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Women on Kazantzakis:

Biography and Fiction

by

AIKATERINI VATHRAKOGIANNI

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ABSTRACT

Nikos Kazantzakis had the advantage and honour of having a number of biographies written about him, despite the fact that biography has not been particularly developed as a genre in Greece. Four of these biographies were written by women writers who were more or less intimately related to him: Galateia Kazantzaki, Lili Zografou, Elli Alexiou and Eleni Kazantzaki.

If we take it for granted that there is no such thing as absolute objectivity and that every text (including biographical accounts) should be considered as fiction since a certain degree of reconstruction as well as personal involvement are involved, in this dissertation I will attempt to judge the levels of objectivity achieved by each of these four biographies according to a number of criteria which I shall elaborate. Further remarks will be made on the extent to which these biographies are in agreement or diverge from each other on several aspects concerning Kazantzakis.

In addition, bearing in mind that one aspect of Kazantzakis' writings which has been widely discussed - and at times even intensely criticized - is his relationship with women as well as their representation in his texts, a secondary aspect of the dissertation will be an exploration of Kazantzakis' own relationships with women in real life, as described by these four women writers combined with a close reading of the portrayal of female characters in four of his major novels, which will allow us to reach certain conclusions as to how justified it is to attach the indictment of misogyny to Kazantzakis.

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INTRODUCTION

Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) was an eminent Modern Greek writer, universally known and recognized among western critics for the quality and range of his writings. As one of the most widely read Greek writers and having acquired fame mainly through his novel *Zorba the Greek* (1943), Kazantzakis is often referred to as a 'classic' Modern Greek writer in the sense that the appeal of his writings and in particular his novels is not confined to a specific era or people, but has endured over a long period of time, inviting and surviving frequent rereadings[1].

Kazantzakis has had the advantage and honour of having a number of biographies written about him, four of which were by women writers, who happened to be more or less intimately related to him. They are his first wife Galateia Kazantzaki, Lili Zografou, Elli Alexiou and his second wife Eleni Kazantzaki. It is worth noting that in Greece biography has not flourished as a genre and therefore no biographical tradition exists. Very few Modern Greek writers or poets constitute an exception to this rule, their biographies still tending to be written by foreign scholars rather than Greek ones: the first example is Cavafy whose biography was provided by Robert Liddell in 1974 and the second is Seferis whose biography was only written in 2003 by Roderick Beaton. Therefore, the case of Kazantzakis as a biographee of so many writers, and Greek biographers at that, is something of a phenomenon.

The aim of the present dissertation is to undertake a comparative examination of the four biographies in order to establish the degree of objectivity eventually achieved by each of them. In addition, attention will be paid to matters such as the sources that each of them uses (e.g. personal contacts and memories, testimonies from

[1] The most recently published one of them is Bien: 2007.

mutual friends, Kazantzakis' own writings and letters etc) as well as to Kazantzakis' own relationship with and attitude towards women, as described by these four, eventually reaching conclusions as to how justified it actually is to attach a 'misogynist' label to him. A secondary aspect of the dissertation will be to make some occasional comparisons between the four biographies, where they deal with the same aspects of Kazantzakis' life, so as to trace the extent to which they are in agreement with or diverge from each other on these points.

As regards the structure of the thesis, it unfolds in four main chapters, one for each biography, preceded by a brief introductory discussion of three main issues, which could inform my examination of the biographies and place their analysis in a wider and more theoretical framework. These issues concern biography and objectivity, the representation of women in Kazantzakis' novels and lastly, (auto)biography and fiction. A conclusion will follow based on the research questions posed.

The chronological order according to which each of these four biographies were written and published is as follows: First Galateia Kazantzaki, Nikos Kazantzakis' first wife, who in 1957 wrote the fictional biography *Άνθρωποι και Υπεράνθρωποι* (*Men and Supermen*) in which she describes Kazantzakis' life and her own as well as their life together, but in the form of a novel, using different names for the characters but with clear enough allusions so that an informed reader is able to make the connection between them and the real-life figures. By and large, Galateia depicts Nikos Kazantzakis as a (super)man, whose aspirations and self-assigned tasks were far from ordinary or destined for a 'common mortal'; a man who was constantly trying to reach the highest possible levels of intellectual, spiritual and physical purity and integrity, even if this made him distant and cold towards other people. Galateia's

biography is the only one of the four examined here which was published while Kazantzakis was still alive.

Next comes the biography by Lili Zografou *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης. Ένας τραγικός* (1960), which is an attempt to explore his personal life and his work by adopting a somewhat psychoanalytic approach. In general Zografou is trying to make the point that Kazantzakis' own life was overshadowed and dominated by fear of his father to such a degree that he developed psychological traumas and inner impasses and this is why she describes him as 'tragic'. Zografou draws her conclusions based exclusively on his work and on Galateia's fictional biography, as she had never met Kazantzakis in person.

Then comes Elli Alexiou, Galateia Kazantzakis' younger sister, with the book *Για να γίνει μεγάλος. Βιογραφία του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη* (1966) in which she talks about her sister's life with Kazantzakis. She considers how this relationship was perceived and dealt with by her family (Nikos and Galateia lived together for a period of time without being married), incidents that she remembers when she had holidays with her sister and Nikos, her admiration for his work as a writer but also her unhappiness and dismay at Kazantzakis' distinctive ambition and selfishness, chiefly interested, as he was, in acquiring fame through his work and little else.

The last of the four biographies was originally written in French by Nikos Kazantzakis' second wife Eleni Kazantzaki and entitled: *Nikos Kazantzakis: Le Dissident* (1968). It was then translated into Greek as: *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης. Ο ασυμβίβαστος. Βιογραφία βασισμένη σε ανέκδοτα γράμματα και κείμενά του* (1977). As the Greek title suggests, this biography consists mainly of Kazantzakis' letters to Eleni but also to some other friends. It has been translated into many languages. Eleni

provides an on the whole positive and uncensorious account of Kazantzakis' personality, individuality and frame of mind, even to the point of hinting that he might have had some covert inclination to sainthood[2]. The intention of Eleni Kazantzaki in writing her husband's biography is to provide an intimate record of the work and thoughts of one of modern literature's major spiritual figures.

With this thesis I believe that I am contributing to the existing bibliography on Kazantzakis in the sense that for the first time a detailed study of the Kazantzakis biographies written by women is provided. To my knowledge, up to the present only Georgia Farinou-Malamatari has written two papers on Kazantzakis and biography[3]. Yet though in one of them (2008), a comparison of the biographies by the four women writers is attempted, Farinou-Malamatari's aim is not to draw any conclusions as to which of them is more reliable nor does she make any reference to any theoretical background concerning objectivity, subjectivity and relativism. Furthermore, it seems that she is not concerned to discover whether any of these biographies show misogyny on the part of Kazantzakis, by looking at either the way women are represented in his texts or treated in real life. Needless to say Farinou-Malamatari's paper offers only a limited exploration such as the extent of an article allows. Moreover, Christina Dounia's paper on Kazantzakis concerns the relationship of (auto)biography and fiction in his works and does not examine any of the biographies written about him[4].

Another contribution I hope to make lies in the fact that I will be examining the degree of objectivity achieved in these biographies after having established certain

[2] 'Κρυφή τάση γι' αγιοσύνη; Πώς να εξηγήσει κανείς τη συνήθειά του ν' αφήνει αγόγγυστα να τον γελούνε;' in Kazantzaki 1977: p. 463.
[3] The first entitled 'Kazantzakis and biography' in *Kampos*, 1998, vol. 6, pp. 19-34, in which Farinou-Malamatari is demonstrating some common elements between the novels *Zorba the Greek* and *Saint Francis* and another as yet unpublished (at the time it was used as a source) paper entitled 'Τέσσερις γυναίκες βιογραφούν τον Καζαντζάκη', 2008.
[4] C. Dounia. 'Με αλήθεια και φαντασία': Ο Καζαντζάκης αυτοβιογραφούμενος in *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης: Το έργο και η πρόσληψή του*, Crete, 2006, pp. 255-270.

criteria of objectivity - since absolute objectivity is impossible - according to which their content should be judged.

Biography and Objectivity

The question under investigation in this part is whether a biography can actually achieve objectivity and if so to what extent. To begin with, the term *biography* connotes 'a relatively full account of a person's life, involving the attempt to set forth character, temperament, and milieu, as well as the facts of the subject's activities and experiences' (Abrams 1993: 14). Nowadays, objectivity is a highly disputed concept in philosophy and other disciplines and its existence is often questioned. The discrediting of objectivity is associated with a more general theoretical problem as well as with the relatively recent movement of postmodernism: the widely contested notion of objectivity has been strongly attacked by critics, most of whom 'whatever their differences, tend to share a common relativism about knowledge and truth, which they reduce to collective belief, disciplinary and community agreement and conventions of the language' (Zagorin 2001: 384-5).

Relativism, which informs my theoretical approach to the genre of biography, occupies more and more space in contemporary thought and philosophy; every text is regarded as a construction and according to this framework, even history is considered as fiction. Therefore, when discussing biography, one cannot talk about absolute objectivity. Ideally we should just establish certain criteria according to which we can classify a biography as more authentic, less fictional or less biased in comparison with others. And the biography which meets more of the criteria than all the others shall be deemed to have accomplished a higher level of objectivity.

According to the foregoing, every biography should be considered fictional: either because it has been composed as fiction, as is the case with Galateia, that is to say that it has been intended as fiction from the very beginning, or, because it is considered as fiction with regard to the notion of objectivity. In other words, in the latter case it is a matter of the approach and presentation of the material the biographer has at their disposal. When composing a biography some elements of reconstruction as well as a certain degree of selectivity are required. In other words, no matter how hard a biographer may try or how good her/his intentions may be to provide the reader with a biography of high standards of precision, thoroughness and objectivity, they will unavoidably choose what to include, to stress certain points they might deem more interesting than others, and possibly use their insight to make judgements. As Hermione Lee observes in her recently published introduction to the subject: 'there is no such thing as an entirely objective treatment. We write from a certain position, constructed by our own history, nationality, race, gender, class, education, beliefs' (Lee 2009: 12).

In addition, a certain degree of alteration is implied since the biographer 'must give a quasi-fictional, storyline shape to their material' (Lee 2005: 2). In other words, it seems that biography constitutes - to a large extent - art, that is to say the literary art of fiction, since it entails shaping and selection. Moreover, in his preface to Robert Sencourt's *La vie de Meredith* (1931) André Maurois defined a great biography as a work 'où les deux soeurs enemies Erudition et Poésie s'unissent pour recréer l'image' (Sencourt 1931: 7), while Lee points out that biography writing encompasses a number of approaches and disciplines, often mutually contradictory: 'History, sociology, gossip, fiction, literary criticism, psychoanalysis, documentary,

journalism, ethics, and philosophy are all scrambled up inside the genre' (Lee 2005: 2).

With regard to the two kinds of 'fictional' biography mentioned above, the former fictional by genre and the latter due to its reconstruction, Paul Murray Kendall aptly observes that the 'fictionalized biography simulates life but does not respect the materials at hand, whereas the fact-crammed biography, from the magpie school of scholarship-as-compilation, worships the materials at hand but does not simulate a life. The one fails truth; the other fails art. Between the two lies the impossible craft of true biography' (Kendall 1965: 15).

At this point - and always within the framework of the genre of biography - let me make reference to reliability in connection with objectivity. When a biography is well-researched and well-documented, then plausibly the biography is bound to be more reliable. This reliability, however, does not at the same time make a biography more objective, as objectivity is rather associated with the way in which the biographer interprets and 'decodes' the data that s/he has collected. In other words, of course the biographer's sources need to be reliable as regards their content but what really matters in terms of objectivity is the approach (i.e. above all personal detachment and non-intervention) s/he adopts towards her/his material and subject.

Let us look into the four biographies under examination in this dissertation: Galateia is writing fiction, Zografou bases herself exclusively on the subject's writings without having ever actually met him, Alexiou may at times appear influenced by her sister's relationship with Kazantzakis and finally Eleni seems to intervene in her husband's letters - on which her biography is based, as the title of her

book suggests[5]- by at times cutting whole parts of them, thus providing readers with limited access to the subject's immediate sources.

Therefore, having in mind all the above ideas and theoretical background on biography, when could an account of a life be characterized as relatively objective? Do any basic criteria exist according to which a biography can be considered to comply with valid scientific cognitive standards, or is absolute chaos to be expected? As Alan Shelston observes 'the appeal to "truth" rather than "fiction" as the basis of a narrative structure has always been one of the heaviest shots in the biographer's locker' (Shelston 1977: 7-8), noting that 'the biographer has always felt able to claim that he is concerned with the "truth": not truth as a philosophical aesthetic concept, as James and Lawrence would have it, but truth in terms of demonstrable fact' (Shelston 1977: 6).

At this point let us attempt to provide some indicative criteria according to which a biography could be regarded as having achieved a degree of objectivity. In the first place, a biography should be well-researched and well-documented in terms of the sources it uses. Secondly, the level of detachment and personal non-involvement (both ideological and emotional) achieved are of major importance. A third factor in judging a biography's level of objectivity is how rounded it is, that is to say whether the subject is examined through a single perspective or through multiple perspectives; i.e. whether a balanced consideration of various sides of the subject has been provided. Needless to say, the more perspectives, the more rounded the biography and consequently the more credit for objectivity it gains.

[5] The English edition of Eleni's book is entitled: *Nikos Kazantzakis: A Biography based on his Letters* (translated from the French), Oxford 1968.

The representation of women in Kazantzakis' novels

As mentioned above, one of the aims of the thesis is to examine whether it emerges from any of the four biographies written by women that Kazantzakis was a misogynist. In order to examine the allegations of misogyny it was deemed necessary to provide a short section on the way he portrays women in his writings, and more specifically in his four novels: *Zorba the Greek* (1943), *Christ Recrucified* (1948), *Freedom or Death* (1950) and *The Last Temptation* (1951). In these women appear, act and are depicted in a more remarkable way than in other of his texts not only in terms of their function, but also as regards the space they occupy - both quantitative and qualitative - in men's thoughts and in general. In terms of methodology, I will attempt to explore the representation of women compared to that of men by adopting a somewhat psychoanalytical approach, thus perhaps opening up a new line of academic enquiry for Kazantzakis scholars to explore in greater depth in the future. This examination of Kazantzakis' writings should provide interesting conclusions as a result of comparing the way he portrays women and the way real women, i.e. the four biographers, express themselves on their relationship and personal contacts (where applicable) with him.

To begin with, after a close reading of these four novels, one can discern a number of predominant female *types* within them: the ***femmes fatales*** who are highly sexual and who often play the role of the prostitute [e.g. madame Hortense and the widow Sourmelina in *Zorba the Greek* (1943), Katerina in *Christ Recrucified* (1948), Eminé in *Freedom or Death* (1950) and Magdalene in *The Last Temptation* (1951)], the ***women-wives***, usually leading a depressed life by the side of their powerful and authoritarian husbands [Katerina in *Freedom or Death* (1950), Mrs

Penelope and Panagiotaros' wife in *Christ Recrucified* (1948) and Mary, Jesus' mother in *The Last Temptation* (1951)] and the ***spinsters***: old, underprivileged women who have not enjoyed a sexual life and have offered their devotion habitually to their brothers [Martha and Mary in *The Last Temptation* (1951), Vangelio, Chysanthi, Maria (Kosmas' sister) and the Foukaropoules (Aglaia, Thaleia and Frosyne) in *Freedom or Death* (1950) - there are no spinsters found in *Zorba the Greek* (1943) or *Christ Recrucified* (1948), at least among the main female figures].

At this point it is worth noting that in his analysis of *Christ Recrucified*, Peter Bien, the leading scholar on Kazantzakis, refers to *characters*, both male and female, and even attempts to rank their virtue 'according to the degree of self-consciousness that each possesses' (Bien 1989a: 30). For example, the main female figure in this novel, Katerina, belongs to the second of three categories of *characters* 'whose goodness is still chiefly instinctive but who also have small degree of self-consciousness' (Bien 1989a: 30).

As Jeremy Hawthorn points out, a *character* 'is intimately bound up with individualism: a character is unique; not just the property of a person but somehow both the person and the sign or token of the person' (Hawthorn 2001: 87). Throughout each of these four novels, however, certain female roles and functions are established; there is some kind of common and repeated routine that is reflected in the women's representations. For instance, most *women-wives* are confined to the domestic sphere, whereas all the *femmes fatales* need to be extremely attractive and provide a source of temptation to the men, and by the end of the novel they have to share a common fate, i.e. death. These 'necessities' seem to be crucial for Kazantzakis, so that specific messages are conveyed through specific functions. No personal distinctiveness or any kind of unique quality is attributed to a woman and nothing particularly innovative,

imaginative, inventive or creative is to be traced in their representation, which ends up being more or less stereotypical.

By contrast, Kazantzakis succeeded in creating original and unique male *characters* like Captain Mihalis or Alexis Zorbas, whose depiction is anything but conventional, banal or foreseeable. Not to mention the fact that in all of these four novels the protagonist is always a man and that in most of his famous and successful novels like *Zorba the Greek* (1943) or *Captain Mihalis* [the Greek title for *Freedom or Death* (1950)] the importance of the eponymous male character is apparent even in the title. Needless to say not one of Kazantzakis' novels uses a woman's name for a title nor do any of the titles even contain one.

The only time when a female protagonist is depicted in a positive way is, according to Papacosta, in *The Last Temptation* (1951), and this is due to the fact that Magdalene is not portrayed as so very different from a man; in other words, she has accomplished such a degree of identification with Jesus, a man, that her value as a woman is augmented (Papacosta 2002: 78-9).

In a further point on the representation of women, which could be associated with the alleged misogyny, Bien points out the fact that: 'Kazantzakis' female characters hinder the male's progress' (Bien 1989a: 95). And Angela Kastrinaki (1998: 142) would seem to be of the same view as is Stamatis Filippidis (1997: 43). In other words, it is argued that women pose a kind of metaphysical threat to men, hindering them from carrying out their sacred assignments, and acting as the incarnation of evil on earth. Even through men's dreams and fantasies, Kazantzakis gives the impression that women indeed make men diverge from their high aspirations, and are nothing but temptations which ceaselessly persecute them. For

this reason, Kazantzakis presents men as finding peace and quiet only when the woman they are interested in has died. At this point, Kastrinaki draws a parallel between Kazantzakis and the Italian dramatist of the Décadence, Gabriele d' Annunzio by pointing to an obsession with getting rid of the woman's miasma (Kastrinaki 1998: 145).

It is sufficiently well known that Kazantzakis' sexuality was repressed due to the strong personality of his father (cf. also Alexiou & Stefanakis 1977: 73-4) and it might well be the case that all his personal impasses or 'traumas' are reflected in his male characters. At this point, a psychoanalytic approach both to Kazantzakis himself as well as to the main male characters in his novels could enlighten this research, offering 'food for thought' on men's sexuality. It is true, however, as Jen Harrison aptly observes, that Kazantzakis' 'society elevates men and subordinates women, ascribing woman's value to her usefulness to men. […]. Women are men's sexual partners, the mothers of their children, their confronters and home makers. And little else' (Harrison 2005: 125). Or in Bien's words 'in Kazantzakis's view the male creates civilization while the female merely creates the male' (Bien 2007: 547).

In conclusion, given the time and place (usually the conservative Greek countryside) in which the women act, their role is depicted more or less as might be expected, or at least unsurprisingly. And maybe the women are not portrayed as being as charismatic as men in terms of spirituality or high idealism. As Bien observes, 'the man is meant to be clever, scheming, brave, assertive, and domineering while the ideal woman is submissive and demure' (Bien 2007: 548). Yet the distance between this and misogyny is significant, at least as far as the representation of women in his novels is concerned. And to my knowledge no fully developed accusation has ever

been made against Kazantzakis; there are simply rather superficial, generalized or oversimplified points of view which have been much exaggerated.

(Auto)biography and fiction

As regards (auto)biography and fiction, it has to be mentioned that Kazantzakis himself flirted with (auto)biography and rather confused the boundaries between fiction and (auto)biography since he fictionalized his own life in his novel *Report to Greco* (1961), which takes the form of an autobiography containing not only personal experiences but also his intellectual and philosophical concerns, something which he does in many of his works. The *Report* could not be characterized as a conventional autobiography nor does the fact that it was composed as a first person narration necessarily suggest that it constitutes an autobiographical account. Dounia points out that the *Report* is a fictional autobiography in which Kazantzakis arbitrarily alters or suppresses his own personal experiences in order to meet the needs of the narration. He did something similar when composing the novel *Zorba the Greek* (1943): based on a real person named Zorbas, Kazantzakis created his fictional character and fictionalized experiences that he and Zorbas had shared, that is to say autobiographical elements (Dounia 2006: 257). Moreover, Kazantzakis himself in the *Report* admits:

> Έγραφα και καμάρωνα, ήμουν θεός κι έκανα ό,τι ήθελα, μετουσίωνα την πραγματικότητα, την έπλαθα όπως θα 'θελα και θα 'πρεπε να 'ναι, έσμιγα αξεδιάλυτα αλήθειες και ψευτιές, δεν υπήρχαν πια αλήθειες και ψευτιές, όλα ζύμη μαλακιά και την έπλαθα, όπως μου κανοναρχούσε το κέφι μου, λεύτερα, χωρίς να πάρω κανενός την άδεια. Υπάρχει φαίνεται μια αβεβαιότητα πιο σίγουρη από τη βεβαιότητα· μα η μια από αυτές βρίσκεται ένα πάτωμα πιο αψηλά από το ισόγειο κατασκεύασμα του ανθρώπου που το λέμε αλήθεια'. (Kazantzakis 1961: 173-4)

Pantelis Prevelakis, one of Kazantzakis' most intimate friends, who also wrote a biography on him, points out that the *Report to Greco* is fiction rather than autobiography; in it chronologies and events have been mixed up and poetry is interwoven with truth. As Prevelakis states:

> 'Είκοσι κάπου μέρες δεν έκαμα παρά να διαβάζω την «Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο». Ο Καζαντζάκης έχει εδώ μυθοποιήσει τη ζωή του. «Ποίηση και αλήθεια». Ανακάτεψε τις χρονολογίες, έβαλε ιδανική τάξη στους αγώνες του, χάρηκε το βίο του σα μιαν αρμονία. Ό,τι του στέρησε η ζωή του το χάρισε η φαντασία. Η «Αναφορά» δεν είναι μια αυτοβιογραφία· είναι το χρονικό της Μάχης με το Δαίμονα, η μυθική προετοιμασία για την «Οδύσσεια»'. (Prevelakis 1958: 277-8)

At this point it would be worth noting that 'before Kazantzakis embarked on his novelistic career, which began in 1941 with *Βίος και Πολιτεία* and ended in 1956 with *Ο Φτωχούλης του Θεού,* he was already well versed in the art of biography' (Farinou-Malamatari 1998: 22). More specifically, in 1940 'Kazantzakis anonymously published biographies of 'Colombus', 'Empress Elisabeth', 'Bernadotte' and 'Chateaubriand' in (the newspaper) *Η Καθημερινή*, supplying a fashionable demand for such literature in order to make a living' (Farinou-Malamatari 1998: 20). In addition, examining two of his novels that are connected with biography, *Βίος και Πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά* and *Ο Φτωχούλης του Θεού*, Farinou-Malamatari traces striking similarities between Romain Rolland's novel *Colas Breugnon* (1919), as perceived by Lukács, and Kazantzakis' *Βίος και Πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά* (1943)*,* 'similarities which can be considered in the framework of the interwar biographical form and in relation to Lukács's notion of *Volkstümlichkeit*' (Farinou-Malamatari 1998: 21-2), while in *Ο Φτωχούλης του Θεού* (1955) Kazantzakis deals with the most popular Western saint, Francis of Assisi, one of

whose more recent biographies he translated into Greek in 1943 (Farinou-Malamatari 1998: 22). As regards Saint Francis one could point to a further connection between this historical figure and some autobiographical elements relating to Kazantzakis, some of which he attributes to characters in his novels (e.g. his dermatitis or his eye disease).

GALATEIA KAZANTZAKI: FICTIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Galateia Kazantzaki (1881-1962)[6] was Nikos Kazantzakis' first wife and a writer herself. They were married for 15 years (1911-1926) but they had known each other a long time before their marriage. Galateia was the daughter of the erudite editor Stylianos Alexiou and had received a good education in a French convent. However, her knowledge was all the broader thanks to her father's large collection of books as well as to the intellectual milieu in which her family mixed, where she met distinguished Cretan intellectuals, politicians and scientists. Galateia made a major contribution to children's literature and translated a number of Andersen's fairytales (Anagnostopoulos & Ziras 2007: 965-6). Her book *Άνθρωποι και Υπεράνθρωποι* (1957) is a fictional biography of Kazantzakis and about their life together as a couple and as writers. It consists of 18 chapters and 5 intermezzi, the content of which is not connected with the main narrative.

The novel is about two young people, Danai and Alexandros, and describes how a romance between them develops in Crete as well as their life together later in

[6] Quite often, as Kastrinaki notes (1997a: 442), 1886 is given as Galateia's year of birth rather than 1881, which is the correct one. This is due to the fact that Galateia systematically tried to hide her real age.

Athens. Danai's initial enormous admiration for the writer Alexandros turns to disappointment and disillusion as she gets to experience everyday life with him; his immense stature as a writer bore no relation to his boorish, insensitive and cowardly behaviour as a man.

This fictional biography of Kazantzakis and autobiography of herself is the last book written by Galateia, and therefore this account of her life with him could be considered a work of her maturity. It was written after their separation and published the same year that Kazantzakis died (1957). In the novel, through the character of Alexandros, Galateia depicts Kazantzakis as an egocentric and cowardly companion unable to meet the needs of a marriage or to become interested in anyone or anything other than his own intellectual preoccupations and his writing. It was first published in December 1957 but Kazantzakis had the chance to read it before he died (i.e. October 1957). It is actually reported that this indirect though impassioned critique of Kazantzakis caused Eleni (his second wife) some frustration and she asked her husband to remove the author's right to use his surname (i.e. Galateia *Kazantzaki* rather than *Alexiou* or *Avgeri*)[7] while writing in such a demeaning way about him. Kazantzakis, however, is said to have replied sharply that Galateia honoured his name and that was the end of the discussion (Papamastorakis 2008: 64).

In this chapter the main question under investigation will be whether Galateia's book on Kazantzakis is more of a disguised biography than a novel. As Farinou-Malamatari observes, the biographical model known in Europe as 'new' or 'modern biography', which flourished in Greece from the 1930s onwards, was given the name *μυθιστορηματική βιογραφία*, or the French equivalent *vie romancée*, and is a representation in novelistic fashion of the life of a historic figure. 'The *vie romancée*

[7] *Alexiou* was her family name and *Avgeris* her second husband's last name.

is designed to combine the appeal of the novel with a vague claim to authenticity' (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 20).

Other points to be examined will be whether Galateia's decision not to provide a conventional biography of her husband but to write a covert, fictional one is due to any specific motive; in other words, could her motive for embarking on her account of her husband's life determine - if not dictate - the form (i.e. fiction) in which she eventually wrote it? In addition, is Kazantzakis indeed portrayed as a superman, as the title of the novel suggests, or could Galateia be attributing this quality to herself (through Danai), thus subverting the reader's expectations? And lastly does she consider Kazantzakis a misogynist?

Galateia depicts Kazantzakis as a man totally deprived of any human feeling: emotional distance and a complete inability to deal with practical everyday life are what characterize him. It is well known that Galateia was a lively, dynamic, liberal woman and quite rebellious for her time. So it might be assumed that her account of Kazantzakis was unfair to him - even scandalous. In this fictional account of her relationship with Kazantzakis, it becomes apparent that the differences between the couple were far from negligible: Galateia was a worldly and emotional human being, distressed about her problematic relationship with her husband whereas Kazantzakis is portrayed as tending to have his head in the clouds, finding inspiration only in esoteric matters.

The direct and lively language of the novel presents people and facts in a realistic way, with no attempt to idealize, providing a convincing representation of intense psychological conflicts. But to what extent can this piece of literature,

biographical as it may be, be regarded as an accurate account of Kazantzakis' life and work or should it rather be seen as a work of fiction full of bitterness and resentment?

Galateia and Nikos lived together as a couple for 16 years in total (1910-1926, and were married for the last 15). Yet they only lived under the same roof for few of those years because of Kazantzakis' extensive travel abroad. Galateia was certainly entitled to provide an account of his life, as personal contact with the subject is of inestimable value when producing a biography. Her approach to the subject, though studious and reflective, may at some points have been distorted or led to exaggeration posing as literature. An attempt at narrative objectivity can be traced in the fact that the narrator of the novel is omniscient; Galateia is describing the facts (i.e. presenting *her* story) in a quite detached and careful way, avoiding becoming emotionally involved and identifying with Danai. Nadel, nevertheless, points out: 'Objective biography is logically and artistically impossible. "Observation is always selective" as Karl Popper reminds us. Every observation, he explains, requires "a chosen object, a definite task, an interest, a point of view, a problem" otherwise it is valueless. […]. The modern responsibility of the biographer is to "lay bare the facts of the case, *as he understands them*"' (Nadel 1984: 10), an acknowledged subjectivity which is surely all the greater if the biography is fictional, thus granting the artist greater scope for going far beyond reality - whatever that is - and creating their own version.

To what extent one can trust the narration or the thoughtfulness of the interpretation is all the more questionable in cases when the narrator also plays an active part in the biography and shapes the story using his/her participation. Nadel continues that 'the goal of the biographer who conceives of biography as literature is the creation of life through art; by so doing, the biographer enlarges the life of his

subject as well as that of the genre' (Nadel 1984: 157) and talking about fiction and myth in biography she observes that 'biography is essentially a demythologizing form. Consistently, it functions to correct, restate or reinterpret false or distorted accounts of the subject' (Nadel 1984: 176). Paul Murray Kendall points out that 'in fictionalized biography the seductive influence of the "literary element" is all too apparent. Just as the compiler of biographical information risks no involvement, the fictionizer admits no limits to it. […]. The result is usually a flaccid compound of fact and fancy, ill-mated, a sort of mutant' (Kendall 1965: 127-8).

As far as Galateia is concerned, what might have seemed distorted to her was the great admiration that Kazantzakis seemed to enjoy as a writer, whereas she did not think that Kazantzakis deserved such high regard either as a writer or as a man. Moreover, as has been noted, the novel *Άνθρωποι και Υπεράνθρωποι* poses a number of questions with regard to the correlation between artist and man: can a notable writer be a humble person? How human can a distinguished intellectual be? After all, is it possible that excelted intellectuals have an aversion for 'healthy' human nature? Titika Dimitroulia suggests that even the peculiar structure of the intermezzi in Galateia's novel constitute a kind of 'στρατευμένη αισθητική', representing the solitude of the intellectuals as something unnatural, irregular or strange (Dimitroulia 2007).

At this point an unavoidable question arises: if Galateia's book was to be classified in a literary category, to which genre would it be allocated: fiction or biography? Would a reader who read this book without knowing beforehand that it was a fictional biography of Kazantzakis be able to recognize that the events described are factual? Or would s/he merely consider it the story of two fictional

characters, Danai and Alexandros? In no part of the book is the name of Kazantzakis explicitly mentioned or even hinted at.

As far as I am concerned, most readers would see it as fiction. Galateia presents all the events without exposing actual people or making it easy for mere readers of literature with no particular interest in biography or fiction as genres to discern the biographical allusions. Everything is depicted in a concealed manner hidden behind the veil of fiction. This camouflage can also be noted in the title itself; there Galateia uses the plural to refer to men and supermen in general, which gives an even greater air of vagueness, abstraction and elusiveness to the whole work. As stated above, had one known nothing of Galateia's life with Kazantzakis and its similarities with that of the characters in her book, it would be fairly hard to make those connections and conclude that the book was a 'fictional biography'.

Besides, as is known from Galateia's other writings, she often depicts difficulties in the relationship of a couple. More specifically, Kastrinaki refers to Galateia's two novels *Ridi Pagliaccio* (1909) and to *Κόκκινη ζωή* (1912), which - according to Kastrinaki - are more or less autobiographical stories that have been processed through the dramatic prism of aesthetic. In addition, her novel *Η Φωτεινή του Ανεγνώστη* (1912) also concerns the transition of village girl to townswoman (cf. Danai's transition from life in Crete to Athens). In this, as in *Άνθρωποι και Υπεράνθρωποι* (1957), she once again projects the idea of the extraordinary individual, who, due to his education and culture, condemns human vanity. The idea of splendid isolation is put forward as an ideal, but the young heroine, Foteini, is deemed unfit to 'bear the weight' of living up to the expectations of this extraordinary individual (Kastrinaki 1997b: 95-7).

From all the above it becomes quite obvious that Galateia did not wish to expose specific people (maybe including herself) by disclosing their real identity and therefore this seems to have been why she chose to express herself through fiction. In other words, her motive (i.e. anonymity) dictated the genre and form of her writing, i.e. fiction. A further motive for this choice might be traced in her own words about her ex-husband: 'Το μυθιστόρημα είναι το λογοτεχνικό είδος που έχει σήμερα πέραση. Μ' αυτό εκφράζεται τώρα η ζωή. Καταπιάστηκε λοιπόν μ' αυτό'(Kazantzaki 1957: 264), suggesting that Kazantzakis started to take an interest in and write novels himself - albeit at an advanced age - because this genre was becoming more and more popular at the time, as it was best suited to describing real life. Therefore, it seems that Galateia herself could not only convey her ideas better through this new and increasingly popular literary genre, thus adding to her own success as a writer, but it would also allow her to retain the mask of an author, protecting to some extent her personal life and the fame of her ex-husband who was quite well known at the time of the publishing.

Dismissive as she was towards Kazantzakis, it remains a fact that, even though they had led separate lives since 1926, Galateia kept her first husband's surname, even when she was married to Markos Avgeris, and continued to sign her literary works and articles with it. Moreover, as Anastassis Vistonitis notices, although Galateia passes judgments on Kazantzakis' works, pointing out their lack of originality, she does not fail to 'open' her novel in a most Kazantzakeian way, even to the point of imitating the beginning of *Freedom or Death* (Vistonitis 2007). The fact that Galateia's fictional biography ends up exposing the unfortunate circumstances of her marriage is something that could plausibly call into question her respectable intention of giving an objective account of her life with Kazantzakis. Nadel points out

that ‘as biography acknowledges its duality of record and narration, it becomes a more vigorous and self-conscious literary form. But part of this consciousness is its understanding the fundamental paradox of biography, that it can gain completeness only by selectivity’ (Nadel 1984: 206).

Galateia’s book covers the whole of Kazantzakis’ life; she even describes the house where he was born and provides information on his parents before they had any children. About his father, she comments ‘Βαρύσκιωτος. Ανθρωποδιώχτης. Σκουντούφλης. Δε μιλεί, δε γελά, δε σμίγει με κανένα. Κάτι λίγες κουβέντες, όσες χρειάζονται στα πάρε-δώσε του με τους χωριάτες’ (Kazantzaki 1957: 9-10) but she does not go to such lengths as to associate his father’s singular personality with everything in her husband’s introvert and cold nature. She continues the narration with Kazantzakis’ own birth and his portrayal as a young boy, both from a physical and an intellectual point of view (cf. Kazantzaki 1957: 17). This makes sense since she knew him from a young age and they both grew up in the same place. She goes on to talk about his studies, his acquaintance with her, their shared life together, their marriage and divorce, his acquaintance with his second wife and in general she covers his life up to the time of her novel, when he had married another woman and had built a house in Aigina.

Galateia is concerned with Kazantzakis mostly as a writer. By and large, she thinks of his work as an empty, cold creation and points out that whatever Kazantzakis wrote was the result of an intellectual process; feelings had nothing to do with it: ‘Ό,τι έγραψε, το’ φτιασε με το κεφάλι του. Δεν ανάβρυσε από την καρδιά του’ (Kazantzaki 1957: 46). In addition, Galateia notices that Kazantzakis’ texts in general are full of second-hand themes; little - if any - originality or creativity is found in them and what is more, they bear no relevance to contemporary life.

Furthermore, Galateia highlights the fact that the main ideas in his books, which are worship of the superhuman hero and the constant struggle between good and evil, seem to repeat themselves. In short, Galateia, who fell in love with Kazantzakis in his capacity as a promising writer, felt immense dismay when she noticed no thematic progress in his writings.

But even as a person, Kazantzakis is not depicted in a more positive way; deprived of any ordinary human feeling, withdrawn and self-absorbed, he could not stand any negative criticism (Kazantzaki 1957: 106-7). Galateia, however, used to express herself forthrightly, stating her arguments against him and his work, which made their relationship even thornier. In her fictional biography, Galateia assures herself that she was definitely not the kind of woman to suit him; Alexandros would be better suited to a woman who was either naïve or witful. But Galateia herself was neither. And regarding his attitude towards women Galateia seems to strongly question his explicit statement that woman is superior to man: 'Η γυναίκα στέκει χίλια σκαλοπάτια ψηλότερα από μας (ενν. άνδρες)', which in her opinion was made rather to impress or to show off his intellectual superiority (Kazantzaki 1957: 125).

In Galateia's description, however, Kazantzakis is not depicted as a misogynist; there is no specific behaviour or incidents reported in which he displays a particular dislike of women or her. Neglectful of his wife, selfish, arrogant or inconsiderate of other people's - and especially Galateia's - feelings would be a better way of describing his behaviour towards women. Besides, misogyny suggests a hatred of, a positive revulsion against women which is usually manifested through aggressive, hostile or even cruel behaviour them as well as through derogatory comments against them. Kazantzakis appears to express none of the above in Galateia's book; he does not appear to humiliate women or to undervalue their

opinion. Maybe his personality was so strong that it seemed very remote in the presence of women, but obviously there is an immense difference between being a woman-hater or acting like one and being perceived as a heartless and difficult man because of the huge impact one makes or may be determined to make.

Concerning her relationship with him in their marriage, Galateia seems convinced that Kazantzakis would never ask her for a divorce because she was a good and useful housekeeper and was able to take care of everyday practical matters successfully, with which, as already mentioned, Kazantzakis had no connection whatsoever. Also, she is convinced that no woman would make any difference to him; he just cannot love anyone (Kazantzaki 1957: 202).

His father's oppression is a further point stressed in Galateia's fictional biography. It is worth mentioning that Kazantzakis married Galateia in the church of a remote cemetery in Crete for fear of his father, who would not have approved of the marriage. Consequently, it seems quite plausible that Galateia had bitter memories of this special occasion in her life and the cowardly way her husband had behaved. The way Kazantzakis kept his distance within the marriage is also obvious from the fact that his shared life with his wife represented just four years out of a total of fifteen. Apparently, travelling and gathering material for his books was more important and pleasant to him than marital life. Even when Galateia was once in really bad health suffering from neurasthenia, Kazantzakis said outright that this would in no way prevent him from going away on his scheduled journey: 'Αν νομίζεις πως θα μου εμποδίσεις το ταξίδι μου γελιέσαι'(Kazantzaki 1957: 205).

Galateia thinks of Kazantzakis as a superman - in a rather negative sense - who, removed from ordinary concerns, continues his vain and empty dialogue with

the gods that he himself has created to no purpose. She presents him as a person whose concerns lay above normal human ones; as an individual whose way of living was prescribed by the discipline he imposed on himself in order to be creative; as a man completely independent and liberated from values or conventions, except the ones he himself deemed valid. Moreover, Nietzsche had posited the Űbermensch as a goal humanity should set for itself in his book *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883). According to Nietzsche, man's nature is something which ought to be transcended; the world is meaningless, nothing but a nihilistic void, which should be transcended by man through perseverance. In examining the French sources which informed the young Kazantzakis' understanding of Nietzsche, Gunnar de Boel also refers to a 'superhuman authority': 'what is common among Kazantzakis, Lichtenberger and Nietzsche are the main points: the belief in a goal, fixed by a superhuman authority, the belief that there is a unity in the universe, of which man is a part, even a collaborator […]. Evidently', de Boel concludes, 'Kazantzakis must have liked the notion of a divine particle (or at least a divine spark) within every human being, for he incorporated it later within his own philosophical framework, in *Ασκητική*' (Boel 2008: 117-9).

In addition, talking about Nietzsche's aestheticism, Alexander Nehamas argues that 'Nietzsche looks at the world in general as if it were a sort of artwork; in particular, he looks at it as if it were a literary text. And he arrives at many of his views of the world and the things within it […] by generalizing to them ideas and principles that apply almost intuitively to the literary situation, to the creation and interpretation of literary texts and characters' (Nehamas 1985: 3). Nevertheless, Vistonitis points out that Kazantzakis' relationship with Nietzsche and his work was far more complicated than Galateia could ever imagine or describe (Vistonitis 2007).

Lastly, Farinou-Malamatari attempts a comparison between the 'superman' as it is understood in the case of Alexandros/Kazantzakis (i.e. a person with metaphysical/existential concerns) and the play *Man and Superman. A Comedy and a Philosophy* (1903) of George Bernand Shaw, which features an inversion of the legend of Don Juan and the ironic dramatization of the Nietzschean superman. Shaw's play is a reference to the archetypal superman; its main character considers himself an untamable revolutionary, above the normal concerns of humanity. In this play hope for the future depends on a combination of intellectual conquests and political progress (in a socialist framework), which, according to Farinou-Malamatari, suggests a reversal of the roles: Danai/Galateia is the superman and Alexandros/Kazantzakis, despite his metaphysical concerns - yet unfixed political viewpoint - , is limited to the role of a mere man (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 5).

As far as the biographical approach to a person through fiction is concerned, Jeremy Hawthorn warns that such an approach i.e. 'reading works with explicit reference to the life, personality, and opinions of the author seems straightforward enough, yet it is fraught with problems and has involved many sharp debates. In a piece entitled 'The Spirit of Place', D.H. Lawrence advised: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale", and generations of critics have pointed out that novelists *can* be very bad guides to their own work' (Hawthorn 2001: 141-2). Suman Gupta also recognizes and introduces a further problematic as regards the interpretation of literary biography, and this concerns its reception by the reader himself. In other words, in the decoding of a literary biography, apart from literature (i.e. fiction) itself, 'every literary biography would be autobiographical: the process of reading is inevitably colored by particular personal, cultural, political experiences and so forth' (Gupta 1993: 693). Kendall, on the other hand, positively and firmly concludes that 'the

practice of modern biography, a double simulation conjointly fostered by science and literature, has not produced towering masterpieces […]. But this dually-simulative mode of composition, growing in accomplishment and in authority, is probably creating the most sustained pitch of biographical excellence that the world has yet enjoyed' (Kendall 1965: 152), while Shelston argues that fiction, as novelists claim, could actually provide the highest form of truth by its freedom to select (Shelston 1977: 14).

In conclusion, Galateia's account of Kazantzakis, though containing biographical elements, remains fiction. Loyal to the title of her book, Galateia provides a portrayal of her ex-husband as a superman in the Nietzschean sense with all the shortcomings this could entail for a wife. However, at no point does she suggest that Kazantzakis manifested - or would ever be able to manifest - misogynistic attitudes or practices of any kind.

LILI ZOGRAFOU: BIOGRAPHY AND SEXUALITY

Lili Zografou (1922-1998) was a novelist, essayist and political activist. She was born in Crete in 1922 and studied literature in Greece and France (Sorbonne). Her father, Andreas Zografos, published the Herakleio daily newspaper *Anorthosis* ('Recovery') and so Zografou was quite well acquainted with progressive ideas and the intellectual environment of her time from a young age. After the German occupation, she worked as a journalist in well-known newspapers and travelled extensively in Europe and the East. Often provocative, the main characteristic of her style is the satire against structures of power (patriarchy, Church etc) and their

interweaving. She has also translated political, pedagogical and psychosociological texts (e.g. Che Guevara, Ivan Illich) (Ziras & Kontakis 2007: 786). Most of her 24 books are political in nature, emphasizing 'the status of women in Greek society, the horror of the Axis occupation of Greece (1941-44), and the equal horror of the 1967-74 dictatorship' (Bien 1998). Her first book *Agapi* ('Love') was published in 1949, but it is actually her biography of Kazantzakis, *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης. Ένας τραγικός* (1960), that established her as a recognized writer eleven years later.

In her book *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης. Ένας τραγικός* (1960)[8], Lili Zografou attempts a demystifying, psychoanalytic approach to Kazantzakis above all as a man but also as a writer. Zografou focuses on his father's oppression and domination of him and points out that this paternal power moulded and determined Kazantzakis' personality and character to a considerable extent. His father seems to have been particularly demanding and tough on him and Kazantzakis himself seems to have kept on trying to meet these high aspirations so as not to disappoint him.

In this chapter the chief questions under examination will be whether Zografou provides a well-grounded and well-documented psychoanalytic approach and explanation of Kazantzakis' life and writings with regard to the relationship with his father; whether it emerges from her book that Kazantzakis was indeed as tragic as the title suggests and finally whether the paternal oppression led to misogyny.

Zografou views Kazantzakis exclusively with reference to his father; the exploration of his character as a whole is not examined in connection with any other

[8] The references to Zografou are from the 1989 (5th) edition of her book. There are no differences between the text of the first edition (1960) and that of the fifth (1989); in the latter the only addition is a note at the end of the book, which was originally added to the 1977 (2nd) edition, in which Zografou states that no matter how many years have passed from the first edition of her biography, she would still change nothing in it, and refers to distinguished personalities who approve of her view of Kazantzakis as expressed in her book. Citations in English from Zografou (where the original Greek text is not quoted) are my own translation from Greek.

person in his life and therefore no overall evaluation of his relationships is given. To her mind the father figure was the first and only person in his life - apart from any philosophical or religious role model - to have made such a big impact on him. Zografou attempts to justify her point of view by referring to Kazantzakis' own work as evidence that what he had experienced with regard to his father appears in his work. According to her, Kazantzakis was the unfortunate child of a heartless father who deprived him of spontaneity and affection, and effectively castrated him. This resulted in Kazantzakis having the social and sexual shyness of a child, which he made up for by his intense desire for knowledge and his insatiable ambition; his 'hunger' for life was more than adequately satisfied through the knowledge he gained from books (cf. also Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 20).

As Richard Altick argues, 'modern techniques of psychological analysis have made it possible to apply the data of an author's emotional life to a reading of his works' (Altick 1979: 406). Edward Mendelson also points out that 'recent literary biographers perceive their subjects as complex sets of internal psychological relations, which cast up signs of themselves in the form of literary works' (Mendelson 1978: 20). Moreover, Virginia Woolf had invited a psychoanalytic approach to literature long before. As she proclaims, 'every secret of a writer's soul, experience of his life and quality of his mind, is written large in his work' (Panken 1987: 7).

Henceforth, Zografou notices that in almost all of Kazantzakis' texts there is a conflict between father and son. More specifically, she refers to the play *Melissa* (1937) and to the novel *Freedom or Death* (1950) as characteristic examples of depicting the drama of family life. As regards *Christ Recrucified* (1948), in which Kazantzakis confesses that in his life he has feared no man other than his father, Kazantzakis still sees in every father an enemy of the son. However, as Zografou

rightly observes, it would be unfair to suggest that in this work Patriarcheas is an oppressive father, too demanding or tough on his son. On the contrary, Patriarcheas wishes for Michelis a settled and convenient life with a wife and a large property; it is Michelis himself who voluntarily renounces all these conveniences and abjures earthly possessions under no paternal or other external pressure. But, according to Zografou, this arbitrary hatred that Michelis shows for his father confirms her point of view that Kazantzakis felt so much paternal pressure that it was impossible for him not to regard every father as the enemy of their son (Zografou 1989: 38-9).

She also notices that in his work *Buddha* (1932) the conflict between father and son is again apparent and reaches such a point that the son finds himself facing a dilemma as to whether or not he should kill his father. The fear of the father can also be traced in the tragedy *Kouros* (1949) while in *Melissa* (1937) the son appears to hate the father because he looks like him: Lykofron cries out at his father 'I don't want to look at my face because it looks like you!' (cited in Zografou 1989: 83).

As mentioned above, Zografou is interested in Kazantzakis not only as a writer but also as a man and makes an effort to interpret his writings by shedding light on his personal life and attempting a kind of psychoanalytic approach. She does not follow Kazantzakis' life in detail from the very beginning and her first reference to him is not before 1897, when Kazantzakis and his family move to Naxos. The narration starts when the writer is aged 14 and is being educated in a Catholic monastery. Zografou does not follow a strict chronological order but rather observes the progress in Kazantzakis' life and thinking through his writings: she uses phrases such as 'Kazantzakis held firm to his beliefs until his death', thus making an indirect connection between his intellectual development - if any - over time and his age, and thus covering as much of his life as possible. The focus is nevertheless on his youth

and to what extent his personality was formed as a result of his father's influence, and on Kazantzakis' attitude towards women.

Zografou does not appear to think highly of Kazantzakis as a man. The puritanical figure of his father in the context of a traditional, Cretan, Christian family seems to have led to Kazantzakis developing a certain degree of coldness, introversion and reserve as far as his relationship with women is concerned. Kazantzakis tries to find a way out through philosophy and Buddhism in which the ascetic element is predominant, any earthly pleasure is excluded and the role of the woman is confined to that of a passive and submissive companion who observes the holiness and grandeur of this ascetic form of life (cf. also Alexiou & Stefanakis 1977: 74). Zografou directly connects the father's formative influence on his childhood with Kazantzakis' later adult life and seems to suggest that it is this 'shadow' of his father over him which led to his repressed sexuality; Kazantzakis would not act with the boldness or determination of 'normal' men, he would not easily take initiatives (for example to marry Galateia) or in general act in an independent way. The pressure his father exerted on him to live up to Cretan values and expectations was so intense for Kazantzakis that his father's death seems to have been a great relief, finally liberating him from paternal authority.

Talking about psychoanalytic approaches with regard to biography, Mendelson observes that 'biography has taken its theory of human nature essentially from Freud' (Mendelson 1978: 25). However, Kendall points out that 'biography demands synthesis, not analysis; the life being lived, not the speculative chatter of the biographer' (Kendall 1965: 74) and warns that even though the biographer need not be a psychoanalyst or a student of psychoanalysis to profit from the science, her/his relationship with psychology 'had better be platonic; she is an invaluable friend but as

a mistress, a *femme fatale*' (Kendall 1965: 122). As Schorer has observed, 'a biographer, like any other civilized man, should know about the developments of modern psychology, but I do not think he should write as if he were a psychoanalyst' (cited in Kendall 1965: 121). Zografou, however, though attempting a psychoanalytic approach, makes no reference to Freud - or to any other theorist connected with psychoanalysis - to support her point of view. She seems to lack theoretical psychological background and to be guided mainly by her intuition based exclusively on Kazantzakis' texts and Galateia's fictional biography *Άνθρωποι και Υπεράνθρωποι* (1957). Her analysis as a whole, therefore, convincing as it may seem, ends up being rather unscholarly and oversimplified; no particular psychological insight is provided nor any adequate or well-grounded interpretation.

Zografou's book on Kazantzakis cannot therefore be regarded as a psychobiography, as M. H. Abrams defines it, since it does not give the impression that it is 'an account of the life of an author that focuses on the subject's psychological development, relying for evidence both on external sources and on the author's own writings' (Abrams 1993: 266). A psychobiography also stresses 'the role of the unconscious and disguised motives in forming the author's personality, and is usually written in accordance with a version, or a revision, of the Freudian theory of the stages of psychological development' (Abrams 1993: 266).

Zografou continues to argue that Kazantzakis was a sexually immature man, with a morbid and unsatisfied nature; to her, Kazantzakis seems to be an adolescent for whom some passionate fantasies about women seem to be enough, which, as she contends, creates a contradictory effect on his work. Despite all the wisdom he will acquire, in the knowledge of love he will remain 'stuck' and immature and will merely make do with the passionate and audacious images of his fantasy. This is why

in all his works we will discover a typical contradiction: while his descriptions are positively hyperbolic, creating quasi pathologically erotic imagery, the symptoms of arousal that torture his heroes (e.g. Manolios, Captain Mihalis, Basil etc) are entirely adolescent (Zografou 1989: 76). In other words, his characters are subjected to his own limitations. In each new book, he expands the procession of disappointed or disenchanted souls who, like him, have trudged up the steep path of the *Ascetic*, only at some point to reach a peak where Kazantzakis stands, staring at the abyss. An abyss 'μωλομένη' by terrifying phantoms, inexplicable remorse and ambitions, morbid dreams, fears and repressed desires (Zografou 1989: 287). This immaturity and limited sexual experience on the part of Kazantzakis incline Zografou to adopt a rather contemptuous attitude towards him as a man. Even in the preface of her book, Zografou states how shocked she was to hear that Kazantzakis addressed his wife Eleni in the plural: 'Είναι αδύνατον να πω το τι αισθάνθηκα. Δεν αντέχω ν' αναποδογυρίζονται οι άνθρωποι' (Zografou 1989: 9).

But even as a writer, Kazantzakis does not seem to be highly regarded by Zografou. She does not think that he was a born or gifted writer; all his fame and success are exclusively due to his enormous hard work. As she observes, Kazantzakis is an exceptional case of a man, who managed, through his rare diligence, to yield 100% more than his natural ability would suggest (Zografou 1989: 182). The justification that Zografou provides for Kazantzakis' commercial success abroad is striking: in 1959 his work is considered successful as the 'ultimate token' of Western decadence with a gloss of primitivism, whereas in 1977 it was 'παραλογοτεχνία' (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 19). As regards his ambition, Zografou remarks that for years cowardice went hand in hand with megalomania, shyness with the greediest and most scorching ambition that ever fired the human breast. Never has there been a man

more famished for fame, power, success and deafening applause than this lovable timid man (Zografou 1989: 58).

Zografou seems to have acquired a thorough mastery of the material (i.e. Kazantzakis' works) and to have formed a very concrete, mostly critical opinion of each of them. She does conclude that Kazantzakis' idiosyncrasy and behaviour towards women has been marked by his father's oppression and this is what she actually discusses when referring to his texts. For example, when she examines *Όφις και κρίνο* (1906), she suggests that the writer's morbid fantasy is due to sexual deprivation which in turn should be attributed to his father's rigidity (Zografou 1989: 68). But this is Zografou's own conclusion and it seems likely to have been shaped by the feminist ideas with which she was quite familiar and to which she inclined. In other words, her argument that the shadow cast by his father resulted in Kazantzakis' suppressed sexuality - and might lead to his being characterized as tragic -, plausible as it may be, is not documented in the texts she cites or perhaps I should say Zografou simply does not go into enough depth when examining these texts for a reader to gather that there is an association between his father's and his own attitude towards women.

As mentioned above, basically it is only *Melissa* that is somewhat more adequately explored. On this Zografou adds that for the issue of conflict between father and son the author could draw on his own personal experience. Zografou connects the writer's 'handicap' - whatever this might mean - with the trauma he suffered at the hands of his father, the results of which are obvious in his life and work.

Zografou continues her critique of Kazantzakis by pointing out that the fact that he was 'handicapped' in the conquest of women led him to adopt asceticism as a way of life. This 'weakness' of his is associated by and large by Zografou with the paternal oppression Kazantzakis had experienced. Giorgos Stefanakis also suggests that the fear of his father created a kind of emotional alienation from his close circle, from society, from love, from people in general and this explains the fact that Kazantzakis loved solitude and developed an inclination to escape reality by escaping from Greece (Alexiou & Stefanakis 1977: 73). Some people who have studied Kazantzakis have even gone so far as to talk of actual castration in his case. For instance, Ioannis Vranou (1979: 30) suggests that Kazantzakis' castration was due to a kick from his father. This piece of information remained unverified at the time his book was published but it was provided, Vranou claims, by a reliable source.

In other words, Kazantzakis was forced to take the direction and make the 'choice' he did but it was not a voluntary self-denial or sacrifice of the flesh; what he could not conquer he presented as evil and stayed away from it. Moreover, Zografou contends that there is a strong contradiction between asceticism and ambition and she quotes his own words from a letter of his to Eleni: 'When I die, some biographer of mine will write […] that I was an ascetic nature, with few desires, a man who could easily live in abandonment and poverty. And no one will know that if I ended up an "ascetic" it is because no chance was actually given to me to live my real nature […]' (Kazantzaki 1977: 438)[9].

With regard to his work - both fiction and drama - again Zografou claims that Kazantzakis repeats himself all the time, in particular as far as his novels are concerned. She does not discern any original thinking or innovative judgments in his

[9] My own translation from Greek.

work after *Ασκητική* (1927). Kazantzakis had formed some fundamental views based mainly on his philosophical readings and all his subsequent writings seem to follow these initial ideas: in other words, Kazantzakis lacks creativity and imagination and from a certain point onwards he merely repeats himself. Furthermore, Zografou claims that no spontaneity, naturalness or impulsiveness is to be found in Kazantzakis' work, which focuses on its impressive verbal richness: 'Εδώ οι λέξεις, δίπλα τα επίθετα, παρακάτω οι ιδέες. Μα η αλήθεια, το αυθόρμητο, πουθενά! Όλα θυσιασμένα στον άψογο φραστικό κι εντυπωσιακό πλούτο' (Zografou 1989: 195-6).

As regards Kazantzakis' attitude towards women, Zografou maintains that he considers them either as evil, as forbidden fruit or as objects to be subjugated in the service of Man. In support of this view she refers to *Buddha* in which Kazantzakis says that the only thing that a woman needs is 'προσταγή' and that a man wastes his energy by getting in touch with her (Zografou 1989: 90-1). Such notions could well be characterized as misogynistic; Kazantzakis explicitly expresses them, though only in this work, which should make a reader pretty sceptical as to whether to entirely endorse the view that Kazantzakis was indeed a misogynist. Besides, neither of his wives (i.e. Galateia and Eleni) who by the way happened to have had personal contact with him and did not just judge him through his writings (i.e. literary forms of art) hint that Kazantzakis acted in a demeaning, misogynistic manner towards them[10]. As Leon Edel argues, 'the biographer who works from life has an extraordinary advantage over the biographer who works from the document […]. He has seen his man in the flesh, he has been aware of a three-dimensional being […] he has heard the voice and seen the gesture (and even in our age no recording, no cinema picture can

[10] Galateia does but only once, and this in her *fictional* biography of Kazantzakis. As regards Alexiou, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, she maintains that misogyny characterizes more or less all of Kazantzakis' works.

provide a substitute for that)' (Edel 1957: 19). At this point let us also recall the words of Johnson to Boswell that 'nobody can write the life of a man, but those who have eat and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him' (Boswell 2008: 474).

On the other hand, of course, let us not forget that in early biographical writing centuries might elapse between the life of the subject and the writing of their biography, thus excluding any possibility of acquaintance between biographer and subject (e.g. Plutarch was writing about Greek leaders who lived 400 years before him, Lives of some medieval saints or cases in which the biographer was commissioned by the family of the subject to provide a biography as much as a generation or more later) (cf. Lee 2009: 11). Nowadays, however, as Hermione Lee asserts, 'personal knowledge of or connection to the subject is not necessarily seen as an advantage or a requirement. The biographer who is asked to write the Life by the subject or by the subject's relations may find the authorization a heavy burden' (Lee 2009: 11-12).

Discussing the distinction between the genre of biography and that of literary criticism, Jack Kolbert admits that the fusion is unavoidable when the subjects of the biographies are literary creators. As he points out, 'one should not discuss the life of a writer unless one also speaks of the acts of the writer; and these acts are realized mainly through literary production' (Kolbert 1967: 47); besides, according to Maurois, 'la véritable mesure d'un écrivain, c'est son oeuvre' (cited in Kolbert 1967: 46), whereas Joseph Kronick argues that 'to be able to recapture the infinite in the individual, the biographer assumes there is an organic relation between words and meaning. Consequently, to tell the life of the writer is to repeat the life contained in the works' (Kronick 1984: 118). What is more, it is highly unlikely that Zografou, an active feminist, would write a biography on a man without being influenced by

contemporary feminist theories professing that literature is a part of reality and that it actually reflects the real (i.e. Kazantzakis' writings reflect his reality). As Ruth Robbins points out, 'Feminist theories assume that Literature is not some transcendent space in which the contingencies of everyday life are somehow elided or absent. […]. Texts, feminist theories argue, are always produced out of a specific reality, and they bear the marks of their time, place and mode of production' (Robbins 2001: 48).

With regard to Kazantzakis' tender and affectionate letters to his wives, Zografou still seems to have doubts about the degree of their sincerity and reliability: 'Would it be so difficult for a writer and a cultivated man to compose marvelous letters?', she thinks to herself (Zografou 1989: 103). Bien also observes: 'equally provocative is Zografou's treatment of Kazantzakis's various relationships with women. The only way he could respond to Galatea's [sic] affection, Zografou claims, was by writing sexual fantasies, by travelling obsessively in order to escape his wife, and by expressing himself tenderly in letters since he could not do so in person. […]. But what Kazantzakis really wanted was a good typist. This he found in his second wife, Eleni, who added self-effacing devotion to her secretarial skills' (Bien 1998).

Zografou does succeed nevertheless in creating an interesting - though once again intuitive - speculation on his life and writings, suggesting that to a degree author and work can actually be identified. The fact that she adopts a critical standpoint towards him, rejecting him both as a writer and man - no matter how sorry she may feel for him because of the 'tragic' element of his father - may be due to the fact that she herself is a writer. As Ira Nadel points out 'more than any others, writers, especially novelists, are susceptible to the conditions Freud describes when they turn to biography. In their accounts of others, mostly of other writers, the author's choice, treatment and analysis of subject tends to follow a pattern of idealization, revision and

rejection' (Nadel 1984: 119). The tragic image, however, that is attributed to Kazantzakis in the title of her book is maintained and stressed throughout the whole biography and always in connection with his father, which provides consistency between title and content.

Regarding the reliability and objectivity of Zografou's portrayal of Kazantzakis, as has already been mentioned above, Zografou and Kazantzakis had never met in person. Zografou seems to have been influenced mainly by Kazantzakis' own writings as well as by the novel of his first wife, Galateia *Άνθρωποι και Υπεράνθρωποι*, which is to a considerable extent biographical. Even so, as she points out at the end of her book, people of indisputable prestige such as the politician George Papandreou, or people who had unquestionably been closer to him like his first wife Galateia seem to totally endorse the content of the book even though it is more critical than acclamatory of Kazantzakis. She quotes George Papandreou telling her father that he would not remove or add one word to his daughter's book if he were to write it (Zografou 1989: 315). Galateia in her turn seemed quite surprised that Zografou had managed to give such an accurate account of her ex-husband, given that she had never met him (Zografou 1989: 316).

These two statements of acknowledgement validate, to her mind, her depiction of Kazantzakis but anyway, as she affirms, she would not change anything even if she had not been applauded by such important people (Zografou 1989: 316). Zografou seems sufficiently confident that in her book she has approached Kazantzakis as a man and writer as best she can and does not feel that she needs to add or change anything in more recent editions of the book no matter how many years have passed.

In conclusion, Zografou associates the whole of Kazantzakis' life and work with his father, suggesting that the shadow of the latter resulted in his suppressed sexuality, which is also stamped on his work. As she argues, 'η υπόστασή του εξαρτήθηκε πάντα από το ανάστημα του πατέρα' (Zografou 1989: 148). In addition, she claims that Kazantzakis endorsed misogynistic views, though she fails to sufficiently document this thesis, either by referring to an adequate number of texts or by citing sufficient and concrete instances of misogyny from Kazantzakis' real life. Hence the introspective, 'spiritual' biography that Zografou attempts fails to acquire the stamp of validity, especially since it seems to disregard modern scientific psychoanalysis (whether Freudian or that attempted by Lacan in connection with literature) as a frame of reference.

It is true, however, that if the biographer 'applies himself too intently to psychology, he runs the danger, unless he subdues his knowledge to his literary purpose, of producing a clinical exposition of a subject instead of the Life of a Man' (Kendall 1965: 121). And 'if one is to examine a work through the prism of external evidence, intuition is as necessary as judgment, and ingenuity is to be shunned, for the critical task is not to solve but to see' (Barzun 1975: 489). As Farinou-Malamatari observes, Zografou starts her biography pretty much as Emile Ludwig did in the so-called 'intuitive biographies' (though without displaying the spirit of sympathetic understanding towards her subject that Ludwig did): she starts from a piece of information, from a characteristic and then searches in the writer's works for anything that could serve as corroboration of the initial intuition. In the case of Kazantzakis, the 'key' to his life is considered the 'maiming' of his personality and his repressed hostility towards his father, which is juxtaposed to the motif of an omnipotent, virile superego, such as is God himself (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 24-5).

Lewis Mumford pointed out long ago that it is the effort made in interpreting the subject that matters regardless of any mistakes made in this process: 'The new subject of biography has both surface and depth. The biographer who is not aware of this unconscious element, who does not seek to penetrate it, or, worst of all, who deliberately ignores all the special data it heaps up, is guilty of ignorance or childish cowardice; […]. It is better to make mistakes in interpreting the inner life than to make the infinitely greater mistake of ignoring its existence and its import' (Mumford 1934: 4). Of course, let us not forget that psychoanalytical criticism as a method has received major criticisms, to the point that Peter Brooks talks about 'imperialism' in the case of psychology claiming to interpret literature (Brooks 1994: 35) as well as that this kind of criticism has been 'unresponsive to its subtleties and uniqueness' and that it 'has to adapt to a world of poststructuralist doubt in which many believe that there is no longer anything at all outside the text' (Goring, Hawthorn & Mitchell 2001: 180).

Nevertheless, viewing Kazantzakis exclusively through the prism of his father, crucial as the paternal figure in his life may have been, suggests a rather short-sighted and limited perspective, which may well be associated with the role of Zografou's own feminist convictions in providing incentives for subsequent generations to avoid his example. As Goring, Hawthorn and Mitchell have observed, 'since the 1980s psychoanalytical theory has typically entered Literary Studies in company with feminism […] and many feminist literary-critical appropriations of psychoanalysis have been concerned with issues of gender formation, repression, and sexuality' (Goring, Hawthorn & Mitchell 2001: 179). Let us not forget the dedication at the very beginning of Zografou's book 'στην κόρη μου και σ' όλους τους νέους της γενιάς της' (Zografou 1989: 7), which provoked Eleni's completely contrasting

dedication in her own biography ‘είθε η ζωή και ο θάνατος του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη να βοηθήσει τους νέους ν’ ακολουθήσουν τ’ αχνάρια της ελπίδας τους και πέρα από την απελπισία’ in which heroic pessimism is praised and commended. Eleni Kazantzaki seems to respond to the allegations of nihilism made about Kazantzakis not only in her dedication, but also towards the end of her book. Characteristically, she points out that those who have studied Kazantzakis superficially or not at all, or who in reality believe in nothing, call him a nihilist but his work, life and letters prove the opposite (Kazantzaki 1977: 549).

As Bien noted, ‘whether Zografou’s one-sided book is libel or literary criticism is open to debate. Clearly, however, it influenced an entire generation against Kazantzakis, probably because its exaggerations are often so brilliantly true. How ironic that this impassioned woman is likely to be remembered not so much for her own creative work as for a destructive critique of another writer’ (Bien 1998).

ELLI ALEXIOU: BIOGRAPHY AND DESTINY

Elli Alexiou (1894-1988) was Galateia Kazantzakis’ younger sister and a writer herself. She obtained her diploma to work as a teacher in Herakleio (1913) and later, after receiving a scholarship from the French government, she took courses at the University of the Sorbonne (1945) and became acquainted with French literary figures like Luis Aragon and Paul Eluard. Having been brought up in a literary family and having met with famous people with progressive ideas since an early age, Alexiou adopted a leftist ideology, which even led to her self-imposed exile (1949) in Eastern Europe (in Romania and Eastern Germany). She returned to Greece in 1962 in order

to attend her sister's funeral, and it was only in 1965 that Alexiou regained her Greek nationality. Apart from the biography on Kazantzakis, Alexiou wrote a number of novels, reviews and articles in many magazines and papers, and translated Gorki, Sartre and numerous essays and novels from Russian and French. She also worked in education for a total of 42 years, both in Greece and abroad (Mitsakis & Theofani 2007: 62-3, Papageorgiou 1992: 168-171).

In her biography of Kazantzakis *Για να γίνει μεγάλος. Βιογραφία του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη* (1966)[11], Elli shares her experiences and reflections on her brother-in-law, both as a writer and as a man, at the same time providing the reader with rich photographic material, abstracts of his works, his speeches and his letters.

The aim of this chapter is to examine whether Alexiou saw Kazantzakis as someone predestined to become a distinguished writer, to excel in letters and acquire worldwide fame or, as the title of her book suggests, if she thought Kazantzakis had to put a great deal of effort (mental but also physical since he would work endless hours) in order to achieve this 'greatness', uniqueness and exceptionality. In addition, observations will be made as to whether her viewpoint on Kazantzakis was in any way negatively biased due to her sister's personal experience and intimate relationship with him, and as to whether she considered him a misogynist.

Alexiou's book consists of 104 brief chapters in several of which some points are repeated. Her biography, though loosely following a chronological order of events, also contains some chapters which merely express her own point of view on

[11] In this dissertation I have used the most recent 2004 (7th) edition of Alexiou's biography. There are no differences between the first (1966) and the last (2004) edition other than the addition of a 15-page Annexe at the end of the book with more material (letters, photos, information) on Kazantzakis which had been already added in the 1973 (2nd) edition. All later editions of the biography (i.e. from the 3rd to the 7th) are accurate reprintings of the first edition.

certain issues concerning Kazantzakis, such as his fear of his father, a comparison between Galateia's and Eleni's personalities, Kazantzakis' political ideology etc.

In the Introduction to her book, Alexiou states that her motivation in writing this biography was the pressing need inside her to share the precious experience she had had with this great writer before she dies. She is well aware that her aspirations for the biography she is composing cannot be compared to those of Henri Troyat or Romain Roland, but does not fail to point out, however, that even biographies written by people with no special background or education in the genre, like Marie Curie's daughter, Eva, do succeed in familiarizing us with the figure portrayed in a warm and truthful way. This is what she herself will be attempting (Alexiou 2004: 7-9).

In the Introduction Alexiou attempts to give the impression that her biography is as reliable and objective as possible; she considers herself entitled to provide a biography of Kazantzakis since she had lived close to him from an early age and, as she states, the family environment of her youth was full of him: ΄Εζησα δίπλα στον Καζαντζάκη από παιδί. Το θέμα «Νίκος» ήταν το πρωταρχικό, που σαν συνύπαρχτο άρωμα, γέμιζε την οικογενειακή μου ατμόσφαιρα των παιδικών και νεανικών χρόνων'(Alexiou 2004: 7). Furthermore, Alexiou confesses that she has tried not to allow her feelings to interfere with the writing of the biography, which eventually - according to her - she did manage to achieve, since death, as she points out, creates a distance and proves passions vain (Alexiou 2004: 9). All these declarations made in the preface give her biography a sense of detachment, which is indeed largely justified.

Alexiou's narrative unfolds in an uncomplicated and straightforward fashion. Her account is something of a confession, in particular in the chapters that concern the

first years of Kazantzakis and Galateia's relationship and marriage. Her observation seems to be sharp and her narration flows in a lively and direct way, revealing personal shared experiences with the subject. The fact that she was much younger than the subject, whom she admittedly admires, combined with her eagerness to reveal as much as possible and as directly as possible may well have resulted in her assuming the role of a 'naïve' observer, in a way which helps convey and stress exceptionality and greatness in otherwise routine everyday moments while at the same time retaining a sense of realism. In other words, Alexiou's admiration for Kazantzakis seen through her eyes as a young girl facilitates the approach to him and presentation of him as someone great, approach which is nevertheless not fictional, hyperbolic, made-up or excessively idealised, but which is based by and large on reality. Her case seems quite similar to that of Frate Leone in *Saint Francis* (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 31).

What is more, Alexiou is a dramatic narrator: she is involved in the story she narrates, which sometimes, as it could be argued, affects the accuracy of the presentation. As William Dowling also observes, a certain artlessness, simplicity or naivety in the biographical narrative can appear attractive, even virtuous, qualities and become a guarantee of fidelity or truthfulness, or in Walton's words like an "artless pencil, guided by the hand of truth" (Dowling 1978: 86). Ira Nadel adds that 'the majority of dramatized, participatory narrators are also naïve and, in the course of their telling, progress from innocence to experience, from ignorance to knowledge of their subject' (Nadel 1984: 172). At this point, Farinou-Malamatari aptly observes that there is an evolution in the perspective that Alexiou adopts: Her perspective as a young girl predominates at the time of Nikos' and Galateia's divorce, at the very beginning of her writing career as well as in her early steps in political engagement.

Later on, however, Alexiou deals with Kazantzakis from her perspective as a mature and accomplished writer and a fully developed and confident personality (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 31). Alexiou, the previously naïve girl, even reaches the point of discussing things with/ directly addressing her 'great' subject while composing his biography, a practice also adopted by his wife Eleni at various points throughout her book.

As mentioned above, Alexiou's biography is a vivid narrative of Kazantzakis' life consisting mainly of recollections of the encounters they had. However self-indulgent or amateurish Alexiou's method of compiling and presenting things might seem, the degree of insight and literary artistry accomplished is quite high. As Lewis Mumford puts it, while the biographer must aim at clearness and accuracy, s/he must likewise acknowledge data which introduce an obscurity or a number of unresolved contradictions into the final portrait. As he argues, 'a biography which loses internal unity by reason of these unassimilable facts may be in closer accord with the actualities of life than a tidy narrative cut in one piece' (Mumford 1934: 6). Besides, as Eric Jacobs points out 'personal contact is of inestimable value to a biographer, putting the authorized variety at serious advantage over the unauthorized' (Jacobs 1996: 135). This immediate and direct knowledge of the subject may nevertheless have a number of drawbacks such as the fact that this knowledge cannot always extend to the whole of the subject's life and as a result only the periods of shared experience are projected; in addition, it can provide a synchronic, fragmentary portrayal of the subject rather than a complete account of the evolution of their personality; it could also have an advantage in terms of dramatization of events through dialogue but be found wanting as a narrative whole (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 30).

Alexiou's biography covers almost the whole of Kazantzakis' life from the early years when he was an adolescent in Crete and Alexiou would observe him with his friends until the very end of it, providing information even on his funeral in Crete, which is not mentioned or discussed in any of the other biographies composed after his death (e.g. Eleni's or Zografou's). Though Alexiou refers to Kazantzakis' childhood, her main focus is on his adult life. Regarding this practice (i.e. focusing on the mature life of the subject) Lee observes that 'until the 20th century, little detail was given about the childhood of the subject, unless to give anecdotes which pointed towards their behaviour in later life' (Lee 2009: 8). Moreover, let us recall that, in Aristotle's time, a biographical study focused on the individual's maturity, so that his essence was fully apprehended as his personality would have been complete; any reference to the subject's childhood and youth is intended to serve as a forecast of traits of the mature individual (Misch 1950: 291). So was this the case in Alexiou's narrative on Kazantzakis?

The main point of her book, as one would expect from the title of the biography, is to show how ambitious, strong-minded and determined to become someone important Kazantzakis was and his firm attitude in this respect, to the point of regarding his writings as the first priority in his life, ignoring his wife or other people around him. Through Alexiou's narrative Kazantzakis is depicted as a taciturn, hard-working artist who led an ascetic life, incredibly fond of travelling and engaged in profound philosophical explorations and investigations.

At some point in her biography, as already mentioned, Alexiou argues that Kazantzakis was a 'prédestiné' for fame, someone destined to achieve greatness (Alexiou 2004: 92). Nevertheless, no particulars or detailed line of argument are given in support of this view. As stated above, Alexiou's biography consists of 104 short

chapters with diverse content, all referring to the man or writer Kazantzakis. However, only one of them is entitled 'Prédestiné', which is actually what one would expect to be analysed in some depth judging from the book's title. And yet not even in this chapter consisting of no more than four pages in total, does Alexiou follow a clear line of argument in support of her view. In this chapter she points out Kazantzakis' commitment to his aims, his determination to acquire fame and his strong will to honour his family and generation, which in effect run counter to the notion of destiny.

In an attempt to sustain her view about destiny, Alexiou initially refers to the high marks Kazantzakis would achieve from a young age; he also managed to finish high school with distinction and the principal honoured him by assigning him to compose and deliver the valedictory speech. Through this speech, according to Alexiou, it became apparent that Kazantzakis had a gift for writing, which later he could further develop. She continues the list of his 'deeds' by highlighting the fact that he finished Law School in 1906 with distinction and by referring to his interesting dissertation completed in Paris. Alexiou admires and praises his efficiency and draws attention to the fact that he was not familiar with failure. According to her, this explains his psychological immaturity and inexperience in confronting the first negative reviews of his work when he was initially occupied with writing: his reaction was to become furious (Alexiou 2004: 92-5).

But all this, i.e. the fact that Kazantzakis achieved high grades and excelled even from his very early years, does not prove that he was destined to distinguish himself in life. On the contrary, no matter how talented, clever or knowledgeable Kazantzakis might have been by nature, Alexiou herself points out his strong determination to succeed: 'Αν διακρίθηκε στο διαλεχτό περιβάλλον που είχα κ' εγώ την κακή μοίρα να ζήσω, είναι γιατί η στοχοπροσήλωσή του δεν ήταν

φτιαχτή'(Alexiou 2004: 92). In other words, his greatness was the result of his own determined efforts to this end. Therefore, it seems that Alexiou rather confuses the sense of the word predestiny; what she means in reality seems to be nothing more than someone gifted by nature. But what she actually reveals about Kazantzakis was not so much his inherent aptitudes as his struggles to distinguish himself which, according to her, reached the point of his disregarding anything concerning his everyday or personal life. In this sense, strong determination and effort to achieve greatness on the one hand and destiny on the other do not seem to be compatible or at the same time plausible. As Kendall puts it, '[…] when we enter upon the life of a great man, we put aside what we happen to know about him, and if the biographer is skillful at his business, we are willing, indeed we are anxious, to begin with the child and live a life along with him into greatness. Maurois is quite right: no statesmen or athletes or warriors are born - only babies. If Edel insists on reminding us what our subject is *going to be*, how can we plausibly lose ourselves in any moment when he *is*?' (Kendall 1965: 135).

But what is actually meant by greatness? According to Carlyle the Great Man comes in three main types: the Poet, the Prophet and God. The Great Man can sink into the mystery of the universe, perceive unseen sides of it, see further and be ahead of his time; thanks to his sharpness of mind and strong intuition he comes closer to the secrets of the Universe and his poetic work functions like a kind of revelation[12]. As regards biography, Carlyle assumed that it was a part of history. More specifically he associated the lives of great men - in the sense of highly influential individuals - with historical developments. As he maintained, 'the History of the World is the Biography of Great Men' (Carlyle 1898: 13).

[12] For more on Carlyle, biography and hero-worship cf. Drabble 1995: 172-3, Stapleton 1983: 143-5, Gillie 1977: 430 and Casper 1999: 209.

Coming back to Alexiou's biography, not only is the title of the book itself contradictory, but also her own 'argument' about greatness and destiny in Kazantzakis' case proves inconsistent, incoherent and thus erroneous. If Kazantzakis was a 'prédestiné' for fame, there is a contradiction in the title of Alexiou's biography *Για να γίνει μεγάλος*; the latter implies some progression of gradually becoming 'μεγάλος' whereas the meaning of the term 'prédestiné' is static, fixed and not dynamic, implying historical determinism. Again, with reference to Carlyle's definition of a 'great man' as someone who tries to surpass human limits and achieve supremacy no matter how hopeless or unpromising his claim might be, Farinou-Malamatari points out that this activity constitutes a crucial commitment by the individual to the concept of free will and a rejection of the notion of destiny. Therefore, she concludes, greatness and predestination cannot coexist (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 33). K. M. Harris also points out that everyone 'can claim as a birthright boundless freedom for self-realization. Self-denial means renouncing self-satisfaction in favor of infinite expansion of the ideal self […], to assert freedom against necessity, to try to overcome human limitations, and to attempt to seize omnipotence, however hopeless the aspiration' (Harris 1978: 67).

One plausible interpretation of what Alexiou means when referring to Kazantzakis' greatness could be how determined he actually was to consciously deny his human nature in order to transcend it by living and working as an ascetic; all this self-denial and 'sacrifice' on his part could indeed result in greatness as it could for any man acting thus. At this point one could not fail to notice that, when writing about Kazantzakis, Alexiou tends to employ titles alluding to a sense of glory, greatness or destiny: let us recall another book written by her and Stefanakis *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης: Γεννήθηκε για τη δόξα* (1983).

In terms of accuracy and objectivity, Alexiou gives the impression that she has done some proper - if not meticulous - research and has attempted to check pieces of information she has received from witnesses, especially when referring to events at which she was not present. Though her thoughts on Kazantzakis as a brother-in-law may have been embittered owing to her sister's unsuccessful marriage, Alexiou appears to present events as impartially as possible. Her love for Kazantzakis is spontaneous, fraternal and genuine and her admiration of his work enormous. By referring to disagreeable incidents in his life with Galateia and implying how much her sister might have been hurt or might have been unhappy in her life with her husband, Alexiou does not intend to reduce Kazantzakis' importance as a literary figure and intellectual, as Zografou did. She deeply respects the magnitude of his works and tries to keep her distance from both him and her sister, both as an individual and as a writer.

Even when referring to her own sister, Alexiou points out her uncompromising nature; tolerance was not one of her virtues and she could not easily accept points of view different from her own. In addition, Alexiou does not hesitate to confess that Galateia would talk to Kazantzakis in a blunt way; she would pitilessly criticize his works and ask him to create and establish new literary characters instead of being obsessed with old ones. But at the same time Alexiou is quick to explain that it was just in her sister's character to express herself so openly, boldly and freely to everyone: her family, Varnalis or Avgeris[13]. She was not so abrupt just towards her husband. Furthermore, Alexiou tries to justify Galateia's demeaning attitude towards Kazantzakis by referring to what was at the time the recent history of Greece. More

[13] Both Kostas Varnalis (1883-1974) and Markos Avgeris (nom de plume of George Papadopoulos, 1884-1973) were literary figures and close friends of Nikos Kazantzakis, Elli Alexiou and Galateia. Avgeris became Galateia's second husband after her separation from Kazantzakis.

specifically, the years after the occupation and the post-war years were hard for Greece, a time when thousands of people were prosecuted, tortured to death or died in exile, people who had proved their heroism in practice at a time when the only thing Kazantzakis did was to show a progressive, atheistic superficiality. This was something that Galateia just could not take (Alexiou 2004: 187-8).

If Alexiou is in any way critical of or shows resentment towards Kazantzakis in her book, this was due to his attitude towards Galateia on a personal level. It seems that Alexiou cannot forgive him for stopping an old friend of his marrying Galateia after they had been broken up for a while. Manolis Georgiadis, a brilliant, well educated and well-off man, according to Alexiou, was in love with Galateia and started dating her after she had broken up with Kazantzakis and the latter had left for Paris. In Paris, as soon as he found out about this, Kazantzakis fervently intervened to prevent this marriage, a move - according to Alexiou - indicative of Kazantzakis' enormous selfishness, as it was not his love for Galateia but merely his hurt ego that urged him to destroy her happiness. Kazantzakis could just not accept that after the leading role he had played in Galateia's life, he would return from Paris to find himself disconnected and the order of things disrupted (Alexiou 2004: 33). And all this for what? At this point it seems that Alexiou is inclined to feel sympathy for her sister's life; she does not omit to stress her sister's good looks and the fact that she had a beautiful, young body, a body which - she confidently states - stayed untouched for twenty-six years in total by the side of this man (Alexiou 2004: 192).

As far as Kazantzakis' attitude to women is concerned, Alexiou has devoted one chapter of her book to this and entitled it 'The Woman'. In this she argues that Kazantzakis would classify women among the weak and that in all his works, from the very first till the last, he would treat them as second rate human beings. Alexiou

claims that in all his works the role of the woman is limited to serving as sex objects for men; women never appear to carry any important message in the plot nor to be attributed any mentality. Alexiou continues that Kazantzakis uses the female characters in any way and for as long as he desires and then he either drops them or 'sacrifices' them, as is most commonly the case. Alexiou finishes the chapter by pointing out that Kazantzakis defines women as parasites (Alexiou 2004: 115-7). Referring to Zorba's belief that the woman is not a human, the result of his reasoning that: every human wants to be free, the woman does not want to be free, therefore the woman is not a human, Gina Politi also concludes that the woman in this text [*Zorba the Greek* (1943)] is regarded as an object and defined as a possession, for instance the wife of X, the field of X etc. Yet, this value system, which is reproduced in *Zorba*, though it harks back to a much earlier stage of social evolution and thus implies a certain misogyny, seems to be in accordance with the authenticity she identifies in the book as regards some elements in Greek society as late as the early twentieth century (Politi 2001: 39-42).

As already mentioned, according to Alexiou, Kazantzakis does not think highly of women or of their destiny in life; his attitude towards them appears rather demeaning, and definitely not compatible with that of a gentle, sensitive and cultivated person and artist. His inconsiderate attitude is pointed out once again by Alexiou, this time not with reference to the female characters in his books but to incidents from real life. More specifically, Galateia, who suffered from neurasthenia and needed him, never received his psychological support, but on the contrary she was left alone back home while Kazantzakis travelled abroad for years (Alexiou 2004: 191). Alexiou also mentions an incident between his second wife Eleni and Kazantzakis that took place in their house in Paris and at which Alexiou happened to

be present: The phone was ringing and he would not answer; instead he kept calling Eleni, who was in the kitchen, probably busy with something else, to answer it. When she came to answer the phone, he said rudely that he was glad that such incidents took place in the presence of other people (meaning Alexiou) so that they realized what kind of person he was living with! Eleni was frustrated but said nothing in reply (Alexiou 2004: 199).

But does Alexiou adequately and convincingly back up her view that Kazantzakis viewed and treated women both in his texts and in real life with contempt and disrespect, as something unworthy of note? As far as I am concerned, though she states categorically that in all his works women are treated as second-class human beings (Alexiou 2004: 115), she fails to provide sufficient documentation in support of her view. She refers rather generally - though disinterestedly - to only four of his works: *Protomastoras, Freedom or Death, Zorba the Greek* and his *Odyssey*. Again the reference to the treatment of women in his texts covers no more than two pages in her book (i.e. pp. 115-6) - actually no more than two paragraphs - though the fact that she does not go to much effort to prove her point of view might suggest that she is totally familiar with, confident and convinced of Kazantzakis' attitude to women, so she does not feel the need to prove anything, but takes it for granted that that was just the way he was. As regards the women in his life, one could argue that he may not have valued his two wives as much as he should, but this was not owing to any misogynistic feelings or mentality but rather to his incredible selfishness; Kazantzakis put himself, his own needs and goals above everything else (including women) come what may.

All this burning ambition to achieve greatness might well have actually resulted from the pressure exerted by his father, who always demanded that his son

excel in everything and prove himself worthy of his ancestors and his homeland. Alexiou, like Eleni, mentions the delight and sense of freedom that Kazantzakis felt upon the death of his father: 'Κόπηκε το μυστικό αόρατο σκοινί που μ' έδενε με την υποταγή και με το φόβο… σκίστηκε το δουλοχάρτι, ήμουν τώρα ελεύτερος, απελεύτερος… Στη ζωή ένα μονάχα άνθρωπο φοβήθηκα, τον πατέρα μου. Τώρα ποιον να φοβηθώ;' (cited in Alexiou 2004: 210). As he himself had admitted, his fear of his father outweighed all the love and respect he could feel for him. In effect, his pursuit of writing was the result of his fear of his father; otherwise he could have been a great fighter or become more actively involved with practical aspects of life. Kazantzakis confesses that his own blood had been reduced to ink due to his father: 'Το αίμα μου το είχε καταντήσει μελάνι…' (cited in Alexiou 2004: 209). Alexiou sympathizes with Kazantzakis for the repression caused by his father but avoids being as judgmental and critical as Zografou who mercilessly attributes his 'tragic' adult life to his inability to stand up to his father and take control of his life. Alexiou, however, points out Kazantzakis' inconceivable submission to his father and the fact that he 'κατάφερε να αποδεσμευτεί ηθικά, οικονομικά, να γλυτώσει από την τυραννική του καταπίεση, να βρει τον εαυτό του, μόνο μετά το θάνατο του πατέρα του, το 1934. Όσο αυτός ζούσε, ασκούσε επάνω του δαιμονική επίδραση' (Alexiou 2004: 38).

As regards his work, it is worth mentioning that Alexiou, unlike her sister Galateia and Zografou, does not think that Kazantzakis imitates other philosophers or uses their ideas unaltered, without at least trying to develop them or elaborate on them. She admits that Kazantzakis was a cultivated and well-educated writer whose range of reading was wide and who may have been influenced by philosophical or ideological trends (Alexiou 2004: 145). In any case, the latter may have constituted the basis for the development of his own ideas. It would be against his own nature,

she remarks, to appropriate to himself ideas belonging to someone else. Besides, she observes, Kazantzakis had his own style, idiomatic Cretan vocabulary and content characterized by profound ideas that rendered his works distinctive, unique and unrepeatable (Alexiou 2004: 145).

Obviously Alexiou values Kazantzakis as a writer immensely, maybe even more than his second wife Eleni. Moreover, Alexiou's biography is the only one of the four to dedicate seven chapters on his literary techniques and to share her personal views on them with her readers. As she observes, his technique presupposes great wisdom and background, as well as several innate aptitudes, and shows an awareness of modern theory on writing techniques. As she points out, his own technique develops gradually over time, as he writes and rewrites his works so that they eventually become highly-crafted and sophisticated (Alexiou 2004: 325).

Moreover, for Alexiou, Kazantzakis' life as a person is totally identified and in full correspondence with his fictional work: 'Ο Καζαντζάκης βρισκόταν και *σαν άνθρωπος σε πλήρη ταύτιση με το έργο του*. Είτε τον ζούσες, είτε τον διάβαζες, την ίδια εντύπωση αποκόμιζες. Ό,τι ξαφνιάζει στο έργο του, ξαφνιάζει και στη ζωή του…[…]. Και το πιο αξιοπρόσεχτο η ζωή του, το βιωμένο έργο του είναι ισοδύναμο σε πρωτοτυπία, γούστο, *και σκληρότητα*, με το έργο του το συγγραφικό' (Alexiou 2004: 145)[14]. As Farinou-Malamatari notes, here we have a romantic concept of the poetic creation: the man channels his passions into his work and therefore it is from his own work that one should seek the biography. Or to put it differently: one could think of the poet's life as a piece of art, a novel, a poem or drama, that is to say that the poet should not be perceived as a normal human, as the subject of his life but rather as the poet of his own life (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 34). Besides, Carlyle

[14] Alexiou's own emphasis.

believed that there could be no truer representation of the poet than that provided in his own writings and therefore 'the Biography of great men, especially of great Poets, that is, of men in the highest degree noble-minded and wise, might become one of the most dignified and valuable species of composition' (cited in Altick 1979: 101).

Alexiou finishes her biography by citing a long list of reviews of Kazantzakis' work provided by prominent figures of literature or politics, which is indicative of the thorough way she seems to have researched the subject. This orderly documentation of hers reminds us also of Eleni.

At this point it has to be mentioned that there are very few reviews of Alexiou's book, one of which is that by Vasos Varikas who finds that the loyal fans of the 'legend' called Kazantzakis would be unreasonably shocked at the disappointing image Alexiou provides of him. He does acknowledge the fact that Alexiou writes without emotion and with undoubted frankness and points out that in any poet or writer, man and work are two completely different things; a writer's personal life should not influence us in forming or changing our opinion of their work (Varikas 1980: 98-9)[15]. In general, even the very few online reviews of Alexiou's biography[16] acknowledge by and large her narrative strength as well as the fact that she manages to present her point of view largely without any strong feeling.

In conclusion, though at times influenced by her sister's relationship with Kazantzakis, Alexiou manages to provide a quite detached and unbiased account of his life. Her material is extensive and the examples of personal contact with him ample. However, in none of them does she succeed in showing the writer's greatness

[15] Vasos Varikas' review was firstly published in the newspaper *Το Βήμα της Κυριακής* on 25.12.1966.
[16] I am referring mainly to reviews by publishers (e.g. Kastaniotis), literature-orientated Greek sites, readers'comments in forums as well as to one or two reviews which appeared in the Communist newspaper *Rizospastis*, the ideology of which Alexiou endorsed.

to be the result of destiny. According to her Kazantzakis was meant to achieve greatness, yet in her narration she constantly points out the great efforts he made and his determination to become someone to be remembered. As regards misogyny, although she does not specifically attribute this quality to him, she seems perfectly convinced that Kazantzakis considered women inferior and treated them as such in all his works, but never provides adequate evidence in support of this view.

ELENI KAZANTZAKI: AN UNRELIABLE BIOGRAPHY?

Eleni Kazantzaki (née Samiou, 1903-2004) was Nikos Kazantzakis' second wife, a writer and a journalist. They met in May 1924 when she was 21 and he was 41 and got married in 1945, after a 21-year relationship. At 655 pages Eleni's book *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης. Ο ασυμβίβαστος. Βιογραφία βασισμένη σε ανέκδοτα γράμματα και κείμενά του* (1977)[17] is the longest existing biography of Kazantzakis. Eleni lived in close contact with Kazantzakis as his partner for longer than any other woman and was his wife at the time of his death, which makes her biography the one with the most authority. Therefore, Eleni's book aspires to be the fullest (as far as length is concerned), most precise and most valid account of Kazantzakis' life and at the same time, a more or less direct reply to all that had been written in the meantime on her

[17] Her biography was originally published in French in 1968 and was entitled *Le Dissident: Biographie de Nikos Kazantzaki*, Paris 1968. It is worth noting that the biography was translated into English and published in the UK and the USA in the same year (i.e. 1968), which is indicative of a certain mobilization in its promotion and circulation at an international level. The biography was later translated into German, Spanish, Greek, Hungarian and Romanian.
For the needs of the present dissertation I have used the Greek 1977 edition, as it was in Greek that Kazantzakis composed his letters (even if at times he may use French, English or other languages in some short phrases in some of his letters) and therefore the Greek edition brought me more directly to the original language used in the records of the subject. I have, however, consulted the English and French editions as well, and noticed no major differences in the conveyance of meaning; though the Greek edition, published nine years after the initial one, has been enriched with more photographic material on Kazantzakis. I will therefore occasionally be citing Eleni and/or Kazantzakis in Greek, as I find that this best conveys their thoughts.

husband's life, especially as far as the other three women writers are concerned (cf. Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 14). It should be mentioned, however, that apart from the three biographies composed by Galateia, Alexiou and Zografou, in the meantime (i.e. before Eleni wrote her own biography) two more biographies had been published on Kazantzakis; that of Nikiforos Vrettakos: *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης: Η αγωνία του και το έργο του* (1960) and that of Aziz Izzet: *Nikos Kazantzaki: Biographie* (1965), while Prevelakis had also provided a kind of bio-critical study on Kazantzakis: *Ο ποιητής και το ποίημα της Οδύσσειας* (1958).

The aim of this chapter is to examine whether Eleni, though basing herself on her husband's own personal records (i.e. letters), manages to provide a reliable account of him, or whether she tends rather to idealize his portrait by embellishing or exaggerating situations in order to create a kind of 'myth' around his name. In addition, I will attempt to trace wherein her (un)reliability lies (i.e. is she lying, hiding facts, interfering with the subject's documents whenever she considers this prudent, or merely projecting her husband's positive qualities and glossing over negative ones, thus composing a hagiography on him?) and at the same time to cross-check elements in her biography with other sources provided on Kazantzakis. Some other points to be explored are whether it indeed emerges from her portrayal of him that her husband was uncompromising, as the title of her book suggests, and if any mention is made of misogyny.

From the very beginning of the biography, Eleni herself states the aim of her book; the motivation that urged her to write about her husband was not to interpret the writer Kazantzakis but just to let his voice be heard and to leave him to talk freely with the people he loved (Kazantzaki 1977: 8). A little later on she explains that she would never have got involved in the writing of a book on Kazantzakis had he not

himself asked her to do so and even left a draft with the structure (i.e. the titles of the chapters) of the book to be written. Eleni remembers her husband asking her to write a book on him after his death, as she would be the only person to know him so well. After much hesitation, since she was well aware how much courage and determination this would take, she confesses that she was finally convinced to do so only after she had found among her husband's papers a half-written page, a half-started outline entitled 'Eleni's book' («Το βιβλίο της Ελ[ένης»]) (Kazantzaki 1977: 14). So now she found herself composing a biography, which she regarded as a very challenging task compared to other forms of writing such as novels, possibly implying that Galateia's book on Kazantzakis, a novel, was quite a painless and undemanding job compared to hers. In short, Eleni appears to have written this biography out of respect for her husband's wishes and by no means out of personal ambition.

Eleni's biography is based on a wealth of material including a considerable number of personal letters, photos and abstracts of Kazantzakis' works, shared experiences, travels, diaries and memories of him. Thus she ended up compiling what might be called an 'accumulative biography' (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 10, Kendall 1965: 14). Cuddon's point about biography: 'almost any form of material is germane to the biographer's purpose: the subject's own writings (especially diaries and letters), his laundry bills, official archives, memoirs of contemporaries, the memories of living witnesses, personal knowledge, other books on the subject, photographs and paintings' (Cuddon 1977: 78) applies perfectly in the case of Eleni's biography. At the same time Eleni exploits the importance of the *locale* (Kendall 1965: 150), that is to say the setting(s) in which the subject spent his life, the places at which they both shared moments, Kazantzakis' manuscripts and in general all 'these enduring

ambiences, atmospheric and substantial' from which 'the biographer elicits both aid and comfort, information and, name to be named, inspiration' (Kendall 1965: 150).

Eleni's biography covers - albeit briefly - all of Kazantzakis' life. She starts her story from the year 1924, the year they met, and it is only nineteen pages later that she starts talking about the early years of Kazantzakis' life, thereafter following a chronological order. For the early years, 1883-1902, she writes no more than a page. In general, she tends to reveal Kazantzakis' life year by year (especially after the year they met and were together as a couple) unless her information on him is limited or no remarkable events are to be traced, in which case she describes her husband's life in a less expansive way, taking several years at once (e.g. 1883-1902, 1902-1906, 1910-1913 etc).

As in the other three biographies by women, Kazantzakis is portrayed here as a very hard-working and conscientious writer; he used to devote long hours to his demanding texts, reading them, writing, correcting and rewriting them many times until a satisfactory result had been accomplished. This whole vigorous process, however, is considered as most challenging, creative and productive, and to him, it accounts for the intensity with which he is occupied with his writings.

Eleni goes on to point out some of the more positive qualities of her husband's personality: his pride and superior vision of life, his tolerance and generosity. Kazantzakis would give his books away rather than sell them, and when he did so he would be ashamed to ask for his rights as a writer (Kazantzaki 1977: 463). And in 1948, when Kazantzakis decided to hand in his resignation to UNESCO, Eleni thought to herself that it was a pity he had quit, as with six more months' salary they

could have bought a couple of flats in Paris and solved their financial problems for good (Kazantzaki 1977: 550).

Moreover, Eleni does not omit to underline the promptness of her husband to sign the intellectual property rights for his translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* over to Kakridis' children (Kazantzaki 1977: 635). In addition, close to the end of his life and while in Freiburg, Kazantzakis did not accept the Peace Committee of Beijing's offer to cover his hospital fees; the offer itself and the friendship of the Chinese people seem to have touched and affected Kazantzakis more than any amount of money could have. Eleni also points out Kazantzakis' free spirit, controversial views and open-mindedness, all displayed in his attitude towards politics, to the point that, as Eleni notices, the right wing suspect and accuse him of being a paid communist from Moscow, while the left did not approve of him because he was a mystic, and the leaders of the Communist Party even accused him of being an agent of the Intelligence Services (Kazantzaki 1977: 477).

Regarding his attitude to religion, Kazantzakis proves himself once again independent minded, causing a number of reactions and misunderstandings even on the part of the Pope himself. But Kazantzakis, as Eleni hastens to affirm, never meant it to be so. She points out what he wrote about his novel *The Last Temptation*: 'Κατάπληξη μου κάνει πάντα η στενοκεφαλιά και η στενοκαρδιά των ανθρώπων· να ένα βιβλίο που το έγραψα με βαθιά θρησκευτική έξαρση, με φλογερή αγάπη για το Χριστό, κι ο αντιπρόσωπος του Χριστού, ο Πάπας, δεν καταλαβαίνει τίποτα, δε νιώθει τον χριστιανικό έρωτα που γράφτηκε και το καταδικάζει!'(Kazantzaki 1977: 613).

The duty that Kazantzakis feels towards his ancestors and which seems to have marked his life and course of action is also highlighted in Eleni's biography. His task is to honour Greece and especially Crete where he comes from through his works; he takes great pride in having been born a Greek and the intellectual superiority of Greece, which at the same time creates responsibility, is highlighted even in his very last letters: 'Πρέπει, αλήθεια, να 'μαστε περήφανοι για τη σύμπτωση αυτή να γεννηθούμε Έλληνες. Και συνάμα να νιώθουμε, κάθε στιγμή, σε κάθε μας λόγο, σε κάθε γραμμή και στίχο που γράφουμε, πως έχουμε μεγάλη ευθύνη'(Kazantzaki 1977: 558).

By this point it has become quite apparent that for Eleni Kazantzakis had every possible human virtue, every desirable quality and that anyone who disliked any characteristic of her husband's personality, just did not love him or failed to perceive his high idealism.

But does Eleni always manage to provide an objective enough account of her husband's life through such a description? Judging by her own words, Eleni intends to be as detached and neutral as possible. As she affirms, 'Δεν προσπαθώ να ξομπλιάσω τον δάσκαλο και σύντροφό μου. Μήτε να τον μαυρίσω. Δεν ήταν πάντα εύκολο ν' αναπνέεις την πυρωμένη ανάσα του' (Kazantzaki 1977: 354). Nevertheless, throughout her book, Eleni appears as an affectionate and compassionate partner and wife, always there to stand by the side of her husband and support him rather than as an objective observer of his life; she justifies him in almost every matter and her admiration reaches the point of considering him some sort of a wise saint full of patience and endurance, loyal to his principles, beliefs and values, consistently trying to fulfil a superior goal. Moreover, she believes that she has gained maturity by sharing her life with this man. As she admits, 'Αγάπησα αυτόν το χαριτωμένο σοφό

άνδρα και νομίζω πως ωρίμασα δίπλα του, όσο μου το επέτρεπε η φύση μου' (Kazantzaki 1977: 354). At this point one could make an association: Eleni, as already mentioned, was much younger than Kazantzakis and she admittedly admired him. The fact that her father[18] died when she was still very young might well have resulted in her seeking a paternal figure as a role model in Kazantzakis.

In her attempt to achieve detachment, Eleni makes use of documentary material concerning her husband such as his own letters. Those written sources, however, are not presented in their complete, 'uncensored' form; on the contrary, the reader is confined to carefully chosen, limited parts of them. As Farinou-Malamatari also notices, Eleni cuts anything of a private or practical character, thus choosing to project the public and official element over the everyday, which adds to the image of a grand figure and uncompromising man, as the title of her book suggests, and she adopts more or less intentionally a vague, omissive, literary style of writing - maybe in an attempt to imitate Kazantzakis' own language and style -, which adds to the mystery concerning their private life (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 14-5).

Eleni seems to adopt the 'orthodox Victorian position that some facets of a man's life are nobody's concerns but their own' (Altick 1965: 169). As Altick points out, 'where the truth was unpleasant - where it would shed discredit upon the subject himself, or irritate the reader's sensibilities - it had to be suppressed, or glossed over with elaborate circumlocution, or, if worse came to worst, admitted and then eloquently (and, if necessary, sophistically) extenuated' (Altick 1965: 152).

In other words, being the authorized biographer of Kazantzakis, Eleni finds herself busy with the care of her husband's figure and - above all - his reputation. She

[18] Eleni's father was Konstantinos Samios, a Professor at the National Technical University, Greece (Kazantzaki 1977: 23).

is well aware that his fame will revive in public consciousness and therefore, in order to establish or further preserve the respectability of this grand intellectual, she dedicates herself to putting forward the best possible picture of her husband, even to the point of hagiography: 'Κρυφή τάση γι' αγιοσύνη; Πώς να εξηγήσει κανείς τη συνήθειά του ν' αφήνει αγόγγυστα να τον γελούνε;' (Kazantzaki 1977: 463). The fact that Eleni tends to project a divinized figure of Kazantzakis is also shown in another paper of hers (Kazantzaki 1983: 50) in which she refers to the dermatitis from which he suffered in 1922 while in Vienna. Women were very beautiful and tempting there, she points out, and Kazantzakis' body was struggling with his intellect so as to keep away from them. Eleni refers to the well-known psychoanalyst Dr Steckel's diagnosis of this 'illness as a "sexuality mask" occurring very seldom and happening almost only to some ascetics' (Kazantzaki 1983: 50). As a result, through her narrative, discretion is preserved; no inappropriate or very personal revelations are made and at the same time Kazantzakis' name and honour are defended.

With her biography Eleni was also providing a model for virtuous behaviour and/or spiritual aspirations. Biographies of this kind (cf. also *Zorba the Greek* or *Saint Francis*) are structured in such a manner as to meet the aims of 'monumentalizing, i.e. venerating (synchronically) and of perpetuating (diachronically) the memory of an elder or a teacher' (Farinou-Malamatari 1998: 28). The case reminds us also of the practice in nineteenth-century biography according to which the biographer would even sacrifice historical realism to the requirements of the subject's ideal portrait, since the time's 'commemorative urge was, as always in hagiography, inseparable from the didactic: the biographer dedicated himself not merely to honoring a luminous memory, but also to turning his subject's character and achievements into an *exemplum*' (Altick 1965: 147). The notion that a depiction of an exemplary life could

serve as a precious lesson for others had also been impressed upon Maurois who actually 'considered that one of the vital functions of biography was to convey to large numbers of readers some of the loftiest examples of human achievements, examples which he hoped would motivate others to live better lives' (Kolbert 1967: 50).

Nowadays, composing a biography with Victorian discretion - or even hypocrisy - may sound unthinkable. As Lee points out, contemporary readers of Western biography generally feel that there should be no censorship or idealization, attributing great value to its honesty and its 'thorough-going investigativeness' (Lee 2009: 9). On the other hand, it is held that a biography written to inspire new generations through their example 'does honor to any age, and to disparage it simply because it often is bad history is to depreciate its motives and its influence for good' (Altick 1965: 148).

Therefore, the illusion of intimacy that should be developed between the subject and the reader is broken due to Eleni's cautious selectivity and careful arrangement of his correspondence. It could be considered axiomatic that the letters of a man *contain* his life; that, indeed, a reproduction of them constitutes the most honest record of his life that we can become acquainted with (cf. Altick 1965: 193-5). But thanks to Eleni's intervention and control over Kazantzakis' letters, no particular (let alone inappropriate) revelation is made and therefore a candid portrait of the subject is not achieved. She seemed on the contrary to adopt the 'critical doctrine that the poet and the man were separable, the one open to, the other exempt from, public curiosity' (Altick 1965: 154). And as Thomas Carlyle put it, 'rich as we are in biography, a well-written life is almost as rare as a well-spent one' (cited in Altick 1965: 185).

Eleni's method of composing her husband's biography is therefore rather biased, exaggerated, uncritical and therefore does not assess her subject's qualities realistically, since she is too strongly influenced by her feelings. Things are presented in an idealized, embellished fashion and harmoniously assembled to constitute the myth of the uncompromising Kazantzakis. Yet all this 'harmony' and cautiousness in the presentation of the material eventually fails to provide either an objective or even a convincing account of the writer's life. A characteristic example of this treatment can be seen in the following: '[…] τόσοι άνθρωποι μίσησαν τον Νίκο με τόσο πάθος […] γιατί τίποτα, καμιά αναποδιά δεν κατάφερνε να διαβρώσει την ψυχή του. Ανεμόδαρτος, ελεύθερος πολιορκημένος, κατάφερνε να στέκει ορθός και τελικά, ύστερα από σύντομον αγώνα, να γελάει απόλυτα λυτρωμένος-λεύτερος! […] Στις κρίσιμες ώρες ήξερε να βρίσκει το σωστό λόγο, τον τόσο απροσδόκητο, […], να κάνει τη σωστή χειρονομία, το σωστό χάδι που σε αφόπλιζε. Αλχημιστής, ήξερε ν' αλλάζει και το πιο πρόστυχο μέταλλο και να το κάνει χρυσάφι' (Kazantzaki 1977: 317). Besides, she herself admits that she could not help being angry at the accusations made against her husband, especially when these concerned his wish to be nominated for the Nobel Prize: 'Εγώ διάβαζα όλες αυτές τις κακίες και θύμωνα' (Kazantzaki 1977: 543), and refers to the English writer Colin Wilson's book *The Strength to Dream* (1962) in which he argues that if Kazantzakis had written in Russian or his last name had been Kazantzovski, he would definitely have been more widely accepted and admired (Kazantzaki 1977: 543-4). As regards the genre of biography, it has to be mentioned, however, that this was not Eleni's first biography; she was familiar with the genre since she had composed a biography of Gandhi[19].

[19] Eleni Samios. *La sainte vie de Mahatma Gandhi*, Paris 1934. She also provided a study on Panait Istrati: Eleni Samios. *La verdadera tragedia de Panait Istrati*, Sandiago 1938. Among her other writings is a travel book on China: *China, a Short Journey in the Big Country* (n.d.).

Regarding Eleni's biography, Farinou-Malamatari points out the importance that Eleni attributes to the very last moments of Kazantzakis' life, the death-bed scene and the blessing he gave her; more specifically, Eleni asks him for his blessing a few minutes before he dies and there follows a laying on of hands. In this way, Eleni evolves from Kazantzakis' confidant in his lifetime to an 'ordained' missionary of the great man after his death, continuing the path that he had marked out and dedicating herself to the spreading of his work (Farinou-Malamatari 2008: 16-8).

In my attempt to check the objectivity of Eleni's account of Kazantzakis I compared her version of events with other sources which dealt with the same subject (mainly Prevelakis). The conclusion I have reached is that Eleni is not lying or falsifying facts (e.g. about Kazantzakis' travels and his impressions en route or his religious/political/philosophical points of view); it seems that Kazantzakis shared his views in the same way and on the same matters both with Eleni and Prevelakis through his letters. Subsequently, what seems to undermine her reliability is the fact that she tends to exaggerate the positive side of her subject and to 'demonstrate the dignity of the subject through the excellence of his work' (Mendelson 1978: 19), even by interfering with his own records, avoiding, unlike Galateia in her fictional biography, any reference to the way he would treat practical matters as a partner, husband or housemate, things which could possibly harm his public image.

At this point it has to be mentioned that finding reviews of Eleni's biography, which comment on the reliability and objectivity of her version, has not been an easy task. At the end of the 1998 edition, which is an accurate reprinting of the 1977 one, Patroklos Stavrou indicatively refers to the outstanding impression that her biography had made in France, UK, USA, Germany and Spain. He cites dithyrambic reviews from the French newspapers *Le Monde* (23.11.1968), *Nouvelles Littéraires*

(7.1.1968), as well as from the *Tribune de Genève* (18.3.1968), the Tokyo newspaper *The Japan Times* (30.10.1968), the Swiss *Le Peuple* (28.2.1969) and the German *Tages Anzeiger* (October 1972). In all of them the tribute that Eleni has paid to her husband's memory is acknowledged and praised; according to these critics, it seems that we, as mere readers, should be deeply indebted to this lady who - through this book - has managed to set before us this intellectual giant, helping us further penetrate his life and work. In other words, Eleni's biography was regarded at an international level as a work equivalent in value to the great man and writer Kazantzakis.

In particular as far as the *Le Monde* review was concerned, it is highly favourable towards - if not eulogistic of - Eleni's biography, even finding that its title in French *Le Dissident* is in full agreement with the content of Kazantzakis' life, as presented through his chosen published correspondence: 'on trouvera en tout cas dans le choix publié par sa femme une émouvante confirmation de cette liberté de pensée, de cette ferveur du coeur et aussi de cette intrasigeance morale dont Kazantzakis fit preuve toute sa vie. Le titre exprime à merveille ce que fut le voyageur, le penseur, l'écrivain et l'ami à travers toute sa vie : un homme en perpétuelle dissidence contre les injustices, les hypocrisies, les lâchetés, les compromissions, dont tant d'autres, autour de lui, se sont accommodés' (Lacarrière 1968 : 4)[20] .

In conclusion, Eleni depicts Kazantzakis as a writer/man with a number of positive qualities. Her role is that of a devoted wife who looks back with delight - and maybe adoration - at the moments she spent with a grand intellectual; she feels blessed to have shared her life with such a special person and is deeply saddened by

[20] Unfortunately I have not been able to check the rest of the reviews cited by Stavrou in the newspapers they were originally published because in Birmingham University Library no hard or online copies of these newspapers are available. I was only able to find a microfilm copy of *Le Monde*'s review of Eleni's book.

his death. Moreover, it is well known that she had been an invaluable assistant to Kazantzakis, as she would work tirelessly in order to promote his work internationally.

In her eyes Kazantzakis is uncompromising (as the title of her book suggests), an idealist, someone exceptional and certainly beyond the ordinary. However, only once in her (anything but short) book does Eleni attach the attribute 'ασυμβίβαστος' to him (Kazantzaki 1977: 442). This quality, though, is not sufficiently justified with arguments. Even if Kazantzakis' philosophy of life might have been represented as such (i.e. uncompromising), he himself in real life is portrayed as wishing to succeed in terms that his father/society would understand, even to the point of excessive ambition. Moreover, it seems more convincing and appropriate that a 'genuinely uncompromising' person should feel satisfied merely by serving a wider human or worthy cause; gaining recognition for this service would be welcome but definitely not sought for. Of course, Kazantzakis' work deserved and achieved worldwide acknowledgement, but in addition immense effort (involving pain, energy and time) was taken by Kazantzakis and his two wives - especially Eleni - to ensure that he became famous.

As mentioned above, Eleni's biography lacks objectivity and detachment: It is indeed based on Kazantzakis' letters, as the title of the book suggests, which are nevertheless not presented in their full form (nor are they - to the best of my knowledge - anywhere publicly available or accessible, unlike the letters belonging to Galateia who eagerly put them at the disposal of the Kazantzakis museum), which makes the reliability of this biography all the more suspect. Eleni takes the liberty of revising or cutting wherever prudent and in general manipulates his documents before publishing them, thus not letting the man speak for himself. Alexiou also mentions an

incident when she asked for access to Kazantzakis' personal records and Eleni refused to give her even one of Kazantzakis' letters (Alexiou 2004: 116).

Eleni covers a number of facets of her husband's personality such as his character, his job, his attitude towards politics, religion, homeland etc. but all in a very brief way. No specific mention is made of his attitude to women which might suggest that he was a misogynist. On the contrary, it appears that Kazantzakis tended to be influenced by certain women in his life (such as Rachel Lipstein) or admired them. In general, Eleni provides us with a descriptive rather than critical biography of her husband (even though she was a writer and a journalist herself), staying loyal to the 'mission' she was assigned by this notable person.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have examined four biographies of Kazantzakis written by women and after comparing them I have reached the following conclusions.

As regards the criteria established in the introduction, according to which the objectivity of a biography can be judged, it turns out that in terms of personal detachment, both from an ideological and emotional point of view, Alexiou's biography is probably the most objective one; as his wives, both Galateia and Eleni were involved in the life of Kazantzakis, which unavoidably - if not obviously - generates a degree of either negative or positive engagement, while Zografou is influenced by her leftist and feminist ideologies in her approach to the subject.

In terms of the best research and documentation, though Eleni's biography might have claimed the first place since she insists that her biography is based on the subject's most intimate records - namely the most immediate and reliable sources one could have - she ends up giving the reader merely an illusion of intimacy, as she intervenes by cutting whole sections of the letters. Galateia is writing fiction, and consequently of Alexiou and Zografou it is rather the latter's biography which should get the credit for best research and documentation because she is the only one of the four (or rather of the three since Galateia is writing fiction) to have formed a concrete, critical and insightful opinion on her subject and to follow a clear, coherent and consistent line of argument which supports her view on Kazantzakis as a 'tragic' man.

Lastly, Alexiou's biography can be deemed the most rounded: she approaches Kazantzakis from multiple perspectives (e.g. from her own point of view and her sister's close relationship with him starting from a young age and continuing in maturity, as a man, particularly as a writer, as a political and/or religious figure etc) and not merely through the prism of his relationship with his father and based exclusively on his writings, as is the case with Zografou. Eleni tends to focus on Kazantzakis as a writer (indeed as a great intellectual) whereas Galateia is concerned with him as a man and a writer (i.e. still not covering as many sides of his personality as her sister) and she does this through the genre of fiction.

Taking an overall view of all four biographies, it seems to me that they can be divided into two groups in terms of their similarities in the way they approach their subject. In the first group are Galateia and Zografou, who believe that Kazantzakis as a writer is not identified with Kazantzakis the man. Both are judgmental of his works, which they present as rather dépassé with nothing new to offer, especially as regards the role models which society really needs. On the

contrary, both biographies present Kazantzakis as constantly repeating himself and things already uttered before him by others. Finally, both these biographies are - by comparison with the other two - quite coherent, attempting to demonstrate what they have announced in the titles of their respective books (i.e. Kazantzakis was a superman or a tragic man).

Alexiou and Eleni's biographies belong in the second group. They have many similarities even as regards their content. Apart from the numerous small chapters they each have, they both provide the reader with photos, documents, letters, speeches and in general with personal records concerning the subject. In addition, both Alexiou and Eleni tend to believe that Kazantzakis' life and work were in total harmony, and both writers have a rather positive approach to him and avoid being judgmental. Nevertheless, for the most part, both women are more descriptive than critical and analytical, not strictly sticking to or being able to demonstrate what they have announced in the titles of their biographies: neither greatness as a result of destiny nor non-compromise are critically examined and/or proved as characteristics of the subject. However, the close relationship which each one had with the subject (as was the case with Galateia of course) and which they share with the reader certainly gives them a considerable degree of intimacy and some 'valuable' information, even if in practice this is useless and concerns mundane details of his everyday life.

As regards Kazantzakis and misogyny, even if this indictment has been made by some, none of the biographies demonstrate it to any extent in practice. To begin with, Eleni makes no reference to misogyny whatsoever; the fact, however, that Kazantzakis addressed her in the formal, plural vocative form clearly suggests a degree of distance in a relationship between a man and woman, especially a husband and wife. Galateia does not mention anything which could be seen as misogynistic in

her husband's treatment of her; she does point out though that Kazantzakis was not sufficiently supportive (mostly in emotional terms) or compassionate enough towards her, always placing his own needs first.

In her intuitive biography based exclusively on the subject's writings, Zografou concludes that Kazantzakis had misogynistic views, but she does not provide adequate proof in support of her thesis by referring to enough of his works in detail and is rather biased and influenced by her own feminist, liberal and leftist convictions. Alexiou also appears to consider that Kazantzakis' ideas were misogynistic but again, as in the case of Zografou, she does not provide sufficient documentation to support her view but tends to make generalized declarations and superficial references to a limited number of his writings. Even the incidents to which she refers (e.g. when Kazantzakis left Galateia home alone suffering from neurastheneia and travelled abroad, or when he demanded that Eleni answer the phone while she was busy and he was not) do not suggest misogyny in its wider sense (i.e. humiliation, verbal or physical violence) but rather indifference and selfishness.

But also, after having examined four of his major and most widely read novels, it does not seem to me that Kazantzakis portrays women in a misogynistic way. Of course, he may not have a very high opinion of their nature or mentality, thus rendering them subordinate, and may consider them (especially the group of *femmes fatales*) merely as temptations for men, who are thus 'required' to kill them at the end of each novel so that they can commit themselves undisturbed to their sacred assignments. But still in my view the fact that the male characters in Kazantzakis' fiction are depicted as attributing such value to women, allowing themselves to be distracted by the latter, rather implies that these women are actually highly valued: the extreme way (i.e. murder) in which men react, due to their repressed sexuality which

has caused them serious mental breakdowns and anxieties, could be interpreted as the result of the extreme power that women appear to have over men and their psychology. Thus in no sense is their power devalued nor is it denied that they ‘need’ to be murdered - the only possible way in which men, the ‘stronger’ sex, could deal with them.

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