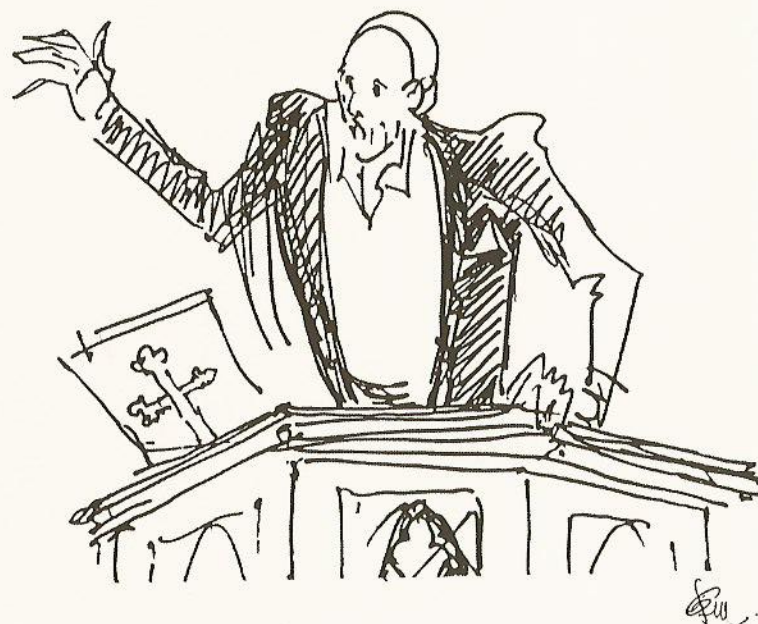


PARIS TACOPOULOS

## THE PRE-LAST OF THE MONIKINS

*a monologue without a beginning and without an end*

Produced by *Theatrico Phytorio Aeginae*  
with *Nikos Kalamo* as Monikin



Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2005  
*Paradise Green Promotions*



Theatrico Phytorio Aeginae

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by Paris Tacopoulos

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*Monikin:*

Nikos Kalamo

*Music:* Kostas Mantzoros

*Cover design by* Elli Solomonidou

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*Prelast but not least, we should like to express our gratitude to Stephen Philips, who was the first to suggest the presentation of the Prelast of the Monikins at the Fringe Festival of Edinburgh; for better or for worse, it remains to be heard.*

*And last, and prefirst, our thanks to Easy Jet which made the trip of our group to Edinburgh much easier.*

## INSTEAD OF A PROLOGUE

A view, and a review of the Pre-last of the Monikins,

by Evangelos Sachperoglou<sup>1</sup>

Although three weeks have elapsed since I saw the *Pre-Last of the Monikins*, the memory of both its text and its performance continue to haunt me. My thoughts are still lingering on the many levels of this one-man play, whose multi-sided character, Monikin, is perhaps one of the most moving in modern drama. Having been under the spell of Cavafis' 154 poems, which I have been, for some years now, translating into English, I could very well empathise with Monikin's loneliness, isolation, and quiet desperation.

What I admired in Paris Tacopoulos' play is the superb structure of the text, as well as the author's inner courage, his penchant for self-dissection, his serene pride in the face of the inevitable, his humane vision of the world, his humility and, last but not least, his humour, which is the amalgama and reflection of the above qualities.

If I were asked to characterise this play, I'd call it a "propitiatory prayer", an attempt to ward off life's unending tragedy, by the potent filter of spiritual honesty, by drinking several cups of high quality "artistic veritas", or, as the playwright would probably have called them, "in vino veritas"!

This polyphonic self-debunking monologue is a jewel of its kind that has already survived the rigours of time. If I refer to the past, I do so because the

<sup>1</sup> This is the main part of a review written in Kathimerini-Herald Tribune on June 9, 2004, for last year's performance in Greek.



play was written in 1966 and presented by the Karolos Koun Art Theatre in 1977 and still is, at least in its new adaptation, one of the best “post-modern” plays, world theatre-wise, or unwise.

As I sat riveted, ruminating on *Monikin*, I realised how little we get to know people, unless fortuitously, they are remorselessly revived by courageous playwrights, who happen to possess particular qualities of innocence and truthfulness. If only our theatre companies had the same courage to present such plays more often!

Now that I have been acquainted with the more than three *Monikins* existing in the play, (if one does not take into consideration the very first one, the playwright himself) and the numerous ones existing in the one-and-only main character of the play, I hope I won't be subjected, some day, to the predicament of having to make a choice, for I have come to love them all!

But enough about the play; the actor also is the thing, and especially in such a play as the *Pre-Last of the Monikins*. Nikos Kalamo, founder of the Phytorio of Aegina, and an experienced actor and director, who completed his studies at Stella Adler's Conservatory of Acting in New York, has managed to be a mature and introverted *Monikin*, without exaggerated gestures or other easy mannerisms. He showed respect for the text with all its linguistic acrobatics, and its climaxes and anti-climaxes, in all its actions or inactions, and he managed eventually to give us a lovable, convincing and memorable *Monikin*.

The music by Kostas Mantzoros was very moving, and provided the right counterpoint to the point of the play. The setting by Margarita Samara was also quite appropriate for the solitary room of a *Monikin*, and displays equal measures of skill and sensitivity. So was the lighting by Nikos Pexomatis, which helped considerably in enlivening the setting, as well as the play.

Finally I should like to refer to the good taste and text selection in the programme, and especially the exciting cover, designed by Alkis Ghinis.

All in all, a memorable *Monikin*, this year. I only hope that after this *Monikin*, and the second English one in the Edinburgh Festival, there will be – to

paraphrase Dylan Thomas – many others. And I make the same wish for his other plays, which if they are not so numerous as the 154 poems of Cavafis, they exceed the 54. (A number I have lately discovered in the recent publication of his plays by Ellinika Grammata, two volumes indispensable for the bookshelves of all greek theater lovers).

Last and not pre-last conclusion: C. P. Cavafis, a theatre lover, would have also been touched by *Monikin* and perhaps would have commented on him: “To have come so far is no small matter; / to have done so much, is great glory”.

*Evangelos Sachperoglou*



# THE PRE-LAST OF THE MONIKINS

*A one-act monologue without  
a beginning and without an end*

**Cast:** *Monikin, a young man about Hamlet's age, between thirty minus eight and sixty plus eight.*

**Scene:** *Monikin's room. A bed, a table, a chair. On the walls, pinned up, two or three paintings. A statuette, possibly of Socrates, a tape-recorder on the table and two telephones on the floor. On the table, and on the floor, corked and uncorked, whisky, cognac and wine bottles. Monikin is ruminating, cross-legged, on a chair. He is in evening dress or in blue pyjamas with white stripes.*

**Monikin:** *(plaintively)* Eeeeh, it's all over now ... There goes Monikin.... At home – not at his castle – his sanctum sanctorum!... Finished ... What does the world care? .... Monikin's occupation ... done. And yet ... *(gets up, approaches the table, grabs one open bottle and takes one, two, three swigs.)* Why should anybody care? .... Monikin's done for, done for ... *(shakes his head with more plaintive significance.)* Once and for all. *(takes another swig and leaves the bottle in its place; stares at the tape-recorder with nostalgia.)* But Monikin hasn't yet had his last word. Isn't that so? *(strokes the recorder)* We haven't yet had our last word! ... No, no ....Don't hurry up, please. Don't hurry up to call 'time'.... It's not time yet. We've still got lots to talk about ... lóooooots and lots! ... Monikin, *(talking now with heroic plaintiveness)* is



Monikin. "The" Monikin. And – there is --- no other --- Monikin --- except for (*thinks*) -- there is not --- nor will there .... e v e r ... be ... another one ... Aïdios! The one and only!... At his sanctum sanctorum... What?.. others? (*looking at the phones.*) Are you listening to me? You're not, but you shall...

Perhaps later, .... or sooner. Better later than sooner ...Shortly... without negligence (*raises the bottle again and takes another swig*) ... So, then, everything's finished now, or accomplished, as Christ said on the cross? Tetélestai? You're going to remain ... - without Monikin? ... (*raises the bottle, makes a deaf-and-dumb toast*). Eh, well, no .... I am resolved to stay with you .... f o r e v e r ...! (*takes another swig and leaves the bottle on the table*) ... Is there something more deathless than death? Something more deathless ... than death ... Than death something more deathless? Or more immortal than mortal! I'll drink to that! .... (*he drinks*) Fine! ... More final ... than death? ...(*smiles*) .. Even better ... (*drinks again*) To die, or not to die? There's the rub ... or the rubber! ... (*moves his right hand with his glass, in the air, as if he were erasing something, and then raises the lid of the tape-recorder, carefully, like a fragile lid of a toilet*). I have to record this ... In the beginning, perhaps, or better at the end ... Rather at the end ... Possibly in the middle. Where does death come more frequently? ... (*with plaintive insight*). Of course, there are cases and cases ... One dies naturally in the end ... but also sometimes, unnaturally in the beginning .... And, other times, naturally-unnaturally before the end of the beginning. Stillborn ... There is still time to say all this ... Still? And life shall have no Dominion ... Jeremiah! Before Dylan. (*He looks at his watch.*) Eleven; ... how has the time gone by! Kavafis ... But it's never too early, N e v e r ... It's never too early. You have to --- but you have to begin some where ... (*raises the bottle again*). I've got a bit of stage-fright ... I don't know whether I'll manage ... (*takes a swig*). Must not forget ... you're not totally alone ... (*glances around him*). You're not ... totally ... alone ... Do you remember? (*raises the bottle and looks at it*).

"You told me, I remember, it was your most delightful night. I still remember your laugh ... (*stops*) ... your laugh? ... Your tears? ... with some fright ... like... -like a dying ember ... (*leaves the bottle on the table*) ... But you do not remember (*tries to remember*) ... You must have had some better evenings... How could you possibly remember that night in December ... It was December... I still remember...- Remember or dismember? ... (*smiles*) ... I forget. Forget-me-not ... C'est la vie ... c'est la mort ... C'est la mort? (*raises the bottle but sets it down again without drinking*). La mort! Amor ... Amore mio ... amore mio ... Amore (*like a cat*) - Miao!... (*taps his chest with his finger*). La veuve et la mort joyeuses (*smiles and purrs, looking at his bottles*). The charismatic and heroic Eros! And the happy hopping Charon! Chi vive sperando, muore caganto... So, we haven't said yet our last word ... No, no. (*lifts one bottle and takes a sip*). My beloved friend (*speaks in a loving way to his bottle*) ... my comrade ... y o u who have stood by me like ... a faithful cat ... y o u, who are my daily bread ... give us this day ... Give us this day .... - what? ... (*takes another swig*)... Let there come forth ... let there go forth ... this bottle ... Wine jug... Oinodohon phialan... That's how Pindar used to hail thee (*drinks*) Hyperphialan! Enough of theosophy! ... enough (*leaves the bottle.*) And now ...on my own without stimulants ... On my own? (*talking to his recorder.*) N o t on my own ... The two of us ... As man ... to man ... We'll talk about major issues now, the two of us, as man to man .... Can you take it, my friend? As man to man! (*strikes the table with his fist, and the bottles start to tremble.*)... What's up?.... are you already high, my li'l bottles? Only with a tot of a man? (*caresses the bottle materno-paternally.*) Don't get worried, everything, e v e r y t h i n g was good as God saw it... I will see to it now personally. Okay? ... Of course, it'll take a lot of care, a lot of consideration and a lot of continence ... a lot of continence and care and consideration ... We'll talk about it in time. When, really does death occur, or takes place. Of course there are, casi pensati e casi accidenti ... Does one die, ac-



cidentally or pensively, at the beginning or at the end, blowing hard or blowing hardly, somewhere in the middle? Am I repeating myself?... Oh what lie and lay, ahead of us, to say .... Meanwhile, we have to begin, begin from the beginning. *(strokes his hair, like a film star to be.)* Recorder, be prepared! One must first rehearse. You must always rehearse before entering a hearse. *(Smiles)* Even God before creating the world... He must have had. Even before he saw that it was good. *(takes hold of the microphone).* One two three four... Over .... At the beginning is the rub. The end... ends, but the beginning...how does it start? Hm...*(In a clownish way)* Loodies and Toiletmen! *(smiles).* Hm. Excellenzen, Ihre Majestät, Tsars, CommiTsars and Propheteers stárets Rasputins. Archbishops and Heads of all Bishoprics, Dalate-Lamas! Ayatol-Állahs! Sunnited Shiites! Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Aügúste et Aügústa Déspodae! Members of Parlourment! *(As he proceeds his voice becomes more and more agitated).* Kameráden! Frateli e Soreli. Inquisidores! Gladiatores, e Cruzadores! Mayor and Mayorettes of Athens! Populi famosi di Magna Grecia, Innocent Hellenes abroad, Griechische Jugend of both and by sexes, Venerable Sexagenarians! Quickly dead Academicians! Immortals, among us poor *mortarmortals!* Iron Crosses and Phoenixes and Garters of the first, the second the third and of all disorders. Regina Mutter und Vater, Vice President and Mr. President of Vice, Post McCarthyists and Edward-hooverisers! Delegati di tutti clani!. Rouges et Noirs, Yellow and White Houses. Rotating Masons, Soropisofferers and Grand Daughters of Penelope, Kukluxklanners and Systematisers, Mein Führer, Mon Marechal!Etéocles and Polynikes! Sieben Gegen Theben. Greek paedes and paedofiles; Comm-Union Leaders, Lentils and Gentlebeans and Commacolonials, God trotters and heroic mililliterates, and "doublomatic" Corpses, American and Unamerican Áctivists! Infidel Undertakers, and most glorious Beforefathers and Afterfathers... Annihilators and Annihiliers, Gauleiters and...Gas-Chamberlains! Golden, coming and going Adolescents... at gun point! ... - Monikin!... – (a bit startled) I am addressing, myself, to you also,... and also to you of course... Monikin!... (sighs) Enough... Rehearsal time, must have a stop

*(to himself)*... Keep smiling Monikin....*(He tremulously, stretches out his hand, presses the button, stares at the tape, which is also tremulously turning, and starts talking through the microphone, in a much calmer voice)* ... Gentlemen ... gentlewomen and gentlegirls... – what about gentleboys? ... - I am a Greek, and that is of universal importance. And this fact, fills me with great pride... Everything in excess! *(looks at Socrates' statuette with a pensive, questioning smile)* Proud because I am Greek ... As every Greek should be very proud because he is Greek, as every free fowl or beast. *(presses the button and stops recording)*.... My opening, I think, was not bad. I raised the issue without any hesitation ... Who am I? I am a Greek ... this is important enough, because if I were not a Greek ... -what would I be? I would be a ... – nothing ... a nobody ... Who would pay any attention to me? ...Whereas now: I'm a Greek ... I, pay attention to myself ... - I like that! ... I, pay attention to myself ... And what's more, I am a true free Greek, who can do whatever he likes and not do what he can't; because Greek and slave are two ....two concepts completely incompatible... a bit of Slavs, perhaps – that awful man Falmerayer – but never slaves! ... And the Greeks have never been defeated ...during their Wars of Independence, except for a very few cases of no importance.... to be forgotten... and which... as a rule prove the exception... *(is about to raise the bottle, but changes his mind.)* Nothing in excess ... Socrates! ... This time it is! And then ... -but why Greek? Would 'Hellene', perhaps, go better?... Civis Romanus sum ...I prefer Greek to Hellene.... No, not Trojan. Not even Byzantine! Greek, yes Greek. Or Romiós - Roman – Rómeo! *(smiles.)* Even the Turks ... call us "Rhum"! or Unan,... -Iones! or Giaour!... Infidels!... Enough!.. Fidelity and infidelity, the scourge of mankind ... and womankind! *(looks absentmindedly at his bottles)*...With a few words or in brief I explained to them who I am – not completely yet, only in general lines ... The main ones, alegro ma non troppo... remaining untold ... And afterwards, I will proceed fortissimus and majestusus, to my main theme; that's to say, w h a t is my main theme, and my prologue's over *(presses the button.)* Eh-eh-eh-eh, the fact – the very fact remains one, and only one! ... As a



Greek, it is self-evident that I am ...anti-retrogressive ... And as every Greek, I am Hellenistic and, should I say, ... filhellenistic too! In other words, I have known everything in the short life of my millenia. . Hen hóida oti to pan éi-da! To pan! E v e r y t h i n g .. because everything is Greek. Even Buddah.... deep inside, was a Greek.... Confucius too... Even Marx and Zaratustra, Christ himself a n d Mohamet – all, Greeks. Because they think Greek. The missing link is the word. The Greek logos. Because if it is not Greek, it is not logos. And I have existed and preexisted... Theist, Atheist, Talmudist, Zo-roastrist, Taoist, Hinduist, Prosocratist, Platonist, Neoplatonist, Marxist, Leninist, Stalinist, Trotskyist, Zeninist, Nihilist, Anarchist, Fundamental-ist and ... Jesuit!... I have been, in brief, all the 'ists' which exist, comme écoles ou listes, francaises, dans le monde, from pre-procommunist to post-post-modernist. But mainly, a pupil-ist, because I like to grow young, (*looks at Socrates*) being eternally taught ... "Aei didaskómenos"... "Pupilist" ... I like that (*smiles*). If I were to live a day longer, I would also have become ... Did you hear what I said? I f, i f, I were to live a day longer ... Eh, this is exactly my theme, ladies-and-gentlemen ... t h i s is my theme. I am n o t destined to live longer ... Monikin's done for, done for, done for!... Monikin's leaving you. ... BUT, here a "but" is raised, like an enormous buttress, which I am almost absolutely certain that will interest you.... very much; as much as the primordial antediluvian question: If I were not what I am, what would I have liked to be. My mother... often... used to say, she would have liked to be an ostrich (*presses the button and stops the tape-recorder.*) Perhaps I've said a lot? (*raises the bottle and takes two swigs.*) Byzantiniere Ich vielleicht? Nein! Nein! I said what I had to say ... Shall I play it back? No time, no time! I don't want coming generations to find platitudes in my speeches. My style is ip-so-greco-facto classical! As classical as the body of a Greek ephebe Sumo wrestler... I don't doubt, ... therefore ... I am not ... Too late now ... (*drinks*) As an artist, perhaps I am more Dionysian than Apollonian ... Like Niet-sche, but without the moustache! ... Also, sprach Kazantzakis! ... Even Pla-to doesn't avoid platitudes ... or playtitudes! ... Plato (*smiles*) makes "play-ti-

tudes" ... Not bad ... But I must continue ... with persistence ... and insist-ance... Monikin's Periclean funereal oration! ... Famous men's ... each old grave, a new life. Thucidides! Or: "for famous men have the whole earth as their memorial". Rex Warner... How many people would simply d i e to re-cite their own funeral oration, themselves? How many! But also how many Monikins are there? ... (*starts counting on his fingers, stops at the middle one*) Death begets death... Death will make the world go round. ... Dead men say no fairy-tales. What is Monikin? .... Monikin is ... Monikin is – me ... Me ... a good and bad li-ii-ii-'l Monikin; but also old, grey and full of sleep or full of death....; W.B.(or not to be) Yeats. (*smiles*) But evil for your own good. "Kakós" k'agathós! "I haven't come to send peace on earth, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" . Matthew. About the son-in-law against his mother-in-law, the Apostle is si-lent. Shall I record this? ... It's not needed! Fame after death leaves me ... cold. It's a worse sin than ... greediness... Do evil and cast it to the wind. The old saying. Like ashes, "blowing in the wind"...Dylan, Bob, this time. Sounds like our Seferis. Anyhow, I have always been totally opposed to prizes ... Per-haps I would have been the only Greek who would have never accepted the Nobel Prize ... unless it was in the name of Greece. "Dulce et decorum est pro patria labori e mori." David Owen ... Dr. Death! No! Wilfred Owen! (*bends and strokes his feet and then, very slowly, gets up. Thinks to himself. Smiles. Thinks and smiles again.*) What is life? ... What is death? ... (*sighs*)... Only a Monikin knows. Because Monikin has lived so many lives! ... And so many deaths ...like the Owens!... Monikin only knows .... Though still young and full of sleep. (*grabs a many-starred bottle of cognac.*) My bright stars, my tiny bottles! Twinkle-twinkle little stars! How I wonder where you are ... One more gulp and we're off again! ... To the moon! ... (*drinks three gulps.*) Wine from your own country ... even if it has gone sour ... Sour grapes ... An old foxy saying ... (*puts the bottle back in its place.*) Well then, let's begin again! Where was I? ... I have said who I am ... yes, and afterwards I announced



that I'm going, perchance, to die, and then, skillfully, left the world in suspense. The world wants to learn the reason, now ... Why will Monikin die? ... Why, why should Monikin die? ... The die is cast!... Julius Caesar ... And Mussolini! ... Monikin ante portas ... I am going to tell you all ..... No one will make me change my mind ... Too late ... Shall I take another sip before I proceed? ... Let me drink. (*raises bottle and takes one, two, three, four swigs.*) Bibbo, ergo sum. Or, Bibbo ergo vivo....(*looks at all his bottles, empty and full*) Do you think you're finishing, too? Wrong!: I've got another full bottle next to you, and another semi-full in the kitchen, and another one in the loo ... Innumerable, as the stars ... I defy you, oh bottles ... You should not count bottles, the way you count stars, because you get dizzy. (*gazes at the bottle with emotion.*) You, y o u, what would you do without me? ... Of course, you'd find someone else ... but, mark my words, no one loves you as much as I do ... Mark my words! And... How do you like your blue eyed boy, Mr. Death? e.e. cummings. (*takes one more swig and then affectionately puts the bottle on the table*) ... My eyes are green... Monikin, it was she who noticed it first. (*drinks again*) Let us proceed. ... How does one proceed? What if I were to say something to link the overture with the main theme? ... What does our noble-Nobel poet say? ... "Wherever I go, Greece wounds me" ... Is that what he says? ... Better, something of my own, or an epigrammatic variation ... "Liberty, cease for a moment to strike with the sword, / come, approach,... – and weep on Monikin's final word!"! .. Solomos, our national poet, the son of an Italian Conte and his housekeeper. How does a Greek historian call him?. The son of a servant. What antinomies; or contradictio per se! The son of a servant writes the hymn to Liberty.... Our national Anthem!. Only in Greece could such miracles occur. Such miracles and such sacrifices! Eureka! Archimides! Between life and death, the intermedio of sacrifice. (*Looks at the bottle*) "This is my blood"... Touto estí to haima mou. But I have to carry on... Life means sacrifice and sacrifice, death. For a Greek at least. Other people sacrifice themselves and die, but the Greeks never die ... Greece never dies as the song goes (*presses button*). Duty calls you. Don't worry, there

will come a time that they will arrest you. The time is nigh! The spirit of all great men is captured... or arrested... post mortem. After Christ. Non omnis moriar! Oratius, What a line. "Even dead I will be alive, because my opus will survive"! ... Well I wonder whether.... (*telephone rings; smiles.*) They're asking for me ... Let them wait ... I don't know, I haven't decided yet if I'm going to answer. Knock and it shall be opened... Matthew... but Lucas too. Coincidence or plagiarism (*grabs the receiver.*) Helloooooo ... Monikin, you?... ... Y o u, Monikin ... Yes, it's me, Monikin ... How am I Monikin? ... How can I be?... No, no, I'm just fine, just fine ... To be precise, I'm in a very creative mood ... Something *very* special this time. Well, a sort of philosophical ... poème en prose! You'll love it, Monikin; at least I want you to love it ... If I still love you? Yes, I love you, Monikin ... How much? ... Very, very much, Monikin, very, very much... What about what?... Ah my new opus... Well in this tractatus logicophilosophicus .... poetic opus of mine, there lies all my biotheory ab ovo.... What means what? Biotheory... ah... Ab ovo... Oratius said it, about Leda's egg... from where Helen sprang up. Ovum is the egg.... Have I been eating? I've become quite a li'l piggy from so much food ... No, no, I'm not drinking ... Almost not at all ... Cross my ... How are your parents, the family? ... What did you say, Monikin? ... You're in a hurry. ... What? Pinnacle? And then cocktail? And then supper? Poor Monikin. And hairdresser? But you only went yesterday... I get you Monikin; only for a coup de peigne. Just a minute Monikin... I am not making fun of you... Don't misunderstand me... If I love you Monikin? Yes I love you Monikin, yess... And you Monikin? You, yess too?... You really do? Yess?... Luv me little, luv me long!... What did you say Monikin?... Yess... Yess... What? Sometimes you repent? No. I was to blame Monikin! I shouldn't have let you leave me... What?... you, it was you, who let me leave you". No, Monikin it was me, me... who let me leave you, to leave me. It was me, mainly me... You must leave me now?... Do you hear steps? Call me again Monikin, call me again Monikin! what? You have to leave. You said that ... One minute more ... Monikin, every phone-call of yours is an oasis in the des- ... She's hung up. (*puts down*



*the receiver, sadly.)* Gesundheit Monikin! Vielen dank Monikin. Tschüss Monikin! Every phone-call of yours is ... is an oasis ... an oasis in, in my desert ... The desert, the privilege of the hermits ... Monikin's hermitage! ... Whoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or... a God. Bacon on Aristotle. *(picks up the bottle, stares at it. It is almost empty. Holds it aloft and begins murmuring the tune of Charlie's Chaplin: "Titine ma Titine").* ... This phone-call of Monikin's was utterly unnecessary ... "La belle dame sans merci" It disrupted the coherence of my conceptions ... Women, aah, Women! ... Woman makes a man. Proverb... And she unmakes him. Suffer the wombs to come unto me... Woman's inclination; dance and copulation! Nursery rhyme. *(drinks)* Frailty, thy name is woman. Euripides... though it sounds like.... She asked me whether I'm eating well... She doesn't want me to drink; only to eat ... She t h i n k s about m e ... She thinks, therefore, I am – Ergo sum ...Descartes. Greek origin. Must be.. Still .. This means a lot to me. "You told me, I can still recall it: This was your happiest night" ... "In December" ... "like a dying ember"? My time is out of joint. Aeschylus or... What a life! And tomorrow, and tomorrow, -Shakes, this time - no, today; no more postponing – as of today: what a death! ... *(sings.)* Happy death-day to me. Happy death-day to me. Happy death-day to Monikin *(drinks the cognac down to the dregs and, after leaving this bottle on the table, plays patty-cakes with his hands. He now stares unhesitatingly at the other bottle and in the twinkling of an eye, finds himself down on the floor, holding the bottle like a Madonna embracing her child; caresses it, opens it and caresses it again.)* Four thousand years of Monikin "live"! .... Only a Monikin could live so many years and encounter so many ... what? ... *(kisses the mouth of the bottle.)* ... If only you knew what I hide inside me ... Ah, if you only knew ... w h a t – I hide – inside – me. *(looks at the bottle)* You, too, hide many pretty lil' things inside you ... *(looks at the empty bottle)* Or used to!... Four thousand years old ... A very good year. *(drinks another drop).* Fine, very fine ... The best wines, like the best human beings ... *(looks at his wrist-watch.)* I'm late ... No more time; no more time ... Curious, we usually don't have time only when

alive ... Whereas I ... - I have to carry on; ... *(takes another swig and afterwards stretches out his hand and presses the button., tottering a bit)* standing, or notwithstanding, my four thousand years! ... Byron, forgive me for digressing, ladies and gentlemen, died young. I cannot quite recollect; how young, but definitely very young. Let's say, thirty-five years old. What a Philhellene! He died of Malaria at Messolonghi before its fall. However, when they opened his cranium, his brain was that of a much older man. Eighty years old, as the Philhellene scientists of that time calculated. I wonder what they'll say when they open my own skull! Oh, what have my eyes not seen! ...Four thousand years old. *(takes a couple of swigs.)* Don't let the four thousand years frighten you. Man is as old as he looks and it's a pity for a man who doesn't look four thousand years old to die, so young ... It's a pity; and do you know why it's a pity? For thou hast real need of me! Every one of you... "Me thanein Ehrezes"! ... "You were not meant to die" Sophocles *(takes another swig, but this time, holds the bottle tightly in his palm, like a hand-grenade.)* And I'll prove it to you, here and now; here and now!... Because I was born a poet; was suckled a poet; grew up a poet, and excluded... a poet... When my mother was breast- feeding me, was reading Polemis, and Drossinis – a kind of Keats; his odes were not addressed to light winged nightingales, but to almond trees, in bloom. I started expressing myself in verse before I even crossed the threshold of six ... "Mama, stop cleaning; let's leave the house, / and go and see Laurel and Hardy, or a Mickey Mouse" was my first rhyming creation. A mere nothing, I grant you, but a mere nothing full of promise. My parents were in Seventh Heaven, with my Juvenilia. At the age of barely eight, I wrote my first patriotic poem: "The Grave of a Corinthian Hero" – a small epic to the memory of my grandpa ... He was a great fighter during our struggle for independence. He had met our legendary hero Kolokotronis. "Here's granpa, there's granpa, / where's granpa? / Granpa granpa, why don't you answer me any more, / you who were once the best and the most valiant Greek warrior?" A daring rhyme for a boy of eight. My mother who adored our national poet more than my father, used to call me



"My lil' Homer!" Between ten and twelve, I wove my first erotic verses, inspired by my teacher. She had enormous tits, whose every rise and fall filled me with rapture. Their weight could easily break any pair of boosi-scales. My poetic disposition was strengthened. Oh what pantheistic festivities, what lewdnesses, and what raging tremors. Our school master used to call her: Bosantium! By then, my parents started descending from their Seventh Heaven. I no longer like big boosies ... You see, little boys ... judge and admire... from the size... which they lack. Now that I'm grown – life's paradox – I prefer little ones... *(remembers his teacher's bosoms nostalgically, sucking his bottle for a little while like a dummy)*... My teacher's bosom was essentially the first great substation in my life. It had a terrifying influence on me. It gave me a "cyclothymique" feeling of the world, with its rise and fall, its calm and its deep sea- swell! – Eliot, or a Homeric stance? ...It was she who suckled me to God. Yes, at that time it was also she who led me into joining Sunday school and to Confession. Her father was a clergyman. "One who is caught in the act of self abuse must do penance; fast for forty days, eating only dry food, prostrate himself each day a hundred times". Canon number eight... I greedily began reading The Scriptures ... especially Paul's Epistles ... to the Corinthians! Family reasons... How naughty we Greeks were, and are. *(takes a swig and smiles, recollecting Greek naughtinesses.)* Greeks eternal children!

Hellenes aei paedes!...How naughty, and what children! ... While the Apostle advised them how to unite themselves with God, they went and became one with themselves, regardless of sex, family relations and age, while putting the blame on one another ... like brothers ...or comrades ... *(smiles)*. ... I was so carried away by Paul that I decided to remain a virgin, too...- like Paul!... But was he a virgin? Why was he then not such an ardent advocate of circumcision – and attacked poor Peter, for his Jewish fundamentalism, so vehemently? That's another big pending unanswered question... Nonetheless,

I, too, began writing epistles to Athenians and Corinthians – in memoriam and in absentiam of my old man... Thus, I became, too, a young disciple ... but that didn't prevent me from having repetitive wet dreams, with the slightest provocation, asleep or in wakefulness. The envy of the devil, as says Gregorius Sinaites as well as Anastasius Sinaites, in their diatribes on ejaculation. *(drinks)* How much I was tempted then. But the temptations of Satan, I overcame, preparing myself for my mission. Faith saved me! Marcos. "I pistis séssoké me"! To be more precise, my dear friends and countrymen: if someone doesn't fix the world, who will save it? *(thinks.)* Or if someone doesn't save it .... who will fix it? And there's such a crowd waiting to be saved;... quite a queue. An incessant, incestuous anacyslosis? Freud or ... Hypócritus....and Spengler! *(Smiles)*Unless *(looks at his bottle.)* it's only a mirage ... Phenomena are occasionally deceptive – I forget the name of the Greek, who said that - ... *(is about to drink, but the telephone rings)* ... Forgive me, they're asking for me again ...Knock knock... who's there?... *(Stops the recorder. Puts the bottle down. Stretches out on his back and, after yawning, rather ceremoniously extends his hand and raises the receiver, brings it to his mouth like a bottle, and smiles.)* – Hallo!...Hellow! Who am I?... Who are you? *(lifts his legs up high.)* Monikin, you? *(brings his legs down immediately and gets up.)* How are you? How're you doing? Are you well? How's business? Is everyone at home well? ... Aunt Angelica? .... How am I?... Just fine... j u s t fine. Do you know who phoned me a minute ago? ... You don't? Well it was Monikin! She also asked me how I was and I told her I am fine... Mostly clear, utterly unclouded; steady and calm. But also rather agitated, and at times ....thunderstormy. I'm on the verge of creating something very, very big! Which will make an even bigger bang! ... You'll not believe your ears, when you hear it ... No, no, I'm telling you, I am very well ... Ah, -ah ... So you've also news to tell me? ... Pleasant news, Monikin? ... Speak, speak up, Monikin ... Aaaa! ... .. Baaaaaah! ... .. So they now want my services ... They really need me, this time ... Am I so much "wanted"? ... *(smiles)* What do you say, Monikin; shall I accept their proposal? Normally, I shouldn't ac-



cept it... Of course, they seek to honour me ... I understand this ... but as things stand now ... I'm thinking that, maybe, all this ... Since you say so, I might accept ... They'll make me Vice-President ... what? A n d President too ... Ah ... either one, or the other ... It doesn't really interest me; sincerely, it does not interest me ... An honour, I grant that, albeit ... It doesn't matter ... Thank you, Monikin... So it's a secret; I shouldn't tell it to anyone yet? ... A Minister's wish?...What, is he afraid of other Ministers' wishes?... even of the Prime Minister's? ... All right, Monikin, you know best ... you always know best ... You have succeeded in life ... You might not have reached the Prime Minister's office, but you are a successful industrialist; Prime Ministers come and go, while industrialists stay. Nature's Law! ...Yes, I have succeeded, too, in a different field ... I know that, I k n o w that... Deep down you haven't changed ... If one opened your safe, he would find the same old child in it ... You're still the old Monikin ... Friends never change; ... Friendships only ... I wanted to say, the older the friends, the smaller the friendships ... No, not ours. Ours has remained.... Indissoluble.. You understand what I am trying to say... .. Do you remember the plans we once made together, Monikin? ... You, a famous painter ... and I, a famous poet. Do you remember? ... Following God, I became acquainted with you, Monikin ... Yes, first with the teacher ...But I have lost them, both her and Him ... Whereas you, you, Monikin, thus ...it seems to me, I'll never lose ... What do you say? ... Et tu Monikin? No, I am n o t drinking ... The usual li'l tots ... Monikin ... Monikin, I give you my word, as soon as I become Vice-President, or President, I'll cut it off completely ... Monikin, are you angry? ... Ah, you are busy ... Yes, you're busy; I understand that, because I'm busy, too, and only he who is busy can understand how busy are ze other busy bees. Alles gut Monikin? Jaa, Monikin. Vielen Dank ... and Auf Wiedersehen ...All right, Monikin. A thousand taas ... a thousand taas ... Every phone-call of yours is a desert ... He's hung up ... It doesn't matter ... He will call again. A desert in my oasis! ... (*puts down the receiver*.) A famous poet ... A famous painter ...(*nostalgically*) Where are the old happy days, la belle époque, the indus-

trial revolution, the revolutionary spirit, la Marseillaise, the third and the fourth International, the Akathistos Hymn, the Euzones long way to Tipperary... Où sont les neiges d'antan?... Where are my violets, where are my roses, where's my fine celery? (*stretches out on his back and looks at his ceiling, as if it were the sky*.) A famous poet; ein bekannter Dichter (*smiles*) .... Anyhow .... So they're offering me the position of Vice-President of the Society for the Abolition of Malaria, "The Anti-Gnat". Its President, also, President of the Byronic Society, is a person with intellectual aspirations ... We'll be able to co-operate ... An honour, I admit it. And in my name they honour the whole nomenclature of my country... Action's beginning again ... Every struggle for Human kind ... an honour ... a recognition ... Recognition? (*gets up*.) Poor Paul was struggling to save his followers, and they, instead of acknowledging this, what did they do? ... They committed adultery ... incessantly ...And without any discretion.... Regardless of sex and of kinship. ... Yes, and to compound this: in an unnatural manner, even men with their own wives. In an unnatural way ... How could he not rebuke them, how could the Apostle not be horrified? As if he had not warned them! " Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor self abusers] [ ... shall inherit God's Kingdom"! But why?... Why didn't they listen? Why ... since people always seek a Saviour! ...As much as the Saviour, also seeks them out. (*drinks again*.) No, no ... I won't accept ... I can not accept ... I said that I would, not to disappoint him .... Of course, he is indebted to the Minister; but Monikin will realise... I have much greater things to accomplish ... Without wishing to diminish the importance of the "Anti-Gnat" ... Anything but that ... To each his own ... (*drinks again*.) I will not... (*drinks, thinks and changes his mood*) The sirens of Presidents and Vice-Presidents will not tempt me. They don't know me well... And, What's more I will return all my medals; And I do not speak about the ones, they have not given me. But for the ones they will give me. I will throw them back to them one by one! They don't know me well! (*drinks*) If you only knew what I hide within myself ... If you only knew ... Only a Monikin knows ...What I've



really been through! And what have my eyes not seen! (*gets up after first casting a glance at the bottle.*) Kneeeeeee-bend (*bends "gymnastically", as if listening to an order from an invisible trainer, and grabs the bottle.*) What memories this "knee-bend" doesn't revive ... (*erect again, drinks again.*) ... What a bosom was that! ... what an "exquisite" bosom! ... (*stares at his women on the wall.*) No comparison ... For what Madeleines are you talking Mr Proust, which you dip and re-dip, in your tea? And why tea, may I ask you? (*smiles with the pun to come.*) A la recherche du thé perdu... (*lifts his head high, like a rooster which is preparing a sudden cockadoodle-doo.*) ... The Alps ... The Swiss Alps...-frozen ... "Cow" do you do? (*smiles.*) ... Stark-white mountains, like .... an ad for organic milk, featuring a multi-bare-breasted blonde mid-wife! Ah, if I could only ... find them again ... A bit smaller, of course. (*lowers his head towards the bottle, which inversely is rising towards his head.*) ... Senilia ... senilia ... (*The bottle and the head meet.*) Monikin, ante ... (*drinks.*) Will I have time to finish my speech before reaching its bottom? Only a Deus ex Machina or a mechanised god knows! An armoured one! "All the saints of the world united are just a mere trifle / compared to the saving grace of a gun, or any other rifle". Charles Heston. (*carefully examines a bottle*) I must not start a third one... Third bottles always put me to sleep ... I don't know why? ... Once upon a time, the first used to make me yawn, and thus I was forced to drink a second one, in order to keep myself awake... But the third one, always sent me to sleep ... Maybe if I tried a quickie... – the recycling of the spirits! Jambattista Vicco! In Vicco, veritas? ... (*takes a half-swig.*)

Monikin, they're waiting for you ... Don't make them wait any longer ... This time, you have to finish. My mission! For immortality's sake; this study on Eros. Symposium.... Jove asks rather naively: "When a man dies, can he come back to life. I wonder what the Daemonic Socrates would have answered... Meanwhile, I have written a diatribe on the subject, entitled: "What happens after death", 288 pages, price 50 drachmas, before death, to be published in

a few days. (*presses the button.*) My dearly beloved ones, behold, I am coming... while going... Where am I? ... I don't maintain that... I'll explain everything; and you will soon realise. I am going to leave my soul on this tape, and then, only then you will understand the inner meaning of my words!

Do I digress again? They say that the sun rises in the East ... I do not doubt this fact ... But where does it set, w h e r e does it set, my friends? ... Where? (*drinks.*) I told you, I have become looped inside you with the whole of me, and I know everything and... everybody ... All ideas ... and all ideologists. The Opium the Popium and the Utopium of the people. Haven't you heard what Christ suffered from the Jews, the Jews from the Christians, the Christians from Marcus Aurelius, our hero Kolokotronis from the Greeks and not from the Bavarians of King Otto. Yes from the Greek Minister of Justice, and the Greek bayonnettes, which tried to convince Judge Tertsetis, to sign Kolokotronis' death sentence. And what does the poor old man dictate, after his release? "I offered my humble allegiance to the King and to Armansberg, and then sat peacefully, up to this very moment, that I am relating you all this... Sat peacefully... WHO? ... Such a warrior as Kolokotronis... To survive, and stay alive! What if the people say: "you can not stain eggs with farts" or... "a Lord's promise and an ass's fart are the same". It is these farts that stain with blood the world. (*Drinks*) But not a l l ideas are the same ... Not mine! (*drinks.*) Ideas bend with the remover to remove. And ideologists are always eager to destroy until eventually, are usually destroyed themselves, like Jerusalem.. Oh, Comrade, my Comrade, your fearful trip is also done. People are not exulting any more... (*drinks*) You told me, I remember it was your most delightful night – forgive me, an old poem of mine without artistic aspirations... but full of rich rhymes.. "remember, December, dying ember, dismember" ... What was I saying? About my idea. Mine differs and is as virginal, as the Parthenon. (*Drinks*) You look at the Acropolis, if you are a Greek of course, or if you are a tourist with a "philhellenic" soul, ... and what do you see? ... The Acropolis is something more than an idea... (*Drinks and totters slightly*) Where do I stand? Ah Yes... I had said once in a discourse



of mine, - in a conference or in a symposium, I don't remember, that ... Paradise is nothing else except the life of the others ... Yes, thus I had said ... although I am not a believer in Paradises ... whether Pan-European – Pan-American, Pan-Asiatic – Pan-African, or Pan-Etceteras. All that stuff, I denounce ... Pilaf or no pilaf (*looks at his wrist-watch.*) Am I going to have another call? ... (*looks up and then drinks*) It doesn't matter. The whole thing in life is ..... dignity and sincerity and something more, something more: faith. I am that I am! Have faith in me. Yes, because without faith neither men, nor Gods exist. And something else: something else ... Death ... Death, - almost rhymes with both birth and earth – is the eternal cemetery which, unlike the cock, knows of no alarm-clock ... It has been proved, all over the world, that today humankind doesn't believe in life. All the acts of youth prove this or aim at it... What else is, then, left but Death! You... – do you believe in Death?... Because if you don't... death does not exist. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? One dies or does not die, this is the real answer. (*drinks the cognac unto the very dregs.*) Yes, this ... But not for me any longer ... No ... I die, therefore I am! ... I die, therefore I am ... And I'll prove it to you immediately ... (*leaves the bottle on the table. Pulls out a drawer and takes out a revolver.*) Forgive me for choosing this way out. Turn down the tape-recorder if you don't like noises. Although Greeks love bangs, as much as whippers... This is how the world starts... (*looks at the revolver, opens it, examines it and afterwards closes it.*) Loaded ... Honest up to the end ... No Russian tricks ... Greeks, Hellenes and Romans ... lend me – up to the end ... I've got stage-fright ... Not very natural... (*looks first at the empty bottle and then at the full revolver.*) Not only actors get stage-fright, but also brave people break a leg ... Even Christ on the cross ... (*looks, hopefully, at the telephone.*) No ... of course, things could have been much simpler ... but they aren't ... In a little while, Monikin, you'll cease having so many things piled up inside you ... That is to say, so many new things. (*turns the gun-barrel of the revolver and points it towards an empty space.*) So much more simple ... But soft you, now (*smiles*) I am ready for my sacrifice ... for

my salvation, i.e. yours ... Because if one does not die, ... he doesn't live ... Have you thought of this? What a great new open horizon emerges before your "closed" eyes? ... Only one example: Does one see dreams, dead? Hamlet went as far as to approach the subject; but didn't go any further. And if yes, does one have wet-dreams? And if yes, does this mean that sin still exists? And if yes, why?... About circumcision – there is no such problem, any more! Oh what a chain of problems and virgin territories lies ahead of us! ... Yes, death is the great under-rated... being. (*his hand is trembling.*) Why then so much importance to life, which, come right down to it, we are in a position to say that we have almost solved most of its problems? (*Telephone rings.*) ... No, now it's late ... too late ... I'm no longer here for anyone ... For nobody! Not even for you, Monikin, not even for you, too, Monikin ... If there is a telephone in the other world, I won't answer it, either ... Only perhaps, to you two ... I might make an exception. Lies ... I would answer, the whole world ... And you know why, because if they did not exist, you wouldn't have existed either, as you are my whole world. (*telephone stops*)

Where Am I? At my beginning. No I am at the end of my tether. (*Lifts his hand as if he were trying to catch a rope.*) The end of the class war! The end of fear of change... I feel cold... I declare death, - the wild! For inner equilibrium and for "eternal" consumption. For there is the secret, the "metron", and the sense of balance of power. And where, I ask you, is there more, tranquillity, order, safety and eternity, than in the Kingdom of death? "A raven is un-gently rapping-rapping at my chamber window". Karyotakis, the Greek Edgar Allan poet. But why is my hand trembling?... (*looks carefully at his hand*) Why? (*Hesitating at the start*) And now I come to my message to the topsy-turvy humanity! I am addressing myself especially to the youth of Greece. Young men... I feel unhurried by emotion... but also very much hurriedly moved, addressing myself to you, as I am suddenly found among three conjunctures... The sun... the sea... the moonlighting... Allow me to send out my own S.O.S.

Life as... ourselves, is our worst enemy... Invite... all the tourists of the world

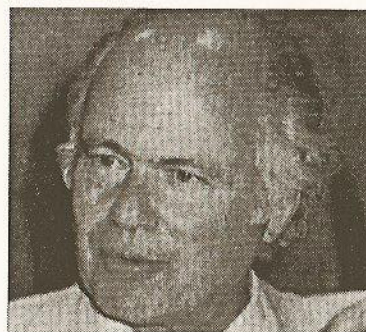


*(raises gradually his voice)* the most lucrative sector of the Greek Economy to be buried here. Defend to your last drop of blood, the sacred idea of death. Greece offers joy, freedom, death... and the Greeks have the right to personally arrange, all having to do with their own grave matters. Have faith in death. We must reform our mentality. Our graves must become the Mausoleums of "Der Neue Zeitgeist". The new spirit. *(First drinks and then yawns)* Thou must... Main pursuit... Become the Evangelists of Death, become teachers of funereal offices and instructors of grave diggers; become preachers of Charon. Strive so that life is effaced from the face of the earth... which is called first Greece, and then the globe. Greece is not allowed to live. We are obliged... and compelled... to make her die and accomplish, after death, glorious deeds, by her new expiatory example. A Greek can not be conceived alive anymore. He must only be conceived dead for the benefit of the whole world... , and humankind. I feel a bit exhausted... Think... May be I am an intrepid, honest and impartial voice, which is about to meet an untimely death .... Here and now... this time... But now I have to die... in other words... I have to live. For your sake. And among you... you... and you Monikin... You must not die... or if you must... better to die... last. And you Monikin... I appreciate your gesture, but I can not accept... as I am already... prematurely absent. Boethius... Bonaventura.... William Tell... the apple.. to telos, the end... Not at his castle... at his Sanctum Sanctorum!... Oh if you only knew, what I hide inside me... and... what my eyes have not seen... How do you like your green eyed boy, Mr. Death? *(lights turn off slowly; the tape is still turning on the recorder; while he turns the revolver once towards himself and once towards the audience. Suddenly the lights turn completely off. A shot is heard and then the phone starts ringing.... )*.

*(Curtain; if there is one)*

## PARIS TACOPOULOS

### *Portrait of a Writer as a "Third-Age" Young Man*



Paris Tacopoulos first broke his silence, like an umbilical cord, in 1930, as was described, very unintelligibly, in his "Hollow Testament", his Joycean novel where, like another "Ulysses", he made a premature last journey with a cheerful Wake.

At the age of twelve, during the war, he again broke his silence to the

sound of different sirens, producing a theatrical play of unknown parentage on the terrace of his house, where of course he was both director and protagonist.

In 1950, much to the terror of his parents, he published his first book of poems, after his return from London, where he did his 'cultural service' in the years 1948-49. It was in London that, thanks to his friend John Craxton, he met with the Graham Sutherland-Henry Moore Group of Painters and Sculptors, among them Francis Bacon, John Minton and Lucien Freud, who "never read grandpa" (as he confessed during his suit against "Time" magazine in 1949). He also made the acquaintance of Patrick Leigh Fermor, who, having read "Hollow Testament", stated that there are three languages in Greece; the official, the demotiki and the Tacopouliki. John Craxton also introduced him, as a poet, to Tambimutu, the publisher of London Poetry, who didn't pay the slightest attention to him when he learnt that his work had



not yet been printed. Hence, his numerous subsequent publications.

Modern poetry (Cavafis, Eliot, Pound, Joyce), modern music (Stravinsky and Jazz), as well as modern painting (Picasso), were his greatest stimulants – after scotch!

Before going to London, he studied English Literature at Eddie Duckworth's great school of friendship, where he came into contact with different "Brave New Worlds" and "Vile Bodies" revisited. It was then that he read "Brighton Rock", perhaps a milestone in his writing, as he said years later to Graham Greene, when he became a friend of his thanks to his brother, Hugh, whose last marriage was witnessed by him. This friendly relationship with Graham, and the whole Greene Family endured, notwithstanding the two Nobel Prizes given to Seferis and Elitis.

His main fixation with the theatre is also due to Eddie Duckworth, with whom he alternated almost all the roles of Shakespeare, as well as Estragon and Vladimir and some Pinter's. With Pinter he is closely linked, both because they were born in the same year, but also because of their common interest in antagonising their literate rival, George Bush junior!

After his first Collection of Poems, and some more readings of "Sweeney Agonistes", he published – to the greater terror of his parents – four books of poems, two books of short stories, two novels and his "Hollow Testament", for which most of our "crickets" (to quote another Joyce; Joyce Carey) have yet to break their silence. He has also been a "cricket" himself, mainly a Theatre Reviewer, and was the Artistic Director in Helen Vlahos' "Kathimerini" for a very brief time – according to him, because nobody could stand him for a longer one.

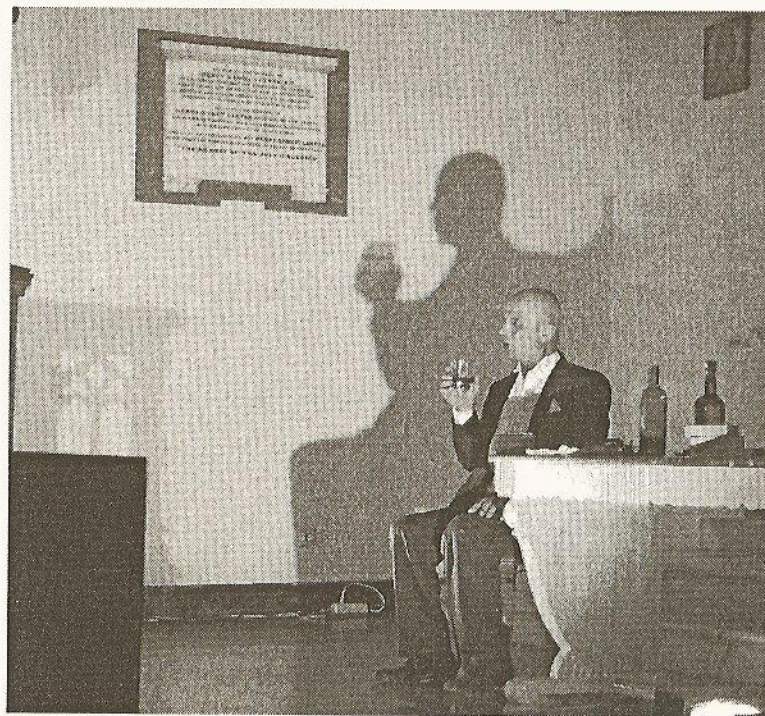
In 1966 he 'nearly' met Ezra Pound, when he came to visit Greece in not one of his most balanced moments, as co-editor of Apostilides' "Neo Ellinika", an anti-establishment literary magazine. But Ezra Pound refused to see him, perhaps because his secretary realised in time that Paris was, himself, not then in the most balanced of moods.

On unparallel lines, for thirty-five years he directed a cement company, which

he eventually helped to bring to a happy state of bankruptcy.

Since 1967, he has written so many plays that eventually a lot of theatres (which he asserts may be counted on eight fingers – as he loves this number) had to present them on stage – the first being the Art Theatre of Karolos Koun, and last, but not most, Student Theatre Groups, as well as "Fringe" ones.

The rest is not necessarily "Pinterian" silence, as more plays of his are being "still born". As for his "Hollow Testament" the two volumes, so far, of his "sagacious" novel (the hero of which is the same pre-last Monikin), was acclaimed by Panayotis Kanellopoulos in his prologue, as the most original and revolutionary work in Greek literature and the Greek language (equivalent only to that of James Joyce in "Finnegans Wake". It will, later or sooner, have its Third Coming. Amen.





## WHO'S WHO OF THE MAIN CONTRIBUTORS OF MONIKIN'S ORIGINAL PRODUCTION IN GREECE

### NICOS KALAMO



After finishing his studies in Greek Theatre schools, he went to New York in 1975 and continued his studies at Stellas Adler's, New York Conservatory of Acting, for a further six years.

He participated in eighteen Off and Off-Off Broadway productions, and in performances organised for the Greek Community by the American Centre of Greek Culture.

Indicatively, among others, he participated in S.Mrozek's "Alpha" at La Mama's, in "Room Service" at the Roundabout Theatre, in "Ceremony in Bohemia", in "Ubu Repertory Com-

pany", in "Goodnight Margarita", and others. He is a member of the Screen Actors' Guild-SAG- and of Equity Actors' Association.

Returning to Greece in 1990, he taught in the drama department of South Eastern College for two years, in the educational programmes of Piraeus Prefecture, N.E.L.E., and to children with special needs he taught phonetic linguistics.

As an actor, he collaborated with the Anti-theatre group, in Strindberg's "Dance of Death", and he participated in the Greek Film Centre films, among others, in "The Garden of God" film by /T. Spiridaki and in "Beautiful People" by N.Panagiotopoulos, and in such television productions, as "Morality Stations".

In one-man-shows, he has presented, directed, and acted in Eric Bogozian's

"Drinking in America" translated by him, and in "The Woman of Zante", by Dionysios Solomos in 2003, as well as in "The Pre-Last of the Monikins" in its Greek version, last year at the "Neo-Ellinico Teatro – Yorgos Armenis".

He founded the Theatriko Phytorio of Aegina in 1993, as a non-profit organisation and Conservatory of Acting, which aims at promoting new talents in the fields of acting, stage setting, play writing and, in general, the promotion and the art of theatre, especially in areas which lack the possibility of theatrical education and attendance of artistic events.

In his Theatriko Phytorio, classes of theatrical education are organised in rounds on a yearly basis, whose aim is to lead to the presentation of plays, or to some evenings dedicated to modern Greek poetry. Up to now, Samuel Beckett's "End Game", Harold Pinter's "The Caretaker", and Tennessee Williams' "Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton" have been presented, as well as the reading of poetry by Seferis, Elitis, Ritsos, Kariotakis, Engonopoulos, Leivaditis and a few others.

### COSTAS MANTZOROS



Costas Mantzoros was born in Athens in 1960. He studied higher musical theory with Ioanni Ioannides, Harris Ksanthoudakis and Stefanos Vasileiadis, and piano with Michel Bischel, he also studied at the Electro-acoustical Musical Centre of Athenaeum.

He taught seminars in the Centre of Modern Music Research. He is a member of the Centre of Modern Music Research and a member of the Board of Hourmouzos-Papaioannou Foundation.

He has composed several works of electro-acoustic music and mixed works, as well as the music for most of Paris Tacopoulos' plays.

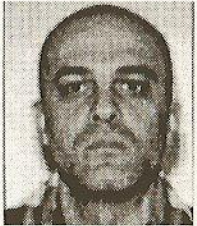




## MARGARITA SAMARA

Studies: She studied painting and stage setting in Thessaloniki's Aristoteleio University and in the Centre of Applied Fine Arts.

Experience: Her theatrical experience includes various events as Stage Designer. She is now studying sculpture at the Athens School of Fine Arts.



## NICOS PEXOMATIS

Graduate of Stavrakos School for Stage-setting. He is now studying Sculpture at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

Theatrical experience: In Polytheama Ioanninon: "Zoo Story" by Edward Alby.

Stage lighting: At the Municipal Theatre of Ioannina – G. Bakolas' "To Hani" (The Inn); and for the "Woman of Zante" at the Polytechnic Theatre, in Athens, and to the Greek Prelast of the Monikins, at the Neo-Elliniko teatro-Yiorgos Armenis.

At the Municipal Theatre of Ioannina, as Assistant in stage lighting to V. Nettis and in seven touring performances, the last of which was Euripides' "Alcestis".

## VIEWS & REVIEWS ON PARIS TACOPOULOS THEATER

"Tacopoulos' plays present to the viewer an unfamiliar relationship to the familiar which is startling; that is, it acts like the centrifugal force and tears him away from ordinary interpretations. The movement, the situation, the "persona" and the language -- both in dialogue and soliloquy -- in short everything, is explosive and unforeseeable in this singular theatre, with its threatening acrobatics, and puts its very self in danger by attempting the complete overthrow of all themes and certainties. Without neo-realistic hysteria or melodramatic embellishments, without heart-rending, ardent climaxes, the playwright's customarily ambivalent characters move about in an atmosphere of "excessive reasoning", one might say, which, nevertheless, is not burdened with any metaphysical, supernatural or dream-like force and though nourished by tangible realities, the spectator is still lured into an enhanced experience of the event. The image which transcends the boundaries of the possible is not an inconceivable one: a journey on an incredibly swift plane, a blind typist, a dangerously eccentric scientist, a child older than his grandfather, a woman who behaves like a spoiled infant, homosexuality as the result of boredom, a couple's meal festooned with skirmishes, are all situations and characters that one can imagine as being right now. So we are not dealing here with whimsical conceptions, nor with science fiction. This is not something unintelligible and, in the final analysis, there is nothing new under the sun anyway. What is of importance is how Tacopoulos has elaborated on the stimuli he receives from his world and how he remoulds them into an artistic composition.

Here it should be said that what stands out is the way the playwright takes



stock of his language. However, Tacopoulos is not satisfied with ridiculing it and de-articulating it until it finally collapses (and is wiped clear of meaning), as Ionesco does, but rather carries it on to a further re-composition, revealing yet another level of meaning, playing with similar-sounding words, covering up the literal meaning with metaphor and provoking a panic with his diction which, however, is very far removed from the idea of the nullification of writing or life. The function of language is revealed, of course, through elements which are apparently unconnected to each other, the absurdity of human intellect, even the most extreme versions of reality and, naturally, language itself. But what is not stable does not necessarily have zero as its point of reference".

"The linguistic code among the characters, which alternately ensures understanding and misunderstanding, is a daring composition of words taken from both formal and colloquial Greek, seeded here and there with foreign terms. The comic elegance and aptness of the language, is unexpectedly jarred by slang which is juxtaposed to the demands of propriety, striking like bolts from the blue, in the manner of a well-brought-up child who leaves one speechless when he transgresses the bounds of good behaviour he has learned so well.

Intimate and alienated, simple and crafted, straightforward and complex, depending on the situation, the theatrical dialogue of Tacopoulos projects the relationship between the significant and the insignificant, the depth and the surface, the comic and the tragic, light and dark. Human enterprise and endeavours, no matter how serious they are, lose their sharp outline and gravity in the microcosm of a limited geographical, ideological and/or emotional space, if seen from a distance and a particular point of view.

Tacopoulos' point of view is that of a "formal distancing" from the supposedly important matters of today's world, which have been reduced to forms without content, movements without a final destination. Even though our life has been rendered a caricature in many ways, even though the established codes have been rendered inoperative, there is nothing to prevent the

writer from painting the incredible lightness of being in his own incredible, unique and at the same time hilarious way, whereby members of the audience burst into laughter from comprehension while at the same time remaining perturbed by the threat that continues to lurk beneath the comic dialogue."

*Chara Baconicola*

*(Excerpts from her work  
"The Hellenised Cosmopolite Theater of Paris Tacopoulos")*

### Paris Tacopoulos at the Karolos Koun Art Theatre

Sleep no more! Paris, (Tacopoulos, that is), hath murder'd sleep. On the night of the premiere, I heard the owl scream and the cricket's cry—at least, those crickets who bothered to come. But it was admittedly a torrid evening, and crickets are notoriously delicate creatures.

To come to the point: Paris Tacopoulos' six one-acters at the Art Theater-Karolos Koun's hotbed of theatrical talent, are very hot stuff indeed. In fact, they are tangible proof that the Greek stage has come of age. This age. This, without in any way wishing to belittle the distinguished prior contributions of other Greek play-wrights to the Modern Greek theater.

I particularly liked "The Prelast of the Monikins", and "Hesitation Waltz" — though this in no way diminishes the other four pieces, which were merely brilliant.

*Eddie Duckworth*

*(Athens News 12/7/1978)*



## A Meaningful Soliloquy on Life\*

How can you memorize a 90-minute monologue, act it, and keep spectators riveted to their pews, too?

This extraordinary feat was accomplished last Monday/Tuesday at St. Paul's Anglican Church-turned-into-theatre for two nights, by Paris Takopoulos, the playwright and director, and Nikos Kalamo, the actor.

The play was a one-act soliloquy called "The PreLast of the Monikins" – a recital of despair and self-deprecation punctuated with manic-depressive imprecision by outbursts of *la folie des grandeurs*.

Takopoulos has made himself a slot in Greek avant-garde literature with his works full of Joyce-esque wordplay and multiple puns which, in this one-man play, includes Anglo-Hellenic verbal acrobatics combined with bitter allusions to known flaws in the Greek character and oblique references to mentalities that are squeezed between super- and inferiority, a technique that allows unpalatable truths to sound less offensive wrapped as they are in puns.

Kalamo who studied acting in New York and runs an experimental theatre group on the island of Aegina where he resides, is a remarkable actor who delivered, with a fascinating mixture of Hellenic egocentrism and an Anglo-Saxon stiff upper lip, the sprawling reveries of a desperately lonely man trying to put a meaningful end to a meaningless life.

The pistol shot in the darkened church resounded like THE END of the play, but seeing that this was a Pre-last Monikin, we can now look forward to the Next-but-last from the talented and witty Paris Takopoulos. Indeed, the play is to be performed at Edinburgh's Fringe Festival in August.

*Mario Modiano*

Former correspondent for the Times

This review was published in Herald Tribune - Kathimerini 14.6.2005

Gregory Nagy

# Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music



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