

## 2.1 A Poet recollected while Flying (1982)

Hey! Kavaphis!\\  
The thing that I admire\\  
is how you range and wheel (as I do now)\\  
high in the bright Aegean air -\\  
contemptuous of time,\\  
adroit scavenger of decomposed cities,\\  
with a raptor's eye\\  
for private acts of grace,\\  
a petty Seleucid's despair,\\  
for Caesar's inner prudence,\\  
and how, one bitter Alexandrian night,\\  
there rose to Antony's turmoiled ear\\  
the phantom sounds of pipe and drum,\\  
the music of a vanished god\\  
which signified to him the end\\  
of all his more impetuous years.\\

Standing at your elbow now\\  
I watch the gilded pageant run –  
immortal kings, forgotten satraps, all alike:\\  
I marvel at the quickness of your eye\\  
expert in irony, its charity imbued\\  
with something more - this constant\\  
reconciling of unbridled blood\\  
with your ascetic heart.\\

And now today, what would you say\\  
you erudite old goat\\  
at my preoccupation with\\  
a certain room, the blend\\  
of darkness with erotic forms\\  
which hang before my eye,\\  
as I watch the burnished Adriatic sea\\  
erode the dark Italian shore?\\  
Would such indulgence in 'habitual \\  
love' have so disgusted you?\\  
or does your tolerant eye allow \\  
a flicker of the heart for\\  
the royal curve of widowed Anna's breast\\  
or the gust of Salome's inchoate desire?\\  
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Out of Cairo - April 1982