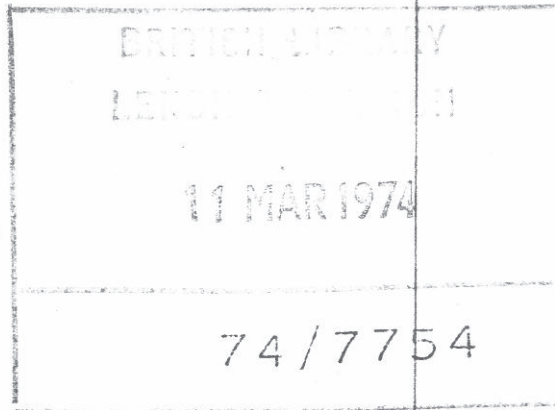


*First Impressions
of Greece*

Henry Miller

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Capra Press 1973 Santa Barbara

Begun at Hydrabad.
at the home of Ghika.
Entouré par Madame Aspasie.
Hasji-Kyriacos, Katsimbolis, de
Seferiades — et les femmes de
chambre. Ambiance générale de
maison féconde — pour commémoration.
rêve travail, loisir, paresse, l'esprit
amitié et tout et tout. L'esprit d'une
ancestrale partant. Le whisker pour aller
qualité ex cellente — surtout pour aller
pour les discussions sur Blavatsky
et Thibet.

PAX VOBIS CUM

TAO



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Little Thoughts En Route —

on Greece, on the Greeks,
and on other things.

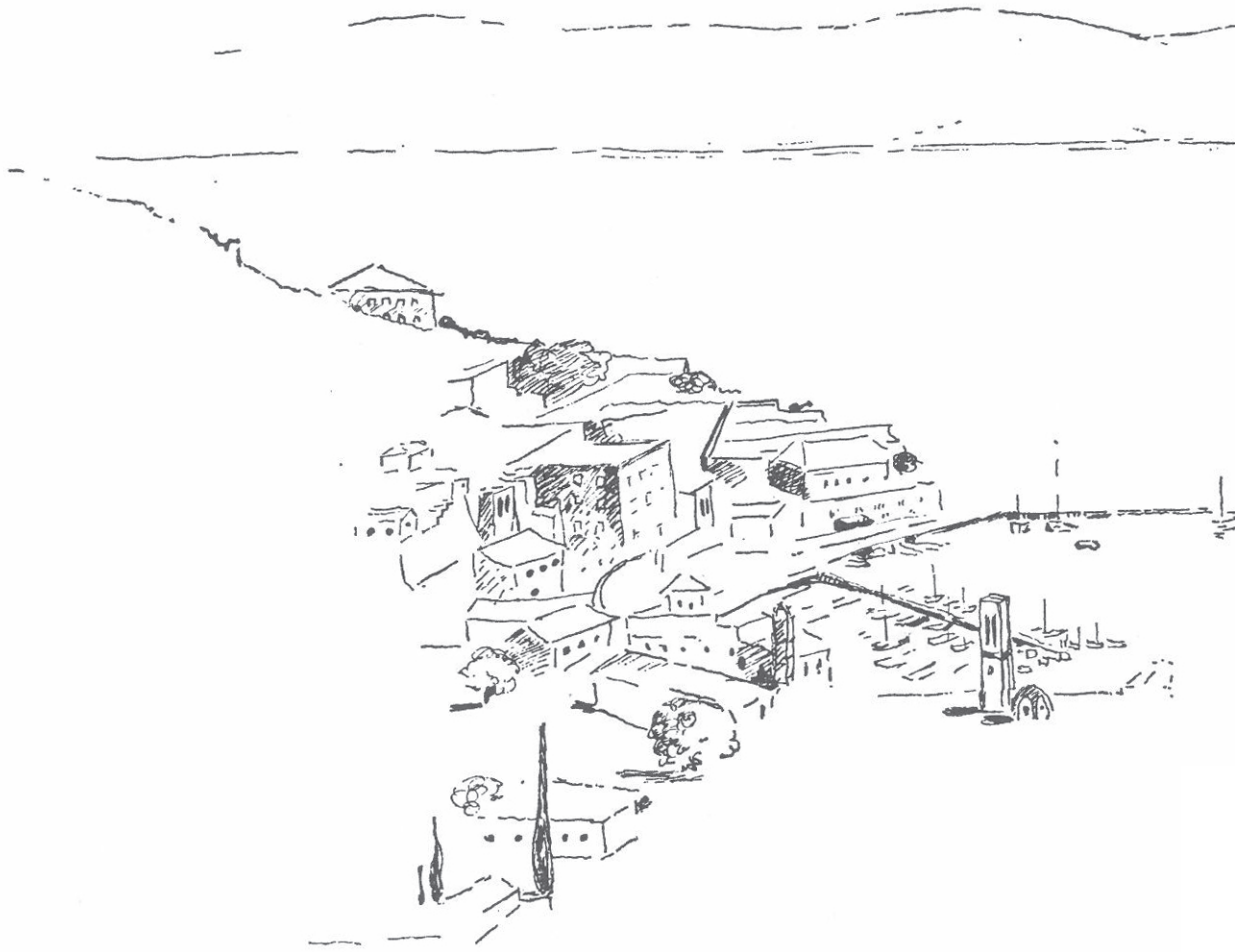
For his most sensitive
majesty, King George Ieris
of Smyrna!

His obedient servant,

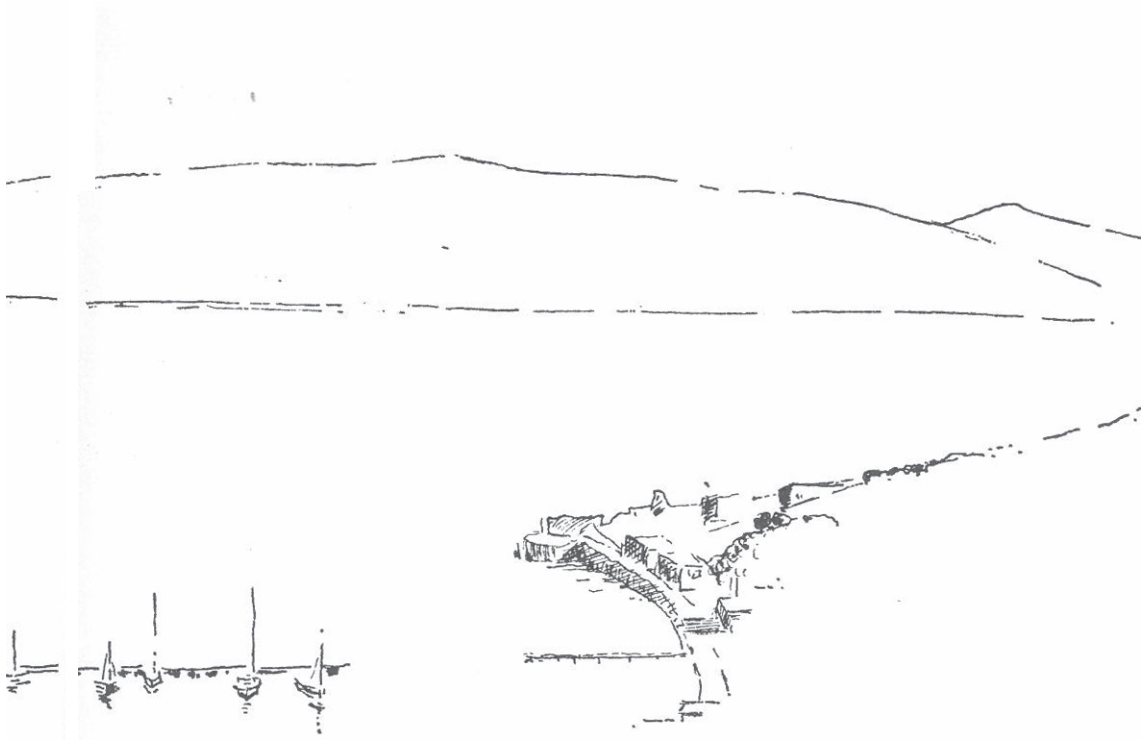
Henry Miller

November 1939

"Et ton voyage à tout le
monde!"



Begun at Hydra, at the home of Ghika. Surrounded by Madame Hadji-Kyriaco, Katsimbalis, Aspasia, Seferiades, and the chamber maids. Ripe, fecundating atmosphere—for conversation, dream, work, leisure, indolence, friendship and everything. Everywhere the ancestral spirit. The whiskey excellent, especially favorable for discussions about Blavatsky and Tibet.



ISLAND OF HYDRA — 11/5/39

The birth-place of the immaculate conception. An island built by a race of artists. Everything miraculously produced out of nothingness. Each house related to the other, as though by an unseen architect. Everything white as snow and yet colorful. The whole town is like a dream creation: a dream born out of a rock. At every step of the way the picture changes. The whole island is like a rock built on a revolving stage. Even the climate revolves. We are going backwards towards the summer solstice. Winter will come with roses, melons, grapes. The soil is like dried blood, a red which becomes Pompeiian as it climbs the walls. The islands float on

bands of light, fastened down only by tiny white shrines which are again like dream visions. The town, which has organically grown out of the rock in artistic formation, seems to be born anew every day. It is like Holland or Denmark, except that it is Greek.

In the fortress where Ghika lives the discussion always seems to revolve about Byzance. Byzance is the cultural link. But the pendulum swings back and forth—from Mycenae to Periclean Greece, from Minoan times to the revolution, from Hermes Trismegistus to Pericles Yanopoulos or Palamas or Sekelianos. The meals are Gargantuan—the hors d'oeuvres alone suffice. Then the desserts—melon, figs, green oranges, grapes, walnuts, Turkish pastry, which is not really Turkish but Greek—*Byzantine*—and the retzina which dissolves everything in gold dust and aerates the lungs by a sort of refined turpentine shellac which evaporates and creates well-being, joy, conversation. Every anecdote uncovers another Greek phenomenon—the human phenomenon—who vies with the natural wonders here in variety and eccentricity. (The story of the banker who wrote bad verse. The imbecile who kept a 33-volume pornographic diary. The nymphomaniac who danced naked on the estate and seduced the guests. Etc, etc. Legends, fables, myths galore.)

The road to the sea, amidst cemeteries of gray stones, gray heather, lavender-green rock, bloody soil, with white everywhere and blue and walls dripping with ochre. The astounding faces of the children, all so different. Some like Africans, some like vase

figurines (?), some like coffin portraits. The maid who is called, who is *baptized*, Demeter! The admiral's house. The destruction of the Turkish Armada. Everything is legendary, fabulous, incredible, miraculous—yet true. Everything begins and ends here.

To Spetsai with Katsimbali by one of the innumerable discarded ferry-boats which the Greeks buy as old junk and continue to sail for twenty or thirty more years, breathing life into the boats by their courage, tenacity and skill. At Hermione, on the Peloponnese, we get off the boat absent-mindedly. Only when we stand before the war memorial does Katsimbali suddenly realize his error. A mad dash in a broken-down Ford to the sea. My first view of Argolis, of a land which excites me immediately. Perhaps this is the very oldest part of Greece. It seems so. It has a primeval quality, a stillness which is enchanting—and healing. Argolis is close to me, the most intimate soil I have yet seen in all my wanderings. To ride through this landscape in the battered Ford is incongruous. All invention now seems childish, more than ever so. Greece will outlive all ideas of "Progress", assimilate, destroy, recreate everything which now seems essential to life. Here is where the buttons go back to the buttonmoulder, where everything is "refunded", in the mystic sense.

At the seaport a violent storm. Finally the sky clears and in a

swollen sea we set forth for Spetsai in a benzina. Hardly have we put out to sea when another trim little boat appears. We race side by side, the tiny craft bucking like broncos. For me it is a Homeric voyage. The boat has become a mythological animal. With a stiff wind blowing, rocks to either side, huge waves threatening to swallow us if we ride into the trough of the waves, the man at the tiller nevertheless leaves the helm to take down the tarpaulin over our heads. An act of sheer recklessness in order to gain time, to save a little fuel. We watch him breathlessly, not daring to say a word. A Greek act—the daring which always accompanies the ruse. This is what distinguishes the heroic Greeks from the Vikings. Both indomitable, sure, reckless, the greatest navigators in the world. But with the Greek I feel absolutely safe. His daring is always based on certitude. He has genius when he undertakes a dangerous task. And what a hard school of training the Mediterranean offers! Who graduates from this school is a master mariner, capable of sailing any sea.

Spetsai seems pale by comparison with Hydra. Seems anomalous, soft, heterogeneous. It has its own charm, however. Marooned there for four days we explore the island on foot. The atmosphere is even more redolent of the past than Hydra. It is somewhat sad. Especially forlorn at the old port, where boats are still being built and seamed and caulked. Four sailboats lined up in mid-harbor, riding at anchor—like so many scenes out of French paintings. But something peculiarly sullen, something almost un-Greek about the

atmosphere. The four boats nestled in the hollow of the hill stick in my memory. It is like the twilight of forgotten deeds. Things are dying silently, hidden away from the public eye.

In Bubulina's home, the place where she was shot. Katsimbalis recounting her exploits. Here lives Mr. Tsatsos, professor at the University of Athens, now in exile and sleeping in this lugubrious, ghost-ridden house. Below is a little shrine, and when one goes to the toilet one is pervaded by fumes of incense. The huge room where Bubulina died now filled with beds and bedsprings, and beneath the flooring the sound of rats scampering madly.

Tsatsos I envy. I congratulate him on his being exiled. I glance at his books. Goethe, Sheridan, Dante, Aristotle, D. H. Lawrence, Homer etc. Over his bed a huge mosquito net. He will remember this place later. He will think how fortunate he was to have passed these months of solitude here. I congratulate him again now—I wish him well.

There is also John Stefanakos, a Greek from Buffalo, N.Y. Fifteen years in America have made him more American than I shall ever be. Even his accent is more American than mine. John has become a sow—a fat sow with gravy dripping from his lips. He has nothing to do but lend money at interest to his compatriots. He has a house which is like a refined lunatic asylum. His wife is a mental but agreeable defective. She is also handy with the needle, a virtue which John appreciates. But John's heart is in Buffalo, at the race track there. He has brought back with him enough clothes to last

him the rest of his life. He has seen nothing of Greece, except Spetsai where he was born. He thinks Greece needs more machinery, more money. He is a perfect specimen of the lost man, the man whom America takes to her bosom, castrates and fattens like a eunuch. He knows how to smoke expensive cigars, drink whiskey, talk out of the corner of his mouth, etc. He has been drained of everything necessary to make a human being. He is like a discarded tin can such as one sees on the shores of every country in the world, in the wake of modern progress. He and Bubulina are two totally different animals. Long live Bubulina!

One day some enterprising Anglo-Saxon will write a comparative study of Bubulina and Jeanne d'Arc. He will omit the fucking business, naturally. It is necessary to say a word here parenthetically. Every female heroine, every female saint was endowed with tremendous sexual ardor. Bubulina fucked her way to fame. She died *enceinte*. (For further details, address George Katsimbali, Amaroussion.) I pass on. Pass to the white, still nunnery on the hill overlooking the two arms of the sea. An all-pervading peace and quiet here. On the terraced slopes some old nuns at work with pick and spade. The birds singing in their cages suspended from the grape arbor that shelters their white little cells. Again it comes over me strongly that it requires high intelligence to select such a life as these old nuns have chosen. All that they voluntarily relinquish to come here they regain a thousand-fold. The belief, the morality, the ethic are nothing—it's the *form* of the life which gives peace and

character and wisdom.

Spetsai marks an important step in the longer journey I am making. My long walks by the sea with Tsatsos brought deep corroborations of the answers I had already given to certain inner problems. Though antipodal to one another, we understood each other perfectly, in spite too of the language problem. What was vitally important, chez Tsatsos, was his purity. I felt that I had met a man of fine spirit, that he was a link with those others past and future whom it is in my destiny to meet. Some give courage, others confirmation. It was too bad my friend "Alf" was not there to listen in on Goethe. To find a Greek talking this language, talking "religiousness", was a great surprise. And I believe Tsatsos too was surprised, in his fashion. (But the greatest surprise was John of Spetsai listening to "Mister George", as he quaintly called Katsimbalis. It was all Greek to him, as we say in America.) Race, language, milieu, profession, *métier*, education—what do these things signify when the spirit is altered? Strange links, strange dissociations. There are only men, only individuals, everywhere. The rest is a foolish, meaningless babble between great convulsions of time and matter. The Anargyrios, for example—a colossal mistake, an illusion on the part of a man who had no illusions. Teaching the Greeks "team work", as the naïf English professor put it—a piece of sheer fatuity. Futile to the *n*th degree. When the Greeks adopt the harness they will cease to be Greek. But only the English with their innate insensitivity to what is other, different,

could believe in such nonsense. Anargyros continues the American millionaire tradition of doing what one pleases in this life and trying to undo his work in the next life, by endowments. All public endowments are bad, in Greece as everywhere else. The spirit of Anargyros is in his Helmar, Murad and Turkish Trophies cigarettes, which I am going to smoke once again when I am rich enough to afford the luxury. (The first cigarette I ever smoked was one of the Anargyros variety. America has lost its taste for them now. To all Greeks I say: "Smoke a Murad!")

Another discarded rolling tub, an English channel boat, taking us to Nauplia. We are to put in at Leonidion on the way. The sun is setting. Katsimbali is talking. Marvellous talk, one story after another, one better than the other, a ceaseless outpouring as the darkness comes on. I am curious to see the ancestral spot. I had already formed an image of it in my mind. We come close to shore. It is precisely as he had described it. A sort of Dantesque pass in the black-green bone of the mountain range. The foothills open up slowly, like heavy drapes drawn aside by giant hands on noiseless pulleys. The village, like a handful of chicken feed, nestles in the harbor. One strong electric light gleams from the shore. A cold dank icy breath blows upon us. A boatload of chairs is being rowed out. They look incongruous. Are there people sitting in chairs here in this chill marsh vapor? Where are the eagles, the vultures, the condors? Where are the Indians? Somehow I expect to see Indians stepping out of their shadowed wigwams. The place is a monu-

mental horror, a living symbol of dread and foreboding. We go back in. We drowse a bit. We awake. We are in Paris—on the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre. Katsimbalis does not know yet what this street means to me, how I too have haunted it night after night. I let him talk. I am stupefied by the rich unending flow. What *warm* stories! How full, how human, how dark, tender, loving, generous. He is not a *raconteur*. He is a living organ, a voice pealing heavy sonorous notes which reverberate in the immense solitude of a deafened Greece. He is bestowing on me, a stranger, great gifts, great linguistic bouquets studded with live flesh. I feel as though I may suddenly bifurcate and no longer tell my own story but his. I am afraid to listen too well—the responsibility is too great. . . . As we arrive in port two prisoners stand handcuffed together. I see Katsimbalis and myself handcuffed too, but not by law. I feel that we are handcuffed for eternity. We will travel the road together. I salute my brother in crime.

A brief walk through the town before retiring for the night. Nauplia has a somewhat French appearance. It is a distinctive town, an ordered place. The little square in front of the museum, where the crazed inhabitants walk up and down, breathes an atmosphere. The fortress looms above. The silence weighs oppressively. It is dead silent. The streets lead out, into open geometric space. The statue of a hero stands naked, shivering, bleak, wan, forlorn in the vast night. The statue is a piece of insanity. In the morning I shall see the plain of Argos, the smoke rising gently

from the imaginary wigwams. A land opposite us such as William Penn saw when he greeted the Delawares. The Indians are haunting me ever since I caught sight of the Peloponnesus. It is an enigma. I leave it as such. . .

Awake at dawn, shivering with the cold. Stroll down to the quay and look at the mist rising from the low plain opposite. I am facing Argos. I get a shock. I only now recall *what* Argos means—the myths and legends. Suddenly I see why it looked so familiar to me. It is a replica of the photographic plate in my history book at school. In the early morning mist it is even more North American. Where are the buffalo, the canoes, the wigwams? I sit in the salon waiting for Katsimbali. I read all the letters which the clients have written for the enterprising manager of the Grande Bretagne. They were all written by half-wits. I would like to write a good one about the Trojan Horse, but the hotel is to be torn down soon. . . .

A ride in the automotrice, for 12 drax (!!) to Mycenae. We are walking the road from the station on a Sunday morning—not quite 8 a.m. A boy is crying bitterly because his comrade has taken all his money away. It is grotesque to hear this weeping so early in the morning. He is like a lost animal. As we curve round the last bend I notice a round smooth green tumulus—the most perfect stretch of green I have ever seen. I feel sure the dead are sleeping beneath this huge pillow of earth. A few steps farther on we pass the first tomb—Agamemnon's. Now I catch sight of Mycenae, the ruins, the place of horrors. Like Tiryñs, it is again well chosen. Tiryñs,

Argos, Mycenae—three strategic and sacred spots. Nothing will ever destroy the validity of these sites. Civilizations may come and go, but these places will remain intact. They are eternally rooted in the landscape, in time, in history, in the evolution of the human race.

A most important item: lunch *al fresco* at the Belle Hélène! The best meal I have had in Greece thus far. And a fat book on archaeology by the British school as an *hors d'oeuvre*. Dozing off under the tree. A group of men in the field measuring the land—a dispute about property. Somehow this scene strikes me as most appropriate. It touches me. Suddenly the earth has become important again—even a square yard of it. Far from megalopolitan worries. No abstract discussions, no abstract reckoning, no abstract holdings. Land, land, measured out by a tape measure. Quite thrilling. Still more thrilling to think that the fellow who owns it will till the soil indifferent to the dead relics which are strewn about. The eternal peasant, living in the eternal present. The man without history, the bottom man who supports the cultural flux. . .

At Epidaurus. Perhaps *the* most perfect spot of earth I have yet seen. The day is superlatively fair, the blue sky even more electric than usual, the hills cutting the sky with a razor's edge. So this was one of the great therapeutic centers of the ancient world! Even if there were not a stone left to testify to its glory one could reproduce it imaginatively. I think of my psychoanalyst friends—Otto Rank, Dr. René Allendy, Dr. E. Graham Howe, I think of Jung, Freud,

Stekel et alia. They are working only with the débris of humanity, with hulks and remnants, with torsos and decapitated heads.

In Aesculapian times man was still a whole being. He could be reached through the spirit. Body and spirit were one. Metaphysics was the key, the can-opener of the soul. To-day not even the greatest analyst can restore to men what they have lost. Each year there ought to be a congress of physicians meeting at Epidauros. First the medicos should be cured! And this is the place for the cure. I would give them first a month of complete silence, of total relaxation. I would order them to stop thinking, stop talking. Stop theorizing. I would let the sun, the light, the heat, the stillness work its havoc. I would let them become slightly deranged by the weird solitude. I would order them to listen to the birds, or the tinkle of goat bells, or the rustle of leaves. I would make them sit in the huge theatre and meditate—not on disease and its prevention but on health which is every man's prerogative. I would forbid cigars, the heavy black cigars of the Freudian school, and above all books. I would recommend the cultivation of a state of supreme and blissful ignorance. I would give them each a string of beads, gratis. And grapes warm with sunshine. Then I would have a shepherd come and blow a few wild Anatolian notes on a broken flute. . .

Visit to Daphni. The church interests me far less than the landscape, the light, the lavender gray rock. I start walking along the Sacred Way towards the sea. As on another day when unwittingly

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I walked to Byron, I am intoxicated by the atmospheric conditions. Today, Sunday, I have seen the miraulous phenomenon of light inhabiting trees. The light literally rushes through the foliage, creating a green vaporous shroud, an indwelling halo, the aura of the tree itself. The soul of the tree stands revealed. The trees are bathed in holiness, in the purity of their own essence. The separation between body and soul is acutely distinct. It is maddening. The more so because of the austerity of the soil, the rosy gray, the slightly Tibetan cast of the slopes. There are no longer leaves, there are only intoxicated green brushstrokes waving with the wind. The sagebrush is silvery and hugs the earth tenaciously, as if guarding deep reptilian secrets. I start to climb a hillside to get a better view of the landscape, but I am too frightened by the naked beauty. I stand half-way up the slope looking about me uncomprehendingly. It is like one of the mad magical scenes which Shakespeare now and then, in his great despair, conjured up. Here man joins up with the reptilian world. Here he dare not walk erect, except as a god. This is the punishment inflicted throughout the ages, the great secret of the sway of Greece, of her temporary abnegation or abdication. Man had first learned here how to walk as a god. He will walk again one day—as a god. When he has forgotten what he now knows. (To-day, my first day in a flying machine, the thought came to me—how utterly ridiculous, how degrading, to be sitting in a chair in the air, propelled by a motor, and oneself utterly passive, utterly useless. Flying is the lowest form of voyaging. One might just as well be a lump of shit.)

In Heraklion—freezing to death. The banana trees are on the other side of the island. Winter is here, but there are no fires. We wait for the sun to come up. I think of the dead cat lying head first in the deep gulch beyond the walls of the town. This morning the flies were feasting on its carcass. To-night the flies are probably dead. Heraklion too is dead. It is like Imperial City, California, where I became definitely schizophrenic. I feel that I am in the Azores, at Madeira, though the architecture is à la Dickens of *The Old Curiosity Shop*. I stop and listen to a phonograph on a chair in the middle of the street in front of a restaurant. It sounds Turkish. The people are looking at me because I am listening to the phonograph. Everybody has a Cyrano de Bergerac physiognomy. The bakery shops are thoroughly Pompeiian—so are the butchers' blocks. An added touch is the butcher's blood-red apron, like a Venetian sail. In the charming courtyards are beautiful faces—startlingly beautiful girls, marooned here for life. The men walk about like pirates on a holiday. The tailors sit on their bench without shoes. Boots everywhere, of the finest kind. The red ones particularly fascinating. The food is abominable. If it weren't for Bill X—, owner of the Café Central, I would die of ennui. He regales me about Montreal, where he owned a flourishing restaurant until the crisis cleaned him out. Bill eats early, contrary to Greek law. He says he means everything he says—not like his

compatriots. They have no sense of business, he says. They only like to play tricks on one another. When he transformed the café they thought he was crazy. He had good drinking water, which he brings from another village. He is a white man.

Suddenly, seeing his portrait for the ten thousandth time, I realize that Metaxas is the dead image of Otto Rank, the Viennese psychoanalyst. They should put a cigar in his mouth to complete the resemblance. Nice too to see Laurel and Hardy advertised at the cinema. And Arizona Shoe Polish. The world is progressing. The Minoans had to do without these luxuries. Poor devils, what reminds me terribly of New York, of the ghetto, the slums, are the perennial kiosks littered with shoelaces, cigarettes, candy, junk. The same wretched faces peering out at me from the little cabins in which these poor devils pass their lives in solitary confinement. I see them looking at my coat, my hat, my shoes. Every American *must* be a millionaire. And yet, if we were to compare notes, compare bank accounts, property, holdings, possessions, I am poorer than any of them. What we see in these wretched faces peering out of the kiosks is *despair*. In this sense all Americans are millionaires. Every American has hope. He will not pass his life sitting in a kiosk. He may punch tickets in the subway, but he doesn't sell shoelaces, etc. That is reserved for "immigrants".

And, when I arrive at Phaestos, at the top of the world, at the one place on earth which is nearest to heaven, there stands Kyrios Alexandros, bowing and kowtowing at 100 yards' distance. "God

has sent you!" he says, in greeting.

I am the first visitor, the first tourist, in several months. Alexandros weeps, kisses my hand, calls me Mister Professor. *Bon! D'accord.* What is there to eat? Fortunately I have brought a few provisions along. While Alexandros scrapes the mud off my shoes I ask about the larder. It is empty, alas. But—he has the black wine which Bill X—from Montreal recommended me to try. Good. Before looking at the ruins I decide to eat. I ask Alexandros to share the meal with me. He seems positively frightened by the suggestion. It is not done. *Soit.* I begin sipping the wine. The olives are lousy—without taste, unless it be the taste of mud. Alexandros talks. He is wringing his hands and calling on God to put a stop to Herr Hitler so that there may be tourists once again. I am thinking of a thousand things at once—of the women who walked about the palace in winter, of Arizona and New Mexico, of the Valley of the Moon in California, of Shangri-la, because this is the closest we'll ever get on this earth to the Shangri-la of the cinema. Most of all I feel the lack of a companion. The site is so marvellous, my well-being so complete, that suddenly I feel guilty, guilty as a criminal, for enjoying all this alone. On the side looking towards Mt. Ida the autumn colors of the earth are ravishing. For the first time in my life I see a symphony of umbers. And towards the sea that red earth, the primordial clay out of which man was formed in God's image. Man has woefully fallen from his state of grace, but nature remains eternally holy. The brown slopes are like

the skin of water animals. They have been washed through aeons of time with alluvial deposits. They have been scorched, baked, blistered, and then deluged with torrents. Everywhere the caress, everything softened down, subdued, sweetened. It is the softest spot of earth I know of. It is feminine through and through. I feel certain the site was chosen by the dynastic queens of Minos. It is the female line of the great dynasty which has given to the landscape its character, its charm, its subtlety—and its inexhaustible variety.

Knossus I tried to enter by the back way. In my enthusiasm I walked past the official entrance. On rounding a bend in the road I espied the big red column, the restored column. It was exactly the right moment, for just as I had reached the bend I was saying to myself—it should be here, this is the spot for it! I feel now that I can set out for any of the sacred places of the earth without guide or compass. Each place has its deity which beckons to you as you approach. In all these spots the earth is unusually quiet—a dynamic passivity, vital as the electric fluids of the cosmos.

It is not only unthinkable, but absolutely impossible, that these sacred spots should one day go the way of modern progress. No machine could survive in this atmosphere. Here the spirit of place rules tyrannically, supreme master of past, present and future. What the human spirit achieved in these few nuclei of chaos remains imperishable. Life eddies about these eternal rocks, these silent anchorages in the earth. And often, when examining the relics in

the museums, I have had the thought that in rifling the tombs of their relics man is merely abetting the preservation of sanctity. It is well that all the material manifestations should be removed. The museums will perish one day and with them every vestige of man's past achievements. But in the "place" the spirit hovers eternally and willy-nilly man will be drawn back to these centers again and again to rediscover his heritage.

At Knossus particularly, because it is so solidly entrenched, one feels the marvelous therapeutic value of the slow rhythm of life. Everything was done leisurely, one feels. The very features of the race—*what race?*—bespeak this slow, dignified rhythm. The great throne chair of Minos—in itself it speaks volumes. One did not sit down in this seat as one now takes a chair. One lowered the full, majestic body to make a magical contact with the earth. The chair was sunk deep into the bowels of the earth. It was a seat of justice, everything carefully weighed, carefully deliberated. In the legend one thinks of Minos as a monster exacting tribute. When one descends to the seat one feels that he was a great legislator. He was dispensing justice and wisdom. He represented art, peace, industry, joy, well-being. Joy! That is the quality which Knossus breathes even from its sad ruins. And in the faces of the Cretans even to-day there is a light which I have not seen elsewhere in Greece, as yet. The glance is full and bright, without fear and without malice. There is no meanness of soul in the Cretan. He looks out at you from beneath his black turban like the pagans of old must have

looked. The sufferings and privations of centuries have not dimmed this bright, honest glance. Aside from the Berbers and the Arabs, or certain tribes in India, the Cretans have the finest human expression I have yet seen. There is not only race and character in the face, but *dignity*, a quality now almost extinct in the human countenance.

Aboard the good ship Frinton, the boat which took me from Athens to Corfu last July—my first trip. Like seeing an old friend. The same crew, same waiters, same maître d'hotel. I am waiting three hours for the boiled rice I ordered when I came aboard—only to find out that they have no rice. Very Greek. Never to say No! Against the pharmacist's orders I order a full dinner. Diarrhoea, or no diarrhoea, I am going to eat. Upstairs in the salon they are playing swing music—disques from Athens. My head is full of Nijinsky, the Ballet Russe, Monte Carlo, Vienna, Budapest, London. I have almost forgotten where we are. Crete seems like something in the distant past. I remember, while getting my shoes shined opposite the Fountain Morosini, how good the last glances about were. At the last minute the eye works feverishly, devouring everything like a hungry man. The question always is—will one ever return?

Just as I am about to leave comes an urgent request from Monsieur le Préfet to visit him at his bureau. I go with Alexion and Kafatos, the agricultural expert. It seems the Préfet—Kyrios Stavros Tsoussis—has been looking for me ever since my arrival. He wanted to put his aerodynamic car at my disposal, he wanted me

to attend a banquet in my honor, he wanted to let me know how pleased he is to see a stranger from a free country.

Stavros Tsoussis is an extraordinary individual, a figure out of the Renaissance. What he is doing in Candia is beyond me. He has all the makings of an intelligent, capable dictator, a man of action, sharp, decisive, alert, efficient, almost American in his dynamism. It is the first time in my life the police have been searching for me to do me the honors. I tell him so. We talk about Phaestos, about the "peaceful" quality of the Minoan epoch. I leave feeling that I have been in the presence of a man who will be known one day, a man of power. It is the greatest surprise I have had since coming to Greece. Outside his office a ragged little urchin, barefooted, is hanging about. She doesn't seem to be overawed by the presence of the police. In no city of the world have I seen a sight like this. It reminds me of the Académie Pédagogique at Candia. Not finding Alexion I decide to ask permission to inspect the school. I visit one room after another, including the kitchen and the agricultural station in the backyard. How can I describe it? *Human*. Intensely warm and human, as though teacher and pupil were friends, or relatives. In the music class they sing for me—forty or fifty lusty bass voices—Byzantine church music. Then sight-reading from the music book, the strangest music book I have ever seen. All done zestfully, with gusto. They show me the scientific apparatus—for physics and chemistry. They deplore the lack of equipment, talk about the new building. Damn the new building! Keep the old

spirit, I say! Greece doesn't need new buildings, new equipment. Greece is doing marvelously with just the bare necessities. Why compete with the rich countries? Why enter a race with overwhelming handicaps? I walk about the crooked streets, peering into the big courtyards. So like Madeira. I am sure of it, though I've never been to Madeira. I stop at a shop to buy some postcards. Some of them are shop-worn. The man leaves me with his wife while he runs home with the cards to clean them (sic!). His wife is French. From Normandy. She talks to me about France. She misses the verdure of Normandy, the cows, the rich pasture lands. She has a sour face, dead eyes, that hateful French way of reducing everything to logic and realism. I begin contradicting her. I was ecstatic about the bare mountains, the dust, the rocks, the blazing sun. She looks at me as if I were crazy. Yes, my dear woman, I like Greece precisely because it is Greece and not France. What I like about Greece is its Greekness. Crazy, what? Keep your French garden, your wall around the house, your modest negatives, your subjunctive moods, your logic, your sous. What is good about Greece is that it is illogical, paradoxical, a contradiction from one end to another. But Greece is never "*pale*", never "*gloomy*". Even the artificial eyes in the pharmacist's shop are interesting. Monstrous eyes, for Cyclopean men. . . .

An evening at Kyrios Elliadi's home. During the course of the meal the president of the tailors' association of Candia arrives. "Don't get up," says Elliadi—"it's only my tailor." In a few min-

utes another visitor, another president of another association. "Where do you come from, gentleman?" he asks me. Follows a thoroughly surrealistic conversation in which we discuss the tailors' art, the war, the expulsion from Asia Minor, the statues along Riverside Drive, N.Y., the Jewish problem, the cost of living for a family of four, the curb market in Wall Street, and so on and so forth.

Elladi, I must explain, is the British Vice Consul at Candia, an ertwhile refugee from Smyrna. The evening of my arrival, as I was sitting alone in the restaurant, he came up to me and asked if I were Mr. Miller. He wanted me to know that his services were entirely at my disposal—and, he added, especially because you are an American! And then he related what I have heard now so often, the story of the disinterested aid of Americans following upon the expulsion of the Greeks from Asia Minor. Here was one man who had vowed never to forget the kindness of the Americans. I was touched, naturally. I have said many things against my compatriots at different times, but the fact that they are kind, that they give without motive other than natural human sympathy is a fact beyond dispute. Sometimes, in traveling about Greece, in listening to the tales of Greeks who have worked in the mines in Arizona, Montana, Alaska, men from the lumber camps, the farms, the steel mills, the automobile factories, men who ran fruit stands or restaurants or soda water fountains, florists from Washington Heights or Cathedral Parkway, sometimes in listening to their

fervid praise of America, I begin to wonder if I am not wrong about my own country. Another thought often occurs to me, in moments of loneliness, when the barriers of race and language isolate me from those about me—the thought that in a vastly diminished way I am being privileged to experience the emotions of the countless immigrants who have come to America to make a home, to know some pale reflection of their struggles, their need for comradeship, for a wee touch of human sympathy. I try to think what my life might be if I were obliged to remain in a foreign country, to earn my living there, to learn the language, to adapt myself to their ways. The few Americans who have changed their nationality have done so under entirely different circumstances than the immigrant whom we receive. For an American it is a luxury, a grotesque whim which he is pleased to indulge. It is never an act of necessity, of despair or desperation. Once an American always one. Lafcadio Hearn became a true Japanese, but then he was born of Greek and Irish parents, he was a poet, a dreamer, a visionary.

However, to Mr. Elliadi, Vice Consul from Smyrna—greetings! And thank you for the book you so kindly gave me. I am one American who will never forget Greece or the Greek people. I have a soft spot in my heart for them. Especially for the Greek who interests me above all others—the wretched, forlorn creature without shoes, dressed like a ragamuffin, living by grace of the sun, the nourishing airs, the vitality of the roots of the race. I shudder to think what would become of this vast nameless horde of beggars should the

climate ever change. They would die like flies. Nowhere yet have I seen such destitution, nor such manly fortitude. A Frenchman is a continual grumbler, despite the fact that he is the richest man in the world. The poverty-stricken Greek does not grumble. Nor does he dance a jig for his proper tip when he renders you a service. France is the country where perhaps it is true that the sense of justice has been developed to the highest degree. Nevertheless, as Shakespeare long again pointed out, and long before Shakespeare, Christ, Buddha, Lao Tse, charity comes before justice. And I feel that despite the horrible inequities in Greece, charity, generosity, kindness, sympathy, spontaneity are virtues which the Greeks as a whole possess to a high degree. American charity is of another order—it is unconscious—the gesture of a man whose pockets are full and who cannot be bothered measuring out justice, or counting out sous. But French charity is nil, non-existent. Charity does not fit into the scheme of logic. It is something “*gratuit*”, like André Gide’s pseudo-Dostoevskian murders in his cerebral romances. Now then, Mr. Elleadi, I can’t say that your book overwhelms me. Though I am unable to believe in your poetic genius I salute you for the friendly gesture you made me at Candia the day I arrived. I am making an imperishable recording of it; it will be for the museum dedicated to human works and in a script forever readable. And a thousand thanks for the boiled rice which you made in order to cure my dysentery. I hope the day will soon be at hand when the town of

Candia has a restaurant worthy of its archaeological renown. Good wishes to your tailor friend, President of the Merchant Tailors' Association of Candia. I told you that my grandparents were tailors, but I did not mention that my father was also a tailor and that I myself began as a tailor.

A few hours at Canea . . .

The old town (Canea) most interesting. A real labyrinth. An image of Venice in tatters. But what pleased me the most was a haphazard meeting with a dwarf in the street. A Goya dwarf. It seems there were three monsters on public exhibition in Candia, but I missed them. I contented myself with listening to the music—the Oriental flute. It was a lovely night and the spot well chosen. From the crags above the old hags descended to see what was happening. There was a lot of dust—and mud. The odor of roasted chestnuts and the neighing of little Greek horses. Further on, as I discovered, there was a spectacular site—a great moat surrounding the walls. And there, while listening to the radio with its crazy loudspeakers, I fell into a reverie about the unknown world of Asia. I felt as if I were already in the land of the Hittites. That vast space, emptier than emptiness itself, gave me a nostalgic feeling for pre-historic Asia. The disk with Minoan writing was before my eyes. I saw again the Babylonian tablets I had once been shown at the British Museum. I thought of another style of writing, the most beautiful, the most primitive I had ever seen—the Mayan script.

And then of another wondrous one—the Egyptian hieroglyphics which I pondered over for an hour or more one day at the Louvre when in search of the Zodiac of Denderah embedded in the ceiling of the Louvre.

Here a long interruption, thanks to Mr. Machrianos, an engineer who knows every town in Greece. He speaks good English. Why not? He spent his youth in Pittsburgh at the Carnegie Institute. He is a technician, one of the vast army working to reclaim the Greek soil. He knows all about water, malaria, sewage, forests, manure, where there are good hotels, good restaurants. He tells me again of the crazy Greeks who returned from America with money, who open modern hotels in the wilderness and keep things going in strict American fashion, even if there is not a customer in sight. From the lips of this man I get a bird's eye view of what the government is trying to do—a truly herculean task. His talk confirms my own convictions about Greece. In another twenty years Greece will be unrecognizable. She is adapting herself to the times almost with Japanese alacrity. Islanders are always adaptable. It is the highlander who remains conservative. How will Greece stand when the war is over? Already the politicians envisage the "*appauvrissement*" of the rich countries. Greece is poor. Greece is at the bottom of the ladder. I think of the Japanese again. I see no reason why the Greeks should not emulate them. If ever there should be twenty or thirty million Greeks in the world something fantastic will happen. Their curiosity is unlimited, their energy

unbounded. There may be a new Peloponnesian war, with Greece rising to the ascendancy, assuming the hegemony of the Balkans. In any case, the movement is forward. Nothing but an earthquake will stop the headlong rush.

I am forgetting about Canea, the Venetian city. Another maritime people. A mighty people. Canea is far more interesting than Corfu. What a leprous maze of streets, what doors and doorways! In the new part of the city, the Greek section, one feels the airiness of the Greek character. The houses straggle towards sea and mountain. There is space between. The light filters in. The children are playing in the sun. A fat woman is standing on a ladder in the middle of the street, trimming a tree. Very Greek. It could be a pioneer town in America, except for the architecture. It is the architecture of nomads who have just settled down to the land. It is not architecture—it is plain refuge, shelter, the body putting a roof over the soul. Inland, towards Phaestos, the construction is still more primitive. We are among the Kalmucks, the Siberians. Everything bequeathed by tradition has been forgotten. Like the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico the Greeks have dug themselves into the rock. The troglodyte's instinct prevails. One is in the land of hurricanes, tornadoes, cloudbursts, sand storms, heat waves, glaciers, avalanches, pests, ghosts, demons, what not. Man digs in.

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"Silence! This is my marriage with God!"
Nijinsky.

"Now I will dance you the war, with
its suffering, with its destruction, with its
death. The war which you did not pre-
vent and so you are also responsible for."
Nijinsky.

"We do not become insane — we
are torn it." (Prof. Bleuler)

"Let him dream his dreams!"
(Professors Freud, Jung, Krepelin, Bleuler, et alia.)

"Mr. Nijinsky is the sanest person in
the whole of St. Moritz Dorf."
(The nurse)

"I want to talk to somebody
who would understand me....."

Nijinsky

Maintenant il parle avec Dieu.
Enfin il y avait quelqu'un
qui l'a compris

Hou.

I am reading the life of Nijinsky, the man whose life itself was a great piece of art. He is standing on the deck of the ocean liner, enraptured by the first sight of the skyscrapers. He begins to leap in the air like a kangaroo. He wants to ride up and down the elevators all day. He likes the American bathrooms, the express trains riding through the city in the air. He sees that there is opportunity here for every one. He is lionized. He buys a car. He runs the car backwards downhill to test the brakes. He is intoxicated. A year later he confesses—"America is not a country in which to create. One must have peace and quiet." Five years later he is in the madhouse. Peace and quiet forever now. He is at rest. He has left the earth. As in the *Spectre de la Rose*, he made one mighty leap out of the window and into space. He is hanging there now—in space—a victim of the times. Do the Greeks know the mad diary Nijinsky left behind? What will they say of it? It is important to know about Nijinsky. He tried to do what Milarepa, the great Tibetan poet and sage did. But he was not strong enough. He was too much of an artist. There was not enough evil in him . . .

Nijinsky's final obsession was with the circle. Curious for a man whose particular form of insanity is described as "schizophrenia". Nijinsky's whole struggle in life was to become a complete individual. By nature he was dual. The transformation from a homosexual to a happily married man was in itself a great triumph. Nijinsky wanted more than that. He wanted a union with God. Finally he identified himself with God, and was pronounced in-

sane. Up to the last he was kind, gentle, tolerant, forgiving. He strove to get beyond the sphere of art; he was perhaps the supreme artist of our time—"le dieu de la danse," as he was called. His error consisted, not in seeking God, but in forsaking art. Godhood is not attained through piety, but through art. Art is the whole from which we cannot escape. Art makes the circle, because it embraces all, God included. Nijinsky was confused. He forgot his own true words—"there are no bad people, only stupid ones." He thought religion was beyond art, but it is not. Art includes religion. Art is man, on his way to ordination. There is no beyond—there is *it*, the nameless, which is eternal. Wholeness is achieved not by overcoming duality, but by embracing it. Only in spirit are we one. In life we are myriad. Insanity is part of life. It is one of the manifestations of wholeness. Insanity is one of many ways to salvation. The tragedy is merely that the insane are unaware of their bliss. They *are* bliss. In the *Possessed* Kirillov kills himself because he has discovered the secret of happiness. To discover God before one's time is a form of insanity. The Greeks too committed suicide when they arrived at their plenum. God himself commits suicide over and over, in order to realize himself anew.

I put down these reflections upon finishing the story of Nijinsky's life. It is a life which touches me to the core. They say he is constantly daydreaming, but that he has not lost his memory. "*He knows that he is Nijinsky.*" I find these words singularly expressive—startling, in fact. We are living in a period which constantly

threatens to annihilate not only our personality but our very identity. The extreme prevalence of schizophrenia (now admittedly the disease claiming the greatest number of victims—in America, at least) is but the reflection of the times. We shall not make a new world until we make new men. To the vast majority the thought is terrifying. It means death in the most potent form—death to the present order of men. . . .

Eleusis. My friend Ghika showing me about the ruins in the dark, striking matches to point out the mysterious symbols cut into the stones. To find Greece dark at six in the evening is one of those phenomena which, despite all evidence, it is difficult to believe. "In Greece there is never night," said a Frenchman, "only the absence of day." This may be true of Greece in the abstract, but it is not true of such places as Mycenae or Eleusis. On the contrary, there is at Eleusis a darkness far more profound than that which the night brings. Eleusis is shrouded in a pall, as though while still in the womb one's mother should go in mourning. The very site, it seems to me, was chosen for its blackness. We came upon the village as the sun was setting. We rushed upon it in a swift, noiseless Packard. Never was a sky more filled with color than this one. The light was extinguished in a blaze of flaming banners. And then suddenly blackness, total annihilation of light. A death, to be followed by a resurrection. After the most extraordinary sunset greens, the whole sky like a sinking lake of moss, suddenly the only tone discernible is the rusty brown of the worn steps, a hoary

monk's brown, a mysterious waxen patina which excites the retina. The ruins sink back, not into the night, but into time, into the slippery well of the past from which each day the light vainly strives to rescue them. Even the archaeologist—inde fatigable beast of burden that he is, mole, worm, jackass, pedant, slave—even this monster seems here to admit his defeat. The mystery refuses to yield to the spade and the chemical retort. Men will have to develop other means, other organs of apprehension and discernment. Eleusis is grand in its obscurity. A *soft* grandeur, a warm, inspiring intimacy, a human, all-too-human immediacy. It is the very antithesis of the Hindu or the Tibetan mystery. It was in shrinking to his natural human proportions that man here created the Greek attitude towards the mystery. Here one perceives that the temple of the spirit is a man-made habitation.

And this was my very first impression of Athens when I came upon it for the first time last July. The first things which struck me were the little churches of Byzantine cast. One especially, which is sunk into the ground, which is exactly the right size for human worship. Even the new public buildings on University Street appealed to me, for the same reason. Similarly at the Acropolis—the little temples—gems. Whereas the Parthenon leaves me cold.

It is stupid to say so, but I prefer the Theseion. I like its squatness. I feel at home there. The Parthenon shuts one out, perhaps even more by its perfection than by its size. I like it best from a

great distance—from Eden, for instance—that first glimpse one gets as one turns the road. From this distance it is a gem. The building which most excites me, of course, is Agamemnon's tomb. Here there is an element which is lacking in the Parthenon—mystery. For me this tomb ranks as the most awesome, the most thrilling construction by man's hand. I felt when I entered that most esoteric portal that I was in the presence of magical spirits. Other heroes out of the past may be dead. Agamemnon—for me—is still alive. If you stand there quietly and reverently you will hear his voice. He was not a demi-god, as the books tell us—he was a god, full-blown, and he lives on, even in death, a more powerful spirit than all the conquerors of the earth combined. The body should never have been removed. Anyway, it was only the corporeal body that was removed. If you stand in a certain place in the tomb and pronounce his name softly he will answer you. (Katsimbalis is a witness to the fact.) The immortal body of Agamemnon is still there, in the crypt which to this day smells of death. This crypt is still permeated with the odor of his body. Nothing can eliminate it. What I am trying to say, and I repeat it over and over, is that between this age of gold and the Periclean one there is an incalculable void. In the span of a dozen centuries or so the corpus of magic was shattered. The Africans are closer in spirit to Agamemnon's epoch than the civilized members of society. With the African the soul is exteriorized—it has not yet found its resting place, its dwelling, in the human temple. Agamemnon, I feel,

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“Cosmos”. Katsimbali asks what do I mean by cosmos! I mean the world, of course, as does any Greek when he pronounces the word. Only with this difference—that when originally the Greek said cosmos it meant “*the world*”—not *a world*, or world. To-day “world” means anything and everything. There is no world any more. There are only worlds—plural always. *The world*—“cosmos”—is gone. To make a world again, a cosmos, we must have new men with new eyes. Man must be re-endowed with a soul. This world, *our world* of to-day, belongs not to man, nor even to the beast, but to the machine. *Alors*, down with the world! Up with the Cosmos.

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embodied his own soul. This gesture of embrace was the ultimate link between man and the cosmos. It definitely centered the human being, gave him his cosmic stance, cosmic proportions. Since that time the center has been shifted. We are functioning along an axis which is only obliquely polarized. Nothing more vividly illustrates the contrast between then and now than the present war. It is the difference between body warfare and abstract warfare. In the shock of mortal embrace of old there was a marriage with death which was fructifying. The deaths to-day are merely statistical. Witness everywhere the tomb to the Unknown Soldier. Our heroes are anonymous. There is no one whose memory we can reverence, no spirit to salute. We stand with bowed heads before the scattered remnants of a body, the body of a man whose identity has been lost. "We who are fast losing our identity salute you, O nameless one!" We are fighting in the air, like great carrion birds. We destroy whole populations by pressing a button. The enemy is everywhere, animate and inanimate. Everything inspires fear, dread, panic. We are fighting our own shadows—a guerilla war with ghosts. Such is civilization. Such is the Steel Age, outwardly so concrete, innerly utterly abstract. The mightiest constructions are shattered like bubbles. A breath can blow down a fortress. The hand of a child can wipe out centuries of effort. Idiocy. Sheer idiocy.

Betty Ryan is a young American woman who seduced me with her faithful, ravishing descriptions of Greece. I spent hours, whole days even, listening to her. The miracle is that all she told me was true. Everywhere I go in Greece I discover the imprints she left in traveling from one end of the country to the other, and never attracting the slightest attention. I am familiar with the works of those who have written about the marvels of Greece, but by comparison with the words of this unknown young woman their words seem pale. I feel obliged to extend her my homage here and now, homage to a pure, precise vision. God bless her for the privilege she granted me in listening to her sweet, ecstatic voice.

Lying in bed amidst the ruins of Athens. Suddenly, in my feverish state, there comes to my mind the very distinct pre-image of Athens which I formed as a result of listening to Betty Ryan. Suddenly I am no longer in the Athens I know but in the Athens I created at the Villa Seurat, Paris. This Athens is more open, offering a view of sea and mountain at once. It is a four in the afternoon Athens with no trams, no auto trucks, no shrieking noises. There are modern buildings but they are in the background. This Athens, strangely enough, I have seen a number of times on my way to and from Corfu. At Zante I saw it in the abstract. Zante is for me a dream place. Every Greek port has this insistent white dream plastic. Every tiny port gives the illusion of a new world in genesis,

of a nucleus which will spread like a web. Zante, however, obsesses me. Perhaps because of the deserted quay with the single palm tree. Perhaps because I first glimpsed it through a port-hole at the very moment I was writing about it and not knowing that it was Zante. Perhaps because I had discovered it in a dream which fused with reality. I wanted to come to the frontier of a new world, a very tiny world which would answer to every demand. Zante seems like such a world. For me it is the threshold of Greece. And here I would install as the first queen of the dynasty, the dazzling Niki Rhally. Every Greek island should be ruled over by a queen. They belong essentially to the women of Greece. Somehow, the more I see of Greece the more I believe that the women were always predominant, always the unseen power. Often the man seems a mere appendage. When you roam the countryside it is the female figure which dominates the landscape. The woman is active and sustaining. She carries a double burden always.

I am all for the Greek women! For their total emancipation. The dowry must be abolished. One must stop trading in virginity! It is a disgrace to Greece. Every Greek woman is worth her salt. To expect her to furnish a dowry in addition to her assets—of pack-bearing mule, draught-horse, water-carrier, ditch-digger, day laborer, wet-nurse, child-bearer, comforter, concubine, cook and general roustabout—is a little too much. The Greek woman should become the celestial bee of the hive. The spindle-shanked drones of the pseudo-aristocracy who sit eating sweets dressed in furs in

mid-September should be dethroned. The Greek woman whom I respect and would pay honor to is the one who is walking in the mud in bare feet with a pack on her back and an ache in her womb. This is the woman I would train to walk upright, to grow five toes and not six. I have passed through villages where almost the entire male population was sitting outdoors moping in the sun. This is not a proof of male ascendancy, or superiority—it is a sign of degeneration. And these are the duffers who expect their women to come to them pure, or at any rate, *technically* pure, i.e. virgins. Bad 'cess to them! May they die of the pox, all of them! In all my travels I have never seen such beautiful women as in Greece. Nor have I ever seen women so miserably treated. And though it may sound crazy to say so, I have a feeling that that is why the Greek cat is such a miserable specimen. The cat seems to have incarnated the mute hunger and misery and dejection of the women. It is not properly a cat at all—it is a sort of furtive scavenger. The lowest of them all is the Corfiote variety, with a loathesome, repulsive snout or muzzle such as distinguishes the eater of carrion. Neither is the Greek dog much to boast of. He is either too submissive, slinking, scab-eaten or else vicious and rapacious. A bad sign! But in both cases it is the man who is responsible. . .

The one creature I had never expected to meet in Greece, and one that seems to be especially favored, is the turkey. The turkey seems to bob up everywhere and is treated like a pet. A pet to be eaten one day. Which is very Greek again. For in Greece it is the

drama of devoration which is supreme. The incest theme is only a polite expression of the need to devour what is nearest and dearest. There is a kind of ingratitude among the Greeks which the foreigner is quick to smell out. It is the evil flower, one might say, of anarchy. Ultimately the Greek stands alone. Ultimately he devours his own progeny. It is in the blood. I sometimes think the Greek is older than any of the known races of the world. I find him at times curiously like the Australian aborigine. The way he laughs, for example, when he is caught cheating. He does everything with a bald face. A part of him—the social part—has not developed at all. That is why, perhaps, the cafés are so lamentably sterile and lugubrious. That is why he falls for American gadgets while understanding nothing of their *raison d'être*. Towards mechanical things he behaves like a Chinaman. He can adapt himself to any device or invention, but the spirit of it is quite beyond him. If one could Americanize the country overnight it would become a huge heap of scrap-iron in a few years. The Minoan man was not a Greek. He was an invader who probably dispersed or enslaved the autochthonous race. He was the survivor of an old and unknown race. He did not evolve on Cretan soil. He was already formed, developed and running to seed when he landed there. That is my belief. I am not a scholar and it is quite likely I am wrong, but that is my opinion just the same. Where the Greek springs from is a mystery to me. I don't take any stock in the theories of the ethnological savants. I say the Greek is also very old—but

culturally young. The primitive quality in him far outweighs the cultural. One has only to see those pre-classical Picassos in the Ethnological Museum at Athens to understand the distinction. Those island statues without name or origin speak far more eloquently than the ruins of the Acropolis. The best things of Greece are still hidden away in the earth, I am sure of it. In the age to come, when man begins to exhume the marvels hidden beneath the seas, we shall perhaps discover the true origins of Greece. . .

All this is very unorthodox and perhaps very American. But it is also a testimonial of my reverence for the true Greek spirit. I cannot accept the dates and the explanations of the scholars. I prefer to make my own history of Greece, a history which will correspond with the incomprehensible marvels I have witnessed with my own eyes. When I go to Delphi I shall consult my own oracles. I shall put my ear to the ground, like a good American Indian, and listen. I shall say a prayer there for the Greece which is to come, which I see everywhere in bud and which promises a splendid harvest. I shall make a hymn to the light, the light of Attica. I shall put in an extra plea of grace and forgiveness for the women of Smyrna, for their off-spring down to the 42nd generation. I shall ask that Agamemnon be restored to power and glory and that Phaestos shall be reinhabited by a new race of queens. I shall request that the mountains be kept bare and the diet lean. I shall not ask that riches be heaped upon you but that the spirit which animates the sacred places be kept alive. Greece belongs not to the legislators but to the gods. Let the gods walk the earth again, say I!

Addenda:

And now, my dear Seferiades, how am I ever to make you understand how deeply grateful I am for the bounteous hospitality you showered me with? Will I one day be able to show you America—the Golden Gate, the Grand Canyon, the petrified forest of Arizona, the slaughter-house in Chicago, the skyscrapers, the famous Ziegfeld beauties, the parks I sleep in, the comfort stations, the ferryboats, etc. etc.? Who knows? I almost hope not. I prefer to come back here again, quickly, and visit with you and Katsimbali and Ghika and Antonio and Tsatsos all the places we did not have time to see. I would like to find an unknown island in the Aegean and set you up as an emperor, a Byzantine emperor. I would like to see you blossom there in a soft Smyrna way, see you dance among your megalithian poems, your Mycenaean rhythms. I should like to come upon you in old age, a poet saturated with his own wines, giving off the fragrant resin of his own verse.

Yours for the Resurrection!

Henry Miller

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