The Homeric element

in Cavafy's poetry:

three examples

Master thesis (1 year) in Modern Greek
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"He has the strength (and of course the limitations) of the recluse,
who, though not afraid of the world,
always stands at a slight angle to it."

E. M. Forster

1. Introduction

This thesis aims to investigate the Homeric element in Cavafy's poetry. The Homeric element is found in Cavafy's poems with historical content. The poet uses as his setting scenes from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. We will illustrate how he handles these epic poems in his poetry.

Costantine Cavafy was a poet greatly inspired by the epic poems of Homer. His unique poetic work has occupied critics and throughout his life he remained dedicated to his art. In order to understand Cavafy and his poetry, this introduction will point out some crucial events that formed his ideas, which are expressed through his poetical creation, and established his reputation. After a brief presentation of Cavafy's life, information about his work and the specific group of poems of the present analysis follows.

Cavafy was born on the 29th of April, 1863 in Alexandria in Egypt, where he lived for most of his life. He led a simple life and was a solitary person, a real observer who aspired to have the objectivity of a historian, and he did not reveal his innermost thoughts to anyone.[1]

Cavafy's life was full of relocations and drama. After his father's death in 1870, Cavafy and his family moved from Alexandria to Liverpool in England. His stay there led him to develop his interest in English poetry and the English novel. In 1877 they moved back to Alexandria due to their financial problems. Five years after this relocation, the British navy bombed Alexandria. Among the losses was the house of his family. The poet was then 19 years old and lived in Constantinople where he became seriously interested in writing poetry for the first time. Constantinople was a town with a deep oriental character. He became close to his grandfather (his mother's father), finding in that new environment a flourishing Greek community with a deep

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[1] Anton (2000), p. 46-47.

conscience of historical memory, of the Byzantine tradition and the monuments of the past. In Constantinople, he discovered his ancestral connections and the value of his ancestral language. All those changes in his life were caused by the fact that he was living in a multicultural town.[2] On the other hand, his stay in Constantinople facilitated the surfacing of a sentimental confusion, which affected his poems.[3]

In October 1885, Cavafy returned to Alexandria. He had little interest in community life and the political events in Alexandria around 1885 did not seem to draw his interest. During this period in Alexandria, apart from his poetic activity, he worked as a civil servant, which proved to be difficult as the spiritual isolation caused, developed sentiments of hopelessness. The need for work to earn his living proved to be a very serious wound for his self-image. In fact, he has said that his profession was to be a poet.[4] If one keeps in mind the high social position of his family, it is easy to understand how pejorative the position of a civil servant was for him. However, he managed to raise his social position to be equal with that of his family. After he had returned from Constantinople, he tried to show a different image to the new social environment in Alexandria, by emphasizing his work as a poet more than as a civil servant.[5]

Cavafy's effort to combine the daily bureaucratic routine with his anxiety to preserve his social dignity led him to despondency.[6] He was not satisfied with his life, for which he blamed the cosmopolitan environment. Some years after his return to Alexandria, it was obvious that his work had had small progress and he was not ready yet to create in a big city, where he believed that people's relations were impersonal.[7] These experiences in Alexandria trained him to observe the town from a distance. An example of this observation is that some of his poems[8] express the idea that one's feelings may be not virtuous, which was the way people in cosmopolitan towns were thinking at that time.

The fact that he was feeling a bit different, inasmuch as he was a very sensitive and lonely person, eventually helped him to be as free as possible as a poet by expressing himself through his poetry. But living in Alexandria solitarily, started

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[2] Anton (2000), p. 57.
[3] Anton (2000), p. 50.
[4] Anton (2000), p. 55.
[5] Anton (2000), p. 53.
[6] Anton (2000), p. 56.
[7] Anton (2000), p. 57.
[8] These were some of the sensual poems of Cavafy.

confusing him emotionally. The limits of the town became the prison of his enclosed self. Cavafy began to understand that the problem was not society but his own inhibitions and fears. After all the efforts to understand his own weaknesses, he managed to accept Alexandria and to reconcile with the town.[9]

A big event for Cavafy's poetry recognition was World War I when many British went to Egypt. A close friend of Cavafy, Periklis Anastasiadis, who knew many important British society members, introduced Cavafy to many visitors, one of whom was the novelist E. M. Forster. Forster helped to make Cavafy's poetry renowned in Great Britain. The first contact of British readers with Cavafy's poetry was right after the end of the war, when Forster published Cavafy's poems in British literary magazines.

Around 1920 Cavafy also became renowned in Athens.[10] As a result, his poetry began to occupy the critics. Some of them supported Cavafy's poetry while others were against it. Cavafy confronted the war criticism with a kind irony and distance. In 1921, the critic Tellos Agras claimed that Cavafy was a milestone in Modern Greek poetry. After this assertion and with the appearance of new poems of Cavafy, European critics began to show their interest.

The real turning point that established Cavafy's reputation came in 1924. From then on there were many advocates of his work in Greece and abroad. A fact of great importance was that T.S. Eliot not only focused on the poems but also published Cavafy's "Ithaka" in 1924. An equally important event in Cavafy's career was at the end of 1926, when the monthly magazine "Alexandrian Art" was founded with Cavafy's support.

Some years later Cavafy was disturbed because people could not understand his poems and there were publications of opinions doubting the value of his work, although towards the end of his life he did become famous. These doubts emerged from the view that he had on history and his great interest in the Greek political adventures of the Hellenistic period, which could not be harmonized with the progressive point of view and the patriotism of the late 1920s in Greece, his view on history was different from the mainstream of Greek poetry in his time and he is more understandable now than then.[11] But Cavafy was so unique that he became the most

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[9] Anton (2000), p. 64.
[10] Anton (2000), p. 84.
[11] Anton (2000), p. 94.

famous poet of his time at the end of his life despite the difficulty in understanding his poetry; numerous tributes in magazines and articles have been saved until our time.[12]

The poet became better known because of a highly published literary quarrel that erupted in 1920 between him and Palamas,[13] who was another renowned Greek poet. It is worth mentioning that that quarrel continued among fanatic followers in Egypt and in Greece many years after Cavafy's death in 1933.

Having presented Cavafy's life, I will now focus on his work's basic characteristics, including both the form and the main themes of the poems. Even though he wrote many more, he only published 154 poems. He felt obsessed about the language of his poetry and sometimes he worked on a single poem for years. His first published poems were in the form of broadsheets and were addressed only to his closest friends.

Cavafy did not receive much recognition, not only because the majority of the readers perceived experiences and things differently than he did, but also because he used in his poetry a very different style from the one that most people were accustomed to in Greece. Although most of the Greek poets of his time were romantic,[14] he chose a different way of writing by being laconic and writing in an objective, antipoetic, prosaic and antilyrical manner.[15] After his death, Cavafy's work became very well known as his position among the modern European and Greek poets is one of the highest till nowadays.

The main themes of his poems were: uncertainty about the future, expression of sensual pleasures, search for identity,[16] the moral character and psychology of individuals and a fatalistic existential nostalgia. Many researchers, like Pappa[17] and Anton,[18] agree that his personal experiences affected his poetry.

Cavafy aimed to turn poetry into a productive art like all the other arts of his time. He wanted to explore things beyond just *the ideas*, to express his thoughts using

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[12] Anton (2000), p. 96.

[13] Palamas was considered to be the new National poet and the defender of the Demotic for the literary audience, while Cavafy was just a peculiar Alexandrian. Palamas spoke of the sensual aspect of Cavafy's poetry as vulgar. The most crucial years of the quarrel were from 1922 to 1926, when the poets attacked each other in newspapers in Alexandria and in Cairo. The end of this quarrel was a dual-sided denial; they never met or understood the way the one conceived the other's literary world. See Anton (2000), p. 85-89.

[14] The word romantic here is used as an adjective and not as a term.

[15] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 26, 27 and 326.

[16] The search for identity in Cavafy's poems is connected to the search for identity of the people in Alexandria. See Minucci (1987), p. 11-12.

[17] Pappa (1983), p. 181.

[18] Anton (2000), p. 15-16.

mythical or historical characters and facts. Simultaneously, the poet corresponded the past with the present by making the reader feel as if all the historical protagonists of his poems are figures of his own time. The figures in most of his poems are real or fictitious characters who played a role in Greek culture and they act as modern people. A statement of Dallas I agree with is that in Cavafy's poetical universe, the heroes are influenced more by the aesthetic element than by the moral one, which is a universal and timeless situation.[19]

If we have to describe the language of Cavafy, it would be a mixture of purist (*katharévousa*) and demotic Greek and some idiomatic forms, which could be explained by his hometown being Alexandria and his life in Constantinople. He did not live in Greece and did not witness the evolution of the everyday language. Cavafy's language was unique as he took elements from both types of the Greek language. He used the free iambic form, and the verses mostly have 10 to 17 syllables. He did not use rhyme often, but when he did, sometimes it implied irony.[20] This complex language use, which reflected the emotions he wanted to express, is difficult to capture in translations of his poems.[21]

Cavafy's poems can be divided into three categories and occasionally a poem belongs to more than one of them. These categories are: historical, sensual and philosophical. The historical poems have their origins in Helleno-romaic antiquity, the Byzantine and the Hellenistic era. The main place of the poetic action is Alexandria. Many of the historical poems could be characterized as pseudo-historical or seemingly historical.[22] The second category includes the sensual poems which have lyrical and emotional character and seem to be drawn from personal experiences, memories and future expectations. The subject matter of the philosophical poems is mostly connected with either consultations to poets or situations involving for example closure, human dignity and existential fears.

This thesis focuses on poems with mythical content; these poems are historical with some philosophical and some sensual elements.[23] More precisely, the setting is in Homer's period. Cavafy was inspired by Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and he did read

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[19] Dallas (1974), p. 17-27.
[20] Daskalopoulos (2001), p. 400-408.
[21] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 329.
[22] Pieris (2008), p. 400-408.
[23] Orfanidis (1997), p. 23.

them both in depth. The connection between the Cavafian poems and the Homeric material will be examined in the present essay.

Savvidis' work *Κωνσταντίνος Π. Καβάφης, Ποιήματα Ά (1896-1918)*[24] will be used as the source for Cavafy's poems in Greek and the translation in English is by Keeley and Sherrard.[25] The book edited by Munro and Allen[26] on the *Iliad* and by Allen[27] on the *Odyssey* will be applied, as well as Murray's translations of the *Iliad*[28] and the *Odyssey*.[29]

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[24] Savvidis (1968).
[25] Keeley-Sherrard (1984).
[26] Munro-Allen (1920a) and Munro-Allen (1920b).
[27] Allen (1920a) and Allen (1920b).
[28] Murray (1924).
[29] Murray (1919).

2. Material, method and purpose of the study

a. Material, theory and method

In Cavafy's poetry there are some poems with content derived from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These poems are the following: "Second Odyssey" (1894) and "Ithaka" (1911) based on the *Odyssey*, and "Priam's nocturnal journey" (1893), "The horses of Achilles" (1987), "The funeral of Sarpedon" (1898) and "Trojans" (1905) with a relation to the *Iliad*. All of these poems are from the canon of the 154 poems that Cavafy published except for "Second Odyssey" and "Priam's nocturnal journey", which are among the hidden poems of Cavafy.[30]

The object of my essay is, as mentioned above, three of Cavafy's poems with homeric content, poems with a special place in the extensive work of the author. I will use the poems as examples to show the way in which the poet treats the Homeric material. The chosen poems are: "The funeral of Sarpedon", "Trojans" and "Ithaka". These are the three most representative poems of Cavafy with a main theme drawn from the Homeric epic poems. They were all written before 1911. Furthermore, they were well-known in Greece only a few years after the writing.[31]

Cavafy's poetry is characterized by elements not specifically Greek, but European. His poetic generation coincided with some of the greatest figures of European Symbolism,[32] like Gabriele D'Annunzio, Luigi Pirandello, Oscar Wilde, Jean Moreas and Gustave Kahn. The year 1911 was the turning point that marked a change in the way most important symbolist poets wrote their poems. They abandoned exaggerated attention to form and created more personal poems in simple language that are similar to metasymbolistic[33] poems. When it comes to Cavafy, we see that his work illustrates the last representations of Symbolism and the first of

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[30] In Cavafy's canon there are two more poems with content not specifically from Homer but in general from the epic tradition: "Interruption" (1900) and "Unfaithfulness" (1903). Mitsakis mentions that another poem of the canon, "Kaisarion" (1918), could be also characterized as Homeric. For further information see Mitsakis (2001), p. 25.

[31] Anton (2000), p.94.

[32] Symbolism is a movement in literature which is founded on the idea that literature should represent meanings that could only be described indirectly. The writing was in a metaphorical and suggestive manner, with particular images and objects used with symbolically.

[33] Metasymbolism is the movement that uses symbols and the main themes of the poems are loneliness, wear, the infeasible element of love and the finite of human nature.

Modern poetry.[34] A statement of Minucci I agree with, sustained by my personal study on Cavafy's poetry, is that all the poems which were written after 1911 were more mature; he became a realist, rational and objective instead of subjective.[35]

The titles of the poems indicate the themes that follow, which introduce us to the mythological universe of Homer. However, a close reading of the texts reveals that the myth is just the starting point for new considerations and poetic positions.

This analysis will consist of a close reading of the poems, applying methodological tools drawn from poetic analysis, with special regard to literary characterization.[36] Close reading[37] is the philological methodology of a detailed analysis of the complex interrelations and ambiguities of the verbal and figurative components within a work. Additionally, I have to mention that a qualitative method is used in my study as the analysis is on three poems that are examined in depth. Another theory applied to my approach of the poems is intertextuality as the three Cavafian poems examined are inspired by the Homeric epic poems as I will outline in the following chapters.

b. Purpose and arrangement of the present study

The mythic themes that Cavafy presents to the modern reader cannot be seen as isolated from the mythic context in which they originate. It is therefore appropriate in the context of this essay to investigate the way in which the poet has incorporated the Homeric elements into his work and how he uses the Homeric material to express thoughts that reflect his points of view. This will be done by identifying the similarities and differences of the heroes and themes of Cavafy with the corresponding figures and themes in the epic poems of Homer. Therefore my study will focus on determining the extent and method of incorporation of the Homeric themes into Cavafy's poems as their main subjects. However, I will not take into

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[34] Modern poetry derives from a tradition of lyrical expression, with emphasis in the personal imagination, culture, emotions and memories of the creator. The modern poet has no essential relation with any regular schemes and he adapts his rhythm to his mood, to modulate his meter through the progress of the poem.

[35] Minucci (1987), p. 13-16.

[36] Abrams (1999), p. 32-34.

[37] Abrams (1999), p. 181.

account possible influences from intermediary sources that may be identified within the specific poems, since that would be beyond the scope of this essay.

In each chapter, following the poem, there will be a brief summary of each myth in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. I will study the way in which the poet manages to insert this material while maintaining or modifying details. Thereafter, I will investigate how the dominant topics acquire new roles and what features they assume in their new poetic environment.

c. Previous research

Regarding the previous research which has been done on Cavafy, there are many noteworthy works. Some of them are about the life of Cavafy, some about his work and his time in general, and some concentrate on precise aspects from his life as they correspond with his poetry, as this essay. Many of these studies aim to combat misunderstandings about his poetry.

A work that focuses on Cavafy's life with chronological details is that by Dimitris Daskalopoulos and Maria Stasinopoulou *Ο βίος και το έργο του Κ. Π. Καβάφη*.[38] The authors have done an analysis of all the events of his life, presenting them in detail and chronologically year by year with emphasis on the most important ones. In this book, the connection between the content of Cavafy's poems and his personal background is apparent.

As for the texts about Cavafy's work and the psycho-social environment during his time, I have to mention the book of Stratis Tsirkas *Ο Καβάφης και η εποχή του*,[39] which gives us an image of the history of Egypt and more precisely of the story of the Greek people who were living in Alexandria from the 19th until the early 20th century; this book is helpful in understanding the relations between the poet's work and the reality of his time, and explains many aspects of the poems. Tsirkas includes in his work some biographical facts, finds unknown sources of some poems and gives some

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[38] Daskalopoulos (2001).
[39] Tsirkas (1958).

aesthetic opinions of him. The main scope of Tsirkas is to show Cavafy's actual perspective on life.

As regards works which concentrate mainly on one aspect of Cavafy's poetry, an important book is *Ο ελληνικός Καβάφης*, written by Nikos Orfanidis,[40] which focuses on the theme of the Greek element in Cavafy's work and therefore has a close connection to the present essay. Orfanidis aims to illustrate that the fact that Cavafy, even though living in Alexandria, was influenced by the Greek culture in his poetry is important and worthy of systematic analysis. This is because this influence emphasizes the importance of Greek culture and history, not only for the people in Greece but also for those who were living in the periphery, and they were many.

Another work about the relation between Cavafy's poetry and history is *Καβάφης και Ιστορία* by Yiannis Dallas.[41] This collection contains twelve works and most of them are anecdotes. The point of view of the authors is not theoretical but aesthetic, and they aim to analyze the actual aims of the poet. In order to accomplish the aesthetic goal, the analysis includes everything: motifs, themes and the main ideas. Also, the authors discuss the actual reason of existence of those elements, especially in relation to the structure of Cavafy's poems and, in general, in relation to the aims of the poet's poetic intentions. The twelve works in this collection have to be seen as a whole and not as separated essays in order for all the ideas to be understood in the best possible way. One conclusion that this work leads to is that Cavafy was a poet whose creation has continued to be comprehensive and impressive from his time until today.

Additionally, we must make a reference to Delopoulos's work *Καβάφη ιστορικά και άλλα πρόσωπα*[42] which concentrates on places like Antiochia, Alexandria, as well as Komagini, and the persons and the time periods that Cavafy's work wanders in. The essay has a table of Cavafy's poems and informative notes on all the historical, mythological, fictional and philological figures of the poems. A work which is similar to Delopoulos's book is Chronopoulos's *"Το λεξικό του Καβάφη"*[43] that aims to improve the reader's understanding of Cavafy's poetry by doing lexicographical apposition of the figures, the places and the mythological elements. The words are not represented alphabetically but per poem. The poems are quoted alphabetically. The

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[40] Orfanidis (1997).
[41] Dallas (1974).
[42] Delopoulos (1978).
[43] Chronopoulos (2006).

information is often fragmentary as the scope is to illustrate the aspect of the figure on which the poet emphasizes.

Savvidis, in *Μικρά Καβαφικά Ά*[44] and *Μικρά Καβαφικά ΄Β*,[45] collects the most representative of his own essays, like literary works, announcements, speeches and critical essays, which he wrote in thirty years. Most of them had already been published in scientific magazines and newspapers but some are published in this collection for the first time. It could be seen not only as a spiritual account but also as a scientific one. In the end of the book there is a note with all the necessary information about the included texts.

John Anton wrote the book *Η ποίηση και η ποιητική του Κ.Π. Καβάφη – Αισθητικοί οραματισμοί και αισθησιακή πραγματικότητα*[46] in which he presents the evolution of the poet. He analyzes the fact that Cavafy, ever since his first poems, insisted on revealing his true poetic self; that is why Anton focuses on the first decades of Cavafy's life. He wants to show the values of the poetic world of Cavafy, as well as the experiences and the thoughts he expressed aesthetically. Anton also analyzes the statements of many critics and the fact that Cavafy achieved to create his poems based on a lyric vision. He was tempted by the literary movements in Europe in his first steps, but in the end he chose his own unique literary way. He admired the ancient Greek literature, so he drew his material from that area and created a personal poetic environment in a simple and simultaneously personal way by combining the Ancient world with the Hellenistic. Anton states that it would be better to examine the poet's work than focusing on details of his personal life. In the end he makes a reference to the increase of the essays on Cavafy, not only in Greece, but also abroad.

Another writer on Cavafy is Filippo Maria Pontani. In his collection of his work *Επτά δοκίμια και μελετήματα για τον Καβάφη (1936-1974)*,[47] there are texts that are translated for the first time in Greek, and it covers a period of forty years, from the pre-war years until 1970. These texts constitute all his published critical and philological production on Cavafy. We must mention that in order to have an overall view of Pontani's research, one must study his Italian translations of the poems in combination with this collection because his philological works proceed simultaneously with his translations. Pontani explores the Greek element of his time

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[44] Savvidis (1985).
[45] Savvidis (1987).
[46] Anton (2000).
[47] Pontani (1991).

in combination with his interest in the ancient years. The text is very diverse and Pontani remarks on the intertextuality of the literary text. Something that is useful for the comprehension of Cavafy's work is the analysis of the versification and its methodological criteria. One further noteworthy thing is that the writer gives the reader the chance to discover the connection between Pontani's and Seferis's points of views on Cavafy's work.

In her work *Ο δρόμος προς τον ρεαλισμό στην ποίηση του 20ου αιώνα*,[48] Sonia Ilinskaya deals with Cavafy's poetry as a phenomenon of realistic typology, which means that Cavafy's poetry expressed the way of life in many countries during that period. Ilinskaya's research carries forward the realistic reading, and beyond some specific purposes of that study, Ilinskaya aims to give the reader more detailed information about Cavafy.

A researcher that has worked on many aspects of Cavafy's work is Dimitris Maronitis; the essay *Ο Καβάφης και οι νέοι*[49] contains information about Cavafy's epitaph poems like "The funeral of Sarpedon". Maronitis analyzes central themes in Cavafy's poetry like the function of fate and art.

There is one more collection of works of Maronitis which was very useful for enriching the theme of this thesis. This collection is the *Γραφή και Ανάγνωση 2 – Κ. Π. Καβάφης Μελετήματα*[50] and it contains nine essays covering a time of thirty seven years. The earliest is dated in 1970 and the latest in 2007. In the introduction to this collection the writer mentions that time span does not abolish the internal continuity although there are some benchmarks. From a methodological point of view six of the nine essays underline Cavafy's role as a "poet-reader", because his poems were a result of reading the ancient Greek literary patterns. In that area of inspiration, Cavafy emerged as a precursor and an exemplary creator on an international level. Regarding the modern reader of Cavafy's specific poems, the method in which they were written constitutes an area of apprenticeship and practice for recognition of the poetic art and technique. If that recognition of the poetic art and technique takes place, those essays will have fulfilled their aim.

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[48] Ilinskaya (1983).
[49] Maronitis (1984).
[50] Maronitis (2007).

3. The funeral of Sarpedon

a. The poem

"Ἡ κηδεία τοῦ Σαρπηδόνος"

Βαρυὰν ὀδύνην ἔχει ὁ Ζεύς. Τὸν Σαρπηδόνα
ἐσκότωσεν ὁ Πάτροκλος· καὶ τώρα ὁρμοῦν
ὁ Μενοιτιάδης κ' οἱ Ἀχαιοὶ τὸ σῶμα
ν' ἁρπάξουνε καὶ νὰ τὸ ἐξευτελίσουν.

Ἀλλὰ ὁ Ζεὺς διόλου δὲν στέργει αὐτά.
Τὸ ἀγαπημένο του παιδὶ - ποὺ τὸ ἄφισε
καὶ χάθηκεν· ὁ Νόμος ἦταν ἔτσι -
τουλάχιστον θὰ τὸ τιμήσει πεθαμένο.
Καὶ στέλνει, ἰδού, τὸν Φοῖβο κάτω στὴν πεδιάδα
ἑρμηνευμένο πῶς τὸ σῶμα νὰ νοιασθεῖ.

Τοῦ ἥρωος τὸν νεκρὸ μ' εὐλάβεια καὶ μὲ λύπη
σηκώνει ὁ Φοῖβος καὶ τὸν πάει στὸν ποταμό.
Τὸν πλένει ἀπὸ τὲς σκόνες κι ἀπ' τ' αἵματα·
κλείει τὲς φοβερὲς πληγές, μὴ ἀφίνοντας
κανένα ἴχνος νὰ φανεῖ· τῆς ἀμβροσίας
τ' ἀρώματα χύνει ἐπάνω του· καὶ μὲ λαμπρὰ
Ὀλύμπια φορέματα τὸν ντύνει.
Τὸ δέρμα του ἀσπρίζει· καὶ μὲ μαργαριταρένιο
χτένι κτενίζει τὰ κατάμαυρα μαλλιά.
Τὰ ὡραῖα μέλη σχηματίζει καὶ πλαγιάζει.

Τώρα σὰν νέος μοιάζει βασιλεὺς ἁρματηλάτης -
στὰ εἴκοσι πέντε χρόνια του, στὰ εἴκοσι ἔξη -
ἀναπαυόμενος μετὰ ποὺ ἐκέρδισε,
μ' ἅρμα ὁλόχρυσο καὶ ταχυτάτους ἵππους,
σὲ ξακουστὸν ἀγῶνα τὸ βραβεῖον.

Ἔτσι σὰν ποὺ τελείωσεν ὁ Φοῖβος
τὴν ἐντολή του, κάλεσε τοὺς δυὸ ἀδελφοὺς
τὸν Ὕπνο καὶ τὸν Θάνατο, προστάζοντάς τους
νὰ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα στὴν Λυκία, τὸν πλούσιο τόπο.

Καὶ κατὰ ἐκεῖ τὸν πλούσιο τόπο, τὴν Λυκία
τοῦτοι ὁδοιπόρησαν οἱ δυὸ ἀδελφοὶ
Ὕπνος καὶ Θάνατος, κι ὅταν πιὰ ἔφθασαν
στὴν πόρτα τοῦ βασιλικοῦ σπιτιοῦ
παρέδοσαν τὸ δοξασμένο σῶμα,
καὶ γύρισαν στὲς ἄλλες τους φροντίδες καὶ δουλειές.

Κι ὡς τὄλαβαν αὐτοῦ, στὸ σπίτι, ἀρχίνησε
μὲ συνοδεῖες, καὶ τιμές, καὶ θρήνους,
καὶ μ' ἄφθονες σπονδὲς ἀπὸ ἱεροὺς κρατῆρας,
καὶ μ' ὅλα τὰ πρεπὰ ἡ θλιβερὴ ταφή·
κ' ἔπειτα ἔμπειροι ἀπ' τὴν πολιτείαν ἐργάται,
καὶ φημισμένοι δουλευταὶ τῆς πέτρας
ἤλθανε κ' ἔκαμαν τὸ μνῆμα καὶ τὴν στήλη.[51]

"The funeral of Sarpedon"

Zeus mourns deeply:
Patroklos has killed Sarpedon.
Now Patroklos and the Achaians rush on
to snatch up the body, to dishonour it.

But Zeus doesn't tolerate that at all.
Though he let his favourite child be killed-
this the Law required-
he'll at least honor him after death.
So he now sends Apollo down to the plain
with instructions about how the body should be tended.

Apollo reverently raises the hero's body
and carries it in sorrow to the river.
He washes the dust and blood away,
heals the terrible wounds so there's no trace left,
pours perfume of ambrosia over it,
and dresses it in radiant Olymbian robes.
He bleaches the skin, and with a pearl comb
combs out the jet black hair.
He spreads and arranges the beautiful limbs.

Now he looks like a young king, a royal charioteer-
twenty-five or twenty-six years old-
resting himself after winning
the prize in a famous race,
his chariot all gold and his horses the fastest .

Having finished his task this way,
Apollo calls for the two brothers,
Sleep and Death, and orders them
to take the body to Lykia, the rich country.

So the two brothers, Sleep and Death,

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[51] Savvidis (1968), p. 111-112.

set off on foot toward the rich country, Lykia;
and when they reached the door
of the king's palace,
they handed over the honoured body
and then returned to their other concerns.

And once the body was received in the palace
the sad burial began, with processions and honours and dirges,
with many libations from sacred vessels,
with all pomp and circumstance.
Then skilled workers from the city
and celebrated craftsmen in stone
came to make the tombstone and the tomb.[52]

b. Sarpedon in the *Iliad*

We will begin with the summary of Sarpedon's presence in the *Iliad* and then we will analyze Sarpedon in Cavafy's poem. Sarpedon is a son of Zeus. Patroclus kills Sarpedon and that is Patroclus' greatest success in the Trojan War. Sarpedon's death is described in Book 16 (257 - 683).

Sarpedon appears in the *Iliad* before Book 16, having an important place among the soldiers and expressing his thoughts. Actually, Sarpedon's first appearance is in Book 5. In that Book, during the exploits of Diomedes, Sarpedon blames Hector for avoiding the battle, by talking about his own story, his wife and little son who were left back in Lycia (*Il*. 5. 471-492). Later on, he is injured in the war and again remembers his wife and son when he asks for help (*Il*. 5. 684-688). His most well-known moments are those when he meditates about the idea of honor and the reason men have to go to the war when he talks with his friend Glaucus in Book 12 (290-328).

In Book 16 where Sarpedon is killed, Zeus and Hera discuss in Olympus their son's fate just before the duel between Patroclus and Sarpedon. Zeus wonders if he can save his son who will die, but Hera reminds him that no exception is allowed for the mortals. They can be honored though with an exquisite burial. Finally, Patroclus prevails and kills Sarpedon and Glaucus complains to Apollo about the fact that Zeus

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[52] Keeley-Sherrard (1984), p. 7-8.

let Sarpedon be killed (*Il*. 16. 522). Then a battle for the corpse of Sarpedon follows and Patroclus wins the honor of despoiling it.

Finally, the body is not left to lie in the dust because Zeus takes care of it by ensuring a proper burial. Apollo himself attends the dead body's bathing, the myro and the wrapping with shroud. The twin brothers Sleep and Death transfer the dead body to Sarpedon's hometown, Lycia. Sleep and Death in the *Iliad* are the sons of Nyx (Night) and Erebos (Darkness).[53] The description of the funereal ceremony juxtaposes the human mortality with Zeus' deity itself, and the tranquil funereal ceremony with the uproar of the war, which continues to rage in Troy.[54]

In the present section I have described Sarpedon's action in the *Iliad* with an emphasis on Sarpedon's funeral, which is what inspired Cavafy to create his poem. I will now approach the Cavafian poem by examining some characteristics which run in the whole poem.

c. "The funeral of Sarpedon" by Cavafy

I. Analysis of the poem's characteristics

"The funeral of Sarpedon" is a historical poem with mythical content. The chapter's subject matter will be the poem's publication, the two forms in which the poem was written and also the meaning of the use of purist Greek. Then, I will point out some main ideas which are dominant in the poem.

Cavafy wrote "The funeral of Sarpedon" in a first form in purist Greek and published it in 1898. He rewrote the poem in demotic in August of 1908 and published it directly. Although, from then on the poem disappeared from his publications. Savvidis[55] tries to give some explanations for this disappearance by examining the successive phases of Cavafy's rewritings of his poem.

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[53] Chronopoulos (2006), p. 164 and 166.
[54] Edwards (1987), p. 261-263.
[55] Savvidis (1985), p. 259-280.

If we compare the first form of the poem from 1898 with the final version written in 1908 which is the one presented in this essay, we can conclude that in the end Cavafy rewrote the poem in a simple way without including elements which are pompous and in fact needless. He only keeps a few really essential elements. In an essay[56] Ilinskaya underlines that in the final version of the poem, Cavafy has entirely shed the external romantic elements with dramatized meaning because he wanted to extract every inconsistency and exaggeration. He also extracts the decorative adjectives and proverbs. Something else that Cavafy includes in the version of 1908, is the presentation of the young Sarpedon's beauty, as Maronitis mentions.[57] That is obvious in the way Phoebus takes care of dead Sarpedon. This addition underlines that Cavafy by 1908 had begun to express through his poetry his preferences on human beauty.

Cavafy chooses to write this poem with purist Greek elements because this is the form that better represents the point of view that he wants to incorporate in this poem. Characteristically, Ilinskaya[58] emphasizes on the use of purist Greek which plays a stylistic role by framing the sorrowful ceremonial action in "The funeral of Sarpedon".

A basic motif is the expression of the futility of human life. The most important thing in the war is the victory and not the protection of the warriors' life. Sarpedon is already dead but people will praise him for his heroic accomplishments in the war. The futility of human life is combined with the theme of death which is also dominant in "The funeral of Sarpedon". Another meaningful theme is honour; Zeus will honour Sarpedon even if he is already dead. This honour is expressed through the restoration of the beauty of Sarpedon's figure and the securing of its unalterable maintenance via a memorial. Thus, we see, as Maronitis states, that art manages to cancel the consequences of death, by creating the memorial of Sarpedon's figure.[59]

Cavafy's poem is of course connected with the *Iliad*. We should indicate that the poet adopts some things from the epic poem but uses them in order to create new meanings and express his own ideas through the new poetic environment. According to that theme, a reference could be made to what Yourcenar pointed out;[60] the poem

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[56] Ilinskaya (1983), p. 128-129.
[57] Maronitis (2007), p. 52-53.
[58] Ilinskaya (1983), p. 127.
[59] Maronitis (1984), p 32.
[60] Yourcenar (1978), p. 85.

"The funeral of Sarpedon" might be seen as a simple attempt of translation at the beginning, but if we examine it carefully we will discover that it contains some motifs that Cavafy frequently uses, such as the peculiar persistence on the age of the hero or the shattering sense of the beauty.

Furthermore, "The funeral of Sarpedon" is a poem dedicated to a dead person, something we find in some other Cavafian poems too. In Maronitis' book "*Ο Καβάφης και οι νέοι*", there is a separation of the *epitaph* poems of Cavafy in two categories: the *funereal* poems and the *tomb* poems.[61] The tomb poems are brief poems, in contrast to the funereal which are lengthy and they provide information on the dead hero's personality laconically. "The funeral of Sarpedon" is, obviously, a funereal poem, and that means that it describes the reaction of the young person's familiar environment to the fact of his death.

II. Sarpedon of Cavafy

The present chapter corresponds to the chapter entitled "Sarpedon in the *Iliad*". After discussing Sarpedon's action in the *Iliad*, Cavafy's source, we will now examine the outlining of Sarpedon by Cavafy.

In the poem Zeus honours Sarpedon before Patroclus manhandles his young body after having killed him. It is worth mentioning that even Zeus himself who "mourns deeply" (v.1) (Βαρυὰν ὀδύνην ἔχει) could not go against *the law*. He can only succumb by letting his beloved child be killed by Patroclus: "he left his favourite child be killed- / this was the Law required-" (v. 6-7) (ποὺ τὸ ἄφισε / καὶ χάθηκεν· ὁ Νόμος ἦταν ἔτσι -). The theme of fate that the law defines is crucial not only in this poem but in Cavafy's poetry in general.[62] The study of Cavafy's poetry leads to the conclusion that no one has the ability to oppose the power of the law. If one is confronted with the law, he has no alternative than to retreat.

There is an incorporation of incidents of the *Iliad* in Cavafy's "The funeral of Sarpedon". These incidents are the following: Patroclus kills Sarpedon, there is a

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[61] Maronitis (1984), p. 30-31.
[62] Minucci (1987), p. 42-43 and Maronitis (1984), p. 31-32.

battle over his corpse and the intervention of Zeus. Zeus entrusts Phoebus to undertake the funeral. Then, Phoebus asks Sleep and Death to transfer the dead body to Sarpedon's home. This participation of the Gods gives theological and ceremonial prestige to the incident.[63]

Maronitis also claims that "The funeral of Sarpedon" differs from the other funereal and epitaph poems of Cavafy, as it can be characterized as a *burial nostos*.[64] This term indicates the return of a dead hero from the place of the battle to his home, and in the *Iliad* there are only two returns: first, the return of Sarpedon, and second that of Hector. By incorporating into his poem the minor one, that of Sarpedon, Cavafy also had in mind the major one, of Hector, which is presented in the background.

In relation to the way Cavafy treats the hero from the *Iliad*, we can see that he presents Sarpedon as a symbol of hedonism. The poet does that by giving some characteristics that underline the beauty of Sarpedon, like the young men have in many of his poems. In "The funeral of Sarpedon", as Mitsakis mentions,[65] there is a comparison of Sarpedon with an athlete which Cavafy adds as he elaborates the theme drawn from the *Iliad*: "Now he looks like a young king, a royal charioteer- / twenty-five or twenty-six years old- / resting himself after winning / the prize in a famous race, / his chariot all gold and his horses the fastest" (v. 21-25) (Τώρα σὰν νέος μοιάζει βασιλεὺς ἀρματηλάτης - / στὰ εἴκοσι πέντε χρόνια του, στὰ εἴκοσι ἕξη- / ἀναπαυόμενος μετὰ ποὺ ἐκέρδισε, / μ' ἅρμα ὁλόχρυσο καὶ ταχυτάτους ἵππους, / σὲ ξακουστὸν ἀγῶνα τὸ βραβεῖον). We should mention that this description of Sarpedon as an athlete has a slight erotic element even though sensuality is something that should seemingly be excluded as the poem is funereal. We would not be surprised by the aesthetic and sensual elements in a funereal poem, as, in Cavafy's poems, death elevates the beauty of the youth by expelling the wear of the future time.

There are also some other features that underline the aesthetic approach of some characteristics of the hero; the poet gives a description of Sarpedon's skin, hair and limbs: "He bleaches the skin, and with a pearl comb / combs out the jet black hair. / He spreads and arranges the beautiful limbs" (verses 18-20) (Τὸ δέρμα του ἀσπρίζει˙ καὶ μὲ μαργαριταρένιο / χτένι κτενίζει τὰ κατάμαυρα μαλλιά. / Τὰ ὡραῖα μέλη

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[63] Maronitis (2007), p. 105-122.
[64] Maronitis (2007), p. 115.
[65] Mitsakis (2001), p. 27.

σχηματίζει καὶ πλαγιάζει). All these features are of a young athlete in Cavafy's poem, while in the *Iliad* Sarpedon is quite senior.

III. Material drawn from Homer

The exact verses in the *Iliad* about Sarpedon's funeral are *Il.* 16. 257-683. Even though Cavafy adds some elements (verses 18-25), he also purposely keeps some motives.

There are some common features between Cavafy's poem and the *Iliad*. The word Law at the seventh verse: "this the Law required" (ὁ Νόμος ἦταν ἔτσι) is found in the *Iliad* as the Greek word «μοῖρα» which means destiny:

μοῖρ᾽ ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιο Μενοιτιάδαο δαμῆναι (*Il.* 16. 434)

for that it is fated be slain by Patroclus, son of Menoetius.

Zeus could not do anything to change his son's fate as it was something inevitable. Thus, while he said to Hera that he thought of saving him, he admitted that Sarpedon's fate was to be killed in the battle with Patroclus.[66] In "The funeral of Sarpedon" the poet approached this incident: "Though he let his favourite child be killed- / this the Law required" (verses 6-7) (Τὸ ἀγαπημένο του παιδὶ - ποὺ τὸ ἄφισε / καὶ χάθηκεν· ὁ Νόμος ἦταν ἔτσι -).

At the thirteenth verse there is the motif of dust and blood: "He washes the dust and blood away" (Τὸν πλένει ἀπὸ τὲς σκόνες κι ἀπ᾽ τ᾽ αἵματα). Sarpedon's body has to be entirely clean before the burial. In the *Iliad* there is the same motif in this verse:

βεβρυχὼς κόνιος δεδραγμένος αἱματοέσσης (*Il.* 16. 486)

moaning aloud and clutching at the bloody dust

and in the verse:

ἔγνω, ἐπεὶ βελέεσσι καὶ αἵματι καὶ κονίῃσιν (*Il.* 16. 639)

he knew, for that he was utterly enwrapped with darts and blood and dust.

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[66] The exact verses of this dialogue between Zeus and Hera are *Il.* 16. 431-457.

The poet aims to underline how important Sarpedon's funeral is by mentioning the Olympian robes. These «Olympian robes», that are found in the seventieth verse of the Cavafian poem: "and dresses it in radiant Olymbian robes" (Ὀλύμπια φορέματα τὸν ντύνει), are found in the Homeric verses:

χρῖσόν τ᾽ ἀμβροσίῃ, περὶ δ᾽ ἄμβροτα εἵματα ἕσσον (*Il.* 16. 670)

and anoint him with ambrosia, and clothe him about with immortal raiment

and:

χρῖσέν τ᾽ ἀμβροσίῃ, περὶ δ᾽ ἄμβροτα εἵματα ἕσσε (*Il.* 16. 680)

and anointed him with ambrosia, and clothed him about with immortal raiment.

There is a phrase about Lycia, Sarpedon's hometown, in "The funeral of Sarpedon": "set off on foot toward the rich country, Lykia" (verse 29) (νὰ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα στὴν Λυκία, τὸν πλούσιο τόπο). That phrase corresponds to the *Iliad* verse:

κάτθεσαν ἐν Λυκίης εὐρείης πίονι δήμῳ (*Il.* 16. 683)

set speedily in the rich land of wide Lycia.

In the end, there is the last verse of Cavafy's poem which completes the process of the funeral: "came to make the tombstone and the tomb" (verse 42) (ἤλθανε κ᾽ ἔκαμαν τὸ μνῆμα καὶ τὴν στήλη), which alludes to the verse:

τύμβῳ τε στήλῃ τε: τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων (*Il.* 16. 675)

with mound and pillar; for this is the due of the dead.

We thus illustrated that the poet's inspiration was the *Iliad*. He incorporates into the poem some Homeric elements in relation to the funeral's ceremonial actions, while he adds his own point of view to the description of how Sarpedon looks.

4. Trojans

a. The poem

"Τρῶες"

Εἶν' ἡ προσπάθειές μας, τῶν συφοριασμένων·
εἶν' ἡ προσπάθειές μας σὰν τῶν Τρώων.
Κομμάτι κατορθώνουμε· κομμάτι
παίρνουμ' ἐπάνω μας· κι ἀρχίζουμε
νἄχουμε θάρρος καὶ καλὲς ἐλπίδες.

Μὰ πάντα κάτι βγαίνει καὶ μᾶς σταματᾶ.
Ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς στὴν τάφρον ἐμπροστά μας
βγαίνει καὶ μὲ φωνὲς μεγάλες μᾶς τρομάζει.—

Εἶν' ἡ προσπάθειές μας σὰν τῶν Τρώων.
Θαρροῦμε πὼς μὲ ἀπόφασι καὶ τόλμη
θ' ἀλλάξουμε τῆς τύχης τὴν καταφορά,
κ' ἔξω στεκόμεθα ν' ἀγωνισθοῦμε.

Ἀλλ' ὅταν ἡ μεγάλη κρίσις ἔλθει,
ἡ τόλμη κ' ἡ ἀπόφασίς μας χάνονται·
ταράττεται ἡ ψυχή μας, παραλύει·
κι ὁλόγυρα ἀπ' τὰ τείχη τρέχουμε
ζητώντας νὰ γλυτώσουμε μὲ τὴν φυγή.

Ὅμως ἡ πτῶσις μας εἶναι βεβαία. Ἐπάνω,
στὰ τείχη, ἄρχισεν ἤδη ὁ θρῆνος.
Τῶν ἡμερῶν μας ἀναμνήσεις κλαῖν κ' αἰσθήματα.
Πικρὰ γιὰ μᾶς ὁ Πρίαμος κ' ἡ Ἑκάβη κλαῖνε.[67]

"Trojans"

Our efforts are those of men prone to disaster;
our efforts are like those of the Trojans.
We just begin to get somewhere,
begin to gather a little strength,

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[67] Savvidis (1968), p. 26.

grow almost bold and hopeful,

when something always comes up to stop us:
Achilles leaps out of the trench in front of us
and terrifies us with his violent shouting.

Our efforts are like those of the Trojans.
We think we'll change our luck
by being resolute and daring,
so we move outside ready to fight.

But when the great crisis comes,
our boldness and resolution vanish;
our spirit falters, paralyzed,
and we scurry around the walls
trying to save ourselves by running away.

Yet we're sure to fail. Up there,
high on the walls, the dirge has already begun.
They're mourning the memory, the aura of our days.
Priam and Hecuba mourn for us bitterly.[68]

b. Trojans in the *Iliad*

In the *Iliad*, Homer narrates a Greek expedition against Troy. Trojans are guided by passion and the hardships of war. A catalyst for their actions is the element of fatality. The poet also claims to show the importance of glory («kleos») for the mortal men, to highlight the great importance for the Trojans of not losing the war.

The Trojans represent the defeated, as in the end they lost the war trapped in the walls of Troy, and this is something important for the better understanding of Cavafy's poem. Nevertheless, the Trojans in the *Iliad* are heroic, brave and proud people. Among them there are violent warriors, but sometimes this violence turns into actions of pure tenderness, such as the description of Priam when he goes to Achilles to ask for Hector's corpse.

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[68] Keeley-Sherrard (1984), p. 17.

For the Trojans, the most important goal is victory; this is the superior value in their life, especially because a victory would mean that their city would not fall. Especially Hector when he has to face Achilles in battle knows that he is about to fight for the rescue of Troy. This knowledge is what constitutes the real epic element in the *Iliad*, and not only the heroes like Achilles or the songs about the exploits of the warriors.[69] Hector personifies the most ideal type of a hero and he is resigned to the sentiment honour.

The Trojans are distinguished for fighting to death so as to save Troy. They act driven by the national consciousness and in military operations they are strongly united by demonstrating physical strength and martial pride.

At this point I have emphasized the heroic character of the Trojans in the *Iliad* in order to compare the Trojans' different identity in the Cavafian poem, as the poet totally excludes the heroic element in his poem. We will focus on this difference in the sections that follow.

c. "Trojans" by Cavafy

I. Analysis of the poem's characteristics

We will make a reference to the publication, the dominant themes, the technique and the relation between the Cavafian creation and the Homeric material in order to prove that a main message is that Cavafy chooses an ancient Greek myth in order to describe a situation that could affect every person's thoughts, beliefs and fears.

"Trojans" was published in 1905 and was written in its first form in 1900. The poet chose a really successful and original comparison and scene. It is also among the most well-known poems of Cavafy. A characteristic of the poem's technique is that it is free from binding rhymes.

The poem expresses the idea of the preconceived decision and reflects a historical fact: the inescapable siege. The poet wants to show that the past has elements of

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[69] Trypanis (1981), p. 48-56.

everyone's present behavior and so he presents some reflections of the past on the present. [70] In the poem the memory of the past is described in the following verses: "They're mourning the memory, the aura of our days. / Priam and Hecuba mourn for us bitterly" (v. 20-21) (Τῶν ἡμερῶν μας ἀναμνήσεις κλαῖν κ' αἰσθήματα. / Πικρὰ γιὰ μᾶς ὁ Πρίαμος κ' ἡ Ἑκάβη κλαῖνε). The Trojans recall their glorious successes and they remark the difference between the past and the present.

The poem contains many philosophical elements as it expresses the poet's ideas about life and human condition. There is the motif of the tragic fallacy,[71] and all the human efforts are compared with the condemned efforts of the Trojans: "Our efforts are those of men prone to disaster; / our efforts are like those of the Trojans" (v. 1-2) (Εἶν' ἡ προσπάθειές μας, τῶν συφοριασμένων· / εἶν' ἡ προσπάθειές μας σὰν τῶν Τρώων). All the hopes and the courage seem vain.

The poem expresses the idea of imprisonment and the desire of escape. As Capri-Karka mentions, there is hope of freedom but it does not last for long.[72] This might be due to that the main characters in the poem are presented lonely, ready to face an external threat and having to wait for the possibility of escape. The walls that encircle the Trojans is a dominant image. The final exit-campaign from the walls is impossible, not only for the Trojans, but also for the poet himself.[73] His sentiments of discouragement are expressed through the description of the Trojans' vain hopes.

Cavafy adopts the Trojans in his poems because he aims to prove that people in his time have some things in common with the Trojans, even though they live in a different time and place. As Minucci states, with the comparison "like those of the Trojans" (v. 2) (σὰν τῶν Τρώων), the poet wants to illustrate the ratio of two similar situations which may be different and remote in time and place, but they finally are proved to be «morally» the same.[74] This could be supported by the reference of one common thing, which is the futility of their efforts, as some external obstacles are always against them.

We see that Cavafy uses the first person singular very few times; he prefers using the first person plural. The use of «we», nevertheless leads to a poem addressed to everyone as it underlines possible difficulties that every person has faced in life.

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[70] Dallas (1974), p. 138-140.
[71] Ilinskaya (1983), p. 132.
[72] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 20.
[73] Bousoulas (1974), p. 38.
[74] Minucci (1987), p. 39.

Capri-Karka analyses that the nation, which is the protagonist, represents all the desperate men and the poem gains constancy by the use of a historical example despite its plaintive atmosphere.[75] This statement might be explained by the fact that Cavafy wanted to present a lost battle in ancient years so as to express his experiences through the mythical past. As Ilinskaya describes, the poet uses «we» from the beginning of the poem and at the third verse he starts to narrate «our» plaintive experiences,[76] this is a way that the poet shows the equivalence with the Trojans' experiences.

Nevertheless, the poet seems to be present in the poem by expressing his personal moral and philosophical beliefs about his «feelings» of life which are manipulated by a destiny of destruction and defeat and this is something that the poet has deeply realized through the years and the events of his own life. Minucci mentions that the meeting of one aspect of the past with an aspect of the present affects each other in a way which is connected to Cavafy's unique personal conception of the historical material.[77] Cavafy uses the historical facts as examples of situations that could happen at any given moment. Bien[78] also speaks of Cavafy being able to expand some elements of the myth until it touches everyone's life. That is the reason his poetry remains valid till nowadays.

Regarding the connection between the Cavafian poem and the *Iliad*, "Trojans" does have a substantial connection with the *Iliad*, except the poet does not include the heroic element. Cavafy does this by including Achilles, Hecuba and Priam and an elementary symbol, the walls of Troy, which assume different meanings. Cavafy aims to focus not on the story but on the inevitable disaster. Anton makes a reference to the fact that the Gods and the heroes are absent and even Achilles is reduced to someone who stands out only for his scary voice.[79] I agree with that statement as it is obvious that the poem does not have a heroic character and that the armies have been replaced, while in the imaginary scenery of the besieged town only those who are led to the disaster are visible, including the poet; their efforts are like those of the Trojans. Thus, there is a reverse of the heroic element.

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[75] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 34.
[76] Ilinskaya (1983), p. 132.
[77] Minucci (1987), p. 41.
[78] Bien (1964), p. 35.
[79] Anton (2000), p. 195.

In line with this reversal, a dominant theme is the inevitable failure of the efforts and the memories of the glorious past. Priam and Hecuba take part in the lament for the lost battle. Anton points out that the efforts to escape led to total despair, and survival is temporary because the fall is something the Trojans cannot avoid, as the inglorious end will come soon, and the lament for the feelings and memories of the old days has already begun. Priam and Hecuba, cry bitterly.[80] They represent the besieged Trojans' defeated soul, and they mourn, expressing the feelings and thoughts of the Trojans. Cavafy's poem underlines the failure of all the efforts for the attainment of a purpose, if the subject does not find the mental power that is needed to support them. In fact, everyone may sometimes be accountable only for themselves to reach happiness and satisfaction, no matter how much one has acknowledged the limits of the «walls» and the external repressive powers.

The theme of conviction is also underlined by Pontani as being central; destiny is presented as something which can cancel time.[81] Nevertheless, fate in the poem is represented by symbolic figures drawn from famous myths, like the Trojans.

After examining the poem as a whole, we will now concentrate on the Trojans in the poem. The analysis will focus on their characteristics, their actions and the meaning of every action.

II. Trojans of Cavafy

The Trojans seem to be without hope and they face difficult situations without being courageous. The ancient Greek myth is used metaphorically. The efforts and difficulties of the plural subject of contemporary time are indeed compared to the efforts and difficulties of the ancestors in the *Iliad*. Maronitis indicates that the equation of the innovation with the mythical subject succeeds.[82] This could be due to the fact that the poet describes his ideas of the human condition: anyone can be scared and pessimistic under certain circumstances.

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[80] Anton (2000), p. 196.
[81] Anton (2000), p. 195.
[82] Maronitis (2007), p. 53.

The poem presents some «men prone to disaster», namely persons who are trapped and condemned behind their personal walls, like the poet himself. They try to stop the siege but in the end they admit that they will not manage to survive from it. As described already, Cavafy was inspired by the main incidents of the Homeric poem. The myth is presented as it is in the *Iliad*; so it is a poem which respects the myth and does not reverse it. The poet takes from the Homeric myth the fall of Troy. In Cavafy's poem there is the oncoming fall of a symbolic town and he imposes the lament in advance.

The poem is historical and one of the basic ideas is the inevitable historical and personal destiny which no one could avoid. Regarding this aspect, Orfanidis argues that the Trojans is a population trapped in the illusions and the perspective of hope.[83] Though, when the time of the crisis comes, and by that Cavafy means the confrontation with the events of history and fate, the fight is lost and fate is omnipotent: no one can avoid it. Hector, the Trojans, Priam and Hecuba are the symbols of the humans who are trapped by destiny: the strength of Achilles and the events of history.

"Trojans" might be said to be a poem about human condition, the way one tries to handle difficulties in life and the point of view each person adopts when it comes to obstacles that each and everyone has to face. People's efforts are compared to those of the Trojans facing misfortune: "Achilles leaps out of the trench in front of us / and terrifies us with his violent shouting" (v. 7-8) (Ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς στὴν τάφρον ἐμπροστά μας / βγαίνει καὶ μὲ φωνὲς μεγάλες μᾶς τρομάζει.). Apart from the fears for the adversities of life they know deeply that: "Yet we're sure to fail. Up there, / high on the walls, the dirge has already begun" (v. 18-19) (Ὅμως ἡ πτῶσις μας εἶναι βεβαία. Ἐπάνω, / στὰ τείχη, ἄρχισεν ἤδη ὁ θρῆνος). The Trojans may manage to do something and begin to be courageous, but a difficult situation always occurs and stops them.

The poet has a certain aim when he chooses the Trojans to be his protagonists: he is inspired by that specific mythical background for creating the setting of his poem. As Capri-Karka presents, Cavafy prefers to speak of the Trojans and not of someone of his own time because he feels desperate like them.[84] Something characteristic is the

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[83] Orfanidis (1983), p. 168.
[84] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 33.

phrase "prone to disaster" (v.1) (τῶν συφοριασμένων) in the first verse which illustrates the central idea of the poem.

Cavafy manages to express the similarities between temporary and ancient times by merging the «we» of the poem with its historical equivalent. As a result, the figure of Achilles enters the poem naturally, as the two groups of people have become one. Every figure that the poet includes into the poetic environment brings the reader to the center of the plot of a myth which preserves almost intact its dramatic tension.[85] After the second verse, the Trojans become the central heroes of the poem, an ideal subject and something that leads to the reader's sentimental tension.

In spite of some unimportant successes and hopes, the besieged are easily scared to retreat. Achilles scares them when yelling at them. The meaning of that symbolic Achilles is not clear. According to Anton, this could be the internal enemy, the voice of guilt, the faded will, the pressure of suspension or an external enemy.[86] The only precise fact is that Achilles belongs to the hostile camp and terrifies the besieged. Pontani mentions that Achilles is something unexpected that stops them, and as a result every attempted escape is vain: «we're sure to fail».[87] The Trojans have not the courage and the mental strength to try to overcome the obstacles and manage to be free.

The next chapter will focus on the connection between the Cavafian poem and verses from the *Iliad* which Cavafy incorporated into his poem by converting them to suit his poetical environment. We will examine how the poet recreates his source.

III. Material drawn from Homer

"Trojans" is a poem which deals with an ancient myth as a whole. However, Cavafy only incorporates into his poem some specific verses of the *Iliad*. We will examine these specific verses, so as to understand the Cavafian poem and see how the poet alters the Homeric foregrounds.

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[85] Minucci (1987), p. 40-41.
[86] Anton (2000), p.195.
[87] Pontani (1991), p. 210.

Achilles appears at the ditch and terrifies the Trojans in Cavafy's poem: "Achilles leaps out of the trench in front of us / and terrifies us with his violent shouting" (verses 7-8) (Ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς στὴν τάφρον ἐμπροστά μας / βγαίνει καὶ μὲ φωνὲς μεγάλες μᾶς τρομάζει). Achilles is an obstacle for the Trojans. They try to escape and he stops them, so they lose their hope. The incident is also described in the *Iliad*:

> ἔνθα στὰς ἤϋσ᾽, ἀπάτερθε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
> φθέγξατ᾽· ἀτὰρ Τρώεσσιν ἐν ἄσπετον ὦρσε κυδοιμόν.
> ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἀριζήλη φωνή, ὅτε τ᾽ ἴαχε σάλπιγξ
> ἄστυ περιπλομένων δηΐων ὕπο θυμοραϊστέων (*Il.* 18. 217-220)

> There stood he and shouted, and from afar Pallas Athene
> uttered her voice; but amid the Trojans he roused confusion unspeakable.
> Clear as the trumpet's voice when it soundeth aloud
> beneath the press of murderous foemen that beleaguer a city

Cavafy mentions that the Trojans dare to escape and they prepare to fight against their enemy: "so we move outside ready to fight" (verse 12) (κ᾽ ἔξω στεκόμεθα ν᾽ ἀγωνισθοῦμε). But they have the courage to fight only before the crisis. Similarly, Hector in the *Iliad* prepares himself to confront Achilles:

> λισσόμενος φίλον υἱόν: ὃ δὲ προπάροιθε πυλάων
> ἑστήκει ἄμοτον μεμαὼς Ἀχιλῆϊ μάχεσθαι (*Il.* 22. 35-36)

> beseeching his dear son, that was standing before the gates
> furiously eager to do battle with Achilles

In the verses below, from the Cavafian poem, the Trojans run away so as to escape from Achilles: "and we scurry around the walls / trying to save ourselves by running away" (verses 16-17) (κι ὁλόγυρα ἀπ᾽ τὰ τείχη τρέχουμε / ζητώντας νὰ γλυτώσουμε μὲ τὴν φυγή). Before the crisis they lose hope and courage. This attempt to rout brings to mind Hector in the *Iliad* when he was afraid of Achilles and escaped before the battle. More precisely, the 16th verse: "and we scurry around the walls" (κι ὁλόγυρα ἀπ᾽ τὰ τείχη τρέχουμε) corresponds to the following verses from the *Iliad*:

> ὣς τὼ τρὶς Πριάμοιο πόλιν πέρι δινηθήτην
> καρπαλίμοισι πόδεσσι: θεοὶ δ᾽ ἐς πάντες ὁρῶντο. (*Il.* 22. 165-166)

> even so these twain circled thrice about the city of Priam
> with swift feet: and all the gods gazed upon them.

and the 17th verse: "trying to save ourselves by running away" (ζητώντας νὰ γλυτώσουμε μὲ τὴν φυγή) with the verse:

Ἕκτορα δ᾽, ὡς ἐνόησεν, ἕλε τρόμος· οὐδ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἔτλη
αὖθι μένειν, ὀπίσω δὲ πύλας λίπε, βῆ δὲ φοβηθείς. (*Il.* 22. 136-137)

But trembling gat hold of Hector when he was ware of him, neither dared he any more abide where he was, but left the gates behind him, and fled in fear.

In the end, we have to mention the wailing of Priam and Hecuba of Cavafy for the Trojans' failure: "Priam and Hecuba mourn for us bitterly" (verse 21) (Πικρὰ γιὰ μᾶς ὁ Πρίαμος κ᾽ ἡ Ἑκάβη κλαῖνε), which seems to be the consequence of their corresponding lament in the *Iliad*. Priam and Hecuba in the *Iliad* try to convince their son to get in the castle to avoid the relentless Achilles. Both Priam's and Hecuba's laments are found in Book 22.[88] Conclusively, we have here analyzed which were the specific Homeric verses which form the poem "Trojans".

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[88] The Priam's lament is in the verses 38-76 and the Hecuba's one in the verses 82-89, see the Appendix.

5. Ithaka

a. The poem

"Ἰθάκη"

Σὰ βγεῖς στὸν πηγαιμὸ γιὰ τὴν Ἰθάκη,
νὰ εὔχεσαι νᾶναι μακρὺς ὁ δρόμος,
γεμάτος περιπέτειες, γεμάτος γνώσεις.
Τοὺς Λαιστρυγόνας καὶ τοὺς Κύκλωπας,
τὸν θυμωμένο Ποσειδῶνα μὴ φοβᾶσαι,
τέτοια στὸν δρόμο σου ποτέ σου δὲν θὰ βρεῖς,
ἂν μέν' ἡ σκέψις σου ὑψηλή, ἂν ἐκλεκτὴ
συγκίνησις τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ σῶμα σου ἀγγίζει.
Τοὺς Λαιστρυγόνας καὶ τοὺς Κύκλωπας,
τὸν ἄγριο Ποσειδῶνα δὲν θὰ συναντήσεις,
ἂν δὲν τοὺς κουβανεῖς μὲς στὴν ψυχή σου,
ἂν ἡ ψυχή σου δὲν τοὺς στήνει ἐμπρός σου.

Νὰ εὔχεσαι νᾶναι μακρὺς ὁ δρόμος.
Πολλὰ τὰ καλοκαιρινὰ πρωϊὰ νὰ εἶναι
ποὺ μὲ τί εὐχαρίστησι, μὲ τί χαρὰ
θὰ μπαίνεις σὲ λιμένας πρωτοειδωμένους·
νὰ σταματήσεις σ' ἐμπορεῖα Φοινικικά,
καὶ τὲς καλὲς πραγμάτειες ν' ἀποκτήσεις,
σεντέφια καὶ κοράλλια, κεχριμπάρια κ' ἔβενους,
καὶ ἡδονικὰ μυρωδικὰ κάθε λογῆς,
ὅσο μπορεῖς πιὸ ἄφθονα ἡδονικὰ μυρωδικά·
σὲ πόλεις Αἰγυπτιακὲς πολλὲς νὰ πᾶς,
νὰ μάθεις καὶ νὰ μάθεις ἀπ' τοὺς σπουδασμένους.

Πάντα στὸν νοῦ σου νᾶχεις τὴν Ἰθάκη.
Τὸ φθάσιμον ἐκεῖ εἶν' ὁ προορισμός σου.
Ἀλλὰ μὴ βιάζεις τὸ ταξεῖδι διόλου.
Καλλίτερα χρόνια πολλὰ νὰ διαρκέσει·
καὶ γέρος πιὰ ν' ἀράξεις στὸ νησί,
πλούσιος μὲ ὅσα κέρδισες στὸν δρόμο,
μὴ προσδοκῶντας πλούτη νὰ σὲ δώσει ἡ Ἰθάκη.

Ἡ Ἰθάκη σ' ἔδωσε τ' ὡραῖο ταξεῖδι.
Χωρὶς αὐτὴν δὲν θἄβγαινες στὸν δρόμο.
Ἄλλα δὲν ἔχει νὰ σὲ δώσει πιά.

Κι ἂν πτωχικὴ τὴν βρεῖς, ἡ Ἰθάκη δὲν σὲ γέλασε.
Ἔτσι σοφὸς ποὺ ἔγινες, μὲ τόση πεῖρα,
ἤδη θὰ τὸ κατάλαβες ἡ Ἰθάκες τί σημαίνουν.[89]

"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 sensation
touches 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 the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning 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 Egyptians cities
to learn and go on learning from those who know.

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.

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[89] Savvidis (1968), p. 23-24.

> Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
> you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.[90]

b. Ithaka in the *Odyssey*

Odyssey's theme was Odysseus' return to Ithaka, his hometown, after wandering and adventuring in the sea and many places, even at Hades, for ten years after the end of the Trojan War. Among the obstacles that Odysseus confronted on his way to his home were the Laistrygonians and the Cyclops. The Cyclops were three one-eyed giants, sons of Uranus and Gaia. The most famous was Polyphemus who was blinded by Odysseus.[91] The Laistrygonians were a tribe of giant cannibals who inhabited in the Arctic regions where Odysseus lost his ships and many of his men.[92] Odysseus was the only one among all the Greek leaders who came back home, who suffered so many troubles on his way.

In relation to the hero's hometown, we should state that in the *Odyssey* what are most important are the ideals of the homeland and domesticity. Odysseus acts with prudence and ingenuity to manage to return in Ithaka.

The central idea is the hero's persistent will to never back away when facing difficulties in life, until he manages to reach his purpose and accomplish his own ideal. He is thinking rationally and in terms of patriotism. In the *Odyssey*, Ithaka represents the hero's destination, and his aim is to go to his home again; his return is what matters for him in life. After outlining that, we will now analyze what Ithaka represents in the Cavafian poem.

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[90] Keeley-Sherrard (1984), p. 29-30.
[91] Delopoulos (1978), p. 93.
[92] Delopoulos (1978), p. 94.

c. "Ithaka" by Cavafy

I. Analysis of the poem's characteristics

The poem "Ithaka" was published for the first time in the magazine «Grammata» in October-November of 1911. Cavafy's poetry after the year 1911 not only becomes more realistic and objective than before, but studying it, we can also draw the conclusion that it also loses its social character and becomes individual and pleasure-seeking. The new poems express a different kind of morality. The poem that illustrates this change of direction more than any other is "Ithaka". Anton states that in this poem we can see depression and Cavafy's decision to accept that the social distinctions and the financial security that he had dreamed of now belong to the past.[93] The poem represents a milestone in Cavafy's poetry, since after writing it, he reached the final pattern of the collection and the edition of his poetic corpus.

In addition to the *Odyssey*, a possible literary source of the poem is the *Exhortatio ad Ulyssem* of Petronios (it is not verified if this poem was written by Petronios). If in fact this poem was a source, the Latin poet gave to Cavafy only the idea for his poem.[94] "Ithaka" is an object of Cavafy's deep thinking and an expression of his own points of view.

Cavafy seems to think that destination is not what matters in life. By the time he writes "Ithaka", he understands that any aim he had throughout his life was not as important as the wear and the sadness it brought to him. But, at the same time, the hero admits that he won something after all these difficult years: the greatest thing is not the aim (the aim may not even exist), but instead the endless trip and how every person has to organize his life so as to make it better. Thus, we do not have to hurry; we must enjoy our life and everything else. Ithakas are beyond reality.

"Ithaka" is a poem that expresses the value of the sensual element in life. One has to focus on the desires and the experience of each day instead of waiting to gain something without enjoying every moment. The poem has a strong sensual character and it is simultaneously philosophical. Capri-Karka observed that the sensual element

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[93] Anton (2000), p. 80.
[94] Tsirkas (1958), p. 432-436 and Capri-Karka (1982), p. 56.

is underlined by a double emphasis.[95] Indeed, the verses "sensual perfume of every kind- / as many sensual perfumes as you can" (v. 20-21) (καὶ ἡδονικὰ μυρωδικὰ κάθε λογῆς, / ὅσο μπορεῖς πιὸ ἄφθονα μυρωδικά) in connection with the verses "as long as a rare sensation / touches your spirit and your body" (v. 7-8) (ἂν μέν’ ἡ σκέψις σου ὑψηλή, ἂν ἐκλεκτὴ / συγκίνησις τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ σῶμα σου ἀγγίζει) consist that emphasis. This argument would be explained if one keeps in mind that perfumes and precious stones always represent sensuality in Cavafy's poetry. Another important observation is that the sensual pleasure described in "Ithaka" might have never been formed if Cavafy had not lived his life in Alexandria.[96] Alexandria was a society with a different conception of morality, a more liberal one than in Greece.

Cavafy incorporates the Homeric myth to describe his own ideas and beliefs. Thus, the elements drawn from the *Odyssey* represent something that the poet wants to point out. For instance, the journey of Odysseus is used as a metaphor for the journey of life: "As you set out for Ithaka / hope your road is a long one" (v. 1-2) (Σὰ βγεῖς στὸν πηγαιμὸ γιὰ τὴν Ἰθάκη, / νὰ εὔχεσαι νά ’ναι μακρὺς ὁ δρόμος). The precious stones and aromatic drugs represent the desire to experience rare strong sensations: "mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony, / sensual perfume of every kind" (v. 19-20) (σεντέφια καὶ κοράλλια, κεχριμπάρια κ’ ἔβενους, / καὶ ἡδονικὰ μυρωδικὰ κάθε λογῆς). Also, Cyclops and Lastrygonians stand for the psychological fears oppressing man's instincts: "Laistrygonians, Cyclops, / wild Poseidon-you won't encounter them / unless you bring them along inside your soul" (v. 9-11) (Τοὺς Λαιστρυγόνας καὶ τοὺς Κύκλωπας, / τὸν ἄγριο Ποσειδῶνα δὲν θὰ συναντήσεις, / ἂν δὲν τοὺς κουβανεῖς μὲς στὴν ψυχή σου). Homer describes external enemies but Cavafy reverses the myth by presenting them as internal: the real obstacles are these that one creates in mind.

Regarding the connection and the differences between the central idea of Homer's *Odyssey* and Cavafy's poem, in the *Odyssey* the aim of the protagonist is to return as soon as possible to Ithaka, and whatever he faces in his long journey functions as obstacles. Anton claims that the Cavafian trip has nothing to do with Homer's *Odyssey* as Cavafy's time was not heroic and the poem expresses Cavafy's perception of the contemporary *Odyssey* of a non-hero.[97] In Cavafy's "Ithaka", the journey is

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[95] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 57.
[96] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 337.
[97] Anton (2000), p. 240-241.

what matters more than the destination, which composes the motif for the journey. The journey enriches one's life and it has to be everyone's aim.

There are some instances in the poem that support the argument that Cavafy reverses the Homeric myth. Odysseus tries to return to his home and everything that delays him is considered to be an obstacle. But, as Cavafy believed, one must enjoy the journey and the destination does not mean anything. As Capri-Karka analyzes, Cavafy degrades with irony Odysseus' will to return to his home and Penelope: [98] "As you set out for Ithaka / hope your road is a long one, / full of adventure, full of discovery" (v. 1-3) (Σὰ βγεῖς στὸν πηγαιμὸ γιὰ τὴν Ἰθάκη, / νὰ εὔχεσαι νά 'ναι μακρὺς ὁ δρόμος, / γεμάτος περιπέτειες, γεμάτος γνώσεις). I agree with this statement as the irony could be connected to the fact that Odysseus in the Homeric epic poem would have never hoped for a long trip back to his home.

Cavafy uses the word «wise» (v. 35) («σοφὸς»). The «wisdom» of Cavafy is connected with the unique personality of every man. Malevitsis supported that this wisdom can be analyzed as three things: knowledge, a tragic element and the poetic experience of these two.[99] Also, according to Anton's argument which I think is valid and accurate, it regards only the absolute passion for the adventurous journey itself and the experience it provides, and not the destination.[100] Cavafy characterizes as «wise» the one who can conceive the true meaning of Ithaka, namely, the road and the experiences that lead you there.

We see that in "Ithaka" there are no external obstacles, such as Achilles in "Trojans" but instead every man is in danger of only what he has in his own mind: "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" (v. 9-12) (Τοὺς Λαιστρυγόνας καὶ τοὺς Κύκλωπας, / τὸν ἄγριο Ποσειδῶνα δὲν θὰ συναντήσεις, / ἂν δὲν τοὺς κουβανεῖς μὲς στὴν ψυχή σου, / ἂν ἡ ψυχή σου δὲν τοὺς στήνει ἐμπρός σου). Besides, as Anton outlined, the superficial values[101] of life in an oriental town like Alexandria are the difficulties for Cavafy, and they prevent the only

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[98] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 56, 57 and 346.
[99] Malevitsis (1983), p. 107.
[100] Anton (2000), p. 350-351.
[101] The values are superficial as the people's relations were impersonal. The citizen felt loneliness and alienation and the anonymity of the massive state was dominant. For Cavafy, though, it would not be better in another city as the problem that he accused the society of, was his own scruples; his fears magnified the matters.

promising journey, the sensual one.[102] The journey in "Ithaka" does not have an impulsive character, but inner causes. Cavafy through the poem finds a way to express his thoughts.

II. Ithaka of Cavafy

In Cavafy's poem, as we have discussed, the dominant theme is the journey, which is presented as a simile for the joy of life and the wisdom one can gain from any life experience. According to Capri-Karka, Cavafy uses the journey to underline his thoughts about life and love, giving advice to one who leaves for a journey.[103]

In "Ithaka", as Dallas points out, there is the expression of a multi-meaning route: "As you set out for Ithaka" (v.1) (Σὰ βγεῖς στὸν πηγαιμὸ γιὰ τὴν Ἰθάκη), which is mirrored in the symbolism of the town.[104] I agree with this and I would like to state that at the end of the poem the message literally comes across and Ithaka turns out to Ithakas: "you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean" (v. 36) (ἤδη θὰ τὸ κατάλαβες ἡ Ἰθάκες τί σημαίνουν). Until that verse Ithaka had represented Odysseus' hometown, but now the case is anyone's Ithaka: every person's aims, willingness and destination in life. As Savvidis claims, Ithaka suddenly is multiplied to Ithakas and so the symbol turns out to be an allegory.[105]

While discussing the final destination: "Wise as you will have become, / so full of experience" (v. 35) (Ἔτσι σοφὸς ποὺ ἔγινες, μὲ τόση πεῖρα), Cavafy uses the word «wise». Capri-Karka mentions that there is irony; a wise man would have understood the meaning of Ithakas from the beginning and not just upon reaching his destination.[106] I could not agree with this statement, as we should underline that the journey itself enriches the person with wisdom after many experiences. Everyone can become wise as the years pass by. There are no ends in life; Ithaka is not an end.

Homer's *Odyssey* is a narration full of adventures on Odysseus' return back to his hometown, Ithaka, after the Trojan War. The aim is to go to Ithaka as soon as

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[102] Anton (2000), p. 312.
[103] Capri-Karka (1982), p.15.
[104] Dallas (1974), p. 138.
[105] Savvidis (1987), p. 190.
[106] Capri-Karka (1982), p. 59.

possible. In Cavafy's poem, on the other hand, as Maronitis claims, it seems that someone abandon his home in order to travel to a mythical and exemplary island.[107] The Cavafian "Ithaka" is about leaving from a place in order to go to Ithaka and there are no obstacles to overcome, only opportunities to benefit from.

We mentioned before that Cavafy was a lonely person, unsatisfied with his life. He only had his poetic activity to express his thoughts through. This poem outlines the real meaning of life according to the poet. Vrisimitzakis expressed the opinion that Cavafy felt trapped in his way of life in Alexandria, and saw Ithaka as a self-centered dream.[108] Ithaka is for the poet cut off from the idea of destination, and it is only a utopian hope connected with adventures and many new things to learn.

III. Material drawn from Homer

In "Ithaka" Cavafy did not use any specific events from the *Odyssey*, but he was inspired from the Homeric epic poem as a whole. There are no verses in Homer that correspond to Cavafian verses. Nevertheless, the poet mentions Egypt and Phoenicia in "Ithaka": "may you stop at Phoenician trading stations" (v. 17) (νὰ σταματήσεις σ' ἐμπορεῖα Φοινικικά) and "and may you visit many Egyptian cities" (v. 22) (σὲ πόλεις Αἰγυπτιακὲς πολλὲς νὰ πᾶς) and there are some references in the *Odyssey* to these places, as we will show in this chapter.

The first mentioning of Egypt and Phoenicia in the *Odyssey* is in Book 4. In that Book, Telemachus is in Sparta, where Menelaus tells him about the return of many Greek warriors and that Odysseus was with Calypso in the isle of Ogygia, as Proteus had told him. The specific verses are: 83, 351, 355, 483 and 581.

In the *Odyssey* Odysseus does not pass through Phoenician stations or through Egyptian cities. But the poet does not add things arbitrarily. Phoenicia is not a place that the hero goes to during his basic journey but he speaks of that place in his spurious narrations.

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[107] Maronitis (2007), p. 132.
[108] Vrisimitzakis (1985), p.30.

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The first time Odysseus speaks for Phoenicia is in his narration to Athena in Book 13:

αὐτίκ᾽ ἐγὼν ἐπὶ νῆα κιὼν Φοίνικας ἀγαυοὺς (*Od.* 13. 272)

I went straightway to a ship, and to the lordly Phoenicians.

The hero has just arrived at Ithaka and does not want to reveal his true identity yet. The last times that Odysseus makes a reference to Egypt and Phoenicia are in Book 14, as he speaks to Eumaeus:

πεμπταῖοι δ᾽ Αἴγυπτον ἐϋρρείτην ἱκόμεσθα (*Od.* 14. 257)

On the fifth day we came to fair-flowing Aegyptus

and

ὅς μ᾽ ἄγε παρπεπιθὼν ᾗσι φρεσίν, ὄφρ᾽ ἱκόμεσθα
Φοινίκην, ὅθι τοῦ γε δόμοι καὶ κτήματ᾽ ἔκειτο   (*Od.* 14. 290-291)

He prevailed upon me by his cunning, and took me with him, until we reached
Phoenicia, where lay his house and his possessions.

6. Conclusions

At this point I have reached the end of my presentation of the Homeric element in Cavafy's poetry, and I have identified the three poems' relationship with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as the way in which they are transformed and reconstructed in their new poetical environment.

I used the material drawn from Homer to show which were the exact verses that Cavafy chose to incorporate so as to express his message. I illustrated that the poet was inspired by Homer's epic poems and adopted the themes of the myths as his setting by focusing on some specific facts and adding his own elements. This was his relation to mythical material. It was my aim to explore the process of the creation of his poems.

Firstly, the Homeric element of the Cavafian poems is connected to the historical and autobiographical situation of Costantine Cavafy. Thus, the myth contributes to the vision of the present and not to that of the past; Cavafy seems to write poems based on ancient Greek myths, but the poems are simultaneously about his feelings, experiences and reactions to the changes of his life.

Through the heroes of the poems are revealed the views and concerns of the poet about the wear of time, human destiny, the futility of life, alienation, loneliness and the absence of the other. In addition, the poems seem to be timeless, neither ancient nor modern, and this is what makes them so special.

The setting of the poems comes from the Homeric myth and retains some mythological features. However, a change from the original myth is that the poet uses in some cases the myth reversed, the environment is not heroic. But even then, he does not add elements arbitrarily and he remains faithful to the content of each myth.

It should be emphasized that the poet selects Homeric heroes and situations in order to express his ideas of life. Accordingly, the Homeric element is converted from being an epic symbol to a symbol of futility, sensuality, hope for a change in life, discouragement, as well as a stir of memories from the past and a will for adventures.

Cavafy used the Homeric sources in his reconstruction of the epic environment, but he did it in many different ways. For example, in "The funeral of Sarpedon" he aims to underline the futility of human life and the importance of sensual pleasures.

Homeric Sarpedon is an honorable soldier who died, as his destiny meant for him, and his burial was an object of the Gods' actions. This divine intervention underlined the importance of Sarpedon for Zeus.

The poet in his narrative of the burial had as a benchmark Sarpedon's beauty even though the hero was already dead. The poet actually added to the already known material from the *Iliad* a comparison of Sarpedon with a young athlete who rested after having won a prize in a race. For Cavafy, Sarpedon was a winner and he just rested after his efforts, famous and peaceful.

In "Trojans", Cavafy pointed out the will for escape from an unpleasant life. In the *Iliad* the Trojans stand for loss and disaster. He built his poem on the idea of this representation. Nevertheless, the poet extracted everything heroic as he aimed to express the meaning of the futile efforts, imprisonment, remoteness and obstacles not only for the Trojans, but also for himself and for the readers of the poem.

Just as the Trojans had to fight for their freedom against historical facts and fate, everyone should be aware of the efforts which are needed for the conquest of happiness and satisfaction in life, as long as there are obstacles and difficulties of any kind, external or internal.

In "Ithaka" Cavafy expresses his view on desires, experiences and adventures in life. Ithaka in the *Odyssey* is the hero's destination, while the Cavafian poem represents the starting point for the many-sided trip, life itself. The poem's main idea is that one should take advantage of the opportunities of every moment, learn as many things a possible and enjoy life.

Fears and insecurity are dangerous and only these might prevent someone from living the life Cavafy speaks of. Thus, the person must be wise enough to avoid being fearful. The journey of life leads to things unknown before, intense experiences and sensual pleasures.

An expansion of the research on the relation between Cavafy and Homer would be important for philological scholarship. Future essays could analyze other poems with a connection to Homer's epic poems. This would be enlightening for a deeper understanding of Cavafy's poetry, as most researchers focus on the poems with content derived from the Byzantine and Hellenistic era and not the ancient Greek, which was the main subject in some of Cavafy's first poems and a source of many significant observations.

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Appendix

Ἕκτορ μή μοι μίμνε φίλον τέκος ἀνέρα τοῦτον
οἶος ἄνευθ᾽ ἄλλων, ἵνα μὴ τάχα πότμον ἐπίσπῃς
Πηλεΐωνι δαμείς, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστι
σχέτλιος: αἴθε θεοῖσι φίλος τοσσόνδε γένοιτο
ὅσσον ἐμοί: τάχα κέν ἑ κύνες καὶ γῦπες ἔδοιεν
κείμενον: ἦ κέ μοι αἰνὸν ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἄχος ἔλθοι:
ὅς μ᾽ υἱῶν πολλῶν τε καὶ ἐσθλῶν εὖνιν ἔθηκε
κτείνων καὶ περνὰς νήσων ἔπι τηλεδαπάων.
καὶ γὰρ νῦν δύο παῖδε Λυκάονα καὶ Πολύδωρον
οὐ δύναμαι ἰδέειν Τρώων εἰς ἄστυ ἀλέντων,
τούς μοι Λαοθόη τέκετο κρείουσα γυναικῶν.
ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν ζώουσι μετὰ στρατῷ, ἦ τ᾽ ἂν ἔπειτα
χαλκοῦ τε χρυσοῦ τ᾽ ἀπολυσόμεθ᾽, ἔστι γὰρ ἔνδον:
πολλὰ γὰρ ὤπασε παιδὶ γέρων ὀνομάκλυτος Ἄλτης.
εἰ δ᾽ ἤδη τεθνᾶσι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισιν,
ἄλγος ἐμῷ θυμῷ καὶ μητέρι τοὶ τεκόμεσθα:
λαοῖσιν δ᾽ ἄλλοισι μινυνθαδιώτερον ἄλγος
ἔσσεται, ἢν μὴ καὶ σὺ θάνῃς Ἀχιλῆϊ δαμασθείς.
ἀλλ᾽ εἰσέρχεο τεῖχος ἐμὸν τέκος, ὄφρα σαώσῃς
Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάς, μὴ δὲ μέγα κῦδος ὀρέξῃς
Πηλεΐδῃ, αὐτὸς δὲ φίλης αἰῶνος ἀμερθῇς.
πρὸς δ᾽ ἐμὲ τὸν δύστηνον ἔτι φρονέοντ᾽ ἐλέησον
δύσμορον, ὅν ῥα πατὴρ Κρονίδης ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῷ
αἴσῃ ἐν ἀργαλέῃ φθίσει κακὰ πόλλ᾽ ἐπιδόντα
υἷάς τ᾽ ὀλλυμένους ἑλκηθείσας τε θύγατρας,
καὶ θαλάμους κεραϊζομένους, καὶ νήπια τέκνα
βαλλόμενα προτὶ γαίῃ ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτῆτι,
ἑλκομένας τε νυοὺς ὀλοῇς ὑπὸ χερσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.
αὐτὸν δ᾽ ἂν πύματόν με κύνες πρώτῃσι θύρῃσιν
ὠμησταὶ ἐρύουσιν, ἐπεί κέ τις ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ
τύψας ἠὲ βαλὼν ῥεθέων ἐκ θυμὸν ἕληται,
οὓς τρέφον ἐν μεγάροισι τραπεζῆας θυραωρούς,
οἵ κ᾽ ἐμὸν αἷμα πιόντες ἀλύσσοντες περὶ θυμῷ
κείσοντ᾽ ἐν προθύροισι. νέῳ δέ τε πάντ᾽ ἐπέοικεν
ἄρηϊ κταμένῳ δεδαϊγμένῳ ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ
κεῖσθαι: πάντα δὲ καλὰ θανόντι περ ὅττι φανήῃ:
ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ πολιόν τε κάρη πολιόν τε γένειον
αἰδῶ τ᾽ αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοιο γέροντος,
τοῦτο δὴ οἴκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν.᾽ (*Il.* 22. 38-76)

"Hector, my dear child, abide not, I pray thee, yon man,
alone with none to aid thee, lest forthwith thou meet thy doom,
slain by the son of Peleus, since verily he is far the mightier—

cruel that he is. I would that he were loved by the gods
even as by me! Then would the dogs and vuhtures speedily devour him
as he lay unburied; so would dread sorrow depart from my soul,
seeing he hath made me bereft of sons many and valiant,
slaying them and selling them into isles that hie afar.
For even now there be twain of my sons, Lycaon and Polydorus,
that I cannot see amid the Trojans that are gathered into the city,
even they that Laothoe bare me, a princess among women.
But if they be yet alive in the camp of the foe, then verily
will we ransom them with bronze and gold, seeing there is store thereof in my house;
for gifts full many did the old Altes, of glorious name, give to his daughter;
But and if they be even now dead and in the house of Hades,
then shall there be sorrow to my heart and to their mother, to us that gave them birth;
but to the rest of the host a briefer sorrow,
if so be thou die not as well, slain by Achilles.
Nay, enter within the walls, my child,
that thou mayest save the Trojan men and Trojan women, and that thou give not great glory
to the son of Peleus, and be thyself reft of thy dear life.
Furthermore, have thou compassion on me that yet can feel —
on wretched me whom the father, son of Cronos, will shay by a grievous fate on the threshold
of old age,
when I have beheld ills full many,
my sons perishing and my daughters haled away,
and my treasure chambers laid waste, and little children
hurled to the ground in the dread conflict,
and my sons' wives being haled away beneath the deadly hands of the Achaeans.
Myself then last of all at the entering in of my door shall ravening dogs
rend, when some man by thrust or cast of the sharp bronze hath reft my limbs of life—
even the dogs that in my halls I reared at my table to guard my door,
 which then having drunk my blood in the madness of their hearts,
shall lie there in the gateway. A young man it beseemeth wholly,
when he is slain in battle, that he lie mangled by the sharp bronze;
dead though he be, all is honourable whatsoever be seen.
But when dogs work shame upon the hoary head and hoary beard and on the nakedness of an
old man slain, lo,
this is the most piteous thing that cometh upon wretched mortals."

Ἕκτορ τέκνον ἐμὸν τάδε τ᾽ αἴδεο καί μ᾽ ἐλέησον
αὐτήν, εἴ ποτέ τοι λαθικηδέα μαζὸν ἐπέσχον:
τῶν μνῆσαι φίλε τέκνον ἄμυνε δὲ δήϊον ἄνδρα
τείχεος ἐντὸς ἐών, μὴ δὲ πρόμος ἵστασο τούτῳ
σχέτλιος: εἴ περ γάρ σε κατακτάνῃ, οὔ σ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἔγωγε
κλαύσομαι ἐν λεχέεσσι φίλον θάλος, ὃν τέκον αὐτή,
οὐδ᾽ ἄλοχος πολύδωρος: ἄνευθε δέ σε μέγα νῶϊν
Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνες ταχέες κατέδονται.᾽ (*Il.* 22. 82-89)

"Hector, my child, have thou respect unto this and pity me,
if ever I gave thee the breast to lull thy pain.
Think thereon, dear child, and ward off yon foemen
from within the wall, neither stand thou forth to face him.
Cruel is he; for if so be he shay thee, never shall I
lay thee on a bier and bewail thee, dear plant, born of mine own self,
nay, nor shall thy bounteous wife; but far away from us by the ships
of the Argives shall swift dogs devour thee."