

**Title: Organic Memory, Local Culture and National History: An  
Arvanite Village**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is the result of investigations done for my dissertation for PhD in Anthropology at the University of Durham. The fieldwork took place from 2001 to 2004. Gogofis (pseudonym) is a community in the Northern part of Attica province near Athens, Greece. This paper examines collective memories associated with the nation and ethnicity in the Greek village of Gogofis. Albanian-speaking Greeks, or Arvanites, are caught between autobiographical memories, which they perceive to be un-Greek, and official historic accounts of Greekness. Such autobiographical memories may be understood as personally experienced and reinforced through the celebration of key events, such as births, weddings and funerals. It has been suggested that these tend to be ephemeral and dependent on association with other people. Historical memory, in contrast, may be understood as independent of personal social networks of the individual; they are, instead, based on documented records, festive enactments and the drama of commemoration. Historical memory, as defined, is therefore indirectly, rather than directly remembered. This paper concludes that Arvaniteness has been maintained through collective memory of the people of Gogofis, at times, even under hostile environments. As a result, traditions explicitly non-Greek were deliberately forgotten while other traditions considered explicitly Greek were maintained. Many collective memories are sometimes implicitly ethnic and Arvanite but are (un)forgettable as they are embedded in the Gogofian society in the local landscape and embodied in the physical senses of its residents. I suggest the negotiation of local and non-local memories creates a hierarchy of value placed on memories, reinforcing the hegemonic relationship of the local to the state. In conclusion, this relationship between the state and the local/ethnic is not unique to Greece but could apply to any place or country where national histories are significant part of identity and, local and state histories/memories differ.

## **Introduction**

One of the characteristics of modern Nation states is the use of selective memories to create a national history (Anderson 1983). There is a homogenization of local history and national history (Anderson 1983). This paper is about memory. It is about how memories intertwine with the concept of the Greek nation of which the village of Gogofis is part. On the other hand, 'other' collective memories are embedded in the villager's everyday life and may contradict the collective memories which constitute the idea of the nation. This paper examines how the village negotiates their identity associated with those collective memories as Greeks and those as Arvanites. Therefore, the paper is about collective memory but inevitably it is about national and ethnic identity. Firstly, this paper examines the notions of collective memory. Secondly, it investigates the collective memories that the people of Gogofis (re)produce. In the latter case the

paper investigates the processes of collective remembering and forgetting from the perspective of the Arvanite population of Gogofis within the context of the greater Greek society. It examines how the people of Gogofis attempt to place themselves within their idea of the national collective memory and thus inside national history legitimatising their national membership.

The official national versions of origin and identity of the Greek people on sometimes diverge from that of the local, which happens to be the case in Gogofis. Thus, Gogofians are caught between their ethnic Arvanite, part-Albanian identity and their Greek national identity. Thus, they negotiate memory for fear of exclusion.

Finally this paper suggests that different collective memories maintain different identities. The historical memories may be counter to local “autobiographical” memories, which in turn create a localized ‘Other’ or minority identities. In the case of the Arvanites and Gogofis, official repositories of information and memory which are based on institutionalized recorded history and performed through dramatic commemoration oppose unofficial repositories of memory, which are based on direct experience and the sensory of the local. These identities are sometimes juxtaposed against one another. As a result, there may be a desire to forget particular memories associated with their ethnic non-Greek past but these elements are embedded in the local. These defiantly local collective memories are maintained regardless of the desire to forget. This paper shall examine the commemoration of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March celebrating the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire as an event creating collective memories about a remote and unexperienced event verses a memory experienced in action, or as local autobiographical memories. As discussed later in this paper, the collection and preparation of wild greens as an example of the creation and maintenance of local ethnic collective memories.

Action and history are contained in cognitive systems (Bloch 1989). If collective memory is understood as a cognitive system then action and history are contained in collective memory. Dirkhien visualizes the process of cognitive systems not as an individual process but one of society and history where the individual is product of society. (Bloch 1989). Sahlins, on the other hand, comprehends it from the perspective of culture; cognition is a historical process which is all encompassing and coherent and not based on

the individual (Bloch 1989). This suggests that collective memory, is not based only on the individual's cognition. It is rather a process based on collective action, history and a product of society. It is an all encompassing, integrated and a coherent system. Halwachs uses the term, 'historical memory', which should not be confused with history. Halwachs suggests that collective memories are maintained by commemoration and dramatics such as in festivals and celebration. He differentiates 'historical memory' which is maintained in media such as writing or other such records and 'autobiographical memories' which are ephemeral in nature because actions to maintain them are determined by individuals and their social networks (Halwachs 1992). Therefore, celebrations such as anniversaries or birthdays are only maintained as collective memories as long as those individuals choose to maintain them or as long as individuals are there to remember them. 'Historic memories' are commemorated and not dependent on individual's associations or personal experiences. Thus, individuals can experience and remember remotely; i.e. the individual's direct experiences are not essential. Andersen's print capitalism resembles Halwachs' notion of historical memory. Thus, national identity is a form of collective memory, a form of historical memory of a place and people which has only been experienced remotely. Bloch's and others mentioned notions are more akin to the idea of an understanding of an embedded 'past' where objects, actions and ideas are placed or make up a cognitive system.

Frentress and Wickham suggest that collective memories exist when those memories have meaning for the group (Frentress 1992). They call this type of memory, 'subjective memory'. Remembering is legitimized in the present; (i.e. it is made important by present situations and therefore past memories potentially may compete with present day cosmologies (Frentress 1992)). Memories are then adapted subjectively to present-day cosmologies. Therefore events, customs, etc. which are based on collective memories are validated and connected to the past from a retrospective eye-piece placing them into today's past; making them relative to existing situations. In addition, the sharing of memories is given meaning by both the sender and the receiver of information. In the case of the Arvanites perception of local ethnic 'autobiographical' memories would either

actively be forgotten or transformed to fit present-day interpretations of the world and their place in the formation of the state.

Serematakis (Seremetakis 1994) suggests something from a different perspective. Memory is stored in the senses. Memories can be recalled when similar sensory stimuli are presented to the individual. Thus, examples such as food aromas or a musty attic, stored in the mind remind the individual of events associated with those aromas years later. She suggests memory is assembled through the senses. Storage of memory has a four-dimensional quality and a cultural component. Memories are intertwined with multitudes of senses temporally and spatially within a cultural context giving it four-dimensionality (Seremetakis 1994). Therefore, a memory may be associated with a mixture of smells, tactile and auditory stimuli through both space and time. Moreover, experience and the sensory are fragmented. They must be arranged by memory in the mind and the imagination to create an understandable sequence of events. On the other hand, Serematakis suggests that if objects and actions, which are linked to sensory perceptions come into disuse, then the memories associated with those objects and actions eventually are also collectively forgotten (Serematakis 1994). Moreover, sensory memory has a collective component as memories and the senses are shared. Just as one shares memories of a meal, one shares smells and tastes reciprocally. The Arvanites thus are bound to place through memories in Gogofis by their senses. I would suggest that sensory recollections are not voluntary. Smells, sounds and tactile sensations in Gogofis produce memories for all who live there. Some of these memories are congruent to things Greek, other memories are not. But I would also suggest that since the senses are tied to the subconscious, memories therefore are sensory recollections and may come to mind involuntarily. Moreover, action related to embedded cultural elements of ethnic nature reinforces non-Greek identities.

### **The Nation and collective memories**

#### Historical memory

Herzfeld argues that national models are essentialist models (Herzfeld 1997). He suggests that they are essentialist because they are models of 'Otherness'. They must define the

'Other' to define the national-self. It can be surmised therefore that membership is also essentialist. Theoretically, individuals must fit strict definitions to belong thus the paradox. Many members do not fit such strict definitions. The Greek national model is no exception. For Greece and the Greek people, the official national history is a salient part of the national model and defines Greekness. Official national history is essentialist leaving little room for academic debate. Events such as the Armenian Genocide, for the Turkish state, or who were the Souliotes,<sup>1</sup> for the Greek state is clear-cut and non-negotiable. The national Greek model asserts that the Ancient Greeks are direct ancestors of the Modern Greek people. Briefly the model goes as follows: the 'light' of Greek culture and knowledge was sown throughout the world by Greeks such as Odysseus and 'Alexander the Great'. *i Elliniki kultura* or Greek culture was maintained during the Byzantine Empire and preserved today for the Greek people by the Greek Orthodox Church that was the caretaker of the 'light' during the dark times of the Ottoman oppression. This model does several things. First it gives the Church a key role in the preservation of Greekness and second, it maintains the existence of only one minority, the Muslim minority in Greece<sup>2</sup>. The Muslims minority is not defined in ethnic terms, Turk or Pomak are not differentiated as ethnically different. The same holds true in Christian Greece; the Vlachs, Arvanites, Pontiacs or Tsakones are not recognized as ethnically different by the state. Each group could be defined as different minorities because they come from different historical trajectories. Likewise, they also have different marriage, kinship and linguistic traditions. It could be argued anthropologically that they are different ethnic groups. I contend they are not. Arvanites, which are particular to this study, originally came from the area now located in Albania. A majority of the villagers spoke a Tosk Albanian dialect as late as the 1970's. They have been stigmatized for speaking Arvanitika and are sometimes described by non-Arvanite Greeks as Albanians. Arvanites do not fit well into this national model. As a result, they feel they could be seen as potential 'Others' in their own country.

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<sup>1</sup> The Souliotes were Albanian speaking Christians who were chased by Ali Pasha at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. They have become national heroic figures in Greek history as representations of Greek resistance to Turkish oppression because women and children committed suicide rather than being captured.

<sup>2</sup> As a reflection of Ottoman influences described in the Muslim *umma* Kocturk, T. (1992). *A Matter of Honour: Experiences of Turkish Women Immigrants*. London, Zed Books Ltd.

The Greek state utilizes various mechanisms, which maintain Greek identity and collective memories for its existence. I would suggest this utility could be characterized as 'historical memory'. Most of these memories are not personally experienced but are maintained through reenactments, commemoration of past events or are reinforced in the national education system and by the written or electronic media. For this paper the 25<sup>th</sup> of March celebrations shall be placed under the looking glass. Official state institutions are all represented well in this celebration. The celebration is similar to the celebration of the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, which commemorates Greece's entrance into World War II. The comparison is important but the details will be discussed later in this section. The 25<sup>th</sup> of March celebrates the revolution against the Turks in 1821. It is a national holiday coinciding with the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. Every primary and secondary school in the country has a parade of the national colours. The children dress in blue and white. Schools are selected by lottery the have to honour to parade in front of the President of the Republic and the parliament in the capital. The following day the military parade their national defense forces in front of the President and parliament. During my fieldwork in the village the primary school did not receive the honour so the village had their own celebration. The children of both the primary and pre-school line up outside the school. Some of the children are dressed in traditional cloths of the early 1800's. Several boys wear the traditional *foustanella*, which is something like a kilt, and the girls in long dresses. The children who don't wear traditional costumes wear dark blue trousers and white shirts for the boys and white shirts and dark blue skirts for the girls. They parade down to the main village square and line up facing the village war memorial in the main square. The square has been decorated with large and small flags several days previously. As the children pass the *kafenio*, or coffee shop, the men stand as they enter the square. The families directly precede or follow the parading children. The villagers gather on both sides of the children. The children stand at attention. The best students have the honour of being the standard bearers of the school banner and the national colours. When everyone has arrived in the square, the Priest and cantor bless the ceremony by saying a few prayers and sing a few hymns. Then the priest blesses the children and the crowd with holy water. The national anthem is sung and then some of

the children walk in front of the memorial and say a patriotic poem about the flag or about the events or people who were involved in the revolution. The children take wreaths, which had been given to them as they arrive in the square. They will place them on the war memorial. One of the elder schoolchildren announces by the loud speaker each name of the fallen, such as, “*Yannis Sideris epese yia tin patriida*”, “Yannis Sideris fell for the fatherland”. Names are read in such a fashion and each time a child places a wreath on the memorial. After the children have placed the wreaths on the memorial, the head of each institution takes his turn as the names of the fallen are said one by one. Thus, The village president, head of the port authority, the representative from local military base, the women’s auxiliaries, and the captain of the local fire-fighters all place wreaths on the memorial. The school headmaster then says a few words about why the village and the nation celebrate the day. Then the celebration is over. The villagers take pictures and the children go to the local cafeterias with their families.

The 25<sup>th</sup> of March is an important ceremony because it embeds the village into the nation-state. The state and village are equal. The 25<sup>th</sup> of March is not in anyone’s living memory. No one actually lived or fought in that war. It is a mythical time; a time when modernity and modern history started. The children and their families take part and remember the sacrifices the Souliotes who had sacrificed their lives rather than being captured by the Turks. Every time a name is called, the villagers know that that individual was related to them. The dead have the same names as many of the village’s the same forenames and/or the same surname. They see the individual honoured as a member of their village. The dead’s sacrifice is the living’s sacrifice. Both local and national institutions are there, the Church, the government, the fire brigade, the school and the military are there to honour their dead family members. The children are dressed and act like little soldiers ready to do their part in protecting Greece from her enemies.

The 25<sup>th</sup> of March celebration, sometimes referred simply as the *epanastesit*, or the revolution, is similar to the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, or *Ochi* Day, in its presentation but symbolically different. *Ochi* Day is celebrated because Metaxas said, “no,” *ochi*, to the Italians when Mussolini offered Greece an ultimatum of an unconditional surrender, resulting in the defeat of the Italians in Albania forcing the Germans to expand their war

in Greece. The ritual of the parade and ceremony are identical with the March 25<sup>th</sup> Celebration, except that all the children are in blue and white dress. The difference is also in the content of the poems and the relationship the village has with the stories told, i.e. their experience with the past. Some of the poems are generally about the war but some are actually about the experience of the villagers themselves. When I observed the ceremony one of the poems was about how one man saved the village from being burnt down by the German forces. Thus, the village's experiences were equated with that of the nation's experience. Village and nation made sacrifices for each other. Around the time of *Ochi Day*, this also gave the elderly the opportunity to remember the war and their part in it. The children and young adults listen with curiosity and interest as their grandparents, uncles, and aunts remind them of the poor condition and their relationship to the Italians and to the Germans.

There is much similarity between the two celebrations but the 28<sup>th</sup> of October is in the realm of autobiographical memory. The villagers know what they had to do to survive World War II. Many experienced the sacrifices of losing loved ones and having their labour and goods confiscated for the war. The 25<sup>th</sup> of March is historical memory but because the ritual of each celebration is the same they have equal weight. The children perform and the dead are honoured in the same fashion even though no one from 1821 is represented on the memorial and none of the people heralded and given wreathes even existed during the Revolution of 1821.

To conclude, the commemoration of March 25<sup>th</sup> is a commemoration of sacrifice for Greece. The villagers remember their village's sacrifices for their fatherland. All the formal institutions take part and commemorate and honour those lost fighting for the village, the kin of the now living Gogofians. But the similarities between the 25<sup>th</sup> of March and the 28<sup>th</sup> of October celebrations give them both similar meaning in the minds of the people of Gogofis. Both celebrations work to include Gogofis into the nation. Both ceremonies represent the sacrifice the country and the village made against a common enemy.

## **Autobiographical Memory Everything Greek (subjectivity)**

Memories are continually being negotiated in Gogofis. There is a constant reminder of the legacy the Ancient Greeks have given to the Greek people. It is a major part of the school children's curriculum. Historical memory is (re)established everyday of their lives in one form or another. There are several major archeological sites very close to the village. One being on Gogofian land, which limits how this land can be used, and the other being Marathon, which weaves modern and ancient events such as the [modern] Olympics and the Athens Marathon to Ancient Greece. Being in such close geographical relationship to such a symbolically powerful place reminds all the inhabitants in the vicinity of Ancient Greek influence on their daily lives but also their *klironomia*, their heritage or inheritance. This message is enforced every day in school and in the media. Thus, to reject any relationship to the Ancient Greeks is rejecting being Greek.

Since the conception of the Modern Greek state, what it means to be Greek is in a process of negotiation. An example of this is the Delissi kidnappings. The Delissi kidnappings<sup>3</sup> of a party of English gentry in the 1870 ignited the debate about what it meant to be Greek (Tzanelli 2002). A debate ensued in Greece and in Europe. Was Greece a place of lawlessness, of barbarous bandits or a place of enlightenment and the birthplace of Europe (Tzanelli 2002)? The Arvanites were branded as foreign agents in their own country. The brigands were finally captured near Gogofis. Interestingly the Delissi affair was not part of the collective memory of the villagers. One can only assume the Delissi affair being the largest man hunter in Greek history was deliberately forgotten. According to Frenress and Wickham it would not have legitimised the present (Frenress 1992). The Arvanites of Gogofis were fairly endogamous until the 1980's, which suggests they had a more limited social relationship with non-Arvanites. Remembering an event such as the Delissi affair would suggest that they were *varvari*, "barbarians" or to say the least a foreign element, which excludes them from the Modern Greek project.

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<sup>3</sup> The Arvanitakos brothers, who from the name were Arvanites, kidnapped a group of tourists on their way to see the Tomb of Marathon. The British Government refused to pay the ransom and the Brigands killed their captives. They were captured and beheaded in the hills above the village of Marathon.

Gogofians treat this potential foreign-ness by 'subjectivity.' Generally, there were several responses in public discourse with non-Gogofians with regards to their Arvaniteness. The two main responses were as follows: 1) They reject the existence of Arvanite elements in their village or, 2) They attempt to place Arvanites into a Greek context.

"I am Greek I do not know Arvanitic"

This rejection would be backed up with a historical event; from about 1880-1920 iron was mined above the village. When I first arrived I was told that at one time Gogofis was an Arvanite village but with the opening of the mine and the migration of strangers into Gogofis only about 20% of the population are still Arvanites. The other 80% of the people in Gogofis today are Greeks who came from all over Greece. This is only partially true. From closer observation most of the men who finally settled and married into Gogofis were Arvanites from elsewhere in Greece. Most of the surnames are Arvanitika in Gogofis and in the surrounding villages in Northern Attica and Southern Evia. Incidentally, affinal relations were maintained until the 1980's as the following generations became less endogamous.

Another very typical response;

"I do not speak it but my grandparents did. They would speak it when they did not want the children to know what they were saying."

Almost everyone gave this response. Even the eldest individuals would make these statements. Later on during my fieldwork I found that many people over thirty-five years of age could speak Arvanitika fluently. Individuals under that age could speak Arvanitika only in a very restricted manner. Tsitsipis called this degree of Arvanitika fluency, 'terminal' fluency (Tsitsipis 1998). Statements such as the ones about language are subjective in that they are attempting to distance themselves from non-Greek elements of their society. Another way in which they maintain inclusion with other Greeks is the statement that Arvanitic is really a Greek language. It was often stated, "It is the first Greek language". Then an example of etymological significance is made such as the following statement from a key consultant to illustrate this statement.

“The word *punon* means work in Arvanitika. *Ponos* (pain in Greek) means *punon*. Work is painful. Do you see what I mean? Arvanitic is the language of the Ancient Dorians. We are the first Greek tribes to have come to settle here.”

Regardless of whether this is a viable linguistic argument or not, the people of Gogofis are compelled to say such statements to reduce potential exclusion as non-Greeks.

The final example of subjectivity where the Arvanite try to maintain a relationship with the Greater Greek society is the *striga*. The *striga* was first described by Durham (1923). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the idea of this spirit was known throughout Albania. The *striga* is an evil female spirit, which takes various forms and does harm to people and animals (Durham 1923). The Gogofian *striga* is a spirit, which kills people, and if it is heard it will kill someone in the village. I have been told the *striga* can take many forms. For example, the *stringa* may appear to be a baby or a little lamb, but it has a call that is neither human nor animal. The people of Gogofis, especially the elderly use the *striga* to explain unexpected deaths in family or livestock. It is used to deal with the unplanned crisis death causes, but it is not particularly Greek. When they talk about the *striga* they tell me for my sake as a foreigner that it is like the Cretan *niktopuli*. The *niktopuli* is a bird, which presents itself at a house where death will visit. By telling me the *striga* is like a *niktopuli* places them and the *striga* in the Greek context.

To conclude, there are many elements of the everyday life, which can be either forgotten because the local context distances Gogofians from other Greeks, such as the terminal disuse of language or forgetting historical events that could stigmatize the population. They manipulate the identity of traditions such as the *striga* and try to fit it into a Greek context. Moreover, by explaining that Arvanitika is an Ancient Greek language or how the iron mines converted Gogofis into a Greek place by altering the identity of the population, transforming a potentially foreign place into a place that can be called a Greek village. By saying the *striga* is a *niktopuli* it makes their local traditions Greek and not foreign. Thus, Gogofis and Gogofians are not excluded in the Greek national model.

## Organic Memories

There are memories that are unique to Gogofis. They originate only from that place. In this section I attempt to illustrate that some memories essential to everyday life cannot be forgotten or subjectified even if there is a wish to do so.

Sarametakis suggests that memories are stored in the senses. There are countless sensory memories associated only with Gogofis. In this section sensory memories associated with non/national collective memory are discussed. Some of these memories could be considered memories, which bind some to national memories while others cannot be considered in the same category as national collective memories. There are many sensory memories in the village, which maintain Greekness such as the Church rituals, but in order to be concise I shall only focus on those stubborn memories which indicate and maintain 'otherness.'

In the spring, a favourite pastime in Gogofis is the collection of *horta*, or wild greens. A piece of wild green's pie is almost always the first thing offered to a guest but both. There are over twelve varieties of greens from the daisy family that are collected, bitter greens being the most prized. *Horta* is used in pies and eaten boiled with olive oil and lemon. It is believed wild greens are part of a healthy lifestyle and that some have medicinal properties. Wild greens are usually collected in small groups of both men and women but there can be collected individually. The cleaning and preparation is usually done collectively by the women as cleaning is time consuming and labour intensive. In the spring there is excitement when someone comes home with the first bag of greens. The women start discussing when the best time to collect is and where the best patches are found. Any outing is a potential opportunity to collect greens. There are many stories told about collection; such as when the best time to collect a particular species, if it was too early or too late in the season, what is their favourite *horta* and why.

Collecting and consuming greens is a collective process. Finding and discussing where they are found, where they were last year and which one to collect at which times is learned and told to the younger members while collecting and processing.

“We use to be very poor. When I was out with the sheep I use to bring a few olives and a clove of raw garlic and a piece of bread. As we were walking with the sheep I would cut greens to be cooked for dinner (sic.). I would cut *radiki* and *bithe vjite* if I could find it.”

It could be argued that collecting, preparing and consuming greens is not unique to Arvanites and that many Greek communities do the same. This is not a false statement but what makes collecting greens different for the Arvanite is that it is one occasion where Greek has not replaced Arvanitika. All the greens cultivated have Arvanite names; *bithe vjite*, *marvro zeze* and *buk i lepura*. And the foods prepared still maintain the Arvanite name such as *kalopodi*. All these greens had Greek nominal counterparts, but they insist on using Arvanite names. If I were to use such names I would be quickly corrected, “You should call it “*anginaraki*” (*bithe vjite*). The power of maintaining the name maintains power of the entire process of collection, production and consumption. The greens were found on their land. The land has an autobiographical provenience.

R: “Where did you find such big *radiki*?”

M: “Over at *mall i zeze* near *Kotsigogoli*’s place”

This type of exchange is very common and not exclusive to orienting one’s self only for the collection of greens. Whenever any event happens a genealogy of the place is produced publicly so that everyone who knows who the owner was and who presently owns the land where a particular event happened. Thus there is a mental map created for the receivers. They then clarify by giving another genealogy of the neighbouring land to clarify its location. In this way listeners develop a mental, cultural and ethnic map because toponymia and people nicknames may be Albanian. Therefore *horta* collection becomes temporal and spatial at the same time. It places the actor into an (pre)historical moment. To be able to understand where the *horta* is located s/he must know the lineage of people and the land and when and what type should be collected.

Moreover, they produce and distribute and consume *horta*. And its finished product is an essential part of their diet today and in the past. Consumption, in this case, eating is part nourishment and part sensory. Nourishment obviously has symbolic significance but I would like to focus on the importance of the sensory interactions produced from the process of collecting *horta*. First there is the early morning environment of birds and dew, which reminds the participant of where and when they are or were in a particular place collecting greens. Then there are the sounds and smells of cleaning, the washed soil and the swirling of the greens in the frigid water. Next, there is the production of the final product. The aroma of the pies or boiling greens which wafts their way around the neighborhood, invite guests and family to consume the final product. *Horta* connects the Gogofians to the land historically and to the present day. One must understand not only the landscape and its geography but also understand it culturally. The collection of *horta* is a collective process from beginning to end; from learning how to distinguish greens from inedible and poison plants to finally eating it. It is tied ethnically to the land by geographic place names, acknowledging land tenure, to the name of the *horta* it self.

### **Naming:**

The powerful are enabled to give people and places names (Bourdieu 1991). In Gogofis the act of naming places and people is important for religious, national and ethnic identity. As has been stated in other literature it reflects kinship rules and religious identity (Bailor 1967; Kenna 1976; Seremetakis 1994). Likewise naming styles put the person or place named into a historical and cultural context through the tradition of naming ones first sons and daughters after the infant's grandparents. But, the use of nicknames and place names sometimes situates Gogofians into a non-Greek or pre-Greek ethnic context. I would suggest that with accordance to Serematakis such usage of nicknames might refer to as 'suppressing the passing of finite time.' because such names

are before the existence of Modern Greece itself and as such placed in a time before modern time itself. This is a time outside the bounds of the linear time of history.

Nicknames in Mediterranean societies have been examined as mechanisms of egalitarianism (Brandes 1975) or as mechanisms of subordination or factionalism (Gilmore 1982). But nicknames also represent suppressing the passing of finite time. Many nicknames in Gogofis are Albanian in origin. They create collective memories binding individuals to the place and in the case of Gogofis, their ethnic roots. People own nicknames but they are ascribed and therefore they have no choice of their ownership (Gilmore 1982). A particular category of nickname can be inherited but inevitably given to the nicknamed by others (Gilmore 1982). People do not choose their own nickname and they can be demeaning at times (Gilmore 1982). Thus, people do not like to be referred to by their nickname but it is part of their identity, willingly or not.

In Gogofis there are several categories of nicknames. The vast majority of people who own a nickname are male, but there are some rare instances where a widows takes either her father's or her husband's nickname or a wife may be referred to in the female form of her husband's nickname. All women's nicknames are female forms of male names. Thus, *Roukos* becomes *Roukou*, or *Ballafas* becomes *Ballafena*. The rules of gender change follow Greek grammatical rule. The first son takes the nickname of his father's father, which parallels formal rules of name-giving, but there are only so many first grandsons. As a result people in the same *soi*<sup>4</sup> can have the same nickname. The majority of men in the village have new nicknames. These nicknames are usually related to some personal characteristic; *Trichas*, *Dzami*, *Psicho-yos* (Stylish, Windows (glasses), Only-son; respectively). These names tend to be etymologically Greek. They usually describe a personality trait or an event that they are remembered by. The final type of nickname is the type, which refers to the individual in a demeaning form. This form usually uses a diminutive form of the person's name, *Niko- Nikoloulis* – *Loulis*. In this case it refers to adults as if they were children. In most cases people do not want to be referred to in

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<sup>4</sup> Term coined by Campbell, J. K. (1964). Honour, Family, and Patronage. New York, Oxford Uni. Press.

person by their nicknames. First, the diminutive form is very personal. Thus, only very close friends and relatives can address individuals by their nicknames directly. Secondly, because the names were given to them when they were children the nicknames tend to be childish. Thus, nicknames lower their status with others if they are addressed publicly. But individuals are almost always referred to by their nicknames when the named is not present. Individuals do not choose their own nicknames. They have little control as to what their name is and how it may be used.

Many of the nicknames are timeless in nature. These are the ones, which are either inherited or used to refer to women. The nature of nicknames is autobiographical memory. They place an individual into a particular historical framework that is culturally specific to the village. If someone did something to get a particular name it puts that person into a particular historical moment. In addition, if a name is inherited it is usually Arvanite/Albanian in origin. Thus, there are names like *Kotsovogli*, or *Ballafa* meaning, “Little Constantine” and “Face” respectively. These nicknames are particularly reminding individuals and the villagers of their Albanianess. They last as long as there are social networks of villagers to use them. In this way if a man has no sons his nickname and thus much of the memory of him might fade away as his associations also pass on. But because this was quite rare in the past because most people had more than five children inherited nickname were usually maintained.

### **The functions of nicknames**

When asked why people have nicknames there are two typical responses. The first is that there are so many people with the same name that they use them to differentiate individuals from one another. The other response is that this is typical of all Greek villages. Their responses hold some truth but I observed several other reasons for the use of nicknames. Gilmore and Pitt-Rivers use a structural argument to suggest that it is a way of creating relationships and conditions behaviour, which also holds some truth (Gilmore 1982). But, I observed that nicknames are a mechanism for both inclusion and exclusion. Only members of the community have nicknames. In addition, only members of the community understand who one is talking about when a nickname is used. Thus, a

stranger or, *xenos* would not have a nickname and could not be placed within the socio-historical context of the village. If a man were to have left the village but was given a nickname before he went to the city he then would be historically placed within the village context. Likewise if he had inherited his father's father's nickname the bearer would again be historically placed within the village context. He would be known and placed into the socio-political context of the village whenever he would return. If an individual uses a particular name to refer to someone, s/he expresses his or her knowledge of the person but also the historical moment of the names origin. The act of calling someone by his nickname exhibits the knowledge of an insider. Outsiders would not know which name correlated to which nickname and would not know who was being referred to. In addition, an outsider would not possess a nickname and therefore be excluded. In addition, if a *xenos* were to visit the village he would not understand anything of the day-to-day of the village by listening to a conversation. This is emphasized when villagers would tell me they didn't even know the person's Christian name.

The presumption that people in all Greek villages use nicknames exemplifies the idea of historic subjectivity (Frentress 1992). They tie historical action, in this case, customs to the National Greek collective. So by using nicknames they are expressing their Greek identity. In contrast, many of the names are inherited and Albanian, thus they are involuntarily ascribed to many of the individuals in the village. These Names remind the Gogofians of their non-Greek past, remembering their difference from other Greeks. Thus when one uses an Arvanite/Albanian name, it reminds the sender and the receiver of the context of where the name places them. More importantly the owner of the name is usually not present, which lessens the possibility of placing them into an uncomfortable position. But because it is used publicly it collectively indicates to insiders their ethnic relationship to one another.

In conclusion Gogofis is a complex of intertwining memories, which define individuals as members of the nation. People in Gogofis are continually negotiating their ethnic and national identities. Autobiographical memories are manipulated and translated into "Greek" memories. They keep everything in a context which they feel comfortable in

order to maintain an appropriate closeness to the nation. Other non-Arvanite communities in Greece maintain their local traditions, while Gogofis has lost theirs because they could not explain them in a Greek context. But there are collective memories not easily adapted or transformed to subjective realities of the present. These are what I call, “organic memories”. These are memories which are either stored in the senses and cannot be forgotten because they still have a salient position in the everyday, or they are structurally embedded into the society such as nicknames which are interwoven into kinship structures, identity of the other and control of social behaviour. Therefore, they cannot be consciously or subjectively changed because such a tradition maintains other structures and cannot be so easily manipulated.

It could be said that identity is collective memory. Shared memories, shared histories, and shared understanding of origin mark individuals as members of a group. The national community may be too large to have these shared commonalities, thus it creates its own problems because not everyone truly fits the essentialist model defining membership. This paper illustrates the fragility of identity. Memories can contradict identity. Before the nation-state identity was localized (Anderson 1983; Sugarman 1999). Memory was ‘autobiographical,’ closer to the present, not historic in nature (van Boeschoten 1991). Therefore national identity and the mechanisms which produce national collective memories should be examined more closely. In the case of Greece and Gogofis, history is the cornerstone of identity. It defines where they came from and who they shall be. Gourgouris suggests that the nation is a dream, conceived to be a timeless entity (Gourgouris 1996). Gogofians see themselves as part of this dream but must subjectify their own history to maintain themselves within the Greek context. The Albanians and Albanianess are facing them, like a mirror and must be confronted metaphorically because this ‘other’ defines Gogofian as Greeks or as barbarians. To extend this argument, one could say that Albanians and Albanianess or any parallel “otherness” existing in Greece therefore defines Greeks because if the Greek nation is made up of many villages and cities like Gogofis then Gogofis could be considered a typical village in Greece and not the exception. If the argument is taken further, it could apply to any nation-state or imagined community. Thus, Gogofis may be considered typical for Greece. Moreover, places like Gogofis could be considered an example for any group, or

any village in any nation where a national history is salient part of their identity and the said group does not fit nicely into the particular national-historical model. A homogenization has occurred since nation-states have come into existence (Andersen 1983). Language, local cuisine, and other types of performance are in the process of being forgotten. This collective amnesia could even transform the social structure. More importantly, local cultural difference is manipulated if possible. On the other hand, I have suggested that everything cannot be manipulated or forgotten. Local difference in Gogofis was hidden from me for a long period of time. The result is a subordination of the local by the national. There is a hegemonic relation between the local, ethnic and the national, between local or ethnic identities and the national identity. Likewise, there is recognition of the power of the national history over local histories. Even for those individuals who are proud of their local past and their difference in their attempt to perform difference, they are in the minority and are discouraged, thus marginalized reifying the power of the state.

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# **The Ikarian Paniyiri: Theoretical Considerations and Comparative Horizons**

**Maria Mpareli**

“Same are our feasts with the coming and going of the needle that unites the different pieces of the reed and makes us one, one and unique reed, one and unique word.”

An aboriginal from New Caledonia

If only the evil influence of potlatch could be done away, the Kwakiutl would forge right ahead

Agent William Halliday, 1883

## *Introduction*

This essay is based on ongoing research<sup>1</sup> on the Ikarian paniyiri; a feast with religious, economic, social, political, moral, spiritual and aesthetic dimensions and which is of a dynamic nature. The interesting element of the paniyiri is that there are forms of exchange that rest upon reciprocity and others that exceed the mutuality of exchange, indicating that offerings take an impersonal character and that the self is diffused in the social exchange. Hence, every time the paniyiri takes place, an *impersonal collectivity* is shaped. The detection of this collectivity and of the special dynamics by which this collectivity is shaped, are the main aims of this study. The main research hypothesis, as outlined by the foregoing quote from a New Caledonian aboriginal, is that the paniyiri is relevant to a field of self-expression of the individual and to the activation and expression of an *integrative force* through this collective ritual practice. By the term ‘integrative force’ I mean the presumable sense of the participants as being parts of a totality. And it is a totality that emerges in the context of particular social structures, giving a nucleus of meanings for the actors, that refers to matters of locality: time, place and local identity. The framework of this study are the procedures of reproduction and change of the local society and the dialectical relation between the paniyiri and this framework provide the terms for approaching the dynamic nature of the paniyiri. The assumption about its dynamic nature derives from the fact that this institution has persisted in the particular social space for a long historical period, adjusting to changing conditions. An important aspect then for the aims of my study, is the examination of the effects of the social environment on the

paniyiri on the one hand, and on the other hand, the impacts of this ritual practice on the reproduction and change of the local society.

The aim of this paper is to sketch out the theoretical choices and the theoretical grounds in the context of which my arguments will be raised. The underlying elements of this social phenomenon indicate that the paniyiri is an *institutionalized exchange system* and as such it is comparable to similar phenomena widely distributed in time and space. Thus, the issue of the comparative horizon of the paniyiri will be raised as well as matters that concern the limits of comparison. Further, I will attempt to outline the paniyiri in relation to the basic axes around which my approach revolves while at the same time providing some ethnographic illustrations of the emerging elements of the paniyiri. An additional emerging axis that traverses this attempt to outline the paniyiri is its dynamic nature. Thus I will briefly discuss this issue also in relation to some historico-socio-political data aiming, not to exhaust this subject, but rather to illustrate some aspects of the dialectic relation between the paniyiri and the social environment that generates it.

### *Theoretical Considerations*

The main theoretical choice in the light of which I approach the Ikarian paniyiri is condensed in the Herodotian phrase: «*θεωρίης είνεκεν*», which means to see with my own eyes and understand, to learn. I adopt the theoretical stance which corresponds to the ancient meaning of theory<sup>2</sup>; that of proximity and participation. The emphasis is upon the interdependence between the living reality of the field and a basic theoretical<sup>3</sup> context. This context consists of a basic skeleton which sensitizes the researcher theoretically- not a prefixed theoretical format consisting of predetermined choices or dogmatic statements. And this context includes the researcher herself, her methodological, theoretical, ontological and epistemological acknowledgments, her research aims and queries. The dialectical relation between the field and this context is under evolution, parallel to the evolution or progress of the research procedure. Thus, I acknowledge that it is the specific circumstances and the ‘on the spot’ situations that enter into a dialogue with my context, through which my theoretical and methodological choices are validated or refuted and amended.

The underlying elements of the paniyiri orient my approach towards gift exchange theory, pioneered by Mauss in his *Essay on the Gift* (1923-24), in the context of

which he draw the attention of anthropologists to a widespread category of phenomena, with many layers and aspects and common among people; namely the institutionalized systems of exchanges. Subsequent studies have approached gift exchange through the lens of structuralist, functionalist and interactionist theories. Thus, for example, Levi-Strauss reframed the three obligations that make up the gift as parts of a wider system and considered reciprocity as the fundamental structure that shapes the behaviors of individuals. Malinowski, on the other hand, was concerned with the functions of gift exchange and its role in establishing and reproducing society. Other studies analyze the gift as a mechanism through which power is exercised (see, e.g. Bourdieu, 1991) or symbolic messages conveyed (see, e.g. Schwartz, 1967). Furthermore, more recent studies have achieved to clarify further aspects of the gift. Gregory and Weiner for example, developed the notion of the inalienability of the gift; Strathern drew our attention to gender differences of gift practices and Hyde to its erotic and logos properties, -that is its binding and differentiating aspects.

Each approach provides different perspectives or aspects of analysis; -from the standpoint of the structural units of society, the way these structures function and from the standpoint of the individual and the collective actors-, each highlighting or clarifying further different aspects of gift exchange. Nevertheless, none of these perspectives can exhaust or interpret the subject in a satisfactory way, and that's because every school of thought emphasizes an element or cluster of elements on the basis of different ontological and epistemological assumptions, leaving outside its scope of analysis or underestimating other elements that constitute social reality. Thus, dualisms of the type structure or function, individual or society, immobility or fluidity, self-interest or altruism are created· dualisms that social reality itself transcends. Moreover, as Elias affirms, the breaking of social phenomena to pieces on the basis of binary oppositions entails an unnecessary impoverishment of our conceptual horizon (1997: 18).

On the contrary, I accept concepts that emerge from these schools of thought as methodological implements that allow me to investigate the nature of the structures, their functions and the nature of human action involved in the paniyiri and I emphasize the living reality of the field and its dialectical relation with the *in motion* research context. And under the light of these elements or notions that emerge from

the field and through this dialectical procedure, the axes or keystones of my subject and the basic perspectives or approaching standpoints arise.

*The Comparative Horizons of the Paniyiri*

Among the emerging keystones of my analysis are those of offering, obligation, cooperation and competition. These elements indicate that the paniyiri is a structural 'device', of the same nature as Mauss brought to light while studying the *gift* in archaic societies. It is in other words a system of exchanges and as such it can be compared with aspects of studies that involve such systems –that is, of prestations and counter-prestations between moral units -social groups like families, tribes, clans-, in the context of which “food, women, children, possessions, charms, land, labour, services, religious offices, rank- everything is offered and counter-offered” (Mauss, 1999:82). Exemplifications of institutionalized exchanges are widely distributed in time and space and vary at the level of form. For example; the *hakari* of the Maori of New Zealand, the *kula* in the islands of the southeast coast of Papua New Guinea, the *mila-mila* in the Trobriand islands, the *pilou-pilou* of New Caledonia, the *potlatch* of Native Americans of North America and the *thanksgiving* of contemporary Americans. This list is practically inexhaustible, as the assembling of moral units in the context of an institutionalized system of exchanges which has economic, social, ritual, religious, political, moral, spiritual and legal dimensions, is a common phenomenon among people.

It is clear that the method of comparison can illuminate sides of the phenomenon under study, at the levels of both theory and empirical data. However, the studies of systems of exchanges are inscribed in structural, functional, interactional or other intermediary approaches. In addition, theories often arise from the effort of the theoretician to understand the social conditions of his time and his relation to the 'exotic other' (Layton, 1997: 3). Consequently, theories are formulated within certain historico-social contexts and depending upon the perspective which each school of thought provides, the emphasis is upon some aspects whilst others are obscured as they are considered of secondary or without any importance for the purposes of each study. This suggests that *complete comparison cannot be achieved*. What can be compared are aspects of studies while at the same time acknowledging not only the

specific angle or angles of our comparison but also the context and orientation of each study.

### *The Field and Object of Research: A Background*

#### *1. The social space*

The rugged mountainous island of Ikaria is located in the North-Eastern Aegean Sea. The total land surface is 267 square kilometres and the mountain chain of Atheras transverses the island separating it into North and South. The coastline deprives important natural harbours while the island occupies an open sea, and is thus exposed to the meltemia (winds). The turbulence of the Ikarian Sea has been legendary in the past and references to it are to be found in Iliad and later in European travellers' accounts who often avoided anchoring on the coast of the island.

The mythology that surrounds the island, its geological and climatological conditions in combination with the particular and the broader historico-socio-political-economic conjunctures of each era have contributed not only to the formation of the particular history of the island, but also in the way in which the island has been perceived in each era. It is the island where Ikaros fell according to mythology and one of the islands that have claimed to be the place of origin of Dionysus and Pramneios Oinos (wine with therapeutic attributes). According to the oral tradition, the island was used as a place of exile for the Byzantine aristocrats who were considered dangerous to the throne. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, European travelers' reports of Ikaria mention the poverty and backwardness of its inhabitants who despite their "pitiful condition" claimed to be of an aristocratic origin, referred to other islanders as "peasants" (*χωριάτες*) and practiced endogamy (Georgirines, 1677). The settlements of this era - "hidden" or "anti-pirate" settlements - as well as the local architecture and even techniques of food storage were elaborated in relation to the main danger of these turbulent eras, that is the pirates, while the main quality of these strategies of survival was that of "*hiding*"<sup>4</sup>. The poverty of the island<sup>5</sup> contributed to the granting of a degree of autonomy by successive state formations, whose main influence was limited to the imposing of low taxes in cash (Georgirenes, 1677: 67; Melas, 2001: 129-130; Kapetanios, 2003:285).

The scattered settlements on the mountain of Atheras were formed around water resources and were expanded on the basis of kinship relations. Thus, many settlements or 'neighborhoods' within larger villages, bear the name of the first settler who is known to have inhabited that district and its inhabitants recognize each other as members of an extended kin. Every lineage then is tied to a specific geographical region, which is considered to be the place that their common ancestor first settled either as an internal<sup>6</sup> or external refuge or as a groom to an already settled family.

Traditionally, a diversified economy prevailed and its distinctive characteristic is the multi-occupation of the household- the basic productive unit- which until recently aimed at self-sufficiency. The island lacks extended grazing land, while its steep ground has to be supported by stone terraces in order for it to be cultivated. The difficulty of the effort that agriculture entailed had traditionally been dealt with the the development of systems of mutual aid and relevant customary laws as, for example, the '*anevouthkio*' (borrowed work), whereby villagers/ members of the extended kin exchanged labour. The diachronic occupations have been those of pastoralism and agriculture and during periods of relative security at sea, charcoal-making and seafaring trade. This last activity flourished and declined during time following the corresponding evolutions of the preceding productive activities.

Coming to the present, the distinctive feature of the habitation of the island is its sparsity- an average of 30 inhabitants for every one square kilometer. Ikaria is administratively divided in 3 municipalities that represent 61 settlements which are inhabited by a total of 7.500 residents. According to the 2001 census, the productive bases of the island are -in almost equal proportions-, the primary and the tertiary sectors<sup>7</sup>. Further, I focus on the primary sector which is relevant to the *paniyiri*, as it provides the goods around which the later revolves. The total area of the land which is used for productive purposes is almost 35 square kilometers, of which 44% is used for grazing and 56% for agricultural purposes. Of the total area that is cultivated 4% is used for viniculture. The population of goats in the island according to the same source is 17.435, which accounts for the 48% of the reported population of goats in the Province of Samos.

## 2. *A preliminary description of the paniyiri*

The paniyiri in Ikaria is the feast connected to religious celebrations. Every village has its own paniyiri that takes place in particular public spaces and on a predetermined date. The paniyiries are held during the whole year cycle, but nowadays, during the period of summer, there is an escalation in their occurrence. They are connected to the church of each village and the patron saint's day, but this is not a rule, as some paniyiries are held on a different day from that of the patron saint's. The morphology of the paniyiri is common among the villages or settlements and for it to be conducted the co-operation of the locals and the immigrants –returnees to the village they come from- is required. The implements of the paniyiri –cooking vessels, wood benches, rough wood tables, etc- are the property of the village. A paniyiri can last the whole day or over night until the next morning, while until the '80s it could last for 3 to 8 days. Before and during the day of the paniyiri, a liturgy is conducted – a vespers and a morning service- at the celebrating church of the village, during which bread (*άρτος*) is offered for the prosperity of the living and consecrated bread (*αντίδωρο*) in the memory of the dead.

During the paniyiri, great amounts of meat and wine are consumed and offered for money. The particular commodities that are offered are local products that are supplied by village or neighbouring producers and pastoralists. The wealth that is accumulated in the context of the paniyiri is redistributed to the villagers. More specifically, the paniyiri of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century was made mostly by offerings of commodities (goats, wine and wheat), that were directly redistributed to the participants. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and until the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the offerings have gradually been mediated through money and during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the earnings of the paniyiri, as well as donations and offerings in work were directed towards “ends of public benefit” (“*κοινωφελείς σκοπούς*”), that is, infrastructural works, like building schools, opening up or repairing earth-roads, water supply works, repair of churches etc. The villagers undertook these works voluntarily and in some cases supported partially by the community (*koinotita*). The voluntary offering of work was also an alternative means of payment to the paniyiri. Since the 1990s, infrastructure works have been more intensively funded by the state and the E.U through programs that aim at the development of the periphery. Gradually, the earnings of the paniyiri have been redirected towards the construction or renovation of

communal buildings (πνευματικά κέντρα), renovation of the public space where the paniyiri takes place, charity towards members of the community etc., although this shift has not been definitive, absolute or even completed. Thus, for example, very recently the local association (σύλλογος) of Raches paid the ambulance drivers of their district in order to remain in the service of the locals, as the drivers had decided to protest towards the state by seizing their work since they hadn't been paid for a long period of time.

Besides the inhabitants of the villages that hold the paniyiri and of the neighboring villages- locals and returnees-, people from more distant villages and other occasional visitors participate. Thus, the paniyiri is the meeting place-time for the locals and those who originally come from the island- from the village or neighboring villages- and live in urban areas. Consequently, in paniyiries of nearby villages one can more or less meet the same people. Furthermore, more than one village can hold its paniyiri during the same day, but *not* in the case of near-by villages. A recent or less recent 'early death', -that is an unexpected death of a member of the village or settlement- is commonly a reason for canceling the paniyiri. Finally until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, offerings in the memory of the deceased were directly made in supplies usually called "share" (μερίδιο) -that is a specific quantities of wheat, goats, wine, oil or wax- during the day of the celebration of the saint, while nowadays offerings in the memory of the dead are made through payments that are allotted to the same economic aims as those of the paniyiri<sup>8</sup>.

### *The Paniyiri as an Institutionalized System of Exchanges*

The paniyiri is a solemn part of a wider system of exchanges that marks the social life of Ikaria. It is an institutionalized system of exchanges which has religious, social, economic, spiritual, aesthetic and moral aspects and provides the context within which material and immaterial 'things' circulate: people, goats, wine food, money, work and services, visits, hospitality, dances and social ranks. It is also of a dynamic nature, since it persists in the social environment of the island, adjusting to changing conditions and thus remaining active. Its basic and diachronic components are those of offerings, co-operation and competition. The exchanges involve the saints, nature, humans and the deceased members of the community. Thus for example, humans offer to saints and the deceased members of the community<sup>9</sup>, to the 'community' or

the ‘village’ –in terms of money, supplies, effort and time- and to humans. The wealth that is accumulated in the context of the paniyiri is redistributed to the villagers; before the generalization of the monetary economy the offerings were directly redistributed among the participants, while in the present form of the paniyiri, the earnings are directed towards infrastructural works and thus the wealth is indirectly redistributed to the villagers.

The cycle of exchange then involves more than two parties, embracing wider realities than that of the self. The surpassing of the dualisms of reciprocity – the simple binary relation of give and take- indicates that the paniyiri is not only a form of relation and exchange, but also a form of expression and performance (Papataksiarchis, 1992:240-242). It constitutes, at the time of its performance, a ‘communitas’ in the terminology of Turner (1969:96,132) or an impersonal collectivity, that is an imminent and spontaneous relation between equal and upright individuals, in which the individuality of the self is diffused in the social exchange and a consciousness of the self as being part of a wider totality is raised (Hyde, 1983; Bakhtin, 1984:225). Furthermore, during the paniyiri there is a temporary suspension of the norms and prohibitions of everyday life and the emergence of others for the occasion (e.g. being drunk in the context of the paniyiri is considered a norm, while outside this context, it is considered as a sign of alcoholism). The suspension of the norms and the hierarchical distinctions that the paniyiri entails, brings to the fore a feeling of equality and the prevailing of “an atmosphere of freedom, frankness and familiarity”, thus “an ideal and at the same time a real type of communication, impossible in ordinary life, is established”, on the basis of which, people are “reborn for new, purely human relations” (Bakhtin, 1984:8-16, 92). Or to put it in the words of an informant: *“In the paniyiri every minor difference had to be resolved. There, life starts from the beginning and society is renewed”*. Following I quote extracts of interviews that highlight some of the meanings people attribute to this collectivity and the way they perceive their individuality.

*In a magical way...you leave your inhibitions and taboos outside...You pass to the opposite side... The limits of your ego are abolished. You live the experience of the one with the whole. Those who do not have a good time, have not been able to surpass their adhesions.*

*We were at a paniyiri in Lagada. I remember that all of those that had remained to the paniyiri were dancing in a circle. We became an organism with one brain, vibrating in the rhythm of music. It was a magical moment.*

The cohesion and solidarity of the group is also expressed in the context of this impersonal collectivity, as the above quotes so vividly illustrate. The expression of the cohesion presupposes at the time of the communion a common basis for the individuals that meet- for example, their common origin- and the divestiture of the participants from other attributes or social identities through which they act in different contexts. Mauss in his *Essay on the Gift* designated as the purpose of the gift “the promotion of a sense of friendship among the involved parties” and as one of its consequences, the fact that it conveys to both parties a sense of a common identity (1999: 90). As a consequence of this integrative force then, it is likely that an identity emerges that derives from the sense of the participants that they are parts of the same totality. In this specific case, the identity of the Ikarian emerges, while the periodicity of the performance of the paniyiri, re-baptizes the participants on the basis of their common origin, as Ikarians. When people reflect on the paniyiri and its importance for the local society, statements like the following emerge: “*if the paniyiri seizes, Icaria and Ikarians will never be the same anymore*”. The recurring element in such statements is the linking of the paniyiri to the island and the local identity.

Proceeding to the basic and diachronical elements of the paniyiri, the offerings to the paniyiri are conceived as a duty and a responsibility, and are inextricably interwoven with the identity of the individual. Not participating in the paniyiri of one’s own village, in the long-term, is equivalent to a loss of local identity, since people do not recognize this person as member of the local community but rather as a guest. Following, I quote an extract taken from my fieldnotes:

*“Just before the end of the paniyiri I witnessed a scene where Nikos and another villager complained to a fellow villager for not helping. They said that he is not an Oksiotis any more, has changed village, went to Chrisostomos (married there) and he helps there now, something he intensely denied saying: “Nor do I help neither do I go to their paniyiri”.*

After the generalization of the momentary economy the cost of participation to the paniyiri has gradually increased. Locals do not usually express complaints in relation

to that, as they conceive their participation as an offering to their village or other villages. When occasional visitors complain about excessive cost, locals usually ascribe these complaints to their ignorance (“*they don’t know that the paniyiri is for the village*”). Finally, the great amount of effort needed for the paniyiri is also conceived as a duty, something especially evident inside the *keli* (cell) - that is the subsidiary room where important tasks, like cooking, bottling the wine, etc., take place before, during and after the paniyiri. Thus, my attempt during the field research to collect information from the *keli* during the paniyiri of Kalamos was a failure and at this instance I was perceived more as an intruder and an obstacle to their work. The following year after I had established relations with these villagers, I had the opportunity to observe by participating; that is offering work inside the *keli*.

These offerings are also obligatory. “*Voluntarily means obligatory, or else you get sidelong looks. This is why when I first settled in Christos, I got involved in the syllogos (local association) and the organization of paniyiries*”. Another actor while talking for the paniyiries of the recent past stated: “*People were obliged to go to the paniyiri. Imagine that they took their kids with them, kids that could hardly walk and they were crossing steep footpaths for 2 or more hours to go to the paniyiri*” At another instance when I arrived late at the paniyiri of the village of my matrilineal origin, I heard complaints from villagers: “*in the paniyiri of your village you must arrive early and help...some time later you (εσείς) will take over*”. At the level of the person or the family, not offering or participating to the paniyiri of one’s own village of origin or neighboring village- thus not reciprocating-, is tantamount to a loss of the value of the social self and the value of the family, who are criticized by other actors as anti-social and not interested in the ‘common good’. It is equivalent to a loss of ‘public face’ and can also be interpreted -or be resorted to by a person or family- as an act of hostility. Such is the case of a pastoralist who in protesting for the enclosure of a grazing territory- a decision made by the municipality under the pressure of habitants of his village as well as neighboring villages-, restrained not only from participating, but also from selling his goats to the paniyiri of those villages for a period of at least three years. Furthermore, the act of a collective absence of a village from the paniyiri of a neighboring village is considered as an act of hostility and it is usually paid back by not participating at the paniyiri of that village when it is its turn to hold one. In addition, before the generalization of the momentary economy- that is until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, parts of the offerings were made by the deceased members of

the community who usually set these offerings to the saints as a condition for the bequest of their property or bequeathed land to churches appointing a specific person – usually kin- to ‘hold’ it and in the condition that he/she provides the “share” (*μερίδιο*) of the legator “*for the celebration of the saint*” and also for his/her commemoration<sup>10</sup>. Not meeting this condition incurred sanctions, such as paying an amount to the ‘existing authority’, that is to the council of the elders (the *dimogerontia*), the exposition to the “*judgment of the church*” and the “*tremendous judgment of God*” (“*εις το φοβερόν του Θεού κριτήριον*”) or the curse of the saint and of the legator.

Additional elements of the *paniyiri* are those of reciprocity and cooperation. In its context offerings of money, participation, visits, hospitality and dances among others are reciprocated. In addition the organization and conduct of the *paniyiri* requires the co-operation of the villagers. This element was also evident in the case of the undertaking of infrastructural works, where the villagers worked collectively. In addition, the postponement of the *paniyiri* without the reason of a recent death is perceived as inability of the families that make up this village to “*put aside their differences and co-operate for the good of their village*”. Thus the ability to cooperate even in conditions of conflict is considered to a personal and familial virtue, while the conduct of the *paniyiri* and the relevant ‘*noikokirema*’ of the village- that is the existence of infrastructural works as well as the possession and renewal of the implements of the *paniyiri*-, are conceived as a matter of pride.

One of the enduring values of Greek society, as Beidelman points out, is the tension between egalitarianism and ranking (see also Walcot, 1970; Cambell, 1964). In that context, it is acknowledged that competitive exchanges are essential for the creation and reestablishment of the social self, while there is a constant need for the verification of the value of the household (1989: 229). The *paniyiri* provides a context within which persons, families and villages confront each other, compete in generosity and claim, verify or reproduce their value which is always at stake. Thus when in the village of Vrakades offerings were accumulated during a liturgy for the reconstruction of the village church and according to the narrative of an informant, a local “*placed a ‘sterling pound (λίρα) on the tray that was circulating for that purpose. The seamen of Kouniadoi (neighboring village) saw him and they placed too this amount or more. But, when they left, he took his money back. But this was deliberate. He had placed it in the first place to prompt the others to do the same*”.

The intensity of the competition at the level of the person –who is moral as he/she is conceived in relation to his/her kin-, is disguised or blunted by the cultural value of ‘*hiding*’, which is not only expressed but also reproduced by the paniyiri. Until recently the “figs of the paniyiri” (*τα σκαλάκια του πανηγυριού*)– that is clashes or generalized beating during the paniyiri- were an “*indispensable part of the paniyiri’s menu*” and a reason for that could be, for example, an excessive demonstration of one’s wealth through the attempt to monopolize the orchestra by paying more than the rest<sup>11</sup>. The element of competition becomes more evident at the level of the villages and is expressed orally in terms of the earnings of the paniyiri, its success or high spirits (*kefi*), although on a practical level, the inhabitants of neighboring villages are one of the main sources of these earnings and the high spirits. In addition, the element of competition is materialized in the material works. The improvement of a church or the construction of a communal building for example usually provokes neighboring villages to direct their wealth and efforts towards the same end. Furthermore, the management of the earnings of the paniyiri is also a field of competition among people. Thus, for example, the village of Perdiki holds two paniyiries in the same day (in the upper and lower part of the village) due to a dispute that took place during the ‘90s regarding the decision on where to direct the earnings of the paniyiri.

These elements attest that the paniyiri is a form of institutionalized exchange system or expressed in terms of the gift theory- a *gift*. As such, it is inalienable and tied to nature, the village- which in turn is tied to the families that inhabit it- and the saints. Nature is the ‘*womb*’ of the paniyiri, as it provides not only the space, but also the constant points around which the paniyiri revolves; those are the goats, wheat and wine. It is also inextricably tied to nature, as it is nature that defines the rhythms of the production of the agricultural cycle which is marked by the saints’ days. Furthermore, when specifying a paniyiri people will say for example “*the paniyiri of saint Isidoros*” or “*the paniyiri of Lagada*”. The paniyiri, as inalienable in itself, - as Godelier notes in talking for the ‘fixed points of society’-, affirms “deep-seated identities and their continuity over time” (1999:33). Or, as Weiner puts it, due to its inalienability, it is a vehicle “for bringing past time into the present, so that the histories of ancestors, titles, or mythological events become an intimate part of a person’s present identity” (1985: 210). The paniyiri is also in motion, moving along time and space- as people reproduce it in social contexts other than that of the island-, interweaving and binding humans, saints and deceased members of the community in

a totality wider than the self. This totality provides a sense of a common identity and a sense of continuity among the generations. And by moving along generations, it binds the past to the present and the future. In addition, and as long as it stays in motion, it increases in value- this is what Hyde calls the core and also the ‘paradox of the gift’ (1983). Each generation ‘increases’ the paniyiri using materials and attributing meanings that are provided from their own historic-social context, and by thus doing the paniyiri is adapting in that context while at the same time people leave their “imprint” on it. The increase then attests to its dynamic and thus diachronic nature.

### *The Social Dynamics of the Paniyiri*

An emerging axis that traverses the above attempt to outline the paniyiri is its dynamicity, that is, its motion through time and in parallel to the motion of the social environment that produces and reproduces it. This motion brings to the fore questions regarding its ability to adjust in changing circumstances, as well as issues that concern its dialectical relation to the social environment within which it evolves; that is, the effects of the social environment on the paniyiri and also the effects of the paniyiri on this social environment.

It is commonplace that every material or organized human activity has its own life, reflecting the cultural and socio-economic rearrangements and evolutions (Skiada, 1992: 85-115). The specific socio-economic-political circumstances of each era have marked the paniyiri at the level of its structures, functions and meanings. Thus, for example, during the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially after the 1860 prohibition of logging of the island’s forests, many Ikarians had to migrate in Asia Minor, Euboea and elsewhere in order to make charcoal. The migration was seasonal and lasted from late spring to early autumn for a period of 4 to 5 months. At the same period, the escalation of the paniyiries was occurring during autumn and winter. As a consequence of the great migration wave of the 1960s towards urban areas, this escalation has gradually been transposed during summer, the period that the migrants return to the island for their holidays. Thus spring or winter paniyiries that used to attract many offerings and people either ceased or declined, while summer paniyiries gained greater importance.

Another illustration related to the material effects of the paniyiri on its social environment emerges from the study of documents of legal acts. It seems that during

the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of a church and the offerings in supplies were considered an important personal or familial affair. The importance of this affair is materialised not only in the great number of wills that set as a condition these offerings, but also in the construction of a large number of private churches around villages. Thus, for example, according to Archbishop Georgirenes who visited the island during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Steli was among the villages that were scanty populated by a small number of families<sup>12</sup> (1677). In that village there is a total number of 6 churches, 4 of which were constructed or reconstructed during or earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> and the other two were constructed or reconstructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1828 according to the census of the Administrator of East Sporades, Ikaria was populated by 3.110 residents and had a total of 808 buildings, 145 of which were churches, 23 village churches (parishes) and 636 houses (Giagourtas, 2004). That is, almost the 21% of the buildings were churches or parishes, while for every 21.4 residents, corresponded one private church. Thus, it can be said that every lineage had more or less one church in its private property.

Further, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ikaria was prospering while money started flowing towards and within the island. It is the period that the offerings to the paniyiri have gradually been mediated through money, while great infrastructural works were undertaken by the Ottoman or/and local administration and substantiated by the obligatory<sup>13</sup> or/and voluntary work of the locals. After the incorporation of Ikaria into Greece (1912) there was a gradual economic decline following the political developments of this era, - the Balkan Wars, the increase of the migration wave towards America among other broader and local circumstances. It is the same period that the paniyiries gradually became an important medium for the construction of infrastructures of the island, substituting to a great degree the role of the state or to put it in the words of an informant “*to cover the vacuum that existed in relation to the central authority*”. This development brings to the fore the way people conceive the relation of the local society with the central authority, the particular terms of the ‘dialogue’ between the local society and the broader socio-politico-economical developments and thus, the way actors manage the symbolic capital of the historical representations of collective memory. In that context, the concept of *marginality* emerges as an important chapter of the collective memory, on the grounds of which the Ikarian identity is articulated. Statements of the type: “*We are among the ‘unclaimed’*” or “*we are forgotten by gods and humans*” are

commonly expressed in relation to the central authority and the ‘backwardness’ of the island in terms of lack of important infrastructural works. The “*complex administrative organization*” (Ikaria belongs to the Province of Samos and the Periphery of N. Aegean) as a reason for “*doing injustice to Ikaria*” is also part of the political speech articulated by Ikarians, while every official declaration regarding prospective developmental works, are commonly confronted with distrust.

It becomes evident then that the paniyiri has not a simple relation of epiphenomenal reflection with the social environment that produces it, but, it is inextricably interwoven with it. As Dietler asserts while discussing the role of feasting in the process of social change, it constitutes “a central arena and has a profound impact on the course of the historical transformations” (2001:16). The paniyiri has the potentiality to recreate the socio-economic structures and re-orient the changes towards new directions (Kapferer, 2004). What is reproduced are the fundamental structures of society, the way these are conceived, social and economic relations, practices, symbols, values and norms that are confirmed or redefined and renewed by their reproduction in the context of the paniyiri or by their temporal submersion and the emergence of other norms for the occasion. In addition, these conditions, relations, practices, values and symbols that are produced or reproduced, reproduce the paniyiri itself. This orbital motion of the paniyiri around the social environment that generates it, is –as indicated above- not closed, but in dialogue with the conditions of this social environment and has a multiplicity of aspects and effects on this environment, the social actors and at the level of place, time and the local identity. This is why the Kwakiutl potlatch was thought to be an important ‘obstacle’ in the Canadian’s Government attempts to ‘civilize’ the Native Americans, who instead of adopting passively the social values of Europeans, as Codere affirms (1966:8), managed to exploit the altered circumstances for their own ends, using their earnings to reinforce the potlatch, which they conceived as one of the most important parts of their social structure (Jonaitis, 1991:135-36).

### *Epilogue*

In the foregoing attempt to unwrap the paniyiri in relation to the basic axes that are emerging from the field, a mosaic, rather than a monolithic image, emerges. The imagery of the mosaic derives from the fact that the paniyiri has many dimensions and

layers and is inextricably interwoven with the society that generates it. As an institutionalized exchange system, it provides the context within which people, animals, objects, services and ranks among others circulate, binding individuals and generations, saints, nature, past and present in an inextricable nexus that revolves around the social space of Ikaria; a space that is also in motion.

Given the multidimensionality and dynamicity of this phenomenon, it becomes evident that its study from a particular theoretical standpoint would substantially impoverish our horizon. On the contrary, the understudying of the paniyiri necessitates an ‘open’ theoretical horizon as it traverses the theoretical grounds of any particular standpoint and includes in itself the theoretical potentialities – as Turner affirms while studying the ritual practices-, and in that sense, it creates its own theoretical ground.

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## NOTES

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2. The ancient meaning of ‘theory’ is literally the participation in the panegyric procession for the worship of the gods. Here I use it in its metaphoric sense, as participation and real presence.
3. Here I use the term ‘theoretical’ in the contemporary sense of the word.
4. For example, people used to hide their valuables (oil, wine, wheat and other dried food) under the earth in the *xostokelia* (χωστοκέλια). The houses were low-roofed and did not have windows or a chimney for the fire-place, but a hole which was covered by a stone and was called ‘*anefantis*’ (ανεφάντης), while the roof was *monoxiti* (μονόχυτη), that is one-sided following its steep background. The settlements that are considered to be ‘hidden’ are very old and present archaeological interest. These are located on the mountain of Atheras and within basins surrounded once by dense forests.
5. This poverty was up to a point real. It was also fictitious exactly because of the hiding strategies of those turbulent periods of history.
6. According to oral tradition internal refugees came from the ‘hidden’ settlements of the island mentioned above, in which they resorted to during turbulent times.
7. With the exception of the case of Agios Kirikos which is the administrative capital of the island and concentrates most of the public and private services (Hospital, banks, Tax Office etc.) and most of the tourist enterprises that center around the mineral springs of Therma. Consequently the 60% of its population is occupied in the tertiary sector, while in the district of Raches and Eudilos the approximate average percentage of the occupation in each sector is around 39%.

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8. Nowadays, in some villages boiled meat is shared in equal proportions among the villagers during Easter Day in the memory of the ancestors whereat, “everyone would eat meat, even *those who could not afford it*”. It is called “*μνημόσυνο*” (commemoration) and it is considered to be a very old custom.
  9. There are offerings of bread in the memory of the deceased that are commemorated during the liturgy. In addition nowadays, postponing the paniyiri because of the death of a member of the local community is tantamount to giving up a great amount of money - that is, the earnings of the paniyiri. In the past offerings for ‘the celebration of the saint’ –goats, wheat and wine- were partially made in the memory of the ancestors.
  10. The living or deceased donors were called “*προθεσάριοι*” (prothesarioi) and their names were commemorated in every liturgy of the church.
  11. During the ‘80s the system of orderings to the orchestra (paragellies) was annulled and the cost of the music was transferred on the total cost of the paniyiri, thus been divided among the participants.
  12. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, according to the estimations of some European travelers, the island was inhabited by a total of 3000 residents (e.g. Thenenot, Coronelli).
  13. In a letter written by the mayor of Mesaria in 1917 to the representative of the government in Samos, it is mentioned that a “community system” pre-existed for the “repair of the public roads” in the context of which, “every citizen every year either acquits 16 grosia or works for 4 days” (Giagourtas, 2004: 51).

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**Michelangelo Paganopoulos (Goldsmiths College, UCL)**

**Title: “The Affinity between Anthropology and Literature: Reflections on the Poetics of Ethnography in the work of Nikos Kavvadias” (5, 000 words)**

In the Introduction of *The Waste Land* (1922) T.S. Elliot acknowledges the influence of two works of early anthropology on which the epic poem was based: Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* and Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (Elliot 2002: 58). Elliot’s use of anthropological resources in his poetry reveals the exotic (folklore) side of anthropology itself, which Malinowski in his strong effort to make a scientific anthropological method totally rejected. But in the last two decades there has been a turn towards literature and the text, and increasingly anthropologists, such as Marcus and Clifford (1986), challenged the method of anthropology itself, that is, extensive fieldwork, participant observation, and categorization of data, recognizing that anthropology is and should be treated as a written text, a genre of literature with its own advantages and limitations, rather than a scientific experiment:

Ethnography is seen more often as a species of creative writing than as science; and the realism of conventional accounts is considered to be as limited in its formal scope as its content is often deceptive (Grimshaw and Hart 1995: 46)

In this essay, I reflect on the poetics of ethnography by looking at the travelling writings of the Greek poet Nikos Kavvadias (1919-1975) in reference to the field diary of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942). My aim is to investigate the relationship of anthropology to prose. Paraphrasing Kavvadias’ question in his poem *Kuro Siwo* (1933) “Is it the compass turning, Or the Ship?” this paper asks: is it the method that makes anthropology, or is it in fact the introverted experience of travelling?

## A Modern Odysseus

Nikos Kavvadias was one of the first travelling writers and poets. He was born in 1919 in Harbin, Manchuria. His parents were from the island of Kefalonia. Kavvadias did not consider being a poet. He was working in cargo ships as a radio-operator from a very young age with various shipping companies based at Piraeus. He was born a traveller who could not stand the land for a long time and always had to move on. He died in 1975 a few months after his third collection of poems *Traverso* was published. The fact that he was not considering himself a poet, but rather a traveller, comes not only from his style of writing based on personal experiences and emotions reflected on the sea, the weather, the lost cities with their dirty ports, but also by the very limited amount of work he produced, heavily invested with experience: his first selection of poems was published in 1933 at the age of twenty-four, his second in the middle of his life in 1947, and his third a year before he died. The cosmopolitan character of his prose was illuminated the year of his death, when the famous Greek musician and former minister of Culture, Thanos Mikroutsikos, made two rock albums with Kavvadias' poetry, which became hugely successful especially among young people.

After the death of Kavvadias in 1975 three short novels were published, "Lee", "Of War", and "On My Horse" (my translation from Greek). The texts, which were published for the first time in 1987, have an even stronger confessional character than his three poetic collections and the novel published during his life. 'Lee' in particular is written like a diary, which I will be looking more extensively below. In addition to this material, more recently Guy M. Saunier published *The Diary of a Skipper* (2005), which contains extracts of intimate travelling experiences and memories written as a prose or poetry in the form of a diary. Originally, this was the first publication of the young Kavvadias published in the journal *Peiraikon Vema* in January and February 1932. The diary gives us a first glance to his future mythological themes with specific references to the dangerous Indian Ocean, the first trip of the writer to the sailors' favourite and mysterious Marseille, his life-changing visit to Stromboli the Italian island opposite the volcano Etna, his parents' home Argostoli the capitol of the Greek island Kefalonia, and other texts, which juxtapose his childhood expectations against the reality and dangers of travelling.

In these writings, and later in his poetry, Kavvadias intimately connects his internal feelings of loss of childhood with the external changes of the environment and its modernization, highlighting Modernity's negative aspects by associating moral corruption to environmental pollution. In the poem entitled *Kafar* (1933) he wrote:

...  
 Once the ships were our hidden wish  
 But now the world is an empty page  
 It is the same to be in Greece  
 And travelling to Fernando Po  
 ...  
 The poles became to us familiar  
 We admired numerous times the northern Selas  
 And the ice is covered for years now  
 With empty cans of Spanish sardines  
 ...  
 The Japanese, the girl in Chile  
 And the black Moroccan girls selling honey  
 Like all women have the same legs  
 And kiss the same

(Extracts from "Kafar" in the collection *Marabou* 1933, my translation)

For Kavvadias the juxtaposition of romantic nostalgia to the modern reality is a universal condition of the human being, reflected on his strong sentiment of nostalgia for a 'home' that is never there, which painfully stigmatises his work as a whole. The endless journey takes him from the mountains of Switzerland to the immobile seascapes of the equator, as people are different and the same, exotic in their own account but banal in their modern reality. Kavvadias does not seem to move, but rather the world travels around him: "Is it the compass turning, or the ship?" His journey is static like the seascapes of the equator, as he is trapped in the ship, a metal coffin, which remains immobile in space, letting the globe move around it.

Unlike many of his contemporary Greek scholars who focused on folklore writing of at times nationalist sentiment, Kavvadias wrote both about modern Greece and about the world. He did not seem to distinguish between the two. For him, Greece was never home, because although he was Greek, he was not born there. His writings are characterized by a strong sentiment of universal humanism, a sense of a world united in cosmopolitan places, such as the dirty ports of multinational cities, which became

his true home. The poet traveller drew huge inspiration and admiration for Konstantinos Cavafys (1863-1933), the writer of the masterful pseudo-historical poem *Ithaca*, who was born in Alexandria to Greek parents but spent most of his life travelling from Egypt to England, and who was the advocate of a universal Hellenistic spirit surpassing beyond the borders of the nation state. Before moving to the evaluation of Kavvadias' own work from an anthropological perspective, it would be useful to briefly examine the central motifs of his work.

The folklore quality of Kavvadias' writings is illuminated in his short novel entitled *Lee*, that is, the name of the anonymous young Chinese girl who was living in ships serving food and cleaning the cabins of the sailors staying at the international port of Green Island (Hong Kong). *Lee* masterly contains all the motives that mark Kavvadias' prose as personal experience: economy of expression that highlights personal memory as introverted exoticism invested with heavy symbolism; a cosmopolitan understanding of the world in humanitarian terms in terms of suffering common to all human beings in sharp juxtaposition to external appearances and differences; an obsession with objects that travel across the globe creating their own history, knives, letters, and gifts; an ethnographic interest in local history, family structures, the market, and even local food.

Similar to his previously published novel *Vardia*, *Lee* is also written in a self-confessional style in the form of a diary, while in the text, the Chinese girl takes the role of the informant for the traveller Kavvadias. The story is structurally divided in three parts, gradually taking us from the inside deck of the Ship to the reality outside it: the first part takes place in the Ship, the inside world in which both the sailor and the girl spend their lives working; the second part takes place at the Green Island, the international dream-world Port; and the final part takes place at the girl's home stigmatised by poverty and prostitution. In the novel, the girl is too young and proud to be a prostitute, and she earns the admiration, even love, of the poet by her crystallized decency, high ethical values, and hard worked maturity. In fact, she could have been Kavvadias' first love as portrayed in his poem *Marabou* (1933), the "aristocratic, elegant, and melancholic" "sister friend" (Kavvadias 2002: 10) symbolizing the innocent world of the young, in sharp juxtaposition to growing up and the corrupted world of the old, the ideal versus the real. This kind of exoticism is

supported by his life-long search for 'home', that is, his lost forgotten first love to which Lee, the anonymous Chinese girl, conforms.

Significantly, in *Lee Kavvadias* reflects on his own life telling the girl that he can speak some Cantonese because he was not born in "His La Kwo" (Greece in Chinese) but in Tung Sun Sheung (Manchuria) (2002c: 15). In another text from his diary entitled "Argostoli: The Melancholic Capitol of Kefalonia" (2005: 40-43), he further reveals his feelings for his parents' Greek home as a place without life, "only mountains rising in a threatening and mourning manner" (Ibid: 40), an experience that is contrasted to the colourful and monotonous at the same time experience of travelling. At times, during his journeys, he might even consider committing suicide, but it is clear that he could not live for a second in the island of Kefalonia. Thus, in his life and poetry, he consciously took the role of a modern Odysseus, the sailor trapped in his inner search for a 'home' that is never there, becoming the protagonist in Cavafys imagination for a long gone Ithaca. This kind of textual introverted exoticism is reflected on the experience of static seascapes and cosmopolitan ports, as the Argonaut Kavvadias, in the role of the folklorist ethnographer, absorbs the exotic life surrounding him in his journey to nowhere, until he dies, and stops moving/experiencing.

The young girl of the story, because of her poverty, had never been inside the international port of Green Island, and for her as for Kavvadias, 'Green Island' symbolizes a material Paradise that combines a strong element of nostalgia for a cosmopolitan world society with material prosperity, a place of "flowers" (2002c: 21-22), from which the local peoples are excluded. The writer finds the opportunity to take her for the first time on land to shops such as "China Emporium" (Ibid: 26), the international bazaar, and the Happy Valley (Ibid: 28-39). But then, in the third part, this ideal and ethnographic description of Green Island with its foods, noise, smells, and colours, is cruelly juxtaposed to the reality of Hong Kong with its poverty and cheap prostitution (Ibid: 44-46), the reality of colonialism in other words.

In meeting her family in such a cruel world, Kavvadias comes even closer to her as their relationship surpasses the anonymity of ethnicities, boundaries and words; it is a matter of personal experience. As a reward, she gives him a gift: a cheap box with a

golden dragon knitted on it, invested with the memory of their close but brief relationship. After his departure the two will never meet again. Instead their friendship and mutual understanding is sealed with this cheap gift, which in itself implies a spiritual commitment to the fragility of their friendship that goes beyond time, life and death. The object owes a corporeal power, invested with the mysticism of personal exchange -similar to Mauss' famous analysis on the corporeality of the "gift" (1950), an eternal commitment to their friendship.

Ironically, back at the Customary Service of Piraeus where Kavvadias was stationed, the officer evaluates the box as an "item without value" (2002c: 50). The officer, who represents the new bureaucratic nation state, cannot comprehend the real value of the item, which is indeed priceless from the writer's perspective. The gift is a commitment beyond the borders of the nation states. In this sense, Kavvadias belongs to the Kantian tradition of universal anthropology, in which "Kantian subjectivity (is) at once personal and cosmopolitan" (Hart 2005: 2) based on experience and humanism as the real motives for writing a "universal history" (Kant 1784) for a "perpetual peace" (1795). Hart crucially distinguishes two periods of anthropological thought: the first refers to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the Enlightenment in the humanist writings of Rousseau and Kant, in which the term anthropology was coined as "a democratic alternative to agrarian civilization" based "on conditions of universal hospitality" (2006: 1-2), in other words, encouraging travelling. And this is the same kind of humanism the Victorian and later functionalist 'scientists' of anthropology chose to ignore (see also Penaloza 2004). As Hart writes on the second period of anthropological thought:

The dominant paradigm shifted in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Anthropology now explained western imperialism's easy conquest of world society [the totality of social relationships linking the inhabitants of earth] in terms of racial hierarchy whose evolution was revealed by speculative history (Hart 2006: 2)

The cosmopolitan and humanitarian understanding of the world by Kavvadias is illuminated in his two poems entitled *Thessaloniki*, the first published in *Pousi* (1947), which nostalgically takes us to the lost cosmopolitan metropolis of Thessaloniki, and the second published twenty-eight years later in *Traverso* (1975) that takes a pessimistic look of Thessaloniki at its present time. In the first poem, Kavvadias

refers to the city of Thessaloniki before it became officially Greek in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne (see Hirschon 2004: 19). The city was famous for its trade and was also known as “the mother of Israel” since Hispanic Jewish dominated its social life. It is estimated that in 1920 there were 30000 Jewish leaving in Salonique, as well as 20000 Turkish and 15000 Greeks, and a number of Bulgarians. With War World II and the occupation of the city by the Nazis, the Jewish population of Thessaloniki ‘disappeared’ in one night. The new immigrants came in the city from Constantinople and Izmyrn, as well as from Pontus, just like my grandparents, who for a few years had to live in small huts with many refugee families in order to survive in the big city. But while Athens prospered with its population steadily increasing to more than half of the rest of Greece, Thessaloniki's economic life has since declined. The city "sleeps under the red lights" if I paraphrase Kavvadias’ final verse in the poem (see Index).

With the power centralized at the capitol the port of the Thessaloniki is in steady economical decline no matter the efforts to re-engage the city as the central port of the Balkans. The economical decline is reflected on the social life of the city that once was speaking at least four different languages (Greek, Turkish, Hebrew, and Bulgarian). Kavvadias poem prophesises with the nationalization of Thessalonica -or Salonique as it was known- the city would lose its "golden sleeve", meaning its economic central power in the Balkans. Kavvadias was right. Today, all the economic and political power of Greece is centralized in Athens. Thessaloniki has transformed from a cosmopolitan centre of trade and the arts into a religious local ghost of a city that used to be.

The humanist and experiential motives of Kavvadias’ writings and poems are therefore not far away from the humanist ideal of anthropology, which has been long argued against in the context of post-colonialism. But the writer seems to be more conscious of colonialism and the change of history than anthropologists. The element he lacks that does not make him ‘anthropologist’ is a method. Below I will first compare the diaries of Malinowski to Kavvadias, in order to re-evaluate their work by comparison, and second, by looking at the criticism of Herzfeld of the ethnographic method (1987) critically reflect on the anthropological “authority” of fieldwork and its scientific claim (see Clifford 1986: 6, 15, 32) in relation to the study of literature as an anthropological source of information.

## Reflections on Ethnography

The natives set fires in the sand  
 And as they play their organs, we get more anxious  
 To triumph over the Sea's deaths  
 I wish I'd see you at the wharf

(Kavvadias' extract from "Karanti" in *Pousi* [1947], 2002: 24, my trans)

The Mayos stood on the shore; I watched them a long time through binoculars and waved my handkerchief –I felt I was taking leave of civilization. I was fairly depressed, afraid I might not feel equal to the task before me... I looked at them through binoculars; they reminded me of the Saturday excursion to Blackall Ranges... I went to the cabin and felt asleep after an injection of Alkarsodyl. The next day was spent in my cabin, dozing with a bad headache and general numbness

(Malinowski on his arrival among the Mailu, New Guinea, 1967: 5)

Travelling for long periods of time can be a cruel experience, as much as boring. As Firth in his introduction to Malinowski's diaries writes: "The feeling of confinement, the obsessional longing to be back if for the brightest while in one's own cultural surroundings, the dejection and doubts about the validity of what one is doing, the desire to escape into fantasy world of novels or daydreams... -many sensitive fieldworkers have experienced these feelings" (1967: xv). In the above very different in style texts, the feeling expressed by both Kavvadias and Malinowski is indeed that of "confinement", anxiety, and numbness. The experience of travelling is common to humanity as a whole, as much as a stranger is always a stranger -even an "illegal" immigrant these days. Both Kavvadias and Malinowski were travellers, and they both regarded travelling as the means of learning about the world and yourself. They were both in places that never became their homes, and in many respects they were born 'foreigners'. In the material published during their lives, they owned a humanitarian spirit that did not essentially distinguish between the 'savage' and the 'developed', the 'prostitute' and the 'mother', the primitive and the European, but rather saw everyone in the equal terms of the experience of everyday life. Of course, their respective views that 'all men are savages' in Malinowski's case, and all 'women are prostitutes' in Kavvadias' writings, should certainly be accounted for. However, departing from trivial matters of political correctness, their writing was in essence *amoral and humanitarian* at the same time. Both writers became innovators of the travelling genre

in their respective institutions, and seen from their eyes, they were indeed motivated by a love/hate relationship for the human being, as much traumatic and passionate as creative.

In a fascinating article on the ethnographic imagination, Fernanda Penaloza (2004) underlines the historical value of Muster's 19<sup>th</sup> Century travelogue in Patagonia (1871), in order to highlight the influence of pre-professional ethnographic narratives on contemporary anthropological studies. She focused on the discursive operations of Muster's narrative "that turned the unfamiliar into the familiar" (Penaloza 2004: 4), operations which were further developed with Malinowski's method of fieldwork. Her aim was to show "how evasive and oblique is a world that has been imaginarily and nostalgically recovered, and how strong are the myths that created it" (Ibid: 9). Just like in Kavvadias' poems and diaries, nostalgia is a central feeling in the construction of the ethnographic imagination.

In *Anthropology through the Looking Glass* (1987) Herzfeld reflected on the anthropological idealistic motivation to save the "vanishing Indian" (see also Penaloza 2004: 8) making a historical association between the survivalist thesis of the Victorian anthropologists to folklore, and consequently to Greek nationalism. In illustrating his point he highlighted Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) as the "ancestor of both nationalism and anthropology" (Ibid: 9). Herzfeld drew a parallel between the thesis of survivalism and nationalism, in the sense that they both refer to a nostalgic past, and that within the context of anthropology, nationalism is replaced by the term "exoticism", that is, our constant interest for the particularly unique and universal at the same time. Underlying the ahistoricity of functionalism and structuralism he argued "all ethnography is in some sense an account of a social group's ethnocentrism" (1987: 18). It is thus this kind of nostalgia of something that is never really there, the method, which is the source of exoticism and ethnocentrism. Is Malinowski's holy methodological triad -participant observation, diary, and system of ideas- really a *scientific* method?

Malinowski was born in Krakow, Austria-Hungary (present day Poland) in 1884, but like Kavvadias, he travelled all his life from Poland to Britain and from there to Papua New Guinea, Melanesia, Oceania, the Trobriand Islands, Mexico, Scandinavia, and

North America among other places. His achievements in the field of anthropology are well known, mainly his systematic study of reciprocity (the *Kula* system), kinship and sexuality, and rituals. Malinowski was a graduate of Leipzig University where the famous folk psychologist Wilhelm Wundt taught him (1908-1910) before moving to the London School of Economics (1910) under the supervision of the psychologist Charles G. Seligman (1873-1940) and the social philosopher Edward A. Westermarck (1862-1939). He also kept contact with Cambridge University and the professor of Zoology and film maker Alfred C. Haddon (1855-1940), and the medical neurologist and ethnologist W. H. R. Rivers (1864-1922). All five men had a huge influence on Malinowski's effort to make the distinction between description and analysis (1922) on which the whole project of scientific anthropology was based ever since.

But Malinowski's publication of his diary in 1967 came twenty five years after his sudden death, sending shock waves across the discipline of anthropology, since for the first time we could see behind the mask of the "scientist", a title that he so eagerly defended in the 'Introduction' of the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) of the Robert Mond expedition to New Guinea (1914-1918). The result was that the diary revived the interest to his ethnography from the Andaman Islands that still remains the Bible of British anthropology. But since the publication of his diaries, Malinowski's method has been heavily scrutinized from a number of perspectives, such as feminism<sup>1</sup>, and cultural studies<sup>2</sup>. Ironically, the diary was the first self-reflective anthropological text that became the nail on the coffin of "scientific ethnography" because of its intimate content that indeed reveals the writer behind the pen in a confessional way. A second publication followed, edited by Helena Wayne (1995), focusing on the letters of Malinowski and his wife Elsie Masson from 1916 until her death in 1935, which highlights the emotional impact of Malinowski's personal life on his self-proclaimed "scientific" functionalistic fieldwork.

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<sup>1</sup> Haraway, D. (1991: 6-20) historically challenged "the political physiology of dominance" in "the neo-Darwinian synthesis and the social functionalism of Malinowski's theory of culture" (1991: 15)

<sup>2</sup> Anthropologists came to question the "method" itself in relation to its ideological association to colonialism (Hutnyk 2004: 19-20, 25-27, and 36-38). In relation to Malinowski's diaries, Hutnyk recently underlined the continuity from Malinowski's method of fieldwork to Clifford's self-reflective method: "The sometimes progressive, relativist, racist, Malinowski was part of the land grab that was the colonial project in the South Seas; Clifford is part of the latter-day version of the same project, this time glossed as globalisation by neoliberal ideology..." (Ibid: 10)

Kavvadias' own Argonauts of the Western Pacific is *Vardia*, translated as 'On Watch', and published after WWII in 1954. It is a prose on the life of the sailors blending poetry with personal memories that reveals the unique narrative talent of the writer. As Michel Saunier (2005) wrote in the Introduction of the French edition of the novel, *Vardia* is both an inner and an outer journey, which, just like Malinowski's ethnographic material, is based on the experiences of the writer, the discussions he had with other sailors and local peoples, and just as Malinowski's diary at times it takes the form of self-confession. The language of the novel uses the dialect of the sailors, which is a universal type of language with words of special meaning referring to the experience of travelling (Trapalis 2002, see also Index), as the Ship becomes a travelling cosmopolitan environment with its own language, customs, and ethics.

In *Vardia*, the sailor Kavvadias functions as an ethnographer. In fact, his method of collecting data from the field is no different to that of Malinowski's comparative method with its own sacred trinity: emphasis on routines in the village (the Ship in Kavvadias), living and experiencing life among the 'natives' (the ports and the market), and talking to people on various interpretations of myths and customary practices (the poetry of the bordellos). Conversely, Kavvadias' Ship could have been Malinowski's famous Tent at the field (Clifford and Marcus 1986) standing immobile in time and space, observing and recording the life of the village/ship (participant observation). In their respective writings, both Malinowski and Kavvadias identified with the natives and the sailors (informants) they travelled with, 'becoming native' and reflecting their experience on paper. This becomes particularly evident in their respective diaries.

The self-confessional texts of both Malinowski's and Kavvadias' writings show that it was experience that motivated their respective works, rather than a method. It could be argued that Malinowski's effort to create a scientific method was a product of his own insecurities (his sexuality and status amongst the natives), which are so strong in his diaries. However, while Malinowski's way out of this trap was his scientific status, Kavvadias was much more conscious of colonialism and world poverty, as the short novel *Lee* shows, which made both his prose and contact far superior to that of Malinowski's methodological account of 1922, and equal to his diaries of 1967. In other words, Kavvadias did not carry with him the academic arrogance of

Malinowski, but instead a spirit of humanism that made him an anthropologist of the Enlightenment, rather than the anthropologist of the British Institution and its politics. As he reflects in his following dialogue with the Chinese girl:

- Lots of books, she said, are they all yours?
- Yes.
- And have you read all of them?
- All of them.
- You must know many things
- No more than you, I thought, and *those that I don't know I am learning now from you*, in my late forties... [Lee, 2002c: 19]

As mentioned above, recent anthropologists turned away from participant observation as the anthropological method, towards literature and the text looking at the poetics of culture as the means of *learning*<sup>3</sup>. By looking at religious, fictional, folklore and historical texts as the means for understanding the experience of culture, and the way ideas, identities, and/or social relationships historically develop in response to those texts, they challenged fieldwork as *the* ethnographic method, allowing the rise of the poetics of ethnography. In the context of the anthropology of Greece, Herzfeld (1985) first introduced the term “poetics” in his description of animal theft among the men of the (anonymous) village Glendi in Crete as the “poetics of manhood”. In his following work on the subversion of silence among “Greek women” Herzfeld (1991) further developed his notion of poetics in relation to Foucault’s ideas of the power of silence as irony. Conversely, Fischer’s (1986) own account of the poetics of ethnography in Clifford’s and Marcus’ collection of essays, underlined the self-reflective power of “irony and humour as tactics... (that) draw attention to their own limitations and degree of accuracy” (1986: 229). Thus, by “poetry” in anthropology we mean (historical) self-reflection; and in a sense, self-reflection is what poetry also achieves.

Even more recently, anthropologists focused on Greek literature. For instance, Mackridge (2004: 235-246) investigated the Greek Minor Asian writers from Izmyrn and Ivali, who wrote from the island of Mytilini after the compulsory exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece in 1923 (Laussane Convention). Mackridge culturally and politically re-evaluated famous Greek texts of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by Ilias

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, in the anthropology of Greece, Danforth and Tsiaras (1982), and Seremetakis (1991) among others, analysed texts of songs of lamentation in relation to social action, particularly focus on the central public role of women in mourning.

Venezis, Dido Sotiriou, Kosmas Politis, and Stratis Myrivilis, in terms of their particular language, location, the political division of Left and Right during the bloody Greek Civil War after WWII, the strong sentiment of nostalgia for a 'lost' Greek past, and the colourfulness of the depictions of the Turkish characters of those novels -who at times remind more of Malinowski's "primitives" rather than real people-, in order to offer a historical and anthropological account of the Modern Greek imagination as reflected on the culture and politics of the Greek literature on "the myth of Asia Minor" in the construction of Greek identity.

The addition of Greek literature in the study of Greece and the world offers an accurate historical understanding of the cultural standards, and political, social, and economic changes of each era, from the perspective of each writer, who should be treated as the ethnographer of his time. More importantly, the study of literature gives an intelligent voice to local cultures through the intellectual perspective of their representative, that is, the writer. I am not arguing that the Anthropologists of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should go back to the armchair and start reading. But literature certainly allows an additional insight into the life of people, outside scientific prejudices and fixed aims, and instead of encouraging institutionalized investigations narrow in their expression and scope, it gives direct self-reflective access to particular cultural settings, in the same way Kavvadias' writings gave us an intimate insight of the life of cargo ships and ports.

From such a perspective, Kavvadias writings certainly belong to cultural studies, if not anthropology. There is a huge writing tradition in Greece that is often ignored in anthropology by being labelled under the category of "Fiction". Since Greece is marginal to anthropology, and until recently, anthropology was almost non-existent in Greece<sup>4</sup>, the anthropological turn towards literature must challenge the marginality of anthropology in Greece. If we accept that Anthropology is indeed an institutionalised practice as preserved since Malinowski's time, then rightly we can argue that anthropology is marginal to Greece, as Greece is to anthropology (Herzfeld 1987). But if we evaluate Anthropology as a dynamic way of thinking and living, rather than

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<sup>4</sup> Until recently there was no recognized anthropological school in Greece. Papataxiarchis, among others, have engaged themselves in an effort to create a school of Greek Anthropology to the University of Mytilini (Lesbos)

a static method and an impersonal institution, then anthropology existed in Greece even before Kavvadias' time in the form of the Hellenic ideal<sup>5</sup> (as in the poetry of Cavafys), which corresponds to the Kantian project for a universal history.

Hence, Kavvadias' marginal position between poetry and ethnography reveals the unsettling interconnection between fiction and ethnographic imagination, and today challenges the institutionalisation of anthropological thought by the Victorian anthropologists, and later by Malinowski, into a British School of (racial) colonial way of thinking. Second, Kavvadias in spite lacking methodology is much more conscious of colonialism than Malinowski. Finally, the study of his writings offers us not only an accurate recording of his journeys around the globe and the life of cargo ships, but also a reflection on his own marginality, which is an extension of the marginality of Greek identity itself, trapped between an idealized ancient past and a brutalized history of Ottoman colonialism.

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<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, the Hellenistic ideal has to be further historically investigated in relation to the nationalist ideology of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the Greek claims for historical continuity from ancient Greece through Byzantium to Modern Greece (Friedman 1994: 117-123).

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### *A Bord de l' "ASPASIA"* (in Marabou 1933)

Hunted by fate you travelled  
 To the all-white but grieving Switzerland  
 Always on deck in your old chaise-langue  
 For a dreadful but all too-well-known reason

At all times your worried family surrounded you  
 But you, indifferent, gazed at the sea  
 All they said only raised a bitter smile  
 Because you felt that you were walking towards the Land of the Dead

One evening, as we were passing-by Stromboli<sup>6</sup>  
 You turned to a smiling someone in a funny way and said  
 "How does my sick body burns  
 Like the heated pick of the volcano!"

Later I saw you lost in Marseilles  
 Disappearing into the noise without looking back  
 And I, who loved the field of water,  
 Say: "You are someone I could have loved"

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<sup>6</sup> *Stromboli*: Island in Southern Italy opposite the volcano Etna (3340 metres)

*Thessaloniki* (in *Pousi*<sup>7</sup> 1947)

It was the night when Vardaris<sup>8</sup> was blowing  
 The wave was winning the prow fathom by fathom  
 The First<sup>9</sup> sent you to clear the waters  
 But you only remember Smaro<sup>10</sup> and Kalamaria<sup>11</sup>

You forgot the tune the Chileans used to sing  
 “St Nicolas<sup>12</sup> and St Sea protect us!”  
 A blind girl guides you, the child of Mondellianni<sup>13</sup>  
 Loved by the First-rate and the two (sailors) from Marmaras

Water sleeps through Fore Peak, water and the sails  
 But instead, a strange dizziness moves you  
 Did the Spanish girl knit that stamp (on you)?  
 Or was it the girl who was dancing on a rope?

A hibernated snake sleeps on your collar  
 And the monkey hangs around looking in your clothes  
 Nobody remembers you but your mother  
 In this terrifying journey of loss

The sailor throws the cards and the stoker the dice  
 And the one who is at fault and does not realize, walks on the slant  
 Remember that narrow Chinese alley  
 And the girl who was silently crying in the dark

Under the red lights Salonique<sup>14</sup> sleeps  
 Ten years ago, drunk, you said, “I love you”  
 Tomorrow, like then, and without gold on your sleeve  
 In vain, you will be looking for the road to Depot<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Pousi*: A word coming from the sailors’ dialect meaning ‘sea fog’.

<sup>8</sup> *Vardaris*: The northern wind that hits the city of Thessaloniki in the winter. It has a nasty reputation for being the coldest wind in Greece making the atmosphere wet and freezing.

<sup>9</sup> The terms ‘First’ and ‘first-rate’ refer to the first among the sailors

<sup>10</sup> *Smaro*: Greek name of a girl, meaning ‘Pearl’

<sup>11</sup> *Kalamaria*: Neighbourhood of Thessaloniki with a very good reputation.

<sup>12</sup> St Nicolas is the Saint of sailors and fishermen

<sup>13</sup> Famous painter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for his portraits of people with blank eyes staring at nothingness

<sup>14</sup> The term “Salonique” refers to the cosmopolitan city of Thessaloniki before it became officially Greek in 1923 with the Lausanne Convention of 1923. It is still used today

<sup>15</sup> *Depot*: Industrialized area near Kalamaria

*Kuro Siwo* (in *Pousi* 1947)

First fare by chance to the south  
 Difficult watches, bad sleep and malaria  
 India's strange lanterns are deceptive  
 They say you don't see them at first glance

Beyond Adam's bridge in southern China  
 You received thousands sacks of soya  
 But not for a single moment you forgot the words  
 What they've said during an empty hour in Athens

The tar leaks under the nails and sets them on fire  
 For years your clothes smell fish-oil  
 And her word whistles in your head  
 "Is it the compass turning, or the ship?"

Early the weather went full and turned nasty  
 You altered course, but sadness holds you  
 Tonight my two parrots died  
 And the ape I had so much trouble training

The iron plate!<sup>16</sup> ... The iron plate wipes out everything  
 The Kuro Siwo pressured us like a Girdle  
 But you are still watching over the wheel  
 How the compass plays point by point

---

<sup>16</sup> In the actual Greek text Kavvadias uses the word 'lamarina' which has a double meaning. In Greek it means the 'iron-plate', and it is the material from which the poorest people used to build their houses. The houses of course were ultimately hot in the summer under the burning sun, while freezing in the winter, like refrigerators. But at the same time, in the language of the sailors 'lamarina' is another word for the 'ship', since the ships are made from iron. It is easy to imagine that when these ships are in the middle of the equator, the temperature of the heated iron must be going really high, and thus, it 'wipes out everything', memories, feelings, passions, identities.

*Woman* (in *Traverso*<sup>17</sup> 1975)

Dance on the shark's fin  
 Play your tongue in the wind, and pass-by  
 In some places they called you Yudith; here, Maria  
 The snake tears apart itself on the rock with the sea krait

Since I was a child I hurried up, but now I take my time  
 A chimney defined me in the world, and whistles  
 Your hand petted my rare hair  
 And if it has bended me once, today it does not define me

Painted. A red lantern shines on you  
 Your hair of seaweed and flowers, amphibian Destiny  
 You were riding without saddle, without curbing  
 First time, in a cave of Altamira

The seagull dives to bend the dolphin  
 What are you looking at? I will remind you where you saw me  
 On the sand I was behind you on top  
 The night when they founded the Pyramids

Together we walked across the Sine Wall  
 Next to you sailors from Ur were building a new ship  
 In between the naked swords of Grammikos<sup>18</sup>  
 You dropped oil into the deep wounds of the Macedonian

Green. Foam, deep blue and purple  
 Naked. Just a gold girdle hanging from your waist  
 Your eyes separated by seven equators  
 In *Giorgione's* workshop

I might have thrown a stone and the river doesn't want me  
 What have I done and you wake me up before the sunrise?  
 Last night at the port will not be wasted  
 A sinner should always be happy and guilty

Painted. A sick light shines on you  
 You are thirsty for gold. Take, Search, Count  
 Here, next to you, I will remain unmovable for years  
 Until you become my Destiny, Death, and Stone

---

<sup>17</sup> *Traverso*: Sailor language for going backwards/ changing root

<sup>18</sup> Grammikos is a river at Northern Greece