

THE INTERVENTION OF BIOGRAPHY IN POETRY: THE REPRESENTATION OF KARYOTAKIS' FRIENDSHIP WITH SAKELLARIADIS

ΙΑΚΟΒΟΣ ΜΕΝΕΛΑΟΥ*

Abstract: In this paper, we are going to look at Karyotakis' friendship with Sakellariadis and its reflection in three Karyotakis' works. The main goal is to show the close relation between life and work in Karyotakis' poetry. Apart from these works by Karyotakis, the correspondence between the two men provides us with very useful material, as this is further evidence on their friendship. While they were really close friends once, this changed through the years; and Karyotakis shows these changes in his works. The letters that Karyotakis sent to his friend is a verification of this change, but also a proof that Karyotakis' poetry is a kind of 'life writing'. Former critique saw Karyotakis as a poet whose works revolve around his personal tragedy and pessimism; an element which permeates the whole of his poetic corpus and it affected several other poets. This identification between life and poetry was seen by some critics as a weakness of his. Nevertheless, such a view is rather misleading, as Karyotakis used his personal experience in a very productive way. In contrast, the fact that Karyotakis' poems frequently allude to his personal experience challenges readers to seek further meanings.

Keywords: Modern Greek poetry, Karyotakis, Sakellariadis, (auto)biography

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we seek to show the connection between life and poetry in Kostas Karyotakis (1896-1928), through the different stages of his relationship with Sakellariadis and how biographical information - primarily the letters Karyotakis wrote to Sakellariadis- helps us to approach the following works: 'Σε παλαιό συμφοιτητή' ('To an old college friend'), 'Ιστορία' (Life story) and 'Ο κήπος της αχαριστίας' (The garden of ingratitude). Although Karyotakis wrote these works

* Iakovos Menelaou (✉)
King's College London, UK
e-mail: menelaou.iakovos@gmail.com

in three different periods, they allude to the same person: Sakellariadis. In addition, it is important to see Karyotakis as a poet, whose personal experience is an integral part of his poetry. Any attempt to analyse Karyotakis' poems as independent entities isolated from the poet's life, deprives reader of the charm to see the poet's real emotions and targets.¹ Karyotakis' pessimism was not an ephemeral craze as Strasburger suggested² or a pretended vogue; it was more like a living experience for him. While other poets who imitated Karyotakis made his pessimism a fashionable trend,³ Karyotakis wrote pessimistic poetry inspired by his personal experience and pessimism.

As Georgiadis declares, poetry and life go together in Karyotakis. If the reader really wants to find the meaning of his poems, he cannot set aside any biographical information. Biography is a key element in the interpretation of his poems, as Karyotakis embodies his personal experiences; this is evident in his erotic poems and poems revolving around suicide. In addition, Georgiadis describes the poem 'Οι στιχοι μου' ('My verses') as a striking example of autobiography in Karyotakis.⁴

¹ For example, Benatsis, following the principles of Semiotics, attempts to interpret certain Karyotakis' poems in such a way. Although such an approach is something new -indeed- in the analysis of Karyotakis' poetry, the results are not very promising. Although Benatsis gives some good interpretations of the poems, the fact that he sets aside outside information, like biographical information, constitutes a great obstacle for the full understanding of Karyotakis' poems. See Απόστολος Μπενάτσης, «Τι νέοι που φθάσαμεν εδώ...»: Κώστας Καρυωτάκης από τα πρώτα ως τα τελευταία ποιήματα [Apostolos Benatsis, 'So young we landed here...' Kostas Karyotakis from the First to the Last Poems] (Athens, 2004).

² J. Kruczkowska, 'Who Gets Translated and Why? Anthologies of Twentieth-Century Greek Poetry in Poland', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 33:1 (2015), 105-125.

³ For the important distinction between the experience of Karyotakismos and the imitation of Karyotakismos see M. Στεφανοπούλου (ed.), *Καρνωτάκης και Καρνωτακισμός: 31 Ιανουαρίου και 1 Φεβρουαρίου 1997* [M. Stephanopoulou, *Karyotakis and Karyotakismos: 31 January and 1 February 1997*] (?Athens, 1998).

⁴ Νέαρχος Γεωργιάδης, *Κώστας Καρυωτάκης: Απαντήσεις στα Ερωτήματα για τον Ίδιο και το Έργο του* [Nearchos Georgiades, *Kostas Karyotakis: Answers to Questions for him and his Works*] (Athens, 2014), 9-18. Besides, we focused on the close relation between life and poetry in another article (see Iakovos Menelaou, 'My Verses Are the Children of My Blood': Autobiography in the Poetry of Kostas Karyotakis', *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, Vol. 5, No: 3 (2017), 5-17.

In his poems, Karyotakis expresses his inner feelings and events from his everyday life. According to Georgiadis, when he writes ‘my flesh and blood I’ll put in the folio form of a book’ in the poem ‘Σταδιοδρομία’ (‘Career’)⁵ is not a metaphor. This is reality and Karyotakis’ poetry could be characterised as a memoir.⁶ Especially in his last poetic collection, *Ελεγεία και Σάτιρες* (*Elegies and Satires*), Karyotakis intentionally includes his whole life. He writes the poems and is the protagonist-hero of those poems too. Inevitably, critics misunderstood certain poems of Karyotakis, because they did not pay attention to the poet’s biography.⁷

During his student years in Athens, Karyotakis met Charilaos Sakellariadis and they became friends. Although they kept in communication until 1928, when Karyotakis committed suicide, because of different reasons the two men did not remain close friends. Sakellariadis worked for literary journals and also wrote some poems; however he never became known for his poetry. Besides, he was mostly interested in the literary field as philologist and critic and worked for various journals.

In a letter in February 1920, Karyotakis writes to his close friend, then, Sakellariadis:

I read in a newspaper yesterday, that there is an order for those who were discharged in 1919 and they should appear in three days. When you receive my letter, I would appreciate if you could go and ask the military office whether this order includes students of Philology and if I could have an exemption, because I am clerk. You must never mention my name. If I have to come, telegraph or write to me. Let us see what will happen. Hell! Will they never leave me alone?⁸

Karyotakis, who refers to the army and his plan to get a permanent discharge, asks Sakellariadis some sort of help on how he will achieve that. There is also evidence on that in a letter to Sakellariadis, in July 1920:

⁵ K. Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars: Poems and Prose*, tr. W. W. Reader and K. Taylor (Birmingham, 2006), 134.

⁶ Γεωργιάδης, *Κώστας Καρυωτάκης* [Georgiadis, *Kostas Karyotakis*], 77, 102.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 132, 143, 181-182. See also Ελπίδα Σίτα Μανιάτη, *Καρυωτάκης: η Ποίηση Ηχεί σαν Θρήνος* [Elpida Sita Maniati, *Karyotakis: Poetry Sounds like Lament*] (Athens, 2014).

⁸ Γ. Π. Σαββίδης, Ν. Μ. Χατζηδάκη και Μ. Μητσού, *Χρονογραφία Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκη: 1986-1928* [G. P. Savidis, N. M. Hatzidaki and M. Mitsou, *K. G. Karyotakis' Chronology: 1986-1928*] (Athens, 1989) 68-70. My translation.

If god would help me to get discharged from the dishonor of the army, I would come and stay permanently. [...] When my leave expires, I will try to get into the hospital in Chania, in order to get the leave from there.⁹

In another letter on 15 November 1919, Karyotakis writes:

Besides, my life is more boring and miserable than I used to believe and you imagine. Cry for me, Charilaos, cry for me, my friend. I am starting to curse the moment I decided to leave.¹⁰

Although not clearing mentioning his desire to get a permanent discharge from the army, similarly to the previous letters, Karyotakis shows that he sees Sakellariadis as a real friend and speaks openly to him about his boredom and worries.

In another letter to Sakellariadis in May 1925, Karyotakis refers to his career as government clerk with irony. Again, the letter shows the closeness of their friendship, as Karyotakis reveals his distress to a true friend:

I offer my high service to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Assistance, of course. [...] In regard with all the rest, home and work. My life is a fine clock (as we are accustomed to say), which God has still the kindness to wind up every morning.¹¹

As we can see, it seems that Karyotakis' letters show an honest and healthy friendship; this is evident from the familiarity we see in these letters. Karyotakis expresses feelings and shares thoughts about the military service and his career as government clerk. Nevertheless, as we are going to see, the friendly climate of these letters is not the case in their later correspondence. Such a gradual change appears in Karyotakis' poems too.

DIFFERENT STAGES OF A FRIENDSHIP

The friendship began at a carnival time in 1915, after Karyotakis proposed to Sakellariadis to go together to a dance.¹² Then, the two men became close friends. On 4 February 1920, Karyotakis sent

⁹ *Ibidem*, 74-75. My translation.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 65. My translation.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 108. My translation.

¹² *Ibidem*, 43.

Sakellariadis a poem with the title ‘Αφιερωμένο’ (‘Devoted’), together with a letter. In his letter, Karyotakis wrote:

I wrote ‘Aphrodite’ [in ‘Αφιερωμένο’] because of needs of rhyme and symbolically; and being sure that you would have one girl with this name, among all the others.¹³

In addition, when the poem was first published in *Νουμάς* (*Noumas*), on 24 October 1920,¹⁴ it had the following dedication: ‘to the poet Charilaos Sakellariadis, with whom I had good times when we were students’. In Karyotakis’ second poetic collection, *Νηπενθή* (*Nepenthe*), the poem appears with the title that became widely known: ‘Σε παλαιό συμφοιτητή’ (‘To an old college friend’).¹⁵ As we can see in his letter, Karyotakis gives Sakellariadis some explanations about the poem, while the warmth of the letter appears also in the poem, as Karyotakis remembers happy times with his friend, in Athens. ‘Σε παλαιό συμφοιτητή’ (‘To an old college friend’) is in form of a letter to friend and is characterised by positive and friendly emotions.

The poem consists of five stanzas of four iambic lines rhymed ABAB. In the first stanza, we have a beginning similar to a letter:

Φίλε, η καρδιά μου τώρα σα να εγέρασε.
Τελείωσεν η ζωή μου της Αθήνας,
που όμοια γλυκά και με το γλέντι επέρασε
και με την πίκρα κάποτε της πείνας.¹⁶

The poet writes to a friend of his, saying that he feels his heart has grown old, because he is not in Athens anymore; a place that made him happy and jubilant. During his stay there as a student, he used to celebrate and have parties with his college friend, who is the recipient of the letter.

In the second stanza, the poet continues in the same atmosphere of nostalgia and recollection:

¹³ *Ibidem*, 68-69. My translation.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 76.

¹⁵ Κ. Γ.Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης [Κ. G. Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. G. P. Savidis] (Athens, 2001), 30.

¹⁶ ‘Friend, now it’s as though my heart has gotten old. My life in Athens is over; it zipped by like candy both with parties and the occasional bitterness of hunger.’ (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 41)

Δε θα ῥθω πια στον τόπο που πατρίδα μου
τον έδωκε το γιόρτασμα της νιότης,
παρά περαστικός, με την ελπίδα μου,
με τ' όνειρο που εσβήστη, ταξιδιώτης.¹⁷

In these lines, the poet says that he will never return to his favourite place. It was a dream, but now is over and he has to live for the rest of his life with the hope that he might visit Athens again, but only as a traveller.

In the third stanza, we move on to a different atmosphere. Although the climate of recollection becomes stronger, the poet's imaginary travel to Athens in order to meet his old friend is the new element:

Προσκυνητής θα πάω κατά το σπίτι σου
και θα μου πουν δεν ξέρουνε τι εγίνης.
Μ' άλλον μαζί θα ιδώ την Αφροδίτη σου
κι άλλοι το σπίτι θα ῥχουν της Ειρήνης.¹⁸

Here, the poet seems to know that if he had to go to Athens, the journey would be a disappointment. Aphrodite, his friend's girlfriend, will be with another man, while Irini will have left her house. Everything would change and there is nothing to remind him of his life in Athens, when he and his friend were students.

The two female names could raise questions, but some information from outside the poem enlighten readers. In the letter discussed earlier,¹⁹ Karyotakis informs his friend that the name 'Aphrodite' is an imaginary one which suits the needs of rhyme. As a result, we cannot identify it with a real person, as opposed to 'Irini' which is, indeed, a real person. According to Reader and Taylor, during his student years in Athens, Karyotakis had an affair with a woman by this name.²⁰

In the following lines, the poet remembers the place that he used to go with his friend; a taverna:

¹⁷ 'I'll come no more to the place my country provided for the celebration of youth, except I come as a passing traveler, with my hopes and dreams now gone.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 41).

¹⁸ 'Like a pilgrim I'll go to your house, and they'll say they don't know what's become of you. I'll see your Aphrodite with another man, and other people will be living at Iréne's.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 41).

¹⁹ See the letter.

²⁰ Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 180.

Θα πάω προς την ταβέρνα, το σαμιώτικο
που επίναμε για να ξαναζητήσω.
Θα λείπεις, το κρασί τους θα 'ναι αλλιώτικο,
όμως εγώ θα πω και θα μεθύσω.²¹

The memories of the previous beautiful life upset the poetic ego, as he realises that he will never find again the happiness of this previous life as student in Athens. He will go to the taverna alone and order the favourite wine that he used to drink with his friend. However, the wine will not be as good as before, because of his friend's absence. His only course is to get drunk, because he feels sad.

In the fifth and last stanza, the poet goes on with a kind of lament; his imaginary travel did not make him happy. Here, the recollection becomes a cry and the disappointment and sadness become much stronger:

Θ' ανέβω τραγουδώντας και τρεκλίζοντας
στο Ζάππειο που ετραβούσαμεν αντάμα.
Τριγύρω θα 'ναι ωραία πλατύς ο ορίζοντας,
και θα 'ναι το τραγούδι μου σαν κλάμα.²²

The author intends to go to the Zappeion, as he used to do with his friend, but since he is alone his song will be a cry. The climate of nostalgia turns to tears.

This warmth we see in 'Σε παλαιό συμφοιτητή' ('To an old college friend'), indication of a strong friendship, is replaced by a different and cold atmosphere and a sense of estrangement in the poem 'Ιστορία' ('Life story').²³ Again, the poem is dedicated to Sakellariadis and some pieces of information from the poet's biography illuminate the background. Dounia also refers to 'Ιστορία' ('Life story') and associates it with a period that Karyotakis' and Sakellariadis' friendship passed into a different stage. According to her, their distance is obvious in Karyotakis' letters, as there is

²¹ 'I'll go to the taverna to order again the Samian wine we used to drink. You won't be there, their wine will be different, yet I'll drink it and I will get drunk.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 41).

²² 'Staggering and singing I'll stumble up to the *Záppeio* where we hung out together. All around there'll be a grand sweeping vista, and my song will sound like sobs.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 41).

²³ Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 86.

nothing of the warmth and friendly climate of their earlier correspondence. She asserts that in the letters of the later period, the two men do not discuss on philosophy and poetry, as they used to do. Although there is still some familiarity, the communication revolves around general and everyday things.²⁴

‘Ιστορία’ (‘Life story’) was first published in December 1926²⁵ and similarly to some of Karyotakis’ letters in September and November 1926²⁶ (close to the date of the poem) we see a completely different atmosphere, compared to ‘Σε παλαιό συμφοιτητή’ (‘To an old college friend’). The letters show the change in their relationship. Dounia sees their new interests as a basic reason of this estrangement, while the memories of their previous student life is the only they still share. On the one hand, Karyotakis is a member of the civil servants union and a leader in the attempt to eliminate the corruption of the Greek government. He was really popular among his colleagues. On 13 January 1928, he was elected to the executive board of his Civil Servants Union, while his poem ‘Δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι’ (‘Government clerks’)²⁷ was published twice in *Υπαλληλική*, the newspaper of the union: on 19 February 1928 and 5 September 1929.²⁸ Karyotakis was not just a union member, since his companions considered him their leader. On 14 February 1928, he was the leading rebel in government clerks’ claims about an embezzlement of funds.²⁹

In addition, Karyotakis had active role in the clerks’ movement, which was a reason for his punitive transfer to Preveza. Another reason was an article against the minister Kirkos. According to this article, which was published anonymously in *Καθημερινή* on 20 January 1928, Kirkos had taken government money illegally. Everyone believed Karyotakis was the author, and the result was his

²⁴ Χ. Ντουνιά, *Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκης: η Αντοχή μιας Αδέσποτης Τέχνης* [Ch. Dounia, *K. G. Karyotakis: the Resistance of Ownerless Art*] (Athens, 2001), 94-96.

²⁵ Σαββίδης, Χατζηδάκη και Μητσού, *Χρονογραφία* [Savidis, Hatzidaki and Mitsou, *Chronology*], 120.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 112-119.

²⁷ Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 104.

²⁸ Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 203. Savidis, Hatzidaki and Mitsou (*Chronology*, 140) do not refer to the second publication of the poem in 1929, since their book stops at 1928, the year of Karyotakis’ death.

²⁹ Ντουνιά, *Καρυωτάκης* [Dounia, *Karyotakis*], 50.

transfer to Preveza.³⁰ Karyotakis' active role in clerks' actions is shown through the publishing of another article ('Ανάγκη χρηστότητας'/'Necessity for virtuousness') in February 1928, which was a clear attack on the government. The content of the article shows that Karyotakis did not hesitate to convey his objections and moreover to uncover corruption in the government.³¹ Papakostas, who re-published the article with some commentary, mentions that it shows sound knowledge of several problems, like tax evasion and the exploitation of people through additional taxes.³² On the other hand, Sakellariadis is a conservative philologist who works for the journal *Ελληνικά Γράμματα* (*Greek Letters*) and later *Ελληνική Δημιουργία* (*Greek Creation*). Both periodicals were very conservative, but especially the first one was a basic enemy of Karyotakis' poetry.³³

Under these new circumstances Karyotakis wrote 'Ιστορία' ('Life story'). The poem was published in *Κυριακή του Ελευθέρου Βήματος* (*Sunday of the Free Step*) on 12 December 1926,³⁴ and later the poet included it in his last poetic collection, *Ελεγεία και Σάτιρες* (*Elegies and Satires*). It consists of three stanzas of four iambic lines rhymed ABBA.

In the first stanza, the poet describes how the two friends became strangers:

Δεκάξι χρόνων εγέλασαν,
 πέρα, στ' ανοιξιάτικο δειλί.
 Έπειτα εσώπασαν τα χείλη,
 και στην καρδιά τους εγεράσαν.³⁵

³⁰ Γ. Μπαλούμη, *Κ. Καρυωτάκη Πεζά: Κοινωνικοϊστορικά* [G. Baloumi, *K. Karyotakis' Prose: Social and Historical*] (Athens, 1988), 158.

³¹ Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκης, *Ανάγκη Χρηστότητας: Ένα Λανθάνον Κείμενο Κοινωνικής Πολιτικής*, ed. Γ. Παπακόστας [K. G. Karyotakis, *Necessity for Virtuousness: a Latent Passage of Social politics*, ed. G. Papakostas] (Athens, 1986), 43-56.

³² Papakostas in Καρυωτάκης, *Ανάγκη Χρηστότητας* [Karyotakis, *Necessity for Virtuousness*], 11-12.

³³ Ντουνιά, *Καρυωτάκης* [Dounia, *Karyotakis*], 96.

³⁴ Σαββίδης, Χατζηδάκη και Μητσού, *Χρονογραφία* [Savidis, Hatzidaki and Mitsou, *Chronology*], 120.

³⁵ 'At sixteen they laughed there in the spring twilight. Afterward their lips fell silent and in their hearts they grew old.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 102).

The poet juxtaposes two different periods: youth and mature age. Youth represents the period when the two of them were still friends; this is the period of spring. In contrast, mature age represents the end of their relationship and implies autumn. The change of the weather signifies the change in this relationship.

This is more evident in the next stanza where we have clear appearance of autumn:

Εκίνησαν τότε σα φίλοι,
σα δυο ξερά φύλλα στο χώμα.
Έπειτα εχώρισαν ακόμα,
κάποιο φθινοπωρινό δείλι.³⁶

The use of the word ‘later’ (έπειτα) denotes the new stage of their relationship and is followed by the phrase ‘some autumn evening’. Also, the use of the verb parted (εχώρισαν) implies that they are not friends any more. The poet connects the scenery of autumn to the end of their friendship.

The ending lines refer to their new lives, as two separate people:

Τώρα καθένας, με ωχρό στόμα,
σκύβοντας, φιλεί τα δεσμά του.
Έπειτα θα γείρουν ως κάτου
και θα περάσουνε στο χώμα.³⁷

In these lines, the poet returns indirectly to the title of his work. The last line of the stanza ‘and pass into the ground’³⁸ indicates that they are just a life story, suggesting the Greek phrase ‘they passed into history’ (πέρασαν στην ιστορία). In other words, the title of the poem ‘Ιστορία’ (‘Story’ or ‘History’) denotes something which happened in the past and is now over: the friendship between the two men. Also, although each one lives his life, the fact that the poet uses the phrase ‘each one kisses his chains’ implies that it was not their own decision to follow separate routes. Nevertheless, for different reasons

³⁶ ‘Back then they started out like friends, like two dry leaves on the ground. Aterward they parted once more in an autumn twilight.’ (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 102).

³⁷ ‘Now each, with pale lips and stooped over, kisses his chains. Afterward they’ll droop and pass into the ground.’ (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 102).

³⁸ Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 102.

the change in their relationship is a fact and there is nothing that they could do to avoid it.

If ‘Ιστορία’ (‘Life story’) reflects the distance between the two old friends, Karyotakis’ prose work, ‘Ο κήπος της αχαριστίας’ (‘The garden of ingratitude’),³⁹ denotes the definite end of this old friendship. And again, the background is helpful in approaching this prose work. As already mentioned, Sakellariadis was a contributor to the conservative journal *Ελληνικά Γράμματα* (*Greek Letters*), that attacked Karyotakis’ poetry. The story begins with a critique by Rotas in February 1928 which clearly attacks Karyotakian satire and pessimism.⁴⁰ In fact, Rotas wrote a very negative critique for Karyotakis the man and the poet:

He is obliged to work and keep company with yokels and hard men and idiots. [...] He has become an intolerably capricious, nervous and a moaner, dedicated to his passion. [...] There is some misunderstanding with Karyotakis: he started this crying with his first book and he still goes on. I had hoped, that with *Elegies and Satires* he would come to his senses at last and change his tune.⁴¹

In February 1928 and when Karyotakis read this piece, he replied to Rotas in polite terms, asserting that this critique connects to ideological literary preferences. Karyotakis also posed a question to Rotas: ‘was his optimism closer to reality than his own pessimism?’. However, when Karyotakis’ letter reached the office of *Ελληνικά Γράμματα* (*Greek Letters*), the editors were uncertain whether they should publish it or not. Then, Sakellariadis took the initiative and asked Karyotakis to withdraw the letter.⁴² In replying to Sakellariadis, Karyotakis was adamant:

Besides, my answer to your question is self-evident. Damn! I want my letter to be published.⁴³

³⁹ Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 143.

⁴⁰ Ντουνιά, *Καρυωτάκης* [Dounia, *Karyotakis*], 84-85.

⁴¹ Βασίλης Ρώτας, untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Vasilis Rotas, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 185, 187, 190. My translation

⁴² Ντουνιά, *Καρυωτάκης* [Dounia, *Karyotakis*], 86.

⁴³ Σαββίδης, Χατζηδάκη και Μητσού, *Χρονογραφία* [Savidis, Hatzidaki and Mitsou, *Chronology*], 143-144. My translation.

Finally, the letter was published, but with some changes.⁴⁴ Karyotakis was probably disappointed by his friend's attitude on the whole issue.

In addition, as Dounia declares, Sakellariadis did nothing for his old friend in his conflict with the journal, unlike Paraschos, who not only defended the poet against the hostile critique of *Ελληνικά Γράμματα* (*Greek Letters*), but also he wrote three very encouraging and positive critiques on Karyotakis' poetry. Karyotakis would not forget such indifference on the part of Sakellariadis.⁴⁵ According to Dounia, Sakellariadis was afraid to defend Karyotakis.⁴⁶ Probably, his personal aspirations and conservative preferences in literature was an obstacle for Sakellariadis. He had succeeded in working with prominent people of literature and had aspirations for his future. As a result, he would not take the risk of supporting Karyotakis against them; he preferred to defend the journal for which he worked or at least to keep silence. In response, Karyotakis wrote 'Ο κήπος της αχαριστίας' (The garden of ingratitude) which was unpublished in Karyotakis' lifetime.

The title and especially the word 'ingratitude' (αχαριστία) are indicative of the content. This prose work consists of seven paragraphs, from which the two last consist of only one single sentence. In the first paragraph, the author seems to be thoroughly disappointed by people's behaviour. This is evident in the following extracts:

Θα καλλιεργήσω το ωραιότερο άνθος. Στις καρδιές των ανθρώπων θα φυτέψω την Αχαριστία. [...] Στη νοσηρή ατμόσφαιρα ορθώνονται φίδια. Οι εγκέφαλοι, εργαστήρια κιβδηλοποιών. [...] Και μέσα σε δάσος από μάσκες, ζήτησε να ζήσεις. Εγώ θα καλλιεργήσω την Αχαριστία.⁴⁷

The author seems to feel really betrayed by people's actions and says that he will 'cultivate ingratitude';⁴⁸ possibly in response to other

⁴⁴ Ντουινιά, *Καρνωτάκης* [Dounia, *Karyotakis*], 87.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 98.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 100-101.

⁴⁷ 'I'll cultivate the most beautiful flower. I'll Ingratitude in people's hearts. [...] In this diseased atmosphere snakes stand up straight. Brains are the workshops of forgers. [...] Try to live in a forest of masks. As for me, I'll cultivate Ingratitude.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 150).

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

people's ingratitude. The reference to masks, ingratitude and snakes alludes to a person who was very close to the poet, like Sakellariadis. At certain parts and especially where he speaks about snakes in 'the diseased atmosphere',⁴⁹ the author becomes very intense and sharp, since he implicitly identifies people with a poisonous creature. Also, this sense of disappointment is more obvious when he speaks about masks, since mask could be seen as a symbol for two-faced people. The author believed that this man was a real friend, but his actions did not prove that; this could be seen as an allusion to Sakellariadis who did not defend Karyotakis when the latter needed his help.

In the second paragraph, the author employs the role of nature to make people's ingratitude clear and show their tendency to hurt their close friends. He draws a parallel between people and nature. Nature is something really beautiful, like real friends. However, in this case, flowers which are symbol of happiness and serenity become an enemy, since in this prose work they have dark and velvet corollas and pointed stamens.

In the two short paragraphs in the middle, we have the appearance of memory. This is the time of truth that once the author could not see. But now, he sees clearly:

Θα θυμάμαι τις σφιγμένες γροθιές, τα παραπλανητικά χαμόγελα και την προδοτική αδιαφορία.⁵⁰

This is the most direct reference in the text. The author denotes that he will remember 'the clenched fists, the deceptive smile, and the treacherous indifference.'⁵¹ Misleading smiles and betrayal constitute his friend's actions. This is an allusion to Sakellariadis' betrayal who took the part of the journal that he worked for and not that of his friend. Here, even memory becomes an enemy, although it includes happy moments of the past. These memories are revealed to be false now in this new condition of betrayal.

The next paragraph describes the poet's wish to become a statue, in order not to feel any pain:

⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁰ 'I'll remember the clenched fists, the deceptive smiles, and the treacherous indifference.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 150).

⁵¹ *Ibidem.*

Θα μείνω ακίνητος ημέρες και χρόνια, χωρίς να σκέπτομαι, χωρίς να βλέπω, χωρίς να εκφράζω τίποτε άλλο. Θα είμαι ολόκληρος μια πικρή ανάμνησις, ένα άγαλμα...⁵²

The author's intention to become a statue without any feelings or notion shows that he is indeed disappointed. He does not wish any communication with people and this is his only way to protect himself. The result is his isolation which is described also in the second paragraph ('I'll wander alone along winding paths').⁵³

The last two lines describe the death of the author:

Κάτου από τη σταθερή τους ώθηση, θα βυθίζομαι στο χώμα.
Και ο κήπος μου θα είναι ο κήπος της Αγάπης.⁵⁴

The poet says that he will sink to the ground, but he also states that his garden will be a garden of Love. This reference perhaps implies that only when he dies, he will forgive his friend. Here, we have a sense of satire, since the answer to the indifference will be love; a word which is used in a rather sarcastic manner.

CONCLUSION

The three works on Karyotakis' friendship with Sakellariadis constitute clear evidence on the relation between work and life in Karyotakis' poetry. They are three works which describe three different stages of the relationship between the two men. Each one reflects the feelings of a different period and represents the situation of that time. Demaras and Theotokas asserted that this identification between life and work is a weakness in Karyotakis' poetry. Both said that Karyotakis was not a real poet, because he used his suffering.⁵⁵ Using similar negative implications, Chondrogiannis characterised

⁵² 'I'll remain motionless for days and years without thinking, without looking, without expressing anything else. [...] I'll be a statue around...' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 150).

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ 'Under their constant pressure I'll sink to the ground. And my garden will be the garden of Love.' (Tr. Reader and Taylor in Karyotakis, *Battered Guitars*, 150).

⁵⁵ Κ. Θ. Δημαράς, untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [K. Th. Demaras, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 220, 222 and Γιώργος Θεοτοκάς, untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [George Theotokas, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 224.

Karyotakis' life, as life of pain. He said that Karyotakis wrote about his painful life, because he could not write about anything else.⁵⁶

However, this could only be seen just as one-sided view; such an attack on Karyotakis is unjustified. As Agras asserted, Karyotakis was a real poet with true talent.⁵⁷ One could say that in these three works, Karyotakis extends his talent, as he makes real events the core of his poems; as he also does with many other works. Negative critiques mainly deal with Karyotakian satire and pessimism which constituted a novel genre in Greek poetry of the 1920's. This is what Demaras, Theotokas and Chondrogiannis attacked: a new kind of poetry which Karyotakis had introduced into Greece, according to European models. As Agras states, Karyotakis learnt from French poets, Renaissance poets, post-romantic poets and others, such as Laforgue and Tailhade whose satirical poetry remained largely unknown in Greece at time.⁵⁸

REFERENCES:

- Karyotakis, K.. (2006). *Battered Guitars: Poems and Prose*, tr. W. W. Reader and K. Taylor, Birmingham.
- Kruczkowska, J. (2015). 'Who Gets Translated and Why? Anthologies of Twentieth-Century Greek Poetry in Poland', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 33 (1): 105-125.
- Menelaou, I. (2017). 'My Verses Are the Children of My Blood': Autobiography in the Poetry of Kostas Karyotakis', *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, Vol.5, No.3:5-17.
- ***
- Άγρας, Τ. (2001). 'Ο Καρυωτάκης και οι Σάτιρες', in Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed, Γ. Π. Σαββίδης [Tellos Agras, 'Karyotakis and Satires', in Κ. G. Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], Athens.
- Γεωργιάδης, Ν. (2014). *Κώστας Καρυωτάκης: Απαντήσεις στα Ερωτήματα για τον Ίδιο και το Έργο του* [Nearchos Georgiades, *Kostas Karyotakis: Answers to Questions for him and his Works*], Athens.
- Δημαράς, Κ. Θ. (2001). Untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [K. Th. Demaras, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], Athens.

⁵⁶ Γιάννης Χονδρογιάννης, untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Giannis Chondrogiannis, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], 234, 235.

⁵⁷ Τέλλος Άγρας, 'Ο Καρυωτάκης και οι Σάτιρες', in Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed, Γ. Π. Σαββίδης [Tellos Agras, 'Karyotakis and Satires', in Κ. G. Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis] (Athens, 2001), 194-195.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 196-197.

- Θεοτοκάς, Γ. (2001). Untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [George Theotokas, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], Athens.
- Καρυωτάκης, Κ. Γ. (1986). *Ανάγκη Χρηστότητας: Ένα Λανθάνον Κείμενο Κοινωνικής Πολιτικής*, ed. Γ. Παπακώστας [K. G. Karyotakis, *Necessity for Virtuousness: a Latent Passage of Social politics*, ed. G. Papakostas], Athens.
- Καρυωτάκης, Κ. Γ. (2001). *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Γ. Π. Σαββίδης [K. G. Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. G. P. Savidis], Athens.
- Μπαλούμη, Γ. (1988). *Κ. Καρυωτάκη Πεζά: Κοινωνικοϊστορικά* [G. Baloumi, *K. Karyotakis' Prose: Social and Historical*], Athens.
- Μπενάτσης, Α. (2004). «Τι νέοι που φθάσαμεν εδώ...»: *Κώστας Καρυωτάκης από τα πρώτα ως τα τελευταία ποιήματα* [Apostolos Benatsis, 'So young we landed here...' *Kostas Karyotakis from the First to the Last Poems*], Athens.
- Μανιάτη, Ε. Σ. (2014). *Καρυωτάκης: η Ποίηση Ηχεί σαν Θρήνος* [Elpida Sita Maniati, *Karyotakis: Poetry Sounds like Lament*], Athens.
- Ντουνιά, Ν. (2001). *Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκης: η Αντοχή μιας Αδέσποτης Τέχνης* [Ch. Dounia, *K. G. Karyotakis: the Resistance of Ownerless Art*], Athens.
- Ρώτας, Β. (2001). Untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Vasilis Rotas, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], Athens.
- Σαββίδης, Γ. Π., Χατζηδάκη, Ν.Μ και Μητσού, Μ. (1989). *Χρονογραφία Κ. Γ. Καρυωτάκη: 1986-1928* [G. P. Savidis, N. M. Hatzidaki and M. Mitsou, *K. G. Karyotakis' Chronology: 1986-1928*], Athens.
- Στεφανοπούλου Μ. (ed.) (1998). *Καρυωτάκης και Καρυωτακισμός: 31 Ιανουαρίου και 1 Φεβρουαρίου 1997* [M. Stephanopoulou, *Karyotakis and Karyotakismos: 31 January and 1 February 1997*], Athens.
- Χονδρογιάννης, Γ. (2001). Untitled article, in Καρυωτάκης, *Ποιήματα και Πεζά*, ed. Σαββίδης [Giannis Chondrogiannis, untitled article, in Karyotakis, *Poems and Prose*, ed. Savidis], Athens.