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**RETHINKING MYTHOLOGY IN GREEK MUSEUMS  
THROUGH CONTEMPORARY CULTURE**

**MARINA ANTONOPOULOU**

**M.Phil**

**2008**

## Appendices

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26 MAY 2010



## Appendix 1

**Socratis Malamas**

**Date: 15/01/2005**

**Venue: Hotel 'Olympia', Thessaloniki.**

**Q: Could you tell me what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: The usual, what we learned in school. With the passage of time, of course, we easily forgot this knowledge and we came to think of myths as if they were fairytales, for instance Heracles' myths, Theseus and some extracts from Hesiod's 'Theogony'. All these were, in a way, interwoven with historical facts, such as the Peloponnesian War and the construction of the Acropolis. I thought that all these constituted one single body and that they were an extension of history, of classical and the -classical history.

**Q: What do you mean exactly? Did you believe that these myths actually referred to real incidents?**

A: Yes. I believed that, because, more or less, we heard about myths before we went to school.

**Q: At home?**

A: We heard about myths at home, in conversations with adults and in our games with other children. I had two older sisters and they used to narrate me stories from Greek mythology, instead of the tragic folk tales that our grandmothers used to tell us children. I thought Greek mythology was far more interesting than these tales. As a child though, I thought that the ancient myths were about real people. I thought that that these people were similar but not identical to us; they were a bit like us, they lived in ancient times and they had all these bizarre stories. I thought that the Homeric Epics were also mythology. I joined all these in one body, which I named history. I found this approach to mythology interesting and I still embrace it. Why should we distinguish the realistic, factual, elements of a narrative and leave out the imaginative and the unreal aspects of it? Saying this, I believe that what Homer, as well as Herodotus said, was partly true. Of course, what historians, like Pausanias, but also tragedians described, was based on real incidents. They may have used their themes in an archetypical way so that they reached the audience in the form of norms, of general and abstract notions, of 'psychological notions' - if that makes any sense at all. Of course this is something that I believe now. As a child I did not think of mythology in this way. But, honestly, I did believe that Greek mythology together with history constituted one solid body of data, which described in reality how people were in the old days. Now, when it comes to each myth separately, a good example is the stories of Odysseus with all these unbelievable encounters. Later on in my life, by reading books and by talking to people, I started suspecting that there is some sort of correspondence between the mythological stories and the

psychological situations and adventures of Man. I mean, what does the Argonauts' passing through the Symblagades mean?...

**Q: What does it mean?**

A: Would you like us to analyze all these?

**Q: Yes. I have various certain interpretations of this story and I was wondering which theory or interpretation are you familiar with, or which one you embrace.**

A: I believe that the entire Greek mythology is a journey of self-knowledge. I perceive it as being the story of humankind's evolution toward humankind's main aim, which is knowledge and wisdom. Of course there are myths of power too. But this specific story (Odyssey) is about humankind's course toward absolute knowledge, toward self-knowledge. The same goes for Theseus' descent in the Labyrinth with Minotaurus' and Ariadne's thread. This story symbolizes the soul that marches through the real maze of life. And perhaps Ariadne's tread is exactly the subconscious connection of Man with their spirit. I say 'perhaps', I do not know for sure. This is the way I perceive mythology but at the same time I like playing with my perception, in order not to be solely committed to one interpretation. So, I believe that all myths are a description of the individual's course towards themselves, towards their deeper core. Now, when it comes to how this is expressed in myths, let's think, for instance, of Heracles and the Hydra, where the hero would cut one head but then, in its place, two new heads would sprout. This means that Man cannot find stability, he/she cannot gain control of things, cannot manipulate and tame his/hers torments. Or again Heracles cleaned up Augeias' Stables; he cleaned up his own life. Heracles tamed Geryon's Horses, and this means that he tamed himself, his impulses. All these legends had to do with Man's nature, with Man's constitution. It is just that all these are impersonated in various ways. Who was the other bloke with the Pine-bender? Wasn't it Theseus? Or think of the myth with Procrustes. What were all these things? They all say the same thing. They all aim to stimulate inside us the desire to explore ourselves and thus live a substantial experience with the impetus of a mythical metaphor. They are ancient myths that represent our journey in life, or rather the journey that Man has to make in order for him/her to become a complete being.

**Q: This is an aspect that is hardly represented in the relevant academic literature.**

A: I do not care.

**Q: I am not implying that you should care.**

A: I am interested in playing with things and their meanings and not in accepting certainties.

**Q: There are many scholars who believe that we should opt for a holistic interpretation of the ancient Greek myths, for instance an interpretation that falls under the umbrella of the Freudian approach. I read once about the Symblagades that they represent the walls of the womb, which contract and thus crush the man who is inside a woman.**

A: This is so phallocratic (sic). You have to be sick to come up with such an idea. The Symblagades are the ultimate chance, which appears before one's eyes only for a moment in a certain time in one's lives. If the person manages to pass through the Symblagades, it is fine; that is if the person has the courage to do it, though. Usually, the passage between the Symblagades closes again very quickly. The Symblagades is the equivalent myth of the Toltec Indians, who say that the bird of freedom always flies straight ahead and passes through one's life only once. If you can jump on its wings, it is fine. But the bird won't wait, nor will it ever return. The Symblagades were something similar.

**Q: Do you use myths in your songs? Are they a source of inspiration for you?**

A: Yes, yes, very much. They are metaphors that help you express what cannot be expressed precisely with rational speaking. Namely, it is not possible to express yourself and say exactly what you want, unless you transfer your thoughts into a mythological context.

**Q: Do you use myths as codes, then?**

A: Yes, as codes.

**Q: They provide a possibility for immediacy. Are they a kind of codified emotion, or notion?**

A: They are codified emotions, images; they are codifications of actions and incidents that occur all around you. Many of them make you reflect on a situation and realize in retrospect that you have played in a myth. And when you are creating a song and want to put something into words, you will use myth's codes, in whichever way you comprehend them. There is no objectivity in this matter. Unless a wise man comes one day and says: 'this myth speaks precisely and strictly of this thing! Conform! Do not alter the concepts and the meanings!' This cannot ever happen though and thus we literally flow and float like boats in the abstractness of the abstract elements. We are travelers.

**Q: Give me an example of the above with reference to specific lyrics from your songs. What comes to my mind is the line: 'Hera's scents, Zeus' mischievous games'**

A: I borrowed their names because I found myself in Olympus (the song is about a day trip on Mount Olympus) and I realized that Hera and Zeus were actually there at that moment. Whatever I was seeing around me was them. They were powers, tendencies; they existed there, they ruled me, they gave me pleasure, enjoyment, ecstasy, so I had to mention them.

**Q: And why were these powers impersonated specifically by Hera and Zeus?**

A: Because they used to be the rulers of Olympus and because my journey there made me think of them. I did not think of anyone else, I do not know why. I could have thought of Hephaestus. Also, it might never happen again, maybe the circumstances were appropriate that day. My psychological position made it happen. The realization of the situation's grandeur, my walk on the mountain, the

waters, the stones, the trees, and the whole atmosphere spoke to me about this thing. I *wanted* them to speak to me about this thing. This is what happened, roughly speaking. In another song I use Circe to narrate my entrapment in an affair that lasted seven years, although it should have ended after the very first year. I realized that I had really gone to the island of Circe and was lost there; I was almost turned into a pig, I was *that* close.

**Q: The fact that we think through myths amazes me. For instance, you went to Olympus and you automatically thought of Hera and Zeus; or you spent seven years being at a loss and you thought of Circe. I wonder whether we, as Greeks, are 'programmed' to think in such a way.**

A: Yes. In another song I used the theme of Labyrinth. I also gave this name to my album. Anyway, I have never pored over this, but now that you mention it, I realize that I have used myths intensely. As you said before, it happens in a place and then certain notions that are associated with this place come to mind in the form of a notional sequence. We do this thing all the time in our lives. For instance, when we say 'tablecloth', we think 'table', and then we think of a setting, of a feast, perhaps our birthday. We think of all these, sequentially, in the form of joined rings. Yet, this perception of the world is false: the world is in eternal movement, it consists of whirls. We live in an illusion and we believe that we are hung on a chain, like the pearl chains we decorate curtains with, but in reality we live in whirls. We are very deep in this illusion. We are travelers in a bizarre journey. This is why myths help us sometimes see more broadly; they help us see, compare and depart. Because, if you are trapped in the web, then at least be conscious of it.

**Q: How do myths help?**

A: They do help, if you want them to. They help you realize that you are trapped in a myth. We are all trapped in the myth that demands that we breed and perpetuate the human species from generation to generation, believing that this is the ultimate purpose of humanity. We believe that the ultimate purpose of humans is to pass their sperm and ovaries to the next generation in order for a better generation to be raised, and so on. We feel that this is our obligation, but all this could be wrong. I mean that the growth of humanity may have been a real necessity once, but now we should perhaps view things from a different angle.

**Q: Maybe we are now too much part of it to change our attitude.**

A: Are we perhaps too much part of it? I wonder.

**Q: How could myth contribute to Man's escape from this vicious circle?**

A: By showing Man their entrapment. Myth tells you that somebody else has walked this way before you.

**Q: How can this happen? Should one become familiar with myth first and comprehend it very well, in order for myth to be able to fulfill its role?**

A: Even knowing myth's basic elements is enough. For instance, the myth of the Labyrinth, with the Minotaur who inhabits it and with Ariadne who gives the thread

to Theseus is once again about Man's escape. The myth of Persephone, who descends into the world of shadows, as she makes the mistake to taste the pomegranate that Hades offers to her, and she is forced ever after to divide her time between the world of the living and the world of the dead. I believe that if we analyze a little the circumstances of our lives, if we examine our actions, even the actions of a short time period, say one year, we will see that we are playing in a myth, as I said before. And if we study the myths a little bit, we will also find out in which myth we are playing. Thus, it will be easier for Man to find a way out. In the same way, Odysseus stuck a peg in the Cyclops's eye to escape, or he threatened Circe -I do not know exactly what he did- and he got her to let him go. Odysseus confronted Circe with the help of Hermes, who told him: 'do not give in to her charms and to her offerings, be considerate, do not play in her act, hold yourself and eventually deny whatever she offers you. Her power lies in her ability to allure you, to give you anything you desire'. Many interpretations have been suggested for this myth, but let us refer to the most obvious one. We all are Circe's victims; we all give in to life's material goods and pleasures. And Circe could in fact represent life with all the materiality that encircles us. Maybe this is what Circe is. And Hermes may be our will, our intention. Of course, all these are simply my opinion and my speculations. They are not certainties.

**Q: I assume that, when using myths, you express yourself on the one hand, but at the same time you also seek to find a mental bridge with your audience.**

A: No, you don't go looking for this bridge. You say what you want to say and you are convinced that a large part of the audience will at least conceive, in its own way, your approach to a certain issue.

**Q: So, you do believe that a large part of the audience does comprehend the use of myths and is able to communicate through them.**

A: Of course. This certainly happens.

**Q: I am asking this having in mind that the notional sequences through which, as we said before, we mainly perceive things refer to and stem from an image of everyday things and situations (for instance, a party, a table). However, on the other hand, our notional relationship to myths is based on a poor education and on their poor presence in our everyday routine.**

A: But, we do come across them! For example, we come across Oedipus very often.

**Q: We do come across Oedipus, but how? In the form of a mere....**

A: Yes, in the form of a mere mention. We do come across myths; we come across all of them. Take today's newspapers and have a look.

**A: This is true and now, as we speak, a striking and recent example comes to mind. I am talking about Lado. It is amazing how people started to worry based on a story that was developed three thousand years ago, or even more. It seems to me that they were sort of 'programmed' to be disturbed on the basis of this idea.**

A: Yes, but we also know that biology has the ability to keep memory intact. Namely, we carry within us memories from centuries ago.

**Q: So, is Greek mythology written down in our DNA?**

A: Yes, definitely. This means that in the essence of our being we carry the entire past. We are moving repositories of knowledge, regardless whether we use this knowledge or not. But we certainly are repositories of knowledge. This skin, this blood, the bones, the veins, the muscles, the hair are an informational coiling, which begins from very ancient times and stretches until today.

**Q: Does this also stand for knowledge?**

A: Of course. Because what is knowledge? Isn't knowledge a form of information? What is biology in its essence? Isn't it information?

**Q: Does this hold value only for us, that is for the Greeks?**

A: No. It holds value for everybody.

**Q: Does this mean then that the Germans think of Lorelei at the sight of a river?**

A: Maybe, maybe they do. The Germans though are a nation that suffered a lot. They are much more stressed than ... -on the other hand, you could argue, have we not been through wars and torments?

**Q: I was wondering, though, in what sense do the Greeks think through myths. Do we Greeks perceive our life through myths, in the mode that you do?**

A: I reckon that a small percentage, say 10% of the population, does so. I cannot be sure about that but having met many people all these years makes me believe that a 10% of Greeks think a lot and think deeply and openly. The rest obey the commands and the narrow limits of what is 'approved' and 'established'. But for a country of 10 – 12 million, 10% is a huge number. The number is big, very big. I believe that in this country there are some very progressive brains, they are just quiet.

**Q: How did myths manage to survive, though, in a society where the majority is narrow-minded? I find it strange.**

A: Well, look, it is what I said before, namely that whether we want it or not, we carry these myths inside us, we carry them with us. You cannot lose these things. At the bottom line, and to put it in another way, we are a nation that likes to fall for fairytales, all sorts of fairytales. We crave to feel passionately about something, about someone.

**Q: What role has the classical past played in music?**

It must have played some role, no? We do not know exactly what its role might be, the experts examine things in the musicological institutes and the universities, but what they say seem far from true to me. Because, if we observe some significant and fundamental pieces of music, like the song 'In the waters of the Aegean', I believe, or I rather intuit, that they come directly from antiquity. Namely, the above mentioned music theme comes directly from the sea of Ionia. I do not why; maybe because I dreamed it, maybe because this is how I sense it. I think that if one examines the songs of Kassos and Karpathos, the entire antiquity will unfold before

them. If one examines many themes of the Cretan music they will find the music of antiquity inside these songs. If you examine the Macedonian songs, you will find in them songs of antiquity, with a touch of Persian music from Iraq. They have common themes, many common themes. I am telling you that ancient music is here, it is present. It is present in folk song and in many cases in rembetiko. There must have been for sure loans, changes, variations.

**Q: What role has the classical past played, not as musical form, but as an idea, as a 'fairytale', since the Greeks as a nation like believing in real-life fairytales? I mean how has the public come into touch with the classical past through music? How was the public 'educated', with reference to the classical past, through music?**

A: I don't know. The public was educated unbeknown both to the public and to tradition. The public and tradition carry each other within them, without them being aware of it. This goes without saying. Of course no microbiologist can tell that someone suffers from archaism, or that one carries on his/her cells Pericles' information. Now, when it comes to the role that the classical past has played, I assume that since we are educated from toddlers with the idea that we are the descendants of classical antiquity, we do eventually bear in us this information, and we can challenge it only with difficulty. It is rare that people question the validity of this information. We embrace the teachings of classical antiquity, if not only in theory, without often comprehending the principals of these teachings, without having the slightest idea of what they are really about.

**Q: In what sense?**

A: In the sense that what Socrates taught does not hold any value today.

**Q: Does this happen consciously?**

A: No, girl, we do not do this consciously. It just happens as we pass values down to each other. Because, what values do we pass down, if not those which were formulated and proved 3,000 years ago? Aren't we intellectually nourished by antiquity?

**Q: We are. I was wondering though: say, in literature, the classical past is present especially in times of national unrest, but in music this is less obvious.**

A: This is because music is more fluid. Music consists of two million separate units that the musicians use for the sake of the expression of their very own and private heartache.

**Q: And does this not stand also for painting, or literature?**

A: It stood, until 50 years ago. Now you see that literature's consistency is broken. Each author follows a different, personal, course of expression. I think this is necessary. There can be no unification without separation. The subject matter has to be broken down into pieces and then we have to take the fragments and let them join again and constitute forms of expression and action. It is not merely, say, a theoretical firework; it is not something to merely pass our time with. It rules us. It is our contemporary mythology. This is the way in which we gain intellectual

coherence. This is our interpretative system. This entire thing provides us with a way to see, to notice, to comprehend, to perceive things.

**Q: So, could it be argued that the stage we are in is a transitional one?**

A: It is not transitional. A stage is just a stage; in the literal meaning of the word. It is a field in which we are walking. If it is a preparatory stage, then we are heading toward great things. This preparatory stage though is too painful

Alright. Are we passing through the Symblagades, then?

**Q: Ah..Yes, we are.**

A: I think we are standing right in front of the Symblagades and we are waiting for them to open. We can hear the creaks. This is exactly what is going on.

**Q: There is something in the current situation that reminds me of the Hydra. I mean humanity has always had wounds, but they were specific and countable; they were manageable. But now...**

A: That was the era of the Nemean Lion.

**Q: Exactly. But now we have moved to the Hydra. New wounds open, before the old ones have had the time to heal.**

A: I think we are in the stage of the Symblagades. The Hydra and the Symblagades will be together every moment. Modern Man will eventually cross the Symblagades. The problem is how he/she will manage to deal with two or even twelve myths at the same time. The solution that the myth speaks of is not the solution of violence. If we won't caress the lion, we won't move on. The Lion cannot be killed, the Hydra cannot be decapitated. But, when you see the Hydra, you recognize her and you recognize her mirroring inside you and you say to her: 'hello there, I know you exist'...

**Q: Will the Hydra respect that?**

A: Yes, she will in the same way that a rogue dog will leave you alone if you respect it, instead of grab a stone and hit it. We are not going anywhere, if we do not perceive our great passions, be they personal, national, or international, in this way too.

**Q: Does music teach this somehow?**

A: It does. Sometimes it does.

**Q: Have you got any specific examples for this?**

A: Yes.

**Q: I mean, do you have any examples where music deals with mythology in this way?**

A: Yes, I do. For instance, the way Hatzidakis conjure love's (eros') fury, when he says: 'who is crazy with love (eros)? Let them dig pits in the dawn and let us go there and drink from the rain waters'. See how he talks about eros? Let's go there and drink the rain. Let them dig a pit, let the rain fall in it, so that we can drink from the rain.

**Q: But this song refers to eros (love) as a sentiment and not to Eros the ancient god.**

A: The audience can interpret and understand it however they want.

**Q: My intention was to look for references to the classical past and especially to mythology in modern Greek music.**

A: What, references specifically to Eros, the ancient god?

**Q: No, not only to Eros, but to the entire mythology.**

A: But mythology is full of love gods and goddesses.

**Q: I am not looking necessarily for references to eros.**

A: Yes, my girl!!

**Q: I mean, there is Ares, he is erotic too**

A: I would argue that Ares is more sexual. He was involved in intrigues all the time, trying to get hold of Aphrodite and do things to her..

**Q: I like Hermes best, he was cunning.**

A: Yes, he was tricky.

**Q: Ares was a bit boring, too brutal...**

A: Yes, I don't know, I haven't pored over this mythological system to be able to tell you what each element represented; because we are talking about powers now

**Q: What I am trying to find out is whether what you do, namely use mythology to express yourself in your music, has also happened in the past and moreover whether it has happened to a greater extent.**

A: Take books that present the ancient steles and observe how many poets and musicians have written about love in the tombs.

**Q: What about the contemporary era?**

A: Ah, in the contemporary era.

**Q: Yes, have contemporary musicians used...**

A: But contemporary musicians are concerned exclusively with this topic.

**Q: With love?**

A: Yes, with love.

**Q: Well, OK. Let's leave love aside. What about mythology in general? It could refer to Athena, who is anti-sexual.**

A: She is not anti-sexual.

**Q: I didn't like Athena as a child at all**

A: She was a bit dull, wasn't she?

**Q: I didn't like her at all. I don't know why. I liked Hera a lot more, who was vivid, temperamental, who got angry and jealous and was not perfect like Athena.**

A: You've got your role models; these are your role models. This is what wakes inside you a power that is certainly there and lurks and is secretly glowing in the dark, like a burning charcoal.

**Q: Back to the question now, that is, whether mythology has been used in modern Greek music, in any genre, like rembetiko or old**

**popular songs.**

A: Yes. Didn't Vamvakaris<sup>1</sup> write about Heracles?

**Q: Yes, but I think that he was the only one.**

A: They didn't draw much on mythology, because they had such serious survival issues to deal with that they were secluded in an enclosed space, which concerned themes such as family, friends, job, survival.

**Q: But isn't this strange? If mythology is written down in our DNA, if we are trained to think like this and mythological references come automatically to our mind, isn't this strange?**

A: Why, wasn't it also happening, say, 100 years ago? Were not mythological topics present in people's lives, were not they employed by artistic expression?

**Q: Was it happening? I am wondering.**

A: It was happening, occasionally. I am not an expert but it must have been happening. However, more rarely for the reasons I have already mentioned. The reasons were, first, the church. The church had a strong, very strong, impact on society and it overpowered all the old models. The church and consequently society replaced the old models, it gave them different content, different names. We gave, in a way, Christ the opportunity to drink a glass of wine: 'Christ, here is to our health!'. This helps us. We gave Virgin Mary a tremendous power. We replaced the models. This is the role of the church. The church was the voice of the models and these models had a very strong impact on people's souls. And this situation still holds value today with the difference that the present generation is beginning to depart from the models, it is stumbling and it is entering different situations, it is escaping. For instance, the generation of my son who is 22 is not the same as the generation of my grandfather. I have never heard him say 'Christ, help me', not even once. Of course neither does he say 'help me, Dionysus', or 'help me, Athena'. In general, young people are drawn away from these models. Now, I do not know what will happen if a necessity suddenly appears, a necessity that will draw us all back to the old models. However, I wouldn't wish this to happen. It is good to depart from the established models and find new ones. Man cannot easily escape from the established situations of his/hers life. You can walk miles but you will always go back to the starting point, once necessity calls you.

**Q: So, the first reason was religion.**

A: Yes, it was religion, which imposed its own models. In the songs then there were references to the Virgin Mary and Christ, to St Demetrius and St Nicolas. In every song there is an invocation.

**Q: And how did music go back to the use of mythology?**

A: This happened through the study of our past.

**Q: But wasn't this examination more essential back then?**

A: Why?

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<sup>1</sup> Markos Vamvakaris: composer, singer and musician of rebetiko music.

**Q: Because we were trying to be legitimized as a state and to become acceptable as a nation.**

A: Listen now: the church was a model on its own. The churches were used as asylums for people who had no place in the sun, the church provided a standard help to all the victimized. It was a model, a nest. Where were they supposed to go? Were they supposed to go to Hermes, who they didn't even know of? The majority of the population didn't know him. Hermes had been challenged and he was cancelled.

**Q: Of course mythology had already lost its religious significance even before the time of Alexander's descendants. It continued to function though on a social and political level.**

A: Yes, it retained its influence on the masses, on the simple people. In Hellenistic and Roman Thessaloniki there were temples dedicated to Sesostris as well as to Dionysus.

**Q: And to Isis. So, you believe that, for those who wrote music 100 years ago, mythology contained a religious element.**

A: It certainly do, as they were talking about the gods, about the twelve gods.

**Q: We still refer to the ancient deities as the ancient 'gods', but does this mean that mythology contains the religious element?**

A: No, of course it doesn't. I believe that the twelve gods and the rest of the crew as tendencies and powers, subconscious powers that coexist inside humans. They were simply personified at the time. For instance, jealousy was Hera's realm as well as the realm of two or three more deities.

**Q: Eris was also associated with jealousy.**

A: There were also the semi-gods and the others that clustered around the main gods of Olympus. They had the Muses to help them, the Moirai, Klotho, and the rest. For every psychological tendency they created a deity. And of course by sacrificing to them they aimed to sooth their souls, to release them from lust, from passion, from jealousy, from misery anyway. They aimed to be released from the soul's 'disability', from its inability to endure this world's cruelty and from its desire to leave this world. There were deities that expressed people all around the place. This is how I see it. I perceive the ancient deities as personifications of the tendencies of human soul. You have made me reflect on things now that live inside my mind, but I principally sense them, rather than analyze them and rationalize them. You put me in the procedure of interpreting the un-interpretable. This is good, it is a good opportunity for a conversation, but when we take out of their 'cases' things that have been abandoned for so long to draw their own existence and try to describe them, we usually talk nonsense.

To go back to the initial question now, people started using new models to talk about their concerns.

**Q: You mean models other than religious ones.**

A: Both religious and philosophical. People were very pious 100 years ago. They perhaps blasphemed, but when there was a real need they were really pious. They were extremely respectful toward their role models. When people were making the sign of the cross they really meant it. So, this was a serious reason why the old models were replaced. Partly due to a relative lack of knowledge of the past and partly due to a cultural preference for the new models, which were more effective. Virgin Mary with her miracles proved her interest for the humans and replaced all the old goddesses, she replaced everybody. And of course there were also the saints who helped people.

**Q: The starting point of this conversation was the remark that although, initially, we were negative, it finally seems that mythology 100 years ago did contain religiousness.**

A: But is it possible for a new religion not to contain in fragments the one it replaced? Even the classical gods had replaced some pre-classical ones and they, in turn, had replaced others too. Man always changes models. The transition took place through the centuries. I cannot be very specific about the situation 100 years ago, because I am not an anthropologist.

**Q: Let us go back now to the presence of mythology in the contemporary music of Greece.**

A: Yes. Well until around 1950 to 1960 there was not an intense use of mythological elements in Greek music. Why? We do not know what happened in the meantime. Perhaps it is that the Greeks started looking once again for their identity after emerging once again from a difficult period. They found their identity in antiquity and thus an interest in mythology was revived.

**Q: To close this interview I would like to ask your opinion on a couple more issues. Does the local factor affect the perception and use of mythology?**

A: No, not anymore. Today a Greek is a citizen of the entire country and he/she does not become passionate about local elements. And I do not think that this ever really happened. Maybe this was true for the urban centers of Greece, such as Herakleion in Crete. There people were more aware of the local significance and importance of a certain myth (for instance the myth of Theseus). However this does not happen any longer. Regardless of the place where a myth is presented (e.g through music), the way the public perceives this myth does not differ.

**Q: Does this mean then that, say, the Thessalonians do not identify themselves anymore with the myth of Alexander the Great?**

A: Perhaps they do.

**Q: I have noticed that most artistic events that take place in Thessaloniki are about the mythology of Alexander the Great (e.g the exhibition about Thessaloniki as a mermaid and sister of Alexander the Great).**

A: Maybe, but this is true more for visual culture than for music as the state intervenes less in the organization of concerts than in the organization of exhibitions of visual culture.

**Q: I believe we have covered pretty much everything. Thank you very much.**

A: Thank you.

## Appendix 2

**Yannis Aggelakas**

**Date: 04/02/2005**

**Venue: 'Myrsini' tavern, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: When you hear the term 'Greek mythology' what comes automatically to your mind?**

A: Well, my description is going to be a bit crude. I am really not much into mythology; I lack basic knowledge. I liked listening to people talking about mythology, but these were random occasions.

**Q: What are the mythology-related memories from your childhood? As a child did you read as a child books about ancient myths?**

A: I wouldn't say so.

**Q: No? Why? Did you hear about mythology at home?**

A: I wouldn't say so. We mostly heard about mythology at school. And school made me feel bored.

**Q: And I guess what you heard about mythology at school was a bit superficial.**

A: Well, it was about the classical stuff, the twelve gods and the likes.

**Q: Did you have a favourite myth? Has a particular myth, or mythological figure etched your memory, for instance Icarus or Circe?**

A: Well, as children we also watched movies; we watched the "Odyssey" and I liked Odysseus' story. I was fascinated by the "Odyssey".

**Q: Were you fascinated by the story or by the movie?**

A: I was fascinated by the story. I liked the story very much.

**Q: Why? Was it because of the rafts, the waves and of all the weird things happening?**

A: Who knows what exactly fascinated me as a child...No, I did not liked it because of the above mentioned things; I liked it because I believe that some stories speak to almost every age; they transfer messages. Namely, I think that deep down I was fascinated because I was watching the story of a man, his struggle to get somewhere.

**Q: Does this mean that you found similarities with yourself? Of course you were a child...**

A: Yes, of course (I was a child). No, no, it is not that I found similarities between Odysseus and myself; maybe, the odd time, while playing with my friends, I have indeed felt like Odysseus when he was blinding the Cyclops, but that was about it. But I imagine that the 'Odyssey' fascinated me, because it was sending out messages, which I must have been subconsciously receiving even in that age. This means that I was watching the passage of a man who sets off from somewhere to go back home, etc.

**Q: You were watching the course of a man with a specific goal.**

A: Yes. He wanted to go home and the idea of 'home' was very important for a child.

**Q: Yes, of course. And I imagine that as you were growing up, the idea of 'home' gained a different interpretation.**

A: Yes, of course, this is well understood. I am talking about how I perceived it as a child. But that was about it. That was all my relation to it. The last strong mythological image that comes to my mind is from last summer, when my friends and I were in Anogeia (a village in the mountains of Crete). We went to Idaean Andron (the Cave of Mount Ili) and we spent the night inside the cave. My friends were narrating stories about how the Corybantes were playing the drums, in order for Cronus not to hear baby Zeus' cries. I experienced this story very intensively. It was night, my friends were narrating, could I practically see these things taking place before me. This is the last strong mythological image that I have. I am not interested in mythology, I just happened to be there, I heard the story and it was taken into my head. I was not very familiar with the story, I learned about it there. I learned about the Corybantes, or Kourites, there.

**Q: As you were growing up, did your limited and random knowledge about mythology, which was acquired for instance by means of epic Hollywood movies, vanish? Did mythology reoccur as a thought at some later point in your life?**

A: I wouldn't say so. For some reason it didn't occupy my mind. To make you understand what I mean, I once decided to familiarize myself with it and I bought Hesiod's Theogony; I didn't read it, though.

**Q: What made you decide to familiarize yourself with it?**

A: I wanted to see after all what it is about. The birth of the Gods and the humans, is a quite important thing.

**Q: So, you detected some interesting associations in it, or you were perhaps seeking to find out what these stories were?**

A: Yes, yes. I similarly happened to read some Indian epics.

**Q: Did you find any similarities between Hesiod...**

A: I didn't read much from him. It looked as he were quoting family trees and I got tired.

**Q: I find him tiring too. So, you didn't find any similarities.**

A: Well, yes.

**Q: Hesiod lost the battle against the rest.**

A: I didn't give him much thought. That is, I would be more fascinated by Egyptian mythology, or by the Pre-Hellenic mythologies.

**Q: Which Pre-Hellenic mythologies?**

A: The Egyptian, the Indian, or the epic of Gilgamesh. Although I did care enough to read this sort of things, I have not read the 'Odyssey' yet.

**Q: Why?**

A: I don't know.

**Q: Isn't this strange?**

A: No, it does not seem strange to me. It is strange to you because you are an archaeologist.

**Q: Well, OK, this is another issue.**

A: Greek mythology, with the exception of a few moments, did not excite me.

**Q: It is strange that although we live in a country with a great mythological tradition, you turn to mythologies of other civilizations instead of turning to the Greek mythology.**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: I am wondering why. Could perhaps the position of Greek mythology in museums, which are one of the main vehicles of culture in Greece, play some role? The fact that myths do not really exist there?**

A: Not that I go to museums a lot..Alright, I get really excited when I go to the Louvre, where I have been once or twice, or to the museum of Cairo, where I have also been two or three times. For some reason, the pre-classical civilizations touched me more. I don't know why. They seemed to be more primitive, more violent, closer to the sense of the divine. They seemed more religious, not in the sense of an organized religion, but in the sense that they were closer to the sense of Divine. The ancient Greek civilization always seemed to be a bit pretentious, more attached to an external 'image'.

**Q: A bit stylish and fake?**

A: Yes, kind of coquettish. Odysseus, or, say Plato, certainly were different. Of course these do not fall into the category of mythology; now we speak of philosophers.

**Q: They do bear mythological elements.**

A: This is not entirely true, because Odysseus and Plato touch me. What I didn't like, what did not attract my interest anyway, were the myths of the twelve gods, who fought with each other, who slept with each other. I mean, they had a good time, but whatever this represents does not thrill me.

**Q: So, myths, in your opinion, bear intrinsically a religious feeling. I am referring not to Greek myths, but to the ones of other civilizations.**

A: Yes, of course, this goes without saying. Definitely, yes.

**Q: So, you didn't perceive them as simple-minded stories, as this comes across clearly, but neither did you perceive them so much as the crystallization of deep thought and philosophy, as much as religious stories.**

A: No, they were crystallizations of thought, how can they not have been?; for God's sake. For instance, the Ramayana, poses for its hero a riddle, which is religious, is practical. It seemed to me that the more primitive civilizations perceived the human adventure more deeply and more broadly and through, say, some sort of religiousness. This is why I liked them better.

**Q: This means that they put Man opposite God.**

A: Or that they put Man inside God, do you understand? These myths were not simply talking about, say, 'God, a mountain and Man'; they were kind of, I do not know how to put it...

**Q: Perhaps, they were more intrinsic to the world, in the sense that they were not de-contextualized, they concerned real life.**

A: Yes.

**Q: Whereas on the other hand, the Greek myths were not that intrinsic, were they? Since I started interviewing people, this is the first time I have come across this idea and this is very interesting, because it took me myself some time to realize that the mythological stories were actually meaningful creations of the human mind with multiple levels of interpretations and reading.**

A: Yes. Of course, there are stories that still thrill me, right? What I have so far described is my general impression. However even the stories that touch me from Greek mythology are the pre-classical ones, namely Orpheus, the Orphic mysteries, Thrace, the first church, the first temple that was supposedly found by the archaeologists.

**Q: Why do these things stimulate you?**

A: These bear that religious feeling. It seemed to me that they had intensity and pain. The pain of man breaking his body, that is escaping, rising above his existence. The Greeks on the other hand were dedicated to modesty and beauty. Nice myths, very nice, but they didn't...

**Q: Could the fact that the Orphic myths appeal to you, be associated with the fact that they contain grains of truth?**

A: Yes, of course, this goes without saying.

**Q: Could this be associated with the fact that these are testimonies about Orphic philosophy and religion, about the Orphic mysteries?**

A: Yes, yes. Well, they also say about Zeus that in reality he was probably a major intellectual personality who was born in Crete.

**Q: Do they?**

A: What are they trying to find, otherwise? Do not tell me they are trying to find the mythological cave!!!

**Q: Well you know, archaeologists look for things generally!...Seriously now, of course there are numerous temples dedicated to Zeus and Hera all over Greece, but behind the Orphics there was an organized religion and philosophy, something which is not testified to in the case of Zeus and Hera.**

A: There was a monotheist religion and the likes.

**Q: And written testimonies have also survived.**

A: Yes, but now we are talking about religion and not mythology. But, on the other hand, the one is close to the other, isn't it? Because I find equally attractive the Eleusinian Mysteries.

**Q: Is this for the same reason?**

A: No, I went and read about them, because they say that there was something going on there. They say that the Eleusinian mysteries was the secular religion of the ancient Athenians. Something was going on there. They catechized people to something, most possibly to immortality and monotheism, with the aid of substances and other similar things that I really like.

**Q: From what I understand, you mean that Core and Demeter are powers that still concern us, that rule our lives.**

A: They are regenerative powers.

**Q: And these powers are modern and...**

A: ...primitive

**Q: ..Which have not ceased to exist since then. What I understand is that they are powers and tensions that still rule our lives and that will never cease to.**

A: Yes, yes, absolutely yes. I could say that the more ancient and pagan the beliefs and the rites, the more fascinated I get.

**Q: So, mythology is in fact a matter of religion.**

A: This is self-understood.

**Q: Could it be the journey of man through life?**

A: Isn't this a religious matter too? What else could the marching in life of an aware and conscious human being be?

**Q: From this point of view, yes, it is. Malamas told me exactly the same thing, that the "Odyssey" is the journey of Man through life and that each one of us is participating in the present and in reality in a play, where a hero has participated in a myth in the past.**

A: This goes without saying, but I would argue that myths better resemble keys that help you unlock unknown places inside us and abilities, or rather powers.

**Q: Can you give an example for this?**

A: For instance, we referred before to Core and Demeter. They do not really exist inside us, do they?

**Q: What kind of a metaphorical key would it give you?**

A: I believe that we draw circles inside us. We sow, we blossom, we fade, we die and then the circle starts all over again. These are the circles, which our thoughts and emotions draw, and myths help us decipher and interpret the circumstances of our life.

**Q: In your life, have you ever used Persephone's mythical example in order to reflect on the circles that your thoughts and your life draw?**

A: Yes, I have.

**Q: Have you ever used the myths of Demeter and Core, in order to find a way out of a problem in your life?**

A: Yes, of course I have.

**Q: Could you give me an example?**

A: These things cannot be described, they are sensations, glimpses in your life, moments where you are feeling that you are going through a little 'winter' and you curl up, but you believe inside you that this period will not last forever, that the fields will soon flourish inside you again. The time when you will harvest, when a beautiful summer will come again; and then winter comes again..

**Q: So, it seems to me that subconsciously the Greek myths somehow exist inside us.**

A: Well, of course. I am not looking down on Greek mythology, it is just that I have not paid attention to it, and maybe I have not paid the attention I ought to for the reasons I described you. There were times, however, like with the Corybantes, when I was madly fascinated by Greek mythology! I was standing there in front of the cave's opening and the image was strong. A light was shed inside me; I learned something new.

**Q: What? What light did the Corybantes give?**

A: The power of music.

**Q: What is this power?**

A: It is the power of rhythm and music; they were hiding the man who was being born from the infanticide god.

**Q: So, today what would be the respective function of music? Who is the evil god today?**

A: No, it is not always about an evil god, for God's sake. We were referring to the power of music.

**Q: Yes, this is what I mean. What would the rhythm and the music save us from? It is well understood that the problem today is not Cronus!**

A: A powerful music could prevent a negative thought from getting inside us; to keep it outside our existence with the power of music. Or music could make us blossom, come up with new, magical, ideas about the world, life and the like! Is this not a big thing?

**Q: Yes, it is. It appears to me that you are still composing your own Greek mythology today.**

A: What do you mean?

**Q: I mean that, although you obviously do not think consciously through the ancient myths...**

A: Of course I do not.

**Q: ...Greek mythology is not a closed case for you.**

A: But how could it be a closed case? Greek mythology is happening now, in this very moment, do you understand?

**Q: Yes.**

A: The myth of the Corybantes corresponds to the way in which a melody in your mind can protect you from an evil spirit, a bad thought that wants to enter, just like I said before. Or the ancient myths could be the key to open a door with many

answers and many beautiful emotions or memories, your memories, memories of your blood, of your ancestors. The myth of Sisyphus also touches me a lot.

**Q: Because of the suffering?**

A: Yes. I also like the story of Prometheus.

**Q: How do these myths touch you? What do they bring to mind? What powers do they wake inside you?**

A: In the case of Sisyphus, for instance, I think that this is something we all do: we carry a rock, we try to lift it, it falls down and there we go again from the beginning. This, on the one hand, stimulates thoughts about vainness and thoughts about stubbornness and strength of character. I put myself in this position and this gives me courage and at the same time it imposes on me a sense of futility. But it does so in such a nice way that it gives me courage, because, as someone said, 'pessimism is optimism imbued with knowledge'.

**Q: What about Prometheus?**

A: Did not he give the gift of fire to humans?

**Q: Yes.**

A: Lucifer<sup>1</sup>, for instance, exists in much more primitive mythologies. There was a time when gods didn't want us to possess fire, that is spiritual power, and an angel, who misbehaved and was later punished for this, stole the gift of fire from the gods and gave it to humans.

**Q: Is this still happening today?**

A: I don't know.

**Q: Who could play Lucifer's role today?**

A: Today this can occur on a level of political authority, if we assume that the ancient gods are represented today by political authority. In most cases people who try to transfer to other people a new element of knowledge, a new viewpoint, a new way to apprehend life, are punished by the authorities. A myth is a key to open a door with many answers and many beautiful emotions or memories, your memories, memories of your blood, of your ancestors.

**Q: Is ancient Greek mythology today playing the role it could be playing, that is to provide a stimulus...?**

A: To help us construct a more creative imagination from our childhood.

**Q: Does Greek mythology, as a well-preserved and much used element of Greece's cultural heritage, constitute today a meaningful intellectual creation with a known and specified essence for the wide public?**

A: Sure, it has got essence, but the answer to this is negative and this happens exactly because Greek mythology is taught at school. What they cared for at school was to make us hate the knowledge that they provided us with. Namely, I realized and valued the grandeur of the ancient tragedy in my 30s and this was thanks to my own initiative. Until the end of high school they had succeeded in making me hate it,

feel bored with it and not want to read ancient Greek ever again. Similarly, through the teaching of essay writing they made me not to want to write for my own pleasure and to express myself in writing. They made me not to want to know history; not to want to learn maths. And although all these subjects were keys to self-knowledge, by consciously not presenting them as such at school, they made me hate them. It follows that whoever manages to rediscover what knowledge is, can only do so after he/she has departed from the official, imposed knowledge.

Mythology could gain the status it deserves, if a real educational system existed, a system that cared to form imaginative, creative, functional people. Unfortunately, the only thing they try to do at school now is to chop our imagination; to make us hate the impetus for knowledge; to make us turn away from knowledge and to become merely the machines they are manufacturing.

**Q: This means that mythology is subsumed to a generally 'ill' educational system.**

A: Yes. How, ever would mythology manage to get away? Who got away?

Mythology was transmitted in the way it was meant to be transmitted, in the way that best served the system. And this goes not only for mythology, but for knowledge in general. History, as we learn it, is a big lie. However, there are serious books and publications about mythology, it is just that they have not given us the key to approach them.

**Q: Yes.**

A: This is the best case scenario. In the worst case scenario, they have already thrown the key away and they have locked the drawer.

**Q: Has the past in general, or tradition in other words, played any role in your development and expression as an individual and as an artist?**

A: Yes, of course. I am very aware of the stage of history I am in and of the job I have to do in the short period of my existence, after my father and before my child.

**Q: What is this stage? Where are you and where are you heading?**

A: I don't mean that I am doing this in every field, because I developed this attitude after my thirtieth birthday, after I got over the shock of school. Therefore, if I want to be specific, I should assess it in musical terms. Why did I become a musician? I became a musician for reasons that I do not even know. I am happy that this is my job, that this is my occupation, more correctly. I honour the past. I know where I come from, I know who my teachers are, although I have never met them. I am struggling to pass something to the future.

**Q: Do you pass this consciously into your music and the songs you write?**

A: Of course, although 'consciously' is a huge word, let's say 'semi-consciously'.

**Q: What elements of the past do you make use of? Does your Greek identity show in your music and in your lyrics?**

A: Yes, it does.

**Q: How?**

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<sup>1</sup> Lucifer is used here by Aggelakas, as a mythological equivalent to Prometheus

A: I step on it, I am not coming from anywhere. Sometimes it becomes more obvious, sometimes it is conscious on my part too.

**Q: Give me an example of a case where this is obvious.**

A: I don't understand, what do you mean?

**Q: I guess that subconsciously we all bear the past in us. We all come from somewhere and we all are going somewhere. When this happens to you, do you realize it? To put it in a broader context, do you ever realize that you employ elements of the broader Greek cultural tradition?**

A: Listen, I have so far celebrated with music, music has lifted me up, it has moulded inside me thoughts and ideas. I realize that I am indebted to music, that I owe to music many things and there are things that still arouse me each time I listen to them: these things are the pre-war rembetiko, the pre-war popular songs, the folk songs that I remember myself listening to as a child in the open fairs. All these things left their mark inside me, all these dances and rhythms. In general I would be very proud, if I realized at some point that I succeeded in transmitting to the future the images I have in mind, my thoughts and my feelings, like old rembetes did, I would be very proud. I feel so inferior before their magnificence, that I almost get numb. I have this agony to manage to make even a single song that will provide a clear and honest overview of my feelings of constraint and happiness in the contemporary world.

**Q: Has the classical past played a certain role?**

A: The classical past? What is this?

**Q: For instance in the music you compose, have you used any musical ways and forms from antiquity, or have you made use of the idea that as a nation we come from from a civilization, which created important things?**

A: No, that has never been on my agenda. I guess that the only common thing we have with that civilization is, generally speaking, that we have seen the same mountains and mused over them and that we have walked in the same forests. These things have remained more or less intact. The light that burns or cools us is still the same. However, my relation to my ancestors stops here. It has not occupied my mind more than this.

**Q: Do the ancient myths bear any social references?**

A: Do they bear what?

**Q: Do the ancient myths bear contemporary social references? Do they speak of racism, of the gender relations, of general interpersonal or social issues?**

A: Listen, Greek mythology has all these things in abundance. As we have already mentioned, the myth of Prometheus has got such references. Che Guevara would be a contemporary Prometheus. And many others.

**Q: Who else?**

A: Commandant Marcos.<sup>2</sup>

**Q: This is very interesting.**

A: But this is not an issue, because anyone can be Prometheus or Hermes and anyone can be Prometheus one day and Zeus the other. Or Hera...every woman has Hera inside her, as well as Aphrodite and Athena. These things are powers inside us.

**Q: Could this constitute a contemporary mythology?**

A: I only thought of it now, because it was brought up in our conversation. I never thought of that before, although I am moved by his story.

**Q: It is the same thing as looking at a painting, for instance a painting with a historical background.**

A: Yes, let's say Mona Lisa. I believe she was the 'Sphinx of Renaissance'. Namely da Vinci painted the Sphinx once again, just like the ancient Egyptians made her, just like the ancient Greeks incorporated her into mythology.

**Q: You produce thoughtful songs that refer to serious issues of our times.**

A: I hope so.

**Q: Despite what we have discussed so far, there are no references to Greek myths in your songs.**

A: Yes, but let me give you one example, right now.

**Q: Yes, please.**

A: When I was writing a line that goes: 'here I am again, alive', I recall now that before writing it I was telling myself that I wanted to create a little 'Odyssey' in three or four quatrains. Whether I succeeded in it or not is irrelevant; I am not pretending to be someone.

**Q: But you did make this thought.**

A: Yes, I did.

**Q: However, despite the fact that as we discussed, mythology is a repository of condensed messages, you do not use it as a communicative code with the audience. Why is that? Is it because it is regarded by you and by your audience as too academic, too old-fashioned? Is mythology bound to an academic perception of the past and therefore condemned?**

A: There are so many people, outside Greece too, who write beautiful things, using symbols from mythology. It just doesn't happen to me. Nothing is pre-scheduled. I do not write something having decided in advance that I will not be using that or the other thing.

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<sup>2</sup> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, or Delegado Cero (Delegate Zero) is, according to his self-description, the spokesman for the Mexican rebel movement, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

**Q: Namely, this does not mean that such 'codes' cannot find a place in rock 'n' roll, or in punk-rock, or whatever the music you compose is called, because they are interwoven with the academic and dull...**

A: I do not know, perhaps I would do it in a nice way. I have seen others do it and it was fine.

**Q: In Greece?**

A: Yes in Greece too.

**Q: Who does it? I mean in the music you 'represent'.**

A: Sokratis (Malamas) has used mythology and he did so in a very nice way. Thanassis Papakonstantinou and others have also used mythology in their music.

**Q: Yes, I agree, they used mythology in a very nice way, but this makes me wonder whether it is specifically in r'n'r where myths cannot find a place.**

A: I do not do, I do not even feel 'rock 'n' roll'...And in any case these myths are being used everywhere and they are being used in a very nice way. I have heard rock songs with mythological references too. And the ancient Greek mythology has inspired many people. For some reasons I have not used it; I do not know why. It simply never came up.

**Q: You do not consciously avoid the use of Greek myths in your music, then.**

A: No, no..

**Q: Moving on, I would like to ask you whether you have ever noticed mythology being misused and abused, for instance on a political level.**

A: Of course...On a political level?

**Q: On any level...I referred to politics because the case of Alexander the Great came to my mind.**

A: Yes, but Alexander the Great is not mythology.

**Q: He does contain all these mythological elements with his sister who is a mermaid and who roamed in the seas asking the seamen about her brother...Alexander became the emblem of every nationalist of the country for a while, and it still is.**

A: Yes. But mythology has such open horizons and one can view it from so many different corners that nationalists too can easily find a way to use it. Mythology is open and exposed and anyone can approach it. The same thing goes for important works and people of our culture have been used in the worst way, from time to time; in the same way that Nietzsche was used by the Nazis, mythology can be used by our neo-fascists. Myths are open and people anyway like being narrow-minded and wear blinders; they can see only a tiny part of a certain truth and use it. We have seen many times myths being used for ridiculous commercial purposes, where myths appear in shop names.

**Q: Does this misuse ever upset you, or do you believe instead that mythology is open to any use and interpretation?**

A: How could it not upset me? It does upset me, indeed. Just think of the fact that

the mess that Greece experiences in its post-junta period has as its point of reference the grandeur of ancient Greece. This seems ridiculous to me, because on the one hand we commit improprieties, we do the worst possible, and on the other hand we use our awesome and glorious aesthetic past as an alibi. How can this be possible?

**Q: Do you believe that the ancient Greek past, and its dynamics could provide the fuel for very important things and not only provide an excuse for committing improprieties?**

A: This is what we have been discussing from the beginning of this conversation. Mythology and history - I am referring to objective history now, that has the power to deliver people- ..., so after the formation of the various nation states, each one of which used its history as an alibi...What was the question? What were we talking about?

**Q: I am not very professional, am I?...**

A: If you were a professional, there is no way we would be talking right now!

**Q: We were talking about the fact that an entire nation raves, swears by, the name of Socrates...**

A: And the worst is that Socrates was executed in the Golden Age of Athenian democracy.

**Q: We were talking about the fact that an entire nation swears by the name of Socrates, without even knowing who Socrates was...**

A: In the same way, all the nations look for something to lean upon, in order to make their presence obvious. All the nations try to project their present onto their past, when some amazing ancestors did some amazing things and by this they seek to demonstrate that they do not deserve their present situation, and that they are surrounded by envious enemies...

**Q: And in Greece this feeling is magnified, from every point of view.**

A: This happens because the longer the history of a nation is, the more complicated things become. Because the modern Greek nation has nothing to do with the ancient Greek nation, but since we, modern Greeks, find ourselves in the role of the ancient Greek civilization's 'safeguards', we are obliged to use the famous ancient grandeur as an excuse for the atrocities we commit today.

**Q: And of course this was even more intense, a hundred, a hundred and fifty, years ago...**

A: Yes, we had to stand on our own feet, to become a legitimate state. The Macedonians experience the same agony today, the agony of declaring that Alexander the Great was 'theirs' and the rest. It seems to me that this is false, as much is false....

**Q: I have a question: you are from Thessaloniki, right?**

A: Yes, from Neapoli.

**Q: So you were born here, you developed your musical identity in Thessaloniki, and the basis of your career is here too. Would you make different music if you were born and lived in Athens?**

A: Perhaps. I do not know this for sure but I imagine that the environment we live in influences who we are and what we do.

**Q: The ‘mythology’ of Thessaloniki, with reference to the Byzantine past of the city, all the Ottoman and Byzantine monuments that surround us, have they influenced you in some way, either consciously or subconsciously?**

A: Of course they have in some way. I believe that we live in an era when Thessaloniki is totally declined and, by reading albums about Thessaloniki, I have realized that the decline must have started around 1912, when Thessaloniki was freed from the Turks and attached to the Greek state. I like stories from old Thessaloniki. I think the city was livelier back then. I am also happy that I myself have experienced the city in the post-junta period. It was very nice; for about ten years the city was in a constant stir. Now Thessaloniki is experiencing the ultimate decline.

**Q: Is Thessaloniki’s decline a self-sustaining issue, or is it related to Athens’ status as capital city?**

A: Prosperity and decline are personal issues and they do not occur in relation to something or somebody else. I mean, Thessaloniki is a city which for so many years votes for a ridiculous mayor, which elects with more than 50% a miserable and appalling prefect, it is a city that is governed by lodges and priests, a city whose Greek identity is being questioned – or so I believe anyway. With the excuse of that fear (the well-known Macedonian issue) they dope us with nationalist theories. Moreover many refugees have come to Thessaloniki lately and now the situation is very miserable.

**Q: But, the fact that many refugees live in Thessaloniki could be a positive thing...**

A: Yes, but the opposite happened. People got scared and the result is that in the general elections LAOS<sup>3</sup>, had its highest score in Thessaloniki. Also, more than half of Thessaloniki’s citizens vote for Papageorgopoulos and Psomiadis<sup>4</sup> who pull the cultural and the financial strings. I regard contemporary Thessaloniki as the epitome of conservatism. Thessaloniki is already destroyed and I do not know whether it has any chances to recover.

**Q: Alright then. Now, to close our conversation, could you give me in a few words a definition of Greek mythology?**

A: What do you mean? (laughter)

**Q: I need something brief and simple. For instance, is Greek mythology a fairytale?**

A: No, of course not.

**Q: Is it the history of a past world?**

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<sup>3</sup> ΛΑ.Ο.Σ (LAOS) = ‘Alarm of the Orthodox Folk’. Nationalist political party of Greece.

<sup>4</sup> Mayor of Thessaloniki and prefect of Macedonia, respectively.

A: It is an aspect of the world's history. A viewpoint of the world's history.

**Q: Is it the Greek viewpoint of the world's history?**

A: Yes, you could say that. We, the Greeks, are related to some very good moments of world history as well as to many indifferent moments too.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 3

**Pavlos Pavlidis**

**Date: 26/01/2005**

**Venue: Pavlidis residence, Asvestohori, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you here the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: Images from a distant past, from the books I read as a schoolboy. I was very fascinated by the myth of Icarus, with the wax wings and the deadly fall from the sky. I was also fascianted by Theseus with the labyrinth. And of course I had fallen in love with Ariadne, she seemed a nice girl.

**Q: What did these myths mean for you at that time? Were they simply nice stories?**

A: Yes, I was attracted to them because I thought they were nice stories, but I would also reflect on the plot.

**Q: Did your family narrate you stories from Greek mythology when you were a child?**

A: Yes, they did and it was mostly my grandparents, from Smyrna and from Pontos, who narrated me such stories. In their places mythology was still alive, it was part of their entertainment. When my grandparents were young, wondering bards, like Homer, still existed in their places. My grandmother had strong memories of this and she passed this experience on to me. This verbal culture was part of the everyday experience of these people. My grandfather who was from Smyrna was aware of a book, which was either in Turkish with Greek characters or the other way round, with the story of Alexander the Great. This was a peculiar version of Alexander's story, full of fictional elements, that did not correspond to any historical fact. The story was full of intrigues, twists and turns and eventually Alexander killed his father Phillip, as Alexander was in reality Aristotle's child. This is the story that my grandfather knew as the real story of Alexander the Great – that was the only indisputable truth about Alexander the Great. I remember this very vividly. Unless my grandfather made up this story himself...

**Q: Or you did!...**

A: Who knows...

**Q: Do you refer to Greek mythology in your songs? Has Greek mythology constituted a source of inspiration for you?**

A: I do refer to Greek mythology in my songs. I have written a song that is called 'Atlantis'.

**Q: I have always thought that your song 'Atlantis' refers to a tourist hotel on a Greek island.**

A: But that's it. This is what I wrote the song for. Do you know how many hotels have the name 'Atlantis'? I have also stated that in an interview, because I did not

want the listener of the song to think automatically of the myth. On the contrary, I wanted the listener to let his/her mind drift away. I wanted to decompose the myth and thus let it be born again.

**Q: Which 'truth' is hiding inside myths? Which 'truth' comes to light after their rebirth?**

A: Truth is a very abstract word. Each one of us can find a different truth in myths.

**Q: Which 'truth' do you find in myths? For instance, what was it that you wanted to be reborn in 'Atlantis'?**

A: It would perhaps be better if you asked me about a particular myth. The way you phrase it now is as if you asked me about every myth.

**Q: Alright, let us talk then about Circe. This is the first myth that comes to my mind.**

A: I would not like to analyze the myth. I believe there have been many analyses so far.

**Q: Which is your favourite myth? Do you identify with a myth in particular?**

A: No, I do not and I do not think that I know all the myths.

**Q: Even among the few myths you are aware of, is there a mythical person that is compatible with your idiosyncrasy?**

A: I think that I am the wandering type. It may be a heavy thing to say, but whether I want it or not, over the last 20 years I have moved from one city to another. That is why I can easily say that the 'Odyssey' comes to my mind all the time out of need.

And I always try to experience the journey and not only to visit cities. I always try to understand what the way between two cities has to tell me and I can feel Odysseus better than any other mythological hero. All the myths speak to us, because there are many myths who seem to talk about the same things, only that the names and the incidents differ. Jason is a traveler too. I can understand what their target was and I can empathize with their struggle. Most of all, I do not overlook the fact that these heroes succeed in their goals, because they were committed to them. I feel that this is what most myth teach me, as well as of course what are the hazards of the journey and what is revealed to you along the way.

**Q: Are myths then a journey of self-knowledge? Are they about 'self-completion'?**

A: Definitely. This is exactly what they are about and maybe this alone is enough, there is no need to say anything more about the myths' purpose. And of course there is also the pleasure that a nice story offers. One should not focus only on the message the myths have to transmit, but also to enjoy the story itself. This is very important to me.

**Q: Do the ancient Greek myths carry contemporary social references?**

A: They definitely do. We have not changed a lot since the time these myths were created. The human relations do not seem to have changed a lot. Things are the same in their core; you see people still kill each other, they still travel, they still fall in

love. Mythology is a parallel universe. And I believe that people both in antiquity and nowadays construct this magical world and in this way they can sometimes demonstrate a situation better than historians. For instance, in the present time Greece and Russia and China and Japan, they all have their contemporary mythologies. It is not sure that what we know about everyday life in New York is correct, but we have constructed a mythology about Brooklyn. When I think about Arizona, the movie 'Paris-Texas', or 'Arizona Dream' come automatically to mind. Thus, a myth about these people and these places starts developing in my mind. Art supports myth-making. I can think about Spain or the Spanish Civil War, which is a historical fact, but the moment I look at 'Guernica' with the bull and the horses, my own personal myth about that event starts developing. Or I can travel to Spain of the past, through Lorca's poetry. And this happens spontaneously. So, if I speak about Spain, as I have it in my mind, we may be witnesses of the birth of contemporary myth. Do you understand what I am talking about? And this is the way in which Spain will be recorded in my music. And this is myth-making. But this goes also for people who have nothing to do with art. Someone may simply narrate his experiences of a trip to, say, Tunisia and you can paint your pictures with colors from this narration. Then you have your own personal Tunisia, your own myth about Tunisia. I think I am explicit.

**Q: So, could we assume that through the same procedure another Pavlos Pavlidis in the past created the myth of his Jason, or of her Europe?**

A: I do not think that the myths were created only by one person. I am not an expert and I cannot tell you exactly how it happened, but I do not think that it is possible for one person to complete a myth. However, it is possible for one person to supplement a myth. It is important to underline this: myths are children of a crowd.

**Q: Does this occur diachronically or synchronically?**

A: Diachronically, of course.

**Q: Speaking in an over-simplistic way, this means that the myths were not born by groups of myth-makers who sat around the fire one night.**

A: Well, since there were professional myth-makers for thousands of years, these people potentially played a decisive role in the birth of certain myths. Folk songs pass down to us in the same way. We do not know who started the song first and who changed a phrase at some point, who added a phrase or a verse. Myths, I believe, were made in a similar way.

**Q: I particularly liked what you said about the existence of a contemporary mythology and about one's personal myths. Could I ask, how you would reform the myth of Icarus, for instance?**

A: I do not think that the myth needs to be reformed.

**Q: I would like to listen to your personal perspective on myth, without necessarily reforming the ancient one.**

A: I do not think I can answer this right now. I cannot go through all my songs and find out which verse corresponds to the myth of Icarus.

**Q: Roughly speaking and without entering into details, what elements would you use?**

A: I answer with a verse from a folk song: 'You are building your nest too high on the tree and the branch will break'.

**Q: My mother uses this verse a lot.**

A: Do you see that mythology is really these things?

**Q: Myths are personal as well as diachronic loans. And the way you mould your own myths, for instance by looking at 'Guernica', is very interesting. Maybe then this is what myths are about, maybe they are the reflection of an era. They resemble the picture inside a kaleidoscope, which is always comprised by the same elements, but is also ever-changing. In this spirit I am asking how you would outline an ancient myth in your personal present time.**

A: Versification can be myth-making. And a myth is not born in the moment of the song writing, but ever since the first person listens to the song and interprets the song in their way. I think that this is the moment when the myth is born. Ever since the myth enters the head and the soul of another human being, it starts developing and changing and becoming what a myth really is.

**Q: However, Greek mythology is not that frequently present in your songs.**

A: I say in a song that "'Beautiful Helen' (Helen of Troy) will now be an old woman" and that 'Troy maybe far, far away'

**Q: And who is the beautiful Helen of the song? I guess you do not refer to the figure from the myth.**

A: Well no, of course not. Obviously the verse means that it perhaps seems too late for journeys, that the target has 'grown old' now. Despite all this though, the song also says that 'I have taken the vow to go to the palaces of the sun and sing the song of the goat'.

**Q: And what is the song of the goat?**

A: This is for tragedy!!! Don't you know???

**Q: The mythological references in your songs are few by comparison to those of other singers, who are participating in this research and with whom I believe that you share the same artistic ethos.**

A: We share a similar artistic ethos, that is for sure.

**Q: And I believe that you address your art to the same audience as well.**

A: This is true, *mutatis mutandis*.

**Q: So, I am wondering whether you and your audience regard myths as being too traditional to constitute a communication vehicle. Do you believe that your audience would look down on mythology, if you tried to approach them through it?**

A: If myths are used as a cliché and as a convention, the audience would have every right to look down on them. That would be a healthy reaction. It is not unusual to find refuge in a well known story, which is already charged with a symbolism and a specific and pre-determined effect on the audience. I consciously avoid doing that and I prefer to contribute to the construction of a contemporary mythology, the mythology of contemporary cities instead.

**Q: Do you mean that you consciously avoid the use of myths?**

A: Yes. Myths are a convention and it is an honour for anyone to avoid convention in art.

**Q: So, you think that the audience does actually bother to assess critically the use of myths in art.**

A: But people do know the meaning of the myths and they think it is a cliché to say the same thing again and again. Orpheus made his trip, but now we have the obligation to light it up. The journey is the circle of life itself and we owe to shed our own light on it.

**Q: I have the impression that perhaps due to the short duration of songs, myths are often used by musicians as an easily recognizable code by the audience and as an impetus for the audience to immediately grasp and further consider a story and a situation.**

A: The audience will not be against the use of myths in a song, if this is done in an elegant and smart way. To use a myth as a convention is, on the contrary, a sign of bad taste. I hope that we are adequately trained to look down on these sort of conventions.

**Q: Could it be though that we are used to perceive by definition the use of myths in art as a convention deprived of meaning?**

A: Myths are torn due to overuse. It would be a good thing to protect them from abuse and overuse, because they are precious.

**Q: Do you think that myths have been abused?**

A: I think that modern Greek society has abused many of the things that were passed down to it. Modern Greece's reaction towards its past is characterized by some sort of exaggeration. It would be good to think twice before we make use of stories that have travelled through the centuries, before coming down to us.

**Q: Could you give an example of myths' abuse?**

A: It is not my job to judge those who abuse the past, I am just trying to avoid them.

**Q: Let us not judge individuals, we could simply think of cases of abuse. The first thing that comes to my mind is Alexander the Great and the myth of the mermaid and its adoption by nationalists as a symbol of national identity and pride; I think of this as well as of the bad aesthetics of pan-Macedonian protests.**

A: Well, I have a sister in Australia, you know, beyond the Pacific Ocean. I like to think of her as the mythical mermaid, but this does not mean that I would turn this

into a song and release it. And forgetful as I am, she often wonders where I am and how I am doing...

**Q: Has heritage in general played a role in your thought and music?**

A: I believe that this happens automatically, whether you want it or not. And I think that it is somehow sick to purposefully try to reject your heritage. I do understand that sometimes you feel that your heritage is dragging you back, but in reality it is not your heritage that drags you back; it is you who has to try and push your heritage forward, because this is what it asks of you. Heritage and tradition, in any case, are not only about what has been inherited by you, but also about what you pass down to the next generation, as well as about how you pass it down. This is what heritage and tradition are about.

**Q: How does this subconscious relation to heritage appear in your music? The impetus for this question is a quote from an interview you have given in the past regarding the use of the Greek language in your songs, something rather unusual for a rock 'n' roll band. So, with this as a starting point, I would like to ask whether you consciously and purposefully use elements of the Greek cultural heritage in your songs.**

A: Yes, I do. Anyway, in order to write lyrics you need to read or listen to other lyrics first, and thus the style of your lyrics is formed by your previous hearings and readings. This is self understood.

**Q: Going back to the presence of mythology in your songs now, I would like to ask something that has crossed my mind during our conversation. Is perhaps the music genre you represent too rebellious to include heritage -and by extension also mythology- in its expressional means?**

A: Did you say 'the music genre I represent', or 'the music genre I make'?

**Q: What is the difference?**

A: I do not believe that every rock 'n' roll artist does the same thing. Unless what you mean is that in this country rock 'n' roll has a certain profile...

**Q: This is what I mean.**

A: You are right, it does have the profile you are implying. And I think that as an individual I constantly attempt to move forward and to create something new, I subconsciously oppose everything that seems to be old, the ancient myths included. But I think that although you are aware that the myths will defeat you and will continue to travel in time even after you have died, and despite your objections, the clash with the myths and with the past is a healthy reaction, just like the clash of the teenager with the what is called 'the established'. This clash is not a bad thing, no clash with the past has ever been a bad thing, provided it gives birth to a new balance in your life.

**Q: I think that we are facing an oxymoron. On the one hand we speak about myths and their diachronic nature and on the other hand we reject something that is**

**charged with such diachronic meanings and values from the contemporary considerations of rock 'n' roll.**

A: Rock 'n' roll does not need myths. And it is a good thing that it does not focus on myths; and the more discreetly it uses them, the better it demonstrates their value. What is for certain is that we are obliged to construct a contemporary mythology, by writing songs and either by referring to what we currently live, or by demolishing what we have been told that we lived.

**Q: It is an interesting opinion that rock 'n' roll does not need myths and that you purposefully do not include them among your expressive means.**

A: I am glad to realize that the use of ancient myths is considered to be a gross thing. It takes great skill and luck to combine something that is extremely contemporary with something ancient.

**Q: Why is that?**

A: Because the ancient myths are worn by overuse, as we have already said. The person who does not refer directly to the ancient myth, but includes it disguised and protected in the depths of his/her new mythology is very valuable.

**Q: Very interesting. Moving forward, I would like to talk about the relationship between the city of Thessaloniki, its mythology and song. Judging from old interviews of yours, I believe that Thessaloniki has played a role in the development of your worldview. It appears that you have experienced the city, you do not simply spend your days in it. And moreover, as I read, you live here by choice and not because it just happened.**

A: I do not regard myself as being an outstanding citizen of this city. What I mostly like is to be 'absorbed' by the city and to stand out in it. So, I cannot answer your question.

**Q: What I mean is that, in your own words, you have lived in Thessaloniki since 1981, you have experienced the punk side of the city in all its magnificence, you have walked many miles around the city, and that eventually Thessaloniki taught you how to run away from it, in order to fall in love with it all over again. I would say that you 'feel' the city, you love, you can synchronize with its pulse.**

A: I surely have my own mythology about Thessaloniki. Its myths exist inside my head, but in reality it mostly exists inside my experiences.

**Q: What is Thessaloniki's myth?**

A: It has not yet been completed.

**Q: What is its myth so far, then?**

A: I cannot talk about that with only a few words. It is like a movie I have been playing in all these years. A movie may have many miles of film, but eventually you will choose only some metres. I remember myself asking passers-by for cigarettes in Navarinou Square, or going out with many many friends after a show. So, from all the years you have lived in a city, you choose only some snapshot and the final result is your personal myth of about the city. I describe this myth in my songs, every now

and then. Perhaps, if you combine bits of my lyrics you could come up with the fairytale I have told about this city, through my experiences and not necessarily referring directly to it. Do you understand?

**Q: Yes.**

A: What I am trying to say is that the important thing for me is to think of mythology, of myth-making as something that is constantly happening and whose production ceaselessly flows in time.

**Q: Your myth draws mostly on Thessaloniki's present, whereas, for instance, my myth would also incorporate things from the past of the city, like Paradeisos Hammam, or Gallerius Arch. And with all these things I would make a very different 'movie' about Thessaloniki.**

A: Of course, and this is why I say that the less academically you approach mythology and the less you exile it to the past and to antiquity, the more you realize what the purpose of its existence is.

**Q: It seems to me that Byzantium, because Thessaloniki is a city with a very strong Byzantine character, does not play in your 'movie'. That is, you do not perceive Thessaloniki through its Byzantine past.**

A: But I have never tried to describe Thessaloniki from an architectural point of view.

**Q: I mean through the Byzantine cultural identity of the city. Would you write different songs if you lived in Athens?**

A: Who knows.

**Q: Would the cultural stimulus be different?**

A: Look now, Neapoli has its own myth and the same goes for Euosmos, Kalamaria, the Old Town as well as for the seafront area.<sup>1</sup> I know this city, I have walked this city and I am glad to have lived in almost every neighborhood of Thessaloniki. I have lived in Touba, in Triandria, in 40 Ekklisies, in Egnatia, near the seafront, in Botsari, in Eptalofos, in many areas of this city for quite a while. All these things together make my own Thessaloniki, my own fairytale for the city.

**Q: But you have never focused on the past of Thessaloniki.**

A: Never until now. Even if I do though, it does not interest me on a lyrics-writing level. What I want to do is to describe the present of the city, or, if you wish, to dress it with my own fairytale-like perspective.

**Q: To close this conversation, I would like to ask you, what is a myth after all? Could you give me a succinct definition?**

A: It is a parallel life, which stems from real life. Greek mythology is being written now and use this phrase as the title of the interview.

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<sup>1</sup>They are all districts of Thessaloniki.

## Appendix 4

**Dimitris Zervoudakis**

**Date: 27/01/2005**

**Venue: Zervoudakis residence, Mesimeri, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: What is your first thought, when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: I think of something that I read in the brochure of a friend's project<sup>1</sup> and I thought 'fuck, is this possible?'

**Q: What is this?**

A: (He reads an extract from the 'Iliad'). It refers to whether art should have these or the other features... I compared this to my experiences. Because, essentially, as a young man the motive is to be appreciated and acknowledged; however later, the situation changes. You know, you take the shapeless, the blank paper, and something happens. It is a magical mechanism that sometimes functions in a very fertile and intense way, and, then, it disappears for a while. From this point onwards you start thinking 'ok, I did what I did, I did what I wanted to do' and you start showing to other people, to find out what they think of it. You look for feedback. Here is where the issue of Doureios Ippos comes in. Each one of us, of the Thessalonian artists, has proposed, through our work, a certain stance towards life, a certain ideology and aesthetics and then you ask yourself 'Are there groups?', 'Is there a school of Thessaloniki in music?'. The answer is that I do not know, there might be a distinctive mentality in the music of Thessaloniki. I do not think that this forms an art school, though.

**Q: What did you study at the University?**

A: Well, totally irrelevant... I studied finance. Social finance, but I did not graduate. Anyway...

**Q: Were you at all into contact with Greek mythology after you graduated from high school?**

A: No. Only accidentally, through theatre plays. Something has happened lately, though.

**Q: Really, what?**

A: Well, I thought that I should do some research and learn something.

**Q: And?**

A: Well, we will see.

**Q: I mean, does this have to do particularly with mythology? Are you planning to buy books on Greek mythology, or mythology, in general?**

A: I have a hobby, i.e. astronomy. I have a book, which begins by the names of the stars and it also speaks of their myths.

**Q: Ah ha!**

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<sup>1</sup> He refers to Sotos Zachariadis' 'Doureios Ippos' art symposium.

A: It is amazing. It speaks of Perseus and Medusa, how she ended up in the sky, what did Zeus do to her, etc.

( End of side A )

**Q: There is also a very beautiful myth for the galaxy. The one with Hera. Are you familiar with it?**

A: Yes! You are referring to the one with Hera's milk, right?

**Q: This is right!**

A: What a beautiful story... See, it is these things that we did not allow to grow inside us.

**Q: Do you recall any of the mythological stories you learned at school, though your preoccupation with astronomy? Do we learn mythology at school, in the first place? I mean, do we tend to remember anything from what we are taught?**

A: Well, alright now. I think that the answer is easy. The way we live and the educational model do not facilitate the learning and understanding of these things at all.

**Q: Yet, myths are everywhere around us. From the tavern, to the...**

A: Yet, who allows space for myth in his/her life today?

**Q: No one.**

A: Who allows space for magic? We live in the era of absolute cynicism.

**Q: Yet, myths have survived until today.**

(Interruption. The interview continues)

A: Collective memory has been lobotomized.

**Q: Yes. But we do remember myths.**

A: Yes, only when we want to state that we are very Greek and very important for this reason.

**Q: Not only. There are also the everyday references to myths, in hotels, shops, taverns, etc.**

A: Well, alright, this is vulgarization. I mean, how can you name a gyros shop 'Hermes'? You are profane. I mean, is this enough for the shop owner? Is he/she satisfied with that?

**Q: It is weird though that we draw so much in mythology and refer so often to it, in the one way or the other, but in a way we neglect to experience its magic. We do not live mythology's myth!**

A: I told you. It is the cynicism, on the one hand, and there is also the lobotomy. I really believe that the Greek nation has been lobotomized.

**Q: Right.**

A: Our relation to ancient Greeks has been under scrutinizing for centuries. So, in the end we say that 'Greek is whoever participates in Greek culture'. This suits us and makes us feel comfortable. But, this is not simple, it takes much effort...

**Q: Effort?**

A: Internal effort. You need to spend time, work and gray matter on this.

**Q: Yes.**

A: This is where cynicism comes in. The system, the 'established' says 'You will have neither time, not courage to work on these things. I will take all. You will have to work all day to make a living.' There is no spare time to invest in the development of our soul.

**Q: If there were free time, would the individual invest it in mythology?**

A: Under the existent circumstances, the individual opts for trash, because he/she wants to slow down and stop thinking. Because, if what he chooses to do in his/her free time brings him/her face to face with their personal reality and make them confront themselves and what they have become.... because mythology does contain the element of subversion. I mean, they fought with gods. The questioned god! This, as a concept was inconceivable. What other culture contained this element, i.e. the element of 'man versus god'? Only the Greek culture contains this.

**Q: So, myths are a source of speculation.**

A: Of course... of course! Zeus did not screw various women and was chased by the humans for nothing! All this friction and killing and I do not what... I mean, mad things. The mortal human was after Zeus! He wanted to catch him and give him a lesson! Do you understand?

**Q: Yes.**

A: There was conflict. So, it follows that by studying a topic like this, the horizons of the individual will be broadened and the individual will start looking for him/herself. And he/she realizes what miserable creatures that we have become, then, he/she will want to change this. So, there is a problem integral to Greek education. I mean I hear all the time 'The contribution of Greece to culture'. What is our contribution? For instance, Odysseus, what do we keep from him? That he finally made it to Ithaca? No. It is his journey that we hold onto. If you say, 'No, friend, it is not the destination, but the journey that matters', to a few millions of Westernized Greeks, you will automatically break the normal flows of their life: I woke up, I washed, I shaved, I took my mobile...

**Q: Right.**

A: He/she automatically thinks 'What I am doing, then?' This is why I am telling you that if these generations decide to say 'I will do what I want to do', if the parents,

instead of being overprotective, realized what it means to allow democratic choice and say 'Do what you like' and stand up for them in what they choose to do,... You got it.

**Q: Fine, but things are not that simple. There is the agony of survival, you cannot simply say 'Do whatever you want'...**

A: In that case, where do you look for myth in, my beautiful girl? Tell me, I want to understand...

**Q: It does not mean that I embrace this attitude...**

A: This is another issue...

**Q: But I can understand why things are how they are.**

A: It is reasonable. There was an amazing program on TV yesterday, where an archaeologist spoke about myths. He was travelling around Greece and spoke of the myths of each place. What were the Nereids, what were the Nymphs...

And at some point he says that 'You know all these things have survived until today'.

And he goes to old man, a shepherd and he says 'There was a man and the fairies liked him and they used to dance around him and he fell in love with one of them.

He took her to an old woman, a bit scrubby - you know how it is - and asked "What shall I do, my lady?" and she said "You should take her the kerchief". Next time the fairies came, they danced and he grabbed her kerchief. And so they became couple.

She gave birth to two children... She goes to her man and tells him "I want my kerchief. There is a feast in the village and I want to go dancing." "I will give it to you", he said. She took it and left. She would only come and visit him to take care of their children'. And the old man said 'We have become too hard. And ever since we hardened, the fairies left us'. This is what the old man said. He said everything! And I think 'Look at this man', he is ninety years old and listen to what he said.

**Q: What else can you say?**

A: Art is a Fury. You have to 'wrinkle' your soul, in order to create something. There is an emotional price to be paid in all this. You will have to fight your own self. You be in such an existential conflict with yourself that you may not be able to express yourself and let the darkness inside you show. There is also the possibility not to be able to finish what you started. And you have to look for the thread inside the labyrinth. What labyrinth? Your personal labyrinth. And there is also that creature with the horns that is chasing you. Because there is also this creature and this is yourself too. We lift the rock up the hill, and then all over again?

**Q: I hear you express yourself through myths all this time and I think that this is amazing. They are alive! We think through them.**

A: We live through them. Of course. This is how it is. This is how it is.

**Q: How does the artist, as an individual who uses his/her intellect and who is neither too cynical, nor too hard, perceive myth? Do you use myth in your songs? I do not think you do.**

A: No, no. I do not

**Q: Although you do think through myths. I mean, you obviously do not think through myths on a daily basis and in the affairs of your life routine. It just happened now...**

A: Well, yes... I think, though, that this is a very serious thing and is not to be perceived superficially. I mean, Greek mythology as a topic is larger than life and it takes lots of talent, but also lots of knowledge in order to approach it, if not successfully, at least in a non-offensive way. I mean, Greek myths have said everything. What more could possibly a contemporary artist say? How could a contemporary artist develop and enhance an ancient myth? I do not think that this possible. Ancient Greek myths are elaborate and refined to the maximum degree. This is why, I prefer the artists who draw on an ancient myth, not in order to elaborate in contemporary terms, but rather simply to narrate it, in the way that Chadjidakis did with the story of Andromache and Hector. He did not use the myth to speak of his own things; he merely set it in a way to music. He narrated the ancient myth as it is in his song.

**Q: I see.**

A: And astronomy, before it developed to a scientific discipline was astrology, which was also a science, it was not...

**Q: Yes, it was not about the star signs and the horoscopes in the way they are presented in magazines today.**

A: Yes, it was a 'dreamy' science, though. Because, we do need to dream. We need to allow space for magic in our lives. I have also seen something else that impressed me. This is relevant to your subject; I do not know, whether you learned about these things at the university. The predecessor of St. Demetrius, the patron saint of Thessaloniki, was Kadmos, a goat-like figure, a pagan figure. Thessaloniki was a pagan city.

**Q: Absolutely! There are so many stories connected to Thessaloniki's pagan past. Have you ever heard the legend, according to which the magnetic field of the area around the Forum is null? This is supposed to have something to do with the cryptic cults, which were the favourite cults of Thessaloniki's people.**

A: Really?

**Q: This is what the legend says. In the same area, there is also a stele, called 'the stele of the snakes', or the 'Slit Stone', in Turkish. This is the sole ancient monument that has been preserved in the entire area - it stands there, in the middle of the pavement - for no apparent reason, as it is neither of a distinctive aesthetic, nor of any other significance. So, they say that this stele has magical properties and that snakes used to emerge from its foundations and litter the**

whole area. This happened in the pagan antiquity, but the phenomenon also continued in the Christian era. Then, the snakes would come out every year on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, when the memory of Virgin Mary is celebrated. Eventually, sometime in the nineteenth century, a Turk Sufi cast a spell on them and sent them away. And, then, there is another story, according to which under the church of Acheiropoiitos, the temple of Isis is still standing intact. This is said to be visible today through a well in the backyard of the church. And so many other stories...

A: Seriously??? A temple of Isis???

**Q: Under Acheiropoiitos. This is what they say.**

A: Go away!!! I did not know that! But, of Isis?

**Q: Isis was very popular in Thessaloniki. In general, cults from Egypt and the Orient were very appealing to the population, as well as cults with a cryptic character.**

A: I do not believe what you are saying, I am petrified. Can you imagine? And they have managed to strangle all this magic... And all that remains now is the Sanctus that the Orthodox church organizes in the memory of Alexander the Great.

**Q: They do what???**

A: Yes, they are organized by the Prefecture and Orthodox priests also participate.

**Q: This is a joke, right?**

A: No. They gather around the statue of Alexander and they make a Sanctus and then there is also music, bouzouki, you know, like a feast, and there are also actors dressed as ancient Greeks and as Persians who fight with each other and the Persians drop dead on the pavement.

**Q: This is surreal!!! Seriously, now???**

A: Yes, I am serious!

( Interruption )

**Q: Well, whatever... So, Thessaloniki has its own myths.**

A: Yes, definitely. However, they have exiled them from its citizens' everyday life. You do not hear about haunted places, about spirits and fairies. People are not anymore afraid of the dark. When was the last time you heard a story like that?

**Q: Well, Thessaloniki does have its legends... There are stories about haunted places...**

A: They are fewer and fewer and people gradually lose faith in those things. But if you ask me, these are the real contemporary mythology. These are the myths we

should be occupied with; these are the myths we should use and elaborate and develop and make part of our lives. These are the stories that maintain magic in our lives, in this harsh rational era we live in.

**Q: I remember the stories that my grandfather used to tell me about his village and the haunted bridges, where fairies lurked and stole the voice of the travelers.**

**And, mind you, my grandfather was a man highly educated, he was not a peasant. He was a very pragmatic man, and moreover a very religious man, who actively participated in the affairs of the Church.**

A: But our grandfathers truly allowed space for the supernatural in their lives. They were not necessarily naïve, but they were in touch with their environment and knew how to keep alive the aspect of themselves that accepts the inexplicable; life sustained its charms and its juices'. This is what I believe. I believe that we need to find myth in our life routine and that we need to turn to the myths of our urban environment for this.

**Q: I agree. Could you give a brief definition of Greek mythology, then, before we close this interview?**

A: I do not know if I am capable of doing such a thing. I would rather say that urban myths are our mythology and we should incorporate it in our lives.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

A: I thank you.

## Appendix 5

**Thanassis Papakonstantinou**

**Date: 02/02/2005**

**Venue: Papakonstantinou residence, Metaxohori, Larissa.**

**Q: Tell me, what do you think of, when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: One of my first songs that was ever released had a mythological topic. I gave this song to Manos Chadjidakis and I participated with this in the musical contest of Corfu.<sup>1</sup> Both the music and the lyrics were mine. In fact it is embarrassing because there was a horrible inaccuracy in that song as it says that Medusa was killed by Theseus and not by Perseus. And the funny thing is that no one noticed this mistake, not even Chadjidakis!

**Q: Really? Well, never mind...So, this is one of your first mythological songs, which however, is not included in any of your personal albums.**

A: No, no.

**Q: I believe that one of the first songs with a mythological theme from a personal album is "Plana xenitia".**

A: Yes, this is right. There are more songs, though.

**Q: I see that in general you have a sort of obsession with oracles and seers; you refer to these themes quite frequently in your songs.**

A: I do not know, is it so? Do you think it is because Thessaly is a region with a long tradition in witchcraft? It is thought that there were many witches and wizards in Thessaly.

**Q: Really?**

A: Of course, in antiquity. This is why all these weirdos who are occupied with the supernatural parameters of the ancient Greek civilization, and all these parapsychological things, have regular meetings here in Larissa.

**Q: What sort of wizards and witches existed in the Thessaly?**

A: I do not know exactly, I have never pored over the subject. What I had in mind was a prehistoric tool from the region that had engraved on it the word 'Abraxas'. Obviously the engraving was made in subsequent years and not in prehistory, but there existed various sanctuaries and oracles in the area.

**Q: I do not know. What was your relationship with mythology as a child? Did you hear stories from mythology at home?**

A: As a child I liked reading very much. Sitting down and reading books was probably the best thing for me, as a child.

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<sup>1</sup> Music contest that Manos Chadjidakis organized in Corfu in 1982.

**Q: Even textbooks? Because mythology as part of the curriculum was obligatory and thus perhaps less attractive to a child.**

A: No, I did read mythology without anyone imposing it on me. I just recalled that one of another book that I really liked was the one by Ploutarhos (Plutarch), with histories of Ploutarhos. I also remember reading the series of the 'Classics Illustrated' and I can say that I learned many mythological stories from them. I also first came into contact with Dostoyevsky, as well as with English literature through 'Classics Illustrated'.

**Q: So, you acquired your first mythological images and knowledge from reading these. I guess though that this initial knowledge was developed further by future readings, if I judge from the quite frequent presence of mythology in your songs.**

A: Actually not. What exists in my songs is rather an echo of these first readings. I started reading less and less. I have bought a mythology book because there are many things that I would like to read again but I have done nothing so far.

**Q: It is also the region you grew up and live in that has perhaps helped an interest in mythology to be developed. Seeing Olympus everyday is not a little thing, is it?**

A: I do not know, it could be a combination of everything. I do not analyze these things, to be honest with you.

**Q: OK, I have got several songs with a mythological topic in mind and I would like us to speak about these songs, as they will provide us with a common ground for the development of the discussion ; or at least I would like us to begin with these songs. Let us start with 'Faltsos Chrismos', for example. I have no idea how the idea for this song was born. I imagine though that, whatever the procedure of writing this song was, the anorthodox and subversive character of the lyrics became obvious very soon. That is to say that Pythia, a figure of Olympian calmness and a figure much studied by the academics, is presented as being involved in a story of a police report with illegal substances and other similar things. In other words, Pythia has become in your song the protagonist of one of those unimportant everyday stories that we bypass in newspapers. She is the protagonist of an unimportant, ordinary, story and moreover of a story of the social underworld.**

A: I would say that there are many parameters that lead me to make a song or to write a verse. I am not influenced by only one thing. Inspiration comes from all directions, but I believe that when it comes to this song, a basic reason that led me to write it was a book about the 'Eleusinian Mysteries', that I had read. I just took this further, thinking that the same thing might have been happening in all oracles. I read a study, according to which, in the 'Eleusinian Mysteries', they extracted from wheat weed a hallucinatory substance, something like LSD and they used this substance to enter an ecstatic state.

So, I thought that Pythia probably took something similar. And then of course I added other things to the plot too.

**Q: You really take Pythia off her stand for good though, I mean you take this a step further. You present her with black circles under her eyes, she is stumbling.**

A: There I drew on everyday routine as we see it the newspapers and on the television.

**Q: And I also see that the course of life that Pythia promotes in the song does not correspond to any high values, but rather to the bitter truth of life, which is 'my friend, life is short, everything is ephemeral, what matters is to enjoy'...**

A: This is a stance towards life that I do embrace sometimes, and some other times again I do not. I believe that essentially these contradictions are what defines who we are in life.

**Q: I am not examining your own cosmology now and to what extent you embrace Pythia's advise; I am rather more wondering whether this 'blackening' of the respectful image of Pythia was purposeful and was made in a cheeky and playful mood.**

A: I do not know, but I believe that generally we should, in any case, be disrespectful and impudent in music and in verse.

**Q: Do you like this game, of unthroning what is established and academically acceptable?**

A: Yes, this goes without saying. Of course in order to do this, one should begin by unthroning of oneself first. If you do not unthroner yourself on a daily basis, you are not eligible to unthroner anyone else.

**Q: Do you believe that mythology has been worn out due to the academic character we have charged it with?**

A: I do not think so, not as long as there are children and people with the soul of a child. I am saying this thinking of myself as a child and how I modeled entire universes when I read mythology. No academic didactics can take away this thing. As long as there exist, in other words, pure souls there is no way mythology can be worn out due to any kind of misuse, abuse and overuse. The academic image of mythology could potentially affect adult readers. That is, I believe that children should read mythology first and then the adults so that they can get their brains in place, because mythology contains some amazing things in it?

**Q: Like what?**

A: Like what? Firstly, it describes the primal fears of humanity in its course toward chaos, humanity's effort to explain this course, that is to understand where it heads to. I believe that all these things are contained in mythology. I have never thought about it before, I just came up with this idea. This is my impression.

**Q: Does this mean that mythology is diachronical, that is addresses issues that have always occupied and will always occupy people?**

A: I think so, because like poetry, music and the other arts, mythology also tries to find the truth, although this seems to be contradictory in the case of mythology.

**Q: I look in your songs and I try to draw some conclusions on this basis. I see that in the song 'Teiresias' we have once again a mythological figure, however in a very different role from that of Pythia's. It is a rather gloomy song. In other words, the scenery changes completely and I am trying to make out what meanings are condensed in the face of Teiresias and why we chose the figure Teiresias in order for us to transport these meanings instead of another figure or even refer to these meanings in a roundabout way.**

A: First of all, I do not like to speak periphrastically in my songs. I find it boring. On the other hand you could also refer to some in a periphrastic way. I believe that I used Teiresias mainly for his blindness.

**Q: Which means?**

A: I believe that, in a way, a person that loses in one thing gains in another. I mean, I believe that all blind persons are Teiresias in a way. I believe that they develop the other senses more intensely. Now for what purpose did I use him exactly? I did it in order to bring into contradistinction Teiresia who might have been blind but he knew a lot of things compared to those who turn a blind eye to things, those who pretend that they do not know, those who try to hide things in their yards. It is better to be truly blind than falsely blind. Empeiricos<sup>2</sup> said that 'My eyelids are transparent curtains. When I open them I see before me whatever I might see. When I close them I see before me what I long for'. This is a side of blindness that, in my opinion, is expressed by Teiresias. The person who has their eyes open and yet turns a blind eye is the real blind person. So, this is the sort of game I made.

**Q: When I heard the song I immediately felt that it referred to the need for self-knowledge and inwardness, and that in order for one to manage to look inwards, one should stop looking outwards so much.**

A: Perhaps you managed to explain the song better than me, because I will tell you what happens. It may also be pointless because there are some songs that I cannot explain at all. Besides, art comes to deliver us and in order for the artist to be delivered too, he/she also has to participate in the game. For this reason I seldom speak about my songs and how I have written them. I mean, sometimes I know how I wrote a song, whereas some other times I don't. But even when I know, I am still hesitant to talk about it, because in this way I cancel the interpretations of the other people and this not

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<sup>2</sup> Andreas Empeirikos (1901-1975): Greek surrealist poet

a right thing to do. You know, many times it happens that what I write is not even originally mine. I have felt this. I have felt like some kind of an intermediary.

**Q: I think that very few things are original.**

A: So, what shall I interpret? In some cases I sit and interpret what I wrote a posteriori. In the beginning I believed that there was something wrong with me, that my brain was damaged. Later, though, I discovered that this is a common place in art and in literature.

**Q: I have heard very often in my research that mythology is essentially a journey of self-knowledge. I have been told that the mythological stories refer to stages of life or thought, to sentiments, and that they function as if they lead you somewhere, as if they propose you solutions or put you in a role that has already been played by a mythological hero. Is mythology then a journey of self-knowledge?**

A: Yes, in a way it is, but I believe that, even more than that, what mythology does is help people to exorcise their fears, it exorcises humanity's fears concerning the distress of existence.

**Q: On a personal level do you ever use mythology consciously in order for you to reflect on your phobias and fears and to exorcise them?**

A: I wouldn't say this, no. I live entirely just like most people live, that is totally randomly, without putting much thought into many situations in my life. My mental status is not so developed, it does not lead me internally elaborate things. I give myself up more to sentiments, rather than to rationale and reflection. It is just that things from the past come to me and they pass into my songs without me aiming at it. I mean even though I am atheist I have got many songs that speak, you know, of monks, monasteries, and the likes. Many people believe, on the basis of the above, that I am a very pious person, whereas I am an absolute atheist.

**Q: However, you have thought that mythology refers to ageold fears.**

A: I just thought about it, now as we speak. I had never thought about it before.

**Q: What do you mean by this? How does mythology function in an apotropaic way? Did it function in this way only in the context of the society that created it and now that it has lost its dynamics, or rather does it continue to function in this way even today?**

A: As I said before, it can function even today, but only for pure souls and for a soul that is *tabula rasa*. For instance, in my opinion it can function for small children, or at least for those children that still have the will to read books and are not polluted by the enormous information available, and believe that they know everything. Mythology, in order for it to flourish, needs simplicity and good intention. It is self understood that it is much more difficult for this to happen in contemporary times. Myths exist today too. I believe that Man, due to his/her weakness, needs myths a hundred per cent. But contemporary myths are similar to the quality of the society that produces them; that is,

they are humble myths, they are myths that one should be ashamed of. I, for my part, try both consciously and unconsciously to shoot down all the myths that exist around, including those that exist around my very self.

**Q: Are you referring to contemporary myths now?**

A: Yes, yes. First of all I demystify myself, OK? With this I mean that whoever is on the stage, even if he/she is the ugliest person on earth, is enwrapped in a myth and this serves both those who are under the stage and the person who is on it. I do not like this, as an artist. On the contrary, I like being very close to the people that listen to my music. And if you want to be close to the audience, then mythification is out of the question. I can say though, that the creation of a myth has functioned efficiently in a lot of things. Say, a basic mechanism is the mythification of certain modes of resistance, as for instance the uprising of the Polytechnic<sup>3</sup>. By weaving a myth around the uprising of the Polytechnic, for instance, we automatically put the protagonists of the uprising on a pedestal, and you stand below and feel feeble seeing the heights these people had reached. This mythification thoughts and the distance that it creates between you and the mythified individuals, stops you from attempting a similar uprising. If this myth did not exist, if it were obvious that they were all ordinary people and that it was the moment that made them react as they reacted, things would be much better and more meaningful.

**Q: From what I understand then, contemporary society does not need myths.**

A: How come it does not need myths? Society always needs myths but these myths in my opinion are analogous to the quality of the given society.

**Q: Are you referring now to myths themselves though, or to their use? Because Chadjidakis is also a myth today and alone, as a separate value, is very big.**

A: In my opinion Chadjidakis should not have become a myth. I do not regard anyone as being a myth. Because those who lived with Chadjidakis may have completely demythisized him.

**Q: Yes, this is what I meant when I said that contemporary society does not have myths. I meant that it does not need myths, that it perhaps should not have myths, and that it is wrong for myths to be constructed today in the way they are constructed and to the extent that they exist.**

A: Yes, I believe that today myths are created to meet the old need of people for self-knowledge, and to answer the classic questions of who we are, where do we came from, and where we are heading to. Today myths are created to function as a tool in the

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<sup>3</sup> The Athens Polytechnic uprising in 1973 was a massive demonstration of popular rejection of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974, and was triggered and led by university students. The uprising began on November 14, 1973, escalated to nearly an open anti-junta revolt and ended with bloodshed in the early morning of November 17 when a tank crashed through the gates of the Polytechnic.

hands of authority, in its attempt to suppress the masses even more; that is to turn people even more to mere consumers, to make them more passive and focused on themselves and to exploit them.

**Q: So, it is the conditions of birth and use of myths in contemporary society, that do not help in...**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: From what I understand this stands in contrast to ancient Greek mythology, which as a complete body of myths can offer an impetus for thought and for...**

A: Of course, because in my opinion it resembles poetry. It contains an abstractiveness and at the same time a complexity that can perhaps lead you near the truth, like poetry can. Poetry - and not literature - can give this opportunity with an image, like lightning. Mythology is closer to poetry in my opinion, but today there cannot be a contemporary mythology that essentially moves in direction, since information and vision, mainly via television, have mutilated people. Mythology is in need of imagination.

**Q: And also in need of time.**

A: And time. But tell me now, where can these things be found.

**Q: Do you have a favorite myth, or can you think of a mythological figure that corresponds to the characteristics of complexity and simplicity and that can provide food for thought and make the individual find in myth something beyond the obvious?**

A: Yes... I will go back to my childhood again and take a dip in it, in order for me to answer to you. But I think that it was that myth with... Pyrrus.

**Q: Deucalion and Pyrra.**

A: Deucalion and Pyrra, yes. This myth came to my mind, I do not know why. And especially when I later read that there are similar myths in other societies too, I was fascinated, because this made me comprehend that there is the possibility that all people have a common origin. And this in turn can make us see those things that bring us together, whereas the powerful ones try to separate us and put borders between us.

**Q: Are you referring to the biological origin of humanity, or rather to the idea that the brain of humans functions in the same way and produces the same thoughts and histories, no matter where in the world we are?**

A: I have the impression that there is also a common biological origin for humanity. There is a common uterus where all things from which born.

**Q: Yes, I have also thought about this possibility of mythology to link where splits and adversity are imposed. Another song with a mythological content is 'Plan xenitia'. In essence this song is a direct transfer of the story of Odysseus and Penelope into the present time. It is an erotic drama where the protagonist, the modern Odysseus, uses the Cyclops as an excuse for not going back to his mistress. This is how I understand**

**the song with a first reading. Of course there may be many other things underlying the surface.**

A: All right, this is one of the songs that perhaps does not really hide any deep meanings. It should be one of the 'easiest' songs that I have made.

**Q: Do not say that, the relationship of Odysseus and Penelope is never an easy thing! This song has really touched me. There is another song, where Hippocrates makes his appearance, "Pastry with a cherry". Hipocrates' statue gets off its stands and...**

A: Hippocrates however is related to Larissa.

**A: Yes. Before discussing the significance of the local factor though, I would like to exhaust the topic of mythology's and of classical past's significance in your songs. There is also the song 'Pechlivanis', which is not mythological but refers to our fully respected and much valued classical past. In this song, Pechlivanis, a strong wind, starts blowing wearing cornels as earrings and rolling gravels in his mouth, in the way that Demosthenes did.**

A: Yes, Demosthenes. This is another story that has etched my memory. And I never thought that anyone would pay attention to this verse: 'and in his mouth he will roll rhetorical gravels'. However many people, you know, have these things inside them and they come across them, they are moved.

**Q: And how do people (the audience) relate to this? Because in these three cases what I see and like is that you mix the old with the contemporary, the grand with the 'unsighted side of the existence', as you have put it, that is with ordinary things and situations, like the wind that blows and keeps you awake. So, how does the audience react to these statements? How do they react for instance to the picture of Pechlivanis who has got the gravels of Demosthenes in his mouth?**

A: What is happening is impressive, and not only with reference to this song. I mean, it seems very strange to me. Even young people, fifteen or sixteen years old, children of the city that have not experienced the images that I have experienced, by living in the countryside are moved by things that I did not expect them to be moved by. I believe that when what is said in a song, is said with psychological intensity then this shows and touches upon the audience.

**Q: I wanted to ask whether you enjoy this mix up, this combination of the past with the present. Do you perceive things as being in a continuous flow? I see that you approach the respected classical past and Greek mythology with a different eye. You make them 'earthy' and accessible.**

A: I do not know, it all happens without my realizing it, I do not think about them. You know, in the moments when I sit and write a verse, the situation is perfectly sentimental, there exists a chaos, a sentimental abyss and this is where the verse springs from. Of course, in writing verse a rational process also intervenes but, even

then, I let myself be perfectly open and free. This is why you will notice that in my songs there are verses that appear to be irrelevant to each other. I can say that I also use automatic writing, something that is almost prohibited in verse-writing these days.

**Q: Really? I like it a lot.**

A: Yes, there are many though who do not like this because by writing in an abstract and ambiguous way you leave more openings for the audience to enter the world of the given song, to participate in the song. I remember a very beautiful saying by Karantonis that we were taught in school. His saying referred to poetry, but I believe that it also holds value for music and for every art in general. So, he said that poetry exists in order to give name to the things that do not have a name, and to remove the name from the things that have been worn out. This is what verse should also do in my opinion: namely to give substance to and to express the unspoken and take away the name and the stigma from the things that are worn by being 'over-expressed'.

**Q: I understand that in automatic writing things are not filtered through reason, but they surely have a rational background. By this I mean that someone else with a different ideology could even find the wind with Demosthenes' gravels or Hippocrates, who leaves his stand to go to the rill, profane.**

A: Eh, what can I do? (laughters)

**Q: And it is also interesting that you draw on things that many people have exiled from their life as they are old and dead and dull.**

A: What can I say, I do not know. I am very naïve; when I sit and write verses I become too naïve. I believe that important things are not lost. They exist as if they are in a universe river of sounds and images and this river finds cracks in certain persons and it springs. I believe that I myself have a crack, that is to say I am a little queer, and from this crack certain things and images spring, which may have occurred a thousand years ago.

**Q: Does this mean that such thing as cultural memory does exist?**

A: Yes, a collective unconscious does exist in my opinion. And I think that this is where I descend when I refer to certain things and it is perhaps for this reason that they are not completely comprehensible when they touch certain people. I believe that the collective unconscious is the baptistry...

**Q: Which we, as Greeks, carry inside us?**

A: Not as Greeks, but rather as beings of the Universe.

**Q: It does not have to do, then, exclusively with memories from the Greek past.**

A: No. Well, all right my own memories exist also because I grew up in this space. I believe though that there are also universal memories that live inside us.

**Q: Tell me briefly about Hippocrates and Larissa.**

A: This song is in some way a description of Larissa, at least when I wrote it. I believe that Hippocrates died in Larissa and this is why there is also a statue of Hippocrates by the river Pineos. I used to meet him every day because I lived in the Tyrnavos for a long period, and the statue was on my way. Thus, Hippocrates passed into the song...

**Q: So, you became friends with Hippocrates (laughters).**

A: Who exists in order to cure us.

**Q: Something else now that relates to Hippocrates and to the mythology of Larissa, with its divinatory and its oracles and its wizards. Do you think that mythology is a Pan-Hellenic language or is it used differently from one place to another? Do the different regions of Greece maintain a distinctive mythological expression, like for instance Thessaloniki with Byzantium, or Crete with the Minotaur? My question focuses more on Thessaloniki, of course.**

A: I do not know this I suppose that surely they are also local mythologies, just like there are also Greek mythologies, but also mythologies of the world. Of course there will also be distinctive characteristics. Thessaly has certain things that are different. And, say, the fact that strike me as belonging to the school of Thessaloniki...

**Q: Does such a school exist in the first place?**

A: It does not exist, not at all. I believe that it is the internal *loci* of the individual that mainly characterize the individual in their creative expression and substance.

**Q: Well, the existence of a certain school in art to exist presupposes various artists met and decided to follow collectively a concrete mode of expression. However, is there, if not a school, then a current, of Thessalonian music, which as they say is characterized by the domination of experiential elements and of an esoteric monologue.**

A: I do not know. These are ideas of people that function on the periphery of things and they try to direct them and to name them, in order for them to be able to control things.

**Q: A certain audience exists, however.**

A: Who is this?

**Q: I do not know who is it.**

A: A, you mean people that...

**Q: Yes, people that like your work, as well as Papazoglou's, Malamas' or Zervoudakis' and of the other members of this so-called 'school'. I do not believe that all these people are indeed directed!**

A: Perhaps it is a random situation. I mean, I liked the music of Papazoglou and was introduced to him. I could have been someone in Athens, as well. I also happened to meet Sokratis (Malamas), because we had a common friend. Of course, it is true that Thessaloniki as city is citizen-friendly and therefore the musicians of the city can get

together much easier. They can therefore do things outside, independent from voracious professionalism, whereas in Athens precisely because of time shortage and because time is expensive people function much more professionally and therefore interpersonal relations cannot be developed much, in order for warmth and an esoteric result to emerge. Perhaps this did play a role in the character of these songs. They were made with more warmth and less professionalism. This I comprehend. Surely a certain city, as a lifestyle, influences the result. On the other hand, this can also function negatively, as the same city can make a musician suffocate.

**Q: Does Thessaloniki influence you not only in terms of lifestyle, but also as a spiritual atmosphere? For instance, the Thessalonians are also called 'musty'.**

A: In what way? In the way that I am 'off', as we use the term for foods?

**Q: Yes, because they are considered to be self-contained people, who do not easily look at what is outside established things and the things they are familiar with; they say that Thessalonians have this 'heavy', 'Byzantine', attitude.**

A: Do they? I do not know. Even though I studied in Thessaloniki for five years, I cannot say I have never pored over this. When it comes to me, I think that whether I lived in a basement in Exarcheia, or where I live now, I would still make the same things. It depends on where you see things from. If you look at them from down here then, yes, it plays a big role. If you look at them from the moon, then it plays a smaller role. If look at them from the galaxy of Andromeda it plays an even smaller role. For instance, a case where the audience can perceive things differently from the musician is the case of Andromeda. Sometime ago I read a book that referred to a so-called Epsilon team, who believe that the Greeks came from Andromeda. Later, it happened once or twice that some blokes came to me, while I was performing and said to me: 'Thanasis, we know the messages that you hide in your songs'. At that time, I could not understand what they were talking about, however, later, I connected their words to the aforementioned theory. They comprehended my lyrics in this way, although I had nothing like this in mind.

**Q: This is an interesting story that also somehow relates to the topic of mythology. Can I ask you, are there cases in which myths have been abused and thus worn out? The first part of the question concerns whether myths have been abused for purposes of self-interest and the second part has to do with whether myths have been worn out due to extreme use. Do we refer to myths, without even realizing the meaning of our words?**

A: Well this is true, and for instance a characteristic case is Odysseus and his return, and I believe that mainly the problem started with Cavafis and with the citation 'it is the

journey that matters and not the destination'<sup>4</sup>. And also there is the story of Odysseus' and Penelope's relationship, with reference to the good spouse's model.

**Q: You mean that myths have become a cliché.**

A: Yes. But as we said, this goes more for older people who have been bombarded by thousands of pictures. In the eyes of small children nothing has become a cliché. What could be better than children reading mythology? It is a big issue. But unfortunately neither the children nor the parents show any interest anymore, since nowadays they force children to become this and that, to study, to do this and to do that... They are not interested. People today are one-dimensional. They try to specialize in something by a young age, in other words, they have them ready for the slaughterhouse. Reading mythology adds to your general knowledge and education.

**Q: But even if the child reads mythology at home, once they goes out, they will have to discuss mythology in a different context. The child will hear of Apollo Pallas<sup>5</sup> for example, or the child will eventually, little by little, perceive Penelope as a cliché, because these are the established mythological images and references in society. I mean, it is OK when the child reads mythology in their home environment, but what happens outside the house?**

A: Whether the child has a fertile imagination plays a big role. By this I mean that if the child gives mythology substance in their imagination, if the child imagines the persons and the places, then these things will not be easily overthrown. Even if many years go by, they will still exist.

**Q: What happens though in the school and outside it? Does not mythology exist merely as a fairy tale, as a narration?**

A: But of course! I mean, an ultimate wretchedness of our society is cinema and mainly the American TV series, like Xena and Heracles, in whose cases what we really face are caricatures.

**Q: Do you go to museums, especially to archaeological ones?**

A: Yes, I do go to museums, I like going to museums. I like ancient culture very much and I would say that I have a soft spot for prehistoric culture.

**Q: And in prehistoric mythologies, respectively?**

A: In my opinion the myth of Prometheus is the one that thrills me most and I have also used it in an unreleased song. In the song I have now put myself in the role of Prometheus, not as the one who stole the fire but with reference to the vultures, and saying that in dealing with music I resemble Prometheus, who is tied up in the grave and two vultures come and tear his flesh apart, and one vulture is named pleasure and the other one is named weakness. Because many times I feel these two things: sometimes I

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<sup>4</sup> He refers to the poem of Constantinos Kavaphes (1863-1933), 'Ithaki' (Ithaca).

<sup>5</sup> Doggery in Athens

feel pleasure, which is also a vulture in my opinion, and other times I feel incredible weakness.

**Q: So, the mythological figures and their stories are archetypes.**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: One could say that they are tendencies and forces that we all carry inside us and they emerge on the surface when the circumstances...**

A:... allow it.

**Q: Do you perceive the function of myths in this way?**

A: No, I do not know how I perceive it. I just thought of what I said before. Or the myth of Sisyphus is an exceptional myth too, but all these myths formed their meaning when I was a child.

**Q: However, you did use Prometheus in your songs, you did think through Prometheus. That is, you reached for Prometheus when you felt the need to express this distress of pleasure and weaknesses.**

A: Yes, I do not know why.

**Q: Myths are still alive.**

A: Yes, yes. You know, I have experienced all these things, they my experiences. And they are things that I have experienced, they cannot be lost.

**Q: They can be transformed though. By this I mean that we call upon these things again and again, according to our own metamorphoses. We bend them in other words.**

A: Yes, of course, they are archetypes, this is for sure. And this is because, in my opinion, myths have been formed over a very long period of time. Mythology is not a creation of a person with a forename and a surname. Same as the anonymous creation in music, myth resembles a prayer; it is as if humanity says a prayer in its course in time. This is sort of how I feel.

**Q: It is like an accumulated deposit of psyches.**

A: Yes, yes like this.

**Q: Two more things now and we will be done. Do you come across mythology in the museums that you visit? I mean do you come across mythology as something more than merely a worn relic and a narration without any deeper meaning?**

A: Yes. Of course it is also true that you need to have the respective educational background in order for you to comprehend mythology in museums more efficiently. For the reason that, as I mentioned before, I study prehistory quite a lot, I realized at some point that most of the figurines...Do you know about the figurines?

**Q: Yes, I am an archaeologist.**

A: A, you are an archaeologist? (laughters). Well, they represented feminine forms, which were full, fertile and... This, on the one hand, may be an indication that the

society was matriarch at that time, and on the other hand what struck me is that in some cases the figurines had their hands crossed in the middle of the torso, whereas in other cases they had their hands like this [he shows a posture with the hands crossed on the chest]. I am telling you this as an answer to whether I look under the surface of ancient artefacts. So, I was wondering what the different position of the hands means. An explanation that I found in a book is that these figurines were probably made to be given from the family of the pregnant woman to the midwife and in this way to show whether the pregnant was a novice in labour, or not. Because the stance with the hands in the middle demonstrates confidence, whereas the other one shows a person that is defenceless. Perhaps the family wanted to show that the woman was pregnant for the first time, and therefore the midwife would have to treat her in a different way. These are thoughts that may be correct or maybe wrong, but anyway they demonstrate that you can indeed see behind the findings, behind the objects.

**Q: To what extent did the museum stimulate your interest? To what extent did it help you go and research the topic? For instance, was the difference the position of the hands pointed out by the museum?**

A: No, I read it in a book.

**Q: Does the museum provide the visitor with the opportunity to enter a different way of thinking? For instance, in the case of mythology, does it shed light on the significance of the displayed mythological themes and on the significance of the appeal that certain mythological themes have to the public from time to time? Does the museum provide this spark in the way it exhibits/reveals its object, or is their presentation rather attached to typology?**

A: In most cases the representation of objects is, as you said, typological. I would say that the representation of the objects is academic.

**Q: Would you have different expectations of the museum?**

A: Yes, it would be nice, you know, to meet also the charm of life with its twists and turns to be met also in museums.

**Q: This is why I think about putting you all in a museum.**

A: You are talking about wax models? (laughters)

**Q: Yes, that is what I am thinking. (laughters)**

And now one last question. Are myths useful today and in what sense?

A: Which myths?

**Q: The ancient Greek myths, not the modern ones.**

A: In my opinion all myths are useful and not only the ancient Greek ones. I have read amazing myths, myths of an extreme poetic sensitivity from Peru about the birth of the world. I mean, I have never read such poetry before. I believe that all the myths of antiquity, the myths that were created in the first steps of humanity, exactly because

people were then still innocent regarding things, they were close to the natural environment, which they could not possibly explain. However, I believe that even today we have not explained it; myths then served, in my opinion, the need of people both for self-knowledge and for the exorcism of the unknown. And today they can also function as a path towards self-knowledge. I believe that. And this can be achieved through the poetic and the innocence that they have, because any truth can be reached only through ultimate innocence.

**Q: Does this mean that myths are didactic? Do they make you think: 'look what he's done, what shall I do?'**

A: I do not stay so much in didactics because for instance a hodja is also didactic. I stay more in the images, even in the incomprehensible elements of the myths; what I do not understand, I usually like more.

**Q: Why? This is weird.**

A: Because what I know and comprehend appears on a daily basis before my eyes. I believe that the big moments in life are where the expected is proved wrong, where you enter the land of the incomprehensible and you lose the ground under your feet.

**Q: Are you referring to the incomprehensible points of the narration?**

A: No, I do not mean this. I mean that not all myths are smooth, specifically when the hero throws behind him stones which are subsequently turned into people, then this is something that you cannot interpret rationally and comprehend. This is what I like. I like more the surreal element in myths than the didactic one. For instance, think of the Hydra, the Symblagades...

**Q: The Hydra as a story is quite smooth though; I mean he found a monster and he killed it. There are no weird twists and turns.**

A: Yes, but what about the Hydra herself? What about the Symblagades?

**Q: Eh, all right, and Heracles as a creature is not less weird. He was a strong man who accomplished some very strange exploits and then he became a god (laughters). What I mean to say is that all mythology is possessed by the incomprehensible.**

A: This is precisely what I like. Because it is the things that you cannot comprehend those that can stir you, and open new doors for you to see life in a different way and not in the one-dimensional way of the rationalist, who believes that rationalism is the unique key that opens all the doors. This is not the case though. Myths were not based on rationalism.

**Q: You like mythology because it is something above the human dimension, which invites to reach it in some way.**

A: Yes. Because mythology is like prayer. It contains, over the passage of time, all the agony of humans to get to know themselves. And this thing has at the same time a sweetness and a gravity that I believe we still need today. And of course in my opinion

myths passed later in some way into folk tales, again in an anonymous creation. The anonymous creation always has this austerity, the transcendental and the poetic character, because it is sculpted by many people. This is the most important thing, even in music.

**Q: And were the myths passed into the folk tales on purpose, or is it rather that the ancient myths are transmitted because the human brain is diachronically occupied by the same questions and issues?**

A: I believe it is the latter. No matter how many years go by, which by comparison to the age of the universe are too few, it is the same issues that more or less occupy our mind. And, from my occupation with folk tales and from what I remember from my childhood, a lot of these tales were scary, namely they spoke of anthropophagies and things like a mum that ate her child because... However in its essence this happened in order for the child to exorcise its fears before the world that was opened for it. And mythology is in a way the same thing, with the difference that in the place of the small child it is the young human race.

**Q: Good. With a word then, what is myth? Could you give me a brief definition in order for this discussion to come to an end?**

A: It is beer, I believe, isn't it? (laughters)

**Q: Thank you, I believe that my supervisor will also like this answer, as he knows Mythos beer and he has also an empty can in his office. He told me it was awful, though...**

## Appendix 6

**Dionysis Savvopoulos.**

**Dimitris Dimitrakopoulos, Savvopoulos' associate and old friend of mine, is present and occasionally contributes to the conversation. He is marked as D.D.**

**Date: 14/02/2005**

**Venue: Savvopoulos' office, Athens.**

**Q: What is your relationship with Greek mythology?**

A: I liked listening to mythological stories since I was a child.

**Q: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase 'Greek mythology'?**

A: That the Greeks are children and like fairy tales. This is what comes to my mind. And that they have proved that they are capable of creating extremely beautiful fairytales.

**Q: Did your family tell stories from Greek mythology, when you were a child?**

A: No.

**Q: No.**

A: I used to listen to my grandmother's folk tales with fairies, etc, and to stories from my parents' homeland. They were both refugees.

**Q: Ah ha, they were refugees.**

A: My father used to stay in bed on Sundays until late, - it was Sunday's leisure -, and I used to crawl into the bed and under the covers, and he would tell me about his childhood in Constantinople, staring at the ceiling. He had the charisma of narration, he could literally paint gardens in the air and cobbled roads, girls, balconies, ships that come and go, and the neighborhoods of his childhood. My grandmother was also a charismatic story-teller. She used to tell stories from her childhood and from Phillipoupolis of Greece, where she got married, in a more 'juicy' way. But, no, they did not tell me stories from Greek mythology...

**Q: So, you mostly listened to stories from their homelands, folk fairytales or personal experiences, as I understand.**

A: Mostly personal experiences. They were talking about their experiences; they were talking about their life and that resembled a fairytale; it was better than a fairytale. I mean, the 'Three Pigs' seemed totally meaningless, compared to these rich and amazing stories. I first came into contact with mythology as a student. Very nice little stories... I remember that I once took the textbook and I sat down and read it all at once.

**Q: So, they did fascinate you.**

A: They were very nice, indeed.

**Q: As what did myths fascinate you? Was it the plot, the adventures...**

A: The fairytale. Ah, mythology is a fairytale. In mythology, as in the other fairytales, we tell lies in order to tell the truth. We tell a thing that lives in our imagination and, if the story-teller or the mythologist is charismatic - and the ancient Greeks were indeed charismatic -, this can shed light on an aspect of your character, or your soul, that you did not even it existed. It can make you feel that what the story-teller says is deeply true. For instance, there is a little child and Areti and Kakia (Virtue and Evil)<sup>1</sup> appear before it and ask the child to choose among them, just like it happened to Heracles. He chose Virtue. From that point onwards, Heracles' one-man epic sets off. Yet, all his amazing deeds refer to Virtue. In other words, he is not promoting himself through them. Form the moment he chose Virtue, it is Virtue, who is promoted through Heracles' deeds.

**Q: So, Heracles is only the motive.**

A: I mean that it is not about 'lifestyle', Heracles does not have the attitude of a 'star'. He does great things, which refer to something superior to him, i.e. to Virtue, whom he chose. So, all these magnificent things exist inside us. Myths ring a bell, do you understand? The myth ends and you are feeling refined. You are feeling as if you came into contact with your real self. The same thing happens with fairytales. They function in the same way. They begin with a girl who is the prisoner of a dragon, and the bloke has to go through tortures and adventures in order to rescue the girl. But this is true; this is what happens deep down to all of us. We try to rescue our woman; this is what we try to do. In other words, ever since we were young boys, we all felt that we had to do something to prove that we are worthy of a good lover, a good woman.

**Q: Which is your favorite myth?**

A: My favorite myth...

**Q: Do you identify with a mythical figure?**

A: No, I never thought about a mythical figure. In myths, the deeds of men are usually the result of physical strength, or the help from the gods; or a combination of both. Yet, this is not who I am. I like more the fairytale with the bloke who plays the bewitched flute and makes the mice drown in the river. I would not say though that I identify with a mythical figure, or a myth ... I don't remember. 'Tom Thumb' is a fairytale that suits me. Yes, I have felt like Tom. I do identify from time to time with various fairytales, however not with Greek myths. They are stories from the mythology of my time. I identified with James Dean, when I was 15 years old.

**D.D: Do you identify with Odysseus?**

A: I do identify with Odysseus, but on a deeper level. Odysseus is a hero who goes through what he goes through, because we want to go back to his homeland. If he did not want to return to his homeland, but go to Honolulu, instead, and live a life of pleasure, he would not have encountered any difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> He refers to the myth of Heracles, where the hero had to choose among Areti and Kakia.

**Q: It is Odysseus' commitment to his target that fascinates you then, and moreover the fact that his target is the phenomenally humble Ithaca.**

A: Yes, our aim is to find our basis. Since your aim is to find out who you really are, you will come across various difficulties. If, on the other hand, you are not interested in finding out who you are and what your basis is, and you are only interested in having a good time, no difficulties will appear.

**Q: Yes, of course! Odysseus had plenty of opportunities to have a good time and forget about Ithaca. I suppose he could have stayed with Circe or Calypso.**

A: Of course, as humans we get influenced and stray off our target. This is not a bad thing, though. Besides, Odysseus strayed off too.

**Q: I see that you find the idea of self-knowledge really charming.**

A: If one neglects this thing - what you call self-knowledge -, then I do not understand what they are going to do. I mean, what will he/she pretend to be? A yuppie? Someone who want to succeed? They may succeed, but they will not be satisfied, they will not be happy. This is what myth is, do you understand? It is the same thing. The love of myth, or fairytale, is the love of finding who I am and what I really need. And although it is not guaranteed that if you discover these and follow your needs you will be happy, you will be, as far as I am concerned, more humane and more interesting.

**Q: So, you detect the element of self-completion in Greek mythology.**

A: Mythology is definitely a play in which we will all participate, each one of us in their own way.

**Q: Do you detect this thing in myths?**

A: Yes. For instance, I see people who try to complete their journey through storm, and I also see many others - and these are the majority - who are Lotus-eaters and Circe's pigs. It is these people who have lost their substance and are now pigs, or ate lotus and they are now lost.

**Q: So, do we all have our own Circe, Icarus and Cyclops?**

A: Yes, we all have them. Everybody. Myths talk about us, they talk about everything. And myth comes to the surface when things are hard, when we are facing a difficulty.

**Q: Have you ever caught yourself looking for the solution to a problem in myths? For instance, have you ever thought of Theseus and his thread, about his Ariadne, while feeling confused and going through a difficult period?**

A: No.

**Q: This is not the way you function, then.**

A: When I am facing a difficulty, when I do not know what to do, I bring to mind beloved creators, or beloved friends, or my beloved parents, or a beloved uncle. You understand what I mean. I bring to mind someone whom I love and not someone

who simply knows me. Or, when I am facing difficulties in expressing myself in my lyrics, I think 'What would Vamvakaris<sup>2</sup> write here, what would he do?'

**Q: This is your mythology**

A: Yes, of course, this is my mythology.

**Q: Do you believe that myths, i.e. the ancient Greek myths, bear contemporary social references?**

A: I will answer that they do, instinctively, but I have not thought about it. I cannot give you a clear answer.

**Q: Have you used myths in your songs?**

A: I do not remember; in my songs? 'Long live Greek song' begins with..., the emblem of the TV show with this title that I held was Alexander the Great's sister, the mermaid. Is Greek song alive, or is it not? This is the mythological symbolism of the title. [Here, Savvopoulos refers to the question 'Is king Alexander alive?' that the mermaid posed to sailors, according to the modern Greek legend.] Are there any more mythological references? [he asks his associate, Dimitris]

**D.D: You refer to historical personalities, as if they were mythical.**

A: Yes, for instance I refer to Vasilis Tsitsanis<sup>3</sup>, as if he were a mythical person. I have no references whatsoever to Theseus or Heracles.

**Q: Drawing on the use of the mermaid, how would you assess the way the public perceive mythology?**

A: The message passes to it immediately. In other words, the listeners are really moved by the question 'is King Alexander alive or not?'. They feel immediately the analogy: 'is Greek song alive or not?' They equate these two and they feel as if they were the same thing. And they think that, regardless of what the question refers to, we all have to answer 'He/she/it is alive! He/she/it is alive!'. The question could also be 'Is generosity of heart alive?'. The mermaid expects to hear that it is alive, that this thing does exist.

**Q: This means that myths are alive today.**

A: Mythology lives.

**Q: It is alive, but do you believe that it has drawn a complete circle? Is it, in other words, a finished book, or is its writing still in progress?**

A: It is still in progress, with unexpected targets.

**Q: Such as..**

A: Vassilis Tsitsanis is mythology, he is a mythical figure. Chadjidakis is a mythical figure.

**Q: Does this mean that our mythology comprises of influential personages, such as artists and politicians?**

**D.D: Of people who have written their own myth. Ah, after death glory is different!**

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<sup>2</sup> Composer of rebetiko song.

<sup>3</sup> Greek composer.

A: Now I am wondering, how a god is born. What is the process of deification?

**Q: Yes, this is interesting.**

A: I do not know, but it is sure that those who become myths know something. Even though they might not be aware of what is that they know. They know something that the others don't.

**Q: Are they in touch with things better than we are?**

A: They possess some kind of knowledge

**Q: Is it not the others who turn these people to myths?**

A: It is the others. But the others need this thing. I mean that mythicized individuals give to other people the spirituality that they seem to be in need of. People today seem to be interested only in money and professional success. What you hear is doggerly music and clichéd songs. And people often pretend to understand other things too, like, for instance, Chadjidakis' music, only because they want to have the whole package: money, success and cultivation. They do not understand the codes, but they pretend that they do.

**Q: But isn't this tiring? I mean, for how long can some pretend to enjoy Chadjidakis, whereas his/her heart is really with Peggy Zena<sup>4</sup>?**

A: It is tiring, but it is moving too, because this means that they regard these individuals to be a bigger, ultimate value. This is what they think. This means that deep down they believe this thing to be superior.

**D.D: I believe that they are scared of this tradition, which draws from antiquity, and distinguishes between 'the intellectuals' and 'the laity'. No one can doubt that Euripides is Euripides. No one can say 'Oh, come on, what are these things?'. I believe that it is a matter of cowardliness, pure cowardliness. They do not have the...They cannot correspond to the insignificance of these things.**

A: But, no! The fact that they do not correspond means that mythology is indeed functioning inside them, because they perceive these things as being superior to them. In other words, they accept mythology, they accept the myth. There were also the patrons of arts.....

**D.D: Ah, the patrons of the arts!**

A: Yes, the church and the aristocrats. Art revolved around them. Like Benakis family. They were a very tough family. If you read, for instance, how they treated their children, extremely tough, but they had the sense that they had to contribute to the country, in order to stand high, to have value. In other words they said, 'Is not enough to have ships and money. We have got to do something, to create something, to leave something behind'. And they did so. So, they obeyed a mythology, according to which there are values bigger and higher than everyday life. To sense these values is to serve these values.

**Q: We said that each one of us has got their own, personal, mythology next to the collective one...**

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<sup>4</sup> Greek doggerly singer.

A: Each one has their own, personal, way to sense mythology, but mythology is one. Mythology is one.

**Q: Are you referring to Greek myths? Do they unite us, because they are Greek?**

A: I know that if you compare them to analogous myths, you will find similarities.

**Q: So, we speak about mythologies of the nations.**

A: This means that 'Virtue' always stands higher. The good man always chooses Virtue. This is what always happens. The deeper belief that I am a significant person if I managed to look beyond my interest and to give everything, even once in my life, exists everywhere. The motto 'Go ahead! Give everything! Do not hold back!' is widespread. We are not always brave and tough, but it is a brave deed that supports us ethically for the rest of our life. For instance, unconditional love is an aspect of this. Well, this is mythology, i.e the recognition that the most important thing is not one's self, but how one's self will be offered.

**Q: So, myths are like...**

A: Myth is a lie that tells the truth. And where does the word myth come from? Do we know this? What is the meaning of the word myth? How is the striking similarity to the word 'myti' (nose), as well as to the word 'mitos' (thread) explained? It is sticking, the musician grasps this at once, it appears as if they were the same word. What could the relation between myth, myti and mitos be? Well let us arbitrarily improvise now. A thread leads us out of the trouble. Myth does the same thing, it makes things clear, it shows us the...

**Q: And the nose?**

A: The nose is a way to sense things! Nose, smelling...do not we often use the word 'smell', in order to indicate that we 'grasp', we 'detect' something?

**Q: That is right.**

A: I 'smelled' it! i.e., I got the real meaning of the things you say. Because you say many things, but my nose alarms me that there is something else going on behind it. It helps me understand that the truth lies there and not in the situation I am entrapped in.

Anyway, when we say that someone is a mythic person, we mean that he/she is a superior person. We mean that he/she is someone who we perceive as an example, as a role model.

**Q: So, myths are role models.**

A: Myths are role models; role models of the truth of life.

**Q: Diachronic role models**

A: Diachronic.

**Q: I wonder, if we examine a carrier of culture like museums, which house...**

A: Museums classify. And they say 'Here we have this temple's metopes; here we have Heracles who strangles the snakes; here we have Laocoön who is being strangled by snakes...'

**Q: Is mythology present in museums?**

A: Of course! Everything I see is mythic! Everything I see is mythic. A museum's displays give us a lecture about life. And this lecture is given through art. Art is by nature and on its own divine. And in many cases the statues depict, represent mythical figures. But myth has in the meantime multiplied, because now what you see it is not only the mythical charioteer<sup>5</sup>, but also the artist and the artist has become a myth now. You see the entire era, which has now passed to the land of myth.

**Q: When it comes to mythology itself, i.e. to the depicted myths, does the museum help? Does it give the visitor the impetus to consider 'why the ancient artist chose the myth, for instance, of Icarus, what...'**

A: Why did the artist choose it? Do you mean that our museums are not well organized? This is to a large extent true. This is true, to a large extent.

**Q: This is true. Let us focus on mythology. What is the relationship that is developed between mythology and the public in a museum? How does the museum help its audience to understand what mythology is about?**

A: The public cannot speak on its own, it cannot understand.

**Q: But does it make the effort...**

A: Someone has to speak to the public, in order for it to make the effort... This is the responsibility of someone who can handle effectively the mythic language, the symbols, the...

**Q: Do we speak about mythology nowadays?**

A: We speak about things that are projected as mythical in our minds. Maybe we do not speak about Heracles, but we speak... In 1963 I walked past 'Floka' on Panepistimiou street - that 'Floka' does not exist anymore - and I saw Chadjidakis and Gatsos<sup>6</sup> sitting at a table and eating spaghetti. Well, I felt that that scene would enter the land of myth,... I was witnessing a mythical scene at that moment.

**Q: Yes? In what sense?**

A: We are speaking of a mythical scene, because I did not know these people, I used to listen to their records. A little child, for instance, in Thessaloniki, listens to their songs on the radio. And, you know, we speak now of songs that make your jaw drop, songs that make you want to say 'I do not believe in my ears, did you hear that as well? Does this thing really exist?' So, the myth mechanism is already active. Now that child sees these two eating spaghetti... Well, this is a mythical scene! They are not ordinary song writers. What they do is different. They are personalities that connect you to mythology.

**Q: The contemporary Greek mythology...**

A: Or most probably they are contemporary figures of mythology. Mythology is one.

**Q: Yes, excellent! Well done! Or I imagine that, in the same way, when someone looks at Guernica, he/she creates their own mythology about the Spanish Civil**

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<sup>5</sup> He refers to the 'Charioteer of Delphi'.

<sup>6</sup> Manos Chadjidakis was a Greek composer. Nikos Gatsos was a Greek lyricist and poet.

**War, or when he/she watches a movie, say 'Arizona Dream', they create their own mythology about America.**

A: In fact, they associate that painting with our ancient horrors and with our ancient hopes, our ancient dreams.

**Q: Thus means...**

A: Fears are standard, they do not differ. For instance, there is fear that something bad can happen and blood start running on the streets. This is something that we know inside us. We may not have seen it, but it is something we fear. These are fears and hopes that all people bear inside them. I do not know how, but they somehow they do. For instance, you see a little child who is afraid of the dark corridor. Where did it learn that from? No one told the child that the dark is a bad thing. The corridor is dark, but there is light in the kitchen and the child is standing there.

**Q: I remember! That corridor seemed endless!**

**D.D: I would turn all the lights on! I had just watched 'Alien' and...**

A: Here is contemporary mythology! Here is how fears perpetuate: Dimitris watched 'Alien'!

**Q: But, it is normal to be afraid of the dark. You cannot see what is around you, you cannot control your surroundings and you cannot control yourself within your surroundings. These are primal fears!**

A: Yes, but this means that there is fear that the sun may burn out some day.

**Q: Yes, yes...**

A: Additionally, we know that when there is an outage, we can light a candle or a petrol lamp; the child is afraid though.

**Q: Can I ask you, have you noticed changes in the use and meaning of mythology over the years? Does the use of mythology change, when social and political circumstances change?**

A: No, I have not noticed such a thing. I mean I do not recall a stronger relationship between, say, the composers of the '50s and mythology than between those of, say, the '80s. I do not think so.

**Q: During the junta for instance, do you recall a special interest in mythology?**

A: I understand what you mean. From the perspective you see it, the use of mythology has never ceased. The use of mythology during the junta was kitsch, but there was an excellent use of mythology in the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. The one was made by generals and the other by artists. This means that the Generals of the junta wanted to impose; they used it for propaganda.

**Q: Yes, yes...**

A: Whereas in the other case, the artist fertilizes mythology through his/her own dreams and fears and his/hers love for the country. When the artist uses mythological elements, he/she wants to speak of the essence of these things.

**Q: Ah ha.**

A: It is a whole different use of mythology

**Q: Mr. Savvopoulos, could you please tell a few things about the so-called Byzantine mythology of Thessaloniki ...**

A: What thing? I do not understand.

**Q: Has the fact that you were born and grew up in Thessaloniki influenced your worldview and your artistic profile?**

A: Thessaloniki has influenced me very much, not only on the level of experiences, but also thanks to its artistic and intellectual environment. Mainly, the poets of Thessaloniki.

**D.D: Aslanoglou,.....and Aslanoglou?** (laughter)

A: Of course. Thessaloniki's poets, such as Anagnostakis, Christianopoulos, Aslanoglou, Vafopoulos.

**Q: Does this mean that you found in Thessaloniki a distinctive intellectual environment, which you took with you in Athens and passed it into your songs?**

A: Yes, yes. I think that these songs could be written only by a Thessalonian.

**Q: Could you explain this briefly to me?**

A: The differences?

**Q: This peculiar 'colour' of Thessaloniki.**

A: Yes, for me there is a school of Thessaloniki in Greek song, which has particular features. My colleagues, the Thessalonian song-writers, do not want to admit this, nor to talk about it a lot.

**Q: Who do you include in this school?**

A: I include not only those who were born in Thessaloniki, or in the broader area of Northern Greece, but also people who are not from Thessaloniki, but they are completely influenced by the features of this school. For instance, Peridis belongs to this school although he is not related to Northern Greece.

**Q: Yes, yes.**

**D.D: Malamas, certainly yes... Papazoglou... Zervoudakis...**

**Q: I would also add Aggelakas and Pavlidis.**

A: Aggelakas, of course...

**D.D: Papakonstantinou?**

A: Who? Thanasis Papakonstantinou?

**Q&D.D: Thanassis.**

A: Ah, Thanassis Papakonstantinou.

**Q: What are the common....**

A: The element of the inner monolog is one of the features of Thessaloniki. It characterizes our song, as it characterized before our prose and our poetry. Because you listen to someone and you have the sense that he/she is making a confession to you; you feel as if he/she were on their own and spoke to their own. Another element is the factor of experience, i.e. that they never speak of things that they have not experienced. They do not speak of things that they simply like, they only

talk about things that they have experienced. Their expression is based on experience. Their expressive style is that of confession and monolog. This is the other element. Another thing is that when they speak of politics they rather view the topic with a pessimist mood, from the perspective of defeat and rather than of victory. The Athenian school perceives the political element as a fanfare, as something connected to victory only.

**Q: You know what? I think that in Thessaloniki there is this introspective and sacramental element of Byzantium in music and poetry, as opposed to the lighter and 'Ionian' element of Athens.**

A: I do not whether it is Byzantine, it could be Byzantine. It definitely has an impact. Thessaloniki is the beloved sister of Constantinople, I have said that before. It neighbors to Mount Athos, and the climate helps these things. For instance, you will come across surrealism in very rare cases in Thessaloniki

**Q: Yes.**

A: Surrealism won over Athenian expression to a great extent. Additionally, in Thessaloniki you will notice an avoidance of very impressive words, of words that make a noise. They use simpler words.

**Q: Yes, they are more direct.**

A: Also, the Thessalonians are more precise.

**D.D: You are an exception when it comes to impressive words. You do use them.**

A: Yes, but compared to Athenian composers... I would never say 'Electric Theseus'<sup>7</sup>. This is outrageous. I would rather say 'electric circus', but this in context. I do exaggerate, I am not saying that I do not.

**Q: Back to mythology now, could you give me a brief definition of myth?**

A: Mythology is a lie that tells the truth.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

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<sup>7</sup> Song of Yiannis Markopoulos, Greek composer.

## Appendix 7

**Takis Simotas**

**Date: 20/02/2005**

**Venue: 'Cardhu' café, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: What is the first thing that comes to mind, when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: For me, mythology is the images, the vivid images that are etched inside us in our childhood. I am saying this, because, in my writings, I use often images from the Old Testament and this is because of the religion lesson at school. This is how these images have come to live inside me. Stories, such as the fall of man, excite a child's imagination and they are etched in the child's mind. And, so, images from the Old Testament come to my mind automatically, each time I want to articulate and visualize something abstract.

**Q: Does this happen only with the Old Testament or with Greek mythology as well?**

A: Greek mythology was not part of the curriculum back then.

**Q: Really?**

A: We were taught the Labours of Heracles. And among his labours there was also the story of the Stymphalian Birds, which is a very powerful image and I have used it in my works in more than one case.

**Q: What do the Stymphalian Birds represent then?**

A: The Stymphalian Birds represent the 'Evil', which sprouts again and again, no matter how many times you cut its head off.

**Q: And the same thing goes for the myth of the Lernaean Hydra, I suppose.**

A: Yes.

**Q: What is the connection between these stories and the stories from the Old Testament?**

A: They do not connect; they are simply both vivid images that are etched in my memory. Their connection would be rather visual. Another powerful image is that of Atlas, who stands on the ground and once Heracles lifts him up, he loses his strength. This myth essentially says that omnipotence is impossible, since we all extract our strength from something, or someone else. So, in essence, these are not only images, they are models of thought. Because a vivid image also contains the word and the advise. What else can I say, now? Well, I would also add that mythology does not count as mythology, at the moment of its creation. In order for mythology to gain the status of mythology, it has to be etched in a child's memory.

**Q: Did you reflecte on mythology in this way, when you were a child?**

A: Of course not. I only do this now and draw these conclusions.

**Q: So, was mythology back then simply a nice story?**

A: Back then, mythology was simply something that I liked.

**Q: Was it the plot that fascinated you?**

A: Of course. Just like when you listen to something which makes your jaw drop. We listened to the mythical stories and we went 'Wow, what is this thing?'

**Q: Did your family tell you stories from the Greek mythology?**

A: They told me folk tales with fairies, dragons, etc; folk fairytales. I cannot recall whether they also told me stories from Greek mythology. Yet, all folktales are primordial things. They do not have a contemporary character.

**Q: So, you learned about mythology mainly at school.**

A: We learned about Heracles, Theseus and the Argonaut Expedition at school. Only these three myths and nothing else.

**Q: I remember that we also learned about the twelve gods at school.**

A: Of course! We also learned the stories of the twelve gods!

Anyway, I believe that myths function inside us as images, on which we draw whenever we are need them. Sometimes, they also come to the foreground on their own.

**Q: Does Greek mythology function in this way inside you, as an adult? Does it ever occur as a thought? Do stories from mythology come to our mind, as you experience a certain situation? In other words, do certain circumstances in your everyday life bring mythology to your mind?**

A: I have concluded that mythology is an era's consciousness and under this light it does not differ from contemporary consciousness. Of course, nowadays, the way society reflects on itself is more theoretic, it is controlled by universities, authors, by professionals, in other words. In antiquity, it was the oral tradition that preserved and perpetuated mythology. Yet, I think that mythology's function is still the same, nothing has changed.

**Q: So, as far as I understand, you perceive mythology as a living element of oral tradition.**

A: Mythology *is* oral tradition.

**Q: Do you regard mythology as constituting a solid body together with contemporary Greece's oral tradition? That is, under the assumption that oral tradition still exists today.**

A: They cannot constitute a solid body, because Greek oral tradition is not consistent. There was a pause, in this flow.

**Q: When did this occur?**

A: It is hard to tell. One could say that it occurred after the Enlightenment. But

Christianity had already replaced the ancient myths. What I mean is that the Old Testament is a mythology that replaced the mythology of the twelve gods. But the Church has anyway a dual substance, in the sense that it incorporates both a scholarly and a secular tradition. Isn't this so? And societies themselves had a traditional character. And when they became industrial urban centres, this continuity was affected.

**Q: Do you mean that we no longer think in a 'mythological' way?**

A: I mean that children are not educated by their grandfather and their grandmother, but they go to school. So, it is school that dominates the child's education. Isn't this so? Consequently a child will embrace from tradition only what the school offers to it. The perception of tradition that the child will shape will be filtered and predetermined by school. Nowadays even the games that the children play are predetermined. Generations do not come into contact with each other anymore. Things do not pass from one generation to the other. In the past and especially in villages, no one or very few went to school. What is oral tradition? It is what people know and what they pass down to their children. We listen to the stories our grandparents and parents tell us, we like some of them, and when we become parents, we tell them to our own children. This is what tradition is. This is how tradition exists. And tradition is not at all 'traditional'; it something that exists and it is alive and vivid. Isn't so?

**Q: Yes, of course. And in which context was mythology passed down to us? In what character and with what meaning has Greek mythology reached us? What is its essence today? Because it is beyond doubt that Greek mythology today exists; the question is as what it exists. Is it merely nice little fairytales that are 'fun' to listen to?**

A: To begin with, fairytales are not to be underestimated, because they shape the individual's ability to develop a judgment of taste. This is a very serious matter. The fairytale increases a child's aesthetics. Now, you are asking how mythology functions nowadays. I suppose that mythology's function today is random; it depends on what one wants to do with it. The hotel owner, for instance, wants to add some local colour and he/she names their hotel 'Heracles'. Mythology is nothing to do with it. A more serious approach to mythology would be to use it as a haven: when I am in need of something a mythological image comes to mind and, as I said in the beginning, it helps me out.

**Q: IS Greek mythology written in the Greeks' DNA?**

A: I do not know whether it is in our DNA. It may be in my DNA, and it may not be in someone else's DNA.

**Q: So, we cannot claim that it is a collective...**

A: It is not collective. There is the fabricated argument that we are the inheritors of the ancient Greeks and we ought to.... This is oppression. It is a compulsory inheritance; it is

fake.

**Q: Does the school attempt a second reading of mythology?**

A: This might be happening only occasionally, only by the odd teacher who does care; it is up to the individual.

**Q: What about museums?**

A: I do not know whether children go to museums and under what circumstances they visit museums.

**Q: I am referring only to children. What do think of the status of Greek mythology in Greek museums? Does mythology exist in museums, in the first place? And how is it presented?**

A: I do not know what to say. I would have to recall the status of mythology in every museum I have ever been to; not that I have been to many museums, anyway. In museums, I am mostly interested in statues and in everyday objects, such as plates, forks etc, because I am mostly interested in what people did in their everyday lives, how they cooked their foods, what they ate. This is what captures my interest in museums. Another thing that I have always found impressive is that all tragedies have as starting point the 'Iliad'. Why is that? Why was the 'Iliad' a turning point for Greece? It is because it served as a textbook for the learning of the Greek language. The 'Iliad's' fairytale is alive and it plays a certain role in society since it is the society's 'alphabet'. Children learned to read and write through the 'Iliad', since antiquity. Plato comments on the 'Iliad' all the time. Everything refers to the 'Iliad'.

**Q: And why was the 'Iliad' chosen particularly to play this role?**

A: It was not a matter of choice; it just happened. The 'Iliad' was a first 'codification' in an era, where there were no other books. And since the 'Iliad' was available they started from there.

**Q: The 'Iliad' was a 'codification' of which thing?**

A: They say that Peisistratos codified it, because these Epics were originally part of the oral tradition. They were sung by the bards and Peisistratos codified them.

**Q: Do you think that Greek mythology contains references to contemporary society?**

A: It does, in the sense that it provides us with self-confidence, with the belief that we are something special because we are Greeks, because we are the descendants of the ancient Greeks. Mythology functions as an alibi. I do not think that a more meaningful relationship with mythology exists, because there is no culture in Greece.

**Q: Do you identify with a certain mythological figure, or with a story from Greek mythology?**

A: With the thread of Ariadne.

**Q: In what sense?**

A: In the sense that, for some strange reason, I relate this thing to the Gordius Knot. To

me these two are the same thing. What is the Gordius Knot? It is a labyrinth; this is what it is. We are inside this labyrinth and the problem is that we owe to cut it, but our swords are made of thread. And although we do cut it, in essence we tangle it further. So, this is a model, on the basis of which I attempt to interpret some things.

**Q: And how would you explain the story with the labyrinth and the sword made of thread?**

A: The issue is not to escape the labyrinth but to live inside it. And we have to find a way not to make this labyrinth more confusing. This is the model of thought that I use when, as I said in the beginning, I am in trouble. When I am in trouble I turn to images and the most powerful image I have is this one, with the labyrinth and Theseus who wants to go out, on the one hand, and the Gordius Knot, on the other. The thread is the connecting link; the thread itself is the labyrinth and all these together are a Gordius Knot, from which we cannot escape. There is no way out of the labyrinth.

**Q: Is life then a labyrinth?**

A: It is a labyrinth and all the swords we have are made of thread. There is no other material and we are mistaking if we think that we can cut the labyrinth, because the only thing we achieve is tangling it. In other words, what I essentially do is trying to balance these two myths.

**Q: So, there are mythological references in our lives.**

A: There are, at least in my life.

**Q: Do you feel like you are playing in a game in which, say, Theseus has also played?**

A: No, it is just that the problems that humans have are diachronic and... The kernel of life remains the same and this kernel is the labyrinth.

**Q: Do we construct personal myths about things today? For instance, do you construct a myth about Spain, when looking at 'Guernica', or a myth on America, when watching 'Arizona Dream'?**

A: I owe, to a large extent, my idea of America to westerns and gangster movies. However, westerns and especially good action movies are essentially epic movies. They are pure narrative; you have the good and the bad and their adventures and this thing is mythical. This is the only mythology that has been created today. It is a popular narrative that equals the old narratives of the bards.

**Q: Have we stopped creating myths, then?**

A: The mythologies of contemporary society have to do with astrology.

**Q: Still, this is a mythology too. The ancient mythology was also met by some with condemn, just like today we condemn the astrologers and the star signs.**

A: I remember that in Plato's 'Phaedrus', Phaedrus asks Socrates what they should do with mermaids, what their attitude towards them should be. I do not remember what Socrates answered though. So, yes, mythology was surely met by some with condemn.

**Q: Of course.**

(end of side A)

**Q: Could we say that myth is a journey of self-knowledge?**

A: ...The journey of self-knowledge is that of Odysseus, of his author and his readers. These are who make the journey of self-knowledge, who participate. We participate too. This is the impact of literature on us. The same journey of self-knowledge can be provided by any novel or song. Now, if the question is whether myth provides us with more possibilities for self-knowledge, the answer is that I do not think it does. Myth is not more potent than other literature genres. Myth functions as a haven. When we are troubled we look for something that is alive inside us. And whatever lives inside us does not exist because tradition exists, but because someone told us a story that we liked. The essence of myths is this precisely. They offer you the image; they explain to you the reason why. Myths gives us what all the arts that relate to speech give. Poetry, history, philosophy, they all are compressed in a myth and they become an image. This means that we create vivid images. We do not merely speculate; speculation has its image too.

**Q: However, from what I understand, you have in your books and in your lyrics more references to the Old Testament than to Greek mythology. Is that right?**

A: No. I started like this, but then I thought that this was wrong. Myths are everywhere after all... Then I thought that we tend to neglect the most obvious things. Remember what I said about the Labyrinth and the Gordius Knot. This is a very powerful image for me. This image comes to me very often, when I try to accomplish something. And I connect this to the folk proverb which says that 'the drowning man grips to his own hair'<sup>1</sup>. This image is alive inside me because of tradition. However, the difference today is that tradition is external to us. A teacher told me once that in a traditional civilization, people participate in this civilization. This is the difference. The culture that surrounds us today is that of TV. In other words TV is our tradition today.

**Q: TV is the new bard. Instead of the old fablers today we have Eleni Menegaki<sup>2</sup>.**

A: Yes, this is what happens.

**Q: Do you think that mythology has been abused in Greece?**

A: The hotel owner who uses a mythological name in the hotel's sign does abuse mythology. Anyone who wants to explode mythology inevitably abuses it.

**Q: Has mythology been abused on a political level?**

A: The classical tradition has been abused by all those who wanted to transmit the

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<sup>1</sup> Greek proverb

<sup>2</sup> Presenter of a lifestyle TV magazine.

message that we are the inheritors of Classical tradition.

**Q: Let us go back to the abuse of mythology now. Myths are undefended toward their abuse.**

A: There is not a representative of Greek mythology who will be offended by their abuse. By abusing mythology, we only abuse ourselves. Without myth we do not even have a present. Our present, the way it is now, hangs in the air.

**Q: Will the future mythology be collective or personal?**

A: It cannot function collectively, because it is multi-fragmental. Today things are fragmental and this is bad, on the one hand, but on the other hand it is also good, because it allows more space for a personal mythology.

**Q: So, today we can only speak of personal mythologies.**

A: This is correct, but no 'personal' is that 'personal' in the very end. A particular situation may be limited to you, but the mechanism is common; it is the mechanism of need, of despair, or discomfort. In a given moment you hold on to whatever is more solid inside you and this mechanism is common.

Of course, since culture is today trivialized to such a large extent, it cannot play its role as such for long. In other words, it cannot offer a cosmology to the individual. In any case the current cosmology is how it is, it is dominated by the idea that there are stars that direct our fate. This is the current cosmology. Let us hope, though that the era of Aquarius<sup>3</sup> is coming.

**Q: Is not Aquarius supposed to be evil?**

A: No, he is good.

**Q: Oh, he is good! So, Aquarius comes to send the Pisces away.**

A: Pisces are the evil ones – I mean, Pisces as an era.

**Q: Are Pisces evil? Why?**

A: Because of their versatility and instability. It is your star sign, I know. You belong to an instable star sign; you are all the ups and all the downs together. Whereas the Aquarius is a more intellectual star sign; it has a missionary character.

**Q: What is mythology then? Could you give a brief definition?**

A: Greek mythology is the consciousness of the era; it is the collective consciousness. It is rather the self-consciousness of a society. It is the way that people view the world, the way people face life and think and reflect on life.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

A: Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> Here Simotas draws on one of his songs entitled 'Aquarius' and more specifically on the verse 'We are entering the era of Aquarius and Pisces are leaving'.

## Appendix 8

**Tilemachos Alaveras**

**Date: 23/03/2005**

**Venue: Alaveras' office, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: Mister Alaveras, what does Greek mythology mean to you and first of all, what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear these two words?**

A: The first thing that comes to my mind is something recent, a very lively incident. Well, I have a grandchild, who is not three years old yet, but likes to learn new things all the time, is very curious and constantly asks questions, like little children usually do. One day when my wife, Roula Alavera the poet, was at my son's, Christos Alaveras the painter's, place, she called me on the phone and told me: 'Listen, Tilemachos wants to tell you something, he has got queries concerning the Apples of the Hesperides. He wants to know, what the apples of the Hesperides are and where the apples of the Hesperides were'. I answered that the apples of the Hesperides were in Spain. Then he calls me back and asks me: 'Grandfather, were these apples really in Spain? What had Heracles to do with them? And why do we locate the apples in Spain?' And I say to him: 'At the time people thought that Spain was where the world ended. There Atlas guarded the apples and Heracles cheated him,...', and thus I told him the whole story. 'Oh!', he says, "is this what happened? I was told differently at the 'Child's Nest'". So, with this I want to argue that this is approximately how myths can be modified and perpetuated. And this is the light in which I referred to Papanigopoulos, before the recording began, and to how he begins his historical treatise by referring to Greek mythology in a pragmatic way. I thought about the incident with my grandson, having this as a starting point. When it comes to myth's meaning now, I have always been interested in it, as I have been occupied with novel writing and in general with myth-making. Literature is directly related to myth and we could claim that speech itself is penetrated vertically by myth. One could say that the word itself, depending on how it will be used, is wedged creatively inside myth, in the sense that even the consonant and the vowel can be creative. Take the names, for instance. Take the names we come across in myths. If we examine them in the context of ancient Greek mythology, we shall realize that they 'play'. The names themselves contain their meaning and they demonstrate where each one aims at. So, in order for one to be preoccupied with these notions, he/she has to be personally interested in the penetration inside myth and he/she has to construct every now and then a mist made of myths around him/herself and to try to function outside the logic of Derrida and the rest. Right?

**Q: Yes. This is the core of my thought too. For instance, your son modified myth, he unconsciously penetrated myth.**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: And he is only a two year old child. And Paparigipoulos on the other hand penetrated myth, he did so though in a disguised way, in producing science and in offering science to the reader. Right?**

A: Yes, of course.

**Q: The artist, on the other hand, penetrates into myth being conscious that he/she produces myth out of myth. This is the difference and this is what I am mostly interested in.**

A: Look, the reformation of a myth will be for the artist a prize of victory, in the sense that he/she will succeed in overcoming the triviality of all the verifications and in creating his/her own myth. But a myth is one thing and a 'mythification' is another thing. You know, all these words have their particular nuances of meaning.

**Q: Could you explain the difference between myth and 'mythification'?**

A: Look now: the myth is, in a way, the framework. The mythification product is what emerges from this framework. It is the branch, a branch that however bears some interest in the context of the art of speech. The art of speech can 'play' on it. The product of 'mythification' is like reverie. 'Mythification' like 'conjugation'. Right? These words, these notional penetrations into the very body of words, provide us with the particular nuances of meaning. So, the product of 'mythification' may be something that in many cases surpasses even the very myth it came from. This means the product of 'mythification' can deny its very origin. Right?

**Q: It can deny its origin when it comes to the dynamics of its myth?**

A: No! It can even deny its origin.

**Q: Could you give an example?**

A: No, I have not got an example this moment.

**Q: I would like to have an example of what you say, so that I can be sure that what I understand is correct; because what I understand is that the product of 'mythification' is essential the myth in second use.**

A: Yes, of course it is; this is what I meant. I meant that the product of 'mythification' can surpass or it can also be inferior to it. The myth, as we have said, is the framework.

**Q: Do you know what this reminds me of? It reminds me of Byzantine remains that were used as constructing material for modern houses. And you see fixed among the bricks and the daub a marble block with a double headed eagle.**

A: Yes, well, I do not know what the theme could be approached from the perspective of visual art, although this could be of special interest for archaeology. A relative analogy emerges also from the example of figurines. An ancient figurine is different to the figurine that a contemporary artist will create. Isn't it so?

**Q: Yes, it is different both in its appearance and in its use.**

A: Well done, this very precise, the use is also different. So, this is also how a difference between myth and the product of 'mythification' results. However, these are elements that constitute the current conversation. If one goes deeper into the topic, then he/she could possibly wonder why one should construct myths by overturning such a cogitative thought and why the myth itself does not emerge on its own. I do not have anything particular in mind, I am improvising now. So, if the myth does not emerge on its own, then is it necessary to create it? Is it necessary? Why does myth-making exist? Why do people use myth-making? Why do they use fairytales, which are at least diachronic? Of course, alas, if the myth is not diachronic. Besides this is why it exists in the first place. However, I do not know whether all the products of literature have the same dynamics as the body of mythology.

**Q: Does this translate, whether the reproduction of myth has the same dynamics with the mythical framework?**

A: I do not know about this, I really do not, because the art of speech may be indeed inherent to man, but what is its dynamics throughout human history?

**Q: Can I ask you this: taking as given that myth is diachronic, can we claim that there is a crystallized body of myths and that from then on the reformations and the reuses of myths exist? Since myth is diachronic by definition, is it not also given that myth will by its nature be reformed and modified along with humans?**

A: Of course. It depends though on the circumstances. Namely, take for instance Gilgamesh: how many myths revolve around it and how many revolve around our myths? These are dependent on the circumstances and on the human characters that result from them. And the myth also moulds human character, right? This means that I would not like one to be able to examine the myth only from a notional point of view. I would like people to be able to live myth.

**Q: Everyday?**

A: Everyday too.

**Q: Or in moments of creativity, when one is alone?**

A: Everyday too, because this is inherent to art. I mean, I cannot imagine that visual artists or musicians do not move in the locus of a personal myth.

**Q: Does this apply only to artists, or to ordinary people too?**

A: I do not about that. I do not know. I do not know if this happens, to what extent it is a conscious attitude.

**Q: You are referring now to ordinary people.**

A: Yes, of course, because the artist will realize this, sooner or later. And this is where the peculiarity of being an artist can be located. But my grandson's example is exactly the same, it is the need to lean on something that is larger than you. In for instance, the

book I gave you, 'Fasola's neighborhood', an entire myth can be created, as I myself have tried to create it. Why? Because Fasola's story speaks of a statue that was found near the 'Labour Center', on the corner of Dikastirion Square and Mitsaeon street. There we played volleyball, when we were children. In the Second World War the Germans had a base there and they used Russian prisoners as workmen. In the picture in the book exactly the moment when the Russian prisoners bring to light the statue under the supervision of the Germans is depicted.

**Q: I remember this picture.**

A: Well this thing can be material for 'mythification', or at least this is how it worked for me.

**Q: How exactly?**

A: There is no 'exactly'. It functioned as material for 'mythification' in the course of time through memory and this incident was combined with one of my heroes, Fasola, and it became a myth for those that read it. And even the picture becomes a myth and this is why it is in there.

**Q: When I asked you how exactly it happened, I was referring to the moment of the conception. That is that from what I understand, the moment of the statue's discovery was imprinted inside you as...**

A: I was not given the photograph. At that time there were no such things as photographs. It was in the middle of the German occupation and I was only a child. I was given the photograph much later, when I had already written the story. A friend of mine gave it to me and I put it in the book. I put it in the book in an attempt to restore the truth, as a colleague had written that the statue was found further down in the street. I felt the urge to restore the truth. So, apart from the myth, there is also a testimony. And a testimony can be contained in myth, right? Let us think of the Trojan War. Do we really know the truth about every incident? How were they passed down to us, through Homer? How did all these things happen? In what way did they function? So, the same process can be applied to every work of literature.

**Q: And what can provide the impetus for the creation of a myth? What can provide the spark that will become the basis for the building of myth, like the discovery of the statue did for you?**

A: Well, in my case it is the character of the central hero that is basically spotlighted. He is a teenager of that period, who experiences life in his neighborhood. In this way the

opportunity is given to me to refer to various incidents and at the same time to testify that specific incident, which I myself witnessed as a teenager, namely the discovery of the statue, and the way this incident found a place and a role among my childhood memories.

(Break due to phone call)

**Q: We were talking about the circumstances that lead to the creation of a new myth. I imagine that the discovery of a statue would not function inside you today in the way it did at that time.**

A: Look now: how would a narration about the 'Incantadas'<sup>1</sup> function inside me and how would it function inside someone else? If you have never heard about it you will say: "'Incantadas?' What is this thing about?'. Also, in Depot<sup>2</sup> there is the so-called 'ghostly house' and the myth of the lovesick Jewish woman that haunts it. So, how does this function for the one person and how for the other? It is a matter of allusions. There is for everybody an allusion that can provide the impetus for the creation of a fictional story; because myth is definitely fictional.

**Q: But now we refer to 'mythifications' rather to myths.**

A: Yes, we refer to 'mythifications'. Literature is more related to 'mythifications', isn't it so?

**Q: Are there any ancient Greek myths that have had a particular impact on you?**

A: Let me tell you this: in very distant years - because I have too many years behind me - , they may have had a certain impact on me; I do not know if they still have an impact on me though.

**Q: That is, when you were a child?**

A: Mostly when I was a child.

**Q: Did you know the Greek myths mostly from school?**

A: Not only from school, from my family too, as well as from incidents that have to do with the way each one lives and grows up. I do not know how each one of us develops a personality, how each one begins to understand the world. I do not think that I was conscious of my surroundings before the age of five, or at least I do not remember myself being conscious of things before that age. I cannot remember. I do not know what you remember.

**Q: I have memories that are most probably stories of my parents etc, that I have metamorphosed into memories.**

A: Yes, you draw on stories or on photographs that you subsequently transform. Just like it happened with the picture in the book.

**Q: Yes.**

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Incantadas' are a set of statues that once adorned the facades of an arcade in the Roman Forum of Thessaloniki. The term 'Incantads' is Sephardic and means 'enchanted'. Many stories and legends were woven around these statues in old Thessaloniki and most of them portrayed the statues as enchanted and petrified humans. Today the larger part of the statues are displayed in the Louvre museum.

<sup>2</sup> An area of Thessaloniki.

A: Besides, in my time, in the beginning of the 20th century or in the end of the 19th century, when photographs were not available, we drew on what you, archaeologists, discovered and what the visual artist produced, right? I think that this is the process of myth's creation.

**Q: I imagine that this process was far more interesting, back then, because you had to look for things, instead of having information, in the nature of photographs, TV images, posters on the streets, abundantly available at any time and everywhere. I guess you understand what I mean. There are things that wait for the reader to make the effort to find them and not the other way round.**

A: It is not only the reader that matters.

**Q: I refer to the reader in the sense of the interpreter.**

A: Yes. So, how can one imagine mythology with sounds? How especially did the opera composers do that? How the sound beats, how the rhythm beats! The speech to which I referred before is the rhythm, in this case. It is poetry itself. We move now to another territory, because the one who think mythically is the poet, whereas the novelist thinks more historically.

**Q: Why is that?**

A: But exactly because the poet is more into mythification and myth, whereas the novelist refers more to current reality, which he is forced to obey, in order for him to communicate directly with the readers. The poet deals more with diachronic elements, and myth is something that stands above us, no matter how we try to shoot it down. Although I have never in my life written poems, I believe that this is how things are, and besides this is the reason why I respect poetry.

**Q: I have a query though: is not reality mythical too?**

A: It can function through a myth with the help of certain allusions.

**Q: So it is mythical.**

A: Yes, it depends. Let us not enter into more details, as we will have to refer to terms like 'modernist', and the rest.

**Q: Since, however, we speak of myth's diachronicity, it is not fair to exile myth in the land of myth?**

A: No, this does not happen. I personally would never exile it. And the novelist can draw on myth, but the novelist has got to also include realistic elements in his/her work; on the contrary the poet has no urge to be realist. The musician can also draw on myth, but at the same time the musician has got to be extremely strict in what he/she does. Or, if you ever meet a painter, you will notice how committed to detail they are. The painter, on the other hand, can be lost in space and this is very nice.

**Q: My questions had mainly to do with the way that mythology is presented in archaeological museums. Mythology there is clearly exiled to the past. It is presented**

**as though if it was born and died in the past.**

A: It appears as though it is located in past.

**Q: Myth is presented as though if it has drawn a circle, if it concerns only a bygone society, a different human species that is nothing to do with the human race as we know it today. There is a separating line between present time and myth. Myth is exiled in the past and it appears as though it is essentially dead.**

A: This is right. You are definitely right. I am very interested in what you say, although I am not a big fan of museums. I have not been to many museums in my life.

**Q: To be honest, neither am I a huge fan of museums, although I am a museologist.**

A: Whenever I go to a museum, I find it interesting, but I have not been to many of them. For instance, I have been only once to the archaeological museum of Thessaloniki; I do not know this museum. And I have been only once to the museum in Veriga and that was when it was still under construction.

**Q: Do you mean when the new museum was under construction?**

A: Yes. I went there with some Cyprian archaeologists. I have also been to Dion with Pantermalis, who showed me around in the excavation. These museums though are not related to mythological incidents. What I saw in Dion for instance - of course perhaps I did not pay the necessary attention - did not have any mythical references.

**Q: Despite this, it is not necessary for someone to be a frequent museum-goer, to live in museums, in order for him/her to know that most exhibits are vases or sculptures and that these vases and sculptures very often bear mythological depictions.**

A: Yes, I did not see such details in these museums, or perhaps I do not pay much attention to the depictions on vases and sculptures whenever I go to museums. And despite the fact that I have been occupied with vases, on a professional level, by means of essays and theses, my relationship with them has been strictly practical and focused on the preciseness of the corrections. My occupation with them did not develop any further.

**Q: So, you would not go to look especially for the myth in a museum.**

A: Honestly, I have never thought about that and maybe this is why I do not go to museums.

**Q: My insisting on this question has to do with my belief that myth in archaeological museums is closer to the context of the civilization, the society and the intellect that created it. I think that myth in archaeological museums is closer to the place of its birth, than it would be for instance in a museum of contemporary art.**

A: I am listening to what you say with pleasure, but I am just listening; I do not know whether I can intellectually approach what you are saying.

**Q: This is right. Just because these things are given for me, as they occupy my thought on a daily basis, it does not mean that they are also a given for you.**

A: They are interesting.

**Q: My research's ultimate goal is to investigate the status of mythology in museums.**

A: Now I will ask you a question: where is the myth, for instance in Vergina? We come across mainly historical topics. This is clear. This is why I tell you that I do not know what the position of myth could be. In the museum of Delphi, for instance,...

**Q: Yes, let us move to another museum, because the museum of Vergina is a quite peculiar case.**

A: Yes. In the museum of Delphi, or in the National Archaeological Museum there are mythological elements.

**Q: These are museums that present the civilization of an area and do not focus, so much on a particular historical period and its events.**

A: And museums have their aims and objectives, right? I mean they function on a 'give and take' basis.

**Q: I imagine that you speak literally.**

A: Literally. Of course literally.

**Q: Yes.**

A: Maybe I was speaking kind of hazy before, but I like being in touch with reality.

**Q: There is a political 'give and take', in other words, in museums.**

A: Yes, this is an attitude that necessities often impose on museums.

**Q: Of course, museums need sponsors.**

A: Additionally, the researcher of mythology wants to claim his/her scientific rights, isn't it so? Because it does matter to know who made these mythological depictions; how they were made, and why they were made. With what objectives were they made? The city, the culture, the urban life, they all play some role. The interconnections and interactions between these are various.

**Q: This is what I would like to see in a museum; however they are not discussed in archaeological museums. Such an approach to myth, that could have as a starting point a coin, or a vase or a statue, is absent from museums. I have the impression that myth is either bypassed without mention, or, when it is mentioned, it is presented as a randomly selected decorative theme. Of course, it is not so, because the artists or the commissioner of the vase chose the theme of, say, Icarus for some reason.**

A: This is right. And an artist may represent Icarus in one way and Daedalus in another. This is where 'mythification' and myth meet each other. This is where what I said before holds value, that is that the product of 'mythification' may surpass the myth it emerged from.

**Q: And if we leave aside the process of 'mythification' and focus exclusively on mythology, we shall realize that not even that is present in museums. I mean, the visitor who is neither an archaeologist, nor a historian or a classicist, in a museum visit**

**will either not even notice the existence of mythology in the museum, or get the idea that myths were simply tales of the antiquity randomly created and deprived of their inner meaning. I think that things are presented as simple and shallow as that.**

A: Of course, I agree. This is how the situation is. Your subject is museology, right?

**Q: My research focuses on the museum; all the observations and the conclusions are eventually taken to the context of the museum.**

A: You focus your topic on the museum then.

**Q: I do not exclusively focus on museums, rather than conclude with them. I would say that I focus on the way that the artist deals with mythology. I look for the products of 'mythification' of the contemporary artist, and the reasons and the thoughts that are hiding behind these products. And by drawing on the artist, as a contemporary producer of culture, I try to examine whether the museum corresponds to contemporary reality.**

A: The topic of your thesis, and especially its focal point, is very interesting. However, I think that the matching of those things, the museological application of those things is going to be very difficult.

**Q: Are you referring to the practical difficulties?**

A: What you say sounds very beautiful, it suits me. But the product of 'mythification' has to have a certain amount of amount of tangibility, in order for it to function in a museum.

**Q: So, the problem is how the product of 'mythification' can become the object of museological research?**

A: Yes. How will it happen? How will it stand in a museum? For instance, I create a myth with the kore of Thessaloniki and the question is how this is presented by me, how it is perceived by an archaeologist, like Bakirtzis who subsequently tried to make a myth of his own.

**Q: I would like to hear from you a bit more about the difficulty of taking the theoretical considerations we discussed before into a museum context.**

A: Yes. I cannot imagine how this could happen, although what you say sounds very attractive to me. I do not know to what extent this can be realized. I would be very interested in seeing this applied in practice. It would be very interesting to see how this could become part of museological practice. Perhaps it is that I have never thought about it.

**Q: I believe that the first step would be for the museum to loosen its attachment to the object, it has to cease being exclusively focused only and entirely on the object.**

A: This sounds very good.

**Q: I believe that the beginning is for the museum to re-define its role and to gain awareness of the fact that culture is not comprised only by the object and by**

**whatever is tangible.**

A: So, museology is this thing then.

**Q: Museology as a scientific field is not only this.**

A: It concerns the gathering of all these things and their reduction to certain levels?

**Q: Museology concerns everything that relates to a museum and its function, the conservation of its exhibits, the promotion of its exhibitions...**

A: It is an applied science, then, in a way.

**Q: However, it is also concerned with the interpretation of objects. I have chosen to focus on the aspect of interpretation.**

A: That is with whether ideological elements intervene in interpretation.

**Q: These elements though cannot be possibly accentuated in a display case. The use of text is also necessary.**

A: How can this be achieved in museology? I do not know.

**Q: In practice?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Are you referring to whether a poster or a panel will be used?**

A: But is this the way? Is this how it will be achieved?

**Q: No. I believe that there are less tiring ways, provided the museum is not content with itself and avoids becoming a bit more demanding - not unpleasant - for the visitor.**

A: OK, say that you go to the museum and that you do read the posters. So, what? Will you read every one of them?

**Q: No.**

A: So?

**Q: No, you will not, because you could as well stay at home and read a book. I do think, though, that if the museum manages to find a link to reality, to everyday life, and to the everyday experiences of the visitor, the interest of the visitor will be eventually attracted and the visitor will find the necessary stepping stones that will lead him/her to understand the displays. And this cannot be achieved with a poster that only provides a jump from the present to the future. The visitor needs to understand the essence of what the museum is presenting to him/her.**

A: Can the text be the means for this?

**Q: Yes, text is a means indeed, but it is not the only means. Let me give you an example: in Byzantine museums the Zilots and their revolt are mentioned.**

A: Yes.

**Q: What will the visitor understand from this reference?**

A: But this is a reference to a historical event.

**Q: Yes, I am not discussing myth in particular now, but the problem of objects in**

**museums in general. Who were the Zilots? Why did they revolt? What were the circumstances that led to their revolution? It is not easy for the museum to analyze these things. It is not good for the visitor to be surrounded by panels full of historical events. On the other hand, though, the museum has got samples of the material culture of this period that, if carefully displayed, will succeed in creating a platform for the understanding of the display. There have been found, for instance, 3000 broken clay vases and only 3 silver ones. There have been found, say, 50 marble decorated sarcophagi and 500 humble pit-graves. If all these are exhibited in conjunction, the visitor will understand what the revolt of the Zilots is about. Isn't it so?**

A: Yes, OK. But to be honest with you, I do not know how the elements of myth could function in this way, since myth is something fluid, whereas what we refer to now are historical facts. For instance, I find it convenient to use the myth of Perseus and Andromeda in a novel of mine. How will the archaeologist do the same in a museum?

**Q: Let me tell you. What would you think if we had the myth of Iphigenia and next to it a mention to...**

A: ...Yes, OK, a mention of the respective drama, etc.

**Q: ...a mention of the respective drama, or a mention of the 'Garden of the Princes' of Bakola's, which, as you have told me, may not be mythological, yet it contains mythological elements in its plot and in its flow, like the names of the heroes, for instance.**

A: Oh, yes, yes...

**Q: Right?**

A: Now you speak to the point. Say that it contains the names Cassandra and which others? I do not remember.

**Q: There is Cassandra, Orestis...**

A: Well done, yes. OK. These are allusions.

**Q: They are, but does not the visitor need that?**

A: The allusion of using not only the name...

**Q: Yes.**

A: ...but to overturn the myth itself.

( end of tape, side A )

This is where the problem lies. This is where the parameter of the creator's ability intervenes. This is where the creator is assessed. And the myth becomes now the impetus, where the creator starts from, and this is the context which the creator's abilities are assessed within. Is this right?

**Q: Is this not what the visitor needs, in order for him/her to become the creator of**

**his/her own process of 'mythification'?**

A: That would be excellent.

**Q: I mean that since the visitor is usually not an artist and is not trained to think of myth and the myth's transformation, he/she needs a game...**

A: Very well.

**Q: ...in order for him/her to start thinking in the way a creator would do.**

A: Of course.

**Q: So, next to a vase with Iphigenia there could be a mention that Nikos Bakolas wrote in one of his works about an Iphigenia who was like this and lived like that and who hung around with Orestis and all the rest....**

A: Namely, a mention of how Nikos Bakolas perceived the respective myth.

**Q: There could be a brief mention that would be followed by questions for the visitor, such as: 'Do you know an Iphigenia? Can you think of an Orestis? Who could be your Agamemnon and why? Why do you think Bakolas gave his heroes these names?' The museum can let the visitors create the relations and the references that best suit them.**

A: Yes, but the individual who will attempt to do this, has got to go very deep into the work, in order for him/her to answer questions such as: 'why is the author doing this thing? Did the author perhaps have to report a personal experience and did he/she do so in a disguised way and by hiding his/her identity?'

**Q: Yet, the author chose to hide his/her identity behind myth.**

A: Right? Art criticism comes in at this point, and it comes in, in order for it to let the myth unfold. Because art criticism cannot only overturn myth, but it can also unfold myth, re-create myth and all the rest.

**Q: Yes. Of course, the museum visitors will not become art critics and novelists.**

A: Of course not.

**Q: I believe though that a percentage of the visitors, after going back home, will think of Bakolas and will look for information about Bakolas, or about Tilemachos Alaveras and will seek to find out what they wrote and how they used myth in order for them to disguise personal data, and the visitors will also think of their personal allusions, while reading the authors' works. I think this is a beginning.**

A: Of course, of course.

**Q: This is how I more-or-less imagine the practical application of what I said before.**

A: In that case, yes, it is good. We came to an understanding.

**Q: Before I leave, could you please give - it is probably a naïve question - a definition of myth? What is myth?**

A: No. I cannot give a definition. I do not like definitions, to begin with.

**Q: Good, this is an answer too.**

A: I am not saying that I do not dare, but in any case I do not like definitions.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 9

**Kostas Lachas**

**Date 10/10/2005**

**Venue: Lachas' workshop, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: First of all, Mr. Lachas, I would like to ask you what comes to your mind, when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'.**

A: Ah....

**Q: It does not have to be related to mythology.**

A: What comes to mind is not related to mythology, but it does belong to the prehistoric period, is not that OK?

**Q: Yes.**

A: In this sense.

**Q: Do you mean that mythology is something that in general refers to the remote past?**

A: It is something that is historically remote and suddenly upsets you, stimulates you and provokes you.

**Q: How?**

A: The works of the Cycladic art upsets me. This simplicity of the figures and the bodies - both male and female -, the reduction of the shapes to the absolute, dominant elements of the gender and the underlining of the features of fertility stir me.

**Q: Yes.**

A: This is my perception of mythology. I would not say that it is mythological in the sense of imitation of circumstances, images, myths - no, these things have never occupied me; neither do I possess the abilities. And I must also mention a photograph that stirs me. In Naxos, there is, inside a garden, the remainder of a marble block, of an unfinished sculpture more precisely. And this stirs me a lot.

(The doorbell rings, and a friend of Lachas from Germany together with his wife come to visit him and buy works. The interview stops. They buy a painting, they leave and we continue the interview.)

**Q: I would like to ask you now a couple of things that came to my mind, regarding the Cycladic figurines. That which thrills you is the simplicity of form, or the stories that they bear, due to their antiquity?**

A: The latter. On the one hand, there is the reduction of the form to the minimum, and, on the other hand, there is the course through which these things came down to us. And when one realizes that similar figurines to the creations of our pre-Hellenic civilization can be also found in Iran, in Persia, one gets dazzled.

**Q: Yes.**

A: I am interested in the 'human' relation to things, and not only in the aesthetic one. I do not possess the necessary archaeological knowledge to compare and draw scientific conclusions, but I am thrilled precisely by the vital necessity, from which those very important - shall I call them offerings? - have resulted.

I am interested in the relation of the people who made these to their creations. I do not approach the ancient object in the way that an archaeologist approaches does. By the way, I heard from a very important person that a peasant found, somewhere in the valley of Veroia, while he was ploughing his field, a piece of rock, approximately 60cm, whose shape reminded him of a phallus. Thank God, the man had good intentions and he protected it. He went to the Archaeological Service and it turned out that it was a type of primitive plow. But this is very important, because the physical relationship between a man and a woman, i.e. intercourse, is like ploughing, isn't it?

**Q: Yes, it is. So, you are fascinated by the human mind and its imprint on the world, by the standard motifs that construct the relation of man to the cosmos and life.**

A: Of course.

**Q: You told me before that you have never been occupied with mythology, and from what I understand this was a conscious choice.**

A: Yes, I avoided it consciously, due to my gaps.

**Q: Yet, mythology does refer precisely to this imprint...**

A: Of course...

**Q: Does it not?**

A: Of course it does. Yet, I never even listened to fairytales.

**Q: Not even as a child?**

A: No.

**Q: And you did not listen to stories from Greek mythology, either, I assume.**

A: No. I never had any contact with mythology.

**Q: So, your first mythological memories are from school.**

A: Yes, they are from school. I grew up in a difficult period and in a 'difficult' geographical region. It was not easy to find a book to read. Neither in primary school, nor in high school. Even today, there is not a public library there.

(Another interruption occurs. The interview continues.)

**Q: Later, as an adult and as an artist, and as someone who was involved with theatre, with painting, and was close to important archaeologists, such as Andronikos, Romaïos, did you develop a different relationship with the stories of**

**Greek antiquity?**

A: Certainly. I am touched by the past, but not in the sense of merely talking about it and thus exiling it to the past...

**Q: Yes, yes...**

A: On the contrary, I use it in order to gain things that are significant and forceful for the present time.

**Q: Exactly, yes.**

A: This is my relation to tradition. This is my relation to our folk poetry, to our folk painting, to all those things, which are produced under specific social circumstances. I do not like fake things. I like people to feel thrilled, not to merely rephrase the past, in a different way.

**Q: Was it the lack of knowledge that stopped you from being occupied with mythology?**

A: No, no. It was that I did not have a 'structured' and solid perception of it. I did not possess a base upon which to approach things. Yet, this did not stop me from admiring what exists inside mythology.

**Q: What thrills you about mythology?**

A: The supernatural element and the element of surprise, of the 'unexpected'.

**Q: Ah ha.**

A: The element of the 'unexpected'. Zeus wanders around and I do not know what the fuck he does.

**Q: You like the twists in the plot.**

A: Ah...you bet I do!

**Q: And the kookiness.**

A: Ah, that kookiness...it is magnificent.

**Q: What is your favorite myth?**

A: I could not be very specific.

**Q: Is there a mythological hero that you like?**

A: No, there is not. I would say that it is my overall admiration for mythology that maintains my bound to the mythological world and keeps me connected to it. Did I phrase it correctly?

**Q: Yet, mythology is an open field of thought...**

A: Positively. Thank God.

**Q: ...which does not demand academic knowledge...**

A: No, but it does demand a kind of coherence.

**Q: What do you mean?**

A: I mean that in order to find myth inside you and to support it, you need to possess a cognitive base.

**Q: What do you mean by 'support'?**

A: Support through which my own possible version of myth will emerge.

**Q: In other words, you are afraid that your approach may be superficial; that it**

**may not succeed in penetrating the surface and go beyond the obvious.**

A: I would not say superficial, but rather 'inadequate'.

**Q: Yes.**

A: It is difficult to depart from this thrill-provoking realm and create something else. I get angry at those who merely transmit an iconographic adaptation of myth and make it soap, or whatever. Bullshit.

**Q: If you did have the cognitive tools, what would you look for, in 'digging' under the myth's surface?**

A: Look, I would look once again for outmost simplicity .

**Q: How is this interpreted in mythological terms? Who does represent this simplicity? Could it be Sisyphus, Prometheus, or the pre-Homeric myths?**

A: Yes. There purity in Prometheus. There is purity in his deeds. The fact that he was crucified and suffered the consequences of his actions is stirring.

**Q: Does this stand oppositely to the myths of the Classical period, with the twelve gods?**

A: Exactly. He was heretic. I mean I feel deeply shaken before Man's passion to do what he did and to suffer the consequences of his decision.

**Q: What about Odysseus?**

A: Well, Odysseus... Look, I am going to say banalities now...

**Q: Well, alright, we can leave Odysseus aside.**

A: Odysseus is not the issue... His journey also exists in contemporary life. The potency of the myths that came down to us through important works holds value today too.

**Q: This means that myths are a-historical.**

A: A-historical! A-historical... A-historical...

**Q: If there is such a word.**

A: A-historical. This means that they respond to the interpersonal relationships of contemporary humans and to their sufferings.

**Q: Could you name a myth that still survives nowadays?**

A: You put me in a difficult position.

**Q: For instance, some interviewees said that contemporary Prometheus could be Che Guevara.**

A: These things interest me very much and I thank you very much that you referred to Che. I would not say the same for Castro. I am touched by those individuals, who, under specific social circumstances, blow their life up, in order to meet with their vision. This is where the mythological origin lies. I am referring to completely unknown people, who, in marginal periods of our country, blew their lives up in the name of a vision, which was perhaps a utopia. They could have been quiet and mind their own business, no?

**Q: Of course they could.**

A: Yet, they blew up their life in the name of a dream. This relate to the mythological

dimension of those individuals that exist beyond the 'given'. Mythology is somewhere there, beyond the 'given'.

**Q: Yes.**

A: Is it?

**Q: You should tell me!**

A: No, I am not the one to tell you, my little bird! Mythology is beyond the 'given'. Mythology floats above the various factual 'givens' that exist from time to time. In other words, today, I would perceive mythology in the form of a utopian quest.

**Q: Do you mean that the human mind is one, and unaltered through time, and that it tends toward utopia?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Do you mean that the tendency is to go up and reach higher?**

A: Yes, of course.

**Q:...and, so, we create our archetypes, in order to climb the stairs.**

A: But, of course.

**Q: So, can we speak of the existence of contemporary Greek mythology, which is the smooth and continuous development of ancient mythology?**

A: I do not know, it is a big thing to say, since there have been so many historical discontinuities...

**Q: For example?**

A: But, my little bird, the 400 years of Turkish occupation...

**Q: Were there not any 'Prometheis' to release us?**

A: Of course there were and they moreover came from the field of religion. For instance, there was Cosmas the Aetolian<sup>1</sup>. He was a strange phenomenon. Instead of being quiet and staying in his house, he decided to help the nation and he moreover gave the people the stones that were destined for the building of churches and asked them to build schools instead. 'Later, we shall build a church too. But you should build first a school', he said.

**Q: Yes.**

A: These are the individuals who interest me and these are the individuals of my personal myth.

**Q: How does this myth help you? Does it free you from something? Does it reveal channels of thought?**

A: Of course. It delivers me, by default, because it surpasses banality.

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<sup>1</sup> St Cosmas the Aetolian is a canonized monk of the Greek Orthodox Church. He lived during the years of Greece's Turkish domination and dedicated his life to the preparation of the revolt of 1821, by reinforcing a feeling of Greek identity, through his promotion of the teaching of Greek language in schools that he himself established all over the Greek part of the Ottoman Empire. It is estimated that he established more than one hundred schools. St. Cosmas the Aetolian was finally executed by the Ottoman authorities on the suspicion that he was Russian agent.

**Q: Is ancient Greek mythology a national or a local language? In other words, does Thessaloniki have its own mythology, which is different to that of Athens?**

A: My opinion is that it does. Thessaloniki has its own distinctive tradition, exactly because it was the second biggest city and centre of the Byzantine Empire.

**Q: So Thessaloniki's mythology is Byzantine.**

A: Mainly, yes.

**Q: Do you visit archaeological museums?**

A: Of course.

**Q: Do you come across mythology in them? Do you know more about mythology, after a visit to an archaeological museum? Do you understand more about mythology?**

A: Ah, if it is a careful visit and if I have someone to guide me, then, yes. If I am alone, though, no. I am more ethereal, I tend to fly.

(Change of tape. The interview continues)

**Q: Would the ordinary museum visitor see in Greek mythology all that we have discussed?**

A: It is not easy, it is not easy.

You must be open to things. I do leave the museum being richer, honestly. I am not saying this because I want to boast, but I really feel that I become richer. A different aspect of things is revealed to me. This is a joy.

**Q: Yes. I would like to ask you one last thing. Could you give me a brief definition of myth?**

A: Whew!...You are looking now for definitions... Myth is the surpassing of banality, the surpassing of the everyday. I like people to mould their own, personal, myth.

**Q: Yes. Does ancient mythology help in this?**

A: It is stimulating, provided you know how to administrate this wealth.

**Q: Yes.**

A: There are people, who use it in a nationalist way. Is not that right? And there are people who say 'What the hell has this to do with me?'

**Q: Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 10

**Fani Melfou – Grammatikou**

**Date: 20/10/2005**

**Venue: Melfou – Grammatikou's residence, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: What are your childhood memories of ancient Greek mythology?**

A: My first memories are the stories that my father and my grandmother used to tell me. They would usually adapt the ancient myths and made them resemble folk tales; however in their essence they were stories from the ancient Greek mythology. Next, my memories are from the textbooks of elementary school, which had many stories from mythology. I remember most of the ancient myths thanks to these textbooks.

**Q: Did you like mythology as a child?**

A: Yes, very much. They were like fairytales and therefore they etched my memory.

**Q: I believe that back then you studied the Odyssey and the Iliad in High School from the prototype (in the ancient version and not translated)**

A: Yes, we studied them from the prototype and we also had to learn some extracts by heart.

**Q: What do you remember from the way that mythology was taught at school? Did the teachers analyze the myths and explain their meaning to you?**

A: They would mostly try to explain the myths from a symbolic point of view. For instance, in the myth of Arion the troubadour, a myth about music, they would analyze the importance that music has for humans and for their intellectual cultivation.

**Q: So, if I understand this correctly, your teachers would use the myths as an opportunity to teach about ancient Greek society, and in this specific case about the role of music within the ancient Greek civilization.**

A: Exactly

**Q: What relationship did you develop with mythology as an adult?**

A: After a point mythology stopped interesting me. Other things attracted me more, until children came and I started narrating to them stories from ancient Greek mythology. I bought books for the children and so my interest in mythology was revived.

**Q: So, you preferred ancient myths for the children instead of folk tales.**

A: Of course, I also narrated them folk tales, but I mostly focused on myths like the Odyssey and the deeds of Hercules and Theseus.

**Q: And why did you choose ancient Greek mythology?**

A: Well, on the one hand it is more interesting, but on the other hand it is also our heritage. Besides, many of the well known fairytales like Snowwhite or Little Red Riding Hood are rather improper for children. However, we still narrate them to children, children today still learn these stories.

**Q: So, you preferred ancient myths, as an alternative to these fairytales.**

A: Yes, exactly. And I named my daughter after a mythological heroine thanks to these

children's books. My husband and I saw her name in the myth of Aegeas, my husband liked the name very much, and since it is also a name with a symbolic significance, we named our daughter Aethra. I remember it were today: I was in the children's room with the book open on my knees; my husband took the book and said: 'what a beautiful name it is, Aethra! Look at the myth! If we have a girl, we shall name it Aethra.'

**Q: What were the symbolic elements of this name that made you like it so much?**

A: She was a young girl with divine origins and it was also a beautiful name! I do not remember finding another symbolism in the name, unless my husband knows something more about that.

**Q: In the following years, what was your relationship with mythology?**

A: When my children got married and made their own families, then I returned to my old interests, I returned to mythology and to writing. Mythology made its appearance in the novels that I started writing and that was not scheduled on my part; it was very spontaneous.

**Q: This goes more for your first novel. I do not remember mythology being present in the first book you wrote.**

A: In the first book mythology is present in the beginning, when old-Stratis speaks about a nymph, a fairy, who is hidden in an aquaduct and foresees the future. If you hear her laugh then the future shall be happy, but if you hear her cry, you should expect sorrow.

**Q: Is this myth your creation?**

A: I remember it from my grandmother.

**Q: So, it is a folk legend and not an ancient myth.**

A: Yes, this is right.

**Q: I remember too my grandfather telling me of bridges that were haunted by fairies who would still the voice of the night travellers.**

A: All these legends may stem from the mists of ancient Greek history.

**Q: In your second novel, 'Persa', the mythological references are more straightforward.**

A: Especially in two instances: when the grandfather tells his grandchildren stories about Eurybia, the goddess of war, who woke up one day and wanted to cause troubles to humanity by creating the Second World War. The second mythological reference lies in the symbolism of the heroine's name, Persa from Persephone, who goes through infelicities during the Possession period and then she emerges again on the surface, just like the mythical Persephone emerged on the surface of the earth.

**Q: So, a mythological symbolism transcends the whole book, as it underpins its core idea. However, the story happens in modern times and in this, suddenly and with no previous reference to mythology, the father of the family decides to speak to his children about war and he chooses no other way to do that than turn to Greek mythology. This was a big surprise to me.**

A: That was something that my father used to do a lot. As a teacher and a classicist, he used to narrate us stories from Greek mythology as well as folk tales.

**Q: I did not know this was a real incident. In the context of the book it is very striking that although there are no previous indications of such a thing, the father approaches the issues of war not by saying that there are the bad Germans who want to take the land of the good Greeks, as the stereotype goes, but instead he does so in a very allegorical way.**

A: That is right.

**Q: Why did he do that?**

A: I imagine that he did that in order to teach us that in a war no one is by definition good or bad; that in war everybody has an aim and an objective. He wanted to teach us that one should expect to go both through good and bad phases in our lives and that in this light, war is also inevitable. In this way, my father wanted to make us philosophize on the situation and thus get over it as harmlessly as possible. I imagine that is why he did it. He was this kind of person, in general; he liked to find an excuse for everything; he did not like to cause bitter feelings.

**Q: Did your father then use the myth in order to provide you with a diachronic allegory and thus remove war from its specific temporal and local context?**

A: Maybe he wanted to make war seem more humane, because he was thinking that we were children and that war's impact on our souls was huge.

**Q: He wanted to lighten the impressions with a fairytale.**

A: And deliver us the hope that all will pass, that this was just a moment, a period, a phase of our lives.

**Q: Are there any references to mythology in your new book?**

A: There are more mythological references in my new novel. There is Aggelis the sailor there, who tells his grandson many stories. He begins with how he met the mermaid, Alexander the Great's sister, three times in his travels and he narrates the entire myth of the mermaid, who asks the sailors if her brother is alive, and if they reply 'yes, he lives and he rules', then she calms the sea and she lets them pass; but if they reply that he is dead, then she creates a sea storm and she drowns the sailors. Then, Aggelis briefly narrates the story of Arion the troubadour and the story of Odysseus and the Sirens. Additionally, there are references to the Bible in the book and more specifically to Jonah who was swallowed by a big fish. These references were included into the book, because, as I explained to my daughter, I think that younger people do not know many things about mythology and I believe that you should know some things. I am not sure if you were taught mythology at school, I cannot remember.

**Q: My memories from those years are very hazy, but I remember that we did learn mythology at school.**

A: For us the things we were taught were much clearer. And this is the reason why I included all these mythological references. And what is more, at first, I had written all the myths, but then I thought that it would probably be tiring, since the book is a novel and so I referred to the myth of the mermaid analytically and I only said two words about the rest.

**Q: You mean that at first you analyzed all the myths that you wrote about in the novel.**

A: I make a simple mention to all the others and I only analyze the myth of the mermaid.

**Q: You could add a mythological glossary at the end, where the reader could read about the myths analytically.**

A: I will consider doing this, as the book has not been published yet. On the other hand, the general public is supposed to be familiar with these myths.

**Q: It is supposed to be. Is this really happening, though? The important thing is the public to be given the chance to learn about ancient myths.**

A: Well, I had many pages on myths, which I then cut out.

**Q: A glossary might be useful in this case.**

A: I have explained to Aethra, that I write so much about mythology, because I believe that you do not know enough things about it. The tradition of knowledge about the ancient Greek past must be continued.

**Q: Is mythology important to you because it is a beautiful narration, or because it somehow connects us to the mythical past of our ancestors, to a past that is often considered to be better and more significant than the present?**

A: I opt for the second and I think that we should know mythology mainly because this is our heritage, these are our origins. By this I mean that we have to know where we come from, what our civilization was and we developed. It is very important for the children to know their origins, where their culture started from and how it developed.

**Q: So, you believe that the myths I studied can reveal values of and facts about the civilization that created them?**

A: Yes, of course. Naturally, all myths are not ethical, but one can find nice myths too. In myths there are also murders and in general violence.

**Q: However, we could learn history, instead of mythology, in order to get to know the ancient culture.**

A: It is not the same, because in this way you cannot really retain much information; I know this from my own experience. I do not remember when, for instance, the Pelonisian War took place, but I remember all of Hercules' deeds, or some other incidents that were passed down to us in the form of a myth. Myths etch memory much more than historical facts.

**Q: It is easier then for the brain to retain information through a nice story.**

**Do you believe that apart from that, myths also bear some symbolisms that relate to ancient society as much as to the contemporary one?**

A: Yes, I believe that. They bear some diacronic values. I believe that the basic values of mythology still exist, because in the very end even the bad elements of mythology, such as competition -be it good or bad-, also exist in contemporary society and we cannot reject or disguise them. Under this assumption, children should learn about them. It is like a lesson, an experience that they need to acquire.

**Q: Could mythology then be a lesson of self-knowledge?**

A: Yes, it could, because I believe that the 2,500 years that have passed since antiquity is a

very short time period within eternity and therefore not many things have changed since then in terms of human values. There is a continuity and children could learn a lot from this, they could draw some conclusions and they could gain self-knowledge.

**Q: Mythology can be both a lesson of history and a lesson of self-knowledge, it depends on where the reader chooses to focus.**

A: Yes.

**Q: Do you visit museums?**

A: I do and the funny thing is that I mostly visit museums in the cities I travel to and not in Thessaloniki; for instance, I have been to museums in Kastoria, Kavala as well as on islands like Limnos, where I last traveled. We take the museum of the city we reside in for granted, we only visit it once and that is all. Anyway, the answer is, yes, I do visit museums.

**Q: I gather that this also goes for archaeological museums.**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: Do you come across ancient mythology in museums?**

A: Very often.

**Q: Is mythology there attributed a particular significance, or is it always merely a superficial mention?**

A: I think that mythology is very often present in museums and that the mention of mythology there is not superficial. At least, this is the impression I have gained, because mythology is interwoven with history. When we speak of the Trojan War we refer to Helen's kidnapping too. History and mythology are entirely interwoven, they cannot be separated, at least cannot separated, without me being an expert.

**Q: In accordance with what we have so far discussed, do you believe that contemporary museums succeed in presenting mythology as a lesson of history and self-knowledge, as a channel towards the understanding of the human mind and of one's self?**

A: Naturally, a museum cannot succeed in this on its own. The visitor has to be familiar with the subject too.

**Q: Does the museum in any case provide the stimulus for a further study and understanding of mythology by the visitor?**

A: Yes, this does happen. The museum can provide a stimulus, but one has to dedicate some time and also the visitor has to be cultivated, so that the museum visit will not be a superficial experience. In any case though, the visitor takes something with him/her after a museum visit, even if the visitor is not a guru. I noticed that in the museum of Xanthi, which I visited recently, each one of the visitors was attracted to a different display. However, everybody found something interesting to look at, even though their tastes were so diverse. For instance, one was interested in fossils, whereas another was attracted to a statue. This is something too, I think; this too has an influence, a certain result.

**Q: However, it leaves perhaps too much to the personal initiative of the visitor and to the visitor's ability to understand things.**

A: Exactly. A large part of the museum experience depends on the visitor's personal interests. For instance, the ladies focused more on jewelry, while the gentlemen spent more time looking at the tools.

**Q: However, especially for mythology I guess that in this way misconceptions can be easily created. I talk to people who by the depiction of a maenad anthropophagy scene on a crater draw the conclusion that cannibalism was practiced in ancient Greece and that the limits of the morally and socially acceptable were so different, that atrocities could occur where people would eat each other's flesh. This is how stereotypes about the 'savage primitives' are born and perpetuated. Mythology is full of symbolisms, which can potentially lead to misunderstandings, if are not decoded. The visitor can leave the museum with the wrong impression about things, or even without any impression at all, when mythology is perceived merely as a fictional story.**

A: I believe that this happens to very few only, or at least to those that have no knowledge of history whatsoever. I think that this is unlikely to happen. I have never thought about it; it could happen, but I find it very unlikely. Of course there are stories in Greek mythology about human sacrifices and the likes, but all this is symbolic. Of course ordinary people can misinterpret these things, but I believe that deep down they believe this not to be real and that eventually *deus ex machina* will appear and everything will fall into place. I think that this is how most people perceive this. Of course, there might be some exceptions, but again, for these visitors there will exist something else to attract their attention.

**Q: Is mythology alive outside museums, in contemporary society?**

A: Sadly what I believe is that it exists in advertisements, in slogans, in shop signs; I do not think it survives in any other field. Sometimes it also exists in the fashion industry, when chitons become fashionable again. These aside, I do not think that mythology is alive in contemporary society.

**Q: Does this mean that mythology has become a word that is deprived of meaning, a notional comfort?**

A: Yes, almost like this. Sometimes it is also present in press of jewelry, when they are made with the traditional techniques. However, I think that the knowledge and the interests of the jewel buyer will not be affected; he/she mostly focuses on the aesthetic aspect of the jewel.

**Q: In other words, mythology has not survived as a cultural and intellectual value.**

A: In my generation it was still present as a value. I do not know how much aware the new generation is of that.

**Q: Is mythology being misused today?**

A: I think so, mainly in advertisements. For instance, a naked mermaid in an advert constitutes a misuse, because as an image it focuses on the sexual element, which is not representative of what the mermaid is.

**Q: Is mythology involved in politics?**

A: Only when it comes to names and by those who want to serve nationalist ideologies.

**Q: Like with the identification of Thessaloniki with the mermaid, Alexander the Great's sister.**

**A: Or with the star of Vergina.**

**Q: Thank you.**

## Appendix 11

**Prodromos Markoglou**

**Date: 15/11/2005**

**Venue: Markoglou residence, Kalamaria, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: I have selected three of your works and I have noted down on my paper three different remarks on them. Shall we start from this, then?**

A: Yes, please.

**Q: You do not really use mythology in your poems.**

A: No, because the poem usually - and I underline 'usually' - refers to a contemporary space and time and therefore mythology can only be used as a symbol. That is, when I do refer to mythology, I refer to it as something which has a symbolic meaning.

**Q: That is...**

A: That is an image that symbolizes something, or a symbol that can be transformed into the contemporary era.

**Q: We shall refer to these more specifically a bit later. However, in general terms, your poetry is very 'earthly'.**

A: That is right.

**Q: It is a poetry that refers to everyday life.**

A: Yes, this is how it is.

**Q: The vocabulary you use is that of everyday life, like as the images of your poetry. And the references to the past that exist in your poems, or at least the references that I am aware of, as for instance those in your poem 'The House'...**

A:...yes, yes...

**Q: ...refer to the recent past and more specifically to your own experiences.**

A: Yes, that is right.

**Q: I have not come across the classical past, for instance, in your works.**

A: No...Look if you take into account that I was born in 1935, then my personal experiences date from 1940 onwards.

**Q: Yes. Well, ok, none of the contemporary artists were born in ancient Greece...**

A:...sure...

**Q:...but many of them do have references to...**

A:...sure, that goes without saying. One can use the past, say, in a contemporary way.

**Q: It has struck me that I have not come across any reference at all to that renowned glorious Classical past in your poems.**

A: No, because it does not fit into the reality that I describe in my poems.

**Q: Yes.**

A: Because I mostly describe everyday life. My poems are mostly 'existential', but they

do so by being placed into a social context. For me, a poem is created with two parameters: one is the 'experiential' parameter of the poem and the second is the social context within which the poet lives and receives the things that occur around him; he receives these things, he elaborates them through emotions and thoughts and subsequently they are free again to emerge in the form of speech or even myth.

**Q: You have described this process in a very nice way in your treatise on the poem and the poet, on the poem's genesis.**

A: Exactly.

**Q: Also,...**

A: Where did you find this treatise?

**Q: I found it on the website of 'diapolitismos' a while ago.**

A: A-ha! How on earth did it appear on that website?

**Q: I do not know!**

A: Someone must have posted it!

**Q: There are other works from you on that website too!**

A: Yes, yes, I know. I am not familiar at all with the Internet!!! I have no idea what they put on those websites.

**Q: There are quite a few things from you there.**

A: That is fine.

**Q: What I wanted to say is that in your poems you speak of the defeat of the left, you speak of a reality that is rather gloomy...**

A:...yes, sure...

**Q:...and I gain the impression that the glorious Classical past, with the applauds and the olive branches, the prizes of victory, simply do not have a place in that reality.**

A: No, this cannot be done, unless someone would like to write - I return to what I was saying before now - that he/she will take images or symbols from the past and he/she will transfer them into contemporary reality, where he/she shall use them as a myth. For instance, I say 'Scylla and Charybdis'. We can transfer this into contemporary reality, into an everyday conversation and say: 'I walked out of the park and I bumped into Scylla and Charybdis', in the sense that someone beat me up. Do you understand?

**Q: Yes. But that could not have been a pure, direct reference...**

A: No, no...

**Q: I might be wrong, but I get the impression that you regard this whole thing...**

A: This thing simply does not express me. I cannot express myself through this thing; otherwise, I would have used it. I cannot express myself through that past. Because that past is the expression of some other things, and I prefer, through an everyday language, to speak of what is going on around me, or at least the things that I myself have experienced.

**Q: Let us move on then to those few references of yours to Greek mythology.**

A: Yes, yes, let us start with this and then maybe we will come up with more things, along the conversation, you know.

**Q: Here, for instance, in 'And the poets wonder', where you speak of the fighting man.**

A: Yes, yes. How a man dies...This is a verse by Seferis.

**Q: Here you have two references to the past. The one reference is to Rigas<sup>1</sup> and the other is to Digenis<sup>2</sup>. In this case, again, I notice that you do not choose to refer, for instance, to Prometheus as a symbol of the hero.**

A: No, I prefer to use some more familiar figures, some figures that are closer to us. For instance, Digenis belongs to the beginnings of the Greek state and contemporary Greek society is supposedly based on the liberal ideas of Rigas. So, these figures stand closer to us. That is why I do not go that far back in time. Also Digenis is a figure of the Greek folk tradition, which we are very familiar with. That 'stone (sic) threshing floor'<sup>3</sup> on which one wrestles, is an expression that we use every day with our children, etc. And we even read these poems of the folk tradition at school and I think that a reference to them is a reference to something more familiar than, say, a reference to Prometheus would be. When you refer to Prometheus, you refer to something that is more 'formal'; perhaps this reference is expressive of a different ideology, less related to what concerns us in our everyday lives. Namely, this is how I see it.

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<sup>1</sup>Rigas Feraios (1757-1798): a Greek revolutionary and poet, remembered as a Greek national hero, the forerunner and first victim of the uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Around 1793 Feraios edited in Vienna a Greek-language newspaper, *Ephemeris*, and created and published a proposed political map of *Great Greece* which included Constantinople. He also printed pamphlets based on the principles of the French Revolution, including *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* and a *New Political Constitution of the Inhabitants of Rumeli, Asia Minor, the Islands of the Aegean, and the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia*. He intended to distribute these in an effort to stimulate a Pan-Balkan uprising against the Ottomans. He also published many Greek translations of foreign works, and collected his poems in a manuscript that was printed in Iasio after Feraios' death in 1814. Feraios radically used the Demotic instead of the ancient Greek in his works.

<sup>2</sup>Digenis Acritas: the mediaeval Greek hero of the most famous epic poem that emerged out of the 12th century Byzantine Empire, following the Acritic tradition. The Arab incursions into Byzantine territory are the context within which the first part of the tale unfolds, the events in the part of the narrative concerning the family history of the central hero seem to be located beyond a climate of conflict. The reconciliation of the two peoples through the marriage of the leading figures of the tale and the triumph of Christianity over Islam, achieved through the conversion and reception of the emir and his people into Byzantine society, is the key theme of the first part. Their son is given the Christian name Basil but goes by the epithet Digenis, translated as "Twyborn", because of his mixed Greek & Syrian lineage, and Acritas because he lives on the borders of the Empire. The rest of the story is of his adventures, central to which is his abduction of "the Girl" (who is never named) and unfolds against a background of generally peaceful coexistence of the two peoples. Written in early Modern Greek by an anonymous author, it marks together with the other acritic poems, the beginnings of Greek vernacular literature.

<sup>3</sup>The correct phrase is marble threshing floor

The tape recorder breaks down at this point and Mr. Markoglou lends me the tape recorder of his son to go on with the interview.

**Q: Thank you very much for this. I hope that not many things were lost. To sum up then, we were talking about the creation of myths and the different mechanisms that exist behind this creation from one nation to another, from a tribe to another and from a period in time to another.**

A: Yes, yes, as well as from one place to another.

**Q: Very nice. Let us move now from this poem. Something that I have noted down is the reference to Pegasus in your poem 'Moon, unreachable slit'.**

A: Ah...

**Q: Would you like me to read it for you?**

A: I never remember my poems by heart.

**Q: You can have a look then. So, what I notice here is that...did you find it?**

A: Ah, yes. Here though the reference to Pegasus is in a metaphorical sense.

**Q: Exactly.**

A: I write: 'with the blood of Pegasus in the veins' and I mean poetry. This was put here in this sense.

**Q: I notice that this reference is anyway found in a poem that is much more lyrical and allegorical than most of your poems.**

A: That is for sure.

**Q: I imagine that this is not a coincidence.**

A: And here too a little myth exists.

**Q: It is not coincidental then that you used Pegasus in such a lyrical poem.**

A: Yes, yes...maybe...yes, yes. Yes, because as I was writing it, I felt that a reference to the name of Pegasus suited the flow of the poem. This reference gave the poem a different image, of a flying horse. Instead of using the word poetry I used the word Pegasus. Poetry as a word does not correspond to an image, whereas Pegasus gives the poem a certain image. That is what I wanted to achieve and this is why I use the word Pegasus.

**Q: Well...I have the impression that the present is quite clearly divided from the past in terms of the ideology that the past and the present express.**

A: Neither the chronological period, nor the people are the issue; the issue and what is divided inside me are the expressions.

**Q: However, you do not like mixing the past with the present.**

A: I cannot express myself through old symbols. And perhaps I do not need to do so. I usually express myself through contemporary images. That is, I do not transfer what I want to say into a different ideological use, in order for me to extract images from...This is very rare.

**Q: Good.**

A: If you wish, I feel that the image from the past will be degraded if I put it in such an everyday context.

**Q: So, your fear is not that the contemporary reality that you wish to describe will be degraded due to the use of a symbol from the antiquity, but the other way round.**

A: It is the mythological symbol that will be degraded.

**Q: Why is that?**

A: Look now, if I take the myth of Heracles and say that Heracles came to earth to collect the garbage that is piled up on the street, trying to draw a parallelism with the Augeias' Dung, well, this simply is not suitable.

**Q: However, did not we say before that mythology is something that constantly flows and which is constantly being reformed?**

A: Yes, but the context is not suitable.

**Q: You do not find it suitable in terms of aesthetics?**

A: In terms of aesthetics, too, but at the same time there is also a notional issue. The labour of Heracles is something that is characterized by grandeur, it is a labour that refers to big volume, it is a heroic deed. If we say that Heracles collected the garbage, then this is neither a heroic deed, nor does it refer to something awesome in dimensions, but it also does not express a certain ideology. Whereas, in the myth, Heracles is the symbol of a certain ideology. He is the man who fights against an old world, because he wants to change this old world into a new one.

**Q: However, would you ever metamorphose Heracles into a protesting tobacco worker<sup>4</sup>? Here the parallel is not humble anymore.**

A: No, the symbol here would not be Heracles either. I think that the symbol that one has to look for is different. Heracles has never been used in this way. Neither has Ritsos<sup>5</sup> ever used him in this way.

**Q: I am not referring specifically to this combination of course.**

A: Yes, of course. Because I am telling you that these old symbols had embodied in them an ideology that is different to the contemporary one. I mean, just like we use religious symbols today, this sense was also more or less embodied inside ancient symbols too. Let us not forget that most heroes were gods, they were demigods, that is they were figures who did not possess the everyday, human, dimension. They also had another, universal dimension. It was a universal interpretation. So, this is why one finds it difficult to use them in a very realistic everyday context. It do not know...they are used by others and are indeed used. Many authors have references to Greek mythology. Isn't it so?

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<sup>4</sup> Tobacco workers and their fights are frequently referred to in Markoglou's poetry.

<sup>5</sup> Yiannis Ritsos: Greek poet of the left and Nobel prize winner.

**Q: Yes, indeed.**

A: However, you will always notice that these figures are used in the context of situations that are not too ordinary.

**Q: Yes.**

A: And maybe they are situations which wish to provide a broader interpretation of the world, or of a situation, in order to magnify it, and thus these mythological symbols are incorporated into the work and give a given situation a dimension that is beyond the humble, the ordinary and the human.

**Q: As is the case in the 'Garden of the Princesses'<sup>6</sup>, of Bakolas for instance, with Cassandra and Orestes.**

A: Yes. There we have a case of mythicization, in which Bakolas takes the ancient figures, wanting to incorporate them into contemporary circumstances, so that the passions of contemporary people will be linked to the old passions; thus he wishes to give those passions bigger dimensions, he gives them a universal dimension. In other words, as the love between the two protagonists is engrafted onto the mythological figures, it takes a universal dimension. He takes that love relationship, which is an everyday situation, into a different level, onto a universal dimension. This is when mythology is born, that is when it is transferred from the ordinary and everyday level to a broader level.

**Q: However, in this way we cannot say that a new mythology is being produced, but rather that the ancient one is being reformed.**

A: We do not have the genesis of a new mythology, but ordinary persons are connected to mythological person and thus their dimensions are expanded.

**Q: Do you mean that it is there that the diachronic nature of mythology becomes obvious?**

A: Exactly. And not only that, but also the human passions acquire a universal proportion and a diachronic character. In other words, the human passions are equated to the passions of some noble figures.

**Q: What I am trying to understand is why are Orestes and Cassandra, for instance, noble figures after all. Is it because they belong to a noble and acclaimed past?**

A: It is because many human situations have been incorporated into these figures. Right? As these symbols functioned throughout the centuries, human situations, human passions and ideologies were incorporated into them, and thus these symbols reach our times in a magnified form.

**Q: So, symbols gain their dynamics through the passage of time.**

A: Of course.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Garden of the Princesses': Novel by Nikos Bakolas that takes the names and the general plot from the myths of the House of the Atreides and puts them into a slum of interwar Athens.

**Q: They do not possess a certain dynamics in the moment of their birth.**

A: Of course. That is, provided they do function and interpret the world. People receive them, they invest in them and they provide anew an interpretation of the world through the old symbols.

**Q: And besides this is their value.**

A: Yes. This is what Bakolas does in his novel. He takes ordinary people, he bridges, through some names and some actions, the historic chasm and he transfers the contemporary individuals into a situation, into, say, a mythical dimension, thus expanding them; thus the ordinary human passion gains a universal value. In other words, love now becomes a universal phenomenon. It loses its humble nature and the symbol is created. That is, when Costas becomes Orestes, he becomes a symbol. And because this symbol comes to us from a very old time and thus it is imbued with all things that humans have deposited on the symbol, it is expanded and it gains a universal dimension. The same thing would also hold true for Christ, or for other names too.

**Q: Yes.**

A: In this sense, you can say Persephone.

**Q: So, the use of mythology in a contemporary context is meaningful when it aims to raise the contemporary situation to a higher level.**

A: Exactly.

**Q: And not when it is simply used as an image, like in the case of Heracles and the collection of the garbage, for instance.**

A: There, well I do not know. I mean one could use it as a metaphor, but it will not have the dimension that it should have. Because in mythology there is always a bigger dimension; it is a symbol that interprets the world. This is the main thing. As a consequence, since it is a symbol that interprets the world, it has a big dimension. Because, as we said, people have deposited on this symbol, they have accumulated on this symbol, many experiences, which in the end give this world its dimension. Just like the experience they deposited on the name 'Christ', and which provides the dimension of a vast, universal world, within which man does not get lost, rather he/she exists diachronically and indeed defeats this vast world. And he/she experiences this world forever and ever and until the end of time. You see what a great dimension this thing gains and this is why it becomes a symbol and a myth. If it does not gain these dimensions, which at the same time have to also interpret man, that is to provide man with interpretations with which the individual is identified and becomes universal, then it shall not become a myth.

**Q: Ok, now I've got it. Now I understand where the difference in the two uses of mythology is pinpointed. We could have Odysseus on a bus, then.**

A: We could, why not?

**Q: And he could go through a very interesting 'Odyssey' on that bus.**

A: Joyce's 'Ulysses', which is unfolded in 24 hours or so, is more or less...and besides this is why Joyce did it, in order for him to express this adventure, this flow of time, which is depicted mainly through these two persons, and, as we pass from one stage to another, instead of having Odysseus' adventures in the way that Homer gives them to us, here we have some everyday situations of his protagonists, which by Joyce wanting to identify them with some mythological figures, he gives them a bigger universal dimension.

**Q: So, the important thing in myths' use is the person to become universal. This is the final target.**

A: Exactly. Myth takes the subjective into a universal dimension. This is the basic thing. And man can also experience this, through the image of myth, or rather through the symbol of myth.

**Q: By 'man' you refer to the reader, I guess.**

A: The reader, the watcher, or...

**Q: Why is it easy for man to experience that through myth? Is it because myth is so familiar?**

A: Because it is condensed into something as small as an image, or a word, which succeeds in taking the subjective element and transferring it into a universal dimension.

**Q: So, myth then is a communication code...**

A: Exactly, exactly.

**Q:...between the art creator and the audience.**

A: Exactly. The individual says 'My Christ' and through this he/she becomes the universe itself in eternity. The dimension of the subject becomes universal until the end of time. That's it. Now it is clear. The subject says 'My Christ' and in that very moment it becomes universal and eternal.

**Q: In another case, I have the impression that you use Sun [the ancient Greek god], or at least that is how I understand it. In 'I was holding you by the hand'.**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: I think that what you describe here is clearly a mythological scene.**

A: Look now, the sun does not have a particularly symbolic character here. It is just that the 'four horses chariot' is identified with the chariot of the Sun.

**Q: Of course it does.**

A: I mean the sun here is the real sun, that we see in the sky.

**Q: Of course. However, you choose to present the sun through a mythological image.**

A: Exactly, in order for a not completely ordinary dimension to be given to the described incident. Say that the poet, or any man, looks at the woman's eyes and he sees the sun to trace out a route into her eyes, and here is where I put the 'four horse chariot'

identifying the mythical chariot of the sun with the very specific sun of the described incident, which again gains this universal dimension. It departs from the ordinary dimension and it becomes a different symbol.

**Q: In that case the subject and the incident grow bigger through myth.**

A: Exactly.

**Q: And this, as we said, happens thanks to the diachronic nature and the accumulated dynamics of the myth.**

A: Yes, because the chariot with the four horses is already a symbol and so suddenly the everyday sun is transferred onto a different level.

**Q: Ok. Do you see all these things that we talked about, or at least some of them, in museums? Do you see the dynamics of myth as well as the potential it has to identify the subject...**

A: No, no, because there is not a...Look now, I believe that this could happen, provided of course we also have the respective findings.

**Q: Findings do exist.**

A: Yes, they exist. So, this could happen from the moment that some archaeologists or art historians,...

**Q: or museologists**

A: or museologists had the ability to take those things and combine them in a way, so that they can transmit exactly this thing to the visitor. Namely, these symbols to transport the visitor onto a universal level. I think that this function is indeed accomplished from time to time. Specifically, when I went to Delphi and saw the 'Charioteer' I was not looking at the 'Charioteer' anymore. This statue is so imposing that it takes you some place else. I do not know. This is already an interpretation and a mythology. The same thing goes for that Sphinx they have in Delphi and which from...I do not remember.

**Q: from Naxos.**

A: Is it from Naxos?

**Q: Yes, it is.**

A: Ok, it is from somewhere, I do not remember. This Sphinx is amazing. I mean you really think that she will pose you the questions. This means specifically that art achieves the incorporation of the beliefs and the visions of the artist, as well as the images he/she head in his/her head as well as his/her ideology, because the artworks always express a certain ideology. The artist succeeded in expressing them in such a drastic way that the transfer is direct. So, a visitor who is only a little aware of the situation receives these things right away.

**Q: Yes, however we should take into account that not everyone has the ability to be aware beforehand.**

A: No, no, watch out now. Because I always underline that art can be taught. Art cannot function in a completely uneducated or rather in a completely crude individual. It cannot function. It is about codes. We have to learn to read. It is like chemistry, where you have to learn the types in order to understand that H<sub>2</sub>O means water. One who has not been taught that cannot understand. This is how is perceive the function of art. People have always been cultivating and retaining these codes and this is how they manage to communicate through them. Because what you see in the museum was a code of communication for them, just like the icons of the saints are for us today. People go to the church and they recognize the figures of the icons. If an Aboriginal came though and saw an icon of Saint George, he would only see a man and a horse. He/she would not receive anything, he/she would not be able to be emotionally stirred. So, the codes of art function in a society that has embraced them.

**Q: Or that has produced them.**

A: Yes.

**Q: However, I think that what happens is that today we have embraced Classical culture, though without having produced it, and this is where we miss a link.**

A: Ok. Watch now. As we, here in Greece are more familiar with the mythology that is incorporated into this culture, we feel more touched by it. A foreigner, though, who is not familiar with it - and I am not referring to Western Europeans now - shall perceive this only in terms of aesthetics. He/she will look at the Sphinx and say 'wow! How beautiful!'

**Q: Will not the same thing happen to a Greek museum visitor, though?**

A: It will, but at the same time this person is also more familiar with myth.

**Q: Is it so?**

A: Well, since children are taught mythology, or at least some elements of it, I believe that they are more familiar with it.

**Q: In what way though? Mythology is being taught in the form of a fairytale, of a narration.**

A: Yes. This is what it is. It is the ideology of an era.

**Q: But it is not taught in the form of ideology!**

A: No, it is not, it is not. It is up to the individual to perceive it like this. The fairytale, though, is not an interpretation of the world too?

**Q: It is, provided you possess the codes in order for you to read it as such.**

A: For instance, what is 'Little Red Riding Hood'? It is a symbol into which the fears and the hopes for some things have been incorporated and thus the symbol does potentially function in a redemptory way to the child that listens to the tale. The child is identified with the hero of the fairytale and is also emotionally stirred and eventually the deliverance comes. So, this is how all myths function.

**Q: My mind is still fixed on the Sphinx and I am thinking how easy it is...**

A: I told you that the Sphinx is perceived solely in aesthetic terms by the majority. The few ones who have a different sort of culture and education communicate with the exhibit in a totally different way.

**Q: Is it not, though, a bit unfair for the museum to be addressed only to the few, to those who have read, for instance, Lévi Strauss?**

A: Unfortunately, education in Greece has always been an issue of social class. And although I am a Marxist, I do not know whether there will ever be a society in the future with no social discriminations of class. Because there will always be individuals who are interested in something and individuals who are not interested in something.

**Q: Do you think that these social class issues could be partly overcome in the museum by a convergence between the past and the present? Would you be interested in that? When you bring the museum visitor face-to-face with something he/she is familiar with in his/her everyday life and ask the visitor to think through familiar terms and not through exclusive scientific knowledge...**

A: I do not know, I am a bit cautious towards this mix and match.

**Q: Why?**

A: I am afraid that things will get blurry.

**Q: You are afraid of the meaningless and unfair equation of things.**

A: Yes, yes. I would like societies to be able to function in such a way that education will be of very high standards. I believe only in this thing. I believe in an education that will focus on man. This is when the history of humankind will function as it should. Because if we look at it, we shall see that it is the names that vary and not the essence, which is the need of man for deliverance. This is always the same. And this happens also with contemporary art. This is why I am very cautious. For instance, when it comes to installations, I have my doubts. The expression of the artist is not clear. I find it difficult to communicate with them as I do with a painting and I cannot receive the sense of deliverance that I search for.

**Q: I would like, to come to an end to know, what is it that scares you in the combination of the past with the present in the museum.**

A: I am afraid that the terms will not be clear to me. And I will feel that there might be a pitfall.

**Q: A parallel could also be drawn though between, say, a vase with Orestes and Cassandra and the myth that Bakolas created.**

A: Yes, but how will you present that myth? You need the object!

**Q: The object is only the starting point.**

A: I mean, OK, we have the vase. What will you take from Bakolas' work? You need something similar.

**Q: I believe that the museum should not be that negative towards text, provided it is used in the right way. Even five crucial lines can be decisive in taking the visitor's attention away from the object solely and lift it onto another level.**

A: Yes, yes. This is difficult though. On the other hand, if the objects are not uniform,...I do not know. I mean there could also be videos...However, you need something that is visual, something that will depict the text. Unless we tell the visitor to read the book before the visit (laughter).

**Q: Come on, no...**

A: But you can perhaps put a verse, only a verse.

**Q: Exactly.**

A: Yes, you could. Why not. Yes, this could happen.

**Q: It certainly is not easy.**

A: There could also be music in the museum. Good, good.

**Q: It is a pity because with the attachment to the object huge aspects of a civilization, like mythology, are lost.**

A: Yes, they do not come to the foreground. They are not accentuated.

**Q: Why not refer, for instance, to the various interpretations of the myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx?**

A: Yes. Although that could be a bit limiting. On the other hand, though, this is a proposed interpretation too.

**Q: I would like to ask two more typical things.**

A: Yes.

**Q: Did you like mythology as a child?**

A: As I said, I learnt to read when I was ten years old and therefore I discovered mythology a bit late. I loved it though, and my children love it too. And I believe that what I love in mythology is the identification with its figures that at the same time though supersede you. You are not you anymore, you are something bigger. You identify with Heracles and you live the adventure with him. And myths are also fascinating as narrations, because they manage to activate all the internal powers of man: the brain, the emotions, the sentiments, the speech, and even the hearing. This is why there is also the pleasure you feel when you listen to myths. And this because myths still exist today.

**Q: Could you give a brief definition of mythology?**

A: The only thing I could say is that mythology is the condensation of life and of its anticipations and of its interpretations into a symbol.

**Q: Ok, thank you very much.**

## Appendix 12

**Sotos Zachariadis**

**Date: 30/ 10/ 2006 and 18/11/2006**

**Venue: Zachariadis' workshop, Thessaloniki.**

### Meeting A

**Q: The reason why I came to meet you in the first place was the symposium 'Doureios Ippos' (Trojan Horse).<sup>1</sup>**

**A: Do you want to know why the particular title was chosen?**

**Q: Yes, I would also like to know how the idea to organize a symposium with the topic of 'Doureios Ippos' emerged? How did you decide to organize this symposium around an ancient Greek story around, say, the sea, which is a broader and more widely accessible topic?**

A: Well. In that period, that is around '91, I had a gallery in Mitropoleos street. Thanks to this gallery I worked with Greek as well as European artists, particularly with Germans, through 'GOETHE', the German Institute of Thessaloniki. In the same period I presented my works in individual exhibitions, in Germany. Through these exhibitions I had the opportunity to meet German artists and to think that it is common for Greek artists to travel abroad, to countries of the western world, in order to see art, to meet artists and to learn how life in these countries is in general. I also thought that since foreign artists already come to Greece as tourists, it would be nice to come to Greece in order to produce art, to be sort of 'cultural tourists' that is, and then to present their works. In that first symposium German and Greek artists participated, whereas the following meetings were international. The first symposium was decided, in collaboration with the German artists, to take place between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, that is in a non-tourist period, and to last 20 days, that is enough time for the artists to produce some work. The symposium was realized in Nea Fokia, in Chalkidiki, and the artists camped there for 20 days, creating a sort of commune. At first the majority of the participants were visual artists and there was also an art theorist, Michael Karna from Germany, who then moved on to other art forms too. Thus, all these people with their multiple artistic backgrounds had the opportunity to discuss their artistic inquiries: how a painter creates an artwork; how music is written; what makes an author write a novel; how can one art form relate to the other. So, this is the reason why the symposium was organized in the first place. I thought that a topic would be necessary and since the symposium was taking place in Greece, I thought that the topic should be Greek. I also thought that this topic should be general but at the same

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<sup>1</sup> The original name of 'Trojan Horse' is 'Doureios Ippos'. 'Ippos' in Greek means horse, while 'Doureios' in ancient Greek means a 'wooden stick' as well as a 'spear'. So, in Greek the word 'Doureios' indicates the building material of the horse and at the same time the nature of the Greek gift, being a weapon. Therefore, in the context of this interview any reference to the word 'Doureios' contains both meanings.

time distinctively Greek. So, the topic could not have been as broad as the 'sea', because there is sea in Italy, in Spain, as well as in Morocco. So, I decided that I would have to opt for an ancient Greek topic.

**Q: So, you were looking for Greece's trademark, in a sense.**

A: Yes. I did not want to use Byzantium, to which I did refer in the course of the symposium, but in a different, rather indirect way.

**Q: Why was that?**

A: Because I thought that the ancient Greek civilization is more recognizable to a broader audience. And among the elements of the ancient Greek civilization, I wanted to find something that, on the one hand, is familiar to everybody, and on the other hand, has an artistic dynamic and impact, since my initial 'target group' were visual artists.

**Q: Did the works that were presented at the symposium already exist?**

A: No, they were made *in situ* and in the context of the symposium.

**Q: How did you know then that the specific topic would have this artistic impact on the participants, since none of them had created anything with a similar topic in the past?**

A: The image of Doureios Ippos does have a visual impact, be it to a foreigner, or to a Greek, since it automatically brings to mind a wooden horse. Don't you agree with that? It is on the one hand a three-dimensional image and on the other hand it is also an age old story about a device which led to the occupation of a city and to the end of a war. So, Doureios Ippos' is by definition a weapon.

**Q: It is a notionally charged topic.**

A: It is a topic that is charged with the dynamics of a weapon. So, considering that art is also a weapon with which one can defend and transmit ideas, either through an artwork, or through one's lifestyle, -because the artist cannot be separated from his/her lifestyle-, I decided to go for this topic and the Germans who were the first participants also agreed with that. And so, the first symposium was realized.

**Q: Germany is anyway a country with a great tradition in classics and this is also reflected on the educational system of the country. What is your relation to mythology? What comes to mind when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: I would suggest that Greek mythology is a form of Greek history. This means that I perceive Greek mythology as an element of Greek tradition.

**Q: As a child, did you have any relevant sayings from your family, or did your mythological knowledge come basically from school?**

A: As a child my knowledge on mythology came basically from school. I began studying engineering, then I quit and decided to get involved in a professional field, which neither me nor my family had anything to do with. From that point and according to my teacher's advice and also thanks to my own interests, I also started writing and studying literature and develop relationships with other forms of art too. For instance, you

cannot be a painter without having knowledge of history and some basic knowledge of physics and chemistry. And through all this an interest in local tradition emerged; and in this tradition I place the entire Greek history, part of which is also mythology.

**Q: Are you referring to the local tradition of Thessaloniki?**

A: I am referring to the tradition of Greece, in general, because I do not perceive Thessaloniki as being cut off from the rest of Greece.

**Q: This is only partly true. If I look at the view from the window, I can see a Turkish bath and a Byzantine church. I do not see any classical or archaic temple and with this I am trying to underline the peculiar tradition and local colour of Thessaloniki.**

A: Thessaloniki is *par excellence* a Byzantine city, but this does not mean that one can overlook Vergina, or the city's Hellenistic or Roman tradition.

**Q: Does this mean that the Byzantine element of the city does not overshadow the classical one in the perception of the artist?**

A: No, I do not think so.

**Q: And moreover in the perception of the visual artist who, I believe, is influenced strongly by the surrounding images.**

A: Well, Thessaloniki does not have for sure the element of grandeur, since there is not for instance an Acropolis that overlooks the city. However in practice, this has no impact on the artist's perception.

**Q: As years went by and as you were developing as an artist, what was your relation to mythology? Were you interested in it? Did you study Greek mythology at all?**

A: I would say that I am not a scholar of Greek mythology in particular, but I do have some relevant knowledge and I have indeed studied ancient Greek philosophy and in particular Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle.

**Q: Do you have a favourite myth?**

A: The entire Homeric story of the Trojan War is fascinating. And I believe it is fascinating for every Greek; everybody has heard of Odysseus. The same goes for me, characteristically.

**Q: Well, there is a difference between 'have heard' of something and 'comprehend' something, or regarding something as being relevant to me. For instance, every student knows that the 'Odyssey' and the 'Iliad' exist, but this does not necessarily mean something more than that.**

A: In my case there is a greater relation to the Homeric stories. If we have the chance to browse around my workshop you shall see that some of my works have references to ancient Greece and that they also depict a relationship between ancient Greece and Byzantium. We shall observe these things in practice.

**Q: Back to the previous question, now: why does the Trojan Horse story fascinate you?**

A: I think it is the largest historio-mythological story of them all. There are so many stories incorporated in the 'Odyssey' and I do not think this happens in any other myth. Of course, Hesiod is also interesting with his 'Theogony' -and as we shall observe later

the 'Odyssey' and 'Theogony' are two works that are relevant to each other-, but 'Theogony' is a fragmental work. In total and in a logical order, I regard the stories of Homer, that is the 'Odyssey' and the 'Iliad', as being superior.

**Q: From what I understand, the important thing in a myth is the host of ideas it encompasses, and not the detection of historical facts in it.**

A: Homeric epics also have this sense of traveling, of roaming. And roaming is something that concerns me, as an artist who has been a traveler for all his life. Ten years ago I had no idea I would be where I am today. I had no idea that I, a painter without a certificate, would find myself in America with an American scholarship for post-graduate studies; nor could I imagine that I would open a gallery in the centre of Thessaloniki. So, I am touched by the roaming individual and by the message that one must get by, on the one hand, by defending our values and, on the other hand, by facing a very strictly structured society. Of course, people face this society on a daily basis, however they do it in a way that is compatible to the society's structure, unlike artists, who have controversy and roaming in their nature.

**Q: The focal point of your interest is Odysseus, who in essence constitutes a point of reference for you.**

A: Yes, the fact that he is surrounded by temptations that force him not to return, the fact that he survives from the verge of disaster and that he is forced to conjure up tricks in order to save his companions and himself are very moving things.

**Q: So, an artist's life is specifically mirrored in Odysseus' adventures.**

A: In my opinion, it is. Hesiod's 'Theogony', although it is respected, is something different.

**Q: It is comprised of separate stories.**

A: Yes, 'Theogony' is the beginning, the genesis, the creation of the pagan divine system and from there one can imagine that the 'Odyssey' begins.

**Q: What you mean, then, is that Hesiod is the basis and the essential knowledge of how the world was created, upon which the comprehension of the human adventure will be built.**

A: Yes. And I believe that after Homer the chapter of philosophy begins in the Greek world. The philosophers of Ionia, were, in my opinion, not occupied only with physics, but they were also involved with the affairs of the Gods -directly or indirectly. The chapter of philosophy begins with them and reaches its peak with Plato.

**Q: Could make this connection a bit clearer?**

A: I believe everything has its life-cycle. Mythology in Greek society made its cycle, since no one could be satisfied with what we, nowadays, call mythology, but which was not regarded as such back then. The chronological distance was not as vast as it is today; the relationship with mythology was an everyday practice at that time. If one examines mythology, he/she will notice that deep down it is a feasible story, however exaggerated. And this exaggeration is the result of an attempt the magnificence of a

hero. These things could also hide historical facts. Namely, the primitive individual could easily perceive a civilized individual as a God or a semi-god.

**Q: You mentioned the difference between the perception of mythology by the ancient and the contemporary society.**

A: Mythology in the ancient society was a thing of a historical continuity, since the religion and the sacred places of that society were based on the twelve gods. That was their *religion*.

**Q: What is our perception of mythology, nowadays?**

A: Today our religion is nothing to do with mythology. This is what I mean when I say that the distance that separates us from mythology is vast, because it has been two thousand years since we had a different religion. This 'mythological history' -let us name it like this- was lost and it was brought back to the foreground in the past fifty or hundred years.

**Q: What gave the impetus for its comeback?**

A: In my opinion it happened in order for Greece to come closer to the European values. It was Europe who imposed that on Greece. It was Europe who discovered the existence of Hellenes in Greece, because the natives considered themselves to be descendants of the Byzantines. They were closer to Byzantium than to ancient Greece, as far as the morals, the customs, the traditions and the religion were concerned. The distance between them and ancient Greece was huge and that is why there was no official care whatsoever, neither for the ruins, nor for the ancient Greek language, with the exception of some monasteries that worked for this purpose.

**Q: What is your personal stance towards mythology?**

A: As a painter, I draw inspiration from mythology. As a human being and a painter, I appreciate the fact that these people reached a level of thinking that still influences humanity, many thousand years after. This way of thinking was expressed all through language, through ideology and through philosophy and was developed in a relatively short period of time. And this is something that we, the contemporary Greeks, may I say, ignore. I am interested in how Heraclitus came to state that 'everything flows'. I am interested in what he said as well as in how he conceived these thoughts and what sort of lifestyle and which reflections on the history and the religion of his time led him to conceive these thoughts.

**Q: What significance does mythology as an individual value, and not in relation to what came after it, bear for you? For instance, I have been told that mythology is a play in which we all have played, plays at the moment and will play in the future; or that Hermes, in the form of individual consciousness, comes and whispers in our ear and advises us to walk away from Cicre that torments and disorients us. Has mythology played a similar role for you? Is it a 'repository of ideas'?**

A: I have already mentioned a parameter of mythology that interests me is the historical one. Another parameter is the inspiration that one can draw from mythology. A third

parameter is the transition from mythology to philosophy. Also another thought is the possibility of all these actually being true. These are the aspects of mythology that interest me. And of course I am interested in the artistic parameter of mythology, as it was expressed in ancient art and especially on vases. Keep in mind that you are talking with a painter and thus the influence from mythology and from the ancient Greek civilization in general is basically of an artistic nature.

**Q: What role has the ancient Greek element played in the visual arts? Has it played a role at all, in the first place?**

A: For me?

**Q: Both for you and in general.**

A: First of all, we have to make clear that there has not been a Greek painter with a global influence, at least not one that I am aware of.

**Q: Alright, this stands for the Greek painters. What about the American, German or English artists? Are you aware of any who like using elements from the Greek mythology in their works?**

A: Yes, I am. They love Greece a lot and when they speak of Greece they have in mind ancient Greece.

**Q: I would like to ask you now to leave the field of visual arts, under the assumption that we will meet again soon to discuss each of your works separately. So, I would like us now to move to another set of questions and to discuss whether in your opinion mythology has been and is still being abused.**

A: For sure both mythology and history are being used a lot, because when we refer to the Parthenon, in reality we refer to a temple that housed statues of gods. Isn't that right?

**Q: Yes.**

A: It follows that the Parthenon has been abused.

**Q: In what way?**

A: It has been abused by the indifference of the Greek state and even more by the ignorance of people, by the fact that the contemporary Greek uses the Parthenon as an excuse. The contemporary Greek speaks about Socrates as if he was his father, that is, as if they are of almost the same intellectual capacity.

**Q: Have the meaning and the essence of Greek mythology been cheapened, due to its use by gyros shops and taverns, to name only two examples? Do you believe that?**

A: Anything that is used for purposes other than the initially intended, without a creative metamorphosis taking place, is abused. This means that an artist can draw on ancient Greece and create something fresh; an artist can also draw on the western tradition and produce a new work of art. It is like the flowerpot that receives water and ingredients from the soil and yet it does not reproduce water and ingredients from the soil, but it creates afresh little leaves or a flower. Similarly in art, this is a creative-reformative process and this gives the impetus for new ideas, new art and a

contemporary civilization to be born.

**Q: There is also this form of art that produces gigantic heads of Alexander the Great, similar to Andy Warhol's famous heads, that subsequently become posters in nationalist protests.**

A: In that case, I would say that the artist uses something that will surely touch the broad audience, in order for the artist to benefit financially. That is all. And it is the artist's choice to act like this, but this sort of approach to antiquity does constitute abuse and I believe that you understand how I mean that.

**Q: Does the same thing occur on a political level, too?**

A: Yes, yes.

**Q: Zervoudakis told me that each year a memorial, organized by the prefecture and with the collaboration of the church, takes place in the promenade, in front of Alexander the Great's statue, in memory of the ancient general. There are also actors participating, dressed as ancient Greeks and Persians; they fight with swords and the Persians lie dead on the pavement.**

A: No comment.

**Q: The relationship of the contemporary Greek with the ancient Greek mythology is of the type of the gyros shop and the promenade memorial?**

A: Mythology is something between fairytale and history. This means that people know myth as if they were little stories. There are some nice examples too with reference to this, like Dionysus, who is nicely used by the 'barrel-worshippers', or by the 'Club of the Scums'. This is a nice way to refer to the past. They employ Dionysus in their activities in order to play fat men with big bellies and swear, something that was actually an element of Dionysiac ceremonies. However, the Scums do what they do without confusing and mixing the traditions and without expressing themselves through activities as extreme as Alexander's memorial. They gather together in a tavern to celebrate and moreover their main celebration takes place every year on the Saturday that is dedicated to the 'Prodigal Son'. As you can observe there is a combination here of contemporary religion with Dionysus. Additionally, women of any age are strictly not allowed to enter the tavern during the celebration. And the Scums step on the tables, they hold pots with wine and they swear and mock each other.

**Q: It is also important that these activities are intended to be consumed by a specific and rather small group of people. They do not take place in an open space, like the promenade is, where anyone and even people totally unaware of the side-meanings of the event can attend.**

A: Yes, it is addressed to a small number of people, but it has actually been presented on a TV show too. But, you see, the way these people treat antiquity is 'smooth' and it does not transmit the message that we all should wear our helmets, fetch our spears and set off to fight the barbarians.

**Q: It is the nationalist element, then, that makes the difference?**

A: It is the attempt of contemporary Greeks to find an excuse for their existence. Surely, what we are today -our culture, our language, our mentality and the way to reflect on things- is a debt we have to our ancestors, the 'Hellenes', but this does not mean that we are allowed to protest on the streets having 2,000 year- old symbols as a flag. Other nations could do the same thing and there are nationalist behaviours in other nations too, but this sort of behaviour cannot lead anywhere.

**Q: Do you visit archaeological museums?**

A: Sure.

**Q: Do you come across mythology there?**

A: I think I mentioned before that any work of art has a religious and by extension a mythological character in these museums.

**Q: However, this is something that you are in position to know and comprehend.**

A: Yes, but I think it is also obvious that each temple is dedicated to a god or goddess. The temple will surely have relevant depictions; art is not separate from religion.

**Q: So, is the ancient Greek mythology being treated merely as an artistic expression in museums? This is something though that potentially concerns just you and your colleagues. The expression of the divine in art through mythology is not something that every visitor can detect and understand.**

A: This may be true. However, the visitor cannot but think of the myth, because the representations he/she sees are not irrelevant; they have an historical or mythological character. And there is also the aesthetics that counts; the beauty of the jewelery and the reliefs is something that the visitor can not only see and admire, but also sense.

**Q: Will the museum visitor have the opportunity to reflect on the issues we discussed before, that is, the transition from mythology to philosophy, or the role of mythology in ancient and contemporary society? Does the museum help the visitor to perceive mythology as something more than merely the decoration of a vase or a metope?**

A: In Greece, and more specifically in Thessaloniki, since it is my hometown, not many people visit museums, be they archaeological or Byzantine. The majority of the museum visits are organized by associations and schools. It is rare for a Greek to take the initiative and visit a museum on his/her own to view contemporary or ancient art. This is what I believe.

**Q: However, the fact that the visit is organized does not change anything in the importance of the visit. An organized visit is not inferior and the museum should not be expected to pay less attention to the quality of the museological and educational experience that an organized visit offers to the visitors.**

A: It does change, because an individual visit is the result of a personal relationship, whereas the organized visit resembles an organized holiday, just like one goes to Egypt and *a propos* also visits the pyramids.

**Q: So, will the visitor who is intrinsically motivated perceive mythology's dynamics in a museum?**

A: Not many things will be transmitted. I take myself as an example: I have been to the

archaeological museum of Thessaloniki too few times, considering that I was born and grew up in this city. And some of these few times were for drawing practice. If you told me to go and visit the museum again I would probably ask you if there is something new to see.

**Q: And what are the few things that the museum will indeed transmit to the visitor?**

A: I do not understand what you mean.

**Q: With reference to my previous question, I am asking what is it that the visitor learns about mythology in a museum.**

A: I do not think that the visitor's knowledge of mythology will be enriched by the museum visit.

The museological experience was for me strictly bound to my prior knowledge on the subject. I did not acquire any knowledge from the museum, I already possessed this knowledge; I just enhanced my knowledge on the specific topic with things I was not aware of.

**Q: Does this mean that the knowledge the museum offered you had to do with the artistic aspect of mythology and not with mythology's meaning, with its creation, development and function in a given society?**

A: Mythology's creation is art and by this I mean that mythology has been passed down to us primarily through art and literature, and from this point of view the knowledge I acquired in the museum was indeed relevant to the artistic aspect of mythology.

**Q: When I speak of mythology's creation, I refer to how mythology was first conceived as a means of expression.**

A: I did not learn this thing in the museum. I can talk about that, but my opinion is not based on something that I have learned in a museum.

**Q: What is the ancient Greek mythology, then? Could you give a succinct definition of mythology?**

A: I could not give a succinct definition.

**Q: Maybe next time.**

A: Maybe next time.

## Meeting B

**Q: Was this project your main contribution to the symposium 'Doureios Ippos'?**

A: Yes, this was my main contribution.

**Q: I was wondering whether myth here is treated like a *sign*. And here I am using the word *sign* in the way Barthes suggests, as part of a semiological chain that consists of the *signifier*, the *signified* and the *sign*. In other words, how is the myth of Doureios Ippos connected to your project, which essentially depicts the interior of an orthodox church?**

A: It is not a church, though -and you have to pay attention to this-, it is one of the

artists' workshops.

**Q: The specific workshop though was transformed into a church.**

A: I would say it is 'something like a church', or 'something like a temple', since there is not a cross that could make it a church, or another symbol that could make it a pagan temple.

**Q: I think that the arches and the candles are all elements that take us to the interior of a Byzantine church.**

A: Well, there are elements that could be regarded as Byzantine, with first of all the arches.

**Q: I would say that the same goes for the candles too. You do not find candles of this shape, stuck in the sand, in churches of other religions.**

A: But we do find candles in churches of the Latin America too, but there is also the lack of windows and the dim light.

**Q: Yes, the room is lit only by small openings at the upper end of the wall.**

A: Yes. And at the end of the room, where the main gate to the church's *avaton* was outlined the space was left empty and slides with works of mine were projected. These little carved works had as their topic the story of Doureios Ippos and also a review of history from the creation of the world. These images were also accompanied by text, that I had produced. However, the text was not at the core of the projection; at the core of the projection was the story of Doureios Ippos and some snapshots from the history of humanity. I started the projection with slides from a planetarium, which I used to present the genesis of the universe, then I presented the 'cosmic egg', I moved on to the explosions that led to creation of the earth and I finally reached the story of Homer.

**Q: So, there is a successive projection of slides that start with the creation of the universe and end with the Troian War.**

A: Yes, the projection ends with the attempt of the Greeks to conquer Troy. Let us say that the outline of the main gate is also the outline of the main gate of Troy.

**Q: What does this mean?**

A: What resembles an arch here is the gate of Troy. In order for the Greeks to pass the gate, they have to solve a mathematical problem and this is why there are these mathematic types in the projection. Is that clear? As you can see, inside the outline of the gate, there are multiple 'gates of Troy' projected and the Greeks have to face each one of them with a new mathematic attack.

**Q: Why do all these occur inside a Christian church and not inside an ancient Greek temple?**

A: Because I am more familiar with that environment.

**Q: With the environment of the Christian church, you mean?**

A: Do not name it 'Christian'; I would say that I felt closer to the introversion of the environment, more than anything else.

**Q: Here, the myth does not really function in conjunction with ancient Greece, to the past, to the historical and social circumstances that created it.**

A: It functions in conjunction to ancient Greece, but through the present time and not the other way round.

**Q: What does this mean?**

A: It means that I approach the distant tradition through the approximate one. I do not jump from the present to the past, leaving a gap behind, but I pass smoothly from the one to the other. You see, the gates in the projections resemble Byzantine arches in the one case and gates of Troy in the other, and this happens in a way that makes you think that it could actually be true. This is what I mean when I say 'smooth passage'.

**Q: In the slides that were projected, Doureios Ippos is presented in binary models of various shapes and forms, like for instance a cube. Which ideas were detected in Doureios Ippos that subsequently found an expression in these models?**

A: At the core lies the problem of the gate and of Doureios Ippos, of this bi-directional relationship and of the solution that can be suggested to the mathematic problem that the gate presents.

**Q: Is this then a philosophical consideration on the problem and its solution? Is Doureios Ippos a notional condensation of the duality of the problem and of its solution?**

A: It is presented under this light in some works, while in others it is an aesthetic experimentation, or even a symbol of inventiveness.

**Q: With reference to the metamorphosis of the workshop to a church, I am impressed by the combination of two antithetical elements, of a story from the pagan tradition of Greece and of contemporary non-pagan religion.**

A: It is an unknown religion though, it is neither Christian, nor Latin, nor ancient Greek, nor Hindu. So, the workshop reminds one of a sacred place, without referring to the worship of a specific god in the present, in the past, or in the future. Well, I would say that mythology is the child of religion, sister of history and art and that mythology together with time gave birth to poetry, philosophy and sciences.

**Q: In what sense is mythology the sister of art?**

A: In the sense that mythology could not have existed without art and history. Mythology was passed down to us through art.

**Q: Do you feel more familiar with the interior shapes of a Byzantine church (with the arches, etc) because of the fact that you were born and raised in Thessaloniki, by definition, a Byzantine city? I was thinking that maybe an artist from Athens would have chosen a different environment for the discussion of the myth of Doureios Ippos.**

A: Maybe, but I am from Thessaloniki. My preference has also to do with the fact that the Byzantine churches are 'introvert', whereas the ancient Greek temples have an 'extrovert' character. The Byzantine churches have a 'grandeur' too, but this 'grandeur' is filtered through a warm feeling of human introversion.

**Q: I would say that from an architectural point of view, the Byzantine churches are closer to the human dimensions.**

A: I would not say so. The stories of the saints, the counterpart of the ancient Greek heroes, are not at all close to the human measures. Whether it comes to their endurance and to their sacrifice, or to their torments and to their spirituality, the saints are miles away from the human reality. An individual who is set on fire and yet does not burn up, is a supernatural human being.

**Q: It is important though that the saints were real people before they became saints.**

A: And I believe that the semi-gods were also real people before they became mythological figures.

**Q: Maybe, but this is not how the following generations perceived demigods and heroes.**

A: In my opinion, due to the fact that so many years had passed by, these stories eventually survived in fragments, with or without exaggerations.

**Q: In any case, the Athenian citizen of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC did not think of Theseus as an once-upon-a-time human being with extraordinary skills, who subsequently became a hero.**

A: I do not think that the division between history and mythology was as sharp as it is today. I believe it was a more complex situation.

**Q: This was also due to the fact that mythology was then connected to religion. Under these circumstances the distinction between myth and history was not always feasible.**

A: Exactly, just like it happens with the saints nowadays. After a thousand years these stories will be regarded as mythology and this partly happens even today. The miracles of the saints fall into the category of myth. And today there also exist survivals of rituals, like 'Anastenaria'<sup>2</sup>. If people one day stop practicing these rituals, the future generations will think of them as myths. People will then say: 'You do really believe they were walking on burning charcoal! These things are just not possible'. People will then

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<sup>2</sup> Anastenaria: The Anastenaria is a traditional fire-walking ritual annually reenacted in some villages in northern Greece. The communities which celebrate this ritual are descended from refugees who entered Greece from Eastern Thrace following the Balkan Wars of 1911-12 and the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1923. In their settlements they built special shrines known as *konaki* to house their holy icons which are embellished with hanging red kerchiefs. On the eve of the feast of SS Constantine and Helena, they gather in *konakia* to dance to the music of the Thracian lyre and drum, which leads to their entering a trance believe that they can be "seized" by Saint Constantine. On the morning of the Saints' day they process from the *konaki* to a well to be blessed with holy water, and to sacrifice animals. In the evening a fire is lit in an open space, and after dancing in the *konaki*, the anastenarides process to the fire carrying their ikons. After dancing around the fire in a circle, anastenarides dance over the hot coals, as the saint 'protects' them. The leading Greek folklorist George A. Megas noted that the complex rites of the Anastenaria – which are barely summarised here- bear many associations to the rites of Dionysos' worship. Besides, as Megas points out, Kosti, the place of origin of the refugees, was a centre of Dionysian worship, and the Bulgarians who practice similar rites (*nestinarstvo*), read their prayers in the Greek language. Katerina Kakouri has also detected many similarities between these rites and the widespread winter and carnival customs of northern and central Greece, which also demonstrate many signs of Dionysian origins.

try to detect an alternative interpretation behind these stories and all these interpretations will be based on the assumption that these stories were 'myths', that is 'fiction'.

**Q: Back to the symposium now. In the preface the question is posed whether art plays the role of a weapon, a device or of a masterpiece and a desire for a holistic communication through art is also stated. How are these two things combined? And how does the artwork you created contribute to this target?**

A: My work does not address these points, but all the works of the symposium reflected all or some of these questions. Some artists perceived Doureios Ippos as a primitive masterpiece and others perceived it on a symbolic level. My work falls into the latter category.

**Q: This is your work too, isn't it? It depicts an offering to Artemis.**

A: Yes.

**Q: What is this about?**

A: I think it is better for an art critic to analyze the work.

**Q: I think it is better for the artist to do so.**

A: Heraclitus says that 'time is a child that plays; it is a child's kingdom'.

**Q: This is the starting point.**

A: There is a sense of 'random'. You get the impression that these things were randomly scattered. However, they are neither purposely, nor randomly placed. In reality these things had a reason to be where they are. They *seem* to be random. What you see here is the brazier I had in my workshop. We used this brazier to bake coffee. And the rest are some metallic objects that we threw in it. I noticed one day that the image of the brazier and the scattered objects brought to mind Heraclitus words and so I decided to photograph them in relation to his words.

**Q: I notice that all the objects are items of everyday household equipment, like a spoon, or metals you used in your work. You did not choose to throw in the brazier, a terracotta statuette or a pomegranade.**

A: You cannot pursue these things. Their existence there is not merely 'random', it is 'organically random'. It seems to be random, but in reality it functions. You have somethings that function in their everyday use and there comes a time when you realize that they actually work, although they are not in their proper positions.

**Q: And what connotations made you dedicate this brazier to Artemis?**

A: Heraclitus had dedicated the quotation I mentioned to Artemis.

**Q: In a following symposium with the title 'Aphrodite: Beauty in Art', you participated with a painting called 'The unknown Saint' (Figure 181). In the introduction to the painting you refer to the passage from the 'unknown God' of antiquity to the 'unknown Saint'. What string of ideas led from the one to the other?**

A: Initially it was an artistic experimentation on the depiction of saints in Byzantine art. When I tried to challenge my skills I realized that I could not actually draw a face-maybe because as a painter I need to be able to observe the things I paint. In this way, my 'unknown saint' ended up without a face. And although it started as an experiment on the Byzantine tradition of representation, it developed into something more. Just like the ancients left an open door to the existence of an unknown God, I left a door open to an unknown, contemporary, saint.

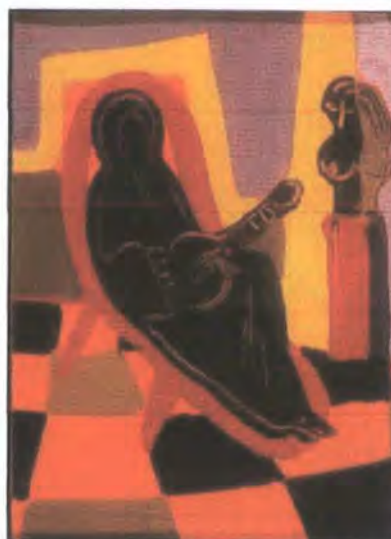


Figure 181. 'The Unknown Saint'.

**Q: Does this demonstrate a certain line of thinking from antiquity until the present time?**

A: Yes, it demonstrates the need people have to leave a door open.

**Q: Does this happen consciously, in order to talk about the unchanged nature of this need through time?**

A: This was one of the reasons I did it, but not the only one.

**Q: Considering that an artistic creation is not *ex nihilo*, in what way has the elaboration of mythology so far influenced you on an artistic and an ideological level?**

A: We have talked about that, haven't we?

**Q: Yes, we refer to that when we discussed museums. Shall we stay with what we have already said?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 13

**Stavros Panagiotakis**

**Date: 19/12/2005**

**Venue: Panagiotakis' workshop, Thessaloniki.**

### **Q: What do think of, when you hear of Greek mythology?**

A: In March and April 2005 I presented in Paradeisos Hammam the project 'Eden', which is based on the epic of Gilgamesh. 'Eden' starts with Genesis, with extracts of poems by Elytis, and it includes projections, live music and some very nice prose that could be heard everywhere in the building, simultaneously with the actors' performances took place and unfolded over time. The prose was in Greek, in English and in Turkish. In 2004 I presented the same event in Constantinople, in Cistern Yerebatan. There is a point in the performance where Anni Berka sings the song 'Xenitia' ('Foreign Lands'), since the myth about the quest for and the illusion of eternity is in essence the process of immigration, where the immigrant moves from one place to the another trying to find something new, to organize a new life, to settle down again and rebuild what he/she has lost. I am not talking only about the political immigrant, but also about the economic immigrant, or the war immigrant. Just think of what happened to India and to Pakistan, think of Baghdad, think of Skopje. In my work I perceived the immigrant simply as an Albanian, or a Chinese, or a Pakistani who lives now in Thessaloniki and is trying to build a new life. Because in China things are very tough, the social contradictions are vast and the same goes for India.

In the course of the narration, Utnapishtim narrates to Gilgamesh the story of the flood. During the narration explosion from Hiroshima are projected. This is the spirit in which the reference to the immigrant exists in the play. At the end of the performance, Gilgamesh jumps into the well and he finds the plant of immortality. Everybody leaves the room and only the woman who narrates the story stays. She slowly marches toward the exit. She narrates that Gilgamesh found the plant but then he stopped by a well to wash himself and a snake stole the plant and disappeared. Gilgamesh headed back disappointed and said: 'how vain this whole enterprise was. Eternity is an illusion.' And the narrator summed up the message of the play, saying: 'and he gets to his city, Uruk. And he rests on its walls and he says: are not these walls what really belongs to eternity? Are not these walls what the seven wise men built and are they not so strong that they will last in time?' In other words, the architecture of that time was so strong that it lasted over time. Then, she leaves the room and there is complete silence. The audience does not know what to expect next. In the meantime, the performance has already ended and the musicians play very loud music and thus the audience realizes that nothing else is going to happen and they slowly start leaving. It is like a dream that fades away ... This is the myth of Gilgamesh.

The same project, with few differences, was also presented in 'Theatre Dasous' and in

the Second Beijing International Art Biennale.

**Q: Was there a brochure that informed the audience of that parallel between the Epic of Gilgamesh and the epic of the contemporary immigrant?**

A: I did not want to provide them with all the information in advance. There was a brochure, a map in fact, with the course we would follow, as well as with some small texts that mainly explained the points of the epic. In the catalogue there was some analysis of the performance as well as a text that I wrote and which explained some things about the performance in general.

**Q: Did it also explain that symbolism you had in mind?**

A: Yes, of course it did.

**Q: I am curious to know why you chose the Epic of Gilgamesh instead of the Odyssey, which has a similar content and which is also more popular with the Greek public.**

A: Gilgamesh is the oldest written myth. It is the oldest testimony in the whole planet, the first indication of a written myth, the first indication of a transfer of speech to a text. The first record of the myth are dated to the 21<sup>st</sup> century B.C, whereas the myth itself is dated in the 27<sup>th</sup> century B.C. When I first read the epic of Gilgamesh, I found it fascinating. My goal is not to take a myth and turn it into something beautiful, or into something Greek. Myths have a global character. I was interested in the fact that a moral myth from distant antiquity is still up to date and has got all the elements that I observe in contemporary life, that is immigration, which is the most active issue today, as well as biology, which has caused a social revolution. Biology was the biggest revolution of the 20th century. I have also produced another video about immigration, which I regard as a very tragic 5 minutes. It is about the life of someone whose family are killed and he is all alone and exiled from his place. I mean let us say that it is about someone who survived Hiroshima and found himself in the West, in Berlin for example, in the alienation of a West city and without any belongings at all. He might have survived, but what is the benefit of this situation and why does this man have to go through all this? Why are all these imposed on him, just like the gods imposed the flood on humans? This is my way of thinking. My way of thinking always contains the passing of time. Time goes by. There might be a bombing, there might be changes, but the march of time is ceaseless; time never stops.

**Q: I would like to insist a bit more on my previous question, regarding the comparison between the 'Odyssey' and Gilgamesh.**

A: I really hope you will present the 'Odyssey' one day. If you wish to work on the 'Odyssey', you are free to do so, it is absolutely fine by me. It is just that each one of us chooses things according to different criteria. I mean, I have never in my whole life considered myself to be a tourist. I always consider myself to be a traveler, since you are mentioning Odysseus. However, the myth of Gilgamesh has some meanings that emerged inside me very easily and naturally in the form of images-I did not make any effort. I was interested in the flood and this is where everything began.

**Q: My question did not have a critical tone. It is just that since I detect a parallel with Greek mythology, I am trying to understand why a Greek artist chose a non Greek myth, in order for him to express ideas that already exist encoded in Greek mythology. However, my question has not got a critical character.**

A: Let me tell you that we have presented in the theatre the 'Troads', which belongs to Greek culture. However, the 'Troads' is about the war that the Greeks started with Troy, and about the slaughtering of the Trojans by the Greeks, as well as about the disrespect on the part of the Greeks towards the sacred affairs of the Trojans, despite the fact that the Greeks and the Trojans had the same gods. It is the same as having Christians killing Christians. But, let us save Odysseus for the future. The need may emerge some day. I have been studying Gilgamesh since 1989 without having anything specific in mind. The paintings that were used in 'Eden' were mostly empty thrones. Each divinity was accorded a throne, but these thrones were empty. This meant that the world fell asleep on empty, powerless thrones. It is a reference to the ability that everyone has to be a divinity, or in any case, something special.

**Q: Additionally, everyone can place on these thrones whatever they want.**

A: Essentially his/herself, if one wishes to do so. And this is not because one wishes to become a king or a queen, but in order for the futility of some things, like the quest of eternity, to be demonstrated. I personally like the myth of Odysseus; it has surprised me ever since I was a child. In fact, I mostly liked the translation by Kazantzakis; I think it is very powerful. However, artistically, I function each time according to my perceptions. I tell you once more that I was interested in the flood, in other words, the current theological approach to the topic did not completely satisfy me. Of course, there has been a theological contradiction, since the 17th century, as to whether this incident was actually true. Additionally, now that everyday we are witnesses of warfare, I believe that the flood was the bombing of Hiroshima, or the Twin Towers, or the events in Yugoslavia. This means, that Gilgamesh naturally developed into a play that is synonymous with contemporary reality. That is why it can be performed anywhere on the planet.

**Q: That is right. If I understand correctly, you prefer non-Greek, or pre-Olympic mythologies.**

A: No, I prefer myths with a moral meaning.

**Q: Of any mythology?**

A: Yes.

In fact, I am in charge of some workshops in the Sports Museum and part of these workshops' content is also Greek mythology. Mythology is again present here. You can choose which myths you would like to use and they will unlock your imagination. And they especially unlock the imagination of young children who participate in the workshops. For instance, they know Heracles from Disney movies but this is not enough for me. He is kind of the father of mythology and something must be done with this fact. What needs to be done, is the imagination of these kids to be unlocked. The

imagination, which has been locked by the current means of mythology's discussion needs to be unlocked. In other words, Xena and Hercules, or other mythical figures of contemporary mythologies, can occupy our mind, but in the context of the mode of thinking that is hidden behind them. I remember the 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles', one of whom was named Michelangelo. There existed some striking contradictions, because some elements of civilization and art are presented by TV altered. TV has turned one of Michelangelo's biggest creations into a tasteless turtle cartoon without imbuing it with any other qualities. On the contrary, myths, like for instance Aesop's Fables, contain very important things that are all moral. And the moral element is something that concerns us all nowadays. This means that if what is constructed does not have a specific concept, then it falls apart, it is destroyed from the inside. And this is what we are trying to avoid.

**Q: Does this mean that myth interested you mainly as an educative means?**

A: It interests me as an educative means, among other things too.

**Q: Are you concerned with mythology more in the form of a connecting bridge with the audience and as a way to transfer messages to the audience?**

A: Well, listen now. In every civilization there is a story about a flood. There is not a single person in the whole world who is not familiar with the myth of the flood. With a moral and at the same global myth, like the one of Utnapishtim, or Noah, we can work as if we had a common language which can help us engage in a conversation. Yes, mythology is a communicative convention indeed. However, it is a convention that bonds the entire planet together.

**Q: It is a convention not in the sense of something 'cheap', but in the sense of the wide accessibility.**

A: That is why it is a moral myth with a global profile.

In 2001 or 1999 we also worked on 'Labyrinth'. I had put together the artistic team 'Elasma' and my colleagues and I created one of the largest works that have ever been created in Thessaloniki. It was about 150 m<sup>2</sup> and the viewer was forced to move inside the installation. Drawing on various things that are widely known, like the 'Labyrinth', because there is not a single nation that is not familiar with the 'Labyrinth', I can transform a contemporary event through another event, that is through a myth, which, however, shall emerge as a new creation. So, Marina, it is about a two - way relationship between the myth and the producer and the myth and the viewer. Eventually the producer communicates with the viewer both directly as well as through myth.

**Q: What interests you most in myth are the references to contemporary society that the ancient myth contains. You are fascinated by the fact that myths have both a global and a synchronic value. You are interested in myths whose constructing parts are common in the mythologies of many civilizations and in myths in which one can find parallels to contemporary life.**

A: You see, I was not concerned, for example, with the myth of Zeus, Leda and the swan.

I was not concerned with issues of a narrow scope, that is with myths that speak of interpersonal relations. I am not interested in the plain drama of two persons or of the heroes of an incident. Jason, however, appeals to me because he did something totally different to what anyone else did. Heracles is interesting indeed because he charts a course of heroic deeds, while he is trying to escape a situation. The immigrant, who is trying to escape entrapment, also does the same thing, whether he/she does so in his/her own will, or he/she is forced onto it.

**Q: I have met cultural producers who, although using myths to reflect upon certain situations, never let this show in their art. Myth, in their case, is used strictly for private consumption, whereas I have the impression that you follow exactly the opposite course.**

A: You are right. I am not interested in having a good time with a myth, although I do like fairytales. I like listening to fairytales, I like bards, who would present and transfer images, words, plot, action, imagination, in other words an outlook towards the unknown. I like the fact that they transferred the above mentioned to primitive people who have neither painting, nor sculpture; they did not have anything, they were isolated in their villages possessing only a shack and a fireplace and their everyday routines in order to cope with a tough survival. Of course, I believe that in the example that you mentioned before, myth is 'food' for those people who get lost in their thoughts and find the way out again through a myth, but they do not express this process in their art. This is not a strange reaction towards myth, it is just a different way to create through myth. Myth does exist in their creations, only in a different form.

**Q: The reference to myth is neither obvious nor direct there, but, as the thought behind the creation shows, the particular artist is moulded by myth too.**

A: Exactly. In fact every Greek knows at least a little about mythology and they, similar to other nations like the Indians and the Turks whose culture includes folk tales, are moulded through these stories. That is, whether we want it or not, the flood, or 'Doureios Ippos', or the 'Labyrinth' have imbued our psyches, without us having necessarily studied these stories. We all come across a labyrinth (maze) in our everyday lives. It can be the system of a computer, the streets of a city, or the structure of a thought. The thread is held each time by the expert, who in turn gets confused before a field of knowledge outside his/her expertise. But which is the real maze in the end? What is the answer to this mathematic equation/question? In the 'Labyrinth', which we, as I said, installed, the aim was not for people to get confused and lose their way. Essentially, it was a kind of a brain, which perceived those who entered the installed maze, carrying their peculiar knowledge, experience, situation and idiosyncrasy. Thus, there was no common result, Ariadne's thread did not exist. It was a maze of knowledge, perspectives and opinions. I held the thread at all times, but individuals had to walk inside the installation for 15 to 20 minutes, in order for them to exit the maze. And each one of them perceived it in their own personal way.

**Q: I understand that you are very much interested in the viewer, in your work.**

A: The viewer is part of the work. I want the viewer to take part in the game.

In the workshops, in the Sports Museum, part of the game are also the myths. In order for the kids to be able to create their own images, we have to speak about things which the kids are already familiar with, that is the myths. Myths unlock people.

I am not interested that much in the result, whether the kids will produce works, as much as in the creative process that can unlock things inside these kids. I take materials -pigments, a brush, a myth, a piece of paper- and I make something that did not exist until now. There, the creation is primary.

**Q: Like in the 'Labyrinth', it is the process that counts. Every one of the participants can produce a personal, unique interpretation.**

A: Exactly. The viewer is called upon to find alone him/herself and to resolve any issues that potentially exist. We all have myth as a common alphabet.

**Q: I did not know that you had used mythology that much in your works.**

A: I have also worked on Icarus. I made a small installation with paintings and constructions. I created the installation in Berlin and it was later exhibited in a gallery that no longer exists. I modified the myth. According to the new version, Icarus and Daidalus decided to leave Crete. They spoke with their fate, who was as usual drunk, and she told them: 'of course you can claim your freedom, but one of you has to pay with his life in exchange'. Then Daidalus talks Icarus out of this idea, because they are father and son and they try to protect each other. So, in the end Icarus flies having complete consciousness of his action's consequence. He consciously takes off and floats on air; he is conscious of the fact that he is going to die. So, Icarus purposefully flew towards freedom, being aware of the price.

**Q: And what is the analogy of this myth in contemporary reality? What are the social references of the myth?**

A: That man wants freedom, the ultimate good, at any price. Man fights for freedom, even when the price is his/her own life. Absolute freedom is the goal, a goal that is unlikely ever to be met.

**Q: What do you think of the current status of mythology? Has mythology been abused? How do Greeks today consume mythology?**

A: Give me a hint, who are you referring to?

**Q: I am referring to the use of mythology for commercial as well as for nationalist purposes.**

A: I have seen paintings with a mythological topic, which are worse than populist kitsch. They are scary. I do not know what is going on on a nationalist level. I have heard about outer right groups that gather and reenact events, etc.

**Q: What is the semiology of the use of mythology by shops and hotels?**

A: Let me tell you. One of our classes in the School of Architecture was based on video of Las Vegas, that Varotsos, a professor, had produced. There, near the desert, there is the 'Mad Greek', with Aristotle Onassis, Athena, little Greek flags, columns and all the rest. Las Vegas is a place of general cultural bric-a-brac. They have taken elements

from various civilizations and they have created a something different. It is a cultural situation that is unique in the whole planet. At first I was critical towards it, but in observing the 'Mad Greek', I thought: 'how different is this to what we, the Greeks, do, then?' We criticize this culture, then we observe our own culture and we realize that we are not very much different. In general though, these 'alliterations', from the plastic armchairs to the hotel, or the 'Hermes' gyros shop<sup>1</sup>, they all come from the past. They are myths that have been imbued with a certain meaning. The shop owner feels the urge to say it and he names his shop 'Hens alight'. He charges his shop with a certain meaning. However, this meaning is no further developed, because the discussed topic is limited in the environment of the gyros shop and has not been imbued with something different, with something richer in meaning. What do we really do in order for the creations that our ancestors have bequeathed us to be perpetuated? We do nothing. This is what matters. The everyday perceptions of a thing are very important for the individual. In contemporary Greece, though, the perceptions of mythology and history are general and abstract. This is why the shop owner names his shop 'Apollo' and not 'Apollo's light'. Of course the one who named his shop 'Hens alight' is much more straight forward and honest. He did not issue an 'overdraft cheque'. He took a language that was familiar to him, he found its origin and he placed the language there; whereas someone else says 'Apollo', 'Hermes', 'Artemis', without adding any meaning to these names. At least the one with the 'Hens alight' continues a situation. The latter is in a sense a cheater and a thief. The latter has simply borrowed a term which sounds nice, which has a tourist impact and contains a certain situation.

**Q: How do you assess the references to mythology in museums, and especially in archaeological ones?**

A: Well, the admiration for the artistic skill is dominant in archaeological museums.

**Q: I guess this means that mythology in museums is approached mainly through the prism of the history of art.**

A: Yes, it is approached through a mere description of the mythological scene and this approach does not concern me. In archaeological museums in particular, the educative aspect is central and it is focused on how the skills and the imagination of the artist helped him represent a certain mythological scene.

**Q: What will the museum visitor, who is neither an artist, nor a classicist, comprehend about mythology in a museum visit?**

A: His/her study will be subconscious, but he/she will be affected by what he/she will see in a museum. Museum visitors feel that what they see in a sense belongs to them too and therefore they want to transmit their experiences.

**Q: Does the museum help the visitor recognize the dynamics that myths contain? Will the museum visitor realize that Icarus or Prometheus are today as active as they were in antiquity and that in the same way that they have survived until today they will also survive in the future?**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Gyros' is a type of Greek 'doner', or 'kebab'.

**A:** Are you asking me if the average museum visitor will draw this sort of conclusion? Isn't this a historian's job? I have the feeling that contemporary museology does produce new museological dialogs and that it focuses on education. As an example, the work of an artist can be displayed individually, or together with other contemporary artists, or - and this I perceive to be the most important thing-, a dialog can emerge through the juxtaposition of an ancient and a contemporary situation. As parallels between the two eras emerge, the visitor is called upon to resolve issues that concern him/her, or to reflect on life situations.

**Q:** Do the museums today provide the visitor with this opportunity?

**A:** Your question is too general. Which museum in specific are you referring to?

**Q:** Let us talk about the archaeological museum of Thessaloniki.

**A:** No, I cannot say that there is a dialog between the museum and the visitor. And even when this dialog exists, it exists for purely commercial purposes. However, the dialog has to have a different character. The visitor needs to examine the displays in a holistic way and not simply view images. It is the direct contact with the place and with the social circumstances that brings development. A museum can make a contribution only as soon as it ceases being merely a museum. A museum is, if you wish, a life injection for culture. This means that if museums did not exist, history would not be recorded. And there is also the educational function of the museums, which may be not satisfying at the moment, but it is anyway true that the visitors in museums do get involved in a learning procedure. If you do not go to the museum to view contemporary art, you will not be up-to-date. It is the museum that provides you with this opportunity.

And can I ask you something now? What is a museum?

**Q:** I would say it is a journey through culture. It demonstrates how the human mind has been projected onto the world.

**A:** The museum is an arc, isn't it?

**Q:** Yes, it is.

**A:** It is an arc, which constantly travels and yet it is always in the present.

**Q:** It is important for the museum to be in a constant dialog with the society to which it is addressed and to escape the traditional motif of 'explaining' and 'rationalizing' every exhibit.

**Mythology has a very wide scope of interpretations and in fact it may be neither possible nor desirable to 'explain' mythology.**

**A:** Mythology takes you by the hand and takes you on a travel through the centuries; it creates for you new places, you become an enchanted traveler without ever having moved.

**Q:** Mythology cannot be approached with a purely scientific rationale. Mythology cannot be dated with, say, the method of radioactive charcoal. Mythology has no age.

**A:** Mythology has only got a future.

**Q:** What is mythology then? I would like you to give a brief definition.

**A:** What is mythology then...Apart from a 'key that unlocks', mythology is in essence a locus within which we can become participants, just like in ancient Greece mythology

was a locus where new situations were moulded and born. Mythology was a locus of great depth, a locus elaborated to extreme levels. For instance, Hesiod's 'Cosmogony' is an 'inexperienced' thing and I do not know how these people managed to develop such a broad thought, so that they created many new fields of knowledge and world-perception, like astrology, astronomy, medicine and of course philosophy. Thus, mythology is also part of the endeavor of man to interpret what he/she could not understand. And this is the situation we are in today too. For instance, radioactivity has existed forever in nature, but humans discovered it only recently. Similarly our ancestors as they could not explain some things through their rationale, employed their imagination and in this way they created things that eventually constructed a never-ending cosmos. Their astronomical observations were very important, however the human mind longed for something more, for something that could lift man off the ground and into another sphere of experience; thus man created myths and these myths took man into the sphere of divine.

## Appendix 14

**Ector Mavridis**

**Date: 12/03/2006**

**Venue: Mavridis' workshop, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: I know that you got involved in a mythological topic once, in the context of the symposium 'Doureios Ippos'. However, mythology is not a frequent topic in your work, you do not make sculptures of Aphrodite or Apollo.**

A: No, no I do not. With the word mythology, do you mean images that come from mythology?

**Q: The way one will deal artistically with mythology is a personal matter. Everyone can elaborate mythology however he/she wants to. That is, with Hermes as his/her topic one could create a ceiling lamp.**

A: I understand how you approach the topic, but when you speak about mythology, you refer exclusively to ancient Greek mythology, right? Because mythology is an intrinsic element of art, anyway. A myth always exists around a work of art. And in our life there is a need for reality to be blended with fiction and truth to be blended with lie. Thus, myths are created anyway.

**Q: My thesis topic focuses on ancient Greek mythology. Of course many artists, using as a starting point ancient Greek mythology, have created things that go beyond the obvious and the anticipated. What I am mainly interested in is to comprehend how artists, and producers of culture in general, perceive ancient Greek mythology.**

A: I got it, I got it.

**Q: To begin with, what comes to mind when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'?**

A: I think of the entire body of the myths that were created back then in order for some needs of a past society to be met.

**Q: From what I have read, you were born in Melbourne, weren't you? Did you receive Greek education there. Do you remember anything about Greek mythology from these years?**

A: The truth is that I did not get good marks in mythology, because I finished elementary school in Australia, and here in Greece mythology was not a taught subject in high school at that time, only in the first grades of the elementary school. When we moved to Greece they made me repeat the last two grades of the elementary school, where mythology was not a taught subject, and so I was never taught mythology at school. What I know of Greek mythology comes from my own readings.

**Q: Did you have any relevant takes in your family? Did they narrate you stories from Greek mythology?**

A: No.

**Q: Did you develop in your adult life a certain relationship with...**

A: With ancient Greek mythology? No. Whatever relationship I develop with Greek mythology, I do it by living in these Greek surroundings. In these surroundings I experience all the relevant stories and the practices, as well as all the abuses that Greek mythology is subjected to. By living in Thessaloniki I experience how ancient Greek mythology is used by politics and all the bad and negative things that this brings with it.

**Q: You never thought about reading, say, the five - volume treatise on Greek mythology by 'Ekdotiki Athinon'.**

A: No. I may decide to read it sometime, though. Of course I do read things from Greek mythology, but my readings are fragmentary. Also Greek mythology does occupy my mind sometimes, but this never develops to become expressed artistically.

**Q: You were once asked to participate in the symposium 'Doureios Ippos' , which has a mythological theme as its starting point. The aim of the symposium was for the artists to work on the theme of Doureios Ippos in conjunction with some challenging questions that were posed by the organizers of the event. Did the theme of the symposium, that is the myth of Doureios Ippos, play any role in your decision to participate in the symposium?**

A: No, the theme had nothing to do with my participating in that event. The impetus was a prior artistic collaboration I had with Sotos (Zachariadis, see interview), where I created one of my best works. In the next meeting, Doureios Ippos was given as a theme. I personally was not attracted by the theme, but I was mostly attracted by the opportunity to meet new people and also to work together with some old acquaintances for twenty days and do things that I would not do if I stayed in Thessaloniki. A work of art can of course fit into many different topics; it can be interpreted in many different ways. Similarly, my work (see picture) could and at the same time could not relate to Doureios Ippos. I do not remember whether I have even given a name to my sculpture; it could relate to anything.

**Q: However, though the subject of Doureios Ippos was not the determining factor in your participation in the symposium, neither was it a discouraging/deterrent factor. In other words, it was a subject to which you could relate distantly, especially since you were not asked in the context of the symposium to produce a replica Doureios Ippos.**

A: No, and I did not want to produce a replica of Doureios Ippos. I created a temporal sequence, that is, I produced a work that encompassed working activity at several stages along the process. For many of the participants the motive was not Doureios Ippos. Of course in other symposiums that Sotos organized, artists did participate thanks to the subject. 'Doureios Ippos' however, was suggested as a theme, in order for a context to exist. The participants were free to work on the basis of the theme, or independently from it, if they wished to.

**Q: Sotos, if you can recall, had presented, in the context of the symposium, a series**

**of slides . The slides had as their core theme the gate of Troy and the projection was realized in a workshop especially metamorphosed -with candles and ashes- to resemble the interior of a Byzantine church. You made this...**

A: I made this, Beur Kotza made horses. When you participate in a symposium there is no pressure to work, you can just exist and watch. And then you begin to act. Do you understand? So, I cannot come up now with semiological analogies between Doureios Ippos and my work, and that sort of bullshit, OK?

**Q: No, we do not want that sort of thing.**

A: No, no.

**Q: Your nickname in the symposium was 'Hephaestus', though.**

A: They gave me the nickname 'Hepaestus', yes. That is bullshit too.

**Q: 'The so-called Hephaestus', I read in the catalogue of the symposium.**

A: Yes, 'the so-called Hephaestus'. I probably touched many people with my fires.

**Q: So, overall ancient Greek mythology, as such, has not been an element of your artistic vocabulary.**

A: It may have passed subconsciously into my work, but I do not work like some artists, who draw on mythology and make for instance...

**Q: A portrait of Aphrodite...**

A: Exactly.

**Q: I also understand though that mythology, as a creation of human intellect and as a combination of rational thoughts, is not indifferent to you. I have met artists who, although they do think through mythology, these thoughts do not show in their work. For instance, Aggelakas told me that when he once prepared to write the lyrics for a song, he had in mind that he wanted to write a little 'Odyssey'. However, Aggelakas has never written even a single verse about Odysseus.**

A: Where did you find Aggelakas?

**Q: I interviewed him for my thesis.**

A: Really?

**Q: Yes, in the context of the music circle.**

A: Ah ha. We were schoolmates.

**Q: Malamas, Papazoglou, Savvopoulos, Zervoudakis, Pavlidis were also in the same circle were also.**

A: So, you interviewed them all.

**Q: Yes, I did.**

A: Where did you meet with Aggelakas?

**Q: We went out for food, in 'Myrsini'. So, thinking about Aggelakas' example, I understand that mythology does exist in his thought, although this never shows in his songs.**

A: Yes, I could say for instance that Prometheus is a symbol of hard work, he stands for Man who, in pursuing a goal, often becomes frustrated and has to start all over his/her

pursuit, but I do not consciously think about these stories like this. Of course, on the other hand, these things live inside me, because when you live in Greece and you are a cultural producer, the energy of mythology's rationale is omnipresent for you. It is always present, every single minute and you cannot escape it. Wherever you go, ancient Greek history is there. And mythology is part of this history. But I do not work on this basis, nor does this way of thinking interest me.

**Q: Does this mean that you consciously reject mythology as a means of artistic expression?**

A: I am not interested in that. This attitude could as well be a reaction towards the sick worship of the past that exists in our society. On the other hand, there are many visual artists that are artistically involved with mythology, so why should I bother?

Well, most of these artistic creations are revolting and some of these artists are a shame of the nation and yet they are everywhere. I am sure you understand whom am I referring to.

**Q: Has mythology been reduced to a 'cheap' convention, deprived of meaning?**

A: It has certainly been in the hands of some artists who refer to the topic of mythology in a gross and vulgar way, in order to benefit financially. And they succeed, especially now that an outer right political current based on a worship of antiquity is developing in Thessaloniki. Greeks are always pioneers in these things. I mean, they want to construct in Vavdos a gigantic head of Alexander the Great, carved in the rock.

**Q: I have heard about that.**

A: They want to create something like the Greek Mount Rushmore. I mean we are beyond kitsch. However, there are also some serious artists, like Tsoklis, who have drawn on mythology in their work. When you make art, you never know how things will develop. I have made some landscapes of Olympus, the divine mountain. Since you live in Greece, these things exist anyway.

**Q: I was wondering whether the fact that we live in Greece, where mythology is omnipresent, has actually the opposite result, that is, it is taken too much for granted.**

A: Mythology existed in the life of the ancients and it was actually a need, right?

**Q: Right.**

A: I mean it served the need of explaining some things and of narrating nice stories. Is that correct?

**Q: But today, now that we do not need to explain thunders with reference to Zeus anymore, how do we treat mythology? Is it perhaps that exactly because mythology is so common in the urban landscape, from the ancient ruins to the hotel with the mythological name, that it has lost its meaning?**

A: Mythology is part of our everyday life.

**Q: I also include artistic creations in everyday life, in other words, artists draw on their everyday life images in order to produce culture. Has mythology been reduced**

**to a convention deprived of meaning, even in art?**

A: I would like this to happen, I would like art to constitute part of people's everyday life to the extent that it will become demystified. Think about the possibility, the practices of art, the 'games' of artists' minds, to become mass culture. And even the simple house lady next door to experience that, and when I asked her how she was, to answer through art. Something similar happens with desserts. The house lady next feels that she does something nice, when she is cooking, but imagine her to paint or write poetry instead, in order to express her love, a sexual experience, or the satisfaction she felt thanks to a nice food. Do you understand how I see this? And thus art would be mass culture. And this mass culture automatically demystifies the artist. This has happened to myth, because when something becomes mass culture on an experiential rather than a cognitive level, it exists, as you said, as mere decoration.

**Q: Mythology's existence is then a given, and therefore not something to reflect on.**

A: It is a given and as an element of mass culture it will be questioned, rejected, misused, etc. Mythology is demystified, right? This is the natural course of things. The next thing to be done is to bring mythology where it was, that is in everyday life, just like it once was part of religion and of everyday life.

**Q: And of politics as well.**

A: Yes, of politics too. I would say that the identity of mythology in contemporary Greece is also politicized, or at least political are some aspects of mythology's identity are political.

**Q: What about the other aspects?**

A: Well, look now, the chapter of mythology is present in every civilization.

**Q: Even today?**

A: Of course, even today. It depends to which aspect of mythology we are referring, of course, right? We tend to suppress some aspects of mythology that 'challenge' our religion and let them appear only in scientific conferences and symposiums. Mythology's existence nowadays is selective, but this is happening exactly because mythology constitutes part of everyday reality. It depends on what we want to do with mythology next. Do we want to close myths' rationale in a box and turn it to a museum display? I do not know.

**Q: From what I understand mythology contains a dynamic.**

A: Ancient Greek mythology?

**Q: Yes, ancient Greek mythology.**

A: This stands for every mythology.

**Q: This conversation is about ancient Greek mythology.**

A: But this stands for every single mythology. Mythology always contains a dynamic.

**Q: What is mythology's dynamic?**

A: It has the power to help us persuade people over some things, to help us create fantasies, ....Ancient Greek mythology is part of the contemporary Greek's existence

and we use its dynamics as a tool in order to find things that are beautiful, or silly, or even bad.

**Q: Does mythology then have a moral, or a therapeutic character?**

A: All myths have such properties. However, I would not like someone to think that ancient Greek mythology can heal in a supernatural sense and believe in the twelve Gods.

**Q: I was not referring to this, but to the practices that are employed in Art therapy, for instance, or to the therapeutic impact that mythology can have on the artist him/herself, by showing him/her the way out of a situation, or by helping him/her express hidden tendencies.**

A: You have forgotten that I do not know much about mythology. In general, the mythology of any civilization can function in one or the other way.

**Q: Mythology is multifaceted, anyone can interpret it however he/she wants.**

A: I also owe to mention that myths are still being created.

**Q: Tell me about this, it interests me.**

A: It interests you? (laughter) Each artist has the delusion of myth-constructing around him/herself.

**Q: Are collective myths still being created today? Is Chadjidakis, for instance, a contemporary collective myth?**

A: Of course they are still being created and thank God they are still being created. It is good such myths are being created. The lack of myths, however, in the sense of something that is not true, is also a curse of contemporary society. The lack of a collective myth, like the myth of social change, or the myth of revolution, is a contemporary curse. Such myths existed once, but now we are in a transitional phase, we are confused with ourselves, with our little brains. Right?

**Q: Even today though, the idea of revolution has found a myth in the face of Che Guevara, for instance.**

A: Yes, but hold on a second, these things are silly...

**Q: Maybe it is our era that is silly...**

A: These things are silly, if one considers the light under which Che Guevara is being referred to today. I used to think in a different way about Che Guevara.

**Q: Today his face is also on key rings.**

A: Exactly. It used to be different. However, Che, as well as others, are myths, they are heroes and pioneers, they are people who gives a little pleasure to our brain and our acts. People always have had the need to create myths, that is for sure.

**Q: Does this mean that contemporary Greece has its own myths, a contemporary mythology that is the continuation of ancient mythology? Are the ancient myths simply transformed, do they change faces? Could Hermes or Prometheus be transformed into Che? Is this the process?**

A: Well, in contemporary Greece...As we said our era is a little confused. It has a need

for myths and moreover for contemporary myths. I mean that it unfortunately needs either to create new myths, or to re-invent new ones, by adjusting them to the new era.

**Q: How could this happen?**

A: I do not know.

**Q: Could it happen in museums?**

A: In museums?

**Q: Could it happen in an archaeological museum, where Greek mythology is presented?**

A: It could happen in an archaeological museum that was bold enough to juxtapose contemporary works to ancient findings.

**Q: Do you visit archaeological museums?**

A: I generally visit museums.

**Q: Do you visit the museums of Thessaloniki?**

A: I went to the Byzantine museum the other day, but this is not really an archaeological museum. The archaeological museum is closed. I went to Vergina last year. I go to museums in general.

**Q: Is mythology present in museums?**

A: What do you mean by that? Do you mean mythology as a narration, for instance there was Phillip and Alexander and their myths?

**Q: I do not understand mythology as the presentation of a painting on a crater. The museum visitor, who is neither a classicist, nor an archaeologist, but the visitor who possesses the basic knowledge of mythology...**

A: And says: 'how beautiful the Greeks are!', for instance...

**Q: Yes. So, will this type of visitor take anything of mythology's dynamics with him/her, when leaving the museum? Will he/her understand that mythology was potentially the personification of certain needs and ideas?**

A: Are you talking about the ordinary people now?

**Q: Yes.**

A: No. Ordinary people go to the museum and see how beautiful the golden earrings are, for instance. Ordinary people go to the Byzantine Museum, because the church is close to them.

**Q: ...it is still active today, as it was in Byzantium.**

A: Exactly. The myths of the Orthodox theology could be presented there. There really exists what you refer to. In ancient mythology everything depends on where you stand intellectually and on how the topic is presented to you. The ordinary Greek feels pride and even curiosity before a mythological exhibit, but outside the museum, the same old banal remarks, like 'wow, life was so different in those days!' are encountered. I think you know what I mean.

Is mythology even a taught subject at school?

**Q: As far as I know, it is a taught subject only in the third grade of the elementary school.**

A: Exactly, only in the third grade. Perhaps mythology should be taught even further on at school. I did not learn mythology at school and I am studying it now fragmentarily. This is my idiosyncrasy, my make-up.

**Q: In a phrase, what is Greek mythology?**

A: For me personally, Greek mythology is something that I need to learn a little better. When it comes to what Greek mythology means in general, there are other who could provide a better definition than me. I am not the most adequate person to do this. If you listen again to our conversation you may be able to compose a definition. Do not forget that I grew up in Australia, I moved to Greece in the change of regime period (the years after the junta), where I finished high school and lyceum. These three-four years were extremely important for me. Then I moved to America. Also, my wife is from Spain. Since I have interacted with diverse civilizations and their myths, and because I experience this mix in my everyday life, I can sometimes compare the significance of certain things. In general, however, I cannot think like this.

**Q: I understand. Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 15

**Pavlos Vasileiadis**

**Date: 27/03/2006**

**Venue: Vasileiadis' workshop, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: What is the first that come to mind when you think of 'Greek mythology'?**

A: I have always like Greek mythology. As a child I always took a Greek mythology book with me in my summer holidays.

**Q: Really? Did your family tell you stories from Greek mythology?**

A: I was lucky, as I went to the German School of Thessaloniki, where our teachers cared enough to give as stimuli for knowledge. I was very fascinated by Greek mythology. I read Greek mythology all the time and Kerényi was my favourite scholar.

**Q: Really?**

A: I also liked Graves. Later, as a university student, I was inspired by mythological themes, but my main concern then was to experiment on texture.

**Q: I imagine that mythology has been a standard topic of your art.**

A: Mythology has been almost always present. My art has two sides: the mythological side and the earthly, realistic, side.

**Q: I noticed that in 'Klotho', which is a work with a purely mythological topic, you created an installation and not, say, a portrait of Fate.**

A: I actually wanted to create a three-fold construction. The Moires are Klotho, Atropos and Lachesis, right?

**Q: That is right.**

A: I presented Klotho as a spinning wheel. The spinning wheel enters into the room. A coil moves from the floor up to the ceiling and then unfolds along the wall. Its shape depends on the space. I mean if it were installed elsewhere, it would have had another shape. I just let the coil unfold along the wall.

**Q: Is this directly related to the function of fate?**

A: Of course it is. It related directly to Klotho and her spinning wheel<sup>1</sup>. Atropos would be a carpet.

**Q: Why?**

A: Because you cannot undone what is woven in a carpet, as Kerényi said.

**Q: What would your Lachesis look like?**

A: I never thought about Lachesis because she is last in order. She is where the thread of life ends.

**Q: No, this his Atropos; she is the one who cuts the thread. Lachesis is the one who determines your destiny.**

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<sup>1</sup> The name Klothó comes from the verb klótho, which means 'spin'.

A: This kind brings to my mind a loom. In essence, I wanted to work having as focal point the process of looming, and so from Klotho we would move to a carpet.

**Q: Did you have a favourite mythical hero, when you were a child? Did you like, for instance, Odysseus, Theseus, or Icarus?**

A: No, I mostly liked the pre-Olympian Gods, i.e. Moires, Graies, etc.

**Q: This is interesting. Could you explain this to me? Other artists feel the same too.**

A: The classical Gods were pretentious. Additionally, the twelve gods of Olympus constituted a society with, more or less, the character and the structure of contemporary society. Thus, the male was superior to the female in social hierarchy, etc. Anyway, the group of the twelve gods was divided in two halves, with six male and six female divinities each, and each deity controlled a separate realm: a goddess was in charge of haunting, another god was responsible for music, etc. In other words, the whole situation was pretentious.

**Q: What dynamics do you detect in pre-Hellenic myths, which do not exist in myths of the Classical era?**

A: The older myths were imaginative. There was a tremendous amount of imagination in them. I think that back then people produced myths that referred to earth. For instance, Scylla and Harybdis were in reality a rock that swallowed water. If one observes how the sea wave crashes on the rocks... If you happen to be there, you will be swallowed by water. The ancients turned this into myth, exactly because they were afraid of this phenomenon. Once you turn your fear into myth, your fear loses its power upon you. Your fear is turned into an 'object' and, so, you can face it. It is the unspecified that causes awe and fear. All these creatures had the element of absolute absurdity in common. This absurdity, yet, was not purely the result of imagination. The ancients would draw on a phenomenon of life that seemed incomprehensible and turn it into myth. Later, in classical mythology, these phenomena were explained and they were comprehensible.

**Q: You mean that things were rationalized and put in order, which order, though, was the one that that best suited man's interests.**

A: Exactly. This is why I mostly liked the pre-classical part of mythology, which was closer to the first discoveries of the human intellect. The mythological depictions in my works are primitive.

**Q: What do you mean?**

A: Well, for instance, I have made a siren, or rather a gorgon. She belonged to that age. I am referring to an age before the Archaic era, i.e. to the age of the Odyssey, circa 1200 B.C, when things were taking their shape. Even when it comes to the ancient art, I am not attracted by Classical art, but by the Archaic one. The Archaic era is precisely the era, when creation occurs, right? What happened after was pretentious. Anyway, I liked mythology, I was passionate with mythology, and I used

to study mythology all the time. Of course, that is not to say that I have learned mythology - you cannot possibly claim to possess this thing -, but I liked some stories that could be described as Minoic, with Pasiphae and the Taurus.

**Q: I noticed Pasiphae in one of your works.**

A: It is from two years ago.

**Q: You are referring to the 'Mythography' series, aren't you?**

A: That is right. I am referring to 'Mythography'. In 'Mythography' I took these myths and repositioned them in a new environment. In the environment where I put them, there is usually sea, sand and rocks.

**Q: Yet, the myths you deal with are not exclusively myths of the sea, right?**

A: Not necessarily. Most of them, though, are relevant to the sea. This is Gaea. It is made of soil and Gaea and rain are depicted. Essentially, it is a representation of intercourse. Uranus (the sky) rained, he slipped into Gaea's (earth) openings and plants emerged. There are almost 60 pieces in this series and they are all huge, because I wanted to install them in open space.

**Q: I would like to see some of these works.**

A: One example is Hydrochoos. Hydrochoos was essentially the equivalent of Ganymedes in mythology and he was also a star constellation. Zeus fell in love with Ganymedes, he sent an eagle to abduct him to Olympus. There Ganymedes became the gods' cupbearer. Therefore, he was also named Hydrochoos. I painted the eagle flying right above the sea and my intention was to play with the reflection of the waters.

**Q: And I notice that the moon is present in all of your works.**

A: It is in all of them. It is everywhere. The nature of these stories makes me want to place them outside, in the nature. And of course, all of these paintings are viewable at night, as they function with black light. Here is Pasiphae, as well as the Taurus that fell in love with Pasiphae. Here is Pasiphae as an island.

**Q: I also see paintings entitled Hesperus, Lado, etc. All the titles are written on the water, in the form of a reflection.**

A: Lado guarded the Hesperides, Hesperus blows in the evening. This piece here depicts the time when the sun is about to set and Hesperus starts blowing. The Hesperides were the sisters that guarded the golden apples, which were finally given to Heracles, and Lado was the dragon who guarded the Hesperides and the apples. The myth of Orpheus was a story that spoke against women; it also spoke of homosexuality. Orpheus was dismembered and his limbs were thrown into the river Pinius, if I remember correctly. The limbs were carried away by the river and they were washed ashore at Limnos. Of course, I depicted Orpheus as a wave. This is a fake wave, though, and it resembles an harp, the musical instrument. Did not Orpheus relate to music?

**Q: Yes, yes.**

A: There are other mythological figures here too, such as Asclepius and Achelous. The latter fought with Heracles, who broke Achelous' horn. The Sirens were born from Achelous' genitals. In other words, my work is descriptive, and this is why I called it 'Mythography' and not mythology. I painted these works two years ago. Now I am making constellations. Would you like me to show you?

(Now we are in a room with black light and an installation of several constellations.)

A: This is the story that occurs on earth and is then taken up to the sky.

**Q: What do you mean?**

A: They are myths that take place here on earth, and then go up to the sky, where they became constellations. Orion became a star after his encounter with Artemis.

**Q: Do you mean that all the constellations you depicted have a mythological descent?**

A: They started from earth and they went up to the sky.

**Q: So, your inspiration was mythology, once again?**

A: That is right. What I painted in 'Mythography' is what takes place on earth - let me put it this way. However, apart from the earth, the rocks and the water, there are also the stars in the sky.

**Q: So, most of the myths you referred to before have their equivalent in the sky...**

A: All of them.

**Q: Does your interest in mythology relate to your scientific identity, as a psychiatrist? Do these two things relate?**

A: Of course they do.

**Q: How?**

A: We have said that I am attracted by the primitive, the primary element in myths, by the imagination, and the need to explain life and Man, that these myths contain.

**Q: What dynamics do you detect in myths that are relevant to psychiatry?**

A: A myth may contain elements that correspond to various strange syndromes. The relation that I detect between psychology and mythology has on its base a very primal element, i.e. 'Man's motives'. The individual is shaped and structured as an entity, through such stories, which embody references to Id and Ego. This is the primal element that creates an analogy between psychology and myth, between psychology and the very moment of myth's creation.

The way psychiatry views things is close to way mythology views things and the other way round.

**Q: How could the viewer of your 'mythological' works benefit? What thoughts on Greek mythology could your works provoke?**

A: From now on, the viewer will see mythology each time he/she looks at the sky.

**Q: Could the work also trigger the viewer's thinking process?**

A: It could, as if the viewer read a book. In general, though, art and painting are not

about thinking. What counts is how you feel when you look at the painting.

**Q: You are an urban painter, in other words, you frequently draw on the urban landscape in your works.**

A: That is correct.

**Q: What impact has the Byzantine character of Thessaloniki had on you?**

A: I do not think that it had any impact at all. It is true that I like Byzantine art and that the Byzantine element is present in Greek art, from Tsarouchis to... Yet, I do not think that it had an impact on me. It is the Classical art and the art before the Classical era, which has influenced me. I mean, Phidias is nice, but I prefer the art that existed before his era. I am currently working on another story with mythological topics, but I do not know where it is...

**Q: Could you talk to me again about 'Klotho'? I have read in the museum catalog an interesting comment regarding 'Klotho's' relation to human fate. I would like to hear a bit more about how you perceive this issue, drawing on the installation.**

**There is a chair...**

A: There is a little chair for children, and there is a coil and from the centre of which a thread unfolds along the wall.

**Q: What is the little chair about?**

A: The little chair is for the little child.

**Q: May I ask why you named the work 'Klotho' and not, say, 'Fate', or 'the course of Man through life'?**

A: I do not know. I probably perceived the work artistically. I liked the representation of Klotho as a spinning wheel, in terms of shape. When you are painting, you are also directed by the form. Thus, I liked very much the shape of the spinning wheel, the way it climbs on the wall, and I installed it in the room. I was given a big and very dark room with six corners for this installation. As the visitors entered the room, they inevitably found themselves in the middle of the web that was created by the thread. Also, if I named it 'Fate', the connotations that would emerge, would be very pragmatic and I did not want that to happen.

**Q: Could the fact that the installation has as starting point a myth, which is already charged with a certain meaning and rationale, influence the perception of the work by the viewer? Is the museum visitor, since the work is installed in the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, offered a pre-structured reflection in life, which he/she can subsequently develop further?**

A: Yes. I take a thought, a myth and I put it in the present, just as if the myth lived today too. Besides, this is what really happens.

**Q: Do you mean that myths are perpetuated, in the sense that they are a closed chapter?**

A: Myths do not live on library shelves, they are every day present.

**Q: Is there contemporary Greek mythology?**

A: Contemporary Greek mythology does not exist.

**Q: Do not we still construct myths? Chadjidakis, or Pavlos Sidiropoulos<sup>2</sup>, for instance, are not mythical persons?**

A: In this sense, yes, there is contemporary Greek mythology. We do construct myths and we need to construct myths. In this sense, of course there is mythology today. There are myths everywhere, in every aspect of our lives. Someone does something important as we speak, and he/she becomes a myth. Right?

**Q: Yes. We mentioned that myths embody tendencies that lie at the heart of our existence, as well as that they reflect our fears, our hopes and our desires. Are these things transformed in the course of time?**

A: Yes, they are transformed.

**Q: Who could a contemporary Oedipus or Icarus be, then?**

A: I come across them every day, as a psychotherapist.

**Q: Tell me about this. Do you come across Oedipus, Icarus and Prometheus?**

A: It is very interesting. There is a painting by Bregel, entitled 'The Fall of Icarus'. On the foreground of the painting, a ship, a shepherd, and a man who is plowing are depicted and somewhere on the background, and in the corner of the painting, there is a tiny falling Icarus.

**Q: I am familiar with the painting.**

A: The fall is incorporated into life routine, it is presented as a natural incident of human affairs, it is an everyday story. The myth of Icarus is the everyday story of an individual, who lost control of things.

**Q: So, myths do have a place in contemporary reality.**

A: Yes, they are not fiction. They exist, they are alive, they are diachronic. It is just that they do not survive in the form they had in antiquity. They survive in a different form. Icarus of today could be the individual that dies in a car accident, or the individual who endeavours to achieve something, but cannot meet his/her goal and is eventually defeated.

**Q: Do you think through mythology?**

A: Mythology is always on my mind. It haunts me.

**Q: Does mythology play the role of the awakener in your life?**

A: In my life? Yes, this does happen. I think that myths are all about truth. I think that they bear diachronic significance, and that they exist today too among us.

**Q: What is the status of Greek mythology in contemporary Greece? Is it misused? What mythological value is depicted in the gyros shop that is named 'Hermes', etc?**

A: I as in Crete last summer and, as you just mentioned, there were really a gyros shops with the name 'Hermes' practically everywhere. Everything is, as Seferis said, 'Helladex'. Everything happens for the sake of mass production, for the sake of tourism. I even saw a shop named 'Vrytomartys'. Vrytomartys was a companion of Artemis... I mean, where on earth did they get this idea?

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<sup>2</sup> Rock 'n' roll musician. He died of heroin overdose in 1991.

**Q: Has mythology been devalued, due to overuse, then?**

A: Obviously, yes. Tourism industry is full of mythological references.

**Q: Do you go to archaeological museums?**

A: Yes, I do.

**Q: Is mythology present in museums?**

A: It is.

**Q: In what way? Will the ordinary museum visitor understand what mythology is about?**

A: I do not think that the visitor will understand what mythology is about. And it is perhaps a mistake that mythology is not taught in Greek universities. I am also involved in Art Therapy group projects, since two or three years. I am practicing psychotherapy, using art.

**Q: How do you use mythology in Art Therapy?**

A: I use precisely the pre-Olympic gods, to whom we referred before. We are mostly concerned with the magical aspect of human mind, because in my profession we encounter very frequently the so-called 'magic thought'. This can be the thought of a mature human being; it can be a normal and structured way of thinking. 'Magic thought' can be also encountered in cave paintings, where the individual paints the buffalo, and then hits the buffalo and believes that, in this way, the buffalo will be killed in reality too. Something similar happens to the contemporary individual, when 'magic thought' comes to the foreground and replaces the rational way of thinking. The magical way of thinking is not an attribute only of psychotic individuals, OK?

**Q: So, myth has the power to turn the intangible to tangible.**

A: And one can control more successfully things that used to be strange, weird, larger than life.

It is usually natural phenomena that are hiding behind myths.

**Q: So, you do not interpret myths symbolically.**

A: No. Of course myths do contain symbolism, right?

**Q: Yes. However, you do not perceive myths in this light.**

A: I am more interested in the stage before the attribution of symbolisms. I am more interested in myth at the moment of its genesis.

**Q: Do you mean that the symbolisms of myths emerged later on, through the elaboration of myths by the ancient society?**

A: This is, more or less, when these things occurred.

I mean, think about it in rational terms. The course of the human nation is, in general terms, similar to the life stages of the individual. There is childhood, there is puberty and there is the age of reason. And by the time the individual reaches the age of reason, he/she has forgotten what preceded, how things came to be as they are now.

**Q: So, the pure meaning and value of myth lies in the early years, in the years of its birth and not when rationale invaded myth.**

A: I am not interested in this phase of myth.

**Q: Could you tell me, with few words, what mythology is?**

A: It is magic. It is the aspect of Man, which contains in abundance the magical element.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 16

**Stefania and Dimitris Gardikiotis**

**Date: 19/04/2006**

**Venue: Gardikiotis residence, Stratoni, Halkidiki.**

**Q: The impetus for this meeting was provided by an exhibition of wood carvings, entitled 'Thessaloniki, Mermaid, Sister of Alexander the Great' that you presented a couple of years ago. This exhibition was realized as part of the events to celebrate Alexander the Great, the Macedonian general, which were organized by the Cultural Centre of the Prefecture of Thessaloniki.**

**How did your exhibition come to being and why was the theme of the mermaid chosen?**

A1: Dinos Kostopoulos invited us to create something with a theme related to Alexander the Great, in the context of the above mentioned events. We had been working on icons for 20 years and when we heard his proposition we became immediately interested in it. It was time for a change and that was the right opportunity for us. We became very committed to this work and we produced a large number of wood carvings within a short period of time. We fell in love with the topic of the mermaid. This is how this exhibition came to being.

A2: As for the mermaid as a topic now. As you know, Thessaloniki has as its symbol the White Tower. Someone we know maintained that Thessaloniki's symbol must change, as the White Tower used to be a prison and its history is written with blood. Besides, in general having a fortress as a symbol does not say much. This person had the idea, or rather the vision, of a four floored building being erected somewhere in the port area, where the museum of the History of Northern Greece and in particular of Thessaloniki, as well as relevant libraries would be housed. And on the top of this building a sixteen metre high mermaid would stand. This mermaid would be Alexander's sister, whose name is Thessaloniki. Of course, many things are said about Alexander the Great and his sister. They say that they were sexually involved, or that there was an unspoken love feeling between the two. In any case, an entire myth exists around the mermaid and Alexander the Great.

A2: It is also weird that the real symbol, that is the name, of Thessaloniki is not celebrated in any way. At least I do not remember it to have ever been celebrated.

**Q: What do you mean?**

A2: I mean that the name Thessaloniki, which both the mermaid and the city have, is never celebrated.

**Q: You mean that there is not a respective name day in the calendar.**

A1: We celebrate Dimitria, that is we celebrate Demeter, but Thessaloniki, which as a name is strictly bound to the place where we live, is by-passed.

**Q: What sort of relationship do you have with mythology? Have you used mythological themes other than the mermaid in your works?**

A2: Our concern with mythology is very occasional; for instance, we have represented Phaeton. We have not worked on any other mythological themes, although there are quite a few pleasant myths.

**Q: Let us take things from the beginning. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'? Are your first memories of Greek mythology from your school years?**

A1: My memories are indeed from my school years. I found back then several photocopies of carvings with the twelve gods and with the wise men of antiquity, such as Plato. There was also an impersonation of Hygeia. From these years, I also have vivid memories of movies with Samson and Hercules, among others. And of course we should not leave Tsiforos aside. You read his 'Mythology', and you laugh your head off, but at the same time you gain knowledge. Well, this is all - in - all my relationship with mythology. It is limited to a very general level.

A2: We have read some things about mythology from time to time.

A1: I also have a nice mythological encyclopedia with beautiful depictions.

A2: Mythology is something that requires investigation. Things are not as simple as they are presented to be. Mythology is not merely a fairytale and there might be disguised symbolisms in it.

**Q: Like what?**

A2: I do not know...

**Q: You must have something in your mind, otherwise you would not have said that.**

A2: No, really, we have not further researched the topic of mythology. However, we do like mythology.

A1: It appears to us that there are some hidden ideas and meanings in mythology.

A2: I believe that in general things are not how they seem to be; we believe that there is something more beyond the appearance of things. There might exist things that we cannot see or feel at this moment and yet they exist. It is interesting to research these issues.

**Q: Can mythology provide a channel to research these things?**

A2: Mythology could be one way. You often observe that things are bound to each other. When researching a topic, like the secret underground tunnels of Thessaloniki, about which we read in the magazine 'Trito Mati' ('Third Eye') which investigates many such issues, from time to time you realize that many things coincide and this cannot be random. When you read ancient mythology, you wonder where the ancients got these ideas from. You cannot have their relationship with the stars, unless you are technologically developed. How did they have this knowledge? They knew things that are being re-discovered just now.

A2: There are many things that we do not know and science only speaks of things that it is aware of and that have been investigated.

A1: But the things that science discovers are in essence nothing more than the things that people in the past, from our grandfathers to our distant ancestors, have said, only in different words. For instance, the nimbus, which exists a lot in the Byzantine art, also existed in the ancient art, in some cases. References to this thing have been passed down to us over the years; it existed in other mythologies too.

**Q: Pindarus has spoken about something similar, which he called 'dazzle'.**

A1: And then comes Kirlian in 1939, if I remember correctly, to take it as a picture of aura, or in other words, the energy field. Thus, science comes many years later and through a different path to prove things that were already known. People in antiquity knew things, but they just could not prove them scientifically.

**Q: They could not prove these things, or had they perhaps encoded them in myths?**

A2: This is the most likely thing, because in some traditions...

A1: ...some things were thought to be secret, unspoken.

A2: Yes, such an example from the orthodox religion is the fasting period. If you follow the fasting procedure correctly, then a very healthy combination results. It is about de-toxing and not eating meat all the time. And this mode of fasting also exists in the Shamans in America; Jesus Christ also fasted while staying on the mountain for 40 days [he presumably means in the desert]. It is not a mere coincidence that people all over the world do the same or similar things. You see that some things happen in various places in the same or in similar ways.

A2: Thus, the 40 days period exists in birth as well as in death. Now, what it is that exactly happens in these 40 days, I do not know. However, something must be happening, because you can find these ideas in other religions too and not only in our religion. And this convergence of opinions cannot be a random thing.

**Q: Tell me about Phaeton please. Why did you chose to work on this myth?**

A2: We liked it as a theme.

**Q: Did you like the story?**

A2: I do not look at it from this angle. What matters is if the topic can inspire us in general.

A1: To be honest, I also perceive the topic from the angle of its image dynamics. I perceive the topic as an image, as a photograph, as a depiction and not as an incident. And a chariot that goes up and down is indeed a beautiful image; and moreover we speak about a chariot that is not driven by a sensible person, and does not follow a smooth course and is instead driven by some mad man who goes up vertically and then down again and sets the fields on fire.

It is as if a young boy drove his father's motorbike.

A2: I have done Lydia [the correct is Leda] with the swan.

A1: Zeus was such a ridiculous man!...

**Q: Pardon?**

A1: I said Zeus was a ridiculous man.

**Q: Was he?**

A1: Of course he was. He would do anything for a lay. He would turn into rain, fog, into a swan. Well, OK, I mean wait a minute! And then Hera was supposedly mean and she would get angry at him. Well, what was she supposed to do? When my daughter, Maria, was in the third grade, she came to me and asked me: 'Was not Hera Zeus' wife? If so, then why did he have so many other women?' I mean Zeus had five or six mistresses and these are things that children are being taught in the elementary school. If you investigate the issue further, then you will find out that he slept with many more women.

**Q: Yes, but I see that these stories are perpetuated. Is it because these issues occupy people's minds from antiquity until the present day?**

A1: Yes.

**Q: So, myth basically interests you from the angle of the representation opportunities it provides. Myth interests you as a beautiful image and for the effect this image could have when carved on wood. I guess that, with this as a starting point, you also move on to the content of the story and to its potent symbolisms.**

A1: No, not really. This mostly happens randomly, out of curiosity and not out of interest. This means that if an article which explains a myth falls into my hands, then I will read it.

**Q: Would you ever draw artistically on a myth, whose content you considered to be uninteresting? Can a myth that you regard as silly ever concern you as artists?**

A2: No. If a story seems silly, then we will not use it.

**Q: Is there a mythological story that you consider silly?**

A1: I would say the arguments of the twelve gods.

**Q: The stories of the twelve gods.**

A1 There is not such a thing as the twelve gods. There is only one god with twelve [he probably means eleven] saints. The ancient Greek religion is essentially monotheism. We have saints too, like the saint of the sea, the saint of the mountain.

A1: In what way do you approach mythology in museums?

**Q: I investigate mythology's status in museums. I meet cultural producers from the fields of music, visual arts and literature and I talk to them and I try to investigate their contemporary approaches to mythology. Next, I investigate the way museums approach mythology, taking it for granted that museums are carriers of culture that bring the past to the present and that they have in the core of their function a dialog with contemporary society, to which they are addressed. I have met cultural producers that do draw on Greek mythology in their art and others that exclude Greek mythology from their expressive means, as they consider the**

**preoccupation with Greek mythology to demand skills that they may not have; they also avoid the use of Greek mythology in their art, as they believe that Greek mythology has been abused due to irrational overuse and that, thus, there is a need for Greek mythology to be questioned and challenged in order for its true value and meaning to be lit up.**

A1: I disagree with the last two approaches to mythology, that is with those that more or less reject their roots as well as with those that are too afraid to use mythology in their art. I mean, I may not have the best relationship with my father, but this does not mean that I am not his child. On the other hand it makes no sense not to touch on an issue, because you think you are too 'little' to do so, or because you have too little knowledge to do so. In the same way, one should not eat, because he/she is too 'little' to do so, or one should not make love because there are others who do it better. You can always focus on an aspect of an issue and work on it. I mean you work on mythology, but you are trying to do well, very well, really really well an aspect of the vast topic that mythology is. And in the end, all topics are vast. We have approached mythology in a loose way and we mainly care about the final, artistic result of our preoccupation with it. I do not know whether in the future we will pore over mythology in a more serious way. At the moment our philosophical queries on mythology are random. We see something, we like it and we go on and learn a bit more about it, or we decide to work on it. We can think about how the myth can be transferred onto wood or linoleum; this is where our preoccupation with mythology ends. Of course, alongside this preoccupation we have learned many things. For instance, when working the mermaid series, we got to learn a few things about the mermaid. I did not know till then that the mermaid Thessaloniki was the sister of Alexander the Great. You teach and the same time you learn in dealing with such topics, as the poet said.

A2: I cannot accept that reality limits things in only one of their dimensions. Universe is so big and we are only a tiny dot within it and yet we do play a role in this magnificence.

A1: And moreover we have an important role.

A2: And I guess that where our universe ends, another universe begins. And we do not know what exactly the life chain is, we do not know what we are made of. I like trying to learn about these things. I do not believe that we die and everything ends there.

**Q: Do you go to museums?**

A: Yes, we do.

**Q: How would you assess the position of mythology in museums, and especially in archaeological museums?**

A: What do you mean exactly? How do you define mythology's presence in museums? Assess what exactly?

**Q: Is mythology in museums simply present as a reference to the decorative themes of ancient art, or does the museum provide the visitor with a key to unlock the mythical thought and the dynamics that a myth hides in it?**

A1: It would be really good if the museum did that.

A2: I think that museums are a bit 'dry' the way they are today. I do not think that they can teach you something, unless you already have some knowledge and you go to a museum to see something specific.

**Q: What happens however with the average visitor, with the visitor who is neither prepared for the visit, nor is an expert?**

A2: Well the situation in museums is not the best for the average visitor, or for the kids that are forced to go to museums as part of their school education. And in my opinion, this may makes kids have a negative reaction towards museums, because they perceive the museum as a place with uninteresting and incomprehensible things. For instance, museums do not help the visitor realize how difficult the making of some of the museum objects must have been, considering the time when they were made.

A2: When you give a kid something axiomatically and you give the kid no option to reflect on it and to investigate what you say, then the kid will react in a negative way. The kid will not go the museum again. It will say: 'I have been there and it is not interesting. I have already seen these things'.

A1: In the museum of Chania, for instance, there is a temple; a beautiful temple. This is fine, but the whole museum preoccupation with the topic cannot end there, because this temple was made by someone and if you bother to research all the parameters of its construction, then you come up with a whole issue for discussion. The museum also needs to talk about how they managed to lift the rocks and about why they chose to build this thing instead of something else. As we said, you go to a museum and you see a beautiful sculpture. You and me can see different things in this sculpture. We all see for example a mermaid, but you will think of the myth, Yiannis will think: 'what a beautiful woman, it is a shame there is only half of her', I may think: 'the artist did not carve her very well', whereas Stephania may say that her body analogies are not correct. Now, what more would you like the museum to offer you? It has already given you what it has to give. The fact of its existence alone is enough; it offers you anything you are supposed to get from a museum. Whether a museum could offer the visitor something more than this, as I said, a reference to the story of the displayed object would be nice. It would be nice for the museum to also provide information on the practical aspect of an object's construction.

**Q: Could you come up with a brief definition of myth? What is myth?**

A1: Oh, this is so heavy!!!

A2: Myth is condensed tradition.

**Q: Yes, myth could well be this. Whatever you might say is correct. I just want to listen to your opinion, I am not testing your knowledge!**

A1: Myth is a hidden truth. Yes, myth bears in it disguised truths, it contains prettified lies and imagination. Yet, myth stems from truth. What is nice though, is that myth is flexible, it is always alive, you can always work on myth and add things.

**Q: Is the myth reformed through the passage of time?**

A1: I think so.

**Q: Is there such thing as contemporary Greek mythology?**

A1: Sure there is.

**Q: Is it the continuation of ancient Greek mythology? Do ancient and contemporary Greek mythology constitute one solid body?**

A1: Of course. You keep adding to myths new elements that come up.

**Q: What is Greece's contemporary mythology? Who would be a contemporary Prometheus?**

A1: Aris Velouchiotis<sup>1</sup> could be a contemporary Prometheus. Another beautiful myth is the conquest of the Eurobasket Cup in '87 by the Greek team. A myth was indeed woven around this team.

**Q: So, what are the contemporary myths that Greece is made of?**

A1: This will become clear in 100-200 years from now. For instance, was it not a myth that in 1940 the Greeks left their wives and mistresses, their children, their goats, their cows and their homes and they were squeezed on packed trains, in order to fight the Germans and the Italians? Is not a myth that in 1821 the Greeks, who after all these years under the Turkish occupation, had developed a quite comfortable life routine, revolted, fought and defeated the Turks?

The Athenian democracy and the respective great civilization is now a myth, although many negative things happened in this era. Many slaves, as well many workers, died. In the same way people died in order for the Calatrava stadium to be built.<sup>2</sup>

**Yiannis: So, what stays in history is only the apparent magnificence and not how many people perished.**

A1: Yes, because history is written by the powerful ones.

**Q: Thank you very much.**

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<sup>1</sup> Aris Velouchiotis: a communist guerrilla. He acted throughout the World War II fighting the Germans and after it, during the Civil War in Greece, fighting the National Army. His relationship with the Communist Party of Greece became problematic because of his persistence in continuing the fight, despite the official agreements that ordered the termination of the Civil War.

<sup>2</sup> Calatrava stadium: The Olympic stadium was built for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

## Appendix 17

**Evangelos Venizelos**

**Date: 12/06/2006**

**Venue: Venizelos' political office, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: To start with, I would like to ask you what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words 'Greek mythology'. What sort of a relationship did you have with Greek mythology as a child?**

A: I grew up in an educational system that put a lot of emphasis on Greek mythology. When I was a child, mythology was a subject taught in the elementary school.

**Q: As part of history?**

A: Yes, in the first grades of the elementary school.

And I think that the role of mythology in the 'trans-textuality' of global literature is so grand, that, as a result, you come across mythology all the time in these texts. I mean that all the basic archetypes and stereotypes in global literature are of a mythological character and origin. And I believe that since the 'theoretical' approach to things has prevailed in the field of humanistic and social sciences, the mythological archetypes became very important. And additionally, since ancient literature is part of everyday life in Greece, as is the ancient drama, which is presented in a hoard of theatres all over the country, especially in the summer, and which is essentially a reproduction of ancient myths, the listeners, the theatre goers and the literature readers, come into contact with mythology all the time, even though they might not be aware of it. Mythology exists, to a great extent, as a connotation inside our everyday life experiences. And I believe that this 'mythological trans-textuality' is one of the serious advantages of the Greek nation. Right? Because, I would argue that Greek mythology is to a great extent also the mythology of the western civilization. At least Europe is largely influenced by the Greek mythology. We, in the Ministry of Culture, supported as much as we could the Greek contribution to LIMC (Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae), which as I am sure you know, is the most respected academic mythological forum. Greece, along with many other countries, participates, contributes, is a subscriber in LIMC.

**Q: Was there a team, put together by the Ministry of Culture?**

A: The Ministry supported this effort, but Lagoumidakis was the one who was in direct touch with LIMC.

**Q: I have collected some documents regarding two exhibitions that were organized by the Ministry of Culture, while you were still at head of it. More specifically, they were organized in 1998 and in 2000.**

A: Which exhibitions exactly are you referring to?

**Q: The first one took place in Spain and was co-organized by the Ministries of Culture of Spain and Greece and it was called: "The Greeks in Spain following Heracles' Footsteps". On the website it says that 'the presentation of the**

**exhibition begins with the myth and follows Heracles in episodes such as the Pillars of Heracles, the theft of Geroen's flock, etc.**

A: Yes, all the episodes of Heracles' life that took place in Spain are mentioned. Another academic who was involved in these things was the Professor of Geology of the University of Athens, Mariolakos. Mariolakos approached many things from the angle of Heracles as the great plumber, because in essence, these myths bear disguised references to very important infrastructure works, to very important technical works. And Heracles is the first, say, plumber-craftsman. Of course, there are many marginal periods, where mythology is present in the archaic and classical civilization, because these periods too had their own perception of history, which also contained many mythological elements. Which was the second exhibition?

**Q: It was 'Gods and Heroes of the Bronze Age: Europe Rooted in Odysseus'.**

A: Right. There are many other exhibitions, which refer precisely to this marginal period that I mentioned before. Such exhibitions are: 'Minoan flavors'.

**Q: I am aware of this exhibition, but its content is not purely mythological.**

A: Another relevant exhibition is 'the Bull in the Mediterranean'.

**Q: This one was organized in the context of the cultural Olympics, if I remember correctly.**

A: Yes, and many more exhibitions and events were organized in the same context.

**Q: I am familiar with the project 'Mythology in Cinema'.**

A: 'Mythology in Cinema' was also a big project.

I believe that you would be able to speak to the organizers of these projects, like Mendoni and Kotaridou.

**Q: I would rather listen to your opinion, as you were in a way, at the head of this entire effort.**

A: Mythology has in general a wide appeal, as the wide audience is more familiar with the figures and events from mythology than with those of the historical periods. And as the mythological figures and events are easily recognizable by the wide audience, the perception of a mythological exhibition becomes easier too.

We made an attempt to put emphasis on these issues, in the context of the digitalization of the Greek culture, and we also discuss some commercial propositions regarding the construction of thematic mythological parks, because we really could have in Greece some sort of a 'mythological Disneyland'.

**Q: I did not know about that. What would a mythological park look like?**

A: There are many who demonstrated enterprising interest and, moreover, the creation of a digital as well as a conventional park was one potential way to develop the Olympic Games installation, after the games were over.

**Q: What would be the significance of such an enterprise?**

A: It would bear great interest, first because it would resemble a big playground and second because it could attract a large number of tourists. What happens in Paris or

Orlando could also happen in Athens. This enterprise would be very interesting in terms of finance and digitalization.

**Q: Did the idea of the mythological park develop in terms of planning?**

A: Not as much as we wanted, because the entrepreneurial interest that was demonstrated was not adequate. Perhaps, they wanted to wait until after the Olympic Games were over and then re-examine the situation.

**Q: What would this park be like, though? I am trying to comprehend the core idea around which this enterprise would evolve.**

A: The core idea would be say, the deeds of Hercules, the Minotaur...

**Q: How would these myths be presented to the public? Would their presentation resemble the narration of a series of events?**

A: I imagine the myths would be presented in the form of games, of large games, or of representations.

**Q: I am asking this question because so far I gained the impression that the Ministry of Culture, at least as long as you were at its head, perceived mythology as a carrier of encoded knowledge, as something that at least the West Europeans can easily recognize and also easily comprehend the message it transmits in each context.**

A: Yes, but on the other hand there is also the disadvantage of the lack of artifacts that could help the development of an exhibition on mythology, an exhibition with very specific artifacts on display. Mythology is more of an idea than of something tangible.

**Q: There are though more than many vases and metopes and pediments with mythological depictions on them.**

A: Exactly, the way antiquity perceived mythology is a given and it survives today as a reference to the aesthetics and the ideology of the ancients.

**Q: In that case then, what exactly does the lack of mythological artifacts refer to?**

A: The lack of artifacts has to do with the fact that you cannot develop an exhibition which focuses on a certain period, like you would do with an exhibition on Byzantine culture, or on ancient currency, for instance. On the contrary, when you develop an exhibition on mythology, in essence you develop an exhibition on the perception of mythology and not on mythology itself, say from the classical civilization to the Hellenistic era.

**Q: How is mythology separated by the way it is perceived?**

A: The perception of mythology is an indirect reference to mythology itself.

I mean, you could as well develop an exhibition on how comics or literature perceive mythology, just like we did with cinema, with contemporary cinema and ancient myths. Additionally, the notion of 'historical locus' is also included in the archaeological law, next to the notion of the archaeological site. A 'historical locus', which is also a theatre of mythological events is also protected by the law. This is a type of passage from the intangible approach to mythology to the tangible one.

**Q: The passage from the intangible to tangible also works in the opposite direction: by protecting the locus, the idea it represents is also protected.**

A: Obviously the symbolism is also protected. The law stands for the protection of the 'mythological loci' in Greece. The 'spring of the nymphs', or the 'spring of the muses' are all protected 'mythological loci'.

**Q: So, the problem lies in the fact that the myth's text alone cannot support a museological study on mythology?**

A: The text is incomprehensible without the myth, isn't it?

**Q: The text contains the myth, though.**

A: Yes, it contains the proof of the power that myth had at the time it was put on paper. And it is also a parameter of cultural continuity, right? It is a standard structure of Greek culture, it is a proof of Greek culture's continuity.

**Q: Yes, of course it is.**

A: Another very important thing that the Ministry of Culture has done is that we have supported a lot folk culture and folk traditions and customs; and the ancient myths survive too inside folk culture, right?

**Q: Yes, of course, and the simplest example of this survival is the carnival.**

A: The Carnival and in general the folk traditions and customs.

The support of the folk culture is essentially the support of ancient Greek mythology.

**Q: Something that particularly interests me and is also directly related to my thesis topic is the observation that there are no mythological thematic exhibitions in Greek museums.**

A: Greek museums in their majority are art history museums, they are museums of aesthetics. A great deal of effort has been put to transforming them into period museums, or into museums of ideas. And I do believe that there are now quite a few new permanent and much more temporary exhibitions that correspond to the latter museum model. These are exhibitions that present a period holistically, by referring to all of its manifestations, the financial, the administrative and the ideological ones. Additionally, there are today museums of ideas, because the same problem that occurs with mythology also occurs with history of ideas, such as democracy. I tried hard to make museums, and especially the big ones like the National Archaeological Museum, develop their exhibitions under a different light and not with the conventional way that is based either in chronology or on collections – a collection of bronze artifacts, a collection of gold artifacts, a collection of sculptures. I believe that some very important steps were taken and the exhibitions have indeed changed.

**Q: Which steps were taken?**

A: In various museums the mentality has changed. For instance, the museum of Mytilini sees things in a fresh way and the same things for the museums of Volos and of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki. I would like also the exhibitions of the National Archaeological Museum to be different, to have a more progressive mentality. Well,

the archaeologists oppose this effort for change, because each has got to have their subject, their period, their expertise.

**Q: I am not aware of the changes in the Archaeological museum of Thessaloniki. I did not have the chance to visit after its refurbishment.**

A: I think that there was an effort made towards a more multilevel museum; I do not have a clear picture of the changes myself either.

**Q: Besides, from what I know the new exhibitions were not developed by museologists.**

A: I think that no exhibition has ever been developed by archaeologists alone.

**Q: Yes, but the archaeologists monitor the development of the exhibition.**

A: Yes, the monitoring always goes to the archaeologists, but also architects take part in the project.

**Q: There were architects, but not museologists (in the development of the new exhibitions of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki).**

A: Well, look now, many claim the role of the museologist, right? Archaeologists with long experience in developing exhibitions claim the role of an 'empirical' museologist, and they are good indeed because they are creative and experienced; so many architects claim the role of the museologist too. However, when it comes to this aspect of an exhibition development, architects bear the stronger influence. We should also see the digital programs. I have tried to promote the idea of a digital museum, where we could have the entire topic of Greek culture, without being stopped by the lack of findings. The fact that we miss for instance the Parthenon marbles, or the Aphrodite of Melos, would not be a problem, since we would be able to reconstruct them in a notion-centric way in a digital museum. However, although I tried hard to realize this idea, the archaeologists could not understand what the requirements and the needs of this project were. It is very difficult for the archaeologists to understand.

**Q: You have spoken about the need for the establishment of a museum of ideas, in contrast to the conventional type of the art history museum.**

**What dynamics does mythology as a conceptual creation bear in it?**

A: Are you asking what is the place of mythology in the contemporary era?

**Q: I am asking about the meaning of mythology both at the time of its emergence and by extension in the contemporary era too, since I believe that mythology has a constant flow in time.**

A: To begin with, I would argue that Greek mythology, and this goes for the Greek civilization in general as the cradle of western civilization, is dominated by rationale. It is a mythology in the borders of rationalism, right? This sort of puts limits on the metaphysical function of this mythology, because it contains powerful anthropomorphisms, something that does not occur in other mythologies. This is very important and I believe that this is closely tied to the fact that the ancient Greek

mythology, as we know it, has been passed down through the filter of the classical civilization. It is not a primary mythology.

**Q: Greek mythology's anthropomorphic character, on the other hand, also gives the opportunity for parallels to be drawn between Greek mythology and the adventures of contemporary humans.**

A: However, the myths that mostly survive are myths of a religious content, aren't they? For instance, the stories of the twelve Gods, which basically demonstrate precisely this passage from the era of mythology to the era of history, survive today. And of course there are also the psychoanalytic archetypes that survive. And both these things, the religious and the psychoanalytic elements, are at the heart of the quests of the Enlightenment. This could also be a chapter of your thesis, that is the Enlightenment and mythology.

**Q: I am more interested in how the contemporary cultural producer, and not the intelligentsia or the academics, perceive mythology.**

A: So, then you examine the mythological motives as trans-textual elements, or as a source of inspiration. For instance, a major production in the context of cultural Olympics was 'Mythodeia' by Vangelis Papathanasiou and this was also the event with the highest appeal, because it was connected to NASA's 'Discovery' and of course also because the CD was launched by a large record company. This production was very successful commercially outside Greece and it was bought by many foreign tv channels. It was the production with the greatest distribution, commercial distribution that is.

**Q: Let us not forget though that it was supported by a powerful marketing mechanism, right?**

A: It was supported by a powerful marketing mechanism, as well as by Sony and all the rest.

**Q: In my interviews with artists that are not involved with marketing that much, I found out that when they go through a difficult phase in their lives they think of similar situations from Greek mythology and thus comfort themselves, or get ideas as to how they should act. Namely, they use mythology in everyday situations, in a way that does not require knowledge of Freud's elaboration of mythology.**

A: Good, but these are simply stereotypes that stem from our education, namely this approach is based on memories from one's childhood and not on memories from mythology.

**Q: It is the way that a producer of culture perceives mythology.**

A: I would claim that it is a perception that is shaped through one's education. I would claim that these things are more simple truths of one's childhood, rather than a certain relationship with ancient Greek myths, with myths of origin. Besides, myths of origin are more or less the same, aren't they? Is not there a common structure in the myths of origin of all civilizations?

**Q: Yes, of course there is.**

A: This is an anthropological approach to mythology.

**Q: So, in a museum that focuses on mythology, you would concentrate more on the various schools of mythology's interpretation, e.g on Freud's schools, or on the anthropological approach, etc.**

A: I would argue that this would be much more important in our times. It is important to demonstrate how post-modernity perceives mythology. This is something that will happen sooner or later.

**Q: I have got two more questions: the last ones. I see that the Ministry of Culture's website 'Odysseus' refers to Athens' affairs, whereas Thessaloniki's respective website is called 'Alexandros'.**

A: Well OK, it is Thessaloniki's website is not Athens' equivalent. 'Alexandros' is part of 'Odysseus'. You can check it out. There is a special mention of Thessaloniki's cultural institutions. I think that now all of these are unified under one culture guide, on the new website of the Ministry of Culture. They are also further developed.

**Q: I would like to ask you, on what basis was the name 'Alexandros' chosen for Macedonia's website?**

A: There are not any connotations. I think it is coincidental and that it happens for symbolic purposes, as Alexandros is the most famous Macedonian. And Odysseus was chosen as a symbol of the ingenious and intellectual capital; and digital culture is 'intellectual' and invests in intellectual capital.

**Q: Do you think that mythology has been abused?**

A: Mythology is prone to abuse, that is it has to be abused, it has got to have a free nature. This is why mythology is mythology after all; this is not a bad thing. What I mean is that mythology is associated with 'kitsch', it is associated with arbitrariness, it is associated with the individual's scruples, it is not something that can be controlled. It would be horrible if mythology's use was supervised and only a normative approach to it was allowed. There are norms in mythology's interpretation, but this is something that should concern mythology's scholars and not mythology's users. I mean LIMC, the norms setter, is one thing and the artist, who plays with the images that exist in his/her brain, is another thing.

**Q: Does the citizen of Thessaloniki perceive mythology in a different way than the citizen of Athens?**

A: Yes, the citizen of Thessaloniki perceives mythology in relation to Alexander and the mermaid and in relation to Thermaikos' bride and in relation to all the local traditions. However, I do not think that in general terms the Thessalonian's perception of mythology is different to that of the Athenian. I think that Greece is the most culturally solid country, at least in Europe. There is a great cultural unity. This is because of Greece's uniform educational system and because of its uniform mass media information. This is a situation that holds value for many years, at least for the last 50 years.

**Q: I believe we have finished. Thank you very much.**

## Appendix 18

**Malamatenia Skaltsa**

**Date: 21/06/2006**

**Venue: 'Skaltsa/ Tzonos/ Heupel' architectural office, Thessaloniki.**

**Q: What comes automatically to mind, with the phrase 'ancient Greek mythology'?**

A: As a child I was not particularly occupied with mythology. Since mythology was included in the folk tales that we used to read, I was familiar with it. However my occupation with it stopped there. I was not particularly occupied with ancient Greek mythology. Of course in the folk tales that we used to read, Aesop's fables were also included. Subsequently, my occupation with mythology was in this sense. And then later in the last grades of elementary school, when mythology was part of the curriculum. Well, and then I went and bought a bigger book - I do not remember now by whom that book was; he was very famous but I have forgotten it.

**Q: So, you bought a book on mythology. In other words it interested you.**

A: I do not know whether it really interested me. Just like I went and bought an ancient Greek grammar book, so that I could learn all the verbs we were taught at school. In the same way I bought a book on mythology, in order for me to be able to read all the myths we would learn at school. I cannot say I was particularly interested.

**Q: How did you first get in touch with ancient Greek mythology?**

A: I just answered this one.

**Q: Did your family play a role in that?**

A: No.

**Q: Would your family talk to you about ancient Greek mythology?**

A: No, my only contact was through folk tales.

**How did you perceive mythology back then? Did you have a favourite myth? If yes, then what did this myth mean to you?**

A: I do not think I had a favourite myth. However, Aesop's fables were particularly impressed on my mind. Perhaps because they functioned antithetically and perhaps this is the reason why they had such an impact on a child.

**Q: Besides, from what I gathered, you would listen to these fables at home more often than you would listen to, say, the 'Iliad', or the 'Odyssey', or the myths of Achilles, for instance.**

A: Yes, obviously. Heracles, Theseus, all these stories that were circulating -you do not remember that- in the series of 'Classics Illustrated'. We would wait with anticipation every week for the new volume to appear on the kiosks.

**Q: Could we please go to point 5 and discuss whether myths contain references to contemporary social issues?**

A: I have not pored over this issue, apart from didactic dictums. But again, I do not reduce them to ancient Greek myth.

**Q: When you say didactic, you mean in the museology course?**

A: No, I mean in the form of proverbs, like for instance 'trust in Athena, but also move your hands', or...other proverbs like this. I recently came in touch with the mythology of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' because my husband was trying to examine what Homer and the 'Iliad' meant in post-Homeric society and how the Homeric man was 'formulated' in that society and how the Homeric man is related to contemporary society. That is with a review of the 'Iliad' through contemporary eyes. This is my only contact, but this again is too recent.

**Q: Do we tend to identify with a myth or with a mythical figure in order for us to be 'helped' on a personal level?**

A: No, I would not say that I identify or associate myself with any myth.

**Q: Mythology is one of the most persistent parts of our past. Why do people still refer to ancient myths? Why do myths survive also outside official education, in manifestations that vary from the artistic creation to the naming of hotels and cafes? Do ancient myths still exist? How do they survive in a rational world? Why do we still need them? Why are they so durable?**

A: Because it seems that ancient Greek society was particularly rational and it used mythology in a rational way, in order for it to explain some things and these are the same reasons why we still need myths today. And I would say that we perhaps need myths a little bit more today, because many things in the post-modern era cannot be completely explained through rationale. And with the collapse of the 'model', or with the collapse of the security of rationalism and of the 'modern', mythology perhaps takes on an additional role, which it may not have, or maybe it could not have, under the modern condition.

**Q: And this is quite contradictory, isn't it? It means, on the one hand, we refer to myth in contradistinction to rationalism and, on the other hand, we discuss myth as the *par excellence* rational way of explaining things.**

A: It depends on the angle you view myth from. When I told you before that myth functioned, in opinion, as a rational way through which the ancient Greek individual explained the world, I find it absolutely normal for the modern condition to refer to myth and to endeavor to resolve some issues through myth. However, as I said, since the security of modernism collapsed, myth should, logically speaking, take a new dimension within post-modern society. Because, we realize that rationalism is not THE tool to interpret things with. There are things that cannot be interpreted. Even physics has lost its guarantees. So, sciences that are 'anthropological' need myth to an even larger extent.

**Q: Have the same myths been used (socially/politically/artistically) in a different way in various regions of Greece?**

A: Yes. I assume you have read Alki Nestoros<sup>1</sup>, so I will direct you her. This is the knowledge I possess. Or you can read Megas<sup>2</sup> folktales series. That is why I am telling you that my experience on myths stems from folktales.

**Q: Do you believe that the local factor influences the use of myths?**

A: Well...Yes...perhaps. I think that this is self-understood. Because I believe that deep down every society uses myth in order for that society to meet its own needs. So, it is self-understood...It depends on what you mean by 'local'. Local is Thessaloniki in Greece, local is also Velvento in Kozani.<sup>3</sup> I do not know how you mean it.

**Q: I refer to the first meaning of 'local'.**

A: Yes. Because I believe that society shapes myths, exactly since I believe that myths are used in order for many things to be explained, as well as in order for social needs to be met. So, there is a constant dealing between society and mythology, a constant give and take.

**Q: Do you have an example of the local use of myths?**

A: Ah...ah...Yes. 'Local' is also 'trans-local', it is also 'hyper-local'. The fact that in my village we used to jump over fires on Saint John's day refers to history - we say 'baptism of fire'. Saint John, who was the Baptist, delivered people from the original sin. I do not know where this can be detected; this can perhaps be detected in the myth of Themis and Achilles, where Themis kept Achilles above a fire to make him invulnerable.

**Q: Or another interpretation of the Saint John fires tradition is that it is derived from Sun worship, as Saint John day coincides with the summer solstice.**

A: I do not know that.

**Q: It is an alternative interpretation.**

A: Right. I do not know that.

**Q: Has Thessaloniki its own myths, which are different from those of other places in Greece?**

A: I do not know that.

**Q: Do political circumstances affect in general myths' usage and role, as well as the promotion of certain myths in particular?**

A: Political circumstances in the sense that I discussed earlier, that is the broad socio-political circumstances. Yes, I believe that. As I said before, societies make use of myths. And of course, Louis XIV as the 'Sun King', etc...

**Q: How do you evaluate the position of mythology in Greek archaeological museums?**

A: It does not exist. It is absent in the form both of mythology of historic as well as of mythical times. But it is present in the museums' discourse. The museum of

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<sup>1</sup> A pioneer folklore scholar of Greece.

<sup>2</sup> Folklore scholar.

<sup>3</sup> Kozani: prefecture in north-west Greece. Velvento: a village in the prefecture of Kozani.

Vergina creates a myth in a theatrical way and in a conscious way - it is a conscious decision of the archaeologist who developed the exhibition - around the...

(disruption by phone call) ...it creates an environment in order to construct a mythical framework around the presence of Phillip, of Alexander, etc.

**Q: In local terms, that is? I mean with reference to Vergina, the place where the museum is located.**

A: With reference to Vergina, with reference to Alexander the Great, with reference to the victorious army commander, with reference to King Phillip. This is not local. This is...

**Q: I would call it national.**

A: Exactly. It is not local, it is not at all local. And there is also a myth around the responsibility of the archaeologist who deals with these antiquities, there is a myth around the place, there is a myth about Macedonia. This is not at all local. And there is also a myth around the important man who is also a Macedonian.

**Q: But the case of Macedonia is indeed a local issue. The intention to create a myth that refers to Macedonia is indeed a local issue, because we should keep in mind that Macedonia has been a very unique case in terms of culture and history for the givens of Greece. And the role that Macedonia played in the formation of the Greek state was very unique in cultural terms.**

A: I repeat that it is not local. Exactly because it contains connotations that are national. The fact that this excavation is taking place there, the fact that this archaeologist is there with funds from the 'Great Ethnarch', Karamanlis, who was a Macedonian. From Vergina we go to Macedonia and then to Greece.

**Q: So, it connects Vergina with Macedonia and eventually these two with the nation.**

A: This is what I think. It creates a mythology around this thing. Without mythology and myth *per se* to exist in the specific museum.

**Q: Is myth, as a notion as well as a mode of thinking, enlightened in the museum?**

A: Not at all.

**Q: Does the average visitor understand more about the notion of mythology after his/her visit, than before that?**

A: No way. The visitor does not understand a thing.

**Q: Today mythology occupies society in the one or the other way: either in the form of the conventional naming of hotels and restaurants, or as a supernatural**

**quest with the organization of seminars, or as a means of artistic expression. Why is mythology ignored by the museum, although it exists in abundance around us?**

A: I do not know to what extent mythology does really occupy society? And I do not know whether the references, that you believe to exist, necessarily mean that society is actually occupied with mythology. I do not think that this is occupation, it is a 'trend' that Greece has been carrying and which hotels and restaurant owners

jump onto, because it connects them to the ancient Greek grandeur and not with myth and mythology. If you refer to the mythology of our ancestors, then yes, but mythology as such.

**Q: Yes, I totally agree.**

**Why is mythology ignored by the museum, although it exists in abundance around us?**

A: Yes, it is ignored by the museum for the reasons we mentioned above.

**Q: I would like to add here that the fact that mythology is being used as a 'trend' by the hotel and the restaurant owner, while at the same time it is ignored by the museum in whose context mythology could be discussed is a 'double-edged knife', because what the museum really does is to contribute to the perpetuation of this trend with a reference to mythology that is deprived by any ideological content.**

A: Yes. Even if mythology was indeed interpreted in museums, even if the value of myth was explained in museums, then again mythology would still exist as a 'trend', because it is the dominant ideology which uses the myth of the 'grand ancestors'. And this is what connects the German emigrant or the one who came from Germany to Greece and opened the souvlaki shop and named it 'Medusa' or 'Hermes'. And also I am aware of a restaurant of some friends of mine in Berlin, which is called 'Medusa'. So, for instance 'Medusa' refers directly to antiquity and not to Medusa herself. If the owner of that restaurant knew the myth, then he/she would not have named it 'Medusa'.

**Q: I agree, and to explain myself, I do consider the fact that the restaurant is called 'Medusa' to be a bad thing.**

A: It does not matter. It does not matter whether we consider it to be bad or good and we do not decide this. We describe it as something that exists.

**Q: I mean the fact that mythology survives as a trend is not to be reproved.**

A: No. On the contrary, it proves that it is the reference to the glorious ancestors that interests and not the recognition and the interpretation of myth.

**Q: What museological principals does this approach correspond to and what could the potential benefits for the museum be from it?**

A: I gather that the question on the sources of the existent museological approach to mythology is with reference to the fabricated ideology about the glorious ancestors and about ancient Greece.

**Q: I am asking this with reference to the museum, though. I am asking how this approach came to being in the museum space.**

A: The existent approach...You mean the absence of any approach.

**Q: Exactly.**

A: Yes. I will only answer with speculations because I have not examined this issue. I believe that the idea that in a museum we present the glory of our ancestors, that is art, was considered to be so self-evident, that we were not occupied with anything else really.

**Q: What could the potential benefits for the museum be from it?**

A: There is no museological benefit, there is only a museological vacuum. You need to use a more neutral word, because the word 'benefit' has by definition a positive meaning.

**Q: I used this word, in order to gain a strongly defined answer from you. Besides, I did not know your position in advance; you could as well have told me that the status of mythology in museum is really excellent.**

A: Well, you would not have come to me if that is what you wanted to hear. I believe that you would not get a positive answer even from a pure archaeologist.

**Q: I did not want to hear anything specific; only your opinion. Besides, these questions are more or less the same for every interviewee. For instance, I asked Mr. Venizelos, who is not a museologist, the same things too.**

A: Right.

**Q: What would an alternative approach to mythology be?**

A: There is no alternative approach. You mean what would be an approach.

**Q: Ok. I would like to listen to your opinion on how mythology should be approached in the museum.**

A: The way that also social situation, ideology, economy should be approached. This is how mythology should be approached. What was mythology for the society that produced it, leaned on it, and used it?

**Q: So, the parameters which led to mythology's creation, as well as its use and its significance for the society that first created it and first used it should be enlightened.**

A: Yes, of course. No, I would not refer only to the past; I would also try to investigate how myths are being used today, because, in my museums, I have as starting point what the contemporary individual is interested in, and subsequently how this person could also approach mythology.

**Q: In that case, what are your objections on my thesis' topic?**

A: I would not try to investigate this issue through artists and cultural producers. Because the artists and the producers are not reflections of the present, they are not reflections of the current situation.

**Q: For you they constitute a separate species, as you underlined in our preliminary discussion.**

A: Exactly. They constitute a peculiar situation and they create, they act, and this will be crystallized only in the society of the future as an everyday experience.

**Q: From what I understand, it is the interlinking between the artist, mythology and the museum that makes you skeptical.**

A: Exactly.

**Q: You do not agree with looking for mythology in artistic creation.**

A: Yes. This equals looking for mythology in artistic creation and not in society.

**Q: So, you would do it differently.**

A: Yes.

**Q: With questionnaires for passers-by...**

A: No, I would look at textbooks, I would ask school children what sort of books they read.

**Q: Ok, I understand where your objection is focused now.**

A: Yes. Artists are a very specific case and they do not represent the whole of society. And since museums must, at last, be addressed to the largest part of society, and not to the experts, neither to those who are already aware of a situation. That is why I would have as a starting point the question 'what occupies people today?'. I would start with children and the educational methods, the teachers, who constitute as well a large part of society.

**Q: Can I ask you something that I just thought of? Would it be easier for the museum to start from the opinion of someone who is indeed aware of things that the public is not, as the artist is, but who at the same time is in touch in the public through his/her art? And moreover, when it comes to artists whose work has a wide appeal to the public?**

A: No, because we shall need to first interpret the artist.

**Q: You mean to interpret the reason for which the artist...**

A: Yes. Whereas I try to find a tool, in order for me to interpret the ancient mythology. So, I will not find a tool which also needs to be in turn interpreted. Because the artist needs to be interpreted too. So, I will find a tool that is easy to handle, easy to understand, and this tool is not the artist. I do not want to interpret ancient mythology through the way that the artist interprets it. Because I will have to also interpret the way in which the artist interprets mythology. I want to see how myth exists in contemporary society, but not in the artist. I want to see how myth exists in my mother, how it exists in my grandson, how it exists in the books that I choose for my grandson, how it exists in the teacher who will speak 'with' the myth and 'with' history.

**Q: However, would not also the stance of the teacher need to be interpreted?**

A: This does not interest me, because I need to understand how contemporary society perceives and uses myth. Because that would become my starting point, from which I would speak to him/her about myth in antiquity. I would not write a PhD by constructing a museum. I would undertake an investigation with the purpose of comprehending what the situation is today and with the purpose of starting from the present and based on this to make the past comprehensible. And the past is much less comprehensible than the present, which is experienced by the individual who will visit the museum.

**Q: I am beginning to understand your argument. However I started on the basis of the idea that it is much easier to start a conversation on myth drawing on uses and descriptions of myth, with which the public is already familiar, as they stem from popular songs, or from popular readings.**

A: I would focus more on myth's overuse, what you describe in the use of myths from souvlaki shops as well as in the way that TV transmits myth and in what is heard about myth in schools and in playgrounds. This is what I consider to be everyday routine and not the artist. The artist is not a typical case and the artist's creation is not a typical case either. Whereas the use of myth in everyday routine is what interests me, in order for me to do my work as a museologist in the museum; in order for me to transmit to the visitor things about the past. When I show a fork today and have contemporary food, he/she can understand why they did not have forks then and what the difference is and to ask 'why did not they have forks and they had only spoons?'; or 'why did they not have neither forks nor spoons and they only used their three fingers to eat?'; or show the visitor the contemporary Indian who eats today with his/her three or more fingers; this could stimulate the visitor's interest and subsequently pose the question. Otherwise I have lost the game in the museum.

**Q: This is the substratum of my idea too, but, from what I understand, I am trying to achieve my aims through a different way.**

A: Yes. That is why I asked whether your supervisor is experienced in making museums.

**Q: I do not know what you mean by 'making museums', I do not think that he ever organized an entire museum on his own.**

A: I mean making exhibitions.

**Q: Yes, he has done that. Keep in mind though that he views them through a different, an Anglo-Saxon, mentality.**

A: But the Anglo-Saxons are *par excellence* realists and grounded; *par excellence*; and in their researches, they are...they have nothing to do with the French, or the Germans.

**Q: In which museological principals would such an approach be based on?**

A: Which approach?

**Q: The 'alternative' one. I think we already answered this one though.**

A: Yes, we did. We said that we have to start from that the visitor is familiar with, so that his/her interest will be stimulated and so he/she will have the patience to learn about the past.

**Q: To which extent do you think that the museum could develop the examination of mythology?**

**What are the problems that could emerge from such an 'in depth' examination of mythology?**

A: Could explain what you mean?

**Q: The essence of the question is the potential museological obstacles that have to be overcome when the museum examines mythology as an ideological creation of the past and as ideological survival in the present. For instance, the fear of Mr. Alaveras...**

A: Yes, what was it?

**Q: ...it was that you cannot speak of something that is intangible, or for something that you cannot see. 'What will you use?', he asked me, 'will you use music?...'**

A: Well, this is natural...He is not an architect, he is not a museologist. The man is an artist.

**Q: Right. This is strange though, because artists do have imagination.**

A: No, no. Artists know only their own field of action.

**Q: I noticed that more in the artists and the novelists and less in the musicians.**

**Musicians were the most imaginative and they were those who could more easily grasp the position of mythology in the museum.**

A: Right. In museology there is not a problem that cannot be solved in the best or the worst way, provided you pose the problem. From the moment you pose the problem, you will solve it.

**Q: You have to point it out, in other words.**

A: Exactly. When you say 'I want to say that', then you will find a way to say it, provided you have a good architect by your side, who can translate your points into an architectural code. Of course, it goes without saying, - you have learnt that in your master course - that in every museum there are plenty of things that can be said and we have to eventually come to decide which ones, from all the things that we can say, we will eventually say, either because we have more objects, or because this has priority in the existent social circumstances, or because this is the priority of the museum in which we shall install the exhibition, or because this is what can be said in the most comprehensible way for the wide audience - because this is what interests us - and we also leave space for third or fourth reading for the visitor who does have the interest to go and search more on the topic or who has the patience to go and read more on the topic. In the small museum we made in Velvento, we transmitted the position of women in the post-industrial society. How can you transmit the position of women in the post-industrial society? You can do it indirectly. It is a third and a fourth level of reading. You can do it in two ways; first you can show images - in order to avoid the extensive use of text; where the text corresponded to a process, this was noted with off-white color, and when it corresponded to an object this was noted with off-grey color. So, next to the off-white color which implied a process, that is an action, the image was placed, so that it would not be interpreted...

End of side A

...The visitor does not take note of this that very moment, but...; this means something. That was the one thing. The other thing was that we decided to say 'us men, us women' and we stayed attached in a strictly scientific way to the activities that were executed by men and to the activities that were executed by women. So,

when you read a text of two hundred words, you see in how many activities women appear and these are so many that you will never have expected them to be. So, this is a second level through which...the museum is neither feminist, nor does it speak only of women. How can I demonstrate the position of women in production? Here it is a way in which, with only two elements that are extremely experiential and comprehensible and hypodermic, you can transmit the role of women in production. So, once you pose the issue, you will solve it. You may consciously decide that you cannot say that thing as well, but then you will have consciously decided to leave this outside.

**Q: What is the position of mythology today in the context of the concept of 'intangible heritage'? Is the necessary effort made for its protection and its preservation? Which role does the traditionally object-oriented character of the museum play in the inability to perceive mythology as an independent unit of cultural and educational interest? If we do perceive mythology as previously described, then what is the role of the object-oriented character of the museum to its practical neglect?**

A: I think that I have once again answered this previously. The object does indeed dominate Greek museums, because none has ever thought that the objects can actually show other things too. It is not the fault of the objects themselves. We ought to be happy that we have so many objects, but we should not take them as panacea; we just have to do a mental 'click' and start functioning differently. Ah! And when it comes to any efforts for the protection and preservation of mythology, this is absolutely not the case in the archaeological museums. The only place where we could find it - if this ever happens - is the folklore museums and in as many of them care enough to create and subsequently hold records. Because as we know these are very few. The Research Centre of Greek folklore of the Athens Academy obviously does hold such archives. The Folklore museum of Macedonia and Thrace obviously holds such archives; Ms. Skouteri at the University obviously holds such archives. Ioanna Papapontoniou I believe, also holds such archives. But that is all. Perhaps the Museum of Folk Instruments in Plaka also holds such archives, where folk museum is connected to myth.

**Q: These are kept in the archives though, I mean they have never put into practice in the museum.**

A: Oh, no. I do not think so.

**Q: What I meant to say is that in the end this preservation never reaches the visitor.**

A: No

**Q: It is exclusively available for the scientist or the researcher who will reach for the information. Well, how do you assess the presence of popular culture in the museum, not as a display but as a channel of the displays' reading?**

A: What do you mean by that?

**Q: I am referring exactly to the core of the argument we have regarding the relationship between society and museum. I perceive popular culture as the connecting link between these two, and I would use popular culture in order to reach museums, whereas you would do it differently.**

A: No, I perceive it as popular culture too, I would not do it differently.

**Q: Then we define 'popular culture' differently. By 'popular culture' I mean artistic cultural production.**

A: But this is high culture, it is not popular culture.

**Q: I would not say so.**

A: Poetry? What are you talking about my girl? Alaveras? Is Alaveras popular culture? How many people read poetry?

**Q: Perhaps in poetry and in general in literature the borders between popular and high culture are more blurred. When it comes to other genres as music, things are quite clearly defined.**

A: It depends on the music genre. You cannot say that all musicians are 'popular culture'.

**Q: No, but I am exclusively concerned with the song and rather with the popular artistic song, which although it is popular does bear connections to poetry - you see that there is a give and take between them -, so I come to believe that this is 'popular' and not 'high culture'.**

A: Well..., however you can indeed set dividing lines between 'high' and 'popular' culture; there are 'grey zones' of course...

**Q: There are many 'grey zones'...**

A: ...but...and what is each time popular is re-defined by society.

**Q: What are the benefits and what are the problems that emerge from the interaction between museums and society?**

A: Yes,...this...many scholars have been occupied with this issue. I believe you have read Bennett, as well as Bourdieu. Now, when it comes to what extent society becomes better, more controllable, happier with museums...I do not think that anyone can answer this. We, as museologists believe that it is a positive thing to have good museums, as we understand 'good' for the mass audience. Now, the holistic assessment as to where a society with more and better museums heads to, the parameters that determine whether a society is good or bad and with reference to what is a society good - the movies we once thought to be 'cult movies' are now the rule. It is a difficult question to answer.

**Q: What is myth?**

A: Myth is what takes the place of another thing, in order for us to understand this thing, or to interpret it, or to protect ourselves from it, or to benefit from it.

**Q: Is it a tool with which we comprehend the world?**

A: It is something that replaces something else for many and various reasons each time; in order to comprehend, in order to protect ourselves, in order to benefit. Not only for the sake of comprehension.

**Q: Thank you very much**

## Appendix 19

**Polyxeni Veleni**

**Date: 29 /09/2006**

**Venue: Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.**

**Q: The first questions have a rather personal character in an attempt to outline your personal relationship with mythology, that is whether your family would tell you stories from mythology as a child, whether you liked mythology as a child, whether you had a favourite myth as a child...**

A: Well, I have read tones of ancient Greek mythology as a child, essentially this is what I was mostly occupied with. From when I first started to read, say six or seven years old, I had many books about ancient Greek mythology at home. I liked Greek mythology very much, it fascinated me, I travelled with it. Subsequently, I have had a very early contact with all the mythological past of Greece. Of course, I never read mythology now. I am not occupied with mythology now and I have not been occupied with mythology in the context of my profession.

**Q: You were not occupied with mythology as an archaeologist.**

A: No, I was not, because my main occupation has been the excavations all these years. My preoccupation with mythology as an archaeologist was only indirect. To be honest, I got over it and this is perhaps due to the fact that I read so much mythology as a child that I was saturated. I fed myself with mythology and maybe it is natural to eventually 'de-mystify' things and get out of the myths that had been feeding you. So, if you ask me whether I am fascinated by Greek mythology now, I would answer 'no', positively 'no', and I think that it is not relevant to me, because I interpreted it inside me, I rationalized it and I placed it mentally in the box, in which I believed I should put it. So, I am not occupied with it anymore, apart from when I am from an interpretive angle, in the context of my profession. I believe that it was useful for the age it was created; it was created for some known interpretive and psychological purposes and for purposes of interpretation of things, but now it says nothing to me. And I do not think it can say much to many people, if only in the form of a pretty tale. What fascinated me, I know you would like me to answer the question on the favourite myth of my childhood, I liked very much the myth of the Halcyon Days. This myth really touched me very much and it still does.

**Q: Why is that?**

A: Because they sought a way to interpret some natural phenomena back in those days, through mythology. And in general the entire body of Greek mythology, if one puts it in rational dimensions, they will realize that in essence it is an alternative way of

interpreting the world that surrounds us. They did not have the opportunity to understand all this thing through science, or at least science was not that progressed - science was in its first steps.

**Q: And it was not that widespread either.**

A: Exactly, knowledge was in the hands of the few, so the crowd sought ways, it made up excuses in order for it to interpret the world around them, the natural phenomena in essence. So, this is a beautiful natural phenomenon that occurs in the middle of the winter, when you suddenly have nice sunny days, and I really like very much Alcyone's myth.

**Q: So, in order to close the first set of questions, which concerns the childhood relationship with mythology, would you say now that, looking back, mythology fascinated you as a child in the form of a beautiful story?**

A: As a fairytale, because it made me sink into a fairytale world and potentially it also helped me find a psychological haven, due to my childhood ignorance. Because children do not know the world either; they discover it piece by piece, perhaps they justify some things through myths, later, when the moment to reject those things comes, they reconsider myth. Mythology helped me in my way of thinking.

**Q: So, mythology functioned as a tool for the interpretation of the world for you.**

A: Yes, it functioned like this a lot for me.

**Q: It was not merely a fairytale with princesses and cannibals and ...**

A: Not at all, because I took my fascination with myth a step further and I thought 'why did they say that? What did they want to interpret? Why were they occupied with that?' All these came to mind of course as I was growing up and along the process of enriching my knowledge.

**Q: I imagine that your family also contributed to that. I imagine that they sort of pushed you toward perceiving mythology in a way beyond the ordinary.**

A: I would not say that, because my parents were averagely educated, and thus they did not teach me in this way. Of course, maybe exactly because of the fact that they were not exceptionally educated, they let me read a lot. So, my family's contribution was only indirect.

**Q: Fine. Let us move on now to your adult life. As you said, you were not particularly preoccupied with mythology as an archaeologist. However, I am sure that you would come across mythology quite frequently.**

A: All the time.

**Q: You said that mythology, in the context of your profession, played the role of an interpretive tool. I imagine that you also used it in order to date the findings and...**

A: And also in order to interpret the depictions. It helped me a lot in interpreting depictions, as the entire iconography of ancient Greece has to do with mythology. Mythology is essentially the substratum of their religion; it is not a random thing. On the one hand it is an attempt to interpret phenomena of the cosmos, that is of nature, as well as phenomena of the psyche, and 'paths' of the intellect, and on the other hand mythology also constitutes the basis of the ancient Greek religion. This is where the entire pantheon was based and built upon, as well as all the myths of the gods and the heroes and all the figures that were associated with that religious framework. And so, mythology naturally helped me in archaeology, in the interpretation of various depictions on vases and reliefs and on any other thing that one can imagine.

**Q: So, mythology constituted a scientific tool. I would like us now to move on, because you are very busy as I can see, and talk about museums and leave the rest for later, in case there is some time left.**

A: Ok, good.

**Q: Mythology is discussed in a separate sector in the new archaeological museum of Thessaloniki.**

A: Are you referring to the 'Gods and Heroes' sector?

**Q: Yes.**

A: Yes, you could say that, of course mythology is discussed there in relation to religion. We present the divinities that were worshipped in Thessaloniki, or the divinities that were loved most by the Macedonians and we present the myths, to the extent that this is feasible, through these divinities. I believe that mythology should be developed in every museum separately.

**Q: This does not happen though.**

A: I mean in what museum should mythology not be discussed separately? Because if one has a look at the iconography of the black-figured and red-figured vases alone, which constitutes a vast chapter in archaeology, let alone the reliefs, the sculptures and the entire art of sculpture, the architectural decoration of temples all over Greece, well all these things have to do with mythology. So, mythology is an integral part of any archaeological museum. Mythology should be attributed a special place. It should, indeed. This is a matter of up-to-date museological perception of things. Perhaps in our museum, too, even more emphasis could have been laid on mythology.

**Q: So, ancient Greek mythology is an element of the civilization that the archaeological museum deals with and which penetrates every manifestation of that civilization.**

A: Exactly, it penetrates every manifestation of life, both public and private. It also transcends issues of age and gender. Mythology moulds people's life and it is also being molded through it.

**Q: Do you believe in mythology's diachronic nature?**

A: In some cases I do. Truly, some myths are pleasant to listen to even today, because they are still applicable. With this I mean that they explain to you some things in a nice way and comfort you, because we do need sometimes to be comforted with the help of explanations that are lighter than reality. Of course, one should always embrace the real cause of things and not the myth. Sometimes, though, myth does comfort us, it gives us something to lean on.

**Q: I have heard that before mainly from musicians, who resort specifically to the myth of Demeter and Core, in order for them to lean on something and to soothe their souls and to make their own problems look a bit lighter. They resort to stories from mythology, which of course they adjust to their own situation. I am asking you about mythology's diachronic character, as I have noticed that the archaeological museum has become more lyrical after its renovation. I noticed that there is a constant attempt for archaeology to be approached through the present. There is an attempt for conceptual links between the past and the present to be established, there is an attempt for the visitor to realize that what is in the museum was not made and used by aliens, by individuals that were different to what we are, and also noticed in two or three cases that there are in the museum references to the cultural production of today. There are references to Savvopoulos with a quotation from his song 'Demosthenus lexis', there are references to Themelis...**

A: But should not this constitute the objective of every contemporary museum and especially of every museum of archaeology? I am referring to the attempt to connect the past to the present. No, when it comes to whether mythology is especially helpful in this attempt...I mean otherwise, one should not bother and be occupied with archaeology today. There is absolutely no reason to go back and view the past if you cannot hurl it into the present, if you cannot transfer it into the present, because what would the purpose be in that case? What would such a thing be useful for? Is it simply because we want to know how people lived in the past? In this way it is only our curiosity that we can feed and in the end we may not all be that curious on this issue. All this enterprise should also have a 'tangible', practical, result, so that we will benefit in the life we live today.

**Q: And I believe that, anyway, without the provision of a link that joins the past with the present, not even the satisfaction of that superficial curiosity will be fulfilled eventually. Because, unless someone is an archaeologist or he/she exercises a profession thanks to which he/she comes every single second in touch with the past, he/she cannot have a complete picture of past life in the context of a museum visit that lasts 45 minutes or even half an hour.**

A: Yes, the visitor will not understand and, in addition, he/she will be bored. I mean, I

believe that a museum which does not project the past on the present ends up dull and boring.

**Q: The visitor feels that it is irrelevant to him/her.**

A: The only thing that the visitor receives is unbearable and strictly scientific information, which perhaps concerns only a few scientists but does not concern the wide public. And the objective of a museum is not to be concerned only with the minority; the objective of the museum is to relate to everybody. A few can find the information they need either in museum stores, either in books, or in special meetings and lectures and colloquia. There is space for the minority too. A museum however is not addressed exclusively either to the minority or to the scientists. The museum is obliged to present things that are scientifically documented, but in a way that can relate to every visitor, from the youngest to the oldest, and from the more simple-minded or less cultivated to the most cultivated, who also have a special interest in knowing the ancient world.

**Q: And who will also have the courage to come to museum twice and perhaps even three times...**

A: Exactly, two and three times. And in general a museum should also have this objective, that is to attract the visitor multiple times, that is to provide him/her with the impetus to come back, or, if you wish, the museum should have such a variety of exhibit, that the visitor will not be able to see them all within only one visit. The museum should succeed in creating the desire of the visitor to come back, because he/she did not have the chance to enjoy the museum how he/she wanted to - because, for instance, he/she spent only one hour -, or the museum should succeed in making the visitor go back to his/her home and reflect on what he/she saw in the museum and ask him/herself, 'What was that? I did not pay the attention I wanted to pay to it. And what displays were related to this information? I want to go and see them again, I am interested in it'. Because, even specialists on the subject, like we are, view a museum differently every time we visit it. And of course, this holds value for all the activities of our life. If a movie is good, then everytime you watch it, you discover new things. And also, this constitutes a criterion of how good something is. If you can bear to be occupied with it repeatedly, then it is good. If you can go and see a movie, a theatre play, a painting or a sculpture two, three or more times, or if you have the desire to see a work again and again, then it is good. It means that this work contains good elements that attract you again and again.

**Q: It means that there is space for second and third readings in this work.**

A: Exactly.

**Q: It is not exhausted in the first reading.**

A: ...in the first reading. Exactly.

**Q: Could this link between the past and the present function in the case of mythology too? Since this museum, from what I understand, has as its central axon exactly this connection of the visitor to the past through the present. And of course this can only be achieved when the visitor also identifies him/herself in the museum exhibits.**

A: Well, I think that these were exactly the objectives of this museum.

**Q: I would like us to focus on mythology with reference to that. Because, to be honest, I did not detect this link in the way mythology was presented.**

A: In my opinion, more emphasis should be laid on mythology. Mythology could be highlighted more in this museum. Of course there is always an issue of lack of space in a museum. Especially in our museum, mythology was approached in a rather superficial way; we did not penetrate into mythology. I think that we could have focused more on mythology. And we may actually do so. But we may do it by means of temporary exhibitions and by means of extra information and objects, which exist in abundance in our stores.

**Q: I do have some ideas on this.**

A: You do? Then you should give us a report!

**Q: Of course, if you ask me to.**

A: Yes, of course. So, what sort of ideas do you have?

**Q: I will start speaking from the viewpoint of my research of course.**

A: Yes, of course.

**Q: I started my research by noticing that many artists, musicians, novelists and visual artists include ancient Greek mythology in their expressional means. So, I talked about this with them and I believe that a museum could actually base its approach to mythology on the ideas of these artists, given that they are easily recognizable. And thanks to this, I believe that they could also attract to the museum an audience that otherwise would not pay the museum a visit.**

A: Yes. Of course, you have to be extra careful, as in this way you also attribute to some people a certain high status.

**Q: Sure, however some of the artists I have in mind are already very acknowledged and have nothing to lose or to gain from their association with the museum...**

A: Yes. We are however preparing, or rather we gave permission for - I apologize for the interruption - an exhibition of an artist who creates sculptures, paintings, serigraphs, wood-carvings and other things with topics from ancient Greece and from ancient Greek mythology.

**Q: Who is he?**

A: Alamanos.

**Q: I can't say I know him.**

A: He is not famous, but he is a very good artist. He is from Corfu. We are preparing a

retrospective exhibition on him, which will be installed in the museum's atrium. It will take place in 2007, from May until September. And because he a very prolific artist, we shall chose those works which are related to antiquity. This is essential, because of the museum's character.

**Q: Temporary exhibitions could be the best solution for such museological discourses.**

A: When I spoke about temporary exhibitions, I did not mean exclusively archaeological exhibitions. And after this exhibition, others may - or rather others will - follow.

**Q: This is what is interesting, for the visitor to go beyond the ancient discovery and realize that the discovery also bears correspondence to real life.**

A: It is an obligation for the archaeological museum. An archaeological museum is obliged to put its arms around all forms of art and to project them onto contemporary life, so that it can specifically attract diverse age groups, people with diverse interests, people of diverse levels of education - let me put it this way, although I do not mean it in the sense of a sort of discrimination.

**Q: But it is a fact!**

A: Yes, I mean we do not all know the same things! Some know more, some know less. Each one knows more about the field of his/her occupation. A museum is obliged to find ways, to come up with ideas, in order for it to attract every single person. A museum has to be interesting to everybody. And if a museum succeeds in becoming part of a city's life, then, I believe, it has succeeded in many things. By this, I mean a situation where the majority of the city's population will think 'what is going on in the museum?'

**Q: In this city this will not be an easy task.**

A: It is very hard for such a thing in this city, but we shall try. Yes. It is a very...

**Q: conservative city...**

A: Yes, conservative...

**Q: with a very developed sense of respectability...**

A: Exactly, I could not agree more with you...The situation is unbelievable. I believe that we are many years behind.

**Q: And it is a pity because Thessaloniki has all the good prospects.**

A: Well...yes...We have the complex of provincialism rooted very deeply inside us. We have to get over this. Essentially in Thessaloniki there has never been and there is still not today a bourgeois class.

**Q: Yes, there is only a sense of self-pity and a belief that Athenians are to be blamed for everything.**

A: And there is something more, but if you do not mind, I would prefer you to turn this off.

**Q: Yes of course.**

## Appendix 20

### 'Ithaka'

As you set out for Ithaka  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.

Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon-don't be afraid of them:  
you'll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.

Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon-you won't encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.  
May there be many summer mornings when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind-  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you're destined for.  
But don't hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you're old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.  
Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you wouldn't have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

C. P., Cavafis, 1894

Translated by Edmund Keeley and Phillip Sherrard

## Appendix 21

### 'Musée des Beaux Arts'

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully  
along;  
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.  
In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the plowman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

W. H. Auden

## MYTHOLOGICAL GLOSSARY<sup>1</sup>

### Achelous

Achelous was the patron deity of the 'silver-swirling' Achelous River, which is the largest river of Greece, and thus the chief of all river deities. His name translates as 'he who washes away care'. According to one version of the myth, Achelous was the son of Poseidon, whereas in other versions, he was the son of Gaia and Helios, i.e. of Earth and Sun, or Earth and Oceanus. Hesiod believed that Tethys and Oceanus were the parents of all river gods. Homer regarded Achelous as the origin of the entire world's fresh water. Achelous was a suitor for Deianeira, daughter of Oeneus king of Calydon, but was defeated by Heracles, who wed her himself. Sophocles pictures a mortal woman's terror at being courted by a chthonic river god:

'My suitor was the river Achelous,  
who took three forms to ask me of my father:  
a rambling bull once, then a writhing snake  
of gleaming colors, then again a man  
with ox-like face: and from his beard's dark shadows  
stream upon stream of water tumbled down.  
Such was my suitor.' (Sophocles, *Trachiniae*)

Achelous was most often depicted as a gray-haired old man or a vigorous bearded man in his prime, with a horned head and a serpent-like body. When he battled Heracles over the river nymph Deianeira, Achelous turned himself into a bull. Heracles tore off one of his horns and forced the god to surrender. Achelous had to trade the goat horn of Amaltheia to get it back. Heracles gave it to the Naiads, who transformed it into the cornucopia. Achelous is sometimes presented as the father of the Sirens by Terpsichore. The mouth of the Achelous river was the spot where Alcmaeon finally found peace from the Erinyes. In another mythic context, the Achelous was said to be formed by the tears of Niobe, who fled to Mount Sipylon after the deaths of her husband and children.

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<sup>1</sup> All entries are from Britannica Encyclopedia, unless otherwise stated.

### **Aegeas**

Aegeas known also as Aegeas, Aigeus, or Aigeas, was an archaic figure in the founding myth of Athens. The 'goat-man' who gave his name to the Aegean sea was the father of Theseus, the founder of Athenian institutions and one of the kings of Athens. Upon the death of the king his father, Pandion II, Aegeas and his three brothers, Pallas, Nisos, and Lykos, took control of Athens from Metion, who had seized the throne from Pandion. They divided the government in four but Aegeas became king. His first wife was Meta and the second was Chalcioppe. Still without a male heir, Aegeas asked the Oracle at Delphi for advice. Her cryptic words were "Do not loosen the bulging mouth of the wineskin until you have reached the height of Athens, lest you die of grief." Ignoring the oracle, Aegeas returned home by way of Troezen, where he was the guest of Troezen's king Pittheus. Pittheus understood the prophecy and introduced Aegeas to his daughter, Aethra, when he was drunk. They slept with each other and then, in some versions, Aethra waded out to the sea to the island of Sphairia, and bedded also with Poseidon. When she fell pregnant, Aegeas decided to go back to Athens. Before leaving, he covered his sandals, shield and sword under a huge rock and told her that when their son grew up, he should move the rock and bring the weapons back, by which sign his father would acknowledge him.

In Troezen, Theseus grew up and became a brave young man. He managed to move the rock and take his father's arms. His mother then revealed him his father's identity and that he should take the weapons back to him at Athens and be acknowledged. Theseus decided to go to Athens, following a dangerous path with thieves and bandits and thus accomplishing some important labours. In Athens he was acknowledged by his father, according to Aegeas' words. In those years the king of Crete, Minos declared war on Athens. He offered the Athenians peace under the condition that Athens would send seven young men and seven young women every nine years to Crete to be fed to the Minotaur, a vicious monster. This continued until Theseus killed the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, Minos' daughter. Aegeas had told Theseus, before he left for Crete, to put up the white sails upon his return, had he been successful in killing the Minotaur. Theseus forgot, and Aegeas jumped into the sea when he saw the black sails coming into Athens, in the mistaken belief that his son had been slain. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled and Aegeas eventually did die of grief. Henceforth, the sea where Aegeas was drown was known as the Aegean Sea.

### **Aphrodite**

Aphrodite was the goddess of love, beauty and sexual rapture. According to Hesiod, she was born when Uranus (the father of the gods) was castrated by his son Cronus. Cronus threw the severed genitals into the ocean which began to churn and foam

about them. From the *aphros* (which means 'foam') arose Aphrodite, and the sea carried her to either Cyprus or Cythera. Hence she is often referred to as Cypris and Cytherea. Homer calls her a daughter of Zeus and Dione. Aphrodite loved and was loved by many gods, such as Hephaestus and Ares, as well as mortals, such as Adonis and the Trojan Anchises. Some of her sons are Eros, Anteros, Hymenaios and Aeneas with Anchises. She was accompanied by the Graces. Her festival is the Aphrodisiac which was celebrated in various centers of Greece and especially in Athens and Corinth. Her priestesses were not prostitutes but women who represented the goddess and sexual intercourse with them was considered just one of the methods of worship. Her attributes are among others the dolphin, the dove, the swan, the pomegranate and the lime tree.

### **Artemis**

Artemis is the daughter of Leto and Zeus, and the twin of Apollo. Artemis is the goddess of the wilderness, the hunt and wild animals, and fertility (she became a goddess of fertility and childbirth mainly in cities). She was often depicted with the crescent of the moon above her forehead and was sometimes identified with Selene (goddess of the moon). Artemis was one of the Olympians and a virgin goddess. Her main vocation was to roam mountain forests and uncultivated land with her nymphs in attendance hunting for lions, panthers, hinds and stags. Contradictory to the later, she helped in protecting and seeing to their well-being, also their safety and reproduction. She was armed with a bow and arrows which were made by Hephaestus and the Cyclopes.

Artemis was very possessive. She would show her wrath on anyone who disobeyed her wishes, especially against her sacred animals. Even the great hero Agamemnon came upon the wrath of Artemis, when he killed a stag in her sacred grove. His punishment came when his ships were becalmed, while he made his way to besiege Troy. With no winds to sail his ships he was told by the seer Calchas that the only way Artemis would bring back the winds was for him to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. In the last minute Artemis exchanged a deer in Iphigenia's place, and took Iphigenia to the land of the Tauri (the Crimea) as a priestess, to prepare strangers for sacrifice to Artemis.

Artemis was worshiped in most Greek cities but only as a secondary deity. However, to the Greeks in Asia Minor she was a prominent deity. In Ephesus,

a principal city of Asia Minor, a great temple was built in her honor, which became one of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World". But at Ephesus she was worshiped mainly as a fertility goddess, and was identified with Cybele the mother goddess of eastern lands. The cult statues of the Ephesian Artemis differ greatly

from those of mainland Greece, whereas she is depicted as a huntress with her bow and arrows. Those found at Ephesus show her in the eastern style, standing erect with numerous nodes on her chest. There have been many theories as to what they represent. Some say they are breasts, others that they are bulls testes which were sacrificed to her. Which is the true interpretation remains uncertain, but each represents fertility. There were festivals in honor of Artemis, such as the Brauronia, which was held in Brauron; and the festival of Artemis Orthia, held at Sparta, when young Spartan boys would try to steal cheeses from the altar. As they tried they would be whipped, the meaning of Orthia and the nature of the ritual whipping has been lost and there is no logical explanation or translation. Among the epithets given to Artemis are: Potnia Theron (mistress of wild animals) this title was mentioned by the great poet Homer; Kourotrophos (nurse of youth's); Locheia (helper in childbirth); Agrotera (huntress); and Cynthia (taken from her birthplace on Mount Cynthus on Delos). When young girls reached puberty they were initiated into her cult, but when they decided to marry, which Artemis was not against, they were asked to lay in front of the altar all the paraphernalia of their virginity, toys, dolls and locks of their hair, they then left the domain of the virgin goddess.

#### **Athena**

Athena was the Greek goddess of wisdom, war, the arts, industry, justice and skill. She had sprung fully grown out of her father's head. Her mother was Metis, goddess of wisdom and Zeus' first wife. In fear that Metis would bear a son mightier than himself, Zeus swallowed her and she began to make a robe and helmet for her daughter. The hammering of the helmet caused Zeus great pain in the form of headaches and he cried out in agony. Skilled Hephaestus ran to his father and split his skull open and from it emerged Athena, fully grown and wearing her mother's robe and helmet. She is the virgin mother of Erichthonius. Athena and her uncle Poseidon were both very fond of a certain city in Greece. Both of them claimed the city and it was decided that the one that could give the finest gift should have it. Leading a procession of citizens, the two gods mounted the Acropolis. Poseidon struck the side of the cliff with his trident and a spring welled up. The people marveled, but the water was as salty as Poseidon's sea and it was not very useful. Athena's gift was an olive tree, which was better because it gave the people food, oil and wood. Athena named her city Athens. Athena's companion was the goddess of victory, Nike, and her usual attribute is the owl. Athena possessed the aegis, i.e. Medusa's severed head, which she wore on her chest as an apotropaic ornament.

#### **Atlantis**

Atlantis (in Greek = 'island of Atlas') is the name of a legendary island first mentioned in Plato's dialogues 'Timaeus' and 'Critias'. In Plato's account, Atlantis, lying 'beyond

the pillars of Heracles', was a naval power that conquered many parts of Western Europe and Africa, over 9,000 years before Plato's own time, or approximately 9400 B.C. After a failed attempt to invade Athens, Atlantis sank into the ocean 'in a single day and night of misfortune'. As a story embedded in Plato's dialogues, Atlantis is generally seen as a myth created by Plato to illustrate his political theories. Although the function of the story of Atlantis seems clear to most scholars, they dispute whether and how much Plato's account was inspired by older traditions. Some scholars argue Plato drew upon memories of past events such as the Thera eruption or the Trojan War, while others insist that he took inspiration of contemporary events like the destruction of Helike in 373 BC or the failed Athenian invasion of Sicily in 415–413 BC.

### **Cyclops**

Cyclops in Greek means 'round eye'. A Cyclops was any of several one-eyed giants to whom were ascribed a variety of histories and deeds. In Homer the Cyclopes were cannibals, living a rude pastoral life in a distant land (traditionally Sicily), and the 'Odyssey' contains a well-known episode in which Odysseus escapes death by blinding the Cyclops Polyphemus. In Hesiod the Cyclopes were three sons of Uranus and Gaea – their names were Arges, Brontes, and Steropes (Bright, Thunderer, Lightener) - who forged the thunderbolts of Zeus. Later authors made them the workmen of Hephaestus and said that Apollo killed them for making the thunderbolt that slew his son Asclepius. The walls of several ancient cities (e.g., Tiryns) of Mycenaean architecture were sometimes said to have been built by Cyclopes. Hence in modern archaeology the term cyclopean is applied to walling of which the stones are not squared.

### **Demeter and Kore (or Persephone)**

Demeter was the Greek earth goddess, who brought forth the fruits of the earth, particularly the various grains. She taught mankind the art of sowing and ploughing so they could end their nomadic existence. As such, Demeter was also the goddess of planned society. In systematized theology, Demeter is the daughter of Cronus and Rhea and sister of Zeus, by whom she became the mother of Kore, which literally means 'young woman'. Zeus once promised Kore to his brother, Hades, lord of the underworld, without telling Demeter. After Hades kidnapped her, she was known as Persephone, Queen of the Dead. Kore was enticed by a bloom of narcissus and strayed too far from her companions. In his chariot pulled by coal-black horses, Hades rose up through a chasm in the earth, grabbed her by the wrist, and sat her next to him. Her mother, Demeter, wandered the earth for a very long time looking for her daughter, during this time the earth brought forth no grain, until she came to the

sun, and he told her what happened. Finally Zeus sent Hermes to the underworld, ordering Hades to restore Persephone to her mother, but that was only if she hadn't tasted the food of the dead. However, before she left, Hades gave her a pomegranate (a common fertility symbol) from which she did eat some seeds. Thus, Persephone could only return to her mother for two thirds of the year and spent the other third at Hades side as his wife, in the infernal regions. Since then it is only when her daughter is with her, that Demeter lets things grow. This period is thought to be autumn and winter, as this is the time when the earth is re-generated, contrary to the common belief that Demeter's favourite season was summer.

The 'Eleusinian Mysteries' were dedicated to the worship of Demeter and Persephone. When Demeter was looking for her daughter, in the shape of an old woman called Doso, she was welcomed by Celeus, the king of Eleusis. He requested her to nurse his sons Demophon and Triptolemus. To reward his hospitality Demeter intended to make the boy Demophon immortal by placing him each night in the hearth, to burn his mortal nature away. The spell was broken one night because Metanira, Demophon's mother, walked in on her while she was performing this ritual. Eventually, Demeter taught instead the other son, Triptolemus, the principles of agriculture, who, in turn, taught others this art. In ancient art, Demeter was often portrayed sitting as a solemn woman, often wearing a wreath of braided ears of corn. Her usual symbolic attributes are the fruits of the earth and the torch. Her sacred animals were the snake and the pig.

#### **Deucalion and Pyrrha**

Deucalion was the son of Prometheus. When Zeus sent a flood to destroy the evil mankind (of the copper age), Prometheus told the righteous Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha, daughter of Prometheus's brother Epimetheus and Pandora, to save themselves by building an ark. After sailing for nine days and nights, Deucalion and Pyrrha landed on Mount Parnassus near Delphi. Deucalion made an offering to Zeus and the god's response was to send Hermes with a promise to make any wish come true. Deucalion then asked for the earth to be re-populated, and he was told to throw his mother's bones behind him. The couple then took stones and threw them over their shoulders, and the stones became the new human race: Deucalion's stones the men, and Pyrrha's the women. The new race was dark and short where the previous had been tall and blond. The couple had a son, Hellen, who in turn became the father of Aeolus, Dorus and Xythos, and grandfather of Ion and Achaïos. These names all refer to the different Greek tribes, with Hellen (i.e. 'Greek'), as the ancestor.

#### **Epic of Gilgamesh**

Gilgamesh is the best known of all ancient Mesopotamian heroes. Numerous tales in the Akkadian language have been told about Gilgamesh, and the whole collection has been described as an odyssey—the odyssey of a king who did not want to die. The fullest extent text of the Gilgamesh Epic is on 12 incomplete Akkadian-language tablets found at Nineveh in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (reigned 668–627 BC). The gaps that occur in the tablets have been partly filled by various fragments found elsewhere in Mesopotamia and Anatolia. In addition, five short poems in the Sumerian language are known from tablets that were written during the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C. The Gilgamesh of the poems and of the Epic tablets was probably the Gilgamesh who ruled at Uruk in southern Mesopotamia sometime during the first half of the 3rd millennium BC and who was thus a contemporary of Agga, ruler of Kish; Gilgamesh of Uruk was also mentioned in the Sumerian list of kings as reigning after the Flood. There is, however, no historical evidence for the exploits narrated in poems and Epic. Gilgamesh of the Epic was part divine and part human, the great builder and warrior, knower of all things on land and sea. In order to curb Gilgamesh's seemingly harsh rule, the god Anu caused the creation of Enkidu, a wild man who at first lived among animals. Soon, however, Enkidu was initiated into the ways of city life and traveled to Uruk, where Gilgamesh awaited him. Tablet II describes a trial of strength between the two men in which Gilgamesh was the victor; thereafter, Enkidu was the friend and companion of Gilgamesh. In Tablets III–V the two men set out together against Huwawa (Humbaba), the divinely appointed guardian of a remote cedar forest, but the rest of the engagement is not recorded in the surviving fragments. In Tablet VI Gilgamesh, who had returned to Uruk, rejected the marriage proposal of Ishtar, the goddess of love, and then, with Enkidu's aid, killed the divine bull that she had sent to destroy him. Tablet VII begins with Enkidu's account of a dream in which the gods Anu, Ea, and Shamash decided that he must die for slaying the bull. Enkidu then fell ill and dreamed of the 'house of dust' that awaited him. Gilgamesh's lament for his friend and the state funeral of Enkidu are narrated in Tablet VIII. Afterward, Gilgamesh made a dangerous journey (Tablets IX and X) in search of Utnapishtim, the survivor of the Babylonian Flood, in order to learn from him how to escape death. He finally reached Utnapishtim, who told him the story of the Flood and showed him where to find a plant that would renew youth (Tablet XI). But after Gilgamesh obtained the plant, it was seized by a serpent, and Gilgamesh unhappily returned to Uruk. An appendage to the Epic, Tablet XII, related the loss of objects called *pukku* and *mikku* (perhaps "drum" and "drumstick") given to Gilgamesh by Ishtar. The Epic ends with the return of the spirit of Enkidu, who promised to recover the objects and then gave a grim report on the underworld.

### **Gaea**

Gaea was the personification of the Earth. She was the mother and wife of Uranus (Heaven), from whom the Titan Cronus, her last-born child by him, separated her. She was also mother of the other Titans, the Gigantes, the Erinyes, and the Cyclopes. Gaea may have been originally a mother goddess worshipped in Greece before the Hellenes introduced the cult of Zeus. Less widely worshipped in historic times, Gaea was described as the giver of dreams and the nourisher of plants and young children. Gaea is often shown as being present at the birth of Zeus, but in some legends she is his enemy because she is the mother of the giants and of the 100-headed monster Typhon.

### **Ganymede**

Ganymede was the son of Tros (or Laomedon), king of Troy. Because of his unusual beauty, he was carried off, either by the gods, or by Zeus, disguised as an eagle, or, according to a Cretan account, by Minos, to serve as cupbearer. In compensation, Zeus gave Ganymede's father a stud of immortal horses, or a golden vine. The earliest forms of the myth have no erotic content, but by the 5th century BC it was believed that Ganymede's kidnapper had a homosexual passion for him; Ganymede's kidnapping was a popular topic on 5<sup>th</sup> century Attic vases.

### **Graiae**

The Graiae (i.e. 'the grey women'), were sisters of the Gorgons. They were three old sisters with white hair. They shared one eye and one tooth. Perseus persuaded them into helping him by seizing the one eye and one tooth and not returning them until they provided him with winged sandals (which enabled him to fly), the cap of Hades (which conferred invisibility), a curved sword, or sickle, to decapitate Medusa, and a bag in which to conceal the head. According to another version, the Graiae merely directed him to the Stygian Nymphs, who told him where to find the Gorgons and gave him the bag, sandals, and helmet; Hermes gave him the sword.

### **Halcyon days**

Alcyone was the daughter of Aeolus, god of the winds, and of either Enarete or Aegiale. She married Ceyx, son of Eosphorus, i.e. the Morning Star. They lived happily in Trachis, and according to Pseudo-Apollodorus's account, they often called each other 'Zeus' and 'Hera'. This angered Zeus, who threw a thunderbolt at Ceyx's ship. Ceyx appeared to Alcyone in the form of a vision to tell her of his fate. Alcyone threw herself into the sea in her desperation. However the gods, as a token of compassion, turned both Alcyone and Ceyx into halcyon birds, which thus were named after the heroine. Ovid and Hyginus in their accounts omit Ceyx and Alcyone calling each other Zeus and Hera as the reason for Ceyx's loss. Ovid and Hyginus also

refer to the transformation as the etymology for 'halcyon days', the seven days in winter when storms and clouds never occur. They state that these were originally the seven days each year (either side of the shortest day of the year) during which Alcyone - metamorphosed to a bird - laid her eggs and made her nest on the beach. During these seven days, Alcyone's father, Aeolus, hold the winds from blowing and tamed the sea so that his daughter could lay her eggs in safety.

#### **Helen of Troy (Beautiful Helen)**

Helene was the most beautiful woman of Greece and the indirect cause of the Trojan War. She was the daughter of Zeus, either by Leda or by Nemesis, and sister of the Dioscuri. As a young girl she was carried off by Theseus, but she was rescued by her brothers. She was also the sister of Clytemnestra, who married Agamemnon. Her suitors came from all parts of Greece, and from among them she chose Menelaus, Agamemnon's younger brother. However, during an absence of Menelaus, Helen fled to Troy with Paris, son of the Trojan king Priam; when Paris was slain, she married his brother Deiphobus, whom she betrayed to Menelaus when Troy was subsequently captured. Menelaus and she then returned to Sparta, where they lived happily until their deaths. Helen was worshipped and had a festival at Therapnae in Laconia; she also had a temple at Rhodes, where she was worshipped as Dendritis (the tree goddess). Like her brothers, the Dioscuri, she was a patron deity of sailors. Her name is pre-Hellenic and in cult may go back to the pre-Greek periods.

#### **Hera**

Hera was daughter of the Titans Cronus and Rhea, sister and wife of Zeus, and queen of the Olympian gods. Hera was worshipped throughout the Greek world and played an important part in Greek literature, appearing most frequently as the jealous and rancorous wife of Zeus and pursuing with vindictive hatred the heroines who were beloved by him. From early times Hera was believed to be the sole lawful wife of Zeus; she soon superseded Dione, who shared with him his ancient oracle at Dodona in Epirus. In general, Hera was worshipped in two main capacities: (1) as consort of Zeus and queen of heaven and (2) as goddess of marriage and of the life of women. The second sphere naturally made her the protectress of women in childbirth, and she bore the title of Eileithyia, the birth goddess, at Argos and Athens. At Argos and Samos, however, Hera was even more than queen of heaven and marriage goddess. She was patron of those cities, which gave her a position corresponding to that of Athena at Athens. Although her Argive ritual was markedly agricultural, she also had a celebration there called 'the Shield', and there was an armed procession in her honour at Samos. This conception resulted from the breadth of functions attributed

to the patron deity of a Greek state: a city goddess must be chief in peace and war alike. The animal especially sacred to Hera was the cow. Her sacred bird was first the cuckoo, later the peacock. She was represented as a majestic and severe, though youthful, matron.

### **Hermes**

Hermes was son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia. His name is probably derived from *herma*, the Greek word for a heap of stones, such as was used in the country to indicate boundaries or as a landmark. The earliest centre of his cult was probably Arcadia, where Mount Cyllene was reputed to be his birthplace. There, he was especially worshipped as the god of fertility, and his images were ithyphallic. Both in literature and cult Hermes was constantly associated with the protection of cattle and sheep, and he was often closely connected with deities of vegetation, especially Pan and the nymphs. In the 'Odyssey', however, he appears mainly as the messenger of the gods and the conductor of the dead to Hades. Hermes was also a dream god, and the Greeks offered to him the last libation before sleep. As a messenger, he may also have become the god of roads and doorways, and he was the protector of travellers. Treasure casually found was his gift, and any stroke of good luck was attributed to him; this conception and his function as a deity of gain, honest or dishonest, are natural derivatives of his character as a god of fertility. In many respects he was Apollo's counterpart; like him, Hermes was a patron of music and was credited with the invention of the kithara and sometimes of music itself. He was also god of eloquence and presided over some kinds of popular divination. The sacred number of Hermes was four, and the fourth day of the month was his birthday. In archaic art, apart from the stylized herms, he was portrayed as a full-grown and bearded man, clothed in a long tunic and often wearing a cap and winged boots. Sometimes he was represented in his pastoral character, bearing a sheep on his shoulders; at other times he appeared as the messenger of the gods with the *kerykeion*, or herald's staff, which was his most frequent attribute. From the latter part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. he was portrayed as a nude and beardless youth, a young athlete.

### **Hesperides**

Their name means 'daughters of evening'. The singular is Hesperis. They were the clear-voiced maidens who guarded the tree bearing golden apples that Gaea gave to Hera at her marriage to Zeus. According to Hesiod, they were the daughters of Erebus and Night; in other accounts, their parents were Atlas and Hesperis or Phorcys and Ceto. They were usually three in number, Aegle, Erytheia, and Hespere (or Hesperethusa), but by some accounts were as many as seven. They were usually said to live in the west beyond the sunset, but the Greek poet and grammarian

Apollonius of Rhodes (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) placed them in North Africa, and the mythographer Apollodorus (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) located them among the Hyperboreans. The golden apples were also guarded by the dragon Lado, the offspring of Phorcys and Ceto. As Lado is the name of an Arcadian river, Arcadia was possibly the original site of the garden. The golden apples figured in different accounts of Heracles' 11<sup>th</sup> Labour. In one version Heracles slayed the dragon and took the apples. In another version Heracles held the heavens while Atlas took the apples for him. In some artistic representations Heracles dines with the Hesperides, who freely give him the apples. The golden apples that Aphrodite gave to Hippomenes before his race with Atalanta were also from the garden of the Hesperides.

### **Hesperus**

Hesperos was the evening star. Although initially considered to be the son of Eos (the Dawn) and the Titan Astraeus, he was later said to be the son, or brother, of Atlas. He was later identified with the morning star, Phosphorus, or Eosphorus (in Latin, Lucifer), the bringer of light (later discovered by astronomers to be the planet Venus). Hesperus is variously described by different authors as the father of the Hesperides or of their mother, Hesperis.

### **Hygeia**

Hygeia was goddess of health. The oldest traces of her cult are at Titane, west of Corinth, where she was worshipped together with Asclepius, the god of medicine. At first no special relationship existed between her and Asclepius, but gradually she came to be regarded as his daughter; later literature, however, makes her his wife.

The cult of Hygieia spread concurrently with his. In later times, Hygieia and Asclepius became protecting deities. Hygieia's animal was a serpent, sometimes shown drinking from a saucer held in her hand.

### **Icarus**

Icarus was the son of the inventor Daedalus (whose name translates into 'skillfully wrought'), mythical Greek architect and sculptor, who was said to have built, among other things, the paradigmatic Labyrinth for King Minos of Crete. Daedalus fell out of favour with Minos and was imprisoned; he fashioned wings of wax and feathers for himself and for his son, Icarus, and escaped to Sicily. Icarus, however, flew too near the Sun, and his wings melted; he fell into the sea and drowned. The island on which his body was washed ashore was later named Icaria

### **Iphigenia**

She was daughter of the king of the Achaeans, Agamemnon (for more information, see *Artemis*).

### **Labyrinth**

Labyrinth was said to have been built by Daedalus on the plan of the Egyptian, is famous for its connection with the legend of the Minotaur. It is doubtful whether it ever had any real existence. By the older writers it was placed near Knossos, and it is represented on coins, but nothing corresponding to it has been found during modern excavations, unless the royal palace was intended. Later writers, such as Claudian, place it near Gortyna, but some winding passages and chambers close to that place are, in reality, ancient quarries.

### **Lado**

see *Hesperides*

### **Laocoön**

Laocoön was a seer and a priest of Apollo. He was the son of Agenor of Troy or, according to some, the brother of Anchises (the father of the hero Aeneas). Laocoön offended Apollo by breaking his oath of celibacy and begetting children or by having sexual intercourse with his wife in Apollo's sanctuary. Thus, while preparing to sacrifice a bull on the altar of the god Poseidon (a task that had fallen to him by lot), Laocoön and his twin sons, Antiphas and Thymbraeus (also called Melanthus), were crushed to death by two great sea serpents, Porces and Chariboea (or Curissia or Periboea), sent by Apollo. A much and better known reason for his punishment was that he had warned the Trojans against accepting the wooden horse left by the Greeks.

### **Medusa**

Medusa is the most famous of the monster figures known as Gorgons. She was once a beautiful maiden, but was turned into an appalling monster by Athena, as a punishment, because she was raped by Poseidon inside one of Athena's temples. She was usually represented as a winged female creature having a head of hair consisting of snakes; unlike the Gorgons, she was sometimes represented as very beautiful. Medusa was the only Gorgon who was mortal; hence her slayer, Perseus, was able to kill her by cutting off her head. From the blood that spurted from her neck sprang Chrysaor and Pegasus, her two sons by Poseidon. The severed head, which had the power of turning into stone all, who looked upon it, was given to



Athena, who placed it in her shield; according to another account, Perseus buried it in the marketplace of Argos. Heracles is said to have obtained a lock of Medusa's hair (which possessed the same powers as the head) from Athena and given it to Sterope, the daughter of Cepheus, as a protection for the town of Tegea against attack; when exposed to view, the lock was supposed to bring on a storm, which put the enemy to flight.

### **Moirae**

Moirae were the three goddesses who determined human destinies, and in particular the span of a person's life and his allotment of misery and suffering. Homer speaks of Fate (*moira*) in the singular as an impersonal power and sometimes makes its functions interchangeable with those of the Olympian gods. From the time of the poet Hesiod (8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) on, however, the Fates were personified as three very old women who spin the threads of human destiny. Their names were Klotho (Spinner), Lachesis (Allotter), and Atropos (Inflexible). Klotho spun the 'thread' of human fate, Lachesis dispensed it, and Atropos cut the thread (thus determining the individual's moment of death).

### **Orpheus**

Orpheus was a legendary hero endowed with superhuman musical skills. He became the patron of a religious movement based on sacred writings said to be his own. Traditionally, Orpheus was the son of a Muse (probably Calliope, the patron of Epic poetry) and Oeagrus, a king of Thrace (other versions give Apollo). According to some legends, Apollo gave Orpheus his first lyre. Orpheus's singing and playing were so beautiful that animals and even trees and rocks moved about him in dance. Orpheus joined the expedition of the Argonauts, saving them from the music of the Sirens by playing his own, more powerful music. On his return, he married Eurydice, who was soon killed by snakebite. Overcome with grief, Orpheus ventured himself to the land of the dead to attempt to bring Eurydice back to life. With his singing and playing he charmed the ferryman Charon and the dog Cerberus, guardians of the River Styx. His music and grief so moved Hades, king of the underworld, that Orpheus was allowed to take Eurydice with him back to the world of life and light. Hades set one condition, however: upon leaving the land of death, both Orpheus and Eurydice were forbidden to look back. The couple climbed up toward the opening into the land of the living, and Orpheus, seeing the Sun again, turned back to share his delight with Eurydice. In that moment, she disappeared. Orpheus himself was later killed by the women of Thrace. The motive and manner of his death vary in different accounts, but the earliest known, that of Aeschylus, says that they were Maenads urged by Dionysus to tear him to pieces in a Bacchic orgy because he preferred the worship of the rival god Apollo. His head, still singing, with

his lyre, floated to Lesbos, where an oracle of Orpheus was established. The head prophesied until the oracle became more famous than that of Apollo at Delphi, at which time Apollo himself bade the Orphic oracle stop. The dismembered limbs of Orpheus were gathered up and buried by the Muses. His lyre they had placed in the heavens as a constellation.

### **Orphism**

A mystery religion based on the teachings and songs of Orpheus is thought to have eventually arisen in ancient Greece, although no coherent description of such a religion can be constructed from historical evidence. Most scholars agree that by the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. there was at least an Orphic movement, with traveling priests who offered teaching and initiation, based on a body of legend and doctrine said to have been founded by Orpheus. Part of the Orphic ritual is thought to have involved the mimed or actual dismemberment of an individual representing the god Dionysus, who was then seen to be reborn. Orphic eschatology laid great stress on rewards and punishment after bodily death, the soul then being freed to achieve its true life.

### **Pan**

Pan was a fertility deity, more or less bestial in form. Originally an Arcadian deity, his name is a Doric contraction of *paon* ('pasturer') but was commonly supposed in antiquity to be connected with *pan* ('all'). His father was usually said to be Hermes, but a comic invention held that he was the product of an orgy of Odysseus's wife Penelope with her many suitors. Pan was generally represented as a vigorous and lustful figure having the horns, legs, and ears of a goat; in later art the human parts of his form were much more emphasized. He haunted the high hills, and his chief concern was with flocks and herds, not with agriculture; hence he can make humans, like cattle, stampede in "panic" terror. As a shepherd, he was a piper and he rested at noon. Pan was insignificant in literature, aside from Hellenistic bucolic, but he was a very common subject in ancient art. His rough figure was antithetical to, for example, that of Apollo, who represented culture and sophistication.

### **Pasiphae and Minotaur**

Minotaurus (meaning 'Minos' bull') was a monster of Crete that had the body of a man and the head of a bull. It was the offspring of Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, and a snow-white bull sent to Minos by the god Poseidon for sacrifice. Minos, instead of sacrificing it, kept it alive; Poseidon as a punishment made Pasiphae fall in love with it. Her child by the bull was shut up in the Labyrinth created for Minos by Daedalus. A son of Minos, Androgeos, was later killed by the Athenians; to avenge his death, Minos demanded that seven Athenian youths and seven maidens should be sent every ninth year (or, according to another version, every year) to be devoured by the

**Minotaur.** When the third time of sacrifice came, the Athenian hero Theseus volunteered to go, and, with the help of Ariadne, daughter of Minos and Pasiphae, he killed the monster and ended the tribute. Theseus escaped with Ariadne.

#### **Persephone**

Persephone was daughter of Zeus, the chief god, and Demeter, the goddess of agriculture; she was the wife of Hades, king of the underworld. Her myth is told in the Homeric 'Hymn to Demeter' (see *Demeter and Kore*).

#### **Phaethon**

Phaethon was the son of Helios, the sun god, and a woman or nymph variously identified as Clymene, Prote, or Rhode. The most influential extant version of the story, found in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Books I–II, seems to echo the plot of Euripides' 'Phaethon', now partially known from papyrus discoveries. Taunted with illegitimacy, Phaethon appealed to his father, who swore to prove his paternity by giving him whatever he wanted. Phaethon asked to be allowed to drive the chariot of the sun through the heavens for a single day. Helios, bound by his oath, had to let him make the attempt. Phaethon set off but was entirely unable to control the horses of the sun chariot, which came too near to the earth and began to scorch it. To prevent further damage, Zeus hurled a thunderbolt at Phaethon, who fell to the earth at the mouth of the Eridanus, a river later identified as the Po.

#### **Prometheus<sup>2</sup>**

When Zeus became the king of all gods, he gathered the gods and dished out honors and authorities to them, accordingly to each one's power and wisdom. However, Zeus did not think to give anything to humans and he simply said that if the human race dies out, he will create a new one. Prometheus was the only one who openly opposed this decision of Zeus'. And not only did he oppose, but also by acting with much boldness and by making wise predictions, he succeeded in putting into humans mind much hope, which made humans not face in every step the threat of extinction. Then, Prometheus brought humans fire, which proved to be a 'common good for the mortals', 'a great facility and a master of every art'. Also some said that Prometheus did not limit his benefaction only to the above, but also that he himself taught humans the arts and the sciences. Some took the story even further and claimed that Prometheus was also the creator of mankind, not only because he was the father of Deucalion - the first mortal king on earth, who became the patriarch of the Greeks and of all people -, but also because Prometheus modeled humans with

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<sup>2</sup> Ρούσος, Ε. Ν. (Roussos, E., N.), «Θεογονία» ('Theogony'), Κακριδής, Ι. (Kakridis, I.) ed., *Ελληνική Μυθολογία*, (*Greek Mythology*) II, pp. 31-35.

his very hands. Namely, they said that Prometheus with the help of Athena had modeled humans from clay and fire and that he had given them shape similar to the shape of Gods. When the gods chose Prometheus as arbiter in a dispute, he fooled the gullible Zeus into picking the worst parts of the sacrificial bull by hiding them under a rich layer of fat. To punish Prometheus, Zeus withheld fire from men. 'Let them eat their flesh raw', he declared. In response, Prometheus, snuck up to Mount Olympus, lit a torch from the sun, and hid a burning piece of charcoal in a hollow stalk. He slipped away with it and thus delivered fire to mankind. Zeus, as revenge, tried unsuccessfully to trick Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus, into accepting the beautiful but mischievous Pandora as a gift. Epimetheus, mindful of earlier advice from his brother, refused. Zeus, even madder now that his trick had failed, had Prometheus chained naked to a pillar in the Caucasian mountains. A griffon-vulture ate at Prometheus' liver all day long. During the bitter cold of the mountain night, the liver became whole again. So it went day after day, year after year. Epimetheus married Pandora in an effort to free his brother. Pandora - as devilish as she was beautiful - opened the famous box in which Prometheus had shut up all the evils that might plague mankind – i.e. Old Age, Labor, Sickness, Insanity, Vice and Passion. Only years later, at the behest of Heracles, did Zeus free Prometheus.

### **Pythia**

Pythia was the priestess presiding over the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, located on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. Pythia was widely credited with giving prophecies inspired by Apollo, giving her a prominence unusual for a woman in male dominated ancient Greece. The Delphic oracle was established in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Its last recorded response was given in 393 A.D, when the emperor Theodosius I ordered pagan temples to cease operation. During this period the Delphic Oracle was the most prestigious and authoritative oracle in the Greek world. The oracle is one of the best-documented religious institutions of the classical Greek world. Writers who mention the oracle include Herodotus, Euripides, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Pindar, Xenophon, Diodorus, Strabo, Pausanias, Plutarch, Livy, Justin, Ovid, Lucan and Julian. The name Pythia derived from Pytho, which in myth was the original name of Delphi. The Greeks derived this place-name from the verb *pythein* ('to rot'), used of the decomposition of the body of the monstrous serpent Python after she was slain by Apollo. It is often said that Pythia delivered oracles in a frenzied state induced by vapors rising from the ground, and that she spoke gibberish which priests reshaped into the enigmatic prophecies preserved in Greek literature. This picture has been challenged by scholars such as Joseph Fontenrose and Lisa Maurizio, who show that the ancient sources uniformly represent Pythia speaking intelligibly, and giving

prophecies in her own voice. Recent geological investigations have shown the possibility that ethylene gas caused the Pythia's state of inspiration.

### **Scylla and Charybdis**

Scylla and Charybdis were two immortal and irresistible monsters who beset the narrow waters traversed by the hero Odysseus in his wanderings described in Homer's 'Odyssey'. They were later localized in the Strait of Messina. Scylla was a supernatural creature, with 12 feet and 6 heads on long, snaky necks, each head having a triple row of sharklike teeth, while her loins were girt with the heads of baying dogs. From her lair in a cave she devoured whatever ventured within reach, including six of Odysseus' companions. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Books XIII–XIV, she was said to have been originally human in appearance but transformed out of jealousy through the witchcraft of Circe into her fearful shape. She was sometimes identified with the Scylla who betrayed her father, King Nisus of Megara, out of love for Minos, king of Crete.

Charybdis, who lurked under a fig tree a bowshot away on the opposite shore, drank down and belched forth the waters thrice a day and was fatal to shipping. Her character was most likely the personification of a whirlpool. The shipwrecked Odysseus barely escaped her clutches by clinging to a tree until the improvised raft that she swallowed floated to the surface again after many hours. Scylla was often rationalized in antiquity as a rock or reef.

### **Sisyphus<sup>3</sup>**

Sisyphus was the son of Aeolus and Enarete, husband of Merope, and King/Founder of Ephyra (Corinth). Later sources say Sisyphus was the father of Odysseus by Anticlea, just before she married her later husband, Laertes. Sisyphus was said to have founded the Isthmian games in honour of Melicertes, whose body he found lying on the shore of the Isthmus of Corinth. Sisyphus promoted navigation and commerce, but was avaricious and deceitful in his killing of travellers and guests in violation of the laws of hospitality. From Homer onwards, Sisyphus was famed as the craftiest of men. He seduced his niece, took his brother's throne and betrayed Zeus's secrets (specifically, Zeus' rape of Aegina, the river god Asopus' daughter; by some accounts, the daughter of his father Aeolus, making her either Sisyphus' sister or half-sister). Zeus then ordered Hades to chain Sisyphus in Tartarus. Sisyphus slyly asked Thanatos (Death) to try the chains to show how they worked. When Thanatos did so, Sisyphus secured them and threatened Hades. This caused an uproar, and no

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<sup>3</sup> Evslin, B. *Gods, Demigods & Demons*, YA: I.B Tauris, 2007, pp. 209-210.

human could die until Ares (who was annoyed that his battles had lost their fun because his opponents would not die) intervened, freeing Thanatos and sending Sisyphus to Tartarus. However, before Sisyphus died, he had told his wife that when he was dead she was not to offer the usual sacrifice. In the underworld he complained that his wife was neglecting him and persuaded Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, to allow him to go back to the upper world and ask her to perform her duty. When Sisyphus got back to Corinth, he refused to return and was eventually carried back to the underworld by Hermes. In another version of the myth, Persephone was directly persuaded that he had been conducted to Tartarus by mistake and ordered him to be freed.

### **The Corybantes**

The Corybantes were sons of Apollo and the Muse Thalia, mythical attendants of the ancient Oriental and Greco-Roman deity the Great Mother of the Gods. They were often identified or confused with the Cretan Kouretes (who protected the infant Zeus from detection by his father, Cronus) and were distinguished only by their Asiatic origin and by the more pronouncedly orgiastic nature of their rites. Accounts of the origin of the Corybantes vary, and their names and number differ from one authority to another. They apparently had a mystic cult, and a prominent feature of their ritual was a wild dance, which was claimed to have powers of healing mental disorder. It is possible that they originally were priests or medicine men of ancient times, later thought of as superhuman. They were credited with the invention of the drum.

### **The Lernaean Hydra**

The Lernaean Hydra was the offspring of Typhon and Echidna (according to Hesiod's 'Theogony'), a gigantic monster with nine heads (the number varies), the centre one immortal. The monster's haunt was the marshes of Lerna near Argos. The destruction of Hydra was one of the 12 Labours of Heracles, which he accomplished with the assistance of Iolaus. As one head was cut off, two grew in its place; therefore, Iolaus finally burned out the roots with firebrands as soon as Heracles cut off each head. At last Heracles severed the one immortal head from the body and buried it under a heavy rock. The arrows dipped by Heracles in the poisonous blood or gall inflicted fatal wounds, eventually including his own accidental death at the hands of his wife, Deianira (according to Sophocles' tragedy 'Trachinian Women').

### **The Sphinx**

The Sphinx was a creature with a lion's body and human head, an important image in Egyptian and Greek art and mythology. The word *Sphinx* was derived by Greek grammarians from the verb *sphingein* ('to bind', or 'to squeeze'), but the etymology

is not related to the legend and is dubious. Hesiod, the earliest Greek author to mention the creature, called it Phix. The winged Sphinx of Boeotian Thebes, the most famous in legend, was said to have terrorized the people by demanding the answer to a riddle taught her by the Muses - what is it that has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed? - and devouring a man each time the riddle was answered incorrectly. Eventually Oedipus gave the proper answer: man, who crawls on all fours in infancy, walks on two feet when grown, and leans on a staff in old age; the Sphinx thereupon killed herself. From this tale apparently grew the legend that the Sphinx was omniscient, and even today the wisdom of the Sphinx is proverbial.

The earliest and most famous example in art is the colossal recumbent Sphinx at Giza, Egypt, dating from the reign of King Khafre (4th king of 4th dynasty, c. 2575–c. 2465 B.C.). This is known to be a portrait statue of the king, and the Sphinx continued as a royal portrait type through most of Egyptian history. Through Egyptian influence the Sphinx became known in Asia, but its meaning there is uncertain. The Sphinx did not occur in Mesopotamia until about 1500 B.C., when it was clearly imported from the Levant. In appearance the Asian Sphinx differed from its Egyptian model most noticeably in the addition of wings to the leonine body, a feature that continued through its subsequent history in Asia and the Greek world. Another innovation was the female Sphinx, which first began to appear in the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. On seals, ivories, and metalwork the Sphinx was portrayed sitting on its (or her) haunches, often with one paw raised, and was frequently paired with a lion, a griffin (part eagle and part lion), or another Sphinx.

In about 1600 B.C. the Sphinx first appeared in the Greek world. Objects from Crete at the end of the middle Minoan period and from the shaft graves at Mycenae throughout the late Helladic age showed the Sphinx characteristically winged. Although derived from the Asian Sphinx, the Greek examples were not identical in appearance; they customarily wore a flat cap with a flamelike projection on top. Nothing in their context connected them with later legend, and their meaning remains unknown. After 1200 B.C. the depiction of Sphinxes disappeared from Greek art for about 400 years, though they continued in Asia in forms and poses similar to those of the Bronze Age. By the end of the 8th century, the Sphinx reappeared in Greek art and was common down to the end of the 6th century. Often associated with Oriental motifs, it was clearly derived from an Eastern source, and from its appearance it could not have been a direct descendant of the Bronze Age Greek Sphinx. The later Greek Sphinx was almost always female and usually wore the long-tiered wig known on contemporary sculptures of the Daedalic style; the body became graceful, and the wings developed a beautiful curving form unknown in Asia. Sphinxes decorated vases, ivories, and metal works and in the late Archaic

period occurred as ornaments on temples. Although their context is usually insufficient to enable their meaning to be judged, their appearance on temples suggests a protective function.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century clear illustrations of the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx appeared on vase paintings, usually with the Sphinx perched on a column. Other monuments of classical age showed Oedipus in armed combat with the Sphinx and suggested an earlier stage of the legend in which the contest was physical instead of mental. Of such a stage the literature gave no hint, but battles of men and monsters were common in Asian art from prehistoric times down to the Achaemenid Persians, and Greek art may have adopted from the Middle East a pictorial theme that Greek literature did not share.

### **The Stymphalian Birds**

The Stymphalian Birds were monstrous man-eating birds that lurked in the Stymphalian marshes. They were shot by Heracles as one of his Labours.

### **The Syblagades**

The Symblagades were two cliffs in the mouth of Euxinus Pontus (the Black Sea) that moved on their bases and crushed whatever sought to pass. In the Argonaut expedition Jason was told by Phineus the course to Colchis and how to pass through the Symplegades. Following his advice, Jason sent ahead a dove that was damaged between the rocks, but thanks to Athena the *Argo* slipped through while the rocks were rebounding. From that time the rocks became fixed and never closed again.

### **Ariadne**

Ariadne was daughter of Pasiphae and the Cretan king Minos. She fell in love with the Athenian hero Theseus and, with a thread or glittering jewels, helped him escape the Labyrinth after he slew the Minotaur, a beast half bull and half man that Minos kept in the Labyrinth. Here the legends diverge. She was either abandoned by Theseus and hanged herself or, Theseus carried her to Naxos and left her there to die, and she was rescued by and married the god Dionysus.

### **Teiresias**

Teiresias was a blind prophet famous for being transformed into a woman for seven years. He was the son of the shepherd Everes and the nymph Chariclo and he participated in fully seven generations at Thebes, beginning as advisor to Cadmus himself. Teiresias was also a priest of Zeus. The myth begins in the country, near Mount Kyllene in the Peloponnese, as Teiresias came upon a pair of snakes lustfully intertwined. He hit the copulating couple a smart blow with his stick. Hera was not pleased, and her punishment was cruel: he was transformed into a woman. As a

woman, Teiresias became a priestess of Hera, married and had children, including Manto, who also possessed the gift of prophecy. After seven years as a woman, Teiresias again found mating snakes; she made sure to leave the snakes alone this time. As a result of his experiences and lesson learnt, Teiresias was released from his sentence and permitted to regain his masculinity. All could then have been well, but Teiresias was drawn into an argument between Hera and her husband Zeus. A common area for marital discussion - who has more pleasure in intercourse - the man or the woman? However Zeus and Hera asked him to settle the question of which sex, male or female, experienced more pleasure during intercourse, as Teiresias had experienced both. Zeus claimed it was women; Hera claimed it was men. Teiresias revealed woman's greatest secret: on a scale of ten, she gets nine parts of the pleasure to his one. Hera was furious and instantly struck him blind, but he did give Teiresias the gift of foresight.

### **Theseus**

(See also *Aegeas*). At the Isthmus of Corinth Theseus killed Sinis, called the Pine Bender because he killed his victims by tearing them apart between two pine trees. Next, Theseus dispatched the Crommyonian sow (or boar). Then, he flung from a cliff the wicked Sciron, who had kicked his guests into the sea while they were washing his feet. Later, he slew Procrustes, who fitted all comers to his iron bed by hacking or racking them to the right length. In Megara Theseus killed Cercyon, who forced strangers to wrestle with him. On his arrival in Athens, Theseus found his father, Aegeas, married to the sorceress Medea, who recognized Theseus before his father did and tried to persuade Aegeas to poison him. Aegeas, however, finally recognized Theseus and declared him heir to the throne. After crushing a conspiracy by the Pallantids, sons of Pallas (Aegeas' brother), Theseus successfully attacked the fire-breathing bull of Marathon. Next came the adventure of the Cretan Minotaur, half man and half bull, shut up in the legendary Cretan Labyrinth (see Ariadne; Minos; Minotaur). Theseus, after Aegeas' suicide (see *Aegeas*), united the various Attic communities into a single state and extended the territory of Attica as far as the Isthmus of Corinth. He added games in honour of Poseidon to the Isthmian Games in honour of Melicertes. Alone or with Heracles he captured the Amazon princess Antiope (or Hippolyte). As a result the Amazons attacked Athens, and Hippolyte fell fighting on the side of Theseus. By her he had a son, Hippolytus, beloved of Theseus' wife, Phaedra. Theseus is also said to have taken part in the Argonautic expedition and the Calydonian boar hunt. The famous friendship between Theseus and Pirithous, one of the Lapiths, originated when Pirithous drove away some of Theseus' cows. Theseus pursued, but when he caught up with him the two heroes were so filled with admiration for each other that they swore brotherhood. Pirithous

later helped Theseus to carry off Helen of Troy. In exchange, Theseus descended to the lower world with Pirithous to help his friend rescue Persephone, daughter of the goddess Demeter. But they were caught and confined in Hades until Heracles came and released Theseus. When Theseus returned to Athens, he faced an uprising led by Menestheus, a descendant of Erechtheus, one of the old kings of Athens. Failing to quell the outbreak, Theseus sent his children to Euboea, and after solemnly cursing the Athenians he sailed away to the island of Scyros. But Lycomedes, king of Scyros, killed Theseus by casting him into the sea from the top of a cliff. Later, according to the command of the Delphic oracle, the Athenian general Cimon fetched the bones of Theseus from Scyros and laid them in Attic earth. Theseus' chief festival, called Theseia, was on the eighth of the month Pyanopsion (October), but the eighth day of every month was also sacred to him.

#### **The Pine-bender**

See *Theseus*

#### **Procrustes**

See *Theseus*

#### **Trojan War**

Trojan War was a legendary conflict between the early Greeks and the people of Troy in western Anatolia, dated by later Greek authors to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The war stirred the imagination of the ancient Greeks more than any other event in their history, and was celebrated in the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' of Homer, as well as a number of other early works now lost, and frequently provided material for the great dramatists of the Classical Age. For information on the myth of the Trojan War see *Hellen of Troy*.

#### **Doureios Ippos (Trojan Horse)**

Doureios Ippos was the device, thanks to which the Greeks won the Trojan War. The ensuing war lasted 10 years, finally ending when the Greeks pretended to withdraw, leaving behind them a large wooden horse with a raiding party concealed inside. When the Trojans brought the horse into their city, the hidden Greeks opened the gates to their comrades, who then sacked Troy, massacred its men, and carried off its women.

#### **Vritomartys**

Vritomartys constituted in all probability a continuation of the Minoan religious beliefs and she was associated to Artemis, goddess of the Homeric Greek pantheon. Diktyna was the main sanctuary of goddess Vritomartys and it also constituted a

strong reason for the maintenance of the friction between the most powerful cities of the area, Kydonia in Chania and Polyrrhenia in Casteli. Vritomartys' worship continued to exist there also in the Hellenistic and in the Roman period.

### **Zeus**

Zeus was a chief deity of the pantheon, a sky and weather god. Zeus was regarded as the sender of thunder and lightning, rain, and winds, and his traditional weapon was the thunderbolt. He was called the father (i.e., the ruler and protector) of both gods and men. According to a Cretan myth that was later adopted by the Greeks, Cronus, king of the Titans, upon learning that one of his children was fated to dethrone him, swallowed his children as soon as they were born. But Rhea, his wife, saved the infant Zeus by substituting a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes for Cronus to swallow and hiding Zeus in a cave on Crete. There he was nursed by the nymph (or female goat) Amalthea and guarded by the Kourites (young warriors), who clashed their weapons to disguise the baby's cries. After Zeus grew to manhood he led a revolt against the Titans and succeeded in dethroning Cronus, perhaps with the assistance of his brothers Hades and Poseidon, with whom he then divided dominion over the world. As ruler of heaven Zeus led the gods to victory against the Giants (offspring of Gaea and Tartarus) and successfully crushed several revolts against him by his fellow gods. According to the Greek poet Homer, heaven was located on the summit of Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece and the logical home for a weather god. The other members of the pantheon resided there with Zeus and were subject to his will. From his exalted position atop Mount Olympus Zeus was thought to omnisciently observe the affairs of men, seeing everything, governing all, and rewarding good conduct and punishing evil. Besides dispensing justice - he had a strong connection with his daughter Dike (Justice) - Zeus was the protector of cities, the home, property, strangers, guests, and supplicants.

Zeus was well known for his amorousness - a source of perpetual discord with his wife, Hera - and he had many love affairs with both mortal and immortal women. In order to achieve his amorous designs, Zeus frequently assumed animal forms, such as that of a cuckoo when he ravished Hera, a swan when he ravished Leda, or a bull when he carried off Europa. Notable among his offspring were the twins Apollo and Artemis, by the Titaness Leto; Helen and the Dioscuri, by Leda of Sparta; Persephone, by the goddess Demeter; Athena, born from his head after he had swallowed the Titaness Metis; Hephaestus, Hebe, Ares, and Eileithyia, by his wife, Hera; Dionysus, by the goddess Semele; and many others. Though regarded by Greek religionists everywhere as omnipotent and the head of the pantheon, Zeus's very universality tended to reduce his importance compared to that of powerful local divinities like Athena and Hera. Although statues of Zeus Herkeios (Guardian of

the House) and altars of Zeus Xenios (Hospitable) graced the forecourts of houses, and though his mountaintop shrines were visited by pilgrims, Zeus did not have a temple at Athens until the late 6th century B.C., and even his temple at Olympia postdated that of Hera.

