

Nikos Kavvadias, A Global Poet; Reflections of Baudelaire and Masefield

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Abstract

The title of this paper has been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, Kavvadias travelled the world and this is reflected through his poetry. Reading his poems, one can see several place names from different countries and non-Greek names; this is an element which gives his poems an exotic character. Second, although one might see some influences from other Modern Greek poets or the Greek tradition in general, Kavvadias embodies in his poetry strong influences from other poets outside Greece; and this is what we are going to discuss.

Keywords: Kavvadias; Baudelaire; Masefield; Comparative Literature; Culture

Introduction

Nikos Kavvadias was born in 1910 in Harbin in Manchuria of Greek parents. He worked as a sailor throughout his life and his poetry was inspired by his travels around the world. He died on 10 February 1975 of a stroke. Although he became well-known because of his three poetic collections *Μαραμπού* (*Marabu*, 1933), *Πούσι* (*Fog*, 1947) and *Τραβέρσο* (*Traverso*, 1975), he also wrote the fiction *Βάρδια* (*The Shift*, 1954) and some other prose works: *Λι* (*Li*), *Τον πολέμου* (*On War*) and *Στο Άλογο μου* (*Of my Horse*, 1987).

His poems revolve around his own adventures or those of his companions in several ports. Through his poetry, Kavvadias shows his love for the sea; the poem 'Mal du départ'²⁹ is such an example:

Θα μείνω πάντα ιδανικός κι ανάξιος εραστής
των μακρυσμένων ταξιδιών και των γαλάζιων πόντων...³⁰

²⁹ Nikos Kavvadias, *Marabu* (Athens: Agra, 1990), 41.

³⁰ 'I'll always be the unworthy, romantic lover of distant journeys and azure seas.'; Nikos Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, translated by Gail Holst-Warhaft (Rivervale: Cosmos Publishing, 1987), 89.

Mitsos Kasolas also says that Kavvadias was a real lover of the sea, whereas land caused him approaching fear.³¹ There are two other lines of the poem 'Mal du depart'³² which show the poet's real desire to be buried in the sea:

Κι εγώ, που τόσο επόθησα μια μέρα να ταφώ
σε κάποια θάλασσα βαθιά στις μακρινές Ινδίες...³³

In what follows, we are going to explore some of the influences on Kavvadias from Baudelaire and Masfield, which have not been discussed before. Generally speaking, Nikos Kavvadias did not attract the interest of critics during the previous decades and especially before 1990. As Antia Frantzi writes, although Kavvadias is a very popular poet with a very distinct poetic style, his poetry was never included in any widely known history of Greek literature.³⁴ Although the composer Thanos Mikroutsikos' settings of several poems of Kavvadias in 1992 made him a well-known poet in Greece, there is still a kind of prejudice against Kavvadias' poetry.

Firstly, the extent of Kavvadias' poetic work is relatively short. He published only three poetic collections and, perhaps more importantly, did not manifest different stages of poetic style. Furthermore, the content of Kavvadias poetry and the nautical vocabulary that he used, affected the spread of his work. Kavvadias did not write about the history of Greece, its glorious past or anything in detail about the Greek landscape. His poetry revolves around his travels, experiences and adventures as a sailor in foreign places.

In addition, the vocabulary that Kavvadias uses is a new expression in Modern Greek poetry. One could say that Cavafy also spoke about notorious places like *καπηλειά* (wine shops) in his poetry. However, Kavvadias speaks more directly than him about bordellos and drugs, and other 'corrupt' elements. Consequently, this new poetic proposal of Kavvadias was a kind of bravado and a challenge to Greek society.

Influences on Kavvadias' poetry

The topic of influences in Kavvadias from other poets could be a major theme in the analysis of his poetry. Although one could see influences by Greek poets, Kavvadias was influenced at a great extent by foreign poets. However, if there is something which makes Kavvadias' poetry distinctive, it

31 Mitsos Kasolas, *Nikos Kavvadias: Woman-Sea-Life: Narrations on Tape Recorder* (Athens: Kastanioti, 2004), 118.

32 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 42.

33 'And I, who longed to find my grave in some sea of the Indies, far away,'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 89.

34 Antia Frantzi (editor), *Seven Passages on Nikos Kavvadias* (Athens: Polytypo, 1982), 11-12.

is the fact that he succeeded in embodying foreign and local traditions. Indeed, Dinos Christianopoulos asserts that Kavvadias belongs to the poetic tradition of Baudelaire, mentioning also some similarities between the Greek poet and another French poet; Levet (1874-1906).³⁵ Christianopoulos writes that Kavvadias is very close to these poets. Nevertheless, although some similarities between Kavvadias and Levet (mainly in *Fog*), Baudelaire remains the basic source for Kavvadias. In addition, Kavvadias had sound knowledge about the literary history of his country. The iambic fifteen-syllable line ('political verse') that he uses throughout his whole poetic career, shows that Kavvadias did not ignore his literary origins. Kasolas refers to Kavvadias' desire to include in his last poetic collection (*Traverso* 1975) some lines from a demotic song, in political verse.³⁶ Looking through Kavvadias' poems, it is not difficult to see that this metre is his favourite one, as most of his poems are written in political verse, and, even more, his language is sometimes reminiscent of demotic songs.

If we were to associate Kavvadias with any Greek poet, it would be Kostas Karyotakis (1896-1928). Although Kostas Ouranes (1890-1953) shows some similarities with Kavvadias in terms of poetic style, there is no substantial impact from this poet; any similarities could be results of the same poetic sources. Thus, elements of Baudelaire's and Karyotakis' poetry, which permeate Kavvadias' poetry, appear in Ouranes as well. It is interesting to note that Ouranes gave a series of poems the general title '*Spleen*'³⁷ (in Latin characters), and this is the title of works of Baudelaire,³⁸ whereas 'Don Quixote', which is the title of one of his poems³⁹ inevitably recalls Karyotakis' poem 'Don Quixotes'.⁴⁰

Nikos Kavvadias, apart from the influences of Karyotakis and some influences from demotic songs that Mitsos Kasolas mentioned, has not been influenced at a great extent by any other Greek poet. Possibly, Stratis Tsirkas' statement⁴¹ that Kavvadias read Cavafy should be seen as an indication of Kavvadias' interest in poetry in general. Besides, Cavafy is one of the most popular and influential Modern Greek poets and as Daskalopoulos wrote, there is a wide range of poets who have been influenced by him. But again, Kavvadias could not be seen as one of them,

35 Dinos Christianopoulos, 'The French Poet J. H-M Levet and his Influence on Nikos Kavvadias', *Ibid*, 77.

36 Kasolas, *Nikos Kavvadias*, 27.

37 Kostas Ouranes, *Poems' Collection* (Athens: Hestia, 1993), 35.

38 Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (London: Pan, 1987), 251-253.

39 Ouranes, *Poems' Collection*, 47.

40 Kostas Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, edited by G. P. Savidis (Athens: Hestia, 1995), 22.

41 Stratis Tsirkas, 'Kolias and the Alexandrian Critic', *Seven Passages on Nikos Kavvadias*, 36-37.

especially if we bear in mind that none of his poems is included in Daskalopoulos' book.⁴²

Through specific poems in the next pages, we are going to see influences from Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), who maintains a major part in Kavvadias' work and perhaps more surprisingly from John Masefield (1878-1967), who influenced Kavvadias at one stage of his poetic career.

Influences from Baudelaire in Kavvadias poetry

In general, when Kavvadias speaks about women in his poems, he refers to prostitutes. Baudelaire also made similar references to prostitutes in several of his poems. One could assume, that prostitutes are more appropriate for this kind of poetry, which is characterized by a 'sinful' climate, and they appear in several poems of Baudelaire and Kavvadias, like the following ones:

Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle
Femme impure! L'ennui rend ton âme cruelle.
(Poem 26, no title)⁴³

Derrière les rochers une chienne inquiète
Nous regardait d'un oeil fâché,
(Une Charogne)
(‘A carcass’)⁴⁴

Κι εγώ, που μόνον εταιρών εγνώριζα κορμιά ...
(Μαραμπού)
(‘Marabu’)⁴⁵

Το βράδυ ετούτο κάρφωσε μ' επιμονή το νου μου
κάποια γυναίκα που άλλοτες εγνώρισα, κοινή...
(‘Gabrielle Didot’)⁴⁶

42 Demetres Daskalopoulos (editor), *Greek Cavafian Poems* (Patra: University of Patra Press, 2003).

43 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 209. ‘You would take the whole world to bed with you, Impure woman! Ennui makes your soul cruel;’ ; Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, translation by William Aggeler, Roy Campbell, Cat Nilan, Geoffrey Wagner, Kenneth O. Hanson, David Paul (<https://www.paskvil.com/file/files-books/baudelaire-fleurs.pdf> 06th January 2017), 84.

44 *Ibid*, 212. ‘Watched us with angry eye, Waiting for the moment to take back from the carcass’; translation in *Ibid*, 96.

45 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 10. ‘And I, who'd only known the bodies of whores,’; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 89.

46 *Ibid*, 30. ‘This evening my mind was insistently fixed on a woman I once knew, a prostitute,’; translation in *Ibid*, 69.

As we can see, both the poets speak about notorious women and although this is a general characteristic, it is still an element in Kavvadias that reflects Baudelaire's atmosphere. The influence of Baudelaire in Kavvadias is more obvious in the next poems, in which the representation of woman emerges from the parallel between cat and woman.

Kavvadias' poem 'Οι γάτες των φορτηγών' ('Cargo ship cats'),⁴⁷ in which the poet describes the behaviour of a cat, is obviously reminiscent of Baudelaire poems: 'Le chat' ('The cat')⁴⁸ and 'Les chats' ('The cats').⁴⁹ As we can see, Kavvadias included in the title of his poem the word 'cats', which also appears in the title of three -in total- Baudelaire's poems. Furthermore, the description of the cat in Kavvadias is very close to that of Baudelaire in the one of the two poems titled 'The cat':⁵⁰

Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
Et que ma main s'enivre du plaisir
De palper ton corps électrique.⁵¹

Είναι περήφανη κι οκνή, καθώς όλες οι γάτες,
κι είναι τα γκρίζα μάτια της γιομάτα ηλεκτρισμό·
κι όπως χαϊδεύουν απαλά τη ράχη της, νομίζει
πως αναλύεται σ' ένα αργό και ηδονικό σπασμό.⁵²

The vocabulary of the two poems is identical, so that we could almost assume Kavvadias made a kind of imitation of or variation on Baudelaire's poem. By the word 'caress' ('caressent' in Baudelaire and 'χαϊδεύουν' in Kavvadias), both poets convey how people treat the cat. Commonly, the reaction of the cat is the stretching of its back ('dos élastique' and 'ράχη της πως αναλύεται'), while it also appears lazy in both works (à loisir and οκνή). In addition, the cat feels pleasure during the caressing, which is expressed in Baudelaire by the phrase 's'enivre du plaisir' and in Kavvadias by the phrase 'ηδονικό σπασμό'. Finally, the word 'electric' is used by Baudelaire (corps électrique) and Kavvadias too (μάτια γιομάτα ηλεκτρισμό).

47 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 16.

48 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 217.

Ibid, 232 (a second poem with this title).

49 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 246.

50 *Ibid*, 217.

51 'When my fingers leisurely caress you, Your head and your elastic back, And when my hand tingles with the pleasure Of feeling your electric body,'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 112.

52 'She's proud and lazy like all cats I know; her grey eyes contain an electric charge. When sailors gently stroke her back it breaks into slow, voluptuous spasms,.'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 41.

As we can see, there is a similar situation with men caressing a cat, while at the same time the latter seems to be lazy and delighted during this process; a parallel between cats and women. This tendency is more obvious in Kavvadias, who directly mentions that the cat resembles a woman and less apparent in Baudelaire, who asserts that when he caresses the cat, he remembers his mistress:

Στο ρεμβασμό και στο θυμό με τη γυναίκα μοιάζει
κι οι ναύτες περισσότερο την αγαπούν γι' αυτό...53

Je vois ma femme en esprit.54

Finally, it is interesting to look at the common focus on cat's eyes, which also evokes a woman:

Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux...55

κι είναι τα γκρίζα μάτια της γιομάτα ηλεκτρισμό.56

Consequently, apart from Baudelaire's material and techniques that Kavvadias used in a productive way, we see the same parallel, suggesting that Baudelaire influenced Kavvadias by giving him ideas and inspiration.

In addition, the word 'pipe' is another common word, as it appears in Baudelaire's title 'La pipe' ('The pipe')⁵⁷ and Kavvadias' title 'Έχω μια πίπα' ('I have a pipe'):⁵⁸

Je suis la pipe d'un auteur;59

Έχω μια πίπα ολλανδική από ένα μαύρο ξύλο.60

Apart from the similar titles, Baudelaire mentions that he is the pipe of the author and Kavvadias has a pipe, which means that the relationship of pipe and author is the same in the two poems.

Turning to another Kavvadias' poem, 'Οι επτά νάνοι στο S/S Cyrenia' ('The seven dwarfs on the S/S Cyrenia'),⁶¹ the reader can see that it evokes Baudelaire's poem 'Les sept vieillards' ('The seven old men').⁶²

53 'She's just like a woman in anger and dreams; it makes sailors love her all the more'; translation Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 41.

54 'In spirit I see my woman'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 112.

55 'Let me gaze into your beautiful eyes'; translation in *Ibid*, 112.

56 'her grey eyes contain an electric charge.'; translation Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 41.

57 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 247.

58 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 24.

59 'I am the pipe of an author'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 214.

60 'I have a Dutch pipe of a black wood'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 57.

61 Kavvadias, *Traverso*, 19.

62 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 270.

Apart from the number 'seven' which appears in both the titles, it is interesting to note that the poets refer to particular categories of people. In Baudelaire, we have seven old men and in Kavvadias seven dwarfs; but commonly both groups of people show a kind of disability. Looking at certain lines of each poem, we can see further reflections from Baudelaire on Kavvadias:

Il n'était pas voûté, mais cassé, son échine
Faisant avec sa jambe un parfait angle droit...63

κι ο στραβοκάνης ο Χαράμ πίττες ζυμώνει.64

Both poems describe the legs of a single person, but most importantly this person, in both poems, has twisted legs.

Despite the fact that the poems 'I have a pipe' and 'The seven dwarfs on the S/S Cyrenia' present less similarities than the poem 'Cargo ship cats' to Baudelaire's works, they still remain useful material, as we see similar titles and some further common elements.

Kavvadias' poem 'Mal du départ'⁶⁵ is also a poem which recalls Baudelaire, and especially, his poems 'Le mort joyeux' ('The grateful dead')⁶⁶ and 'Bénédition' ('Benediction').⁶⁷ Firstly, the two poets describe how they would like to be buried:

Dans une terre grasse et pleine d'escargots
Je veux creuser moi-même une fosse profonde,
Où je puisse à loisir étaler mes vieux os
Et dormir dans l'oubli comme un requin dans l'onde.⁶⁸
('The grateful dead')

Κι εγώ, που τόσο επόθησα μια μέρα να ταφώ
σε κάποια θάλασσα βαθιά στις μακρινές Ινδίες,
θα'χω ένα θάνατο κοινό και θλιβερό πολύ
και μια κηδεία σαν των πολλών ανθρώπων τις κηδείες.⁶⁹

63 'He was not bent over, but broken; his back-bone Made with his legs a perfect right angle'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 338.

64 'and bandy-legged Haram is baking pies'; translation Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 185.

65 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 41.

66 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 250.

67 *Ibid*, 189.

68 'In a rich, heavy soil, infested with snails, I wish to dig my own grave, wide and deep, Where I can at leisure stretch out my old bones And sleep in oblivion like a shark in the wave.'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 222.

69 'And I, who longed to find my grave in some sea of the Indies, far away, will have a sad and common death, a funeral like those of other men.'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 89.

Kavvadias prefers the sea and Baudelaire prefers rich soil full of snails. However, Kavvadias similarly to Baudelaire and although unwilling, knows that his funeral would not be different that the rest of people; it will be a common funeral on earth with soil. Apart from the common funeral (on earth with soil), Baudelaire states that he would like to sleep in peace, using the simile 'like a shark in the sea'. While Kavvadias speaks directly about the sea, Baudelaire makes such a parallel, although he initially spoke about soil. Thus, the common elements are: the general pessimistic climate, preference of place that they want as a grave and finally, the common reference to sea.

Secondly Kavvadias, as Baudelaire had done before him in the poem 'Benediction', mentions what the mother of the poet believes about her son's talent:

Lorsque par un décret des puissances suprêmes,
Le Poète apparaît en ce monde ennuyé,
Sa mère épouvantée et pleine de blasphèmes
Crispe ses poings vers Dieu, qui la prend en pitié:70

Θα πάψω πια για μακρινά ταξίδια να μιλώ·
οι φίλοι θα νομίζουνε πως τα' χω πια ξεχάσει,
κι η μάνα μου, χαρούμενη, θα λέει σ' όποιο ρωτά:
«Ήταν μια λόξα νεανική, μα τώρα έχει περάσει...»71

According to Baudelaire and Kavvadias, the talent of the poet is a curse from the mother's point of view. The fact that she does not agree with the idea of her son-poet is presented in Baudelaire by her complaints to God and in Kavvadias by her happiness after her son stopped speaking about his travels. In contrast, poetry is a kind of blessing for the two poets:

Vers le Ciel, où son oeil voit un trône splendide,
Le Poète serein lève ses bras pieux...72

Θα μείνω πάντα ιδανικός κι ανάξιος εραστής
των μακρυσμένων ταξιδιών και των γαλάζιων πόντων...73

70 'When, after a decree of the supreme powers, The Poet is brought forth in this wearisome world, His mother terrified and full of blasphemies Raises her clenched fist to God, who pities her:'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 222.

71 'I'll stop my talk of far-away journeys, my friends will think I've forgotten it all; my mother, delighted, will tell those who ask, 'It was a quirk of his youth, but now it's passed''; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 89.

72 'To Heav'n, where his eye sees a radiant throne, Piously, the Poet, serene, raises his arms'; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 14

73 'I'll always be the unworthy, romantic lover of distant journeys and azure seas'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 89.

Although Kavvadias' lines are somehow self-depreciating, we can see that both poets contradict their opinion of poetry with that of the mother. Similarly, they refer to the completely different opinions about the poetic talent. Concluding, if there is a source for Kavvadias' poem 'Mal du depart', probably this is Baudelaire's poems ('The grateful dead', 'Benediction'), which are clearly recalled here.

The dark atmosphere of some Kavvadias' poems is also reminiscent of Baudelaire's tradition. Although such a pessimistic atmosphere appears in Karyotakis' poetry, it is more plausible to associate the darkness of Kavvadias with Baudelaire. The vocabulary that Kavvadias used is very close to that of the French poet; inevitably, we could assume that this is a further influence:

Dis-le, belle sorcière, oh! dis, si tu le sais.⁷⁴
(‘L’irréparable’)
(‘The irreparable’)⁷⁵

Η μάγισσα έχει τρεις κόρες...⁷⁶
(‘Fata Morgana’)⁷⁷

Sur l’oreiller du mal c’est Satan Trismégiste...⁷⁸
(‘Au lecteur’)
(‘To the reader’)⁷⁹

Δαίμονας γεννά τη νηνεμία...⁸⁰
(‘Fata Morgana’)

Kavvadias same as Baudelaire, gives an atmosphere of darkness using approximately the same words: witch, Satan or demon. Moreover, words like ‘monster’ also appear in both the poets:

Ces monstres disloqués furent jadis des femmes...⁸¹
(‘Les petites Vieilles’)

74 ‘Tell it, fair sorceress, O! tell it, if you know’; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 175.

75 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 237.

76 ‘The witch has three daughters’; translation Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 205.

77 Kavvadias, *Traverso*, 30.

78 ‘On the pillow of evil Satan, Trismegist’; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 175.

79 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 183.

80 ‘A demon gives birth to the sudden calm’; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 205.

81 ‘These disjointed monsters were women long ago’; translation in Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 343.

(‘Little old women’)⁸²

τέρατα βαμμένα πορφυρά...⁸³

(‘Αρμίδα’)

(‘Armida’)⁸⁴

Through this common vocabulary, the two poets attempt to give their poems a climate of ‘hell’. These are words which describe the common spiritual world of the authors and also their intention to associate poetry with atmosphere of darkness.

Interestingly, Baudelaire in his poem ‘Les Phares’ (‘The Beacons’)⁸⁵ and Kavvadias in his poem ‘Ένα μαχαίρι’ (‘A knife’)⁸⁶ refer to the artist Goya (1746-1828).⁸⁷ Although Baudelaire and Kavvadias make several references to artists, Goya is a very prominent one, because his work is indicative of an atmosphere, very close to that of the two poets. His ‘Black paintings’ and, especially ‘Saturn Devouring His Son’ and the series ‘Witches’ in which he presents witches discussing and also the devil, resemble Baudelaire and Kavvadias. As Puhvel declares, Goya was one of the artists who were in the heart of Baudelaire,⁸⁸ while Helman writes that Baudelaire extolled above all Goya’s originality and especially, his revolt against the system of his contemporaries and his freeing of the imagination.⁸⁹

A good forty years before Baudelaire, Goya intended to suggest the demonic, monstrous nature of bare sensuality, becoming the first painter to make us aware of the ambiguous qualities of love in a secularized world.⁹⁰ According to Baudelaire’s words, Goya was a great and terrifying artist, who was able to create a credible form of monstrous in which the line between the real and the fantastic is impossible to grasp.⁹¹ Baudelaire accepted and elevated the caricatural style and forms of Goya to the level of great art,

82 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 272.

83 ‘a band of monsters painted red’; translation Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 127.

84 Kavvadias, *Fog*, 18.

85 Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 195.

86 Kavvadias, *Marabout*, 18.

87 www.Goya.

88 Jaan Puhvel, ‘L’ accueil et l’ Influence de Baudelaire parmi les Lettrés Estoniens’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1984: 15. 4, 249-257.

89 Edith Helman, ‘Identity and style in Goya’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 1964: 106. 730, 30-37.

90 Mary Louise Krumrine, ‘Goya’s ‘Maya desnuda’ in context’, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 1994: 28. 4, 36-44.

91 Betsy Fryberger, ‘Dream and Nightmare’, *The Art Institute of Chicago Quarterly*, 1962: 56. 4, 65-67.

refusing to equate in traditional thought.⁹² And of course, bearing in mind that Kavvadias shares this dark atmosphere and refers to Goya too, it could be said that Kavvadias continued this style and forms.

Influences from Masefield in Kavvadias poetry

John Masefield worked for a few years as a sailor.⁹³ His life in that respect is similar to that of Kavvadias. Kavvadias used to study foreign poetry and art in order to broaden his knowledge of poetry, and art in general. His poems included names like Federico Garcia Lorca⁹⁴ and painters' names such as Goya⁹⁵ or Modigliani.⁹⁶ In addition, we should bear in mind the Stratis Tsirkas' statement that Kavvadias used to read almost unknown and sometimes unsuccessful poets.⁹⁷ Indeed, Masefield is an almost unknown poet among Greek readers and this is probably the reason why nobody has attempted to associate him with Kavvadias. Masefield's influence on Kavvadias was not as strong as Baudelaire's, but it does appear in certain poems.

Initially, Kavvadias' poems 'Ένας νέγρος θερμαστής από το Τζιμπουτί' ('A black stoker from Djibouti')⁹⁸ and 'William George Allum'⁹⁹ are reminiscent of Masefield's poems 'Bill'¹⁰⁰ and 'Cape Horn Gospel I'.¹⁰¹ The strongest similarity between the poems is the names. 'Bill' is the name of the sailor in both Masefield's poems and 'Willy' (or William) is the name of the sailor in both Kavvadias' poems:

'Bill, he's dead, was all they said;
('Bill')

'And Bill, as was a seaman, died.
('Cape Horn Gospel I')

Ο Γουίλλη ο μαύρος θερμαστής από το Τζιμπουτί...¹⁰²

92 Alisa Luxenberg, 'Further Light on the Critical Reception of Goya's 'Family of Charles IV' as Caricature', *Artibus et Historiae*, 2002: 23. 46, 179-182.

93 David Gervais, 'Masefield, John Edward (1878-1967)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

94 Kavvadias, *Fog*, 27.

95 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 18.

96 Kavvadias, *Fog*, 29.

97 Tsirkas, 'My Friend Marabu', *Seven Passages on Nikos Kavvadias*, 18.

98 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 28.

99 *Ibid*, 45.

100 John Masefield, *Collected Poems* (London: W. Heinemann, 1932), 9.

101 *Ibid*, 21.

102 'Willy, the Black stoker from Djibouti'; translation Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 65.

(‘A black stoker from Djibouti’)

William George Allum.

(The title of the poem)

It is also interesting to note that the form of the sailor’s name, which is chosen by Kavvadias, appears in Masfield’s poem ‘Cape Horn Gospel I’:

And he says ‘Stand by’, says William,
‘For a shift towards a better place’.

The theme in the poems of Masfield and Kavvadias is also identical. We have the story of a specific person and finally the description of his death:

We dumped him down to the swaying weeds ten fathom
beneath the keel.
(‘Bill’)

So we lashed him in an old tarpaulin
And tumbled him across the side;
(‘Cape Horn Gospel I’)

Μια μέρα τον αφήσαμε στυγνό απ’ τον πυρετό,
πέρα στην Άπω Ανατολή, να φλέγεται, να λιώνει.¹⁰³
(‘A black stoker from Djibouti’)

Κάποια βραδιά ως περνούσαμε από το Bay of Bisky,
μ’ ένα μικρό τον βρήκανε στα στήθια του σπαθί.¹⁰⁴
(‘William George Allum’)

Also, the protagonist is rather unsociable in both ‘Bill’ and ‘William George Allum’. Masfield says that Bill did not have any friends and there was nobody to close his eyes after his death. Kavvadias’ description is also similar, as he speaks about a person without friends, who never spoke to anybody:

He lay dead on the cluttered deck and stared at the cold
skies,
With never a friend to mourn for him nor a hand to
close his eyes.

103 ‘One day we left him out in the East burning with fever and wasting away’; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 67.

104 ‘One night as we sailed from the Bay of Bisky, he was found with a knife sticking out his chest’; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 97.

Εγνώρισα κάποια φορά σ' ένα καράβι ξένο
έναν πολύ παράξενον Εγγλέζο θερμαστή,
όπου δεμίλαγε ποτέ κι ούτε ποτέ είχε φίλους
και μόνο πάντα κάπνιζε μια πίπα σκαλιστή.¹⁰⁵

Apart from the focus on the common character in the two poems, another common element is the order given by the ship's officer. In Masfield's poem we have the mate, who ordered the sailors to 'lash him up in an old tarpaulin', while in Kavvadias' poem it is the captain the one who ordered them to throw him into the sea:

The mate came forrard at seven bells and spat across the
rail:
'Just lash him up wi' some holystone in a clout o' rotten
sail.

Ο πλοίαρχος είπε: «Θέλησε το στίγμα του να σβήσει»
και διέταξε στη θάλασσα την κρύα να κηδευθεί.¹⁰⁶

In addition, it seems that the speakers in these poems were on the boat. It is not just a story that they heard, but a story in which they play an active role. The reader can realize from the descriptions in first person: 'we dumped him down' ('Bill') and 'I was in a hooker once' ('Cape horn Gospel I') in Masfield and 'I met once' ('William George Allum') and 'we left him one day' ('A black stoker from Djibouti') in Kavvadias.

Besides, there are two other poems by Kavvadias which reflect Masfield's poem 'Cargoes'.¹⁰⁷ These are the poems 'Αρμίδα' ('Armida')¹⁰⁸ and 'Fata Morgana'.¹⁰⁹ Although we do not have such clear similarities between these poems -as between the previous ones in terms of story and the death of a sailor-, there are some significant elements which could strengthen the argument that Kavvadias was partly influenced by Masfield.

Firstly, the poems 'Cargoes' and 'Armida' begin in an identical way. This is the name of a boat. In Masfield the boat is the Quinquieme of Nineveh and in Kavvadias it is the pirate ship of Captain Jimmy. Secondly, the geographical place is also the same between these poems. On the first

105 'Once on a foreign boat I knew an English stoker who was very odd; he never spoke and had no friends but smoked a carved pipe all day long'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 95.

106 'He wanted to wipe it off,' said the captain, and ordered him buried in the cold, cold sea'; translation by Holst-Warhaft in Kavvadias, *The Collected Poems of Nikos Kavvadias*, 97.

107 Masfield, *Collected Poems*, 56.

108 Kavvadias, *Fog*, 17.

109 Kavvadias, *Marabu*, 28.

hand, Masfield mentions in the second line of his poem that the boat is going to Palestine, while Kavvadias in the poem 'Fata Morgana' uses place names like *Καρχηδόνιοι* (Carthaginians), *Φοινίκη* (Phoenicia), *Σινά* (Sinai), *Δαμασκός* (Damascus) and *Βαβυλώνα* (Babylon), which place the reader in the same general geographical region.

Moreover, if there is something in 'Armida' which evokes this part of the Mediterranean Sea, it is the name of the poem. Kavvadias borrowed the name Armida from *La Gerusalemme liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) by Tasso. Armida was a beautiful witch who intended to divide the Christian knights against each other, during the fights between Christians and Muslims at the end of the First Crusade. Also, the poems 'Cargoes' and 'Armida' name the reason of the travel, which is the transfer of cargo, as we see: ivory, apes, peacocks, sandalwood, cedarwood, sweet white wine, emeralds, amethysts, topazes, cinnamon, gold moldores, road-rail, pig-lead, firewood, iron-ware and cheap tin trays in Masfield's poem and hashish in Kavvadias' (here we could possibly follow another route of influences; that of Baudelaire).

Finally, there is a notable contradiction between the poems 'Cargoes' and 'Armida', which brings them even closer. In Masfield the boat returns. This suggests that we have a final destination or a kind of purpose. In contrast, the ship in Kavvadias goes nowhere. There is no final destination. Thus, Kavvadias reverses the climate of Masfield's poem, by speaking about a boat which does not have a purpose. He did not ignore this detail in Masfield's poem and tried to change it describing a boat, without a purpose and far from its place.

Conclusion

Concluding, Kavvadias was influenced by Masfield, although the influence appears only in a limited number of poems. Nevertheless, we could assert that these influences should not be ignored. Masfield provided the Greek poet with some ideas which he developed in his own poetic work. Baudelaire may have influenced Kavvadias more obviously, but Masfield gave him additional material for inspiration, though perhaps without any wider influence. However, in an attempt to identify the poets who influenced Kavvadias, Masfield could certainly be included.

In contrast, Baudelaire was the great master for Nikos Kavvadias, as elements of Baudelaire's poetry appear in the whole poetic corpus of Kavvadias. However, while Baudelaire dreams of travels, Kavvadias does, indeed, the travels. This gives his poetry an exotic character and makes his descriptions and scenography livelier and probably realistic.

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