

The Dark Labyrinth

Lawrence
DURRELL

The Dark Labyrinth

FABER paper covered EDITIONS

LAWRENCE DURRELL

D 134 A DUTTON PAPERBACK

\$1.35, IN CANADA: \$1.60

The Dark Labyrinth

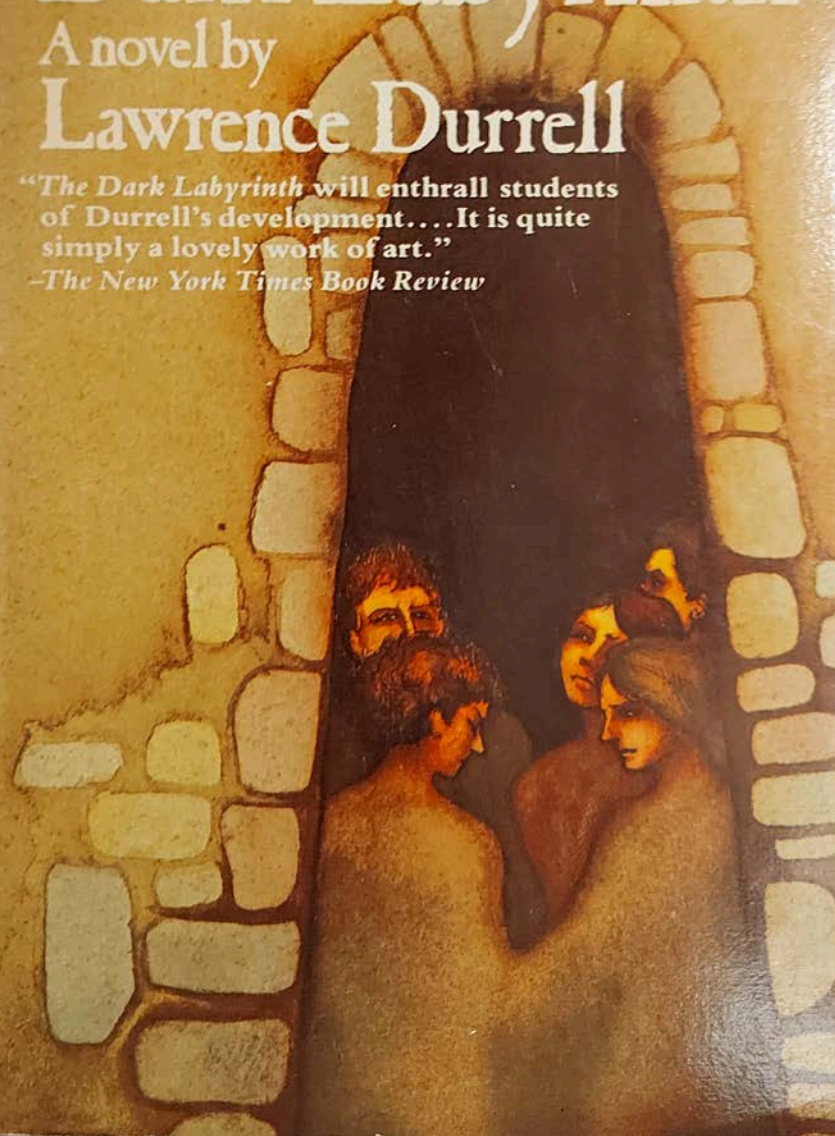


A FASCINATING EARLY NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF JUSTINE

The Dark Labyrinth

A novel by
Lawrence Durrell

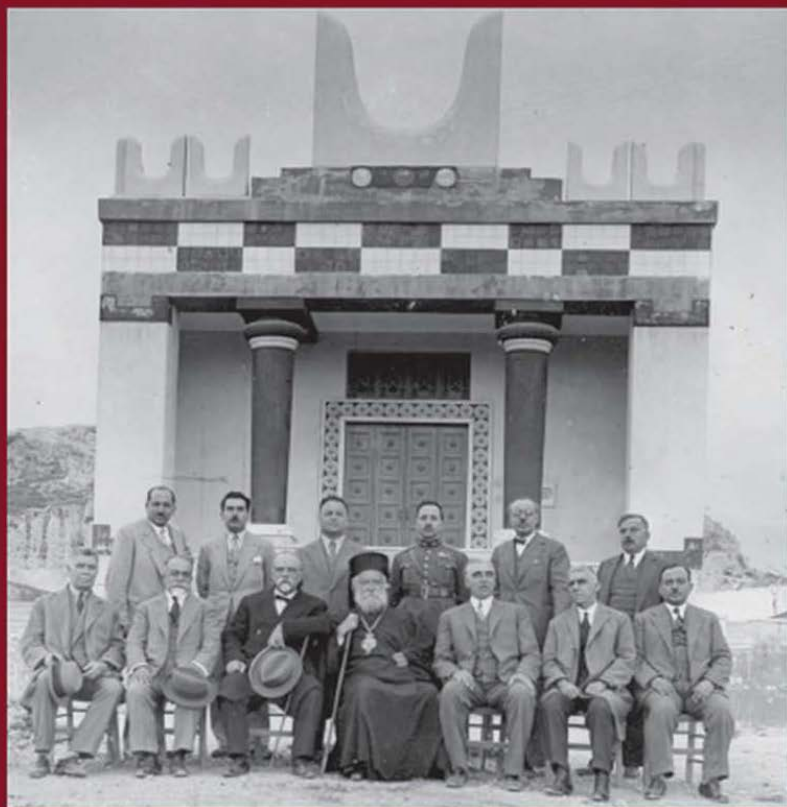
"The Dark Labyrinth will enthrall students of Durrell's development... It is quite simply a lovely work of art."
—The New York Times Book Review



Cretomania

Modern Desires for the Minoan Past

Edited by
NICOLETTA MOMIGLIANO and ALEXANDRE FARNOUX



BRITISH SCHOOL AT ATHENS
Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2019

FOCUS

The Minoans' timeless allure

High-level conference in London explores civilization's influence on art, design

The enduring influence of the Minoan civilization on fashion, food, music and art is the subject of a high-level event at the Museum of London tomorrow, which has been dedicated to Sophia Kokosalaki, the 47-year-old fashion designer of Cretan heritage who died earlier this month.

Featuring distinguished academics and designers, the event seeks to showcase how one of Europe's earliest and most advanced civilizations inspired the likes of Sergei Diaghilev, Ted Shaw, William Blake and his "Minotaur," Pablo Picasso's Labyrinth series, Mariano Fortuny's celebrated Anossos scarf, Karl Lagerfeld and Kokosalaki, among many others.

"Contemporary Minoans: Cretan Culture, Source of Inspiration" is

A special message will be sent by the head of the Picasso Administration and the closing address will be delivered by Yiannis Politis, known for his restoration work at the Palace of Knossos

an initiative of the cultural organization Branding Heritage (BH) and was put together with the support of the Regional Authority of Crete and the Greek National Tourism Organization's UK and Ireland Office. Branding Heritage aims to explore how Greek culture inspires contemporary creativity and drives business. The nonprofit organization is the brainchild of journalist Katerina Prentzos.

In London, Harriet Quick, a journalist and Vogue UK contributing editor, and Sarah Mower, chief critic of Vogue Runway and British Fashion Council ambassador for emerging talent, will pay tribute to



This Ergon Mykonos garment (left) is inspired by the Minoan Snake Goddess. Late designer Sophia Kokosalaki modeled her silver necklace (center, top) after votive swords found in a sacred Minoan cave. A detail from the painting 'Labyrinths of Love' (center, bottom) by Tereza Valavani shows the influence of the tale of the Minotaur, which also inspired Faye Chatzis' handmade black silk dress with gold thread (right).

Kokosalaki's creative genius and exceptional personality.

Athens-born, London-based designer Mary Katrantzou, who recently presented a Greece-inspired collection at the Temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion and has created a collection featuring Minoan motifs, will be a guest speaker.

Panel session speakers at the Museum of London also include professor of Aegean studies, Classics and ancient history at the University of Bristol Nicoletta Momigliano, Maze designer Adrian Fisher, lecturer in Aegean prehistory at Ca' Foscari University of Venice Ilaria Caloi, honorary re-

search fellow at the University of Birmingham Diana Wardle, archaeologist and founder of Minoan Tastes Dr Jerolyn Morisson, ceramicist Lilah Clarke, Rainbowwave founder Maria Lemos, fashion designer Marios Schwab, archaeologist and jewelry designer Dr Polina Ellis, and Stephen J. Payne and Nikos Ziarkas of the Balothizer music ensemble.

The event will be addressed by Regional Governor of Crete Stavros Arnautakis, the Greek National Tourism Organization's president, Angela Gerekou, and secretary-general, Dimitris Fragakis, Greece's ambassador in London, Dimitris

Caramitsos-Tziras, and journalist and founder of Branding Heritage Katerina Prentzos.

A special message will be sent by the head of the Picasso Administration, Claude Picasso, and the closing address will be delivered by Yiannis Politis, known for his restoration work at the Palace of Knossos on Crete. There will also be an exhibition of art with Minoan references by European artists, including Greece's Alekos Fassianos, as well as workshops in the reproduction of ancient weaving techniques.

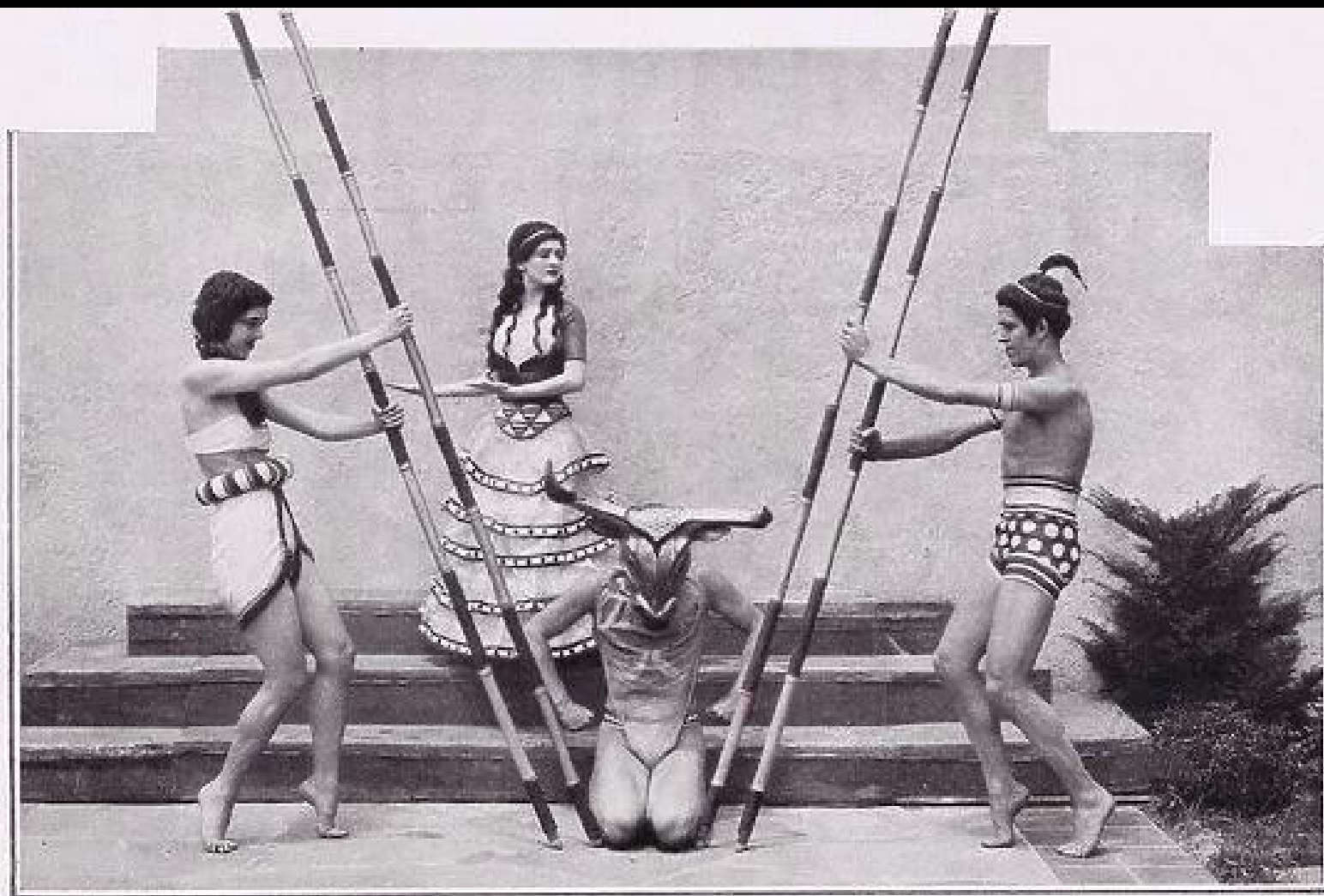
Museum of London, 150 London Wall. Starts at 12.30 p.m.



The Afternoon of a Faun (L'Après-midi d'un faune)
Choreographed by Vaslav Nijinsky for the Ballets Russes
First performed in the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris on 29 May
1912. Nijinsky danced the main part himself.



Ted Shawn's 1919 solo *GNOSSIENNE (A PRIEST OF KNOSSOS)*
and Martha Graham



IF 100

In Ancient Crete, one of the new dance productions offered by Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn and the Denishawn Dancers in their third season with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at the Lewisohn Stadium, New York City, in early August. In this photograph Ted Shawn is seen center, with a group of the Denishawn Dancers

Revue des Voyages, which described this particular mania for things Minoan among Viennese artists and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, especially in the period of the Belle Époque.¹

The use of allusions to and quotations from the past in the works of modern authors and artists, and the continuous dialogue and negotiation between past and present, are, to a large extent, fundamental and essential elements in every history of scholarship and in reception studies. In the field of Minoan studies, there has been considerable previous work on the history of Minoan scholarship and, to a much lesser extent, on Minoan reception (and this volume continues a dialogue started by such work).² This, however, is the first publication entirely devoted to modern responses to the material culture of Minoan Crete.

Although reception theory and reception histories have now been flourishing in many fields during the last few decades,³ archaeology appears to have shown more reluctance to adopt this kind of approach. This is, perhaps, partly because, as Martin Bernal once remarked:

Twentieth-century archaeology has been bedevilled by [what] I shall call 'archaeological positivism'. It is the fallacy that dealing with 'objects' makes one 'objective': the belief that interpretations of archaeological evidence are as solid as the archaeological finds themselves.⁴

The solid materiality of the Minoan past is, of course, undeniable. Nevertheless, just as the Athenian Acropolis, for example, 'is a cultural product not only of the fifth century BC, but of millennia',⁵ so the Minoan past is not merely what happened in Crete in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC (i.e. in what has become the canonical chronology of the 'Minoan Age'),⁶ but also the product of centuries of scholarship, including reconstructions, and of responses to this past steeped in various interpretative traditions, some of which are not merely related to archaeology and its practice. In addition, and to paraphrase Jauss, the real significance and legacy of the Minoan past have arguably been determined to a large extent by the chain of interpretations and receptions of Minoan material culture.⁷ Whether it is the 'palace-temple' of Knossos,⁸ the famous 'snake-goddess', the 'Taureador/Bull leaping' or the 'Prince of Lilies' frescoes, these objects are nowadays no longer products only of 2nd-millennium BC Crete, but they are experienced in the present, and have acquired multiple layers of meanings since their rediscovery in the early 20th century – in no small part also thanks to their association with famous later Greek myths (such as Theseus and the Minotaur), the bane and blessing of Aegean Bronze Age archaeology. While the structures and objects essentially remain the same,⁹ their symbolism and significance have continued to change within the present, because they continue to exist and are experienced in the present: Knossos has become a Cretan 'Acropolis'; the 'snake goddess', which for Evans signified the Great Minoan Mother Goddess and a precursor of the Christian Virgin Mary,

for others reflected both the 'antiquity' and 'modernity' of Minoan culture, its Oriental and alluring nature, full of sexual promises, its feminine, matriarchal character and the possibility for a better life, especially for women (cf. various chapters in this volume and [Figure 1.1](#)).

Thus, if Minoan Crete continues to fascinate and matter to us, it is not simply because of the peculiarities of its remarkable material culture, but largely because of the individual responses to it: writers, architects, politicians, and artists, as well as archaeologists and historians, give it new meanings and new importance in their own present. This, as Donald Preziosi reminds us in his contribution to this volume, recalls Walter Benjamin's ideas about snatching something from the past for its revolutionary potential to change the present. Or, to use Hannah Arendt's words, Benjamin's use of quotations represented a new way of dealing with the past, emerging not from his despair about a past that, in Tocqueville's terms, no longer threw light upon the future, but 'out of the despair of the present and the desire to destroy it'.¹⁰

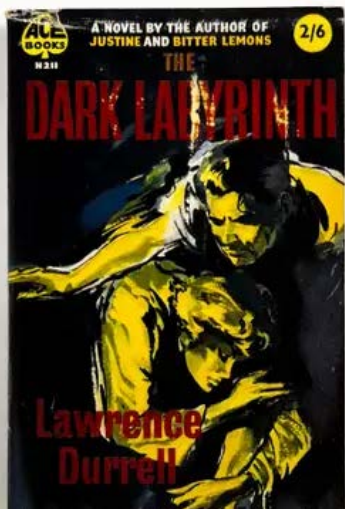
The revolutionary function of the past in its continuous and multi-temporal dialogue with the present is also closely reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's affirmation that 'no poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of the dead poets and artists'; it also echoes Eliot's idea that the poet or artist of any art

is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious not of what is dead, but of what is already living.¹¹

This realisation of the Minoan past's revolutionary potential, in a broad sense, is amply illustrated in many chapters collected in this volume, which has been divided into three parts.

In [Part 1](#) ('Cretomania and the built environment – conscious, unconscious, and coincidental allusions in modern architecture and reconstructions'), the chapters by Preziosi, Philippides and Sgouros, and Blakolmer focus on how Minoan architecture and its reconstructions interacted with the work of modern architects and artists who followed modernist trends to revolutionise their present. They also underline how responses and allusions to the Minoan world changed considerably between the two world wars: before 1914, the aesthetics of Art Nouveau clearly influenced contemporary responses to Minoan Crete and paved the way to its favourable reception, whereas after World War I, it is Minoan material culture that influences more clearly certain productions of Art Déco.¹² Most importantly, these chapters bring to the forefront a number of methodological questions concerning the nature of Minoan citations and the history of the transmission of Minoan imagery (cf. also below, pp. 7–8).

In [Part 2](#) ('Cretomania in the visual and performing arts, and in other cultural practices'), the chapters by Caloi, Momigliano, Morris, Boucher, and Burns deal with various ways in which Minoan material culture has been



For
MARGARET, GERALD
& LESLIE

Lawrence
Durrell

the Dark
Labyrinth

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Author's Note

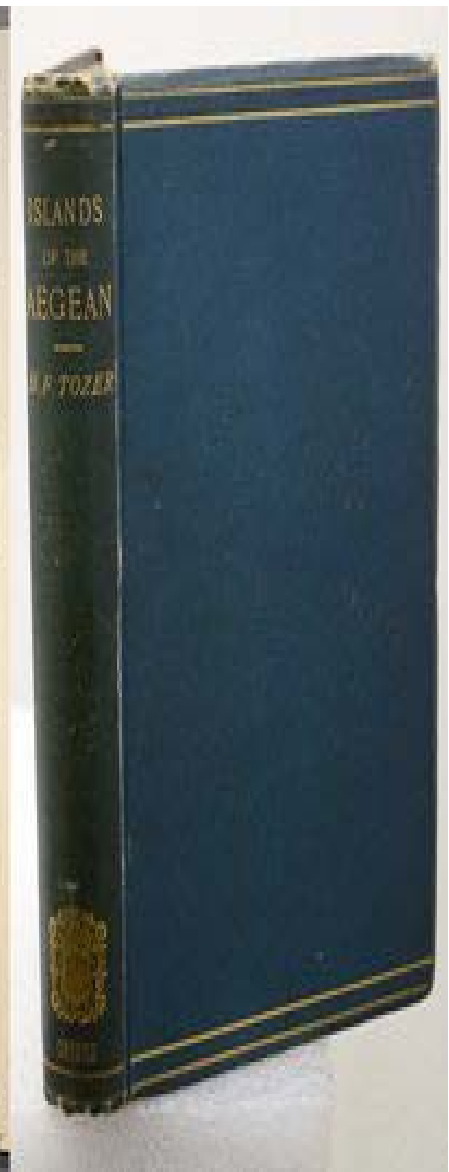
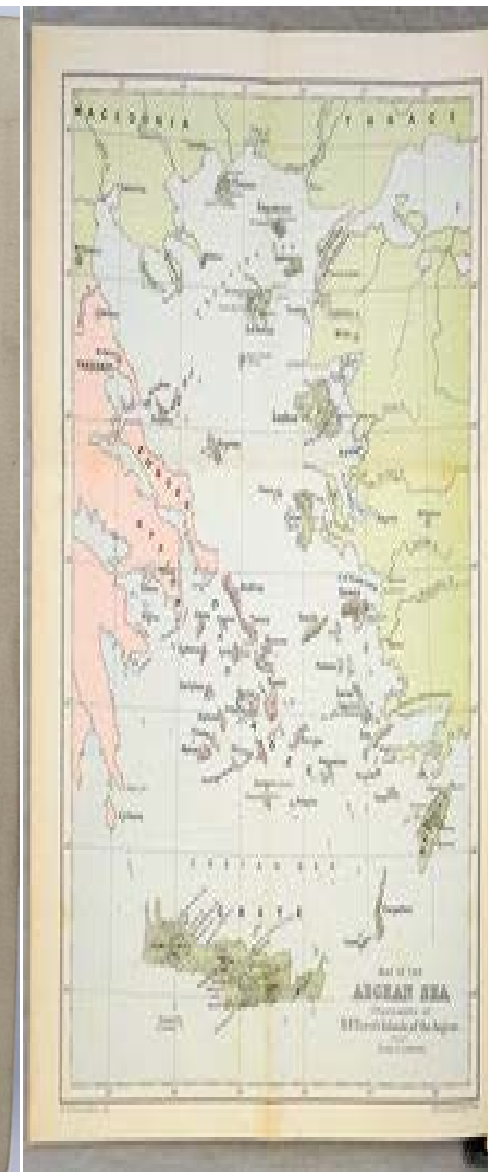
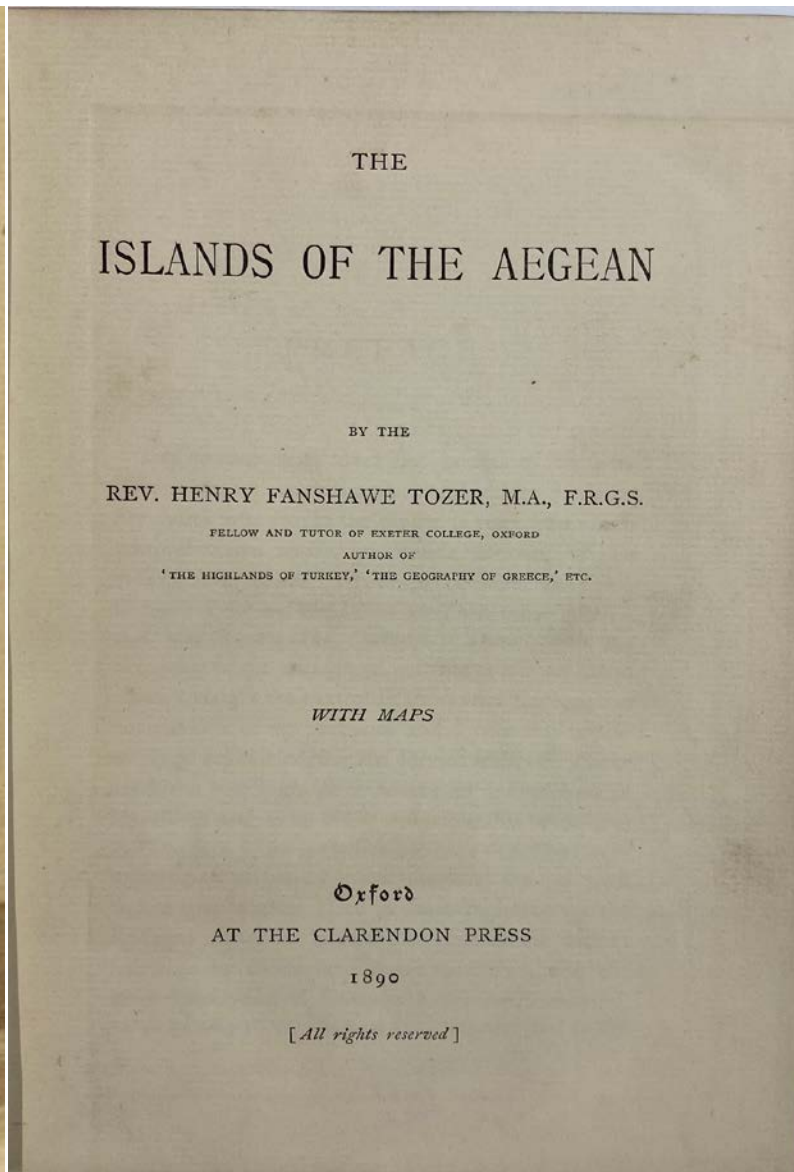
Not only the characters depicted in this story, but the events also, are fictitious. Even the island of Crete may rest assured that no libellous motives suggested its choice as a *locale*. The following fragment from *The Islands of the Aegean*, by the Rev. Henry Fanshawe Tozer, MA, FRGS, Oxford University Press, 1875, must be held responsible for suggesting the story:

'Our object now was to recross the island on the Eastern side of Mount Ida to the town of Megalocastron, or Candia, on the northern coast; but before doing so we determined to make a *detour* to visit a place which is known in all the neighbouring district by the name of "The Labyrinth" (*O Aλφύρινθος*). Our host, Captain George, undertook to be our guide; and accordingly the next morning we started in his company and, fording the stream close under the Acropolis of Gortyna, ascended the hills towards the north-west and in an hour's time reached the place which bears the name. It is entered by an aperture of no great size in the mountain-side where the rocks are of clayey limestone, forming horizontal layers; and inside we found what looks almost like a flat roof, while chambers and passages run off from the entrance in various directions. The appearance at first sight is that of artificial construction, but more probably it is entirely natural, though some persons think it has served for a quarry. We were furnished each with a taper and descended by a passage, on both sides of which the fallen stones had been piled up; the roof above us varied from four to sixteen feet in height. Winding about, we came to an upright stone, the work of a modern Ariadne, set there to show the way, for at intervals other passages branched off from the main one, and anyone who entered without a light would be hopelessly

lost. Captain George described to us how for three years during the late war (1867-1869) the Christian inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, to the number of 500, and he among them, had lived there, as their predecessors had done during the former insurrection, to escape the Turks, who had burned their homes and carried off their flocks and herds, and all other property they could lay hands on. He pointed out to us the places where the stones were piled up so as to form chambers, each of which was occupied by a family. When I inquired, half in joke, where their refectory was, he replied that far, far within there was a large and lofty central hall, capable of holding 500 people together, to which they gave the name, and that there they used to meet from time to time and dance, sing and enjoy themselves. They had brought a provision of bread to eat and oil for light; and water they obtained from a spring in the innermost part of the cavern, which appears to be the only one, for we saw no stalactites or dripping water in other parts. After wandering in different directions for half an hour, during which time we had not penetrated into one-tenth of its ramifications, we returned to the open air.

'Notwithstanding the modern name, and the opinion of some scholars in favour of this place, there is no reason for supposing that this was the original Cretan labyrinth. The place was in all probability a mythical conception, like the stories attached to it, though like many other Greek legends, it may have been attached to some geographical feature, such as a cavern; but all Greek writers localize the story at Cnossus, besides which the coins of that city bear as their emblem an idealized representation of the Labyrinth.

'Ascending the hillside, we crossed a plateau, the ground beneath which is mined by the Labyrinth, and at one point Captain George pointed out to us the position of the refectory underground. Higher up we obtained a view of the snowy mountains of Crete together, comprising the Dictean Mountains, Ida, Kedros, and the White Mountains.'



down items of interest about the affair. He always found it difficult to read his own shorthand. By the light of a pocket torch he steadied the papers on his knee, and, bracing himself against the jolting of the old car, tried to compose his dispatch. There were several interesting notes which would help to give his cable colour. For instance, Sir Juan had several times notified the authorities that the labyrinth was unsafe, that conducted tours should be discouraged. The British Consul himself had tried to dissuade the captain of the *Europa* from letting his passengers embark on the excursion. Then there was the interesting fact that several expeditions had disappeared in the labyrinth. He had the dates: 1839, 1894, 1903. They were all unofficial bodies and no trace of them had been found. Sir Juan estimated that the ramifications of the labyrinth might cover an area of several square miles. There was a peasant legend to the effect that a large animal of some kind lived in the heart of the labyrinth.

At Canea he was settling down to a cheerless dinner when he received a telegram from his office in Athens giving the passenger list of the *Europa* – or rather the names of those tourists on it who had set out for the labyrinth.

Mr. O. Fearmax.

Mr. V. Truman and Mrs. Truman.

Miss Virginia Dale.

Captain J. Baird.

Lord Graecen.

Miss Dombey.

The name of *Campion* did not appear. He ticked off Lord Graecen's name and that of Captain Baird. They had both been accounted for. The others he presumed dead. He wondered what the chances were of any of them finding a way out. After all, a mere twenty-four hours had passed. Should he stay on a while and see whether time could put a better story in his way? A glance at the forbidding darkness of Canea decided for him. He would catch tomorrow's plane

“Dramatis Personae” – A Key

Mr. O. Fearmax: The Spiritualist

Mr. V. Truman and Mrs. Elsie Truman: A Couple of Married Eccentrics

Miss Virginia Dale: The Pretty Convalescent

Captain J. Baird: The Soldier with Guilty Memories of the Cretan Resistance

Lord Graecen: The Antiquarian Peer and Minor Poet (Dicky)

Miss Dombey: The Protestant Spinster with a Fox Terrier

Campion: The Extrovert Painter

Böcklin: The Buried German

Sir Juan Axelos: The Archaeologist

Mr. Howe: The American Journalist

Hogarth: The Psychologist



LABYRINTH

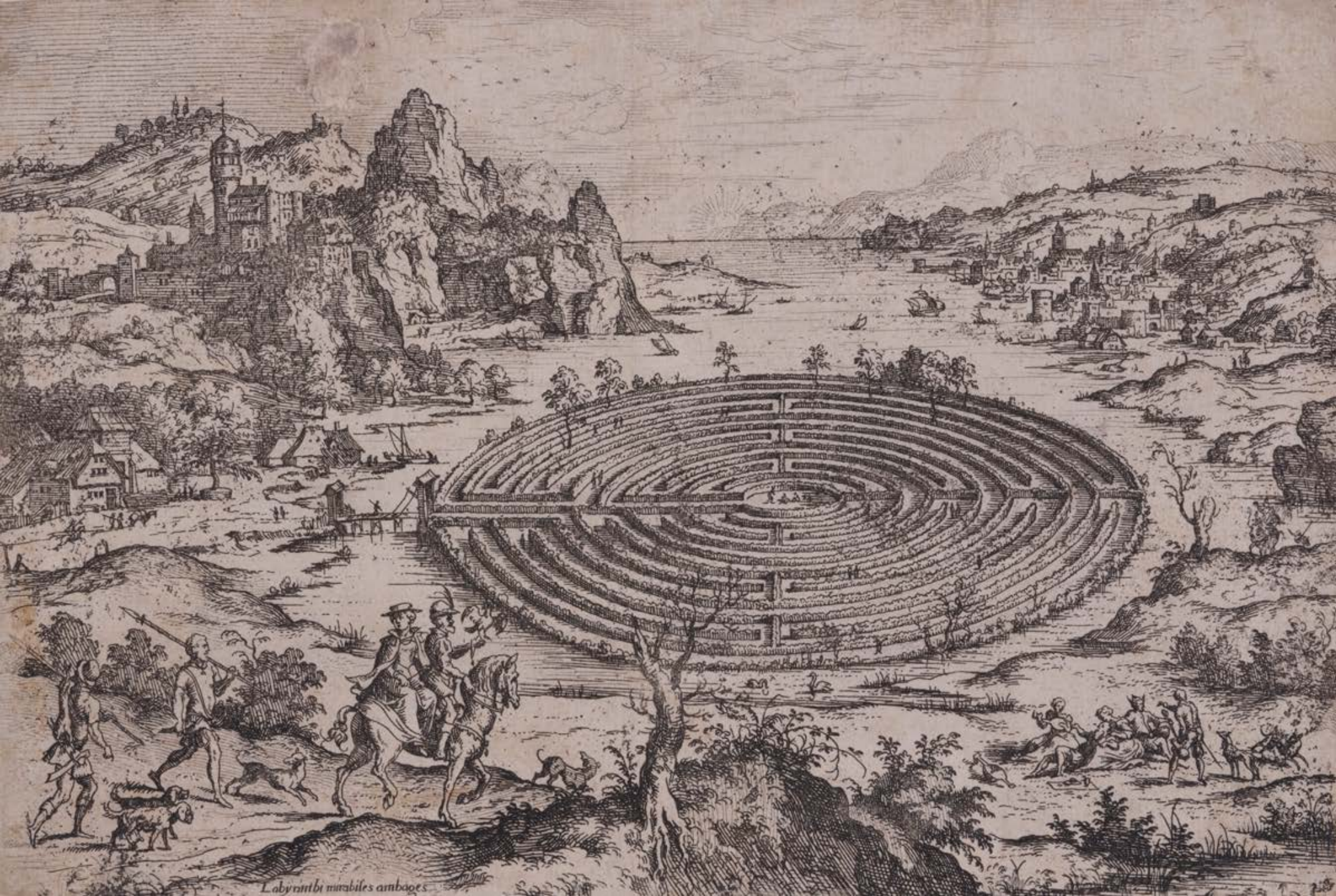
KNOSSOS, MYTH & REALITY



ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM
OXFORD



Coin minted at
Knossos depicting
the Cretan Labyrinth,
silver, 300–270 BCE
© Ashmolean
Museum



The Cretan
Labyrinth,
1558, after
Mathjis
Cock
drawing ©
Ashmolean
Museum



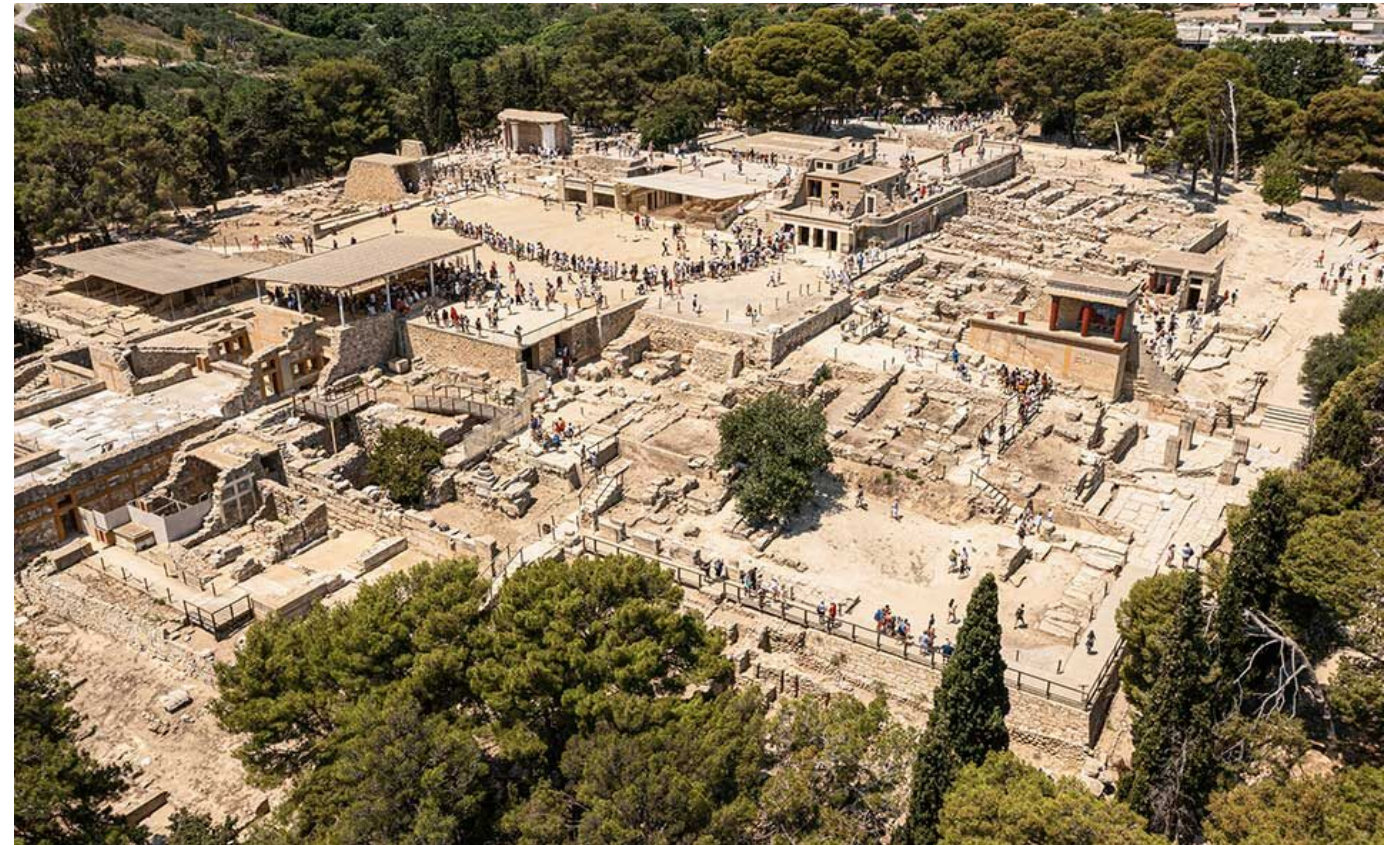
Bust of the Minotaur;
5th century BC,
Marble statue. Found
in the Plaka Athens.
erected on a fountain
in Athens near St
Demetrios Katephoris
in Plaka. It is a Roman
copy of the famous,
lost statuary group
attributed to Myron
erected on the
acropolis that
represented Theseus
fighting the Minotaur.

The Argument

During the early part of June, 1947, a small party of sightseers found itself trapped in what was then the newly-discovered labyrinth of Cefalù, in the island of Crete. They had penetrated the network of caves and corridors with a guide from a tourist agency, their intention being to examine the so-called 'City in the Rock' – whose discovery early in the preceding year had set a seal upon the long archaeological career of Sir Juan Axelos. By a sudden and unforeseen accident, the guide in charge of the party was killed. Falls of rock separated several members of the party from the main body, and it was only the sheerest chance that led one of them, Lord Graecen, to find his own way out.

Where a novelist might find it necessary to excuse himself for the choice of so formal a theme, the journalist feels no such inhibition. This extraordinary story found a welcome place on the front pages of the London papers. As representing that part of Truth which is stranger than fiction, it found a no less welcome place in the American Press, where the final piquant note was added by sub-titles reading 'Lord Lost in Labyrinth'. *The Times* took the opportunity to call attention once more to the brilliant discovery by Axelos of a labyrinth so long believed to be purely mythical. The words 'Labyrinth' and 'Minotaur' occurred in the *Daily Mirror* crossword puzzle on the fifteenth of the month. The Greek Press of Athens, while it was unable to afford the expense of a special correspondent, reprinted the accounts given in the American Press. In one of these, a correspondent went so far as to say that the Labyrinth was still inhabited by some monstrous creature – a minotaur, in fact – which had been responsible for the death of a number of innocent villagers.

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“The Times took the opportunity to call attention once more to the brilliant discovery by Axelos of a labyrinth so long believed to be purely mythical.” (1)

“At the old Wembley Fun Fair there had been a water-labyrinth. You sailed through the darkness in a small boat, passing at last through a corridor of mirrors and lighted panoramas” (9)

“Benjamin Haydon and Van Gogh are equals in suffering if in nothing else. Each was lost in the labyrinth of his own spiritual discoveries.” (35)

“In a sense she was no longer afraid of the labyrinth, since it was no longer the labyrinth that was killing her.” (171)

Or was this whole place merely a mad exteriorization of his inner confusion; his feet walking slowly down metaphoric corridors of his own subconscious — in which only the roar of the sleep-ing monster gave him a clue to his primal guilt? It was a pretty fancy. If he ever got out he would have the pleasure of sharing it with Hogarth. The work of Rank on the symbolic significance of labyrinths, and their connexion with divination by entrails. (176)

[...] “because Philhellenism—being, I would argue, an Orientalism in the most profound sense—engages in the like activity of representing the other culture, which in effect means replacing the other culture with those self-generated, projected images of otherness that Western culture needs to see itself in: the mirrors of itself.!? This is to return to the identification of Philhellenism in Humboldt as a particular kind of colonial mimicry inherent in the colonization of the ideal, an intercourse that can only be autoscopic. Were we, like good philologists, to unearth from the word autoscopic its etymological presence, we would have to add to its meaning of “looking at one’s self” its other meaning: aiming at one’s self, making the self one’s own teleology. From this identitary archaeological terrain, it is but a step to the death of the Other, to the philological autopsy, to Chateaubriand’s idealist necrophilia. Hence, from the point of view now of Neohellenic reality, the inevitability of what I have named “the punishment of Philhellenism.” (140)

“This is a concrete example of the absurdity of the notion of national sovereignty. What we have here is none other than a perfectly colonial condition. We need only remember Fanon’s words: ‘Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. . . . By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it’ (1968: 210).” (152)

Gourgouris, Stathis. *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Dream Nation

Enlightenment, Colonization and the
Institution of Modern Greece



STATHIS GOURGOURIS

“[W]hether we had simply invented it [Greece] for ourselves in the old days, living comfortably on foreign exchange, patronizing reality with our fancies and making bad literature from them” (Durrell, *Reflections on a Marine Venus: A Companion to the Landscape of Rhodes*, 1953, 17).

“Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape; Greece offers you something harder—the discovery of yourself.” (*Prospero’s Cell: A Guide To The Landscape And Manners of The Island Of Corfu*, 1945, 11).

And when hemp sings of murder bless your boy,
The double fellow in the labyrinth,

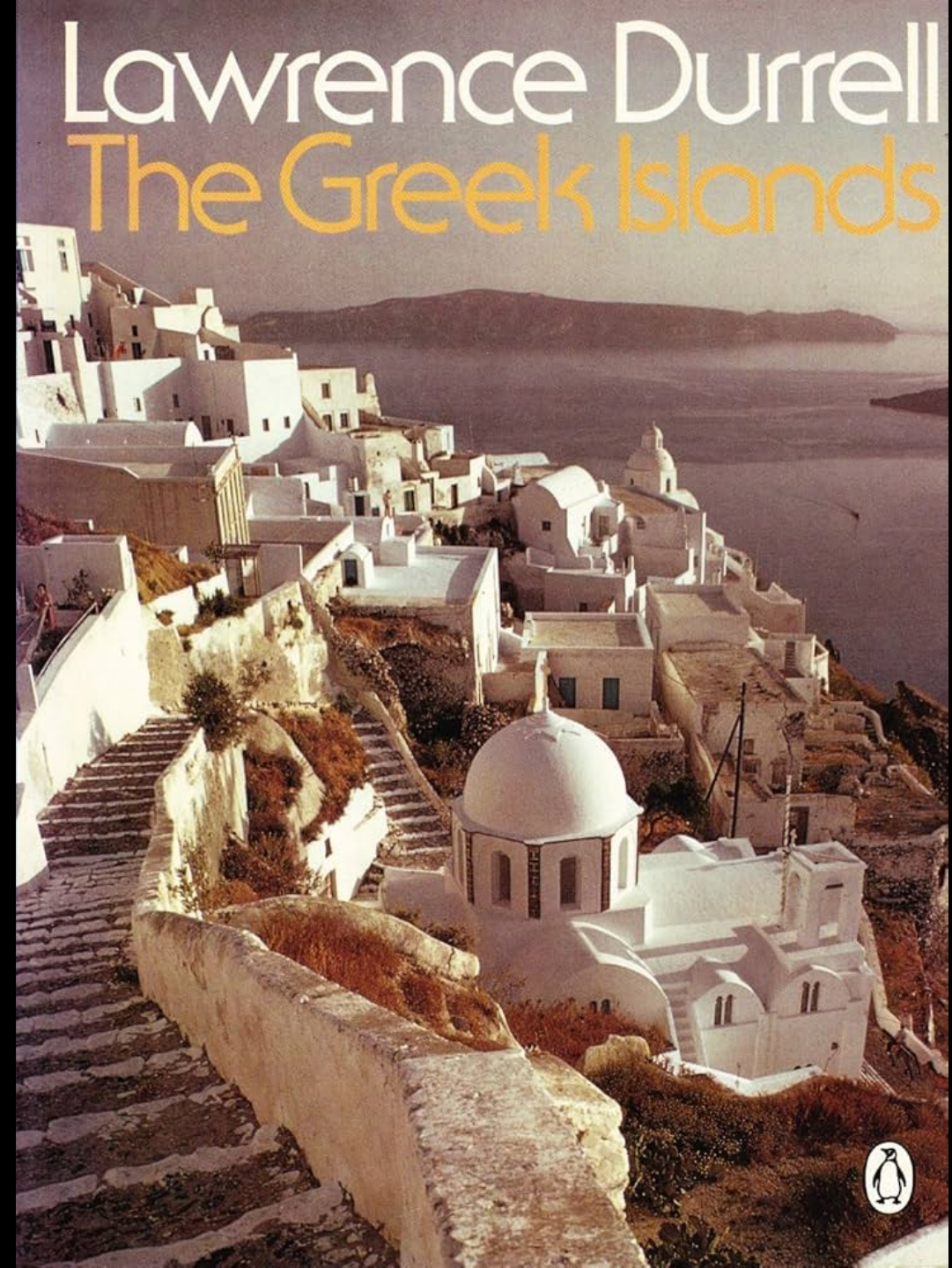
Whose maps were stifled with him in the maze,
Whose mother dropped him like the seedless pod.

Durrell, “A Soliloquy of Hamlet” 1943



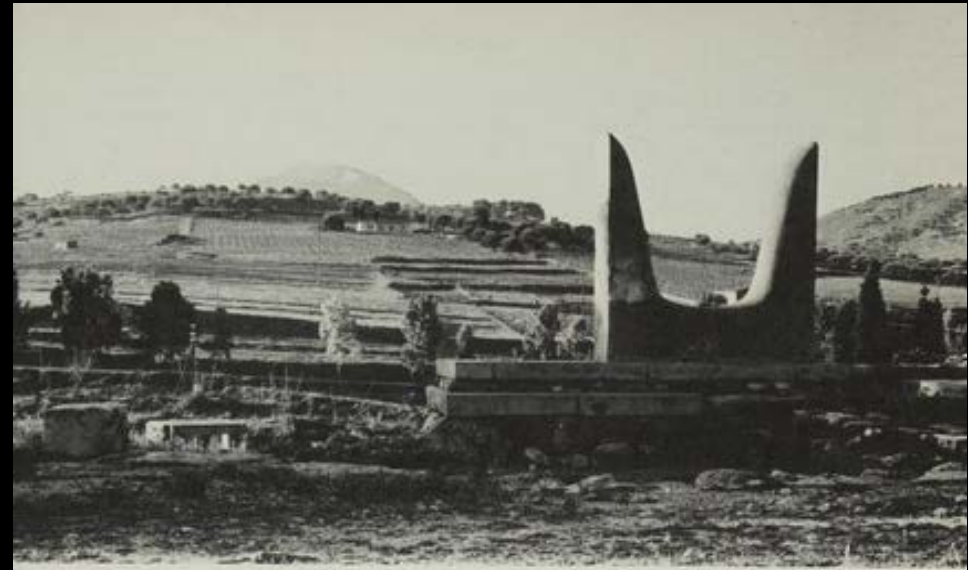
These legends, with their graphic symbolism to which unfortunately the key has been lost — or not yet recovered — are sometimes more irritating than enlightening. The Minotaur is one of the puzzles; his existence and habits have given rise to numberless differing explanations, but there is no single one which answers all the questions. Equally full of enigma is the maze — did it have a ritual function, a religious function? Did it symbolize the evolution of the individual personality into maturity — after conquering all the stresses 'and fears of life? Otto Rank, the psychoanalyst, seemed to think the maze was a symbol of the loops of the big intestine of a sheep or a cow — the standard form of divination. Myself, I think that a man sentenced to death was given an outside chance of redeeming his life by crossing the labyrinth and avoiding the Minotaur if he could. Somewhere I have read that, in the old Roman arenas, where so many Christians were fed to the lions, not all the cages surrounding the arena were full of wild animals; and that a slave thrown into the pit was pardoned if he twice opened an empty cage. Maybe the labyrinth worked like this; maybe the trick was to sneak through without waking the monster?

Durrell, *The Greek Islands*, 63-64.



If the Minotaur, the labyrinth, and the double axe are symbols, they are harder to interpret. Is it fair to suppose that the Minotaur symbolizes some great event — perhaps the arrival of men from far away — who brought with them a terrifying and puissant animal which had never been seen before: a bull? (Imagine the terror of seeing one's first bull!) And then a bull-culture, bull-obsession displaced whatever had been the native pastoral cults? It is not too far-fetched if one remembers the superstitious horror combined with delight that our grandfathers felt on sight of the first devil-car, and recognizes to what a degree the invention of the petrol-engine has changed and is gradually strangling our whole culture. This is an obsession if ever there was one; and soon the tourist organizations of all Mediterranean countries will be forced to print and issue a map of all the marvellous beaches ruined by oil slick.

Durrell, *The Greek Islands*, 75.



The 'Horns of Consecration' and Mount Juktas from Knossos

of those on Crete) are easy to play with. The Provençal *couteuvres* — grass-snakes sometimes two metres long — provide the same sort of fun without developing into a cult. At every harvest time the newspaper has pictures of people snake-teasing; but they let them go without harming them. And the snakes in the *garrigues* of the Midi are positively cheeky. The situation may well have been similar in ancient Crete, with no question of snake-playing being a religious rite.

If the Minotaur, the **labyrinth** and the double axe are symbols, they are harder to interpret. Is it fair to suppose that the Minotaur symbolizes some great event — perhaps the arrival of men from far away — who brought with them a terrifying and puissant animal which had never been seen before: a bull? (Imagine the terror of seeing one's first bull!) And then a bull-culture, bull-obsession displaced whatever had been the native pastoral cults? It is not too far-fetched if one remembers the superstitious horror combined with delight that our grandfathers felt on sight of the first devil-car, and recognizes to what a degree the invention of the petrol-engine has changed and is gradually strangling our whole culture. This is an obsession if ever there was one; and soon the tourist organizations of all Mediterranean countries will be forced to print and issue a map of all the marvellous beaches ruined by oil slick.

'modernization' of the towns with its ugliness. A traveller of modest means and limited to a few days in the island should go to Heracleion and find a modest perch in a small hotel. He will find that Knossos is a longish walk, but five miles or so is nothing if one is curious to gather one's own impressions. There is of course a bus, nowadays there are taxis galore. The distance of Phaestos need not daunt him either, for there is an early-morning bus there from Heracleion and a late-evening bus back. It is about twenty miles away on the southern shoulder, but it has the added attraction that the journey there will make you pass through a magnificent section of the Cretan countryside. Of the two sites it is, for me, the most evocative in its brooding stillness, in the light airs from the sea which cradle it, and from the shadows of high cloud which roll across it. It is uncomfortably full of suggestive mysteries, which produce a feeling that the guide book with its careful, factual approach does not suggest. To camp out here in a fierce thunderstorm, and to awake frozen in a dense dew which has condensed on your blankets like a sheet of mercury is the sort of experience which every camper will relish, but the swift tinges of rheumatism that follow from damp clothes is no joke. By the road among the olives, a peasant has lit a fire with olive trimmings; he jovially welcomes you and helps dry your kit, plying you the while with gasps of *tsikudi* and slabs of brown crust. When you are ready to set off you offer him money; he looks shocked and aggrieved, and puts your hand away as if it held a sword. The quiet ruins rest on your tired shoulder-blades as you march in the deep dust – you feel the weight of a message from the past which you have not been able to decipher. The experience is dense and exciting, but you would be at a loss to say why or in what manner. Phaestos! It is one of those places which mark you.

To revert for a moment to the vexing question of the [labyrinth](#), it is important to make a distinction between a man-made maze and a [labyrinth](#) constructed by nature; and the natural geological [labyrinth](#) situated near Gortyna has for long been a candidate for the honours of being the original lair of the Minotaur. Sceptics have declared that it is simply an abandoned quarry with a few corridors but, while I have not completely explored it myself – for lack of an Ariadne and a ball of thread – I think it is more suggestive than that.

The most succinct and accurate description of this singular geological formation comes from the pen of that energetic and endearing Victorian divine, the Reverend Tozer, whose detailed, factual travel books enjoyed a great appeal during the last century. He says:

Our host, Captain George, undertook to be our guide and accordingly next morning we started in his company and, fording the stream close under the Acropolis of Gortyna, ascended the hills towards the north-west



Vaphio gold cup, showing cow used to decoy bull

and in an hour's time reached the place . . . It is entered by an aperture of no great size in the mountainside, where the rocks are of clayey limestone, forming horizontal layers; and inside we found what looks almost like a flat roof, while chambers and passages run off from the entrance in various directions . . . We were furnished each with a taper and descended by a passage on both sides of which the fallen stones had been piled up; the roof above us varied from four to sixteen feet in height. Winding about, we came to an upright stone, the work of a modern Ariadne, set there to show the way, for at intervals other passages branched off the main one, and anyone who entered without a light would be hopelessly lost. Captain George described to us how for three years during the late war (1867–9) the Christian inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, to the number of five hundred, and he among them, had lived there as their predecessors had done during the former insurrection, to escape the Turks who had burned their homes and carried off their flocks and herds . . .

I can vouch for the accuracy of his description and also for the fact that the place is known as 'The [Labyrinth](#)' in the local speech. To the best of my knowledge the whole of it has never been explored, though the villagers

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thereabouts claim that the internal network of corridors span an area of some ten kilometres. One must, as always, subtract a bit of peasant exaggeration, but nevertheless the place is impressive – in places like a series of small cathedrals – and so well-ventilated that I am not sure one could not trace the corridors with smoke, which always follows the direction of the air. Once again, however, there is disagreement among scholars about the true history of the place. Of course the whole surface of these volcanic islands from Sicily to Cyprus is simply a cap of metamorphic limestone, punctured everywhere by successive volcanic explosions, and pock-marked like an old piecrust. It is not the only cave in a Greek island – I know of a dozen. But there seems to be nothing of the same size, in such tantalizing juxtaposition with a historic reference – nor anything as worthy as a Minotaur's haunt. (The limestone crust over most Greek islands certainly accounts for the way that sound carries over great distances; the whole place is like a drum, responsive to every snatch of noise.)

It would be an exciting thing to explore this Gortyna labyrinth with professional care; perhaps by the time these lines are printed the Speleologist's Club of Athens will have done so and printed their findings.

One last brief thought before leaving the ancient history of the island with all its conundrums – a thought devoted to the scripts. Here again one wishes that the whole subject had been fully explored, and the findings clearly tabulated. Alas! Despite all the great enthusiasm for the Michael Ventris 'breakthrough' into an interpretation of the script called Linear B, opinions seem to be still divided as to its veracity.

Nothing could better illustrate the sharp division of thinking about the history of Minoan Crete, than the fact that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* carries two articles concerned, one of which clearly accepts the authenticity of Ventris's discovery, while the second seems to cast doubts upon it. The ordinary reader or visitor will not pay much attention to these learned differences. But if Ventris is right, it is most exciting to find, among the deciphered words, ones which are in daily use in any Greek village today: (*toson* meaning 'so much'; *kreesos* meaning 'gold'; *eruthros* meaning 'red'; *selimon* meaning 'celery'). There are also some proper names which strike a chord – Theseus, Hector, Alexandra and Theodora. Myself, I hope that Ventris is correct though I have not the scholarship to assert that he is.

The earliest seals, tags or tallies, with their pictographic signs, hinted at an Egyptian influence. Linear A and Linear B came later, and are thus probably more sophisticated. While A remains undeciphered, the brilliant suggestions of Ventris gave great hopes for a decoding of Linear B, and some progress was made along the lines of his suggestions. The real disappointment has nothing to do with the accuracy or the errors of his interpretation – it is that what has so far been decoded is relatively uninteresting. We have so to speak



Chanea harbour, Crete

So the great adventure began. Evans's findings were carefully checked against the typology of objects already unearthed in Egypt and Asia Minor. Egypt was especially helpful, for the desert is an admirable conservator of everything; even papyrus, and the history of this ancient land is more smoothly continuous, less tempestuous than that of the Greek isles where invasions, wars and shattering earthquakes have erupted so often. Egypt was the touchstone; with its help Evans began his, at first, vague and hesitant back-dating of Minoan history. Even today, when the time-chart (still open to correction according to findings) pushes the history of the place back to 3000 BC, one can feel how momentous the discovery was – and also how difficult and unsure the intellectual act of trying to sort and assign all these fragments. What would be the impressions of a Minoan archaeologist, picking over a heap of mud in a London devastated by an atomic attack – a heap which yields him objects as disparate as a teddy bear, a Father Christmas, a Rembrandt, (was England full of monkeys, and at what epoch?), an Iron Cross, an income tax return . . . and so on? How would he sort them out historically and assign a purpose to them? Were the English believers in a bear totem? And was Father Christmas a sort of Zeus? The margin of possible error is disquieting, and should put us a little on our guard against the 'certain certainties' that T. S. Eliot refers to.

However chilling the time-chart is to those who hate dates, the thing is well worth a glance. For, in fact, it records the slow emergence of cultural man – with so many failures and collapses, not all of his own manufacture – from a cave-lurker of Neolithic times to a warrior, a priest or an architect, capable of abstract thought and the use of a tool which did duty as an extension of his arm. Completely different animals, one might say. Here is the chart in all its grimness.

NEOLITHIC	4000 – 3000
EARLY MINOAN I	3000 – 2800
EARLY MINOAN II	2800 – 2500
EARLY MINOAN III	2500 – 2200
MIDDLE MINOAN I	2200 – 2000
MIDDLE MINOAN II	2000 – 1750
MIDDLE MINOAN III	1750 – 1580
LATE MINOAN I	1580 – 1475
LATE MINOAN II	1475 – 1400
LATE MINOAN III	1400 – 1200
SUBMINOAN	1200 – 1000

“It would be an exciting thing to explore this Gortyna labyrinth with professional care; perhaps by the time these lines are printed the Speleologist's Club of Athens will have done so and printed their findings.” Durrell, *The Greek Islands*, 80



*Stratis
Grigori*

*Manoli "Wallace Beery"
P.M.L.-F.*

*George "Nikko"
W.S.M.*

The abduction gang



**PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR
ABDUCTING A GENERAL
THE KREIPE OPERATION IN CRETE**



The kidnapping of Heinrich Kreipe was an operation executed jointly by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and local resistance members in Crete in German-occupied Greece during the Second World War. Operation 'BRICKLAYER' was launched on 4 February 1944, when SOE officer Patrick Leigh Fermor landed in Crete with the intention of abducting notorious war criminal and commander of 22nd Air Landing Division, Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller. By the time of the arrival of the rest of the abduction team, led by William Stanley Moss, two months later, Müller had been succeeded by Heinrich Kreipe, who was chosen as the new target.

On the night of 26 April, Kreipe's car was ambushed while en route from his residence to his divisional headquarters. Kreipe was tied and forced into the back seat while Leigh Fermor and Moss impersonated him and his driver respectively. Kreipe's notorious impatience at roadblocks enabled the car to pass numerous checkpoints before being abandoned at the hamlet of Heliana. The abductors continued on foot, continuing to evade thousands of Axis soldiers sent to stop them, with the help of guides from the local resistance. On 14 May, the team was picked up by a British motorboat from the Rodakino beach and transported to British-held Egypt.



ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟ ΜΠΕΝΑΚΗ



