

**THE POETICS OF TASOS LEIVADITIS:
FROM EXTROVERSION TO INTROVERSION.**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to examine the poetics of Tasos Leivaditis and its transformations in the course of distinct periods of his work focusing on its continuities and discontinuities. In the first chapter, I analyse “the first period poetry” (1952-1956) of Leivaditis and the transition from his writing about his experience of the concentration camps of the first two collections, via the politically and socially committed third collection, to the humanism evident in the last collection of poems written in this period (in a sense that Leivaditis' last collection of this period is less autobiographical than his earlier poems, it often includes fictional elements which give to the poems symbolic connotations and it is not exclusively focused on the historical events of the poet's country but it refers to the social and political reality outside of Greece as well). Leivaditis' work of “the second period” (1957-1966) is explored in the second and the third chapter of this thesis. In the second chapter, I examine the poetry of this period which I regard as an extension of the humanism of the latter poems of Leivaditis' “first period” poetry. Issues of existentialism are also raised in this chapter concerning the poems written at the end of Leivaditis' “second period” poetry. In the third chapter, I address the issue of *To Εκκρεμές* [*The Pendulum*] (1966), the only collection of short stories that Leivaditis has published and the transitional role it plays between the work belonging to second and third periods. In the fourth chapter, I examine the final phase of Leivaditis' poetry (1972-1988), including the collection *Τα Χειρόγραφα του Φθινοπώρου* [*Autumn Manuscripts*] (which was published in 1990, after the poet's death), and the transition from realism to symbolism that takes place in it (via Leivaditis' literary production of the second period).

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the thesis is to show the development of Tasos Leivaditis' poetics. The new element that this thesis introduces to the existing studies is the research on the evolution of Leivaditis' work (*To Εκκρεμές* included) by focusing on the transitions during the various periods.

I suggest that reconstructing the continuities in Leivaditis' work is of vital importance, since it allows prospective researchers to gain an overall perspective. Such a perspective is hindered by the volume of Leivaditis' work in itself and the researchers' focus on his poetry of the third period.

Studies of Leivaditis' third period poetry far outweigh that of the previous two. The literary production of this period has been regarded as Leivaditis' mature poetry and at the same time it is taken to be his main contribution to Greek poetry of the first post-war generation. Arguably, it has been studied as if it had been created *ab ovo*. The work of Leivaditis' previous two periods, on the other hand, has been, at best, interpreted and acknowledged retrospectively under the lens of the work produced in the third period. It has been treated, in particular, as statement of intention of his poetry to come.¹

The emphasis, placed by the scholars, on Leivaditis' poetry of the third period could be attributed to its intricacy, in contrast to his literary production of the previous periods, which is far less complex in terms of language and style. As it is shown in

¹ See, for instance Athanasios Zisis' (2003) doctoral thesis to which reference is made below in the introduction of this thesis. Zisis sees the first period of Leivaditis' poetry as a starting point ("Οι Θεμελιακές Προδιαγραφές της Εκκίνησης") and his period of the second period as a transition ("Μεταβατικός Σταθμός και Απαρχή μιας Νέας Αυτοσυνειδησίας") to his work of the third period.

this thesis, in Leivaditis' work of the first and the second period, the language is literal and the meaning is lucid: the poems (mainly of the first period) refer to the historical circumstances of Leivaditis' time. Therefore, Leivaditis' literary production of the previous periods is easily perceivable by his readers, especially when it is placed in the wider context of the first post-war literature. On the other hand, the poetry of the last period is a web of symbolisms, both explicit and implicit phrases, fictional and realistic components that leave much space to research.

Another possible reason why critics have laid less emphasis on Leivaditis' earlier, politically committed, work may be related to the fact that Yannis Ritsos' poetry appears to have cast a shadow over the poets of the first post-war generation for years; the former seems to have been acknowledged as the epitome of the political poet of his time. As a result, the work of other politically committed poets of the first post-war generation appear to have been studied in comparison to Ritsos' poetry.² Therefore, it can be presumed that the scholars who set out to "discover" Leivaditis, might wish to show the peculiarity of his case, thus they tend to focus on the poems that differentiate him from Ritsos' and other poets' of the first post-war generation. Therefore, Leivaditis' poetry of the third period is suitable for further research.

As far as the chronology issue is concerned, in this thesis I adopt Leivaditis' division of his work into three periods, those stated in Kedros' collected poems: a) 1952- 1956, b) 1957- 1966, c) 1972- 1988.³ As mentioned in the abstract of the thesis,

² Indeed, the bibliography on Ritsos' work by far outweighs that concerning his contemporary poets. On an indicative bibliography related to Ritsos' literary production see: http://www.philology.gr/subjects/nef_ritsos.html.

³ The reason why Leivaditis proposed the specific three-part periodization of his oeuvre is worth-asking. The criterion that seems to underlay this periodization is rather historic: it reflects the communist revolution and its outcome: a) 1952-1956: the concentration camp poetry and the peak of the communist revolution, b) 1957-1966: the failure of the communist revolution and the period of disillusionment, c) 1972-1988: the transformation of the communist vision or poetry as a means of personal resistance.

in the third period *Τα Χειρόγραφα του Φθινοπώρου* (1990) is included, Leivaditis' last poetic collection, published after his death in 1988. The poet's own division is further adopted in Apostolos Benatsis'⁴ and Athanasios Zisis'⁵ doctoral dissertations and is implicitly or conventionally followed by the majority of the scholars. Others simply bypass the issue.

In his thesis, Benatsis applies Greimas'⁶ structural semiotics and divides Leivaditis' poetry into the following three periods: "the warring period" ("η περίοδος του μαχόμενου", where Leivaditis mostly writes about his experience in the concentration camp in Makronisos where he was exiled because of his communist beliefs as well as about his return to post-civil war Athens), "the period of realization" ("η περίοδος της συνειδητοποίησης", after the defeat of the communist party and the failure of communist ideology) and "the period of introversion" ("η περίοδος της εσωστρέφειας", or the advent of a new perception of thyself). Following Benatsis, Zisis' suggests that these periods be named "the starting point", "a transitional stage on Leivaditis' way to mature creation" and "the poetics of thyself and other" respectively.

In terms of reconstructing the evolution in Leivaditis' literary production, Benatsis' approach is quite limited in its scope, though consistent with the issue it addresses (themes of victory and defeat throughout Leivaditis' poetry), whereas Zisis' approach provides the scholars a blurred image of Leivaditis' literary production, since it relegates, to a certain extent, the work of the first two periods to a preparatory stage. Besides, Zisis' division does not seem to be based on specific criteria which

⁴ See Apostolos Benatsis, *Η Ποιητική Μυθολογία του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Epikarotita, 1991.

⁵ See Athanasios D. Zisis, *Η Ποιτική του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη στην Τελευταία Περίοδο της Δημιουργίας του (1972-1988)*, Ioannina: 2003.

⁶ See Algirdas J. Greimas, *Semantique structural, Recherche de Method*, Paris: Larousse, 1966.

persuasively justify this. The above doctoral theses, however, given their limitations, must be acknowledged, since they have laid the foundations for further study in this direction. It could be said that they have both initiated a tradition of research on Leivaditis' poetry at the University of Ioannina, Greece.

Panayotis Noutsos, in his study, *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Ο Κόσμος της Ποίησής του* (2008),⁷ detects two turning points in Leivaditis' work, in 1956 and 1966 respectively. He suggests, however, that these "two great discontinuities", as he sees them, be included into the continuity of Leivaditis' overall production.⁸ Even though Noutsos raises the issue of continuity and discontinuity, he does not provide us with further analysis. However, his contribution to the matter of the reconstruction of the evolution in Leivaditis' work has been significant and inspired aspects of this thesis as well.

As far as the perception of Leivaditis' literary production is concerned, not much sustained research had been made until 2008, apart from Benatsis' (1991) and Zisis' (2003) theses and the classic works of Ilinskaya and Menti, *Η Μοίρα μιας Γενιάς. Συμβολή στη Μελέτη της Μεταπολεμικής Πολιτικής Ποίησης στην Ελλάδα* (1976)⁹ and *Μεταπολεμική Πολιτική Ποίηση. Ιδεολογία και Ποιητική* (1995)¹⁰ respectively, which, however, covered Greek political poetry of the post-war period in general and did not focus exclusively on Leivaditis' work.

⁷ See Panayotis Noutsos, *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Ο Κόσμος της Ποίησής του*, Athens: Kedros, 2008.

⁸ See: "Συμπερασματικά, από την εξέταση του συνολικού έργου του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη προκύπτουν τα εξής: α) διακρίνονται δύο σταθμοί (1956, 1966) που καθιστούν αναγνωρίσιμη την ασυνεχή συνέχεια στο πεδίο του σημαίνοντος και ιδίως του σημειομένου (...)" (Panayiotis Noutsos, *ibid.*, p. 99).

⁹ See Sonya Ilinskaya, *Η Μοίρα μιας Γενιάς. Συμβολή στη Μελέτη της Μεταπολεμικής Πολιτικής Ποίησης στην Ελλάδα*, 5th ed., Athens: Kedros 1986.

¹⁰ Dora Menti, *Μεταπολεμική Πολιτική Ποίηση. Ιδεολογία και Ποιητική*, Athens: Kedros, 1995.

Before 2008 (the twentieth anniversary of Leivaditis' death), research on Leivaditis' work was limited to various book reviews in literary journals focusing on single collections, something which allowed only a fragmentary perception of the poet's overall production or there were memoirs that added nothing to this field but biographical details.¹¹ However, there were two articles, both published in 1989, in *Diavazo* magazine, dedicated to Leivaditis,¹² that particularly promoted research on the poet's work: Alexis Ziras' "1960- 1970: Η Δεκαετία-Μεταίχμιο στο Έργο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη"¹³ and Alexandra Boufea's "Η Αναζήτηση του Θεού στο Έργο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη".¹⁴ The former has been the first to demonstrate how the 1960's is a transitional decade in Leivaditis' work, while the latter raises the issue of Christianity throughout the poet's work, from his very first poems to his, so-called, mature works. The division Boufea has suggested be applied to Leivaditis' work however (a. 1952- 1965, b. 1966- 1978, c. 1979- 1987) differs from those later adopted by the scholars.

Another significant publication before 2008 is the release in 2005 of a volume titled *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Έλληνες Ποητές*,¹⁵ where Leivaditis' reviews of the poetic collections of his contemporaries are collected. These texts, initially published in the newspaper *Avgi* during 1978- 1981, show another aspect of the poet as a literary critic and can be argued to indirectly reveal his poetics.

¹¹ See, for instance Vasilis Zilakos & Yorgos Chronas, "Το Πορτραίτο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη από τον φίλο του Νίκο Δρέττα" in *Αφιέρωμα στον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη, Odos Panos* 140 (April- June 2008), pp. 49-52. Also in the same volume see Yannis Kontos, "Τάσος Λειβαδίτης: Το Αστέρι Μας στην Καταχνιά", pp. 10-11, Efi Pyrpasou, "Η Χαμένη Υπόθεση", p. 12. Most of the articles of the special issue of *Poeticanet* 18 (April 2013) consist contemporary Greek poets' expression of their gratitude to Leivaditis for the impact of his work to them and to their work.

¹² *Αφιέρωμα στον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη, Diavazo* 228 (December 1989).

¹³ See Alexis Ziras, "1960- 1970: η Δεκαετία-Μεταίχμιο στο Έργο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη" in *Diavazo* 228 (December 1989), pp. 52- 58.

¹⁴ See Alexandra Boufea, "Η Αναζήτηση του Θεού στο Έργο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη" in *Diavazo* 228, pp. 67- 76.

¹⁵ See Titos Patrikios & Thanasis Niarchos (eds.), *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Έλληνες Ποητές*, Athens: Kastanioti, 2005.

After 2008, interest on the poet's work has increased. In 2008 a volume titled *Μεγάλες Μορφές της Λογοτεχνίας. Η Ζωή, η Εποχή και το Έργο τους*¹⁶ was published. That includes Leivaditis' fictional biographies of some of his favorite Greek writers of the 20th century, written and published in 1969- 1970 in the *Fantazio* magazine and signed with the pseudonym "A. Rokkos". In the same year *Μεγάλοι Ρώσοι Συγγραφείς. Ντοστογιέφσκι, Τολστόι, Παστερνάκ, Λέρμοντοφ. Συνοπτική Απόδοση των Αριστουργημάτων τους από τον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη*¹⁷ was also published, including the poet's brief translations of some of his favorite Russian writers (Dostoyevski, Tolstoy, Pasternak, and Lermontov). These translations were also published between 1969-1970 in *Fantazio* magazine.

In 2008 Yannis Kouvaras publishes his book *Στην Ανθισμένη Ματαιιότητα του Κόσμου. Περιδιαβάσεις στην Ποίηση του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*,¹⁸ a work which sheds light on the issue of identity and the role of the decadent anti-hero in Leivaditis' poetry, most frequently encountered in his poems of the third period. In the same year, Yannis Kontos' anthology of Leivaditis' work,¹⁹ Noutsos' work *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Ο Κόσμος της Ποίησής του* and a special volume edited by Yorgos Douatzis²⁰ were published. Furthermore, the special issue (140) of the literary journal *Odos Panos* was dedicated to the poet. Certain articles published in this volume explore new aspects of Leivaditis' work or investigate in a greater depth others that have been briefly alluded in the past, for instances, issues of chronology.

¹⁶ See Lefteris Papadopoulos & Yorgos Markopoulos (eds.), *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Μεγάλες Μορφές της Λογοτεχνίας. Η Ζωή, η Εποχή και το Έργο τους*, Athens: Kastanioti, 2008.

¹⁷ See Yannis Bakoyannopoulos & Thanasis Niarchos (eds.), *Μεγάλοι Ρώσοι Συγγραφείς. Ντοστογιέφσκι, Τολστόι, Παστερνάκ, Λέρμοντοφ. Συνοπτική Απόδοση των Αριστουργημάτων τους από τον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Kastanioti, 2008.

¹⁸ See Yannis Kouvaras, *Στην Ανθισμένη Ματαιιότητα του Κόσμου. Περιδιαβάσεις στην Ποίηση του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Kastanioti, 2008.

¹⁹ See Yannis Kontos (ed.), *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Υάκινθοι, Βιολέτες και Ηλιοτρόπια. Μια Επιλογή Ποιημάτων από τον Γιάννη Κοντό*, Athens: Kedros, 2008.

²⁰ See Yorgos Douatzis (ed.), *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Συνομιλία με τον Νυχτερινό Επισκέπτη. Σίχλοι, Χειρόγραφα, Κείμενα, Μαρτυρίες*, Athens: Kedros, 2008.

In 2009 the special issue (171-172) of the literary journal *To Dentro* was published and dedicated to the poet, while in the same year Yorgos Markopoulos published *Η Ποίηση του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*,²¹ where he traces motifs and subjects in Leivaditis' poetry. In 2012 a volume titled *Ποιητές στη Σκιά*, edited by Yorgos Blanas was published, including contributions by young Greek poets.²² In the same year Elli Filokyprou published her monograph *Ενοχος Μιας Μεγάλης Αθωότητας. Η Ποιητική Περιπέτεια του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*,²³ an important study, short-listed for the Literary Award 2013 of the literary magazine *O Anagnostis* in the category "Best Essay/ Study". Nevertheless, Filokyprou excludes *To Εκκρεμές* from the primary references of her study.

From 2012 and on, various articles have been written, issues of literary journals, such as *Metronomos*, *Nea Estia* and *Poeticanet* have been dedicated to the poet. Also, several anthologies²⁴ have been released, either in printed form or on line, including his work. What is more, groups of Leivaditis' readers have been organized on social networks, where the latter's poems are regularly circulated.²⁵ Besides, several videos, based on Leivaditis' poems and accompanied with classical music, can be found on YouTube, proving the popularity the poet has gained over the years as well as the continued interest in his work.

In 2014, the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* released a series of anthologies of some of the most important Greek poets of the 20th century, titled *Έλληνες Ποιητές*,

²¹ See Yorgos Markopoulos, *Η Ποίηση του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Ekati, 2009.

²² Yorgos Blanas (ed.), *Ποιητές στη Σκιά*, Athens: Gavrielidis 2012.

²³ Elli Filokyprou, *Ενοχος μιας Μεγάλης Αθωότητας. Η Ποιητική Περιπέτεια του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Nefeli, 2012.

²⁴ See, for instance, Thanasis Kastaniotis & Thanasis Niarchos (eds.), *Τα Ωραιότερα Ποιήματα για τον Πατέρα*, Athens: Kastanioti, 1998.

²⁵ See the website: www.tleivaditis.weebly.com. See also the blog www.tassosleivaditis.wordpress.com. Moreover, one can see the relevant group on Facebook where Leivaditis' readers post his poems. For Leivaditis' poems and songs one can visit YouTube (for instance, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCG1fh-qRBY> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX7guuf-3UU>).

where Tasos Leivaditis' poetry was included.²⁶ In the same year, Nick Trakakis' translation of Leivaditis' collection *O Τυφλός με το Λύχνo* [*The Blind Man with the Lamp*] (1983) was also released.

It should be highlighted that, despite the increasing popularity Leivaditis' poetry has been gaining over the years, his books are currently out of print. What is more, Leivaditis' only collection of short stories (*To Εκκρεμές*) remains unfamiliar to the Greek readers, even to those who are conversant with his poetry.

Since I wish to show the development of Leivaditis' poetics, I shall discuss the transitions that are made throughout his work, *To Εκκρεμές* included. I believe that the study of this collection of short stories could shed light to the transition that takes place from Leivaditis' poetry of the second period (which has not been discussed by Leivaditis' scholars so far) to his poetry of the third period. A presentation of *To Εκκρεμές* and its transitional role in Leivaditis' oeuvre was made in the 7th Athens Postgraduate Conference at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Faculty of Philology in 2013 and received quite encouraging feedback. The announcement has been included in the proceedings of the conference.²⁷

The study of the transitional role of *To Εκκρεμές* (and of Leivaditis' literary production of the second period in general) will be hopefully the contribution of this thesis to the existing studies.

CHAPTER ONE

²⁶ Starting from February 16, 2014, the newspaper released 13 volumes on 13 consecutive Sundays. The volume dedicated to Leivaditis was released on May 24, 2014.

²⁷ See Vagia Kalfa, "Το Εκκρεμές του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη: μία παραγνωρισμένη συλλογή διηγημάτων" in *Πρακτικά 7^{ου} Συνεδρίου Μεταπτυχιακών Φοιτητών Φιλολογίας*, vol. 2, Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 16-18 May 2013, pp. 724-733.

The period of extroversion (1952-1956): From the concentration camps to the anti-war poetry.

The basic element of Leivaditis' poetry of the first period, acknowledged by nearly all scholars, is its extroversion. The aim of this chapter is to highlight this tendency as it is revealed both in certain verses of Leivaditis' work concerned with his poetics and in the general context, style and language of his poetry of this period in general. The main characteristics of Leivaditis' poetry produced in this period are: a preoccupation with the social and political situation of his time, as well as simplicity and immediacy of his writing.

The first period of Leivaditis' poetic production extends from 1952 to 1956 and includes the following four collections: *Μάχη στην Άκρη της Νύχτας* [*Battle at the Edge of the Night*]²⁸ and *Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας* [*This Star is for All of Us*] (both published in 1952), *Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου* [*The Gust at the Crossroads of the World*] (1953) and *Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπόρλο* [*The Man with the Drum*] (1956).

The first two collections of this period were written in the concentration camp in Makronisos, where Leivaditis was exiled because of his communist allegiance.²⁹ In these collections the poet, following the tradition of the concentration camp poetry of his time,³⁰ describes his experiences in the camp, the tortures and executions that took place there and justifies his decision to leave his loved wife Maria, to whom the

²⁸ The translation of Leivaditis' collections into English belongs to Nick Trakakis, see N. N. Trakakis (tran. & intr.), *Tasos Leivaditis. The Blind Man with the Lamp*, Limni, Evia: Denise Harvey (Publisher), 2014, pp.ix-xxx.

²⁹ On Leivaditis' biography see Benatsis (1991) and Trakakis (2014).

³⁰ More about the tradition of the concentration camp poetry see Dora Menti, "Η Θεματική της Άγониς Γραμμής" in *Αφιέρωμα στον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη*, *Diavazo* 228 (1989), pp. 33-40, p. 35.

second collection is addressed and dedicated, in order to take part in the communist revolution against the right wing Greek government of that time.

In the third collection of this period the poet's point of view shifts from the concentration camp of the previous two collections to a post-war city, likely to be Athens, even though it is never named. After all, as Ilinskaya states, Leivaditis is an urban poet and, apart from Makronisos (an island in the Aegean Sea), Ai Stratis (a small island in the northern Aegean Sea) and Moudros (a town on the island of Lemnos),³¹ where he was exiled, the poet did not travel neither inside nor outside of Greece; on the contrary, he spent his entire life in his birth place, Athens.

The last collection of this period includes the sections *Τρία Ποιήματα* [*Three Poems*] (written in 1950), *Παράρτημα Α'* [*Appendix A'*] and *Στίχοι Γραμμένοι σε Πακέτα Τσιγάρα* [*Verses Written in Cigarette Packets*] as well as the poems “Συντροφικό Τραγούδι” [“Comrade Song”], “Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” [“Eight People Walk the Earth”]³² and “Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο” [“The Man with the Drum”]. In this collection few poems refer directly to the historical context (current events inside and outside of Greece, for instance, see the poem “Γουατεμάλα”, *Παράρτημα Α'*³³); most of the poems of this collection portray the misery of the war in general irrespective of time and place.³⁴ In addition, this collection features several poems where Leivaditis discusses his poetics: his

³¹ Zisis informs us in this period, communists, who were arrested, were sent to Ai Stratis, Makronisos, Ikaria, Lemnos, Samothrace, Gavdos, Anafi, Trikeri, Yaros, subjected to the law 511 of the 31st of December 1947 (ibid. p. 19).

³² The translation of titles of the sections *Τρία Ποιήματα*, *Παράρτημα Α'*, *Στίχοι Γραμμένοι σε Πακέτα Τσιγάρα* as well as of the poems “Συντροφικό Τραγούδι” and “Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” are mine.

³³ See “Γουατεμάλα” in Tasos Leivaditis, *Ποίηση*, vol. 1, 12th ed., Athens: Kedros, 2003, pp. 127-130.

³⁴ For instance the poem “Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” (ibid. pp. 166-190). In this poem, in which Leivaditis narrates the personal stories of the soldiers who fight in the same trench, there is no reference to the place and time the war takes place; the emphasis is on the brutality of the war in itself and its consequences on the soldiers' and their loved ones' life. See the text that accompanies the poem, where Leivaditis highlights the symbolism of the composition.

perception of the poetic art, its mission, as well as his target readers. The poems of this period are long compositions, though several of them are divided into sections.³⁵ There are also several short poems such as those in the section of *Στίχοι Γραμμένοι σε Πακέτα Τσιγάρα*. The title here implies the poems' brevity.

All four collections feature poems written in free verse and in simple spoken language, conveying Leivaditis' experience of the Civil War in a manner that is not excessively emotional. Leivaditis recounts historical events in a restrained and succinct way that Ilinskaya defines as a sign of a "lofty masculinity".³⁶ In the last section of this chapter I discuss further the language in Leivaditis' first period poetry and I raise the issue of simplicity within the frame of the first post-war generation where the poet belongs.

The comparison between Leivaditis and other poets of his generation is rather intermittent and basically concerns Leivaditis' first period poetry, which is placed in the context of the politically committed first post-war poetry. Such a limitation is based on the hypothesis that the later, "introverted" Leivaditis offers fewer handles for comparison with Alexandrou and Anagnostakis; however, due to space limitations, such a hypothesis is not explicitly supported in this thesis. Therefore, there is much space for argument on the issue of Leivaditis' communication with the political poets of his time.

³⁵ See the collection *Μάχη στην Ακρη της Νύχτας*, which is a long narrative poem that is divided internally with asterisks.

³⁶ See Ilinskaya, *ibid.* p. 53.

1.1. A political dimension: from the realism of “the poetry of the battlefield” to the symbolism of Leivaditis’ ant-war narrative.

The extroversion of Leivaditis’ first period poetry can be traced through his attitude towards the political and social developments of his time. «Αρετή είναι να αγωνίζεσαι για την ευτυχία των περισσότερων»,³⁷ Stendhal’s quotation that Leivaditis employs as a motto in the first volume of his collected poems, is an idea which he further develops in his poem “Αν Θέλεις να Λέγεις Άνθρωπος” [“If You Wish to Call Yourself a Man”].

In this poem, Leivaditis suggests that political action is a prerequisite for one to consider oneself a human being. In other words, being human is not only a biological given but must be constantly proved by moral action. One should participate in the political and social battles of his time for the sake of peace and justice³⁸ and be willing to die for the sake of humanity when necessary.³⁹ It is only by securing a humane place for others to live in, that one can regard oneself as a human being. For this, one should assume responsibility not only for oneself but for the common people, especially the less privileged. In order to do that, one should never rest, nor can he just theorize about problems of his time; on the contrary, he should take action whenever the duty calls.⁴⁰ This kind of man is mentally free even when he

³⁷ For my part I honor with the name of virtue the habit of acting in a way troublesome to oneself and useful to others. [Stendhal "de l'Amour," 1822]

³⁸ See “Αν Θέλεις να Λέγεις Άνθρωπος”, pp. 121-124.

³⁹ See: “Αν θέλεις να λέγεις άνθρωπος /θα πρέπει να μπορείς να πεθάνεις ένα οποιοδήποτε πρωινό.” (ibid. p. 123).

⁴⁰ See: “Να μπορείς να πεθάνεις ένα οποιοδήποτε πρωινό /να μπορείς να σταθείς μπροστά στα έξη τουφέκια/ σα να στεκόσουν μπροστά σ’ ολάκαιο μέλλον.” (ibid. p. 124).

is physically limited⁴¹ and it is this kind of freedom that does not allow him to hide behind his loved ones and the safety of his home and daily routine.⁴² As Leivaditis writes: “Δεν έχεις καιρό/ δεν έχεις καιρό για τον εαυτό σου/ αν θέλεις να λέγεται άνθρωπος”.⁴³

A definition of man as a political being (that reminds us of that given by Aristotle)⁴⁴ as well as a deontological moral perception (which reminds the reader of Kant’s categorical imperative and theory of morality),⁴⁵ seem to underscore Leivaditis’ poetry and to be adopted in the course of his life. After all, for Leivaditis, poetry and life are inextricable.⁴⁶ Indeed, the poet composes his first two collections not in the safety of his home but inside the concentration camp, where he was exiled.

In his collection *Μάχη στην Άκρη της Νύχτας*, in particular, Leivaditis recalls the harsh conditions he and his mates underwent⁴⁷ in the concentration camp at Makronisos together with the fear that the future generations will not value their sacrifice. Despite these, there is no sign of regret in Leivaditis’ poetry whatsoever. On the contrary, Leivaditis praises the values of brotherhood and devotion to the vision for world change, as communists of that time perceived it as the end of the class

⁴¹ See: “Εσύ και μες απ’ το τετραγωνικό μέτρο του κελλιού σου /θα συνεχίζεις τον δρόμο σου πάνω στη γη.” (ibid. p. 123).

⁴² See: “Αν θέλεις να λέγεται άνθρωπος /μπορεί να χρειαστεί ν’ αφήσεις τη μάνα σου, την αγαπημένη ή το παιδί σου. /Δε θα διστάσεις. /Θ’ απαρνηθείς τη λάμπα σου και το ψωμί σου /θ’ απαρνηθείς τη βραδινή ξεκούραση στο σπιτικό κατώφλι για τον τραχύ δρόμο που πάει στο αύριο (...).” (ibid. p. 122).

⁴³ Ibid. p. 122.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Πολιτικά*, 125a 9-11.

⁴⁵ See: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.” (H.B. Acton, *Kant’s Moral Philosophy*, London: MacMillan, 1976). A prospective scholar of Leivaditis could study the philosophical background of his work, which will shed more light on it.

⁴⁶ See Titos Patrikios, “Prologue” in Tasos Leivaditis, *Έλληνες Ποητές*, Titos Patrikios & Thanasis Niarchos (eds.), Athens: Kastanioti, 2005, pp. 11-13, p. 11. The passage has been translated by Nick Trakakis in N. N. Trakakis (ed.), *Tasos Leivaditis. The Blind Man with the Lamp*, Limni, Evia: Denise Harvey (Publisher), 2014, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁷ In this collection Leivaditis recalls, in particular, the harsh weather conditions, famine, the threat of the forthcoming execution (as well as the executions of others), the lure of a compromise, as well as the tortures he and his comrades experienced in the concentration camp.

struggle and the prevalence of the lower classes over the upper classes, and as a consolidation of the basic human rights of peace, equality and freedom of speech.

Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας (1952) was also written in the concentration camp in Makronisos. In this collection, which is addressed and dedicated to Leivaditis' wife Maria, the poet recalls his life with her,⁴⁸ expresses his love to her and also explains the necessity of his participating in the Civil War: he recalls the devastation of his birth place, the deaths, poverty and misery of their neighbors and explains to her that all these cannot allow him to stay inactive. Leivaditis' confession "σ' αγαπώ πιο πολύ απ' ό,τι μπορώ να σου πω με λόγια/ θα ήθελα να πεθάνω μαζί σου, αν κάποτε πέθαινες"⁴⁹ is transcended by the following realization: "κι όμως, αγαπημένη μου/ δε μπορούσα/ δε μπορούσα πια να σ' αγαπώ όπως άλλοτε"⁵⁰ which is being justified further on:

(...) και καθώς γύριζα να δω τα μάτια σου
έβλεπα τα μάτια της γειτόνισσας που της σκότωσαν τέσσερα παιδιά
και καθώς άπλωνα να βρω το χέρι σου
είταν σα να 'κλεβα το ψωμί απ' τα χέρια των πεινασμένων⁵¹

Leivaditis finds it unbearable to enjoy his life, while others starve and mourn over their dead children. The idea of duty prevails in his poem -as well as in general-

⁴⁸ See: "Α, είχαν ζεστό το σπιτικό μας τότε /χαρούμενη η λάμπα μας /μεγάλος ο κόσμος. /Απ' την κουζίνα μύριζε τηγανισμένο λάδι. /Εσκυβα αγάπη μου και φιλούσα τ' αλευρωμένα χέρια σου /τα χείλια μου γεμίζανε όλο αλεύρια. Σε φίλαγα ύστερα στο στόμα /και γέμιζαν και τα δικά σου χείλια αλεύρια. /Κοιτούσε ο ένας τον άλλο και γελούσαμε" (*Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας*, p. 62). More on Leivaditis' representation of women, see the next chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁹ See *Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας*, p. 51.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 51.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 51. Due to the length of the poems that are cited in the first two chapters of the thesis, the space between the verses in the citations is single. On the contrary, due to their prose form, the space between the lines in the citations given in the next two chapters of the thesis is double. This choice is believed to facilitate the reader.

and it comes as a realization of the interdependence between personal happiness and common good.⁵²

Leivaditis realizes that he might miss his wife while being in exile, however, she is there with him as long as he remembers her. Discussing her and sharing his feelings of homesickness, that are common among his comrades, with them, Leivaditis comes closer to them and to his loved wife. It is the same historical circumstances the ones that tear the loved ones apart that also bring them together again.⁵³

According to Leivaditis, his and his comrades' sacrifice is not an illusion; its effects will soon be visible in people's everyday life. Thanks to their sacrifice, the latter will enjoy a decent life in a peaceful class- free society, where all citizens will be equally treated and given the means to assert their rights to create a better life for their loved ones and themselves:

*Αφού κάθε στιγμή οι άνθρωποι θα μας βρίσκουν
στο ήρεμο ψωμί,
στα δίκαια χέρια,
στην αιώνια ελπίδα,
πώς θα μπορούσαμε, αγαπημένη μου,
να 'χουμε πεθάνει...*⁵⁴

⁵² See Eratosthenes Kapsomenos, “«Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας». Ζωικές και Κοινωνικές Αξίες στον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη”, *Diavazo* 130 (1989), pp. 29-30. In this article Kapsomenos traces dichotomies in Leivaditis' collection (war-love, competitiveness-unity, death-life, society-individual, civilization-nature) but he ends up seeing them be transcended.

⁵³ See: “Οι άνθρωποι που μας χώριζαν, οι ίδιοι τώρα σε ξανάδιναν σε μένα. /Και σ' έβρισκα (...) σ' ένα μισό κασκόλ /τ' άλλο μισό το φόραγε ένας σύντροφος την ώρα που ντουφεκιζόταν/ (...) Σ' έβρισκα, αγαπημένη, στο χαμόγελο όλων των αυριανών ανθρώπων”. (*Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας*, pp. 58-59).

⁵⁴ See: *Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας*, p. 77.

In these first two collections, and while narrating the daily life in the concentration camp, Leivaditis does not focus on his own feelings. Even in his second collection, he soon casts his confessional needs aside and backtracks to the reality of the camp. He narrates mostly in the first plural considering himself as a part of the fighting force and he urges both his comrades and common people to action (*Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου*). In his narration Leivaditis does not focus on past or the needs of the present. On the contrary, he focuses on the great future that will come as soon as the Civil War ends and the Left prevails. The latter is considered to be so certain that in some cases, when Leivaditis thinks of the future, he uses present simple in describing it.

War as a theme recurs in Leivaditis' poem "Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη" (*Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο*). In this poem Leivaditis narrates the brutality and the absurdity⁵⁵ of the war, as well as the moral dilemmas⁵⁶ and physical suffering that the soldiers in the trenches experience. The new elements in this poem, however, compared to Leivaditis' first two collections, where he narrates real life events, are on one hand the fact that the poet focus on the soldiers' personal stories and on the other

⁵⁵ See: "ένας έγγειρε στην πλάτη του μπροστινού του /κι απόμεινε έτσι όρθιος, εκεί. Σε λίγο μάθαμε /πως ήταν πεθαμένος. /Ο γιατρός του λόχου είπε πως είχε πεθάνει πριν δυο ώρες. /Αδύνατο έκανε ο λοχαγός, πώς θα μπορούσε να βαδίζει /δυο ώρες τώρα ένας πεθαμένος. /Ο γιατρός έλεγε, ναι, μπορεί, /ένας άνθρωπος μπορεί να βαδίζει /και πεθαμένος/ (...) Κατά το βράδι /μάθαμε πως ο γιατρός του λόχου ήταν τρελλός." ("Οκτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη", pp. 167-190, p. 171). In these lines the impact of the war on the soldiers' psychology (as well as on everybody involved in the reality of the concentration camps) is obvious. The element of the absurd prevails in Leivaditis' poetry of the last period.

⁵⁶ See: "είναι η σειρά μου τώρα, στρατηγέ μου/ αφήστε με να γυρίσω στην πατρίδα μου /θέλω να ζήσω, στρατηγέ μου /θέλω να ζήσω /θέλω να ζήσω ..." (ibid., p. 188). In contrast to Leivaditis first two collections of this period, in this poem, for the first time, certain moral dilemmas emerge, such as soldiers' love for life, on the one hand, and the need for action, on the other hand. Participating in the war might cost one one's life but will help the majority of people lead a better life. At this point, one might recall John Stuart Mill's utilitarian theory, according to which, a good action is one that is the most beneficial for most people, which in Leivaditis' case, means that the soldiers ought to sacrifice their lives for the sake of others. The emerge of such moral dilemmas probably shows Leivaditis' turn from the aggressive point of view of the fighter to a more, it may be said, humanistic point of view.

hand the fact that the setting is fictional, intensifying the symbolism in Leivaditis' work.

More specifically, the soldiers in the collections *Μάχη στην Άκρη της Νύχτας* and *Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας* had no name and no personal stories. Leivaditis used to refer to them using their attribute: for him, everybody was a “soldier”, a “comrade” whose past should be set aside for the sake of the common goal that is the communists' victory against the official conservative regime. The setting was realistic and Leivaditis' contemporaries could connect to it, even though there is no direct reference to place and time.

On the other hand, Leivaditis in the text that accompanies the poem “Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” highlights that the plot, space, time and heroes he creates are fictional: the war, narrated in this poem, could take place wherever and whenever and protagonists could be anyone of his male readers.

The pretence of symbolism and fiction is not due to Leivaditis' fear to name the unsettling social and political events and the guilty parties behind him. Leivaditis' communist past (his three consecutive periods of exile and then his transfer to a prison in Athens⁵⁷ as well as the seizure of his poetic *collection Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου* and his prosecution with the accusation of communist propaganda) leaves no margin for doubt on his being vocal on such matters. After all, the readers, familiar with the historical background of Leivaditis' poetry always realizes whom his poetic verses refer to.

Leivaditis emphasizes on the criticism on the anomie and terror in themselves rather than the identification of the guilty. At this point, Leivaditis seems to recall

⁵⁷ See Benatsis, p. 54.

Marx's theory about the circular nature of human history, according to which certain crises of the past, that were due to the unstable capitalism, are to be repeated in the future, creating a vicious cycle of growth, collapse and more growth:⁵⁸ the only elements that seem to vary are the place, time and the protagonists behind these crises. According to Marx, an economic determinism seems to underlie human history:⁵⁹ economic interests, asserted by the opposing economic forces (the capitalist classes and the proletarians)⁶⁰ are the ones that determine society's past, present and future. In this context, war is an inescapable result of that conflict between the classes.

In this framework, the symbolic and fictional element of Leivaditis' poem reveals the poet's intention to talk about the human condition in general in an irrational and brutal world where special interests, both economic and political, lead, and they will always do, to conflict.

Leivaditis' focus on the war in itself is revealed by his interest in the turbulent situation not only inside but outside of Greece as well. Such poems referring to international events are "Τελευταίες Ειδήσεις για τους Ρόζενμπεργκ" ("Last News about the Rosenbergs") and "Γουατεμάλα" ("Guatemala") (both in the *Παράρτημα Α', Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο*) as well as the poem "Συντροφικό Τραγούδι" ("Comrade Song") included in the same collection.

⁵⁸ See Craig J. Calhoun, "History and Class Struggle" in Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, Indermohan Virk (eds), *Classical Sociological Theory*, Wiley- Blackwell, 2007, pp. 96-121.

⁵⁹ See Craig, J. Calhoun, "History and Class Struggle" in Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, Indermohan Virk (eds), *Classical Sociological Theory*, Wiley- Blackwell, 2007, pp. 96-121, Barry Stewart Clark, *Political Economy: a Comparative Approach*, ABC- CLIO, PP. 57-58 and Jonathan H. Turner, *Sociology*, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005 pp. 17-18.

⁶⁰ See Craig J. Calhoun, "Capitalism and the Labor Process" in Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, Indermohan Virk (eds), *Classical Sociology Theory*, Wiley- Blackwell, 2007, pp. 122- 130, and also: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Echo Library, 2009, p. 5.

The first one was written after Leivaditis was informed of the execution of the Rosenberg couple, the night of June, 15th 1953 in the United States after being accused of espionage on behalf of the Soviets.⁶¹ In this poem Leivaditis fictionally “resurrects” this well-known couple and renders them actual symbols of freedom in the place of the Statue of Liberty. Looking at them, the statue steps back, embarrassed, and enthrones them in its place.⁶²

In the second poem Leivaditis expresses his support to the people of Guatemala in its political and social turmoil and the American interference against the country. The third poem was written after the death of Stalin who features as its main character. In later publications of the poem, however, the dedication to Stalin has been substituted by the following one: “to the anonymous dead of the Soviet Union during the Second World War”.⁶³ This substitution reveals Leivaditis’ intention to honour the common soldiers as symbols of sacrifice in the name of peace and liberty and is likely to express his own disappointment with the communist party, as suggested in the second chapter of this thesis.

In conclusion, Leivaditis, via his participation in the political and social battles of his time, validated his communist beliefs and his poetry. To Leivaditis, being a human necessitates taking action, which does not contradict the creative process of making art (or, in his case, that of writing poetry). On the contrary, as far as Leivaditis is concerned, poetry promotes action and vice versa. Either following the vein of the concentration camp poetry (in his first two collections of this period) or writing about realities outside Greece, whether writing in a realistic manner or giving symbolic connotations to specific events, Leivaditis’ point of view is open to the world.

⁶¹ See Benatsis, p. 134.

⁶² See: “Τελευταίες Ειδήσεις για τους Ρόζενμπεργκ”, p. 126.

⁶³ «Συντροφικό Τραγούδι», pp. 139-149.

Defender of freedom of speech, justice and peace, the poet practises what he preaches, contributing to Greek post-war literature with an extroverted poetry that criticizes the political and social injustice of these years as it is shown in the following section of this chapter.

1.2. The social dimension in Leivaditis' poetry of the first period

In contrast to his first two collections (which focus on the concentration camp and the realities experienced by the poet there), Leivaditis' third collection *Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου* (1953) encapsulates a wider point of view, as the poet describes the turbulent, social, political and financial situation in a nameless city during the Cold War.

The absence of references to a specific time and place in this collection renders the city universal (even though certain references to Hitler and western countries place it in the present). It could be any city, where the lower social classes are getting more and more impoverished and their rights suppressed, while the privileged are becoming wealthier. The city, then, serves as a symbol of the state of fear, oppression and injustice that could exist in every place, where the government stands up not for the citizens but for its own interests.

In what is essentially a long narrative poem, the poet wanders inside the city and describes what he encounters in a dramatic yet factual way as if he were a street photographer or a film director. The poet does not conceal nor does he embellish. His intention to reveal the reality that the civilians of a Cold War city face. The poet's social criticism is mainly expressed through his focusing on places where the ordinary people spend their daytime; the setting is often: streets and bridges, hospitals, taverns,

orphanages, brothels, prisons in great contrast to the extravagant marble- built ministries and churches that comprise a city full of contradictions.

In the courtyards and steps of the churches and ministries the beggars proliferate, while the clerics and ministers blatantly disregard them.⁶⁴ They only interfere with them, and with the citizens in general, whenever the circumstances demand it for the sake of appearances: they attend ceremonies and make speeches in national anniversaries which they anticipate to get over with.⁶⁵ Furthermore, whenever citizens rise up against the authorities, the latter set the army against them.

The army, unable to oppose the fascist regime (in fact, unable to perceive it as such), impose orders on the population, often with resort to violent means. The army's turning into the official enforcer of the government has been completed, once the soldiers do not think but merely do as they are told. At the second part of the poem, when the people, both the left wing ones and civilians, who died during the Civil War, are resurrected, the members of the army giggle uneasily as they watch them coming, waiting for an order by their superiors in order to react.⁶⁶

What underlies this poem is Leivaditis' realization that those elected by people to defend their rights abandon them at the most crucial moment. The indifference of

⁶⁴ Ministers are portrayed as traitors to their nation. They are not interested in the lower classes' welfare. On the contrary, they seem to enjoy prosperity and stay inactive planning to serve their own special interests. They live in marble-built buildings in great contrast to beggars and (industrial) workers who either proliferate or protest about their rights down in the streets. See also: "Τα μέγαλα ρίχνουν έναν ίσκιο βαρύ που σπάει τη ραχοκοκκαλιά μας/ τρέχουν οι δρόμοι λαχανιασμένοι /τα παράθυρα είναι τυφλά" (ibid. p. 86) and "Οι τράπεζες ξαπλωμένες στα φαρδεια πεζοδρόμια/ σαν προϊστορικά ζώα που χωνεύουν τη λεία τους" (ibid. p.88). Buildings serve as symbols of power and alienation in Leivaditis' collection of short stories, *Το Εκρεμμές*, which is studied in the third chapter of the thesis.

⁶⁵ See: "Το έθνος μας απειλείται... /υπέρ βωμών και εστιών... /μα πρέπει να συντομεύουμε εξοχώτατε /μας περιμένουν για το τσάι". (ibid. p. 83).

⁶⁶ See: "πώς να σκοτώσουμε τους σκοτωμένους εξοχώτατοι /χι- χι- χι (...) /Επιτεθήτε /χι- χι- χι- (...)". (ibid. pp. 96-97).

the religious and political (and incidentally, of the military) authority against the population is highlighted by quoting their speech:

*Κάποιος πέφτει
ποιος είναι ποιος είναι
δυο αστυφύλακες τρέχουν
τίποτα τίποτα
ένας άνεργος
λιγοθύμισε

φυσάει
μπορεί και να πέθανε
αλληλούια⁶⁷*

The one who faints is left this way; certain assumptions are made which remain uncorroborated. The man is thought to be unemployed and, as such, he is treated not as somebody who needs assistance but as if he was unimportant, a social outcast. The possibility of his death seems to ease the authorities.

Quoting word for word the language of authority, Leivaditis parodies both its context and style.

*-Να διαφυλάξωμεν την ασφάλειαν του έθνους
-Θα διώξουν λένε κι άλλους εργάτες αύριο- τι θα γίνουμε
-Σας πάει περίφημα η ερμίνα σας αγαπητή μου
-Ελεήστε με χριστιανοί, δώστε μου μια δραχμίτσα χριστιανοί
-Μακάριοι οι πεινώντες κι οι διψώντες
-Κάνε πιο κει ντε το στόμα σου βρωμάει σαν απόπατος
-Η ελευθερία της πατρίδος
-Την πήγα στο νοσοκομείο μα θέλαν λεφτά...
- Απαιτεί να εξοπλισθώμεν
-Πέθανε
-Φυτίλια για τους αναφτήρες... φυτίλια για τους αναφτήρες⁶⁸*

⁶⁷Ibid. p. 92.

On the one hand, there is the stereotypical language of the politicians whose honesty is obviously questioned by the poet. In this poem, politicians appear to betray their nation and to ally with its enemies (more specifically, with the Germans); their true identity, however, is revealed unexpectedly in a Freudian slip of the tongue: “χάιλ, Χίτλερ/ ω με συγχωρείτε η ελευθερία της πατρίδος- ήθελα να πω”.⁶⁹ On the other hand, there is the declamatory speech of the clerics that not only fail to move the people who suffer⁷⁰ but also provokes their anger⁷¹ and mistrust.⁷²

The irony in the speech of the common people raises the issue of the existence of God, closely related to the presence of the Evil in the world.⁷³ However, the issue is not developed further here, since turbulent reality prevails, leaving no time and energy to the common people for deeper thought and evaluation of the circumstances. Experiencing poverty, while the civilians of the western countries enjoy prosperity or at least have had their rights secured, sentiment among the population of this city is that it has been abandoned not only by the government but also by God who seems to make discriminations among nations, favoring the most powerful ones.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 84.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 91.

⁷⁰ See: “ένθα ουκ εστι πόνος, ου λύπη/ ένας ζητιάνος ξύνει τ’ αχαμνά του”. (ibid., p. 83).

⁷¹ See: “Μια γυναίκα ουρλιάζει: γιε μου/ και χύνεται στα πόδια ενός νεκρού/ ένας νταμαρτζής φωνάζει/ μαζί τους ένας χτίστης: δολοφόνοι/ ένας αχθοφόρος σηκώνει το χέρι του/ κι η γροθιά του πελώρια κρέμεται πάνω απ’ τα μέγαρα/ βοήθεια/ μαζί τους/ δολοφόνοι/ γιε μου γιε μου...” (ibid., p. 97).

⁷² See: “Μια γρηά σταυροκοπιέται: Κύριε των δυνάμεων/ -των Δυτικών βέβαια Δνάμεων” (ibid., p. 87).

⁷³ The question about God is closely related to the existence of Evil in the world. It has been re-raised by Bayle in his *Historical and Critical Lexicon*: “how is that possible to believe that God is both good and powerful and yet, the Evil exists or even prevails?” According to Paul Ricoeur, this question seems to emerge particularly after troubled periods of history: after the two World Wars, Hitlerism and Stalinism, Gulags and the genocide in Auswitz. (Paul Ricoeur, *Το Κακό. Μια Πρόκληση για τη Φιλοσοφία και τη Θεολογία*, Yorgos Grigoriou (tran.), Athens: Polis editions, 2005, p. 7). In *Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου*, Leivaditis, does not adopt a folklore point of view on this subject, according to which, Evil arises and spreads in a mystical manner. On the contrary, he seems to adopt a rather pragmatic point of view. He appears to claim that it is people’s duty to fight against it; the Evil derives by peoples’ actions (or inaction): more specifically, it derives from the authorities’ will for power.

Despite the ordinary explanation common people give to the issue of the existence of God, it is obvious that their speech is spontaneous, expressing exasperation and despair, in contrast to that of the authorities which seem to be motivated by their special interests. In contrast to the impersonal and stereotypical speech of the politicians and clerics, the speech of the common people is highly emotional and coloured by swear words.

Furthermore, the indifference of the politicians and clerics to communicate with the common people is proved by the fact that even though the latter come from the middle and lower classes (the majority of them, unskilled workers), the former do not use their language, the popular (Demotic) Greek; on the contrary, when they address them, they persistently use the purist form (Katharevousa). Cancelling any chance of dialogue that the common people struggle to initiate, the authorities (re)state their power over them.⁷⁴

However, it is not only the government that does not care about the everyday life of the lower classes. In the excerpt quoted, on the one hand, there is a man begging for a penny, a worker who is worrying about forthcoming dismissals, two men discussing the death of their loved one because he could not afford health care, while, on the other hand, a woman of the upper class compliments her friend for her clothing and yet another one is being repelled by a man whose breath smells bad due to undernourishment. All these women seem to be self-centered, paying no attention to poverty surrounding them.

The fact that the poet can hear all these discussions shows that he is close to the common people: he is one of them. He mingles with them; he does not serve as a

⁷⁴ Leivaditis' belief that Demotic Greek should be used both in everyday life and in poetry is firmly expressed here. This issue (language in poetry) is further developed in the following section of this chapter.

spiritual leader nor is he that kind of poet who escapes from reality for the sake of a pure art. He wants to raise awareness about the less glamorous parts of society. His persistence to do so led to the seizure of his collection as well as to his imprisonment.

Other post-war poets also wrote down their impressions of their city after returning to it; in some of them a tone of bitter realization prevails as they face a new reality with which they cannot identify.⁷⁵ Others, on the other hand, seem to be aggressive and ironic, using a polemical tone to portray the situation. Manolis Anagnostakis is the most representative of this cast. Generally, as Dora Menti mentions and which is applicable to Leivaditis as well: “those who come back realize the process of alienation that has been accomplished meanwhile among the common people, their being strangers in their own cities, wild and terrified among the crowd; the futility of their return at last”.⁷⁶ This alienation is developed in Leivaditis’ poetry of the next periods but in a more introverted, one can say existentialist, manner.

⁷⁵ Dora Menti (1995), pp. 173-188. In this section, Menti writes about the return of the poets of the first post-war generation in their home town and the way it is reflected on their poems. According to her, the vast majority of these poets seem to feel alienated, unable to fall in love, make friends and, finally, adjust to the new situation that has been established during their absence. She gives the examples of Titos Patrikios’ (who seems to see the new reality as a chance of reflection and as an opportunity for people to learn by their mistakes, see pp. 239-245), Panos Thasitis’, Aris Alexandrou’s (who seems to have experienced dramatically the failure of the communist party; however, he managed to transform his disappointment and to criticize the communist party and his comrades’ ideology, pp.255-258), Tasos Leivaditis’, Dimitris Doukaris’ (who talks about the failure of the communist party in an existentialist manner which brings him close to Leivaditis’ latter poems, pp.262-264), Thanasis Kostavaras’ and Kleitos Kyrou’s poems, where, she traces such feelings of alienation. On the other hand, she also refers to these poets who managed to keep their fighting tone in their poems, such as Manolis Anagnostakis (pp. 245-255), Tasos Leivaditis (at least in his poetry of the first period), Yannis Dallas (pp. 265-267) and Michalis Katsaros (pp. 267-269).

⁷⁶ See Sonya Ilinskaya, “Οψεις της Γενέθλιας Πόλης”, *I Leksi* 130 (November 1995), pp. 740-745, p. 742.

1.3. Poems about poetry: socially committed and communicative

This section is concerned with Leivaditis' poems that make reference to the poetic act. The aim here is to analyse the ideological and aesthetic background of Leivaditis' poetry of this period under the lens of poetry written by the first post-war generation. Placing Leivaditis' poetry of the first period in the wider context of the first-post-war generation will hopefully give to the reader a more rounded view of the poet's work of this period. Leivaditis' poems are read in parallel with similar ones written by Manolis Anagnostakis and Aris Alexandrou. Leivaditis' poems that are considered in this section belong to the last collection of this period, *Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο*. These poems are: "Ποιητική" ["Poetics"], "Γένεσις (έκδοσις Β΄)" ["Genesis (edition B')"], "Κριτική της Ποίησης" ["Criticism on Poetry"] from the sequence *Στίχοι Γραμμένοι σε Πακέτα Τσιγάρα*, the poem "Απλή Κουβέντα" ["Plain Talk"] from the section *Τρία Ποιήματα*, as well as certain fragments from the poem "Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο". In these poems Leivaditis discusses his own poetics: the virtues of the poem, the value of poetry and the role of the poet in the modern world, as well as his intended readers.

According to the poet, poetry cannot and should not be separated from life. This idea is stated in the motto Leivaditis has chosen for the first volume of his collected poems and is further developed in his poem "Αν Θέλεις να Λέγεται Άνθρωπος". It is also revealed by the overall literary production of this period. Leivaditis argues that poetry ought to be open to the world, serve people and discuss the historical context during which it has been created; especially so when the social, political and financial circumstances in which it has been born are troubling.

As Nikos Trakakis highlights, the poets of this generation, having been born between 1918- 1928, they have experienced, during their childhood and adolescence, the National Division, the Asia Minor Destruction, events in the Dictatorship of the 4th of August, the Soviet Revolution, the international financial crisis, the spread of fascism and all these things under the shadow yet of another World War.⁷⁷ They have also experienced the American –financial, political and military- intervention, the defeat of the communist party, the Cypriot issue and the Dictatorship of 21 April.⁷⁸ The amount and the dramatic nature of such events demand that post-war artists, and poets in particular, as people of their times, should assist the common people both through their poetry and political action.

The idea that the poet should be politically and socially active is discussed in Leivaditis' poem "Κριτική της Ποίησης":



Such an idea shows Leivaditis' belief on the prevalence of experience and the value of testimony in his work over imagination. The latter, however, is not

⁷⁷ See N. N. Trakakis, pp. xi-xvi.

⁷⁸ See G.P. Savvidis, "Το Στίγμα της Πρώτης Μεταπολεμικής Γενιάς", *Symposio Neoellinikis Poiisis*, University of Patras, July 1981.

⁷⁹ See: "Κριτική της Ποίησης", pp. 155-156.

underestimated nor is it rejected by the poet. In contrast to the whiny verses (“μυξιάρικοι στίχοι”) of the other poets (further down I discuss the possible addressees of such a characterization), the aim of the poet, according to “Κριτική της Ποίησης”, should be the writing of poetry which can move those who have experienced a great trauma, just like the woman whose children got killed during the Civil War.

Leivaditis seems to reproach the aesthetes⁸⁰ and their elitist dogma “Art for Art’s sake”. The latter strongly insisted on art’s release from any external expediencies and put emphasis on artistic ideals of perfection. They were interested in deciding the best artistic form, selecting the appropriate rhythm and word, creating works which were adequate in terms of technique but lacked, in their excessive design, emotion. They have been accused by those artists who promoted political and socially committed art that their works were pompous, self-serving and had no intent to interact with the external reality of their times.

Apart from the aesthetes, Leivaditis seems to criticize those poets who might not write in a difficult and/ or pretentious way but who have failed, however, to connect with their target readers due to their autobiographical mode. Showing no interest in the expression of the common experience, such poets limit themselves to narrating their own circumstances. Leivaditis seems to imply that the work of such poets, keeping distance from the world, is closer to a diary rather than aspire to the status of literature.

According to Leivaditis, literature owes to serve a purpose and thus to be useful. In the poem “Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο” he writes about the role of

⁸⁰ See M. H. Abrams, *Λεξικό Λογοτεχνικών Όρων. Θεωρία, Ιστορία, Κριτική Λογοτεχνίας*, Yanna Delivorria & Sofia Chatziioanidou (trans.), 2nd ed., Athens, Pataki, 2008, pp. 20-21.

poetry and the poet in the contemporary world. In this poem Leivaditis draws a parallel between poetry and excavation: writing poetry is like digging up a truth and bringing it to the sunlight. Such a process is rather dark and strenuous. Using this metaphor, Leivaditis emphasizes the exhaustion that follows the completion of the writing process. Composing poetry demands discipline as well as devotion to one's adopted task; that is why Leivaditis compares it to a job that has certain, daily and demanding, shifts. Furthermore, poetry is not a secondary activity; it is rather a work of vital importance (poetry is compared to coal, a good necessary to survival).

Leivaditis compares the poet to a heaver: both of them carry stuff; the poet, in specific, brings in material which he will use in order to contribute in the construction of a brand new society. The poet's work is as arduous as the menial job of a builder or a garbage collector. In the poem "Γένεσις (έκδοσις Β΄)" Leivaditis places poets next to workers co-operating with them in the creation of a new world.⁸¹

Moreover, as far as Leivaditis is concerned, the poem is like a document: it embodies the spirit of the poet's generation. In the case of the first post-war generation, the poem expresses and reminds people of the Civil War, the poverty and the loss of their loved ones. At the same time, however, it helps them, through a process of catharsis, to rise; it encourages them to fight for their rights. Therefore, the poet is dangerous: he has the power of speech, something threatening to the authorities. According to Leivaditis, poetry can and should undermine the shaky foundations of society. After all, according to Leivaditis, it is a means of inspection and criticism.

⁸¹ See: "Η δημιουργία του κόσμου δεν τελείωσε ακόμα. /Την αποτελειώνουν κάθε μέρα /οι εργάτες /κ' οι ποιητές". ("Γένεσις (έκδοσις Β΄)" in *Στίχοι Γραμμένοι σε Πακέτα Τσιγάρα*, pp. 153-162, p. 160).

Alexandrou promotes the idea of poetry as social criticism in his poems “Φρόντισε”⁸² [“Struggle”] and “Το Μαχαίρι”⁸³ [“The Knife”].

Φρόντισε



According to Alexandrou, the poet should not just reproduce reality the way it is, let alone be indifferent to it or embellish it. On the contrary, his task is to take a step further and reflect on his personal experience of it, emphasising the dark side of the civilisation.⁸⁴ Belonging in the same generation with Leivaditis, thus sharing the same experience of the post war city, Alexandrou believes that poetry should serve as a kit. The poet should never rest; he ought to act as if he were a doctor: it is his duty to revive the readers whose passivity over the authorities' injustice is compared by Alexandrou to the state of consciousness a patient falls into. Therefore, the poet does not have time to act gently. His interference should be immediate and drastic: his words should be powerful like a hit that would force the readers recover from their pathological detachment.

In the poem “Το Μαχαίρι” likewise, Alexandrou promotes the idea of that kind of poetry that is not afraid to name things the way they are.

⁸² See Aris Alexandrou, *Ποιήματα (1941-1974)*, 3rd ed., Athens: Ypsilon/ Books, 1991, p. 83.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 99.

⁸⁴ The expression is from Freud's work. See Sigmund Freud, *Ο Πολιτισμός Πηγή Δυστυχίας*, Niki Mylona (tran.), Athens: Nikas/ Elliniki Paideia, 2011.

Το μαχαίρι

In this poem, Alexandrou advises poets (and also, himself) not to be consumed by the flashing lights of their own inspiration and then miss their final goal. This, according to Alexandrou, is to create a sharp poem that threatens the authorities and can be utilized by the readers as a means of defending the truth.

Such arguments on poetry as a means of social criticism have been stated by a number of poets of the first post-war generation. Some have also highlighted the value of simplicity and their aversion against aestheticism and obscure language in their poems.

The idea of an art committed to the political and social cause was promoted by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1945 in the first issue of *Temps Modernes* magazine as well as by Albert Camus.⁸⁵ In Greece, specifically, it was championed by artists and writers of the first-post war generation.⁸⁶ On the other hand, quite a lot of scepticism has been expressed by some post-war poets about the necessity of poetry in crucial periods of history. For some, poetry, at these times, seemed to be a luxury that only the leading

⁸⁵ Thanasis Yalketsis, “Η Ευθύνη της Στράτευσης”, *Eleftherotypia*, February 6, 2011, <http://spoudasterion.pblogs.gr/tags/strateymeni-techni-gr.html>).

⁸⁶ Aimilios Chourmouziou, “Οι Πνευματικοί Άνθρωποι και η Ιστορική Στιγμή”, *Nea Estia* 50, 584(1951), pp. 1433-1435.

classes could afford.⁸⁷ Such a reflection is made in Anagnostakis' ("Επίλογος" ["Conclusion"]⁸⁸ and "Σε τι Βοηθά Λοιπόν..." ["To what it helps"]⁸⁹ and Alexandrou's ("Ποιητική" ["Poetics"])⁹⁰ poems. According to Dimitris Tziovas, specifically, Alexandrou's poem "Ποιητική"⁹¹ is "anti-poetical" in a sense that the poet seem to deny the usefulness of poetry, feeling guilty whenever he attempts to write.⁹² In this particular poem, which is being analyzed below in this section, Tziovas recognizes a contradictory approach of poetry, a division between "ethics and rhetoric, action and theory".⁹³ For Leivaditis, however, there is no such dilemma: for him, poetry is a form of action.

In his poem "Κριτική της Ποίησης", Leivaditis addresses a poor woman, peddlers in the street markets, figures that represent all those who try hard to make ends meet. In his poem "Ποιητική", Leivaditis, also, names his target readers: these are the illiterate, the peasants, the street sweepers, the coal miners, the laundresses, the workers at large, whom the poet calls "brothers" and "comrades".

*Γράφω για κείνους που δεν ξέρουν να διαβάσουν
για τους εργάτες που γυρίζουνε το βράδι με τα μάτια κόκκινα απ' τον άμμο
για τους χωριάτες, που ήπιαμε μαζί στα χάνια τις χειμωνιάτικες νύχτες του αγώνα
ενώ μακριά ακουγότανε το τουφεκίδι των συντρόφων μας.
Γράφω να με διαβάσουν αυτοί που μαζεύουν τα χαρτιά απ' τους δρόμους
και σκορπίζουνε τους σπόρους των αυριανών μας τραγουδιών
γράφω για τους καρβουνιάρηδες, για τους γυρολόγους και τις πλύστρες.
Γράφω για σας*

⁸⁷ See Dimitris Tziovas, *Από το Λυρισμό στο Μοντερνισμό. Πρόσληψη, Ρητορική και Ιστορία στη Νεοελληνική Ποίηση*, Athens: Nefeli, 2005, p.208.

⁸⁸ See "Επίλογος" (*Ο Στόχος*) in Manolis Anagnostakis, *Τα Ποιήματα 1941-1971*, Athens: Nefeli, 2000, p. 176. On the Civil War in Anagnostakis' poetry see Liana Theodoratou, *Writing Silences: Manolis Anagnostakis and the Greek Civil War* in Philip Carabott & Thanasis D. Sfikas (eds.), *The Greek Civil War. Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, London: Ashgate, 2004, pp. 239-251.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 153.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 60.

⁹¹ Tziovas traces the same attributes in Anagnostakis latter poem "Ποιητική" as well (ibid. p. 208).

⁹² Ibid. p. 209.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 217.

*αδέλφια μου στο θάνατο
 σύντροφοί μου στην ελπίδα
 που σας αγάπησα βαθειά κι απέραντα
 όπως ενώνεται κανείς με μια γυναίκα.*

Leivaditis' ideal readers all belong to the lowest social classes, received primary education or no education at all. Some of them cannot even read. This inadequacy, however, does not exclude them from poetry reading. Their lack of education is balanced by their living in the world, their experience of harsh working conditions in the workplace, their being exploited by employees. Realizing the indifference of the higher social classes and government, the division between different political parties, these readers have developed a strong sense of what constitutes a good –necessary- poem and a bad one.

Such readers, trapped, as Marx pointed out, in the capitalist system, thus obliged to spend a considerable amount of time and energy in their workplace on a daily basis, will not sacrifice their remaining spare time reading poetry, which they see as an elitist activity, unless they perceive it as necessary for their existence. For Leivaditis, it is the reader who chooses the poet rather than the other way around; the reader, then, is the one who determines the poem's language and context.

In his poems “Κριτική της Ποίησης” and “Ποιητική” the responsibility for the understanding of his poems is transferred from the reader to the poet; the latter is the one who should approach the former and persuade him that his work is worth-reading. At this point, the “adequate reader” of George Seferis seems to be replaced by Leivaditis' “adequate writer”.

According to Tziovas, Leivaditis perceives poetry as common good.⁹⁴ In other words, Leivaditis claimed, in the spiritual field, what Marx claimed in the financial field; that is the abolition of the social battle through the abrogation of any kind of (spiritual) ownership. Alexandrou also promotes the idea of poetry as common good to which everyone should have access to, in his poem “Ποιητική, ΙΙΙ”.

According to Alexandrou, a poem is indefinite, since, after it gets published, it becomes commonly available spreading from mouth to mouth and thus changes, gaining new variations, inflections and interpretations. The poet is well aware of the fact that his ideas are not original; as Seferis stressed out: “there is no virgin birth in art”. Alexandrou seems to indicate that poetry is everywhere and belongs to everybody; to him, a poem is not an artistic construction that requires extraordinary creativity and skills. The emphasis here is on the context, rather than on technique. In fact, Alexandrou argues that a poem is a truth that can be expressed by everybody who has suffered. In other words, the conception of a poem does not require a preferential intervention of the Muse, as it was further believed after Romanticism.

The demand for poetic common ownership is related to the demand for communication posed by the poets and writers of the first post-war generation who opt for simplicity as the ultimate virtue of a work of art. According to Ilinskaya, “the Greek poetry achieved such a degree of simplicity for the first time in its history during the first post-war period”,⁹⁵ while, according to Tziovas,⁹⁶ Ritsos was the first one to support the idea of “linguistic collectivism”.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid. 201.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 75. It can be argued, though, that other poets who appeared before 1940s, Kostas Varnalis for instance, used a simple language as well.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 215.

⁹⁷ I translate Tziovas’ “γλωσσικός κολλεκτιβισμός” as “linguistic collectivism”.

Leivaditis, in his poem “Απλή Κουβέντα” writes:

*Θα ήθελα να μιλήσω
απλά
όπως ξεκουμπώνει κανείς το πουκάμισό του
και δείχνει ένα παλιό σημάδι
όπως κρυώνει ο αγκώνας σου*

*γυρίζεις
και βλέπεις ότι είναι τρύπιος
όπως κάθεται στην πέτρα ένας σύντροφος και μπαλώνει τη φανέλλα του. (...)
Κάποτε ονειρευόμαστε να γίνουμε μεγάλοι ποιητές
μιλούσαμε για τον ήλιο.
Τώρα μας τρυπάει η καρδιά
σαν μια πρόκα στην αρβύλα μας. (...)
Δεν είμαστε πια ποιητές
παρά μονάχα
σύντροφοι
με μεγάλες πληγές και πιο μεγάλα όνειρα.*

Both in Alexandrou’s poem “Το Μαχαίρι” and Leivaditis’ “Απλή Κουβέντα” a concern about aesthetics is not absent: however, it should not prevail. Truth and communication, on the other hand, do. According to Leivaditis, poetry derives from one’s need to reveal himself and his trauma, encouraging others to do the same. Poetry has the power to absolve both the reader and the writer. In confessing his trauma, the writer finds a way to negotiate it, end even overcome it. At the same time, the reader identifying himself with it, recalls it, empathizes with the writer and finally comes to terms with his own loss. Poetry, in other words, is a form of therapy and social act. It allows people to share common experiences, feel less alienated as a result. In simple words, literature encourages people to come closer to one another.

To sum up, in the poetry written in this period (1952-1956), Leivaditis moves from the concentration camp poems of his first two collections to the presentation and criticism of the post-war society and from the autobiographical framework of his early

poems to the fictional setting of his latter poems of this period, negotiating the war in a symbolic manner, as a universal phenomenon. Despite this tendency, however, in some of his poems, there are specific references to the historical circumstances of his time (for instance the poem “Γουατεμάλα”).

In any case, Leivaditis promotes the idea of an extroverted and useful art and demands a Marxist perception of literature, achieved with recourse to simplicity, which according to the first post-war generation –Leivaditis included- is the ultimate virtue of poetry.

Extroversion (the idea of an art committed to the political and social reality of one’s time) and communication with the readers are the common understandings among the poets of this generation. What seems to differentiate them from one another is the intensity (and consistency) of their belief on the role poetry plays during troubled historical periods. Alexandrou, for instance, appears certain for the objectives of his art (see the poem “Το Μαχαίρι”), whereas, in some other poems he oscillates (“Ποιητική”). Even Anagnostakis, who generally is among the most consistent poets of his generation, as far as the necessity of poetry is concerned, he appears rather guilty in certain instances, feeling that he could be accused of using his art as a means of political –communist, in particular- propaganda (see “Ποιητική”). Leivaditis, on the other hand, is perhaps, as it is shown in this chapter, the one most certain about his ideology and how it connects to his art.

CHAPTER TWO

The failure of the communist revolution and its impact on Leivaditis' poetry of the second period (1957-1966)

As it has been mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Leivaditis' second period poetry has not been studied exclusively yet nor has it been seen into the continuum of his overall work. In this scope, the progress in his poetry has not been shown clearly, and through, its continuities and discontinuities. On the contrary, Leivaditis' literary production of the period seems to be squeezed between the production of the first and the third period in the sense that the literary production of the second period has been seen as a transition from the concentration camp (extroverted) poetry of the first period to the introverted work of the third period. The target of this chapter is dual: an approach, on one hand, of Leivaditis' second period poetry and, on the other hand, of its transitional points from the poetry of the previous period to that of this one.

Leivaditis' literary production during this period extends from 1957 to 1966 and consists of the poetic collections *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι. [Symphony # I]* (1957), *Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια [The Horse-Eyed Women]* (1958), *Καντάτα [Cantata]* (1960), *25η Παρωδία της Οδύσσειας [Book 25 of the Odyssey]* (1963) and *Οι Τελευταίοι [The Last]*⁹⁸ (1966), as well as of *Το Εκκρεμές* (1966), the only collection of short stories the poet has published. Into the literary production of this period Leivaditis introduces the section *Ποιήματα (1958-1964) [Poems (1958-1964)]*, short poems written at the same time with his lengthier compositional poems.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The translation of the title of the collections *25η Παρωδία της Οδύσσειας* and *Οι Τελευταίοι* in English is mine.

⁹⁹ See N. N. Trakakis (2014), pp. ix-xxx, p. xix. Trakakis sees in the poems of this section a turning point. Such a turning point is studied further above in this chapter. Zisis (ibid. p. 58) mentions that the

Historically, between the last collection of the first period *Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο* (1956) and the first collection of the second period *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι.* (1957), the 20th conference of the Soviet Communist Party and the crackdown on the Hungarian revolution by the Soviet tanks have intervened.¹⁰⁰

Inside Greece, the defeat of the Greek Communist Party is now a fact (1949) and the anticommunist propaganda of the right-wing party proceeds. Furthermore, the financial deterioration and unemployment plague the Greek population, migration, both inside and outside Greece, is a common phenomenon of that time. What is more, the movement is upset by harsh anti-working measures. Salaries are cut, strikes are suppressed and the certification of social esprits is instituted in the private and public sector.¹⁰¹ Censorship in the publishing world as well as in public life continues. Leivaditis' work of the second period concurs with the so called "Centrist Interval" which expired on 21 April 1967 when the military junta took office, led by the Colonels.¹⁰² Indicative of the turbulence of that time was the assassination of Grigoris Lambrakis in May, 1963.

Among the poetic elements that are introduced in Leivaditis' poetry of the second period and that are studied below are: the search of one's identity and what determines it (whether it is determined by others or it forms itself, whether it is shaped by one's actions or by one's dreams, emotions and thoughts that have not been transfigured into actions), man's mission in life and the problem of lost time, the role of fate (determinism) and choice (freedom) in one's life, the sexes and their

section *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)* was published in 1978; however, it was included in Leivaditis' poetry of the second period. Leivaditis' choice to integrate these poems –that include most of the common themes the poet develops in his poetry of the last period- could be seen as the poet's indication that the existentialist background the scholars has traced in his poetry of the third period emerged during his latter second period work.

¹⁰⁰ Dimitris Angelis, "Συχνά η Ψυχή σου σε Ζημίωσε Πολύ [Σχόλιο στην Καντάτα]", *To Dentro* 171-172 (autumn 2009), pp. 9-13, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Dora Menti, pp. 79-81.

¹⁰² Ibid. pp. 81- 82.

psychology, the privations they experience in their personal lives, the lack of meaning in the surrounding world and death as a common destiny of humanity. There is Leivaditis' transition from the front lines (his exile in the concentration camp and his participation in the battle of the communist party against the authorities) to the background of the historical events.

After the failure of the communist ideology, it is not Leivaditis' comrades who star in his second period poetry, nor is his wife, Maria. On the contrary, marginal groups are introduced to whom Leivaditis feels closely related. Blind men, beggars, prostitutes, individuals with special needs and flaws, either physical or mental, are the main characters in Leivaditis' poetry of the second period (and also, in his third one). Apart from these people, the poet's family members, especially his mother, appear now, revealing his turn from the macrocosm of society to the microcosm of his family. Besides, in a wider context of denial, the ideal love (the love the poet shared with his wife Maria in the previous period) is now substituted by vulgar love and several ephemeral relationships.

New grammatical and stylistic elements are used for indicating these emerging issues: present and future tenses are substituted by past ones, as the combative and visionary tone of the first period poetry is outplaced by a tone of reminiscence and reflection.

In this chapter I explore the poetics of Leivaditis' poetry of the second period via a consideration of these elements, which emerge during this period and are established in his poems in the next few years. Furthermore, via this approach I aim to re-evaluate the issue of the continuity in Leivaditis' oeuvre.

2.1. The end of camaraderie: from the ideal to the realistic “other”.

In Leivaditis' poetry of the first period, companionship was of vital importance to the fighter/ poet. Back then, he enjoyed camaraderie while being in the exile with the other exiled men with whom he shared the same communist beliefs. At the same time, his wife Maria stood by him during his absence in the concentration camp. In his poetry of the second period, Leivaditis' relationships are questioned: ephemeral relationships prevail that fail and, ultimately, disillusion the poet.

Leivaditis, in his first collection of this period, *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι*, which, according to Zisis, “serves as an inspector of the frigid and hostile post-war society”,¹⁰³ describes life in a city after the end of the recent Civil War: soldiers who return to their home town defeated and distraught, dogs that howl in dusky flats and neighbours, walls riddled by bullets, lorries that went up- torn, ruined ships, broken weapons and water pipes, desolate paved roads, deserted houses, beggars and prostitutes compound a setting of sheer terror. In this setting, which the poet cannot identify himself with,¹⁰⁴ yet for whose destruction he feels responsible,¹⁰⁵ advertisements promote a fake idea of prosperity that is satirized by the poet.

Οι φωτεινές ρεκλάμες ανοιγοκλείνουν τα μάτια τους

έκπληκτες πάνω απ' τη θλίψη των περαστικών: οδοντόκρεμες, παστίλιες για το βήχα,

μοσκοσάπουνα

τόσα πράγματα προσφέρει ο πολιτισμός για την ευτυχία μας

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 61.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. pp. 226- 227.

¹⁰⁵ In his works of this period and, more specifically, in this collection, Leivaditis constantly reflects on his, as well as of his comrades, responsibility (and that of the opposite political party) for the social division. Realising the vanity such divisions entail, the poet starts to reflect on the meaninglessness of life in general: “Μα ξαφνικά σαν άρχισε η αντεπίθεση και φύγαν και σ’ άφησαν όλοι/ κι έμεινες άοπλος και γυμνός στη μέση της ατέλειωτης τούτης νύχτας/ είδες με τρόμο, πως έπρεπε τώρα να σηκώσεις μοναχός, ολάκερη/ τη χαμένη ζωή σου.” (p. 225). See also Zisis (ibid. 64).

*και μεις επιμένουμε αναχρονιστικά
να 'μαστε δυστυχημένοι: εσώρουχα νάυλον, λοσιόν, γαλακτώματα για το δέρμα
όλα στην εποχή μας διαφημίζονται, γιατί όχι κι αυτό
«αγαπώ άλλον», με κόκκινα πελώρια γράμματα θα 'ταν υπέροχη διαφήμιση
πάνω απ' την είσοδο των νεκροταφείων-
α, δε θα βρεθεί λοιπόν μια διαφημιστική μεγαλοφυΐα να φωταγωγήσει πάνω απ' τον
πλανήτη μας
τη λέξη μοναξιά, δάκρυα, ταπείνωση.¹⁰⁶*

On the one hand, there are all these goods that are being advertised, which generate new needs in an ostentatious way (lights that turn on and off, huge posters, vivid colours, bold and capital sized fonts) and promote the idea of the successful, wealthy, beautiful and happy consumer and, on the other hand, there are the silent and depressed citizens of the post-war city that can barely make ends meet. Leivaditis uses the advertising language in order to parody it. The criticism here is again on the capitalism and the fact that it divides people into classes. This is the (constantly developing) city where Leivaditis wanders struggling to find somebody to share his life with; however, he fails.

For the poets of the first post-war generation, the defeat of the communist party and their return to the post-war city consist a landmark; these facts commonly recur in their poems, in different tones that fluctuate between bitterness and nostalgia of the communist ideology and its dispute. In case of Leivaditis, the tones fluctuate likewise; however, the poet does not become as aggressive in its criticism of the post-war reality as Anagnostakis.

More specifically, Leivaditis, in his first period poetry, despite the absurdity of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 231

the concentration camps, felt that there was a meaning in his life, which laid in his participation in the battles of the communist party against the official regime and in his vision for a just and class-free society. Since the first collection of this period, Leivaditis had no reason to doubt about unity among his comrades. It is in his collection *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι*, that the poet realises, for the first time¹⁰⁷ the alienation among his ex-comrades, as well as among people in general¹⁰⁸ and even within himself.¹⁰⁹ Struggling to answer the emerging question “who is to blame?”¹¹⁰ that persistently recur in the collection, and given the historical events that preceded, Leivaditis realises that all these that he believed in in the previous period do not exist anymore. Ideologies fail along with the revolution and the real motives of Leivaditis' ex-comrades are revealed, shedding light on the reasons for the defeat.¹¹¹

In the third collection of this period *Καντάτα*, Leivaditis answers the question he addressed in *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι*. In *Καντάτα*,¹¹² in which the poet, according to Filokyprou, re-defines his role in history and re-reads his past, it turns out that personal ambitions, envy, intrigues and distrust among comrades depressed solidarity, indicating that the communist revolution was a chimera.

Καθώς, λοιπόν, ξεφύγαμε τη Σκύλλα και τη Χάρυβδη, και βγήκαμε στ' ανοιχτά

¹⁰⁷ See: “Έχουν ήδη τεθεί οι όροι της υπαρξιακής περιπέτειας: ματαιότητα, απόγνωση, εγκλωβισμός σ’ ένα ατελέσφορο παρελθόν. Αναδρομικά ο αγώνας αντιμετωπίζεται λιγότερο ως πολιτικοκοινωνικός και περισσότερο ως υπαρξιακός: πάλη ενάντια στο κενό και στη ματαιότητα.” (Filokyprou, *ibid.* 104).

¹⁰⁸ See: “αμίλητα βαργεστημένα αντρόγυνα στα τραπεζάκια φτύνοντας τις φλούδες του πασατέμπου/ σα να φτύνουν την αηδία τους ο ένας στον άλλον” (*ibid.* p. 239).

¹⁰⁹ See: “Θα ’ταν αστείο, αλήθεια, κάποτε να γράγω την ιστορία μου- / χριστιανός κι άθεος, φιλόδοξος και δειλός, σύντροφος και κοινή πόρνη/ με το ’να χέρι ακουμπισμένο στις σημαίες μας και τ’ άλλο στα σκέλια των περαστικών γυναικών.” (*ibid.* p. 233). More on the issue of identity on the third chapter of the thesis.

¹¹⁰ See: “Ποιος ήταν, λοιπόν, ο ένοχος; Ας παρουσιαστεί, επιτέλους, ο ένοχος!” (*ibid.* p. 217).

¹¹¹ See: “Κι εσύ, παλιέ μου, χαμένη σύντροφε, η σφαίρα που σε πήρε, σκέφτομαι απόψε, /ίσως ήταν σοφή, και σε προφύλαξε /απ’ τον αυριανό εαυτό σου. (...) α, εσύ δεν είδες ποτέ το ίδιο το χέρι σου να σε σημαδεύει αλύπητα/ απ’ το βάθος των περασμένων.” (*Συμφωνία αρ.Ι*, p. 227). As Filokyprou states: “Ο εχθρός δεν είναι πια απέναντι, δεν είναι μόνο ο δεσμοφύλακας ή ο εντολέας του δήμιου. Ενεδρεύει και στα πιο αγαπημένα πρόσωπα, καθώς και στον ίδιο τον εαυτό που πρόδωσε την ιστορική του μοίρα ή την προσωπική του ζωή.” (*ibid.* 62).

¹¹² Filokyprou, *ibid.* 300.

*γνωρίσαμε άλλους πιο τρομερούς κινδύνους: των συντρόφων τη ξαφνική λιγοψυχιά,
του κουπολάτη την τυφλή υπακοή, ή την κρυφή φιλοδοξία του άλλου,
την εύκολη αναγνώριση, τον έπαινο του ταπεινού και την αδιαφορία του μεγάλου,
τη ζήλεια, την αμφιβολία, τη χίμαιρα, την πανουργία που χαμογελά και την υστεροβουλία που
δίνει,
κι απ' όλα πιο χειρότερο, όταν όχι η ελπίδα πια, μα κι αυτός ο ίδιος ο πόνος σου σ' αφίνει.*¹¹³

Leivaditis traces the reasons for the defeat of the communist party into the human nature. In his poem “1949 μ.Χ.” Leivaditis regards the end of the Civil War and the victory of the official regime over the communist party as a result of a chain of critical mistakes and betrayals among the communists.

*Βέβαια, όπως είναι γνωστό, οι προδοσίες και τα λάθη
τσάκισαν την επανάσταση. Ήμουν εικοσιεφτά χρονών.*¹¹⁴

In this poem, Leivaditis seems to believe that all revolutions are predetermined to fail, since, despite the initial selfless motives of the revolutionists, it is their personal interests and mistakes that finally prevail. According to the poet, it is the idealism of youth that makes it hard for one to realise on time the vanity of social battles. In his poem “Μάθημα Ιστορίας”,¹¹⁵ Leivaditis seems to promote the idea of determinism in human history (his identifying monkeys as his ancestors appears to promote such an interpretation), which appeared in his poetry of the first period already. In other words, he seems to argue that there is a natural law which human history is subjected to (which, according to Marx, equals to the prevalence of the ruling class over the proletariat) that, ultimately, disillusions even the most idealist

¹¹³ *Καντάτα*, p. 306.

¹¹⁴ *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 393.

¹¹⁵ See: “Στο βάθος του χρόνου ήμουν πιθήκος./ Ύστερα ανακάλυπα τα εργαλεία./ Πολέμησα σταυροφόρος στην Ιερουσαλήμ/ βίασα γυναίκες, κήρυξα την ισότητα, με σταύρωσαν./ Τον Οχτώβρη του '17 έκλαψα από ατελείωτη ευτυχία.// Τώρα με τα κουρέλια που μου απέμειναν/ προσπαθώ να φτιάξω ένα ομοίωμα ανθρώπου.” (*Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 395).

individuals among people. The fact that determinism is applicable to every time and place in human history is something which Leivaditis refers to further in the collection that follows *Καντάτα, 25η Παρωδία της Οδύσσειας*.

In this collection, the poet narrates his own journey, the adventure he and his mates underwent during the years of the Civil War, as well as its privations, as if he were the Odysseus of Homer's epic.¹¹⁶ Leivaditis narrates the mistrust among the communists, their hidden motives and ambitions and its consequences in the outcome of the war, the fear of oblivion and that of suppression of one's heroic acts that threatens every human being. Apart from these, the poet recalls all his and his mates' visions that did not come true; “όσα δε ζήσαμε, αυτά μας ανήκουν”, he states.¹¹⁷ It is not without significance that out of Homer's epics, Leivaditis chooses to refer his readers to the *Odyssey* instead of the *Iliad*: the title in itself implies that Leivaditis' narration is focused not on the great victory as a result of a common struggle but on his lonely wandering and return from his several exiles to post-war city of Athens. What is more, according to Filokyprou¹¹⁸ (2012:57), the poet, and in the name of his comrades, he realises their inability to return to the past and/ or in their unfulfilled dreams. Everything seems to have been completed, the past is over, and all one can do is to reflect on it and (re)define it.

The last collection of this period *Οι Τελευταίοι*, like the preceding collections, is about the cancellations that not only a post-war man but a human being in general experiences. In this collection, Leivaditis introduces several heroes, all of whom,

¹¹⁶ See David Ricks, “Homer in the Greek Civil War (1946-1949)” in Barbara Graziosi & Emily Greenwood (eds.), *Homer in the Twentieth Century. Between World Literature and the Western Canon*, Oxford University Press: 2007, pp. 231-244

¹¹⁷ See p. 359. In his poetry of the third period, Leivaditis highlights the importance of his unfulfilled wishes and the prevalence of imagination and dreams over reality.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 57.

according to Zisis¹¹⁹ represent different types of disenchantment. For instance, the former communist Stefanos discusses the end of social battles and the beginning of a new anti-heroic era;¹²⁰ Gabriel argues the disillusionments that the transition from adolescence to adulthood entails;¹²¹ Grigoris¹²² and Anna¹²³ recall the dead ends lovers have to deal with as well as the bitter end of love, while Elisavet mesmerises the unfulfilled dreams of a human being that haunt one's reality.¹²⁴ What is more, the surprising, at a first glance, introduction of Clytemnestra muddles reality with drama (theatre, in specific) highlighting the drama of the human life and his inability to distinguish between reality and imagination.¹²⁵

Leivaditis does not become judgmental of his former comrades, when he recalls their ambitions, pusillanimity and betrayals that led the communist revolution to fail. On the contrary, he is well aware of human nature and man's ambivalence between individualism and socialisation; he realises that one, even though he wishes to love and be loved and to feel a sense of belonging, cannot overcome one's fears and one's avidity to stand out. Such an ambivalence renders people tragic, hampering them from self-fulfilling.

It is not only brotherhood that is questioned in the poetry of this period; love,

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 93.

¹²⁰ See: "Ετούτη τη φορά, καθώς η μάχη θα καθόριζε για πάντα τη ζωή μας, προσπαθήσαμε να τα προβλέψουμε όλα-/ στρατηγική και ταχτική, τις εφεδρείες, τις πιθανές κινήσεις του εχθρού,/ τη διαμόρφωση του εδάφους, ακόμα και τις καιρικές συνθήκες,/ όλα προσεχτικά μελετημένα και, σχεδόν, ευνοϊκά. Κι όμως ηττηθήκαμε! (...)" (ibid. p. 447)

¹²¹ See: "(...) ενώ στην άκρη ο καναπές που καθισμένος κάποτε έκλεινα τα μάτια/ και στεφόμουν βασιλιάς του κόσμου, είναι τώρα το ανάχωμα ενός τάφου/ που έθαψαν όλη την εφηβική παντοδυναμία μου." (ibid. p. 456).

¹²² See: "Και συχνά ενώ βρίσκεσαι στο κρεβάτι με μια γυναίκα (...) σηκώνεσαι αθόρυβα και φεύγεις απ' την πίσω πόρτα/ αφήνοντας στη θέση σου έναν καθρέφτη. Γιατί οι άνθρωποι μόνο όταν βλέπουν τον εαυτό τους μέσα σου/ βεβαιώνονται ότι κι εσύ υπάρχεις". (ibid. p. 456).

¹²³ See: "Συχνά γονάτιζε και μου φιλούσε τα πόδια κι έκλαιγε-/ αλλά ήταν στιγμές, μες στο χαμηλωμένο φως της κάμαρας/ που 'βλεπα μες στα μάτια του έναν πόνο αόριστο και τρομαχτικό/ σα να 'θελε να με ρίξει στο κρεβάτι ενός άλλου- όχι, όχι για την αμαρτία/ αλλά για να συντρίψει μέσα του αυτό το πνιγηρό αίσθημα/ της ιδιοκτησίας που τον υποδούλωνε σε μένα" (ibid. p. 454).

¹²⁴ See: "Πεθαίνουν τα όνειρά μας μέσα στην εκπλήρωση./ Και μόνο εκείνα τ' άλλα, που η τύχη ή έστω οι περιστάσεις/ τους αρνήθηκαν την ύπαρξη, εκείνα ζουν για πάντα." (ibid. p. 451).

¹²⁵ According to Filokyprou (ibid. p. 139) it is in this collection, mainly, that experience and imagination start to mingle.

which was considered to be ideal in Leivaditis' poetry of the first period, now is questioned likewise. In this period, love is not the only motive that makes people create relationships, nor does it last forever. The collection *Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια* is indicative of the turn that takes place in Leivaditis' poetry as far as his belief on love is concerned.

In the collection *Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια*, which, according to the stage directions, given by the poet at the text that accompanies his poem, takes place in a hotel, Leivaditis narrates an extramarital relationship of a woman. Using the cover of this relationships, Leivaditis studies the temperament of the two sexes and their roles as they are constructed by society, in great contrast to his poetry of the first period where the female figure was seen in an idealistic manner.

More specifically, in Leivaditis' collection of the first period, *Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας*, Maria, the female figure represents the wife, lover, friend and, even arguably, the poet's mother. The roles attributed to her are mostly virtuous, and traditionally considered by society as “feminine” (being caring, patient, understanding, unconditional loving), though certain “masculine” characteristics are also given to her by the poet. She thus appears to be the epitome of femininity while at the same time not dependent on her husband. In fact, she is able to make ends meet on her own as if she were a man herself.¹²⁶ Leivaditis used to regard his partner as equal to him, and his faith on her and their relationship was a given. He did not expect her to be a virgin, nor did he feel jealous of her previous relationships.¹²⁷ In the context of this collection therefore, there appears to be no sign of a battle between the two sexes. Especially in the poetry written during this first period, women are not

¹²⁶ See: “φοβούνται τα χέρια σου που ξέρουν ν’ αγκαλιάζουν τόσο τρυφερά/ και να μοχτούνε τόσο αντρίκια” (*Αυτό το Αστέρι Είναι για Όλους μας*, p. 69).

¹²⁷ See: “θα μπορούσα ακόμα και να χαμογελάσω/ στον άντρα που σ’ έχει δει γυμνή πριν από μένα/ να του χαμογελάσω, που του δόθηκε μια τόσο ατελείωτη ευτυχία.” (ibid. p. 65).

treated as objects; and even though Maria is described as beautiful, her outward appearance is only one aspect of her. Leivaditis makes only a few comments on her looks and in a way that do not diminish her. On the contrary, the poet emphasizes her character. He does not hide from her his experience of the concentration camp but used to confide in her everything, his feelings and his thoughts, explaining choices made and actions taken, as if she is a male friend; Maria, then remains central part in his life.

The first signs of Leivaditis' losing faith in an idealized love can be traced in his poem “Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” from the last collection of this first period, *Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο*. In this poem, a soldier's wife writes him a letter, saying that, even though she still loved him, she could not make ends meet on her own after his enlistment, and to leave him and marry someone else.¹²⁸ Financial security is certainly a key motive, among others, that leads people to create a relationship.

In the poetry of the second period, Leivaditis illustrates the complexities of female psychology. Women enter relationships for several reasons: because they want to forget about their previous lover or to revenge his betrayal; out of boredom or out of need to live their life to the fullest. “Γιατί η ζωή είναι λίγη και πρέπει να τη γλεντάει κανείς”, Leivaditis argues.¹²⁹ Motives which are socially acknowledged as “masculine”, with their basis, presumably, in biology, are considered by the poet as applying to women as well. In the course of Leivaditis' poetic production, gender stereotypes are always called into question.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 183. In this poem, Leivaditis does not criticize the soldier's wife for abandoning him. On the contrary, he seems to realise that she faces a difficult moral dilemma; he sees her action as a self-sacrifice, since she chooses to leave her husband for the sake of her children's survival. Circumstances, and the financial factor in particular, for the first time in this poem, seem to prevail over people and feelings.

¹²⁹ *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι.*, p. 223.

In his poetry of the second period, Leivaditis represents woman as a well-rounded human being, with her virtues and flaws. He narrates woman's struggle to be and remain attractive so as not to get abandoned by her lover,¹³⁰ her romantic side (her trust on ideal love)¹³¹ as well as her cruelty to those who love her.¹³²

Men, on the other hand, are simpler, arguably, than women; according to Leivaditis, man is driven by his desire for adventure and conquest.¹³³ His actions are in pursuit of a climax and as soon as he reaches it, he loses interest and directs his energies on to another goal.¹³⁴ For this reason, according to Leivaditis, relationships fail: men strive for intensity, while women for duration; the first insist on immediate satisfaction, while the latter's desire is builds up gradually.

Men's tendency to unattainable targets precludes the formation of permanent relationships; on the contrary, it leads them to several sexual encounters that lack emotion. The result is distance, alienation.¹³⁵

According to Leivaditis however, ephemeral relationships are far more sincere than long-term ones which seem to continue because of force of habit, out of fear of change as well as adherence to social norms that serve only the needs of an official regime. In the collection *Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια* and in other poems of this

¹³⁰ See: “Αν μας έβλεπε κανείς το βράδι, όταν μένουμε μονάχες/ και βγάζουμε τις φουρκέτες, τις ζαρτιέρες, και κρεμάμε/ στην κρεμάστρα το πανωφόρι κι αυτήν τη βαμένη μάσκα/ που μας φόρεσαν, εδώ και αιώνες τώρα, οι άντρες για να τους αρέσουμε-/ αν μας έβλεπαν, θα τρόμαζαν μπροστά σε τούτο το γυμνό, κουρασμένο πρόσωπο./ Αχ, γυναίκες, έρημες,/ κανείς δεν έμαθε ποτέ πόση αγωνία κρύβεται πίσω απ’ τη λαγνεία, ή την υστεροβουλία μας.” (*Καντάτα*, p. 311).

¹³¹ See: “περηφανευτήκαμε πως έχουμε υψηλές γνωριμίες/ διηγηθήκαμε έρωτες φανταστικούς (...) Και πάντοτε γυρεύαμε το καλύτερο.” (ibid. p. 311).

¹³² See: “αυτούς που είχαν την ανάγκη μας τους παιδέψαμε” (ibid. p. 311).

¹³³ See: “Είδες ποτέ σου, αλήθεια, στρατιώτες να γυρίζουν απόναν πόλεμο που χάθηκε/ νικημένοι και σιωπηλοί, πηγαίνοντας δυο- δυο γιατί φοβούνται τη μοναξιά/ κοιτάζοντας άπληστα τριγύρω για να μη θυμούνται/ κλέβοντας τα χωριά και βιάζοντας τις γυναίκες/ στο βάθος μονάχα για να νοιώσουν λίγο απ’ παλιό πυρετό της μάχης (...)” (*Συμφωνία*, αρ. I, p. 212).

¹³⁴ See: “Κι άντρες, που όσο κι αν προσπάθησαν να δοθούν, δεν κατορθώσανε/ παρά να συνεχίζουν την πανάρχαιη αρσενική τρέλα της απόχτησης” (*Συμφωνία* αρ. I, p. 223).

¹³⁵ It is for the first time in his poetry of this period that Leivaditis talks about the relationship between the sexes borrowing the vocabulary/ imagery from the battle field in order to promote the idea of the war between them. See: “ένα ζευγάρι ζαρτιέρες/ σκόρπιες φουρκέτες/ πλήθος από γυναικεία μικροπράγματα/ σν ένας σιωπηλός τρυφερός στρατός/ που έπεσε ηρωικά/ στο αιώνιο υπέροχο Βατερλώ της αρετής” (*Συμφωνία* αρ. I, p. 238).

period, Leivaditis castigates social hypocrisy: on the one hand, people's puritanism, evident by their strong disapproval of extramarital relationships, or even their turning a blind eye on the domestic misery. On the other hand, the official institutions further aim to suppress individuals and exercise control under the excuse of keeping order, peace within a society.

For the first time, in this period of his work, the poet focuses on marital bonds and the routines and negative emotions that forced cohabitation may cause to the couple. In fact, the deconstruction of love due to the institution of marriage, which is forced in certain cases due to social and financial reasons, is central in the second period of Leivaditis' poetry. The poems “Ο Αιώνιος Διάλογος”¹³⁶ and “Ο Διάλογος Δεν Είναι Αιώνιος”,¹³⁷ which follow one another, are indicative of the poet's constant reflection on people's motives, and secret wishes, as well as on their relationships, the strenuous thoughts that speak of defeatism in the face of a situation that appears unchanging.

In the first of these two poems the poet sheds light on a typical day of a married couple which becomes consolidated through repetition, entrenching man's dominance over his wife. Following the gender stereotypes, the spouse performs her role as a housekeeper: she has cooked lunch and she waits for her husband to return home. He, on the other hand, holds a job and is thus the one who has the financial and, therefore, total control of her life. Totally dependent on her husband, the woman has to satisfy his sexual needs regardless of her feelings; as if she were a sexual object, existing exclusively for him. After intercourse, the man secludes himself from his wife - dreaming of great accomplishments (he expresses his wish to become a god), while the woman wishes to become pregnant. At the end of this poem, both of

¹³⁶ *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 406.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 407.

them, go to sleep disillusioned.

In the second poem, the routine of the married couple of the previous poem seems to be interrupted suddenly by the woman's realisation that she is trapped in a relationship that follows the pattern of “dominance and subordination”. She feels that as long as she is young, thus sexually attractive, she will be obliged to succumb and satisfy her husband. As far as his approach on marriage is concerned, Leivaditis appears to be influenced, basically, by Engels¹³⁸ and his theory that women are oppressed by men who are dominant both in the workplace, over the other men, and at home; woman's role into the family, according to Engels, is supplementary due to the fact that she cannot work, as the radical technical developments excluded her from the job market. Therefore, her only outlet is to become her husband's private prostitute. A prospective scholar of Leivaditis' work could trace the poet's possible influence by the second wave feminism and more specifically, by Simone de Beauvoir¹³⁹ and Emma Goldman.

According to Goldman, women who get married tend to become their husbands' slaves/ prostitutes. What differentiates slaves/prostitutes to married women is the fact that former are not dependent on their master/client. By the time they have finished their work, they are free to do whatever they choose to. Sometimes, they even have the ability to reject a client or to ask for better working conditions via strikes. Married women, on the other hand, are not able to act this way. Their bodies, as well as their free time and their whole lives in general are determined by their

¹³⁸ See Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Pat Brewer (ed.), Australia: Resistance Books, 2004, pp.45-84.

¹³⁹ In this collection of Leivaditis the woman attempts to challenge the social construction of women as the “other” who struggles to adjust to the standards of “normality”. De Beauvoir's influence on Leivaditis can, also, be traced in his recognising different kind of women (apart from the traditional one that is, the faithful wife and mother) in his poetry of this period (the narcissist woman, the woman in love, the secretive one). By doing this, Leivaditis indicates, as De Beauvoir did, the wrong paths that women follow in their pursuit of independence. See, Simone de Beauvoir, *Το Δεύτερο Φύλο*, Kiriakos Simopoulos (tran.), Athens: Glaros, 1979, pp. 681-731.

husbands who can very well be abusive over them.¹⁴⁰

*Ένα ζευγάρι βγαίνει αγκαλιασμένο από κάποιο κέντρο,
τα φώτα των αυτοκινήτων τους δίνουν μια στιγμή
το σπασμένο, ωχρό προσωπείο της Ηλέκτρας και του Ορέστη, λίγο πριν απ' την αναπότρεπτη
πράξη,
ενώ, πελώριες κι αόρατες, σαν Ερινύες του παραμονεύουν στο βάθος του δρόμου
η κούραση, η μοιχεία- κι η συνήθεια.*

*Ποιος είναι, λοιπόν, αυτός που μένει στο ίδιο σπίτι με σένα,
που τρώει στο ίδιο τραπέζι με σένα, που κοιμάται στο ίδιο κρεβάτι με σένα; Δεν τον γνώρισες
ποτέ.¹⁴¹*

and above

*Και κάθε που ζυπνάνε τη νύχτα,
συλλογίζονται γι αυτό το ξένο πρόσωπο που κοιμάται δίπλα τους: «αν τουλάχιστον
πέθαινε».¹⁴²*

Comparing lovers with the heroes of ancient Greek drama, Leivaditis highlights the tragedy of human relationships, their anticipated failure¹⁴³ irrespective

¹⁴⁰ See the essays “The Traffic in Women” and “The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation” in Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association 1910. For a Greek translation of these essays, see: Emma Goldman, *Για το Λαθρεμπόριο Γυναικών. Η Τραγωδία της Γυναικείας Χειραφέτησης*, Katerina Schina (tran.), Athens: Potamos 2010. See also “Marriage and Love” in Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association 1910. For the Greek translation of this essay see: Emma Goldman, “Γάμος και Έρωτας” in: Lee Corner, Evelyn Reed, Emma Goldman, *Ο Μύθος της Μητρότητας*, Nikos Alexiou (tran.), Athens: Eleftheuros Typos, 1980. In this essay Goldman writes about the influence of social norms on women and on the construction of their perception of love and marriage. According to her, love and marriage are irreconcilable by nature: the former is an instinct, while the latter is a form of patriarchy that subordinates women to men and alienates them from their inner selves. Goldman argues that women cannot escape the social pressure, exerted by the social media and church, and, as a result, even the most liberal among them, get married sooner or later, ending up being isolated from the world, incapable of earning money on their own. They become thus dependent –socially, financially, mentally and physically – on their husbands and, experience constant humiliations. Love, on the other hand, is a social taboo: it is often forbidden especially to women; the myth of chastity has been promoted to them as a prerequisite to a future marriage (ibid. pp.36-38).

¹⁴¹ *Καντάτα*, p. 330.

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 333.

¹⁴³ See: “Και πάντα ο χρόνος/ από δυο ανθρώπους που αγαπιόντουσαν παράφορα/ κάνοντας σε λίγο δυο αδιάφορους ξένους/ που σ’ άλλα τώρα βαθειά κρεβάτια πάνε να πλαγιάσουν/ και σμίγουν και χωρίζουν οι άνθρωποι/ και δεν παίρνει τίποτα ο ένας απ’ τον άλλο. Γιατί ο έρωτας/ είναι ο πιο δύσκολος δρόμος να γνωριστούν” (*Συμφωνία αρ. I.*, p. 224).

of the lovers' desperate attempt to sustain them.¹⁴⁴

*Είχαμε τόσοι ανάγκη απ' αυτό το πάθος που μας εξουθένωνε
κι ας νοιώθαμε στο βάθος πως εμείς το σπρώχνουμε ως την υπερβολή
σα δυο ασήμαντους θλιβερούς θεατρίνους που παίζοντας κάποτε
μια μεγάλη παράφορη σκηνή του Σαίξπηρ
είναι ότι πιο όμορφο έχουν ζήσει
σ' όλη τους τη ζωή.¹⁴⁵*

According to Camus,¹⁴⁶ lack of meaning in people's lives – in the sense that everything is predetermined to end, relationships to fail, people to die – and also, people's conscious choice to keep on living despite being aware of life's absurdity, gives our existence a tragic dimension: it is that common fate that equates all human beings and leads them to approach each other, to become friends, to fall in love. As Leivaditis states: “ερχόμαστε απ' την παλαιολιθική αρπαγή κι αρχίζουμε την ανθρώπινη φιλία”.¹⁴⁷

In Leivaditis' poem “Παιδική Άμυνα”¹⁴⁸ a boy and a girl, after the burial of their friend, find themselves making love pushed by erotic drive that comes as a counterweight to the death drive.¹⁴⁹ Love is seen as a revolutionary act against the reign of depravation and death. Through *eros*, lovers experience a brief state of immortality thus they prevail over death for a little while. In his collection *Συμφωνία αρ.* I the poet writes: “γιατί οι άνθρωποι, σύντροφε, υπάρχουν από τη στιγμή που βρίσκουν μία θέση στη ζωή των άλλων”.¹⁵⁰

Leivaditis seems to argue that man truly exists as long as he is visible to members of his community, in the sense that he has an active, positive role in the lives

¹⁴⁴ See «Αναπότρεπτο», p. 387.

¹⁴⁵ *Συμφωνία, αρ. I*, p. 226.

¹⁴⁶ Albert Camus, *Ο Μύθος του Σίσυφου. Δοκίμιο για το Παράλογο*, Niki Karakitsou-DouzeMaria Kasabaloglou & Romblain (eds), Athens: Kastanioti, 2007.

¹⁴⁷ *Καντάτα*, p. 321.

¹⁴⁸ *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 411.

¹⁴⁹ According to Freud, the instincts of life and death are on constant fight both inside humans, and nature.

¹⁵⁰ *Συμφωνία αρ. I*, p. 225.

of others. It is not without meaning the fact that Leivaditis uses the verb “υπάρχουν” (“exist” instead of “be”) which seems to derive from philosophical theories associated with existentialism. Existentialist thought was widespread in Greece during the first post war period.¹⁵¹ More specifically, Leivaditis seems to agree with Sartre’s theory, according to whom, “existence precedes essence”.¹⁵² For him, man should be treated neither as an abstract idea of essence nor as a human being with inherent – and thus, static and permanent – attributes but as an individual whose existence is shaped by his personal actions which, ultimately, define him. Existentialists argued that one’s existence is realized by one’s actual presence in the world, arguing moreover that tangible results should prevail over vision and theoretical ideas and concepts.

Leivaditis indeed participates in the communist struggle against the official regime in the first period of his poetry, a regime that is bound to fail; and, in the poetry composed in the second period, emotional bonds with women that are predetermined to end, are considered. What these thematic aspects of his work appear to support, is the idea that man is defined by others, and dependent on them. This idea seems to be developed further in his collection of short stories, *To Εκκρεμές* where he consistently studies the issues of personal freedom and identity. Such issues are approached in the next chapter of this thesis.

In conclusion, in this second period Leivaditis proceeds to question beliefs expressed in works of the first period especially on the communist party, on comradeship and love and arguably attempts a new approach on them. Leivaditis here

¹⁵¹ See Mitsos Lygizos, *Προβληματισμοί στην Ποίηση. Δοκίμια*, Athens: Dodoni, 1976. Lygizos refers to the feeling of despair the post-war poets experience in the aftermath of the war: “Η μεταπολεμική λογοτεχνία βρήκε στον υπαρξισμό εκμεταλλεύσιμο πεδίο γι αρκετούς λόγους κι ένας απ’ τους πιο ισχυρούς είναι ο εξής: (...) αίσθημα της απελπισίας. Το αίσθημα της απελπισίας είναι ακριβώς εκείνο που έφερε στην επιφάνεια το αίτημα του υπαρξισμού κι έκανε τόσο έντονη την παρουσία του (...). Ο υπαρξισμός -και ειδικότερα ο υπαρξισμός του Σαρτρ- ευαγγελίζεται ένα είδος ελευθερίας που ταίριαζε στην ατμόσφαιρα του μεταπολεμικού άγχους: ευαγγελίζεται “την ελευθερία του ατόμου χωρίς όρια”. (ibid. p. 112).

¹⁵² See Jean Paul Sartre, *Ο Υπαρξισμός είναι ένας ανθρωπισμός*, Stamatiou Kostas (trans.), Athens: Arsenidis, 2011, pp. 18-19 and p. 23.

does not limit himself to reminiscing about the naïve days of youth, nor does he lose his faith in humanity; on the contrary, this returns him to a thorough examination of the psychology of man and the motives behind one's actions. Far from expecting people to be perfect, Leivaditis discovers humble origins, which explain the existence of character flaws and virtues which in themselves lead them not only to errors but also, great achievements. Furthermore, Leivaditis studies the psychological basis and limitations imposed by, gender stereotypes.

On the one hand, the poet sees women trapped in their keeping to a certain image, surrounded by clothing and make up products, constantly worrying about the possibility of a lover rejecting them. In a capitalist society, where people's value is itself estimated by laws of supply and demand, in a world where lust, alongside money, seems to be the motivating force, women cannot attempt spiritual development; on the contrary, they struggle to increase their purchasing power, essentially thus perpetuating an oppressive, patriarchal system, and a consumerist society. On the other hand, women also become the ones who abandon their men or cheat on them. They form ephemeral sexual relationships with other men, or even become prostitutes.

However, Leivaditis does not limit female oppression to the financial field but he sees it in a wider context and everywhere in women's life, from the domestic environment, where they exist subordinate to their husbands, to the workplace where women are exploited financially and experience sexual harassment by their employers to their often degrading representation in the hands of the media which renders them both the subjects and the objects of consumerism.

In any case, Leivaditis aims to disengage people from fixations and idealisations which erase their personal qualities and strengths in the name of the so-

called perfection. He explores, in his poetry, what defines people, what may influence their ideology, questions of class and gender; he desires to return to them their personal identities before the coming of oblivion. The specter of death appears for the time in Leivaditis' in this period of the poet's work.

2.2. From social mission to the search for a personal identity

In the poems of this second period, as well as in his collection *To Εκκρεμές*, Leivaditis refers to a mission that he has to, although he often cannot, accomplish. This sense of a failed mission causes Leivaditis feelings of great stress, guilt and despair.

In his first period, this mission was related to participation in the communist revolution against the official regime, a revolution that, ultimately, failed. Back then Leivaditis used to be both a fighter, since he actually took part in the revolution and gave voice to its protagonists, via his political and social poetry of that time.¹⁵³ After the communists' defeat, Leivaditis lost his role as a fighter, while his role as a political poet is arguably at stake, now that his poetic work is deprived of its context/ ideology.

As a result of this defeat, Leivaditis appears to experience an identity crisis. Having lost his role as a fighter, which used to define him, Leivaditis fails to comprehend who he really is:

*Ποιος είσαι, λοιπόν, πίσω απ' αυτό το πρόσωπο που η κάθε μέρα τ' αλλάζει,
ποιος είσαι πίσω απ' τις πράξεις που κάνεις τη μέρα, πίσω απ' τις πράξεις που συλλογίζεσαι τη
νύχτα.
Αρίθμητα πρόσωπα μέσα σου, καθένα ζητάει να υπάρξει
σκοτώνοντας το άλλο- ποιο είναι το αληθινό; Ποιο είναι αυτό το πρόσωπο*

¹⁵³ In Filokyprou's words: "Ως πρωταρχικό χρέος του ποιητή προβάλλεται, στις πρώτες συλλογές, η συμμετοχή του στους λαϊκούς αγώνες, ενώ ένα δεύτερο, συμπληρωματικό, είναι να καταστήσει το έργο του φορέα συλλογικής μνήμης." (ibid. p. 32).

*που κανείς καθρέφτης δεν μπορεί να σου το δώσει;
Αρπαγές, βιαιότητες, τρόμοι, εγκλήματα που δεν έκανες
ορίζουν το αίμα σου. Κάθε χειρονομία σου είναι βαρειά
από χιλιάδες ξένα κι άγνωστα πεπρωμένα. (...)*¹⁵⁴

It is worth mentioning that Leivaditis highlights, in this poem, a part of him that is constantly changing as well as a host of varied characters which exist concurrently inside him, fighting one another. There appear to be two principal obstacles within the poet's struggle for self-fulfilment: on the one hand, time: the passage of which, changes man under the light of his own experiences. On the other hand, there are conflicting wishes, demanding simultaneously to be satisfied; such a dilemma renders man helpless and desperate, since there is no sign that can help him make the right choice nor can he designate someone else to act on his behalf. In this sense, man is free to decide as well as assume responsibility for his own decisions. However, such a freedom and the responsibility that lays in it is frightening. The possibility of a wrong decision makes one feel guilty while reflecting over and over again on it and its consequences.¹⁵⁵

Gradually, the co-existence of such different selves inside the poet leads to themes of duality. The poems “Πίνακας Αγνώστου Ζωγράφου”¹⁵⁶ and “Ο Άλλος”¹⁵⁷ are indicative of this sense of a divided self. In the first one, Leivaditis witnesses the different selves inside him as two acrobats that hate one another to death but as the show (his art) begins, they become reconciled «πάνω απ’ το μίσος και τον κίνδυνο και

¹⁵⁴ “Μικρή Υπαρξιακή Παρένθεση”, *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 388.

¹⁵⁵ Another point worth mentioning, which exactly confirms the strenuous phase of introspection the poet undergoes during this period, is that Leivaditis reflects not only on his actions (actions that are visible and thus open to criticism), but also on the motives behind these actions before he comes to evaluate them as personal victories or defeats. According to the poem “Μικρή Υπαρξιακή Παρένθεση” (ibid. p.388), for instance, not causing someone harm is not necessarily regarded by the poet as evidence of kindness, a result of free will, but might as well be due to fear of being punished, or due to personal interest. At this point, Leivaditis raises a significant moral question: are badly motivated beneficial actions, to be considered as good or bad actions, ultimately? See Zisis, ibid. 87.

¹⁵⁶ *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 414.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 432-433.

το θαυμασμό και τον χρόνο».

These contradictions might prove productive for the poet's work, on a personal level however, they are distressing. In Leivaditis' prose poem “Ο Άλλος” the poet feels as if another, dark self, inside him makes the choices on his behalf. The poet's alter ego is the one that drives him, against his will, towards bad actions that eventually humiliate him and even push him to thoughts of suicide.

In the poem “Τετέλεσται...”,¹⁵⁸ Leivaditis, reflecting on his past, feels that somebody else has lived his life instead of him, leaving him before death, without memories to call his own.

*Όλα τόσο μακρινά, τόσο θαμπά, τόσο ανεπίστρεπτα
σα να 'ζησε τη ζωή μου ένας άλλος και μένα δε μου δόθηκε, παρά μονάχα
να πεθάνω.*

Unable to account for one's own past means, according to the existentialists, that one's life is inauthentic. For existentialists, since one's past is an integral part of one's identity, to deny it implies a denial of one's identity as well. On the other hand, defining a man exclusively through his past means ignoring a significant part of one's present and future realities, and entails the risk of detaching one from his present.¹⁵⁹

Self-discovery, facticity (accepting one's own attributes, both chosen ones and the non-chosen ones that might well define us, e.g. past actions, class and gender) and authenticity¹⁶⁰ becomes Leivaditis' mission in his second period of creative production. In certain poems, this mission becomes even more particular: the poet's goal is to become humble before a God to whom he looks up. In other words, man

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 435.

¹⁵⁹ See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Existentialism, 2.1. Facticity and Transcendence.

¹⁶⁰ See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Existentialism, 2.3. Authenticity. According to existentialists, authenticity involves the idea of creating oneself and living in accordance to that self, after having overcome what is supposed to define him. More on the issues of existentialism see the third chapter of the thesis.

should imitate the example of God and get rid of what prevents him from doing so, his ambitions and bad motives, and gradually get back to what he used to be before his interference with others. In any case, all his past beliefs, his faith in love, brotherhood, the force of ideas, in the end harmed him more than anything else.¹⁶¹ Taking the latter definition of ‘mission’ into account, one realizes the reason why the poet in *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι.* chooses, as his role models in his struggle for self-fulfillment not traditional heroes but anti-heroes, those live in the margins of the society and often get humiliated by others.¹⁶²

In *Συμφωνία αρ. Ι.*¹⁶³ Leivaditis highlights the childlike naivety of madmen¹⁶⁴ and the helplessness of the blind¹⁶⁵ which others may take advantage of. Leivaditis feels closely related to people who have been mistreated: while reflecting on the defeat of the communist party and the sense of emptiness resulting from the failure of its ideology, the poet feels alienated, in fact he likens his devastation to that of a woman who has been raped;¹⁶⁶ what is more, while following the woman he loves though he knows that she has just made love with another man, he feels as if he were a blind man who can only guess at what happiness is.

In the same collection, Leivaditis praises the figure of the beggar¹⁶⁷ someone who will not harm others in spite of the fact that, as the poem tells us, is often

¹⁶¹ See: “ποιος τη γυρεύει αυτήν, και μάλιστα να στην πληρώσει κιόλας./ Α, η ψυχή σου, όχι κανένα κέρδος δε σου πρόσφερε ποτέ, μα, ίσα-ίσα,/ συχνά σε ζημίωσε, συχνά η ψυχή σου σε ζημίωσε πολύ.” (*Καντάτα*, p. 302).

¹⁶² For the role of the marginal anti-heroes in Leivaditis' work see the study of Kouvaras (2008).

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 218.

¹⁶⁴ Leivaditis was interested in people who suffer from psychological illness. Zisis (ibid. p. 91) mentions that “Clytemnestra” and “Pylades”, two of Leivaditis' protagonists in his last poetic collection of this period, *Οι Τελευταίοι* are psychopaths. However, in his forthcoming republications of his collection, the poet chose to erase that information.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 219.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 234.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 242.

humiliated by them.¹⁶⁸ Bearing a motto from Romain Rolland («Και πηγαίνετε να πεθάνετε εσείς που πρέπει να πεθάνετε»), Leivaditis encourages, in this poem, the beggars to accept their destiny: humility and even humiliation.

As man struggles to live in accordance to an adopted identity one that society forces on him, the ensuing moral failures become a source of great stress, guilt and despair. Guilt in Leivaditis seems to derive both from adherence to existentialist ideas, as has already been mentioned earlier in this section, but also, from the widespread Christian Orthodox culture.¹⁶⁹ What is more, it appears to derive from Leivaditis' favourite writers, Dostoyevsky in particular.

Like the hero of Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from the Underground*, Leivaditis realises that guilt is closely related to human nature and no matter what decision a man may reach, he is destined to feel guilty about it.¹⁷⁰ It appears that being born, existence itself is seen as a crime and a sin, repaid by one's (pointless) life on earth and finally by his death. Under the light of vanity and the coming of death, human beings, according to Leivaditis, should choose to stay in the margins of society, where the poet himself lives. Such a choice is not a form of escaping responsibility. On the contrary, it presupposes that one is courageous enough so as to opt for an ascetic life, while others may lead a luxurious one.

All in all, this predominant theme of a 'mission' in the poetry that Leivaditis writes in his second period of poetry, is not a social goal anymore; it concerns

¹⁶⁸ See: “ξεσκονίζουν το πόδι του διπλανού τους/ που το άγγιξαν πέφτοντας/ και κοιτάζουν γύρω σα να ’φταιξαν και χαμογελάνε/ προσπαθώντας με τα’ αποφάγια και τον περίγελο/ να ησυχάσουν αυτή την απελπισμένη πείνα μέσα τους/ που ζητάει να τους εξευτελίξει” (*Συμφωνία αρ. Ι.*, p. 242)

¹⁶⁹ See also Alexandra Boufêa, “Η Αναζήτηση του Θεού στο Έργο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη”, *Diavazo*, vol.228 (1989), pp.67-78.

¹⁷⁰ The poet, whether he accepts the reality established by the official regime or whether he fights against various representatives, feels guilty; no matter what he does, the verdict will be death (see the poem “Δίκη”, *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, pp. 417-418). The motif of the trial, along with that of the loss of personal identity, as they are expressed in Leivaditis' poem “Ο Άλλος”, also prepare the ground for its more thorough exploration in his collection of short stories, *Το Εκκρεμές*. In the poem “Δολοφονία Οργανωμένη” Leivaditis also discusses these very themes (*Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p. 424).

individuals and the choices they make. Human beings have to live in accordance with how they understand this mission. To do so, one has to refuse all representation of the self as promoted in the media, in politics, art, literature and philosophy and invent one for themselves. This would be an authentic self, and, further one less prescribed by one's background, their gender, ethnicity, class, and profession political beliefs and so on.

Moreover, people and societal structures that interfere with the individual eventually become obstacles in his mission to lead an authentic life. Their perceptions as well as their expectations often influence his feelings and actions. In certain cases, even the assumptions one makes about other people's thoughts (whether they correspond to reality or not) determine his actions in life. Notions of (as well as imagery associated with) the "other", constitute the predominant themes in Leivaditis' collection *To Εκκρεμές* and are discussed in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Last but not least, the past -or according to the existentialists, facticity- can also define one's life. The past, as has been discussed earlier, is a part of one's life, something that both limits human beings and sets them free: it is restricting in a sense that it is irreparable. At the same time, however, the past demands that it be surpassed; this can and should be done. Overcoming one's past, though, makes one feel that they betrays themselves, that they lead an inauthentic life. Nevertheless, transcending one's past is necessary; if one does not achieve this, he might find himself returning to pre-existing boundaries surrounding him. Engulfed between his past and his future, this self-creation is an ongoing process. Living an authentic life, means that one should define his identity in every passing moment.¹⁷¹ Succeeding in that, he would now be responsible for himself, a free man in existential terms. This kind of freedom,

¹⁷¹ In this period poetry, Leivaditis experiences time that passes by painfully, see the poems "Βιογραφία" (p. 384), "Από Μέρα σε Μέρα" (p. 402-403) and "Το Καπέλο" (410), all from the section *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*.

however, especially as defined by Sartre, is neither a given nor easy for one to acquire.

2.3. Determinism and free will in Leivaditis' second period

In the poems written during this period, Leivaditis reflects on the issue of free will and the impact of determinism (if there is one) in lives of people. Leivaditis wonders whether one's life is decided by himself or largely predetermined by outside forces, such as God, chance-like events or the historical context. This issue does not emerge in poems of the first period, since, back then, the poet feels absolutely in control of his life, and makes all the decisions by himself, including that his participation in the civil war.

On the contrary, in his poetry during this second period, Leivaditis realizes the failure of the relationships he has formed until then (with his wife as well as his comrades in the communist party), as well as the revising of his core beliefs (towards the ideals of communism in particular); the poet wonders whether he has made the right decisions on his past life thus far, his responsibility for his current situation, or the extent to which his life's trajectory has been predetermined. Furthermore, the poet often feels alienated both from his own self and from the others he communicates with. Eventually he experiences the world in which he lives as incomprehensible.¹⁷²

The poet gives no definite answer as regards the questions that are raised. In some parts of these poems, he seems to trust in man's ability to define his destiny, mainly in the first collections of this period;¹⁷³ while in others, he makes explicit

¹⁷² More comments on the poet's sense of alienation in the next chapter of the thesis.

¹⁷³ See: “το κλειδί της φυλακής του καθέννας το κρατάει στην τσέπη του,/ και κάνει πως το ξεχνάει. Αυτό είναι η φυλακή του.” (*Οι Γυναίκες με τ’ Αλογίσια Μάτια*, p. 282).

references to the natural laws dominating one's life.¹⁷⁴ He also appears to echo Marx's tenets on the cyclical nature of human history, according to which every past event is destined to re-occur in the future. The only aspect that appears to change through time is the protagonists of those developments.¹⁷⁵

*Αηδίες- ο χρόνος έγινε για να κυλάει
οι έρωτες για να τελειώνουν
η ζωή για να πηγαίνει στο διάολο
κι εγώ για να διασχίζω το Άπειρο
με το μεγάλο διασκελισμό ενός μαθηματικού υπολογισμού*¹⁷⁶

In *Καντάτα*, the poet introduces his heroes, all of whom discuss the defeats they have already experienced (the man with the casket, the wise man, the poet, etc.). In this collection, as well as in the following one, *Οι Τελευταίοι*, the poet appears to acknowledge the presence of determinism in one's life or, at least, to support the sense that people's belief in it, alongside their withdrawal from current developments allows it to structure their lives, in the manner of self-fulfilling prophecy.

The man with the casket, for instance, narrates his own tale in the first person. This is the adventure of the common man of the post-war period, the one who has suffered from the official regime and recalls Christ's chase and crucifixion.¹⁷⁷

58. *Κι οι δικαστές, μόλις εκείνος μπήκε, σκύψαν και κάτι μίλησαν μεταξύ τους.*

59. *Και τον ρώτησαν: Είσαστε πολλοί;*

60. *Κι αυτός, κανείς δεν ξέρει αν από σύμπτωση, ή ίσως για ν' απαντήσει, έδειξε έξω απ' το παράθυρο,*

61. *το πλήθος.*

62. *Κι οι δικαστές φώναζαν: τι χρείαν έχουμε άλλων μαρτύρων;*

63. *Και θυμήθηκαν, τότε, πως τούτος ο λόγος είχε, κάποτε, πριν πολλά χρόνια, ζανά ειπωθεί.*

64. *Και τους πήρε φόβος μεγάλος.*

¹⁷⁴ See: "Ενώ πίσω από κάθε τους φιλή, κρυμμένο, παραμόνευε το τέλος/ οριστικό κι αμετάκλητο/ σα μια αριθμητική." (*Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια*, p. 283).

¹⁷⁵ See: "δεν περνάει τίποτα, μόνο που λίγο αλλάζουν" (*Καντάτα*, p. 331) and: "η κάθε μέρα μ' αλλάζει,/ ενώ στο βάθος τίποτα δε μ' αλλάζει" (*ibid.* p. 335).

¹⁷⁶ 25^η *Ραψωδία της Οδύσσειας*, p. 358.

¹⁷⁷ *Καντάτα*, p. 324.

The speech of the man with the casket appears to recall Matthew (26:65) and, more specifically, Christ's capture and trial. Leivaditis narrates how the judges reacted when they saw a communist standing in front of them in the court, committing the blasphemy of disobedience to the official regime. However, contrary to the high priest in Christ's trial, who seemed to have torn his garments in horror at His blasphemy (His claiming to be the Son of God), the judges in the communist's trial appear to be rather petrified when they realise the resemblance between Christ's and the communist's trial and their own role in the latter's destiny: it is pretty much the same as the role of the high priest and the crowd in Christ's conviction. It is not only the context but also the numbers of the verses that precede in Leivaditis' poem that seem to refer to those of Matthew.

In the very same collection, the wise man seems to believe that outside forces determine his destiny as well.¹⁷⁸

*Όταν, λοιπόν, σε κάθε αρχή, εσύ ακούς αόρατο το τέλος ν' ανεβαίνει κιόλας τα σκαλοπάτια,
όταν την ώρα που λένε: «σ' αγαπώ», βλέπεις να πέφτουν πάνω τους αθόρυβα
τα δειλινά όλων των αποχωρισμών. Όταν μέσα σε κάθε πράξη, εσύ μαντεύεις,
τυλιγμένο στο αιώνιο σάβανό του, εκείνο το άλλο,
το καίριο, που δεν έγινε, κι ούτε θα γίνει ποτέ. και που πέθανε
τη στιγμή ακριβώς που θέλησε να υπάρξει-*

What is interesting is how Leivaditis, via this persona of a wise man, hints at a second, essential existential reality that underlies superficial, everyday reality. The wise man comprehends this underlying reality, which eludes the common man. For the wise man seems man's fate is already decided and he is given no space to truly

¹⁷⁸ *Καντάτα*, p. 313.

influence developments in his own life.¹⁷⁹ According to Leivaditis, through the character of this wise man, whatever happens in one's life, no matter how random it might seem at a first, is another link in the chain of predestined events.

In the poem “Γέγραπται...”, the poet's girlfriend has stopped outside a shop in order to style her hair and, as she is mirrored in the shop's window, the poet realizes that she stands outside a funeral parlour. This is not considered as a coincidence by Leivaditis, but an intimation of the death that will come to her too.

It is due to inclinations of determinism that women struggle to foresee and even preempt the future. That is why, according to Leivaditis, they tend to resort to fortune-tellers, astrologists and the like.

*Συχνά καταφύγαμε και στις χαρτορίχτρες,
τρέχουμε στα μέντιουμ να μάθουμε- τι να μάθουμε;
Διαβάζουμε καθημερινά το ωροσκόπιο στις εφημερίδες,
πηγαίνουμε σε διάφορους ύποπτους αστρολόγους
ή ακόμα και σε κείνες τις παλλαϊκές ξορκίστρες
που γυρίζουν στις βρώμικες, αποπνιχτικές τους κάμαρες,
ανάμεσα στο Υπερπέραν και τη φτωχή χύτρα που βράζει η φακή,
και που πεθαίνουν μες στη θλίψη και την ερήμωση,
ενώ είχαν προμαντέψει, για λίγες δεκάρες,
όλες τις ευτυχίες.¹⁸⁰*

To sum up, issues of determinism and free will are never resolved. Leivaditis renegotiates it further in his collection *Το Εκκρεμές*, as we shall see in the next chapter of this dissertation.

In conclusion, there is arguably a transition from the extroverted nature of the more political and socially committed poetry in his first period of work to more

¹⁷⁹ See the poems “Γέγραπται...” (p. 385), “Αναπότρεπτο” (p. 387), “Μάθημα ιστορίας” (p. 395) and “Από μέρα σε μέρα” (pp. 402-403).

¹⁸⁰ *Καντάτα*, p. 317.

discernably introverted works during his output in this second period, where Leivaditis largely focuses on the individual and his psychology as this has been formed in the wake of the civil war and the failure of communist ideology. In this second period, the poet's mission is itself transformed: it has much less now, a recognizably social meaning and intent; it does not deal with grand projects and social battles for the sake of peace and justice. On the contrary, it is concerned with the circumstances of individuals and it boils down to the creation of a personal, authentic self via the transcending of those exact factors which restrict one's efforts towards self-fulfilment. Leivaditis approaches the parameters of ethnicity, gender, class, profession, the weight of past actions and that of other people's perception, puzzling over their impact on one's life. Sentiments and notions common among existentialist philosophers and certain writers that Leivaditis was fond of,¹⁸¹ an outlook of guilt and despair, as well as certain motifs (that of the trial, for instance), can be seen under the prism of existentialism, or as a result of the defeat of the poet's youthful idealism, as expressed in the poetry written during that first period. In the next chapter of this thesis, I will further explore all these aspects of Leivaditis' second period.

CHAPTER THREE

¹⁸¹ See, for instance, Kafka and Dostoyevsky.

To Εκκρεμές: a transitional collection of short stories

*To Εκκρεμές*¹⁸² (1966) is the only collection of short stories that Leivaditis published and comprises eight short stories, five of which are written in the first person,¹⁸³ while two of them are written in the third person.¹⁸⁴

As it has been mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, only few references to this collection of short stories have been made by Leivaditis' scholars, as the emphasis has largely been placed on the poetry especially that, produced during his third period. The references made to this book are usually incidental and appear in the wider context of studying Leivaditis' earlier poetry. Scholars who study the development of a theme in Leivaditis' overall output also make reference to *To Εκκρεμές* (for instance, Alexandra Boufea who traces the existence of God in Leivaditis' literary texts). Apart from these critical studies, most of them appearing during the 1990's, other mentions to this collection of short stories are limited to occasional bibliographical citations; 'in passing'.

The aim of this chapter is dual: firstly, to attempt an analysis of *To Εκκρεμές*, and secondly to suggest its role as a turning point from the second to the third period of Leivaditis poetry. For the purpose of this study, I shall discuss characterization, time and space as they are perceived by the main hero's point of view and trace the elements both of the second period that Leivaditis further develops across *To Εκκρεμές* as well as the elements that appear for the first time here and which are being explored further as the poet moves into his third period.

Before I attempt an approach of *To Εκκρεμές* which I shall treat as a single

¹⁸² See Tasos Leivaditis, *To Εκκρεμές*, Athens: Themelio 1966.

¹⁸³ See the short stories: "Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες", "Ο Αντικρινός Γραφιάς", "Οι Χελώνες", "Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα" and "Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών".

¹⁸⁴ See the short stories: "Το Ύποπτο Χέρι", "Το Μοιραίο Στοίχημα" and "Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης".

narrative, I shall introduce the reader to its plot and explain the arguments that support this treatment (the treatment of the collection as a single narrative). Such an approach will allow me to summarise all the attributes that comprise the portrait of the main hero of *To Εκκρεμές*; as it is shown in the next two chapters of the thesis, this main hero seems to be the same with (or at least, it prepares) the poetic subject of the third period.

3.1. *To Εκκρεμές* as a single narrative

The collection starts with the story of a man who wakes up in a nondescript room (“Μία Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”).¹⁸⁵ Strange things happen there: he finds a bell in a corner of the room that reminds him of the one sounding at his school when he was young. Then, a man who looks like the superintendent from his old school comes in and offers him a cup of coffee; yet this proves to be empty. He then starts to wander in a city that is not named and which is far from being a conventional one: the bus he catches is cut in the middle –yet it appears to work absolutely fine; he enters a coffee shop where he encounters his beloved cousin, his uncle and some of his ex-comrades all of whom are long dead.

When he returns at his room (“Το Ύποπτο Χέρι”), late at night, he searches for a book to read to help him fall asleep, when he suddenly realises his right hand has transformed into a hand of a monkey. He spends the whole night worrying that his colleagues will discover his secret. The next day, however, nobody seems to notice anything. The hero, realising that his boss is in the same situation as he is, discloses the truth about the latter and then both of them leave the place.

¹⁸⁵ The title of each story is given in parenthesis.

In the next story (“Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”) the hero is in his office, where nobody seems to register his presence. He tries hard to find all possible explanations for their lack of attention. At first, he sees it as an evil plan, a kind of conspiracy that they made in order to destroy him, and then, as some sort of game, a way to express their tender feelings (the same suspicion comes to the hero’s mind, when he reflects on his failures in the story “Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα” where he receives an anonymous letter that warns him to be careful of the others as they wish to harm him because of his promising destiny). Unable to confirm his suspicions, and while the colleague that works next to him still does not look at him, the hero of this story starts to doubt his own existence. At the end, the hero decides to kill his colleague (to pretend that the latter does not exist), when he notices that he is still there (the hero cannot pretend that he is indifferent towards him).

He tries to justify his colleague’s indifference towards him, suggesting that there has to be something in his appearance that invites people to humiliate him. Recalling his childhood (“Οι Χελώνες”), in an effort to explain how and when everything started, he remembers the day, when his cloth merchant father went bankrupt and had to beg a rich supplier to lend him some money, ending up to lose his self-esteem. This appears to be the moment when the hero accepted and followed his father’s destiny: a path towards humiliation. He went to the rich supplier himself when he was asked to and the latter unexpectedly stacked a turtle into the child’s mouth (more on this see below in this chapter). The boy had no option but to swallow it. From that moment on, the hero spends his life swallowing powerful men’s turtles. One day, however, our hero decides to take action, killing his superior who asked him to swallow his turtle.

The hero realises that he has a mission in his life (“Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο”),

that is, to shake hands with a hippopotamus (more on this see below in this chapter). However, he fails and that causes him great stress and despair. His guilt subsequently turns to accusations that he puts in his relatives' mouth who become witnesses for the prosecution in the trial that takes place in the court of his consciousness. There he is being judged on his past life (“Ἡ Εσχάτη των Ποινών”). The sentence is posed and that is, that he has to keep on living.

The hero realises that he had not become the writer he wanted to be and save the world through his work (“Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης”). Instead, he is a common civil servant, somebody who did not have the courage to opt for his own destiny. As he reflects on the opportunities he has lost, the humiliation he has suffered, he feels as if somebody else, his alter ego, has stolen his life. He decides to stalk and kill him. In the end of the story, either the hero or his alter ego (it is purposefully not clear), is murdered with a paper cutter.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the story of *Το Εκκρεμές* is divided into eight sections, three of which are in third person and five in first person mode. So, in order to be able to argue about *Το Εκκρεμές* as one narrative, one should demonstrate that the characters in each story are all the same person; and, also, that the third person narrator and the first person narrator (the main hero) really are the same person as well.

This sense emerges, since not only the way the heroes/ narrators of these stories perceive themselves, the world and the other people in their lives is remarkably similar, but also the way they express this perception. All of them experience the same despair in an incomprehensible world, where there is lack of communication and

human touch, and they describe this alienation in the same dramatic tone.¹⁸⁶ They constantly worry about other peoples' feelings for them; they try to read their minds and they even substitute the silence of others with their own interpretations on their possible thoughts.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, they fluctuate between great love and strong loathing for the others and when they cannot control themselves due to their strong emotions, they use a vocabulary of insults.

The fact that they do not have the same job (they work either in a Bank, Prefecture or Company, all in capital letters) does not seem to contradict the suggestion that there is only one hero in the narrative. Firstly, since their workplace is pretty much the same: after all, they are all civil servants. Secondly, because the workplace is used in all of these stories as a synonym to alienation and, at the same time, as a symbol of power. And it is described in general terms¹⁸⁸ or as “the Company”, “the Prefecture”, “the Bank”; the reader does not learn which Bank, Prefecture or Company the hero talks about neither does he have a more specific picture of the place (decoration, location etc.). What is more, the use of capital letters for the workplace seems to indicate that these institutions, not the people, are the actual heroes of the story.

Bearing in mind all these and taking into account the dualism that the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* experiences (more on this issue see below in the chapter), the principal difference in the mode of narrative can be explained thus: in some stories, the hero talks about himself and narrates his story in the first person mode, while in others, he

¹⁸⁶ When the hero experiences despair, anger or anxiety, he uses long sentences that are divided internally with commas. A typical example is in “Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών”, where there are 61 commas in a period of 41 lines and only one full stop (“Τελικά το βρήκα, ήταν ο τύπος... ίσως ολόκληρη η ζωή μου να ’ταν αλλιώτικη τότε.” (ibid. pp. 90- 91).

¹⁸⁷ Contrary to Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, where the poet resorts to silence and often praises its value (see the last section of the fourth chapter), in *To Εκκρεμές* silence is regarded as threatening for the hero and, as it is shown further down in this chapter, for his self-identity. The hero/ narrator of *To Εκκρεμές* is petrified by the others' silence.

¹⁸⁸ See: “τάδε” (“Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”, pp. 17- 18).

sees himself as if it was not him who lived his life but his alter ego whom is chased by in the story “Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης”.

3.2. The subjective perception of space and time in *To Εκκρεμές*

3.2.1. Space: the topography of consciousness

In the poetry of Leivaditis before the third period, time and space are *historical* in nature, in the sense that readers can easily relate to them. As far as time is concerned, it is recognizably the first post-war period that Leivaditis is concerned with; as for space, it is clearly Athens that the poet wanders through and is writing about. Even when these two elements are not explicitly mentioned, they can be deduced from the text or from certain indicators accompanying it (for instance, Leivaditis’ dedications to political leaders of his time or from noting the dates where his poems were written, e.g. “Μακρόνησος, 1950”). In any case, the earlier poems exhibit, more direct correspondences to the historical context during which they were written and which they reference. This is particularly true about his poetry of the first period, where Leivaditis’ poems distinctly serve as means of social criticism.

Even when time and space are presented as fictional or symbolic, for instance in the text that accompanies the poem “Οκτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” (*Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο*), where the poet highlights that the story (the war) he narrates is fictional and that it could have taken place anytime across human history, time and locations are not distorted. In *To Εκκρεμές*, on the other hand, the hero’s perception of the surrounding world is significantly disrupted.

In the first story of *To Εκκρεμές*, “Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες” (the title is ironic: the events Leivaditis narrates are by no means usual) the hero already finds it difficult

to relate to the world he inhabits. As it has been mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the hero finds himself waking up in a hotel room, where irrational events succeed one another: the man who enters the room to serve him is not a hotel employee; rather, he is the custodian of the school he used to attend during his childhood, while the cup of coffee he offers him is empty.

The city, in which the hero of this short story navigates after having left his room, is also incomprehensible to him. The coffee shop that he has to pass by in order to reach the city centre resembles a hospital wing; instead of chairs and tables there are three beds where the hero's already-dead ex-comrades and relatives appear to rest. The bus in which the hero boards is stranger still: it is cut in the middle and the second half of is driven by a myopic woman. None of the passengers seems to have noticed its peculiar shape.

In this story –as well in *To Εκκρεμές* in general as I shall show below– Leivaditis disassembles reality and attempts to reconstruct it through the possibilities of language: he traces the etymology of words, uses metonymy and free association creating his fictional universe. It is the same universe his latter poems inhabit; one where paradox, surreal events and dream logic constantly surprise the reader.

The hotel setting (“ξενοδοχείο” < “ξένος” (stranger) + “δέχομαι” (host)), firstly appeared in Leivaditis' second period collection, *Η Γυναίκα με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια*, is systematically used in *To Εκκρεμές* as the principal stage where the plot unfolds, supporting the idea of a world where people feel transient and alienated in their dealings with the social environment. This sense is amplified in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period.

Furthermore, the city bus (“λεωφορείο” < “λεώς” (people) + “φέρω” (transport)) can be perceived as a political party, bringing together people of various

backgrounds who board it in order to achieve their personal goals (to reach their destination) regardless of its driver's (leader's) statements and their validity. The passengers are indifferent over the bus' shape (as it has been mentioned above, the bus is cut in the middle which seems to imply that the political parties divide people, even people of the same political party):¹⁸⁹ they look out of the window, joke around or reflect on their lives. Such indifference seems to lend credence to this interpretation: people take the bus (support this specific party) either driven by their personal agenda, or unable to realise its hidden meaning as well as the harm these parties causes to solidarity.

In *To Εκκρεμές*, as well as in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, the city bus is used as a counterpoint to the train, the poetic subject's symbol of his opportunity to escape his unsatisfactory reality and truly change his life. Following prescheduled destinations inside the same city, the bus reminds one of the daily routine he is trapped in, while the departure of the train, implying new possibilities, provokes an adrenaline rush that, according to Leivaditis, is similar to that sparked by a great moment of passion (“έξαψη μιας μεγάλης ερωτικής στιγμής”). Overall, the train in Leivaditis' *To Εκκρεμές* and poetry of the third period stands for a critical moment; a life-changing opportunity, and potentially, its denial, since the hero/ poet hears the train reaching the station –however, he does not board it.

Moreover, the café the hero enters in this story (“Το Μοιραίο Στοίχημα”) is used in a rather metonymical way. Via the word “coffee” and “coffee shops” the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* recalls two customs, widespread in the Greek tradition: on one hand, the prediction of one's fate (in Greece it is believed that one can decipher the marks and shapes formed in the grounds of coffee left in the bottom of one's cup) and on the

¹⁸⁹ The seat that the passengers have inside the bus and their proximity to the driver (leader) seems to indicate that even inside the same political party some people gain some profits out of the ideology while others do not.

other, reminiscing about the persons who have died (in Greece, following the funeral, relatives of the dead offer coffee, cognac and bitter chocolate eggs to those who have attended the ceremony; it is an opportunity to gather and remember the deceased).¹⁹⁰

Taking these into account, the fact that the hero in this story, while entering the coffee shop, encounters his ex-comrades (reminding us of the traumatized soldiers of the Civil War) and his dead uncle and cousin means that he equates this space to the customs related to it. Furthermore, the empty cup of coffee the custodian offers to the hero symbolises either the prediction of an unimportant destiny or exists as diagnosis of a life that has been spared without a purpose; in the second case, the failures of the communist party which Leivaditis dedicated his life in previous years is hinted at.¹⁹¹ It possibly also stands for the custodian's refusal to predict the hero's fate and thus his suspicion of determinism and a belief on the value of free will in shaping one's life.

Opposite to Leivaditis' poetry of the previous periods (and the first one, especially) which was realistic, in *To Εκκρεμές* the poet raises issues concerning both the perception and interpretation of the world. In *To Εκκρεμές* Leivaditis seems to suggest that there is no such thing as ontological truth; on the contrary, the world is absurd by nature, its perception is subjective, rendering communication among people difficult; as a result, people seem to wander in the world alone and misunderstood.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Coffee shops are used in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period with both of these meanings.

¹⁹¹ When the hero asks the custodian why he had served him an empty cup of coffee, the latter answers: "Έμαθες τόσα γράμματα κι ακόμα δεν μπόρεσες να καταλάβεις!". Such an answer may refer to Leivaditis' idealistic faith on the communist party and his ex-comrades' motives, how these have been proven to be an illusion.

¹⁹² Indeed, every time the hero attempts to communicate with other people (his co-workers, family, people he meets at social gatherings), he fails. In the section "Οι Χελώνες", for instance, when the hero's sister asks him to explain the reasons of him choosing unemployment over his previous job, he shows her the cloth-made turtle of her son. Soon he realizes that communication with her is impossible: while she sees the turtle as a common toy, for the hero the latter is a symbol of succumbing to an authority (more on the symbolism of the turtle see below in this chapter).

In the story "Ένα Μουραιο Στοιχείμα" the hero accepts the challenge set by a young lawyer to shake hands with a hippopotamus (more on the symbolism of the hippopotamus see in this chapter of the thesis). However, this challenge is interpreted differently by them: as far as the former is concerned, the hippopotamus stands for something lacking in shape and form; the handshake thus, equals to the process of giving a shape to what is formless (which reminds the reader of the strenuous process of

In other words, the deconstruction of space in *To Εκκρεμές* comes as a result of the absurdity of the surrounding world or, at least, it indicates man's inability to perceive and/ or deliberate it. Such a realisation raises the issue of man's place into this world and, even though it causes him feel desperate at first (in the sense that it questions his certainties), it offers him a new perspective: that is, to reconstruct reality according to his own perception of it. In case of Leivaditis and the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* who appears to be (or wishes to be) a writer as well (more on this see below in the chapter), the reconstruction of the surrounding world can be accomplished, as it has been shown above in this section, through language and authentic¹⁹³ creativity. Man's ability to reconstruct reality, allows him to overcome the deconstruction of his self-identity and reconstruct a new self for himself, thus be free and lead an authentic life.

Reconstructing reality and one's self-identity (in other words, leading an authentic life) is not easy. One has to escape his old perception of self first. Escaping oneself is a struggle and is illustrated in *To Εκκρεμές* as a battle between the hero and his alter ego (the sharp peak of this battle takes place in the story "Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης").

More specifically, as *To Εκκρεμές* can be read as a single narrative, and taking into account the fact that in the section "Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών" it is clarified that the hero's trial takes place not in an actual court but in the court of his consciousness, it can be argued that *To Εκκρεμές* as a whole takes place in the hero's consciousness, thus, it is a reminiscence of his past and reflection on it: a wandering in his own

writing). For the latter the challenge has an actual meaning; regarding this handshake unfeasible, the young lawyer laughs at the hero who takes his mission as something of vital importance for his existence.

¹⁹³ I use the word "authentic" as Sartre defines it in *Being and Nothingness*: according to him, authenticity is the state of living one's life according to one's will. Leading an authentic life means that one takes the responsibility of his freedom and try to become the kind of man he wishes to become no matter what his background is and what other people think of him.

internal space.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, *To Εκκρεμές* is the hero's endless attempt to escape his memories, consciousness and ultimately his body, in which he is prisoned.

Under this scope, the room the hero found himself, at in the story “Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες” (and to which he returns in “Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης”) can be read, retrospectively, as a representation of the hero's consciousness and body within a struggle between him and his alter-ego takes place. The room (in the story “Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”) is described as unfamiliar, on the verge of inexistence.¹⁹⁵ The hero can hardly recognise it,¹⁹⁶ as if he experiences it for the first time.¹⁹⁷ He cannot remember how he got into it (which seems to imply that nobody is asked whether he wishes to be born or not) and he reacts as if he is not the owner of it but a guest. He even appears to be overwhelmed by it: the room is empty, big and old. Things that could otherwise give life to it, such as a bell from his school years which the hero comes up with, do not function anymore, or if they do, they do in a rather threatening way: the bell does not imply the beginning of another day at school nor does it remind the hero of the games he used to play with his classmates during the break; it is not equal to insouciance. On the contrary, it symbolises (it threatens actually) the beginning of the trial in the hero's court of consciousness. What is more, the description of the bed,¹⁹⁸ the only furniture that exists in this room, imposes a state of imprisonment, very much alike to that the heroes of Sartre's drama *Huis Clos* [*No*

¹⁹⁴ See also Kondylis Panagiotis, *Η Παρακμή του Αστικού Πολιτισμού*, Athens: Themelio, 1991, pp. 135- 136.

¹⁹⁵ See also: “Το δωμάτιο ήταν κατασκότεινο, σαν ανύπαρχτο, καθώς άνοιξε τα μάτια”. (“Το Ύποπτο Χέρι”, p. 25).

¹⁹⁶ See: “Το να ξυπνάς ντυμένος στο κρεβάτι, σ’ ένα δωμάτιο που βλέπεις για πρώτη φορά, είναι, βέβαια, ένας κακός οiwνός για τη μέρα που αρχίζει. Μα να μη θυμάσαι καθόλου το πώς βρέθηκες μέσα σε τούτο το άγνωστο σπίτι, καταντάει λίγο σαν εφιάλτης.” (“Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”, p. 9).

¹⁹⁷ The feeling that the world has lost its meaning emerges suddenly in one's mind. It is the feeling of absurdity. As Camus argues: “Το συναίσθημα του παραλόγου μπορεί να χτυπήσει καταπρόσωπο οποιονδήποτε άνθρωπο, στη στροφή οποιουδήποτε δρόμου.” (ibid. p. 26) and “Μια μέρα όμως ακούγεται το “γιατί” κι όλα αρχίζουν μέσα σε τούτη την κούραση που χρωματίζεται από έκπληξη. “Αρχίζουν”, αυτό είναι το σημαντικό. Η κούραση βρίσκεται στο τέρμα των πράξεων μιας μηχανικής ζωής, μα δίνει συνάμα το έναυσμα για την κίνηση της συνείδησης.” (ibid, p. 29).

¹⁹⁸ See: “Μοναδική επίπλωση το κρεβάτι που ’μouna πλαγιασμένος, κι αυτό παλαικό, φαρδύ, με μαύρα σιφερένια κάγκελα” (“Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”, p. 9).

Exit] experience.

Just like the heroes of Sartre's drama, there seems to be an opportunity for the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* to escape loneliness and himself and transform into the kind of man he wishes to become. There seems to be a window in the ceiling that belongs to the next house which the hero can open if he decides to. This escape has less to do with other people, though, and more with the hero's other self. As it is revealed at the end of the story "Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης", it is through this window that the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* was being observed by his other self during the previous years of his life.

The hero experiences and describes this alienation from his own body in a very dramatic way that reminds the reader of the eternal battle between master and slave, good and evil. He watches as his other self does the moves he should be doing and lives the life he should live. The hero often seems to be dominated by his alter ego, who has taken total control of his soul. The hero stalks him, studies his habits and, finally, decides to kill him and re-gain his freedom.

According to the hero, his other self is the one that must be blamed for the humiliation he suffers at the hands of others -and for the failure in his life in general: it is his other self who pushes him to meaningless actions (in the story "Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα" the hero asks his boss's daughter to marry him, even though he barely knows her) that are ended in failure. He is also the one who causes him guilt and negative feelings that poison his life (for instance, he makes him feel jealous of his brother). His other self even causes him to lose his sense of reality: the hero becomes delirious, believes that he is destined for greatness and other people deliberately and methodically subvert his plans. Even though he gets suspicious, afraid even, of other people, he confides in them his deepest secrets. As a result, he constantly gets

disappointed by others (for instance, his wife cheats on him with one of his best friends and abandons him).

Such a battle between the hero and his other self (dualism) emerges in Leivaditis' poetry of the second period and more specifically in his poem "Ο Άλλος" from the section *Ποιήματα (1958- 1964)*. There, the other self is described in the same terms and his attributes are very much alike with the other self of *Το Εκκρεμές*.

Below, I cite the poem "Ο Άλλος" and in the form of footnotes I cite the parallel parts of *Το Εκκρεμές* in order to indicate the similarities between these two works as far as the relationship between the hero and his other self is concerned. These similarities concern not only the way the latter affects the former's life but also the way such an influence is described. After the citation of this poem, I shall briefly discuss the hero's portrait, as it has been formed until 1966 (when Leivaditis publishes *Το Εκκρεμές*); these attributes of the emerging anti-hero can be traced in Leivaditis' favourite poets, the fictional biographies of whom the poet wrote in 1969- 1970,¹⁹⁹ and in the poetic subject of Leivaditis' poetry of the third period.

¹⁹⁹ Tasos Leivaditis, *Μεγάλες Μορφές της Λογοτεχνίας. Η Ζωή, η Εποχή και το Έργο τους*, Niarchos Thanasis (ed.), Athens: Kastaniotis, 2008.

²⁰⁰ See: "θα τον σκότωνε οπωσδήποτε" ("Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης", p. 134).

²⁰¹ See the letter that the hero sends to himself in the section "Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα" (mainly pp. 75- 78).

²⁰² See: "Αξιότιμε κύριε", άρχιζε το γράμμα, και σκέφτηκα, πως, αλήθεια, δεν έφτασε ακόμα το τέλος του κόσμου, αφού υπάρχουν άνθρωποι τόσο ειλικρινείς που όχι μόνο σε υπολήπτονται, μα και σε διαβεβαιώνουν κατηγορηματικά- ύστερ' από μια τέτοια εισαγωγή, συνεχίζεις, φυσικά, το διάβασμα ακόμα πιο καλοδιάθετος." ("Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα", p. 75).

²⁰³ See: “Γιατί κι άλλη φορά μου συνέβηκε, τότε που έφυγε η γυναίκα μου μ’ έναν παλιάνθρωπο, φίλο μου” (“Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”, p. 43).

²⁰⁴ See: “(...) ένα πρωινό, ήμουν στην Τρίτη Γυμνασίου, πάνω από την έδρα, σε μεγάλο μέγεθος, είχαμε το Χριστό στο όρος των Ελαιών, γλυκύτατος και ξαλαφρωμένος, γιατί είχε διαλέξει πια, μόλις έγινε, λοιπόν, διάλειμμα, βγήκαν όλοι, έμεινα ολομόναχος, γονάτισα πάνω στην έδρα, κάτω απ’ το Χριστό, κι άρχισα να κλαίω- ούτε κι εγώ ήξερα γιατί έκλαιγα. Ένα παιδί μπήκε απότομα, τα ’χασε στην αρχή, ύστερα σα να γέλασε, κι έφυγε τρέχοντας να το διαδιβάσει. Εγώ ντράπηκα –θε μου, πώς ντράπηκα, και πάντοτε απορούσα γιατί να ντρεπόμαστε για τα πιο αληθινά μας αισθήματα.” (“Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”, p. 50).

²⁰⁵ See the way the hero perceives the others’ laughter while he is on the bus (“Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”, p. 15).

²⁰⁶ See: “Κι εγώ ο αφελής έπεφτα πάντοτε θύμα της ευπιστίας μου, όπως τότε μ’ εκείνο το κάθαρμα, που τον είχαν βάλει να με παρακολουθεί, κι εγώ τον αγάπησα, “έχω κι εγώ ένα φίλο”, έλεγα μέσα μου, και μου φαινόταν πως έχω το μισό κόσμο δικό μου, κι έπεφτα στο λαιμό του κι έκλαιγα, και του άνοιγα την ψυχή μου, ώσπου μου πήρε τη γυναίκα κι έφυγε.” (“Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”, p. 47).

²⁰⁷ See: “Έτσι και τώρα, το καταλάβαινε, είχε αποφασιστεί: πότε; λες και την απόφαση την είχε πάρει κάποιος άλλος μέσα του κι αυτός απλώς θα την εκτελούσε, ποιος είναι, λοιπόν, εκείνος που αποφασίζει για μας, μήπως έχουμε κρυμμένο μέσα μας κάποιον άλλον, πάντοτε είχε κάτι τέτοιες αόριστες υποψίες, ότι μας έχουν παίξει ένα άσχημο παιχνίδι, ποιος; ο διάβολος ασφαλώς, δηλαδή, το φυσικό μας, έσκυψε, σχεδόν, μοιρολατρικά το κεφάλι, και στο βάθος, ένοιωσε και κάποια ανακούφιση αφού άλλος μέσα μας παίρνει τις αποφάσεις, ας έχει εκείνος και τις ευθύνες και τις τύψεις, εγώ ένα απλό όργανο είμαι, θα μπορούσα, βέβαια, ν’ αρνηθώ (...)” (“Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης”, pp. 133-134).

All in all, the main character of *To Εκκρεμές* is rather lonely and opts for an isolated way of living. He has a certain degree of sensitivity which makes him pursue humiliation or suffering, in order, through this ultimate sadness, to know himself and the world he lives in in a greater depth. He has a great ambition to stand out from the crowd and this, sometimes, leads him on the verge of mental illness or pushes him to commit suicide.

Contrary to Leivaditis' previous works, in *To Εκκρεμές*, the female figure is not present in the hero's life or if she is, his relationship with her does not last. Last but not least, the hero, even though he struggles to escape from the destiny of his family, follows a rather conventional lifestyle: he works as a civil servant and feels

²⁰⁸ The motif of suicide reoccurs in *To Εκκρεμές*: see the sections “Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα” (p. 86), “Το Μοιραίο Στοίχημα” (p. 126) and “Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης” (p. 142).

²⁰⁹ Alcohol and the motif of the drunk man is common in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, as well as in *To Εκκρεμές*. On this issue see: Themou Anna, “Μέθη και Όνειρο: το αλκοόλ στην ποίηση του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη”, *Odos Panos*, 140 (April- June 2008), pp. 14- 25.

imprisoned in his own life, which he perceives as meaningless and unimportant, and that renders him sarcastic, touchy and suspicious of other people.

It is from that kind of self, the weak and unimportant, the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* struggles to escape. However, the outcome of this struggle is not clearly stated, neither in the poem “Ο Άλλος” nor in *To Εκκρεμές*. As it has been mentioned in the first section of this chapter, *To Εκκρεμές* ends with the hero having committed suicide. However, it is not elucidated whether such a suicide is literal or metaphorical nor is it illustrated who of these two got murdered, whether the hero or his other self.

The fact that the outcome of the battle between the good self and the evil one is not revealed, leaves the question of human freedom open and raises the issue of human nature. More specifically, it challenges the impact of civilisation/socialisation on man's nature and freedom: in other words, Leivaditis, here, through the question of space, seems to wonder whether man is evil by nature (in which case, the process of socialisation, which aims to de-humanise him, even though good by virtue, constitutes a restriction of his freedom) or intrinsically good (in this case, evil derives from civilisation which corrupts and alienates man from his inner self).

In his poetry of the third period, Leivaditis seems to go beyond good and evil. The poet introduces the motifs of master and slave, defeater and defeated and questions the meaning of victory and defeat: who is the master/defeater in life, is the one prevailing over himself and over others, or the one who stays in the margins of society, having gained total control over his passions? Does ‘victory’ have an earthly, thus material, context that concerns life here and now, as Nietzsche stated in his work *Beyond Good and Evil*, or is it related to the Christian religion and stoicism, according to which it obtains a spiritual meaning (after-death exculpation and redemption for what one had suffered during his life)?

To sum up, *To Εκκρεμές* is placed in a wider context of the literature of the absurd. From the very first story of the collection, it becomes quite obvious that the world where the hero inhabits is hostile and bizarre. As we approach the central points of the narration (arguably, the story “Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών”) we realise that *To Εκκρεμές* really takes place inside the hero’s consciousness. Therefore, the perception of space (as well of as time), is given by the main hero’s point of view. It is the point of view of a marginal anti-hero who finds the surrounding world threatening and his life suffocating. Thus he attempts to escape both from the world (at least, his perception of the world) and himself (his perception of self).

The marginal anti-hero’s inability to comprehend the world is so extensive that it leads to the destruction of space and, thus, to the deconstruction of self. Such a destruction (of space and self-identity) urges him to reconstruct the world in order to (re) define his place inside it. Proceeding then to reconstruct space, the marginal anti-hero is well aware of the fact that his approach on it is subjective (he does not simply convey reality, as Leivaditis did in his poetry of the previous periods, mainly of the first period); that gives him a creative role against reality. It is via language and free associations that the hero of *To Εκκρεμές*, similar to that of the poetic subject in Leivaditis’ poetry of the third period, reconstructs the world that surrounds him.

3.2.2. Time: turning to the past

As it has been mentioned above in this chapter, although the trial in *To Εκκρεμές* (more specifically, in the story “Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών”) appears to recall Leivaditis’ prosecution and the case brought in the court on 10th February 1955 for his

poetic collection *Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου* (1953),²¹⁰ which was regarded as a propagandistic missive and got seized, it functions largely as a metaphor: *it takes place in a court of the mind*. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that the hero is not being accused of his communist beliefs: the witnesses for the prosecution are not representatives of the state, but members of his family and people towards whom the hero has misbehaved in the past; all of them have died by the time the trial takes place.

Contrary to Leivaditis' poetry of the previous periods (especially that of the first), *To Εκκρεμές* does not reflect historical circumstances, nor is it autobiographical (though it contains certain autobiographical elements). This collection of short stories, along with Leivaditis' poetry of the third period in which the narrative is conveyed through the marginal anti-hero's point of view, lays beyond autobiography and social realism: *To Εκκρεμές* is not –or not only– a criticism on the so-called democratic foundations of post-war Greece (a charge against censorship and the law system of Leivaditis' time), contrariwise, it is an entrance point to the psychology of the post-war man: *the psychology of a reject*.

Although *To Εκκρεμές* takes place inside the hero's mind, time is not distorted to the extent that happens with space. The narrative, even though it is not linear (in the sense that it often emerges via free associations), is not clearly disrupted as it happens in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, where the poetic subject fuses various time frames, as he freely –and often unexpectedly– moves back and forth into his past. In this sense, *To Εκκρεμές* becomes a point of transition: from the linear narrative of the previous periods to the subjective (as far as the perception of time and space is

²¹⁰ See Benatsis, *ibid.* pp. 52- 59. Also Theocharis G., “Οι Διώξεις του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη [Η συλλογή *Φυσάει στα Σταυροδρόμια του Κόσμου* και η Έκκληση του Ποιητή στην Παγκόσμια Ομοσπονδία Δημοκρατικής Νεολαίας]”, *To Dentro*, 171-172 (2009), pp. 38- 41.

concerned) narrative of the third period, a narrative liberated from the demands of realistic representation.

More specifically, hardly ever is there any specific time reference in *To Εκκρεμές*. What seems to underlie this choice is that, as far as the hero is concerned, each day of his life appears to be similar to the previous day. What happens in the present has happened in the past and it seems that it will be repeated in the future: the hero has nothing to expect from his life. The title of the first story (“Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες”) implies the triviality of the hero’s daily routine, from which he cannot escape, as the title of the last story illustrates (“Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης”); the sentence that is imposed to him in the story “Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών” seems to verify this interpretation.

The only time reference in *To Εκκρεμές* is indefinite (the late mid-night hours) and rather symbolic. Night is the time which is related here –and in Leivaditis’ poetry of the third period-²¹¹ with musing over something that no longer exists. For instance, in the story “Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες” the hero is heading in the middle of the night to his aunt’s house, knowing that she is dead.

Και συνέχισα να προχωράω, όλη τη νύχτα, κάτω απ’ τη βροχή,²¹² ψάχνοντας για τη συνοικία που έμενε η θεία μου, μικρότερη αδερφή της μητέρας μου, χρόνια κι εκείνη τώρα πεθαμένη. (21)

²¹¹ Night is used as a synonym to dreaming and meditation, realisation and permanent escape from reality in Leivaditis’ poetry of the third period, where it is used together with the (street) lamps and candles which stand as a counterweight for the darkness, as symbols of truth.

²¹² Rain as a symbol of reminiscence is also commonly used in Leivaditis’ poetry of the third period.

Night is also time for realisations, mainly painful. It is during the night that the hero reflects on his life so far and his possibilities (or the absence of them) for the future. On the other hand, night, sometimes, appear to be confronting. It offers the hero time to stay away from everything and everybody that causes him stress, thus, it allows him to rest. A good sleep can temporarily cause a relieving memory loss, whose effect is compared to the kind of dizziness somebody feels after having got drunk.²¹³ Morning, on the contrary, comes as a shot, as a compulsory return to a hostile world and a violent transition from relaxation to a constant awakening state.

Apart from the night, which often gains a romantic value (in the sense that it responds to and reflects the hero's feelings), there is one more reference to time in *To Εκκρεμές*, which is rather specific: this is the time between seven o'clock in the afternoon and seven to ten o'clock in the morning. During this period of time, the hero has to escape the man he has become and the life he leads, to re-invent himself and accomplish the mission he has in life.

More specifically, in the story "Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο" the hero, invited at the Prefect's house, watching the other guests who are discussing at the living room and feeling angry about their pretentious behavior, realises that he has to detach himself from them and act until seven o'clock this afternoon. This seems to be a crucial moment for him, an issue of life and death.

Το βλέμμα του έπεσε στο μεγάλο εκκρεμές του τοίχου, επτά παρά τέταρτο, "μέχρι τις επτά ακριβώς πρέπει κάτι να κάνω, αλλιώς είμαι χαμένος (...)" (117)

²¹³ Μια Μέρα σαν τις Άλλες", p. 9.

The hero accepts the challenge that is set to him by a young lawyer (more on the context of this challenge see the next section of this chapter). This challenge comes as a revelation to the hero, who interprets it as a sign of God²¹⁴ and feels that it is high time he accomplished it.²¹⁵ As he reflects on his present, he feels that he has spent his life denying himself, having trapped in a dead end situation, doing an unsatisfying job and having nobody to trust.

In order to confront himself and understand how everything started (his alienation from himself, other people and the surrounding world), the hero turns to his past, mainly his childhood. He recalls his dead relatives, especially his mother. These dead relatives are the heroes in Leivaditis' poetry of the last period.

In *To Εκκρεμές* the hero interprets his mother's overprotection towards him as a sign, as if his mother was aware of a secret and she desperately struggled to insulate him from it.

(...) και θυμήθηκε, πριν από πολλά χρόνια, πέντε- έξη χρονών θα 'ταν, είχανε γιορτή στο σπίτι, μόλις είχε γυρίσει, μάλιστα, ύστερ' από δέκα χρόνια, ο θείος του, αδερφός της μητέρας του, που ταξίδευε, ναυτικός. Όπως ήταν, λοιπόν, μικρός, και δεν του 'δινε κανείς σημασία, θύμωσε, και μη βρίσκοντας άλλο τρόπο να τους χαλάσει τη διασκέδαση, χούφτωσε το γυαλί της λάμπας που έκαιγε πάνω στο τραπέζι. Έμπηξε μια δυνατή κραυγή απ' τον πόνο. Η μητέρα του, έτρεξε απ' την τραπεζαρία, τα 'βαλε με όλους που δεν πρόσεχαν το παιδί, και παίρνοντάς τον αγκαλιά του φίλαγε το καμένο χέρι, μουρμουρίζοντας με δάκρυα: "Το χεράκι

²¹⁴ See: "(...) εξ' άλλου, είδες σύμπτωση, αύριο είναι των Θεοφανείων, καλό σημάδι, πίστευε πολύ στο Θεό, και πάντα σε κάθε δύσκολη στιγμή της ζωής του ανέβαινε μέσα του αυτή η παλιά παιδική ευπιστία (...)" (ibid., p. 120).

²¹⁵ The poetic subject in Leivaditis' third period poetry also has a mission to accomplish and he often feels that he has delayed. The motif of the delay is also a common place in the section *Ποιήματα* (1958-1964).

του, το χεράκι του...” “Μητέρα, που ’σαι τώρα να δεις πώς έγινε αυτό το χέρι” σκέφτηκε με παράπονο. (“Το Ύποπτο Χέρι”, 30)

The hero perceives the game (hide and seek) he used to play with his mother as a preview of his future (as a proof of his inexistence). He then interprets his whole past, especially the financial degradation of his family, as a foreshadowing of his future.

Θυμήθηκα τη μητέρα μου, νεαρή ακόμα, αφού τελείωνε το συγγύρισμα, παίζαμε κρυφτό για να με διασκεδάξει, εγώ κρυβόμουν πίσω απ’ τη διάφανη κουρτίνα, μ’ όλο το φως πίσω μου, ή κάτω από μια ψαθωτή καρέκλα, κι όμως η μητέρα έψαχνε ώρα πολλή για να με βρει “μα πού είναι; πού είναι;” έλεγε κάθε τόσο μ’ ένα αχνό χαμόγελο. Όταν μεγάλωσα λίγο, κατάλαβα πως το ’κανε επίτηδες για να μακραίνει τη χαρά μου, ή κιόλας για να μ’ εμψυχώσει, ότι το μυαλό μου έκοβε, κι έβρισκα το σωστό- πράγμα που, η δύστυχη, μάταια το προσπάθησε. Ή μήπως δε σ’ έβλεπε πραγματικά, κι ήταν μικρές προειδοποιήσεις της ανυπαρξίας; (“Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”, 50- 51)

He struggles to reconstruct the sequence of past events that led him to his present, as if his life was a crime which must be detected.²¹⁶

Το ζήτημα όμως, ετούτη τη στιγμή, ήταν άλλο, έπρεπε με κάθε τρόπο να θυμηθώ, να βρω τη σειρά των γεγονότων που με φέρανε σ’ αυτήν, την κάθε άλλο, παρά ευχάριστη θέση (...) (“Οι Χελώνες”, 65)

²¹⁶ The motifs of crime and trial, as well as the feeling of guilt are common places in Leivaditis’ poetry of the last period (especially, in the earlier collections of the third period).

Εκεί, χθες, εκείνη instead of *εδώ, σήμερα* and *αυτή* respectively: overall, the hero of *Το Εκκρεμές* turns to his past and constantly reflects on his life in the hope of justifying it and thus validate his existence. However, the realisation that his life has truly been wasted becomes unbearable. Such a realisation destroys all that is certain and urges him to reconstruct his life and assume responsibility for it.

Finding himself between reality (who the hero is, actuality of events in his past) and fantasy (who he wishes to be, what he wishes to have occurred in his past), memory and oblivion, the hero struggles to remember: “έπρεπε με κάθε τρόπο να θυμηθώ”, he says in anguish. At the same time, however, he knows that the outcome of reminiscing is subjective, in the sense that the reconstruction of his past constitutes to a certain degree a personal myth, a fiction. Leivaditis’ poetry of the third period is a reconstruction/ (re)creation of his past (the past of a marginal anti-hero), as well as a reflection on the process of reminiscing itself; a comment on the limitations of language and memory.

3.3. The hero and the others: from existentialist crisis to personal freedom

The hero of *Το Εκκρεμές* turns to other people, struggling to validate his existence. Among them he wishes that he will hopefully find somebody who will understand and, even, define him (in the sense that he can assist him understand his true self and destination in life). However, his colleagues ignore him and his superiors humiliate him.

More specifically, in the story “Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”, as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the hero spends yet another day at his office, where

nobody seems to notice him. Struggling to understand his colleagues, the hero inspects their motives and according to his assumptions, he experiences various feelings: for instance, at first, when he believes that his co-workers have made an evil plan in order to eliminate him,²¹⁷ he traces evidence of their guilt (misinterpreting a coincidental laugh as a personal attack against him) and consequently feels hatred against them. Soon, however, he feels tenderness, starting to believe that their indifference is not real; on the contrary, it is a proof of love, a game they play in order to show him their friendship.²¹⁸ Believing that, the hero feels himself guilt about his initial thoughts. All the same, he soon returns to them.²¹⁹

In this story there is no action. The story (an assumption of a story, as it is perceived by the hero's point of view)²²⁰ takes place, as in *To Εκκρεμές* in general, in the hero's mind. The hero, even though, he wishes to approach his colleagues, does not, discouraged by their indifference for him from the beginning to the end of this working day.²²¹ The hero does not simply make a conclusion on the lack of communication among people of his time or the absence of class consciousness among his colleagues (who represent the working class); after all, he does not seem to believe in social revolutions nor does he wish to provoke a riot against his boss (even though, he is well aware of the oppression he experiences by him, authority in general, as it is shown further down in this section). *To Εκκρεμές* is not a work of

²¹⁷ See: “Απορώ, μάλιστα, πως δεν το κατάλαβα αμέσως το σατανικό τους σχέδιο (...) και πάντα για να ζητήσω μια γομολάστιχα ή να ρωτήσω την ώρα.” (Ibid, p. 41).

²¹⁸ See: “Σήμερα όμως, ήταν τόσο πεισματική η σιωπή που για μια στιγμή θάρρεψα πως μου παίζουν παιχνίδι. Και μ’ έπιασε μια απέραντη τρυφερότητα. “Για να μου κάνουν αστεία, είπα μέσα μου, σημαίνει πως δε με περιφρονούν όσο νόμιζα”. Είδατε, λοιπόν, καμιά φορά πως αδικεί κανείς τους άλλους! Μήπως εγώ δεν έχω φερθεί άσχημα;” (Ibid, p. 41).

²¹⁹ Jean Paul Sartre discusses the contradictory feelings man experiences in his relationships with others. According to him, man oscillates between his being enslaved by the other's look and his enslaving others. See Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Hazel E. Burns (trans.), New York: Washington Square Press, 1984, pp. 364-378 (love and masochism) and pp. 379-412 (indifference, desire, hate, sadism).

²²⁰ See: “Τελικά μπερδεύτηκα και δεν ήξερα αν αυτό είχε συμβεί στην πραγματικότητα ή απλώς το είχα φανταστεί.” (Ibid, p. 43).

²²¹ See: “Καθισμένος, στην ίδια θέση, στη γωνιά, ο αντικρινός γραφιάς, με κοίταζε πάντα με κείνο το άδειο βλέμμα του, σα να κοίταζε το κενό.” (Ibid, p. 53).

social criticism. The hero does not simply realise that he is alone in the world but also, being aware of that, he questions his own existence.

(...) βοήθεια, βοήθεια, μα ποιος να με βοηθήσει, με ποιο τρόπο, άλλωστε η φωνή μου, καθώς το πρόσωπο έλυνε, γινόταν όλο και πιο βραχνή, άναρθρη, ώσπου σε μια στιγμή έμεινε μόνο μια υγρή σκιά στο σχήμα του κορμιού, που σε λίγο στέγνωσε κι αυτή, τίποτα. Ήταν μια αίσθηση τρομερή που την ένοιωσα με δύναμη “δεν υπήρχα πια. (46- 47)

The hero's non-existent relationship with his co-workers starts to define him. The others' indifferent looks as well as the hero's own conflicting interpretations affect his attitude, emotions and thoughts. The process leads to self-detachment, with the protagonist rendered a sort of automaton, in the sense that he gradually gets dependent on the others. It is the others who determine whether the hero exists or not: if their look is full of his image (if they look at him) the hero exists, whereas if it is empty (if they do not look at him), he does not. It is them who decide who the hero is, what his actions will be; at the end, their gaze deprives him of his freedom. Unless he can do the same towards them, the latter has no choice but to surrender. The impact others have on the hero is also shown in “Οι Χελώνες”. In this short story the hero, still a child, asks his teacher whether he believes that he is going to fail in his life or not. It appears that the teachers' answer (that the hero is going to fail) determines his future (his failure).

The hero's father seems to determine his existence as well. As he is the one who gives birth to the child, together with his mother, the hero is literary on his mercy, in the sense that he believes in his father's wisdom: after all, he represents

authority. Therefore, his father's belief about him, every single comment he makes on his character, appearance or lifestyle, gains for the hero a value of a sentence: when his father tells his son that he is unlucky, the latter appears to believe it and he detests him for that, as if he revealed his secret flaw.²²²

What is more, it is his father the hero looks up to and is dependent on (financially among other ways) as a child, therefore, he often identifies himself with him. Following the example of his father (as mentioned above in this chapter), the hero swallows powerful men's turtles, for instance his boss's.

Θα σου δώσω μια ευκαιρία σήμερα, που θα 'ναι η μεγαλύτερή σου επιτυχία, έκανε με ικανοποίηση. Κι όπως ήταν ορθός προχώρησε, κι άνοιξε την πόρτα της τουαλέτας. Άκουσα ένα μουντό γλίστρημα κι απ' την ανοιγμένη πόρτα είδα να ξεπροβάλλει σαλεύοντας αργά, μια τόσο μεγάλη χελώνα που οπισθοχώρησα. Ήταν ψηλή και φαρδειά σαν εκείνες τις τεράστιες σόμπες που βλέπει κανείς στα εξοχικά πλούσια σπίτια- είχε μια τέτοια ο διευθυντής στο γραφείο του. –Μα είναι αδύνατο, τραύλισα, πώς μπορώ... Είπε ένα χοντρό αστείο που, αληθινά, με πείραξε, μα ύστερ' απ' το πρώτο μου ξάφνιασμα σκέφτηκα καλύτερα. “Θα είναι μια μεγάλη επιτυχία, πράγματι” (...) Άνοιξα το στόμα κι εκείνος άρχισε να τη σπρώχνει, ήταν οδυνηρό, μα έπαιρνα κουράγιο, ότι θα 'χα καταφέρει κι εγώ κάτι πάνω απ' τις δυνάμεις μου. Ξαφνικά, ένας καθρέφτης, βρέθηκε στον τοίχο. Το θέαμα ήταν αποκρουστικό, τα μάτια μου πεταμένα έξω, ο λαιμός φουσκωμένος κι ολόκληρος μπλάβος από την ασφυξία, και το ζώο μισοχωμένο στο στόμα μου, τεράστιο –σα δύο ζώα που το ένα κατασπαράζει (67) το άλλο. Περίεργο κι όμως, ξαφνικά, μ' έλουσε μια απέραντη αγαλλίαση. “Σ’

²²² See: “(...) παιδί, πήγα ένα πρωινό στομαγαζί μας, μου λέει, λοιπόν, σε μια στιγμή ο πατέρας μου: “άτυχος θα 'σαι, απ' το πρωί που είσα εδώ, δεν μπήκε ούτε ένας πελάτης μέσα”, ντράπηκα, λες κι ήμουν γυμνός αυτήν την ώρα, ίσως, σκέφτηκα, με τη διαίθησή του, αυτός που με γέννησε, να 'χε βρει το κρυμμένο μου ελάττωμα, μίσησα τον πατέρα μου όσο κανέναν άλλον εκείνην την στιγμή, “κοίτα τι ιδέες σου βάζουν στο κεφάλι οι άνθρωποι (...)” (“Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών”, pp. 90- 91).

ευχαριστώ, θε μου, που μου 'δειξες το αληθινό μου πρόσωπο'', ψιθύρισα." (68)

During the process (of swallowing) the hero cannot stop thinking. He experiences the mental oppression in physical terms, as a kind of sexual harassment. He feels every second of it and sees its consequences to his inner self through their reflection on his face and body. While his initial thought was to step up and go, after a while, he persuades himself that he should feel honoured that an unimportant man like him was chosen by a powerful man: the latter's look at him would render him powerful as well.

At this point, Leivaditis seems to recall Sartre's philosophy, and *Being and Nothingness* in particular, where the philosopher discusses among other themes, the effect of the others' gaze on the individual. According to Sartre, human beings tend to create relationships based on how other people make them feel about themselves²²³ (see also Sartre's drama *Huis Clos*).²²⁴ They tend to perform the role other people expect them to perform; they even get enslaved in the others' image of themselves, due to bad faith²²⁵ and a fear of assuming responsibility of their freedom. As Sartre suggests, one exists not for himself, but for the sake of others.

If the paternal figure stands for determinism (or at least he teaches his son to succumb to it), the hero's mother appears to save the hero from it. She encourages

²²³ On the look of the other and its impact on the individual see Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Hazel E. Barnes (trans.), New York: Washington Square Press, 1984, pp. 252-308. Arnold Hinchliffe comments on Sartre: "Ο Sartre πιστεύει ότι όταν με βλέπουν με θαυμασμό υπάρχω περισσότερο από όσο υπάρχω όταν με βλέπουν με περιφρόνηση. Κάτω από τέτοιες συνθήκες η πραγματική αγάπη είναι αδύνατη, αφού ο καθένας θέλει τον άλλο μόνο και μόνο για να του δίνει περισσότερη ύπαρξη θαυμάζοντάς τον." (ibid., p. 53)

²²⁴ In this play, three people are imprisoned behind the closed doors of a drawing room from which they are not allowed to escape. They have to stay there together suffering from the others' presence, who have the power to save their souls or destroy them simply by believing in their ability to change their lives or not. The play ends with Sartre's famous quote "Hell is other people", which seems to be speaking for every short story in *To Εκκρεμές* as well.

²²⁵ See ibid. pp. 47-72.

him to separate his life from his family²²⁶ and assume responsibility of his own freedom. Through her death she teaches him that one's social and financial background does not determine one's future.²²⁷ Believing that it does, as well as living for the sake of others is, as Sartre states, a sign of bad faith.

Μα κι ο διάβολος ήταν κιόλας κοντά μου. “Κι αν το να μην υπάρχεις, σημαίνει να μην υπάρχεις για τους άλλους, ενώ κάλλιστα, μπορείς να υπάρχεις για τον εαυτό σου; Τον νεκρό, βέβαια, δεν τον βλέπεις, ξέρεις όμως αν ζει μ’ έναν τρόπο άλλο, δικό του; (“Ο Αντικρυνός Γραφιάς”, 50)

According to Sartre, there is nothing in- ourselves.²²⁸ One never is; he becomes, and he becomes what he wishes to become, depending on the mission he chooses to accomplish in life. As far as the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* is concerned, the mission that he has to accomplish, which he believes that he is destined for, is to shake hands with a hippopotamus.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, such a handshake is symbolic and amounts to one's handshake with what the hippopotamus represents: as the hero states, the latter stands for what is essentially shapeless, lacking in form (in the sense that one cannot and does not wish to touch a hippopotamus due to the clammy texture of its skin).²²⁹ It can be argued that the mission the hero has to accomplish refers to

²²⁶ The hero's participation in the communist revolution turns his family against him. See, for instance: “Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών” (ibid. p. 98) and “Οι Χελώνες” (ibid. pp. 62-63).

²²⁷ “Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα”, pp. 85- 86.

²²⁸ See Jean Paul Sartre, *Ο Υπαρξισμός είναι ένας ανθρωπισμός*, Stamatiou Kostas (trans.), Athens: Arsenidis, 2011, p.p. 18-19. See Sartre's example of the paper cutter which Leivaditis seems to recall in his story “Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης”.

²²⁹ See: “Όμως γιατί ο ιπποπόταμος, αναρωτιόταν, είναι αλήθεια, όταν πήγε στο Ζωολογικό Κήπο πριν μερικούς μήνες, του 'κανε τρομερή εντύπωση, σ' όλη του ζωή του δεν είχε ξαναντικρύσει πιο

the writing process and his vision to save the world through his writings.

(...) εζ άλλου ο ίδιος δεν παρακαλούσε πάντα νάρθει ένα αναπάντεχο γεγονός, οποιοδήποτε, φτάνει να τον βγάλει απ' αυτή την καταραμένη δειλία του, στο τέλος- τέλος όλα είναι προτιμότερα, κι η ντροπή κι η γελοιοποίηση, παρά να ζεις σ' όλη σου τη ζωή με το φόβο, όταν φοβάσαι, κύριε, τότε είσαι καταδικασμένος να ζήσεις σαν κορηός, μάλιστα, σαν κορηός που τρέχει πανικόβλητος να ξεφύγει τη φλόγα ενός κεριού, κουνάει απελπισμένα τ' αστεία ποδαράκια του, σέρνει τη χοντρή κοιλιά του, τις οίδε και τι μορφασμούς θα κάνει, ντροπή, αγαπητέ μου, στάσου εκεί να καείς, αφού πρέπει να καείς, άλλωστε από παιδί ονειρευότανε να πάρει επάνω του τις τύχες του κόσμου (...) (121-122)

The hero's attempt to overcome his cowardice, making him live at the expense of others (his sister, more specifically), as well as the image of him as a panicked bug in *To Εκκρεμές* reminds readers of Gregor Samsa and his transformation into a frightened cockroach in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Leivaditis' hero, however, appears to have a mission in his life, the context of which is splendid.

(...) πάντα τον απασχολούσε η σκέψη: πώς να νοιώθει, αλήθεια, ο άνθρωπος όταν είναι

αποκρουστικό θέαμα, κάτι που σου 'φερνε αναγούλα και φόβο μαζί, έτσι δύσμορφο, ή μάλλον άμορφο (all the highlights in this footnote are mine), λες κι η φύση το 'χε πλάσει σε μια στιγμή παραλογισμού" ("Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο", p. 121).

Just like the hero of Sartre's *Nausea*, the hero of *To Εκκρεμές*, when he recalls the picture of hippopotamus, experiences nausea (see also the way he feels about his body when other people do not look at him: it is gradually getting melted). By "nausea" I mean the feeling of disgust and despair one experiences when he has to face something that cannot make sense thus cannot be defined.

The hero of *To Εκκρεμές* compares the hippopotamus to the young lawyer who sets the challenge of handshake to him: "Ένας υποπόταμος είναι το πιο αηδιαστικό πλάσμα του κόσμου", σηκώθηκε και είπε με έμφαση, πλησιάζοντας τους άλλους, γύρισαν και τον κοίταξαν ξαφνιασμένοι, "όμως πολλοί απ' αυτούς που αυτοτιτλοφορούνται κύριοι, ούτε καν μπορούν να συγκριθούν μαζί του" ("Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο", p. 119). It is not without significance the fact that this animal is chosen by the hero in order to compare to the lawyer: hippopotamus's slimy skin is compared with the oily voice and unctuous behavior of the man, and all men of the same background and class in general. Therefore, it can be argued that shaking hands with a hippopotamus means that the narrator has to perceive and reveal social hypocrisy of his time through his hands (and since the use (writing) gives the means (the hand) its power, through his writings) and save the world. See: "να πάρεις απάνω σου τις τύχες του κόσμου", να, ένας αληθινός προορισμός." ("Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο", p. 122)

φτασμένος ψηλά, κι όχι χρήματα, για το Θεό, ψηλά, με την πιο ιδανική σημασία της λέξης, όχι, όχι, οποιεσδήποτε επιτυχίες, αισθήματα, κύριοι, μεγάλες πράξεις που να βγαίνουν απ' ευθείας απ' την καρδιά, αυτοθυσία, να, αυτό είναι, ν' αφοσιωθείς μ' όλη σου τη δύναμη σε μια ωραία ιδέα (...) (115)

In order to achieve his goal (achieve a handshake with the hippopotamus), the hero realizes that he has to work hard, studying the habits of the animal both with the help of a book of zoology as well as observing it in his natural environment. So, he visits both the library²³⁰ and the zoo; at the zoo, a policeman stops him and asks for his identity card. Whilst checking it, he tells the hero that he seems to have come from a distant place, suggesting through these words that the protagonist is destined to achieve great things in his life that will hopefully help him rise from a primitive state, that of (animal) instinct.

Taking into account Leivaditis' studies in Law (and his never finishing his degree), certain autobiographical details creep in; it is quite possible that the unlikeable lawyer of the section we just examined is the hero's alter ego. In this sense, in order to accomplish his mission, the hero of *To Εκκρεμές* has to overcome fears that derive from his conformist self by pursuing a writing career, despite the financial difficulties and the questionable rates of success a writer has to accept in contrast to a lawyer.

²³⁰ The hero goes to the library and, as it is late and the library is closed, he makes the librarian get drunk and enters the building. This scene can be seen as a scene between an editor and a (prospective) writer (ibid, pp. 122- 123). The librarian/editor is presented as a rather easily persuaded person, who does not seem to have gained a deep understanding in the world of the books. His criterion for publication is rather changeable: as long as he is certain that the book will be profitable to him, the editor invests on it. Taking into account the resemblance between imagination and alcohol, as it is presented in *To Εκκρεμές*, as well as the parallelism of the drunk man (librarian) to a publisher, one can assume that the drunk man who testifies in the hero's trial in the court of his consciousness is his publisher. See "Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών", p. 104. The editor stands up for the hero: the latter not only was a source of profit for the former but also he confronted him through his books or due to his naivety to believe that he is going to change the world through his work. The word "τιμή" (value) which is emphatically used twice in the story, expresses through its ambiguity, the different interpretation an editor and a writer give to it, a materialist/ commercial one and an idealistic one respectively.

Similar to the poems of the section *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, the hero in *To Εκκρεμές* cannot accomplish his intended mission (see the stories “Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης” and “Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο” in which the hero's attempts are in many ways, cancelled). The result is that he has to continue with his life feeling guilty and desperate, hating himself for his cowardice.

(...) “μάλιστα, έφτυσες κατάμουτρα τον ίδιο το Θεό, που άφησες τόσα χρόνια αχρησιμοποίητη τη δύναμη που σου 'βαλε μέσα σου” (...) (“Το Μοιραίο Στοιχείο”, 124)

Engaging with Sartre, Leivaditis refers to personal freedom²³¹ which is by no means painless. On the contrary: it is frightening and, usually, unmanageable. The hero often resorts to alibis in order to justify his inability and avoid assuming responsibility. In the section “Το Τέλειο Έγκλημα”, for instance, as it has been mentioned above, the hero writes a letter to himself in which he blames others for his own mistakes and failures:

Βέβαια, πάντοτε ήμουν αναβλητικός, όμως αυτή η αναβολή είχε κρατήσει τώρα χρόνια και η λύση που'χε δοθεί, απ' όπου κι αν την εξέταζες, δεν ήταν καθόλου ευνοϊκή για μένα. (71)
 (...) “αλήθεια, πώς βρέθηκα εδώ;” σκεφτόμουν, ενώ εγώ ήμουν κάπου αλλού, τέλος πάντων, κάπου αλλού. Με λίγα λόγια ήμουν άξιος καλύτερης τύχης, μα οι περιστάσεις, ο πατέρας μου που πτώχευσε (...) (75) (...) Ξέρω πολύ καλά (...) πως είσατε ένας τίμιος άνθρωπος, κι έχω την ίδια γνώμη μ εσάς, ότι σας έχουν αδικήσει. (...) Εκάνατε, λοιπόν, πως αγνοείτε αυτή την ανεπίτρεπτη αδικία, και σε πολλές περιπτώσεις αντιτάσσατε, με επιμονή, στις αηδιαστικές ατιμίες τους, μια καλωσύνη περισσότερο κι από χριστιανική. (...) Αυτή η μαλθακότητα υπήρξε

²³¹ On man's freedom see Sartre: *ibid.* pp. 433-556 and, more specifically, on personal freedom and one's responsibility for one's freedom *ibid.* pp. 553-556.

κι η δυστυχία σας. Βέβαια, εσείς, ήθελα να πω ο φόβος σας να πιστέψετε στην κακοήθειά τους, ήταν ένας τρόπος να ξεφεύγουν, αλλά ως τότε, να που ήρθε η στιγμή της αλήθειας και της δικαιοσύνης, όπου τα σκότη διαλύονται και λάμπουν μόνο τα καθαρά μέτωπα. (...) (75-75) (...) αγαπητέ κύριε, σας κατακρατούν μια μεγάλη περιουσία, μια περιουσία που σας ανήκει, όπως σας ανήκουν τα χέρια και τα μάτια σας, και που αυτοί, για να σας το αποκρύψουν χρησιμοποίησαν όλους τους τρόπους, απ' την απειλή ως την εξουθένωση, σταλάζοντας σιγά σιγά το ασφαλέστερο δηλητήριο μέσα σας: να σας δημιουργήσουν το αίσθημα ότι εσείς χρωστάτε μάλλον σ' αυτούς, παρά σ' εσάς εκείνοι. (77) (...) Πάντα υπήρξα θύμα αυτής της αυταπάτης, να νομίζω ότι μπορώ να ζήσω με τιμή και ανεξαρτησία (...) (82).

In the passage above, the hero oscillates between struggling with his freedom and assigning it to somebody else. Sometimes he seems to be well aware of the fact that procrastination leads to an unimportant life, while, at other times he lays the blame for it on his father's bankruptcy, the plans of various others to annihilate him or on external circumstances. At the story's end, however, the hero recalls his mother, who died in abject poverty, realises the meaninglessness of materialism and human life in general. Death, the shared fate of all men, becomes the moral of this story. Realising the little significance that being prosperous makes to people's happiness and sense of personal success,²³² and certainly this sort of vindication after death, becomes a motif in Leivaditis' poetry in the years to come: this motif of the so-called "divine intervention".

In conclusion, in *To Εκκρεμές* Leivaditis oscillates between free will and determinism. Taking into account the futility of life (the unavoidable end of relationships and the finality of death which both give further meanings to the issues

²³² On the significance of one's actions and its prevalence over one's belongings and background, see Sartre: *ibid.* pp. 575-599.

of freedom and determinism), he does not provide a definite answer on this issue. Leivaditis' awareness of meaninglessness is pervasive in his poetry of the last period.

To sum up, in his work of the second period, which opens with him disputing communist ideology and his faith in comradeship, Leivaditis eventually realises his loneliness and his inability to communicate effectively with others. He engages more systematically and in greater depth with the issues that have concerned him in the poems belonging to the section of the second period *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*. Such issues are: the identity crisis that (post-war) man experiences due the failure of his past beliefs as well as the issues related to it, that of the mission one has to accomplish in his life (along with feelings of guilt and despair that follow from his failure to accomplish it) and his relationships with others, who are also regarded to be a threat to one's self-awareness. The role of determinism and free will in one's life is also discussed both in the poems mentioned above and in *Το Εκκρεμές*.

In *Το Εκκρεμές* all the above issues are placed in a context of absurdity that deconstructs not only one's self-perception but also the dimensions of time and space. The hero of *Το Εκκρεμές* questions external reality and realises the subjectivity, thus relativity, of his own perception; in order to reconstruct himself, the hero reconstructs time and space, in the sense that he now attempts to interpret these elements.

Diving into his consciousness (instead of just reflecting the historical circumstances), struggling with his memories and unfulfilled dreams, the hero of *Το Εκκρεμές* seems to live in a state of abeyance, hesitating between his past and his future, reality and fantasy; he is gradually moving from the front line of the historical events to the margins of society, transforming into a marginal anti- hero, who lives a life of the mind, closed to himself. This marginal anti- hero is very much alike –in

fact, it prepares- the poetic subject of Leivaditis' third period poetry as far as the perception of themselves and the surrounding world are concerned.

In this sense, *To Εκκρεμές* is crucial in Leivaditis' writing; its study is a prerequisite to the prospective scholars of Leivaditis' work. A close reading of this collection of short stories can explain the various transitions that take place from Leivaditis' second period work to his poetry of the third period. However, despite the significance of *To Εκκρεμές* as a turning point in Leivaditis' poetics, he goes on to write poetry, not prose. The reasons why he did so are worth asking. For instance, it can be assumed that his translating and summarizing classic prose works of the Russian literature during the dictatorship made Leivaditis realise his own limitations. Another possible explanation might be that prose did no more serve his purpose. Answers to questions such as why Leivaditis did not pursue his prose-writing agenda further or to that of genre, could shed more light to this collection of stories as well as to Leivaditis' oeuvre in general or prompt even more interesting queries.

CHAPTER FOUR

Leivaditis' poetry of the third period (1972-1990): From realism to symbolism and from (auto) biography to fiction.

Leivaditis' poetry of the third period extends from 1972 to 1990²³³ and comprises the following poetic collections: *Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης* [*Night Visitor*] (1972), *Σκοτεινή Πράξη* [*Dark Deed*] (1974), *Οι Τρεις* [*The Three*] (1975), *Ο Διάβολος με το Κηροπήγιο* [*The Devil with the Candlestick*] (1975), *Βιολί για Μονόχειρα* [*The Violin for the One-Armed Player*] (1977), *Ανακάλυψη* [*Discovery*] (1978), *Εγχειρίδιο Ευθανασίας* [*Euthanasia Handbook*] (1979), *Ο Τυφλός με το Λύχνο* [*The Blind Man with the Lamp*] (1983), *Βιολέτες για μια Εποχή* [*Violets for a Season*] (1985), *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα* [*A Small Book for Big Dreams*] (1987) and finally, *Τα Χειρόγραφα του Φθινοπώρου* [*Autumn Manuscripts*] (1990).

In this period the turn in his poetic work, noticeable from the end of the second period (1966) has now been accomplished.²³⁴ As far as the context and style of Leivaditis' poetry is concerned, it is more abstract and complex in this period than in the previous two.²³⁵ Its abstract nature emerges from the very balance between what is being articulated and what is left unsaid; while its complexity is arguably located in the density and frequency of the symbolisms occurring in this verse, and also in the unique mixture of fictional and realist elements, the alternating instances of time and

²³³ In this period, Leivaditis' collection *Τα Χειρόγραφα του Φθινοπώρου* which was published after the poet's death is included.

²³⁴ See Zisis, *ibid.* p. 103.

²³⁵ See Zisis, p. 104.

space. In relation to the particular form these poems now take, Leivaditis' literary production during this period mostly consists of mid-size prose poems: such a transition could be seen, on one hand, on the grounds of the failure of the communist ideology (the prose form in correspondence with the vapidness of the post-war era) and, on the other hand, as the poet's need to concentrate and communicate his experience (in a lower tone).

The tone of his poems in this period is confessional, the language remains simple, even though it is no longer literal²³⁶ as it used to be in the previous periods, in the sense that it is now open to various interpretations. The traditional unity of time, space and plot in his narration is disestablished: past and present are mixed with one another, space is rather internal, rarely is there a linear narration.

Leivaditis' poetic collections of this period are gradually serving as an apology of his life and his art; the poet turns to his past (mainly to his childhood, during which the maternal figure dominates and his father's bankruptcy serves as a milestone; a threshold to adulthood); he reflects on his experience and on the ability of language/poetry to represent and reconstruct it, as well as the limitations (the weakness of memory and words) that arise during this process. Apart from his self-referential poems, Leivaditis' constant interest in his art is shown in the element of surprise that he introduces in his poems of this period. Such a surprise is accomplished via the defamiliarising combination of words, symbols and images and the frequent and quick leaps of his thought. What is more, the last verse of his poems, which is usually placed in a different paragraph from the main body of the text, is often unexpected.

As far as the context of Leivaditis' poems is concerned, what concerns the poet

²³⁶ Ibid. p. 112.

most is, just like in the poems of the second period, his self-identity. More specifically, while the hero of *To Εκκρεμές*, was chased by his alter-ego/true self, the poetic subject of this period has been substituted by his other self. The dualism of the previous period has reached its peak in Leivaditis' poetry of this period. The poetic subject often feels that somebody else has lived his life and, as a result, feelings of denial, anxiety and guilt overwhelms him. The mission that he used to have in his life (in the first period mainly) does not exist anymore: the poet does not participate in the communist party nor does he praise it via his poetry. On the contrary, he realises the end of social revolutions and man's loneliness in the world.

As it is shown in the first section of this chapter, the poetic subject in Leivaditis poetry of the last period is marginal: he fails to create strong emotional bonds with other people. The attributes of his personality reminds the reader of the decadent poets, by whom the poet seems to have been influenced, and more specifically, by French symbolist poetry (late 19th-early 20th poetry) and Greek neo-symbolist poetry (see below in this chapter).

It has been argued that Leivaditis' poetry of the last period is surrealistic (or it has some surrealistic elements). However, automation is absent from his poetry; the leaps of his thought, even though they are quick and frequent, do not render his writings unreachable. What is more, the symbols he uses serve as symbols of his personal mythology and they do not seem to claim the universal role that the symbols of the surrealistic poems do, as carriers of the common consciousness.

The aim of this chapter is to show the transitions to symbolism and fictional narratives of Leivaditis' poetry of the third period by way of the existentialism of his work of the second period which has led to a complete turn in comparison to his (auto)biographical, social and realist-grounded poetry written in the first period.

Among the issues examined in this chapter are: the fictional construction of the poetic subject in this period of Leivaditis' poetry (in the sense of its origins, attributes as well as relationships with other characters featured in his poems) and considerations of time and space; more specifically, their way these two fuse. Following that, in the third section of this chapter, self-referential poems and fragments are discussed in more detail; these works suggest more clearly how Leivaditis' poetics shift in this latter period, compared with the nature of his poetics in the previous two periods.

4.1. The construction of a new identity: the fictional (autobiography) of Tasos Leivaditis.

Unlike the works of the past two periods, the subject of Leivaditis' poetry is certainly not himself in this third period: “κι υπάρχουν μερικοί που παραδόξως νομίζουν ότι είμαι εγώ-/ας τους αφήσουμε στην πλάνη τους.” he tells us in *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα*.²³⁷ Even though several autobiographical hints and references exist in his poems (mainly concerning his relationships with his family and the latter's financial degradation following his father's bankruptcy), the poetic subject of this period is, to a large extent, a fictional one.²³⁸ More specifically, Leivaditis appears to borrow and synthesize the attributes of his favourite poets and writers, linking to the fictional biographies he wrote between 1969-1970; and some elements

²³⁷ See “Ενοικιοι της Ματαιιότητας”, p. 49.

²³⁸ See: “Η αφήγηση εκτυλίσσεται μέσα από τη φωνή ενός ανώνυμου κεντρικού αφηγητή ο οποίος, συχνά, παρουσιάζεται ως “ποιητής”, και σχεδόν πάντα, στο α' ενικό πρόσωπο, κάτι που ενισχύει την ταύτισή του με τον πραγματικό συγγραφέα. Ωστόσο, είναι αναγκαίο να διαχωρίσουμε τα δύο αυτά πρόσωπα, παρ'όλη την ένταση ενός αναμφισβήτητα αυτοβιογραφικού στοιχείου. Ο Λειβαδίτης πλάθει συστηματικά το πρόσωπο ενός “πλασματικού συγγραφέα” με συγκεκριμένη ταυτότητα και ενιαίο κοσμοθεωρητικό σύμπαν.” (Zisis, p. 104) and: “Τα χαρακτηριστικά αυτά, στο σύνολό τους, προσδιορίζουν την ποιητική δημιουργία του Λειβαδίτη αυτής της περιόδου και συγκροτούν το ύφος μιας ιδιότυπης *αυτοβιογραφίας*, που αγωνίζεται να ανταποκριθεί σε πιο καθολικά μοντέλα ανθρώπινης εμπειρίας.” (ibid. p.106).

of this work can be traced in the actions of Leivaditis' hero in *To Εκκρεμές*.

Three years later, in 1969, Leivaditis starts to publish fictional biographies of some of his favourite Greek poets and writers of the early 19th and early to mid-20th century (Dionisios Solomos, Andreas Kalvos, George Vizyinos, Alexandros Papadiamantis, Kostas Krystallis, Michael Mitsakis, Miltiades Malakasis, Perikles Yannopoulos, Lambros Porfyas, Angelos Sikelianos, K.G. Karyotakis and Maria Polydouri). All these writers share some common attributes; as Yorgos Markopoulos states in his prologue to the volume *Τάσος Λειβαδίτης. Μεγάλες Μορφές της Λογοτεχνίας. Η Ζωή, η Εποχή και το Έργο του*²³⁹ where these biographies are collected, these writers -both in their lives and work- experience guilt and loneliness, become alienated from the world and themselves. Most of them come from non-privileged backgrounds (Papadiamantis, for instance) and find it difficult to make ends meet; they have experienced multiple defeats in their love life, personal circumstances or in their careers as writers that deeply affected them, even leading some of them to suicide (see the case of Karyotakis) or madness (for instance, Vizyinos). Finding the reality surrounding them unbearable, they usually recall their childhood during which the maternal figure dominates. Several of them resort to addictions, such as alcohol.

In his poetry of the third period, Leivaditis borrows most of these attributes from his favourite writers in order to synthesize a fictional persona of himself. This persona, who, in the ways portrayed in the second period, used to have friends and love affairs, often with people in the margins of society, humiliated by others due to defects, mental or physical,²⁴⁰ becomes in this period himself a marginal figure. He

²³⁹ See Yorgos Markopoulos, “Για Ένα Σμάρι ‘Σκοτεινά Τρυγόνια’ ” in Yorgos Markopoulos, *Μεγάλες Μορφές της Λογοτεχνίας. Η Ζωή, η Εποχή και το Έργο τους*, Athens: Kastaniotis 2008, pp. 21-23, p. 22.

²⁴⁰ In his thesis, Zisis also regards as the main axis of Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, the re-

seems to wander around alone, and unemployed, in some cases having suicidal thoughts (also, the hero of *To Εκκρεμές*); he appears to be a social pariah, dysfunctional in the sense that he is unable to face reality, have satisfying relationships with others and be productive in his work. He cannot function.

This extremely lonely, resigned individual writes in *Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης*:²⁴¹ “Ήμουν τόσο μονάχος, που τα σκυλιά που με γάβγισαν στο δρόμο ανέβαιναν τώρα μαζί μου στον ουρανό.”; such feelings accompany the poet to the end of his life. Years after the publication of his first collection of the third period, he writes: “Ήρθα, έλεγες πάντα μπαίνοντας στο δωμάτιο, παρ' όλο που δεν σε περίμενε κανείς”.²⁴²

Contrary to the previous two periods, in this period, Leivaditis even resorts to God²⁴³ in order to overcome his loneliness and justify the meaning of his marginalization and sense of degradation. His relationship with the divine gets more and more mystical, reminding us of Papadiamantis' religious sentiment.²⁴⁴ In the motto for the section “Απ' το Ημερολόγιο Ενός Υπηρέτη”, he writes: “Αιώνες τώρα χτυπάω τον τοίχο, μα κανείς δεν απαντάει. Όμως εγώ ξέρω πως πίσω απ' τον τοίχο είναι ο Θεός. Γιατί μόνον Εκείνος δεν απαντάει.”²⁴⁵

The poetic subject appears to be frugal; nor does he assert his rights, or complains for the others' cruelty towards him. A friend addressing him is perceived as the ultimate happiness, a precious gift:

Αυτοί που δεν έχουν πού να πάνε και τους αρκεί μια φιλή λέξη για να κοιμηθούν στον ουρανό. (Ανακάλυψη, “Δωρεάν Στέγη”, p. 325)

creation of the poet's self as a fictional persona. See: “Ποιητική του Προσώπου” (ibid. p. 102).

²⁴¹ See “Εξοδος”, p. 36.

²⁴² See *Ανακάλυψη*, “Κανείς δεν είναι μόνος”, p. 310.

²⁴³ On Leivaditis' perception of God, apart from Alexandra Boufea, see also Zisis “Οι Δημιουργικές Προσλήψεις του Χριστιανικού Μύθου” (ibid. pp. 225-241).

²⁴⁴ See Leivaditis' fictional biography of Papadiamantis in the volume mentioned above.

²⁴⁵ See *Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης*, p. 73.

What is more, he sometimes appears to be addicted to alcohol and thus be dangerous for the fabric of the conservative, if not hypocritical society of his time (reminding the hero of the short story “Οι Χελώνες”, *Το Εκκρεμές*).

Πήγαινα στο οινομαγειρείο, όπου ο ατμός από τις κατσαρόλες με γέμιζε θρησκευτικές σκέψεις, συνωστιζόταν φτωχόκοσμος, μέθυσοι με ποδοπατημένα καπέλα, λόγια χιλιοειπωμένα σαν τις εποχές, ώσπου τέλος πιωμένος, έπαιρνα από πίσω κάποιον απ' τους νεκρούς μου κι έτσι έβρισκα πάντα το σπίτι μου. (Ο Τυφλός με το Λύχνο, p. 94)

According to Anna Themou,²⁴⁶ alcohol -which, in most cases, is wine and less frequently, cognac and beer- finds those who live in the margins of society, who still perceive it as a demon and try to rehabilitate themselves.²⁴⁷ They often get humiliated, since, due to their addiction, they cannot keep their physical needs under control: their pants are unzipped or fallen down, they fall asleep in the taverns in which they reside, they even urinate on themselves. However, and despite their own contradictory feelings towards drinking they do not quit the habit, since it is their -the poet included- way to escape from a harsh reality (its influence on them is just like that of fantasy on writers). As Themou highlights, drinking is a pleasure: a forbidden habit that provokes remembrances in them –as it is obvious in the fragment above.

What is more, the poet-narrator is either a blind man, or he has a limb leg; in other poems he cannot hear and/or speak or he appears to suffer from a mental illness. These characteristics render him a target for the others' taunts who ridicule him

²⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 14-25. The passage of this paragraph is mine translation of some of the key points of Themou's essay in English.

²⁴⁷ According to Yannis Kouvaras, alcoholism was the scourge of the working class in the 18th century, during the heyday of the Industrial Revolution. (Yannis Kouvaras, *ibid.* p. 93).

mercilessly and fend him off when he approaches.

(...) ήπια όλο το βούρκο στον υπόνομο που μ' έριζαν, τ' άντερά μου έγιναν οι δρόμοι που κυλάνε αμάξια θριάμβου (...) / Τότε είδα το μεγάλο ικρίωμα, όπου έπρεπε ν' ανεβώ, άγνωστο αν θα στεφθώ βασιλιάς ή θα κυλήσω στο καλάθι των αποκεφαλισμένων. (Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης, “Ενέδρα”, p. 13)

The poetic subject feels as if he were a beggar or a woman, betrayed by men; he is always in a state of alertness, trying to protect himself from the others. However, he seems to have a goal in his life: a mission that others cannot understand.

Οι γυναίκες έκλαψαν, όπως πάντα, κι όπως πάντα οι άντρες σκυμμένοι κοίταζαν το χώμα. Και μόνον ο τυφλός χαμογελούσε καθώς το ραβδί του, σοφό, τον πήγαινε πέρα απ' τη ματαιότητα, μες στο σκοτάδι. (Σκοτεινή Πράξη, p. 117)

Transforming into a marginal anti-hero himself, the poetic subject seems to atone for his previous behavior towards these people (for instance, his classmate who had a limb foot as well as towards his ex-lover in the short story “Η Εσχάτη των Ποινών”). However, as Kouvaras states, the poet does not idealise them: he simply gives them credit, does right by them.²⁴⁸

(...) κι ο ονειροπόλος είναι ένας βασιλέας τα βράδια, γι αυτό και δεν έχει τι να κάνει ολη τη μέρα ή γράφει στο τζάμι το ανάγνωσμα μιας άλλης εποχής (...) / κι, ω άξαφνη καταιγίδα, όταν όλοι έχουν την ίδια σκέψη να φυλαχτούν κι ο σακάτης βιάζεται και πηδάει ανάμεσα στα δεκανίκια του σαν πουλί. (Ανακάλυψη, “Φθινοπωρινή Άσκηση”, p. 253)

²⁴⁸ See Yannis Kouvaras, “Περιθωριακοί Τύποι στο Έργο του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη”, pp. 82-102, p. 83.

What seems to be a defect to others, to normal people,²⁴⁹ serves as a hidden asset, according to the poet: in the poem above, the –most likely, unemployed-dreamer who had achieved nothing in life or the man with the limb leg, “les anormaux”, are all vindicated in Leivaditis' poetry of this period. The dreamer is the most likely to write a great novel or to live in his -fictional- world that cannot be seen by others and the man with the limb foot suddenly flies like a bird between his crutches. Leivaditis vindicates several marginal characters, those anti-heroes of his poetry, necrophiliacs, those in incestuous relationships, homosexuals included: “(...) κι ο νεκρόφιλος έφευγε τώρα με το κλειδί, κι ο αιμομίχτης με το εικόνισμα,/ ενώ ο βαμμένος άντρας που σφουγγάριζε τις σκάλες ήταν γεννημένος βασιλέας.”.²⁵⁰ These are perceived to be the poet's alter-egos.

In other poems, and as the poetic subject seems to sink deeper in his past, in memories and unfulfilled wishes (a more detailed examination of this issue follows in the next section of this chapter) and, since oblivion and fantasy get mixed with his actual experiences, he finds it more and more difficult to identify with himself. He approaches to his mirror, a significantly charged symbol in Leivaditis' poetry of this period,²⁵¹ unable to understand who he is. As a result, the mirror usually terrifies the poet, who constantly confronts an image he cannot recognize or even, a blank space instead of his own person.²⁵²

As Yannis Kouvaras states with respect to the poetry written in this period,

²⁴⁹ The characterisation is borrowed by Foucault's book, *Οι Μη Κανονικοί. Παραδόσεις στο Κολέγιο της Γαλλίας, 1974-1975*, Sotiris Siamandouras (trans.), Athens: Estia 2011.

²⁵⁰ See “Δικαιοσύνη”, p. 58.

²⁵¹ Kouvaras argues: “Ο καθρέφτης είναι ίσως το συχνότερο και ιδιαίτερα φορτισμένο σύμβολο στην ποίηση του Λειβαδίτη. Λειτουργεί ως οθόνη προβολής της συνείδησης, ως κάτοπτρο που μεγεθύνει ενοχές, ως κοίτη ροής του χρόνου. Είναι όργανο αυτογνωσίας, κλονίζει παγιωμένες αντιλήψεις (...), υπονομεύει ενότητα και βεβαιότητες.” (ibid. p. 38).

²⁵² Ibid. p. 38.

Leivaditis' self-identity is gradually getting shattered (a smashed self-image firstly appears in the poems of the second period and more specifically in the section *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*); see, for instance, the poem “Μικρή Υπαρξιακή Παρένθεση”,²⁵³ which has been previously discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation) until it gets crashed by such a “relentless dualism”:²⁵⁴ the poet feels that is being chased by his other self who gradually inhabits his place and lives his life.²⁵⁵ This sense of a dual existence exists in several other poems of that second period, more strikingly in “Ο Άλλος” as well as in *Το Εκκρεμές*, principally in the short story “Ένας Κοινός Χαρτοκόπτης” which seems to be developed from ideas in the earlier poem).

The anxious search of the self in Leivaditis' poetry of this period is presented via multiple symbols. The poetic subject tries to comprehend who he is under his several masks, coats and hats, symbolizing the various roles and ideologies he embraced in his life which, progressively deprive him of true self.

(...) και μόνο το παιδί έκανε μια κίνηση σαν να 'θελε κάτι ν' απομακρύνει, μα αμέσως ξανάπεσε βαριά στην καρέκλα, και τότε είδαμε τη χλωμή μάσκα που έριξε στην όψη του το απλησίαστο, να γίνεται σιγά σιγά το πρόσωπό του. (Σκοτεινή Πράξη, p. 115)

In dialogue with Camus' perception of life as drama, Leivaditis often allows a theatrical form in his collections. From his poetry of the second period to his poetry of the third period, there are several poetic collections that seem to have been written in order to be presented on stage, for instance: *Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια* (1958), *Οι Τελευταίοι* (1966) and *Οι Τρεις* (1975), while others might as well be adapted in

²⁵³ See, p. 388.

²⁵⁴ See Kouvaras, *ibid.* p. 36.

²⁵⁵ See also the poem “Επιτύμβιο” in *Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, p.404.

order to be presented as theatrical monologues, such as, *25η Παρωδία της Οδύσσειας* (1963) or *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα* (1987).²⁵⁶ Leivaditis' insistence on the theatrical form is not random, especially as far as his work of the late second period and the third one is concerned. As Elli Filokyprou points out, the poetic subject's belief that he stars in a play is a first sign of a deconstructed self-identity and the confusion between reality and fiction.²⁵⁷ It appears that it is due to a sensed loss of self-identity, Leivaditis adopts some attributes of these decadent anti-heroes in order to construct a new fictional persona for himself.²⁵⁸ What is more, such a persona allows the poet-narrator, on the one hand, to escape reality and on the other hand, to write on behalf of these people. Thus his poetry is rendered universal yet remains introverted: in some of his poems his need to adopt a fictional persona for himself and live in a fictional manner, is clearly stated: “Τέλος, κάτω από μυθιστορηματικές συνθήκες, έφτασα στην στάση (...).”²⁵⁹ And for a forthcoming poetic collection, he explains: “(...) κι εννοούσα, φυσικά, τότε που με πέταξαν έξω, μαζί με τ' άλλα ωραία πρόσωπα του μυθιστορήματος (...).”²⁶⁰

In fact, choosing people that live in the margins of society either as his heroes or as a persona of himself, Leivaditis allows new insights on the meanings of, and

²⁵⁶ On Leivaditis' engagement with other forms of art, see Yorgos Spanos (“Η Μουσική Πουητική του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη”, *Odos Panos*, vol. 140, April- June 2008, pp. 32-37) and Christina Mikaelian (“Τάσος Λειβαδίτης Συνοικία Το Όνειρο”, *Odos Panos*, vol. 140, April- June 2008, pp. 38-43). These essays argue Leivaditis' occupation with lyrics and script writing respectively. Last but not least, Leivaditis' concern with fiction can be traced, apart from *Το Εκκρεμές*, and his fictional biographies of his favourite writers, mentioned already, in the volume Tasos Leivaditis. *Μεγάλοι Ρώσοι Συγγραφείς. Ντοστογιέφσκι, Τολστόι, Παστερνάκ, Λέρμοντοφ. Συνοπτική Απόδοση των Αριστουργημάτων τους από τον Τάσο Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Kastaniotis 2008. This volume consists of Leivaditis' summaries of some of the greatest Russian novels, published in *Fantazio* magazine from 1969 onwards.

²⁵⁷ See Filokyprou, *ibid.* p. 215. The issue of time and space in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period is explored in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

²⁵⁸ See: “Κατά την απλουστευτική εξήγηση της ψυχιατρικής οι τρελοί είναι όντα που έχουν απολέσει την ταυτότητά τους και ταυτίζονται με πολλές προσωπικότητες σε μια απέλπιδα προσπάθεια να σωθούν από τον εαυτό τους που δεν τον αποδέχονται. (...) Ταυτίζονται δηλαδή με πουλιά, σκαλές ή δέντρα, ό,τι πιο ελεύθερο, ωραίο και υψηλό, νοσταλγώντας τη μεταρσίωση στην ουράνια πατρίδα.” (Kouvaras, *ibid.* pp. 86-87).

²⁵⁹ See *Βιολί για Μονόχειρα*, p. 230.

²⁶⁰ See “Το Παραβάν”, p. 341.

distances between extroversion and introversion, the social and private sphere. It can be argued that in representing this part of society that is not usually the case in post-war political poetry (where those who dominate the front line of historical events are praised), Leivaditis discusses margin, essentially as a (political) option: abstention from the great social battles is not regarded as conformism anymore.

(...) κι όπως άνοιξε την πόρτα, είδα πάνω στο τραπέζι σαν χυμένο κρασί το μακρινό μας ταξίδι, “αν ξανάρθω, θα συναντηθούμε, άραγε;” είπε, “ναι, του λέω, γιατί εγώ θα βρίσκομαι πάντα στην άκρη”. (Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης, “Δολοφονία”, p. 49)

What used to be regarded as “truth”, “mission” and “victory” in his poetry of the first period (revolution, and the communist ideology), after the end of the second period, and the disillusionment intervening there, is being consistently re-negotiated in the third period. As Leivaditis realizes the meaninglessness of social battles,²⁶¹ the great achievements and of human affairs in general; he seems to argue that what matters for one is to stay decent, even if this means to be naïve and innocent as a child.

ΤΡΩΤΟΙ (sic) κι αφανείς υπήρξαμε, πλάθοντας με φτωχό πηλό τις μέρες μας στην άκρη του ορίζοντα/ κυβερνώντας με υπομονή τις νύχτες μας στην άκρη της γυναίκας, και πάντα ο παμπάλαιος χρόνος που σε νέους θρύλους μας αποπλανά./ Όμως, είναι κάποιος που κάθε πρωί ντύνεται το κουρέλι του/ για να περάσει αμόλυντος μέσ' απ' την πόλη. (Σκοτεινή Πράξη, p. 152)

Being a child is a form of resistance in a world where calculations and competitiveness prevail.

²⁶¹ On meaninglessness in Leivaditis' poetry of the third period see Filokyprou, pp. 266-277.

(...) ποιος απ' τους δυο ήταν ο παρείσακτος, ή μήπως κάποιος τρίτος σας πρόδωσε και τους δυο- μ' ένα πρόσωπο συκοφαντημένο απ' το πολύ φως/ ή κι επικίνδυνο, σαν όλα τα πράγματα που τους δώσαμε πολλή σημασία/ και μόνον, καμιά φορά, το βράδυ τα μακρινά γαβγίσματα μας βεβαιώνουν/ ότι η αιωνιότητα είναι πάντα εδώ- παίζε, λοιπόν κάτι πιο εύθυμο, αφού έχουν όλα πια τελειώσει/ ή θυμήσου εκείνους που τους ταπεινώνουν κι αυτοί κοιτάζουν στο βάθος του καπέλου τους/ σα να 'ναι εκεί η αληθινή τους ζωή (κι όλα τ' άλλα δεν έχουν καμιά σημασία) (...) (Ανακάλυψη, “Η Υπόσχεση”, p. 358)

Doing so, however, is not easy.²⁶² Other people -even the hero himself sometimes- seem to regard this as a kind of abnormality, even delinquency, a trait that should be erased.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, this marginal persona of Leivaditis can be also connected to the decadent poets of French symbolism and Greek neo-symbolism. These poets created for themselves such a marginal persona

²⁶² See: “Για τον ποιητή οι τρελοί είναι τρομοκρατημένα παιδιά που φοβήθηκαν να μεγαλώσουν, αρνήθηκαν να μπουν στον άσπλαγχο κόσμο των μεγάλων, με το βαρύ τίμημα να μετατραπούν σε αποδιοπομπαίους του κοινωνικού συνόλου.” (Kouvaras, *ibid.* p. 84).

both in their works and life.

According to Eleni Kollia,²⁶³ a decadent person is one who has been chased in life; it is the artist whose work has not been acknowledged by his contemporary critics. It is the melancholic, aloof and impoverished poet,²⁶⁴ Kollia writes, as she introduces the reader to the decadent poets of France. According to her, these poets strongly separated themselves from the prudent ones, those who were actually slaves of the system they serve, and claimed, through their writings, the vision of a better world.²⁶⁵ They have even denied their self-identity for the sake of their art: in order to reach pure art, they have adopted the persona of the patient, criminal or cursed man, wishing to know the hidden truth of the world and their existence.

They have denied any kind of conformism, even the chase of their own happiness and have dedicated themselves in the trace of the Absolute (truth and beauty).²⁶⁶ All of them were haunted by their own intelligence and suffered from the tedium of the daily routine; they praised the value of void, silence and, ultimately, their own death which, some of them, opted for.²⁶⁷ They praised the unseen, the unsaid and the unfulfilled; shadows, darkness, souls of the dead, silence, memories, demons, death: these are the common places in their poems. They opted for the new instead of the ordinary, they chose dream and fantasy over reality, ambiguity over literal meaning, impermanence and change over permanence and stagnancy. Believing that the poet should stay in the margins of society, they used their fantasy as a starting point in their search of the eternal truth and beauty.

All these attributes can be traced in the fictional persona of the decadent anti-

²⁶³ See *Καταραμένοι Γάλλοι Ποιητές. Απάνθισμα, 13ος-20ος αιώνας*, Eleni Kollia (tran.), Athens: Iridanos 2010. Further down, I translate Kollia's arguments into English, since they are applicable to Leivaditis' fictional persona to which they shed light.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. p.9.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p.11.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p.12.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p.13.

hero Leivaditis creates for himself and they are revealed through the symbols that construct Leivaditis' fictional cosmos of this period. Such symbols that are also used by the French symbolists and Greek neo-symbolist poets (such as Romos Filyras, Napoleon Lapathiotis, Lambros Porfyas) are: those which reveal the poet's psychological state, for instance, autumn as a symbol of sadness and nostalgia; flowers that are mainly connected to death, such as violets; musical instruments,²⁶⁸ such as violins -instead of the drums of the first period; symbols that are connected to loneliness and/ or humiliation the poetic subject experiences from other people: these are basically the rain, which accompanies the poet, from *To Εκκρεμές* already, in his wandering in the streets every time he gets repelled by the others; lamps and candles that indicate the lack of visibility and the constant threat of the darkness; the moon, the stars, the night, in general, which appears to be the permanent background of his poetry of this period, as well as the favourite background of the (neo) symbolist poets.

Besides, symbols of depravation, desertion and decadence that are used to describe public life (such as hotels, public urinals, brothels etc) intensify the feelings of loneliness and suffocation that the poetic subject experiences; what is more, symbols of escape, such as the train, highlight the poetic subject's opportunity to leave; however, such an opportunity is constantly being wasted. Death -and suicide- also recurs in Leivaditis' poetry of this period and is indicated either via space (cemeteries) and objects that are related to it (violets) or via the poet's reminiscence of his loved ones who have died.

Leivaditis' world is a world of loneliness but at the same time rebellious, as long as the poetic subject rejects the role that society demands from him to play and chooses to stay in the margins of society, preserving his child-like perception of the

²⁶⁸ The main care of symbolist poets is the rhythm of their poems as well as the impression and feelings that the combination of their words cause to the reader.

world. He deconstructs his so-called true identity and reconstructs a new one for himself that is a mix of attributes his favourite decadent anti-heroes (both poets and writers or not) have. Creating such a persona of himself, the poet escapes from reality and other people (his oppressors) and lives the fictional life he wishes:



The role of childhood in Leivaditis' poetry of this period is discussed in the next section of the thesis.

4.2.Fusions of time and space.

In Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, time becomes an amalgam of various time levels overlaying one another. More specifically, in this period Leivaditis is gradually returning to his past, and to ultimately, his childhood, in an attempt to escape the unbearable reality that he has to face. Either through himself or the personas he constantly adopts, he goes back to his childhood, and in unpredictable ways. While he talks about his/ the decadent anti-hero's -gloomy- present, he suddenly returns to his past which he sometimes reconstructs in a fantastical manner.



What is unique in this poem is the fact that while the narrator seems to simply recall his past, the results of reminiscing are visible in his present: the hero of this poem probably stepped up in the rails of the railway imitating a past habit, recalling his dead cousin and that time the arriving train killed him. However, this story is narrated in such a way that makes it impossible for the reader to realize whether it actually happened or it was in the hero's and the poetic subject's imagination. What is important in this poem is the fact that the poet experiences his past physically: memories, either literary or metaphorically, *kill him*.

Quite a lot of Leivaditis' poems of this period are written in this way.

(...) κι όταν έμαθα πως άρχισε η εξέγερση, βάλθηκα να χτυπάω τον τοίχο, ώσπου οι σοβάδες έπεσαν μ' έναν ξερό κρότο, αφήνοντας να φανεί το αμάξι που περίμενε, ακριβώς την ώρα που ο πατέρας ανέβαζε τις βαλίτσες, η μητέρα στεκόταν στη σκιά, με μια βεντάλια, νιόνυφη, “να μου προσέχεις τη μητέρα” του λέω, μα ο πατέρας δε μ' άκουσε, καθόταν πίσω απ' τα τζάμια του νοσοκομείου, γέρος, κι η μητέρα έκλαιγε που δεν τον πρόφτασε ζωντανό- ύστερα έκλεισαν την πόρτα του αμαξιού και ξεκίνησαν για το γαμήλιο ταξίδι. (Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης, “Γαμήλιο Ταξίδι”, p. 69)

In the poem above, Leivaditis' memories are mixed with one another as the poet relishes free association: from his participation in the communist revolution to his parent's wedding day at which the poet is supposed to be present (imaginatively inserting himself into the photo of his parents' wedding day) and from the day of their honeymoon to his father's death, memories pass before him and the reader as quick snapshots. Focusing on the mirror the poet gets quickly transferred from his family car to the emergency room and back, in a way that reminds us of cinematic montage.

As it has been implied in the first section of this chapter, the poet usually returns to his childhood, which serves as his resort from the cruelty of adulthood and as a political choice. The poet seems to argue that returning to the state of innocence, thus believing in no political parties but in one's dreams, is the key to one's happiness, to discovering the actual meaning of life. The poet fights to preserve the child's view and not the view of the communist mate, even though he does not seem to have totally abandoned his belief on the communist ideas of equality and social justice.

In Leivaditis' poetry of this period, as Zisis highlights, childhood becomes equal to a very specific perception of the world; it consists an attribute rather than an age group.²⁶⁹ Perceiving reality in the way a child does, means that there are no limitations as far time and space is concerned. Children believe in dreams; they can transfer themselves easily from one place to another and to various times via their fantasy. As far as their imagination is concerned, there is no limit; nobody can imprison them and even if they do, children, just like madmen and marginal anti-heroes, can escape whenever and wherever they want.

*(...) τα παιδιά, όμως, είχαν έναν άλλο φίλο,/ έτσι νομίζαμε καμιά φορά πως μιλούν
μοναχά τους, και το βράδυ/ στον ύπνο παίρναν μαζί τους τις εικόνες, που δε θα ζούσαν ποτέ,*

²⁶⁹ See Zisis, “Η Διάσωση της Παιδικότητας”, pp. 199-211, p. 206.

γι' αυτό το πρωί ήταν πάντα αφηρημένα και νύσταζαν, σαν να 'θελαν/ κάτι να συνεχίσουν.
(*Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης*, “Η Συνέχεια”, p. 90)

In the poetic collection *Βιολέτες για μια Εποχή*,²⁷⁰ Leivaditis recalls the imaginative sojourns of childhood: “Ω, παιδικά απογεύματα, όταν στεκόσουν με το μέτωπο στο τζάμι, σχεδόν φευγάτος, τόσο που η μητέρα τρόμαζε μπαίνοντας, γιατί εκεί που είχες πάει ήταν πολύ μακριά κι ίσως να μην είχες βρει τον δρόμο να γυρίσεις.”, he writes.

As Filokyprou argues escape through imagination serves as a means of the poetic subject's defense against others;²⁷¹ it is his counterweight against reality then, it exists as confrontation and revenge: via fantasy Leivaditis compensates himself and his decadent anti-heroes for the injustice they have faced in their lives. As Filokyprou notes, poetry served as a means of escape and vindication for the first time in his poetry of the second period: “Φτύστε με/ χτυπήστε με/ ποδοπατήστε με/ εγώ/ κάθε βράδυ/ σας εκδικούμαι/ καθώς/ γυρίζοντας αργά/ σπίτι μου/ πιωμένος/ ταπεινωμένος/ πλαγιάζω αγκαλιά/ μ' ένα αηδόني.” (*Ποιήματα (1958-1964)*, “Εκδίκηση”), he used to write. In his poetry of the third period, fantasy broadens its territory: “Ο δρόμος έχει πια ανοίξει για τη διερεύνηση της σχέσης μεταξύ πραγματικότητας και φαντασίας, για την αναζήτηση της αλήθειας στον έναν ή στον άλλο χώρο.”, Filokyprou notes.²⁷²

This childlike perception of life, as Zisis highlights,²⁷³ is preserved to Leivaditis' last poetic collections of this period. Indeed, in his collections *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα* and *Τα Χειρόγραφα του Φθινοπώρου*, Leivaditis usually resorts to his childhood. In these collections, however, time levels can be easier

²⁷⁰ See, “Δύο Παιδικά Δάκρυα μες στη Βροχή”, *Ποίηση*: 3, pp. 227-228.

²⁷¹ See: Zisis, *ibid.* p. 204.

²⁷² See, Filokyprou, *ibid.* pp. 138-139.

²⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 210.

distinguished from one another: it is childhood, on the one hand, and adulthood, on the other hand, that come up against one another, oppressing the poetic subject,²⁷⁴ showing two different perceptions of life: imagination and reason, respectively.

Opting for childhood, the poet sometimes feels that he was the winner in the game of life²⁷⁵ while others he feels that he had lost himself and his life in daydreaming.²⁷⁶

Space levels, also, overlay one another. Via fantasy and memory the poetic subject transfers from one place to another.



There are some symbols that signify the transition from one place to the other as well as from the past to the present or from reality to the territory of the unfulfilled wishes. The ladder, for, instance, is the main symbol via which indicates such a transition: “(...) ή μήπως κι η σκάλα δε μας πηγαίνει αυτή όπου θέλει!”, Leivaditis writes.²⁷⁷ Other symbols that allow this transition are: carpets, sofas and carriages.²⁷⁸

As Yorgos Markopoulos, who traces themes and motives in Leivaditis' poetry

²⁷⁴ See also: “Γι αυτό σου λέω, μην κοιμάσαι: είναι επικίνδυνο. Μην ξυπνάς: θα μετανιώσεις.” (*Βιολέτες για μια Εποχή*, “Πείρα Αιώνων”, p. 309).

²⁷⁵ See for instance *Βιολέτες για μια Εποχή*, “Γράμματα στον υπόνομο”, p. 261.

²⁷⁶ Generally, this dilemma between the benefits and the loss of childhood and adulthood troubles Leivaditis in his collection *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα*, as he reflects on the meaninglessness of life.

²⁷⁷ See “Αναγκαιότητες”, p. 303.

²⁷⁸ Yorgos Markopoulos, *Η Ποίηση του Τάσου Λειβαδίτη*, Athens: Ekati 2009, pp. 36- 40, p. 37.

of the last period mainly, implies, when he puts into quotes the external places where the stories of Leivaditis' poems take place, space gradually loses its materiality and gets the value of a symbol. In other words, there might be several places where the poetic subject and his alter-egos wander, such as hotel rooms, taverns, old mansions, public urinals, coffee houses and barber shops, these, however, serve as symbols; just like in *To Εκκρεμές* of the second period, the hotel room basically serves as a symbol of loneliness and impersonal relationships, while the coffee shop, as a metonymy of coffee, is connected to the reminiscence of one's dead loved ones.²⁷⁹ What is more, old mansions appear to be the threshold between the prosperous era of the poet's family and its financial degradation, while barber shops seem to declare the failure of ideologies.

Taking this into account, it can be supported that the poetic subject's movement from one place to another is rather metaphorical²⁸⁰ and even, as Markopoulos suggests, that it takes place inside its consciousness.²⁸¹ Attics and basements are common symbols of consciousness.²⁸²

It is the poetic subject's/ alter-ego's imagination that permits entrance to places that other people cannot access, even the most privileged ones. In other words, Leivaditis seems to claim that fantasy is the only prerequisite for one to overcome reality and the daily hardships. This is the motif of "divine intervention" that

²⁷⁹ On this issue see the third chapter of the thesis.

²⁸⁰ Zisis talks about the internal trip in Leivaditis' poetry of this period (p. 210).

²⁸¹ Ibid. p. 37.

²⁸² Ibid. pp. 38-39.

Leivaditis referred to for the first time in *To Εκκρεμές*. According to this idea, God has provided for the less privileged ones, so that they can achieve in life no matter what their social and financial background is. In his poetry of this period, Leivaditis seems to have discovered that God's gift to him is imagination which he uses as a passport to travel in places where his oppressors cannot find him.

Γεγονότα και πρόσωπα της πιο ωραίας μου ζωής, της φανταστικής,/ που δεν την έζησα ποτέ και θα την κληροδοτήσω ανέπαφη στους μεταγενέστερους./ Και συχνά σχεδίασα ταξίδια στο άγνωστο (...)/ Ίσως γι αυτό κι οι αποτυχίες σου δε σε πλήγωσαν ποτέ, αφού βέβαια την ώρα που αποτύχαινες/ εσύ δεν ήσουν εδώ. Πού ήσουν λοιπόν;/ Και γιατί γύρισες; (...) Τώρα ανεβαίνω σε μιαν άμαξα απ' αυτές που διασχίζουν τον ύπνο μου/ και δραπετεύω. (p. 11)²⁸³
 (“Σελήνη 20 ημερών”)

Living in his childhood/ dream/ sleep (all of them are used in the same way in Leivaditis' poetry of this period to indicate the childlike perception of life), the poetic subject remains unknown to other people; they cannot reach him; every time they try to catch him, he has become somebody else, he has gone somewhere else, he has unexpectedly moved in another time and place. Leivaditis insist on his childhood: after all, it allows myth to happen.²⁸⁴

Taking into account the existentialist background of Leivaditis' work of the second period as well as the incorporation of the absurd in it²⁸⁵ and the theatrical form of many of his works of the second and third period, it could be argued that Leivaditis processed his works as if they were dramas, disestablishing the traditional unity of

²⁸³ Tasos Leivaditis, *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα*, Athens: Kedros 1987, pp. 9-15.

²⁸⁴ See: “Για τον Λειβαδίτη ο χρόνος και η ενηλικίωση που ανεπαίσθητα τον ακολουθεί, είναι δύο στοιχεία που υπονομεύουν τον παιδικό κόσμο, αφυδατώνοντας, μέρα με τη μέρα, το ζωντανό πλέγμα του μύθου, καθώς τον αντικαθιστούν ισοπεδωτικά με το ρεαλισμό της ανάγκης.” (Zisis, *ibid.* p. 201).

²⁸⁵ Especially in *To Εκκρεμές*, more on this see the third chapter of the thesis.

time, space and plot in order to deconstruct his certainties of the first period, related to his sense of belonging to his time, space and people and his sense of self-identity.²⁸⁶

All in all, the fusions of different time and space levels that abrogate the (linear) plot aim to raise Leivaditis' (and his contemporary writers') persistent questions on existence: who one was and who he is, why he exists, which are his relationships with others and whether it is possible for people to effectively communicate with others, what is the meaning of one's life. With reference to these questions, Leivaditis seems to be rather “pessimistic”: as he approaches to his last collections, he talks about the meaninglessness of life and one's inability to know himself and others. He acknowledges, however, the ability of imagination to vindicate people or at least confront them temporarily as they reflect on their lives, despite the loss it causes to those who get trapped in it: that is why, he and his alter-egos often imagine things that have never happened and act as if they have had; realising that one's life has been wasted could be unbearable for one to handle, therefore, such distortions of memory could be proved lifesaving for those who feel that they have failed in life. As Leivaditis writes

4.3. Leivaditis' self-referential poems of the third period

²⁸⁶ See Tom Stoppard, *Μεταμφοιέσεις*, trans. Dimitris Papakonstantinou, Athens: Dodoni 1980, pp. 23-25.

²⁸⁷ In his collection *Ο Τυφλός με το Λύχνο*, Leivaditis writes: “Τα φαινόμενα συνήθως απατούν, οι άνθρωποι ξεγελιούνται εύ-/κόλα, ίσως κιόλας να το 'χουν ανάγκη, είναι τόσο δύσκολη η ζωή.” (“Ο Άγνωστος Στρατιώτης”, *ibid.* p. 178).

As it has been mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, in his poetic collections of the first period Leivaditis believed in the ability of poetry to reflect on the historical circumstances, as well as in the power of words, in general, to criticize on the social phenomena of his time. In other words, the poet used to perceive poetry as a “carrier of the collective experience”²⁸⁸ and as a means of social criticism; he not only used to narrate the historical events of his time the moment they take place, but also he participated in them; as a result, he was certain about the facts he narrated as well as about the truth of his narration.

In this period, poetry also served as a means of support and confrontation to the less privileged classes of society who were Leivaditis' target readers (for instance, laundresses, street cleaners). As Filokyprou highlights,²⁸⁹ Leivaditis poetry of the first period (especially his first collections of that period) used to serve as a means of communication and representation of the common experience.

Gradually, and as we approach the end of the second period and mainly to Leivaditis' poetry of the third period, camaraderie loses its central role. More specifically, it is in his literary production of the second period, where Leivaditis, now reflecting on his past, started to question it for the first time. However, such a question does not relate to memory as much as it does to his perception of the past. In other words, the poet does not doubt his ability to recall the communist revolution but his belief on it, its actual historic role, as well as the motives of his comrades.

During the second period, poetry seemed to serve less as a means of testimony, let alone as a means of propaganda of the communist revolution, and mainly as a reflection of the past and as Leivaditis' attempt to see it in its true

²⁸⁸ The expression is borrowed from Elli Filokyprou, see on the third section of this chapter.

²⁸⁹ See Filokyprou, p. 314.

dimensions; what seems to have changed, especially in his collection of short stories *To Εκκρεμές*, is the poet's belief on the possibility of a social revolution.²⁹⁰ His poetry gradually transits from extroversion to introversion and from praising social action to the narration of his personal story. However, even in this period, poetry does not lose its communicative value, since the poet does not limit himself to the narration of his personal cancellations; on the contrary, he traces the role of denial in every man's life-not only that of the post-war period. Apart from the context, the language of his poems of the second period is also simple; in this sense, the poet allows comprehension and communication among his readers, while, at the same time, he questions them.

In *To Εκκρεμές*, the hero and the other people are worlds apart, constantly facing the boundaries of their perception; they end up facing one another in their attempt to dominate, thus establish their world/ perception of the world. In such a battle one, who does not succumb in the social norms, is targeted as a social pariah; he is constantly being chased and alienated until he gets smashed.

In his poetry of the third period, Leivaditis, being a marginal, thus unconventional, anti-hero himself, realises the harsh side of the words: they usually do not confront people, as he used to believe in the first period, but they often kill them: language is the most dangerous weapon in the daily battles: “Αργά. Το καφενείο άδειασε. Οι φίλοι έφυγαν. Κι εγώ ρεμβάζω ολομόναχος, κάνοντας τάχα πως παίζω με τις τρίχες του στήθους μου, ενώ βγάζω προσεχτικά μια μια/ τις σφαίρες της συνομιλίας.”, he writes in the poem “Πρώτες βοήθειες”.²⁹¹ According to Leivaditis' poetry of this period, every man is a prospective murderer, on one hand, because he makes, either knowingly or unintentionally, other people have expectations that are

²⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 103.

²⁹¹ See, *Ανακάλυψη*, p. 333.

destined to be cancelled²⁹² or because he subjugates them to his will via language.

Seldom do words protect people; sometimes they assist them to hide from the terror silence causes them.²⁹³ However, according to Leivaditis, silence has priority over the words;²⁹⁴ to him, silence is equal to truth (in some of his poems it is equal to the voice of God or is paralleled to music) and as people cannot handle it, they often resort to the lies of their own words.²⁹⁵

Contrary to his poetry of the first period, where, given the historical circumstances, silence was not an option, since it was equal to connivance and submission to the official regime of that time, in his poetry of the last period, Leivaditis introduces a world of silence.²⁹⁶ After the end of the communist revolution and the failure of the communist ideology, Leivaditis reflects a lot on the meaning of the words. He realises that words often mislead people, especially those who believe in them unconditionally.²⁹⁷

Words in which Leivaditis used to believe during the first period, like “equality”, “solidarity”, “peace” and “justice” have proved to have no meaning; they were used by several ambitious leaders as a means of propaganda killing those who have fought for them, while assisting them to achieve their personal goals. Those who took part in the Civil War, misled by words that meant nothing, misled others as well. In this sense, silence is equal to reflection, humility and apology and it turns out to be wiser than words; therefore, that who hushes is not a coward or aloof; on the contrary, he is aware of the meaninglessness of life which he faces on a daily basis.

²⁹² See: “(...) Από τότε φοβάμαι τις λέξεις. Τι τις θέλεις κι άλλες απογοητεύσεις;” (*Ο Τυφλός με το Λύχνο*, “Εορταστικά”, p. 183).

²⁹³ See: “Όταν άρχισε η πολιorkία, ο μάντης το ’χε πει καθαρά: τη σιωπή να φοβάστε.” (*Ανακάλυψη*, p. 276).

²⁹⁴ See: Είσαι η απεριγραπτή σιωπή που την ακούμε μέσα μας και μιλάμε για να μην πεθάνουμε από τρόμο.” (*Ο Τυφλός με το Λύχνο*, p. 153). See also the motto of the collection.

²⁹⁵ See Filokyprou, pp. 309-344.

²⁹⁶ Zisis, *ibid.* p. 108.

²⁹⁷ See: “αφού κι η πιο αθώα λέξη είναι μοιραία σαν ένα χιλιοειπωμένο αντίο λίγο πριν απ' το δυστύχημα” (*Ο Διάβολος με το Κηροπήγιο*, p. 187).

On the other hand, silence can sometimes be dangerous as well, since it leaves all versions of probability open; bearing all possible destinies that he could have, the poet feels hopeless. Unable to handle his freedom, he ends up idealising the life he could have and all things that have not been said or fulfilled: “Κύριε, αδίκησες τους ποιητές δίνοντάς τους μόνο έναν κόσμο”, Leivaditis writes.²⁹⁸ The unsaid and the unfulfilled often recur in Leivaditis' poetry of this period, in which the boundaries of experience and dream are examined, disestablished and/or mixed, as memories and imagination overlap each other.

In other words, in Leivaditis' work of the third period, poetry mainly serves as a means of reminiscence²⁹⁹ and renegotiation of the past, since several events recur in his writings and they become common places as the poet tries to deal with them. Remembering, however, is not an easy process. Leivaditis realises that, between his experiences of the past and his present, oblivion has intervened.

(...) ή θυμηθείτε μια λεπτομέρεια: είμαι θαμμένος στον κήπο κι ούτε έγγραψα ποτέ ποιήματα- απλώς προσπάθησα να σχεδιάσω ένα όνειρο/ πάνω στην άμμο της λησμονιάς. (Ανακάλυψη, “Σχόλιο στην Άμμο”, p. 357)

Oblivion becomes a commonplace in several of Leivaditis' self-referential poems.

Κάθε φορά που αρχίζω να μιλώ, ξέρω πως τίποτα δε θα πω: τα λόγια θα με προδώσουν, ο χρόνος θα προσπεράσει, οι άλλοι θα σταθούν αδιάφοροι έξω απ' το σπίτι. Ωσπου, τέλος, δε θα 'μαι παρά κάποιος που κρατώντας μια λάμπα πήγαινε από κάμαρα σε

²⁹⁸ Tasos Leivaditis, *Τα Χειρόγραφα του Φθινοπώρου*, Athens: Kedros 2003, p. 13.

²⁹⁹ To Leivaditis, even in this period, poetry as a means of narration and praise of the human experience does not lose its value: “ακόμα κι η ζωή μου αποχτά σημασία όταν τη διηγούμαι σε κάποιον.”, he writes in the motto of his poetic collection *Βιολί για Μονόχειρα* (p. 221).

κάμαρα φωτίζοντας τη λήθη. (Εγχειρίδιο Ευθανασίας, “Η Λάμπα”, p. 44)

The poet appears to be well aware of the limitations of language, of words as well as of memory. He realizes how words can fail you (in the sense that the poet sometimes fails to express what he has experienced/ imagined). Time goes by, memories are forgotten, following the true fate of all human things. However, the poet does not give up on his perceived duty. He keeps on writing poems, shedding light on those things that have been forgotten (thus they receded in darkness), in a way that reminds the reader of the Renaissance painters' technique called “chiaroscuro” (the use of strong contrasts between light and dark).

The poet seems to have invested on memory from his first poetic collections of the first period already; memory is a perquisite for his poems. In his poetry of the first period, memory was necessary, since it allowed the poet to honor the communists' sacrifice. Oblivion, on the other hand, served the official regime, the enemy of the revolutionists.³⁰⁰ The controversial role of memory, according to Filokyprou³⁰¹ and as it has been implied in the beginning of this section, emerges for the first time in his poetic collections of the second period: it can be both comforting and painful. However, it is only after 1972 that memory intensely troubles Leivaditis.³⁰²

More specifically, in his poetry of the last period, memory still is Leivaditis' material, as he needs to recapture basically his childhood or the years of the revolution, recall his loved ones and feel connected to them, even though they have

³⁰⁰ See Filokyprou, *ibid.* p. 32.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 33.

³⁰² *Ibid.* p. 34.

died.³⁰³

Κι εκείνος ο πρώτος νεκρός που είδαμε παιδιά, τόσο αξιολύπητα ακίνητος-/ απ' την άλλη μέρα έμπαινε κι αυτός μες στα παπούτσια μας και στα παιδικά μας ρούχα./ Ίσως γι αυτό φθείρονταν γρήγορα. (Ανακάλυψη, “Αλληλεγγύη”, p. 307)

However, focusing too much on memory and acts of memory can be harmful: it can prevent the hero from truly inhabiting, living in the present.³⁰⁴

(...) υπήρξαν μέρες που ξύπνησα εντελώς μέσα στο παρελθόν, κατέβηκα σκάλες που δεν υπήρχαν, πιάστηκα απ' το χέρι του πατέρα για να μη χαθώ στο συνστισμό ή πέθανα πυροβολημένος από λέξεις που ειπώθηκαν εδώ και είκοσι ή και τριάντα χρόνια (...) (Βιολέτες για μια Εποχή, “Γεγονότα υπό Αίρεσιν”)

That is the reason why oblivion, even though the poet may find it unbearable (particularly when he reflects on the possibility that his literary work can be forgotten after his death) is necessary to the poetic subject: it allows him to go on with his life no matter how great or humiliating his past has been. “Η λήθη θα μπορούσε να χαρίσει στον άνθρωπο την επανασύνδεση με την ύπαρξή του και χωροχρόνο του” Filokyprou notes.³⁰⁵ However, as she adds,³⁰⁶ oblivion is not an option for Leivaditis. Memory, either as carrier of the past or the way of reconstructing it in admixtures with fictional events, reappears constantly, becomes the poet's fate³⁰⁷ or punishment.

³⁰³ Ibid. p. 34.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. pp. 36-37.

³⁰⁵ Ibid p. 40.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 40.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. p.42.

(...) οι λέξεις είναι η ποινή μου, ο ύπνος η βιογραφία μου (...) (Ανακάλυψη, “Ένα Ιδιόρυθμο Καπέλο”, p. 353)

Oblivion, sometimes, appears to be equal to justice in the sense that it reminds people of the fact that everything is destined to be forgotten: people will die, their contribution to the world will not be remembered (unless somebody acknowledges it); no matter what their backgrounds used to be, their common fate is death and oblivion: “(...) αφήστε μας στην τύχη μας, τι τους θέλουμε τους άθλους, πανάρχαια νικημένοι (...)”,³⁰⁸ he writes. Life will go on without them, balance would come no matter what. Taking into account that fact, poetry seems to be an ode to meaninglessness –and a battle against it.

(...) ή όπως οι παλιοί ραψωδοί που παραμέριζαν τις βαριές γενειάδες τους/ για να φανεί λίγο η Τροία.³⁰⁹ (“Μικρή Ραψωδία”)

Fusing acts of memory with acts of oblivion, Leivaditis leaves some space to invented elements which can fill the gap the latter create in the narration: “Κι η ποίηση είναι σα ν' ανεβαίνεις μια φανταστική σκάλα/ για να κόψεις ένα ρόδο αληθινό.”, he writes.³¹⁰ Poetry is a way to freedom, it enables the poet –and consequently, his readers- to escape his daily routine. It can be fictional and able to

³⁰⁸ See *Σκοτεινή Πράξη*, p.105.

³⁰⁹ See *Ανακάλυψη*, p. 240.

³¹⁰ See *Μικρό Βιβλίο για Μεγάλα Όνειρα*, p. 14.

transform -instead of simply narrate- the world.



Poetry is an art of recollection but also, an art of forgetting. It consists of the necessary act that discerns between what should be salvaged and what should not be. In Leivaditis poems of this period, poetry is poignantly compared to an umbrella:

(...) στάθηκα τότε αναποφάσιστος, σαν ένας τρελός που αγόρασε όλη τη μουσική/ ή σαν εκείνες τις φτωχές γυναίκες που κρατάνε πάντα μια γελοία ομπρέλα- για να μην ακούσουν απευθείας την προσβολή,/ όπως περίπου γράφεται κι ένα ποίημα.³¹² (“Παρομοιώσεις”)

(...) σαν κάποιον που ανοίγει την ομπρέλα του σε καιρούς ξηρασίας (ίσως γιατί δε θέλει να ξεχάσει)/ ή κάποιον που ντύνεται γυναίκα για να πει ένα ψέμα ακόμα παιδικό-/ μη μ’ αδικείτε, λοιπόν, αν έκλεισα τα μάτια, ήταν για να υπερασπίσω τον κόσμο (...) ³¹³ (“Ο Επίλογος”)

It is the poem that protects the writer from the direct confrontation with reality and his memories. It is also a last resort, in the same way that Karyotakis understood it,³¹⁴ but one which the reader can carry with him in his daily confrontations with the world that surrounds him.

³¹¹ See *Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης*, p. 39.

³¹² See *Ανακάλυψη*, p. 355.

³¹³ Ibid. p. 362.

³¹⁴ See K.G.Karyotakis, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, Savvidis, G.P. (ed.), Athens: Estia, 2006, p. 87.

Κάθε στιγμή κινδυνεύουμε, αλλά κανείς – οι φωτογραφίες στον τοίχο, τα έπιπλα, οι αναμνήσεις, το κλειδί,/ στέκονται εκεί, ανήμπορα να σε βοηθήσουν - όπως οι λέξεις μόλις τελειώσει το ποίημα³¹⁵ (“Οι Λέξεις”)

Poetry serves as a means of personal absolution: thanks to it the poet remains innocent, child-like, consistently resisting the compromises of adulthood. It is also a means of self-construction, and of questioning the boundaries of language in this process.

(...) όπως η σελήνη έγερνε πάνω στο λόφο αιμόφυρτη- σαν τον ποιητή πάνω σ' αυτό το πεπαλαιωμένο αλφάβητο.³¹⁶ (“Οικογενειακή Συνάθροιση”)

The poet is well aware of the fact that words, the material of his art, have been there before him and that they have been used already by other poets. His work is to revive the poetic art by finding his personal voice that is distinguishable from others. In other words, poetry is a bidirectional process: it is able to transform the poet and it gets transformed by him. It deconstructs certainties and allows the poet to reconstruct himself (in the sense that he can create his persona through his poetry). By reconstructing himself, the poet might as well contribute to the revival of his art. However, poetry, Leivaditis concludes, is a strenuous process that requires a lot of pain on behalf of the poet: as he had mentioned in his self-referential poems of the first period, Leivaditis argues that poetry is written only via loss and suffering.

³¹⁵ Ibid. p. 318.

³¹⁶ See *Ανακάλυψη*, p. 243.

All in all, according to Leivaditis, poetry remains a means of resistance from his very first poetic collections of the first period to his poetry of the last period. What seems to change, however, is the kind of resistance poetry makes in this period.

During the first period, poetry, as a means of social criticism and promotion of the communist ideology, used to resist the official regime. After the second period, however, during which the poet experienced the failure of the communist ideology and the defeat of the communist party, the meaning of this resistance changes.

More specifically, in the last period, poetry becomes equal to the child-like perception of life (which is equal to a decadent anti-hero's point of view), thus, it resists adulthood and its terms: automation in the workplace that transforms people into mechanical devices, social norms that force people to be identical to one another, compete and smash one another and especially those who differ from the crowd or fall short. Gradually, the traditional perception of time and space (the unity of time and space) is being disestablished, the boundaries between reality and fiction are getting abolished; memory, oblivion and fantasy overlay one another, assisting the poet to reconstruct himself and the world via poetry, as well as his own poetics.

Such a transition from extroversion of the first period to introversion of the third period should not be regarded as a kind of withdrawal from the world on behalf of the poet: on the contrary, Leivaditis' poetry from the first period to the last is a constant battle with the world that surrounds him, in the sense that the poet is constantly reflecting on it; he represents, deconstructs and reconstructs it. What is most important and should be acknowledged is the development that took place as far as his poetry is concerned. From the linear narration and reflection on the historical

circumstances of the first period poetry to the complex fictional cosmos of his third period work, quite a lot of distance have been made. Via the painful disillusionment and renegotiation of his past (in Leivaditis' literary production of the second period), the poet have gained his own voice and mastered his art.

CONCLUSION

Leivaditis gradually makes a transition from extroversion to introversion. More specifically, in his poetry of the first period, and particularly, in his earlier poetic collections of this period, Leivaditis reflects the historical events of his time. In the first two collections of this period, the poet presents his exile in the concentration camp and the tortures he and his comrades undergo by the official regime (the right wing party). The third collection of this period constitutes a transition, in the sense that the events the poet narrates here, take place in a (post-war) city, instead of the concentration camp of the previous collections.

In the end of the first period, and more specifically in the long compositional poem “Οχτώ Άνθρωποι Βαδίζουν Πάνω στη Γη” (*Ο Άνθρωπος με το Ταμπούρλο*), Leivaditis approaches no more the Civil War, in which he participated, but war in general, introducing fictional characters and a plot from which space and time references are absent, giving to his text a universal value. The poem above seems to serve as a turning point from Leivaditis’ poetry of the first period to that of the second period, in the sense that it is here that for the first time (auto) biographical elements are absent from his work or mixed with fictional ones, in a way that the reader cannot identify with a specific historical context. What is more, it is in this poem where war is denounced; that renders the poem rather humanitarian instead of political.

From the very first collection of the second period (*Συμφωνία αρ. Ι.*), Leivaditis’ focus is on the results of the war (which is not named). The poet’s certainties on the communist ideology and the communist party are gradually getting disillusioned, as he reflects on his past and questions it. While reflecting on his past, however, the poet does not limit himself to the narration of his personal disillusionments; soon he describes the privations people experience in life, not only the post-war man. The issues that emerge in the second period bring Leivaditis’

poetry close to the philosophy of the existentialism (the section *Ποιήματα* (1958-1964) in particular). At the same time, the fictional element is used more systematically in the poetry of this period (*Οι Γυναίκες με τ' Αλογίσια Μάτια, Καντάτα, οι Τελευταίοι*) as Leivaditis turns to the unprivileged who live in the margins of society, whom he uses as his protagonists. It is these people whom the poet uses in order to create the persona of his poetic subject of the third period.

Το Εκκρεμές, Leivaditis' last work of the second period serves as a turning point to the poetry of the third period in multiple ways. Firstly, it introduces the element of the absurd. The introduction of the absurd allows Leivaditis to disestablish the unity of time, space and plot, thus to develop the ideas of individual's loneliness and the meaninglessness of life (which emerged in his poetry of the second period and which are studied at a greater depth in his poetry of the third period).

More specifically, in *Το Εκκρεμές*, space is deconstructed in correspondence to the deconstruction of the hero's perception of self (such a deconstruction comes as a result of the identity crisis the poetic subject of the second period poetry undergoes). The plot is also undermined, preparing the poetry of the last period where there is no storyline in contrast to Leivaditis' poetry of the previous periods; instead of a plot, both in *Το Εκκρεμές* and mainly in Leivaditis' poetry of the last period, the subject of the narration turns to his past which he recalls, moving freely back and forth in time and space and fusing reality with fantasy. Both the collection of short stories and the poetry of the third period constitute Leivaditis' constant struggle to interpret and reconstruct his life so far in order to reconstruct his self-identity.

What is more, the form of *Το Εκκρεμές* (short stories), as well as that of Leivaditis' fictional biographies of his favourite Greek writers, seems to prepare

Leivaditis' turn from the long compositional poems of the previous periods to the prose poems of the last period and from the monophonic narrative, mainly of his poetry of the first period, to the polyphonic one of the last period (in the sense that the voice of the poetic subject of the third period is an amalgama of several marginal anti-heroes' voices).

Last but not least, Leivaditis' reflection on the possibilities and limitations of memory and language, which emerged in *To Εκκρεμές*, prepares the re-negotiation of his poetics in his poetry of the third period: Leivaditis does not believe in the endless possibilities of poetry and memory anymore. As a result, his beliefs in the role of his art transform as well. Poetry is not a means of reflection of social criticism, since there is no such thing as reality, as far as Leivaditis of the third period is concerned: there are different perceptions of it instead. Therefore, poetry becomes one's subjective approach on, and even reconstruction of, reality. This gives poetry a new meaning: it remains a form of resistance; what changes is the context of such resistance: on the first period resistance referred to the official regime, while now is against conformism and normativity in general.

Under that scope, the transition from extroversion to introversion could not be interpreted as a defeat, as it has been stated, but rather as a transformation of Leivaditis' approach on the world and his place in it as a poet and as a man.

The contribution of this thesis is the study of Leivaditis' poetry of the second period and of *To Εκκρεμές*, as well as the indication of their transitional role in Leivaditis' oeuvre. The indication of Leivaditis' literary production of the second period as transitional hopefully sheds light on the development of his poetics and helps the reader and the prospective scholar of his work to gain a round view of it.

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