

*The Nicolas Calas –
Nanos Valaoritis
Correspondence, 1958-1967*

TRANSCRIBED, EDITED AND ANNOTATED
BY ELENA KOUTRIANOU

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Asklipiou 6, Athens 106 80

tel.: +30 210 3639962 – fax: +30 210 3623093

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INTRODUCTION

1 The Nicolas Calas – Nanos Valaoritis Correspondence, 1958-1967

According to Nanos Valaoritis' accounts, he and Nicolas Calas met either in Athens in 1956,¹ or in Paris "in the mid-1950s, following the suggestion of André Breton, since as I recall now, we had arranged to meet at his hotel on St. Germain Blvd., opposite the St. Germain-de-Prés Church; we then went for coffee at the Deux Magots".² Besides, Valaoritis remembers Calas much before they met since, as he observes, he was a man who demanded attention from an early age, both with his physical appearance and his strong personality: "I had heard of him and his radical ideas around the end of the 1930s, probably in 1937-38. I believe I first saw him in 1939, if I am not mistaken, at the Kauffmann bookshop, a tall, thin young man with a rich set of hair wearing a pink shirt, woven pants and red espadrilles. [...] He was reading some periodical. His elegant and overall loose air made quite an impression on me. It's still vivid in my memory, as Athenians dressed much more conservatively those days".³ Valaoritis had read Greek poetry and Calas's theoretical texts before having met him; and he was particularly impressed by his French book, *Foyers d'incendie* (1938) and his volume of essays in English, *Confound the Wise* (1942).⁴ As he

1. See Nanos Valaoritis' letter to George Seferis, dated 22 [Febr.] [19]56: "I met Nicos (Kalamaris) Calas this year in Athens", in Nanos Valaoritis – George Seferis, *Allilografia (1945-1968) kai trianta tesseris epistoles tou Nanou Valaoriti ston G.K. Katsimbali (1947-1950)* [*Correspondence and thirty four letters of Nanos Valaoritis to G.K. Katsimbali*], ed. Lila Theodosi, introd. Avi Sharon (Athens, Ypsilon, 2004), 152.

2. See Nanos Valaoritis, "Nicolaos Calas" (1989), *Gia mia theoria tis grafis [For a Theory of Writing]* (Athens: Exantas, 1990), 301-10; the quotation on p. 301. It must be pointed out, however, that two pages below Valaoritis seems to suggest that the year of his meeting with Breton was 1954 (*ibid.*, 303).

3. *Ibid.*, 301.

4. See Nicolas Calas, *Foyers d'incendie [Sources of Fire]* (Paris: Denoël, 1938) and Nicolas

explains, “what impressed me from the beginning was the use of paradox in his style, which bordered poetry, especially in his English texts, but also his fervent revolutionary rhetoric in *Foyers d’incendie*, which was also quite poetic in spite of the fact that it was published as an essay”.⁵

Calas (Lausanne 1907 - New York 1988) was fourteen years Valaoritis’ (Lausanne 1921 - Athens 2019) senior and, naturally, impressed the younger writer. But it seems that Valaoritis also attracted the attention of Calas from early on. In his letter dated August 10, 1946, addressed to George Theotokas, he writes: “It was interesting to read Nanos Valaoritis’ essay in *Horizon*. I do not agree with him [...], yet this young man is certainly smart”.⁶

The portraits of both writers are best described in another passage from the article that Valaoritis published shortly after Calas’s death, which is particularly noteworthy, since it refers to the same period covered by their correspondence. For this reason I quote it here:

From that time on [the time of their first meeting], Calas would send me, on a regular basis, photocopies of his articles published in various magazines and we maintained an extensive correspondence until after 1968 and my move to the United States. I visited him in New York – and we met again in Athens following the fall of the military junta, but we also kept in close contact during that entire period. Of course, the publication of his latest poems in *Pali* –1963-67– entitled *Odos Nikita Rantou*, (which was one of his earlier pseudonyms) had already taken place. I had also visited his house on Karneadou St. in the 1960s, the decade in which he used to visit Greece in the summer [...]. That house was sold – and was to become the headquarters of the Delphi Centre [...]. Finally, they bought an apartment on Souidias St. but he and his wife lived in it only a short while. His illness, a paralysis of the lower limbs, was get-

Calas, *Confound the Wise* (New York: Arrow Editions, 1942).

5. See Nanos Valaoritis, “Nicolaos Calas”, 301-02.

6. See George Theotokas – Nicolas Calas, *Mia allilografia [A Correspondence]*, ed. Ioanna Konstantoulaki-Chantzou (Athens: Prosperos, 1989), 53. See also Valaoritis’ essay, “Modern Greek Poetry”, *Horizon* VIII.75 (Mar. 1946): 205-16.

ting worse and they stopped coming to Athens from New York in the last years. Also, our correspondence was interrupted and when I went to read my poems at the Poetry Centre in New York in 1985, I sent him an invitation, without ever getting an answer from him. His friends who had visited him told me that his public contacts had diminished significantly.⁷

The portraits of the two men, Valaoritis and Calas, are also sketched in a personal way by their common friend, Alain Jouffroy, to whom they both make reference in their correspondence. Reading his relative text, I believe that one may focus on the following excerpt, in which Jouffroy makes a rather representative observation:

What impressed me from the beginning with my Greek surrealist friends, was their Joycean-Ulyssean manner: they articulated the uniqueness of their free thinking in at least three cultures: their own, the Anglo-Saxon and the French. Much better than André Breton himself, who spoke no other language and did not travel much, they each took advantage of their “odyssey” (Calas in New York, Valaoritis in Paris, London and San Francisco) to create a unique vehicle that brought forward the relativistic character of all forms of local ethnocentric thought. For them, it was apparent [...], poetic and critical ingenuity is a circle whose center is everywhere and the periphery is non-existent.⁸



The correspondence of Nicolas Calas and Nanos Valaoritis kept in the “Nanos Valaorites Papers” at the Princeton University Library (Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections) and the

7. See Nanos Valaoritis, “Nicolaos Calas”, 302-03.

8. See Alain Jouffroy, “Nanos Valaoritis et Nicolas Calas: La *complicité critique* de deux surréalistes grecs” [“The critical complicity of two Greek surrealists”], in *Surréalistes grecs*, eds. Ketty Tsékénis and Nanos Valaoritis (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1991), 193-208; for the above quotation, see p. 197. Jouffroy also corresponded with both Calas and Valaoritis.

“Nicolas Calas and Elena Calas” archives at the Nordic Library at Athens, respectively, includes a large number of letters exchanged during the period 1958-1982. The first letter is Valaoritis’, it is dated June 19, 1958 and it is written in French. The last, dated January 2, 1982, is also Valaoritis’ and it is written in Greek.

Nevertheless, most of these letters are written in English, while a few in French and in Greek. When I asked Valaoritis about the language issue, he observed that the choice of writing in foreign languages was made rather spontaneously since it made it “easier” for them, as both were used to expressing themselves in these languages for a number of years. Going through the entire list of the original letters, however, I assume that their choice was also dictated by another, equally *practical* reason: the need to use a typewriter, on the one hand, and the lack of having one with Greek characters available, on the other. And this is because the handwriting of both was such that made it difficult for them to read each other’s letters, so the use of a machine was required. In any case, even from 1946, in his aforementioned letter to Theotokas, Calas explains that he had chosen the English language precisely for these reasons: “I should beg your pardon for writing in English, as I do not own a Greek typewriter and my handwriting is terrible”.⁹ In spite of all this, regardless of the choice of the language medium, the correspondence between Calas and Valaoritis bears evidence of the transnational prospect in which both proceeded. What is characteristic is not only the use of English (and French), but also the issues that occupied them: French surrealism, and art and poetry in America and Europe.

The extensive correspondence may be divided into two parts, since the year 1968 clearly places a chronological mark of the end of one period and the start of another. This is accompanied by determining changes, which would influence the nature of the letters. These changes are owed to the different environment and, subsequently, the occupations and interests of Valaoritis, following his move to the US, but also to the dramatic political developments in Greece, the military coup of April 21, 1967, and the declaration of the dictatorship. These last developments seem to have especially

9. See Calas’s letter to Theotokas mentioned above, in George Theotokas – Nicolas Calas, *Mia allilografia*, 50.

led to a reorientation of the two writers on political issues, which appeared rarely in their correspondence up until 1967. These issues occupy them to a large degree from 1968 onwards.

The first part of the correspondence, that is the part covering the decade 1958-1967, which is published here, includes a total of 95 letters, of which 43 are written by Valaoritis and 52 by Calas; in Valaoritis' letters we also find an undated note which is included in Appendix I (since it is not possible to place it with precision among his other letters or connect it with a specific letter, to which it was probably attached).¹⁰ As concerns the subjects of their discussions, in this period we observe the mainly *literary* correspondence between the two writers. On the one hand, a large part is covered by references to Valaoritis' literary development, his first attempts to write drama and prose, while continuing to write poetry. On the other hand, it is the first time after many years (insofar as we know today) that Calas presents new poems in Greek. In the framework of an enthusiastic reading of these poems by Valaoritis were the latter's attempts to publish a literary magazine; and his efforts were succeeded by the circulation of the *Pali* magazine (by the end of 1963 or the beginning of 1964),¹¹ which included the return of Calas with works in Greek. Besides, although the correspondence does not offer any explicit information with regard to the development of Calas's thought while his study on the work of Hieronymus Bosch is still in progress (mainly for the painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*), it does, however, offer indirect, yet clear information on the stages of this important project. More specific information is provided about Calas's essays and art criticism for this period. Of great interest are the critical observations and commentary by both sides with regard to the new poetic works exchanged between them, as one asks the other for his first reading reaction. Of equal importance as to the change in the subject-matter of their correspondence after 1967 was the death of André Breton in September 1966. For both Greek writers (as also happens

10. Of the 95 letters included in the present edition 11 by Calas (4 in English and the rest in Greek) have been prepublished in the volume Nanos Valaoritis, *Modernismos, protoporía kai "Pali"* [*Modernism, Avant-garde and "Pali"*] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1997), 112-27. See also Valaoritis' comments on these eleven letters, in *ibid.*, mainly 193-200.

11. For the date of the first circulation of *Pali* magazine, see relevant footnote in letter no. 62.

with many of Breton's students even today) the death of Breton brought about the end of the heroic period of French surrealism. As the reader of this volume may realize, surrealism maintains a focus of their conversations up until that point and it attaches a particular tone to their letters here published. Finally, it should be pointed out here that, contrary to the case of the letters exchanged between the two writers following Valaoritis' move to the US (from 1968 on, as noted), there is no reference to the military junta in the last letters of this first period, that is, in the few letters written after April 21, 1967 and prior to Valaoritis' move to America.¹²

By contrast, once in the US, Valaoritis began to discuss with Calas the political situation in Greece, in fact, in a rather intense manner. While literary issues never ceased to occupy them (especially the developments in the surrealist movement in the US and France), from 1968 they seem to deal with them less than during the first period of their correspondence. As a matter of fact, most of these letters were written from 1968 to 1975, and mainly deal with the dictatorship and issues around it (political, ideological, social etc.), while their correspondence following the return of Democracy (in the summer of 1974) became apparently less frequent. Thus, the second, "American" period of their correspondence, that is, the letters they exchanged between 1968 and 1982, which were written while both lived in the US, may well be considered *political* (and less literary) in the main. Due to their unique nature but also their large range, the letters of this period must constitute the object of a separate publication.

In what follows I focus on certain issues pointed out above, which show the framework in which the thought and work of both writers developed, shedding light on the subjects discussed in the correspondence between 1958 and 1967, in my attempt to show the significance of its present publication. More specifically, I examine certain of the principal issues that bear evidence of the way both writers faced their contemporary, Greek, French and American literary, artistic and social reality, which in turn influenced their work.

12. Since the exact opposite is the case with their letters from 1968 on, I presumed that this choice was made under fear of censorship while Valaoritis was preparing to travel abroad; indeed, when I asked him, Valaoritis confirmed my presumption.

2 *The Art of Risk: Nicolas Calas*

*The supreme message of art as conveyed by those who have put their genius in their life is to help us realize that failure, failure to solve the enigma of life, is more important than to find successful solutions.*¹³

Nicolas Calas¹⁴ is known as a poet, and as an art and literary critic and theorist. These three qualities took their form in texts he wrote in Greek, French and English. The bulk of his poetry belongs to Greek literature,¹⁵ while –with the exception of his first critical essays–¹⁶ Calas’s theoretical views developed since

13. See Nicolas Calas, “Surrealist Intentions”, in *Art in the Age of Risk and Other Essays* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 15.

14. The pseudonym Nicolas Calas (of Nicos or Nicolaos Kalamaris, who in the 1930s published his Greek poems using the pseudonym Nikitas Rantos and his Greek articles with M. Spieros) was apparently chosen from 1938 by the writer, when his French book *Foyers d’incendie* was published, as his signature shows also in the later publications of his books in English, and of his (English) articles and essays, as well as his volumes of collected Greek poems. See Nicolaos Calas, *Odos Nikita Rantou [Nikitas Rantos Street]*, prologue by Odysseas Elytis (Athens: Ikaros, 1997 [2nd ed.; 1st ed. 1977]), for which he was awarded the First Greek State Literature Award in 1977; and also, Nicolaos Calas, *Grafi kai fos [Writing and Light]* (Athens: Ikaros, 1998 [2nd ed.; 1st ed. 1983]).

15. Nicolas Calas wrote some poems in English and in French, which he never published in single publications. These poems became known recently. See the French poems in Nicolaos Calas, *Dekaexi gallika poiimata kai allilografia me ton William Carlos Williams [Sixteen French Poems and Correspondence with William Carlos Williams]*, eds. and trans. Spilios Aryiropoulos and Vassiliki Kolokotroni (Athens: Ypsilon, 2002). See also the Greek translations by Andreas Pagoulatos in the magazine *Nea Syntelesia* 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2004): 23-27, and by Despina Demertzi and Vivi Tsouroyanni in the magazine *Mandragoras* 35 (July 2006): 81. In the same issue, pp. 82-84, see the English poems (ed. and trans. Xeni Skartsi), and the provided information about some other publications of his English poetry.

16. Calas’s early critical texts (articles, essays etc.) were published in Greek during the

his departure from Greece in order to live in Paris at first and finally in New York City, following the break of WWII; these theoretical texts were published in French and, mainly, in English.¹⁷ Though he always visited Greece –usually in a nostalgic manner–, Calas was an expatriate by choice, a fact proven by his cosmopolitan attitude and interests in international political and aesthetic matters.

While in New York, Calas established himself as an art critic by publishing articles in well-known art periodicals and as exhibitions curator, while teaching Art History at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey as of September 1962, as he himself wrote to Valaoritis.¹⁸ During this period, he also launched his research and writing of –what remains unpublished to date– a study on Hieronymus Bosch’s painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*,¹⁹ and published a number of other books, mostly on art.²⁰ After a

period 1929-1938. They are collected in Nicolas Calas, *Keimena poiitikis kai aisthitikis* [*Texts on Poetry and Aesthetics*], ed. Alexandros Aryiriou (Athens: Plethron, 1982).

17. For Calas’s early works in English and French, see n. 4 above. After 1938, Calas’s work would be published mainly in English.

18. The Fairleigh Dickinson University Archives include the name of Professor Emeritus of Art Nicholas [sic] Calas in the Emeriti Faculty list. From 1947 and, mainly in 1953 and 1956, Calas was collaborating with Margaret Mead in the United States, gave “a series of formal lectures” at the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and participated in lectures and classes at Columbia University (1956-1958) and at the University of Chicago (in 1957). See *Primitive Heritage: An Anthropological Anthology*, eds. Margaret Mead and Nicolas Calas (New York: Random House, 1953). Also, Margaret Mead, “[Letter October 27, 1959]”, *Mandradoras* 35 (July 2006): 71. Cf. also relative letters revealing Calas’s attempts to find a teaching post in April 1959 (*ibid.*, 70-71).

19. Calas received a three-year scholarship (1949-1952) by the Bollingen Foundation for the research and the writing of his study on the work of Bosch (he first presented a brief version in *Life* magazine on November 21, 1949). The writing and publication of this work constitute a constantly repeated issue in the correspondence.

20. See, for example, Calas’s references in the correspondence to his and his wife’s Elena new book (at the time), *The Peggy Guggenheim Collection of Modern Art* (New York: H. Abrams, 1967), as well as to his volume of essays, Nicolas Calas, *Art in the Age of Risk*, *op. cit.* See also his references to the book of Nicolas Calas and Elena Calas, *Icons and Images of the Sixties*, which was prepared in the 1960s but was published in 1971 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971). His later publications include the books: Nicolas Calas, Herbert J. Muller and Kenneth Burke, *Surrealism: Pro and Con* (New York: Gotham Book Mart & Gallery Inc., 1973), and Nicolas Calas, *Transfigurations: Art Critical Essays on the Modern Period* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985) (which also includes four texts by Elena Calas and

hiatus of several years, he returned to the writing of poems in Greek, which were published in literary magazines in Greece (and firstly in Valaoritis' *Pali*, as mentioned above) and which were later to be included in the sequence of poems "Odos Nikita Rantou" of his poetry book that bears the same title.²¹

2.1 A Matter of Honour: Greece and Poetry

Calas's relationship to Greece seems to have been an unstable one and apparently dependent upon personal reasons and events which remain unclear to a large extent. In 1959, certain law issues made it impossible for him to visit Greece, as he himself explains to Valaoritis in their correspondence, when the latter asks Calas whether he and his wife Elena plan to visit in the following summer on his private, Madouri island (letter no. 4, dated Nov. 27). A few months later, Calas answers Valaoritis following the latter's insistence: "My affairs in Greece [...] are in a very bad way and not only is it out of question my going back there before some unpleasant law suits are settled, but I also am facing the eventuality that I will probably never return there. [...] Perhaps in ten years' time I may be able to live on the little money that I have or if not I will then, if I can, go to end my days in Greece" (no. 12, Apr. 3, 1960).²² It is yet unclear as to the reason why Calas faced the risk of danger in ever returning to Greece (perhaps due to the "law suits" mentioned above?). It is, however, known that prior to 1960, he does "visit Greece in order to see his ill father and, when the latter dies in April 1955, he takes care of inheritance matters".²³ According to a curriculum vitae written by Calas himself, he visited Greece in January 1955 and returned to New York

one written by both Nicolas and Elena Calas, as well as another entitled "Profanation: A Chess Game", which Calas co-wrote with André Breton).

21. See Nicolaos Calas, *Odos Nikita Rantou*, op. cit.

22. Calas really meant his desire to return to Greece sometime: in 1965 (letter no. 77, June 9) he asks Valaoritis to help him convince his mother not to sell their entire estate in the Peloponnese, and to leave him a small portion, perhaps to "go to end [his] days in Greece"; cf. his relevant comments in his letters nos. 33 (July 1961) and 34 (Oct. 1961).

23. See Christos Yannakos, "Chronologio Nicolaou Cala" ["A Nicolas Calas Chronology"], *Mandragoras* 35 (July 2006): 69.

on June 26, 1956 (it is not specified whether he stayed in Greece for the entirety of this period of one and a half years); he also visited Athens in 1957 and 1958, in addition to a forty-day visit in 1959.²⁴

At least one of the law suits he refers to in the above letter had apparently been cleared by August 1960, at which time he sent a new letter to Valaoritis (no. 19, dated Aug. 12) most likely from Athens (or the island of Hydra), in which he underlines his “distressing mood” and his inability “to concentrate on writing”. In fact, already in May 1960, in another letter to the same recipient, he comments on his reaction as regards Greece by using the word “ambivalent”:

Thanks for your kind words about my Greek poems, although I am afraid that because of your warm feelings towards me you read them with too much indulgence. But if Elytis agrees and in the fall you feel like publishing them, I would be very pleased. What makes Elytis think that I do not like his poetry? Perhaps the fact that when I was in Greece these last years I never looked him up. This has to do with my whole and very ambivalent attitude toward Greece. When I left Greece with the plan never to live there again (and that was in the thirties) I was very bitter at the cold reception that my first poems had received. To my surprise, last year I found out that some critics and poets were rediscovering me. But it's too late to give me any pleasure; I am no more the same one who wrote those poems, nor can I be among those who might read them. Now naturally I care less about such matters and I am too old to enjoy approval. (Letter no. 17, May 14, 1960.)

Yet, if we look at excerpts of other letters, we conclude, firstly, that Calas was most likely not against the publication of his poems, even in the language of the residents of Mars(!),²⁵ and secondly, that for some reason or reasons, he

24. See [Nicolas Calas], “Proshedio viografikou simeiomatos tou Nicolaou Cala” [“Outline for a biographical note of Nicolas Calas”], *Mandragoras* 35 (July 2006): 71.

25. Let us not forget that during this period the first space missions are being prepared and what prevails is a journalistic, cinematographic etc. relevant literature (e.g., about Mars and its inhabitants, that is, the “Martians”). Cf. the long-lasting impact of Orson Welles's

refrained from writing poetry for many years: “Thank you for suggesting my name to the Icelandic poet. It does not interest me very much and, as you know on the whole I have done nothing to promote my poetry for the very good reason that it is only recently that I have started, after so many years, to write poetry again, and that only very unsystematically. Most of my activity having been directed toward other fields. However, if you think it a good idea, I have no objection to having my poetry come out in any language, even Martian!” (letter no. 23, Oct. 7, 1960). Although he implies that his energy was spent mostly on research and the writing of his essays, his relative comment in a letter dated March 31, 1962 (no. 40), in which his interest in having his Greek poems published in Greece, in *Pali* magazine²⁶ –more so than his articles in English– becomes clear (“This I insist upon, nota bene!”), shows that, even if he had really refrained from writing poetry, save for “only recently”,²⁷

radio program (in CBS’s “Mercury Theatre on the Air”), performed as a Halloween special on October 30, 1938, during which a part of H.G. Wells’s novel, *The War of the Worlds* (1898), involving an invasion of Earth by Martians, was read; for instance, Nelson Bond’s *The Night America Trembled* (produced in CBS’s live television program “Studio One” on September 9, 1957), the first dramatization of the public panic caused by the 1938 production.

26. Calas did not know the name of the magazine of course (since it had not yet been founded) and, therefore, that is why he makes no reference to it.

27. Though in his letters to Valaoritis Calas suggests the decades of the 1940s and 1950s, the year 1945 added on the table of contents of *Odos Nikita Rantou*, which includes these Greek poems he sent to him in the early 1960s, perhaps limits to a good degree the period of his hiatus as far as his writing of poems in Greek is concerned. Moreover, if we account for the chronological suggestions of this book –which he himself edited–, it becomes clear that Calas suggests a distinction between three periods in his creative development: 1933-1936, 1945-1977 and 1977-1982. It becomes apparent that such a distinction is important to the study of the development of his poetics. It should also be mentioned here that in 1938, in his correspondence with George Theotokas, Calas writes: “A propos, I no longer write any poetry! It is a period of my life that has definitely ended” (Dec. 2, 1938); in spite of this, a short while later he notes: “à propos I wrote some poems recently, but in French” (Apr. 16, 1939) (see George Theotokas – Nicolas Calas, *Mia allilografia*, 34 and 43, respectively). As Spilios Aryiropoulos and Vassiliki Kolokotroni have pointed out, these poems belong to the same period as the French poems that survived and were published in the volume *Dekaexi gallika poiimata*. The two scholars believe that Calas, “having reached [...] his limits, seems to have refrained from writing poetry for some five years and returned to it [...] after 1945” (see Spilios Aryiropoulos and Vassiliki Kolokotroni, “Thelo na gino o chrismos tis zois mou: O Nicolaos Calas kath’ odon” [“I want to become the oracle of my life”: Nicolas Calas on his way”], in Nicolas Calas, *Dekaexi gallika poiimata kai allilografia me ton William Carlos Williams*, 21).

it was to the latter that he gave priority – at least in so far as its publication in Greece (or in Greek) was concerned. I quote the following excerpt from a letter written nine months later, as I believe it shows, not only his “ambivalent attitude toward Greece” as the possible reason for his refraining from writing poetry, but also his eagerness to convey the results of his poetic development to his Greek contemporaries: “I’ve added a few more poems to the ones you already know and have made a few corrections on some that you have seen. It’s kind of you to want to include some of my work in your personal anthology. Please let me know more about it. If you think that it is useless my publishing a group of poems in a magazine, I will take your word for it; however, I regret that no one should be interested in seeing or reading what Nikitas Rantos of the pre-war days is now writing” (letter no. 52, Dec. 26, 1962).²⁸

In other words, it seems that whatever the matters of honour which led to his initial decision to refrain from the writing of poetry (personal or “the cold reception that [his] first poems had received”), some other reasons contributed to his renewed desire to communicate with the Greek public. Valaoritis’ insistent interest, as moving as it was,²⁹ can not have been the sole reason for this change – though Calas sent his own poems after having received two volumes from Valaoritis that had been recently published (letter no. 12). Perhaps the critics and the poets who had “rediscovered” him, as he notes in the above passage (without making reference to specific people), had contributed to the renewal of his interest in poetry. Or, perhaps, he was really writing poems in Greek since 1945. In any case, Calas directly strengthened Valaoritis’ interest by announcing that at some point he had indeed (re)started to write poems in Greek.

His first reference to these (new) poems is made in his letter no. 12 (Apr. 3, 1960): “By sea mail I will send you an introduction I wrote for the new

28. Indeed, as the correspondence and the relative discussions with Valaoritis develop, Calas passionately wishes not only to have his new poems read, but his old ones as well. It is also interesting, for example, to read his relevant comments in letter no. 50 (Oct. 31, 1962) and yet another passage of a 1965 letter, in which he points out to Valaoritis the proper way of advertising and selling his old book of poems (see letter no. 80, July 22, 1965). It must be noted that Calas does not simply wish to sell his book as a collector’s item, but in order to gain *new* readers.

29. See for example his wish/urging: “I will be delighted to see anything come out of your pen, poems or prose” (letter no. 2, Nov. 28, 1958).