Robin Cormack

“The nightingales will never let you go to sleep at Platres”. Re-visiting the Greek Past.
Ezra Pound: *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* (1920)

**O bright Apollo,**
**τίν’ ἄνδρα, τίν’ ἕρωα, τίνα θεόν**
**What god, man or hero**
**Shall I place a tin wreath upon?**
There died a myriad,

And of the best, among them,

For an old bitch gone in the teeth,

For a botched civilisation.
George Seferis:

“Helen” (written on Cyprus in 1955)

Lyric nightingale,
on a night like this, by the shore of Proteus,
the Spartan slave-girls heard you and began their lament,
and among them — who would have believed it? — Helen!
She whom we hunted so many years by the banks of the Scamander
She was there, at the desert’s lip; I touched her; she spoke to me:
‘It isn’t true, it isn’t true,’ she cried.
‘I didn’t board the blue bowed ship.
I never went to valiant Troy.’

Breasts girded high, the sun in her hair, and that stature
shadows and smiles everywhere,
on shoulders, thighs and knees;
the skin alive, and her eyes
with the large eyelids,
she was there, on the banks of a Delta.
And at Troy?
At Troy, nothing: just a phantom image.
That’s how the gods wanted it.
And Paris, Paris lay with a shadow as though it were a solid being;
and for ten whole years we slaughtered ourselves for Helen.
Sunrise over Levadaia
Sunrise over Levadia
Grace Graupe-Pillard: “Squeezed by Laocoön”
MONASTERY OF SIMOPETRA.

a passage to Xeropotamo, accompanied us; and, turning our boat's head again to the north-west, we arrived before long a second time below the lofty rock of

SIMOPETRA.

This monastery was founded by St. Simon the Anchorite, of whose history I was unable to learn anything. The buildings are connected with the side of the mountain by a fine aqueduct, which has a grand effect, perched as it is at so great a height above the sea, and consisting of two rows of eleven arches, one above the other, with one lofty arch across a chasm immediately under the walls of the monastery, which, as seen from this side, resembles an immense square tower, with several rows of wooden balconies of galleries projecting from the walls at a prodigious height from the ground. It was no slight effort of gymnastics to get up to the door, where I was received with many grotesque bows by an ancient porter. I was ushered into the presence of the agoumenos, who sat in a hall, surrounded by a reverend and long-haired monks; and after bread and water, and a cup of coffee, no pipes—for the divines of Mount Athos in smoking—they took me to the library.

I have more than five hundred manuscripts, of which, all works of divinity, and not a fine book. I asked permission to see them acceded. These were the canons of Max, Agoumenos of Mount Athos the seventh century; the Acts and Epistles written in large letters in double script, the letters upright and written transversely; at the end is an inscription in Latin, the date, but it is so faint that I cannot read it. The third was a quarto of the life of an evangelist at the monastery. Whilst I was arranging the papers, a monk, opening the copy of
Inner Court of the beautiful House of the Vestal, restored as in the days of its splendour, Pompeii.
EDWARD LEAR (1812-1888) VIEW OF THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO AT BASSAE IN ARCADIA