

The CHARIOTEER

An Annual Review of Modern Greek Culture

NUMBER 35
1993-1994

GEORGE SEFERIS
DELPHI

Translated by C. CAPRI-KARKA

ZISIMOS LORENTZATOS
PALIMPSEST OF HOMER

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MOURNING SONGS OF GREEK WOMEN

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Translated by NICK MACHALIAS

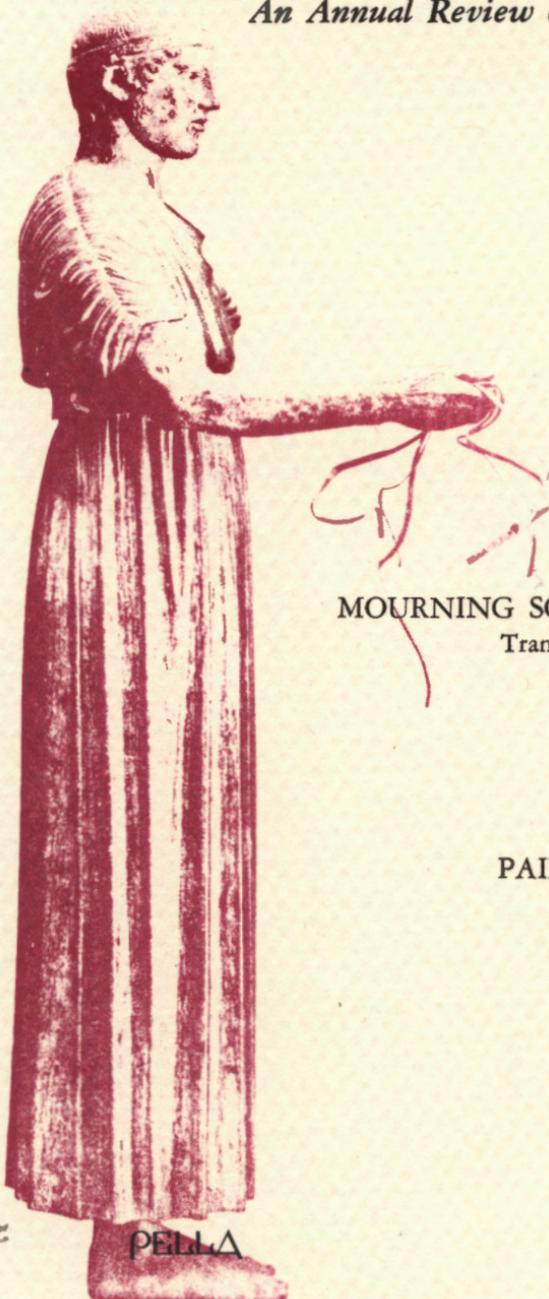
PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS
BY DESPO MAGONI

A CRITICAL COMMENTARY

By THALIA VRACHOPOULOS

A DISCUSSION

With MARY DONAHUE



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THE CHARIOTEER

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IN MEMORIAM

KIMON FRIAR (1911-1993)

It is with great regret that *The CHARIOTEER* received the news that Kimon Friar, its founder and first editor had passed away. The death of Kimon Friar represents a great loss for modern Greek poetry and for the world of letters in general, because he, more than anyone else, was the link between Greek poets and English speaking audiences.

Kimon Friar was born to Greek parents in Asia Minor in 1911. He was four years old when he came to America with his parents. He studied in Chicago and Michigan and he taught as a Professor, Lecturer, Visiting Professor and Distinguished Lecturer at several universities, including Adelphi, Amherst, Iowa, New York University and the University of Minnesota. He directed the Poetry Center in New York for five years and served as a judge for the National Book Award in Poetry and for the National Medal in Literature. He was the founder and first editor of *The CHARIOTEER* and the *Greek Heritage* and a contributing editor to a number of other magazines. He was the recipient of several awards for his work.

A talented and accomplished poet in his own right, Kimon Friar chose to make the translation of modern Greek poetry his life's work. This effort started in 1946 when he returned to Greece in search of his cultural roots. His first great accomplishment was his translation of Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, which was universally acclaimed as a masterpiece of translation. His rendering of Odysseus Elytis' selected poems, *The Sovereign Sun*, played an important role in that poet's winning of the Nobel Prize. He also translated poetry collections by Manolis Anagnostakis, Takis Sinopoulos, Milto Sachtouris, Yannis Ritsos and others.

All in all, Kimon Friar has translated 1800 poems by 280 modern Greek poets. The first part of this monumental work, covering more than 450 poems by thirty poets was published by Simon and Schuster in 1973, under the title *Modern Greek Poetry, From Cavafis to Elytis*. A second volume,

Contemporary Greek Poetry, including over 440 poems by sixty-three poets was published by the Greek Ministry of Culture, out of commerce, while a third part, *Recent Greek Poetry*, has never been published. Like the translation of Kazantzakis' *Odyssey*, the two published volumes received universal acclaim as masterpieces of both translation and poetic creation, since his translations are superb works of English poetry in their own right. In addition, these books are outstanding examples of scholarship, including notes, commentaries and lengthy prefaces on the poets presented and on modern Greek poetry in general.

What Kimon Friar has accomplished with his superb translations and his exhaustive and complete study of modern Greek poetry has been summarized by Panayiotis Kanellopoulos: "Modern Greek poetry owes to Kimon Friar its definite naturalization in the English language." He has been twice honored by the Greek Academy. He was also awarded a gold plaque and honorary diploma by the Greek branch of the International Society of Public Relations for "his contribution to the advancement of the Greek spirit, its literature and culture, throughout the world."



Kimon Friar (right) founder of The CHARIOTEER and the present publisher Leandros Papathanasiou.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN E. REXINE (1929-1993)

On October 23, 1993, Dr. John Efstratios Rexine passed away. John Rexine was a distinguished scholar, a humanist, a man who was liked by everybody. He has been a frequent contributor to *The CHARIOTEER* and in fact one of his translations, Zisimos Lorentzatos' *The Palimpsest of Homer*, appears in this issue.

Dr. Rexine was born in 1929, in Boston, MA, of Greek parents. He was a graduate of Harvard College in 1951, received his B.A. degree magna cum laude and was elected a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his M.A. in 1953 and Ph.D. in 1964 from Harvard University and held an honorary Doctor of Letters from Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology.

He had taught at Brandeis University prior to joining the faculty of Colgate University in 1957. He was Charles A. Dana Professor of Classics; had served as chairman of the Department of Classics; director of the Division of Humanities; associate dean of faculty and acting dean of faculty. He retired in July 1992.

Dr. Rexine was a distinguished classicist with deep interests in philosophy and religion who probed into the whole Hellenic tradition—ancient, Byzantine and post-Byzantine. He was the editor, associate editor or book review editor of several journals and the author or co-author of several books, numerous articles and over a thousand book reviews. He also was a member of a number of professional organizations, in some of which he held leadership positions.

Besides his excellence as a scholar, John Rexine was also regarded as an exceptional human being. As put by one of his many friends, "as a simple man, he captivated his fellow-men with his innate modesty and the simplicity, sincerity and integrity of his thoughts and his feelings."

Dr. Rexine's death represents a great loss for *The CHARIOTEER* and for the Greek-American intellectual community in general.

EDITORIAL

This issue of *The CHARIOTEER* includes two essays, one by George Seferis and one by Zisimos Lorentzatos; twenty-two Mourning Songs of Greek Women, translated by Konstantinos Lardas; a short story by Angelos Terzakis; and sixteen paintings and drawings by Despo Magoni accompanied by a critical essay and a discussion about her work.

The first essay is George Seferis' "Delphi." It was included in his unique collection of essays Δοκίμῆς but not in the volume of translations of some of these essays, *On the Greek Style*. As the poet writes in his notes, "it is not a tourist guide nor an archaeological one." It does combine certain elements of both but what makes it so different is the perspective from which he looks at the Delphic phenomenon: the perspective of a poet who is in close touch with history and tradition and who has "a profound consciousness of the presence of the past"; the perspective of a visitor who does not look at things with the idle curiosity of a tourist but with deep emotional involvement. Following him in his wanderings among these marble fragments, the reader may hear, as night falls, "a whisper that could remind him of the stammering voice of the prophetess"; he may smell the fragrance of thyme in the waters of Kastalia; he may feel the landscape become awesome as the voice of the poet unravels the myth: how Apollo killed the serpent, Python, and how the power of the god of harmony, of light and of divination grew in this place. And the reader is enriched further with Seferis' insight as the poet goes beyond the myth to suggest that the dark forces are "the yeast of light" and to explain why the landscape of Delphi still "vibrates with such an inner radiance."

Today's tourists, Seferis tells us, no longer have a common faith; each has his own personal myth. Among these various crowds of tourists, the people of Parnassos "continue to live obstinately with the traditional myths which their collective subconscious nurtures." The tradition is very much alive, as

suggested by the discussions Seferis quotes with some native villagers. These trees, one of them tells him, are not just any trees, "they are the trees that Agamemnon himself planted." Also, on the way to the Corycian cave, the mule-driver tells him that "Apollo had gathered in this cave forty beautiful weavers" from the surrounding villages—a story he attributes to a foreigner, although Seferis thinks he most probably heard it from his mother.

Perhaps the most important point in Seferis' essay is his reference to Socrates. He writes that "if the oracle did indeed stimulate Socrates' thinking, as Plato teaches us in the *Apology*, its contribution to the development of human thought would have been so great that it would have been worth founding for this reason alone." What Seferis has in mind here is the Delphic oracle which said that Socrates was the wisest among men. According to the *Apology*, Socrates did not believe this oracle at first, but after several discussions with statesmen, poets and craftsmen he came to admit that the oracle might have been right. This made him conscious of his mission to preach to his fellow men the supreme importance of a knowledge of what is good for the soul.

In referring to the function of Pythia Seferis points out that according to Plutarch this function was alive even in the first century. He then mentions the "eternal question" faced by everyone who has thought about the very important role—religious, political, personal—that the oracle had played in ancient Greek life: were all these oracles and prophesies mere fabrications or "was there possibly real sincerity underlying these things, something that goes beyond our common sense?" Seferis seems to suggest an answer further along in the essay when he writes that "in the sanctuary of Apollo there has remained a mystery that goes beyond us." At the end of the essay, he describes the landscape of Delphi at sunset in a language that at times is pure poetry and he concludes: "no matter how much you resist, you cannot help but have a feeling of sanctity about it."

The next essay is the "Palimpsest of Homer" by the distinguished poet and outstanding essayist Zisimos Lorentzatos. In his introduction the author explains that he uses the term

"palimpsest" for what is in essence a re-reading of the *Iliad*. In the beginning of his essay, he calls Homer "the poet of poets" and he quotes from Aristotle's *Poetics* that the poet of the *Iliad* "has a divinely inspired imagination" (θεσπέσιος ἄν φανείη "Ὀμηρος παρά τοὺς ἄλλους).

Lorentzatos makes a few very important points in his interpretation of the Homeric work. After repeating Plato's assertion that "Homer educated Greece," he emphasizes that the whole of *Iliad* is a praise of *arete*. This unique Homeric word cannot be rendered by a single English equivalent; it is "the sum of all good qualities that make character": virtue, excellence, valor, wisdom. Lorentzatos writes that according to Homer man should strive to be "better." And one is better when he obeys the gods but also listens to his fellow men and treats them with kindness; when he controls his anger and keeps his balance (does not "overstep the measures"); when he resorts to wisdom rather than force. The best quality for man to possess is kindness (φιλοφροσύνη γὰρ ἀμείνων). Achilles whose proud spirit and uncontrollable anger brings disaster learns at the end that even the most powerful can be tamed.

Another important point that Lorentzatos brings to our attention is that while we are confronted in the whole of the *Iliad* with the unstoppable evil or war, described in every frightful detail, Homer has Achilles himself make an appeal for peace: addressing his mother he expresses the wish that dissension (ἔρις) and anger (χόλος) disappear from the world. Along the same lines, Lorentzatos emphasizes Nestor's assertion, near the end of the *Iliad* that a lot more can be accomplished through wisdom (or reason) than through force: "with wisdom and not with strength the woodcutter becomes ten times better; with reason again the captain of the sea pilots the swift craft torn by the wind; with reason too one charioteer surpasses another."

At the end of the essay, he cites a few examples of Homer's powerful metaphors and writes that the poet of the *Iliad* is "a single eye transcending all four kingdoms," heaven, earth, sea and Hades. Homer actually saw everything with his unique vision—the paradox being that the poet was a blind man "as

tradition would have it, probably to show that the light lives within us."

Lorentzatos' essay was translated by the late John E. Rexine shortly before his death. In translating this essay, one is faced with the following problem: in his text Lorentzatos often paraphrases a line or a passage from Homer in modern Greek and then quotes the ancient Greek original. In the translation there is no problem in rendering the modern Greek into English. However, when it comes to the Homeric original, translating it also in English would be repetitious—two English translations of essentially the same text. On the other hand, leaving the quotation in ancient Greek would not be of any use to the English reader not versed in the Homeric language. A third solution was found: leaving the quotation in the original and presenting a literal English translation in a footnote. In a few instances the opposite was done with the English translation in the text and the ancient Greek in the footnote in order not to break the continuity of the English text.

The twenty-two "Mourning Songs of Greek Women" are selected from a collection of over a thousand such songs translated by Professor Konstantinos Lardas and published as a book by the same title by Garland Publishers. Mourning songs have always been considered to be one of the most genuine manifestations of demotic poetry. They are in most cases spontaneous expressions. The women who sing them are timid and uneducated but they are marked by deep sensitivity and strong inspiration. They do not use written texts but always improvise depending on the occasion and when they sing are often overwhelmed by emotion and despair. Although these songs have been given a lot of attention by Greek scholars, they are very difficult to translate and thus they have not been extensively presented to the English speaking audience until recently with the publication of Professor Lardas book. We felt that we should give the readers of *The CHARIOTEER* a sample of this remarkable work.

What comes next is a short story by Angelos Terzakis. Works by Terzakis were included in early volumes of *The*

CHARIOTEER. This short story, translated by Professor Nick Machalias is about an undeveloped but obsessive relationship between the protagonist and a friend who is finally lost at sea. The title of the story, "Silence," is very suggestive, implying the psychological arrest of a person who lives with hesitation and uncertainty.

The CHARIOTEER wishes to express its most sincere thanks to Mrs. Maro Seferis for her permission to translate the poet's essay "Delphi"; to Zisimos Lorentzatos for his permission to translate his "Palimpsest of Homer"; to Professor Lardas and Garland Publishers for permission to reproduce the songs from *Mourning Songs of Greek Women*; and to Ms. Despo Magoni for her permission to reproduce her paintings and drawings.

CARMEN CAPRI-KARKA
Editor

DELPHI¹

BY GEORGE SEFERIS

translated by C. Capri-Karka

In the beginning was the wrath of the earth. Later, Apollo came and killed the chthonic serpent, Python. It was left to rot. It is said that this is where the first name of Delphi, Πυθώ [Pitho], came from (the root is πύθ [pith] = I rot).² In such a fertilizer the power of the god of harmony, of light and of divination took root and grew. The myth may mean that the dark forces are the yeast of light; that the more intense they are, the deeper the light becomes when it dominates them. One would think that if the landscape of Delphi vibrates with such an inner radiance, it is because there is no corner of our land that has been kneaded so much by chthonic powers and absolute light.

Descending toward Parnassos from the direction of the Stadium, one sees the wide-open wound that divides, as if by a blow of Hephaestus' ax, the two Phaedriades ("shining rocks") from top to bottom in Kastalia and, even lower, to the depths of the ravine of Pleistos. One feels the awe of a wounded life that struggles in order to breathe, as long as it still can, in the light and rejoices that it is dawn and the sun is rising.

¹This text is, of course, neither an archaeological nor a traveller's guide. I have used the *Guide Bleu*, 1953. I have also seen the *History of the Delphic Oracle* by H. W. Parke (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1939) and Pausanias with commentary by J. G. Frazer (Macmillan, London, 1913).

²See also the Homeric hymn to Apollo, III, 371-4:

And the holy strength of Helios made her rot away there;
wherefore the place is now called Pytho, and men call the
lord Apollo

by another name, Pythian; because on that spot
the power of piercing Helios made the monster rot away.

αὐτοῦ πῦσε πέλωρ μένος οἰξέος Ἑλίοιο]
ἔξ ὃθ νῦν Πυθῶ κικλήσκειται· οἱ δὲ ἄνακτα
Πύθιον ἀγκαλέουσιν ἐπώνυμον, οὐνεκα κεῖθι
αὐτοῦ πῦσε πέλωρ μένος οἰξέος Ἑλίοιο.]

Or, again, as night falls, when the weary cicadas become silent, a whisper can remind one of the stammering voice of the prophetess Cassandra. It may be the only authentic sound that resembles the unknown to us—I mean “unprocessed”—“clamor” of Pythia:

woe, woe, woe! O Apollo, O Apollo!

(Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1072)*

Cassandra had the gift of prophesy, as they say, but God wanted nobody to believe her; as we ourselves do not believe her.

As one comes from Athens to Delphi, after Thebes and Livadia, where the road meets the road to Daulis, there is the crossroads of Megas, the “bandit-killer,” as he was called in the popular novels of the last century. In the years of Pythia, this crossroads was called Σχιστή Ὀδός [split road]. It was a very significant crossroads for the emotional complexes of the people of those days; maybe, in another way, for us too. There begins the story of Oedipus, who answered the Sphinx; of the blind Oedipus, the ultimate suppliant. Pythia had given her oracle to his father: “Laius, you ask me for a son; I will give him to you; but it is your fate that from his hands you will lose the light of day.” Laius was going to Delphi; Oedipus was returning. They met at this crossroads under the heavy mass of Parnassos. Neither of the two knew whom he was facing. They argued. Oedipus killed his father.

We are living in a technological age, as we say. Pythia has vanished; and out of the myth of Oedipus science has drawn symbols and terms that occupy us perhaps more than the Oracle of Delphi occupied the ancients. Today this tale may still give many people a pleasant evening at the theater, if it happens, by chance, that a good actor is performing. But if we do not have that Oedipus, we have the Oedipus complex and its consequences. Is it better this way? Maybe. The problem is not so much which things have come to an end but with what we—who are living,

*ὄτοτοτοτοῖ πόποι δᾶ
ᾧπολλον ᾧπολλον...

like everything in life, amidst decay and change—replace those things we consider finished.

I am thinking of those big waves from the depths of time that shift the meaning of words. For example, the meaning of the word *oracle*: Where has it gone today? The word became an archaeological object. Agreed. But its meaning? Could it possibly have taken on, imperceptibly, a particular scientific or mathematical form? Who knows. However, what one feels is that in the depths of today's thought something must have remained of the old, abolished expressions. Otherwise how could we feel such a vibration here?

One can also go to Delphi from the direction of the sea, from Itia. It used to be called Kirra, and there Apollo, transformed into a dolphin, brought the Minoan ship. Thus Pytho was named Delphi, if we believe the Homeric hymn:

and in as much as at the first on the hazy sea
I sprang upon the swift ship in the form of a dolphin,
pray to me as Apollo Delphinus; also the altar itself
shall be called Delphinus and overlooking for ever.

(To Apollo, 493 ff.)*

It is nice to start from the seashore and enter among the olive trees under the silver leaves of the plain of Criseos, enumerating, as you pass by, the wrinkles on the dense gathering of trunks; and if by any chance this shadow weighs heavily upon you and you raise your eyes, you suddenly see, in the perpetually moving blue, the twin peaks of Parnassos; further down you see the extension of the western Phaedriad and even lower down the acropolis of Crisa. Around there the chariot races that were praised by Pindar took place. There is this rhythm that breathes, along with two or three other stark voices, over Delphi:

*Ὡς μὲν ἐγὼ τὸ πρῶτον ἐν ἠεροειδέι πόντῳ
εἰδόμενος δελφῖνι θεῆς ἐπὶ νηὸς ὄρουσα,
ὥς ἐμοὶ εὐχεσθαι Δελφίνῳ· αὐτὰρ ὁ θεωμὸς
αὐτὸς Δελφίνιος καὶ ἐπόπιος ἔσεται αἰεὶ.

... neither by ships nor by land canst thou find
 the wondrous road to the trysting-place of the Hyperboreans
 (Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, X, 29 ff.)*

It is said that Apollo used to go to the Hyperboreans for three months every year. Who were the Hyperboreans? They have sunk into myth. At their table—Pindar continues—Perseus sat one day. He saw them sacrifice excellent hecatombs of asses to the god; Apollo was laughing as he looked at the erect shamelessness of the beasts that were offered to him. The Muse is always with them; neither sickness nor age touch this sacred race; they do not need to work hard; they do not have fights. They have escaped the avenger Nemesis.

Up there in Delphi, after you pass the village and reach the temple, you have the feeling that you have entered a place separate from the rest of the world. It is an amphitheater nestling on the first steps of Parnassos. From the East and the North it is closed by the Phaedriades: Hyambeia, which descends like the prow of a big ship and cuts the ravine; the northern Rodini, which almost touches the Stadium. From the western side, the rocky wall of Saint Elias and further down the mountains of Locrida, Giona, where you see the sun set. If you turn your eyes to the South, you have in front of you the robust lines of Cirphis and at its foot the ravine of Pleistos. Pleistos is dry in the summer; you see its dry bed shine in the sun but a river of olive trees is streaming, you would say, flooding the whole plain of Amphissa, all the way down to the sea, where the seafarer sees them for the first time. Close by, the shiny stones of the ruins of Marmaria, where the three columns of Tholos jut out. I almost forgot Castalia. However, its water has a fragrance of thyme.

The temple of Apollo is reckoned to be approximately two hundred meters in depth and one hundred thirty in width, not including the Stadium. The space is not very large and it is natural that the monuments, as they were crowded here, had to develop vertically in order to grow taller than the others: think of the Sphinx of Naxos, the column with the dancers, the snakes

*... ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζῶς ἰὼν <κεν> εὔροις
 ἔς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θιαυματῶν ὁδόν.

of Plataia. One tries to imagine all these as they were when they breathed intact. They must have looked, from a distance, like cypresses, shiny, multicolored, around the temple of Pythia. One just tries. What comes to mind is the dawn that Ion saw; as far as the natural landscape is concerned, this dawn is, I think, conventional but it reflects, I feel, the brilliant splendor of the temple as one imagines it to have been in those years:

Lo, yonder the Sun-god is turning to earthward his
splendour-blazing

Chariot of light;

And the stars from the firmament flee from the fiery
arrows chasing,

To the sacred night:

And the crests of Parnassus untrodden are flaming and
flushed as with yearning

Of welcome to far-flashing wheels with the glory of
daylight returning

To mortal sight.

To the roof-ridge of Phoebus the fume of the incense
of Araby burning

As a bird taketh flight.

On the tripod most holy is seated the Delphian Maiden
Chanting to children of Hellas the wild cries, laden with
doom, from the lips of Apollo that ring.

(Euripides, *Ion*, 82 ff.)*

* ἄρματα μὲν τάδε λαμπρὰ τεθρίππων
ἥλιος ἤδη λάμπει κατὰ γῆν,
ἄστρα δὲ φεύγει πῦρ τόδ' ἀπ' αἰθέρος
εἰς νύχθ' ἱεράν,
Παρνησιάδες δ' ἄβατοι κορυφαὶ
καταλαμπόμεναι τὴν ἡμερίαν
ἄψίδα θροτοῖσι δέχονται.
σμύρνης δ' ἀνύδρου καπνὸς εἰς ὄροφους
Φοίβου πέτεται.
θάσσει δὲ γυνὴ τρίποδα ζάθεον
Δελφίς, αἰίδουσ' Ἑλλησι θοάς,
ὡς ἂν Ἀπόλλων κελαδήσῃ.

One is still trying. The imagination grows tired. The retrospectives and the reconstructions, no matter how useful, become most inhuman. What else do we have from this "instantaneous present?" In the end, the imagination prefers that the river of time should have passed and filled this limited space. Today, looking down from above, let us say from the theater, you have the impression that you have before you a downward sloping bottom where everything is levelled—these marble fragments and carved stones and the rocks which rolled in older times from Parnassos and on which Sibylla once sat; the bottom of a calm, shallow sea where the pebbles shine, where everyone discerns as much as he can, depending on his nature: a polygonal wall so much alive that one's hand spontaneously repeats the movements of the craftsman who carved and fitted the stones; a bending of the thumb and the index finger to raise a dress with the same grace that one saw the other day in a Greek village; a life-like thigh, as the knee of a woman descending from the chariot bends; the head of a Sphinx with the eyes neither open nor closed; a smile that one would call archaic—but this is not enough—of a Hercules or a Theseus. Such fragments from a life that was once whole, stirring pieces, very close to us, ours for a moment and then enigmatic and inaccessible like the lines of a stone licked smooth by the waves or of a seashell at the bottom of the sea.

Yet, the Phaedriades shine as does the dry rock of Parnassos, and higher up in the air two eagles with outstretched, immobile wings move slowly in the azure sky like the eagles that Zeus once set free so that they would show him the center of the world. Perhaps these things come as a big relief.

At noon, in the museum, I looked again at the Charioteer. He did not live long in the eyes of the ancients, so we are told. An earthquake buried the statue one hundred years after it was erected—this perpetual dialogue, in Delphi, between the wrath of the earth and sacred serenity. I stayed near him for a long time. As in older times, as always, this motionless movement stops your breath; you do not know; you are lost. Then you try to hold on to the details; the almond-shaped eyes with the sharp, transparent look, the strong jaw, the shadows around the lips,

the ankle or the toenails; the robe which is and is not a column. You look at its seams, the crisscrossed ribbons that hold it together; the reins in his right hand that stay there, tangled, while the horses have sunk into the chasm of time. Then the analysis bothers you; you have the impression that you are listening to a language not spoken any more. What do these details which are not artistry mean? How do they disappear like that within the whole? What was behind this living presence? Different ideas, different loves, a different devotion. We have worked like ants and like bees on these relics. How close have we come to the soul that created them? I mean this grace at its peak, this power, this modesty and the things that these bodies symbolize. This vital breath that makes the inanimate copper transcend the rules of logic and slip into another time, as it stands there in the cold hall of the museum.

I chose to walk up to the Corycian Cave from the ancient path; it is too rough for today's habits; the animals slip. The rhythm of the mule's bell and of the horseshoes on the rocks is something from another time; this iamb.

It is dawn; from above the Stadium looks as if it was built in the sand by a child; then what scares you is the big gaping wound of the Phaedriades. On the ridge of Cirphis you see the rosy shades of the houses in a village. It is Desfina; behind it, down at the seashore, with more golden shades, is Galaxidi. We get off the horses at Kroki, where a fountain is running and a flock of goats with twisted horns and black fur, shining in the light, are drinking water. In the old days these places were pastures—Dionysus Αἰγοβάλος (goat-thrower).^{*} Then we walk under the fir trees; their cones—people call them "rubala"—like the candles of a Christmas tree, shed tears of resin, which makes them look silvery. At the foot of the hill of Sarandavlio, as the cave is called today, we left the mules. Pausanias is right. "Climbing up to the Corycian Cave is easier for the pedestrian than for the mule or the horse," he tells us (X, XXXII, 2).

^{*}Αἰγοβάλος: a temple of Dionysos bearing this name existed in Boeotia (Pausanias VIII, 8, 1). According to legend, the name was given to the temple when Dionysos threw a goat to the altar to replace a boy that was about to be sacrificed.

But even for the pedestrian the path is very rough. As we climb up, I ask my mule driver if there are still fairies in the cave, as I heard down in the village. He laughs; he does not feel that fairies are appropriate for a modern man. "Fairies in our times!" he says. Yet, his denial seems to me less sincere when he adds: "I myself never saw them;" and after some silence he continues: "A foreigner told me that here, in this cave, Apollo had forty beautiful weavers, gathered from the surrounding villages, who wove for him all the time." It seems more probable to me that he heard the story from his mother rather than a foreigner. A fellow villager of his told me the other day, down in Castalia: "And these plane trees down here are the ones that Agamemnon himself planted." "Agamemnon?" I said in surprise. He looked at me as if I was ignorant. "Of course Agamemnon," he said, "what did you think?"

Through Delphi passes a large crowd of tourists. "Delphi has become an endless hotel," a native told me. As in Plutarch's time, I thought. I had remembered his dialogue about Pythia's oracles. In those times too, the temple had become a tourist place with organized guides showing the sites to the crowds. The difference is that in Plutarch's times, the people who visited Delphi still had, as a common tradition, a faith that was on the decline, as in Jerusalem in our times. Today the common faith has been lost, and the people who come each have different personal myths. They read or they listen to a guide; to this information each person adds his own. Among these various crowds, the people of Parnassos continue to live obstinately with the traditional myths which their collective subconscious nurtures.⁹

I wanted to climb to the Corycian Cave because I thought

⁹It is worth noting here one of the most charming. "The Milords are not Christians since nobody ever saw them make the sign of the cross. Their lineage comes from the old idolaters Adelphiotes, who kept their wealth in a castle and called it Adelphi (brothers) from the two brothers, sons of the king, who had built it. When the Virgin Mary and Christ came to these lands and the people all around became Christians, the Adelphiotes thought that it would be better for them to leave, and they went to the land of the Franks, taking with them all their wealth. From those people the Milords are descended and they now come and pay their respects to these stones." (N. G. Politis, Παραδόσεις [Traditions], Part 1, No. 108, "The Milords," Delphi.)

that this visit to the place of Apollo had to be completed with a feeling of Dionysos, whom Pythia supported so strongly—of the dead and alive god, the infant god; that emotional force which willed that the instincts of man not be spurned. In the plateau around the cave, the Thyiades and Maenades held their periodic nocturnal orgies—whatever that ecstatic outburst of women possessed by the god means for us today. I was thinking of that frustrated king, Pentheus (Euripides, *Bacchae*). I was afraid of the example of his tragedy; I said: better the frenzy of the Thyiades in the high solitudes of Parnassos than its substitutes in the contemporary boundless ant-hills that are our big capitals. I was thinking of our collective madnesses.

To the right, as you enter the cave, the stone is still preserved with the half-effaced sign to the god Pan and the Nymphs. Then you have the feeling that you have descended into a large womb. The ground is damp and slippery; stalagmites and stalactites can be discerned in the dim light; it feels cold after the heat and the panting of the climb. Only after you proceed further and turn around, do you see the rays of the sun like a blessing as they enter, parallel, through the mouth of the cave striking its walls with a rosy and green iridescence. You rejoice at being born again in the warmth of the sun, certainly not poorer; you know that there is still something behind these things.

At one time, Plutarch tells us, people from a foreign land came to Delphi to consult the oracle. The preliminary test with the goat, which would show if the day was auspicious, was performed so that Pythia would deliver her oracle. But the animal did not shiver when sprayed with cold water; the sign was not good. Yet, the foreigners must have been important and, in order to please them, the priests exceeded the proper limits, until the animal, wet all over, showed signs of shivering. Then Pythia came down to the altar of the temple "unwilling and reluctant." As soon as she gave the first answers, Plutarch continues, the ferocity of her voice showed that she was possessed by an angry and mean spirit. She looked like a wind-swept ship ("δίκην νεὼς ἐπειγομένης"). Finally, in a complete frenzy, with dreadful screams, she sprang towards the exit. The prophet Nikandros, the priests, and the foreigners fled in terror. Later

they returned and carried away the still frantic Pythia. She died a few days later.

This incident, they say, should be considered authentic—it happened in Plutarch's time and the prophet Nikandros who witnessed it was his friend; it shows us that Pythia was still functioning in the first century. It also makes us return to the eternal question that all of us who have thought about the very significant role—religious, political, private—that the oracle played in ancient Greek life have asked ourselves: were all these oracles and prophesies fabrications and frauds of sly priests or was there possibly real sincerity underlying those things, something that goes beyond our common sense.

Plutarch's narration should make us think that it was not very probable that the breakdown of a woman leading up to her death could be mere acting. Of course there were priests who interpreted Pythia's words—how articulate nobody knows—and delivered them, arranged in hexameters, trimeters or prose, to the faithful; no doubt they were opportunists, shifty, cautious, masters of ambiguity. But as in our times, it is one thing to look at such matters of the soul from the point of view of God and another from that of his servants.

It has been said that the phenomenon of Pythia must be included in the phenomena of that which we call today *spiritualism*. Perhaps. In that case though, the least one could remark is that Pythia resembles a contemporary medium as much as the Charioteer does a contemporary statue of mediocre art; let us say of Jacob Epstein. This is the difference. By this I mean that in the sanctuary of Apollo there has remained a mystery that goes beyond us, just as in the art of the Charioteer. I don't know. What one can consider more clearly is that if the oracle did indeed stimulate Socrates' thinking as Plato teaches us in the *Apology*, its contribution to the development of human thought would have been so great that it would have been worth founding for this reason alone.

Plutarch's narration approximately coincides with the event that brings to an end the world of the idols. Then the Oracle of Apollo slowly dries up, sparkling faintly, and, tired, finally disappears. Sometimes it whispers sentences that remind us of

Sibylla's "I want to die," quoted by Petronius. Three hundred years or so have been spent among the wrinkles and the formal gestures of the clergy, who merely repeat and do not create. The only concern that seems to preoccupy them is the fear that the old habit of offering gifts to Apollo might come to an end. This until the ultimate answer of the Oracle to the tragic Julian:

Tell the king the ornately designed temple has collapsed.
Phoebus no longer has a home, nor a mantic laurel,
nor a talking spring. The babbling water has run dry.*

Yet, although the Oracle seems to write the last page of its history by itself and to descend into the grave of its own volition, the theoreticians of the new religion found it worthwhile to devote a lot of thought and ink to fighting it. The strange thing is that they do not set out to prove that such prophesies are the work of charlatans. They recognize the prophetic power of Delphi, but for them these things are the work of Satan and of the forces of darkness; and Apollo is a metamorphosized devil.

Here in Phocis, in the monastery of Saint Luke, a mosaic of Pantocrator, over the lintel of the west door, bears the inscription: "I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness." Nature abhors a vacuum.

In the morning, at Marmaria, I went again to see the rocks that rolled down from Parnassos and destroyed the temple of Athena, as mentioned by Herodotus. In the beginning of our century, another storm again detached three large rocks and completed the destruction. The rocks are there among the trampled works of men, still showing, motionless now, their initial force. I remembered Angelos Sikelianos as he was listening to the onset of such a wind. "Not a sound is heard anywhere; and suddenly a horrendous roar, a strong and unbelievable roar breaks out as if from every direction. It is the great wind

*Εἶπατε τῷ βασιλεῖ χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος ἀλλά.
Οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσιν. Ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

of Parnassos which starts up unexpectedly from the peaks toward the open spaces, with such force that you think it will shatter even the rocks to dust." The poet of Delphi—if any of our contemporaries can be called the man of Delphi—was writing in his house, high up near the Stadium, where I met him for the first time. His house is now in ruins; an ugly bust of him outside the door underlines the futility of glory.

As I was returning to the place where the round pool of the Gymnasium baths remains dry, five or six girls, very young, with legs naked up to above the knee, as if obeying a decision or an order, walked down very seriously, linked arms and danced two or three rounds, singing in a Hyperborean language I did not know. Hyperborean girls, I suppose: the dances of the Hyperborean virgins of Pindar. Then, looking very serious and still panting, they approached a guide who started lecturing in English: "The gymnasium was not only for the training of athletes; philosophers taught the young, poets recited their poems; astronomers explained from this spot the movements of the stars in the sky . . ." In the evening, at about eleven o'clock, a friend showed me in the starry sky an artificial satellite which was moving from west to east with a discernible motion; it had the intensity of a star of second, or perhaps third rank.

Like everything human and like the life of the stars, Apollo's Pythia had her beginning and also had her end in the wrath of the earth. "Phoebus has no home any more." Now again it seems as if we have completed a cycle; we are again facing the wrath of the physical forces that we have set free and do not know whether we will be able to control them; one might say that we have in front of us a Python, that we need an Apollo, whatever these names mean. I don't know. What we know now is that the duration of this earth, as well as of this corner inside the loins of Parnassos is relative. It may end tomorrow or after some million years; that when we say *eternity*, we do not have in mind something measured in years, but we do something like Pythia, who, when falling into a trance, saw the whole of space and the whole of time past and future as one thing; or, to remember my friend E. M. Forster, *we must* call things *eternal*, in order to be able

to struggle up to our last moment and to enjoy life. This sacred temple would probably whisper something like that to us.

If, however, we wish to look at things in a more simple and more direct manner, we could sit down on a stone at the time when the sun has passed the mountainous wall of Saint Elias and goes to set behind Giona. The light now comes parallel and strikes the Phaedriades showing them like Clashing Rocks, stopped, half-open. They are gray and light blue with the shades of an old mirror, with wounds of rust and blood. Down in Marmaria, three columns of the Tholos can be discerned; a smile of that earthly grace. Further down, the olive trees keep changing color in the unbelievable flexibility of the light, from golden green to silver green; the mountain masses also keep changing, always becoming lighter: from golden to violet, from violet to the color of crushed black grapes. Only the ridge of Cirphis still shines in a saffron-colored light and stays alive for a while before everything turns to light blue and then darkens. You look again at the stair-like temple that is disappearing in the shadows, this seashore with the big broken pebbles. You want to get away from it all. You want to get away from this change—of things and feelings—that makes you dizzy. You turn again toward the Phaedriades that you looked at and looked at again throughout the day, and especially at high noon, when they shine, dry, when the old mirrors have found all their power again. The thought is holding on to them, as long as it still can, to the dry stone that refines you. No matter how much you resist, you cannot but have a feeling of sanctity about it. At least this: let us be true to ourselves.

Delphi - Amorgos, August 1961

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PALIMPSEST OF HOMER

BY ZISIMOS LORENTZATOS
translated by John E. Rexine

*To the sacred shadow of my father
who stood by me
with his Homeric dictionary*

Palimpsest (πάλιν + ψάω, "again" + "rub") is a manuscript from which one has rubbed, scraped, completely erased the first writing and writes on its sheets again from the beginning. From the adjective, a palimpsest book, it becomes a noun, "the palimpsests," a word that we find in Plutarch (*Concerning Garrulity*, 504 d). Beyond the linguistic genealogy of the title, there in Plutarch we read—by chance or by some lucky coincidence—also the following, which concerns the contents of our writing: that Homer is the only one whom men cannot get their fill of, remaining always new, always with his grace and beauty at its peak. "Homer alone surpassed men in fastidiousness, always new and abounding in grace."

I used the word palimpsest here for the reading of the *Iliad*, but it is not restricted only to it. One can generalize it on the rest of the horizon, in all readings, in order to bridge today's so-called generation gap. With respect to Homer, but more generally too, one can reach the conclusion that every generation scrapes from the written parchment the vicissitudes of the previous generation and writes its own particular ones. The strange thing is that with so many scratchings out and successive writings, the parchment beneath remains each time always untouched. This is the wonder of life.

Z. L.

Kephisia, 1976

Homer is the poet of poets and the *Iliad* the poem of poems. The poet is elusive (voilà the Homeric Problem); he is not like

the other poets. The name Homer is a group name. The Indians, with a written tradition older than that of the Greeks or the Jews, know such names. The poem passed from thousands of mouths, for whole centuries, to the point where the words took their final place—like rounded stones in the bank of a river, where you do not know which is brighter or more limpid, those that the water rolls or the water that does the rolling. Taking in our hands the *Iliad*, we should never forget the enormous investment in time and concern for life that has occurred within the poem or the hull of the poem, which travels from the beginning to the end, from that viewpoint, with its holds full.

According to Platonic tradition in the *Republic* (606 e), "this poet has educated Greece"—which means that "he taught the whole world," if we consider that Greece, which the poet himself educated, in turn educated countless peoples throughout the world. The *Iliad* constitutes not the beginning but the conclusion of a long journey. The oral creation (and transmission)—the river—must have taken centuries; possibly during the so-called "dark ages" that intervened between some deluge that violently swept the Mycenaean world and the eighth century, the century of Homer (according to contemporary dating). If behind Greece we have Homer—that Cyclopean wall of a poetic narration whose unit is the single verse—behind Homer we have the "dark ages," as we are accustomed to call those centuries about which we know very little or nothing, or of which we don't understand anything. (An analogous example of our wisdom are the so-called, still in our days, "Dark Middle Ages.")

Meanwhile, in these "Dark Ages," the presupposition of the world of the *Iliad*, the poem of poems, is gradually formed, molded by the poet who eludes us. With a group and elusive name, Homer, they name the poet of poets since ancient times. There is nothing more solid in the world than that ghost that left us the Cyclopean wall with the Greek words emerging from their swaddling clothes, lined up in monostichs, which were worked over for generations by countless lips and heard by countless ears. There is nothing more solid than Homer *and* the *Iliad*. Here the (intentionally) italicized "and" connects nothing; it has only a logical, not a real significance. Homer and the *Iliad* do not exist separately. Homer is the immeasurable poetic structure

we have before us, which was called the *Iliad* first in Herodotus (2.116). Above all he is not a poet in the sense we know or want for a poet. Compared to Homer, the greatest poets we know seem like small children. Aristotle's statement in the *Poetics*, that the poet of the *Iliad* has a divinely inspired imagination, has eternal validity: θεσπέσιος ἂν φανεῖη Ὀμηρος παρὰ τοῦς ἄλλους.¹

The name Homer we find for the first time in a dubious fragment from Hesiod (265.1), a few centuries before the name *Iliad* appears in Herodotus. However, the testimony we have is much later and consequently for the oldest writing with the name of Homer we must stop at Xenophanes (fragments 10 and 11), which means the sixth century. Of course, by saying "first time" we do not speak with absolute certainty but always in relation to the remaining evidence at our disposal, whether considered certain or uncertain. At any rate, so it is with nearly everything related to the ancient.

To be sure, the highest point one can reach in terms of a poem is to be able to put it in front of oneself and read it. The entire remaining wisdom concerning Homer and the *Iliad* is inferior to a direct reading. Accumulated wisdom can serve us for everything else, but not for the poetry of the *Iliad*. With that wisdom we "damage our soul," that is, the poem, and we gain "the whole world" (and that incomplete and mutilated). The highest point in our acquaintance with Homer and the *Iliad*—the contact in the flesh—is the poem we have before us. And that we should never sacrifice for any wisdom in the world, even the greatest.

Before the poetic magnificence of the *Iliad*, the unbiased, regular reader ends up with melancholy thoughts about man's petty pusillanimity and caviling as he considers the literal armies of all those who, for centuries now, with their comments or digressions, have fallen like great (the greatest among them) and small (the smallest) ants on the robust wood of the Homeric oak. The rustling they make, with so much fuss, almost shifts our attention away from the poem and toward their own

¹"Homer would appear divinely inspired in comparison with others" 1459a, 30).

writings about the poem. Is their purpose to clarify the poem? If so, did this clarification ever advance by one iota since antiquity? From the general spectacle that Homeric studies present, especially in such times as the Alexandrian and the modern European, one is almost overcome by a feeling of shame. I have in mind not so much those who construct the tools to provide the reader with the best linguistic or "real" approach to the Homeric text, but rather the rustling of the ants, with their various unitary or analytical theories, around the famous "Homeric problem." Many among the unitarians or analyticals or neo-analyticals (the one leads to the other) seem so preoccupied with devouring the wood that they have forgotten whether the poem exists at all. Both the large and the small ants in the end acquire stature or significance from the large tree.

One may say that it's their job. And it is (the Homeric problem). Just like any other. And each one reaps what he sows. Good. It is their job, I don't deny it. I accept it. But greater respect wouldn't hurt. This is the great Homer! Μηδὲν ἄγαν: "Nothing in excess."

* * *

The polity or the rulers, the family and the individual in the world of the *Iliad*, in every movement or manifestation, are in continuous contact with divinity. The great significance of worship in the poem reveals the deep faith of these men in the gods to whom they pray and sacrifice every day. The gods in the *Iliad* are not at all creatures of myth or simply products of art. I say that because there are great men in Europe who equated or compared themselves with the world of the *Iliad* and also with ancient Greece in general because they oppose the world of faith—in the case of their time, the Christian faith. With a certainty which in fact conceals some pride, the "Olympian" Goethe calls himself "einem alten Heiden,"²² wishing to indicate by that how he is directly aligned with ancient Greece, i.e., with the opposite of the world of faith. But where did Goethe find it written that the word of the *Iliad* and of ancient Greece more generally is not directly aligned with the world

²²"An old pagan," letter to Fritz Jacobi, 18 January 1808.

of faith and that these men did not have their own particular faith—just as the Christians of today (if they still believe)? A ready reference to the texts of ancient Greece or simply a trip to the monuments of their geographical space is enough to convince even the most unrepentant that always dominant there are the words of one of their own, of Thales: πάντα πλήρη θεῶν (“All things are full of gods”). And where did the wise German—or modern man—acquire the notion that the opposite of the world of faith is lack of faith (his own) and not a faith different from another (the faith of the ancient Greeks in opposition to the faith of the Christians)? The opposition to the pagans of the evangelist Matthew (6:7) remains always in the world of faith and indicates opposition, not to lack of faith but to mistaken faith. The opposite of faith (faithlessness) is one thing and opposing faith (still always faith) is another. Goethe—or modern man—speaks of the world of the *Iliad* and the ancient Greeks in general from the viewpoint of his own faithlessness, that is, as if they had no relation whatever with the world of faith or, at least, as if it were possible that he in his own time could have their faith, in the same form (now outdated) that they had it. Irreconcilable transpositions. Both Homer and the ancient Greeks, and the Christians belong to the world of faith, father of civilizations of faith (there are no others). There does not exist, up to the Renaissance and the European Enlightenment (from which Goethe came), any civilization on earth that does not belong to the world of faith.

Not equivalent or parallel, then, with the world of the *Iliad* and ancient Greece in general, but apart from all preceding ones, appears the lonely Dr. Faustus or modern man. And that negative conclusion I do not view as negative. I do not see it as unique or isolated (which would take us somewhere else). I consider it a contribution to Homer.

* * *

Placing the poem before us we confirm the Platonic tradition that Homer “educated Greece” (τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαιδευκεν). With the first encounter we count one by one, throughout the *Iliad*, the majority of the guidelines or intellectual axes that later separate the ancient Greeks from all others but at the

same time bring them closer to the others in the common pan-human polyphony of the various civilizations, when they all try to define unanimously, each in his own measure, the highest good.

And with the word "good" alone we immediately knock on the narrow gate. Because with Homer there begins here for the Greek world a golden chain that tightly links certain subjects from certain words with that which Basil the Great mentions about the poet of poets: Πᾶσα μὲν ἡ ποίησις τῷ Ὀμήρῳ ἀρετῆς ἔστιν ἔπαινος.³ In other words, the whole of poetry, for Homer, praises *arete*. That is what finally all poetry does for the poet of the *Iliad* and nothing else. And what it does is everything for Homer (what it does for us today is something else).

But the word *arete* comes from the same stem from which is derived the word ἀρείων which is the comparative of ἀγαθός, which is the positive of ἄριστος: ἀγαθός (good), ἀρείων (better), ἄριστος (best). Thus we enter the center of the Homeric world and thus we turn again to "the good," the Alpha and the Omega of Homeric poetry. And from the same stem as *arete* comes ἀρέσκω, with the meaning of "restoration," and the reduplicated ἀραρίσκω, with the meaning of joining or connecting, the root of which, ἀρ, again gives us ἀρμόζω (to fit) and ἀρμονίη (harmony). It is one golden chain of critical stems that lead us to useful themes about Homer and the *Iliad*.

We see the usefulness as soon as we skim through the poem and consider the criteria of the great axes of reference of the Homeric world with which that distant man always praises *arete* and condemns its opposite, reveals emphatically his position, prefers that which he believes in.

Skimming through the rhapsodies from the beginning to the end, let us take, for example, which is better, which is τὸ ἄμεινον, in the case of I 218. The better, ὧς γὰρ ἄμεινον, is obedience to the gods.

³"For Homer poetry is a praise of *arete* [excellence]," *To the Young* V, 26.

ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθεται, μάλα τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοῦ.⁴

Whoever, however, listens to the gods will also listen to men out of wisdom. He listens first and then decides. But he listens. He sits and hears because that is best (and since it is better to obey⁵), I 274 tells us. Again the *ameinon* (better) is everywhere. In this way the vertical (ἐπιπείθεσθαι, "to be obedient to") is connected with the horizontal (πείθεσθαι, "to obey") at the point of comparison of two separate worlds. From one side we, the horizontal, and from the other, you, the vertical; we the mortal, and you, the immortal, that which we empower and that which empowers us or surpasses us, and at the point of comparison is the poet who is entreated and who speaks with both worlds. We have the comparison of the "for you" (ὕμεῖς γάρ) and "we, on the other hand" (ἡμεῖς) in II 485, at the moment the poet entreats the Muses, still incapable even if he had ten mouths and ten tongues (οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν⁶), to name all those who, a few lines earlier, had gathered like the birds in the plain of the many-rivered Troy, countless, like the leaves and flowers of the spring: "Thousands, as many leaves and flowers as there are in season."⁷ He prays and says to them: You are found everywhere, like divinities, which you are. We hear only the report and know nothing: "For you are goddesses, you are present, you know all/We hear of what sort of glory but we do not know it in any way."⁸

The juxtaposition of the "for you" and "we, on the other hand" is continued unflinchingly in the entire *Iliad*. Black death closes our eyes and all powerful fate, πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή,⁹ or elsewhere, the hated death, στυγερόδ σκοτός¹⁰ and the wrath of a god can become oppressive for

⁴"Whoever is obedient to the gods, him rather do they hear."

⁵ἐπεὶ πείθεσθαι ἄμεινον.

⁶"Not even if I had ten tongues or ten mouths."

⁷μυριοί, ὅσσα τε φύλλα καὶ ἄνθηα γίγνεται ὄρη.

⁸ὕμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε, πάρεστε τε, ἴστέ τε πάντα, ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν.

⁹"Purple death and powerful fate" (V 83).

¹⁰"hated darkness" (V 47).

us¹¹ as long as we live. Don't wish, mortal man, to compete in wisdom with the gods; the immortals are not of the same kind as men who crawl on the earth. We read in V 440:

Don't wish to think like the gods,
since never is the race of men who
crawl on the earth like the immortal gods.¹²

We mortals do not circulate between heaven and earth, "between earth and starry heaven,"¹³ like the immortals. Our race is like the leaves, some of which fall to earth because of the wind and others sprout in the bushy forest in the spring. One generation grows or comes and another ceases to grow or passes by—and both men and gods know this. I wish to recall on this regard the famous simile, "As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity,"¹⁴ which we encounter at two points in succession in the *Iliad*: the first time in VI 146 it is made by a mortal (Glaukos) and the second time in XXI 464 by a god (Apollo). Between them, at the point of comparison, the poet happens upon both of them and shares the disputes between men and gods.

The good (or its opposite) puts everything in order. There is no distinction between the physical and spiritual good in the sphericity of the Homeric world. The good is good everywhere and for everyone. At nighttime, it is good to hear the night: "Night has already come; it is good to listen to the night."¹⁵

The advice about the night is repeated a little below in a similar verse, VII 293. And it is to our advantage to listen to Night with a capital N, that is, a goddess or a person, because it is the tamer of gods and men: "Night, subduer of gods and men."¹⁶ Its darkness is sacred (ἱερὸν κνέφας, XI 194); and so is the day

¹¹χαλεπή δὲ θεοῦ ἔπι μῆνις (V 178).

¹²μηδὲ θεοῖσιν

ἴσ' ἔθελε φρονεῖν, ἐπὶ οὐ ποτε φύλον ὁμοῖον
ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἔρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων.

¹³μεσσηγὺς γαίης τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερέεντος (V 769).

¹⁴οἴη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

¹⁵νύξ δ' ἤδη τελέθει· ἀγαθὸν καὶ νυκτὶ πιθέσθαι (VII 282).

¹⁶Νύξ δμητήρια θεῶν καὶ ἀνδρῶν (XIV 259).

(ἱερὸν ἦμαρ, VIII 66). This is said to Iris by Zeus, who does not speak with the voice of a man (αὐδῆ) but with the voice of a god (ὄμφη) and who is especially considered a possessor—only once in Homer (VIII 250)—of every sign that is revealed with a divine voice or *omphēē*. Zeus' epithet is *πανομοφαίος*, in other words, the one from whom all omens come.

As we previously learned that whoever obeys the gods is himself more listened to by the gods (I 218), we now learn, in IX 116, that whomever Zeus loves with his heart is worth many people: ἀντί νυ πολλῶν/λαῶν ἔστιν ἀνὴρ ὃν τε Ζεὺς κῆρι φιλήσῃ.¹⁷ Agamemnon who is speaking here, has Achilles in mind, who is a mortal man but from an immortal mother, and often can do what we cannot do, just as the poet himself cannot relate everything as if he were a god—a perfect narration would be an impossible difficulty: ἀργαλέον δέ με ταῦτα θεὸν ὡς πάντ' ἀγορεύσαι.¹⁸ Thus Achilles represents the single case in the *Iliad* where music is heard among mortals, as he plays the sweet-sounding phorminx (φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ), and his soul delights in singing the achievements of men, while Patroklos sits quietly opposite and waits for the end of the song:

τῆ ὃ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, αἶδε δ' ἄρα κλέα
ἀνδρῶν.

Πάτροκλος δὲ οἱ οἶος ἐναντίος ἦστο σιωπῆ,
δέγμενος Αἰακίδαην, ὁπότε λήξειεν αἰείδων.¹⁹

In all other cases the phorminx is either heard on Olympos by the immortals or is only presented—without being heard—by Hephaestus on the shield of Achilles. In other matters the son of Thetis is following in his inner world the better (ἄμεινον) of the rest of the mortals. He knows that—according to

¹⁷“Worth many fighters is the man
whom Zeus loves with his heart” (IX 116).

¹⁸“It is grievous for me to narrate all these
things like a god” (XII 176).

¹⁹“It delighted his spirit, and he sang
of the glorious deeds of men
and Patroklos sat opposite him in silence,
waiting for Achilles to finish singing” (IX 189).

the paternal advice—the best for man in kindness (φιλοφροσύνη γὰρ ἀμείνων²⁰) and to restrain oneself or to keep in check every exaggerated disposition (σὺ δὲ μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν ἴσχειν ἐν στήθεσσι²¹), in contrast to him who does not at all consider or does not honor either men or gods (οὐδέ τι τίει ἀνέρας οὐδὲ θεοὺς, IX 238-239). (Τίω, to honor, has the same root as τιμή, honor, which in IX 603 is not the same for Achilles “equal to a god;”²² he will not remain honored the same if he does not soften his grandiose disposition and accept from the Greeks their purificatory gifts: “no longer will you be honored alike.”²³) Here Patroklos comes to mind, who knew as long as he was alive to be of good will with all (πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστατο μείλιχος εἶναι ζωὸς ἔων, XVII 671-672). He also knows how the imposing (μεγαλεπήθολος) and hard-hearted (he has both qualities—great spirit, θυμὸν μέγαν, and a pitiless heart, νηλεὲς ἦτορ—and this opposition within himself creates his magnificence) is finally tamed. His obstinacy is for naught, and even the gods themselves change, who have greater *arete*, honor and power than we do: “The gods, themselves are flexible/even though their *arete*, honor, and power are greater.”²⁴ Prudent men, just like the gods, also change their minds: “The minds of good men are flexible.”²⁵

It is not at all strange that Achilles is equally hostile to the gates of Hades as to someone who is used to hiding some things in his mind and saying other things with his tongue. Speaking in the first person:

For likewise that man is enemy to me like the
gates of Hell
who conceals one thing in his mind and says another.²⁶

²⁰“For kindness (gentle-mindedness, benevolence), is better” (IX 256).

²¹“You control your great-hearted spirit in your chest.”

²²ἴσον θεῶ.

²³οὐκέθ' ὁμῶς τιμῆς ἔσεαι.

²⁴στρεπτοὶ δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί,

τῶν περ καὶ μείζων ἀρετὴ τιμῆ τε θίη τε (IX 497-498).

²⁵στρεπταὶ μὲν τε φρένες ἐσθλῶν (XV 203).

²⁶ἔχθρὸς γὰρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἄϊδαο πύλῃσιν
ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη (IX 312).

He faces two options, losing the return ("my return has been lost"²⁷) or fame ("my glory has been lost"²⁸) in the dilemma of IX 410 about his death. He prefers the first and finds himself dipped to the neck in war, praying to his mother that dissension disappear from the world—from both men and gods—as well as the anger that makes the mind irascible and drips sweeter than honey and wells up inside the chests of men, just like smoke:

ὥς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο,
καὶ χόλος, ὃς τ' ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ, χαλεπήναι,
ὃς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένιοι
ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσιν ἀέξεται ἢ ὕτε καπνός.²⁹

And this call to the good—or to peace, or to some difficult to accomplish and distant paradisiacal goal, if you wish—is the more important the more we are confronted in the whole of *Iliad* with the unstoppable evil or war, with the true hell of human pain or death, without hiding or omitting anything, not a single frightful detail, in the representation of the horror amidst the pitiless, but also most beautiful world of reality. Because the poem demonstrates the same sensibility and knowledge, simultaneously and scrupulously, not only for the *inferno* but also for the *paradiso* of life, without any illusion anywhere.

Above all, that distant man knows the inexhaustible value of the living principle, that is, of his soul, as long as he is alive (and maybe after life), "for it is not worthy of my soul,"³⁰ before which neither the wealth of Troy in the years before the Achaians arrived, nor the treasures of Delphi are worth anything (IX 401-409). Because the oxen and the karamanian sheep you can plunder in war, and in peace you can acquire the tripods and the horses with blond heads, but the life of man does not return—it cannot be plundered, it cannot be seized once it has leaped over the barrier of the teeth:

²⁷ὄλετό μοι νόστος.

²⁸ὄλετό μοι κλέος.

²⁹"I wish that wrath would leave gods and men and anger, which enjoined even the prudent man to be difficult which becomes much sweeter than dripping honey in the chests of men increases like smoke" (XVIII 107).

³⁰οὐ γὰρ ἔμοι ψυχῆς ἀντάξιον.

ληϊστοὶ μὲν γὰρ τε βόες καὶ ἴφια μῆλα,
 κτητοὶ δὲ τρίποδες τε καὶ ἵππων ξανθὰ κάρηνα·
 ἀνδρὸς δὲ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐλθεῖν οὔτε λειῖστη
 οὔθ' ἐλετή, ἐπεὶ ἄρ κεν ἀμείψεται ἔρκος ὀδόντων.³¹

Man prays to the gods with the Entreaties (Λιταί, Prayers) when he happens to commit a transgression or a sin, "whenever anyone goes beyond and commits a sin."³² Here is the beginning of the subsequent course of these two words: παραβαίνω ("overstep"), in the Heraclitean "should not surpass moderation,"³³ with the progressive omnipotence of separate meaning for transgression of the spiritual and physical measure in all of the Greek world; and ἀμαρταίνω ("sin"), not yet burdened by its later Roman legal baggage (especially in the Western world), the *sin* of the New Testament. And the Entreaties, daughters of great Zeus (Διὸς κούραι μεγάλοιο)³⁴ counterbalance slowly or struggle to heal man's blindness (*ate*), which always prevails throughout the earth, harming mortals (φθάνει δέ τε πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἶαν θλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους).³⁵ He who respects those personifications as they approach him obtains a great benefit, and his entreaties are listened to:

ὅς μὲν τ' αἰδέσεται κούρας Διὸς ἄσσον ἰούσας,
 τὸν δὲ μέγ' ὤνησαν καὶ τ' ἔκλυον εὐχομένοιο.³⁶

If someone, on the other hand, does the opposite, they see to it that he remains in his blindness, to suffer evil or to be harmed and to pay (ἵνα θλαφθῆις ἀποτείση).³⁷ In that ἀποτίνω ("pay back" from the same root as τίνω, "to honor," and

³¹"Plunderable are the oxen and the fat flocks, tripods are acquirable and the blond heads of horses but the soul of man can neither be won by force, nor is it takeable, when once it passes the barrier of the teeth."

³²ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβῆῃ καὶ ἀμάρτη (IX 501).

³³οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα ("should not overstep the measures").

³⁴"Daughters of great Zeus" (IX 502).

³⁵"It reaches the whole earth, harming men" (IX 506).

³⁶"Whoever respects the daughters of Zeus as they come closer, him they benefit greatly and they listen to him praying" (IX 508).

³⁷"In order that, harmed, he will pay" (IX 512).

τίσις, "payment, penalty," and the previous τίω, "to honor," and τιμή, "honor"), in other words, in the payment or punishment for transgression of spiritual and physical moderation (measure) is the starting place and justification of the whole of Greek tragedy. Its type at this point is clearly manifested in the well known *hybris*, the product of excessive violence (both of which reach the iron firmament in the suitors' behavior in XV 329 of the *Odyssey*: τῶν ὕβρις τε βίη τε σιδήρεον οὐρανὸν ἴκει).³⁸

The later lines of Heracleitos, "should not overstep the measures," about those who transgress the physical laws of life, and the Erinyes, "the helpers of justice"³⁹ who catch up with them, is connected with Homeric justice in XVI 388, when Zeus gets angry with men—Ζεύς, ὅτε δὴ ρ' ἄνδρεςσι κοτεσσάμενος⁴⁰—who chase justice away or violate it, defying the punishment of the gods: ἐκ δὲ δίκην ἐλάσσωσι, θεῶν ὅπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες⁴¹ but it is also connected with the Erinyes in XIX 418. When one of Achilles' two horses transgresses physical laws and with a human voice predicts to him that the day of his death is near—ἀλλὰ τοι ἐγγύθεν ἦμαρ ὀλέθριον⁴²—the Erinyes immediately deprived it of its speech: "Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσαντος Ἐρινύες ἔσχεθον αὐδήν."⁴³

Within a moment, disaster can suddenly begin and the hour of our doom is set, even if it will actually occur later or much later. In a moment, Patroklos innocently begins the cycle that will end later: "the beginning of the evil came near to him."⁴⁴ At the same time, beyond individual cases, in the general struggle of men, Zeus and Poseidon, each helping in his own way, the one the Trojans, the other the Argives, stretched over them the rope of powerful enmity and desperate war, pulling now to one and now to the other side the edge of the rope that cannot

³⁸"Their hubris and violence reach the iron heaven."

³⁹Δίκης ἐπικούροι.

⁴⁰"Zeus when, indeed, angered with men."

⁴¹"They drive out justice, disregarding divine vengeance."

⁴²"But, indeed, the day of your destruction is near."

⁴³"When it spoke thus, Erinyes deprived it of its voice."

⁴⁴κακοῦ δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλεν ἀρχή (XI 604).

be cut or untied. Because of it the knees of so many were unstrung:

τοὶ δ' ἔριδος κρατερῆς καὶ ὁμοίου πολέμοιο
πεῖραρ ἑπαλλάξαντες ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροισι τάνυσσαν,
ἄρρηκτόν τ' ἄλυτόν τε, τὸ πολλῶν γούνατ' ἔλυσεν.⁴⁵

(Truly, I think a people like ours must be considered lucky, for from the time of the *Iliad* to the present we speak the same words: *μοῦ λύθηκάν τὰ γόνατα*.⁴⁶) And though war is not a desire of man—whose soul would rather fill itself with sleep, love, sweet song, beautiful dance—all the same in the end man is satiated with those too. Menelaos concludes disdainfully that only his opponents the Trojans can never be satiated with war.

πάντων μὲν κόρος ἐστί, καὶ ὕπνου καὶ φιλότητος
μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς καὶ ἀμύμονος ὄρηθμοῖο,
τῶν πέρ τις καὶ μᾶλλον ἐέλδεται ἐξ ἔρον εἶναι
ἢ πολέμου· Τρῶες δὲ μάχης ἀκόρητοι ἕασιν.⁴⁷

Continuing our skimming of the *Iliad* from beginning to end, we learn that Zeus' help—whomever he will glorify because of their victory and those he refuses to defend and brings down low—can clearly be discerned from the outset:

ρεῖα δ' ἀρίγνωτος Διὸς ἀνδράσι γίγνεται ἀλκή,
ἡμὲν ὄτέοισιν κῦδος ὑπέρτερον ἐγγυαλίξῃ,
ἦ δ' ὅτινας μινύθη τε καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλησιν ἀμύνειν.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Indeed, making the end rope of war now go this way, now go that way, they stretched it over both, unbreakable and unlooseable it unstrung the knees of many" (XIII 358-360).

⁴⁶"my knees were unstrung."

⁴⁷"There is satiety of all things, of sleep, and love, and of sweet song, and beautiful dance—of these things truly a man would rather have his fill than of war; but the Trojans are not satiated with battle" (XIII 636).

⁴⁸"Easily far-famed is the power of Zeus for men.

To some he guarantees higher fame;

Others he diminishes and does not wish to defend" (XV 490).

We see everywhere that one evil falls upon another: πάντη δὲ κακὸν κακῷ ἐστήρικτο;⁴⁹ in my view, nevertheless, the mind of Zeus, as a general rule in the world of the *Iliad*, is always superior to the mind of men: ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τε Διὸς κρείσσων νόος ἢ ἐπερ ἀνδρῶν.⁵⁰

That verse echoes from Homer ceaselessly throughout the whole Greek intellectual world to its very nightfall. Along with countless others, it says with the brilliant intellectual power of faith, and not with the complaint of lament, that which is steadily heard from one end of the earth to the other in all civilizations that have left a small or large trace in their passing: that of all that breathe and walk on earth, no creature can be found more miserable than man:

οὐ μὲν γὰρ τί πού ἐστιν διζυρώτερον ἀνδρὸς
πάντων ὅσσα τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνεῖει τε καὶ ἔρπει.⁵¹

That fate did the gods ordain for miserable mortals, Achilles consoles Priam in XXIV 525-533. They themselves live afflicted, while the gods live with no cares. Zeus has set up two urns upon the earth, one filled with evils, the other with good gifts which he grants us. To whomever Zeus, who delights in thunder, gives a mixture from both, sometimes misfortune, sometimes good will ensue. To whomever he will grant only of evils, he marks him out and black misery or hunger hunts him over the great earth, as he turns here and there unhonored by gods and mortals:

ὧς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι θροτοῖσι,
ζῶειν ἀχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δὲ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.
διοὶ γὰρ τε πίθιοι κατακείονται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει
δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἑάων·
ὧ μὲν κ' ἀμμίξας δῶη Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος,
ἄλλοτε μὲν τε κακῷ ὃ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλῷ·

⁴⁹"Everywhere one evil has been fixed upon another" (XXI 111).

⁵⁰"But always the mind of Zeus is superior to that of men"

(XVI 688).

⁵¹"For indeed there is nowhere any creature more wretched than man of all who breathe and crawl upon the earth" (XVI 446-447).

ὦ δέ κε τῶν λυγρῶν δῶη, λωθητὸν ἔθηκε,
καί ἐ κακῇ θούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα διῖαν ἐλαύνει,
φοιτᾷ δ' οὔτε θεοῖσι τετιμῆνος οὔτε θροτοῖσιν.⁵²

So the adjective νήπιος ("foolish"), which is heard throughout the *Iliad*, often hides immeasurable love for man, as we always find it before us in so many difficult or terrible situations that evoke pity and compassion. I would frequently go as far as calling it caressive. It expresses then in the sensibility of today's language approximately what the frequent adjective ὁ καημένος ("poor fellow") expresses in the writing of Makriyannis, whether it be used for animate or even inanimate beings (for example, in the battle on the Acropolis: "At the time the *poor* Greeks felt very sorry for me"; or at the battle in Analatos: "And they themselves all drank water as did the *poor* innocent horses"). Caressive I would also call the manner in which the poet of the *Iliad* turns suddenly and speaks directly to his heroes, first beginning this tactic of warm familiarity with Menelaos in IV 127. In XIX 90 again, we read that absolutely everything has been realized or reached its end through the power of God: Θεὸς διὰ πάντα τελευτᾷ.⁵³ And in XX 131 we read how oppressive it is for man once the gods manifest themselves in his presence: χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ φαίνεσθαι ἐναργεῖς.⁵⁴ It is an account difficult to distinguish in our psychology from the parallel one of Paul: "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God."⁵⁵

⁵²"For the gods have allotted to mortal men
to live in misery, while they themselves are without cares.
For there lie two jars on the threshold of Zeus.
From one he grants evil gifts, from the other good.
To whomever Zeus who rejoices in thunder gives a mixture
sometimes that man chances upon evil, sometimes upon good.
But to whomever he gives from the urn of evil, he makes him
despitefully treated
and grinding poverty drives him all over the holy earth,
and he wonders honored by neither the gods nor by the mortals."

⁵³"God brings all things to an end."

⁵⁴"For hard are the gods to look upon when they appear in manifest presence."

⁵⁵φοβερὸν τὸ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς χεῖρας θεοῦ ζῶντος.

Even if many times utter ruin or destruction hangs over him (ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφήπται)⁵⁶ and the most worthy can be capable on a bad day of unworthy actions—Achilles, dragging behind his chariot the dead Hector, "was devising outrageous deeds"⁵⁷—a mortal can with reasoning or thought (μητις) become worthy at the same time of wonderful deeds. With wisdom or reason, according to Nestor, and not with strength the woodcutter becomes ten times better. With reason again the captain on the wine-dark sea pilots the swift craft torn by winds. With reason too one charioteer surpasses another:

μητι τοι δρυτόμος μέγ' ἀμείνων ἢ ἐ βίηφι
μητι δ' αὔτε κυβερνήτης ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ
νῆα θοὴν ἰθύνει ἐρεχθομένην ἀνέμοισι
μητι δ' ἠνίοχος περιγίγνεται ἠνίοχοιο.⁵⁸

Involuntarily our minds are drawn from the Homeric verses to Sophocles. Among the many wonders of human "wisdom" (μητις), man himself takes his place among the many wonders of the world—in fact, man is the most wonderful. How could one not whisper here, syllable by syllable, the everlasting apostrophe of Greek tragedy: πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλλει.⁵⁹ And how could he not proceed a little further to the lesson taught by the divinely inspired poet of the *Iliad* to the Athenian tragedian—a universal human conclusion: "Only death he cannot succeed in avoiding."⁶⁰ Let us not forget that, according to Plato's confession in his *Republic*, Homer seems to have been "the first teacher and the first leader of all the great tragedians" (595 c), and elsewhere "with respect to tragedy . . . its leader" (598 d).

⁵⁶"The cords of destruction are made fast upon [the Trojans]" (VII 402).

⁵⁷ἀεικέα μῆδετο ἔργα (XXII 395).

⁵⁸"In no way is the woodcutter better with power than with skill, nor the helmsman who on the wine-dark sea directs his swift ship harrassed by the winds, in no way does charioteer surpass charioteer except by skill" (XXIII 315).

⁵⁹"Many are the wonders and nothing is more wonderful than man."

⁶⁰Αἰδα μόνον φεῦξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται.

Those may be only a few of the great guiding lines or intellectual axes that, during the so-called "Dark Ages," about which we know little or nothing, were enclosed little by little within the Cyclopean wall of the verses of the *Iliad* to teach, as Plato writes, Greece (about which we always pretend to know everything or almost everything) and consequently countless people throughout the world.

* * *

The metaphors or similes in Homer remain proverbial for all people. The poet of the *Iliad*—the blind man, as tradition would have it, possibly to show that the light lives within us—is a single eye transcending the three kingdoms: the heaven of Zeus ("broad heaven"⁶¹), the sea of Poseidon ("the gray sea"⁶²) and the nether world of Hades ("the murky darkness"⁶³), with the earth and Olympus common to the three gods. (According to XV 187-193, the kingdoms were allotted in that order to the children of Kronos and Rheia, the three brothers, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades.) There is nothing in these three worlds that the eye of Homer does not read, no corner that is unseen by that eye. There are no secrets—in the heavens, lands and nether regions—for the physical and intellectual or metaphysical vision of the poet of the *Iliad*, which embraces everything, "as many as breathe and crawl upon the earth."⁶⁴ Along with man, he studies them, speaking of them first hand. He looks at the inner world from the inside and the outer from the outside, his knowledge always first hand—whether it is of the soul (with its inner world) or of the body, whether it is of a shadow or of a firm thing (*ombra* or *cosa salda*, in Dante's language). Knowing every created thing and the whole creation almost as well as their creator, within the poem of poems he speaks always to us like the landlubber speaks of the land, the seaman of the sea, the diviner of the heavens or of the nether world, like a woman of womanly works, like a fisherman about fishing, like a hunter about birds and like an anatomist about death. His eye

⁶¹ οὐρανὸν εὐρύν.

⁶² πολλήν ἄλα.

⁶³ ζόφον ἠερόεντα.

⁶⁴ ὅσά τε γαίαν ἔπι πνέει τε καὶ ἔρπει.

is opened wide, more like that of a god than of a mortal, if we stop to consider the poet of the *Iliad* with normal human measures.

With respect to the metaphors in Homer, I shall say only a few words about certain details every time when—since we are speaking of similes—"the ten hawks pounce upon the flock of swans" (that is, the fingers of the poet seize the strings of the lyre) to sing of the "deeds of men" or the glories of the brave, in accordance with the unparalleled poetic picture from *Slovo*, the almost brotherly song of the "dark" (for us "enlightened") Slavo-Byzantine Middle age.

The Homeric metaphors can capture likeness sometime amid unlikeness so great and wide that no one else's mind could ever or would ever bridge the chasm. (I said in the beginning and I say again, that compared to Homer, the greatest poets we know seem like small children.) Whenever that happens—the poet of *Iliad* exclusively comprehending the common ground amidst such diametrically distant dissimilarities—the result is so crucial, the power of the metaphor so great, the affirmation to "let there be light" of surprise so complete (how, indeed, can the poet himself reveal or dig up within us the buried element that makes all humans agree with him and at the same time rejoice that we are human beings—the highest point of poetry) that from thereon the liberating jolting we receive in our inner world makes us have fewer reservations about that which we call, in one word, a miracle, whatever significance we may give to that expression.

No one else could (and no one did) say that the words of a stentorian Odysseus, falling thickly one upon the other and swirling toward the audience, are in their impetuous dance like wintry snow flakes: ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ ὄπα τε μέγαν ἐκ στήθεος εἶη καὶ ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν εἰκότα χειμερήσιν.⁶⁵

Man can learn everything, but in metaphors and similes he remains self-taught. Limiting ourselves to the critical thought of the post-Homeric world, which completed its education in the school of the *Iliad*, of all difficulties that exist in enabling

⁶⁵"But when he uttered his great voice from his chest and words like wintry snowflakes" (III 221).

the literal poetic tongue to speak clearly for all without being commonplace, "the most important"—I translate from Aristotle's *Poetics* (1459 a)—"is to be able to make metaphors; and indeed it is the most important by far; it is the only thing that you cannot learn from another and at the same time it reveals a great natural gift, because to be able to create real metaphors means that you can, among unlike things, see the like." To be precise: πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι. μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὐτε παρ' ἄλλο ἔστι λαβεῖν εὐφυίας τε σημείον ἔστι· τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἔστιν. The Aristotelian term εὐφυία⁶⁶ ("genius") here means natural ability that one does not acquire through lessons or study. It means, in other words, that one must have a good natural constitution, one must be so made by one's mother, as we say; in short, to have a great natural gift in contrast to the one who acquires an ability through study or knowledge.

Aristotle previously states that poetry needs either a great natural gift or otherwise a holy madness: διὸ εὐφυοῦς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἔστιν ἢ μανικοῦ.⁶⁷ Now how effective can an education or a mindset like ours (unlike the Homeric) be, fixed as it is more on knowledge, in learning to spell the Homeric alphabet, which contains all twenty-four letters of poetry, its Alpha to Omega I think I suggested an answer somehow from the beginning. It is now better for us to continue with the metaphors.

When Menelaos is wounded by the deadly arrow of Pandaros, we see—or rather we don't see—Athena imperceptibly warding the arrow off the target (so it wounds him only superficially), just as a mother shoos a fly from a child lying in bed and sleeping: ἡ δὲ τόσον μὲν ἔεργεν ἀπὸ χροός, ὥς ὅτε μήτηρ/παιδὸς ἐέργη μυῖαν, ὅθ' ἠδέϊ λέξεται ὕπνω.⁶⁸ And when ten verses further, the black-red blood begins all of a sudden to flow from the wound⁶⁹ there begins

⁶⁶εὐ-φυῆς (εὖ, "good, right" and φυή, "nature, spirit." Φυή comes from φύω, "to give birth, to produce").

⁶⁷"Because poetry is either from genius or from madness" (1455a 32).

⁶⁸"She warded it off from his skin, just as a mother shoos a fly from her child when he lies in bed in sweet sleep" (IV 130).

⁶⁹αὐτίκα δ' ἔρρεεν αἷμα κελαινεφές ἐξ ὠτειλῆς.

one of those magnificent Homeric similes of many parts, which neither happened in the world nor will easily (or even with difficulty) happen again. The poet turns tenderly to Menelaos and talks to him directly—one small sample of the magnificent writing of Homeric poetry.

Just as when a Lydian or Karian woman, the poet begins to tell him, paints purple the ivory destined for the cheek pieces of the horses, and it remains in the cellar while many charioteers wished they had it—it remains a present for the king and at the same time both: an adornment for the horse and glory for the charioteer. Of such a sort, Menelaos, your well-made thighs and your shapely legs and lower down your beautiful ankle bones were dyed with blood:

Ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τ' ἐλέφαντα γυνή φοίνικι μίην
 Μηονίς ἢ Κάειρα, παρήϊον ἔμμεναι ἵππων
 κεῖται δ' ἐν θαλάμῳ, πολέες τέ μιν ἠρήσαντο
 ἵππηες φορέειν· βασιλῆϊ δὲ κεῖται ἄγαλμα,
 ἀμφοτέρων κόσμος θ' ἵππῳ ἐλατῆρί τε κύδος·
 τοιοῖ τοι, Μενέλαε, μιάνην αἵματι μηροῖ
 εὐφυέες κνήμαί τε ἰδὲ σφυρὰ κάλ' ὑπένερθε.

(IV 141-147)

From the tiniest tenderness in IV 130 a little before, with the fly, until the expansive simile here, it is the same poetic language that speaks clearly for all without being commonplace, as Aristotle defines it: λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφῆ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι.⁷⁰ It is the same unwavering progression, the same tone.

In V 692 his noble companions first set the divine Sarpedon down wounded under a magnificent oak, the tree of shield-bearing Zeus, and later the powerful Pelagon, who was his beloved companion, pulled out of his wounded thigh the shattering spear. He fainted and mist was scattered over his eyes. Still, he recovered again. The breath of the north wind blew all around ihm, bringing back to him his breath, which he almost lost miserably:

⁷⁰"The virtue of the expression is to be clear and not common" (ib. 1458a 18).

οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἀντίθεον Σαρπηδόνα δίοι ἑταῖροι
 εἶσαν ὑπ' αἰγίοχοιο Διὸς περικαλλεῖ φηγῶ·
 ἔκ δ' ἄρα οἱ μηροῦ δόρου μείλινον ὄσε θυράζε
 Ἰφθιμος Πελάγων, ὃς οἱ φίλος ἦεν ἑταῖρος.
 τὸν δὲ λίπε ψυχὴ, κατὰ δ' ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἄχλυσ.
 αὖτις δ' ἔμπνύνη, περι δὲ πνοιῆ Βορέαο
 ζώγρει ἐπιπνεύουσα κακῶς κεκαφηότα θυμόν.⁷¹

One has to have been born (and lived) in the natural environment of the Mediterranean world, where the men of the *Iliad* were born and lived, and to have felt many times the gentle north wind when sitting somewhere out-of-the-way worn out from fatigue; one has to have arisen for the first time after a long illness in front of an open window in order to understand fully, not through reason (ratio), like many contemporary people, but totally, "both with hands and feet and mind,"⁷² in its real dimensions, the Homeric description that is unreachable by any other means. One obtains then an additional dimension for an accurate evaluation: one performs the same act, one can feel the same way, as we say, in certain instances. It is like the celebrated simile with the donkey and the children in XII 558-562, which a far northerner or a southerner would not grasp.

I would like to note another small detail here. When the description of a thing of rare beauty or a creature equally precious cannot proceed any further, when it has crossed all the steps of praise, then the poet of the *Iliad* brings the word "star" to the point of crystallization. The Homeric star leaves heaven—where the stars of the astronomers and other poets continue to shine—but contrary to mathematical and physical laws, it leaves

⁷¹"His companions laid godlike Sarpedon down by the beautiful oak of aegis-bearing Zeus, stalwart Pelagon, who was his dear friend, pushed an ashen spear out of his thigh. His life left him and mist covered his eyes. Thereupon he regained his breath and the blast of Boreas revived him at a time he was wretchedly breathing forth his life."

⁷²χερσί τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ.

in order to add (and not to subtract) brightness to the remaining. The night from which Homer detaches his star is like the transformed night, which, in our contemporary tradition, Solomos "filled with wonders" and "sowed with magic."

Hecuba descends in the sweet-smelling room, the "fragrant chambers,"⁷³ and, as a gift for Athena, picks up a piece of weaving—the largest and most beautifully embroidered which shone like a star and had been put far below all the others:

τῶν ἔν' ἀειραμένη Ἐκάβη φέρε δῶρον Ἀθήνῃ,
 δς κάλλιστος ξην ποικίλμασιν ἠδὲ μέγιστος,
 ἄστηρ δ' ὡς ἀπέλαμπεν ἔκειτο δὲ νεῖατος ἄλλων.⁷⁴

Hector's baby looks like a beautiful star—ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ.⁷⁵ Two small examples among others. Who will measure the unworldly orbit or the poetic brilliance of the Homeric stars?

In XI 162 birds of prey now love the slain more than their wives do—γύπεσσιν πολὺ φίλτεροι ἢ ἀλόχοισιν⁷⁶—and more winged creatures surround the slain man than crying women.⁷⁷ We said it before and we say it again: there is no illusion anywhere in Homer about the *Inferno* (or elsewhere about the *Paradiso*) of the world in these contrasts. But neither is there any concession to the useless sarcasm about the fate of the world, which, in all likelihood, certain *docti homines* (learned men) of today could possibly discern in those tragic verses. In the intellectual teaching of the *Iliad* there is everywhere compassion and a paternal sympathy for the large defenseless totality of humanity.

I would like at this point to show with one example the oddity of certain connections that can occur in the reading of a text depending upon the times; in the context of our discussion, by those who read the *Iliad* XI 514-515 in all previous times and ours. There, one of the two physicians who participate

⁷³θάλαμον κήωντα.

⁷⁴"And lifting one of them up, Hecuba brought it as a gift to Athena. It was the most beautiful in embroidery and the largest.

It shone like a star. It lay beneath" (VI 293-295).

⁷⁵"Similar to a beautiful star" (VI 401).

⁷⁶"Much dearer were they to the vultures than to their wives" (XI 162).

⁷⁷οἰωνοὶ δὲ περὶ πλέες ἢ ἐ γυναῖκες (XI 395).

in the expedition, Machaon (brother of Podaleirios, the second physician, both sons of Asklepios, who in the *Iliad* is not yet a god), is wounded by an arrow and must be moved to the ships. One physician, you see, acts for many others, removing arrows and spreading soothing medications on the wound

ἰητρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιός ἄλλων
 ἰοὺς τ' ἐκτάμνειν ἐπὶ τ' ἤπια φάρμακα πάσσειν.

Reading the passage today, how is it possible not to make the connection not supported by the text, between the physician's arrows, the Homeric ἰοὺς, and the viruses that are omnipresent in the medicine of our time?⁷⁸ With a transference of the meaning of the word those who serve Asklepios today struggle in a parallel manner, in great measure, to "remove the arrows." The peculiarity of the connection continues inadvertently from Homer, if we continue now the juxtaposition, considering how the two similar-sounding Greek words ἰός ("arrow") and ἰός ("toxic substance") are derived from two different Sanskrit roots, and how the second ἰός (in Latin, *virus*) was used in this sense for the first time in 1898 by Beijerinck, as the cause of the disease that in botany is called "tobacco mosaic." So much for the peculiarities surrounding certain connections, which can be not only linguistic but often interpretative of the ancient texts, depending upon the times.

I don't have the heart to omit two other transitory pictures or similes taken from the world of the sea, which everywhere surrounds the topography of the *Iliad*. In XII 385 Telamonian Ajax (Αἴαξ) detaches from the citadel wall a gleaming un-hewn stake ("with a terrifying stone")⁷⁹ and hurls it against Epikles. The terrible stone hits him, breaks his helmet and shatters all the bones of his head. He falls from the high tower of the citadel—here is the crucial picture—like a diver: ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄρνευτήρι εἰοικῶς κάππεσ' ἄφ' ὕψηλοῦ πύργου.⁸⁰

⁷⁸The connection is lost in translation: the word "ἰός" means arrow in Homer but *virus* in Modern Greek.

⁷⁹μαρμάρῳ δκριόεντι.

⁸⁰"He fell from the high tower like a diver."

In XXIV 79-82 again, Zeus sends Iris to summon Thetis, wanting her to persuade her son Achilles to accept the gifts of old Priam and turn over to him the Hector's corpse. She leaves immediately. Between Samothrace and Imbros she jumps into the dark sea, whose waters resounded all around, and heads directly toward the bottom like a lead weight that, when placed on the horn of a pasturing bull, goes down, bringing to the carnivorous fish their extermination.

ἔνθορε μείλανι πόντῳ· ἔπεστονάχησε δὲ λίμνη.
ἦ δὲ μολυβδαίνῃ ἰκέλη ἔς θυσσὸν ὄρουσεν,
ἦ τε κατ' ἀγραύλοιο θοδὸς κέρας ἐμβεβαυῖα
ἔρχεται ὠμηστῆσιν ἐπ' ἰχθύσι κῆρα φέρουσα.⁸¹

I want to conclude this part with two horrifying descriptions of all that happens in the murderous passing of the water-twisting (δυνήεντος) Scamander river when Achilles decides to reenter the war. In the first Achilles encounters the first of his two successive victims, Lykaon, and in the second his second victim, Asteropaios. The poet of the *Iliad* is talking to us.

In XXI 120 Achilles grabs the slain Lykaon by the foot and throws him down for the river to carry him away: ποταμόνδε λαθὼν ποδὸς ἦκε φέρεσθαι.⁸² And then he reminds him that his mother will not lay him to rest to mourn over him (οὐδὲ σε μήτηρ ἐνθμεμένη λεχέεσσι γοήσεται)⁸³—the river, he turns and tells him, will carry him deep in the boundless embrace of the sea. And jumping between the waves, some fish will dart forth in the foam, where the sea curls and darkens, to eat the white fat of Lykaon:

εἴσω ἄλδος εὐρέα κόλπον.
θρῶσκων τις κατὰ κύμα μέλαιναν φρῖχ' ὑπαίξει
ἰχθύς, ὃς κε φάγησι Λυκάονος ἀργέτα δημόν.⁸⁴

⁸¹"She leapt into the black sea. The sea resounded and like lead she plunged into the bottom of the sea and she, entering like the horn of an ox of the field, came upon the flesh-eating fish, bringing death."

⁸²"Grabbing him by the foot, he hurls him to be carried away."

⁸³"Nor will your mother, placing you in bed wail over you."

⁸⁴

"Within the sea's broad gulf.

In XXI 202 Achilles abandons the slain Asteropaios recumbent on the sand by the river, getting wet in the black water. With him the eels and the fish find work, feeding upon him, tearing pieces from the fat around his kidneys:

κείμενον ἐν ψαμάθοισι, δίαινε δέ μιν μέλαν ὕδωρ.
τὸν μὲν ἄρ' ἐγγέλυές τε καὶ ἰχθύες ἀμφεπένοντο,
δημόν ἐρεπτόμενοι ἐπινεφρίδιον κείροντες.

We need proceed no further after these horrible descriptions, which, one would think, corroborate the unanswered question that a small child once asked me: "Why, when something true is very beautiful, do we say that it seems untrue, and when something false is very beautiful, we say that it is truth-like?" The highest point, we said, that one can reach in connection with the poetic education of the *Iliad* is to read the poem itself, forgetting all one has happened to learn about Homer, the threatening bibliography or the Homeric question. As long as we have Homer in front of us, we do not have a Homeric question. Philosophical scholarship or professional criticism may concern itself with that, but even those only to the extent that the Herakleitian measures stop us. From there and beyond we climb down the stairs. We do not climb up with respect to our general assessment of our reckoning with the poet of poets.

* * *

And now I come to elaborate on the three verses from III 156-158, which are closely connected with everything that happens that day at one of the gates to the citadel of Troy, the one that faces the setting of the sun with a view of the plain below, where the two armies are lined up against each other. As we know, nine years have already passed and we are entering the tenth year of the war. High upon the tower of the citadel gate, veterans of the war, the wise old men of the town, sit with Priam. I shall stop only at what the old men said to one another in a low voice (ἦκα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον) when they

A fish leaps into the black sea wave shuddering
who darts beneath the black ripple (of the sea)
who devours Lykaon's white fat" (XXI 125).

saw Helen ascending in their direction. And especially at their first words—the Trojans and the Achaians (with their beautiful greaves on their legs) were not to be blamed for enduring for so long all the terrible things they suffered for the sake of such a woman: she is terribly like the immortal goddesses in appearance:

οὐ νέμεσις Τρῳάσ καὶ ἔϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
 τοιῆδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεια πάσχειν'
 αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῆς εἰς ὄπισθ' ἔοικεν.

That affirmation of living beauty, or youth, by wisdom—in other words, by men who earlier in their life pondered things deeply—is one of the most basic theses of the Homeric world, which passed later, when little by little “this poet had educated Greece,”⁸⁵ to the rest of Hellenism. Generally speaking, the miracle of life, culminating in beauty or youth as its archetype or prototype, was handed down for the first time in the *Iliad* and carved in the pure marble of the Greek language. The confirmation of this miracle by all wisdom, not only in language and all of its creations, but also in religion, architecture, sculpture—everywhere—constitutes one of the most basic characteristics of civilization, which spread in one way or another in the Eastern Mediterranean and its hinterland. With the elaboration of the three verses in III 156-158 of the *Iliad*, I quickly descend the steps of our language and I see the precept of Solomos that life continues to be always (even in his years, though he might not have hoped for it) “a great and primary good,” which could be considered a small resonance of the Homeric thesis. This comes first, like a quick digression, on the fly. Then I hurry to recall in parallel someone who, perhaps, was not given any attention by the literary or philosophical giants of his country—including Goethe, whom we referred to in the beginning—and who was never called “Olympian,” but who sometimes came close, much closer than the other messengers of the Greek “reading” in Europe, to one or two guidelines of this world, not so much by systematic study or knowl-

⁸⁵Τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαιδευκεν οὗτος ὁ ποιητής.

edge of antiquity or scholarship, but because in the loneliness of his exile amidst a culture completely opposite to the Greek he seems to have discovered them within himself. I am speaking of Hölderlin who, due to certain telepathic advice that he bequeathed to modern Europe, stood among his compatriots from that point of view as a transgressor of what was expected.

Returning to the Homeric juxtaposition of the elders of Troy and Helen, I shall proceed to one forgotten verse—two tetrastichs—from Hölderlin's mature period, where Socrates represents wisdom or deep thought and Alcibiades life, beauty, and youth. The poem is called "Socrates and Alcibiades" (1798). The first tetrastich asks Socrates why he always honors the young brave man so much. Doesn't he know anything greater than life and youth or beauty? Why does he lovingly raise his eyes up to him as we raise our eyes to the gods? The second tetrastich replies: He who has thought more deeply loves the most whatever is the most lively. He who has observed the world well understands the greatest virtue. And finally, many times the wise incline to beauty.

Why, holy Socrates, do you always pay homage to these
young men?

Do you not know greater men?

Why do you look upon them with love?

Why do you gaze at them as if they were gods?

Whoever has thought most deeply, loves the most vibrant,
understands high virtue. He is the one who has looked
into the world
and often the wise finally turn themselves to beauty.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ "Warum huldigst du, heiliger Sokrates,
Diesem Jünglinge stets? kennest du Grössers
nicht?
Warum siehet mit Liebe,
Wie auf Götter, dein Aug' auf ihn?"

Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste,
Hohe Tugend versteht, wer in die Welt geblickt,
Und es neigen die Weisen
Oft am Ende zu Schönem sich.

Let us now set up two scales: on the one the elders of Troy (wisdom) with Helen (life—beauty—youth), and on the other Socrates (wisdom) with Alcibiades (life—beauty—youth). We complete the correspondence between the two excerpts, on the one hand, and the Homeric affirmation of living beauty or youth by wisdom, on the other. This affirmation of wisdom before the brightness of life, beauty and youth, comes in different languages: from “around such a woman”⁸⁷ of the intellectual world of the *Iliad* or the foreign *das Lebendigste*⁸⁸ of Hölderlin. One can follow it later as it permeates measureless manifestations of faith, thought, politics or art in the rest of Hellenism to its twilight and the final arrival of the historic (but never intellectual) night.

Finally, connecting the *Iliad* with our own contemporary tradition, I shall risk a juxtaposition of verses XVIII 231-236 with the *Erotokritos* in IV 1969 and 2019. I proceed to this connection without participating at all in the theory of Paparrigopoulos (and many others) of one nationality—for me a dream, the Homeric ὄναρ—and I limit myself to the unique reality—the Homeric ὕπαρ, “waking vision/reality”—that we are the only contemporary people who go up and down to Homer by the ladder of the same language. I find this privileged reality more than enough. From the most ancient times until today—as Paparrigopoulos writes—I at least do not know the history of “the Greek nation.” To the contrary, I know “from the most ancient times till today” and, it could be, from today till the end of the world, the history of the Greek language. And since I said it and I repeated it, that compared to *the poet*—as the ancients obviously called Homer—the greatest poets we know are all like small children, I risk the juxtaposition not to elevate or move Vitsentzos Kornaros from his real position but to show the strength of the Cretan fifteen-syllable verse. That verse was not enough “to charm away the ears”⁸⁹ among the pusillanimous pedants who tried very hard (and were glorified) this past century to be the first to bring the message of the Enlightenment

⁸⁷ τοιῆδ' ἀμφὶ γυναίκι.

⁸⁸ The most vibrant, the most lively.

⁸⁹ κατακηλεῖ τὰ ὦτα.

to the Greeks along with the "Greek Library" of Koraes. The poetic blossoming that the Turkish yataghans reaped in 1669 in the Castle (Candia), and which spread everywhere where Greek was spoken through the wave of Cretan refugees, not only did the pedants ignore—this failure would have been human or forgivable—but they condemned it *ex cathedra*, along with "other such monstrosities," to the people whom at the same time they endeavored to enlighten. The continuation would have been tedious, were it not like an abortion in the life of the land and a violation of its two sensitive points, its faith and its language, for almost two centuries now. Educated men, and among them some useful in their fields, unforgivably humiliated and shamed an entire people.

The one sensitive point: Commenting on Aristotle—*The Extant Remains of Aristotle's Politics* (Paris, 1821)—Koraes was the first to declare our severance from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. We listened to him. We appointed ourselves autonomous, that is, spiritually headless, and now, in our century, we beat our breasts or shed crocodile tears over the terrible position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Too late. And the Greek state only today (1976) officially allows the citizen to write in the language that he speaks and not in another that no one ever spoke. So be it.

XVIII 231 of the *Iliad* tells us that finally the Achaians gladly dragged the slain Patroklos far from where the arrows fell and put him in his death bed. His beloved companions mourned around him. And close by them followed Achilles (of the swift feet), shedding black tears because he faced his faithful companion lying in the bier and cut to pieces by the sharp bronze (of the spears):

αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὶ
ἀσπασίως Πάτροκλον ὑπέκ θελέων ἐρύσαντες
κάτθεσαν ἐν λεχέεσσι· φίλοι δ' ἀμφέσταν ἑταῖροι
μυρόμενοι· μετὰ δέ σφι ποδώκης εἶπετ' Ἀχιλλεύς
δάκρυα θερμὰ χέων, ἔπει εἶσιδε πιστὸν ἑταῖρον
κείμενον ἐν φέρτρῳ δεδαίγμενον ὀξείῃ χαλκῷ.⁹⁰

90

"But the Achaians
warding off the missiles from Patroklos

The scene is solemn and ceremonial. Even though the comparison between the *Iliad* and the *Errotokritos* or any other of the greatest poets we know is like comparing the sun with the fading moon of midday, for us to find again the magnificence, the nobility and the simplicity of this scene—comfortably and rhythmically set “in Greek discourse,” as Cavafy would say—we must also follow here in poetry the Gospel’s teaching about our soul and humble ourselves to the level of the wronged Kornaros in order for us to be raised to Homer.

There where the war took place they marched around in
circles
with silent silent trumpets and broken drums
and his forlorn arms, still covered with blood
were placed on his horse and were always in front.

.....
They carried him four times around the plain
and at the end they all left and took the body with them.⁹¹

This for the “Homer of vulgar philology” (Koraes).⁹² Period.

put him on a bier gladly. His companions
stood around him, lamenting. After them followed
Achilles shedding hot tears, when he
looked upon his faithful friend lying
on a bier pierced by sharp bronze.”

⁹¹Ἐκεῖ ποῦ γίν' ὁ πόλεμος γύρου τριγύρου πηαῖνα
μὲ σάλπιγγες μουγγές μουγγές καὶ τύμπανα
σπασμένα,
καὶ τὰ παντέρμα ντ' ἄρματα, ὡς ἦσα ματωμένα,
εἰς τ' ἄλογόν του τὰ ἔχανε, καὶ πάντα ὀμπρὸς τὰ
πηαῖνα

.....
Στὸν κάμπο τέσσερεις φορές τοῦ κάμασι τῆ γύρα,
κι ἄργά μισέσπαν ὄλοι ντως, καὶ τὸ νεκρὸν
ἐπῆρα.

⁹²The quotation from Koraes refers to Kornaros.

THE MOURNING SONGS OF GREEK WOMEN

These songs from my collection of the *Mourning Songs of Greek Women* are all anonymously made. They were first collected by Claude Fauriel in his *Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne* in Paris 1824, but since then countless collections have appeared in Greece and throughout Europe. Many of these songs can be traced back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the majority of this work was composed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were sung throughout the Greek world, including the far-flung motherlands that were contained in Anatolia until the exodus of the Greeks in 1922 and in the remote Greek-speaking villages in Sicily and Russia.

I began translating these songs when I was given a copy of Kosta Pasayianis's *Maniátika Moirólógia kai Tragoúdia* (Athens, 1928) by the poet Nikos Gatsos when I was in Greece in 1962 on a Fulbright Student Grant. Slowly, through the years, I continued this work, and when in 1982 I returned to Athens on a Fulbright Research Grant, I was able to work at the National Research Folklore Center at Odos Singrou, where I gathered and translated some two thousand such songs.

In my translations of the Greek texts of these songs, I have not tried to rhyme them as they are often rhymed in Greek, nor have I been constrained to hold on to the "forms" of the songs as they are made now in the Greek, but I have heard, and I have understood, and I have felt the anguish of such grieving women, and I think that I have made true English poems from their Greek songs.

KONSTANTINOS LARDAS

MOURNING SONGS OF GREEK WOMEN

translated by Konstantinos Lardas

We must not sell the arms of our heroes,
but let them be attendant to the liturgies of death,
and hang them high in cobwebbed towers
that rust might eat the arms, as earth eats up the dead.

3-639

It's proper that the earth rejoice,
that she be filled with pride,
it's proper that we plant her with
bright shoots of pearl
and rake her with gold rakes, —

for she has eaten of our eagles,
our virgins and their jewels,
and she has eaten of the babes of mothers,
our brothers and our sisters,
and eats the much loved husband
and the wife,
the child, as, ah, it sucks its
mother's teat.

2-175

Translators note: Of the two numbers at the end of each song, the first refers to the book from which the Greek text was taken and the second (after the hyphen) refers to the *page* number, except for book No. 2 where it refers to the *poem* number.

The book references are to:

2. Nikos Politis, Τραγούδια του Ἑλληνικοῦ Λαοῦ [Tragoudia tou Ellinikou Laou], 1966.
3. M. Peranthis, Ποιητικὴ Ἀνθολογία [Poitiki Anthologia], 1453-1900, Vol. 3, 1954.
4. M. Avgeris, Νέοι Χρόνοι [Neoi Chronoi], Vol. 2, 1959.

I, for your sake, had set
three loyal garrisons to guard.

I set the sun to watch the mountains,
the eagle, to the fields,
the coolest wind,
to hover to the ships.

But quick, the sun is setting,
the eagle swoops to sleep,
the sails suck up the wind, —

and Charon seizes on this moment
and takes you off with him.

2-181

I had an apple tree beside my door,
another in my garden.
My home was covered with red ribbons.
I had a golden cypress tree,
and, ah, I leaned against that tree.
And yes, a silver oil lamp hung against my walls.

Now, now, my apple tree has withered,
the other tree is fallen now, uprooted, to the ground.
My brilliant ribbons have turned black.
The cypress tree, my golden one, is broken,
my holy light is stopped.

And now, I have no light, — no light to light my home.

2-187

A widow's lost upon a mountain,
and no one's there to help her,
and so she cries aloud, —

Where are you, husband, lord?
If you're ahead of me,
leap from your ambush there,
if you're behind me, speak,
if you are waiting for me
by the river's edge,
give me your hands, your hands.

I'm miserable, I'm weak, —
I cannot cross alone.

2-191

Sun, ah, how quickly do you, to your setting, go, —
to leave your home, to leap elsewhere to shine.

2-194

Go too, my child, with all the other children, —
and gather there, in paradise, the flowers of her fields.

2-201

Hard hearts,
I dare you not to break.
This mourning song's
not from the mouths
of widows or of wives,
but I have heard it
from Charon's mother's lips.

Mothers, hide your children,
and guard your brothers well,
and hide your husbands, wives.

My son's a hunter, a corsair.
All night he stalks his prey
and in the evening hours,
he pounces on them, hard.

Wherever he finds three,
he takes two,
wherever he finds two,
the one,
wherever he finds one, —
that one is vanished,
wholly, from the earth.

But here he comes,
comes marching,
mounted, and across
the plains,
trailing his naked swords,
his double-edged stiletos.

Stiletos for their hearts.
The swift swords for their heads.

Three brave youths said they had no fear of Charon,
and quick, a little bird sent word of this to him, —

and he comes storming down the mountain on his horse.
His eyes flash lightning bolts,
his face is blazing fire,
his shoulders are twin mountains,
his head, a mighty fort.

And he rides swiftly to the boulder where they sit, —

Great joy! Eat well, my heroes.

Great joy to you, Sir Charon. Sit here and share with us.
Here's rabbits' entrails, partridge breasts,
and here's this years-old wine that only brave men drink.

I've not come here to eat with you, to drink.
I've come to meet the brave one who has no fear of me.

And no one spoke, and no one answered him.
But Yanni rose and spoke, —

Come, Charon, let's wrestle on our marble threshing floors.

The young man leaps forty paces, and Charon, forty-five,
and Charon grabs him by the hair and flings him on his horse.

Ah, leave me, Charon, don't take me by the hair,
but take me by the hand, release me on the highest peaks,
and if I cannot fly as falcons fly away,
take me back down with you into your tent, —
and there, cut off my head.

Fool! Should you see my tent, you would go mad with fear.

Birds fooled me, birds of spring.
They told me Charon would not take me.

And I began, and built my house of marble:
gold doors and silver windows
and balconies of pearl, —
and, for a moment, stopped to breathe.

And now I see him, mounted, come.
Ah, he is black, — black horse,
and black his saber, too.

He pulls the young men by the hair,
the old men, by their beards,
ah, and the littlest ones, —
he leads them by the hand.

While he was digging up his fields,
with his fine plow of walnut wood,
his pearl-encrusted reins,
his oxen sweating to their yoke,
his body
glistening like a golden bough, —

Charon laid eyes on him and wanted him,
and he has come to take him.

Whoever cries for such a youth will need
new eyes when he is done with weeping,
will need a heart of stone,
a lake from which to draw his tears.

Whoever cries for him will need
the reigning weeds for hair,
for in his anguish he must tear
his hair from their roots.

All morning he must cry
for his lost youth,
and in the evening, for his perfect body.
From morning into evening,
he must cry for his departure,

and then, and for the whole long night, —
oh, he must cry for all his household too.

But tell me, child, when will you come again, —
that I might light the many candles at the door,
great candles in the courtyard,
the light that lights the center of our home.

4-234

But tell me, tell me, ah, my eyes, how Charon welcomed you.

Upon my knees I hold him, he presses to my breast,
and if for food he hungers, he eats upon my flesh, —
and if he thirsts for water, from my two eyes he drinks.

4-236

Rise up, sweet mistress, ah, rise up,
that we might go from here, —
up to the high, high mountain,
to its highest peak,
that I might build a marble fortress
for you there
where you can safely sleep.

And should dread Charon come to find you,
I'll stand before him. I'll stand,
and I will hold his horse for him,
and I will kiss his hands.

Charon, listen to my pleas,
and let me buy you off, —
let mothers come to you with gold,
and sisters with their silver,
and let the widows come,
come bearing all their jewels.

What are you saying, wretch?
I'm not some warrior chieftain,
I'm not some tax collector, —
they call me Charon,
they call me "Closer of the Home."

Wherever I find three, I take the two,
Wherever I find two, I take the one,
and where I find but one alone,
I shut and bolt his door, —
and strangers take his keys,
and strangers take his all.

What's happened to the heroes of our world, Oh Lord,
that we no longer see them at our weddings, at our feasts?

They're building their iron fortress
that Charon might not find them.
They've built it, oh, they've built it well,
they've set their cannons and their banners on the ramparts,
and now, they've gone inside.

And Charon, mounted on his horse, rides down upon them.
He's black, his horse is black, and he is dressed in black.
And Charon greets them from afar and from up close, —

Great joy to you, my heroes.

Great joy to you, they answer.
Where have you come from, Charon, where are you going now?

The Lord has sent me down to take your souls with me.

We'll not give up our souls, for we are warriors.
We've built a mighty fortress, and we are mighty too.

And even as they spoke with him,
while all their words resounded in the air,
a darkness hovered over them, then fell on them,
and then enveloped them,

and then, they closed their eyes, —
and, oh, they could no longer see, to see.

I never thought to praise the stone,
but for your sake I'll praise her, —

Silver stone, golden stone,
don't eat his red, red lips,
his eyes,
don't eat his tongue,
his swallow-singing tongue,
that had been, once,
the music-master to the birds, —
that taught them how to sing.

4-238

Where do you go to hide, my amulet, my ribbon,
that all the wretched spiders
might weave their nets on you, —
where do you go, my sweet Venetian cup,
to toss down all your flowers?

I go into Black Earth, oh, to the cobwebbed tomb, —
who eats the young men and is filled with joy,
who eats the young girls, too,
and swells, as if he were a peacock.

4-238

I beg you, Charon, oh, I kiss your hands, —

Open the gates of Paradise
and let our youths see spring again and summer,
and let our babies smell the flowers of May.

But, oh,
however he might try, however he might force them,
the locks are rusted now, wild weeds block up the gates.

4-238

Charon announced that he would build a garden,
that he, whoever built it for him, would be free, —

The young girls ran to him with lemon trees,
the young men with tall cypresses,
the babies with their roses,
and there they labored long and built it for him, —

and they were never freed.

Rise up, my hero,
put on your rich, red vest,
for they have brought the coffin
that will carry you.

There where you go, my hero,
let meadows rise before you,
let little pots of basil
grope round your horse's legs, —

let stretch before your eyes,
a little space, and goodly,
where you'll sleep, alone.

4-243

Now comes the evil hour, the hour of greatest pain.
They've brought the wooden horse for you to mount it, —
unreined, unsaddled and unshod.

Go tell the girl that she must now prepare it.
Tell her that she must stretch its golden reins,
that she must set the silver saddle on its back,
tell her that she must bring the silver shoes, —
and nail them to its feet.

4-243

The snake that eats the dead,
upon his pillow's coiled, two-headed, —

and, ah, the dead man cries, —

Snake, do not eat my hands,
I want them yet for greetings,
snake, do not eat my legs,
I need to walk again,
snake, do not eat my eyes,
I want to see my friends,
snake, do not eat my mouth,
I need to speak again.

4-244

CONSTANTINOS LARDAS was born in Steubenville, Ohio in 1927. He studied English and Creative Writing at the University of Pittsburgh (B.A. 1950) and English and Comparative Literature at Columbia (M.A. 1951) and the University of Michigan (Ph.D. 1966). He taught English at City College of New York starting as Assistant Professor in 1966 and retiring as Professor Emeritus in 1992. He has published many poems, short stories and translations and was the recipient of several poetry and fiction awards, including a Pulitzer nomination. His book *Mourning Songs of Greek Women*, excerpts of which appear in this issue, was published by Garland Publishers, New York, in 1992.

SILENCE

BY ANGELOS TERZAKIS

Translated by Nick Machalias

Sometimes I get tempted to write the story of my life. This happens at unexpected times, overwhelming me. I recall an evening, for instance: it was the hour when the lights were being switched on, while in the sky the memory of the sun was fading. It was in a lonely neighborhood, and I was looking out of the window. The sky turned yellow, then green, its color deepening; the infrequent noises assumed a greater significance. There was a child crying in the neighborhood, and the smell of warm food wafted through the cracks in the window. The desire to confess grew stronger, then it was forgotten. Sometimes it again came at moments when I was feverish. I think a life, in order to be recorded, must be very significant or perhaps rather insignificant. I am searching to find a basis on which to justify my own life, but I cannot find it. I think life is not based on self-confidence, but on its subconscious spirit.

However, let me come back to my own self, since I am devoting this manuscript to it. I have always found it difficult to like myself. Everytime I focus on myself, another face, imposing, comes noiselessly alongside, and obliterates me with its presence. Perhaps I have always lived like this. In the various stages of my life someone else was the protagonist and I only lived for him and through him. I acted as the bodyguard for a third party, perhaps a friend or a woman, one in authority or a companion.

Now my friend casts his shadow alongside me, from the world which is situated beyond the sun, the land with the black calm waters. I will devote my manuscript to him.

The sky has two colors. That is how I see it. One is blue, the other red.

I was a sickly child. My recollections of myself and other

people are shrouded in a hazy light, coming from invisible fireplaces. It is no longer possible to distinguish my life in the blue world from that in the red. I have always had two lives like this, although they have not been completely separate. What began in one, ended in the other. Opening my eyes, when I was healthy, I would see the blue sky above me, and when I shut them again during times of fever I would see a red sky.

My friend also had a red smile.

He was of medium height. In fact, he used to stoop, in a way which sometimes gave the impression that he was trying to hide himself, to obliterate his noiseless presence, and at other times that he was rushing forward with the stubbornness of an animal. When he looked at you, he would smile very politely, except that this genuinely childlike smile did a great injustice to his face. His gums came down very low, and were exposed by his upper lip when it stretched in a smile that was red, moist and shiny.

He lived in a big mansion in the small city which still awaits us by the sea. He was a guest at the house since he was a nephew, and because his own family was scattered: his father had gone by boat to the Far East, his mother lived in the countryside, abandoned and betrayed.

I used to enter the house through the huge tiled entrance which was dimly lit from the background by a high skylight with stained glass panes. Here your footsteps echoed just as they do in churches. A musty, paint smell made the air feel damp, as if the colors—deep red and dark green—on the ancient walls had never dried. As you went up the tall spiralling staircase, huge pitchers, which had been drawn up from the bottom of the sea, protruded on your left and right out of arched recesses, like mummies. The recesses were painted in a veined green, like the reflection of surface ripples at the bottom of the water. Up above, the home was silent. My friend's aunt had not left the house for some twenty years.

You could hear her in the adjoining closed room, sadly singing impromptu songs which she herself had composed. A chronic, severe case of eczema had disfigured her completely. The older people used to say she was very beautiful as a young

girl. She now dragged herself around with walking sticks and composed poems which she quietly recited, about her grief and the world she had lost.

Down on the ground floor was the shop. At one time it must have sold fabrics, but now nobody crossed the threshold any more. Every Saturday, which was market day, only five or six villagers would come. My friend's uncle used to buy them ouzos and coffees, because he wanted their vote at the elections. In all he would get ten to fifteen votes, no more. For the rest of the time he used to pace back and forth in the shop, with his black morning coat and gold pince-nez which shook as if threatening to fall off his nose. Usually he would pace up and down with his eyes closed. At midday he went upstairs to his home, closed the door of the main bedroom behind him and everything became quiet. Until, from within, the wife's moaning could be heard. It was the choking, fluttering writhing of an animal being slaughtered. The old servant, hurriedly closing my friend's door so we could not hear, would say: "He's giving her therapeutic treatment." However, neither of us believed this explanation.

Outside, the city was cheerful. The days passed calmly, rose-colored in spring, golden in summer, grey in winter. When I close my eyes, I can recall the awakening of the small square: the clock, high up, slowly ringing out the hours; the big bell tolling vespers. Little cities in their entirety are like a family hearth, our paternal home.

Down below on the quay, the fishermen sat cross-legged on the pavement, mending their nets. The early morning sea was calm, it gave off a sweet breath, a pure fragrance. At other times big boats would come, caiques from distant places. Up front, on the prow, they had carved figures, monsters with hairy heads. The sailors, wearing dark blue caps with red tassels, would jump nimbly onto the pier and tie up the cables to short thick stone poles. In the evening they used to sing songs only they knew, which sounded like lullabies.

On the left was the breakwater. It was like a long tongue of clean white pebbles and stones, spreading out and leading

gracefully to an enormous shell made of huge wet rocks. We would go and stand there, keeping our balance on the sharp pointed corners. Beneath us, the crabs would scuttle inside the crevices. The water ate away at the rock and gave off a sickly, rotting smell.

One day, I received a note at home. My friend had written: "I want to see you this afternoon. There's something I want to tell you."

I was surprised. It was already October and it used to get dark early. Nevertheless I went, and my friend and I left the house. I remember a warm unsettled wind was blowing and the lanes were deserted. My friend was walking quickly, bent over, and I was following.

I wanted to ask him what he had to tell me, but for some inexplicable reason I hesitated. At this time the quay was already deserted; the lovely happy summer crowds had dispersed and there were only a few boatmen making adjustments to their boats, which the wind was buffeting against the pier. We headed beyond, towards the breakwater, went over the pebbles, and climbed onto the rocks.

There, at the edge, he stopped.

It must have been the time when the steamship used to come. From the other side, on the quay, the muffled voices of the boatmen reached us. My friend, lying on his stomach, was looking at the water, and I kept meaning to ask him, but kept putting it off, in case he spoke first.

At one point the wind subsided, and there was a brief silence. Then, from the left, behind the headland, the boat came into sight.

It was chugging quietly. Its lights were bobbing up and down like a snake, dancing playfully on the waves, and its fumes gave off the smell of coal. It drew near, and passed right in front of us.

The voices from the quay grew louder. I bent down towards my friend, impatient to learn what he had to tell me, but he, as if to forestall my query stretched out his arm and pointed out the passing boat to me.

I looked too. On the left, the entrance to the harbor appeared even bluer in the dark night. The lighthouse was flashing on and off like an eye signalling in code. There was not a breath of air. I watched without understanding.

It happened later that I, guided by my friend's restless hand, would stop frequently at the very edge of an enormous uncertainty. He had the power to awaken the thirst for inquiry, and in this he seemed to be assisted by the forces of creation. Afterwards he would leave you there, at the very edge of the precipice, so that you could find a solution by yourself. And whatever he showed you, was just like that time at the harbor, an image, something without words, a fleeting moment.

Later, I too learned to pause in front of the compositions suggested by certain moments. I realized that on many occasions the elements of a solution to a higher uncertainty would begin to come together before your very eyes. However, I have never been able to pin those elements down. I have always stood irresolute on the edge of truth, just as on that distant night on the edge of the dark harbor.

From life's episodes we see only the outline, and that is why we destroy every instance of curiosity we possess in order to ratify a matter, instead of appreciating the moment. From time to time I used to wonder if my friend had any idea of his family background. I had sometimes heard him speak about his family, but only incidentally, and he had a unique way of referring to them. He did not say "my mother" or "my father." He referred to the former as "the unfortunate woman" and the latter as "the other."

I had the opportunity to learn that he knew everything the day the news reached our little city that his mother had become mentally unbalanced.

When her husband had left, abandoning her and the boy, the relatives had gathered to decide on a course of action. It was suggested that the boy should live in the city, and his mother in the country. Her nerves had been greatly affected, and that was why the child should not live with her. She was confined to her paternal home, a lonely little house, which was two hours

by road from the city. She only saw her boy on special occasions. She waited for him the rest of the year.

That day, as I was passing the shop, I saw the uncle inside, pacing back and forth as usual, with his eyes closed. I knocked on the door of the house and for the first time the old servant came down to open it for me. Her eyes looked as if she had been crying. "Come into the garden," she gestured.

The garden was a small yard with some greenery at the rear of the house. I went out there hesitantly, tip-toeing, and paused to look. The boy, my friend, was sitting on a chair in front of the wall. He was staring at his shadow, cast opposite him by the sun.

He nodded his head to show he had heard me, then he motioned for me to sit beside him. We never looked each other in the eye. I went and sat on the ground, on the mildewed grass. He kept on watching his shadow. He said quietly:

"The worst part about always thinking about something, is that you can't really blame anyone. Everyone is in the right."

Then he added, turning his head towards me:

". . . You see, one way or another, you have to leave, whether it's like 'the other,' or like 'the unfortunate woman.' The only difference is the way you do it."

My friend left like "the other." These are the last words I can remember him saying to me. We went our separate ways. I led an ordinary hard-working life which was subject to the law of the city. He chose a free life, in the salty air of the open sea. Wearing the uniform of the merchant navy he sailed on a cargo ship bound for South America.

There followed years which were empty, with nothing to distinguish one from the other. Sometimes I used to receive a letter or card from my friend. "We're in Argentina. I may or may not return in winter. We're always taking on cargo for some new destination. I'll have lots to tell you." The same standard phrases with a few variations.

I met him by chance one day in a main street. He was not easily recognizable, being taller, slim and tanned. Upon

reaching adulthood his childish face had acquired a look of indifferent perseverance rather than cool determination.

We recognized each other and yet we hesitated. There was still that old childhood fear of making eye contact; it was as though there were some danger in looking at one another, as though we would learn something which would change life forever.

However, my friend smiled and stretched out his hand to me. It was the same kind of smile that did him an injustice, except that his lips were lined and chapped. They say that people who stay for a long time in some places in the Far East, or go there frequently, suffer from incurable fevers.

He went first into a club and I followed him. We sat there feeling awkward. He started telling me something about the Pacific Islands where the women dress in flowers, and about some South American fire-flies which can kill you if you touch them. Then we both fell silent, and very quickly tried to look into each other's eyes. My friend immediately withdrew his gaze.

Then I leaned forward with a throbbing which rose up to my throat, feeling that the moment had arrived.

I waited. He leaned forward too, looked at the floor, and bit his fever-chapped lips. At that moment, a little brown hand placed a yellow rose between us on the table. A little girl waited next to it. My friend raised his head, put his hand in his pocket, and gave her a coin. I realized that the moment had passed.

Other years followed, and I received more letters from my friend, but this time they were spaced further apart. In his last letter, he wrote: "This time I'm returning for good. I think I'm getting old. We'll be able to see one another every day and we'll talk about everything."

They say that ambition is a noble thing, but I came to know something even more noble: disdain for every ambition.

My friend was never ambitious and perhaps this was his main characteristic. He did not even possess the quite common desire to see his name in print one day.

Nevertheless this did happen a few years ago when I read

his name in a list of people lost at sea. The shipwreck had taken place off the coast of the Indian Ocean.

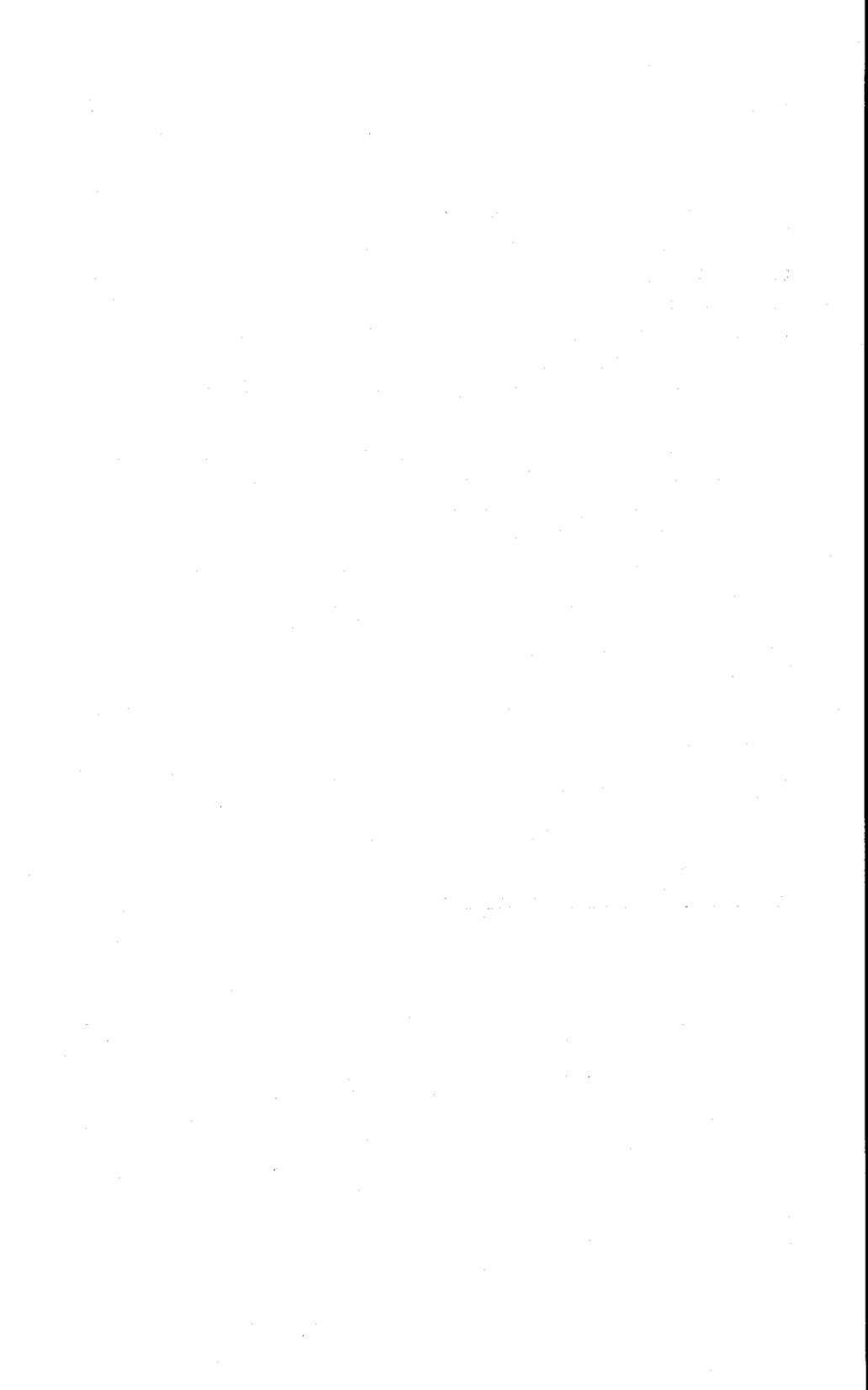
My friend has remained down there forever and I get sick frequently. The sky changes color, it turns red. I lie on my back and shut my eyes. When I open them, I see shadows and lights which rise and set on a low sky of whitewash above me. Many times I saw the reflection of the outside street on the ceiling, I heard his cries which seemed all the more significant for coming to me in a room sealed by anguish.

Nightfall comes. The sky turns rosy, then gold, then red. The breath of the sick hangs heavy. It is as though someone has cast nets from the highest point in the sky and is now pulling them up. It is the gathering of the souls.

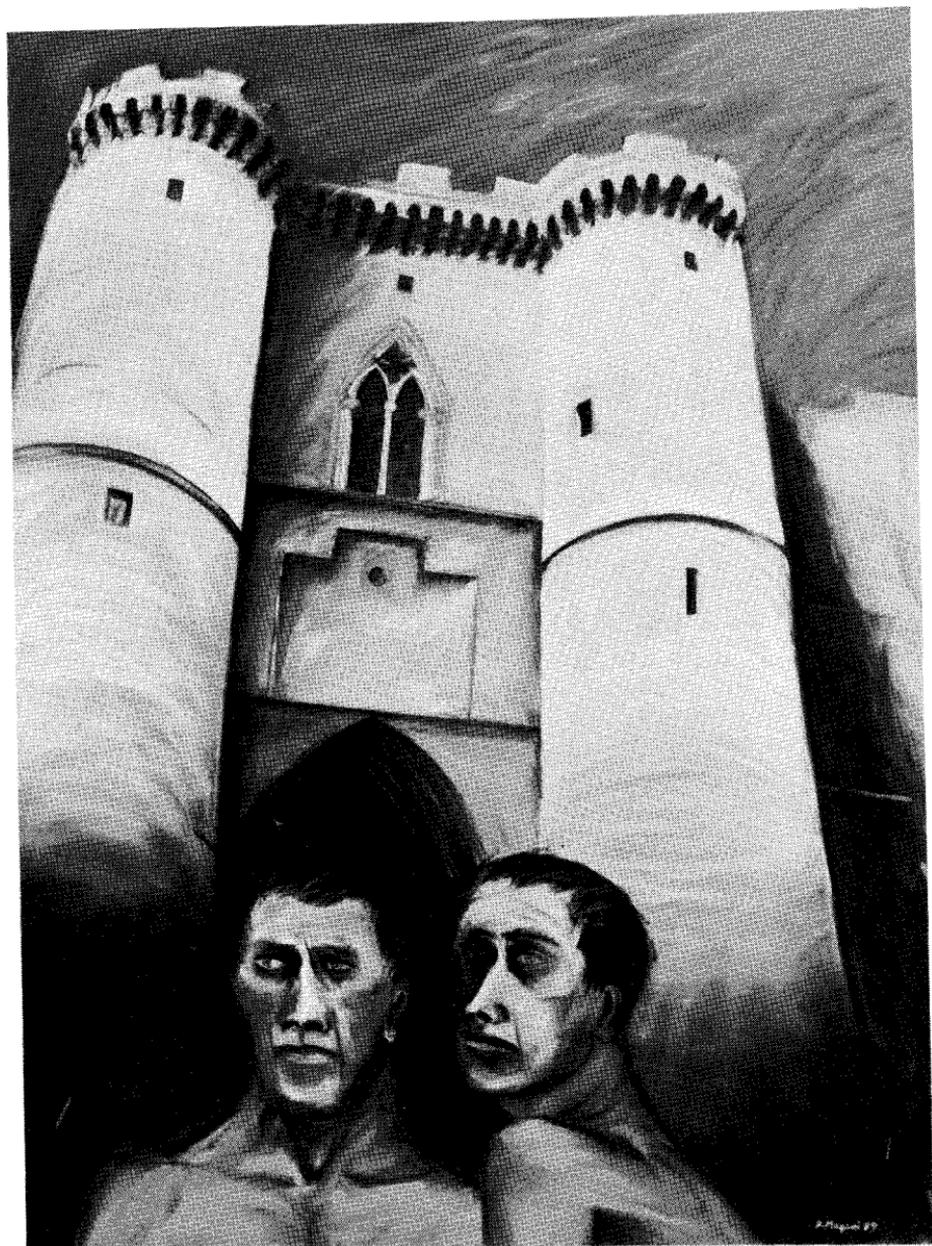
Then, at that part of the sky I can see from my bed, familiar and loved faces pass by in succession. A sea full of burning reflection withdraws with a deep breath, exposing the sandy shore of our beach. The pebbles are grinding quietly, and the waves are breaking around the cliffs.

And there, hanging on with one hand to a stone wall, I see my friend who is in water up to his chest and is smiling at me naively. He is vaguely indicating for me to approach him. I look at his mouth, as my breath grows heavier. Congealed on the red smile is the unbreakable seal of Silence.

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P A I N T I N G S
BY
D E S P O M A G O N I



THE CASTLE, oil on canvas, 68"x50, 1889



MOVE #4, oil on canvas, 67"x56", 1990



MOVE #5, oil on canvas, 67"x56", 1990



THE KING, oil on canvas, 67"x45", 1992



THE QUEEN, oil on canvas, 67"x45", 1992



THE BISHOP, oil on canvas, 67"x45", 1992



PAWN #7, oil on canvas, 17"x17", 1992



MOVE #10, oil on canvas, 67"x56", 1991

Photo credits: PAT WALLACE

IMAGES OF POWER AND STRUGGLE: A COLLOQUY OF IDEAS IN MAGONI'S *THE QUEEN'S MOVES IN A GAME OF CHESS*

BY THALIA VRACHOPOULOS

"This game I observed, is an image of the works and deeds of men. If we lose a pawn, it seems a small matter; but the loss often brings that of the whole game." The queen replied, "I understand you."

French Ambassador de Foix to
Queen Elizabeth¹

In "The Act of Recognition" Bronowski suggests that a work of art is the visual equivalent of a doorway opening onto a stage which displays the human condition.² He avers that this equivalency is created by the complete vocabulary of an individual artist. That is, both the style and imagery of an individual artist fuse and confront the viewer with a general statement about the human predicament. Although an artist may present a generalized viewpoint, or even a specific reading, each viewer, asserts Bronowski, extracts and synthesizes those aspects of a given work which "speak to his inner language."³ Thus, each viewer is able to recreate a work of art from a personalized perspective. Based on this approach, a colloquy between artist and spectator as well as multiple opinions about a work of art are exchanged. In essence, the work of art becomes an instrument for disseminating information, as well as eliciting replies and counterarguments about the human condition.

¹Hibbert, Christopher. *The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. Inc.: New York, 1991, p. 156.

²Bronowski, J. "The Act of Recognition" in *The Visionary Eye*. MIT Press: Cambridge, 1978, pp. 114-132. This essay originally appeared as part of the Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, entitled "Art as a Mode of Knowledge."

³*Ibid.*, p. 126.

Despo Magoni's oeuvre *The Queen's Moves in a Game of Chess*, of 1989-1992, embodies the idea of art as a mode of knowledge or a site of information and discussion. The imagery in this series examines concepts of individual choice, struggle and empowerment as opposed to established institutions of power. While images of power and the rule have been the topic of several studies,⁴ in this series, imagery and treatment combine to speak of conflicted values in individuals marginalized by dominant power structures. The imagery can be read in both general and specific terms, and has historical as well as current significance. In keeping with the idea that a viewer derives his or her own interpretation from a work of art, this discussion will explore Magoni's chess series from the viewpoint of the writer.

The Queen's Moves in a Game of Chess, consists of twenty three oil paintings, eight of which are medallions of the pawns. Major motifs include a chess board and players, such as the bishop, as well as members of the Tudor dynasty, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. The series is executed in an expressionistic style marked by energetic brushwork, dramatic action and a rich application of paint.

The essential qualities of the series are manifested in the power and movement of the figures as well as the dramatic brushwork of the style. The correlation between an artist's ideas and formal choices has been discussed by Nochlin in connection with Seurat's *La Grande Jatte*.⁵ According to Nochlin the pointillist technique can be linked with Seurat's anti-utopian sentiment. By employing the *pointille*, Seurat "undermined, if not nullified a dominant language [the Western tradition of representation], because his formal choice which was resolutely anti-expressive, rejected the notion of a hidden inner meaning to be externalized by the artist."⁶ Similarly, Magoni's painterly technique and expressive line can be tied with her attitudes about the inequities of power, because the struggle of the queen can be understood and read as an expression of the artist's inner feelings exter-

⁴See *Art Journal*, Summer 1989, Volume 8, Number 2. This issue was entitled "Images of Rule: Issues of Interpretation."

⁵Nochlin, B. *The Politics of Vision: Essays on 19th Century Art and Society*. Harper and Row: New York, 1989.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 173.

nalized. The artist's struggle for recognition is paralleled in the queen's moves toward control of the throne. Nochlin further suggests that Seurat's anti-expressive style, that is, its cool formality, defies the idea of the artist's subjectivity. The obverse is true of Magoni's style. Historically expressionist modes of painting, as seen in Van Gogh, have been understood as externalizations of an artist's inner feelings, and are therefore highly subjective.

By using the idea of a chess game as a central motif, Magoni refers not only to the hypothetical moves on a chess board, but also to the condition of reality, the day-to-day affairs of the world.⁷ Magoni's figures are distinctly human and she imbues them with a sense of pathos and involvement in mankind's struggle. Although their identities are unknown, these figures can often be said to represent members of society who are not fully integrated into the mainstream for reasons of health, sexual preference, age, ideology, race, class or gender. The dual reference to reality and the drama within the game of chess is one of the most significant aspects of the series, because it allows the viewer to observe the work on more than one level.

Magoni's use of pawns in the first work of the series, *The Castle*, speaks of her commitment to contemporary social issues and is enhanced by her formal choices. The chromatic arrangement is dominated by the juxtaposition of light and dark, or the struggle of opponents. Remember that the pawns are the least valuable players in chess and are surrendered without significant thought or struggle. In *The Castle*, the pawns are male figures. Together, pawn and male, might signify hostility toward homosexuals. This combination could also refer to the sense of alienation that such hostility engenders. However, the male figures in *The Castle* need not just represent gay men, but anyone who feels outside of the dominant group, standing outside of those who are within the circle of power.

The game of chess, suggestive of competing values and desires, is an appropriate backdrop for the unfolding of a drama about a power struggle. The idea of struggle is clearly manifested

⁷This strategy was also employed by Giacometti. See Krauss, R. *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. MIT: Cambridge, 1977.

in the chess board imagery with its striking contrast of black and white. It is also evident in the treatment of the queen. In *Move 4*, for example, the queen is engaged in a battle with a pawn, while the bishop observes with a detached countenance. This presentation suggests that a female monarch is grappling to overcome the obstacles of gender, as she ascends towards a majestic position and subsequently becomes the holder of absolute power.⁸

In *Move 5*, Magoni presents the queen being pursued across the chessboard. The scene is characterized by action and emotion as the queen attempts to escape an assailant. The queen's movement suggests that she must make an intense effort to prevail over impediments blocking her goal of achieving her full status.

To make the point clearer, compare *Move 5* with Tiepolo's *Queen Zenobia Addressing Her Soldiers*. In the latter, the queen is frozen and staid amidst the accompanying figures of the soldiers. The immobility of Tiepolo's queen in the presence of the military suggests that the queen's place is secure in the face of raw physical power. Magoni, on the other hand, explicitly depicts a monarch attempting to free herself and who is vulnerable. This may be read as the queen's attempt to escape the values and perceptions of an ensconced power hierarchy.

It has also been suggested that Tiepolo's work acts as a piece of propaganda, setting forth the idea of historical greatness.⁹ This type of propagandistic and unilateral message was also the hallmark of Nazi art, promoting the absolute authority of the state.¹⁰ The common element between Tiepolo's work and Nazi art is its monumental and remote appearance, stressing singularity and uniformity in its message. On the other hand, Magoni's series is immediate and vital, presenting neither an exclusive idea nor a fixed reading.

While the struggling actress in the drama is always a female monarch, she can represent anyone who is trying to gain control in the face of strong resentment or adversity. The image

⁸Elliot, S. "Casting A Rival into the Shade" in *Art Journal*. Summer 1989. Volume 8. Number 2.

⁹Bronowski, J. "Plays of Values in A Work of Art" in *The Visionary Eye*, p. 158.

¹⁰See Adam, Peter. *The Art of the Third Reich*. New York, 1992.

brings to mind for example the historic queen, Elizabeth I, who took title to the throne as the illegitimate child of Henry VIII. Because of her bastard status, this queen's early reign was plagued by a constant state of struggle for legitimacy, power and cooperation from various arms of the government. Within this historic context, Magoni's queen might also represent the Regent Sophia, who struggled to be the leader of Russia while facing adversity from her brothers Peter and Ivan. Similarly, Magoni's queen can represent anyone striving to overcome resistance and perceived social differences.

Ideas of social difference are matters of perception, as recent studies have shown.¹¹ They are determined by arbitrary moral standards and shaped by arbitrary norms. When the normative patterning of a society, as reinforced by its more powerful members, differentiates its participants in terms of status, privileging certain groups at the expense of others, one effect is exclusion. Honour and Kolodny have written about the sense of alienation and disenfranchisement that can result from social differences hinging on race and gender. Magoni addresses the issue of gender by choosing the queen, rather than the king, as the focal point of the series. By doing so, the artist follows the development and struggle of the person who is struggling against traditional norms, wherein males are given or ascend to the positions of power.

Throughout the series, there is an undeniable emphasis on stage and theater—as if a royal drama were being performed for an audience. In *Move 4*, for example, the figures, as if actors, are bathed in bright light. During the Tudor monarchy, what has been called “the theater of power,”¹² bolstered the court's status and prestige. That is, the monarchs engaged in an extensive showing of royal opulence in order to persuade the public of their importance.

¹¹ See Honour, H. *The Image of the Black in Western Art*. Cambridge, MA, 1989 and Kolodny, A. “Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism.” *Feminist Studies*, 1980.

¹²Cannadine, David. “Splendor out of Court: Royal Spectacle and Pageantry in Modern Britain, c. 1820-1977” in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual and Politics Since the Middle Ages*. Wilentz, S. editor. University of Pennsylvania Press. Philadelphia, 1985, pp. 206-43, 206.

In *The King*, a royal drama between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn is enacted, but not in order to support royal prestige. Instead, this painting seems to be about a power struggle between the sexes. Anne's inability to present Henry with a male heir resulted in her death. Yet, their daughter Elizabeth I was one of the most important rulers in English history. Through her choice of subject, Magoni touches upon the issue of gender discrimination, specifically attacking the invalid assumptions regarding women's abilities to perform in positions of power. Composition and treatment combine to set up a contrast, indicative of contest and difference, between the king and queen. Henry VIII is depicted in a prominent frontal position, while Anne Boleyn is placed above. Although the king is larger in scale, the queen is enlivened by a more spontaneous brush work. Her small, agile figure differs strikingly from the king's staid and overbearing disposition. And, the queen is decapitated. Here, the contrasting treatment of the figures shows that although the King appeared to be in a position of authority, it was ultimately Boleyn's offspring, Elizabeth I, who succeeded him to the throne. This seems to indicate the senselessness of Boleyn's death. Ironically, Elizabeth's reign was considered to be a Renaissance period in England.

In *The King*, Magoni also elucidates the conflict between the status quo and change. *The King* is the representative of the known, while the queen is the representative of the future. The struggle between the established power and the rise of a new order is the theme which Magoni examines in this work.

The Queen, in the figure of Elizabeth I, is not merely a recreation of a historical person. On the deeper level, it refers to the queen's quest for approval and royal power, and ultimately to anyone seeking empowerment. The suggestion is, that like Queen Elizabeth, they will succeed and advance, even in the face of adversity. Dickens had something to say about the Tudor queen that emphasizes this point, "where other queens had found their sex to be a matter of weakness, Elizabeth made it a source of peculiar strength and succeeded in evoking a remarkable emotional response from those around her, who felt bound to

pay her a special kind of homage.¹⁸

Both *The King* and *The Queen* may be read as works that examine structures of power. As mentioned, *The King* focuses on issues of gender discrimination, while *The Queen* instructs the viewer about overcoming formidable adversaries. When read together, *The King* and *The Queen* may allude to replacing an old regime with a new regime headed by an unconventional ruler or rulers. Within a contemporary context, these paintings could concern the shifts of power in Eastern Europe and in the United States. In Eastern Europe, the fall of the Communist regimes has fostered unanticipated attempts at democracy. In the United States, the popularity of presidential candidates, Clinton and Gore, is clearly a move against prevailing conservatism and the long-term hold of the Republican party on the government. These two paintings could also be informed by the artist's struggle to overcome tradition and present a new artistic statement.

The English Reformation involved a movement in which spiritual growth was determined by individuals rather than clerics. It concerned a personal faith which developed in response to the abuses of the clergy. From this perspective, the bishop in Magoni's painting could insinuate that clerical exploitations continue despite the Reformation. The bishop can also be seen as a conflation of the Pope, the head of the church in Rome. Here, Magoni suggests an uneasy balance of power between religious and secular life—that is, the conflict arising from the contrary values of human and divine ways. With the advent of the Reformation, the balance of power shifted from the papal to the secular state. In England, Henry VIII gained control of secular and religious power and became an absolute monarch. Eventually, this power was bestowed upon his daughter Elizabeth I. Together, *The King*, *The Queen* and *The Bishop* address complex issues of the separation of church and state and the abuse of power when two institutions of power merge under one ruler.

In connection with images of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, it is instructive to examine *The Bishop*. Symbolic of organized religion, the bishop, resplendent in robes, appears to bless the

¹⁸Dickens, A. G. *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty 1400-1800*. McGraw Hill. New York, 1997, p. 167.

masses. The deep space in the painting helps create an imposing figure in keeping with the status and power associated with high clerical office. Here, we recall that Henry VIII declared himself the head of the church in England, usurping the power of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

Wilentz described the unification of church and state that followed the Reformation, as a form of political rhetoric that "carried a multitude of contradictory meanings."¹⁴ The art of interpreting the meaning of a single rhetoric is associated with Geertz. Geertz argues that each politically significant event is representative of a system of cultural, normative and societal aspirations, customs and beliefs.¹⁵ Therefore, Magoni's choice of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I as subjects strongly suggests the artist's desire to have her work evaluated in a number of ways.

If true, what then can be said about a recent *New York Times*¹⁶ article devoted to a meeting between Vice President Quayle and Cardinal O'Connor? The article discussed a conversation between the religious and secular leader which dealt with their common view regarding abortion. An image accompanying the article showed the men chatting amicably in front of a portrait of a church official. Although the United States Constitution provides for the separation of church and state, both imagery and text belie this separation. By placing symbols of secular and religious power in close proximity, it may be seen by some as a breach of our nation's highest law, or it may be seen by others as the emergence of those in power who openly seek to promote an agenda of conservative values. Clearly, as Geertz suggests, this single rhetoric brings into focus many of our society's beliefs.

One of the predominant subgroupings of the series are medallion pieces designed as *The Pawns*. The significance of these works is that they draw the viewer into the realm of ordinary people who are not privy to the secrecy and intrigue found in power structures of their society. Through the pawns, Magoni specifically deals with individuals who are often on the periphery

¹⁴Wilentz, Sean., ed. *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual and Politics Since the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 5.

¹⁵See Geertz, Clifford. *Interpretations of Cultures*. New York, 1973.

¹⁶*New York Times*. June 16, 1992, p. 1, col. 3.

of society. Also, the artist indirectly confronts the dilemma of the public which relies on its leaders to conduct their affairs in an ethical manner, while these same leaders continue to evade public scrutiny. We have only to recall Watergate, the Iran-Contra affair or the Savings and Loan scandal to understand the scope of the issues that Magoni addresses. She examines the same issues which confront the members of society who reside and remain outside established power structures.

Simultaneously, Magoni also addresses these issues in a historical context. According to scholars,¹⁷ the reign of Elizabeth I was marked by intrigue, yet the impression given to the public was that of a wise and sympathetic queen. During her reign, there was an attempt by the Jesuits to assassinate her and reinstate the supremacy of Rome. In retaliation, Elizabeth executed Mary Stuart, a prominent Catholic sympathizer. Thus, like the paintings in the series, the medallions also allow the viewer to explore relevant contemporary issues, while simultaneously bringing to the fore some of the social issues of the past.

One of the most interesting aspects of Magoni's work about power is that it is intended to be seen in a series. Beginning with *The Castle*, the viewer gets the impression that each work is a subplot within a story. The viewer, in effect, is watching the unfolding of a "theater of power." When done in a traditional pomp and circumstance fashion, this display of the ceremony associated with the Tudor monarchy has been described as "the manner by which royal and republican prestige was enhanced."¹⁸ Consequently, Magoni has included yet another dimension in her work, emphasizing that it is capable of multitext analysis.

While this might be one way of interpreting the artist's own expression, it is clearly left to the viewer to complete or alter the understanding of the message of the work in a series format. The completion of the message by the individual viewer "consists of statement which is not the same as the artist's and yet

¹⁷See generally, Rowse, A. L. *The England of Elizabeth*. Madison. University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. Also, Hurstfield, Joel. *Elizabeth I and the Unity of England*. London, 1960.

¹⁸Cannadine, David. "Splendor Out of Court: Royal Spectacle and Pageantry in Modern Britain, c. 1820-1977," at p. 206.

which could only have come from the artist to the viewer because of the wealth of the imagery."¹⁹

In *The Queen's Moves in a Game of Chess*, Magoni creates an multidimensional discourse about power and, as such, insists upon a relationship between viewer and artist. In the series, many of the relevant issues of today's society are paralleled by historic scenarios. Thus, these paintings foster a genuine intellectual pursuit that delves into the timeless questions of existence.

Magoni's power as an artist begins with her ability to make manifest in visual language the human condition. Gombrich has noted, "the artist who wants to represent a real or imagined thing does not start by opening his eyes and looking about him but by taking colours and forms and building up the required image."²⁰ This ability is the gift of a visual artist, who in a unique and personal language creates for the viewer a work that speaks of eternal and timeless questions, in a means capable of contemporary analysis.

Magoni, who studied at the Beaux-Arts in Athens and has been a successfully exhibiting artist in the United States and Europe for over twenty years, brings to each of her canvases new notions and ideologies concerning power, development and struggle. These same issues have concerned philosophers, writers, and artists throughout history and challenge the viewer to understand and explore the vast array of information, signs and symbols of our complex contemporary society. Thus, the strength of Magoni's artistic statement clearly evinced in her formal choices, finds its counterpart in her ability to invite the viewer into the realm of knowledge. Bronowski observed in reference to art's ability to act as a mode of knowledge that "something in painting has dragged us in through a doorway and suddenly showed us the whole human personality."²¹

¹⁹Bronowski, J. "The Act of Recognition," at p. 126.

²⁰Sir Ernst Gombrich. *Art and Illusion*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 395.

²¹Bronowski, J. *The Visionary Eye*. MIT Press. Cambridge, MA, 1978, p. 122. Harper and Row: New York, 1989.

DESPO MAGONI'S DRAWINGS,
THE QUEEN'S MOVES IN A GAME OF CHESS:
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
THE ARTIST AND MARY DONAHUE

- M. DONAHUE: During the period of August 1989 to August 1992, you produced a body of drawings and paintings called *The Queen's Moves in a Game of Chess*. Tell me about the drawings. They look labored over. They are highly finished. Were they preparatory works for the paintings?
- D. MAGONI: I never do preparatory drawings. These are complete in themselves. My drawings are usually complete.
- M. DONAHUE: Yet they are clearly related to the paintings. The same naked female appears as well as similar gestures and settings.
- D. MAGONI: The drawings and paintings are linked, but I see them as variations on a theme.
- M. DONAHUE: What about your process? There are thirty drawings. Were they done before the paintings?
- D. MAGONI: No. They were done in parallel with the paintings and there is a difference between the two. Previously I have done drawings in tangent with paintings, but never as a series. This is the first time that I have done a series of drawings in connection with my paintings.
- M. DONAHUE: Where did you start? I see that the drawings are numbered.
- D. MAGONI: I began in August, 1989 with a drawing of a Woman with a crown (Figure 1). I didn't know why she wore a crown until I did the first painting in October of a castle. Then I associated the castle, crown and woman with the queen in a game of chess.
- M. DONAHUE: So, your process is to an extent spontaneous and involves a reciprocity between the drawings and paintings from which you develop meaning. But how did you arrive

at this meaning, namely, a game of chess? That is not immediately clear. For example, can you explain why you choose to depict a castle?

- D. MAGONI: I saw the picture of a castle that impressed me in the newspaper and decided to paint one myself. Then I had to make my own scenario about it. I remembered the passion I had for chess and politics when I was young. I used to say that people in power were playing chess with the fortunes of the small. Meanwhile the drawing with the crowned woman was on the floor. And I had to make a story about the two different works—the drawing and the painting. In light of the castle, I saw the crowned woman as a queen and I associated her with power. In chess, the queen is the most powerful piece of the game, but all her hard work, her moves, serve to secure the king's position. To me, the drawings and paintings are joined in a theme of conflict between the sexes for power. Incidentally, I returned to chess during this time as a way of getting in touch with my ideas.
- M. DONAHUE: But there is no antagonistic male presence in your work.
- D. MAGONI: The male power doesn't have to be seen because it is always there.
- M. DONAHUE: I understand. You are referring to a condition of women in patriarchy. Yet, how did the power play develop in your work and how is it enacted? In explanation, can you point to another association between the drawings and paintings?
- D. MAGONI: At some point I decided that I wanted the queen to keep the crown instead of maneuvering for the king. That is why I painted her as Queen Elizabeth in the triptych, *The Bishop, The King, The Queen*. Elizabeth the Great was a queen without a king. She never married because she didn't want to share her power. Her image is the final work in the painted series, with the exception of the pawns. A related image is found in the second last drawing, number 29 (Figure 2). Here the formidable queen leaps with glee in front of the throne. Intoxicated by her success, and, since no one can see her, she is behaving like a kid. In the previous draw-

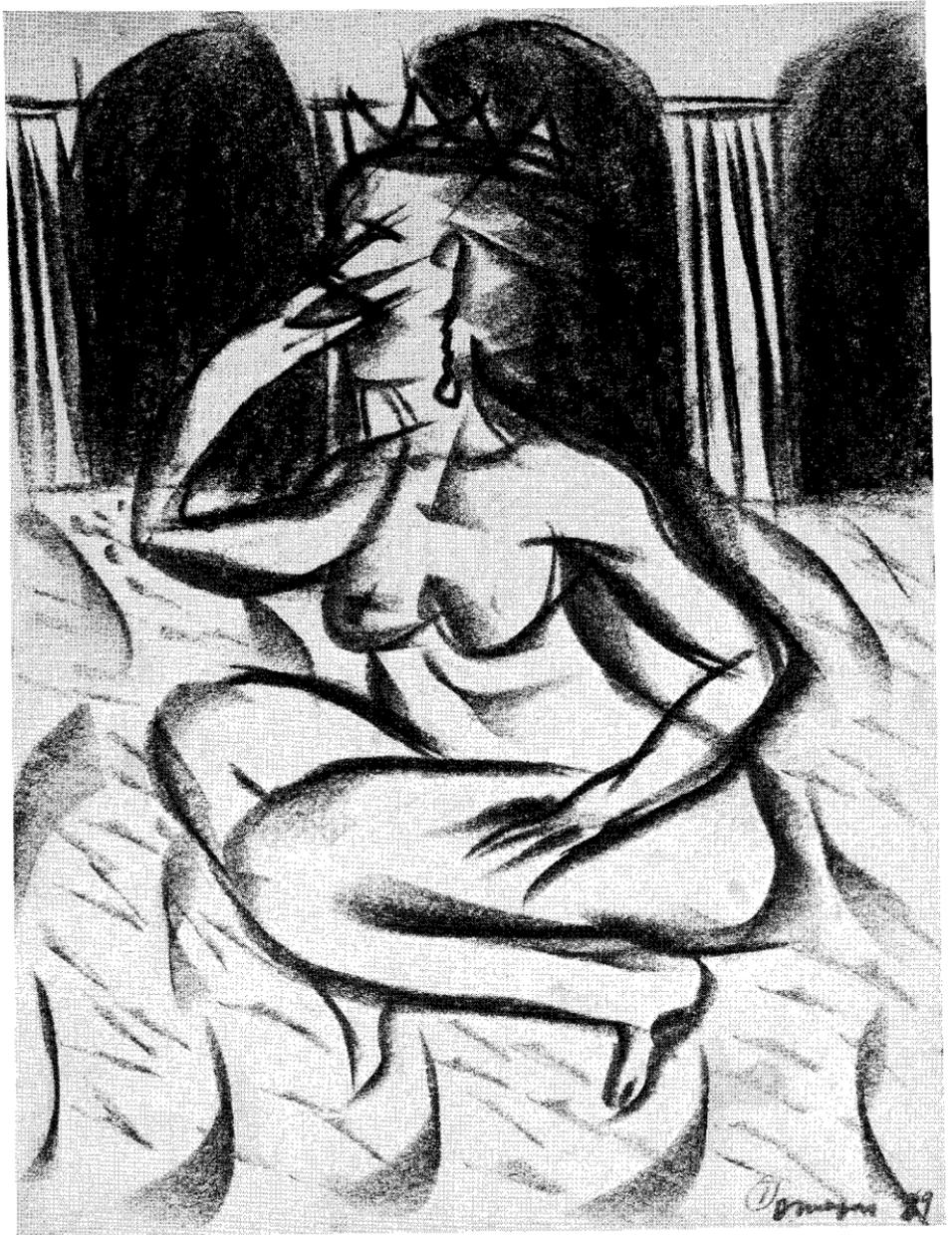


FIGURE #1, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1989

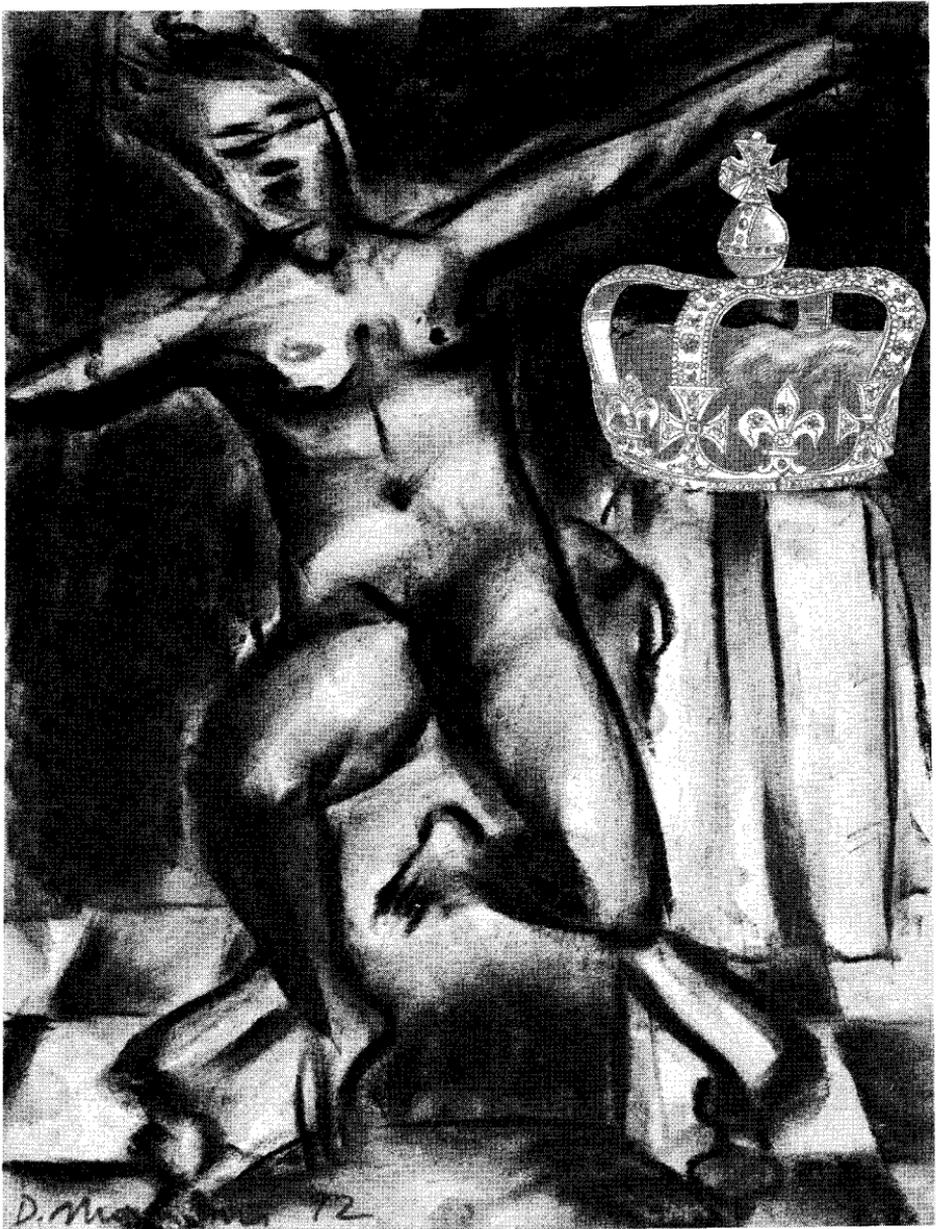


FIGURE #29, charcoal and collage on paper, 12"x9" 1992



FIGURE #28, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1992

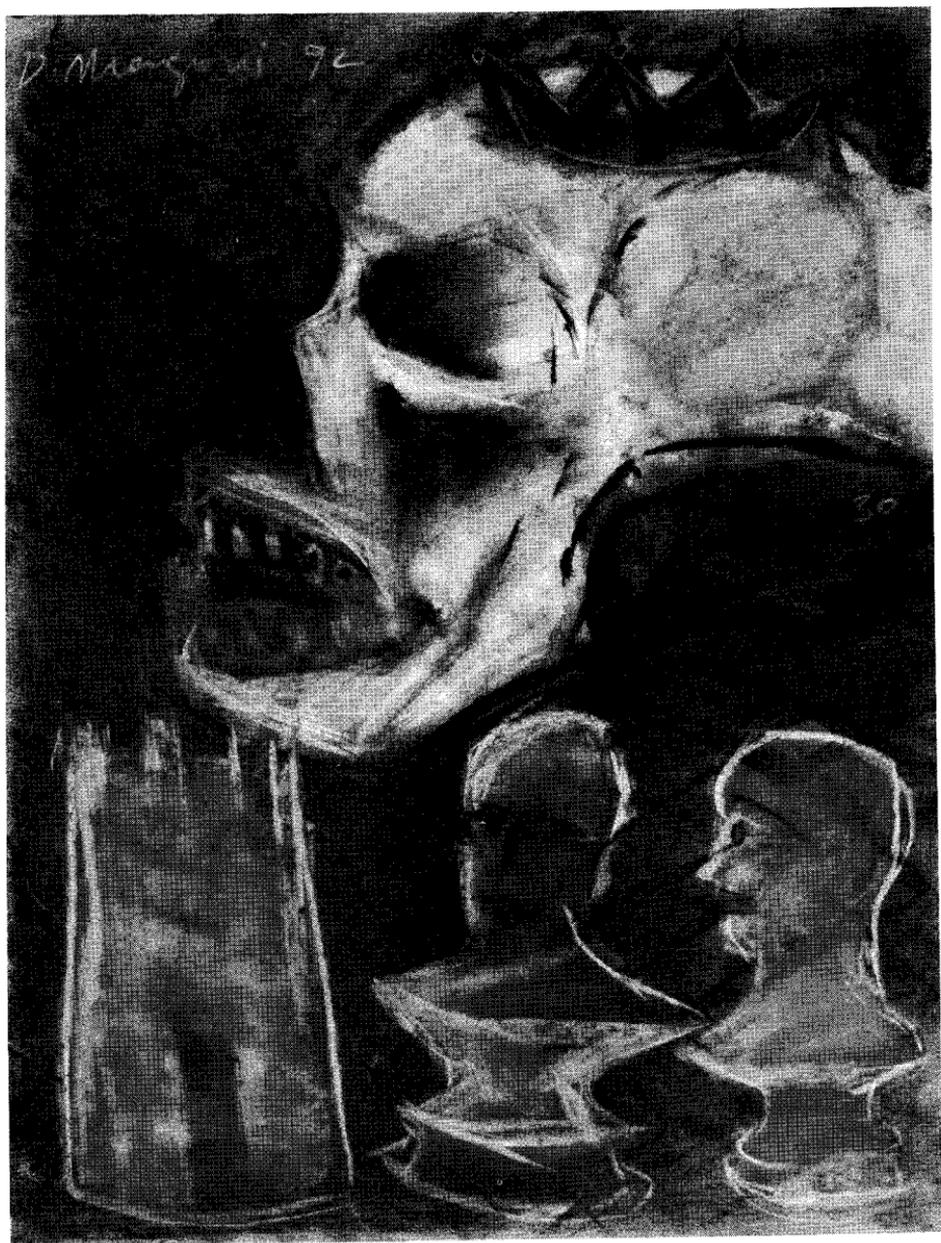


FIGURE #30, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1992



FIGURE #8, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1991



FIGURE #12, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1991



FIGURE #13, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1991



FIGURE #19, charcoal on paper, 12"x9", 1992

ing (Figure 3), the queen is all alone in the palace, contemplating her next move. These drawings were done after the paintings were completed.

- M. DONAHUE: The queen's empowerment must have been an emotional experience for you, since you said that you had never quite envisioned a female in this way. How then do you explain the final drawing of a skull wearing a crown (Figure 4)?
- D. MAGONI: That is a vanitas image, the end of power.
- M. DONAHUE: Isn't that a negative conclusion for the female?
- D. MAGONI: No. All power comes to an end.
- M. DONAHUE: It is significant that the power conflict between the sexes does not end with a dominant party, since many consider the idea of domination to be a male perspective on the workings of power. The ways in which male power is produced and maintained through visual representation have been central to the work of many women artists. An abiding image in your work is a naked female. She appears in your series on Salome, Theodora and Cleopatra as well as in the Queen series of paintings and drawings. As a feminist, the naked female body poses problems for me.
- D. MAGONI: As long as I can remember, I've drawn naked figures, alternating between the sexes. But for the most part, I have concentrated on the female. I'm not sure why. Maybe it has something to do with my education as an artist. For the six years that I studied art, nude figure drawing was a large part of the training. Why do I do more female images? Maybe it is because the majority of our models were women. There was only one male model. Yet, I don't paint a piece of flesh to be watched. My females are active, working bodies full of determination who are going to achieve something.
- M. DONAHUE: Did you consciously attempt to challenge the idea of the female body as a spectacle?
- D. MAGONI: After I did a group of nudes, I realized that my females were not like the norm. They were not done for arousal. By painting a female nude, I'm not actually

exposing a woman's body, but the agility of a woman's mind. Also, a sexual body is never expressive. By expressive I mean gesture and line, as seen in my work.

- M. DONAHUE: The mind as body is an intriguing idea when it concerns women. It works against accepted definitions and conventions of femininity. Similarly, your female nudes elude current signs of feminine beauty. In drawing number 8, for example, the woman is in a potentially erotic pose (Figure 5). She is kneeling with her buttocks thrust upward, but her breasts are sagging. Actually, your female bodies look masculine by virtue of their broad shoulders and thick waists.
- D. MAGONI: I see those bodies as strong and functionable. They are strong and healthy like athletes. Such bodies go with autonomy, power and self-reliance. Think about Madonna and female body building. I see these naked females as rewriting the tradition of the nude. This approach is very important in my work. My Salome paintings also concern a rewriting. In *The Last Dance*, St. John is decapitated, whereas Herod loses his head in *Salome's Dream*.
- M. DONAHUE: Bodybuilding and the well-maintained healthy body involve muscularity. Your female nudes don't look as if they have undergone any physical training or health program. Instead they look rather lumpy. They lack muscular definition and are not taut and toned. Although theoretically sound, redefining the nude in art—male or female—is problematic. Let's return to your work with nude figures in general. Did you ever abandon this format?
- D. MAGONI: Yes. After settling in New York in 1969, I began to do colorfield and later biomorphic paintings. It was my way of fitting in, of being mainstream. I didn't want to feel alienated and marginalized. But my heart was not in it. In the early seventies I came to realize that art means freedom, and, perhaps, real freedom can be found only in the margins. I went back to the body. In those days my bodies were clothed. Maybe I couldn't paint the naked truth yet.
- M. DONAHUE: In the seventies, figuration returned. Remember Pearlstein and photo-realism?

- D. MAGONI: Yes, but I don't remember being influenced by that. In 1974, there was a Turkish invasion in Cyprus. I saw some ugly scenes of the invasion on TV. I said to myself, my goodness, people are getting killed, Despo, and you are trying to be trendy. These people have the courage to die for something and you are doing colorfield paintings out of fear of being an outsider. That was a turning point. I immediately did a series of fully clothed figures. Then, from 1978 to 1983, I left painting behind and did works on paper, mostly faces with some sporadic work on the figure. I returned to the figure in 1984, which mainly involved nudes on canvas. My large paintings of female nudes were initiated with the Salome series in 1988, followed a year later by the Cleopatra and Theodora series. This brings us to the depiction of the woman with a crown and the focus of our conversation, the Queen series of drawings.
- M. DONAHUE: From our conversation, I have learned much about your aesthetic and your resistance to the dominant structure of male power. There will be more to discuss in the future about the significance posed by your approach to the drawings in *The Queen's Moves in a Game of Chess*. Conceived for the first time in unison with paintings, this approach clearly influenced your artistic process. You have since completed two large series of drawings in conjunction with four paintings.

MARY DONAHUE is a Ph.D. student in Art History at The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. She is presently researching a dissertation topic and teaching at Brooklyn College and the School of the Visual Arts in New York. Her publications include essays concerning feminism and contemporary women's art, Polish textiles and Neolithic goddess imagery.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

GEORGE SEFERIS and ANGELOS TERZAKIS have been presented in previous issues.

ZISIMOS LORENTZATOS was born in Athens, Greece, in 1915. He studied Law and Literature at the University of Athens. He first appeared in Greek letters in 1936 with an essay on Edgar Allan Poe. He has published two collections of poems, translations of Pound, Blake, Wittgenstein and others and has written extensively on a variety of literary and philosophical subjects, including essays on Gide, Hölderlin, Pascal, Solomos and Seferis. A fine poet and outstanding essayist, he is considered one of the most highly respected and influential thinkers of contemporary Greece.

DESPO MAGONI was born in Athens, Greece. She studied Art and Art History as well as Iconography and Fresco at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Athens. She has held fourteen individual exhibitions of her work in the U.S.A. and Greece and has participated in over forty group exhibitions in the U.S.A. and Greece, Mexico and France. She has been the recipient of the Second Prize, P. Vyzantios Competition in Athens (1973), and won the Gold Medal (Palm D'Or) at the Saint Germain des Pres International Festival of the Arts, Paris (1974). Recently, Magoni was nominated for an AVA (Award of the Visual Arts) for her outstanding contributions.

THALIA VRACHOPOULOS is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at the CUNY Graduate Center of New York, specializing in European painting and sculpture. Her dissertation topic is Jean Xceron, the American abstract pioneer. She is teaching at Marymount Manhattan and John Jay colleges in New York City. She has published numerous articles on contemporary Greek artists.

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