

**Paris Tacopoulos speaks to (or with) Boston College students
in the course “Modern Greek Drama in English”
about his play
*The Pre-Last of the Monikins***

**Audio Cyber-Interview via Conference Call
Oct. 28, 2010**

Clip 1:

To save time and face, I decided to change the order of the agenda not strictly set by Dia’s questionnaire, so that I can clarify matters vice versa, and start from the end, although I call *The Pre-Last of the Monikins* a play without a beginning and without an end.

So I start with **Jack Xia’s** question, i.e., what inspired me to write this play. Well the answer is simple. The reason lies in a very unhappy incident, and nearly fatal self-accident, in my life (*How do you like all these euphemisms and evasions?*) After this, not top secret, confession **Jack** has the right to say that Monikin was I, although he became “not I”, as he gradually developed into a play. And now for my second open confession: writing the play saved my life from a new desperate attempt. It made me see the funny side of my dilemma. Monikin made me realize that a “second coming” is better than any “second going”. Yes I owe a lot to Monikin; writing about him, while – I must also confess – drinking with him. *Have you heard what I said?* To quote or misquote my hero. Let’s say “à la manière” of Monikin. Drinking –is that my third confession? – together with my first answer to **Jack**, covers and honours also the question of some other responders, in this friendly and not holy inquisition about Monikin’s not so immaculate conception and “parthenogenesis”.

How did you conceive the idea for a play as cerebral as *The Pre-Last of the Monikins*? Where from did you draw inspiration? Asks **Honor Flannery** who has watched the play before reading it.

How and why did you pick the title *The Pre-Last of the Monikins* asks **Jeff Zanghi**, who unlike **Honor**, read the play, as it is his practice for similar occasions, before watching the video. While **Taylor Stiegler**, who prefers reading Monikin to watching him, asks from where did I draw my greatest influence? Playwriting unwise, Samuel Beckett perhaps; although my first naughty mentor was Willie, Hamlet’s father. I used to read and play for years together with an English friend of mine, almost all of Shakespeare’s major roles; as well as Vladimir and Estragon. “Asides” end here.

Best Supanusonti, who also thinks it best to read the text and then to view it on DVD, wonders how I managed to keep the audience engaged throughout such a long monologue. What else can

I say to **Best**, than “thank you”; this was the best compliment I have received up to now. I always considered it better to be engaged, until I eventually got happily married to my cousin **Marina**. **Andrew Pike** who first came to know the play by reading it, and pick apart many of the literary references, and thus enjoyed more the DVD later, especially the second time he saw it, asks how closely Monikin’s thoughts resemble mine as a writer? I will come to that, in a few minutes, and also revert to **Honor Flannery’s** belief that *Monikin* is a cerebral play.

But first to **Juan Rodriguez’s** categorical, more answering than questioning statement: “This is an extremely personal play”, a statement which covers the whole “primordial” question of Monikin’s creation. “*Primordial?*”! I start talking again like Monikin. “How much – if at all – asks **Juan** after his statement, “is Monikin’s train of thought influenced by your own views on spirituality, life, society and popular culture?” There is the rub, as Monikin says together with Hamlet. I have to bring Samuel Beckett back into our conversation, who, after a special revealing moment in his life, wrote *Krapp’s Last Tape*. A tragicomedy full of sad reminiscences, irreligiously kept by Krapp on a tape recorder. Past mishaps as present ones, – slipping because of a banana skin for instance–, make us laugh reminding us of Charlie Chaplin’s and Buster Keaton’s similar tragicomic scenes. Laughter is the real catharsis in our lives, unlike gods in ancient Greek tragedies, which had perhaps their real catharsis in Aristophanes, or even in Euripides, who notwithstanding his many *Dei ex machina*– just a gimmick of his – knew how to make fun of both gods and men sometimes, although he was always, much more sympathetic to the latter.

Before my lines become “more continuous”, as **Peter Foradas** views my lines in the play, I come back to the raised theme of *Monikin’s* conception. Did I write this play in one sitting? Or, as **Scott Mulloy** asks: How much was the play planned or thought out carefully, and how much of it was actually my own stream of consciousness? And to this, **Grace Luetmer** adds her own doubt about how I wrote this play. And wonders whether I had in mind all the literary references while I was making up my Monikin’s “dialogue”. Stop. **Grace** says dialogue and not monologue, which answers the three students posing questions about the theatricality of a monologue; or why I haven’t used more persons “live” in my play, since there are, anyhow, two more Monikins, communicating by phone, with the “one and only” protagonist, in this play.

I am referring to **Caroline Quincy’s**, **Marlo Studley’s**, and **Caitlin Kim’s** remarks on the form of the play I chose. All of them, as far as I remember, enjoyed reading the play before or after watching the DVD, and that should be sufficient to me.

But I would like to take this opportunity to make a remark which I consider crucial. It is the content of each play which determines the number of the actors. And a monologue is a continuous dialogue, not only with one person, or idea, or two or three which makes the monologue a trialogue, or trianglogue, but even with a cast of thousands persons or ideas. Have you ever thought how many persons, pictures, or ideas pass through our minds every minute, awake or asleep? If not, ask your Wikipedia.