

THE EXPLORATIONS AND POETIC AVENUES OF NIKOS KAVVADIAS

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ABSTRACT. This paper analyses some of the influences in Nikos Kavvadias' (1910-1975) poetry. In particular – and without suggesting that such topic in Kavvadias' poetry ends here – we will examine the influences of the French poet Charles Baudelaire and the English poet John Masefield. Kavvadias is perhaps a *sui generis* case in Modern Greek literature, with a very distinct writing style. Although other Greek poets also wrote about the sea and their experiences during their travelling, Kavvadias' references and descriptions of exotic ports, exotic women and corrupt elements introduce the reader into another world and dimension: the world of the sailor, where the fantasy element not only exists, but excites the reader's imagination. Although the world which Kavvadias depicts is a mixture of fantasy with reality—and maybe an exaggerated version of the sailor's life, the adventures which he describes in his poems derive from the capacity of the poetic ego as a sailor and a passionate traveller. Without suggesting that Kavvadias wrote some sort of diary-poetry or that his poetry is clearly biographical, his poems should be seen in connection with his capacity as a sailor, and possibly the different stories he read or heard during his journeys. Kavvadias was familiar with Greek poetry and tradition, nonetheless in this article we focus on influences from non-Greek poets, which together with the descriptions of his distant journeys make Kavvadias' poems what they are: exotic and fascinating narratives in verse.

KEY WORDS: Kavvadias, Baudelaire, Masefield, comparative poetry

Introduction

From an early age to the end of his life, Kavvadias worked as a sailor, which is precisely why it can be argued that his poetry had been inspired by his numerous travels around the world. Although Kavvadias became well-known mainly because of his three poetry collections, *Μαραμινό* (*Marabu*, 1933), *Πούσι* (*Fog*, 1947) and *Τραβέρο* (*Traverso*, 1975), he also wrote the fiction *Βάρδια* (*The Shift*, 1954) and some other prose works: *Λι* (*Li*, 1987) and *Του Πολέμου/Στ' άλογό μου* (*Of War/On my horse*, 1987).

Thus, with three poetry collections one could say that his poetic *corpus* is relatively short. Also, despite the natural differences with the passing of time, and possibly the maturity the reader sees in *Pousi* and *Fog*—compared to *Marabu* (Loukidou 2015: 86, Kalokyris 1995: 33-36, 45-46, 69-70 and Daniel 2010: 41-46), there are no great differences in his thematology or stages of

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poetic style manifested in these collections. In an interview for the paper “Demokratiki Poreia” of Patras in 1996, Kavvadias said that he always wrote thalassographies, *i.e.* stories about the sea and sailors (Gelasakis 2018: 61). In addition, the nautical vocabulary Kavvadias used in his poems, perhaps did not allow the readers to understand fully his poetry—despite his popularity. Most importantly, Kavvadias did not write about the history of Greece, its glorious past or anything in detail about the Greek landscape—which is the case of the national poets, like George Seferis (1900-1971), Yiannis Ritsos (1909-1990) and Odysseas Elytis (1911-1996).

Basic themes of his poetry are the sea, women, death, and the loneliness which characterises the life of the sailor (Deliyiannis 2002: 25). Although the form of his poetry is traditional—mostly with iambic verse (Vogasaris 1979: 13), his themes and poetic explorations diverge significantly from traditional Greek themes. His poetry embodies some biographical elements which are frequently the material on which he builds his stories (Kalokyris 1995: 30). Thus, his poems become the result of a mixture of myth with reality, and as it has been said, “the truth of his poetry derives from its lies” (Lykiardopoulos 1990: 11, 40). Consequently, despite some attempts to read Kavvadias’ stories in his poems as “true stories”, it is safer to say that there is a marriage between fantasy and reality (Sakkatos 2009: 21-22)—possibly with the element of fantasy to be the prevailing one. In an interview for the periodical *Omorphia*, Kavvadias said that everything he wrote was true: it is about experiences that he lived or stories which he heard (Gelasakis 2018: 74). Nevertheless, reading his poems we could assume that the poetic imagination plays an important role in his stories.

Beyond the fact that his poetry revolves around his travels, experiences and adventures as a sailor in foreign places, by choice—one may say—Kavvadias describes the “corrupt” side of a sailor’s life. Thus, Kavvadias has been said to overlook certain facts in Greece and depict in his poems a non-realistic version of the sailor’s life (Philippou 2010). However, the reader should see this as the poet’s “empirical material” (Frantzi 2016: 16-21).

The non-Greek names and place names, his adventures or those of his companions in the sea and the several exotic ports and his admiration for the sea is a recurrent phenomenon in Kavvadias’ poetry. An example where Kavvadias shows his love for the sea is the poem *Mal du départ* (1990: 41):

Θα μείνω πάντα ιδανικός κι ανάξιτος εραστής
των μακρυσμένων ταξιδιών και των γαλάζιων πόντων...
I’ll always be the unworthy, romantic lover
of distant journeys and azure seas... (Kavvadias 1987: 89).

Kavvadias’ poetry was never included in any widely known history of Greek literature (Frantzi 1982: 11-12). However, although there is a kind of

prejudice for Kavvadias' poems, he is one of the most popular poets—partly due to the composer Thanos Mikroutsikos (1947-2019) who set several Kavvadias' poems to music. Mikroutsikos' albums *Γραμμές των Οριζώντων* (*Lines of the Horizon*, 1991) and *Ο Σταυρός του Νότου* (*The Southern Cross*, 1979) are two of the most popular albums in Greek discography (Gelasakis 2018: 22). Commenting on this “Kavvadiomania” of the youth, Mikroutsikos asserted that Kavvadias' poetry challenges intellectual people and especially young people to go beyond their limits and reach the impossible (Mikroutsikos 2010, see also Dimitroulia 2011).

Influences in Kavvadias' Poetry

The influences in Kavvadias' poetry could be a major topic, as Kavvadias combines different traditions.¹ Beyond the influences from Greek poets, like for example Kostas Karyotakis (1896-1928)—without claiming though that Kavvadias could be included in the movement of Karyotakismos (Menelaou, 2017: 150-152), or perhaps Seferis, whose poetry Kavvadias admired (Gelasakis 2018: 397), to a great extent Kavvadias was influenced by non-Greek poets. Christianopoulos (1982: 77) shows that Kavvadias belongs to the tradition of Baudelaire, while he also refers to a group of similarities between Kavvadias and the French poet Levet (1874-1906). In addition, Kavvadias had sound knowledge about the literary history of Greece. The iambic fifteen-syllable line (“political verse”) which he used, shows that Kavvadias was well-aware of his literary origins. Kasolas stated that Kavvadias wanted to include in his last poetry collection (*Traverso*) some lines from a demotic song, in political verse (2004: 27).

Previous analyses also dealt with the relationship between Kavvadias and Ouranes' poetry. Indeed, in Kostas Ouranes' (1890-1953) poetry the reader detects similarities with Kavvadias. And although we could speak of influences from Ouranes to Kavvadias, the reader should also bear in mind that they relied on the same sources: the Baudelairean tradition and Karyotakis. Interestingly, Ouranes titled a series of poems *Spleen* using Latin characters (1993: 35), which is precisely the title for Baudelaire's works (2016: 234-241), whereas his poem *Don Quixote* (1993: 47) alludes to Karyotakis' poem *Don Quixotes* (1995: 22). In any case, previous critique saw Ouranes as a source for Kavvadias' poetry—mainly because of the travelling experience, which is a common element in the two poets. Nevertheless, there is a substantial difference between Kavvadias and Ouranes: while Ouranes travelled as a traveller-passenger, Kavvadias was a sailor and thus travelling was his everyday reality (Mike 2010: 20-21; Karagatsis in Gelasakis 2018: 409-411).

1 This paper is a revised version of the article “Nikos Kavvadias, a Global Poet: Reflections of Baudelaire and Masfield” (Menelaou, *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017: 79-94).

In addition, Tsirkas stated that Kavvadias was familiar with Cavafy's poetry (1982: 36-37), and perhaps this suggests that he had been influenced by Cavafy. Besides, it is widely accepted that Cavafy became a source of inspiration for a significant number of poets, and he is one of the most influential Greek poets. On the other hand, although Daskalopoulos asserted that there are several poets who have been influenced by Cavafy, none of Kavvadias' poems had been included by Daskalopoulos in the Cavafian poems (Daskalopoulos 2003). If there is something in common, this should be detected in the general atmosphere of their poetry. Cavafy referred to corrupt elements and places in his poetry, like the poem *Μέσα στα Καπηλειά* (*In the Tavern Wines* 2008: 160). Similarly, Kavvadias referred to such places, but he is more overt—as he made mentions of bordellos, drugs and other such elements more openly.

In the following pages, the focus will be on the influences from traditions outside Greece. In particular, we will analyse certain poems in order to show the influences from Baudelaire, who maintains a major part in Kavvadias' poetry, and perhaps more surprisingly from Masfield, who influenced Kavvadias at one stage of his poetic career. If Baudelaire seems like a natural source for Kavvadias (based on their thematology), the influences from Masfield open new avenues for the analysis of his poetry. It is also important to note that Kavvadias' relationship with Baudelaire's and Masfield's poetry does not rely on a hypothesis. In contrast, in an interview for "Pan-spoudastiki" in 1967, a student periodical, Kavvadias said that he was fascinated by Baudelaire (Gelasakis 2018: 79), while in an interview for a radio station in 1967 (RIK Cyprus), he said that he loved Masfield (Gelasakis 2018: 87-88).

The "Baudelairean Stigma of Sin"

Kavvadias has been described as the poet of the sea and the "mythical" descriptions of the sailor's life. However, he could be also described as a "cursed poet"—because of the strong influences from Baudelaire (Philippou 2010: 9). According to Loukidou, Kavvadias' poetry has roots in Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) and Saint-John Perse (1887-1975), but one can also detect influences in his poetry from Greek poets (2015: 81). Indeed, Baudelaire constitutes a main source for Kavvadias' thematology, and Kavvadias' characterization as a cursed poet should be seen in connection with the Baudelairean elements which permeate his work. As Deliyiannis stated, in Kavvadias' poetry woman is presented in three ways: woman as mother, woman as friend-companion and woman as lover (2002: 26-29). Consequently, woman, in general and in any way, plays a prominent role in Kavvadias (Vogasaris 1979: 30). However, when Kavvadias refers to women as lovers in his poems, he mainly refers to easy women. In that respect, he is

reminiscent of Baudelaire who also wrote about them (Chatterjee 2015: 17-32). Such an example is Baudelaire's poem *Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle* (2016: 88):

Tu mettrais l'univers entier dans ta ruelle,
Femme impure! L'ennui rend ton âme cruelle.
You'd take the entire universe into your shrine, lewd woman!
Boredom makes your spirit so malign. (Baudelaire 2006: 89)

As Saunier asserts, in Kavvadias' poetry prostitution is connected to the poet's guilt (Saunier 2004: 141), and one could have added the sinful life of the sailor. Interestingly, Kavvadias did not want to make a family and wasted himself with women he met at different ports. He believed that making a family meant abandonment of the sailor's life and the sea (Gelasakis 2018: 55-57). In this spirit, in the poem *Μαραμπίου (Marabu)* (1990: 10) the poetic ego asserts that he only met "bodies of rakes":

Κι εγώ, που μόνον εταιρών εγνώριζα κορμιά...
And I, who'd only known the bodies of rakes. (Kavvadias 1987: 89)

Also, in *Gabrielle Didot* (1990: 30) the pensive poet remembers this woman he met in the past:

Το βράδυ ετούτο κάρφωσε μ' επιμονή το νου μου
κάποια γυναίκα που άλλοτες εγνώρισα, κοινή...
This evening my mind was insistently fixed
on a woman I once knew, a rake. (Kavvadias 1987: 69)

Perhaps one could say that these images are more appropriate for this kind of poetry, which describes corruption and the abuse of the body. This "sinful" atmosphere appears in several poems of Baudelaire and Kavvadias and constitutes a significant element of their poetry. Focusing on Baudelaire's poem *À une mendicante rousse* (2016: 278), Chatterjee asserted that the reader witnesses "the visibility" of salaciousness (2015: 18). Both poets referred to notorious women, and although this is a general characteristic, it still shows how Baudelaire's "sinful" elements are reflected in Kavvadias' poetry. The influences from Baudelaire become more obvious in the following poems, in which the representation of woman emerges from the parallel between cat and woman.

In his poem *Οι γάτες των φορτηγών (Cargo ship cats)*, 1990: 16), Kavvadias depicts a cat as "proud" and "lazy", its eyes with an 'electric charge' and its body reacts with "voluptuous spasms" to the sailor's caress:

Είναι περήφανη κι οκνή, καθώς όλες οι γάτες,

κι είναι τα γκριζα μάτια της γιομάτα ηλεκτρισμό·
 κι όπως χαϊδεύουν απαλά τη ράχη της, νομίζεις
 πως αναλύεται σ' ένα αργό και ηδονικό σπασμό.
 She's proud and lazy like all cats I know;
 her grey eyes contain an electric charge.
 When sailors gently stroke her back
 it breaks into slow, voluptuous spasms. (Kavvadias 1987: 41)

Initially, Kavvadias' title is reminiscent of Baudelaire's titles, who wrote at least three poems about cats, see *Le chat (The cat)* (2016: 116), *Le chat* (2016: 160) and *Les chats* (2016: 214). Here the focus is on the first mentioned poem. A primary difference that can be seen is that Kavvadias included in his poem's title the "clarification" that he refers to the cats of cargo ships, thus building on familiar ground. In his poem, Baudelaire also spoke about the way a man caresses the cat and the latter's reaction:

Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir
 Ta tête et ton dos élastique,
 Et que ma main s'enivre du plaisir
 De palper ton corps électrique.
 When my keen fingertips caress at leisure Your neck's smooth elasticity,
 And when my hand palpates with drunken pleasure Your body's electricity.
 (Baudelaire 2006: 117)

The language used in the two poems is identical, so that the reader could almost assume that Kavvadias made a kind of imitation of or variation on Baudelaire's poem. By the word "caress" ("caressent" in Baudelaire and χαϊδεύουν in Kavvadias), both poets show how people treat the cat. The reaction of the cat is the stretching of its body. This is reflected through the phrase "dos élastique" in Baudelaire and ράχη της πως αναλύεται in Kavvadias. In addition, in both poems the cat appears to be lazy. Although Baudelaire used the phrase "at leisure" ("à loisir"), which describes the overall scene (as opposed to Kavvadias who used the epithet "lazy" (οκνή) for the cat), his poem still shows the cat's lazy mood during the process of caress. Another similarity is the feeling of pleasure which exists in both poems during this process of caress. In Baudelaire, the phrase "s'enivre du plaisir" refers to the man's pleasure but it also insinuates the cat's pleasure, as it accepts the caress passively and happily. In Kavvadias, the pleasure of the cat is more overt through the phrase ηδονικό σπασμό ("voluptuous spasm").

Finally, another important similarity is the use of the word "electric": Baudelaire states "corps électrique" to characterize the cat's body, while Kavvadias uses the same epithet in the phrase μάτια γιομάτα ηλεκτρισμό to describe the cat's eyes. Overall, there is a very similar description with men caressing cats, which alludes to a parallel between cat and woman. This

parallel becomes obvious in Kavvadias, who states that cats resemble women and this is why sailors like them so much:

Στο ρεμβασμό και στο θυμό με τη γυναίκα μοιάζει
κι οι ναύτες περισσότερο την αγαπούν γι' αυτό...
She's just like a woman in anger and dreams;
it makes sailors love her all the more... (Kavvadias 1987: 41)

However, the poetic ego in Baudelaire also asserts that when he caresses the cat, he remembers his mistress:

Je vois ma femme en esprit.
I call to my mind the mistress of my heart. (Baudelaire 2016: 117)

The focus on the cat's eyes is another resemblance and strengthens the parallel between woman and cat. Kavvadias describes the cat's eyes as "grey eyes" with "an electric charge":

κι είναι τα γκριζα μάτια της γιομάτα ηλεκτρισμό.
Her grey eyes contain an electric charge. (Kavvadias 1987: 41)

Baudelaire also refers to the cat's eyes and describes them in similar terms:

Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux...
Let your bewitching eyes to me impart. (Baudelaire 2016: 117)

Consequently, the reader sees that Kavvadias has built on Baudelaire's description in a very productive way. In particular, Kavvadias exploited certain elements found in Baudelaire's poem, like the caress of the cat, the cat's laziness, the parallel woman-cat, and the focus on the eyes. The use of Baudelaire's vocabulary and language is also the case in Kavvadias' poem *Έχω μια νινα (I have a pipe)* (1990: 24), which is reminiscent of Baudelaire's poem *La pipe (The pipe)* (2016: 218). In Kavvadias' poem, the poetic ego asserts that he has a "Dutch pipe" made of "black wood":

Έχω μια πιπα ολλανδική από ένα μαύρο ξύλο.
I have a Dutch pipe of a black wood. (Kavvadias 1987: 57)

On the other hand, in Baudelaire's poem the pipe says that it is the pipe of the author; or to put it in a different way, the pipe is the voice of the poem:

Je suis la pipe d'un auteur.
I am an author's pipe. (Baudelaire 2016: 219)

Consequently, both poets use first-person narrative and depict the same relationship: the relationship between the author and his pipe. However, although the voice in Baudelaire's poem adopts the role of a lifeless object by asserting that it is the pipe, the voice in Kavvadias' poem adopts the role of the author who has a pipe. In any case, beyond the obvious similarity in the titles, both poems represent the relationship between the author and his pipe.

Kavvadias' poem, *Οι επτά νάνοι στο S/S Cyrenia* (*The seven dwarfs on the S/S Cyrenia*, 1990: 19) should be read in connection to Baudelaire's poem *Les sept vieillards* (*The seven old men*, 2016: 286). Baudelaire's poem is dedicated to the poet, novelist and dramatist Victor Hugo (1802-1885). Apart from the number seven which appears in both titles, Baudelaire and Kavvadias refer to particular groups of people: Baudelaire mentions "seven old men", whereas Kavvadias speaks of "seven dwarfs". In both cases there is some sort of disability.

In Baudelaire, the reader sees a man who is not just "bent", but "broken". This derives from the description of his misshapen body:

Il n'était pas voûté, mais cassé, son échine
Faisant avec sa jambe un parfait angle droit...
He was not bent, but broken, and his level spine
Made with his lower half a right angle so straight...
(Baudelaire 2016: 287)

On the other hand, Kavvadias depicts Haram—a character with bendy legs:

... κι ο στραβοκάνης ο Χαράμ πιττες ζυμώνει.
... and bandy-legged Haram is baking pies. (Kavvadias 1987: 185)

As we can see, both poems describe the disability of a person: Baudelaire asserts that the man's spine makes almost a perfect right angle with his legs, while Kavvadias' Haram has twisted legs. Kavvadias' poem *Mal du départ* (1990: 41) is another poem where one sees influences from Baudelaire, and especially the poems *Le mort joyeux* (*The happy corpse*, 2016: 226) and *Bénédiction* (*Benediction*, 2016: 20). In *The happy corpse*, the poet expresses his wish for a rich and heavy soil with snails as his grave. There he will sleep oblivious, "like a shark in the sea":

Dans une terre grasse et pleine d'escargots
Je veux creuser moi-même une fosse profonde,
Où je puisse à loisir étaler mes vieux os
Et dormir dans l'oubli comme un requin dans l'onde.
In a rich, fertile soil where snails live at their ease,
I want to dig a deep and spacious cavity,

Where I can idly stretch my old bones as I please
And sleep, oblivious, like a shark in the sea. (Baudelaire 2016: 227)

In Kavvadias' poem, one sees a similar macabre atmosphere, as the poetic ego also expresses what he wishes after his death. In this case though, the desired location is the sea:

Κι εγώ, που τόσο επόθησα μια μέρα να ταφώ
σε κάποια θάλασσα βαθιά στις μακρινές Ινδίες,
θα'χω ένα θάνατο κοινό και θλιβερό πολύ
και μια κηδεία σαν των πολλών ανθρώπων τις κηδείες.
And I, who longed to find my grave
in some sea of the Indies, far away,
will have a sad and common death,
a funeral like those of other men. (Kavvadias 1987: 89)

Juxtaposing the two poems, we can see that the poetic ego in Kavvadias' poem prefers the sea, whereas the poetic ego in Baudelaire's poem prefers rich and fertile soil with many snails. This is an element which should be seen in connection with a Kavvadias' statement: that he will never leave the sea and be buried in soil because he hates worms (Gelasakis 2018: 115). In fact, Kavvadias replaced Baudelaire's desired place with his own desired place and expressed a different view about worms or snails. However, Kavvadias—similarly to Baudelaire and although unwilling—knows that his funeral will be a typical funeral as to the rest of people: a common funeral on earth with soil, which is implied in the poem. Consequently, both poetic egos end with the same funeral. Thus, the common elements in the two poems could be summarized as follows: a general pessimistic climate—deriving from the poetic ego's speculation about his death and the reference to the place which the poetic ego prefers as grave.

In the poem *Benediction*, Baudelaire refers to the mother of the poet and what she thinks about her son. She is concerned about her son's inclination to poetry and 'full of blasphemies' supplicates to God, complaining about her son's "whim":

Lorsque par un décret des puissances suprêmes,
Le Poète apparaît en ce monde ennuyé,
Sa mère épouvantée et pleine de blasphèmes
Crispe ses poings vers Dieu, qui la prend en pitié.
When, by decree of the supreme authority,
The Poet is brought forth into this dismal sphere,
His mother, in her dread, and full of blasphemy,
Raises her fists to God, who takes pity on her. (Baudelaire 2016: 21)

In Kavvadias' poem, the atmosphere is very similar. The poetic ego asserts that he will stop talking about journeys, and the friends will believe that he forgot about travelling. The mother, who thinks that her son's passion about travelling was a "quirk of his youth", is jubilant because she thinks that this is over now. Although poetry is not mentioned in Kavvadias' poem, it is implied as travelling works as a source of inspiration for the poetic ego:

Θα πάψω πια για μακρινά ταξίδια να μιλώ·
 οι φίλοι θα νομίζουνε πως τα' χω πια ξεχάσει,
 κι η μάνα μου, χαρούμενη, θα λέει σ' όποιο ρωτά:
 «Ήταν μια λόξα νεανική, μα τώρα έχει περάσει...»
 I'll stop my talk of far-away journeys,
 my friends will think I've forgotten it all;
 my mother, delighted, will tell those who ask,
 "It was a quirk of his youth, but now it's passed." (Kavvadias 1987: 89)

According to Baudelaire's and Kavvadias' poems, the talent of the poet is seen as a curse from the mother's point of view. Thus, both mothers do not agree with their sons' wish to be poets. The mother's disagreement is reflected in Baudelaire's poem through her complaints to God, and in Kavvadias' poem through the mother's jubilation after her son stopped talking about journeys.

On the other hand, both sons see their talent from a totally different perspective. Poetry is a kind of blessing for them. According to Baudelaire's poem, the poet sees poetry as "a splendid throne" in heaven, where he can find serenity. In a position of invocation, the poet "lifts his arms in piety":

Vers le Ciel, où son oeil voit un trône splendide,
 Le Poète serein lève ses bras pieux.
 Upward to Heaven, where he sees a splendid throne,
 Serene, the Poet lifts his arms in piety. (Baudelaire 2016: 227)

In his poem, Kavvadias asserts that he will be always an "unworthy" and "romantic lover" of journeys and seas, and insinuates the grandeur of poetry. Kavvadias' poem is somehow self-depreciating. By underestimating and downgrading himself to an "unworthy, romantic lover", the poetic ego exalts poetry and gives it a higher role similarly to Baudelaire. Nonetheless, as he is not able to commit with travelling and poetry—and having complied with the role his mother envisaged for him, he thinks that he is "unworthy":

Θα μείνω πάντα ιδανικός κι ανάξιος εραστής
 των μακρυσμένων ταξιδιών και των γαλάζιων πόντων...
 I'll always be the unworthy, romantic lover
 of distant journeys and azure seas... (Kavvadias 1987: 89)

Consequently, the reader can see that the two poets contradict their opinion of poetry to that of their mothers. Kavvadias' poem *Mal du départ* could be characterized as a Baudelairean poem, where the poet builds on two Baudelaire's poems. In addition, the dark atmosphere, a prominent characteristic of Baudelaire's poetry, appears in Kavvadias too. The pessimistic tone is also the case in Karyotakis' poetry, whose pessimism influenced a whole generation of Greek poets. Nevertheless, Kavvadias' dark atmosphere is not necessarily connected with Karyotakis' pessimism. In particular, if we focus on some words and the language used in general by Kavvadias, we are inclined to say that his language is evocative of Baudelaire (without ignoring of course that Baudelaire wrote in French and Kavvadias in Greek). For instance, in his poem *L'irréparable* (*The irreparable* 2016: 180), Baudelaire speaks of a sorceress:

Dis-le, belle sorcière, oh! dis, si tu le sais.
Tell me, fair sorceress, Oh! tell me if you know.
(Baudelaire 2016: 181)

The reader sees similar references in Kavvadias, such as in his *Fata Morgana* (1990: 30). The title connotes the sea-nymph of medieval Celtic legends about King Arthur, and also an optical illusion caused by atmospheric conditions (Trapalis 2000: 76, 103; see also the explanation of the poet about this optical illusion in Kasolas 2004). "Fata Morgana" is a witch with three daughters:

Η μάγισσα έχει τρεις κόρες...
The witch has three daughters... (Kavvadias 1987: 205)

Similarly to Baudelaire's *The irreparable*, Kavvadias' *Fata Morgana* comprises an almost metaphysical element, because of the presence of the sorceress and the witch respectively. Both poets refer to creatures which exist outside of human perception, even if we consider that they are used as metaphors. This metaphysical element also appears in Baudelaire's poem *Au lecteur* (*To the reader* 2016: 14), where the poet depicts a "Trismegist Satan":

Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté...
Upon his evil pillow, Satan Trismegist
Lulls up and casts his spell on our enchanted mind...
(Baudelaire 2016: 15)

Kavvadias too, again in *Fata Morgana* refers to a demon:

Δαίμονας γεννά τη νηνεμία...
A demon gives birth to the sudden calm... (Kavvadias 1987: 205)

Beyond the common reference to the demonic element, both poets imply that because of this element (Satan in Baudelaire, a demon in Kavvadias) there is a superficial situation of tranquility: in Baudelaire's poem their minds are *enchanté* ("enchanted") because of Satan, while in Kavvadias' poem the demon "gives birth to the calm". In that way, both poems insinuate some sort of trap, as this situation of calmness or enchantment is only superficial and disguises potential dangers and threats.

Words like "witch" and "demon" give Kavvadias' poetry a distinct element, which the reader can hardly find in another Greek poet. Influenced by Baudelaire's tradition and exploiting to the full the personal experience of his exotic journeys, Kavvadias depicts a dark atmosphere—perhaps unique in Modern Greek literature. Words like 'monster' also appear in both poets. In the poem *Les petites vieilles* (*Little old women* 2016: 290), also dedicated to Victor Hugo, Baudelaire draws a parallel between old women and monsters:

Ces monstres disloqués furent jadis des femmes.
These shambling ruins once were women in their prime.
(Baudelaire 2016: 291)

On the other hand, in the poem *Αρμίδα* (*Armida* 1989: 18), Kavvadias speaks of monsters painted red:

... τέρατα βαμμένα πορφυρά.
...a band of monsters painted red. (Kavvadias 1987: 127)

Despite the different use of the word—*monstres* works like a metaphor in Baudelaire, while in Kavvadias *τέρατα* is rather a more literal description—the reader cannot ignore the "common poetic language" which depicts this climate of hell.

Interestingly, in the poem *Les Phares* (*The Beacons* 2016: 36) Baudelaire calls upon the artist Francisco de Goya (1746-1828). A reference to Goya we also see in Kavvadias' poem *Ένα μαχαίρι* (*A knife* 1990: 18). Although Baudelaire and Kavvadias made mentions of other artists too in their poetry, Goya is a prominent one. The dark atmosphere of some of his paintings (especially his "Black paintings") constitutes an element, which, as we have already seen, exists in certain poems of Baudelaire and Kavvadias. According to Puhvel (1984: 249-257), Goya was one of the artists who were in the heart of Baudelaire. In the same spirit, Helman (1964: 30-37) states that Baudelaire extolled above all Goya's originality, his revolt against his contemporary system and his freeing of the imagination. One could assume that this can be the case for Kavvadias too, who was very likely to have studied Goya's paintings.

Years before Baudelaire, Goya suggested the demonic and monstrous nature of bare sensuality. He became the first painter to make people aware of the ambiguous qualities of love in a secularized world (Krumrine 1994: 36-44). In Baudelaire's words, Goya was a great and terrifying artist. He was able to invent and create a credible form of monstrous, where the borders between reality and fantasy were blurred (Fryberger 1962: 65-67). Baudelaire infused Goya's style and forms into his work and refused to comply with the traditional thought (Luxenberg 2002: 179-182). Bearing in mind that Kavvadias shared in Baudelaire's and Goya's dark atmosphere, one is inclined to say that he continued this tradition.

Readings of a Forgotten Poet: Masfield

Kavvadias read and studied non-Greek poetry and art in general. His broad horizons are shown in his poems, where the reader sees mentions of different artists and poets. For example, his poem *Federico Garcia Lorca* (1989: 27), as the title suggests, refers to the prominent Spanish poet Lorca (1898-1936), who was murdered in 1936. Also, beyond Goya as discussed earlier, there are references to other artists like Amedeo Clemente Modigliani (1884-1920) in the poem *Θεσσαλονίκη* (*Thessaloniki* 1989: 29).

As Tsirkas asserted, Kavvadias read almost unknown poets, without a great readership (1982: 18). Masfield could be seen as such a poet, since he is hardly known in Greece. Almost an unknown poet among Greek readers, Masfield worked for a few years as a sailor (Gervais 2004). In that respect, his life is similar to Kavvadias' life. It is important to clarify that Masfield's influences on Kavvadias are not as strong as Baudelaire's influences—whose atmosphere permeates the whole of Kavvadias' corpus. Nevertheless, Masfield's influences exist in Kavvadias and deserve analysis, especially if we bear in mind that the association of Kavvadias with Masfield has never been attempted before.

Kavvadias' poems *Ένας νέγρος θερμαστής από το Τζιμπουτί* (*A black stoker from Djibouti* 1990: 28) and *William George Allum* (1990: 45) are reminiscent of Masfield's poems *Bill* (1932: 9) and *Cape Horn Gospel I* (1932: 21) [both originally published in the collection *Salt-Water Ballads* in 1902]. The strongest similarity is the name: "Bill" is the name of the sailor in both Masfield's poems, and "Willy" or "William" is the name of the sailor in the two poems of Kavvadias:

Bill, he's dead, was all they said.

(*Bill*)

And Bill, as was a seaman, died.

(*Cape Horn Gospel I*)

Ο Γουίλλη ο μαύρος θερμαστής από το Τζιμπουτι...
 Willy, the Black stoker from Djibouti...
 (*A black stoker from Djibouti*, Kavvadias 1987: 65)

The name Bill is a short form or hypocorism of the name William. Interestingly, the form of the sailor's name which is used by Kavvadias in *William George Allum* (William), appears in Masfield's poem *Cape Horn Gospel I*: "And he says 'Stand by', says William/ For a shift towards a better place."

In addition, Masfield and Kavvadias share a similar theme: the story of a certain person and the description of his death. In the poem *Bill*, Masfield describes how the other sailors "dumped" the dead sailor "down to the swaying weeds ten fathom beneath the keel", and in the poem *Cape Horn Gospel I* how the crew "lashed" the dead sailor, "in an old tarpaulin and tumbled him across the side":

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

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

Thus, as we can see both Masfield's poems show the treatment of a dead body by the crew. Turning to Kavvadias' poems, we see a similar description. In the poem *A black stoker from Djibouti*, the sailors left the dead body of the sailor somewhere in the East "burning with fever and wasting away", while in the poem *William George Allum* the reader sees the announcement of death, when the other sailors find the dead body of William "with a knife sticking out his chest":

Μια μέρα τον αφήσαμε στυγνό αι' τον πυρετό,
 πέρα στην Άπω Ανατολή, να φλέγεται, να λιώνει.
 One day we left him out in the East
 burning with fever and wasting away. (*A black stoker from Djibouti*, Kavvadias 1987:
 67)

Κάποια βραδιά ως περνούσαμε από το Bay of Bisky,
 μ' ένα μικρό τον βρήκανε στα στήθια του σπαθι.
 One night as we sailed from the Bay of Bisky,
 he was found with a knife sticking out his chest.
 (*William George Allum*, Kavvadias 1987: 97)

The treatment of the dead body by the companions in both poets almost connotes dehumanization: in Kavvadias' poem *A black stoker from Djibouti* they just left him, while in *William George Allum*, the phrase "he was found" suggests that his dead body was almost forgotten. In Masefield's poem *Bill*, they "dumped him down" and in *Cape Horn Gospel I*, they "lashed him". Moreover, the protagonists in Masefield's poem *Bill* and Kavvadias' *William George Allum* share a basic characteristic: they are not very sociable. According to Masefield's poem, Bill did not have any friends and there was nobody to "close his eyes" after his death:

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

In the same vein, Kavvadias' poem refers to a rather unsociable person who never spoke and had no friends. He only smoked his pipe:

Εγνώρισα κάποια φορά σ' ένα καράβι ξένο
έναν πολύ παράξενον Εγγλέζο θερμαστή,
όπου δε μιλάγε ποτέ κι ούτε ποτέ είχε φίλους
και μόνο πάντα κάπνιζε μια πίπα σκαλιστή.
Once on a foreign boat I knew
an English stoker who was very odd;
he never spoke and had no friends
but smoked a carved pipe all day long. (Kavvadias 1987: 95)

Another common element is the order given by the ship's officer. In Masefield's poem the mate ordered the sailors to "lash him up":

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

In Kavvadias' poem, the captain ordered them to throw the dead body into the sea:

Ο πλοίαρχος είπε: «Θέλησε το στιγμή του να σβήσει»
και διέταξε στη θάλασσα την κρύα να κηδευθεί.
He wanted to wipe it off,' said the captain,
and ordered him buried in the cold, cold sea. (Kavvadias 1987: 97)

It also seems that the narrators in the poems were on the boat and members of the crew. It is not a story they heard, but a story in which they played an active role. The reader can see the narrators' active role from the use of first-person narrative: "we dumped him down" (*Bill*) and "I was in a hooker once"

(*Cape horn Gospel I*) in Masfield; “I met once” (*William George Allum*) and “we left him one day” (*A black stoker from Djibouti*) in Kavvadias.

What is important to note, is that according to sources Willy (in Kavvadias’ poem *A black stoker from Djibouti*) was a real person. The poet met Willy in 1930 on the boat “Iphigeneia” (Gelasakis 2018: 51-52, 360). The interesting part of the story is that Kavvadias kept the real name of the stoker, but changed his country of origin: while Willy comes from Ethiopia, in the poem Kavvadias states that he comes from Djibouti.

Kavvadias’ poem *Apriða* (Armida, 1989: 17) also reflects his readings of Masfield, and especially the latter’s poem *Cargoes* (1932: 56) [originally published in *Salt-Water Poems and Ballads* in 1916]. Although here the reader does not see the strong similarities we saw earlier, there are important elements which strengthen the connection between Kavvadias and Masfield. Initially, the poems *Cargoes* and *Armida* start with an identical way: the name of a boat. In Masfield, the boat is the “Quinquireme of Nineveh”, while in Kavvadias it is “the pirate ship of Captain Jimmy”. Additionally, there is some overlap on the general geographical location. Masfield states in the second line of his poem that the boat is going to Palestine. On the other hand, although Kavvadias implies Peru as the final destination, the title of the poem—which is the name Armida— suggests a different place of action. By mentioning Armida, Kavvadias alludes to the fictional character from *Gerusalemme liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) by Torquato Tasso (see Esolen 2000). Armida was a Saracen sorceress meant to stop the Christians during their fight against the Muslims. If the readers take into consideration the fact that Armida in Kavvadias’ poem was a Saracen and Masfield refers to Palestine as the final destination, then the two poems point to the same geographical area. According to Trapalis (2010: 96), Armida could also refer to the asteroid discovered in 1903 or even to the name of a boat. In any case though, the connection with Masfield is important here.

Also, the poems *Cargoes* and *Armida* name the reason of the travel: the transfer of cargo. In Masfield’s poem we see many things: ivory, apes, peacocks, sandalwood, cedarwood, sweet white wine, emeralds, amethysts, topazes, cinnamon, gold moldores, road-rail, pig-lead, firewood, iron-ware and cheap tin trays. On the other hand, in Kavvadias’ poem the ship transfers hashish.

Finally, there is an important contrast between *Cargoes* and *Armida*. In Masfield’s poem the boat returns. This suggests that we have a final destination and a kind of purpose. In contrast, the ship in Kavvadias goes nowhere. Although in the second stanza the poetic ego states “once we reach Peru”, in fact there is no final destination as in the last stanza the poetic ego says that the “anchors are lost in the sea”. Thus, Kavvadias reverses the climate of Masfield’s poem, by describing the journey of a boat which has no purpose.

Conclusions

Regardless of individual beliefs and views of Kavvadias' poetry, his writing style is a special and unique case in Modern Greek literature. His poetry embodies different traditions which are blended with his travelling experience as a sailor in a very productive way. In this article, we showed that Kavvadias had been influenced widely by Baudelaire, who was his great master. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that Kavvadias, although not a French poet, belongs to the Baudelairean tradition—as elements of Baudelaire's poetry permeate his poetry. Nonetheless, if we were meant to find a basic difference between the two poets, this would be the experience of travelling: while Baudelaire dreamt of travels, Kavvadias travelled almost for his whole life—and this is reflected in the exotic tone of his poetry.

As regards influences from Masfield, these appear in a limited number of poems compared to Baudelaire. However, these influences show Kavvadias' enriched horizons, and his encounters with Masfield's poetry. The influences from Masfield constitute an original addition in the study of Kavvadias' poetry. Masfield provided Kavvadias with some further ideas, which he developed in his own poetic work—adopting them to his reality.

It could be said that Baudelaire's influence in Kavvadias are more obvious. Nonetheless, Masfield's influence—although without the same depth—constitutes an important aspect of Kavvadias' oeuvre. Thus, in the attempt to identify the poets who influenced Kavvadias, Masfield should certainly be included together with the main source, namely Baudelaire.

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