; brothers; oh kind
companions!

No angel came from Troezen
with a sweaty forehead from the street
hardiness of Epidaurus or Argos,
with the voice that fatality makes prettier
— whoever it is — like a funeral

to announce the loss in the wave
of the faithful of Artemis; but it came
the futile reputation, the
enslaved,

to cover the beauty of the death
of the offspring of Athenians teenagers,
to throw only a handful of soil —

ποῦ; στοῦ πελάου τῶν βυσσοῦ; ἢ νῦν σβήσει
Or to
τῆς χιονάδα τῆς φροῦ πῶς σπροβολάει

κι ἔτέλειωτα ἄνανιώνει τοῦς ἄνθους του
ἄπανου ἄπῶ τῶ ἄπαρθενο κορμί του;...

Μῶς μεῖς τῶς ἄστερες τιμές, ἄκεῖνες
ἄποῦ φιλία κῶ ἐγένεια μῶς ἄμπνέουν,
ἄς δώσωμεν, ἄπόμερα θρηνώντας,
καθῶς τοῦ κυνηγάρη τοῦ ἄπολύτου
οἱ συντροφοί, πού, στῶν ἄτιῶν ἄπάνω
σκυμμένοι τοῦς λαιμούς, ἄσιγοκλαῖγαν,
ἄ, ἄκουμπισμένοι στῶ ἄπραγο τῶ δόρυ,
μῶ δακρυσμένα ἄνάβλεπαν τῶ μάτια
τῶ πέλαο τῶ γαλάζιο ἄπῶ ἄφανίστη...

*

Κῶ ἢ ἄθήνα, ἢ δούλη ἄθήνα πού, σκυμμένη
κάτω ἄπῶ τοῦς ναούς της καῶ τοῦς θεούς της,
τῶ μάτια νῦν σηκώσει δῶν εἶνῶ ἄξια
στοῦς ἄθανάτους στύλους ἄστῶ ἄαθήρια
the

τῶν Βουνῶν της τῶ χρώματα, ἄναζοῦσε
στῶ ἄγέρινο, ἄλαφρῶ περπάτημά του,
στῶ Βαθυγάλανη ματιά, στῶ λόγια
ποῦ ἄλαφριῶ ἄτρικύμιζαν ἄπάνω
ἄπῶ τῶ ἄχνό της χῶμα ἄς τρικυμίζουν
πεταλοῦδες σῶ ἄστάχυνο λιβάδι...

Κῶ ἄ ἄγάπη τοῦ ἄμορφου κορμιοῦ καῶ τοῦ ἄλιου
body and

τῶς ρυθμισμένης δύναμης ποῦ δείχνει
τῶν ἄμορφιῶ δίχως κανένα ἄγώνα,
μῶ μόνον ἄνα σάλεμα, μῶ μόνον
ἄνα ἄσυχο χαμόγελο, μῶ μόνον
ἄνα γοργῶ κῶ ἄνα καθάριο γέλιο,
σῶν κοράκου κραυγῶ μῶς στῶς ἄβύσσου
τῶν ἄττικῶν οἱ ἄράνιον τῶ γλαυκότη,
καθάρια κι ἄσυντρόφευτη ἄναζοῦσε
στῶ σάλεμα καῶ στῶ χαμόγελό του,
ἄ ἄττικῆ, — καῶ κανέννας τῶ λεπτά σου
τῶ μύρα δῶν ἄνάσανε μῶ τόσον
ἄρχοντικῶ τῶν ἄστηση, κανέννας
τῶ ἄνέλπιστά σου χρώματα δῶν πῶρε
νῦν κλείσει πῶ σφιχτῶ στῶ βλέφαρά του
καῶ τῶ λιτό σου πνέμα νῦν σαρκώσει
τριγύρα μας δῶν ξέραμε κανένα
νῦν μοιάζει πῶ πολῶ μῶ τῶν ἄλιά σου,
μῶ τῶ ξανθῶ τῶ ἄστάχυ σου, κι ἄκόμα

Where? To the abyss of the sea?
erase
the snow-like whiteness of foam that
glows
and endlessly renews the flowers
on his virgin body?

40 But the last honours, those
that friendship and kindness inspire us,
we may pay, lonely weeping,
as Hippolytus the hunter's
companions, that, were bending on
their steeds' necks, crying softly,
or leaning on the idle spear,
with tearful eyes watching
the blue of the sea where he
disappeared...

*

And Athens, the enslaved Athens that,
bent

beneath its temples and gods,
50 it is not worth to raise the eyes
on the immortal columns or on
ethereal

colours of its mountains, it was living
in its aerial, light march,
in the deep blue glance, in words
that gently stormed
over the pale soil as butterflies
storm on the corn meadow...

And the love of the beautiful
the sun's

balanced force that shows
60 the beauty without any struggle,
with only a movement, with only
a quiet smile, with only
a quick and clear laughter,
like a crow's yell in the abyss
of the blueness of the Attican sky,
pure and peerless it was living
in his movement and his smile,
oh Attica, — and nobody breathed
your delicate myrrhs with such
70 noble sense, nobody
took your unexpected colours
to close his eyelids more tightly
and to embody your plain spirit;
around us we didn't know anyone
that resembles more to your olive,
to your blond ear, and even

μ□ τ□ κιτρινισμένα μάρμαρά σου...

Κ□ □να κλαράκι □λι□ς, □να συντριμίμι
marble

μάρμαρου, □να χρυσ□ μεστ□ν □στάχυ
στολίζαν τ□ν □ραιόπαθη ζωή του·
κ□ □ ψυχή του κυμαίνονταν, σκυμμένη
□νάμεσα □π□ τ□ς Δήμητρας τ□ δ□ρο,
τ□ στάρι, πο□ □ λιγνή σου γ□ γυρεύει
παρθενικ□ σ□ν τ□ν Τριπτόλεμο, κα□ δίπλα
στ□ς Περσεφόνης τ□ ε□δωλο □π□ τ□ν □δη,
πο□ στ□ μισάνοιχτα προσφέρνει χείλη
τ□ σπειρι□ το□ ροδιο□, τ□ ματωμένο

καρπ□ το□ □ραίου θανάτου κα□ το□ πόθου,
πο□ □σ□ν τ□ κόκκινα πετράδια □στράφτει!

Κι □φερε □ φήμη (□ς □ταν μ□ το□ στίχου
words

μοναχ□ τ□ν ε□γένεια ν□ σηκώσει
το□ θανάτου τ□ν πέπλο) π□ς κατέβη
descended

σ□ □λογο □πάνω, στ□ καθάριο κ□μα
κα□ π□ς τ□ στόλισε μ□ □νθούς, κι □κε□νος
flowers, and

π□ς μ□ □γριολούλουδα νεκροστολίστη...

Κα□ μπροστ□ στο□ πελάγου τ□ ζαφείρια,

κα□ μπροστ□ στ□ν □ρίθμητη □νάσα
breath

το□ □ρμυρο□ κα□ το□ □λιόλουστου □γέρα,
τ□ □λογο κέντησε μπροστ□ στ□ κ□μα,
σ□ μπρ□ς σ□ □πόδιο π□ □λλαζε τ□ □νέμου
the

□ πλήθια πνοή, κα□ π□ □σο □ν □πλωνόνταν
stretched,

συντριμμένο στ□ν □μμο, □λόρτο πάλι,
φουσκωμένον □νέβαιναν □ρμώντας...

*

Φωτι□ δ□ θ□ ν□ □νάψωμε στ□ν □χτο
τ□ν □ρμο το□το, το□ κορμιο□ το□ □ραίου
the ashes

τ□ στάχτη γι□ ν□ πάρωμε... Τ□ κύμα
δ□ν τ□ν □ξέβρασε, □ς τ□ν □δελφό του
τ□ν Σέλλεϋ, μ□ς στ□ν φίλων του τ□ χέρια.
Κα□ κανε□ς στ□ φωτι□ δ□ θ□ ν□ σκύψει,
bend

μ□ τολμηρ□ τ□ χέρι τ□ν καρδιά του
ν□ ξεσηκώσει μέσ□ □π□ τ□ στάχτη,

to your yellowed marbles...

And an olive twig, a piece of

debris, a golden ripe ear
embellished his beautiful life;
and his soul fluctuated, leaning
between Demeter's present,
wheat, which your poor land seeks
pure as Triptolemus, and beside
Persephone's image of Hades,
who offers to half-open lips
the seeds of the pomegranate, the
bloodied
fruit of good death and desire,
as if the red gems sparkled!

90 And rumours brought (if only

were kind enough to raise
the veil of death) that he

on a horse, to the clean wave
and that he adorned it with
he

dressed for death with wildflowers...

And straight ahead the open sea's
sapphires,
and straight ahead the countless

of the salty and sunny air,
the horse leaped towards the sea,
100 ahead like an obstacle that alters
wind's

heavy breath, and however it

crushed against the sand, again standing,
inflated it went up rushing...

*

Fire we don't want to set
in that secluded shore, to get

of his beautiful body... The wave
didn't wash him out, like his brother
Shelley, on his friends' hands.
And nobody to the fire wants to
down,

and with bold hand, to rouse
his heart from the ashes,

καὶ μὲν σέβας ἔρῃ νά τηνε δείξει
it
στὸ μοναχὸ της τῆν κριτή, τῆν ἥλιο!

and with sacred reverence show
to his only critic, the Sun!

Ἄγγελος Σικελιανός, “Περικλῆς Γιαννόπουλος,” Λυρικός Βίος, Β', ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης
(Athens, Gr.: Ἴκαρος, 1966) 63-67. The English rendering of the poem is my translation.

Bibliography

- Alexandre-Garner, Corinne, comp. Confluences: Lawrence Durrell. Proc. of Colloque pour l'inauguration de la Bibliothèque Durrell, 17-18 Oct. 1997, U Paris X, Nanterre, Fr. Nanterre, Fr.: U Paris X, 1998. Vol. XV of *Confluences*.
- . Confluences: Lawrence Durrell: Borderlands & Borderlines. Proc. of the International Conference "D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell: Borderlines/Borderlands, Jun. 2004, U Paris X, Nanterre, Fr. Nanterre, Fr.: U Paris X, 2005. Vol. 26 of *Confluences*.
- . Confluences: Lawrence Durrell Revisited / Lawrence Durrell revisit . Proc. of the International Lawrence Durrell Conference "On Miracle Ground XI," [2-7] Jul. 2000, Corfu, Gr., and of the Colloque "Lawrence Durrell: des Indes au Languedoc," 26 Apr.-6 May 2001, U Paris X, Nanterre, Fr. Nanterre, Fr.: U Paris X, 2002. Vol. XXI of *Confluences*.
- Ammianus Marcellinus. History: Books 20-26. Cambridge, MA: Loeb-Harvard UP, 1940.
- Antoniou, D. I. "Obstacle to What." Six Poets of Modern Greece. Trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. New York: Knopf, 1961. 141.
- Arius Didymus apud Eusebius. Praeparatio Evangelica.
- Bachelard, Gaston. La po tique de l'espace. Paris: PU de France, 1984.
- Baldock, John, ed. The Tibetan Book of the Dead. Trans. Kazi Dawa-Samdup. Introd. John Baldock. London: Arcturus, 2009.
- Bartillat, Christian de, ed. Conversaciones con Henry Miller. Barcelona, Sp.: Granica, 1977. Trans. of Flash Back. N.p.: Stock, 1976.
- Beaton, Roderick. An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature. 2nd ed., rev. and expanded. Oxford, UK: Clarendon-Oxford UP, 1999.
- . George Seferis: Waiting for the Angel: A Biography. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2003.
- Begna , Michael H., ed. On Miracle Ground: Essays on the Fiction of Lawrence Durrell. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1990.
- The Booster. NY: Johnson, 1968.
- Bowker, Gordon. Through the Dark Labyrinth: A Biography of Lawrence Durrell. New York: St. Martin's, 1997.
- Brassa . Henry Miller, Happy Rock. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2002. Trans. of Henry Miller, rocher heureux. [Paris]: Gallimard, 1978.

- . Henry Miller: The Paris Years. Trans. Timothy Bent. New York: Arcade, 1995. Trans. of Henry Miller, grandeur nature. [Paris]: Gallimard, 1975.
- Buffière, Félix. Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque. Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1973.
- Capri-Karka, Carmen. Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis. New York: Pella, 1982.
- Carton MacDonald, Ann. "Spirit of Place: The Role of Landscape in the Poetry of Lawrence Durrell." Diss. Carleton U, Ottawa, 1988.
- Cavafy, C. P. Collected Poems. Ed. George Savidis. Trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. London: Chatto-Random, 1998.
- . "In Broad Daylight." Trans. James Merrill. *Grand Street* Vol. 8.3 (Spring 1983).
- . The Complete Poems of Cavafy. Trans. Rae Dalven. New York: Harcourt, 1961.
- Cirlot, J. E. A Dictionary of Symbols. 2nd ed. Trans. Jack Sage. Mineola, New York: Dover, 2002.
- Dearborn, Mary V. The Happiest Man Alive: A Biography of Henry Miller. New York: Simon, 1991.
- Decker, James M, ed. Nexus. The International Henry Miller Journal 1-9 (2004-2012)
- Dick, Kenneth C. Henry Miller: Colossus of One. Holland: Alberts - Sittard, 1967.
- Durand, Gilbert. Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire: Introduction à l'archétypologie général. 11th ed. Paris: Dunod, 1992.
- Durrell, Gerald. Fillets of Plaice. Boston, MA: Godine, 2008.
- . My Family and Other Animals. London: Penguin, 1959.
- Durrell, Lawrence. "A Cavafy Find." *London Magazine* (Jul. 1956): 11-14.
- . "Airgraph on Refugee Poets in Africa." *Poetry London* (Dec. 1944): 212-215.
- . A Smile in the Mind's Eye. London: Wildwood, 1980.
- . An Irish Faustus: A Modern Morality in Nine Scenes. 2nd rev. ed. Moseley, Birmingham, UK: Delos, 1987.
- . Bitter Lemons of Cyprus. London: Faber, 1959.
- . Blue Thirst. Santa Barbara, CA: Capra, 1975.
- . Caesar's Vast Ghost: Aspects of Provence. London: Faber, 1995.
- . Collected Poems: 1931-1974. Ed. James A. Brigham. London: Faber, 1980.

- . "Corfu: Isle of Legend" The Geographical Magazine Mar. 1939: 325-334. Photographs by Nancy Durrell.
- . Esprit de Corps: Sketches from Diplomatic Life. London: Faber, 1961.
- . Henri Michaux: The Poet of Supreme Solipsism. Moseley, Birmingham, UK: Delos, 1990.
- . Pied Piper of Lovers. Ed. James Gifford. Victoria, BC: ELS, 2008.
- . Prospero's Cell. A Guide to the Landscape and Manners of the Island of Corfu. London: Faber, 1962.
- . Reflections on a Marine Venus. A Companion to the Landscape of Rhodes. London: Faber, 1973.
- . Sicilian Carousel. New York: Penguin, 1981.
- . Spirit of Place: Mediterranean Writings. Ed. Alan G. Thomas. London: Faber, 1971.
- . The Alexandria Quartet. London: Faber, 2005.
- . The Avignon Quintet. London: Faber, 2004.
- . The Big Supposer. Interview by Marc Alyn. New York: Grove, 1972.
- . The Black Book. London: Faber, 1973.
- . The Dark Labyrinth. London: Ace-Harborough, 1958. Rpt. of Cefalû, 1947.
- . The Greek Islands. London: Faber, 1978.
- . "The Poetry of Elytis." *Books Abroad* 49.4 (Autumn 1975): 660.
- . The Revolt of Aphrodite. London: Faber, 1990.
- . Unpublished letter to Henry Miller. Lawrence Durrell Collection (Fond 1 – Correspondence), William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Canada (Athens: 1942).
- . White Eagles over Serbia. London: Faber, 1993.
- Eliade, Mircea. El mito del eterno retorno. Madrid: Alianza/Emecé, 1979.
- . The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper, 1961.
- Eliot, T.S. The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism. New York: Knopf, 1921.
- Elytis, Odysseus. "Πρώτα-πρώτα," Ζ'. Ανοιχτά Χαρτιά. Athens: Αστερίας, 1974.

- . Selected Poems. Trans. Edmund Keeley, George Savidis, Philip Sherrard, John Stathatos, and Nanos Valaoritis. Sel. and introd. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1981.
- Elytis, Odysseus. Interview. "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry." *Books Abroad* 49.4 (Autumn 1975): 639.
- Fermor, Patrick Leigh. Roumeli: Travels in Northern Greece. NYC: NY Review, 2006.
- Flaxman, Amy M. New Anatomies. Tracing Emotions in Henry Miller's Writings. Belfast, ME: Bern Porter, 2000.
- Forster, E.M. Alexandria: A History and a Guide. London: Tauris, 2014.
- Fraser, G. S. Lawrence Durrell. Harlow, UK: Longman, 1970.
- Friar, Kimon. "In the Shadow of the Parthenon." *Saturday Review* 12 Nov. 1960: 35.
- Friar, Kimon, ed. The Greeks. Photog. John Veltri, pref. Lawrence Durrell, commentary by Odysseas Elytis. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984.
- García Gálvez, Isabel, ed. Giorgos Seferis: 100 años de su nacimiento. Proc. of VIII Encuentro sobre Grecia, 1-3 Dec. 2000, Granada. Granada, Sp.: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas, 2002.
- Gerontopoulos, Panayotis. "The Myth of Pope Joan, Emmanuel Roidis & Durrell." On Miracle Ground XIII: International Lawrence Durrell Conference, Rhodes, Gr. 29 June 2004. Address.
- Gifford, James. "Hellenism/Modernism: Reading Eliot and Cavafy in Durrell's (Un)Real City." Anglo-American Perceptions of Hellenism. Ed. Tatiani Rapatzikou. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2007. 82-97.
- . "The Unknown is Constant; The Fiction and Literary Relationship of Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller." Diss. U of Alberta, 2004.
- Gifford, James & Zezulka-Mailloux, Gabrielle, ed. Culture & the State: Landscape & Ecology. Vol. 1 of the proc. of "Culture and the State," May 2003, U of Alberta. Edmonton, AB: U of Alberta, 2003.
- Goldman, Lyn. "An Interview with Lawrence Durrell: Pennsylvania State University". Agora: An Online Graduate Journal 3.1 (Summer 2004). <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/agora>. This interview was conducted during the conference of the International Lawrence Durrell Society, On Miracle Ground IV, Pennsylvania State U, 1986.
- Gordon, William A. The Mind and Art of Henry Miller. Foreword by Lawrence Durrell. LA: Louisiana State UP, 1967.
- Grimal, Pierre. Diccionario de mitología griega y romana. Trans. Francisco Payarols. Barcelona: Paidós, 1981.

- Gullberg, Jan. Mathematics: From the Birth of Numbers. New York: Norton, 1997. 26.
- Haag, Michael. Alexandria: City of Memory. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2004.
- Hadas, Rachel. Form, Cycle, Infinity: Landscape Imagery in the Poetry of Robert Frost and George Seferis. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP-Associated UP, 1985.
- Heraclitus in Stobaeus. Eclogarum, Physicarum et ethicarum. Libri duo. Vol. 1. 60.
- Herbrechter, Stefan. "Durrell, Encounter, Deconstruction". Agora: An Online Graduate Journal 3.1 (Summer 2004). <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/agora>.
- Hodgkin, Joanna. Amateurs in Eden. London: Virago, 2013.
- Homer. Iliad II.560.
- . The Odyssey. Trans. George Chapman. Ware, UK: Wordsworth, 2002.
- Ingersoll, Earl G., ed. Lawrence Durrell: Conversations. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP-Associated UP, 1998.
- "Ithaka." Trans. G. Valassopoulos. The Criterion: A Quarterly Review II.8 (July 1924): 431-432.
- Jacquin, Renée. L'esprit de Delphes: Anghélos Sikélianos. Aix en Provence, Fr.: U de Provence, 1988.
- Jong, Erica. The Devil at Large: Erica Jong on Henry Miller. New York: Grove, 1994.
- Jung, Carl G., ed. Man and his Symbols. N.p.: Dell-Random, 1968.
- . Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1967. Vol. 5 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung.
- . The Collected Works. The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature. Vol. 15. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1966.
- . Two Essays on Analytical Psychology. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Hove, UK: Routledge, 2014. Vol. 7 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung.
- Kaczvinsky, Donald P., ed. Durrell and the City: Collected Essays on Place. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2012.
- Karagiorgos, Panos, ed. Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World: Proceedings of the Conference. Session of July 5, 2000. Corfu, Gr.: Ionian U, 2000.
- Katope, Christopher G. "Cavafy and Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*." Comparative Literature 21.2 (1969): 125-137.
- Keeley, Edmund. Cavafy's Alexandria. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996.

- . Inventing Paradise: The Greek Journey 1937-47. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2002.
- . Modern Greek Poetry: Voice and Myth. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983.
- Kersnowski, Frank L., and Alice Hughes, ed. Conversations with Henry Miller. Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 1994.
- Krikos-Davis, Katerina. Kolokes: A Study of George Seferis' Logbook III (1953-1955). Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1994.
- Labrys* 8 (1983).
- Laszlo, Violet S. de, ed. Psyche & Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C. G. Jung. Pref. C. G. Jung. Garden City, New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1958.
- Lebesgue, Philéas. "Lettres Néo-Grecques," *Mercure de France* 1 Jan. 1935: 193.
- Leite, George, ed. Circle 9 (1946).
- Leontis, Artemis, ed. Greece: A Traveler's Literary Companion. San Francisco: Whereabouts, 1997.
- Lewis, Pericles, ed. The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2011. 234
- Liddell, Robert. Cavafy: A Critical Biography London: Duckworth, 1974.
- Lillios, Anna, ed. Lawrence Durrell and the Greek World. London: Associated UP, 2004.
- . " 'The Blue of Greece': Durrell's Images of an Adopted Land." Studies in the Literary Imagination 24.1 (Spring 1991): 71-82.
- Lord Byron. The Works of Lord Byron. Ed. E. Rowland et al. Vol. VI. NYC: Scribner, 1901.
- MacNiven, Ian S. Lawrence Durrell. A Biography. London: Faber, 1998.
- MacNiven, Ian S., ed. The Durrell-Miller Letters, 1935-80. London: Faber, 1989.
- Maffesoli, M., J. Freund, J. P. Bozonnet, Samivel, and B. Bellotto. Espaces et Imaginaire. Grenoble, Fr.: PU de Grenoble, 1979.
- . Du Nomadisme: Vagabondages initiatiques. Paris: Librairie Général Française, 1997.
- Mailer, Norman. Genius and Lust: A Journey Through the Major Writings of Henry Miller. New York: Bantam, 1977.
- Manning, Hugo. The It and the Odyssey of Henry Miller. London: Village, 1973.
- Martin, E. W., ed. The New Spirit. London: Dennis Dobson, 1946.
- Martin, Jay. Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller. Santa Barbara, CA: Capra, 1978.

- Merlier, Octave, ed. "La Correspondance d'Edouard Schuré et de Sikélianos," *Études Néo-Helléniques* II (1969-1970): 103-104.
- Miller, Henry. A Devil in Paradise. London: NEL, 1968.
- . Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch. New York: New Directions, 1957.
- . Gliding into the Everglades. Lake Oswego, OR: Lost Pleiade, 1977.
- . Greece. Drawings by Anne Poor. New York: Viking, 1964.
- . Letters to Anaïs Nin. Part One: Europe 1931-40. Ed. and introd. Gunther Stuhlmann. London: Village, 1965.
- . My Life and Times. Chicago, IL: Playboy, 1973.
- . Paris 1928: Nexus II. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2012.
- . Quiet Days in Clichy. New York: Grove, 1965.
- . Remember to Remember: Vol. 2 of The Air-Conditioned Nightmare. New York: New Directions, 1961.
- . Reunion in Barcelona: A letter to Alfred Perlès, from *Aller Retour New York*. Northwood, UK: Scorpion, 1959.
- . Sextet: Six Essays. London: Calder, 1980.
- . Stand Still Like the Hummingbird. New York: New Directions, 1962.
- . Sunday After the War. Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944.
- . The Air-Conditioned Nightmare. St. Albans, UK: Panther, 1973.
- . The Books in My Life. Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1962.
- . The Colossus of Maroussi. New York: New Directions, 1958.
- . The Comological Eye. New York: New Directions, 1961.
- . The Obelisk Trilogy: Tropic of Cancer. Tropic of Capricorn. Black Spring. [Rockville, MD]: Olympia-Disruptive, 2005. New Traveller's Companion Ser. 41.
- . The Rosy Crucifixion: Sexus. Plexus. Nexus. [Rockville, MD]: Olympia-Disruptive, 2004. New Traveller's Companion Ser. 42.
- . The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder. New York: New Directions, 1974.
- . The Time of the Assassins: A Study of Rimbaud. New York: New Directions, 1962.
- . The Wisdom of the Heart. New York: New Directions, 1960.

- Miller, Henry, Lawrence Durrell, and Alfred Perlès. Art and Outrage: A Correspondence about Henry Miller. London: Village, 1973.
- Mitchell, Edward B., ed. Henry Miller: Three Decades of Criticism. New York: New York UP, 1971.
- Moore, Thomas H., ed. Henry Miller on Writing. New York: New Directions, 1964.
- Nelson, Jane A. Form and Image in the Fiction of Henry Miller. Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP, 1970.
- Nesbit, Thomas. Henry Miller and Religion. New York: Routledge-Taylor, 2007.
- Nin, Anaïs. The Diary of Anaïs Nin: Volume Three 1939-1944. Ed. and pref. Gunther Stuhlmann. New York: Harvest-Harcourt, 1969.
- Norden, Charles [Durrell, Lawrence]. Panic Spring: A Romance. Ed. James Gifford. Victoria, BC: ELS, 2008.
- Palamas, Kostas. A Hundred Voices. Trans. Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbali. London: n.p., 1976.
- . A Hundred Voices and Other Poems. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1921.
- . "A Man's Death," Modern Greek Stories. NY: Duffield, 1920.
- . Άπαντα. Vol. IA'. Athens: Μπίρης-Γκοβόστης, 1967.
- . Life Immovable. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1919.
- . Royal Blossom or Trisevyene. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1923.
- . The King's Flute. Trans. Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbali. Athens: Kostas Palamas Institute, 1982.
- . The Twelve Words of the Gipsy. Trans. Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbali. London: Oasis, 1974.
- . Three Poems. Trans. Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbali. London: n.p., 1969.
- Palmer-Sikelianos, Eva. Upward Panic: The Autobiography of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos. Ed. and introd. John P. Anton. Chur, Switz.: Harwood, 1993.
- Pausanias. Description of Greece 10.24.1.
- The Penguin New Writing* 33. London: Penguin, 1948. 89-91.
- Perlès, Alfred. My Friend Henry Miller: An Intimate Biography. Pref. Henry Miller. New York: John Day, 1956.

- Pinch, Geraldine. Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt. New York: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Pine, Richard. Lawrence Durrell: The Mindscape. New York: St Martin's, 1994.
- Plotinus. The Enneads V.6.4.
- Plutarch. Lives. Trans. John Dryden. Vol. 5. Boston, MA: Little, 1859.
- . Moralia. Trans. Frank Cole Babbitt. Vol. V. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003.
- Politis, Linos. A History of Modern Greek Literature. Oxford, UK: Clarendon-Oxford UP, 1973.
- Politis, M. J. "In Understanding of Greece." *The New York Times* 29 Mar. 1942: Book Review, 24.
- Polley, George Warren. "The art of religious writing: Henry Miller as religious writer." *South Dakota Review* 7.3 (Autumn 1969): 61-73.
- Pourgouris, Marinos. Mediterranean Modernisms: The Poetic Metaphysics of Odysseus Elytis. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011.
- Prevelakis, Pandelis. "Prospéro le Jeune." *Synthèses* 249/250 (Feb./Mar. 1967): 32.
- . The Sun of Death. Pref. Henry Miller. Trans. Abbot Rick. New York: Simon, 1964.
- Rev. of Poems by Kostas Palamas and Modern Greek Poems, comp. and trans. Theodore Ph. Stephanides and George C. Katsimbalis. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* Jan. 1926: 287.
- Rexroth, Kenneth. Bird in the Bush. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1970.
- Ricks, David. The Shade of Homer: A Study in Modern Greek Poetry. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Royidis, Emmanuel. Pope Joan: A Romantic Biography. Pref. and trans. Lawrence Durrell. London: André Deutsch, 1960.
- Seferis, George. A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951. Trans. Athan Anagnostopoulos. Bridgewater, NJ: Replica-Baker, 2000.
- . Complete Poems. Trans., ed., and introd. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. London: Anvil, 1995.
- . Días 1925-1968. Trans. and Sel. Vicente Fernández González. Madrid: Alianza, 1997.
- . Δοκίμεις [Essays]. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. Athens: Ίκαρος, 1974.
- . George Seferis to Henry Miller. Two Letters from Greece. New Haven, CT: Pharos, 1990.

- . Μέρες Α΄: 16 Φεβρουαρίου 1925 - 17 Αυγούστου 1931. Athens: Ίκαρος, 1975.
- . Μέρες Β΄: 24 Αυγούστου 1931- 12 Φεβρουαρίου 1934. Athens: Ίκαρος, 1975.
- . Μέρες Γ΄: 16 Απρίλη 1934-14 Δεκέμβρη 1940. Athens: Ίκαρος, 1984.
- . Μέρες Δ΄: 1 Φενάρη 1941 - 31 Δεκέμβρη 1944. Athens: Ίκαρος, 1986.
- . "The Greek Poems of Lawrence Durrell." *Labrys* 5 (1979).
- . On the Greek Style: Selected Essays in Poetry and Hellenism. Trans. Rex Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos. Introd. Rex Warner. Boston, MA: Atlantic-Little, 1966.
- . Six Nights on the Acropolis: A Novel. Trans. and introd. Susan Matthias. Fwd. Roderick Beaton. River Vale, NJ: Cosmos, 2007.
- Shakespeare, William. Antony and Cleopatra. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- . The Tempest. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Sikelianos, Angelos. "Δελφική Έκκληση 1930," Πεζός Λόγος, Β΄. Ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης. Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1980.
- . El último ditirambo órfico o El ditirambo de la Rosa. Pref. Kostas E. Tsirópulos. Trans. Isabel García Gálvez. La Laguna, Tenerife, Sp.: II Congreso de Neohelenistas de Iberoamérica, 2001.
- . "Ο Διθύραμβος του Ρόδου," Θυμέλη Α'. Ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης. Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1971.
- . "Pericles Yannopoulos". My trans. of "Περικλῆς Γιαννόπουλος". Λυρικός Βίος, Β. Athens: Ίκαρος, 1966. 63-67.
- . "Περικλής Γιαννόπουλος," Πεζός Λόγος Α'. Ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης. Athens, Gr.: Ίκαρος, 1978.
- . Poèmes Akritiques. La Mort de Digénis. Athens: Institut Français, 1960.
- . Selected Poems. Trans. and introd. Edward Keeley and Phillip Sherrard. London: Allen, 1980.
- . "Sibylla: Tragédie." Trans. Octave Merlier. *Études Néo-Helléniques* II (1969-1970): 169-255.
- . The Awakener: A Condensation of "Proanakrousma". Trans. Eva Sikelianos. Benaki Museum / Historical Archives, Eva Palmer-Sikelianos Archive, Inv. Num. 189 / f13. Kifissia, Gr.
- . The Dedication of the Delphic Word: A Poem of Initiation. Trans. Alma Reed. New York: Vinal, 1928. Trans. of Ο Δελφικός Λόγος: Η αφιέρωση. Athens: n.p., 1927.
- Sikelianos, A., and G. Seferis. Six Poems from the Greek of Sikelianos [sic.] and Seferis. Trans. Lawrence Durrell. Rhodes, Gr.: Durrell, 1946.

- Snyder, Robert, ed. This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn. Los Angeles, CA: Nash, 1974.
- Stephanides, Theodore. Autumn Gleanings: Corfu Memoirs and Poems. Ed. Richard Pine, Lindsay Parker, James Gifford and Anthony Hirst. Corfu, Gr.: Durrell Sch. of Corfu - Int. Lawrence Durrell Soc., 2012.
- . Island Trails. Introd. Gerald Durrell. London: Macdonald, 1973.
- . Lettres à Lawrence Durrell [1961-1982] / Γράμματα στον Λώρενς Ντάρελ [1961-1982]. Trans. Barbara Papastavrou-Koroniotakis. Pref. Corinne Alexandre-Garner. Paris: PU de Paris 10-Gavrielides, 2006.
- Taylor, Lily Ross. "The Cult of Alexander at Alexandria," *Classical Philology* 22.2 (1927): 162-169.
- Temple, Frédéric-Jacques. Henry Miller: Qui suis-je? Lyon, Fr.: Manufacture, 1986.
- Thaniel, George. Seferis and Friends: Some of George Seferis' Friends in the English-Speaking World. Ed. Ed Phinney. Stratford, ON: Mercury, 1994.
- Tziovas, Dimitris, ed. Greek Modernism and Beyond. Lanham, MD: Rowman, 1997.
- Tzu, Lao. Tao Teh Ching. Trans. John C. H. Wu. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2006.
- Venezis, Ilias. Aeolia. Trans. E. D. Scott-Kilvert, pref. Lawrence Durrell. London: Campion, 1949.
- Virgil. Aeneid.
- Voglis, Polymeris. "Surviving Hunger: Life in the Cities and the Countryside during the Occupation," Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe. Ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2006.
- Wallis Budge, E. A, comp. and trans. The Book of the Dead. London: Arkana-Penguin, 1989.
- Wickes, George. Henry Miller. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota, 1966.
- Wickes, George, ed. Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence. London: Faber, 1963.
- Yannopoulos, Périklis. Άπαντα Α΄. Ed. Δημήτρης Λαζογιώργος-Ελληνικός. Athens: n.p., 1963. xl-xliii and 283-284.
- . La Ligne Grecque, La Couleur Grecque. Trans. Marc Terrades. Paris: Harmattan, 2006.

