Nomadic and Correspondent Discourses: The Voyage to Orient in Nikos Kazantzakis’s Travel Letters and Literary Work

Nomadiniai ir korespondenciniai diskursai: kelionė į Rytus N. Kazantzakio kelionių laiškuose ir grožinėje kūryboje

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Summary

This article examines the relation of an author’s travel letters with his literary work. Travel letters are proposed as a prioritized example for the study of the formation of an “open circuit” with an author’s other oeuvres, beyond the traditional “laboratory” approach of his correspondence, according to which letters come before or after the literary work. The research is focused on Nikos Kazantzakis’s travel letters from China and Japan, written during his travel experience as a press correspondent (1935). These letters addressed to his wife have also fuelled his travel articles for the daily press Acropolis and afterwards his travelogue entitled Japan-China. A Journal of Two Voyages to the Far East and his novel entitled Rock Garden. To this corpus we could also add works in which the travel experience is treated in a rather philosophical manner, such as his piece The Saviors of God: Spiritual exercises and his epic poem The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel. In the first part through the exploitation of concepts deriving from Jacques Derrida (1987) and Gilles Deleuze (1972, 1980), the nomadism of the travel letter is examined. In this manner, a study of Kazantzakis’s travel letters and of all these texts–either originating or influenced by his travels to Asia and his interest in the Orient, is advanced as an “open circuit,” beyond any temporal and generic restrictions. In the second part, the various literary and cultural intertextual relations in his work are examined as organizing his encounters with Japanese and Chinese women in his specifically Asiatic travel experience through the archetypical “woman as Temptress” example (J. Campbell, 1949). It has been proven that a “nomadic thought” not enclosed in genres is circulated through all forms of his

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The auctorial activity and the various correspondent forms can alternatively function as rather dynamic 
assemblages of his oriental travel experience.

**Key words:** epistolary, travel letters, Nikos Kazantzakis, Gilles Deleuze, voyage, Orient, women.

### Santrauka


**Esminiai žodžiai:** epistolinis, kelionių laiškai, Nikolas Kazantzakis, Gillesas Deleuze’as, kelionė, Rytai, moterys.

An author’s correspondence is generally considered to come before or after the literary work, often limited to biographical, genetic or reception issues. Seen as the author’s own “laboratory,” his correspondence exposes his initial ideas, impressions or emotions, his future writing projects or the reception of his works. In order to prove that it can also be placed among the literary work, Brigitte Diaz (2002) is interested in the literarity of the letter itself, exploring the mechanism which leads the young author from his correspondence to the literary work in the nineteenth century. The difficulty of defining the genre is attributed to the fact that the letter in the nineteenth century conveys a “nomad though,” defined according to her terms as “a thought of the self, of the city or of the literature itself”¹. Due to the fact that this nomad thought cannot be limited to a particular literary genre, the letter offers the prospective author a convenient place to exercise his style — functioning as a “hypergenre,”² or “as literature without genres,” in paraphrasing Jacques Derrida’s claim (1987), acknowledging the mixture of all forms and of all styles in the letters³.

In this paper the relation of an author’s travel letters with his literary work will be investigated. Travel letters are proposed as a prioritized example for the study of the formation of an “open circuit” with the author’s other works, beyond the traditional “laboratory” approach of his...
correspondence or the discussion about its literarity. If letters as well as travels are generally supposed to have a determinate or fixed destination, this could be challenged by putting in the core of the conception of the letter the notion of “nomadism,” a movement across space without a fixed pattern, much in the Deleuzian sense of the term\(^4\). The travel letter as a hybrid genre favors the alleged “nomadism” of epistololarity. It is argued that the opening of the study of the author’s entire correspondence to a full and active interaction with the rest of their literary and non-literary writing reveals the complex participation of correspondence to the whole auctorial project. This position is rather a further elaboration of Gilles Deleuze’s claim speaking about Kafka’s letters, that “they are an integrative part of the writing machine or the expression machine”:

It is useless to ask whether the letters are a part of the oeuvre or whether they are the source of some of the themes of the work; they are an integrative part of the writing machine or the expression machine. It is as such that we must think of the letters in general as belonging to the writing, outside the work or not, and understand moreover why certain literary forms such as the novel have naturally made use of the epistolary form. (32)\(^5\)

It will be claimed here that an author’s correspondence benefits from being examined as an integral part of his general poetics and not in a linear, genetic or meta-critical relation with his other works but rather in an anarchic and nomadic way. Nikos Kazantzakis’s twentieth-century personal travel letters from Asia to his wife and his correspondence with his friend Prevelakis when referring to this travel (1935), as well as his public writing in the form of a travelogue, titled *Japan - China. A Journal of Two Voyages to the Far East* (1935) and a novel inspired by this travel, titled *The Rock Garden*, written in French (*Jardins des rochers*, 1936) offer a fine example of highly interrelated oeuvres assembled around his travelling experience to China and Japan. To this corpus we could also add works treating the travelling experience in a rather philosophical manner, such as his piece *The Saviors of God: Spiritual exercises* (1927, 1944) and his epic poem *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (1938)\(^6\). In this perspective, dispersed entities or *assemblages*,\(^7\) liberated from fixed and unified identities can be pieced together across these works. An assemblage is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons between them across different natures and genres. Since it lacks organization, the only unity of the assemblage is that of
co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, as the one formed by the wasp and the orchid, both creating together a “symbiotic emergent unit” according to G. Deleuze’s famous example. This paper proposes to consider the above mentioned works of Kazantzakis as forming diverse “assemblages” of his oriental traveling experience.

**The “nomadism” of the travel letter: the transgression of generic and communicative premises**

The epistolary as a genre has a highly diversified form, one that is not easily pinned to a description. The travel letter comes into view as a suitable example to illustrate the nomadism of the genre, since several historical and formalistic approaches appear to hold a conception of it as a rather polymorphic and fluid genre. For instance, since the 19th century it is well known that there is an interaction of the genre with the press, where journalistic travelogues were published in the form of travel letters. Even if the private travel letters intended to create an intimate bond between the correspondents, they can equally captivate the attention of large audiences by the central role of the transmitted information. An author’s travel correspondence then is frequently the raw material of his literary travelogues. There is a constant interrelation, a work of reduction, amplification, censure or transformation, during which the letters are rather supposed to aliment the literary text rather than the opposite, although we can perceive both movements in Kazantzakis’ work. The form of the travel letter has been considered as flexible and disparate in order to collect highly diversified information (about the travel, the place, the traveler, the personal thoughts and feelings as well as eventual philosophical reflections). The discourse is often fragmentary as it aims to captivate the discontinuous of the experience in a procedure which resembles the notion of romantic epiphany: besides the “objective” descriptions of the place, personal insights of the author about the “real” nature of the reported reality are often displayed. If the concern of exhaustiveness in exposition is suited to accurate details, fastidious descriptions and digressions on the one hand, the need for promptness in writing, favors the proverbial, the use of stereotypes and the generalization, on the other. The scholarly correspondent often handles edgy alterity by retracting to the known space of culture. The world is presented as a pretext for the canonic texts describing great places of culture, following the model of an incessant reconnaissance, reaffirming a rather “already known” knowledge, a validation of what is
already said or written about the place by recounting opinions of famous predecessor travelers or widespread cultural stereotypes.

The transgression of the discursive and communicative premises in travel letters has been accentuated and further put in focus in post-structuralist theories, which have radically questioned our conceptions of subjectivity and communication. Respective questions are exposed in Jacques Derrida’s, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980). The discussion evolves around a postcard found in Oxford, in which Plato as a teacher is standing behind the seated Socrates and is dictating to him. Derrida deduces an “entire postcard ontology” (22) by the analysis of this depiction on the postcard as a catastrophic scene of order, which overturns and reverses the established historical relations. An interesting defying of linearity, order and direction is noticed in the postcards:

[…]

There is a semiotic mess both in spatial terms and formal criteria, an uncertainty about the semiotic hierarchy of the signs of the form caused by their reversibility as “one does not know what is in front or what is in back, […] Nor what is the most important, the picture or the text, and in the text, the message or the caption, or the address”:

What I prefer, about post cards, is that one does not know what is in front or what is in back, here or there, near or far, the Plato or the Socrates, recto or verso. Nor what is the most important, the picture or the text, and in the text, the message or the caption, or the address. Here, in my post card apocalypse, there are proper names, S. and p., above the picture, and reversibility unleashes itself, goes mad. (13)

These multiple disorientations lead to confusion of destination and addressee. Although a postcard is usually clearly addressed to a specific person, the destination can be seen as not always fixed and not always unique. According to Derrida, by this “adestination” (71) the postcard opens on the side of literature. For if the post card is a kind of “open letter,” defined as “destined in part to the expressly designated personage,
but above all to the great public,” (91) all the correspondence of an author could claim the same status. The author’s travel letters, even the private ones, are literally “open letters” as they often get published later on in autonomous volumes or contain material reattributed to ulterior writings. They break the private “closed circuit” of two-way liaison and enter in a public “open circuit.” For instance, Kazantzakis travel letters from China and Japan, written during his first travel to Asia (1935), were initially addressed to his wife but have also supplied material for his travel articles for the readers of the daily press *Acropolis*. Afterwards they have been opened to an even larger readership, as a travelogue entitled *Japan-China. A Journal of Two Voyages to the Far East* and they have been inserted creatively in the novel entitled *Rock Garden*. The other way around is also illustrated: in these travel letters, several philosophical positions about the notion of journey and the meaning of life, already formulated throughout Kazantzakis’s literary work, have been incorporated.

The fact that a travel letter is not “inefficacious” even when its receiver is other than its addressee is linked to the issues of the genre’s performativity and functionality. Besides the strengthening of the emotional bond between the correspondents, the practical aim of sharing the travelling experience generates a message with both intellectual and emotional implications. Kazantzakis’s travel letters during his travel to the Orient aim to establish a link between separated partners with the obvious effort to suppress the distance between himself and his wife and to arouse her sympathy by revealing an image of himself as the melancholic correspondent suffering and complaining about his loneliness. All these are signs of the address to a determinate addressee but they are also general clichés of epistolarity. In the next part the elaboration and the transmission of the travelling experience will be examined beyond the travel letter, through an “open circuit” of heterogeneous interrelated works (travel letters, travelogue, novel, poem, essay).

**The “open circuit” in Kazantzakis’s work: the oriental travelling experience through the “Woman as the Temptress” assemblage**

Kazantzakis is one of the most eminent Greek authors of the twentieth century and also an avid traveler searching for inspiration for his literary writing. Kazantzakis in his quest for personal spirituality is a constant
seeker of truth and meaning and this trip to Japan and China is made precisely to stimulate himself with these radically different cultural, religious and philosophical traditions. A central theme in his work is the conception of “life as a journey,” a constant inquiry, during which life is projected as movement. The notion of wandering is at the core of his poetics, explaining the presence and the function of nomadic and correspondent discourses in it. The predilection for a nomadic stance of life is clearly stated in his philosophical piece *The Saviors of God. Spiritual Exercises*, where God expresses his love for vagabonds and he designates himself as “the great Vagabond”:

I love the hungry, the restless, the vagabonds. They are the ones who brood eternally on hunger, on rebellion, on the endless road - on ME!
I am coming! Leave your wives, your children, your ideas, and follow me. I am the great Vagabond. (113)

Kazantzakis’ poetics offers a good example of generic and discursive “intertwining.” The novel entitled *Rock Garden* is a structural shambles, displaying an intertwining of genres: billed as a novel, it is also an uneven travelogue with a rough political analysis of the edgy relations between China and Japan and perhaps most of all it is a reflection on the meaning of life. In the *Rock Garden*, long excerpts from his philosophical piece, *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* are inserted. Several excerpts or basic philosophical positions of this piece are found in Kazantzakis’ travelogue *Japan-China. A Journal of Two Voyages to the Far East* and in his travel correspondence as well. In this “open circuit” of various works, an interplay of discursive correspondences is also displayed with the Homer-ic *Odyssey* and with Kazantzakis’ own epic poem, also entitled *Odyssey: A modern Sequel*, – chanting the wanderings of Ulysses after his return to Ithaca.

His concern about the communication with a foreign culture without recourse to language is expressed in his travel letters. He recurs to the “eternal common points” where all humans meet and namely “song, erotic love, pain-and, above all, death.” His travelling impressions are in fact centered on these universal experiences, although he finally resolved the problem of language through a Japanese guide:

I’m feeling terribly queasy. Tomorrow I shall be plunging into the unknown. Without the language (very few Japanese people know English), without
very much money, how shall I manage things?...What a different world, what another sort of earth has molded these people; and there is no communication. To be sure, song, erotic love, pain-and, above all, death- unite us with them. But from how far away must we come in order to meet at these eternal points? (313)

His travel experiences in Asia, dispersed in various genres and oeuvres, can also be constructed through “assemblages” of correspondent and nomadic discourses put together around a particular travelling experience. For instance, the central experience of his encounters with Oriental women encloses the aforementioned “eternal points.” These encounters presented as challenges and trials for his principles, function, thus, as an exemplum of what Joseph Campbell describes as “the meeting with the archetypical Temptress” in a hero’s spiritual journey of life. This meeting with the Female is part of the stage of initiation, which deals with the hero’s various adventures along the way.

The Homeric hero, Ulysses, – according to a clear reference to the *Odyssey* in his travel letters, – seems to function in Kazantzakis’s works as the archetypical pattern of the traveler. Focused on the masculine perspective, the female temptresses encountered in his travel, like Circe and the Sirens, can be found in all times and spaces, as well as in twentieth-century Asia. Real events and specific episodes of his fortuitous and deliberate encounters with Chinese courtesans and Japanese geishas in the streets, along with the cabarets and their houses are highlighted and presented as “epiphanies” and “reconnaisances” of the archetypical Temptress, illustrating ad hoc not only seduction as an essential attribute of the described countries but also the eternal struggle between the male and the female as a ruling principle of life. Mostly influenced by H. Bergson, F. Nietzsche, Ch. Darwin and Buddha, these encounters are reassertions of his personal philosophical assessments on human life viewed as an eternal struggle between the matter and the spirit. Men struggle to avoid the fatal carnal temptations presented to them by the women, who operate as distractions to their spiritual ascension, and finally lead them to the ground, to decomposition and death. In one of his travel letters from Japan there is a clear reference to the *Odyssey* and to the “method of Odysseus,” who, not ready to quit all temptations but also not willing to yield to them, found a third solution, i.e. to bind himself to the mast of his ship. In *The Saviors of God. Spiritual Exercises* Kazantzakis had proposed not to avoid temptation but to take the Sirens into his boat and to continue
the voyage with them. A further “reconnaissance” of the validity of the erudite western cultural context comes, not only through the use of literary comparisons of the Asian temptresses with the Homeric ones, the Sirens and Circe, but also by a convergence with the widespread orientalist and patriarchal stereotypes about women; i.e. the western literary and political discourse on oriental women and especially their seductive and dangerous sexuality. The interplay between the intertextual, erudite reconnaissances and the more personal, ad hoc epiphanies, intertwine the borders between fiction, culture and the reality of the travelling experience, as expressed in his travel letters. This effect is further multiplied by the diffusion of the narrated episodes not only in the different works but also in different genres.

Firstly, in various occurrences in his correspondence, the Chinese and the Japanese women are described in dualist and oppositional terms, as the reflection of the war state between their respective countries, which culminated during the time Kazantzakis was elaborating his pieces. In order to present women as a fatal temptation to men’s life-voyage to ascension, he falls into typical orientalist stereotypes. He recycles the well-known stereotype about the “rich and dangerous sexuality” of oriental women. As a matter of fact, from his experiences in Japan, he doesn’t only choose to describe his encounters with Japanese women in general, but he especially focuses on the geishas. In China, he provides respectively a relatively long description of his impressions of the courtesans in a Chinese cabaret. He finds Chinese women beautiful, elegant, mysterious but sinister:

I am most impressed by the unexpected elegance of the Chinese woman: simple, well-tailored pajamas, without any trinkets; hair sometimes in long braids and sometimes in tight buns (the married ones). Their faces are as though they’ve just been licked, carved on shiny, unblemished wood; and they walk lightly, resolutely like ephebi. (310)

Stereotypes which link the Orient, femininity and sexuality through the creation of an atmosphere of lust, mystery and danger appear in his descriptions. Metaphors like the “snake,” “sword” and “blade” are reproduced in order to describe the sinister female sexuality of the Chinese courtesans and their state of war towards men. Kazantzakis, like Nerval in The Voyage in the Orient or Flaubert in Salammbô, is predisposed to recognize the region of fatal hallucinations and illusions in the Orient. He
joins a twentieth-century literary tradition (e.g. Gide, Conrad) still seeing in the Orient rich funds of unbounded, unbounded sexuality and feminine sensuality expressed in the way women are dressed, move, make love or dance:

We were sitting facing the door of the cabaret, watching the Chinese prostitutes enter. This was the most troubant spectacle, the most intense vision given to me by this trip so far. Imagine slender, tall Chinese women like snakes erected upright, dressed in very simple, unornamented silks... [...] Never did the human body look so like a sword. And through the dresses slit open at the sides, at each step, the yellow blade of the leg –glistens-slender, strong, irresistible-right up to the pelvis. And to top of this snake like, slowly swaying body, imagine an extraordinary mask: pie shaped, heavily powdered, with dagger-sharp, very fine eye-brows, an immobile orange mouth, the eyes slanted: they too are motionless, staring at you indifferently, coldly, mercilessly, as the snake looks at you. I watched them gliding by, one by one, and disappearing under the arched doorway of the cabaret, snakes slithering into a cave. And from inside, actual hisses could be heard: woman with woman, woman with man, dancing on a shiny, polished floor, an invisible flute leading their dance in low, sibilant tones. An exotic, hair-raising spectacle; lust arrived at the lethal point of hallucination; exhausting identification of opium and woman.

The word “mask” alluding to the Buddhist mask is a symbol used to describe the female complexity and duplicity, but designates also the coldness, the indifference and the mercilessness of the Chinese courtesan’s face. It is again a metaphor of danger, as was the “sword,” the “blade of the leg” or the “snake” metaphors- and an indication of their impersonal, archetypal role. It can also be seen as the equivalent of the veil in the orientalist discourse referring to the Arabic world alluding to secrecy, mystery and sexual promises—the veiled oriental woman being a recurrent colonial fantasy. The fear of the females’ physical beauty and sensuality is matched with another orientalist stereotype, the fear of mortal diseases sexually transmitted like syphilis:

[...] Like their streets, all stench of sewers and scent of jasmine; like their fruits, repulsive and fragrant; like their women, full of charm and syphilis—this is the way their paradises attracted and repelled my spirit. This is the way I also imagine the Sirens, in any brave and honorable spirit that is unwilling to lose the temptations of this earth and yet, at the same time, is unwilling to slip downhill. Of the methods discovered by man- to give all of yourself and to
rot, not to give any of yourself and to become holy—once again, the method of *Odyssey* is the best… (311)

Japanese women in sharp contrast to the Chinese women, are described as “ugly” but “good-natured,” “constantly smiling,” “bowing” but “they do have a charme” too:

I went into a bar; the famous geishas, three of them sitting around a little table, waiting for clientele; insignificant, tiny, ugly…All the women here seem to me ugly and good-natured, contrary to the Chinese women, many of whom have lethal charm, but you sense they’re sinister… (313)

So far the Japanese people are agreeable and most polite. Their life has a gentle Oriental charm. The women all seem ugly to me, but they do have a charm. They’re constantly smiling, bowing and they walk as though dancing… (314)

The narration of a night spent in the house of geishas praise their “innocent sweetness” and their efforts to entertain their male hosts with their music, dance and gaiety. Finally they are compared to lovely, harmless animals, namely “birds”:

The other night, a friend of mine and I went to the house of some geishas. Indescribable the purity and exhilaration of the atmosphere. […] They bowed to us, touching their foreheads to the ground, took off our shoes and led us into the parlor. […] One of them took the samisen and seating herself cross-legged, began playing. A little one got up and danced. Grace, serenity, modesty, dressed in brilliantly colored kimonos, their eyes gay and innocent as I have never seen in any European family. My friend spoke excellent Japanese and joked with them, and they all laughed like seven-year-olds. I have never, never sensed to such an extent the innocent sweetness of women…I sat calmly watching them, my arms folded like Buddha. I didn’t stretch out my hand to touch them, I was so afraid the enchanting vision might vanish. It was late when we left. They bent down to the ground and, paying homage to us, helped us to put on our shoes. Then once again they paid homage, warbling gaily like birds, “Arigato kozaimas! Arigato kozaimas! [Thank you very much! Thank you very much!] (317-18).

In opposition to the warrior-like Chinese courtesans which were cold, indifferent and sinister “like snakes erected upright.” the geishas are serving their hosts “bent down” with “grace, serenity, modesty,” “warbling gaily.” This approbation of geishas serving with docility their male west-
ern guests presents an interesting parallel to the orientalist male power-fantasies\textsuperscript{26}.

These two real episodes of the encounters with Chinese and Japanese women described in his travel letters and his impressions were further elaborated in the two relevant literary works, his travelogue \textit{Japan-China. A Journal of Two Voyages to the Far East} and the novel \textit{The Rock Garden}. An antithetical structure, conforming to the fundamental dualist conception of the world by Kazantzakis, is adopted. In \textit{Japan-China. A Journal of Two Voyages to the Far East} there are two sections, the first entitled, \textit{The Geishas} (154-58) and the second \textit{The yellow Circe} (201-206). In the first section of the travelogue, the Japanese women are presented as in the narration of his encounter with the geishas in his travel letters. The same emotions and impressions of sweetness and innocence are recounted by expanding the episode in a very detailed manner – describing the dances and chants of the geishas. The same structure and overall impression are maintained. He again compares the geishas to safe, cute and joyful little animals, on this occasion, they are compared to “gazelles” and to “young goats.” He assumes that the conception of love in Japan is very close to the ancient Greek one as stated in Plato’s \textit{Symposium}, claiming this time not the warfare but the union of the two sexes as an “innocent and sacred contact.”

On the contrary, the section entitled \textit{The yellow Circe} analyzes the Chinese men’s conception of women considered as a mysterious and destructive power. He repeats, reworks, expands, refines and analyzes his own position about the sinister power of Chinese women as part of his general philosophy about the two sexes stated also in \textit{The Saviors of God. Spiritual Exercises}. The beautiful women are called “destroyers of the world.” He also refines his conception about the Chinese courtesans as the “most dangerous and charming type of courtesan,” “full of hardness and intoxicating poison,” capable of hypnotizing men, along with the hashish they smoke in the cabarets. He expands his philosophical positions by rejecting the naivety of the western romantic happiness. Pleasure is rather generated by the primitive relentless struggle, the indomitable hatred between the two sexes, operating as opposing forces which create and destroy the world: the man who wants to raise his head upward and the woman who enraptures him fizzling and casts him again to the ground. The whole metaphor, used in his travel letters too, implies again the similarity between the woman and the “snake,” a clear allusion to the biblical, original Temptation:
Many times, as I walked down the Chinese streets, in Peking, in Nankin, in Hang-chow, in Shanghai, I flinched in terror, the way one flinches when suddenly coming upon a rearing, sparkling small snake with a forked tongue. A Chinese girl was passing, tightly wrapped in her black silk sheath, which opened and closed, and the body glowed through, merciless as a sword, and her eyes shone, in the sunlight or in the moonlight, cold and irresistible, slanted and beguiling, as a snake’s.

The cruelty of Chinese courtesans who denude lovemaking from all sweetness or sentimentalism is contrasted to the sweetness of Japanese geishas during the act of love as was stated in his travel letters. The comparison of Chinese courtesans with Circes of a yellow Venus reiterates the description with the mask which is analyzed as the loss of personal features and the power of Circe to return men back to an animal state.

Circe must surely have been Chinese. All the white Sirens, oh how naïve and harmless they seem, inexperienced, illiterate, awkward and superficial in the art of love, confusing pleasure with happiness or sport or gold. Here pleasure breaks the boundaries of the individual, surpasses the human cry, reaches down to the roots of the earth – down to the animal, to the plant, to death.

This archetypal power of seduction, which constitutes the eternal secret of the woman, is attributed foremost to Chinese women. Occidental women are compared to white Sirens, and by confusing pleasure with happiness or gold, they appear naïve, superficial and comparatively harmless to men. In conclusion, there is a reaffirmation of the position taken in *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* (48) that the woman in her archetypal role is seen as the subordinate instrument of the universal power which pushes mankind downwards.

In the *Rock Garden*, the eternal struggle between the two sexes holds the elementary plot, a love-hate relation between a Japanese woman, Joshiro and a Chinese man, Li-The, reflecting the tense relations between their corresponding countries. Concerning the references to Japanese and Chinese women, besides the Japanese Joshiro and the Chinese Siu-lan, the sister of the male protagonist, both actively involved in the war between their countries and inclined to seduce the male characters, there are once more references to female artists, geishas and prostitutes in order to act as an auxiliary and embody the charming, but dangerous allure of the archetypal woman. We can spot parts of his travel letters which after being further elaborated in the travelogue are repeated as such in the novel (105-107).
Conclusions

It seems that for Kazantzakis even the chance encounters and the epiphanies of his travel experiences to Asia, transcripted in his travel letters, illustrate his philosophical thought as it is elaborated in his work *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* and in his poem *Odyssey. A Modern Sequel*. Eventually slight alterations for the plot’s sake occur, but in general the references to women as temptresses are rather crystallized in the selected corpus of texts: the same dualist basic structure, metaphors and philosophical thoughts occur through the different genres. Occasionally the are analyzed in greater depth or better organized. The initial travelling experiences are expanded in the travelogue and highly restricted in the novel. There is thus a free circulation of the oriental travelling experiences in various genres and works, which were reworked in parallel and in different phases of Kazantzakis’s life, resulting in the impression of a dynamic work “in a state of becoming.” The travel experience in Asia, attested to in his travel letters, seems to have been perceived to a certain degree through the lens of cultural and literary intertexts as much as it itself has shaped his relevant literary works. Furthermore, Kazantzakis himself in his travel letters has overtly declared that the purpose of his travel in Asia was to include all this travel material in his articles for the press and mainly to crystallize the “essence” of his travelling experience in his opus magnus, *The Odyssey. A Modern Sequel*:

Multitudes of joys and bitternesses, weariness, exaltation, nostalgia, freedom, godlike colors, paintings, statues, theater, women, forests, temples, seas—all this is still seething in my chest and I cannot express it. But of necessity I will have to be able to, because I must write the articles. And all the essence will crystallize and go into *The Odyssey*. For its sake, I have suffered this difficult—extremely difficult—trip; and I hope to be able to preserve whatever magnificence I have seen in few verses… (319)

In our analysis, through the exploitation of concepts deriving from Derrida’s and Deleuze’s works, a study of Kazantzakis’s travel letters and of all these relevant texts – either originating or influenced by his travels to Asia and his interest in the Orient – is promoted as an “open circuit,” beyond any temporal and generic restrictions. By proceeding in this manner not only is the author’s correspondence better understood, but the nomadic and correspondent nature of literary writing is also highlighted: a dynamic conception of literature as being always “in movement” and
“in becoming,” in the Deleuzian sense. The multiple literary and cultural intertextual relations in his work organize his concrete Asiatic travelling experience through the meeting with the archetypal “woman as Temptress” example and therefore demonstrate that a “nomadic thought,” not enclosed in genres, has freely circulated through various forms of his auctorial activity. These correspondent forms can alternatively function as rather dynamic assemblages of his oriental travelling experience, forming joint stories like the one of the seductive power of the eternal female analyzed here. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s acknowledgement in his essay “One Hundred False Starts” (1933) that “Mostly, we authors repeat ourselves – that’s the truth. We have two or three great and moving experiences in our lives […] Then we learn our trade, well or less well, and we tell our two or three stories – each time in a new disguise – maybe ten times, maybe a hundred, as long as people will listen,” could be another way to underline the presence of nomadic and correspondent discourses in the auctorial activity.

References

2. Ibid., 245.
13 This excerpt is also inserted in the novel Rock Garden, 222-223.
23 Tagopoulos, C. (May 2010), 224.