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Title: “The Affinity between Anthropology and Literature: Reflections on the Poetics of Ethnography in the work of Nikos Kavvadias” (5, 000 words)

In the Introduction of *The Waste Land* (1922) T.S. Elliot acknowledges the influence of two works of early anthropology on which the epic poem was based: Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* and Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (Elliot 2002: 58). Elliot’s use of anthropological resources in his poetry reveals the exotic (folklore) side of anthropology itself, which Malinowski in his strong effort to make a scientific anthropological method totally rejected. But in the last two decades there has been a turn towards literature and the text, and increasingly anthropologists, such as Marcus and Clifford (1986), challenged the method of anthropology itself, that is, extensive fieldwork, participant observation, and categorization of data, recognizing that anthropology is and should be treated as a written text, a genre of literature with its own advantages and limitations, rather than a scientific experiment:

Ethnography is seen more often as a species of creative writing than as science; and the realism of conventional accounts is considered to be as limited in its formal scope as its content is often deceptive (Grimshaw and Hart 1995: 46)

In this essay, I reflect on the poetics of ethnography by looking at the travelling writings of the Greek poet Nikos Kavvadias (1919-1975) in reference to the field diary of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942). My aim is to investigate the relationship of anthropology to prose. Paraphrasing Kavvadias’ question in his poem *Kuro Siwo* (1933) “Is it the compass turning, Or the Ship?” this paper asks: is it the method that makes anthropology, or is it in fact the introverted experience of travelling?

A Modern Odysseus

Nikos Kavvadias was one of the first travelling writers and poets. He was born in 1919 in Harbin, Manchuria. His parents were from the island of Kefalonia. Kavvadias did not consider being a poet. He was working in cargo ships as a radio-operator from a very young age with various shipping companies based at Piraeus. He was born a traveller who could not stand the land for a long time and always had to move on. He died in 1975 a few months after his third collection of poems *Traverso* was published. The fact that he was not considering himself a poet, but rather a traveller, comes not only from his style of writing based on personal experiences and emotions reflected on the sea, the weather, the lost cities with their dirty ports, but also by the very limited amount of work he produced, heavily invested with experience: his first selection of poems was published in 1933 at the age of twenty-four, his second in the middle of his life in 1947, and his third a year before he died. The cosmopolitan character of his prose was illuminated the year of his death, when the famous Greek musician and former minister of Culture, Thanos Mikroutsikos, made two rock albums with Kavvadias' poetry, which became hugely successful especially among young people.

After the death of Kavvadias in 1975 three short novels were published, "Lee", "Of War", and "On My Horse" (my translation from Greek). The texts, which were published for the first time in 1987, have an even stronger confessional character than his three poetic collections and the novel published during his life. 'Lee' in particular is written like a diary, which I will be looking more extensively below. In addition to this material, more recently Guy M. Saunier published *The Diary of a Skipper* (2005), which contains extracts of intimate travelling experiences and memories written as a prose or poetry in the form of a diary. Originally, this was the first publication of the young Kavvadias published in the journal *Peiraikon Vema* in January and February 1932. The diary gives us a first glance to his future mythological themes with specific references to the dangerous Indian Ocean, the first trip of the writer to the sailors' favourite and mysterious Marseille, his life-changing visit to Stromboli the Italian island opposite the volcano Etna, his parents' home Argostoli the capitol of the Greek island Kefalonia, and other texts, which juxtapose his childhood expectations against the reality and dangers of travelling.

In these writings, and later in his poetry, Kavvadias intimately connects his internal feelings of loss of childhood with the external changes of the environment and its modernization, highlighting Modernity's negative aspects by associating moral corruption to environmental pollution. In the poem entitled *Kafar* (1933) he wrote:

...
 Once the ships were our hidden wish
 But now the world is an empty page
 It is the same to be in Greece
 And travelling to Fernando Po
 ...
 The poles became to us familiar
 We admired numerous times the northern Selas
 And the ice is covered for years now
 With empty cans of Spanish sardines
 ...
 The Japanese, the girl in Chile
 And the black Moroccan girls selling honey
 Like all women have the same legs
 And kiss the same

(Extracts from "Kafar" in the collection *Marabou* 1933, my translation)

For Kavvadias the juxtaposition of romantic nostalgia to the modern reality is a universal condition of the human being, reflected on his strong sentiment of nostalgia for a 'home' that is never there, which painfully stigmatises his work as a whole. The endless journey takes him from the mountains of Switzerland to the immobile seascapes of the equator, as people are different and the same, exotic in their own account but banal in their modern reality. Kavvadias does not seem to move, but rather the world travels around him: "Is it the compass turning, or the ship?" His journey is static like the seascapes of the equator, as he is trapped in the ship, a metal coffin, which remains immobile in space, letting the globe move around it.

Unlike many of his contemporary Greek scholars who focused on folklore writing of at times nationalist sentiment, Kavvadias wrote both about modern Greece and about the world. He did not seem to distinguish between the two. For him, Greece was never home, because although he was Greek, he was not born there. His writings are characterized by a strong sentiment of universal humanism, a sense of a world united in cosmopolitan places, such as the dirty ports of multinational cities, which became

his true home. The poet traveller drew huge inspiration and admiration for Konstantinos Cavafys (1863-1933), the writer of the masterful pseudo-historical poem *Ithaca*, who was born in Alexandria to Greek parents but spent most of his life travelling from Egypt to England, and who was the advocate of a universal Hellenistic spirit surpassing beyond the borders of the nation state. Before moving to the evaluation of Kavvadias' own work from an anthropological perspective, it would be useful to briefly examine the central motifs of his work.

The folklore quality of Kavvadias' writings is illuminated in his short novel entitled *Lee*, that is, the name of the anonymous young Chinese girl who was living in ships serving food and cleaning the cabins of the sailors staying at the international port of Green Island (Hong Kong). *Lee* masterly contains all the motives that mark Kavvadias' prose as personal experience: economy of expression that highlights personal memory as introverted exoticism invested with heavy symbolism; a cosmopolitan understanding of the world in humanitarian terms in terms of suffering common to all human beings in sharp juxtaposition to external appearances and differences; an obsession with objects that travel across the globe creating their own history, knives, letters, and gifts; an ethnographic interest in local history, family structures, the market, and even local food.

Similar to his previously published novel *Vardia*, *Lee* is also written in a self-confessional style in the form of a diary, while in the text, the Chinese girl takes the role of the informant for the traveller Kavvadias. The story is structurally divided in three parts, gradually taking us from the inside deck of the Ship to the reality outside it: the first part takes place in the Ship, the inside world in which both the sailor and the girl spend their lives working; the second part takes place at the Green Island, the international dream-world Port; and the final part takes place at the girl's home stigmatised by poverty and prostitution. In the novel, the girl is too young and proud to be a prostitute, and she earns the admiration, even love, of the poet by her crystallized decency, high ethical values, and hard worked maturity. In fact, she could have been Kavvadias' first love as portrayed in his poem *Marabou* (1933), the "aristocratic, elegant, and melancholic" "sister friend" (Kavvadias 2002: 10) symbolizing the innocent world of the young, in sharp juxtaposition to growing up and the corrupted world of the old, the ideal versus the real. This kind of exoticism is

supported by his life-long search for 'home', that is, his lost forgotten first love to which Lee, the anonymous Chinese girl, conforms.

Significantly, in *Lee Kavvadias* reflects on his own life telling the girl that he can speak some Cantonese because he was not born in "His La Kwo" (Greece in Chinese) but in Tung Sun Sheung (Manchuria) (2002c: 15). In another text from his diary entitled "Argostoli: The Melancholic Capitol of Kefalonia" (2005: 40-43), he further reveals his feelings for his parents' Greek home as a place without life, "only mountains rising in a threatening and mourning manner" (Ibid: 40), an experience that is contrasted to the colourful and monotonous at the same time experience of travelling. At times, during his journeys, he might even consider committing suicide, but it is clear that he could not live for a second in the island of Kefalonia. Thus, in his life and poetry, he consciously took the role of a modern Odysseus, the sailor trapped in his inner search for a 'home' that is never there, becoming the protagonist in Cavafys imagination for a long gone Ithaca. This kind of textual introverted exoticism is reflected on the experience of static seascapes and cosmopolitan ports, as the Argonaut Kavvadias, in the role of the folklorist ethnographer, absorbs the exotic life surrounding him in his journey to nowhere, until he dies, and stops moving/experiencing.

The young girl of the story, because of her poverty, had never been inside the international port of Green Island, and for her as for Kavvadias, 'Green Island' symbolizes a material Paradise that combines a strong element of nostalgia for a cosmopolitan world society with material prosperity, a place of "flowers" (2002c: 21-22), from which the local peoples are excluded. The writer finds the opportunity to take her for the first time on land to shops such as "China Emporium" (Ibid: 26), the international bazaar, and the Happy Valley (Ibid: 28-39). But then, in the third part, this ideal and ethnographic description of Green Island with its foods, noise, smells, and colours, is cruelly juxtaposed to the reality of Hong Kong with its poverty and cheap prostitution (Ibid: 44-46), the reality of colonialism in other words.

In meeting her family in such a cruel world, Kavvadias comes even closer to her as their relationship surpasses the anonymity of ethnicities, boundaries and words; it is a matter of personal experience. As a reward, she gives him a gift: a cheap box with a

golden dragon knitted on it, invested with the memory of their close but brief relationship. After his departure the two will never meet again. Instead their friendship and mutual understanding is sealed with this cheap gift, which in itself implies a spiritual commitment to the fragility of their friendship that goes beyond time, life and death. The object owes a corporeal power, invested with the mysticism of personal exchange -similar to Mauss' famous analysis on the corporeality of the "gift" (1950), an eternal commitment to their friendship.

Ironically, back at the Customary Service of Piraeus where Kavvadias was stationed, the officer evaluates the box as an "item without value" (2002c: 50). The officer, who represents the new bureaucratic nation state, cannot comprehend the real value of the item, which is indeed priceless from the writer's perspective. The gift is a commitment beyond the borders of the nation states. In this sense, Kavvadias belongs to the Kantian tradition of universal anthropology, in which "Kantian subjectivity (is) at once personal and cosmopolitan" (Hart 2005: 2) based on experience and humanism as the real motives for writing a "universal history" (Kant 1784) for a "perpetual peace" (1795). Hart crucially distinguishes two periods of anthropological thought: the first refers to the 18th Century and the Enlightenment in the humanist writings of Rousseau and Kant, in which the term anthropology was coined as "a democratic alternative to agrarian civilization" based "on conditions of universal hospitality" (2006: 1-2), in other words, encouraging travelling. And this is the same kind of humanism the Victorian and later functionalist 'scientists' of anthropology chose to ignore (see also Penaloza 2004). As Hart writes on the second period of anthropological thought:

The dominant paradigm shifted in the 19th Century Anthropology now explained western imperialism's easy conquest of world society [the totality of social relationships linking the inhabitants of earth] in terms of racial hierarchy whose evolution was revealed by speculative history (Hart 2006: 2)

The cosmopolitan and humanitarian understanding of the world by Kavvadias is illuminated in his two poems entitled *Thessaloniki*, the first published in *Pousi* (1947), which nostalgically takes us to the lost cosmopolitan metropolis of Thessaloniki, and the second published twenty-eight years later in *Traverso* (1975) that takes a pessimistic look of Thessaloniki at its present time. In the first poem, Kavvadias

refers to the city of Thessaloniki before it became officially Greek in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne (see Hirschon 2004: 19). The city was famous for its trade and was also known as “the mother of Israel” since Hispanic Jewish dominated its social life. It is estimated that in 1920 there were 30000 Jewish leaving in Salonique, as well as 20000 Turkish and 15000 Greeks, and a number of Bulgarians. With War World II and the occupation of the city by the Nazis, the Jewish population of Thessaloniki ‘disappeared’ in one night. The new immigrants came in the city from Constantinople and Izmyrn, as well as from Pontus, just like my grandparents, who for a few years had to live in small huts with many refugee families in order to survive in the big city. But while Athens prospered with its population steadily increasing to more than half of the rest of Greece, Thessaloniki's economic life has since declined. The city "sleeps under the red lights" if I paraphrase Kavvadias’ final verse in the poem (see Index).

With the power centralized at the capitol the port of the Thessaloniki is in steady economical decline no matter the efforts to re-engage the city as the central port of the Balkans. The economical decline is reflected on the social life of the city that once was speaking at least four different languages (Greek, Turkish, Hebrew, and Bulgarian). Kavvadias poem prophesises with the nationalization of Thessalonica -or Salonique as it was known- the city would lose its "golden sleeve", meaning its economic central power in the Balkans. Kavvadias was right. Today, all the economic and political power of Greece is centralized in Athens. Thessaloniki has transformed from a cosmopolitan centre of trade and the arts into a religious local ghost of a city that used to be.

The humanist and experiential motives of Kavvadias’ writings and poems are therefore not far away from the humanist ideal of anthropology, which has been long argued against in the context of post-colonialism. But the writer seems to be more conscious of colonialism and the change of history than anthropologists. The element he lacks that does not make him ‘anthropologist’ is a method. Below I will first compare the diaries of Malinowski to Kavvadias, in order to re-evaluate their work by comparison, and second, by looking at the criticism of Herzfeld of the ethnographic method (1987) critically reflect on the anthropological “authority” of fieldwork and its scientific claim (see Clifford 1986: 6, 15, 32) in relation to the study of literature as an anthropological source of information.

Reflections on Ethnography

The natives set fires in the sand
 And as they play their organs, we get more anxious
 To triumph over the Sea's deaths
 I wish I'd see you at the wharf

(Kavvadias' extract from "Karanti" in *Pousi* [1947], 2002: 24, my trans)

The Mayos stood on the shore; I watched them a long time through binoculars and waved my handkerchief –I felt I was taking leave of civilization. I was fairly depressed, afraid I might not feel equal to the task before me... I looked at them through binoculars; they reminded me of the Saturday excursion to Blackall Ranges... I went to the cabin and felt asleep after an injection of Alkarsodyl. The next day was spent in my cabin, dozing with a bad headache and general numbness

(Malinowski on his arrival among the Mailu, New Guinea, 1967: 5)

Travelling for long periods of time can be a cruel experience, as much as boring. As Firth in his introduction to Malinowski's diaries writes: "The feeling of confinement, the obsessional longing to be back if for the brightest while in one's own cultural surroundings, the dejection and doubts about the validity of what one is doing, the desire to escape into fantasy world of novels or daydreams... -many sensitive fieldworkers have experienced these feelings" (1967: xv). In the above very different in style texts, the feeling expressed by both Kavvadias and Malinowski is indeed that of "confinement", anxiety, and numbness. The experience of travelling is common to humanity as a whole, as much as a stranger is always a stranger -even an "illegal" immigrant these days. Both Kavvadias and Malinowski were travellers, and they both regarded travelling as the means of learning about the world and yourself. They were both in places that never became their homes, and in many respects they were born 'foreigners'. In the material published during their lives, they owned a humanitarian spirit that did not essentially distinguish between the 'savage' and the 'developed', the 'prostitute' and the 'mother', the primitive and the European, but rather saw everyone in the equal terms of the experience of everyday life. Of course, their respective views that 'all men are savages' in Malinowski's case, and all 'women are prostitutes' in Kavvadias' writings, should certainly be accounted for. However, departing from trivial matters of political correctness, their writing was in essence *amoral and humanitarian* at the same time. Both writers became innovators of the travelling genre

in their respective institutions, and seen from their eyes, they were indeed motivated by a love/hate relationship for the human being, as much traumatic and passionate as creative.

In a fascinating article on the ethnographic imagination, Fernanda Penaloza (2004) underlines the historical value of Muster's 19th Century travelogue in Patagonia (1871), in order to highlight the influence of pre-professional ethnographic narratives on contemporary anthropological studies. She focused on the discursive operations of Muster's narrative "that turned the unfamiliar into the familiar" (Penaloza 2004: 4), operations which were further developed with Malinowski's method of fieldwork. Her aim was to show "how evasive and oblique is a world that has been imaginarily and nostalgically recovered, and how strong are the myths that created it" (Ibid: 9). Just like in Kavvadias' poems and diaries, nostalgia is a central feeling in the construction of the ethnographic imagination.

In *Anthropology through the Looking Glass* (1987) Herzfeld reflected on the anthropological idealistic motivation to save the "vanishing Indian" (see also Penaloza 2004: 8) making a historical association between the survivalist thesis of the Victorian anthropologists to folklore, and consequently to Greek nationalism. In illustrating his point he highlighted Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) as the "ancestor of both nationalism and anthropology" (Ibid: 9). Herzfeld drew a parallel between the thesis of survivalism and nationalism, in the sense that they both refer to a nostalgic past, and that within the context of anthropology, nationalism is replaced by the term "exoticism", that is, our constant interest for the particularly unique and universal at the same time. Underlying the ahistoricity of functionalism and structuralism he argued "all ethnography is in some sense an account of a social group's ethnocentrism" (1987: 18). It is thus this kind of nostalgia of something that is never really there, the method, which is the source of exoticism and ethnocentrism. Is Malinowski's holy methodological triad -participant observation, diary, and system of ideas- really a *scientific* method?

Malinowski was born in Krakow, Austria-Hungary (present day Poland) in 1884, but like Kavvadias, he travelled all his life from Poland to Britain and from there to Papua New Guinea, Melanesia, Oceania, the Trobriand Islands, Mexico, Scandinavia, and

North America among other places. His achievements in the field of anthropology are well known, mainly his systematic study of reciprocity (the *Kula* system), kinship and sexuality, and rituals. Malinowski was a graduate of Leipzig University where the famous folk psychologist Wilhelm Wundt taught him (1908-1910) before moving to the London School of Economics (1910) under the supervision of the psychologist Charles G. Seligman (1873-1940) and the social philosopher Edward A. Westermarck (1862-1939). He also kept contact with Cambridge University and the professor of Zoology and film maker Alfred C. Haddon (1855-1940), and the medical neurologist and ethnologist W. H. R. Rivers (1864-1922). All five men had a huge influence on Malinowski's effort to make the distinction between description and analysis (1922) on which the whole project of scientific anthropology was based ever since.

But Malinowski's publication of his diary in 1967 came twenty five years after his sudden death, sending shock waves across the discipline of anthropology, since for the first time we could see behind the mask of the "scientist", a title that he so eagerly defended in the 'Introduction' of the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) of the Robert Mond expedition to New Guinea (1914-1918). The result was that the diary revived the interest to his ethnography from the Andaman Islands that still remains the Bible of British anthropology. But since the publication of his diaries, Malinowski's method has been heavily scrutinized from a number of perspectives, such as feminism¹, and cultural studies². Ironically, the diary was the first self-reflective anthropological text that became the nail on the coffin of "scientific ethnography" because of its intimate content that indeed reveals the writer behind the pen in a confessional way. A second publication followed, edited by Helena Wayne (1995), focusing on the letters of Malinowski and his wife Elsie Masson from 1916 until her death in 1935, which highlights the emotional impact of Malinowski's personal life on his self-proclaimed "scientific" functionalistic fieldwork.

¹ Haraway, D. (1991: 6-20) historically challenged "the political physiology of dominance" in "the neo-Darwinian synthesis and the social functionalism of Malinowski's theory of culture" (1991: 15)

² Anthropologists came to question the "method" itself in relation to its ideological association to colonialism (Hutnyk 2004: 19-20, 25-27, and 36-38). In relation to Malinowski's diaries, Hutnyk recently underlined the continuity from Malinowski's method of fieldwork to Clifford's self-reflective method: "The sometimes progressive, relativist, racist, Malinowski was part of the land grab that was the colonial project in the South Seas; Clifford is part of the latter-day version of the same project, this time glossed as globalisation by neoliberal ideology..." (Ibid: 10)

Kavvadias' own Argonauts of the Western Pacific is *Vardia*, translated as 'On Watch', and published after WWII in 1954. It is a prose on the life of the sailors blending poetry with personal memories that reveals the unique narrative talent of the writer. As Michel Saunier (2005) wrote in the Introduction of the French edition of the novel, *Vardia* is both an inner and an outer journey, which, just like Malinowski's ethnographic material, is based on the experiences of the writer, the discussions he had with other sailors and local peoples, and just as Malinowski's diary at times it takes the form of self-confession. The language of the novel uses the dialect of the sailors, which is a universal type of language with words of special meaning referring to the experience of travelling (Trapalis 2002, see also Index), as the Ship becomes a travelling cosmopolitan environment with its own language, customs, and ethics.

In *Vardia*, the sailor Kavvadias functions as an ethnographer. In fact, his method of collecting data from the field is no different to that of Malinowski's comparative method with its own sacred trinity: emphasis on routines in the village (the Ship in Kavvadias), living and experiencing life among the 'natives' (the ports and the market), and talking to people on various interpretations of myths and customary practices (the poetry of the bordellos). Conversely, Kavvadias' Ship could have been Malinowski's famous Tent at the field (Clifford and Marcus 1986) standing immobile in time and space, observing and recording the life of the village/ship (participant observation). In their respective writings, both Malinowski and Kavvadias identified with the natives and the sailors (informants) they travelled with, 'becoming native' and reflecting their experience on paper. This becomes particularly evident in their respective diaries.

The self-confessional texts of both Malinowski's and Kavvadias' writings show that it was experience that motivated their respective works, rather than a method. It could be argued that Malinowski's effort to create a scientific method was a product of his own insecurities (his sexuality and status amongst the natives), which are so strong in his diaries. However, while Malinowski's way out of this trap was his scientific status, Kavvadias was much more conscious of colonialism and world poverty, as the short novel *Lee* shows, which made both his prose and contact far superior to that of Malinowski's methodological account of 1922, and equal to his diaries of 1967. In other words, Kavvadias did not carry with him the academic arrogance of

Malinowski, but instead a spirit of humanism that made him an anthropologist of the Enlightenment, rather than the anthropologist of the British Institution and its politics. As he reflects in his following dialogue with the Chinese girl:

- Lots of books, she said, are they all yours?
- Yes.
- And have you read all of them?
- All of them.
- You must know many things
- No more than you, I thought, and *those that I don't know I am learning now from you*, in my late forties... [Lee, 2002c: 19]

As mentioned above, recent anthropologists turned away from participant observation as the anthropological method, towards literature and the text looking at the poetics of culture as the means of *learning*³. By looking at religious, fictional, folklore and historical texts as the means for understanding the experience of culture, and the way ideas, identities, and/or social relationships historically develop in response to those texts, they challenged fieldwork as *the* ethnographic method, allowing the rise of the poetics of ethnography. In the context of the anthropology of Greece, Herzfeld (1985) first introduced the term “poetics” in his description of animal theft among the men of the (anonymous) village Glendi in Crete as the “poetics of manhood”. In his following work on the subversion of silence among “Greek women” Herzfeld (1991) further developed his notion of poetics in relation to Foucault’s ideas of the power of silence as irony. Conversely, Fischer’s (1986) own account of the poetics of ethnography in Clifford’s and Marcus’ collection of essays, underlined the self-reflective power of “irony and humour as tactics... (that) draw attention to their own limitations and degree of accuracy” (1986: 229). Thus, by “poetry” in anthropology we mean (historical) self-reflection; and in a sense, self-reflection is what poetry also achieves.

Even more recently, anthropologists focused on Greek literature. For instance, Mackridge (2004: 235-246) investigated the Greek Minor Asian writers from Izmyrn and Ivali, who wrote from the island of Mytilini after the compulsory exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece in 1923 (Laussane Convention). Mackridge culturally and politically re-evaluated famous Greek texts of the 20th Century by Ilias

³ For instance, in the anthropology of Greece, Danforth and Tsiaras (1982), and Seremetakis (1991) among others, analysed texts of songs of lamentation in relation to social action, particularly focus on the central public role of women in mourning.

Venezis, Dido Sotiriou, Kosmas Politis, and Stratis Myrivilis, in terms of their particular language, location, the political division of Left and Right during the bloody Greek Civil War after WWII, the strong sentiment of nostalgia for a 'lost' Greek past, and the colourfulness of the depictions of the Turkish characters of those novels -who at times remind more of Malinowski's "primitives" rather than real people-, in order to offer a historical and anthropological account of the Modern Greek imagination as reflected on the culture and politics of the Greek literature on "the myth of Asia Minor" in the construction of Greek identity.

The addition of Greek literature in the study of Greece and the world offers an accurate historical understanding of the cultural standards, and political, social, and economic changes of each era, from the perspective of each writer, who should be treated as the ethnographer of his time. More importantly, the study of literature gives an intelligent voice to local cultures through the intellectual perspective of their representative, that is, the writer. I am not arguing that the Anthropologists of the 21st Century should go back to the armchair and start reading. But literature certainly allows an additional insight into the life of people, outside scientific prejudices and fixed aims, and instead of encouraging institutionalized investigations narrow in their expression and scope, it gives direct self-reflective access to particular cultural settings, in the same way Kavvadias' writings gave us an intimate insight of the life of cargo ships and ports.

From such a perspective, Kavvadias writings certainly belong to cultural studies, if not anthropology. There is a huge writing tradition in Greece that is often ignored in anthropology by being labelled under the category of "Fiction". Since Greece is marginal to anthropology, and until recently, anthropology was almost non-existent in Greece⁴, the anthropological turn towards literature must challenge the marginality of anthropology in Greece. If we accept that Anthropology is indeed an institutionalised practice as preserved since Malinowski's time, then rightly we can argue that anthropology is marginal to Greece, as Greece is to anthropology (Herzfeld 1987). But if we evaluate Anthropology as a dynamic way of thinking and living, rather than

⁴ Until recently there was no recognized anthropological school in Greece. Papataxiarchis, among others, have engaged themselves in an effort to create a school of Greek Anthropology to the University of Mytilini (Lesbos)

a static method and an impersonal institution, then anthropology existed in Greece even before Kavvadias' time in the form of the Hellenic ideal⁵ (as in the poetry of Cavafys), which corresponds to the Kantian project for a universal history.

Hence, Kavvadias' marginal position between poetry and ethnography reveals the unsettling interconnection between fiction and ethnographic imagination, and today challenges the institutionalisation of anthropological thought by the Victorian anthropologists, and later by Malinowski, into a British School of (racial) colonial way of thinking. Second, Kavvadias in spite lacking methodology is much more conscious of colonialism than Malinowski. Finally, the study of his writings offers us not only an accurate recording of his journeys around the globe and the life of cargo ships, but also a reflection on his own marginality, which is an extension of the marginality of Greek identity itself, trapped between an idealized ancient past and a brutalized history of Ottoman colonialism.

⁵ Admittedly, the Hellenistic ideal has to be further historically investigated in relation to the nationalist ideology of the 20th Century and the Greek claims for historical continuity from ancient Greece through Byzantium to Modern Greece (Friedman 1994: 117-123).

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A Bord de l' "ASPASIA" (in Marabou 1933)

Hunted by fate you travelled
 To the all-white but grieving Switzerland
 Always on deck in your old chaise-langue
 For a dreadful but all too-well-known reason

At all times your worried family surrounded you
 But you, indifferent, gazed at the sea
 All they said only raised a bitter smile
 Because you felt that you were walking towards the Land of the Dead

One evening, as we were passing-by Stromboli⁶
 You turned to a smiling someone in a funny way and said
 "How does my sick body burns
 Like the heated pick of the volcano!"

Later I saw you lost in Marseilles
 Disappearing into the noise without looking back
 And I, who loved the field of water,
 Say: "You are someone I could have loved"

⁶ *Stromboli*: Island in Southern Italy opposite the volcano Etna (3340 metres)

Thessaloniki (in *Pousi*⁷ 1947)

It was the night when Vardaris⁸ was blowing
 The wave was winning the prow fathom by fathom
 The First⁹ sent you to clear the waters
 But you only remember Smaro¹⁰ and Kalamaria¹¹

You forgot the tune the Chileans used to sing
 “St Nicolas¹² and St Sea protect us!”
 A blind girl guides you, the child of Mondellianni¹³
 Loved by the First-rate and the two (sailors) from Marmaras

Water sleeps through Fore Peak, water and the sails
 But instead, a strange dizziness moves you
 Did the Spanish girl knit that stamp (on you)?
 Or was it the girl who was dancing on a rope?

A hibernated snake sleeps on your collar
 And the monkey hangs around looking in your clothes
 Nobody remembers you but your mother
 In this terrifying journey of loss

The sailor throws the cards and the stoker the dice
 And the one who is at fault and does not realize, walks on the slant
 Remember that narrow Chinese alley
 And the girl who was silently crying in the dark

Under the red lights Salonique¹⁴ sleeps
 Ten years ago, drunk, you said, “I love you”
 Tomorrow, like then, and without gold on your sleeve
 In vain, you will be looking for the road to Depot¹⁵.

⁷ *Pousi*: A word coming from the sailors’ dialect meaning ‘sea fog’.

⁸ *Vardaris*: The northern wind that hits the city of Thessaloniki in the winter. It has a nasty reputation for being the coldest wind in Greece making the atmosphere wet and freezing.

⁹ The terms ‘First’ and ‘first-rate’ refer to the first among the sailors

¹⁰ *Smaro*: Greek name of a girl, meaning ‘Pearl’

¹¹ *Kalamaria*: Neighbourhood of Thessaloniki with a very good reputation.

¹² St Nicolas is the Saint of sailors and fishermen

¹³ Famous painter of the 19th century for his portraits of people with blank eyes staring at nothingness

¹⁴ The term “Salonique” refers to the cosmopolitan city of Thessaloniki before it became officially Greek in 1923 with the Lausanne Convention of 1923. It is still used today

¹⁵ *Depot*: Industrialized area near Kalamaria

Kuro Siwo (in *Pousi* 1947)

First fare by chance to the south
 Difficult watches, bad sleep and malaria
 India's strange lanterns are deceptive
 They say you don't see them at first glance

Beyond Adam's bridge in southern China
 You received thousands sacks of soya
 But not for a single moment you forgot the words
 What they've said during an empty hour in Athens

The tar leaks under the nails and sets them on fire
 For years your clothes smell fish-oil
 And her word whistles in your head
 "Is it the compass turning, or the ship?"

Early the weather went full and turned nasty
 You altered course, but sadness holds you
 Tonight my two parrots died
 And the ape I had so much trouble training

The iron plate!¹⁶ ... The iron plate wipes out everything
 The Kuro Siwo pressured us like a Girdle
 But you are still watching over the wheel
 How the compass plays point by point

¹⁶ In the actual Greek text Kavvadias uses the word 'lamarina' which has a double meaning. In Greek it means the 'iron-plate', and it is the material from which the poorest people used to build their houses. The houses of course were ultimately hot in the summer under the burning sun, while freezing in the winter, like refrigerators. But at the same time, in the language of the sailors 'lamarina' is another word for the 'ship', since the ships are made from iron. It is easy to imagine that when these ships are in the middle of the equator, the temperature of the heated iron must be going really high, and thus, it 'wipes out everything', memories, feelings, passions, identities.

Woman (in *Traverso*¹⁷ 1975)

Dance on the shark's fin
 Play your tongue in the wind, and pass-by
 In some places they called you Yudith; here, Maria
 The snake tears apart itself on the rock with the sea krait

Since I was a child I hurried up, but now I take my time
 A chimney defined me in the world, and whistles
 Your hand petted my rare hair
 And if it has bended me once, today it does not define me

Painted. A red lantern shines on you
 Your hair of seaweed and flowers, amphibian Destiny
 You were riding without saddle, without curbing
 First time, in a cave of Altamira

The seagull dives to bend the dolphin
 What are you looking at? I will remind you where you saw me
 On the sand I was behind you on top
 The night when they founded the Pyramids

Together we walked across the Sine Wall
 Next to you sailors from Ur were building a new ship
 In between the naked swords of Grammikos¹⁸
 You dropped oil into the deep wounds of the Macedonian

Green. Foam, deep blue and purple
 Naked. Just a gold girdle hanging from your waist
 Your eyes separated by seven equators
 In *Giorgione's* workshop

I might have thrown a stone and the river doesn't want me
 What have I done and you wake me up before the sunrise?
 Last night at the port will not be wasted
 A sinner should always be happy and guilty

Painted. A sick light shines on you
 You are thirsty for gold. Take, Search, Count
 Here, next to you, I will remain unmovable for years
 Until you become my Destiny, Death, and Stone

¹⁷ *Traverso*: Sailor language for going backwards/ changing root

¹⁸ Grammikos is a river at Northern Greece