Dear Nikos,

Dear Giorgis,

Stoupa, 27 September 2026

I feel somewhat awkward addressing you like this. To me, you will always be Nikos Kazantzakis and Alexis Zorbas.

I have loved you since I was a child. With a child's wholehearted devotion, but also with a child's reverence, when instinctively sensing—and instinct at that age is rarely mistaken—that what stands before them is something immense and unsurpassable.

We first met in the dark. With my first pocket money, I bought a flashlight. I would burrow under the blanket and read passionately until both book and flashlight slipped from my hands. It was the only way to satisfy my longing, since my parents would not allow the light in my room to remain on after midnight.

In the years that followed, Kazantzakis was always present. I came to love other conversations of yours far more than this one with Zorbas, which, despite that first love of mine, left me with a sense of unease. Zorbas was no more than Anthony Quinn's face and the syrtaki.

This year's Stoupa festival—I owe it that much—restored Zorbas to his true dimensions. Before coming here, I reread the book. Had I ever really read it before? It was so utterly "different"!

But yesterday, here in Stoupa, after all that Katerina and Maria said, it was not that I changed my heroes. Rather, the two of you stood here, in this light, in this breeze scented with sea and tamarisk, in these surroundings—with the necessary subtractions—and your smiles grew broader, while the wrinkles on your faces revealed secrets I had never known.

And yet, the place where I truly encountered you was at the "company offices." It was there that I heard Zorbas's hurried, impetuous footsteps... pacing back and forth, putting the affairs of the enterprise in order.

And then Kazantzakis's footsteps. Forgetting where he was headed, his gaze caught by the luxuriant vegetation, by the horse turning the winch, by the basket of water and fruit cooling at the rim of the well, by a fig tree, a vine, and those flowers for which no blue exists that could ever paint them. He would take out paper and pencil, jot something down, linger, filled with the sweet anticipation of returning to his little hut, because Buddha was waiting for him there.

And I wanted to slip into the hut too, even if Buddha frowned at my unwelcome presence. If only to tell him that here, outside the hut, a great many people have gathered from all over Europe, and they speak with great affection of Kazantzakis and Zorbas. At the forefront are Katerina, Maria, Vasiliki; I hear Maklena... Marilyn, Mariella... and their voices mingle with the voices of "Englishmen, Frenchmen, Portuguese, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Poles, aghas, pashas, dervishes..."

There are other kinds of "conversations" as well. Artists, Greek and non-Greek—but with Greek hearts—have taken up colours and threads and offered us aspects of your work and your presence that otherwise would have been lost.

Eighty years later... and both of you are here, in Stoupa, at Kalogria! Fully alive!

So that failure of the lignite enterprise was no failure at all. It was a victory over decay and death.

Until we meet again, whenever God may grant me the blessing!

With love
(may this one word encompass all that I feel for both of you),

Georgia Kakourou-Chroni

P.S. I was too quick to bring this letter to a close. I had not imagined that, just a short while ago, in front of the "little white house," beside the tiny cove where the stentorian voice of Angelos Sikelianos once resounded, George Seferis's Denial would be heard in the voices of English visitors familiar with Stoupa.

As those voices joined sea and sky, they erased the objections of Seferis, the Nobel Prize-winning poet who rejected the Greek writer who today—alongside C. P. Cavafy—is the best known of them all.

The power of art rising above the voices of its creators.

Seferis reached out his hand to Kazantzakis. There was no reason to ask "forgiveness." The great Cretan kept no ledger for accounts of that kind.

Time vindicated both their voices—so different, yet equally irreplaceable, alive and fertile!__