

Sophie Shamanidi (Tbilisi)

SOME ASPECTS OF REPRODUCTION AND FUNCTION OF MYTH IN G. SEFERIS' POETRY

It is common knowledge that the creative interpretation of myth in Seferis' works has caused heated arguments. The problem chiefly concerns the use of so called "mythological method" by the poet, the essence of the method and the common and different aspects between Seferis and his contemporaries in applying the method.

Before discussing the exact point of our interest, we shall consider some aspects concerning the definition of mythos. We do not mean to join the discussion over the problem. We shall only dwell on the definition of *mythos* itself. The most acceptable to us seems the more or less traditional definition, which W. Burkert stated in the following way: *Mythen sind traditionelle Erzählungen mit besonderer 'Bedeutsamkeit'. Äußerlich zeigt sich dies in der Rolle der Eigennamen, die den erzählenden Text, sofern es sich um einem Mythos handelt, charakterisieren.*¹ The statement may remind us of the idea of A. Losev, a prominent Russian scholar: *Миф есть развернутое магическое имя.*² Thus nominated symbols, both images and events, are the most relevant elements of myth. These very nominated symbols acquire the function of so called "stable orientators" in the history of culture. The point we are making is that each mythological symbol conveys a certain piece of information, associations, emotions, which otherwise would require a large text to be rendered. Again, we refer to Losev, who thoroughly studied the application of symbols in art: *Всякий миф есть символ.*³ Thus, owing primarily to literature and art, these stable orientators acquired a unique position in human thinking, and has been stimulating the development of fiction and critical and analytical works throughout centuries.

The history of the creative interpretation of myth has exposed two relevant aspects of the process: a) the pieces of mythological information that captures writers' attention, and the methods they use to render a myth; b) the function of a myth in works of a writer. These two aspects will guide our study of Seferis' works.⁴ The first one we shall call reproductional (implies the mythological information used by the poet and the ways of its actualization in his works). Another aspect we shall call functional (refers to the function of a myth in his poetry).

While considering the so called **reproductional** aspect, we point out the following basic moments:

1. The most elementary and easily noticeable point for critics is the informational basis. Here we mean the mythological information used by the poet. Unlike many European writers, Seferis is characterized with "limited" selection of the mythological information. It is commonly known that he remains within the frameworks of the Greek mythology, where he prefers the Train cycle and respective episodes. It is noteworthy that Seferis is moderate even in nominating the mythological information - he nominates about 60 images.⁵
2. It is not difficult to identify Seferis' methods of interpreting the mythological information. His manner of introducing the elements of antiquity is well discussed in D. N. Maroniti's article: according to the latter, out of the three existing methods (*ταυτοσημία* – keeping to the primary mean-

¹ W. Burkert, *Antiker Mythos – Begriff und Funktion* (in: *Antike Mythen in der europäischen Tradition*, Hrsg. H. Hofmann, Tübingen, 1999), 14.

² А. Ф. Лосев, *Философия, мифология, культура*, Москва, 1991, 169.

³ А. Ф. Лосев, *Проблема символа и реалистическое искусство*, Москва, 1976, 174.

⁴ Creative interpretation of the classical tradition in George Seferis' works is discussed in a large number of critical works. The issue is also analyzed in our monography *Classical Tradition in Modern Greek Literature and George Seferis* published in 1999. Though the work offers a comprehensive study of mythos, we believe that modern investigations enable to expand the complex study of mythos in Seferis' works, the attempt of which is offered in the present paper.

⁵ Remarkably, Seferis' contemporary Georgian writer G. Tabidze uses 142 antiquity-related names, 56 of which are mythological images, cf.: K. Gardapchatze, *Antiquity Related Terms in the Poetry of G. Tabidze*, Tbilisi, 1995.

ing, *ετεροσημία* – purposeful diversion from the primary meaning, and *παρασημία* – the mean between the two methods), Seferis mostly chooses *παρασημία*. We share the opinion that *παρασημία* prevails in Seferis' works though he by no means ignores so called *ταυτοσημία* and *ετεροσημία*.⁶

3. Seferis' manner of using mythological information is very diverse. In this respect, we may nominate: a) the most elementary form – a lexical formative, a term or a proper name;⁷ b) a word combination or a phrase;⁸ c) a fragment from the mythological information;⁹ d) informational block;¹⁰ e) subtext.¹¹
4. Another point of our interest is the degree of clarity of the mythological information. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Seferis does not try to purposefully vague the information he uses. However, this does not mean that all of his poems are easy to decode. In this respect, we may classify his poems into two types: one type nominates the mythological information (*Helen*, *Andromeda*, *Astyanax*, etc.), while the other offers "stable orientators", which may stir certain associations in the reader. Thus, the poem *Description* may allude to the image of Medea,¹² while the verse Γ' of the *Three Secret Poems* is believed to be associated with Clytemnestra,¹³ and the third poem of *Mythistorema* stirs associations with sufferings of mercilessly murdered Agamemnon.¹⁴

⁶ For more information, see: Δ. Ν. Μαρωνίτης, Η αρχαιογνωσία του Σεφέρη, ζητήματα μεθόδου (in: Διαλέξεις, Αθήνα, 1992). The first method, that of *ταυτοσημία*, to our mind, is applied in *Companions in Hades*, where the poet, actually, does not change the myth. Seferis uses the method of *ετεροσημία* in *Narration* and *Sensual Elphenor* where he presents the characters in the context absolutely strange to them.

⁷ E.g. oars ("their oars/ mark the place where they sleep on the shore." *Argonauts*), the golden fleece ("The golden fleece shivered on the see." *Description*), the baths ("the baths of revenge". *Three Secret Poems*), Nesos' shirt ("Nesos' shirt". *Wednesday*. "tortured by my own shirt". *Mycenae*. "On Pelion among the chestnut trees the Centaurs shirt/ slipped through the leaves to fold around my body." *In the manner of G.S.*) etc. In the paper we use translations by E. Keely - Ph. Sherrard ions, cf.: G. Seferis, *Complete Poems*, translated, edited and introduced by E. Keely and Ph. Sherrard, Great Britain, 1995.

⁸ As an example we may mention the phrase from Aeschylus *Agamemnon*, used by the poet three times: "Ἔστιν θάλασσα τίς δέ ἰνυ κατασβέσει;

⁹ Out of numerous examples, we may recall the passage from *Helen* which gives the reason of Teucer's settlement on Cyprus: "...my fate, which wavers/ between the last sword of some Ajax and another Salamis,/ brought me here to this shore", or the passage from *Mycenae* which obviously alludes to the myth of Atrides: "I/ who've followed so many times/ the path from killer to victim/ from victim to punishment/ from punishment to the next murder/ groping/ the inexhaustible purple/ that night of return/ when the Furies began whistling/ in the meagre grass".

¹⁰ Here we mean the use of a comparatively large, complete story from the mythological information, e.g. the verse *Companions in Hades*, which represents the sad story of Odysseus' imprudent friends.

¹¹ We absolutely agree with M. von Albrechts' method of identifying a subtext, according to which a subtext may be formed of either a certain piece of literature, or a group of such works, or an extract (cf.: Μ. фон Альбрехт, Античные реминисценции и проблема индивидуализации в творчестве И.С.Тургенева, Тбилиси, 1998). Correspondingly, we should consider a concrete text instead the general mythological information. Thus, the subtext of *Helen* is Euripides' tragedy *Helen*, and the subtext of *The Name is Orestes* is the aged servant's story from Sophocles' *Electra*, the fabricated story which Seferis presents as true (cf.: Δ. Ν. Μαρωνίτης, Γραφή και ανάγνωση. Τα όρια της ανάγνωσης, in: Η ποίηση του Γιώργου Σεφέρη, Μελέτες και μαθήματα, Αθήνα, 1989, 78). Quite remarkable and complex is the subtext of *Mythistorema* itself: we believe the subtext of the poem's whole carcass is the model of an ancient tragedy with a prologue, episodes and an exodus. However, its structure resembles Homeric epics with 24 parts. Besides, parallels should be drawn between the principle of beginning and ending Homeric epics and Seferis' poems: their beginning introduces the chief motifs and themes, while their ending is not the finale in its traditional sense as it implies further development of events (cf.: Ρ. Гордзιани, Проблемы гомеровского эпоса, Тбилиси, 1989, 112. For the ending of *Mythistorema*, cf.: Μ. Vitti, Φθορά και Λόγος, Εισαγωγή στην ποίηση του Γιώργου Σεφέρη, Αθήνα, 1989, 72). As for the imaginary and quite uncertain "action" of the poem, its subtext is *Odyssey* on one hand, and *Argonautica* on the other. We believe the combination of these two informational sources are absolutely justified. The imaginary ship and crew of *Mythistorema* is very significant, like Argo and its crew. On the other hand, the fate of Seferis' travellers bear direct resemblance to *Odyssey*, beginning with the shipwreck and ending with Odysseus' loneliness (cf.: Αλεξ. Αργυρίου, Δεκαεπτά κείμενα για τον Γ. Σεφέρη, Αθήνα, 1990², 140).

¹² This idea is testified by the orientators given in the text. They are "the golden fleece" and "Sympligades". We may understand the poem as Medea's description (which is implied in the title as well). In this respect, the following passage proves quite interesting: "Here I gazed at the moon/ dyed in the blood of a young she wolf". As accepted in classical antiquity, the moon is connected to sorcery and Hecate, the goddess who initiated Medea into the art of enchantments. The moon is "dyed in the blood of a ...she wolf" – so, besides the image of a wolf, we should as well consider the shed blood. If we regard the moon as the symbol of Medea's sorcery, and the she-wolf as Medea herself, the passage may be understood as the interpretation of Medea's vengeance. As it is known, Euripides compares Medea to a lioness (Med. 187-188). As for the parallels between Medea's image and a female wolf, neither antiquity nor the modern literature offers such a comparison.

¹³ It is not easy to identify the main character of the verse. Though, the previous poem already implies that the "protagonist" is the accomplice of the "celebrated murder". It ends as follows: "and on the stage the light dimmed as though for some celebrated murder." Besides the obvious orientators "the baths of revenge", nothing seems to allude to Atrides' tragedy. However, to our mind, the "plot" of the poem resembles Aeschylus' trilogy, especially *Libation Bearers*. The poet presents Clytemnestra right before her death. Seferis does not specify the details; he only offers implications. Clytemnestra leaves her bed, which she will never return to; she comes out of the bath where she murdered Agamemnon. Seferis uses the term *λουτρά*, the word which is several times used in *Libation Bearers*. It is also noteworthy that in Aeschylus' tragedy the appearance of servants with Orestes' things indicate the start of the vengeance scene. Servants' role seems quite significant there. Cf.: Seferis: "Slaves brought them knives". But the chief guarantee of the vengeance in *Libation Bearers* is the soil -

5. We should also point out the parameter of the informational volume. The mythological information in Seferis' works may be confined to a single line, passage, poem, or embrace his whole poetry.
6. While considering the reproductional aspect, we also pay attention to the combination of different pieces of information in Seferis' poetry. Here we mean the cases when the poet creates new contexts by means of combining different informational elements. This is best illustrated in the verse *Argonauts*, which combines fragments from Plato's *Alcibiades* and the information from *Argonautica* and *Odyssey*. Likewise, the poem *Helen*, besides Euripides' tragedy, contains the information from *Iliad*.¹⁵ To our mind, two different sources are combined in *Pedlar from Sidon*. Besides the setting, we believe that there is something else that links the main character to the island. As it is known, already in classical antiquity, there existed two traditions concerning Hermaphroditus. The earlier one associated the androgenic creature Hermaphroditus to Cyprus, and ignored his relations to Hermes and Aphrodite. The other, later one, is presented in Ovidius' *Metamorphosis*.¹⁶

The analysis of so called reproductional aspect concerning Seferis' way of interpreting the mythological information testifies to the significant role of myth in Seferis' works, though we by no means insist on seeking links with mythology in his every single poem. All above-mentioned, naturally, raises a question: what is the **function** of myth in Seferis' poetry?

As it is known, the above-explained stable orientators had different functions in the literature of different periods. Their usage in Modernistic literature is purposeful and selective.¹⁷ Modernist poets have common, "similar" attitude to the tradition. Briefly, its essence can be defined as follows: the tradition enables the synthesis of the diachronic and synchronic, which abolishes the distance between the present and the past.¹⁸

One of the chief functions of applying the tradition by Modernists – according to Eliot – is to introduce the order, forms and meaning in the vast panorama of vanity and anarchy, which is called the

γη. In Seferis' poem, "the soil" is mentioned three times, though it may be a coincidence; cf.: "your feet bare on the soil", "you stood rooted to the soil". As for the image of Clytemnestra's breasts, it has a significant symbolic meaning in *Libation Bearers*. In the most dramatic moment, when Orestes is going to kill his mother, Clytemnestra shows him her breasts, the breasts she sucked (896). But neither this argument softens Orestes' heart. Correspondingly, Clytemnestra's breasts are made of stone as they inspired her to kill her husband; cf.: Seferis': "Two small purple stones covered your nipples". In *Libation Bearers*, Clytemnestra obediently follows Orestes into the palace to accept her death; Seferis' Clytemnestra submits to death the same way: "Let anyone come and sleep with me who wants to: / am I not the sea?" - the poem ends with the well-known phrase from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. But the "protagonist" of a poem may also remind some readers of Cassandra, cf.: Δ. Ν. Μαρωνίτης, *Η αρχαιογνωσία του Σεφέρη*, 67.

¹⁴ But for the epigraph, it would be very difficult to link the verse to Atrides' myth. The epigraph helps to more or less correctly interpret the verse. The narrator with "the marble head in my hands" looks into the eyes, which are "neither open nor closed"; he speaks to the mouth which "keeps trying to speak". These phrases provoke associations of the sufferings of murdered Agamemnon. He can not speak; neither can he see. The narrator, the witness of all this is shocked and he is unable to do anything - "that's all I am able to do". Let us recall also Electra's words to her dead father: ἀρ' ὀρθὸν αἶρεις φιλτατον τὸ σὸν κάρη; (497). Line 439 of the tragedy tells us about the brutal murder of Agamemnon: ἐμασχαλίσθη δέ γ' ὡς τὸ δ' εἰδῆς. Here the author uses the verb *μασχαλίζω*, the primary meaning of which is to "put under one's arm". However, its meaning is much more comprehensive: "I cut off the limbs of the murdered and put them under his arms in order to avoid vengeance" (the same meaning of the verb is also used by Sophocles, El. 445; see also: Ap. phod. IV, 447). This line is believed to be associated with the last line of the verse: "My hands disappear and come towards me mutilated" (Cf.: E. Benedetti, *Poesia pensiero della grecia classica nell'opera di Giorgio Seferis, Omaggio a Seferis, Studi Bizantini e Neogreci diretti da F. M. Pontani, Padova, 1970, 75*). Besides these concrete associations, the verse may lead to some other ideas as well: we may perceive the narrator's image as the Greek people, who, because of endless occupation, were comparatively late to restore links with their past. After the liberation, "awaking", the nation realized its glorious heritage ("I woke with this marble head in my hands"), which tires and exhausts ("it exhausts my elbows"), and the nation is puzzled, it does not know, what to do ("I do not know where to put it down").

¹⁵ See footnote 10.

¹⁶ According to an earlier tradition, Hermaphroditus was the symbol of Aphrodite's latent masculine essence. As it is known, this mythological image was depicted in the images of bearded Aphroditos, who like Hermathena, Hermerotos and others were called Hermaphroditus, not because they were related to Hermes, but because the name is formed with the help of the word *έρμα*. For more details, cf.: *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Hrsg. W. H. Roscher, Leipzig, 1884-1937.

¹⁷ T. Kobakhidze, *T.S. Eliot: Poetry and Mythos*, Tbilisi, 1991.

¹⁸ In this respect, it is noteworthy that scholars point out the following statement as one of the peculiarities of a myth as a phenomenon: Как историческое повествование о прошлом он (миф) диахроничен и необратим во времени, а как инструмент объяснения настоящего (и будущего) синхроничен и обратим во времени. В силу этой сложности, двойственности мифа, его подлинны конститутивные единицы обнаруживают свою значимую природу не в качестве изолированных отношений, а только как связка, комбинации отношений имеющие два измерения - диахроническое и синхроническое. Cf.: Е. Мелетинский, *Мифология и фольклор в трудах К. Леви-Строса* (in: К. Леви-Строс, *Структурная антропология*, Москва, 1985), 471.

Modernity. The usage of mythological method enables to initiate the modern world into the art, order and form.¹⁹

The XXc literature, which was saturated with mythological spirit, is characterized with maximum degree of using the signs that we called symbols conveying mythological information or "stable orientators". This resulted into the accumulation and combination of the symbols within one piece of work, which requires readers' profound knowledge of mythology and history of culture. To our mind, while analyzing the peculiarities of Seferis' attitude to mythos, we should mention that Seferis may regard a myth as an organizing factor, but on the other hand, he purposefully tends to combine the "stable orientators". As mentioned above, Seferis sharply limits the circle of so called "stable orientators" more or less frequently used in his poetry. While alluding to myths, he chiefly confines himself to the Greek mythology, within which he gives preference to the Trojan cycle, or rather the episodes of the cycle that seem to him the most significant. Of course, we can not ascribe this solely to Seferis' patriotic devotion to his native culture. This seems to be the way he demonstrates his attitude to the function of myth in his own poetry. Presumably, the reason of the "limitation" of the mythological symbols he uses might be determined by the poet's desire to show that with the help of classical symbols borrowed from ancient Greek tradition one can achieve the same goals as Modernist poets did through intensive use and combination of numerous symbols from different cultural layers.²⁰ He confines himself to "a certain mythology" and introduces a considerable degree of "order and forms" into his poetry. Moreover, this method enables him to emphasize specific hierarchical principle of using the mythological symbols. Recurrent mythological images and fabulas in Seferis' poetry leads us to the idea that the recurrence is coordinated. We do not mean to claim that while writing his earlier poems, Seferis already bore in mind the mythological information he would later use. However, it is evident that in his works, he considered what he had already written.²¹

Seferis interestingly coordinates mythological information. If we analyze the works where the latter is reproduced, we may trace the tendency of building up the "intertextual" plot. In this case, we apply the definition already accepted in literary criticism and understand the plot as a fabula made up of interrelated events and existing in the tradition, which the poet perceives with the help of myths (or the artistic interpretation of myths) and actualizes in his poetry.²² The peculiarity of the plot is determined by the unity of nominated images and components of the plot, which (i.e. the unity) preserves identity of the plot with its mythological prototype. In Seferis' works, the so called "intertextual" plot may be considered *Odyssey*. The choice is not accidental as through the fate of Odysseus, the poet "projects" the fate of himself, the impersonalized "us" (which may imply the Greek people or even the mankind), and, typically of epic thinking, models the diverse relations of the world.²³

The plot of Seferis' *Odyssey* is constituted with separate episodes (we mean the verses which more or less reflect the mythos), which are chiefly inspired with the pathos of the Trojan cycle, and attempt to present this generalized, tragic fate through the images and accents of the mythological information. Thus, this so called unifying plot may be understood as the unity of episodes where tragic spirit prevails.

If our conception on the coordination of the mythological information in Seferis' poetry is true, then we face a question – how does the poet organize the information? To our mind, he applies both epic and dramatic styles. The latter chiefly implies tragic elements. If we consider the poems of our present interest as the "intertextual" information, we shall understand that they are structured in epic style, as various episodes, characters, motifs are united into one single poetic texture. As for its components, the episodes, they are written in tragic-dramatic style, as the information reproduced is distinguished with its tragic pathos.

Seferis equally succeeds both in describing the diverse interrelation of the universe as a system, which is typical of epos, and on the other hand, in emphasizing the tragic spirit – the element of drama. He regards the fate of an individual, the Greek and the mankind as an endless *Odyssey* in time and space, while the concrete adventures that the "actants" of this *Odyssey* have to face are marked with tragism. While synthesizing these two styles, Seferis uses Homeric epics (basically *Odyssey*) and Greek

¹⁹ Cf.: T. S. Eliot, *Ulysses: Order and Myth* (in: James Joyce, *Two Decades of Criticism*, ed. by S.Givens, NY, 1948).

²⁰ E. Keely calls Eliot's way of using the method the "method of collage", cf.: E. Keely, "Μυθική μέθοδος" του Σεφέρη (in: *Μύθος και φωνή στη σύγχρονη ελληνική ποίηση*, Αθήνα, 1987), 122.

²¹ Cf.: Ν. Βαγενάς, *Ο ποιητής και ο χορευτής*, Αθήνα, 1991⁶, 260.

²² Cf.: E. Frenzel, *Stoffe der Weltliteratur*, Stuttgart, 1976⁵, Vff.

²³ The problem of epic thinking is well discussed in the following article: R. Gordesiani, *Die Entwicklungstendenzen der epischen Gattung in der Epoche des Prinzipats (1.-2. Jahrhundert)*, (in: *Λεκτά*, Tbilisi, 2000), 199ff.

tragedies as paradigmatic models, which serve as prototypes for the poetic images (and events) he creates. The convergence of these two lines attaches the epic-dramatic character to his poetry. This very character of his poetry reveals his desire to influence the reader with something already experienced (Seferis resorts to the epic-dramatic style to influence the reader with something already experienced). Therefore, it is hard to trace the passages in his poetry, where he resorts either to didactics, or obtrusive interpretations of a certain idea, or the assertion of a certain conception. He confines himself to the poetical actualization of his visions, emotions and lets the reader draw their own conclusion. His poetry raises the feeling of quasi catharsis, which makes the reader experience the tragism of described events.²⁴

While considering Seferis' attitude to myth, we should pay attention to one more significant issue – the poet's attitude to the principle of mythological thinking. It is common knowledge that a writer may frequently use mythological information, but he may have nothing in common with the principle of mythological thinking. Let us recall two basic aspects of the mentioned principle that the modern scholars usually point out: the principle that structures relations between an individual and the world of events, and the structure of a myth the dominant element of which is the principle of binary opposition. In this respect, we may trace a very interesting tendency in Seferis' works; it may be called the tendency of "approach" and "distance".

In the world of mythological thinking events and things are animated like a human being and a society. Therefore, the relation between a subject and an object, a human being and the world of events is based on the principle "I" and "you". "I" 's perception of everything else as "you" reveals the tendency of granting all objects peculiar features, individuality, while the second tendency – that of distinguishing objective "that", striving for abstractions, is rather weak. Within the frameworks of this thinking, people are not interested in the rules that coordinate events, the motives of certain facts; they are concerned with the origin of these events, the One that regulates them.²⁵ This principle of mythological thinking may in a way be reflected in the literature of any period. Of course, as a man of XX c, Seferis is far from this principle, but as a poet, he follows it in the majority of his works, where the mythological information prevails: he introduces the mythological information without any explanations, and his manner of creative interpretation of myth never raises the question – why? Everything seems to be clear and is regarded as the truth. This manner of Seferis leaves no feeling of artificiality in introducing a myth. The mythological information is an organic part of his poetry. Moreover, Seferis skillfully inserts in the narration based on this quasi mythological principle passages borrowed from philosophical works, which in their essence oppose the principle of mythological thinking. He organically inserts "logical" structure into the mythological context. To our mind, in this respect, Seferis demonstrates the tendency of approaching mythological thinking.²⁶

While considering Seferis' attitude to the structure of myth and the principle of binary opposition, we face the opposite tendency. As it is accepted, the structure of the myth is based on the programs of limited actions, which are constituted by the succession of arguments with positive and negative functions. Pairs of functions and arguments oppose each other according to the principle of binary opposition, which means that one argument neutralizes the other.²⁷ Seferis radically diverts from this principle. Even in the popular and commonly known fabula borrowed from the Greek mythology, the poet purposefully avoids the moments that may imply an opposition. Therefore, the fabula of Seferis' *Odyssey* ignores the vengeance upon the bridegrooms. In so called Seferis' *Oresteia*, there is no opposition even when the character obviously suffers mischief, or on the contrary, when he revenges; the other component of the binary opposition is not shown.²⁸ We believe Seferis purposefully ignores the princi-

²⁴ Για τον Σεφέρη το θεμέλιο κάθε σωστής κρίσης για την ποίηση είναι ο ορισμός του Αριστοτέλη: "μίμησις πράξεως ... δι' ἑλέου και φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν". Η δική του συμβολή στη συζήτηση του θέματος είναι ο ... εμπλουτισμός των επιμέρους στοιχείων του ορισμού, που διαφοροποιεί το νόημά του για να το προσαρμόσει στις δικές του απόψεις. Έτσι η παραδοσιακή έννοια της "κάθαρσης", που αποδίδει στην τραγωδία και μια θεραπευτική ιδιότητα - την απαλλαγή από οδυνηρά συναισθήματα μέσα από την αναπαράσταση παρόμοιων συναισθημάτων - βαθαίνει και με μια λειτουργία ικανή ν' απελευθερώσει άγνωστες και να ξαναζωντανέψει εξασθενημένες παρορμήσεις. see: Ν. Βαγενάς, op.cit., 44.

²⁵ For the Mythological thinking cf.: R. Gordesiani, *Die Gegenüberstellung Europa Asien vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart*, (in: *Λεκτά*), 268ff.

²⁶ We mean the insertion of the quotations of ancient Greek philosophers in the texture of his poems.

²⁷ Cf.: W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1982, 10ff.; R. Gordesiani, *Abwandlungsformen der traditionellen Struktur des Mythos in der griechischen und römischen Heldendichtung*, (in: *Λεκτά*), 206ff.

²⁸ For example, although in *Three Secret Poems* the image of Clytemnestra is presented right before her death, the murderer is

ple thus following his own general poetic conception. We may suppose that Seferis refuses to apply the circulation of negative and positive functions, which is typical of the binary opposition in a myth. To our mind, this explains his tendency to purposefully divert from the principle of mythological thinking, and overcome the structures of myth in his poetry.

It is noteworthy that Seferis tries to ignore the distinguished features of traditional heroes. Though, he never creates an anti-hero, which is so typical of antique literature.²⁹

Thus, we may distinguish several basic aspects in Seferis' manner of interpreting the mythological information: 1. Seferis strictly limits his informational basis to the Greek mythology and offers the reader popular symbols, which he uses (as Eliot says) to "order" his poetry. 2. Despite the "limited" informational basis, the ways the poet actualizes the mythological information are multiple and diverse. 3. Seferis' works are distinguished with a high level of coordinating and distributing the mythological information, which enables us to trace the "intertextual" fabula and its constituting episodes in his poetry. 4. The poet tends to apply the principle of mythopoetic world – that of "I" and "you" relations, though diverts from the principle of binary opposition, the typical element of mythological thinking. This way, he at once approaches and distances from mythological thinking. In the end, if we try to specify the feature that distinguishes Seferis with respect to the interpretation of myth, we may briefly state: this is the unity of all above-mentioned aspects. Some of them may be characteristic of various poets, but the combination of all these aspects may be considered the peculiarity of solely Seferis' attitude to the mythological tradition.

not shown, while *The Name is Orestes* does not name the person whom the revenge was directed to.

²⁹ The myth of Atrides in the poetry of Seferis starts with the moment when Agamemnon is already dead. That is why the King of Mycenae is never regarded as a living, acting character. But although Seferis does not name Agamemnon in his poems, his presence is always obvious when the poet relates about Orestes and Clytemnestra. His phantom is so perceptible that one can even judge about peculiar features of Seferis' Agamemnon. He totally loses the nimbus of a hero and becomes just a victim of his treacherous wife or a stimulus for a new murder. Seferis offers implications of another hero of the Greek mythology - Heracles, and chooses from his various deed only one aspect - the way he was murdered. Even in the case of Odysseus, the poet stresses his loneliness, the moment of νόστος, νεκρία, his human weaknesses, but not his braveness.