

*Κάμπος*

**C**ambridge Papers  
in **M**odern **G**reek

Cambridge

No. 9 2001

© Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages  
University of Cambridge 2001  
ISSN: 1356-5109

*Published by:*

The Modern Greek Section  
Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages  
Sidgwick Avenue  
Cambridge CB3 9DA  
United Kingdom

Price per issue: £10.00

All correspondence should be sent to the above address.

*Edited by David Holton and Jocelyn Pye*

*Layout by Liz Crossfield*

*Cover illustration: from the Grammar of Gregorios Sarafis, published at Kydonies (Ayvalik) in 1820 (see A. Koumarianou, L. Droulia & E. Layton, Το Ελληνικό Βιβλίο 1476-1830. Athens 1986, Plate 239)*

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## Reading Seferis's politics and the politics of reading Seferis\*

Roderick Beaton

George Seferis the poet-diplomat was closely involved in many of the most crucial political issues which affected his country between the late 1930s and the early 1960s; he was closer than most poets to the centres of power and the dilemmas confronted by his political masters; his poetry and other public utterances, with a single exception scrupulously aloof from overt political statement, often comment in complex, covert ways on the political realities of his time and on the more fundamental forces which Seferis saw as underlying these realities. In a certain sense, then, few writers are more "political" than Seferis.

The huge secondary bibliography on his work has generally little to say about Seferis's actual political involvement, on what he did in his diplomatic career, or on how his personal beliefs, expressed in posthumously published poems, diaries and letters, relate to both his literary and his diplomatic activity.<sup>1</sup>

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\* Some of the ideas presented here were first aired in lectures given at Brown University (April 2000) and King's College London (September 2000), as well as at international conferences on Seferis at Platres, Cyprus (February 2000), Izmir (October 2000) and Norwich (May 2001). I am grateful to participants on all these occasions, as well as the audience for the Cambridge lecture from which this essay immediately derives, many of whose suggestions and comments I have tacitly incorporated.

<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that the political dimension of his poetry and other published work has not been noticed: on which see, indicatively, Orfanidis 1985. Specific studies of Seferis's professional career by professional historians and/or diplomats are few indeed. Almost the only article which tackles this topic head-on is Xydis 1984. We also owe to Xydis the excellent editions, with commentary, of Seferis's two "political diaries" which have so far appeared (Seferis 1979a; Seferis 1985) and, although unattributed, of the *Manuscript Sept. '41* (Seferis 1972a, text only = 1992: 17-55). Some invaluable information and insights have come from Y.

At the same time, those critical voices which have been raised in recent years against the pre-eminence and cultural authority of Seferis, have mounted their attack almost exclusively on the territory of what they call "politics". What in my title I have called the "politics of reading Seferis" predominates in the bibliography over "reading Seferis's politics". The contention of this paper is that the two activities are inseparable, just as the two public roles of Seferis the poet and Seferiadis the diplomat are also inseparable.

For this reason, I propose to approach the first half of my title by way of the second. First, I shall introduce the charges that have been levelled against Seferis over the last fifteen years, by revisionist scholars who have in common an Anglo-American institutional background.<sup>2</sup> Then I will propose rather different readings of the evidence adduced by the revisionists. Finally I will demonstrate how this and other evidence can be used to identify the principles that guided Seferis's political judgements at particular stages of his life, and the ways in which these principles are in turn related to Seferis's poetry and essays.

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Yeoryis (1991; 2000), whose interest, however, is avowedly limited to Seferis's involvement in the affairs of Cyprus.

<sup>2</sup> The principal "revisionist" critiques are, in chronological order: Dimiroulis 1985; Lambropoulos 1988; Calotychos 1990; Layoun 1990; Jusdanis 1991; Leontis 1995; Gourgouris 1996; Dimiroulis 1997; Kayalis 1997a; Van Dyck 1998. I exclude from this list Dimiroulis's more recent book on Seferis (Dimiroulis 1999), which, although it approaches the *Three Secret Poems* tangentially as a pretext rather than as the object of literary interpretation or analysis, and is presented as the "continuation" of the earlier book, nonetheless marks a notable shift from the agenda that is here termed "revisionist". Also excluded, although cited where relevant, is Pitsilidis (2000). This writer does not share the academic affiliations or interests of the "revisionists", and the evidence he adduces is different from theirs in being chiefly biographical; on the other hand Pitsilidis's extensive quotation from Dimiroulis (1997) and his emphasis on Seferis's political behaviour and allegiances place his work in a direct relation to theirs.

*The politics of reading Seferis*

Almost all of those whom I am here calling revisionists privilege Seferis's essays over his poetry. Much the greater part of their discussions is devoted to the ideas expressed in the literary essays that Seferis published between 1936 and his death in 1971.<sup>3</sup> Dimitris Dimiroulis, the only one to have devoted a whole book to Seferis, confines discussion of the poet's poems to just 74 pages out of a total of 455. Only Karen Van Dyck, who contrasts Seferis's Modernism with the Postmodernism of three women writers who began writing at about the time of Seferis's death, uses close reading of one of his poems, alongside other kinds of evidence, to sustain her reading of his work as politically conservative and aesthetically bound into a dead end.<sup>4</sup>

The underlying resistance to Seferis in every case is expressed in terms of "politics". Often the attack is not just on Seferis but on the Greek version of literary Modernism of which, quite reasonably, Seferis is taken to be the most influential exponent. Under this heading, three specific charges emerge: firstly that Seferis's essays were conceived programmatically<sup>5</sup> with the purpose of promoting his own work through a "massive ... rewriting" of the Greek literary canon;<sup>6</sup> secondly the charge of Hellenocentrism, which is understood in terms of nationalist exclusivity; and thirdly, closely bound up with the second, the

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<sup>3</sup> For these essays as collected by Seferis see Seferis 1981; for "uncollected" essays see Seferis 1992. Gourgouris explicitly dismisses the poetry altogether: "There is enough written about Seferis's poetry ... to constitute a full-fledged industry. To take up the subject of Seferis's poetry once again would first require, from my point of view, a ruthless dismantling of this accumulated refuse of discourse surrounding his verses and his name, a task for which I am certainly not suited. Yet there is another reason for *not taking the time to address the Seferis phenomenon as a poetic phenomenon*. For as distinct as Seferis's poetry was, he would not have achieved such cultural dominance without his consistent and prolific critical production..." (Gourgouris 1996: 202-3; my emphasis).

<sup>4</sup> Van Dyck 1998: 38-42 on "The Cats of St Nicholas"; cf. 24-8 on Seferis's politics derived from essays and diaries.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Calotychos 1990: 87 and n. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Lambropoulos 1988: 64.

insinuation that Seferis's political sympathies lie with the Right, and even the far Right.

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### *Canon-formation*

A national tradition redefined, a literary canon revised, and the more unsettling modernist trends suppressed: all this served, of course, a relentless self-promotion which was never to cease.<sup>7</sup>

His careful commentary on specific literary persons and *œuvres* amounts to a *wily, strategic* construction of a canon ... which, one recognizes, would foreground those particular technical qualities that would most resemble those employed by Seferis and his like-minded contemporaries.<sup>8</sup>

There is unlikely to be disagreement about the contents of Seferis's "Great Tradition" of Modern Greek literature and culture, as this emerges from the *Dokimes*. Its principal components are: (i) oral folk song; (ii) the seventeenth-century Cretan verse romance *Erotokritos*; (iii) the "national poet" of the time of the Greek war of independence, Dionysios Solomos; (iv) the veteran of that war, General Makriyannis who taught himself to write at the age of thirty in order to record his experiences; (v) Kostis Palamas, the doyen of Greek poets and critics at the turn of the twentieth century; and (vi) the naïf painter of the early twentieth century, Theophilos Hatzimichael.

Makriyannis, the unlettered General and neglected hero of the nineteenth-century war of independence, for many revisionists becomes a test case. Seferis's admiration for the *Memoirs* of the General lasted throughout his life, and is famously enshrined in the text of a lecture which he gave in Alexandria and Cairo in 1943, and later published among his essays.<sup>9</sup> Lambropoulos teases out from this essay what he calls "the strategies

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<sup>7</sup> Lambropoulos 1988: 64.

<sup>8</sup> Calotychos 1990: 120, my emphasis.

<sup>9</sup> Seferis 1981: I 228-63.



Seferis uses to appropriate *The Memoirs* as a literary work".<sup>10</sup> Gourgouris, traversing the same ground in the context of the idealising construction of state ideology, goes so far as to declare: "In 1943, in Cairo, Makriyiannis was abolished and Seferis emerged as the *anthropos*."<sup>11</sup> This is perceived as the consequence of "Seferis's desire to Hellenize Makriyiannis, i.e. to discover in him the essence of *anthropos*",<sup>12</sup> part of a programme which Gourgouris understands to be at once aesthetic and nationalistic.<sup>13</sup> More modestly, Takis Kayalis reads the same essay in order to propose

that through Makriyiannis Seferis picks out, transposes and consolidates within Greek cultural life basic modernist values and concepts.<sup>14</sup>

Gregory Jusdanis, in the context of a study of canon-formation in which Greece is taken as a test case, finds "also worth mentioning ... Seferis's success in classifying the nearly forgotten [sic!] memoirs of General Ioannis Makriyiannis as a prototype of Greek literature".<sup>15</sup>

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### *Modernism v. Hellenocentrism*

The second charge is more complex, and relates to an alleged contradiction at the heart of Greek literary Modernism. The term "Modernism", in the sense that it has been routinely applied to what Hugh Kenner memorably termed the "Pound era" in Anglo-

<sup>10</sup> Lambropoulos 1988: 56.

<sup>11</sup> Gourgouris 1996: 198.

<sup>12</sup> Gourgouris 1996: 197-8.

<sup>13</sup> Programmatic for many of this group is the statement of Jusdanis, referring to the literary "Generation of the 1930s" in Greece: "whereas in the past Greece was understood as content, now it is appreciated as form" (Jusdanis 1991: 121).

<sup>14</sup> ότι μέσω του Μακρυγιάννη ο Σεφέρης εξειδικεύει, μεταφέρει και εδραιώνει στην ελληνική πνευματική ζωή βασικές μοντερνιστικές αξίες και αντιλήψεις (Kayalis 1997a: 34).

<sup>15</sup> Jusdanis 1991: 85.

American literature,<sup>16</sup> was not commonly applied to Greek literature until the 1980s. Since then, it has moved in to supplant the clearly deficient term "Generation of the 1930s" that was dominant before then. Dimitris Tziouvas has edited a collection of essays which together go a long way towards defining this literary phenomenon in Greece in terms consonant with the Anglo-American model.<sup>17</sup> But many of those who have pioneered a new perception of the dominant literary mode in Greece between 1930 and about 1960 as Modernism, including Tziouvas himself, have been struck by the paradox which many of them also see as Greek Modernism's fatal flaw.

Artemis Leontis detects this contradiction in an acute form in the work of Seferis (again, she is referring mainly to the essays):

Seferis both defended his affiliation with modernist poetics and recuperated the Hellenic as an approachable though difficult standard of value. This *paradoxical* joining of the modern with the Hellenic, the modernist, international with a neotraditionalist, national sensibility, is the critical foundation of his work.<sup>18</sup>

Dimitris Dimiroulis, in his long book on Seferis, returns again and again to this crux, in a display of linguistic ingenuity which often carries a weight of explicitly moral outrage.<sup>19</sup> Among the eighteen essays edited by Tziouvas, the majority of those which directly address this issue concur in seeing a contradiction at the heart of Greek Modernism, while a lone dissenting voice bravely

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<sup>16</sup> Kenner 1971.

<sup>17</sup> Tziouvas 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Leontis 1995: 139 (my emphasis).

<sup>19</sup> See for example: αντιμετάθεση (Dimiroulis 1997: 27), υφέρπουσα αμφισημία (112), αντίθεση, αντίφαση (78), εντατική αμφιδοξία (132), σχεδόν πιλάτεια στάση (273). Revisiting this issue in his more recent book Dimiroulis allows for a more nuanced coexistence of the two terms: Στα "κρυφά ποιήματα" η γη της Ιωνίας και ο λόγος των προσωκρατικών αναδεικνύουν το αιώνιο πρόβλημα της ελληνικής ποίησης: την χωρίς έκβαση ταλάντευση της ποιητικής γραφής ανάμεσα στον ευρωπαϊκό λόγο της μοντερνικότητας και στη μοναδικότητα της ελληνικής εμπειρίας που συναρτάται πάντοτε με το αίτημα της ταυτότητας (Dimiroulis 1999: 198).

insists, in the teeth of the evidence, that Greek Modernism is not Hellenocentric, or nationalistic, at all.<sup>20</sup>

Only Takis Kayalis, so far as I know, has approached this alleged "contradiction" in Seferis (and others of his generation) via the context of late twentieth-century scholarship on Anglo-American "High Modernism". Kayalis recognises, in Seferis's appropriation of Makriyannis, something that most scholars of Eliot and the "Pound era" have been saying for decades. Seferis's search, in this essay, for the roots of a collective tradition, and particularly the manner in which that search is conducted, are for Kayalis the sure and consistent proof of Seferis's affiliation to "High Modernism" in the style of Eliot.<sup>21</sup> For Kayalis, as for Kermodé, Lentricchia and many others who have dealt with this issue in the Anglo-American context, there is nothing contradictory about this: aesthetic innovation and political/cultural nostalgia for an irrecoverable pre-modern age are two sides of the same coin.<sup>22</sup>

Kayalis, however, declares finally for the revisionists, rejecting the whole modernist project as leading to "a kind of professional schizophrenia", and "pregnant with serious dangers"<sup>23</sup> – clearly of the same political kind as also disturbed Dimiroulis. Elsewhere Kayalis has carried this "political" assault on Greek Modernism, though not primarily with reference to Seferis, to the point of linking it with fascism.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Vayenas 1997. Layoun also writes in terms of "contradiction" and "unintentional ironies" in Greek Modernism (1990: 13, 14).

<sup>21</sup> Kayalis 1997a: 34-6.

<sup>22</sup> "The courage to 'make it new' as a writer is not a metaphor: it is Eliot's path to regeneration. The other side of Eliot is never avant-gardist, is the very antithesis of the spirit of the avant-garde. The two sides coexist, always uneasily but always through necessity, in Eliot's writing, life being a truncated travesty if imagined otherwise. I refer, of course, to his commitments to tradition, literary history, the past" (Lentricchia 1994: 285). See also Kermodé 1967: e.g. 111; Morrison 1996.

<sup>23</sup> ... ένα είδος επαγγελματικής σχιζοφρένειας. ... εγκυμονεί σοβαρούς κινδύνους (Kayalis 1997a: 63).

<sup>24</sup> Kayalis 1997b.

*Seferis and the politics of the Right*

Implicit in much of this is the attribution to Seferis of the politics of the establishment figure which he posthumously became. Several of these critics, implicitly or explicitly, go further and link Seferis with the Greek Right. Karen Van Dyck, whose theme is censorship in a later period, notes that Seferis worked "in the Press Office in Athens under the Metaxas dictatorship", and assumes that this implicated him in the very censorship against which he "struggle[d] for freedom of expression in his own poetry and criticism".<sup>25</sup>

Most of those I am calling revisionists similarly assume, usually with less direct evidence adduced than this, that Seferis, the establishment figure thirty years after his death, was during his lifetime inextricably implicated with the political Right.

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*The politics of reading*

To a student of history or politics, none of this would seem, probably, very political at all. It is clear, however, that severally and together these revisionist approaches to Seferis in themselves amount to a political strategy. The nature and purpose of this strategy are not hard to seek. For Lambropoulos, a priority for "contemporary Greek criticism" must be:

the undermining of Seferis's exasperating presence and the debunking of his legislative authority in every part of public rhetoric and conduct. ... His is a language we must unlearn and a rhetoric we must expose ...<sup>26</sup>

This same outright opposition is expressed by Kayalis when he takes an explicitly personal and ideological stand against the Modernist phenomenon which he had acutely dissected in the case of Seferis's reading of Makriyannis. Dimiroulis, the only one

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<sup>25</sup> Van Dyck 1998: 36; cf. Dimiroulis 1997: 379-83, indicatively cited by Pitsilidis (2000: 214-16), who adds further details, none of which prove the allegation (Pitsilidis 2000: 177-217).

<sup>26</sup> Lambropoulos 1988: 65.

of the revisionists to tackle Seferis head-on, by devoting a whole book to him, indicates both a personal animus, similar to Lambropoulos's "exasperation", and a grudging sense of awe before the idol which he acknowledges he does not know how to cast down. In his preface, Dimiroulis admits to reading Seferis in the way that Seferis read his predecessor Cavafy: "with hidden jealousy and enigmatic displeasure".<sup>27</sup> And among Dimiroulis's conclusions (one of the book's explicit rhetorical tropes is the way in which it refuses to end) is this:

at the point of radical doubt, at the cutting-edge of the abyss, I imagine that I encounter Seferis who has been held captive between escape and falling.<sup>28</sup>

And Dimiroulis goes on to quote (it is still not, quite, the end), the poem from Seferis's last collection, *Three Secret Poems*, in which the poet confronts the void that is the white paper in front of him.<sup>29</sup>

None of this actually gets us very far with Seferis's political opinions, activities, and judgements. The "politics" that interest the revisionists are the perceived "politics" of the essays, which they see as imposing a canon on Modern Greek literature and buttressing an introverted Hellenocentric, nationalist ideology, which fatally compromises the overtly (and extroverted) Modernist project which the same essays purport to promote. Finally, identifying Seferis (not unreasonably) as a central figure in the establishment and consolidation of literary Modernism in Greece, they more or less explicitly insert their critiques of Seferis into their own postmodern, post-structuralist resistance to Modernism.

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<sup>27</sup> ... με κρυφή ζήλεια και αινιγματική δυσαρέσκεια (Dimiroulis 1997: 16).

<sup>28</sup> ... στο σημείο της ριζικής αμφιβολίας, στην κόψη του κενού, φαντάζομαι ότι συναντώ τον Σεφέρη που αιχμαλωτίστηκε ανάμεσα στη φυγή και στην πτώση (Dimiroulis 1997: 452). The antagonism of these comments, and of most of the book from which they come, is markedly moderated, if not entirely replaced, in Dimiroulis's second book on Seferis (Dimiroulis 1999), which as noted above is not included here among the revisionist "canon".

<sup>29</sup> Heavily begrudged respect is also a characteristic of Gourgouris – see e.g. 1996: 206 n.

This is, of course, the very stuff of literary, cultural and academic politics. What is at stake is precisely how, and indeed whether, readers in the new century, in the English-speaking world, square up to Seferis. One conclusion to be drawn, so far, is that on the evidence of these critiques, Seferis is far too important to be ignored. To that extent, these revisionist voices, raised in varying degrees of exasperation against the dominant position they ascribe to Seferis, cannot help but consolidate what they seek to deny. On the other hand, considerable institutional power has now (in July 2001) gathered around these positions, to the extent of preventing this paper from appearing in the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, to which it was first submitted.<sup>30</sup>

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*Reading Seferis's politics (i): canon-formation*

Far from laying down the established canon of Modern Greek literature and redefining Modern Greek letters in his own image, Seferis's preferred "Great Tradition" of Modern Greek literature and culture, as set out in the *Dokimes*, has in fact proved the least durable part of his legacy. A study of the critical essays of his predecessor Palamas has shown that Palamas, in the early years of the century, did far more than Seferis to fix the "demoticist" literary canon for much of the century that followed;<sup>31</sup> Seferis merely extended it. Of the "greats" in Seferis's Modern Greek tradition, only Solomos, the "national poet" of the first half of the nineteenth century, is still viewed by criticism in more or less the way that Seferis viewed him. The Greek folk songs are no longer seen as the organic, living link between the bards who sang the Homeric poems and the simple fishermen of Seferis's childhood.<sup>32</sup> The seventeenth-century verse romance *Erotokritos* is no longer mistaken for a product of the folk tradition, but has been shown to be the highly skilled

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<sup>30</sup> See Postscript (July 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Apostolidou 1992.

<sup>32</sup> For Seferis's "romantic" perception of folk poetry, see the poem "Upon a Foreign Line of Verse" ("Πάνω σ' έναν ξένο στίχο") and, *inter alia*, his 1943 essay on Palamas (Seferis 1981: I 215-27). For modern reassessments of this material see e.g. Herzfeld 1982; Sifakis 1988.

and rhetorically polished masterpiece of an educated, probably an aristocratic, writer with a developed knowledge of Italian and Latin literature.<sup>33</sup> Makriyannis's *Memoirs* have been returned to the field of history where they belong; the re-discovery of nineteenth-century fiction in *katharevousa* has toppled Makriyannis from the canonical status he briefly enjoyed during the 1930s and 1940s (due to Theotokas and others, as much as Seferis).<sup>34</sup> Even Makriyannis's language has been shown to be much more the product of its time than Seferis thought;<sup>35</sup> and the publication of the General's bizarre superstitious writings, in 1983, would surely have shattered Seferis's illusions about his hero's humane rationality.<sup>36</sup>

Palamas, next, whose shadow lay as heavily over Seferis's generation as that of Seferis does today, is now more often studied for his critical essays than for his poetry. It is generally accepted that the naïf painter Theophilos, charming though his works are, was greatly overrated by those writers of the thirties – Myrivilis, Elytis, Embirikos as well as Seferis – who chose him as their icon of an indigenous art-form. Influential Seferis's essays may have been in other ways, but the literary and aesthetic canon they incidentally promoted had already been set aside by serious students of Modern Greek literature by, at the latest, the end of the 1980s.<sup>37</sup>

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### *Reading Seferis's politics (ii): Hellenocentrism*

There is no doubt at all that Seferis participated in the search for a new sense of national identity, that was a common denominator for almost all Greek creative artists and intellectuals in the

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<sup>33</sup> See S. Alexiou 1980; Holton 1991.

<sup>34</sup> On the reception of Makriyannis in the 1930s see Tziouvas 1989: 127-9.

<sup>35</sup> Holton 1984-5.

<sup>36</sup> Makriyannis 1983; cf. Gourgouris 1996: 187-96.

<sup>37</sup> For rather different perceptions of the canon as it was being shaped at the end of the twentieth century see Lambropoulos 1988; Beaton 1999. For a useful indicator of how far the contemporary canon diverges from that of Seferis, it is instructive to consult the analytical prospectus (Οδηγός Σπουδών) of the Departments of Literature at the major Greek universities.

years following the expulsion of the Greek populations from Asia Minor and the ending of the irredentist programme known as the “Great Idea” which had taken root in Greek politics and culture since at least the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Anyone who reads the poems of Sikelianos, Papatzonis, Seferis, Kalas, Elytis, Ritsos, Embirikos, Engonopoulos, to cite only the best-known names, written during the decade of the 1930s, will immediately recognise this shared quest. It is equally evident in the prose fiction of the time, most programmatically in the two-volume novel *Argo* by Theotokas, published in 1933 and 1936, and in all the new periodicals which were founded in Athens between 1927 and 1936 – of which *Ta Nea Grammata*, established by close associates of Seferis in 1935, is only one.

In 1938 Seferis published an essay in *Ta Nea Grammata* which is regularly quoted by the revisionists as the proof of how Hellenocentric he was. Seferis, in this essay, was actually replying to his brother-in-law, Konstantinos Tsatsos, in a somewhat staged confrontation (both men were living in the same house at the time). The “Dialogue on Poetry” takes the Modernist line against the nationalist, but without denying the claims of the latter, since to have done so in Greece in 1938 would have been not so much politically reprehensible as simply inconceivable. These were the terms in which people thought at the time. But Seferis insists that “Greekness” (ελληνικότητα) – an abstraction much in vogue in the thirties – must *not* be imposed on works of art as an aesthetic criterion. Rather, “Greekness” (which everybody around him expects) must be left to emerge, and to be defined, by what Greek artists actually produce:

... let us advise them [*sc.* the young] to seek the truth..., not asking *how* to be Greeks, but believing that since they *are* Greeks, the works that will truly be born out of their souls cannot but be Greek.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Tziouvas 1989 *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Κι ας τους συμβουλεύουμε [*ενν.* τους νέους] να γυρεύουν την αλήθεια ..., όχι ρωτώντας πώς να είναι Έλληνες, αλλά πιστεύοντας πως αφού είναι Έλληνες, τα έργα που πραγματικά θα γεννήσει η ψυχή τους δεν μπορεί να μην είναι ελληνικά (Seferis 1981: I 102).



Seferis's argument here has been, on occasion, wrenched out of the historical context of 1938 and distorted, not least by Dimiroulis who contrives to make it mean the exact opposite of what Seferis said.<sup>40</sup> But Dimiroulis is not the only critic of Seferis to confuse ελληνικότητα (Greekness), that shibboleth of the Athens intelligentsia in the 1930s, with ελληνισμός (Hellenism), which in Modern Greek defines Greek culture diachronically and without reference to the geographical boundaries of the Greek state. Seferis rejected the former term. He used it only in the "Dialogue on Poetry" just quoted, and only within quotation marks, in order to make plain his objections to it:

When I read remarks such as these, I deduce that we consider the "Greekness" (ελληνικότητα) of a work of art as an aesthetic criterion which can condemn it or condone it, regardless of its other virtues and vices. This principle I reject ...<sup>41</sup>

That said, there is no doubt that Seferis accorded Hellenism a special place in his worldview. Wherever he travelled, in that much quoted and probably much misunderstood line, it was *Greece* that pained him.<sup>42</sup> As he expressed it in his interview with Edmund Keeley in 1968:

Let me say that I am interested in everything which finds expression in the Greek language and in Greek lands – I mean taking Greek lands as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dimiroulis 1997: 33; 35.

<sup>41</sup> ... όταν διαβάζω περικοπές σαν αυτές, ερμηνεύω ότι θεωρούμε την "ελληνικότητα" ενός έργου τέχνης σαν κριτήριο αισθητικό που μπορεί να το καταδικάσει ή να το συχωρέσει, ανεξάρτητα από τις άλλες του αρετές ή αμαρτίες. Τον κανόνα αυτόν τον αρνιέμαι ... (Seferis 1981: 198).

<sup>42</sup> Όπου και να ταξιδέψω η Ελλάδα με πηλώνει, from the poem "In the manner of G.S." ("Με τον τρόπο του Γ.Σ."). For evidence that this poem was originally intended to be read satirically, probably as self-parody, see Seferis's correspondence with Karandonis, where Karandonis twice calls it a "pastiche" (Seferis/Karandonis 1988: 120; 126-7) and Seferis corrects him, shortly before publication, giving it the current title: "Satire on himself" ("Σάτιρα εις εαυτόν") (Seferis/Karandonis 1988: 134).

<sup>43</sup> Keeley 1983: 207.

But if it was the Hellenic world and Hellenic culture that claimed Seferis's deepest allegiance, there is ample evidence, on the other hand, in both his life and his writings, that Seferis was open to a great deal that came from elsewhere – most notably in the energy he devoted to immersing himself first in French and then in English literature and culture.

His receptivity to other, non-European cultures, is evidenced from at least the late 1920s in his experimentation with verse-forms such as the Japanese *haiku*, the Malayan *pantun*, and the calligram (in the published poems). Posthumously published poems show his interest in Zen Buddhism and the ancient Hittite language, and include a brief translation from Nahuatl.<sup>44</sup> The catalogue of his books in the Vikelaia Public Library, Heraklion, includes the *1001 Nights* (which we know from his correspondence was among his earliest reading and remained a favourite),<sup>45</sup> the *Rubayyat* of Omar Khayyam (in several translations), the anecdotes of Nasreddin Hodja, Modern Israeli poetry, Basho and other Japanese poets, the *Tale of Genji*, anthologies of Chinese verse, an English translation of Malay sonnets, and a history of Arabic literature, some of them with Seferis's annotations.<sup>46</sup> In music he admired Ravi Shankar and jazz – to the latter of which he even claimed to have introduced Henry Miller!<sup>47</sup> As ambassador in London over twenty years later, he notes in his diary his favourable impressions of a Duke Ellington concert at Kilburn.<sup>48</sup>

Seferis's own self-assessment under this heading, which dates from 1959, states the case in a more nuanced way than either his critics or his defenders have done:

Something which preoccupies me now with the passing of the years; I am not what might be called a typical nationalist. But these roots in this soil, in this voice – sometimes excessively ex-

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<sup>44</sup> Seferis 1976: 89-92 (1946); 28-9 (1949); 126 (1968?).

<sup>45</sup> See e.g. Seferis/Maro 1989: 156-7.

<sup>46</sup> Yannadakis 1989: 275-80.

<sup>47</sup> See, respectively, Seferis 1975b: 133-4 (4 May 1933); Keeley 1983: 201.

<sup>48</sup> Seferis 1990: 87 (12 October 1958).

clusive the way I feel them – how can it be that they are so sensitive? ...<sup>49</sup>

Four years later, in his lecture to the Swedish Academy on 11 December 1963, Seferis explicitly rejected the racial concept of the continuity of Hellenism, defining “tradition”, instead, in terms of the human relationship to landscape, and as a force for innovation, not stasis:

I will not say that we are of the same blood [as the ancients] – because I have a horror of racial theories –, but we still inhabit the same country and see the same mountains ending in the sea. Perhaps I used the same word, tradition, without emphasising this evidence that tradition does not mean habit. On the contrary, its interest lies in its ability to break with habit; it is by this that it demonstrates its life force.<sup>50</sup>

The text of this lecture, one of two given in French on the occasion of the award of the Nobel Prize, was not included by Seferis either in the volume of his selected essays or in the definitive two-volume edition of *Dokimes* which he had prepared for publication but which did not appear until after his death.<sup>51</sup> A Greek translation of the lecture, by G.P. Savvidis, did appear, in *Tachydromos*, three days after it was delivered, and Seferis himself published the definitive French text of both lectures shortly afterwards.<sup>52</sup> It would be an exaggeration, therefore, to

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<sup>49</sup> Ένα πράγμα που με απασχολεί τώρα που πέρασαν τα χρόνια: δεν είμαι αυτό που λένε ο τύπος του εθνικιστή. Αλλ' αυτές οι ρίζες σ' αυτό το χώμα, σ' αυτή τη φωνή – κάποτε υπερβολικά αποκλειστικές καθώς τις νιώθω – πώς συμβαίνει να είναι τόσο ευαίσθητες; ... (Seferis 1990: 99, 1 March 1959).

<sup>50</sup> Je ne dirai pas que nous sommes du même sang – car j'ai horreur des théories raciales –, mais nous habitons toujours le même pays et nous regardons les mêmes montagnes finir dans la mer. Peut-être ai-je employé le mot de tradition, sans souligner cette évidence que tradition ne signifie pas habitude. Elle intéresse au contraire par la faculté de pouvoir rompre l'habitude; c'est par cela qu'elle prouve sa force de vie (Seferis 1992: 167).

<sup>51</sup> Respectively Seferis 1966; 1981.

<sup>52</sup> The text was not published again until it appeared in Seferis 1992: 149-68, with Savvidis's Greek translation (357-71). See the bibliographical

say that Seferis deliberately suppressed, at home, the views that he had expressed for the rather different audience of the Swedish Academy. On the other hand, the evidence is unmistakable that Seferis, in this case, exercised diplomatic censorship against himself.

Why did he do so? If Seferis was a shrewd judge of what his peers back home would tolerate, it is not he who stands out from those peers for harbouring nationalist sentiments.

So when we say that Seferis was "Hellenocentric" or "nationalist", it must be in the same limited and limiting sense in which the Irish poet W.B. Yeats, writing in 1937, one year before Seferis's "Dialogue on Poetry", applied the equivalent term to himself, at the end of his life:

I am no Nationalist, except in Ireland for passing reasons; State and Nation are the work of intellect, and when you consider what comes before and after them they are, as Victor Hugo said of something or other, not worth the blade of grass God gives for the nest of the linnet.<sup>53</sup>

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*Reading Seferis's politics (iii): the politics of the Right*

It is only a short step from Seferis's alleged nationalism to the allegations that he was committed to the political agenda of the Greek Right. The most serious charge here is the one repeated by Van Dyck, Dimiroulis, and Pitsilidis referred to earlier, namely that as Director of the Foreign Press Bureau under Metaxas Seferis participated in the exercise of censorship and, implicitly, was implicated in the authoritarian policies of the regime of the 4th of August.<sup>54</sup> This charge is not new. It was first laid against Seferis as early as the first months of 1943. Seferis replied to it in a seven-page letter, dated 20 May 1943, which he delivered in person to the Deputy Prime Minister of the government in exile in Cairo, Georgios Rousos.

notes by Savvidis in Seferis 1981: II 361-2 and by Daskalopoulos in Seferis 1992: 386.

<sup>53</sup> Yeats 1961: 526.

<sup>54</sup> See n. 25 above.

The specific charge to which Seferis replies in this letter relates to two posts which he had held recently: firstly as Director of the Foreign Press Bureau in Athens (December 1937 to April 1941), and then, less plausibly, when he was retained by his boss in that job, the distinctly dictatorial Theologos Nikoloudis, to serve in the South African embassy (July 1941 to April 1942). Seferis's defence is in two parts: firstly, a public servant has no choice in whom he serves and in what capacity; and secondly, and more interestingly, he sets out in unusually direct terms, for Seferis, what his political sympathies at that time were.

These two positions I did not seek, but was appointed by decree. ... My political ideas [are] certainly not in favour of dictatorship, nor are they aristocratic-republican; I favour people's rule. That is to say, I believe that the so-called upper class in Greece has been bankrupt for years and that the only policy which has hopes of succeeding is that which will be able to create new party members and new leaders arising from the heart of the people; that policy which ... will try to liberate our people in social, economic and national terms.<sup>55</sup>

Seferis's defence is worth examining closely. Certainly, he appears to have had no choice in accepting the posting to South Africa, which he liked no more than he liked his political superior, Nikoloudis.<sup>56</sup> But his appointment to the Press Bureau

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<sup>55</sup> Τας δύο αυτάς θέσεις δεν τας επεζήτησα, αλλά διετάχθην να τας αναλάβω ... [Αι] πολιτικά[ι] ιδέ[αι] μου ... δεν είναι βεβαίως δικτατορικάι, αλλ' ούτε καν δημοκρατικάι αριστοκρατικάι, είναι λαοκρατικάι. Πιστεύω δηλαδή ότι η ανωτέρα λεγομένη τάξις εις την Ελλάδα έχει από ετών χρεωκοπήσει και ότι η μόνη πολιτική που έχει ελπίδας να επιτύχει είναι εκείνη που θα ημπορέσει να δημιουργήσει νέα στελέχη και νέους ηγέτες προερχομένους από τα σπλάχνα του λαού: η πολιτική εκείνη που ... θα προσπαθήσει να απελευθερώσει κοινωνικώς, οικονομικώς και εθνικώς τον λαόν μας. Cited from a typed carbon copy (p. 2), among the small number of Seferis's papers in the Greek Literary and Historical Archive, Athens (ELIA). The delivery of the letter, on 22 April, and something of the circumstances which provoked it, are mentioned in Seferis 1979a: 120. Compare Seferis's reconstruction of the apologia he made verbally to the newly appointed Prime Minister, George Papandreou, on 27 April 1944 (Seferis 1979a: 210-11).

<sup>56</sup> See Seferis 1979a: 27-40.

at the end of 1937 was a different matter. There is indeed no evidence to suggest that Seferis sought this specific post; the verb he uses for his appointment, *διετάχθην*, is accurate. But we know that Seferis, throughout 1937, had been desperate to return to Athens.<sup>57</sup> This was not because of any political sympathy with the Metaxas regime, but because of his developing relationship with his future wife, Marika Londou (Maro Seferi). Seferis's secondment from the Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of Press and Tourism, and the responsibility for exercising a degree of censorship over the foreign press, were the price Seferis paid in order to set up house with the woman he loved. In the letter to Rousos, and again, in 1944, when he was called as a witness in a court case, Seferis insisted that his role at the Press Ministry had nothing to do with internal censorship in Greece.<sup>58</sup> This has also been categorically stated by Alexandros Xydis, who served under Seferis in the Press Office in Cairo.<sup>59</sup> The censorship that Seferis did exercise shows him consistently and sometimes courageously trying to block the propaganda of the agents of Hitler and Mussolini, with the result that by April 1941 Seferis was on the Gestapo blacklist. This was the reason why an official of such relatively junior rank came to be evacuated with the government.<sup>60</sup>

Whatever may have been his political sentiments in 1937, by the time that he wrote the letter to Rousos in May 1943, and from then until the *Dekemvriana* a year and a half later, Seferis's political sympathies were not with the Right, but with the Left. His disgust with the old political class, and his idealistic elevation of the people (*λαός*) as the hope for the future, as

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<sup>57</sup> See e.g. Seferis 1977a: 42; 84; Tsatsou 1973: 351-2; Theotokas/Seferis 1981: 140; and Seferis/Maro 1989: *passim*, throughout the period that Seferis was in Albania.

<sup>58</sup> Seferis 1979a: 164-5 (29 March 1944).

<sup>59</sup> Editor's [=Xydis] unsigned note in Seferis 1972a: 72, n. 27 (only a few of the notes from the 1972 edition have been carried over into Seferis 1992); cf. Xydis 1984: 112. Pitsilidis, who cites this evidence extensively, and does not believe it, does not prove his case that Seferis was a trusted supporter of the 4th August regime (Pitsilidis 2000: 177-217).

<sup>60</sup> Seferis 1997b: 55. The same point is made in the unpublished letter to Rousos quoted above.

expressed in the letter to Rousos, can be corroborated by other things that he wrote at the same time. One of these is the essay on Makriyannis, to which reference has already been made.

The unlettered nineteenth-century General, painstakingly composing his memoirs between 1829 and 1850, is indeed appropriated by Seferis, in this essay, as both an ideal precursor of the Modernist artist and as a prop to support Seferis's own Modernist poetics in the manner of Eliot. But the essay on Makriyannis also has a strong political subtext, as has been noted in two doctoral theses written at English universities in the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> Makriyannis, as appropriated by Seferis, represents not just the idealised "authentic" voice of tradition, such as Eliot claimed to find in the seventeenth-century preacher Lancelot Andrewes and Pound in the Occitan troubadour Arnaut Daniel; Makriyannis, for Seferis, represents the repressed voice of the Greek *people* (λαός). As Seferis begins to sum up his argument towards the end of the essay:

This is what I had to say to you about Makriyannis, [who was] the ... sure messenger of our long and unbroken popular tradition, who because he holds it so deeply rooted within him, comes to tell us, in the voices of many people, and not of just one, what we are and how we are, ourselves. That his anger and his tragedy are not individual matters, but things which matter to you and to me and to all of us; matters in which all together, dead and living, are mutual guarantors and jointly responsible.<sup>62</sup>

Seferis's essay on Makriyannis was written as a lecture and finished, in Cairo, on 30 April 1943.<sup>63</sup> As a lecture, it was given to an audience of about 1,400 in Alexandria on 16 May, and on 19

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<sup>61</sup> Williams 1997: 52-55, also mentioned by Petropoulos 1996: 221.

<sup>62</sup> Αυτά είχα να σας πω για τον Μακρυγιάννη, τον ... σίγουρο μαντατοφόρο της μακριάς και αδιάσπαστης λαϊκής μας παράδοσης, που επειδή την κρατά τόσο βαθιά ριζωμένη μέσα του, έρχεται να μας πει με τη φωνή πολλών ανθρώπων, και όχι ενός μονάχα, τι είμαστε και πώς είμαστε κι εμείς οι ίδιοι. Πως ο θυμός του και η τραγωδία του, δεν είναι ατομικές του υποθέσεις, αλλά υποθέσεις δικές σας και δικές μου για όλων μας· υποθέσεις όπου όλοι μαζί, πεθασμένοι και ζωντανοί, είμαστε αλληλέγγυοι και συνυπεύθυνοι (Seferis 1981: I 261-2).

<sup>63</sup> Seferis 1977b: 289.

May, to an audience of “unfortunately” only about 500, in Cairo.<sup>64</sup> Seferis notes with cryptic satisfaction that Crown Prince Paul, who was in the audience, said to him afterwards, “I didn’t know these things.”<sup>65</sup> In Cairo, after the lecture, he records, “Young colleagues moving away from my vicinity, like rats from a sinking ship.”<sup>66</sup> Seferis was perfectly well aware that his lecture on Makriyannis was not only a statement of poetic Modernism, it was also as open a statement of left-wing political conviction (in terms of the ideology and rhetoric of the time) as could possibly be made in public by someone in Seferis’s position – and indeed too open in the eyes of many.<sup>67</sup>

The day after he gave the lecture in Cairo, Seferis wrote his letter to Deputy Prime Minister Rousos.

The immediate upshot was that Seferis kept his job – for the time being.<sup>68</sup> A year later he resigned (effectively he was sacked) by Prime Minister George Papandreou, who refused to have confidence in a man so much identified with the Left and sympathetic to the left-wing resistance in Greece, as Seferis now was. At that time Seferis ruefully recorded the comment of a French colleague and his reply:

“Strange, ... until now they accused your office of being conservative, now of being leftist, strange – I don’t understand.” ...  
“Perhaps you should understand that we’ve done a good job.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Seferis 1979a: 120 = 1977b: 290.

<sup>65</sup> Seferis 1977b: 289; cited with comment by Williams 1997: 54.

<sup>66</sup> Seferis 1977b: 290.

<sup>67</sup> More than a year later, Seferis recorded that there were still those who had not forgiven him for this lecture, and he held them responsible for his effective dismissal by Papandreou in April 1944 (Seferis 1979a: 254, 21 August 1944).

<sup>68</sup> Seferis 1979a: 221.

<sup>69</sup> “Περίεργο, ... ως τώρα κατηγορούσαν το γραφείο σας ως συντηρητικό, τώρα ως αριστερό, περίεργο – δεν καταλαβαίνω.” “Ίσως να πρέπει να καταλάβετε ότι κάναμε καλά τη δουλειά μας” (Seferis 1979a: 221, 3 May 1944). For the circumstances of Seferis’s resignation from the Press Office at the end of April 1944, see Seferis 1979a: 210-28.



*Reading Seferis's politics (iv): a historical perspective*

If we stand back from these particular issues, on which the recent revisionists have based their attack on Seferis's pre-eminence, it is possible to sketch in, on the basis of historical hindsight, some of the basic principles of what might broadly be termed Seferis's politics.

One particular misunderstanding has to be avoided from the start: in his actions and his public statements as a higher civil servant, Seferis was subjected to very specific constraints, which it is sometimes hard for those in the academic world, the beneficiaries of "academic freedom", to appreciate. It is therefore important to make a distinction between the professional diplomat, who had limited freedom of action and none of speech, on the one hand, and on the other the private estimations which Seferis made on political matters, which are expressed directly only in diaries and letters, but may also be encrypted in the poems and essays which he published during his lifetime.<sup>70</sup>

First of all, Seferis was a Venizelist, the son of a Venizelist, and his closest friends, at least until 1941, seem also to have been Venizelists. Only one political principle seems to have been stronger in Seferis even than this, and that was his dislike of the monarchy. As he wrote in 1941, he never forgave Venizelos for having finally acquiesced in the return of King George in 1935.<sup>71</sup> Seferis's first overtly political poem, which was not published in his lifetime, was "Leoforos Syngrou II", dated the day on which King George landed at Tzitzifies.<sup>72</sup> The roots of this antipathy probably go back to the National Schism, and to Seferis's adolescent memories of the anathema pronounced

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Yeoryis 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Seferis 1972a: 22 = 1992: 27-8.

<sup>72</sup> The poem is now included in Seferis 1976: 64-6. It was originally a letter sent to Theotokas, dated 25 November 1935, and also appears in its place in that correspondence (Theotokas/Seferis 1981: 136-8). It also inaugurates what Seferis himself called his "service diary" (υπηρεσιακό ημερολόγιο), on which see Xydis in Seferis 1979a: 7-8. The published title "political diary" (πολιτικό ημερολόγιο) belongs to Xydis (see Seferis 1979a: 9).

against Venizelos on the Pedion Areos in 1916.<sup>73</sup> Taking stock, in the circumstances of his new exile, to South Africa, at the end of 1941, Seferis was unforgiving of the Six who had been executed in 1922 for their part in the Asia Minor disaster.<sup>74</sup> But the prime responsibility, in Seferis's eyes, as in those of many Venizelists, lay with Venizelos's arch-opponent King Constantine and therefore, by extension, with the monarchy itself.<sup>75</sup>

The politics of Left versus Right always interested Seferis less than the (again Venizelist) principle of the integrity and self-determination of the nation-state. Seferis saw the Axis as the enemy at the start of World War II not only because they were Nazis and Fascists, but because he foresaw (surely rightly) that an Axis victory would deprive Greece of self-determination.<sup>76</sup> What he could not forgive in Metaxas, writing in 1941, was not the dictatorship as such, but Metaxas's support for King Constantine in 1916.<sup>77</sup> By upbringing and temperament naturally inclined towards the "aristocratic-republican" Right, Seferis adopted the cause of the Left during the Second World War, not least because he saw how fatally out of touch was the government in exile, which he served, from what should have been its power-base in occupied Greece. Although he never says so explicitly, it seems to have been the street violence of December 1944 which changed all that. In 1947, with the "third round" of the civil war now in full swing, the right-wing press denounced Seferis as a "communist"; the Left withheld its support because he was not.<sup>78</sup> The result, at the end of 1947, was political exile to the embassy at Ankara, without promotion.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Seferis 1972a: 11 = 1992: 20; for Xydis's historical note see Seferis 1972a: 70; cf. Aronis 1984: 21.

<sup>74</sup> Seferis 1972a: 19 = 1992: 25.

<sup>75</sup> Without stridency or prominence, this issue runs through the *Manuscript Sept. '41* and the two published volumes of *Political Diaries*.

<sup>76</sup> Seferis 1972a: 41 = 1992: 41. For Seferis's revulsion at Nazi propaganda see e.g. Seferis 1977a: 195-6 (24 May 1940).

<sup>77</sup> Seferis 1972a: 44 = 1992: 43.

<sup>78</sup> Seferis 1985: 116-32; Seferis 1977c: 85-94. The press cuttings reflecting the outcry when Seferis was awarded the Palamas prize in February 1947 are collected in the Seferis Archive, Gennadius Library, file II.51 (pre-1996 catalogue). For the attack on Seferis, Katsimbali and the "clique" in

During four periods of national crisis, Seferis became deeply involved in political decision-making, and gave his energies unstintingly. These were: the war against Italy in 1940-41 (it was Seferis who drafted the King's declaration of war in the early hours of 28 October 1940,<sup>80</sup> and who announced the German invasion on 6 April 1941, in terms which anticipate the end of the second part of the poem "*Thrush*");<sup>81</sup> in Cairo during successive government crises during the war; in 1945-6 when he served the Regent, Archbishop Damaskinos, as head of his Political Bureau; and finally from 1956 to 1959, when he played what must have been a key role in the diplomatic resolution of the Cyprus crisis, although the evidence for this last is still tantalisingly unavailable.<sup>82</sup>

In all these situations, Seferis was far more than a mere functionary carrying out instructions.<sup>83</sup> He often gave far-reaching, even radical advice to senior politicians. Seferis pinned his political hopes for his country, successively and conditionally, on three, perhaps four, political figures: Panayotis Kanellopoulos (in 1943), Yorgos Kartalis (in 1944 and perhaps later), Archbishop Damaskinos (during the Regency of 1945-6), and (the doubtful fourth) Konstantinos Karamanlis (from 1956 until, perhaps, 1958).<sup>84</sup> Leaving aside the last, for which the evidence

the same year, see file II.53; Seferis 1992: 278-82. For an account of these events (hostile to Seferis), which reproduces the published sources extensively, see Pitsilidis 2000: 219-325.

<sup>79</sup> Seferis 1985: 118-20; 225 n. 3 (Xydis).

<sup>80</sup> Seferis 1977a: 259.

<sup>81</sup> Text reproduced by Xydis in Seferis 1972a: 65-8, but omitted from the reprint in Seferis 1992. See also Seferis 1972a: 74 n. 52 (Xydis).

<sup>82</sup> Seferis's "political diary" for this period has not been published and is at present inaccessible. Two pages of extracts appear in the "Prosopa" supplement of the newspaper *Ta Nea* (Prosopa 2000: 22-3), preceded by an interview with Xydis (Prosopa 2000: 21). See also Yeoryis 2000.

<sup>83</sup> This point is also made, although in a tone hostile to Seferis, by Dimiroulis (1997: 379).

<sup>84</sup> Seferis's political and personal relationships with the first three are well documented. On Kanellopoulos see Seferis 1979a: 46-7; 63-4; 69-70; 78; 99; 101-2; 178-9. On Kartalis see Seferis 1979a: 128; 233; 235-46; 279-80. On Damaskinos see Seferis 1985: 48; 50; 52; 54; 59; 62; 68; 109-10. On Karamanlis see Seferis 1986a: 220-40, esp. 231, and note 80.

is incomplete, it is clear that in each of the first three Seferis aspired to see a second Venizelos; indeed Seferis urged Damaskinos, on more than one occasion, to renounce the monarchy in whose name he held office and instead unite the squabbling politicians behind his own authority.<sup>85</sup> It is perhaps significant that all four political leaders were already close friends of Seferis's family before he placed his trust in them;<sup>86</sup> with all four, successively, he became bitterly disillusioned.

But the final principle, and the one that reveals Seferis's politics as inseparable from either his poetry or his essays, is the belief that he expressed repeatedly, from at least 1939 onwards, in the *ethical* basis of the life of nations, and in the organic link between human ethics and the laws that govern the natural world. This, I believe, is the fundamental link between Seferis the writer and Seferiadis the higher civil servant. As Seferis summed up his career succinctly in 1966:

I have the impression that whatever has been vouchsafed me to do, has crystallized around an organically ethical stem.<sup>87</sup>

The earliest full articulation of this belief comes in 1939, just a month before the start of the Second World War:

Feelings that I find in Aeschylus; that reassure me: the security and the balance of justice without sentimentality, without moralising, without psychology. Like a law of the universe, clear, uncorroded. And the authenticity of that voice, its authority. The greatest order that I know.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Seferis 1985: 35-8; 54; 59.

<sup>86</sup> Seferis's diaries are reticent about this, though in at least the first three cases there is a presumption of a degree of intimacy in the early entries in which they appear. For the relationship of these political figures to the circle of Konstantinos and Ioanna Tsatsos see Tsatsos 2000: 127; 239; 241; 267; 306; 327-8 (Kanellopoulos); 285 (Kartalis); 312-9 (Damaskinos); 335; 460-4 (Karamanlis).

<sup>87</sup> Έχω την εντύπωση πως ό,τι αξιώθηκα να κάνω, γύρω από ένα οργανικά ηθικό στέλεχος κρυσταλλώθηκε (Seferis 1981: II 297-8).

<sup>88</sup> Αισθήματα που βρίσκω στον Αισχύλο: που με αναπαύουν: η ασφάλεια και η ισορροπία της δικαιοσύνης χωρίς αισθηματολογία, χωρίς ηθικολογία, χωρίς ψυχολογία. Σαν ένας νόμος του σύμπαντος, καθαρός, χωρίς σκουριές.

There are good grounds for believing that from this time onwards, this idea of an impartial, ineluctable justice, regulating equally both nature and human affairs, animated all Seferis's thinking about the political choices faced by those in power, both in Greece and in other countries, as well as his own actions, choices and, crucially, the advice he gave to politicians when in a position to do so.

During this period of his life, Seferis frequently quotes Heraclitus. One of his favourite fragments of Heraclitus is Fr. 94: "Sun will not overstep his measures...; if he does, the Erinyes, the minions of Justice, will find him out."<sup>89</sup>

Seferis's most fundamentally held principle, at least during the last thirty years of his life, was this belief in justice.<sup>90</sup> His last poem sums this up well. The poem was written two years after Seferis's one overt and personal, as opposed to professional, political act, his "statement" against the Colonels of 28 March 1969.<sup>91</sup> In the poem "On Aspalathoi" ("Επί ασπαλάθων"), the ancient text of Plato is linked to the flowering thorn-bushes on Cape Sounion, to ensure that the tyrant (who represents, of course, the Colonels) is punished eternally for his crimes – not just against human mores, but against the balance of nature itself.<sup>92</sup>

In this poem, Seferis's lifelong distrust of the Greek monarchy has far transcended the narrow political horizons of the National Schism of 1915 with which it began, or even the Asia Minor disaster of 1922, for which Seferis and those who thought

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Και η αυθεντία αυτής της φωνής, το κύρος της. Ημεγαλύτερη τάξη που ξέρω (Seferis 1977a: 125-6, 3 August 1939).

<sup>89</sup> Ἡλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπικούροι ἐξευρήσουσιν (Kirk 1954: 284).

<sup>90</sup> See, indicatively but not exhaustively: Seferis 1981: II 283-92 (1965); Seferis 1975a: 125 (15 August 1930); Seferis 1977b: 140 (2 January 1941); 192 (8 March 1942); Seferis 1977c: 90-1 (12 February 1947); Seferis 1990: 124-7 (9 September 1959); Seferis/Philippe 1991: 80; 81 (May 1971).

<sup>91</sup> Δήλωση, Seferis 1992: 261-2. On the background to this see Seferis 1986b and introduction by Pavlos Zannas (the text only is reproduced in Seferis 1992: 246-60).

<sup>92</sup> The Greek text, first published in the newspaper *To Vima* on 23 September 1971 (the day after Seferis's funeral), is included in Seferis 1976: 50; English translation in Seferis 1995: 223.

like him held the monarchy responsible. The word “tyrant” (τύραννος) in the poem’s last line reminds us of the visionary glimpse of reconciliation which comes at the end of the poem “*Thrush*”, written in 1946: “the tyrant from within man has fled” (ο τύραννος μέσα από τον άνθρωπο έχει φύγει).<sup>93</sup> What offended Seferis about the regime of the Colonels was not only the political repression, still less the (temporary, as it turned out) seizure of power by the political Right at the expense of the political Left. What repelled Seferis even more about the Colonels, and what he denounces in this poem, is the exercise of absolute power.

*Tyranny*, in a conflation of the ancient and modern senses of the word, for Seferis was an overstepping of the natural limits which according to Heraclitus and Aeschylus govern, impartially, both nature and human affairs. The outrage (*hubris*) represented by the Colonels and by the ancient, mythical tyrant of Pamphylia named in the poem, is punished, not by human agency, but by nature, in the form of the thorns – and on the day which is both that of the Annunciation and (by convention) commemorates the uprising of the Greeks in 1821 against their “tyrannical” Ottoman masters.<sup>94</sup>

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### Conclusion

The late twentieth-century revisionist readings of Seferis, which privilege the “politics” of his essays as a point of attack, themselves amount to an important strategy in literary/cultural politics. This strategy can be understood in terms of a post-structuralist and postmodernist reaction against the Modernism of the first half of the century, of which Seferis is justly seen as

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<sup>93</sup> Part III of the poem, line 71 (Seferis 1972b: 229). Previous lines of the poem (III 59-62) had referred to Sophocles’s play *Oedipus at Colonus* (and, through reference to the warring sons of Oedipus, to the civil war whose third round was breaking out at the time when the poem was written – cf. Vitti 1989: 228-30). This line then underscores the imagined transition from the first Oedipus play in Sophocles’s trilogy (*Οιδίπους Τύραννος*).

<sup>94</sup> The allusion is to the myth of Er (*Republic* 616a): see Seferis 1976: 152 n. (Savvidis).

the leading Greek representative. What these readings highlight, however, is the lack of serious attention that has so far been given to the available evidence for Seferis's actual involvement with the political life of his time, which during the second half of his life was considerable.

This paper has proceeded to interrogate the most prominent critiques of Seferis's politics by the revisionists. It has not sought to rebut them; nor do their arguments emerge as baseless. But in the three areas examined (canon-formation; Hellenocentrism; adherence to right-wing politics), the picture that has emerged is a much more nuanced one than most of the revisionists have been prepared to consider.

Seferis's "canon" was probably not as programmatically conceived as they have supposed, and has certainly not been as influential as they assume. Seferis's "Hellenocentrism" in the 1930s has to be placed in the context of his rejection of the prevalent (nationalist) concept of "Greekness" (ελληνικότητα), and both then and later has to be seen alongside his profound involvement in other cultures, first and foremost French and English, but also, right through his life, non-European cultures. Seferis's stance *vis-à-vis* the twentieth-century divide between Right and Left can perhaps best be summed up as "old-fashioned": more fundamental to his thinking seem to have been the Venizelist concepts of the integrity of the nation-state and (after 1922) the avoidance of a "hubristic" monarchical or autocratic system. From 1941 until at least 1944, his sympathies were strongly with the Left, against the Right and the established politicians. These opinions were profoundly held and vigorously defended by Seferis at that time. Later he distanced himself from the Left, until 1969 when he broke with the habit (and the professional ethos) of a lifetime, to denounce the dictatorship of the "Colonels" in the foreign press.

Finally, Seferis's long-delayed acceptance by the Greek Left, and his "canonical" status today, owe much to the popular musical settings of his poems, which begin with Theodorakis in 1961. It was thanks to these that Seferis's funeral on 22 September 1971 turned into the first spontaneous (and peaceful) mass demonstration against the regime of the "Colonels". The pre-eminence of Seferis that provokes the revisionists is not, as many of them suppose, a status that he enjoyed during his lifetime.

What Gourgouris terms the “Seferis phenomenon”<sup>95</sup> dates from no earlier than the poet’s death, and owes more to contingent factors than it does directly to either the poetry and essays of Seferis or the political activity and estimations of Seferiadis.

A century after the poet’s birth, it is certainly time to reassess a “phenomenon” that is perhaps too easily taken for granted – as witness, for example, the national and international events to mark the “Seferis Year”, declared by the Greek Ministry of Culture in 2000. But if Seferis’s achievement is to be assessed anew for the twenty-first century, it will be essential to re-couple the arbitrarily divided poet and diplomat, and to understand how both Seferis’s unique, distinctive brand of literary Modernism, and his engagement with the political life of his country, belong integrally to their time. As much as any great writer, and perhaps more than most, Seferis has to be read in and against history.

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### Postscript (July 2001)

Of two anonymous peer reviews received from the editor of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, justifying the decision not to publish this paper, one states: “The approach the essay characterizes as revisionist is now established and it is the author’s own view that could be characterized as revisionist.” The other I quote in full and without comment, as it shows the argument of this paper to be more urgent and necessary than I had supposed when I wrote it.

I cannot recommend “Reading Seferis’s Politics and the Politics of Reading Seferis” for publication in *The Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. This essay attempts to counter the recent initiative of an Anglophone and poststructuralist criticism of Seferis that would demonumentalize his monumental status in the modern Greek literary canon on the basis of finding in his poetic and prose

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<sup>95</sup> See note 3.



work a concerted effort to reinvent the Greek canon in his own image, a Hellenocentric nationalism, and a politics of the Right. There may be an argument to be made against this judgment (though I doubt it). But I do not think the author's is adequate to that possibility. As his/her counter-attack suggests, it is written from a rather undefined traditionalist critical perspective, the only theoretical certainty of which is its utter impatience with poststructuralism, postmodernism, and, it seems, any kind of criticism resembling these. I have to admit that my review of this essay is undertaken from such a perspective, so my evaluation of it may appear to be prejudiced against it from the start. But it is not the traditionalist or anti-poststructuralist orientation of the essay I am criticizing; it is, rather, the oversimplified way the author carries it out. For one thing, if a critic, such as this one, overdetermines his/her opposition to a poststructuralist interpretation of texts, then it seems to me, especially at this late stage in the history of contemporary criticism, he/she is obligated to say more about its operations than that it is simply an agency of Left politics. There is, in fact, nothing in this essay to suggest that its author is even conversant with this poststructuralist perspective, though he/she may be. Further, one of the author's complaints is that these poststructuralist "revisionists," who "have in common an Anglo-American institutional background" (it is difficult not to infer from this that the author feels that their project of demonumentalizing a Greek writer is presumptuous) avoid Seferis's poetry in favor of his essays in keeping with their political reading. The implication is that Seferis's poetry would show that his "politics" was, in fact, far more complex than the revisionist claim. One would, therefore, expect the author to put Seferis's poetry into play in his/her argument. But that's not the case. Instead, he/she, like the antagonists he/she alleges eschew the poetry, relies on Seferis's prose to make his/her argument. And that argument, unlike that of the poststructuralist revisionists, which is, as such, attuned to the unsaid of discourse, reads Seferis's text at face value. It would be easy to point out many places in this essay where this assumption of linguistic transparency blinds the author to ideological implications of Seferis's prose writing that corroborate the argument of the "revisionists". But time will not permit. It will suffice to refer to a couple: 1) his/her unexamined reference to Seferis's insistent use of the word "people", which by this time, and thanks to the poststructuralist *lecture symptomale*, is now massively identified with the self-present nationalist subject and conservative nation-

state; and 2) his/her acceptance of Seferis's rationale for remaining a member of the Metaxa [sic] dictatorship.

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# Greek sporting terms of foreign origin\*

Bo-Lennart Eklund

## I Introduction

For some reason I have not been able to abandon an idea I got more than a decade ago: that the terms of foreign origin used in the language of sport should constitute a very rewarding area for deeper insights into the character of modern Greek lexicology and morphology. Thus a year ago an impulse moved me to take a second look at the material I had originally collected between 1991 and 1994, in order to try to give the subject a somewhat more systematic treatment. I am still at it. You should not interpret this as a sign of my being a sports fan; on the contrary, more than once my wife has expressed her astonishment at the fact that someone with so little sporting inclination can display such an interest and devote as much time and effort as I have done to newspaper coverage of this particular area of human activity. The explanation is simply that my fascination is linguistic.

The basis of this paper is the vocabulary of sports and athletics as found in the Athenian daily *Eleftherotypia* from the period December 1989 to January 1990 inclusive, and from July to August 1992. The texts from 1992, almost exclusively reports from the summer Olympics, were added to achieve a balance in the corpus, since November and December proved to be a period when there was an overwhelming dominance of football in the sports pages. This sports corpus consists of 905 Kb text, i.e. some 174,000 running words (the average word length in my material is 5.21 letters).

In order to establish whether certain terms are also in wider use outside the sporting domain, I have recently run check-up concordances on a larger body of material, including also non-

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\* Although this paper has been restructured and amended in the light of the discussion that followed the lecture, most of its original, somewhat oral character has been retained.

sporting texts from *Eleftherotypia*, one novel (Alki Zei's *Achilles' Fiancée*) and material from the magazine *Diavazo* on books and literature – altogether 8.6 Mb (1.65 million running words). I have also collected texts from the on-line sports pages of *Athlitismos*, *Eleftherotypia*, *Kathimerini* and *Vima* from January to March 2001, in all some 527 Kb, i.e. approximately 101,000 running words. The entire material thus roughly amounts to 9.1 Mb or 1.75 million running words.

My paper is organized in the following manner: first come some deliberations about sports and athletics as a social and cultural phenomenon and about the language of sport in general; then follows a brief discussion about sporting terms of foreign origin in Greek newspapers; and finally I present an analysis of some particular features.

## II *Sport and society*

In the minds of many people sports are closely connected with spare time, leisure, excitement and entertainment. The British author Nick Hornby has said that “[Sport] has all of life’s business in it and no meaning... [It] contains as much pleasure, pain, irony, tragedy and comedy as a writer will ever need” (Coleman and Hornby 1996: 4-5). Not all agree, though; George Orwell, for example, saw sport as “an unfailing cause of ill will”, and certain kinds of behaviour among sports fans may even indicate that it is perceived as something in a sense existing outside the general social framework. There are thus reasons to expect sport to be a rather specific area of human activity, governed by rules of its own. In most respects, however, the world of sport resembles and reflects society at large. Furthermore, sport is sometimes a clearly *political* issue in society, and during the century or so that sports have existed in their modern forms, their importance – negative or positive – as a national and international phenomenon has grown enormously.

A sporting competition should abide by a well-defined set of rules, and cheating is – at least officially – seen as a punishable offence and a sign of moral debasement. Both these circumstances can be regarded as an analogy to social life: the ultimate goal of life is social advancement, attained within the written and unwritten laws of society, to the benefit of oneself and one’s family or corporation.

Since the language under scrutiny here is Greek, I find it appropriate to remind the reader that it has often been claimed that in particular *one* supposedly inherent property of ancient sport made it morally equal, if not superior, to social life: its *idealism*. Sports were to be pursued for the honour of winning, not to attain economic or other material advantages. However, the "Olympic idea" did not mean amateurism, since in ancient Greece sportsmen were sponsored: "wealthy patrons and city-states paid for athletes to train for the Olympics" (Nixon 1996: 19). The professionalization of sports today can be regarded as a sign of their adaptation to the modern industrial society that developed in the nineteenth century, as a private, commercial enterprise in a capitalist nation or, when applicable, as a collective, nationalized enterprise in a non-capitalist, socialist state or a right-wing dictatorship.

Nowadays the prerequisites for sports and for life in general are very similar, and the close links between socio-political conditions and sports are made painfully obvious when expressed as hooliganism, interpreted as a type of social unrest often triggered by sports but psychologically originating in feelings of social frustration and dissatisfaction. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, when nationalism in Europe, in less than a hundred years, had conquered the minds of most Europeans, sports had become an integrated element in national ideologies, supposedly reflecting the greatness of the nation, embodied in individuals or teams.

One of the reasons for the present popularity of sport is no doubt the growing importance of mass media, which has contributed decisively to creating the image of sportswomen and sportsmen as the heroes of our time, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of sports, admittedly to a significant extent linked with the wealth that comes with stardom, but also reinforcing their inherent ideological properties.

### III *The language of sport*

It is a commonplace observation that strong cultural influences from one country upon the surrounding world are often accompanied by an influx of words and expressions from the language of that country into those of the other countries. In many European

languages you can read the political, social and cultural history of a language's users from early days to the present time.

The older these once foreign elements are, the less they are perceived as alien, since they have long since adapted to their new "home" grammatically, phonologically and lexically (cf. note 6 below). In general terms the possibility of linguistic adaptation, combined with the actual need for foreign words, names of technological or other novelties, are the most decisive factors for the success a loan-word.

When modern sports began to spread, they created just such a need for a new terminology. Consequently, writing about them in newspapers and other publications called for a new linguistic competence on the part of the journalists. He or she not only had to master this hitherto unknown terminology but also to find new and suitable descriptive means and establish new linguistic usages. In this way images and expressions from other areas of human life came to be utilized to build up the language of sport.

Compared to the sociologists' lively interest in its social and political implications, linguists seem to have been far more reluctant to investigate the language of sport. This lack of interest strikes me as peculiar, since it is a fascinating field for sociolinguistic research as well as for investigations into vocabulary, stylistics, foreign words, slang, metaphors, stereotypes, or grammatical phenomena such as inflection and compounding.

A Swedish linguist has told me (in earnest, as far as I can judge) that the reason for this indifference might be that scholarly work in this area has had a low academic status and accordingly carried little weight in competition for a university post in linguistics. Nonetheless some research has been pursued in Sweden, albeit to a very limited extent, based mainly on corpora from daily papers and covering some of the aspects mentioned above.

Furthermore, another sign of the ever-growing popularity of sport is the fact that it has found its way into an area where sooner or later all changes in society are mirrored: the realm of literature. Such a process may take quite some time, probably because, for historical reasons, many people have experienced sports and "culture" (in the traditional sense) as antithetical entities. On 19 July 1992 Mary Papagiannidou published an article about this phenomenon in the Athenian newspaper *To*

*Vima tis Kyriakis*. After a thorough survey of sports in the writings of Greek intellectuals since the end of the nineteenth century she points out that it has taken a long time for sports to find their way into literary works in Greece, and that this applies not least in relation to football:

Τελευταίο στάδιο, η "Φανέλα με το εννιά" του Μένη Κουμανταρέα. Είναι το πρώτο βιβλίο που γράφεται για το ποδόσφαιρο και είναι πραγματικά απορίας άξιον πώς άργησε τόσο πολύ να συγκινηθεί η λογοτεχνία από το δημοφιλέστερο άθλημα στην Ελλάδα.

The final stage is *The number nine shirt* by Menis Koumandareas. This is the first book written about football, and one has every reason to wonder how it can have taken so long to get literature engaged in the most popular sport in Greece.

(Papagiannidou 1992)<sup>1</sup>

Since sports generally reflect the surrounding society and the changes in it, the language of sport should be expected to underline phenomena that are particular to a given country. But there is a two-way relationship between sport and metaphor: sport can also act as a source of metaphors, e.g. in English expressions like "it's not cricket" (it's not fair) and "to be on a sticky wicket" (to be in a difficult situation). In the light of my previous deliberations about various aspects of the language of sport, one would expect that, as a result of factors arising from the social and political rôle of sports in combination with the so-called language question in Greece, the Greek sporting vocabulary would display an increasingly puristic character the further back you go in time. On the other hand, as purism faded away, it should have been easier for sports and games introduced into Greece to bring their foreign terminologies with them.

Gunnar Tingbjörn, now retired from the Department of Swedish at the University of Gothenburg, has dealt with foreign words and the stylistic features of Swedish sporting language, e.g. in his unpublished thesis of 1968, *Sport och idrott* ("Sports and athletics"), which is an investigation of English loan-words in Swedish sports language between 1910 and 1960. The foreign

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<sup>1</sup> All English renderings of Greek quotations are mine.

words are indiscriminately of English origin, Tingbjörn says, because sport as a modern phenomenon originates in nineteenth-century England. If Gunnar Tingbjörn's findings for Swedish hold true also for Greek and what he, as well as the Eleftheroudakis *Εγκυκλοπαιδικόν Λεξικόν*, states about England being the "native" (γενέτειρα) country, English should be the major donor language of sporting terms. If we go back to 1931, we will find the following in the article about "σπορτ" (N.B. not "σπορ") in the *Εγκυκλοπαιδικόν Λεξικόν*:

Το σπορτ υπό τας ποικιλωτάτους αυτού μορφάς είνε σήμερον διαδεδομένον ανά την υφήλιον και εξ ίσου προσφιλές εις αμφότερα τα φύλα.

Sport, in all its varieties, is today spread all over the world and equally popular with both sexes.

And further, in the article "Αθλητισμός":

Εις την Αγγλίαν όμως, όπου τα Πανεπιστήμια και τα λοιπά ανώτερα σχολικά ιδρύματα με ενθουσιασμόν τας ενεκολπώθησαν και τα εκαλλιέργησαν με ιδιαιτέραν στοργήν, ονομάσθησαν *αθλητικά* ασκήσεις (athletics), οι δε διαγωνισμοί εις ταύτας, *αθλητικοί* διαγωνισμοί (athletic games). [...] Ο σύγχρονος αθλητισμός, καλλιεργηθείς εντατικώτατα εις την γενέτειράν του Αγγλίαν και την Αμερικήν, αλλά και εις την λοιπήν ηπειρωτικήν Ευρώπην και τας Σκανδιναβικάς χώρας, και διαδοθείς, ιδία από της ανασυστάσεως των νεωτέρων Ολυμπιακών αγώνων (1896), εις όλον τον πεπολιτισμένον κόσμον, περιέλαβε μέγα πλήθος ασκήσεων και παιδιών και ατελεύτητον κυριολεκτικώς ποικιλίαν αγωνισμάτων.

In England, however, where universities and other higher institutions of learning have enthusiastically adopted them [i.e. sports] and developed them with special affection, they have been named *athletics*, whereas the competitions are called athletic competitions. [...] Contemporary sports, cultivated intensely in their native England and in America, but also on the European continent and in the Scandinavian countries and thence spread, particularly through the reinstatement of the modern Olympic Games (1896), to the whole civilized world, comprise a wide

range of exercises and games and a literally infinite variety of competitions.

One can notice that, except for "cricket",<sup>2</sup> the terms for various sports and games used in the *Εγκυκλοπαιδικόν Λεξικόν* are "Greek" in the sense that they do not contain any foreign morphemes, e.g.

**αθλητικά αγωνίσματα** (athletics, sports athlétiques):  
*αγωνίσματα στίβου και κονίστρας* (track and field):  
δρόμοι, πηδήματα, ρίψεις

**βαρέα (απλά) αγωνίσματα:** *πάλη, πυγμαχία, άρσις βαρών*

**αθλητικά παιχνίδια:** *ποδοσφαίρις* (foot-ball), *αντισφαίρις* (lawn-tennis) [...] καθώς και αι υπό της Αμερικανικής Χριστιανικής Αδελφότητος των Νέων συντεθείσαι *παιχνίδια χειροσφαίρις* (ή καλαθοσφαίρις, basket-ball), *αντισφαίρις διά χειρός* (volley-ball) [...]

#### IV *Sporting terms of foreign origin*

Now to the main theme of this paper. The first question I presume my readers will ask when confronted with the expression "sporting terms of foreign origin" is likely to be "what is a *sporting term*?" To answer this question both "sporting" and "term" must be adequately defined. One problem is that "sporting terms" are often metaphors, something which makes it difficult accurately to define what is specifically "sporting" about them, semantically or otherwise. As for "term", I find that the ordinary definition "a word belonging to a specific discourse", i.e. chemistry, linguistics, law, sport etc., is sufficient.

When it comes to "sporting", however, things immediately become much more complicated. Let us first consider the fact that the language of sport basically reflects one of the darker areas of human activity: warfare. The obvious analogies between a real, bloody battle and a sporting competition make this unavoidable; suffice it to consider words like "attack", "shoot", "fight",

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<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, in Greece cricket has been played only on the Ionian Islands, the reason being that they were under British rule for some sixty years in the nineteenth century.

“defend”, “win”, “strike”, “siege”, “firing line” (γραμμή πυρός). To realise that these words are transformed into metaphors in certain contexts presupposes knowledge of the particular language in which they are used. On the other hand, on most occasions a native speaker uses such images unconsciously, i.e. without reflecting upon the original semantic content of the morphemes.

Since we are here dealing with sporting terms of *foreign* origin, i.e. borrowed into Greek from other languages, it should be kept in mind that words constituting images can be borrowed between languages in two ways: either translated or imported more or less in their original phonetic form. Most metaphorical sporting terms are *translated* rather than borrowed, since, as I pointed out above, to be meaningful, a metaphor must build on morphemes known to the user. Consequently, morphemes imported from foreign languages *without* translation cannot be proper *images* in their new linguistic environment, but on the other hand they are often confined to specific discourses and therefore undoubtedly “terms”.

Let us consider an example to find out the implications: take the “Greek” noun σουτ and the corresponding verb σουτάρω; these words cannot be used in connection with weapons in Greek, neither those used in war nor those of hunting, despite the fact that the basic morphemes are the English “shoot”/“shot”. Thus, in Greek, the use of these words is normally limited to sports: σουτάρεις, “you shoot/kick [a ball]”, or κάνεις σουτ, “you take a shot”; but the noun, as well as the verb, is actually excluded from the terminology of shooting as a sport, σκοποβολή. Very rarely do you find σουτ/σουτάρω in colloquial Greek outside the area of sports: τον σούταραν, “they kicked him [out]”, in the sense “he was fired”. Incidentally, in my material σουτάρω is the only true war image borrowed untranslated into Greek primarily as a sporting term. For all other English examples mentioned above (“attack”, “shoot”, “fight”, “defend”, “win”, “strike”, “siege”) Greek words are used, and this is also the normal procedure in other languages.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Actually, the word “attack” was borrowed from French into English as well as into Swedish in the early seventeenth century.



A highly probable second question would be: "What is meant by *foreign origin*?" Here my definition is a word which partly or wholly originates from another language than Greek and which is used in Greek, i.e. transliterated foreign words and words containing at least one foreign morpheme.

This is merely a *formal* classification, which does not take into account whether or not a particular word is perceived as "foreign" by a native speaker. As indicated above, an established, commonly used, "integrated" loan-word is usually considered indigenous and does not cause any reaction, since original aberrations from the phonology and/or the morphology of the recipient language have been abolished and replaced according to the rules of the new linguistic surroundings. Furthermore, another characteristic of such an integrated word is that it stands for a notion which cannot be expressed with a "non-foreign" word.

However, I have settled for the following two ways of looking upon a "sporting term". With regard to its *origin* it can be one of five things:

(a) *a transliterated foreign word* (e.g. σπορ – the French pronunciation has replaced the original English "σπορτ" – "sport", φάουλ, "foul", κόρνερ, "corner") and words containing at least one foreign morpheme, e.g. αντι|ντόπιγκ.

(b) *a compound or non-compound calque*, i.e. terms "translated" into Greek morpheme by morpheme, e.g. ποδό|σφαιρίο (older ποδο|σφαίρισις) "foot|ball".

(c) *a Greek word existing with the same meaning already in the ancient language but not used primarily about sport*, e.g. έφηβος, "young man", hence "junior [athlete]" (cf. Παγκόσμιο Πρωτάθλημα Εφήβων Ελευθέρας [Πάλης], "World Free Style Wrestling Junior Championships"), παις, ancient Greek for "child", as in Πρωτάθλημα Παίδων (the genitive plural παίδων occurs fourteen times in all in the corpus).

(d) *a Greek word used as a sporting term already in the ancient language*, e.g. πάλη, "wrestling", πυγμαχία, "boxing".

(e) *a modern Greek word not used primarily about sport, e.g. διαιτητής (= ρέφερι), "referee".*

Only (a) and (b) above meet the criteria for a "foreign" term. Sometimes synonyms belonging to (a) and (e) are found, e.g. γκολ and τέρμα (as a translation of γκολ), the latter usually for a goal scored and the former for the physical goal that the goalie keeps, φινάλε and τελικός (sc. αγώνας or δρόμος) for a "final", etc. "Sporting terms of foreign origin" are thus words that conform to one of the criteria under (a) or (b) above in combination with any type below.

*Semantically, a foreign sporting term can be:*

(a) *a word whose original semantic contents are directly related to sport and which is used exclusively in a sporting context. Examples: γκολτζίης, μπόουλινγκ, τένις.*

(b) *a word whose original semantic contents are not connected primarily with sport but which is used exclusively in a sporting context in the recipient language. Examples: μπάσκει, πέναλτι, ρέφερι.*

(c) *a word used in connection with sport but whose semantic base is not primarily related to sport. Examples: κομπάρσος, ρεβάνς, φαβορί.*

With these definitions as a foundation I have settled for a division into five groups when describing the foreign terms in Greek, the distribution of which is based on language of origin. One group contains those of "mixed origin", i.e. words containing morphemes from more than one language, whereas the other groups consist of unchanged, transliterated words from English, French, Italian or other languages. Because of the character of Greek morphology, unchanged loan morphemes should be capable of being interpreted, morphologically or syntactically, as nouns, or adjectives, or adverbs. Consequently verbs, which must be altered to function in Greek, are found exclusively in group 1, "Mixed origin", whereas the other four groups consist chiefly of nouns and a few adjectives (after each example the number of occurrences is given in brackets):

1. Mixed origin (morphemes from more than one language, 43 types) 26%. Examples:

αυτογκόλ (2). Greek *αυτο-* + Eng. *goal*

σκοράρω (6) Eng. *score* + It. *-ar-*

μπασκετμπολίστας (17). Eng. *basket-ball* + It. *-ista*

2. English (73 types) 44%. Examples:

γκολκίπερ (7). Eng. *goalkeeper* (*τερματοφύλακας* [54])

μάνατζερ (5). Eng. *manager*

οφσάιντ (3). Eng. *offside*

3. French (26 types) 17%. Examples:

πατινάζ (3). Fr. *patinage*

τουρνουά (53). Fr. *tournoi*

4. Italian (12 types) 7%. Examples:

καμπιονάτο (8). It. *campionato*<sup>4</sup>

φινάλε (10). It. *finale*

5. Other languages (10 types) 6%. Examples:

καγιάκ (17). Eskimo *kayak*

καράτε (1). Japanese *karate*

Already a quick glance at sporting terms consisting of one morpheme reveals that the distribution between the donor languages supports the assumption of English being the major donor to the Greek language: 44% are of English origin, 17% of French and 7% of Italian (the figure for French origin was higher than I, at least, had expected):

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<sup>4</sup> This word is used seven times, exclusively about Italian football, but also the Greek (το ιταλικό) πρωτάθλημα appears five times (once “το ιταλικό πρωτάθλημα γυναικών”).

*Table 1*  
**Distribution of sporting terms  
 according to donor language**

	No.	%
English	73	44
Mixed origin	43	26
French	27	17
Italian	12	7
Other languages	10	6
Unknown origin	1	<1
Total	165	100

If instead we look at the distribution of morphemes among the terms of mixed origin, the result is as follows:

*Table 2*  
**Combinations of morphemes  
 in "terms of mixed origin"**

Eng. + Eng.	1
Eng. + Gr.	6
Eng. + It.	14
Eng. + It. + Gr.	3
Eng. + Turk.	1
Eng. + Venet.	1
Fr. + ?	1
Fr. + Gr.	1
Fr. + It.	1
Fr. + It. + Gr.	1
Gr. + Eng.	3
Gr. + It.	2
Iran. + Gr.	3
Iran. + It.	1
It. + Gr.	4
It. + It.	1

This means that the total number of occurrences is distributed like this:

*Table 3*  
**Distribution of morphemes  
 in "terms of mixed origin"  
 according to donor language**

	No.	%
English	28	34
Greek	23	27
Italian	23	27
French	4	5
Iranian	4	5
Turkish	1	1
Venetian	1	1
Unknown origin	1	0
Total	82	100

Here also English takes the lead with at least one morpheme in one third of the items, closely followed by Greek and Italian. English and Italian have an absolute majority with 61%, leaving French, Iranian, Turkish and Venetian well behind with only 12% together. The Iranian morphemes are, of course, found in the four chess terms *σακιέρα* (2), *σακιστής* (14), *σακιστικός* (16) and *σακίστρια* (6).

#### V Nouns

The general grammatical structure of modern Greek is different from that of the donor languages in some important respects, above all in morphological richness. Thus the correspondence between grammatical and morphological categories is a prominent feature in Greek: gender, number and case of nominals are marked by means of stress and endings, and tense, aspect, person and number in the verbs by means of stem, stress and endings. In words of Greek origin this presupposes certain phonological patterns at the end of the stem and/or of the ending itself, something which may cause problems when adapting a foreign morpheme or stem to the Greek morphological system. These

problems can be overcome in various ways. For *nouns* used as sporting terms the solutions may be as follows:

(a) Morphologically unadapted:

αντιντόπιγκ<sup>5</sup> and αυτογκόλ (Greek + English)

(b) *Nomina agentis*:

The reason why type A.1.a below is more frequent than A.1.b is that most nouns in -ής (except for -τζής) are of Greek origin, whereas most of those in -ας are formed on a foreign basic morpheme (μπασκεμπολ-, πολ[ο]-, ραλ[ι], τεν[ις]-, χανμπολ-). A peculiar "Greek" example is αρσι|βαρ|ίστας < άρση βαρών "weightlifting" (< άρσις, stem αρσι-, and βάρος).

A. with Italian *-ist-*:

1. masculine:

a. -ist- + -ας: αρσιβαρίστας, μπασκεμπολίστας, πεταλουδίστας, πολίστας, ραλίστας, σπιλίστας, τενίστας, χανμπολίστας.

b. -ist- + -ής: σκακιστής.

2. feminine:

-ist- + -ρια: σκακίστρια, βολειμπολίστρια, μπασκεμπολίστρια, πεταλουδίστρια, τενίστρια.

B. with "Turkish" -τζής: γκολτζής.

(c) -ισμα: from verbs in -άρω:

κοντράρισμα, μαρκάρισμα, ντοπάρισμα, πλασάρισμα, σκοράρισμα.

## VI Verbs

As far as the verbs are concerned, one group is of special interest from the above-mentioned viewpoints, namely those in -άρω. There are 42 different verbs in the entire material, occurring 152 times, and they are particularly frequent in sporting texts. Here they are, distributed according to text type:

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<sup>5</sup> αντιντόπιγκ (Gr. αντι- + Eng. *doping*) is found only once in the collocation αντιντόπιγκ κοντρόλ, which seems a little strange to me, since one should expect a control of *doping*, not of *antidoping*.

1. Verbs found exclusively in non-sporting texts (11 types, 14 tokens):

μπαρκάρω 1	σουλατσάρω 1
μποϊκοτάρω 2	σπινιάρω 1
μποτιλιάρω 1	στυλιζάρω 1
ξεμπαρκάρω 1	φιλτράρω 3
παρκάρω 1	φουντάρω 1
σαλπάρω 1	

2. Verbs found in sporting texts only (23 types, 96 tokens):

γουστάρω 2	πρεσάρω 4
κοντράρω 5	προβάρω 1
κοντρολάρω 1	σεντράρω 1
κοουτσάρω 3	σκοράρω 16
μαρκάρω 7	σουτάρω 21
μοντάρω 2	στοπάρω 1
μπλοφάρω 1	στραπατσάρω 1
ντεμποντάρω 5	τρακάρω 2
ντοπάρω 3	φορμάρω 10
ντουμπλάρω 3	φορτσάρω 1
ντριμπλάρω 2	φρεσκάρω 1
ποντάρω 3	

3. Verbs found in both types of texts (8 types, 42 tokens):

(S = sport, M = miscellaneous)

κριτικάρω S 1, M 2	ρискάρω S 5, M 3
μπλοκάρω S 3, M 2	σοκάρω S 3, M 2
ξεμπλοκάρω S 1, M 2	φλερτάρω S 3, M 1
πλασάρω S 10, M 2	φρακάρω S 1, M 1

The higher frequency in sporting texts becomes even more apparent if the occurrences in group 3 M are added to those in group 1 (= 29) and the occurrences in group 3 S to those in group 2 (= 123): 89% of all occurrences can be found, or are found exclusively, in sporting texts.

From a *semantic* point of view, it is interesting to note that some of the verbs occurring only in sporting contexts have a broader semantic sphere, e.g. γουστάρω, μοντάρω, προβάρω, στραπατσάρω, τρακάρω and φορτσάρω, while some of those in group 3

seem rather unlikely to arise in connection with sport, e.g. φλερτάρω:

Ενα νεαρό 21 χρονών, αμυντικό φλερτάρει για να αποκτήσει η Αρσεναλ.

Εκεί, όπου, το ελληνικό χάντμπολ φλερτάρει στις 4.45 το απόγευμα, με τη μεγαλύτερή του διάκριση, στην αναβαθμισμένη φέτος διοργάνωση, την 7η βαλκανιάδα ανδρών.

Παρτενέρ του Βάτα [...] είναι ο διεθνής Σουηδός, Ματς Μάγκνιουσον, που [...] παρουσιάζεται όλο και καλύτερος, ενώ "φλερτάρει" συνέχεια με τ' αντίπαλα δίχτυα.

From a *morphological* viewpoint verbs are especially interesting. In Greek the opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect regularly requires a morphological marking by means of different stems. There is one option traditionally called "sigmatic": the active perfective stem consists of the imperfective stem (ending in a plosive) + /s/ (έ|λειψ|α < λειπ|ω) or the imperfective stem + vowel + /s/, the latter for verbs stressed on the final syllable in the active present tense (γέλ|ασ|α < γελ|ώ, κάλ|εσ|α < καλ|ώ, αγάπ|ησ|α < αγαπ|ώ). In addition there is a variety of "irregular" options: change of vowel in the stem (έ|στειλ|α, στάλ|θηκα < στέλν|ω), change of stem altogether (είπα from λέ|γ|ω). Some, very few, verbs do not comply with this pattern: some of these are defective and cannot express the perfective aspect (e.g. είμαι and ξέρω) and occur only marked for imperfectivity, whereas others appear, extremely rarely, with the same stem for both aspects, e.g. κάνω (although the older perfective stem καμ- is found also in demotic literary texts). The structural need of aspect marking, however, becomes obvious from the fact that verbs of the former type regularly have their missing perfective forms supplied by other, semantically closely related verbs. Thus the non-existent perfective past of είμαι is supplied by στάθηκα (< στέκομαι, "stand", "remain") or υπήρξα (< υπάρχω, "exist"), both meaning "I was [for a limited period]", "I became", and the missing perfective past of ξέρω by γνώρισα ("I knew for a limited period", ingressive "I got to know" < γνωρίζω, "know", i.e. in practice a synonym of ξέρω).



The verbs under discussion here consist of a foreign basic morpheme combined with the Latin/Italian<sup>6</sup> verb marker *-ar-* and Greek endings for person. This combination does not automatically allow for markedness for perfective aspect, i.e. the forming of a perfective stem. Nevertheless these verbs often – but not always – form such a stem, e.g. from *παρκάρω* the past tense *παρκάρησα/παρκάρισα*, marked for perfective aspect, or *πάρκαρα*, used for both aspects. The vacillating spelling reveals the morpho-phonological problem I have already indicated: a sigmatic perfective stem cannot be formed, neither an active nor a medio-passive one, since the clusters */rs/* and */rst/*, the former rare, the latter non-existent in Greek words, do not appear at the end of such a stem, where the */s/* can be preceded only by one of the vowels */a/*, */e/*, */i/*, or one of the voiceless stops */k/* and */p/*: *γελασ-*, *καλεσ-*, *αγαπησ-*, *κοιταξ-*, *χωνεψ-*.<sup>7</sup> Hence the addition of the vowel */i/* between *-ar-* and */s/*, i.e. *-ησ-* or *-ισ-*, which allows the formation also of a medio-passive stem in */isθ/*, if not dissimilated, or */ist/*, if dissimilated according to the rule: *πλασσαρισθούν* or *μαρκαριστεί*, respectively.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the *-άρω-* verbs are slightly reshaped so as to conform with verbs in *-ώ* or *-ίζω*. For reasons not stated, Georgios Babiniotis prefers the spelling with iota in his 1998 dictionary (e.g. *παρκάρισα*, Babiniotis 1998: 1358), and in my corpus all four occurrences in the medio-passive voice, *μαρκαριστεί*, *ξεμπαρκαριστεί*, *πλασσαρισθούν* and *φιλτραρίστηκαν*, are spelt with an iota (notice the fluctuation */sθ/* – */st/*).

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<sup>6</sup> The morpheme *-ar-* is not perceived as alien, since it was borrowed into Greek some eight centuries ago.

<sup>7</sup> The active perfective stems in */ps/* from verbs with an imperfective stem in */f/* are the result of the development of Greek phonology: the contemporary */f/*, in Greek orthography {Φ}, was originally the aspirated voiceless stop */p<sup>h</sup>/* which developed into the fricative */f/*, just as */t<sup>h</sup>/*, grapheme {Θ}, developed into */θ/*. As a result of the modern Greek dissimilation rule the fricative */f/* then became a */p/* again when combined with the voiceless sibilant */s/*.

<sup>8</sup> The cluster */sθ/* in medio-passive perfective stems should, according to the morpho-orthographic rule of the official grammar of demotic, be dissimilated to */st/* and spelt *στ*.

In my entire material:

– nine verbs appear in the past tense marked morphologically for perfective aspect: κοουτσάρισε/κοουτσάρησε, είχε μαρκαριστεί, μπλοφάρησε, μπιτσιλιάρισαν, ντουμπλάρισε, θα ξεμπαρκαριστεί, προβάρησε, στοπάρησε and φιλτραρίστηκαν.

– twelve with a past tense unmarked for aspect: ξεμπαρκάρουμε, ξεμπλόκαρε, ντριμπλαρε, πλάσαρε, ποντάρουμε, πρεσάρουμε, ρίσκαραν, σέντραρε, σόκαρε, σούταρε, τράκαρε and φούνταραν.

– only four occur in both aspects: κοντράρησε/κοντράρισε – κόντραρε, μπλοκάρησε – μπλόκαρε, πλασαρισθούν – πλάσαρε and σκοράρησε – σκόραρα.

### VII Some "puristic" terms

Almost all terms pertaining to specific sports or games have the qualities one would expect: sports and games are "modern". However, some were introduced fairly early, which explains calques like ποδόσφαιρο, also αντιποδόσφαιρο ("παίζουν αντιποδόσφαιρο", three times). Other such terms are άρση βαρών (55), εμποδίστρια/εμποδιστής (4) and καλαθοσφαίριση, also καλαθόσφαιρα (3), as well as μπάσκετ (177), πιγκ-πογκ (6) as well as επιτραπέζια αντισφαίριση (1).

If we check my entire material against the ancient/puristic terms mentioned in the *Εγκυκλοπαιδικόν Λεξικόν*, some of them are found: ρίψεις (twice with reference to sports), δρόμος (31, δρόμος μετ' εμποδίων, Παγκόσμιο ρεκόρ στα 110 μ. μετ' εμποδίων), πήδημα (1), πάλη (46), πυγμαχία (31), ποδοσφαίρισις (ποδόσφαιρο 144). (Incidentally, in Sotiris Patatzis's novel *Μεθυσμένη Πολιτεία* [1984] the headmaster of the local school uses the word φουτουμπωλίστας when commenting ironically – in *katharevousa* – on football.) One example of terms consisting solely of Greek morphemes is σκυταλοδρομία, "relay-race" (σκυτάλη, "baton").

### VIII Conclusion

Even if the material is not analysed thoroughly, but only on the basis of a few points, some general conclusions may be drawn. The – rather self-evident – assumption that English should be the major provider of foreign sporting terms in Greek holds true. It can also be noted that foreign terms appear to have replaced

puristic Greek ones in the course of the twentieth century, but that occasionally terms of Greek and foreign origin exist side by side and are still in use.

As far as morphology is concerned, the same, somewhat inconsistent, pattern appears for sporting terms of foreign origin as for loan-words in general: nouns and adjectives are sometimes accepted without being adjusted to the normal prerequisite for a Greek nominal – that it must be declinable. Verbs, on the other hand, cannot function in Greek if the corresponding requirement is not fulfilled. Therefore verbs borrowed from foreign languages must be adapted, and this is achieved by means of the verb-marking morpheme *-αρ-* and the normal endings for tense, person and number. Marking for aspect may, however, still be a problem. It is noteworthy that verbs of foreign origin treated in this way are far more frequent in sports language than in other discourses found in newspapers.

On one occasion I discussed metaphors and imagery in the language of sport with a friend of mine, Magnus Wistrand, Professor of Latin, who has written an important scholarly work on violent Roman “sports”. He told me the following little story to emphasize the versatility of sporting imagery:

Once, some graffiti were found somewhere in Britain. On a wall someone had written JESUS SAVES, and below there was an addendum in a different handwriting: BUT KENNY DALGLEISH SCORES ON THE REBOUND.

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# Irony and satire in George Seferis's poetry\*

Katerina Kostiou

The study by G.P. Savidis on the satirical Seferis (1979)<sup>1</sup> is, as far as I know, the first systematic attempt to discuss the presence and function of political satire in the work of Seferis, with the exception of a brief article that the same scholar published in 1974, but clearly with less preparatory work.<sup>2</sup> In this paper Savidis noted (my translation):

Wit and humour are two terms that have been rarely used up until now by Seferis scholars. It is a pity, because those at least who had the privilege of meeting the poet personally will retain the lively memory of the banter that lightened his seemingly heavy disposition, without any recourse to the "spirit" of the *salon* or to unimaginative play on words. And this joviality, for someone who knows how to read him, is all-pervasive in the work of Seferis, as much in his poetry as in his prose. Less so, perhaps, with the tone of wit (which is mainly a personal disposition when it is not used for the purpose of earning a living) and more as a wise or whimsical humour that is either eastern popular or western European learned in its origins.<sup>3</sup>

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\* This article is an elaborated and revised version of a lecture first delivered at the Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies Seminar, King's College London (20 March 2000) and later in another version at the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages in Cambridge (11 October 2000). Part of it was first published in *Erytheia* 21 (2000) 305-26.

<sup>1</sup> G.P. Savidis, "Γιώργος Σεφέρης", in: E. Tsantsanoglou et al., *Σάτιρα και πολιτική στη νεώτερη Ελλάδα. Από τον Σολωμό ως τον Σεφέρη* (Athens: Etaireia Spoudon Neoellinikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias 1979), pp. 275-304. Reprinted in: D. Daskalopoulos (ed.), *Εισαγωγή στην ποίηση του Σεφέρη. Επιλογή κριτικών κειμένων* (Irakleio: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 1996), pp. 307-40.

<sup>2</sup> Later collected in G.P. Savidis, "Ο σατιρικός Σεφέρης", *Εφήμερον σπέρμα (1973-1978)* (Athens: Ermis 1978), pp. 104-8.

<sup>3</sup> Daskalopoulos, op. cit., p. 308.

Savidis points to the need for the study of “the personal aspect of Seferis as a satirical poet or prose-writer” and the need for his satire to be incorporated into the central Greek tradition of poetic satire that begins with Solomos and Laskaratos, and certainly includes Palamas, Varnalis, Karyotakis and Ritsos, without overlooking other possible hybrids with eccentric personalities such as Souris, Cavafy, Papatzonis, Engonopoulos, Skarimbos, and Montis. At the same time, Savidis makes distinctions between terms such as “wit”, “humour”, “satire” and “irony”, with varying degrees of success.

If it is assumed that restrained humor is to be found, artistically, a step above immediate spontaneous wit (something not at all certain, given the conscious craftsmanship of Seferis), irony and satire most certainly belong on another scale. Because, while wit and humour are friendly or at least well-disposed expressions of impulse, both irony and satire are basically hostile manifestations, private or public; satire is undisguised, irony is veiled. Consequently they avoid meeting on the same step.<sup>4</sup>

Today, despite twenty more years of literary study on Seferis and Cavafy, but also on satire, irony and other related terms, I consider the need for an examination of the satirical and ironic content of Seferis’s poetry to be as great as ever, especially in light of the convincing case that has been made for regarding Cavafy as, ultimately, an ironic poet. As regards the above-mentioned definitions suggested by Savidis, it is not possible, for anyone who has undertaken a systematic study of the continually expanding relevant literature, to accept that satire and irony do not co-exist: satire frequently uses irony as a means to achieve its aim, while irony is not a hostile expression in all its manifestations. In theoretical discussions of the last few decades irony has been elevated to an evaluative criterion of literature, but also to a writing method that allows many voices, which come together in the authorial ego, to be heard concurrently. In addition, the satire of the twentieth century can be at times undisguised and outspoken and at other times low-key and implied. This does not mean that the limits between the above

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

terms are not at times blurred and difficult to distinguish, making the work of the critic rather frustrating. This difficulty comes about from the very fact that the terms do not pertain to a specific genre, nor can they be pinpointed in a particular form. Besides, their transmutable nature is responsible for many contradictions and antinomies of theory in the international literature on the subject. (Let me make it clear at the outset that I shall not engage in theoretical elucidations of the terms that interest us here, something which I do not think necessary in an article in English.) As far as Seferis studies go, the only works that I am aware of on the subject are a heretical study by Nanos Valaoritis entitled "A different reading of George Seferis",<sup>5</sup> where he explores the poetics of Seferis through the perspective of modernist humour; a rather unsystematic study by Athanasios Gotovos entitled "Humour and irony in Seferis",<sup>6</sup> where the above-mentioned perspective is briefly touched upon with reference to the diaries, the novel *Six nights on the Acropolis* and even less the poems; and an outstanding study by Christos Papazoglou entitled "A comment on Seferis's 'Denial'".<sup>7</sup>

My interest in the satirical and ironic voice of Seferis was instigated by the precise and provocative article by Savidis, and it became intertwined with the study of Cavafy's ironic method, passing unavoidably through Seferis's reading of Cavafy's poetry. Seferis's awkward and contradictory stance towards Cavafy's poetry is due, I believe, to a large extent, to the type of irony peculiar to Cavafy's poetry, with which Seferis's temperament is completely at odds. Before moving on to examine the satirical and ironic perspectives of Seferis's poetry I would like briefly to look at the relationship between the two poets, even though this relationship has constituted a point of interest for many noteworthy critics. I will focus my attention on this relationship through the prism of irony.

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<sup>5</sup> Nanos Valaoritis, "Μια άλλη ανάγνωση του Γιώργου Σεφέρη", *Η Λέξη* 53 (Μάρτιος-Απρίλιος 1986) 412-27.

<sup>6</sup> Athanasios Gotovos, "Χιούμορ και ειρωνεία στο Σεφέρη", *Ελίτροχος* 8 (1995) 187-207.

<sup>7</sup> Christos Papazoglou, "Σχόλιο στην «'Αρνηση» του Γ. Σεφέρη", in: A. D. Lazaridis, V. Barras and T. Birchler (eds.), *Βουκόλεια. Mélanges offerts à Bertrand Bouvier* (Geneva: Edition des Belles-Lettres 1995), pp. 445-61.

To begin with, one can trace the different presuppositions of the intellectual and emotional idiosyncrasies of the two poets. Seferis's inability to grasp Cavafy's modern irony in all its multilevelled magnitude, his "all-pervasive" irony according to R. Beaton's apt description,<sup>8</sup> is obviously due to a large extent to Seferis's temperament, compelling a stance that is at the antipodes, as he himself admits, of the Cavafian point of view. "Le style ironique est l'homme même", notes Wayne Booth,<sup>9</sup> parodying Buffon's well-known statement. Seferis becomes activated by his belief, to use Vayenas's apt evaluation, "in the values of the Renaissance, because he feels them to be an offspring of Greek values".<sup>10</sup> As a man who believes, an admirer of Makriyannis and Theophilos, as the bearer of a specific ideology, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for him to converse in a meaningful way with the sceptic Cavafy, who chooses the Hellenistic period because it is more immoral, more liberated, and allows him to situate his characters as he likes. "The ingenious minds," according to Cavafy,

observe with accuracy and certainty; when they set out the pros and cons of a matter, we can draw our own conclusion. Why not they themselves?, I will be asked. Simply because I do not have the conviction of the absolute value of a single conclusion. From the given facts, I form one judgement, and someone else another. It is therefore possible for the two judgements to be both incorrect and both correct, as it suits each individual, because they have been dictated by our peculiar circumstances and idiosyncrasies, or adapted to them.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Roderick Beaton, "C.P. Cavafy: Irony and Hellenism", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 59.4 (1981) 516-28, at p. 527.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Booth, *A rhetoric of irony* (Chicago-London: Chicago University Press 1974), p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> N. Vayenas, *Ο ποιητής και ο χορευτής* (Athens: Kedros 1979), p. 184 (my translation).

<sup>11</sup> Οι μεγαλοφρενείς νόες παρατηρούσι μετ' ακριβείας και ασφαλείας: όταν δε μας εκθέσωσι τα υπέρ και τα κατά ενός ζητήματος, δυνάμεθα ημείς να ποιήσωμεν το συμπέρασμα. Διατί όχι αυτοί; θα με ερωτήσωσιν. Απλώς διότι δεν έχω πολλήν πεποίθησιν περί της απολύτου αξίας ενός συμπεράσματος. Από αυτά τα διδόμενα εγώ σχηματίζω τοιαύτην κρίσιν, και άλλος άλλην· είναι δε δυνατόν να είναι αμφοτέραι εναντίαι και αμφοτέραι ορθαί καθ' όσον αφορά



Cavafy's poetry consists of an amalgam of heterogeneous signs, but his ideological identity remains confused; the most significant belief that emerges vigorous and untouched in his work is his belief in his Art. Cavafy sees and examines the futility of the freedom of the human will. Seferis, on the contrary, believes that man is to a large extent free to determine his fate. The distanced, unsentimental and intellectual, in other words ironic, stance of Cavafy, is at the antipodes of Seferis's "nakedness", of his elimination, in other words, of the intellectual functions, as much when the poem is being written as when it is being read. The "given" poems, the most authentic poetic voice according to Seferis, are, as a poetic function, foreign to Cavafy's nature. But poetic catharsis and "the dark night of the genius", as regards the initiation of the reader to the poem, are concepts very distant from Cavafian experience. Vayenas comments:

I believe that the reason that Cavafy ceases to preoccupy him is that, beyond his use of history, which, in the final analysis, is only one side of the matter of expressive accuracy, Seferis does not see other elements capable of retaining his interest undiminished.<sup>12</sup>

I have the impression that, irrespective of Seferis's legacy from Cavafy on the level of poetic achievement, the ironic language of Cavafy has ceased to play a catalytic role because of its lack of consistent interest and Seferis's indifference to it. In any case, however, the questions that remain are many; the points of deviation of the two poets, as regards the poetics of subversion, will appear with greater clarity once the satiric face of Seferis has been studied and – what is clearly more difficult – his ironic voice, wherever it exists, has been traced.

Our next step is the systematic examination of the conception that Seferis himself had of the terms that concern us here. The theoretical positions that appear in his study on Cavafy, ex-

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έκαστον άτομον, διότι υπαγορεύονται υπό των ιδιαιτέρων μας περιστάσεων και ιδιοσυγγρασιών ή συμμορφούνται προς αυτάς. Quoted by G.P. Savidis, *Βασικά θέματα της ποίησης του Καβάφη* (Athens: Ikaros 1993), p. 101.

<sup>12</sup> *Ο ποιητής και ο χορευτής*, p. 224 (my translation).

pressed either directly or indirectly, as well as his views on the terms that concern us as they appear in his published correspondence, shed light from another angle on the types of humour, satire and irony that are compatible with his poetic temperament. For example, in his criticism on Cavafy we come across recurring words and phrases such as "spirit", "wisdom", "sarcasm", "caustic mockery", "derision" and "humour". The poet, in fact, considers humour an English quality and he connects it with the word "nonsense". This particular notion of his brings him to the traditional view according to which humour is primarily an English matter and consists of the distortion of the normal function of the human spirit.<sup>13</sup> This is why, perhaps, when he refers to Cavafian humour, which is situated in the vicinity of Pirandellian theory, he considers it necessary to distinguish it from the spirit and to attach to it the characteristic of being cold:

Cold humour: not spirit (esprit). The witty joke is light, it dances, it does somersaults. Humour walks solemnly, indifferently. At times it missteps or trips, but it does not "sparkle". This is a serious distortion of our lives (see Edward Lear). Cavafy's humour is at times so serious that you cannot distinguish it from him personally. His existence is humour; an existence both tragic and humorous, in a hollow world that does not know where it is going (not tragically ironic). This is why he has so frequently given rise to caricature.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, from the broad range of the at times straightforward and at times Daedalian poetics of subversion that Cavafy uses, Seferis easily recognizes satire, and it is telling that he considers the poem "Awaiting the Barbarians" a poetry that is close to the *Ptochoprodromika*, in other words a purely satirical poem, while it is commonly accepted that the poem belongs primarily to the domain of irony. Seferis decodes the open irony with ease, while he appears perplexed with its more challenging, modern sense. I consider the much-discussed nega-

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<sup>13</sup> Ronald Knox, "On humour and satire" (1927), in: Ronald Paulson (ed.), *Satire: modern essays in criticism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1971).

<sup>14</sup> See G.P. Savidis, *Ο Καβάφης του Σεφέρη*. Α' (Athens: Ermis 1984), p. 132.

tive evaluation of the poem "Che fece ... il gran rifiuto", as well as the misreading of certain Cavafian poems that have been singled out in research, to be the result of this perplexed hermeneutic position. Besides, the way Seferis alternates between the terms parody and satire to characterize his own self-parodying poem "In the manner of G.S.", and his use of the pseudonym when he is conscious of creating texts that, as he himself mentions, "are situated on the fringe of his work",<sup>15</sup> show on the one hand that the relevant terminology concerned him, and on the other hand that obviously he considers the involvement with certain forms of writing that contemporary theory has re-established, e.g. parody, to be inferior. But perhaps one does not need to delve into poets' theoretical baggage any further, as at certain points we do well to distinguish the poet from the critic.

It is commonly accepted that, unlike irony, satire presupposes belief. For this reason it is closer to the Seferian perspective, even though the self-restraint that directs his style, his professional activity and his education do not encourage satire. Nevertheless, Seferis did use satire and humour in ways that liberated him from the above-mentioned confinements. His is a humour, however, that is completely different from the Pirandellian humour of Cavafy, as we shall see in what follows. As regards the political satire of Seferis, it was not until he had established certain of his beliefs, and his sensitivity was ignited by the surrounding atmosphere of his period, in other words not until the war years, that he wrote three of his best-known satirical poems with a distinct political point: "Kerk Str. Oost, Pretoria, Transvaal", "Days of April '43", and "Actors, Middle East". Of these three political satires, the one which is intertwined with the major themes of the Seferian mythology and is in dialogue, and at the same time in keeping with the tradition of Greek political satire, is the one written in 1943, when the poet was in the Middle East:<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> G. Seferis—A. Karandonis, *Αλληλογραφία 1931-1960*. Φιλολογική επιμέλεια: Φώτης Δημητρακόπουλος (Athens: Kastaniotis 1988), pp. 130-1.

<sup>16</sup> The poems quoted in English are taken from: George Seferis, *Complete poems*, trans., edited and introduced by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (London: Anvil/Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995).

## ACTORS, MIDDLE EAST

We put up theaters and tear them down  
 wherever we happen to find ourselves  
 we put up theaters and set the stage  
 but our fate always triumphs in the end

and sweeps them away as it sweeps us too  
 actors and the actors' actors  
 prompter and musicians: all disappear  
 scattered to the five hungry winds. [...]

There were four more political satires, published after Seferis's death: "The alibi or free Greeks, 43"; "Partisans in the Middle East"; "Chorale from Mathios Paskalis prisoner", which is a pastiche, as he himself refers to it, because he imitates freely a chorus from Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*; and "The afternoon of a corrupt person" ("Το απομεσήμερο ενός φαύλου"), which is a parody of "L'Après-midi d'un faune" of Stéphane Mallarmé.

The manner in which Seferis combines tradition and satire with song in "Thrush" has been noted by Savidis. More significant, perhaps, is the satirical function of parody in the part that is subtitled "The radio" where the target is the government voice as it was heard from the Athenian radio station in the period that followed the second return of King George II.<sup>17</sup>

*The Radio*

– "Sails puffed out by the wind  
 are all that stay in the mind.  
 Perfume of silence and pine  
 will soon be an anodyne  
 now that the sailor's set sail,  
 flycatcher, catfish, and wagtail.  
 O woman whose touch is dumb,  
 hear the wind's requiem.

[...]

– "Athens. The public has heard

<sup>17</sup> See N. Vayenas, *Ποίηση και μετάφραση* (Athens: Stigma, 1989), pp. 36-8.

the news with alarm; it is feared  
a crisis is near. The prime  
minister declared: "There is no more time..."  
Take cyclamen... needles of pine...  
The lily... needles of pine...  
O woman...  
– ... is overwhelmingly stronger  
The war..."

SOULMONGER<sup>18</sup>

As has been noted, one satirical poem of the collection *Logbook III* is "Neophytos Enkleistos speaks—", where three voices are ironically intertwined: that of the poet, that of the monk Neophytos and, to a certain extent, that of Shakespeare in the explosive end of the poem. Savidis considers paradoxical the fact that only one of the poems of this collection is satirical. I believe, however, that this paradox is cancelled out by another significant situation: the fact that, finally, in the Cyprus experience it is redemption which predominates, a result of human communication and love, and what the poet sees as the unique experience of an authentic world that has been irrevocably lost to Greece. Undoubtedly, as we shall see in the following, this unique, perhaps momentary redemption, initially emotional and ideological, also pervades Seferis's poetics.

After 1954 the satirical vein of the poet appears to dry up; the only exceptions are the third poem of "Summer Solstice" in the collection *Three secret poems* (1966) and two poems in *Book of Exercises II* (1976). I shall cite just one effective satirical synthesis which parodies the familiar slogan of the dictator Papadopoulos: "Greece of the Greek Christians". The title consists of an anticipatory answer to the questioning sense of the poem:

#### ΑΠΟ ΒΛΑΚΕΙΑ

Ελλάς· πυρ! Ελλήνων· πυρ! Χριστιανών· πυρ!  
Τρεις λέξεις νεκρές. Γιατί τις σκοτώσατε;

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<sup>18</sup>The term "Soulmonger" was suggested to the poet by *Agamemnon*, 438: "Ares, the bodymonger".

The poem "Hippios Kolonos" (1970) is Seferis's last political satire. Its satirical nature is produced not only by the cry "yahoo", that Seferis borrowed from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, but also by the undisguised caustic tone.

But, certainly, Seferis's satire does not exhaust itself in politics. A good demonstration of the correct dosage of satirical and lyrical language is provided, in my opinion, by the superb poem "Last stop", which incorporates, together with other material, the theme that dominates in "The afternoon of a corrupt person", the mob of the mature "resistance fighters" who, at the end of September and the beginning of October, at the end of the Second World War, gathered at Cava dei Tirreni around the so-called "Government of National Unity".

#### LAST STOP

Few are the moonlit nights that I've cared for:  
 the alphabet of the stars – which you spell out  
 as much as your fatigue at the day's end allows  
 and from which you gather new meaning and hope –  
 you can then read more clearly.  
 Now that I sit here, idle, and think about it,<sup>19</sup>  
 few are the moons that remain in my memory:  
 islands, color of a grieving Virgin, late in the waning  
 or moonlight in northern cities sometimes casting  
 over turbulent streets, rivers, and limbs of men  
 a heavy torpor.  
 Yet here last evening, in this our final port  
 where we wait for the hour of our return home to dawn  
 like an old debt, like money lying for years  
 in a miser's safe and at last  
 the time for payment comes  
 and you hear the coins falling onto the table;  
 in this Etruscan village, behind the sea of Salerno  
 behind the harbors of our return, on the edge

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<sup>19</sup> The phrase is from the Introduction to the *Memoirs* of General Makriyannis, one of the principal leaders of the Greek War of Independence. His *Memoirs* are one of the most important prose works in Greek literature of the nineteenth century. See *The Memoirs of General Makriyannis 1797-1864*, edited and translated by H.A. Lidderdale (London: Oxford University Press 1966).

of an autumn squall, the moon  
outstripped the clouds, and houses  
on the slope opposite became enamel:  
*Amica silentia lunae.*<sup>20</sup>

This is a train of thought, a way  
to begin to speak of things you confess  
uneasily, at times when you can't hold back, to a friend  
who escaped secretly and who brings  
word from home and from the companions,  
and you hurry to open your heart  
before exile forestalls you and alters him.

We come from Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria;  
the little state

of Kommagene, which flickered out like a small lamp,  
often comes to mind,  
and great cities that lived for thousands of years  
and then became pasture land for cattle,  
fields for sugar-cane and corn.

We come from the sand of the desert, from the seas of  
Proteus,

souls shivered by public sins,  
each holding office like a bird in its cage.

The rainy autumn in this gorge  
festers the wound of each of us

or what you might term differently: nemesis, fate,  
or simply bad habits, fraud and deceit,<sup>21</sup>

or even the selfish urge to reap reward from the blood of others.  
[...]

To speak of heroes to speak of heroes: Michael  
who left the hospital with his wound still open,  
perhaps he was speaking of heroes—the night  
he dragged his foot through the darkened city—  
when he howled, groping over our pain: "We advance in  
the dark,

we move forward in the dark..."

Heroes move forward in the dark.

Few are the moonlit nights that I care for.

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<sup>20</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii. 55.

<sup>21</sup> Makriyannis, *Memoirs*, II, 258.

In the *Book of Exercises II* there are other satirical as well as humorous poems. The motto of the collection is a limerick "In the manner of E.L.", which acquires, to some extent at least, a determining force for the collection. I refer primarily to the third part titled *Events* (1931-1971), the study of which is revealing for the function of the satirical perspective of Seferis's poetry.

Apart from the satirical parody mentioned above, the poet uses parody in many other cases. Furthermore, he uses self-parody to take up thematic motifs of his early poetry within new literary contexts or to develop his well-known personas of Mathios Paskalis and Stratis Thalassinos (e.g. "In the manner of G.S.", "Chorale from Mathios Paskalis prisoner", etc.).

Parody has frequently been linked to the reception of a literary work. A typical example of such parody is the poem "Indian tale" (1931). It is common knowledge that *Turning point* received much negative criticism when it was first published. Kleon Paraschos called it word-dominated (λεξιοκρατική) poetry and Alkis Thyrylos wrote that "it is a book that can offer nothing else but words". Reacting to such critics Seferis wrote the above poem using unknown words borrowed from the translated Indian epic *Mahabarata Nalas and Damagianni*. We should make it clear that the target of parody may lie outside the textual elements which, in terms of style, theme, structure, are incorporated in the new text. "Indian tale" is a satirical parody; the explicit, indeed crude ending leaves no doubt as to the satirist's target.

Another less well-known parody written by Seferis under the title "Areti and Rotokritos" (1961) was not included by Savidis in the *Book of Exercises II* in (1976), because of its indiscretion.<sup>22</sup> The poet created a clever new synthesis borrowing words, themes, grammar and metre from *Erotokritos*. This daring erotic parody brings to mind Seferis's words in a note to his classic essay on *Erotokritos* (1946): "*Erotokritos* is perhaps the only work, at least one of the very few Greek literary works which speak in a sensual way to a world sensually frustrated."<sup>23</sup> It seems to me that this parody by Seferis, who lived "climbing on words like a

<sup>22</sup> Published in "G.P. Eftyhidis" [= G.P. Savidis] (ed.), *Μαθιός Πασκάλης, Τα Εντεπείζικα* (Athens: Leschi, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> G. Seferis, *Δοκιμές*. Α' . 4th ed. (Athens: Ikaros), p. 503.



rope ladder",<sup>24</sup> was directed more towards himself and less towards "a sensually frustrated work of the Cretan Renaissance". It is common ground for critics that sometimes parody is a competitive undertaking and functions in a liberating way for the writer.

But other parodies by Seferis may work in the same liberating way, as exemplified by the poem "What the camel said" (1948?), which parodies the fifth part of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and was written soon after "Thrush", the poem of Seferis most influenced by Eliot. In any case, parody in Seferis's poetry calls for a systematic study as it elucidates different aspects of his poetics.<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes in the manner of parody, sometimes using open irony, and sometimes in an undisguised direct manner, Seferis marks the lack of communication that he experiences as a human being and as a poet, and he interacts with tradition, both Greek and foreign, if one excludes the political satires, which I have already mentioned ("A type-setter went mad", "Syngrou Avenue, II", "Le cheval n'a pas dit M.E.R.D.E.", "[Frontispiece to a rewriting of the 'Odes']", some parodies of the *Palatine Anthology*, "What the camel said", "Bhamdoun" etc.).

It is telling that most of his satirical poems remained unpublished up until his death, as if the poet considered them incidental or second-rate poetry, as I have already mentioned. As Avgeris notes:

Perhaps with the method of satire, using it with greater sharpness and more systematically, with the dramatic and sarcastic style which is never absent, the poet might have given greater variety, richness and power to his work, if the conditions of his life, his education and his profession had not prevented him. Because his satirical eye and his expressive capabilities, as well as sarcasm and often indignation, are not lacking and the dramatic and pessimistic feeling that accompanies his thought could have found a new outlet. Is it possible that he lacks daring? Perhaps a

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<sup>24</sup> G. Seferis, *Μέρες Ε* (Athens: Ikaros 1977), p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Katerina Kostiou, "Η τεχνική της παρωδίας στο έργο του", in: *Γιώργος Σεφέρης. Εκατό χρόνια από τη γέννησή του* (Athens: Ermis 2000), pp. 101-5, which is a summary of a lecture given at a conference marking the centenary of Seferis's birth (Nicosia, 29 February-2 March 2000).

broader conception of the satirical genre could be characterized as dramatic satire and, at the same time, the poem of the same collection with the title "Here among the bones" could be seen as a cry of despair? For someone who wished to study carefully all of Seferis's poetry, it would be easy to find many verses that could be characterized as dramatic satire. But Seferis's satire also wears dense veils like the rest of his poetry.<sup>26</sup>

Seferis uses a fanciful humour that frequently alludes to the atmosphere of Tristan Corbière and Paul-Jean Toulet, but also to Valéry and to Eliot; in certain of his poems the reader finds an effusive playful intention, at times in combination with rude puns, which I will omit for many reasons, partly because they surpass my translation abilities. Tangible and forthright examples of this intention are the verses that are inserted in the novel *Six nights on the Acropolis*, the witty *Poems with drawings for small children* (1975), published in honour of Anna Krinou, grand-daughter of Maro Seferis, and the poet's involvement with limericks, a poetic form that is predominantly playful. Traces of this intention, in the form of personal notes, still exist in his unpublished archives that belong to the Gennadius Library. I think, however, that we should elucidate that the "high spirits" to which Savidis refers are none other than wit, a quality of expression or writing that can surprise and please through the reception of the incongruous or the unexpected. For the moment, I can give two examples of an obvious playful intent, expressed as early as in the *Book of Exercises* (1928-1937), which transforms itself in a variety of ways in his work and conceals a subversive view of the world, which, according to Nanos Valaoritis, in combination with elements of the absurd that are intertwined in his imagery, places Seferis among the Modernists:

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<sup>26</sup> Markos Avgeris, "Η ποίηση του Σεφέρη", in: *Για τον Σεφέρη. Τιμητικό αφιέρωμα στα τριάντα χρόνια της Στροφής* (Athens: Ermis 1981), p. 46 (1st ed. 1961).

HAIKU

7

Again I put on  
The tree's foliage  
And you – you bleat.

PSYCHOLOGY

This gentleman  
takes his bath each morning  
in the waters of the Dead Sea  
then dons a bitter smile  
for business and clients.

The aim of the poet is to re-activate the human senses by means of the interpolation of the incongruous, the confusion of the categories of the world, and the abolition of the inert image of the world. In any case, a first reading of his diaries or his correspondence is capable of revealing the playful intent and the humorous view of the world. Also, the poet's humor finds its place in the novel *Six nights on the Acropolis*, in the mouths of Nikolas and Stratis.

One must mention here an unknown anthology by Seferis indicating his early relation with satire or the appeal that subversion had for him. Dated between autumn of 1926, when he started working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 1931, when *Turning point* was published, this unknown anthology by Seferis complements the poet's profile as a reader during the crucial years of his youth.

The reason why this anthology interests us here is the satirical French poems included: three poems by Vincent Hyspa: "Le déraillement du rapide de Marseilles" ("The derailment of the Marseilles express"), "Les délégués Turcs" ("The Turkish representatives"), "La sérénade interrompue" ("The interrupted serenade"); and one vulgar poem by Léon Xanrof entitled "Héloïse et Abélard", a parody of the well-known myth. All of them are satirical poem-songs written for revue, within the style and atmosphere of the famous cabarets of Montmartre, in the first decades of the twentieth century. Another long, subversive poem entitled "Complainte" is by the satirical poet Mathurin

Régnier (1573-1613).<sup>27</sup> The last one is a poem under the title "Il pleut" ("It's raining"), by Fernand Gregh (1873-1960).<sup>28</sup> This short, melancholic poem can easily be read in an ironic way, because of its exaggerated romantic tone, inappropriate to the atmosphere of Paris at that time.<sup>29</sup>

However, it is common ground for critics that Seferis pre-occupies himself with fundamental problems of life which constitute the actual theme of human existence. It is natural, therefore, that the irony of fate appears in his work, as in Eliot's. As far back as *Cistern* we read:

[...]  
 On the curve of the dome of a pitiless night  
 cares tread, joys move by  
 with fate's quick rattle  
 faces light up, shine a moment  
 and die out in an ebony darkness.

Faces that go! In rows, the eyes  
 roll in a gutter of bitterness  
 and the signs of the great day  
 take them up and bring them closer  
 to the black earth that asks no ransom.

But irony is transformed in multiple ways in his poetry with, as a common feature, the ironic coupling of what are, in the nature of things, incompatible opposites. As has already been stated, in *Turning point* there is a potent irony directed against tradition. Apart from the much discussed "Denial", and the poem "The companions in Hades", which according to Takis Sinopoulos would annoy those of his friends who belonged to the school of "objective" poetry as it "becomes blurred from the con-

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<sup>27</sup> Mathurin Régnier, *Œuvres complètes*, précédées de *L'Histoire de la Satire en France* par M. Viollet le Duc (Paris 1853), pp. 290-5.

<sup>28</sup> Fernand Gregh, *Le Clartés humaines* (Paris 1927), pp. 157-8 (first published 1904).

<sup>29</sup> This early unknown anthology by Seferis was the topic of my communication at the conference on "Seferis as a reader of European literature", devoted to the centenary of the poet's birth (University of Patras, 14 April 2000); it will be published within 2001 by University Studio Press.

tradictory and uncontrolled circumstances of the ego",<sup>30</sup> most of the poems of the collection interact ironically with tradition, with "Erotikos Logos" marking the opposite extreme, in that it expresses nostalgia for tradition.

High points of Seferis's ironic achievement are the poems "Folk Song" and "Slowly you spoke". I quote the latter, together with the ironic reply to it in the third part, subtitled "Adolescent", of the poem "Stratis Thalassinos describes a man" from the collection *Book of Exercises I*:

### SLOWLY YOU SPOKE

Slowly you spoke before the sun  
and now it's dark  
and you were my fate's woof  
you, whom they'd call Billio.

Five seconds; and what's happened  
in the wide world?  
An unwritten love rubbed out  
and a dry pitcher

and it's dark... Where is the place  
and your nakedness to the waist,  
my God, and my favorite spot  
and the style of your soul!

### 3. ADOLESCENT

[...]

The next day a journey opened in my mind and closed  
again, like a picture book;  
I thought of going down to the shore every evening  
first to learn about the shore and then to go to sea;  
the third day I fell in love with a girl on a hill;  
she had a small white cottage like a country chapel  
an old mother at the window, glasses bent low over her  
knitting, always silent  
a pot of basil a pot of carnations –

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<sup>30</sup> Takis Sinopoulos, "Στροφή 1931-1961", in *Για τον Σεφέρη* (see n. 26), p. 176.

I think she was called Vasso, Frosso, or Billio;  
so I forgot the sea.

Furthermore, the use of the extract from *Erotokritos* as a motto for *Shells, clouds* is ironic, because on the one hand it announces a new perspective for the regeneration of tradition, and on the other it reveals its own subversiveness by indicating the new direction which Seferis's poetics opens up for poetry. On other occasions his irony is used in order to satirise and this technique is developed in his work, even in relation to the same motif. For instance, the ironic comment "your eyes, watching, would be beautiful", in the thirteenth poem of *Mythistorema*, which attacks lack of judgement and the alienation of man, becomes in the sixteenth poem: "they were lovely, your eyes, but you didn't know where to look", competing in sharpness with the Cavafian verse "it will have grown old, if it lives, the beautiful face."

At other moments Seferian titles crown the poems ironically, determining the interpretation. For example in the poem "Interlude of joy" the title is totally at odds with the content, as Mario Vitti<sup>31</sup> and other critics have shown. At other points, the symbols in the poems, such as the sun in the same poem, are created in an ironic manner, through the positioning and cancelling out of positive and negative qualities ("a huge sun all thorns and so high in the sky").

In other respects the most interesting sense of irony in the work of Seferis, as far as poetics goes, is not satirical irony, as for instance in the poem "Letter of Mathios Paskalis", but the sort of irony that allows the reading to move on two parallel planes. This is achieved with a wealth of rhetoric that can be summarised as follows: (a) the interweaving of two time and place levels, the elsewhere and the here, the previous and the now, (e.g. the use of ironic anachronism with Shakespeare's statement in the poem "Neophytos Enkleistos speaks", as Peter Mackridge

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<sup>31</sup> Mario Vitti, *Φθορά και λόγος: εισαγωγή στην ποίηση του Γιώργου Σεφέρη*. Νέα έκδοση, αναθεωρημένη (Athens: Estia 1989), p. 139.

aptly notes;<sup>32</sup> (b) the dialogue he generates with tradition through the use of quotation, allusion, parody or pastiche, which at times has an ironic perspective, since it undermines or comments on the idea of the original text (as happens, for example, in the poem "The return of the exile", to which I shall return); and (c) contrasts that undermine basic conceptual points of the Seferian universe, such as *nostos* (return to one's home), the function of light as a catalyst for *nostos*, catharsis or communication, as we shall shortly see.

From the ironic sensibility of *Turning point* to the use of personas and the polyphonic fusion in the poems "The return of the exile" and "Hampstead", or even the conversation with Makriyannis which ends up underlining the disparity between the heroic yesterday and the miserable present, the distance is great. Even though irony does not constitute a major part of Seferis's poetics, tracing it is nonetheless absolutely necessary for the interpretation of his at times complex work.

The systematic study of Seferis's irony can open up new perspectives for the interpretation of the poems, and, furthermore, affirm or make redundant older interpretations, by revealing the transitions of the poetic ego and the shades of the voices that inhabit his poems. For example, through the perspective of irony the concept of a return home (*nostos*), widely accepted as a central concept in Seferis's poetry, already undermined by Cavafy and of course by the historical developments that in 1922 definitively closed the road of return, both literally and figuratively, is also undermined in Seferis's work, where the mood-swings of the poetic subject all too often cast their shadow. Intertwined with the concept of a return home is the concept of human alienation which the satirical poems warn against, and which is constantly projected as a result of man's estrangement from the possibility of a return to Greek values. Also undermined is the catalytic (for *nostos*) presence of light with its dual nature "angelic and black", a nature that is re-established without, however, significant consequences for *nostos*, following the decisive and, at the same time, liberating experience of Cyprus.

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Mackridge, "Ο καθαφικός Σεφέρης", in: M. Pieris (ed.), *Γιώργος Σεφέρης, Φιλολογικές και ερμηνευτικές προτάσεις. Δοκίμια εις μνήμην Γ.Π. Σαββίδη* (Athens: Patakis 1997), p. 118.

The function of a return to the homeland in Seferis's poetry has been studied by scholars in the past and continues to provide nourishment for new interpretive approaches. For example, *nostos* in the work of Seferis is connected directly with concerns that began in the years of his youth and follow him all through his life, as, for instance, the absence of teachers and the consequent isolation, the impotence of the powers that be, the lack of belief in the values of the Greek heritage, the lack of spiritual belief and of conscience, pretentiousness, or, to use his own words "the ailment of Athens". "A seed that returns to its own place is a seed that is about to grow. A Greek who returns to his own place is a man who is about to blaspheme," notes the desperate poet in the novel *Six nights on the Acropolis*.<sup>33</sup> This quote clearly alludes to the poem "The return of the exile", which embodies poetically, by employing the method of subversive dialogue with tradition (in relation to the folk song that N. Politis had given the same title to) the disparity between Greek values and the disdain for reality that epitomises contemporary Greece. The ironic method does not detract from whatever interpretation one might adopt: that of D. Maronitis, who supports the dialogue with the folk song or that of Mario Vitti, who considers that the conversation springs from the two dialectical aspects of the same person, the divided poet, expressing the ambiguous situation to which he led himself through his dual needs, by returning to Greece during the paranoia of the war.

#### THE RETURN OF THE EXILE

"My old friend, what are you looking for?  
After years abroad you've come back  
with images you've nourished  
under foreign skies  
far from your own country."

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<sup>33</sup> Ένας σπόρος που γυρίζει στον τόπο του, είναι ένας σπόρος που πάει να βλαστήσει· ένας Ρωμιός που γυρίζει στον τόπο του, είναι ένας άνθρωπος που πάει να βλαστημήσει. *Έξι νύχτες στην Ακρόπολη* (Athens: Ermis 1974), p. 103.



"I'm looking for my old garden;  
the trees come to my waist  
and the hills resemble terraces  
yet as a child  
I used to play on the grass  
under great shadows  
and I would run for hours  
breathless over the slopes."

My old friend, rest,  
you'll get used to it little by little;  
together we will climb  
the paths you once knew,  
we will sit together  
under the plane trees' dome.  
They'll come back to you little by little,  
your garden and your slopes."  
[...]

"Now I can't hear a sound.  
My last friend has sunk.  
Strange how from time to time  
they level everything down.  
Here a thousand scythe-bearing chariots go past  
and mow everything down."

Similarly ironic is the interaction of the poet with folk song in the poem "The last day", where the heroic message of the folk song is undermined and subverted thematically, and will also be subverted in terms of form, through the style of the dirge in the poem that follows ("Spring, A.D."):

My friend, walking beside me, was singing a disjointed song:  
"In spring, in summer, slaves..."

It is a well-known fact that the theme of *nostos* and the conceptually positive and negative presentation of the figure of Odysseus has a long tradition in European letters, with a variety of different versions. Especially notable is the case of Dante, who, true to the call of his times (the turn of the 14th century), which thirsted for knowledge and greeted new discoveries, in the 26th canto of the *Inferno*, makes Ulysses abandon the return home for the sake of knowledge. Alfred Lord Tennyson's version

is similar: the homonymous hero does return but feels suffocated in the tight confines of his homeland and leaves for an unknown destination. The undecided destination of Tennyson is resolved by the Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli in his work "Ultimo viaggio" (1904): after a nine-year stay on Ithaca, Odysseus sets out with his companions on the same journey in reverse, only to discover that nothing remains the same any longer. Similarly, in the *Odyssey* (1917) of Nikos Kazantzakis, Ithaca is not the final destination for the much-travelled Odysseus, but just another stopping-place which will be followed by many others, until the final journey, that of death. In the work of Seferis the constant concern of the poet for *nostos*, along with its related themes (the wandering, the conversation with the dead and the quest for authenticity) is validated by the references to Odysseus that begin from the first collection, *Turning point*, and extend to the last, *Three secret poems*, with a quantitative and qualitative augmentation – in terms of functionality – from *Mythistorema* up to "Thrush".<sup>34</sup> I will not discuss the references to Odysseus whose ironic dimension has been noted in other studies, as, for instance, in the poem "The companions in Hades". I will make reference to some mechanisms of Seferis's poetry that tend to produce ironic polarities, a consequence of the poet's erratic moods that undermines the ardent passion for *nostos* and consequently determines his stance towards the given mythological figures. One can possibly trace other ironic elements: for example, in the poem "Peddler from Sidon", perhaps the peddler constitutes a comic caricature of Odysseus, and forms a dialogue with the Cavafian peddler; but this hypothesis needs a convincing answer, with reference to verses that indicate through their rhetoric whether they are based on ironic contradiction or whether they create ambiguity that by its nature is ironic.

The poet frequently structures the concept of the journey and the wandering on negative images that dictate the meaning of stagnation, inaction, failed attempt, impotence, death. For

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<sup>34</sup> See D. Nikolareizis, "Η παρουσία του Ομήρου στη νέα ελληνική ποίηση", *Νέα Εστία* 491 (Christmas 1947) 153-64; David Ricks, *The shade of Homer. A study in modern Greek poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989); E. Kapsomenos, "Το θέμα του νόστου στην ποίηση του Σεφέρη", *Πόρφυρας* 93 (2000) 255.

example, as early as *Turning point*, in the poem "The mood of a day" we read:

[...]

Where is love that with one stroke cuts time in two and  
stuns it?

Words only and gestures. A monotonous monologue in  
front of a mirror like a wrinkle.

Like a drop of ink a handkerchief, the boredom spreads.

Everyone in the ship is dead, but the ship keeps going the  
way it was heading when it put out from the harbor  
how the captain's nails grew... and the boatswain, who  
had three mistresses in every port, unshaven...

The motif becomes denser from *Mythistorema* onwards; from the eighth section:

[...]

What are they after, our souls, traveling  
on rotten brine-soaked timbers  
from harbor to harbor?

Shifting broken stones, breathing in  
the pine's coolness with greater difficulty each day,  
swimming in the waters of this sea  
and of that sea,  
without the sense of touch  
without men  
in a country that is no longer ours  
nor yours.

The motif recurs frequently in different variations. Here is an extract from the tenth poem of *Mythistorema*:

Our country is closed in. The two black Symplegades  
close it in. When we go down  
to the harbors on Sunday to breathe  
we see, lit in the sunset,  
the broken planks from voyages that never ended,  
bodies that no longer know how to love.

And from the well-known poem "In the manner of G.S." in the *Book of Exercises*:

Meanwhile Greece goes on traveling, always traveling  
 and if we see "the Aegean flower with corpses"<sup>35</sup>  
 it will be with those who tried to catch the big ship by  
     swimming after it  
 those who got tired waiting for the ships that cannot move  
 the ELSI, the SAMOTHRAKI, the AMVRAKIKOS.  
 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 like a stone in white and gold.

As early as the first poem of *Mythistorema* the idea of returning to the homeland is undermined:

We returned to our homes broken,  
 limbs incapable, mouths cracked  
 by the taste of rust and brine.

It is commonly accepted that the function of *nostos* in Seferis's poetry is connected with the loss of identity on both the collective and the individual level. The lost paradise of ancient Greek tradition and the subsequent alienation of man on both levels is usually expressed through images of a dualistic dialectical movement, exemplifying the attempts of the poetic subject (to find, to feel its way through, to understand), which result in failure (it drowns, ends, dies). At times this ironic imagery, so frequent that we need not give further examples, is followed by the certainty of disillusionment, where, of course, there is no room for irony: "Sinks whoever raises the great stones" ("*Mycenae*", *Gymnopaïdia*).

As I have already noted, the rhetoric of Seferis's irony is impressively inventive. Apart from the dual structures, it is frequently supported by the reversal of normal categories of reality, as in the poem "Stratis Thalassinos among the Agapanthi", where the dead and the living exchange roles:

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<sup>35</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 659.

[...]

It's painful and difficult, the living are not enough for me  
 first because they do not speak, and then  
 because I have to ask the dead  
 in order to go on farther.

At certain points, the irony is supported by the intermingling of linguistic codes, as in "*Thrush*", or in the poem "In the manner of G.S."; at other points by means of grammar and syntax, where the instrumental energy of the poem is sustained by the use of gerunds; and at other times by the versification, as the use of traditional metre intertwines with the poetic impasse. Typical from this angle is the poem entitled "*Ballad*", less innocent than it appears at first glance. The poem was composed in 1931 in the idiom of *Erotokritos* and uses unaltered verses from *Erofili*. The form is in ironic contrast to the content of the poem, which projects metaphorically the theme of failure to compose poetry. The present is intertwined ironically with the past, as three time levels are constructed in the poem: the late Middle Ages of the fifteenth century through the form, the Cretan Renaissance of the seventeenth century through the language, and the barren present which the poet tries to overcome, by managing to write a poem with borrowed elements in a single composition.

[...]

Στάλσιμο

Μοίρα που μας επίρες την εξιά,  
 μη γδικιωθείς, τ' ακάτεχα κορμιά  
 τό δεν το μαστορέψα δεν το ξέρα,  
 βούηθα κι αλάφρωνέ μας την καρδιά  
 να χτίζουμε περβόλια στον αγέρα.<sup>36</sup>

However, rhyme sometimes also becomes a joke in Seferis's poetry (e.g. "*Crickets*") or even dissonant (e.g. "*Fog*"). Sometimes the poet uses undisguisedly ironic techniques, inserted in an ironic language in order to create a momentary irony and to direct the mood of the reader, and even perhaps at times his or her inter-

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<sup>36</sup> G. Seferis, *Τετράδιο γυμνασμάτων Β'*, ed. G.P. Savidis (Athens: Ikaros 1976), p. 55.

pretation. For example, in “*Thrush*” we read: “sometimes the hunter hits the migratory birds, / sometimes he doesn’t hit them. Hunting / was good in my time, many felt the pellet”.<sup>37</sup> One cannot fail to notice the enjambement and its contribution to the intensification of the irony.

The systematic study of Seferis’s rhetoric of irony and satire is necessary, not to arrive at a static and barren typology of its tropes, but to endeavour to address, by way of a different route, fundamental questions that his poetry poses, such as: what exactly is his attitude towards tradition? With which poets does he engage in a meaningful dialogue, and how? What are the constituents of his spirituality? What is the development of his poetics, in terms of his courage to state certain things that build up inside him? And so on.

The questions are certainly many and even more the gaps left by this presentation, as my study is still in progress. But one must begin somewhere.

University of Patras

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<sup>37</sup> κάποτε ο κυνηγός βρίσκει τα διαβατάρικά πουλιά / κάποτε δεν τα βρίσκει το κυνήγι / ήταν καλό στα χρόνια μου, πήραν πολλούς τα σκάγια.

# Yorgos Ioannou: fragmentation in life and art

Christopher Robinson

The prose writings of Yorgos Ioannou have attracted relatively little critical attention, largely, I suspect, because critics feel uneasy in the face of their resistance to easy classification. Roderick Beaton, having characterised the early works as "elusive and atmospheric", and whilst claiming that by Ioannou's third collection *Η μόνη κληρονομιά* (1974) the fragments grow into "fully-fledged short stories", observes: "Taken together, Ioannou's stories provide a rueful commentary on the waywardness of human nature, and employ a method of ironic juxtaposition for comic effect, which seems to draw on the example of Cavafy."<sup>1</sup> There are two interesting implications in this for the matter in hand: the notion that the fragments add up to something when viewed as a whole, and the potential ramifications of the parallel with Cavafy. The latter is significant not just because of the importance of the ironic juxtaposition of fragments in the two writers, or even for their handling of time and memory, but because they share a very similar position on the question of sexuality. It highlights a potentially under-explored issue. Critics now take for granted the importance of sexuality to Cavafy.<sup>2</sup> But how do sex and text interrelate in Ioannou's work? What I want to do in this paper, therefore, is to suggest ways in which Ioannou's approach to homosexuality and

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<sup>1</sup> R. Beaton, *An introduction to Modern Greek literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994), pp. 250-1.

<sup>2</sup> True though this may be, with the exception of a useful but basic essay by Mark Lilly in his *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan 1993), there is strangely little recent critical work specifically on Cavafian homosexuality. In making the parallel with Ioannou I am thinking of the emphasis on the outsider, fascination with male beauty and the importance of the gaze, the sense of guilt and the transcending of it, and the privileging of the sensual moment over any kind of linear identity.

his use of the prose fragment as a form of writing, can be interpreted as significantly interdependent.<sup>3</sup>

For Ioannou, fragmentation in life derives, in large part, from the problem of how to construct for himself a workable identity in a world where his sexuality is socially condemned. At one level he shares common ground with the French thinker Roland Barthes, for whom the self is an imaginary construct and any representation of the self must therefore be marked by a sense of its instability and multiplicity. But Ioannou's response to this is closer to that explored in the essay "Identity and identities" by the British philosopher Bernard Williams.<sup>4</sup> Rather than denying the significance of selfhood, Ioannou seems to be looking for ways of establishing a workable sense of identity which is not simply imposed from outside, although it involves his relationship to the world around him. The absence of institutions such as marriage which impose a linear structure on one's private life, and the presence of an alternative pattern of fleeting desires and brief encounters which privilege the moment over the continuum, reinforce the importance of his sense of fragmentation.

There is more than one mode of response, of course, to this situation. Ioannou is not a writer who, in the manner of Kostas Tachtsis, attacks issues of gender and sexuality head-on, in life or in writing. His position on both issues is very different from those of Tachtsis, a fact which reminds us of the dangers of swallowing the simple binary masculine/feminine, straight/gay oppositions around which conventional western thought has traditionally structured our social and cultural perceptions. For

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<sup>3</sup>The two main studies on Ioannou, Anna Di Benedetto Zimbone, *Ghiorgos Ioannu: saggio critico* (Università di Catania 1994) and A. Droukopoulos, *Γιώργος Ιωάννου: ένας οδηγός για την ανάγνωση του έργου του* (Athens 1992), both give attention to what might be called the poetics of his writing, and Droukopoulos also looks at the issue of erotics, but neither seeks to link the two.

<sup>4</sup>In H. Harris (ed.), *Identity* (Oxford 1995). Williams observes that: "The difference between an identity which is mine and which I eagerly recognise as mine, and an identity as what someone else simply assumes me to be, is in one sense all the difference in the world." He recognises in particular the importance for minority groups of being able to choose a personal and group identity within which to work.



Ioannou, homosexuality is about the cult of the hypermasculine: that is to say, he admires and desires a certain sort of body and a certain type of behaviour which are heavily coded as masculine within the Greek environment. Although his precise "ideal man" might be rather different from the Cavafian ephebe, he shares with Cavafy a relative lack of interest in the conventionally feminine. Tachtsis on the contrary deals in transgression of the socially constructed gender boundaries, and consequently revels in the complexities of feminine and masculine stereotyping and crossing-over. When approaching Ioannou's work, therefore, it is essential to remember that there is no monolithic homosexuality, there are only *homosexualities*, although different authors can and do share significant features. Consequently, Ioannou's assumption of his homosexuality has none of the flamboyance of Tachtsis, just as it does not engage with issues of gender boundaries, and we have no reason to expect him to embody his desires in game-playing, self-conscious texts of the Tachtsis variety. Nonetheless, Ioannou places great emphasis on the importance of what he variously refers to as η ερωτική ροή, το ερωτικό θέμα, or η ερωτική κατάσταση, and welcomes the label of ερωτικός συγγραφέας. It is a much less *overtly* physical view of sexual identity than that of Tachtsis, or even of Cavafy, in that Ioannou distinguishes between the ερωτικό and the σεξουαλικό, but it is no less important to his work, nor can the physical input be underestimated. As he puts it in an early poem:

Όλα μπορείς να τα σπαράξεις,  
όμως ποτέ τον έρωτα.<sup>5</sup>

A key text which develops the point is "Ιερά ανακραυγάσματα" in *Καταπακτή*,<sup>6</sup> where the sounds emitted during sexual pleasure, particularly the sounds of the receiving partner, are equated with the language at its most powerful. To speak effectively, powerfully, is in Ioannou's terms to speak the flesh, an act which negates the binary distinction passive receptor/active expressor,

<sup>5</sup> "Τα βήματα σου", quoted by Zimbone, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> Y. Ioannou, *Καταπακτή* (Athens: Gnosi 1982).

since it is the passive reception which generates the power of the expression.

In the case of Ioannou, it is the sense of difference, of otherness, which predominates in his early sexual self-perceptions, and this is paralleled in other perceptions of difference which from a young age played a large part in his life: his family's refugee roots; the different class-origins of his parents and the relatively deprived nature of his family's economic condition; and the growing unease of belonging to the working class and yet in a deeper sense not being fully of it, which is paralleled by his growing unease *within* the family. The same elements of difference play a role in his wider social isolation. Nowhere is the marking of class/cultural isolation greater than when he writes about the way in which his accent and his grasp of educated syntax made him an object of derision to his school-mates in *Η πρωτεύουσα των προσφύγων*.<sup>7</sup> The overriding sense of oppression and need for escape that they produce is reflected in the diary which he kept in late adolescence.<sup>8</sup> At the same time there is from his earliest writing the sense of a strong need to *belong*. So here we have three classic impulses of the Romantic and post-Romantic pariah-figure: a sense of doubt about the defining parameters of one's identity, a sense of exclusion, and a need to belong, all traits easily assimilable to homosexual experience in a homophobic environment.

In what precise ways does all this relate to sexuality in the thematics of Ioannou's writings? In the text "Έτσι θα 'ναι και τότε", in *Καταπακτή*, Ioannou describes how this experience leads him to acquire his sexual sensibilities in a silence and isolation which privilege *sight* over the other senses as a form of potential communication. Significantly, in "Έτσι θα 'ναι και τότε", as if to dramatise this sense of the self-as-voyeur for the reader of the text, Ioannou addresses the self in the second person.<sup>9</sup> For Ioannou, as for the French Surrealists, sight generates two distinct actions: looking and seeing. *Looking* is by definition an exterior action, marking a process of separation. *Seeing*, on the

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<sup>7</sup> Idem, *Η πρωτεύουσα των προσφύγων* (Athens: Kedros 1984), pp. 120-1.

<sup>8</sup> See Droukopoulos, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> This technique is used increasingly in his 1980s writing, as Droukopoulos points out, op. cit., pp. 145-7.

other hand, can offer a model of connection. The point is made in another text in *Καταπακτή*, “Το κέλυφος”:

Μέσα σ' αυτό το κέλυφος κρύβεται πεισματικά η αληθινή χαρά και η έκσταση. Γι' αυτό και όταν κυκλοφορείς στους δρόμους είσαι, συνήθως, σαν αδιάφορος ερωτικά, σαν ξεχωρισμένος από τις ερωτικές ώρες σου – δεν είσαι περιχυμένος από ερωτικούς χυμούς ανά πάσα στιγμή. Αυτό γίνεται μόνο όταν αντικριστείς με το πρόσωπο που θαρρείς ότι έχει την ικανότητα να σου σπάσει το κέλυφος [...] Όχι μόνο ερωτικές επαφές δεν είναι απαραίτητες, μα δεν χρειάζεται ούτε καλημέρα καμιά φορά, για να πάρει να ραγίζει το κέλυφος. Μια ματιά είναι αρκετή, ακόμα και μόνο δική σου, μη διασταυρωμένη ματιά, για να νιώσεις πως κάτι το ιδιαίτερο συμβαίνει μέσα σου.<sup>10</sup>

This defence of the power and validity of indirect contact matches Ioannou's evident acceptance that homosexual desire can best be expressed indirectly within the Greek society for which he writes. Such desire is at its most overt in the presentation of the male body; it is at its most pervasive in a generalised model of desire which, in the interview-article “*Θεωρούμαι ερωτικός συγγραφέας*”, he calls “a fetishism of things and of course a fetishism of language”.<sup>11</sup> It is easy to categorise this as escapism, as a way of evading the issue. But you will find the same model promoted by the extremely up-front gay French writer Renaud Camus in his novel *L'Épuisant désir de ces choses*,<sup>12</sup> where it is part of the argument that sexual identity is an illusion and that what counts is the shifting forms of desire

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<sup>10</sup> “True joy and ecstasy obstinately hide inside this shell. That is why when you are out in the streets, you are usually more or less indifferent in erotic terms, as if separated from your erotic moments – erotic sap isn't flowing through you at every moment. That only happens when you come face to face with the individual who has the power to break the shell. [...] Not only are erotic contact and acts not indispensable but it doesn't even take so much as a good-morning sometimes to shatter the shell. A glance is sufficient, even a glance of your own which is not met, for you to feel the same thing happening inside you” (pp. 88-9).

<sup>11</sup> Cited by Droukopoulos, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Renaud Camus, *L'Épuisant désir de ces choses* (Paris: P.O.L. 1995).

itself. In this respect Ioannou's position is in fact comparable with the view of love expounded by Barthes, particularly in *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*,<sup>13</sup> and subsequently developed by French radical Queer Theory. The Ioannou who evokes his sense of fascinated unease in a working-class bath-house ("Λιμενικά λουτρό"<sup>14</sup>), constructs a climactic invocation to the muscular body of the contemporary αλήτης ("Περί του κάλλους και πού βρισκόμαστε σήμερα"<sup>15</sup>), or discusses the problem of his instant physical excitement when faced with naked bodies in a Turkish bath or at the sea ("Νέες εξηγήσεις για το κολύμπημα"<sup>16</sup>), *hides* nothing. Indeed, in the last-quoted example, he ridicules the absurdity of trying to hide desire. He is merely refusing the limitations of the binary labelling by which heterosexual society, even at its most tolerant, seeks to create a *cordon sanitaire* between itself and other forms of desire.

How is all this embodied in Ioannou's writing at a level beyond that of overt discussion? I have twice mentioned parallels between Ioannou and Barthes. I think that there is a workable third parallel, though it is less close. Barthes makes much of the opposition between *Œuvre* and *Texte* (*Work* and *Text*). As Michael Moriarty explains:

The Work is a material object, a book, processed through institutions, not only the market-place, but the educational apparatus in which literature is taught. Through these institutions it is classified as novel, poem, and so forth, and also interpreted, provided with a signified, according to various scholarly or critical techniques. It is tied to an author, in the usual sense, or to some cause outside itself [e.g. literary or intellectual influence]; all these approaches provide it with a father, an authority over meaning.<sup>17</sup>

A *Text* by contrast refuses generic boundaries and what Barthes calls *doxa* (= public opinion, including scholarly tradition). Now

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<sup>13</sup> Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Editions du Seuil 1977).

<sup>14</sup> In *Η Σαρκοφάγος* (Athens: Kedros 1971), pp. 65-71.

<sup>15</sup> In *Καταπακτή*, pp. 177-81.

<sup>16</sup> In *Καταπακτή*, pp. 165-7.

<sup>17</sup> M. Moriarty, *Roland Barthes* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1991), p. 143.

Ioannou, unlike Barthes or even Tachtsis,<sup>18</sup> has no interest in the so-called death of the author, i.e. the notion that the writing individual is not present in and controlling the text he writes. On the contrary, Ioannou is constructing, out of his fragments, a work which embodies his sense of self. But the key point is that it is *Ioannou* who is constructing it. It is imperative that the literary identity of this *Work* be determined by him and not by the *doxa*. And one of the best ways to do this is to explore the power of fragmentation, creating a direct link between the form and the experience and discouraging the reader from assimilating the text to customary patterns of reading. Nowhere is this determination to subvert traditional expectations about literary writing more evident than in his celebration of Omonoia Square in Athens, *Ομόνοια 1980*.<sup>19</sup> Since it is a text in which homosexuality is very much at issue thematically, it affords an excellent starting point for any attempt to match sexuality and textuality.

This is physically a tripartite text; it consists of three elements/layers of text: an italicised "rubric" of personal generalised reflections runs along the tops of the pages, above a main text which is focussed on the physical and human geography of the square, and a set of photographs which deal principally with representations of the male, in that they are shots of individuals and groups of men within the square. It is a text which dramatises both *masculinity*, in various forms, and *otherness*, in this sense: the voice of the rubric and the eye behind the photographs both mark distance from the figures within the verbal (and in the former case also the visual) main text. Initially there seems to be a clear gap between a typically Greek male-centred café-society, with its erotically charged idling macho protagonists, and a homosexual outsider, who makes his sexual response very clear in the rubric:

Τι άλλο μπορείς να κάνεις παρά να περπατάς και ολοένα  
να μουρμουρίζεις φράσεις, προτάσεις, στίχους και άλλα

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<sup>18</sup> Tachtsis specifically plays with the concept in the foreword to *Το φοβερό βήμα*.

<sup>19</sup> Y. Ioannou, *Ομόνοια 1980* (Athens: Odysseas 1980). Page references are to the third edition, 1987.

τέτοια κομματιάσματα, καθώς το βλέμμα σου καρφώνεται εδώ και εκεί σε πρόσωπα, κινήσεις, μέλη και κορμοστάσεις κι αναπηδούν αυθόρμητα από την καρδιά προς το μυαλό οι λέξεις που άλλοι χυδαίες τις λένε και άλλοι του κρεβατιού και που εσένα πάντως σε τινάζουν και σου δίνουν δύναμη.<sup>20</sup>

But as the text progresses, it becomes clearer that homoeroticism is part of what binds the observer to the scene, and not a separating factor. Thus the phrase "Omonioia is frequented by suspect bodies" (26) widens out into:

Βέβαια, το φαινόμενο που είναι περισσότερο συνδεδεμένο στη συνείδηση του κόσμου, με την Ομόνοια, είναι η ερωτική αναζήτηση. Όπου συχνάζουν φαντάροι, επαρχιάτες νέοι και υποψιασμένα κορμιά, είναι φυσικό να μαζεύονται και ομοφυλόφιλοι, εννοώ δηλαδή άνθρωποι πιο συνειδητοί σ' αυτού του είδους τον έρωτα.<sup>21</sup>

– a definition which not only homosexualises Omonioia but, by the phrase "more consciously", discreetly refuses a simple binary division of masculine sexuality.

It is only when we add in the photographs to the equation, however, that the text takes on its full meaning. The photographs do four things: (i) They represent the stereotypically macho, e.g. soldiers; (ii) they parody the stereotypically macho, e.g. child with gun; (iii) they represent the "feminine" through the choice of non-macho bodies or through pose: just as in one

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<sup>20</sup> "What else can you do but walk and keep murmuring phrases, sentences, verses and other snatches of things, as your gaze fastens here and there on faces, movements, limbs, body postures, and words leap up from the heart to the brain, words which some call crude, others call bed-words, but which, be that as it may, both shake and strengthen you..." (pp. 10-14). Note both the use of the word κομματιάσματα and the fragmented representation of people in terms of faces, movements and postures.

<sup>21</sup> "Of course, the phenomenon which is most clearly connected in the world's consciousness with Omonioia is erotic pursuit, particularly homosexual erotic pursuit. Where there are crowds of soldiers, young men from the provinces and dubious characters, it's natural for homosexuals to collect, I mean, that is, men who more consciously pursue sexual love of that sort" (p. 28).

tradition of gay photography, e.g. the work of the American Tom Bianchi,<sup>22</sup> which consciously refers to late antique statuary, the hypermasculinity of developed muscular legs, buttocks, arms and chests is offset by the way in which the weight of the body is distributed, or by the adoption of a curving posture, so in the Omonoia photographs the "weight thrown on to one leg" position is used to emphasise other "non-macho" signs, e.g. in flamboyantly patterned or cut clothing. But it is the fourth element, the gazer's ability to choose a sexual angle on his male subjects, which is the most important element in this respect – the photographs show a marked preference for backsides, often emphasised by pose.<sup>23</sup>

Now, if we took this last element on its own, it would constitute an exercise of power – the power of the gaze to reduce the male to object status. But once we add the photographic eroticisation/objectification of the male to the motifs of desire in the written text, we see that the text as a whole *refuses* difference of sexual subject/sexual object: sexuality is precisely what binds the viewer to the viewed. The importance of this goes beyond the subject of sex itself, because this is a text about *power*.<sup>24</sup> It is a social text, lamenting the destruction of this environment, i.e. the destruction of a group which, however superficially heterogeneous, was in fact a united group of those rejecting conventional divisions of class and gender. The tripartite text, a protest about the exercise of power, itself subverts power divisions both thematically and aesthetically: it overrides divisions, such

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<sup>22</sup> See for example Kenneth Dutton, *The Perfectible Body* (London 1995), p. 225.

<sup>23</sup> Whilst it could be argued that photographing a *mangas* from the back is the best way of avoiding being punched on the nose, there is no doubt that this is also an angle favoured by photographers interested in the erotics of the male body. See for example Dutton, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-9 and 262-3. Note also that posture is one of the elements picked on by the secret voice of the rubric in the list of things which excite his gaze.

<sup>24</sup> In this respect again there is a clear distinction between Ioannou and Barthes. Whilst Ioannou shares Barthes's view that love can be a force for social disruption or transgression, he quite clearly rejects his assertion in *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* that love finds no place in a social language of power or contestation.

that no conventional concepts of masculinity can be shown to prevail, any more than conventional concepts of genre, narrative structure or even artistic medium are applicable to it. A “femininity” inherent in the *mangas* (revealed in terms of clothes, posture), coupled with his willingness to serve as an object for homosexual desire, balances his macho image and reputation; the outsider status of the observer, both in the rubric and the photographs, is overridden by the links thus established between him and the male subjects of the text. At a significant level he *joins* them, despite the physical/social distance separating them. In the same way, the “personal” commentary, the documentary text and the photographs are dependent on each other for their meaning. Where there is a potential sense of thematic “inferiority” (the voice of the rubric as outsider), it is balanced by opposing images (the rubric runs *above* the main text; the rubric *shares* sexualised perception with the photographs). Observer and observed are thus as interdependent as rubric, text and image. Equality prevails. This in turn affects our perception of the speaker/seer, who is diffused between three discourses: the private space of the rubric, the public space of the socio-geographical disquisition and the representation of what and how he sees in the photographs. We “know” him both through the self and through the *other*. The knowledge is inevitably indirect and unstable but the multiplicity of viewpoints ensures that the self represented is more complete than that of a simple first-person account.

Much of what I have just said about *Ομόνοια 1980* might seem at odds with my earlier quote from “Το κέλυφος” to the effect that when you are out in the streets, you are usually more or less indifferent in erotic terms. Given that identity in general, and sexual identity in particular, is not to be read as a static or monolithic concept, oppositions and divergences in Ioannou’s work are not simply to be read as contradictions. But in this case what we have is not even a divergence. We must remember the social dimension of the *Omonoia* text, and that the square’s inhabitants are not just “Greeks in the street” but a special group, marginalised like Ioannou himself. His relationship to those in the square is eroticised because they have the “power to break the shell” of which he speaks in “Το κέλυφος”, even if the glance is not returned.



*Ομόνοια 1980* represents a number of key points in Ioannou's textualisation of his sexuality. His self is projected into three fragmentary (in the sense that they are discrete) discourses which are left to comment on one another. The issue of the relation between private and public space in the thematics of the text is thus reflected in its different linguistic spaces, the construction of the commentary requiring active participation by the reader. At the same time the whole piece constitutes a protest against disempowerment and a defence of subcultures which is as dismissive of consensus values in society as the generic instability of the text is disruptive of the *doxa*. For these reasons the *Omonoia* text provides a convenient entrée into interpreting the world of Ioannou's writings. I shall now look at some short texts to consider: (i) how the motifs of private and public space, of difference, marginalisation and looking embodied in *Ομόνοια 1980* manifest themselves in Ioannou's characteristic short texts; and (ii) how that relates to the *forms* of writing as opposed to its content.

The collection on which I want to focus is *Η Σαρκοφάγος* (1971). The work is defined as *πεζογραφήματα* and the title is the same as that of one of the texts which it contains, but it is a *precise* title, not (for example) *Η Σαρκοφάγος και άλλα πεζογραφήματα*. Now, the individual text of that name is not the first or the last; it is seventeenth out of 29, coming a little over halfway through. So I shall begin by looking at two issues: what is the significance of that text in itself, and what is the implication of using its title to define the collection? It is a very brief text, seven paragraphs in all. It has a first-person narrator who provides the "eye" of the narration, and a central object of perception, the sarcophagus. The I/eye defines himself (i) in terms of isolation and separation, in the first paragraph: "Moreover, I find all empty, dark streets restful"; and (ii) as a literal outsider-figure who leaves the city only to find it changed on his return in the final paragraph. The *object* of perception, the sarcophagus, is also isolated and displaced – in the opening sentence it is described as lying discarded for years in a very narrow side-street, and it is treated with disdain, e.g. urinated on. But the sarcophagus is also associated with *love and desire*. Its sides are described as decorated with cupids and it has a naked couple on the lid apparently continuing their love-making: "συνέχιζαν

θαρρείς τους θαυμάσιους έρωτές τους". This object is for the narrator an object of adoration: as the closing sentence of the first paragraph puts it, "Η σαρκοφάγος εκείνη ήταν ολόκληρη η λατρευτή ειδωλολατρεία για μένα." Here then we have the key elements of Ioannou's eroticism as defined by Droukopoulos<sup>25</sup> and the markers of a homosexual "sense of difference" which I talked about earlier: an interlinked pattern of isolation, difference and erotic attraction. Ioannou develops this in the next five paragraphs in terms of the element so important in *Ομόνοια 1980*, the gaze which generates erotic fantasy. The observer-narrator finds that in the sarcophagus a pair of young lovers have made their love-nest. He imagines them embracing inside it, naked. Any potential prurience in this is removed by his insistence on their right to privacy, defined in terms of *aural* space rather than visual: he does not eavesdrop on them ("μισώ τα κρυφακούσματα όσο τίποτε άλλο στον κόσμο"). Nonetheless the narrator does associate himself with their experience by *caressing* the sarcophagus as he passes (a consciously sexual verb of touch).

The significance of *secret* love-making is brought out in the fourth paragraph. The narrator reflects, unanswered, on the question of why the lovers should choose such an out-of-the-way and uncomfortable spot: "Who was hindering them or hounding them?" He makes much of the narrowness of the sarcophagus, and the implicit paradox of finding freedom in constriction. It is almost as if he were answering Donne's "The grave's a fine and private place / but none I think do there embrace", by showing that, for the pariah, the taboo places are the surest ones. He may also be playing with traditional straight associations between homosexuality and non-procreativity (though in the age of AIDS the image of the sarcophagus takes on a new resonance). The narrator firmly makes the point that these cannot be ordinary lovers, because society connives at *their* relationships. An obvious answer is that they are gay. Why doesn't Ioannou state this directly? One reason is presumably that by refusing to specify the specific form of unacceptability of their sexuality Ioannou is stressing the arbitrary division between "the normal" and all other forms of desire. At the same time, the more doubt there is, the more firmly the narrator is prevented from having

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<sup>25</sup> See n. 3.

the comforting sense of "collusion with his own kind" which knowledge would bring. So we now have two roles for the narrator, and two sets of relationships: society/exclusion/neglect *versus* the narrator + the lovers (joined by his eroticised perception of the sarcophagus); and narrator (excluded observer) *versus* the lovers (protected by the sarcophagus). In the first of these relationships, the narrator's imagination has created a bridge between himself and the lovers, but in the second he is doubly excluded – by those who are not like him (society) *and* by those that are (the lovers). This makes most sense if we assume that he *is* fantasising the lovers as gay, and wants to join them. The only role in which he can insert himself into the lovers' successful relationship is by fantasising about himself as a jealous third party. Hence the narrator projects himself into a mythical role – the unattractive Hephaestus catching Ares and Aphrodite (conventional masculinity/femininity and sex) together.<sup>26</sup> The literary dimensions of this are stressed by the reference to the narrator's re-reading of *Odyssey* IX, where the myth is recounted.

So what we now have is: a "real" world (two gay/hunted lovers protecting themselves from the outside in the sarcophagus) whose significance for the isolated desiring I/eye of the narrator is translated into terms of *art* – the erotic carving on the sarcophagus/the story told in *Odyssey* IX. Before the narrator can cross this barrier between "reality" and "art" – he wants to integrate himself into the lovers' world by shutting the lid and temporarily trapping them inside – a "real" pervert/"real" myth, that of the δράκος, a serial killer, frightens both him and the lovers away. When he sees the sarcophagus again, years later, it has lost its sexual charge and with it its sense of life; the neighbourhood has been lit and integrated into society, the sarcophagus has been moved into the museum gardens.

The story reflects both the experience of otherness/distance/separation in an erotic context which characterises Ioannou's homosexuality, and the ambiguous belonging/not belonging which the charge of the erotic gaze gives to him in a homosexual

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<sup>26</sup> For Ioannou's choice of the bodily disadvantaged Hephaestus as a self-image cf. his dismissal of his own body, in the text "Λιμενικά λουτρά", in contrast with those of the working-class young men he desires.

context. It is only through the imagination that he can be linked to the couple, who even in their successful pursuit of sexual satisfaction are separating themselves from Ioannou. The only force overriding the separation is art/literature: the text which provides the connection between narrator and lovers (the myth as told in *Odyssey* IX) and the sarcophagus constituted by Ioannou's story itself, in which narrator and lovers are permanently enclosed. The story, like the sarcophagus, risks losing its erotic charge when "brought to light" just as the sarcophagus has become a dead thing in the museum garden, unless we imaginatively re-integrate it into its context (the rest of the collection) and re-envisage its secret (erotic fulfilment in the narrow space it provides). Read like this it is obvious that the individual text "Η σαρκοφάγος", with its correlation of isolation, the gaze, the erotic and the reality/art dichotomy, ought to function as a key to the collection as a whole, and that its displacement into an unnoticed corner of the collection is in fact merely emblematic. So the next question is: if the collection is a sarcophagus which contains and protects Ioannou's erotic sensibility (including his ambiguous relationship with his fellow homosexuals), and which transfers that experience into art, how is this reflected in the contents and form of the collection?

The thematics of negative difference are easy to find in the childhood pieces, notably in the text "Τα παρατσούκλια", where naming is the classic method of distancing – the child is literally *labelled* as other by his peers, and the difference is used by the school-teacher as a way of bridging her own distance, i.e. as a way of ingratiating herself with the class. (Contrast the refusal of the narrator of "Η σαρκοφάγος" to label the lovers' sexual difference, even in the cause of associating himself with them.) The thematics of positive difference are rarer but no less important – integration into a working-class group and worship of the developed male body in "Λιμενικά λουτρά". The full implications of difference are perhaps best developed in "Το κρεβάτι", and as this text also beautifully echoes a number of other aspects of "Η σαρκοφάγος" I shall focus on it for the rest of my interpretation.

The factual content of the text is, again, slight. The narrator remembers a Jewish friend, whose family were taken away (and presumably killed) by the Germans. The bed was his, and when

the flat was plundered by the other inhabitants of the block, the narrator had made his family take it so that he could sleep in it himself. Izos, the Jewish lad, provides a fundamental symbol of the evils of arbitrary social labelling of a sort more chilling than the psychologically destructive naming in "Τα παρατσούκλια". But through the motif of the bed itself Ioannou also eroticises this difference. First, the bed is associated with Izos's body and with the narrator's own first awareness of puberty: he had shared a bed with Izos. The resulting awareness is expressed both in an image of the gaze: "Τότε πρωτοείδα το νεανικό τριχωτό στεφάνι της ήβης", and in a more frankly sensual image: "μας είχαν κοιμίσει αγκαλιά στο κρεβάτι αυτό" (39). Second, the bed-bugs which survive to bite the narrator after Izos's departure are offered as a symbol of continuing union – the transfer of Izos's blood to the narrator makes them, as blood-brothers, two of a kind, brothers in difference. The bed is in fact another version of the sarcophagus: it is associated with death (Izos's deportation), narrow (it's a single bed), and private, and it becomes a rejected object (towards the end of the text even the rag-and-bone men don't want it). Above all, at the close of the text the narrator is wondering whether he would not be better off returning to that bed. He rejects the literal sexual implications of the double bed in which he now sleeps (implicitly alone) and yearns for the narrow bed as a generator of imagination/visions: "Ας ξαναβρώ τουλάχιστο τις φαντασίες μου και τα παλιά οράματά μου" (49).

I have so far looked at the transference of thematic motifs. What do we have at a *formal* level to recall the sarcophagus? There are not, as there are in *Ομόνοια 1980*, obvious markers of difference like the physical division of the prose into two, or the presence of photographs. The two key elements in *Η Σαρκοφάγος* are: (i) the text as fragment, and (ii) the refusal of a clear *generic* function/label, the two things being interrelated. In both the texts "Η σαρκοφάγος" and "Το κρεβάτι" narrowness/closedness is associated with the generative power of the imagination. The fragment is the formal equivalent of this narrowness – constricting but providing a space whose content is not predetermined by cultural conventions. It too is presumably therefore a vehicle for release of the imagination. Now, as the text "Η εγγραφή" states in its conclusion, imagination cannot change

reality. Its power is limited to its own sphere. The converse of this is that exposure of art to conventional reality *will* change/destroy art – hence the death of the sarcophagus in the museum garden. Art can however do what life cannot, or at least, what conventional heterosexual society does not: it can refuse arbitrary binary classifications, notably the division between the real and the imaginary. Just as the sarcophagus (a place associated with death) is turned into a place for sex/love, so the prose fragment is turned into an embodiment of both the real (autobiographical) and the imaginary (the fictional), which acknowledges that the self constructed by one's own perceptions is in the strictest sense imaginary. The "real" self (the documentary self as perceived in society and the psychological self reflecting on that experience) is presented as a series of unlabelled fragments "preserved" inside the body of the text, just as the "real" sexual identity of the lovers is constructed within the sarcophagus, or indeed within the narrow bed, in a form which is both protected and unlabelled.

It is interesting to see conventional criticism trying to come to terms with this form of writing. The back cover of *Η μόνη κληρονομιά* comments uneasily on the fact that that collection of texts is called διηγήματα: "The texts of *Η μόνη κληρονομιά* incline more towards the story than to the πεζογράφημα as Yorgos Ioannou, who is considered to have introduced it into our literature, understands it and writes it." Ostensibly one might suppose this to be a judgment based on the relative importance of the documentary elements in the two collections. But that will not hold as an argument. The title story of *Η μόνη κληρονομιά* in particular is exactly akin in its autobiographical reminiscence to "Τα παρατσούκλια" from the earlier collection. In fact, the only notable difference between the texts of the two collections is that those characterised as "stories" are slightly longer, and many are couched in the third person singular. Like the photographs in *Ομόνοια 1980*, these texts tend to represent constructions of the "other" around the writer, ways of looking at what is outside him which at the same time reflect the nature of his own perception: the *eye* is substituted for the *I*. The political context of the close of the dictatorship in which these pieces were composed may play a part in this variation of focus. There are nonetheless also texts in the first person, and at least one,

“Ομίχλη”, is fragmentary in the manner of “Η σαρκοφάγος”: it functions like a prose-poem, with a central image that identifies the self with the mist in which it loves to envelop itself. Whether the change of generic definition is Ioannou’s or his editor’s I do not know. In practice the labels on the books mean little in themselves; between them they draw attention to the reader’s need for labels (and relative disconcertment at an unfamiliar label such as *πεζογράφημα*) and the misleading nature of the familiar: the texts of *Η μόνη κληρονομιά* may narrate (as the etymology of *διηγήματα* suggests they should), but they cannot be read simply as conventional fictions. *De facto* the issue of labels is a red herring. All the texts are fragments, whether their form suggests the conventional short story, “autofiction”, the *πεζογράφημα* or even the *χρονογράφημα*. At one level such fragments may consciously relate to the cultural heritage, e.g. the reference to *Odyssey* IX in “Η σαρκοφάγος” or the invoking of Poe in “Στις παρυφές”,<sup>27</sup> while declining to integrate themselves clearly with it. At another, the unpredictable status of the narrating voice, the shifts between anecdote, moral reflection, description, the choice of unexplained tense sequence (particularly the future) or pronouns (as in undefined second-person address) all defy the pigeon-holing process of conventional reading.<sup>28</sup> What is essential is that the fragment in Ioannou’s case is not a device *à la Barthes* for the prevention of ultimate meaning<sup>29</sup> (just as he does not believe in the death of the author), but is a way of preventing ultimate meaning coming from outside, i.e. of pre-

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<sup>27</sup> See *Το δικό μας αίμα* (Athens: Ermis 1978), p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to contrast Ioannou’s disruption of the reading process with that of Tachtsis in *Τα ρέστα*. Tachtsis plays with the reader’s natural tendency to assume that a series of first-person voices represent the same persona in order to disorientate the reader. This he does as part of a strategy to establish the centrality of the self-as-writer. Ioannou shows no signs of wishing to mystify or confuse the reader. It is merely the case that for him the lived self only makes sense as a series of fragments, and that the reader must be kept constantly aware of that fact.

<sup>29</sup> For Barthes, as Moriarty puts it (op. cit., p. 101): “The fragmentary structure keeps the signifier on top, where it belongs, prevents an ultimate meaning from arriving to close down its operations.” Ioannou wants to direct the possibilities of meaning, not to suppress them.

venting the application of the *doxa*. As such it exactly mirrors on an aesthetic plane Ioannou's struggle to prevent socially defined otherness from engulfing him.

I hope that my analysis has demonstrated that there is a significant link between fragmentation as a mode of self-perception and as a mode of expression in Ioannou's work. This raises the further question: is the above reading compatible with the idea of change/development? *Ομόνοια 1980* suggests a coming-to-terms with or overcoming of the obsession with rejection and difference which marks the childhood narratives. In it, sexuality, which had risked seeming the confirmation of childhood otherness, becomes the key factor which links Ioannou both to the objects of his desire and to the socially disempowered on a broader scale. This degree of development must be recognised. On the other hand *Καταπακτή*, which includes texts, notably "Το κέλυφος", that still embody images of isolation and difference, was published two years after *Ομόνοια 1980*. This is only to be expected, given that Ioannou's work as a whole embodies a refusal to be fixed, a rejection of linearity, the adoption of a plurivocality in which the definable contours of identity, personal and literary, become those which the author chooses, rather than those which society or the *doxa* seek to impose.

Christ Church, Oxford



## ***The year 2000–2001 at Cambridge***

### *Students*

Michelle Malakouna graduated with an upper second class degree (Modern and Medieval Languages). Her Part II examinations included three papers on Modern Greek language, literature and history and a dissertation on Cypriot prose fiction since 1974. Timon Karamanos-Cleminson also graduated with a II.1. He offered a paper on twentieth-century Greek literature, thought, and history in his final year, as well as papers in French.

Thea Constantinides, who graduated in 2000, was awarded first prize in the 2000 London Hellenic Society competition for an essay by an undergraduate.

Three students successfully completed the examinations for the Certificate in Modern Greek. Ralph Anderson was awarded a Distinction and Rachel Fentem passed with Credit. Kirsi Lorentz and Alice Wilson were awarded a Diploma in Modern Greek.

Maria Vlassopoulou submitted her PhD thesis in December 2000 and was approved for the degree in May 2001. The title of her thesis is: "Literary writing and the recording of history: a study of Marinos Tzane Bounialis' *The Cretan War* (17th century)".

### *Teaching and research staff*

Ms Margarita Tsota continued as Language Assistant in Modern Greek, seconded by the Greek Ministry of Education. Language teaching was also undertaken by Dr Anna Mastrogianni and Efrosini Camatsos. Dr Dimitris Livanios, Georgakis Research Fellow in Modern Greek and Balkan History and an Affiliated Lecturer, taught courses in modern Greek history. Dr Jocelyn Pye, also an Affiliated Lecturer, taught courses in Greek prose fiction. With funding provided by the Faculty of Classics and the Modern Greek Section, Dr Io Manolessou carried out preliminary research for a grammar of medieval Greek during the period from February to May 2001.

*Visiting scholars*

The Modern Greek Section hosted four visiting scholars during the course of the year. Dr Birgit Olsen, of the University of Copenhagen, spent the period from January to July 2001 as Carlsberg Fellow at Churchill College. Professor Bo-Lennart Eklund, of the University of Gothenburg, was in Cambridge in May-June 2001 on sabbatical leave from his university. Professor Dia Philippides (Boston College) and Professor Wim Bakker (formerly of the University of Amsterdam) visited Cambridge in July 2001 to pursue their bibliographical researches.

*Visiting speakers*

In the Michaelmas Term a series of four special lectures was arranged to mark the centenary of the birth of George Seferis. A varied range of topics was covered in the lectures given in the Lent and Easter Terms. The speakers and their titles were as follows:

11 October. Dr Katerina Kostiou (University of Patras): *The poetics of subversion in Seferis's poetry*

25 October. Professor Roderick Beaton (King's College London): *Reading Seferis's politics and the politics of reading Seferis*

8 November. Professor Peter Mackridge (St Cross College, Oxford): *Seferis and the prophetic voice*

22 November. Dr Katerina Krikos-Davis (University of Birmingham): *The King of Asine, Makriyannis, Seferis and ourselves*

24 January. Dr Margaret E. Kenna (University of Wales Swansea): *Changing meanings and uses of a sacred site: Apollo's temple on Anafi*

7 February. Professor Mark Mazower (Birkbeck College, London): *Travellers to nineteenth-century Thessaloniki*

21 February. Professor Christopher Robinson (Christ Church, Oxford): *Yorgos Ioannou: fragmentation as life and art*

7 March. Ed Emery: *Songs of the Greek Underworld: researching the rebetika tradition*

2 May. Dr Philip Carabott (King's College London): *The everyday lives and silences of a National Army soldier and his wife during the Greek Civil War*

9 May. Professor Bo-Lennart Eklund (University of Gothenburg): *Greek sporting terms of foreign origin*

### *Graduate Seminar*

The Graduate Seminar met on twelve occasions during the year. Papers were given by the following members of the seminar: Efrosini Camatsos, Tassos Kaplanis, Dimitris Livanios, Jocelyn Pye and Seraphim Seferiades. Further papers were contributed by six invited speakers: Dr Alexis Dimaras (Athens), Professor Stathis Gauntlett (La Trobe University), Dr Tina Lendari (University of Thessaly), Dr Birgit Olsen (University of Copenhagen), Professor Alexis Politis (University of Crete) and Notis Toufexis (University of Hamburg).

### *The SCOMGIU Greek Weekend*

The 2001 Greek Weekend for undergraduates was due to take place in Cambridge, but because of practical difficulties it was transferred to the University of East Anglia at Norwich. The organisation was undertaken jointly by Dr David Holton (Cambridge) and Lela Anagnostopoulou-Banakas (UEA). The Weekend, which took place on 17-18 March 2001, was attended by about 50 students and 11 members of teaching staff. A generous grant from the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation made the event possible.

### *Activities of members of the Modern Greek Section*

Dr David Holton was promoted to a Readership in Modern Greek with effect from October 2000. He gave a paper on "Classical Antiquity and the Cretan Renaissance" at King's College London in March 2001, and chaired a session at a conference on "Greece and the Balkans: Cultural encounters since the Enlightenment" at the University of Birmingham in June 2001. He will continue as Chairman of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages until December 2002. He has published:

"Georgios Chortatsis" and "Vitsentzos Kornaros", in: G. Speake (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, (Fitzroy Dearborn, London-Chicago 2000), pp. 324-6, 908-10.

"The Cretan Renaissance", in: Davina Huxley (ed.), *Cretan Quests: British explorers, excavators and historians* (British School at Athens, London 2000), pp. 195-202.

(With Dia M.L. Philippides) *Του κύκλου τα γυρίσματα. Ο Ερωτόκριτος σε ηλεκτρονική ανάλυση*. Τόμος Α' (Ermis, Athens 2000).

“Η εισαγωγή μιας κριτικής έκδοσης: Σε ποια ερωτήματα θα έπρεπε να απαντήσει ο εκδότης ενός κειμένου;”, in: H. Eideneier et al. (eds.), *Θεωρία και πράξη των εκδόσεων της υστεροβυζαντινής, αναγεννησιακής και μεταβυζαντινής δημόσιας γραμματείας* (Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις Κρήτης, Irakleio 2001), pp. 251-70.  
*Μελέτες για τον Ερωτόκριτο και άλλα νεοελληνικά κείμενα* (Kastaniotis, Athens 2001).

Dr Dimitris Livianos taught two new courses in Balkan history: “From Sarajevo to Sarajevo: the Balkans 1914-1992”, for the Cambridge Faculty of History, and “From Berlin to Dayton: the Balkans 1878-1995”, for Birkbeck College, University of London. In July and August 2001 he taught a course on “Nations and Nationalism: theories, concept and politics, 1789-2001”, for the International Summer School of the University of Cambridge. In December 2000 he lectured on “The Macedonian Question, 1878-1992” at Sabancı University, Istanbul. He organised (with Dr Catherine Holmes), and delivered a paper at, an international conference on “Continuity and change in Eastern Christendom: Identities in the Byzantine Commonwealth and after, c. 1204-1821”, held at Pembroke College on 28-29 April 2001. He also gave papers on “The image of the Slavs in the Greek historical imagination, 17th-20th centuries”, at a colloquium on “Nationalism in the Balkans and the Ottoman world” held at Princeton University (19 May 2001), and at a conference on “Greece and the Balkans: Cultural encounters since the Enlightenment” held at the University of Birmingham (29 June 2001). He has published: “Pride, prudence and the fear of God: the loyalties of Alexander and Nicholas Mavrocordatos, 1668-1730”, *Dialogos* 7 (2000) 1-22. “Pavlos Melas”, in: G. Speake (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, (Fitzroy Dearborn, London-Chicago 2000), pp. 1030-1.

“Βαλκανικοί εθνικισμοί και ευρωπαϊκές προτεραιότητες: Μια βρετανική πηγή για το μακεδονικό ζήτημα την περίοδο του μεσοπολέμου”, *Ίστωρ* 12 (2001) 45-66.

Dr Jocelyn Pye gave a paper on “Self and engagement in three decades of Greek fiction: *Το φράγμα*, *Η αρχαία σκουριά* and *Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερικ Πασά*” at the University of Birmingham in February 2001.

## About the contributors

**Roderick Beaton** is Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College London. He graduated from Cambridge (Peterhouse) in English Literature, where he also took his doctorate in Modern Greek, under S.J. Papastavrou. His first two books, *Folk poetry of modern Greece* and *The medieval Greek romance*, were published by Cambridge University Press. His most recent book is *An introduction to Modern Greek literature* (Oxford University Press, 2nd edition 1999). He has also published a novel (*Ariadne's Children*) and is now working on a biography of Seferis.

**Bo-Lennart Eklund** studied Slavonic languages at Uppsala University, Ancient Greek at Gothenburg and Modern Greek at Lund. His PhD (Lund) was a study of the ideas in Palamas's *Ο Δωδεκάλογος του Γύφτου*. He began teaching at Gothenburg University in 1974, and since 2000 is Professor of Modern Greek. He has conducted major research projects on "The problematic image of Greece: Modern Greek literature in Sweden" and "GREVOC – an investigation of the vocabulary of Greek newspapers". He is currently engaged in research on the implications of morphological variation in Modern Greek, especially against the background of the language question.

**Katerina Kostiou** is a Lecturer in Modern Greek Literature at the University of Patras. She has published on Solomos, Cavafy, Drosinis, Melachrinos, Nirvanas, Seferis, Skarimbas, Vafopoulos, the literary review *Ζακύνθιος Ανθών*, and especially on the poetics of subversion in literature. She has edited the novels and short stories of Giannis Skarimbas in ten volumes (Nefeli 1992-8). Other recent books include: «Κυπριακές» επιστολές του Σεφέρη (1954-1962). Από την αλληγορογραφία του με τον Γ.Π. Σαββίδη (Nicosia: Politistiko Idryma Trapezis Kyprou 1991), Για τον Σκαρίμπα (Aigaion 1994), and Παρωδία εμπαικτική και παρωδία παιγνιώδης (Periplous 1997).

**Christopher Robinson** is Professor of European Literature in the University of Oxford. He has a particular interest in issues of gender and sexuality, and his work on Modern Greek literature includes articles on women's writing in the first half of the twentieth century, translations from contemporary women's poetry, and studies of the work of Cavafy and Tachtsis.