

Navigating the Labyrinth: Communist Engagement with Theseus and the Minotaur in 1940s Literature

Abstract: This work was undertaken as part of a module on Classics and The Left, and how Communists utilised Classical culture politically throughout the 20th century. From my own independent research, I decided to focus in on the use of the Theseus and the Minotaur myth by Communist author Nikos Kazantzakis and brief Communist and subsequent anti-Communist André Gide, in the former's 'At The Palaces of Knossos' and 'Kouros', and the latter's 'Theseus'. Drawing heavily upon the details of the men's lives, as well as the texts themselves and adjoining texts, I provide a detailed and nuanced reading of the differences and similarities between the uses, consistently interwoven with exploration of linguistics, politics, and the mingling of the two in the literature.

The conclusions I draw are as follows. Kazantzakis utilises the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur to present the necessity for Communist revolution, displaying Theseus as a Communist revolutionary, and the Cretan upper-classes as corrupt, violent, and contemptible, and the Minotaur representative of the evils of capitalism, in his 'At The Palaces'. In his 'Kouros', intended for a more mature audience, we see far more nuance, with the Minotaur now able to be changed into a more workable system, not necessarily through violence. Gide, however, uses the myth in both a similar way, with the demonisation of the upper classes in his text, and in a different way, with an emphasis on the Minotaur as representative of Communism, which, while at first intriguing, can quickly be discovered to be 'stupid'. These uses are heavily entwined with the men's politics, and, in their work, they use Classics for new political avenues that we perhaps wouldn't expect from the discipline so well-known for its far right exploitation.

The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur is a story that has captured the imagination throughout the ages, and, with its dashing prince of nascent democracy, beautiful princess, tyrannous king, and piecemeal monster, it comes as no surprise. Having inspired a multitude of receptions, from the *Percy Jackson* franchise to F L Lucas' philosophical epic poetry, the myth stands out to us as something worth engaging with, and it certainly stood out to Communist authors in the 1940s, who adapt the myth in similar manners, but also leave their own inimitable marks on the ancient story.¹ Within this essay, I intend to investigate the engagements of Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) and André Gide (1869-1951) with the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur in the 1940s, exploring how their political viewpoints – both influenced by Communism – impact their receptions.² The version of the myth I shall be using is summarised in Gagarin (2010), as this is the most prevalent version.³

¹ Riordan (2013) and Lucas (1932); for more engagements, cf. Dobyns (1986), Amadio (1960), English (2006), and Ross (2018), and for a comprehensive scholarly overview, cf. Ziolkowski (2008)

² For more general, superficial overview of these texts, cf. Herbert (1960)

³ cf. Gagarin (2010)

For other Communist / Leftist receptions of the myth, cf. Lindsay (1949) and Sikelianos (1943, accessed via Constantinidis (1987))

We shall begin with Kazantzakis, in his earlier work, *At the Palaces of Knossos*, written in approximately 1940.⁴ This text was written as a serial publication for an Athenian youth periodical, but was never published, unlike its sister text, *Alexander the Great*, until after Kazantzakis' death, due to paper shortages.⁵ The work tackles the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur with an intended audience of children, but it equally works the myth in such a way as to display Communist ideology and revolution, attesting to Kazantzakis' strong views at this point (indeed, he became the leader of a socialist party in Greece only six years later). Throughout the text, he points out the exploitative class system in Minoan Crete, which can be taken to represent any capitalist state: *'The lords and ladies, freshly painted, perfumed, and coiffured, sat at the tables, sniffed the food, went through the ritual of the evening meal. Not that they were hungry. They were never hungry, these lords and ladies; never without food and drink long enough to get thirsty or hungry. But what else was there to do? They toyed with the food; pushed it away; yawned.'*⁶ Here, we can see a disconnect from the reality of hunger that the lower classes suffer, as many other Leftist authors point out in their literature.⁷ Kazantzakis is using the entrenched nobility, portrayed by Minos' court, in order to illustrate the natural injustice of the capitalist system – they are so far removed from human struggle that they no longer even feel hunger. This is further shown by the explicit exploitation of the lower classes earlier on in the text, which is a sustained problem the author points out to his readers: *'Poor peasants ... how they worked all year, ploughing the fields, sowing, harvesting, winnowing ... and then along came the Palace guards and took away their labour, leaving them nothing but the chaff.'*⁸

This capitalist system presented in the text is enforced by extreme violence towards those who disagree with the king – even towards children, as we see with Haris, one of the protagonists.⁹ It is also compared explicitly to slavery and serfdom, Marx's believed precursors to capitalism, as seen when Aristidis, a craftsman, and Haris' father, speaks about how he is trapped in Crete:¹⁰

*'We're all slaves here,' murmured Aristidis, breaking the silence again.
'Why don't you leave?' said Theseus.*

⁴ Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957), considered a giant of Greek literature, actually did not get that much attention or success in his native Greece due to his political views, and the stranglehold of the Greek Orthodox Church on society at the time (*Christ Recrucified* (1954) and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1955) ensured his essential exile). He was nominated for the Nobel Prize nine times, but never won.

Throughout his life, he held strong Communistic views, but described these views as 'metacommunism', and this lack of focus on economic ideals for culture and morality led to alienation from both the Communist Party and right-wing parties – something Savvas (1971/72, p. 291) calls 'Marxism polluted by Mysticism'. For more on this, cf. Kazantzakis (1968), *Nikos Kazantzakis Online Archive*, Poulakidas (1969), Owens (2001), and Smaragdis (2017), as well as Savvas (1971/1972, pp. 291-292) and X (2021a)

⁵ Kazantzakis (1982)

⁶ Kazantzakis (1988), p. 194; cf. pp. 9, 199-200

⁷ cf. Kazantzakis (1958) 1.770-781, 1.907-922; F D (1914); Fast (1951), p. 346; Fowke, Glazer & Bray (1973), pp. 70-71

⁸ Kazantzakis (1988), p. 4

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 52; cf. *ibid.*, p. 44, 133

¹⁰ cf. Katz (1993)

*'They won't let me. I've learned the art of working iron and making new weapons. They're afraid if they let me leave I might go to some other country and teach the people this dangerous new skill.'*¹¹

Two Marxist ideas come to the fore here: the first, the ancient class system within the theory of historical materialism, whereby ancient societies only had two classes (rulers and slaves), and the second the concept of controlling the means of production as a way for capitalist overlords to retain power – which, in this case, means controlling Aristidis' skills.¹² Kazantzakis, again, is using the unequal societal structure in Minoan Crete to critique what he views as the equally oppressive capitalist system – the extremes of class divides in the ancient world are used to sensationalise those more insidiously placed in modern society.¹³

Another interesting way in which Kazantzakis approaches the myth is through the presentation of Theseus as a revolutionary, People's leader. He arrives in Knossos under much suspicion, and serves as the main instigator of the unrest against Minos, inciting the people towards revolt: *'Celebrate today man's victory over the beast. Let each of you feel in his heart that there is a Theseus in him, slaying the beast within that has been tyrannising him. Only in this way will my victory gain worth and you will be able to say that you have become liberated people.'*¹⁴ The Leftist watchword of freedom is dependent on the defeat of the evil 'beast', clearly implied to represent capitalism, which the Minotaur thus is explicitly suggested to represent. We have Theseus as a metaphor for the Communist revolutionary, and this is only enhanced by his Athenian origin, as the ancient city is known only as the founding-place of democracy, but also as a 'new' state that relentlessly strives towards progress.¹⁵

*This empire of Crete had done all it could do. It had accomplished great things, built cities as far as the ends of the earth, conquered a whole world with its ships and its trade, built magnificent palaces, created a great civilisation. ... But now it had finally spent itself. It had nothing more to give. It stood in the way of the young and kept them from creating great works of their own. It had to be destroyed.*¹⁶

Clearly, Communist ideals are displayed through the ancient myth, and the dramatic governmental and political changes which rock the myth (from monarchy to democracy) are used to illustrate the hoped-for transition to socialism / Communism in the modern world, which seems to be viewed by Kazantzakis as the 'ethical imperative', presented as inevitable within the text:¹⁷ *'The day is going to come when your Palace will be reduced to ashes.'*¹⁸

¹¹ Kazantzakis (1988), p. 21; cf. *ibid.* p. 5, 107

¹² cf. Woodfin & Zarate (2009), pp. 38-39, 46-47

¹³ cf. Fast (1951), Littlewood & MacColl (1947), Koestler (1939)

¹⁴ Kazantzakis (1988), p. 177; cf. *ibid.*, p. 4, 20

¹⁵ cf. *ibid.*, p. 206 – *'Don't look back. ... Look forward. Our work here is finished.'*

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 163; cf. *ibid.*, p. 196, 211

¹⁷ Harker (2021), p. 3; cf. Woodfin & Zarate (2009), p. 94

¹⁸ Kazantzakis (1988), p. 152

One thing to note about Kazantzakis, before we move on to look at his *Kouros*, is that he was of Cretan nationality. This might seem inconsequential, but, as Levitt (1972) has shown, Crete has a great ingrained history and social identity of revolution, beginning from 1212 and stretching all the way up to 1941.¹⁹ This has cultivated a love of freedom, which, in his study of Kazantzakis' *Freedom or Death* (1953), Levitt (1972) has suggested to present Marxist ideology as a 'manifestation' of 'Cretan revolution' rather than a 'cause'.²⁰ Thus, it is important to acknowledge that, with the action set in Crete, this text also has a nationalist resonance; it encompasses both the ideal Marxist revolution, as Kazantzakis supported as a Communist, and the historical continuance of the Cretan character's consequences.²¹

Considering Kazantzakis' *Kouros*, now, it is interesting to investigate the differences in how the author handles the myth for juvenile and adult audiences.²² Written in 1949, this closet drama tackles the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur from when Theseus prepares to fight the monster, to when he has 'succeeded'. Translated into various languages, including Farsi and French, performed in New York, and broadcast by Swedish, Swiss, and Cypriot radio stations, it seems to have been quite popular, and, naturally with Kazantzakis, utilises its platform to push its author's ideals. The myth is used in a similar way to how it is used in *At the Palaces of Knossos*, but there seems to be far more nuance – either because of the elder age of his audience now, or because of disillusionment with the state of politics in the 1940s.²³

From the beginning of the play, Theseus speaks at length about a 'new god', young, kept within the heart.²⁴ He calls this god 'The Liberator', whom he describes in detail.²⁵

*legs like bronze pillars, a muscular belly, a mighty chest sprinkled with salt marks that gleamed in the sun. Your neck was an invincible fortress. Your grisly, un-kissed lips stirred softly, curled, and slowly formed a smile that spilled over your entire body. It was a deep, secret, restful smile, as if you had enjoyed the sleep of numberless years, and were awakening, opening your eyes and seeing the ocean, the hills, the islands, the caiques – all yours!*²⁶

Interestingly, in his personal letters to his first wife, Galatea Alexiou, Kazantzakis wrote of his own 'new god', which was, at the time, Communism:

The new face of my God ... is a Worker who is hungry, who works and rises up in revolt. A Worker who smells of tobacco and wine, a dark, strong one full of

¹⁹ Levitt (1972), pp. 165-167

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 184; cf. Kazantzakis (1953)

²¹ cf. Kazantzakis on the 'Flying Fish Fresco' (trans. in Levitt (1972)): 'The flying fish – behold the soul of struggling, indomitable man!'

²² cf. X (2021b)

²³ cf. Ziolkowski (2008), p. 106 for the political ideology in *AtPoK*

In 1946, after the democratic and socialist united, Kazantzakis, minister in the government since 1945, resigned his position in protest. He also failed to begin an Internationale of the Spirit in the UK.

²⁴ cf. Kazantzakis (1969), p. 216

²⁵ cf. *ibid.*, p. 228, 282

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 217-218

*desires and thirst for revenge. He is like the old, oriental Chieftains with sheepskins on their legs, with a double-headed axe in a leather belt, a Ghengis Khan leading hungry new races, who razes the palaces and cellars of the replete to the ground, and grabs away the harems of the impotent. My God is tough, full of passion and will, uncompromising, unyielding. The Earth is his field, heaven and Earth are one.*²⁷

I think it is reasonable to connect these two together, suggesting that the new god presented by Theseus in *Kouros* is equivalent in meaning to Kazantzakis' – they both represent ideological and political change, particularly in the sense of Communist or Socialist revolution.²⁸ When Theseus engages in battle with the Minotaur, it is transformed into this new god. We know from the text that Minos has attempted revolution before against the Minotaur and failed, so it seems to be Theseus who is solely capable of enacting this transformation, which perhaps suggests that you need a very specific type of person to conduct a successful revolution.²⁹ This change then surges out of the play, with Theseus' rousing call to the Liberator: '*Comrade, come, let us go!*'.³⁰ As we can see, the Minotaur's use within the text is a lot more multivalent than it is in Kazantzakis' earlier work – he is not uncomplicatedly evil, but rather symbolic of a system that is alterable for the better.

Another important part of the play comes through the constant referral of the attack on the Minotaur as the beginning of 'the struggle', which presages emphatic use of the Marxist concept of inevitable revolution and historical cycles: '*My fledgling warrior, the struggle always begins from the beginning. It is erased, it ends with each fight, and begins anew with the next.*'³¹ Theseus himself is shown to represent a repeating revolutionary figure – 'The Leader': '*I see, behind your shoulders, another Theseus who will surely come one day to dash you from your throne, O young Minotaur, and behind this other Theseus I clearly see another, and another, and another, and another, until the last Theseus comes!*'³² The fight between Theseus and the Minotaur is extrapolated onto a more general level in order to illustrate the necessary fight for a fairer system, and the results when the fighter is strong enough to change the system, in the face of a continuous cycle of protest and revolution.³³

²⁷ Nikos Kazantzakis Online Archive, 'Letters to Galatea – On the Path towards Communism (II) – The New Face of God' – <https://www.historical-museum.gr/webapps/kazantzakis-pages/en/life/letters-galateia-communism-poreia02.php> (accessed 07-11-2021, 17:05)

²⁸ A further parallel we might draw between author and character could be both using 'comrade' for romantic partners – cf. Kazantzakis (1969), p. 280, Kazantzakis (1968)

²⁹ Kazantzakis (1969), pp. 245-249; cf. p. 247 – '*You say it with scorn and pride; you think you are my enemy, but you are not. You are my sole heir and my companion in the struggle. I believe you are the one for whom I waited all these years!*'

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 283; cf. Savvas (1971/72, pp. 287-288) for how this links into Kazantzakis' internationalism – 'The Greeks now had to look beyond themselves for lessons; the spotlight had to be taken away from the Greekness of the struggle and into the area of the human, the international objectives.' (p. 288)

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 249-250

³² *ibid.*, pp. 274-275; cf. Constantinidis (1987), pp. 172-177

³³ cf. Sikelianos (1943 – access through Constantinidis (1987)) – in his play *Daedalus in Crete*, Sikelianos has Minos rule through physical force, with him dressing up as the Minotaur and annually raping the seven youths and seven maidens; Pasiphae ultimately leads the revolution; '*Who could tell that a caterpillar would grow wings? Likewise, every man's soul hides a winged god inside it.*'

Clearly, we can see that Kazantzakis adopts the myth similarly in terms of political allegory, but, dependent upon his audience (children or adult), he approaches these myths differently in terms of nuance and complicatedness.

The next Communist use of Theseus and the Minotaur that we shall discuss is André Gide's *Thésée* (1946), a semi-autobiographical narrative poem that describes the life of Theseus in retrospect.³⁴ Watson-Williams (1967) has suggested that Gide uses myth to 'explore the central problem of man's relationship with his surrounding world', and we certainly see this here, as he interrogates the class divide, the relationship of the leader to the People, and the nature of life.³⁵ The first of these – the class divide – is interrogated by Gide in much a similar way to Kazantzakis (1988), and we can see this through the presentation of the Cretan royal family:

*[Minos] held Greece responsible for the death of his son Androgeos, and, in the manner of a reprisal, forced from us an annual tribute: seven young men and seven young maidens should be delivered to satisfy, as they said, the appetite of the Minotaur, the monstrous offspring that Pasiphae, Minos' wife, had from intercourse with a bull.*³⁶

Here, we can see the royal family presented as both morally and sexually corrupted, through the union of Pasiphae with a bull, but also through the fact that they equate the death of one prince to the annual deaths of fourteen youths.³⁷ We can further consider the physical description of Minos, compared to the People:

*The common people, in great groups, pressed on all sides to see us. All of the men had bare chest. Minos alone, sitting under a dais, wore a long robe made out of one piece of dark red material which fell from his shoulders in majestic pleats to his ankles. On his chest, as vast as Zeus', he wore three rows of necklaces. A number of Cretans wear them, but vulgar ones; Minos' were made up of gems and plaques representing fleur-de-lys. [³⁸] He sat on a throne which was dominated by the double axe and held a golden sceptre as high as him in his right hand, away from the body in front. In the other hand, he held a three-lobed flower, like those of his necklaces and also in gold, but larger. Above his gold crown an enormous plume of peacock, ostrich, and alcyon feathers rose.*³⁹

³⁴ André Gide (1869-1951), French author and 1947 Nobel Prize winner, called himself a Communist only briefly. While he never joined the Party, as a prolific author and contemporary celebrity, he was invited to speak at Maxim Gorky's funeral, and on a tour of the USSR, but became disillusioned by what he believed was censorship and a lack of culture, later contributing to *The God That Failed* (1949); cf. Gide (1937), pp. 41-42

³⁵ Watson-Williams (1967), p. xiii

³⁶ Gide (1946), pp. 23-24 – translation by myself, as other Gidean translations

³⁷ For the sexual corruption of the upper classes in Communist lit, cf. Fast (1951), Sikelianos (1943)

³⁸ cf. De Raadt (1894) for the association of the *fleur du lys* with the French monarchy, as well as Pastoureau (2007) – the French monarchs in the Middle Ages suggested that an angel with the fleur de lys on it descended to make the French monarchy legitimate and loved by God

³⁹ Gide (1946), pp. 25-26; cf. description of Pasiphae, pp. 30-31; description of the robes is based on *Le Costume et la Parure* from Glotz' *La Civilisation Egéene* – cf. Pollard (1970), p. 291

In this description of clothing, we can see the class divide – *Minos seul* is clothed lavishly with the monarchical *fleurs de lys*, while *des gens du peuple* are bare-chested – and this arguably makes him more contemptible through comparison.

We must equally consider what the Minotaur is made to represent within this text, and this is where Gide's treatment differs from Kazantzakis'. When Theseus fights the Minotaur, he is made to go down with Ariadne and others, including Pirithous, by Daedalus, the craftsman, and tied by the thread to Ariadne. This is a notable change to the descent, and it is explicitly stated to ensure that Theseus remains grounded in his past for the purpose of future greatness.⁴⁰ This would be in contravention of Communist ideology, which was grounded purely in the concept of progress and the future – so much so that, in the foreword to Gide's chapter in *The God That Failed* (1949), Enid Starkie explicitly links this change to the myth to his movement away from Communism, comparing his notes for the poem from thirty years previous: 'At first he saw the thread which bound Theseus to Ariadne as dragging him back to his past, to the place whence he had come, to women who will always be a brake on man's urge for progress; later he imagined him entering the Maze assured only by the thread of an inner fidelity; and finally he showed how Theseus could return only because he had clung tightly to the thread which bound him to his past, to the thread of tradition.'⁴¹

Then, once Theseus approaches the Minotaur alone, he finds himself attracted, drawn in by the noxious gases Daedalus placed to prevent people from leaving, and is reluctant to kill it. It takes one second of eye contact, though, for him to realise that it is *stupide*, and kill it.⁴² He then has to force his friends to leave with him, through physical violence – through *piéd au cul*.⁴³ When we consider Gide's disenchantment with Communism by this time, we can make the suggestion that the Minotaur here represents Communism, in that, once close to it, it can be intoxicating.⁴⁴ We can see this sentiment in Gide's own impassioned letters, when he became concerned over the uncritical attitude of youth towards Communist doctrine in 1933:

It is as a religion that the Communist doctrine exalts and feeds the fervours of the young people today. Their action itself implies belief; and if they pass their ideal from heaven to the earth, as I do with them, nonetheless they strive in the name of an ideal and, if they must, they sacrifice themselves. And what frightens me is that this Communist religion includes also a dogma, an orthodoxy, texts which we refer to, an abdication of criticism... This is too much. I understand the requirement to appeal to an authority and rally the masses around it. But here I leave off; or at least, if I should stay with them, it is because my heart and reason counsel me to do so and not because <it is written...> Whether the invoked text is by Marx or Lenin, I do not submit that my heart and reason don't approve it, and if I escape the authority of Aristotle or Paul, the Apostle, it is not to fall back under theirs. However I recognise the necessity for

⁴⁰ Gide (1946), p. 64

⁴¹ Crossman (1949), pp. 171-172; cf. Conner (2001)

⁴² Gide (1946), p. 83, 85

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 84

⁴⁴ cf. Gide (1997), p. 353, Entry of 26 février; p. 353-354, Entry of 27 février; for other readings, cf. Genova (2000)

*a credo for the bringing-together of individual wills; but my adhesion to this credo is of value only as long as it is freely given.*⁴⁵

It seems to take a man of great spirit and will to fight against the Minotaur (or, Communism) and kill it, and Theseus happens to be the great man required, adding to the long list of revolutionary heroes that Gide has Daedalus incorporate his son into in the text, and that Kazantzakis (1969) similarly refers to, through the concept of Marxist historical dialectic.⁴⁶

After the Minotaur's death, Theseus seems prepared to marry and found democracy in Athens, which he promptly does, with Phaedra his ill-fated bride. Gide's text follows rather closely with Plutarch's account of the Life of Theseus, which cements him as anti-monarchical (he gives up his inherited position) and as a positively Leftist ruler.⁴⁷ Indeed, when Theseus returns to find civil unrest, Gide traces this back to social inequality:

*The Aegean, my father thought to assert his authority over in maintaining divisions. Considering that the well-being of the citizens is made up by discord, I recognised in the inequality of fortunes and in the desire to claim one's own as the source of most evils. Not anxious myself to enrich myself, and worried by the public good as much as or more than my own good, I gave the example of a simple life. By equal division of the lands, I suppressed suddenly the supremacies and rivalries which they involve.*⁴⁸

Theseus then speaks to the rich, telling them that they enrich themselves through injustice, and that he is creating a society *régie non par un tyran, mais par un gouvernement populaire*, enshrining some of the buzzwords of France's post-revolutionary republic – *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.⁴⁹ As in Kazantzakis, Theseus is clearly used as a revolutionary, Leftist figure, preoccupied with progress and advancement – although, with the Minotaur's symbolism, not towards a Communist system.⁵⁰ This is emphasised through the way in which, when Pirithous later brings up the impossibility of a completely equal system, Theseus acquiesces to the idea of some remaining inequality. As Watson-Williams (1967) has written: 'Theseus' total devotion to his State, to the founding of his City, and the political reforms that create its proud citizens and his own glory, is the final outcome of the concepts of Ulysses in *Philoctète* and in 'Ajax', just as his economic reforms, the equal opportunities he provides for every citizen, the welcome he extends to immigrants, are developments of the humanitarian ideas of *Œdipe* and *Perséphone*. But in both the political and the economic aspects of Theseus' ideal Athens the concepts are developments from earlier ideas, not mere echoes of them. For the ideals of political equality are

⁴⁵ cf. Gide (1997), pp. 427-428, Entry of 29 août

⁴⁶ cf. *ibid.*, pp. 72-73

⁴⁷ cf. *ibid.*, p. 103; cf. Plutarch (1960), *Life of Theseus* 24-26; cf. Slochower (1949), p. 41

Gide read Plutarch and Strabo while in North Africa and Provence, and used general mythology dictionaries regularly, and Pollard (1970) suggests Pausanias, Diodorus, and Homer, as well as Sophocles, Euripides, and Racine – cf. Pollard (1970), pp. 291-293 for the engagement with Plutarch

⁴⁸ Gide (1946), pp. 100-101; cf. p. 52

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 101-103

⁵⁰ cf. Pollard (1970), p. 296

impractical and cannot be maintained; as Pirithous points out, there will always be '*une plebe souffrante, une aristocratie*'.⁵¹ Clearly, Theseus creates a more modestly Leftist government, which thus leans into Gide's post-Communist political opinions, as expressed in *The God That Failed* (1949): 'There is no doubt that all the bourgeois vices and failings cannot be reformed from the outside ... and I feel anxious when I observe all the bourgeois instincts flattered and encouraged in the Soviet Union, and all the old layers of society forming again.'⁵²

Overall, we can see quite clearly, then, that these authors utilise the myth in very similar ways, but, with both at different points in their relationship with Communism, their works have very different thrusts. Kazantzakis, in both of his texts, shows the Minotaur as symbolic of Capitalism, which is able either to be defeated or killed, and whose battle with the (surprisingly) revolutionary Theseus presages wider social change. Meanwhile, Gide, now disillusioned with Communism as the Party shows it, presents a Minotaur representative of the enticing visage of Communist ideology destroyed by a revolutionary Theseus who realises that more moderate action is perhaps necessary in the government he goes on to create – although, he is still Leftist; perhaps a 'fellow traveller'. Indeed, it is clear that the myth is used similarly, but with individual nuances dependent on the author's individual political niche.

⁵¹ Watson-Williams (1967), p. 136

⁵² Crossman (1949), p. 183; for more on Gide's politics in *Thésée*, cf. Durosay (1995)

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