The CHARIOTEER

An Annual Review of Modern Greek Culture

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SPECIAL ISSUE

ODYSSEUS ELYTIS

MARIA NEFELI
Poem

YANNIS TSAROUHIS
Painter

THE WOMAN OF ZAKYNTHOS
by Dionysios Solomos

REVIEW OF BOOKS

Published by
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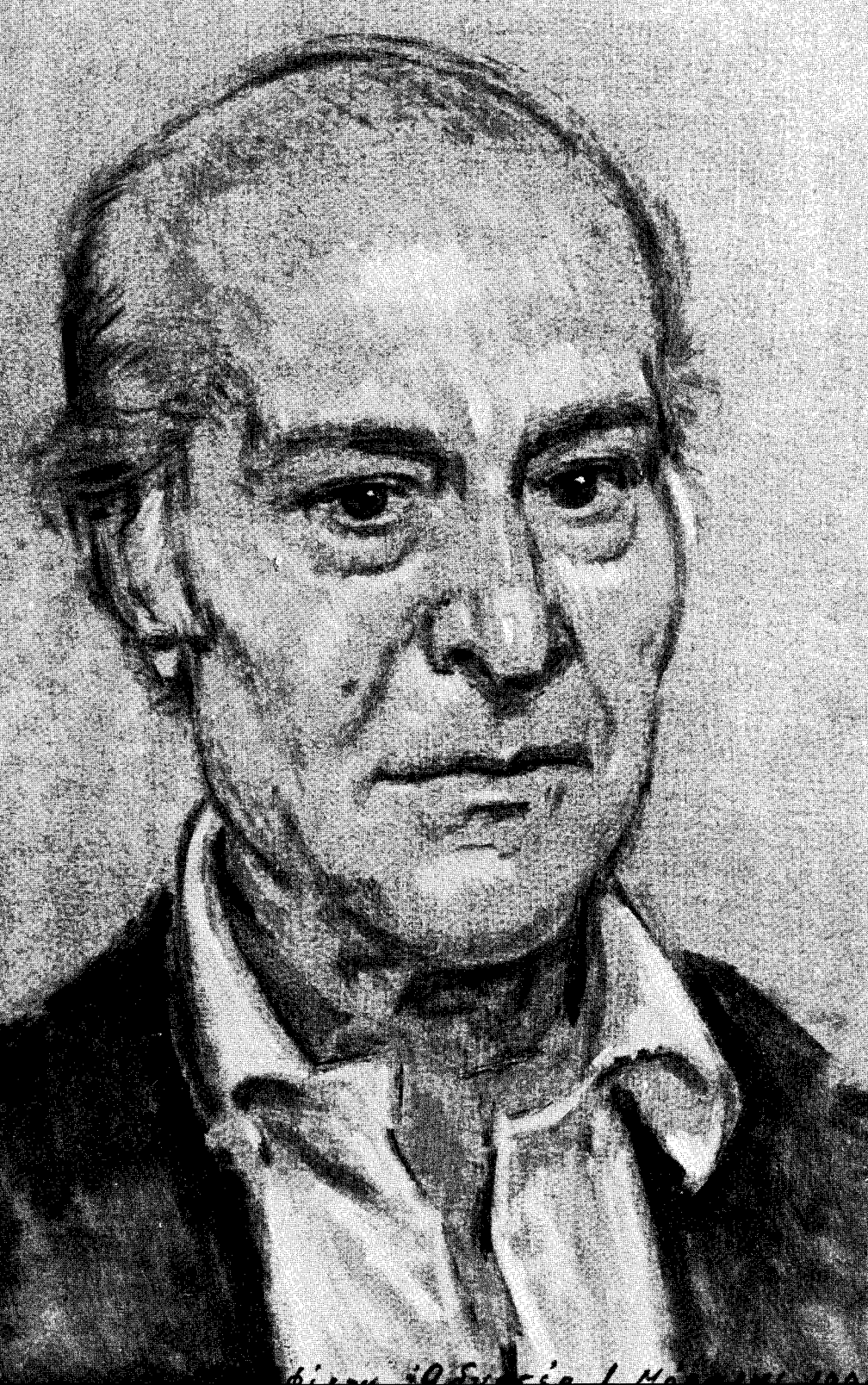


EDITORIAL

One of the wonders of the modern world is the multinational complexity of American culture. The legend of its hospitable embrace, however, hides a deep danger. *Our nation is at risk of* being Balkanized by undeclared, internecine warfare among heterogeneous citizen-organizations who serve, not the common, national good, but special, exclusive and often non-American interests. The remedy for such disunion is what it has always been: Americans must learn to understand each other and subordinate divisive egoism so as to live by what is best in each for the betterment of the nation.

For more than twenty years, the primary purpose of THE CHARIOTEER has been to foster such understanding by presenting the writers and artists of Modern Greece to our English-speaking readers who are scattered around the world but are mostly in America. The task of THE CHARIOTEER has, fortunately, been not to span a chasm of hostilities but to open a new avenue along that broadest of thoroughfares which for more than twenty centuries has been the busiest vital artery in the life of the Western world and helped establish the historic bond between America and Greece.

Our founding fathers first acknowledged that bond when they considered the adoption of Greek as a national language and risked their lives to create on these shores a nation based on the ideals of ancient Greece—however cast into Roman models—of truth and justice and freedom. For the survival of her own people and of her Western allies, Modern Greece has, in turn, repeatedly reinforced that bond by fighting to uphold those ideals within her own ranks and against despotic invaders. (The what-have-you-done-for-me-lately cynicism of world politics tends to ignore the fact that the bloodshed in Greece during World War II was, proportionately, more than in any other country.) The American dream of social justice, for instance, stems from a "tradition" which Rex Warner describes as "peculiarly Greek" but, he adds, it "is also in a sense common to humanity. So far as human values are concerned no tradition

in history is of comparable importance" [George Seferis, *On The Greek Style*; trans. R. Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos (London, The Bodley Head, 1967) p v].

The ultimate aim of THE CHARIOTEER is to serve the humanizing cause of World literature, by affirming through the civilization of Modern Greece the testimony of that all-embracing humanity which first began to express itself in Ancient Greece. If the world we love is to survive, the dwellers of this fast-shrinking earth must learn to share the feelings of "an old [Syracusan in 413, B.C.] called Nicolaus, who . . . lost his two sons in the war [and] comes forward and appeals for a policy of mercy [against the] proposal that [the Athenian invaders] be put to death under torture, and . . . thrown into the quarries; . . . 'The spirits of civilized men', Nicolaus declares, 'are overcome above all by compassion, because of the fellow-feeling which nature has implanted in us'" [H. C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1965) pp 71-72].

The focus of THE CHARIOTEER is, for the most part, literary. It offers the common, English-speaking reader a timeless collection of Modern Greek writing which reflects the history of Modern Greek literature and can be used as a text by students of comparative literature who are Greek-less. While THE CHARIOTEER has presented the best writers of Modern Greece, it has occasionally published works which—though not, perhaps, unquestionably first-rate—deserve to be known chiefly because they illustrate a phase in her history and culture. THE CHARIOTEER seeks to overcome the barrier of language which—except for isolated instances—has delayed the arrival of Modern Greek literature upon the international scene. A more serious hindrance, we believe, has been the absence of a keen, learned, objective Modern Greek criticism to guide or cauterize, goad or inspire her talents. If Greece today had such an indigenous body of criticism, her writers would have a greater voice among those who are determining the consciousness of the modern world. To speed the day when that voice may enjoy its rightful resonance abroad, we have often discussed Modern Greek writing according to theory and practice of art set forth or illustrated by significant writers, artists and critics, especially in America.

Parallels in the development of each culture—the one struggling to revive almost a hundred years after the birth of the other—show how a democratic people—through its writers, artists, and critics—develops the consciousness that makes it a nation.

This double issue of THE CHARIOTEER is, as we promised, devoted to the poet Odysseus Elytis. His works, we are honored to declare, help our publication fulfill its every purpose. Above and beyond their intrinsic genius, they reflect a career through which can be traced a major phase in the development of Modern Greek consciousness. If his achievement were not embodied in slender volumes whose weight is spiritual rather than corporeal, it might be seen as a kind of colossus, extraordinary in itself, straddling the last half century and bearing high a light which cuts a glittering path through a cultural miasma that has plagued Modern Greece and infects the world at large. Amply translated, the works of Elytis hold the attention of serious critics and devoted readers in many lands. He gained a permanent place in World literature when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979, and again the poetry of Greece claimed the niche Seferis made for it in 1963.

In his remarkable volume of essays—*Open Book* [*Anihta Hartia* (Athens, Ikaros, 1982); except where otherwise indicated numbers in brackets refer to pages of this text]—Elytis presents at great length his aesthetic credo. He discusses some signal points of his career and analyzes important figures and movements which have contributed, positively or negatively, to the development of contemporary Western culture. He refers often to the French among whom he lived for many years and who first unveiled the poetic horizons which altered the course of his life. He moves with learned ease across a universal range of ideas, ancient and modern, in philosophy, religion, history and psychology, as in art and poetry, which relate to the intellectual climate of our time.

Throughout this collection, scintillates an indefatigable, imaginative, passionately partisan, creative and critical spirit of inquiry which is surprisingly—how shall we say?—American. In its analytical judgments and philosophic approach to questions of life and art, interspersed with autobiographical sequences (recalling, to the very moment, a flash of mind, at a particular

place and the flood of sensations there—the musty bookshop, for instance, when Elouard's poetry suddenly shifted the tropism of his being—) *Open Book* resembles precisely such essays by Henry James. Whatever differences occur between the temperaments of the 19th-century American novelist (1843-1916) and the 20th-century Greek poet (1911-), their quality of mind is strikingly similar. Like James, Elytis is as polemic a critic as he is an hierophant of his craft; and, like James, since he could not find "serious, substantial, mature criticism," he provided it himself [357]. Indeed, *Open Book* reveals so many insights into the heart of the poet and his convictions about the theory and practice of his art, that it is as valuable a *vade mecum* for the poet as James' collected New York prefaces, *The Art of The Novel*, are for the novelist.

On second thought, the resemblance between the two writers is not accidental but is to have been anticipated. Their careers exemplify the ordeal of an aesthetic sensibility in a newborn society. Each writer emerges at a turning-point in his country's youth and reacts against its half-educated opinions about life and art, its inept critical dogma and synthetic idealism. Each is driven to delineate his identity as an artist in a more challenging environment and yet is impelled by an inflammable sense of mission to portray his nation so as to uplift it in the eyes of Europe whose view of his homeland is full of rankling condescension and far from the truth. Each discovers in European sources the fertile soil of a mature civilization which quickens genius.

The same themes engrossed them: the relation of the artist to his art and society, the relation of art and life, of the ideal and the real, of appearances and reality, of truth and beauty, imagination and observation, the role of the critic of art, and of art as a criticism of life, the dangers of facility, the obligatory loneliness of the artist, a longing for perceptive, dedicated criticism and a devoted reader, and—above all—the imperative need to be free. Some of these, of course, for Elytis, loom larger than others. Like *The Art of The Novel*, *Open Book* is a testament of art that shows its author to be greater than the sum of all his work; and of Elytis, it can be said, as R. P. Blackmur said of James:

> He want[s] the truth about the important aspects of life . . . [and is] avowedly the [poet] of the free spirit, the liberated intelligence—on feeling, and on form [*The Art of The Novel* (New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1974) p xxxviii].

The *air de famille* in the self-portraits depicted by their essays, is born of their passion for freedom. The most valuable possession of the artist, James stresses, is a "boundless freedom"; and the final measure of his greatness is signalled by the amount of freedom he exercises: "[T]he smaller sort [of artists] never use all the freedom they have . . . ; but those of the greater have never had too much immediately to use . . ." [*Op. cit.*, pp 47, 281-282]. In *Open Book*, much of what Elytis writes keeps turning directly or obliquely on the question of freedom. He recalls his beginnings:

> When I took up the pen, . . . I wanted to feel above all, free.

Elytis, characteristically, equates that desired freedom to mind with a freedom of body experienced in a setting which symbolizes for a Greek, liberation not merely of mind and body but, most vividly, of spirit. He wanted to feel as free, he writes,

> [a]s if I were high up in the mountains, scratched by wild branches, crushing, here and there, fragrant vetch underfoot, leaping across ditches, and drinking handfuls of clear water [14].

From the beginning, Elytis instinctively craved that freedom which is the artist's staunchest shield—with it or on it, he establishes his identity as an artist. The question of identity has, of course, become a commonplace literary theme as a journey, from the familiar to the strange, which ultimately leads the awakened psyche back to its initial point of departure. Such a journey for Elytis' counterpart was a pilgrimage to seek in Europe what he never had in the New World. The Modern Greek, as Seferis writes, "studied in or went to the West to

bring back to liberated Greece the heritage that had left [Greece] in order to be preserved" [*Op. cit.*, p 93]. Since poetry has always been the characteristic *genre* for the voice of Greece, Elytis' identity as a poet should then have sprung panoplied from a "heritage" that never "left" his homeland but is an unbroken tradition reaching back into the mists of time before the days of Homer. That very tradition, however, did not exempt him from the difficulties—imposed by historical circumstances upon the Greek as upon the American artist—of defining his identity, but, rather, put on him a burden which, paradoxically, is heavier than if he had no heritage at all.

In *Open Book*, Elytis acknowledges a *revolutionary thrust* in his way of *understanding life and things* [101]; so when he keeps referring, as he does, to *liberation* and *rebellion*, he is prompted by his own temperament as by matters around him which ask to be overthrown. The word *freedom* has, of course, a double edge: freedom *from* whatever restricts and freedom *for* whatever is desired. Matters that irritate the revolutionary bent in Elytis are rooted in his nation's struggle for identity—intellectual and psychological as well as political. The question of identity sustained the Greek people through four centuries of slavery under the Turks (not counting previous subjugation under the Romans), which immured Greece from the fermentation that ripened Western civilization after the Renaissance. Nor did any Greek, as Seferis observes, have "any decisive or immediate influence at that time on the trends which were taking shape in the West as a result of the contact with Greek values" [*Op. cit.*, p 93].

In the West—where that serfdom seemed a medieval oblivion—the people of Greece ceased to have any identity, but they never lost it in their hearts and minds. It was a spirit that lived through racial memories of ancient time, merging pagan and Byzantine traditions with their customs and folkways and their Christian faith in the crucible of their native tongue. That spirit burst, after many tragic sallies, into the long War of Independence of 1821 which continued into the present century when islands along her Aegean borders broke their chains and unfurled the symbolic blue and white, the cross and stripes of liberty. Fears of recurring subjugation continue to haunt these

acritic shores; as Seferis observes, "[T]he Greek Revolution . . . never stopped throughout the nineteenth century and is still going on today" [*Op. cit.*, p 40].

Seferis saw that spirit embodied in the old, battle-scarred hero, "leader of the popular insurrection that gave the nation the Constitution of 1843, inmate of the prison of the first King Otho and his Bavarian court"—General Makriyannis, who "was illiterate . . . [but] very far from being an uncultured barbarian from the hills. He was exactly the opposite. And the culture, the education, which Makriyannis shows is not fragmentary. . . . It is the common lot, the spiritual wealth of a race, handed on through the ages from millennium to millennium, from generation to generation, from the sensitive to the sensitive, persecuted and always alive, ignored and always present—the common lot of Greek popular tradition. It is the essence, precisely, of this civilization, this differentiated energy that formed the men and the nation that in 1821 decided to live in freedom or die" [*Op. cit.*, pp 25, 35-36].

The *Memoirs* of Makriyannis—one of the noblest figures in history—set the direction of that new-found freedom from the *I* toward the *We*:

> ". . . [T]his country of ours belongs to all of us, learned and ignorant, rich and poor, politicians and soldiers, even the least of the people . . . The reason why we all fought was that we might keep this country for all of us together, so that neither the strong nor the weak should say 'I'. . . . When a man struggles all by himself and all by himself makes or breaks something, then he may say 'I'. . . . When many people join together in the struggle and accomplish something then they should say 'We'. In the life which we live it is 'We' and not 'I'. And from now on let us learn wisdom if we want to be able to live together. . . ." [*Op. cit.*, pp 28-29].

General Makriyannis is, probably, the first who noted that however eloquently he asserts himself by word and deed, the Modern Greek is invisible to Western eyes except as a senti-

mentalized, synthetic copy of his ancient forbears. His political freedom was hardly won when he had to fight a second war for his psychological freedom. That second struggle can be said to have begun in 1836 when, as Elytis records, General Makriyannis dismissed a European artist he had employed to paint historic vistas of then revolutionary Greece, and replaced him with a folk artist—a freedom-fighter from Sparta, called Panayiotis Zographos (i.e., Panayiotis Painter)—who depicted not an artificially decorative but an authentic record of the spirit of the land and its people [397 ff]. *There is no doubt*—Elytis observes—*that Makriyannis was at heart an artist*; he had *an artistic idiosyncracy* [400]. Elytis refers to him as *the artist-general* and perceives that *there is no way of knowing to what degree the twenty-four pictures executed by the hand of that simple foot-soldier and ikon-painter were a joint effort*, guided, too, by the eye of *the artist-general* [401]. *According to all evidence, Makriyannis gave meticulously-detailed instructions* which were lost on the European painter, but *inspired* the folk-artist because, Elytis explains, *they shared the same psychological identification* [405]. In 1839, when *the artist-general* held what was, in effect, an international exhibit of those paintings [402], he declared by this event the independence of the aesthetic spirit of the new nation. The struggle for that independence of the Greek spirit continues, Elytis observes, to the present; many Greeks today see themselves not as they really are but as they think they appear to Europeans, and so they become *disdainful of their genuine tradition and [are] rootless mimics of foreign models* [39 ff].

That second struggle launched by Makriyannis impels Elytis on a personal and collective mission to eradicate that false image of Greece among Westerners and his own countrymen, and to liberate her *living truth*. That truth, he complains, *is refrigerated . . . in her history as presented by official Greeks. So too, is her history refrigerated in the hands of her European interpreters*. The artist-as-soldier is the figure Elytis draws of Picasso (elsewhere in this issue), using his brush like a sword to cut through conventional "Reality"; that figure is, clearly, a projection of Elytis himself inspired by *the artist-general*. Throughout the pages of *Open Book*, such a swordsman is

Elytis, an agile, unpredictable, tirelessly resourceful, embattled warrior, as full of mother-wit as of fantasy, sparring as much against his own shortcomings as against predators who threaten to stifle or destroy or fail to pay due homage to what he holds most dear, determined to achieve with his pen the victory Makriyannis won with his sword (as Balzac once said of himself and Napoleon). The more Elytis feels summoned by Poetry to fulfill this mission, the more he responds as to a call to arms. Poetry, to Elytis, means revolution on many fronts, in many fields of social endeavor:

> Every minute, poetry must bring about a new reality; every result must bring about a new more daring thrust into the world. The revolution must demonstrate the same metamorphic energy by deed and by word, so as to convey the same meanings in the external as in the interior reality of man, in politics, in philosophy, in the use of words, in everyday conduct [102].

That *new reality* can never be achieved unless that *metamorphic energy* is exerted to liberate the Greek language so that it may once again be one of the sublime instruments of human expression. Early in his career, Elytis

> ... believed there was a great need, sooner or later, for someone ... to appear, who would liberate our language from the inferiority complex which plagues it in relation to other languages ... [15].

Once and for all, the old squabbles between the academic style—the *katharevousa*—and the demotic would be resolved when that liberator of the Greek language would

> ... awaken and call into action its secret power, all those vital juices whose swift streaming can bring life to the most abstract statement and can dispel the musty odor of the study, the pallor of the ivory tower, and the fearful constipation of [writer's] block [15].

In the liberation of the language, a whole new range of experience was the *field of action* where the Greeks' words were to be marshalled:

> They had to overthrow the thankless and banal fate imposed on them by academicians, as well as the aristocratic and constricted destiny granted to them by "pure poetry"... [Words] had to stop serving—no matter how exalted it may seem—the mathematics of the soul [102-103].

Such an upheaval in the language requires a profound psychic upheaval in the poet. Accustomed mental and emotional patterns and nuances locked into his vocabulary are shabby impedimenta he must discard. In thought and word, he must break away from conventions, especially those of time-worn tradition. Its siren-call enslaves because it beguiles his faculties to luxuriate inertly among its rusted mythic fixtures and cloying psychic paraphernalia. Having shed all that dead skin of thought and feeling and fantasy, he must then use these very powers to create the word anew, shaping his own mythic content from phenomena about him and within him and make of all a pristine, organic whole, a kind of Eden where the psyche can be reborn.

That *new reality* springs to life in what the poet sees. Like James who insists, "Art deals with what we see, it must first contribute full-handed that ingredient; it plucks its material... in the garden of life... [*The Art of The Novel* p 312]—Elytis stresses that the poet's first creative act occurs when he looks at the sensory world with his own eyes, washed clear of any pre-conceived notions. Elytis records that he developed early in his career the *optic* habit of absorbing every impression visually [103]. What James calls "the garden of life," was, of course, for Elytis the physiognomy of Greece, her land and sea. Elytis wanted to portray *the true face of Greece*, but in his youth, he confesses, it was so *dazzling* that he was *powerless* to disentangle his *feelings*—conditioned as they were by the habits of tradition—from *objective* truth and thus *express the essential fullness of her gifts*. In his first realizations,

> the material body of Greece, . . . was something else and not plainly, simply "nature." . . . It was freighted with secret messages (as some people said although one hesitated to believe them), and she, therefore, claims rightfully within us the significance and the burden of a secret mission [241].

When he considered the mechanical way European writers treated "*Nature*," he saw that she

> was neglected, was delegated to secondary considerations, like a mass of material which has no resonance in the soul [240].

The same hackneyed effects he observed in the work of some Greek contemporaries:

> the most spontaneous expressions of the most advanced efforts presented nature as "scenery," "landscape," "impressionistic sketches" . . . [240].

When he, however, caught a visual impression, he noticed that it did not remain static in his awareness but by some alchemy within his poet-self became transmuted into a truer form. There was, he writes,

> . . . an instinctive tendency to superimpose on whatever I looked at, another, superior value, a kind of ideality, [a tendency which] operated unceasingly within me, and caused me, after a series of additions and subtractions, finally to grasp a "synoptic landscape" which was clearly oneiric but which I, nevertheless, was convinced held greater truth than what I had initially seen [239].

This analysis of his own cognition resembles what James notes about his own mind: "Addicted to seeing 'through'—one thing through another, accordingly, and still other things through *that*," James writes, he achieved "uncannily . . . a certain fulness

of truth" which was different, more comprehensive than what was first seen, "—truth diffused, distributed and, as it were, atmospheric" [*The Art of The Novel*, p 154].

The same definition of truth, Elytis repeatedly voices: truth does not lie in the verisimilitude of photographic accuracy *whose only criterion is logic and reason*; the sensory experience *must be interpreted so as to reveal its secret, lyrical meaning* [338, 343]. The pursuit of such truth leads the poet far from the physical world by calling into play faculties which are otherwise dormant. Yet, without them he is at the mercy of *stifling rationalism* [and] *barren, . . . rigid idealism . . .* [106].

The *instinctive tendency* in Elytis' mind does not, he realized, operate spontaneously by its own volition but is called into action by another *phenomenon*. He wonders why *nature* is always central in Greek poetry—

> why the poets of Greece, of whatever generation or epoch are always concerned with their native soil. [The answer is in the secret of that] phenomenon which has aroused the wonder of foreign studies as of unthinking Greeks [242].

That *phenomenon* is the Greek language. Just as *the true face of Greece* imparts subliminal meanings to the intuitive observer, the language of Greece arouses in him a *metaphysical* urge to express them. Thus, for such an observer,

> *a cluster of trees or some mountains are not merely details of a landscape but a portentous arrangement of musical notations. . . .* [The Greek language] *is imbued with many virtues, superior to those of other tongues; its most remarkable genius is that it gives birth to "original meanings." . . . Even if one refused to acknowledge this fact as reasonable, he would nonetheless be obliged to admit that in actual practice, the Greek language is an instrument that in most instances generates the meanings it expresses far more than it is determined by them* [241-242].

Throughout the densely woven texture of *Open Book*, many other themes recur besides that of revolt/freedom. Though insubordination may be a central trait of his personal and national temperament, that theme did not initially germinate in his poetry but was absorbed from the surrealism of Eluard one afternoon when Elytis, still a student at the Gymnasium, *was browsing . . . in Kaufman's dark, little, old bookshop* [96]. After a few random passages, Elytis was, he recalls, electrified *by the sudden, magical revelation of another world*, different from any he had ever known, *a world that was alive around* [him] *or within* [him] *and had no desire except to find a way to express its reality more clearly*. Elytis records:

> At that very moment, the men who moved about me in my everyday life, who were practical and successful, began to seem in my eyes like blockheads . . . which no God [could] command me to copy or to serve [96].

The dimensions of that *new reality* dawned first in his understanding of himself; intimations and sensations which had previously seemed buried in him, unapproachable if not unthinkable, suddenly were palpable beyond a threshold where

> [surrealism] opened a door . . . to a world reserved for one's most secret, wildest, unrestrained feelings which had hitherto been shut away behind huge sepulchres of loneliness [97].

His first attempts at surrealistic expression were a form of *automatic writing*; during those early *verbal games*, he writes,

> [I felt as if] I were knocking at the door of the Unknown [113].

Earlier in these pages, we noted that Elytis resembles James; the reverse is, in fact, true. Out of the Realism of the School of Balzac (then under the aegis of Flaubert), James explored the borders of awareness as he developed a new *genre*, the psychological novel, where figurative analysis and symbolism

mirror the corresponsive drama of conscious and unconscious knowledge. The novelist's vision prompted Americans to see and judge themselves, without provincial preoccupations, on an international scene, and he initiated a continuing moral and philosophic dialectic about the corrosive materialism of Western man that alienates him from values essential to his existence. That vision was fostered by elements in James' family upbringing and in his European experience—all imbued with the human values which the poet, drawing on the spiritual resources of his nation, revives not only for Greece but for the world at large.

Each artist found in Europe the means to find in himself what he was seeking beyond himself, but did so, by, in effect, relinquishing it. *The phychic apparatus* (as Jung would say), that directs their art along the same course, is essentially the same. The individual search for identity becomes a collective quest for Being. The transformation is brought about by the awakened psyche, in which, as Jung writes of a patient discovering his cure: "... something arises to confront him—something strange that is not the 'I' ... [that emanates from] the sources of psychic life" [*Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York, Harvest/HBJ, 1933), p 242]. The subjective ambitions, personal and nationalistic, which initially spur the artist, are swept away as he voyages, necessarily, into a psychic world of collective nightmare. There, *the metamorphic energy* he has been exerting, internally and externally, on his material, gradually transforms his very self. He, thus, acquires that supreme objectivity which allows him to look over the edge of "the unfathomed abyss" [Jung, p 157] and, without vertiginous terrors, turn away from it and steer with a steady hand toward a safe and healing haven.

The radical difference between the two artists and between the consciousness of the two nations becomes apparent here. The rootless, esoteric intensity which critics of James blame on his lack of psychic resources because he left American society and went to live in Europe, stems, in fact, from the meagreness of collective psychic resources with which, as an American at home or in any part of the world, he had, so to say, to make do. James succeeded in overcoming that meagreness—or rather com-

pensating for it—by drawing from his own personal fund of psychic energy, supplemented by European influence. That meagreness results from the estrangement of the American psyche, not from American society but from the American earth. Americans have absorbed their land, but their land has not yet absorbed them. In Greece—especially in the Aegean—Elytis writes, a sublime psychic dialogue between the people and the Greek earth and sea has been in progress for centuries:

> The center of artistic energy in Greece has, for thousands of years, before the dawn of civilization been the Aegean. There, in that azure basin—which at once unites and separates three historic continents—were consummated from the beginning the most daring and fertile encounters of the spirit. The Greek people have always lived at the rim of that basin (and only then have they been in a position to fulfill the meaning of their mission in the world) . . . [fusing the experience of the East and the West] and creating a new form and substance. [The constant fact in the development of Greek consciousness] has been the direct correspondence between the physical and the rational world [403].

That spirit of his native land, from his earliest childhood, has been the lodestar of Elytis. He refers to it as

> a "key" which, among others, helps far more than science to explain how the Parthenon came to be and how [the language of Greece] endured through four hundred years of servitude—indeed [that spirit] supports the observation that this small nation and other small nations are not at all one and the same thing" [25].

Through surrealism, that spirit, flowing with that spontaneity essential to its nature, finds new channels whereby the poet releases his own pent-up genius and unleashes the Promethean force of the Greek language and its mystical link to the essence that breathes from every stone and mountain

peak, from the waters along her shores, and from the presiding light that radiates out of the Aegean [403 ff].

Objectivity does not change him into a different, other self, but makes him more truly what he is—sloughs off the accidental and brings the nucleus of his being to bear on whatever he says. The word and the person become one, and that one-ness is in a constant flux. Vision and feeling, object and subject, keep interchanging:

> . . . [A]ccording to the way I looked at Nature, the subject ceased to be Nature. From the vision, emanated a feeling and that feeling progressed in turn to another vision. That progress was significant. What I mean is the parallel progress of the soul. In other words, the principle of perpetual motion with the Immovable and the Eternal [240-241].

As surrealism discloses regions of *unconscious* life and of *dream*, it draws the Odyssean self of the artist to the creation of a new cosmos where the encrustations of the past merge with the gear and barnacles of a storm-tossed present. Through the spectrum of surrealism, these must not

> be interpreted as personal matter which seeks arbitrarily to enter Poetry, but should be interpreted as a wide, anonymous world which does not tolerate anyone's subjective opinion [102].

When Elytis marshals Poetry to liberate the spirit of Greece through surrealism, he is enacting a historic, inherent desire of that spirit to unite humanity. The deepest longing in the human heart is for unity with our fellow-creatures and nature. A means to that unity is surrealism because it makes possible in the human soul, the reconciliation of opposites [101]. This occurs because

> intuitive realization of the world [fostered by surrealism] gives a different substance to the meaning of life, [and] in fact, re-affirms in the center of man, the source of his freedom [111].

With the revolutionary flag in one hand and the rapier of his pen in the other, Elytis, the poet-soldier, exhorts not only his fellow-Greeks and fellow poets but all humanity to celebrate its freedom in an archetypal ritual of immersion in waters that symbolize a cleansing and rebirth and a sanctification, by releasing into the conscious mind the elements from the subconscious which are common to all and transcend differences of race or creed or nation:

> the subconscious [is] . . . an aspect of that huge baptismal font which makes possible the *community* of symbols and their free interpretation, beyond the borders and barricades of nations or circumstance . . . [102].

As we listen to Elytis, the poet-soldier who is, like a true hero of '21, hierophantic in his pronouncements, and are mesmerized by what seems to be an inexhaustible wealth of poetic thought and feeling (always made unfailingly concrete by his gift of language and the gifts the Greek language bestows), the full portent of his words is carried by echoes from the near and distant past: the plea of old Nicolaus gives way to the rough-hewn syllables of *the artist-general*—hoarse from the dampness of the Bavarian king's dungeon—that come ringing down the mouldy, blood-stained corridors of history—the history not only of a small, single nation, but of the human race:

> In the life which we live it is *We* and not *I*.
> And from now on let us learn wisdom if we want
> to be able to live together.

DESPOINA SPANOS IKARIS
For Parnassos and
The Staff of THE CHARIOTEER

MARIA NEFELI and the Changeful Sameness of Elytis Variations on a theme: an essay

BY ANDONIS DECAVALLES

I

"Guess, toil, feel: On the other side I am the same." Almost four decades separate this statement from its reiteration. It was first expressed in Elytis' early poem "The Concert of Hyacinths" of 1940, then recently appeared again on the front page of *Maria Nefeli* of 1978. Clearly, the striking technical or other novelty in this latter poem required the restatement as a necessary reminder that in his long development as a poet, Elytis has never ceased to experiment technically, with inventive metamorphoses and revisions, but he has stayed essentially faithful to his initial conception—the notions, feelings, the world, the objectives and cause, and the insistent message. A consideration of what is new in *Maria Nefeli* offers the chance, therefore, to seek that unity of which it is a part; the search involves a challenging adventure.

First published in December 1978, about a year before the poet was awarded the Nobel Prize, *Maria Nefeli* was subsequently reissued several times, twice within a month of its initial appearance—a fact that speaks eloquently of its instant popularity. The poem appealed especially to a younger generation of readers and writers. They saw in it an illustrious, well-established, older poet who monumentally surpassed them in expressing their own contemporaneity, who embraced and gave voice to their own reality, and who, in part at least, even adopted their mode of feeling and expression.

There have been, nonetheless, old admirers who confessed surprise, reservations, even objections as to the poem's novelty which seemed to them a disturbing deviation from what they had long cherished in Elytis—if not, in fact, a betrayal of his long-established poetic creed. Novelty often fascinates even as it

shocks, but the Modern Greek intellect has generally been reluctant to change, particularly as to language, because ethnic and cultural survival have, for at least two millennia, identified language with the Greek national identity. Well-known is the example of Cavafy whose linguistic and other "unorthodoxy" took years of struggle to gain triumphant, epoch-making acceptance in the body of Modern Greek poetry.

So, too, the example of Elytis, though not for the same reasons. When, together with his colleagues, he brought surrealism to Greece, Elytis met much opposition, even ridicule in the 1930's. His extraordinary lyrical gifts of genuine originality, with his unswerving belief in surrealism as a liberating force, and with his sunny, youthful Greekness, enabled him to acclimate that movement to his native soil. He made surrealism a powerful means of redeeming his country's poetry from mordant post-symbolism on the one hand, and Karyotakian suicidal pessimism on the other. In his poetry, the impulsive automatism of surrealism was, however, unfailingly subjected to an art which was constantly experimental yet highly disciplined aesthetically and intellectually.

Form has been one of his supreme concerns, much modulated by the rich musical and imagistic potentials of the Greek language. He soon became one of the most influential shapers of his country's modern poetic and spiritual identity that eventually attained the highest recognition at home and abroad. In its unity, the poetry of Elytis has matured through a consecutively widening and deepening of its initial foundations, by a constant renewal in answering the same universal questions posed by the poet's cultural Aegean origin, his upbringing, temperament, experience, and no less, his time. His unceasing innovations of craftsmanship and his tireless reaching for new resources have rescued his art from the danger of monotony in its recurring affirmation of life's permanent beauty and worth. In no romantic sense, his youthful, intuitive convictions gathered strength from a cultural inheritance that ranges from the world of Homer to that of Ionian ontologists and lyricists, the Pythagoreans and Orphics, and further on, the Platonists, the Byzantine hymnologists, the fathers and mystics of the Byzantine Church, some of the Modern Greek writers like Makriyiannis and Papadhiamandis, and above all from the Greek

folk tradition and spirit as he found them still vibrant in the Aegean archipelago.

To these resources his approach has always been impulsively lyrical rather than learned. From them the magnet of his temperament has selectively attracted and assimilated the elements which affirm the sunlit view of life in its material and spiritual, physical and metaphysical essence, elements which co-exist and are co-essential, inseparable and mutually enriching. There, evil joins good, sorrow joins joy, darkness joins light in a harmony beyond any dualistic conflict, in a totality of vision where the divinities of his mythology are predominantly the still nameless, primeval *daimons,* the powers that move the elements.

II

His progress has been from an apparently careless, erotic innocence, in a sunny world under the pure skies of childhood and youth, to the complexities of a world darkened by the clouds of experience. A first awakening to the beauty of nature and love passed to an increasing awareness of suffering that caused the need to recognize its inevitability and transcendence. Simplistically, Elytis has been called the optimist because he has insisted on maintaining that youthful erotic innocence as capable, if spiritually enriched, of becoming the means to combat the alienating existential negativism of the postwar West. He has remained "the same" in keeping his faith in man's capacity to discover the means to transcend life. This transcendence is the supreme function of poetry. His "first period," as he has called it, of *Orientations* in 1939, and of *Sun the First* in 1943, won him the title of "The Poet of the Aegean." It projected the world of his own birthplace and of Greek culture as a realm of eternal youth and beauty, of clarity, sanity and vigor. The Sovereign Sun, its creator, with vivifying, revelatory and purifying power reigns supreme over that world, initiating the boys and girls who inhabit that realm to Eros whose universality, creativity and sacredness unite them, through *analogies*, with the elements that surround them. In that first period, "nature and metamorphosis predominate (stimulated by surrealism, which has always believed in

the metamorphosis of things)," as Elytis stated in his interview with Ivar Ivask [*Books Abroad,* 49:4, Autumn 1975, p 639. Further references to that text will be indicated as *B.A.*]

The war experience in 1941—Elytis was active at the Albanian front—the Nazi Occupation of his country and the subsequent Civil War, all brought him "a greater historic and moral awareness, yet without loss of vision of the world that marks [his] first period" [*Ibid.*]. The young hero who perished in the war, in the *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant in the Albanian Campaign* of 1945, embodies all youth that perishes in every war; yet, the poet does not let him perish. The Aegean spirit, that of the hero's origin, and his youth itself, the youth of all times, achieves the transcendental miracle, making the hero the victor over his own death. If the individual body dies, universal youth lives on. It is destined only to learn repeatedly of life's darker side and to overcome it through the glory of light.

III

The major masterpiece of Elytis' second period, deemed by many as his *magnum opus—The Axion Esti*—of 1959, with its epicolyrical grandeur may be said to have its initial conception in the *Heroic and Elegiac Song.* The central meaning is much the same, but its majestic expansion required the study, contemplation and hard work of fourteen years of seeming silence that separate the two poems. Much like the major poets of Modern Greece who have preceded him, Elytis felt the need to discover and define that which lends the Greek identity its cultural uniqueness. He, therefore, studied the sources of that identity, the wealth of its cultural past, so as to raise his lyrical concept to its epic dimensions.

Much has been written about *The Axion Esti,* its nature, pattern, language, its wide variety of sources and of art; all the qualities which won the special praise of the Swedish Academy need not be repeated here. In short, in the three parts of Elytis' Aegean equivalent of the Byzantine mass, the Aegean (in fact, the Greek world as "genetically" and historically shaped by physical, psychological and spiritual elements and by intellectual and

moral values) endures the war decade, as one of several experiential tests, a "Passion" of suffering brought upon it by external and internal evil. That Aegean gains from that experience the stern wisdom which helps it re-emerge "gloriously" to the promise of restitution of an earthly yet spiritual paradise where vices are transformed into virtues, and darkness into light.

These two poems seem to have set the pattern which is typical of most of Elytis' later poetry—what he has called *"a kind of meteorism . . . a tendency to mount up into the sky [or heaven], to rise toward the heights . . . a search for paradise . . . that happens all the time in my poetry"* [*B.A.*, p 641]. Has the term *meteorism* been drawn from *Phaedrus*, 264D, where Plato—with whom Elytis feels much spiritual affinity—equips the soul with wings for its celestial ascent? There we read: "Πέφυκεν ἡ τοῦ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθὲς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα, ἧ το τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ"—i.e., "The natural function of the wing is to soar upwards and carry that which is heavy up to the place where dwells the race of gods" [Harold North Fowler, trans.]. In the avowed yet modified Platonism of Elytis, the words, as carriers of a deeper perception into the essence of things, function as the wings for a *meteoric* rise, yet not quite to the realm of the gods. The rise is to a paradise that is *"another world incorporated into our own, yet it is our fault that we are unable to grasp it"* [B.A., p 641]. His fullest poetic rendering of that paradise is "The Gloria" of *The Axion Esti;* and there are several further intellectual references in his book of essays *Anihta Hartia* [*Open Book*]. In his recent interview with G.Y. Dryansky [VOGUE, March 1982, p 231], Elytis said, *"The world is a pile of matter, and man can put it together any way he wants. . . . If he puts it together one way, he has hell. Another way, paradise. Paradise not in the beyond, but paradise in the form of perfection."* The notions of *meteorism* and *paradise* are recurring parts of the poet's Solar Metaphysics.

IV

Criticism of Elytis' early verse has stressed the beauty of its lyrical imagery as springing from an erotically inspired *insou-*

ciance. Criticism of his middle period, besides admiring the exquisite craftsmanship of astonishing variety, has noted mostly his way of recording historical experience as that is quintessentially summarized in five of the six so-called "Readings" in "The Passion" of *The Axion Esti.* Less significance has generally been attributed to the fact that the historical experience and its painful awareness were to serve the poet as a condition and stimulus for an existential deepening of the meaning of life and the human condition, their physical and spiritual, their *moral* order, and their teleological justification. On such a philosophical substratum, that poem and its major aspirations are essentially based. In that fundamental philosophical and *thymosophical* substratum, the long adventure of the Greek mind and soul has been selectively stored; there, they have been emotionally integrated and renewed so as to face the alienating challenge of our time.

Elytis always stresses the balance that must exist between man and the world. No dualism exists between them or between matter and spirit. They are held together by universal links. Such was, too, the prevalent belief among the Pre-Socratics. The enlightened mind cherishes their co-existence, the mind which, according to Anaxagoras, "sets in order (διεκόσμησεν) all that was to be, and all that ever was but no longer is, and all that is now or will ever be" [Fr. 12]. Also in the poem is the Pythagorean belief that "the Unlimited exists in perceptible things," and that "the soul is a sort of harmony, of attainment, a synthesis and blending of opposites" [Aristotle, *De Anima,* 407B, 28]. Much of Elytis' physical, moral, and aesthetic world-view, as found in his verse and explained in his prose, basically echoes Heraklitos: "ἓν πάντα εἶναι — τὸ ἀντίξοον συμφέρον· ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστη ἁρμονία — φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ — ἁρμονίη ἀφανὴς φανερῆς κρείσσων" [Frs. 50, 8, 54, 123, 51]—i.e., "all is one—opposition brings concord, out of discord comes the purest harmony—nature likes to hide—the hidden harmony is better than the obvious one." These are central concepts inspiring much of life's affirmation. If Dante found in the mediaeval world a comparatively ready spiritual cosmology and a set of values with which to construct with mathematical accuracy his *Commedia,* Elytis needed boldness, at a time of much disparity and alienation, to combine elements that range from his

favorite Pythagorean numbers to the ritualistic order of the Byzantine mass. From much of the latter's symbolism and lyrical wealth Elytis constructed his own "comedy."

Of his Aegean universe, corresponding to him as its microcosm, Eros, much like the Sun, is the original and eternal procreator of matter and spirit, the befriender, whom the Orphics identified with Phanes, the shaper and revealer of the world's essence. The sacredness of Eros involves the "sacredness of the senses" which negates the notion of both Sin and Death; they are non-existent in the poet's Heraklitean understanding of life as the spark in the clash of all opposites, which is the essence of its harmony. To explain that "sacredness of the senses," Elytis stated in the interview with Ivask:

> *Surrealism also stimulated us through the great importance placed on the senses. Everything was perceived through the senses. I, too, have brought to poetry a method of apprehending the world through the senses* [not much in agreement with Plato in this respect]. *The Ancient Greeks, of course, did the same, except that they did not have the notion of sanctity which only appeared with the arrival of Christianity. I have tried to harmonize these two terms; that is, whenever I speak of the most sensuous matters, I am at the union of these two currents. I am not a Christian in the strict sense of the word, but Christianity's idea of sanctity I do adapt to the world of the senses* [*B.A.*, p 362].

The Greek folk mind and its tradition have always kept alive a miraculous and charming amalgamation of paganism and Christianity which is often reflected in its art and literature. In the work of his fellow-Mytilenean, the gifted folk-painter Theophilos, Elytis found that "*Madonna travels on the prows of caiques like a mermaid, or walks lightly at noon across the ravines like a nereid. Prophet Elijah holds the mountaintops and regulates the weather. St. George is a stalwart horseman as Bellerophontes once was on these same ravines*" [*Open Book*, p 296].

V

For Elytis, among modern Greek writers, kindred minds are the novelist Stratis Myrivilis (1892-1969) and the poet Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951). With Myrivilis, Elytis shares the Mytilenean-Aegean origins, the beauty and richness of vocabulary and imagery, and the sensuous warmth of feelings about life. Myrivilis' novel *The Mermaid Madonna* gives a fascinating, imaginative, legendary precedent of the pagan-Christian folk mixture that Elytis has adopted. The poet's visionary and temperamental affinities with the Lefkadian Sikelianos go far deeper; not withstanding the differences between their origins, times and experiences, Elytis is in many ways the descendant of Sikelianos in the composite traditional line. Writing of Modern Greek poetry as *"the only form of art expressing an unbroken continuity,"* Elytis has expressed his special respect for Sikelianos as *"the last one who, in our time, carried on his shoulders the weight of the role of a divinity, with not even the least crack apparent. He was unceasingly filled by Greece, and Greece was unceasingly filled by him"* [*Open Book*, p 296].

Very similar have been the elements in Greek culture which the two poets chose to draw from imaginatively, to renew and absorb, so as to provide Modern Greek cultural identity with its most powerful, most sane, most invigorating resources during times of crisis. However divergent their respective ways, both poets turned to the folk tradition because it has retained the pre-classical, mythic, ontological, visionary, pre-rational world, including its remote Oriental precedents. Both poets deemed that tradition as the most genuine in its universal, spiritually-inspired earthliness wherein man, inseparate from the physical, still shares in the divine as part of the World-Soul. Supreme in both poets is the wonder about life in its entirety, and both recognize the sensual as a necessary part of the spiritual.

That complex tradition has been recurringly revived; a certain continuity has also been expressed in Eastern Orthodoxy which contrasts with the Western World's neo-classical, humanistic, Renaissance mentality that has diminished life through the fear of sin and death and has left the spiritual dimension out of

count. In his *Prologue To Life* with its five "Consciousnesses" (1915-1947), and more concretely in his *Mother Of God* (1944), Sikelianos united the inherent spiritual affinities of the Dionysiac-Eleusinian with the Christian symbols, rituals and creeds. Such a union, though on a more secular basis, is implied in the poetic myth of Elytis.

Not to be overlooked are the striking contrasts between the two poets. In its Dionysiac yet thoughtful impulsiveness, where Delphic Apollo himself is a manifestation of Dionysus, the verse of Sikelianos, often obscure in its theoretical, complex, almost dogmatic implications, starts from a concept expressed in image. The post-surrealistic verse of Elytis, however, stems instead from the conglomerate imagery itself which, as it haphazardly discovers, reveals a concept to become its visual manifestation. The complex and learned mythical references of Sikelianos are concrete and expanded to a considerable degree; the myth of Elytis is personal and anonymous in its references—his gods are still the elemental *daimons*—suggested or implied in furtive glimpses. Only in the later verse of Elytis are his references somewhat concrete but still furtive.

Implicitly, yet insistently identifying man with nature in terms of his so-called "analogies," in a mutually shared and revealing communion between man and the Universal Soul of which man is a part, Elytis—like Sikelianos—expects man, the poet, to be the perceiver, the Orphic Phanes, the *knower,* the revealer. Such a visionary and revealing *knower,* as shall be noted, is John the Divine in the poem "The Revelation" of *Maria Nefeli.* He is called "John of Eroses," as if inspired by an exquisite, divine Eros.

Remarkably, but not surprisingly, Elytis' understanding of that *knower,* the imaginative revealer, seems to have a precedent in the *Katha Upanishad.* (No specific indebtedness is implied, despite Elytis' wide range of readings and sources; for after all, the Hindu and the Greek part company in their subsequent developments. There, that *knower* is defined as the mouth of death itself, as being "smaller than small, greater than great, this Self hidden in the heart of Man," actually the Soul which is "consciousness in the life powers, the light within the heart . . . the Spirit of Man dwelling in two places, both this world and the

other world. The borderland between them is the third, the land of dreams" [*Selections from the Upanishads and The Tao Te,* Charles Johnston, trans., 1953, pp 43-44].)

This definition is amazingly close to Elytis' view of man's position in the universe as the sharer of two co-existing worlds—the physical and the spiritual. Elytis also stresses the need to be aware of them, to discover them, and the transcendental function of poetry to impart an understanding of paradise as a "borderland" between these two worlds, a "land of dreams" (*vide* "surrealism") a land that unites opposites in a *tertium quid,* a *"third state"* as Elytis has called it. This is the state of poetry.

VI

The soul is rarely mentioned in the verse of Elytis; yet its presence is pervasive, and so, too, is his concern for the soul. In Elytis, as in Plotinus, the soul co-exists with matter. Both share in Eros that unites them, raising them to the realm of the sacred. In the process, the Pre-Socratic Becoming rises to the Platonic Being, where the pain and joy of life become identical. Again for this belief, Elytis gives credit to surrealism:

> *Surrealism is a spirit that believes in life, believes in the incessant metamorphosis of life within its eternity itself and aspires at necessarily undergoing an equal number of metamorphoses to keep close to life. From this point of view, we might say that surrealism, as a general theory, lies very close to the Pre-Socratic philosophers of Ionia. . . . Its deeper aspiration has been to stand as a synthesis and reconciliation above the apparent . . . contradictions of earthly life, to stand, i.e., at that point where man is still entire and unhesitant, with his body, his nature, his dreams inseparably congealed in a higher reality* [*Open Book,* pp 392-3].

In this stand for surrealism, Elytis recognizes its further affinity with Orphism and Pythagoreanism. In the "reconciliation" toward which it aspires, he delineates his notion of paradise, the poetic

state which (as if echoing the *Katha Upanishad*) he defines as:

> *a third state, not subject to the contradictions and division of everyday life. It is a musical notation which is written in words but is interpreted in the soul with pulsations of which the extensions go very far, at times (and that is when they are closer to their remote goal) to something which has no connection any more with the initial meaning of the words. The sun has no connection with the sunshine, nor the sea with the boat-ride, nor death with non-existence, nor the firmament with infinity. In other words, nature with naturalism, and the revolutionary spirit with rebellion, just as a continuous permanent and incurable mentality of our time desires. . . . But though one can catch birds with lime-twigs, one cannot ever capture their song in the same way. One needs another kind of twig—the wand of magic—and who can produce such a thing if it is not initially given to him?* [*Open Book*, p 19].

VII

Elytis here is possibly not far from Plato's idea-forms, further implying the soul's immortality and its pre-existence as recollected in that "third state." In his later poetry, Elytis more fully reveals his Platonic affinities; his worship of the body and the senses certainly indicates, though not precisely, a thorough commitment to Plato's idealism. The *"third state"* is eventually embodied in the *"third heights"* which are already implicit in "The Gloria" of *The Axion Esti* and are specifically mentioned in *The Light Tree and The Fourteenth Beauty* and again in *Maria Nefeli.*

Their earthliness seems to gain a celestial, "metaphysical" dimension, much as a state of mind, a paradisical state where "opposites cease to exist," a state which, "like nature itself," is "neither good nor bad, beautiful or ugly; it simply is" [*B.A.*, p 632].

"ΣΤΗΝ ΑΡΧΗ τὸ φῶς"—IN THE BEGINNING the light —these first words of *The Axion Esti* declare the genetic primacy

of the light, the Greek light, of the sun which has "its axis" in the poet. It is the sunlight that grants the Greek world and the poet's perception, through διαφάνεια, a very special *limpidity,* physical and spiritual. The Sovereign Sun of the poet's early verse acquires, during his middle period, the symbolic value it holds in Plato, that of the supreme good, enabling the viewer to perceive sempiternal truth. Yet, for Elytis, in the earthly world, the onenesss is beyond the apparent dualities. It enlivens recollection (the equivalent of Plato's ἀνάμνησις) and stirs the imagination which—as referred to by Demokritos, Plato, Blake and Shelley, among others—is, as Elytis writes, *"nothing else but that function which knows how to render value, how to utilize memory, and how to turn to the future"* [*Open Book,* p 141].

VIII

The poet's *"third period,"* as he has named it, began in 1960, when he was in France among the foremost modernist poets and artists, particularly those with surrealist connections, and he thought of writing an article entitled, "Towards a Lyricism of Architectural Invention and Solar Metaphysics." That article was never written. Yet, several statements in *Open Book* speak of the "Solar Metaphysics" as he understands them, certainly not a new version of Solarism as understood in ancient mythologies. In Modern Greek literature, the essayist Pericles Yiannopoulos (1869-1910) and the poet George Seferis have paid special tribute to the Greek sunlight as formative of the Greek world, soul and intellect. As already noted, Elytis attributed symbolic value to it for its "limpidity" wherein *"physical forces co-exist inseparably with moral and ethical values."*

In his volume of poems *The Light Tree and The Fourteenth Beauty* of 1971, the most representative of the poet's third period, solar metaphysics has its most seminal expression. The individual poems in that book are the poet's best approximations of what he deems the ideal poem as defined in *Open Book,* p 354:

> *the full miniature of a solar system, with the same tranquility and the same air of eternity in its entirety, the*

> *same perpetual motion in its separate constituent parts. This is the way I understand, even today [1973], the nuclear shaping of a poem as a close unit, and its final self-powered radiation as well, from the point of view always of the specific meaning which inspiration, every time, locates, isolates, and throws light upon.*

The Light Tree may not generally have received the attention it deserves for its individual worth and for its central place in the poetics of Elytis. Those poems, among his most personal and contemplative, also have the widest universal implications. Their concreteness contains much spiritual abstraction. Besides being possibly the most comprehensive expression of his poetic world and creed, they also express his poetics in action as stated in his interview with Ivar Ivask: "[*T*]*hese are simple poems in appearance but they are difficult to understand. The book appeared only three years ago, and there is no criticism in Greek yet to prove that each poem is a development of the ideas I mentioned above*" [*B.A.*, p 640].

Andreas Karandonis has called these poems "a wave-like, unfolding chapter of a 'Poetic Bible' " through whose images "we instantly communicate with the whole, a . . . paradisiac world created by the light as 'projected by the Tree,' a light melancholic or even secretly despairing" [*Of Odysseus Elytis—Yia Ton Odhyssea Elyti (Athens, 1980) pp 203 ff*]. There is much truth in this statement. *In The Light Tree,* the mature poet nostalgically recollects his past, real and imaginary experiences, in an effort to recapture their essence, their symbolic and archetypal meaning, to evaluate them, to wonder and finally to affirm once again their precious creative value, their revelation and their wisdom as a means of interpreting and facing life. Of a life's experience, he imparts the almost quintessential residue and the lesson.

If the rise to *The Axion Esti* was given by the critical decade of the war from which the poem drew its spark, inspiration and elements, and the need to fight transcendentally against the darkness which that decade had left behind, *The Light Tree* may be said to have been the product of another painful experience, another crisis. There are indications that these poems were written during the poet's self-exile in France during 1969-1971, when

Greece was under the rule of the colonels, and when the country's Asiatic neighbors decided to renew their aggressive claims against the Aegean.

That crisis brought to memory the tragic loss of Asiatic Ionia in 1922. New dangers arose as to the poet's Ionian-Aeolian native world which made the poet, as never before so emphatically, claim the inherent, age-old cultural and emotional Greekness of that world and its deeper connection with the Orient. All is realized from the painful distance of the self-exile. A stirring of personal with national and racial memories is in these poems of which the Ionian world is the insistent locale, with several references to the Orient nearby. They span a day—and life is but a day —from a Palm Sunday morning to the night that eventually falls, and with the darkness, the worrying and wondering. Then, the celestial lights, the moon—the Sapphic Σελάνα—and the stars replace the sun's translucence—διαφάνεια—with another, cryptic, eerie, mystical and contemplative yet equally solacing translucence, expressive of the aging poet's mind as it descends into life's occult and mystical truths.

Suffering is to be reckoned with, and losses, but they have always been there. They are part of time and its changes. The soul bears its wounds as does the body, but life without suffering is inconceivable. Suffering itself is what makes life integral and worth its transcendence through the spirit, through poetry. "The Silver Poem Gift" that concludes *The Light Tree* is symbolically the mature poet's offering to the world, still *meteoric* but not as extravagant as those that rise toward the sunlight.

In its low-toned, meditative, even existential questioning, its often cryptic imagery, its deep evaluation of experience, *The Light Tree* was preceded by *The Six and One Remorses for the Sky* [or *Heaven*] of 1961. Significantly, that work was composed about the same time as *The Axion Esti* and shares some of the epico-lyrical, lucid yet often grandiose texture of that major work. *Remorses for the Sky* had already opened the way toward awareness of the poet's Solar as well as his Lunar Metaphysics. In retrospect, as he has stated, he grew aware of chance occasions in his life that were to prove decisive: his Ionian-Aeolian origin and the fact that he was the first to express it by setting into motion "a magic mechanism as it continued to exist for him

among the people of the Greek Islands." Another fact was that he was innately inclined *"not to express in poetry his conflict with the external world, but to shape spiritual models of an ideal life by means of the Greek language which, according to its nature, would not grin expressionistically."*

IX

These extended notes on the development of Elytis' mind and art are a necessary prologue to an understanding of *Maria Nefeli* as a new step in the changeful "sameness" of Elytis. It is rooted in the elements out of which his poetry grew, and *Maria Nefeli* is its most recent fruit.

An introductory poem—"The Presence"—leads into the work's three sections, each of fourteen poems, seven for each of the two speakers, Maria Nefeli and the Antiphonist, their poems in pairs on facing pages. In Sections I and III, Maria Nefeli speaks first and is responded to by the Antiphonist; in the middle Section II, the Antiphonist precedes her. Each of these paired poems is footnoted by a motto, "sculpted on marble" (as Karandonis has written) stating the philosophical-lyrical quintessence of the individual poem. Those mottoes of the heart's wisdom were published separately in 1977 under the title Simatoloyion [*Signal Book*] before the publication of the poems themselves. Each of the three sections is supplemented by a hymnal, coda-poem, the three being, respectively, "Maria Nefeli's Song," "The Poet's Song," and the all-conclusive "The Eternal Wager." The total number of poems is forty-six.

The dramatic structure of *Maria Nefeli* has no significant precedent in the work of Elytis. Almost exclusively a first-person lyrical poet, Elytis grants in *Maria Nefeli,* for the first time, to another voice a share equal to his own. In its first two editions the poem was subtitled "A Scenic Poem," as if meant for the stage, but that subtitle was subsequently dropped. What, however, seems to be a dialogue, is in fact a series of parallel monologues of mutual awareness; the two speakers speak more *of* than *to* each other in a process of mutual understanding. Between them is an initial conflict of times and generations, of respective experi-

ences and mentalities, which cause apparent discord. Maria Nefeli perceives an unbridgeable distance between herself and the Antiphonist; he gradually discerns deeper affinities that make them two sides of the same human coin.

Elytis has called the girl Maria Nefeli his *"other-self"*—obviously implying an inner dialectical conflict which searches for resolution through the exchange of monologues. As he informs us, Maria Nefeli was a "real girl" he knew, who had a distinct personality and a world of her own. He, the poet of eternal youth, has now grown old, while she is young; he is the bearer of a tradition, while she, non-traditional, lives the death of that tradition.

She is comparatively deprived of solacing beliefs, for she is the embodiment as well as the victim of change. She is the changing, fumbling, alienating present, and as such she is the challenge to him, expecting his rejuvenation. He strives to accomplish this, not through betrayal of his beliefs and principles but through their enlargement. Her challenge, which is of time and reality, clashing with his frame of mind, lends this sequence most of its power and originality. He becomes painfully aware of the need to broaden his understanding. *"Anything would have been preferable/to my being slowly murdered by the past"* ("The Fix," 11-12). As their arguments gradually unfold, the solacing discovery comes that *"we are just the same. . . . My conclusion in this poem is that we search basically for the same things but along different routes. . . . In her I am showing the other side of myself"* [*B.A.*, p 640].

Despite this identification, Maria Nefeli's pulsing individuality is not lessened, nor are her femininity, activism and eloquent voice—all that distinguish her from the impersonal and voiceless "girls" who recur in Elytis' verse. If they have been the beloved and beautiful creatures, the silent, inspiring muses who embody the natural elements and virtues, his *animas,* but objects rather than subjects, spiritualized in their very earthliness and sensual attraction, she is a real, powerful, vocal figure. Eros, however, is again the magnetic, procreative and transcendental force that unites her with the Antiphonist and with the symbolic femininity in his world. The Antiphonist actually becomes her confessor, no

less than self-confessive himself to her, even at times apologetically.

X

But what is Maria Nefeli's individual identity? She is a young, modern girl, the product and victim, as already stated, of our jet-set, consumer-oriented world. She has a rootless intellectualism; she is sophisticated but not learned; self-analytical and sceptical, embittered and rebellious. She is unemployed, dependent, and apparently has no purpose in life. She is, according to Karandonis, almost a corpse, a maenad, and a Sphinx. Her memory does not contain more than her post-war disheartening experiences, and she expects nothing from the future. For her there seems to be nothing but the emptiness of the present. Yet, all this is only one aspect of her; there is another, deeper dimension beyond temporaneity, which the Antiphonist strives to discover, to reveal and to liberate.

Elytis has spoken of multiple mythical significance in her double name, but various mythical interpretation of commentators are hardly convincing or enlightening. *Nefeli* means, literally "cloud" and there have been several meaningful "clouds" in the poetry of Elytis, intruding mostly as carriers of loneliness, sorrow, worry and darkness. Their frequency and symbolism have increased with his maturity. The girl in "The Mad Pomegranate Tree" fights against them; they darken, as evil forces, the sunlit sky of the Second Lieutenant who perishes in the Albanian frontier, and there are several clouds in the second, "The Passion" part of *The Axion Esti,* which are symbolic of the darker sides of life and of human nature. One side of Nefeli is unquestionably dark and under the shadow of the inhospitable skies of her times.

Yet, in life's Heraklitean opposites, as embraced by Elytis, there is also the other, brighter aspect of the girl as indicated by her first name—*Maria*—the most common feminine name in Greece, that of the Virgin Mary. It implies the girl's purer, angelic self as the victimized, fallen angel who, however, retains the powers of redemption and ascension expressed in the prophetic tone of "The Eternal Wager," the poem which closes the sequence. In the process, the reality she initially reflects, the

temporal becomes supernal. From being filled with *hybris* she becomes a *star* where the worldly reveals its otherworldliness—a characteristic transformation in the poetry of Elytis. Worldly contradiction transcends into the Pythagorean harmony of another world. Like a celestial magnet, she conquers gravity and thus gathers upon herself the qualities of the poet's highest vision. Just as from the clouds the gods made their epiphanies and into the clouds ascended, so the poet at one point calls her *Iris Maria Nefeli*—possibly a reference to Xenophanes: "She whom men call *Iris* [rainbow] is a cloud of such a nature as to cause appearances of violet, red and yellow-green" [Fr. 32]. Contrary to pragmatic Xenophanes, however, the Iris of Elytis retains her legendary role as a guide toward heaven which the sun makes colorfully resplendent.

In these poems another allegorical allusion to her name stems from several references to John's Revelation; passage 10:1 strongly suggests the double name's symbolism: "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a *cloud*: and *rainbow* upon his head, and his face as it were the *sun,* and his feet as pillars of fire. He had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the *sea,* his left on the *earth.*" [Emphasis is added here to some of Elytis' cherished symbols.] That angel marks the final revelation of the victory of the Bride over the Dragon. Obvious correspondences occur in the Antiphonist's "The Revelation."

The Antiphonist is the mature poet himself with his long-established beliefs and accumulated wisdom, facing a new challenge in the young girl. He meets her world and her arguments with his own, and discerns the deepest bond between them, revealing her as another, the newest embodiment of life's abiding permanence among apparent changes. Much of life's abiding *thymosophic* wisdom, the wisdom of the heart that she newly embodies, is expressed in the concluding mottoes, referred to above: *"A naked body is the only projection of the mental line that unites us with the Mystery."* [In *Open Book,* he wrote that *"we do not eavesdrop enough at the door of the mystical conversation of things,"* adding that his own *"physical contact with the body of Greece"* helped him discover its nature as *"charged with mystical messages,"* [*pp 143 & 263*]: *"The void exists as long*

as you do not fall into it," "In your thought the sun coalesces into a pomegranate and rejoices," "Sorrow beautifies for we look like it," "In the village of my language, Sorrow is called The Radiant Maiden," "It is discourteous to kiss the hand of Death," and "If you are destined to die, die then, but take care to become the first rooster in Hades."

Implicit in these mottoes are affinities with the early lyrical philosophers of Greece and with apocalyptic elements in the Bible, as with the mysticism of John Novalis, Friedrich Hoelderlin and others—all of whom Elytis has referred to, in *Open Book,* by quotation and allusion. In *Maria Nefeli,* his wider vision of life's physical-spiritual reality in its universal aspects gradually turns the apparent initial contradictions between the two characters into mutually complementary elements forming the axis round which their harmonious polarity revolves. Clearly, Maria Nefeli is more than herself; she is Nature, Life—both Matter and Spirit.

XI

Of the technical novelties in *Maria Nefeli* which have mostly disturbed those who believe in the *status quo* of Elytis, the most obvious and striking change is, perhaps, in his use of language. This appears all the more striking in light of his long and fervent commitment to the tradition of the Greek language as it has developed since the time of Homer. "*My only care my language on Homer's shores,*" he writes in Psalm II, in "The Passion" of *The Axion Esti.* In the Ivask interview he declared that "*poetry . . . is always a creation from within the language. . . . I am not permitted* [*in its use*] *to vilify life* [*the way the poètes maudits, he thinks, did*]. *The Greek language insists on a noble attitude toward the phenomenon of life. . . . I want the text to be completely virginal and far removed from the everyday usage of words. I would go as far as to say I want it to be contrary to colloquial usage. The tone of my poetry is always somewhat elevated*" [*B.A.,* pp 637-8].

A striking contrast to this approach has been Seferis' use of language, which also helped to modernize Greek poetry, but Seferis did so in an unusual way, under the influence of Cavafy,

and even more, of Eliot, by adopting a prosaic, non-lyrical colloquialism. In *Maria Nefeli* Elytis was partly to transgress his own principle, surpassing even Seferis with a colloquialism that includes jargon, profanity, technological neologisms, and trade terms and trade names, as well as foreign words, phrases and allusive quotations—all of which recall the practice of Eliot and Pound, especially of Pound's multilingual mixtures. For Karandonis, who first discovered and appreciated the exceptional lyric genius of Elytis, "the organic writing itself of the poet changes almost radically" [*Yia ton Odhyssea Elyti,* p 245].

And yet, it does not change. The foundations are still there, still unshakable, particularly when the Antiphonist speaks. The neological deviations are intended to make himself understood in the girl's own terms. On the whole, the tone is still elevated, and ever-present is the beauty of nature's imagery together with dream vision that raises matter into the realm of the spirit, providing the work with its higher dimension.

Some concessions were unavoidable in *Maria Nefeli,* the poet's "first poetry" that "takes place in an urban environment." The poet of nature goes to the town, the girl's world, to the city's urban environment, its imagery and speech—to the late twentieth century for whatever it is, so as to communicate with Maria Nefeli and her generation. "*Nature,*" Elytis remarks in the Ivask interview, "*has become something of secondary importance in this age of technology in the West. Nature does not speak to the young today.*" [p 637]. Most of the poetry written now by younger poets in Greece sadly attests, in both its language and setting, to the truth of his statement. In their practice they have, however, been the victims rather than the aggressors. Technology and consumerism are the recent triumphant invaders of the Greek world. Yet, for Maria Nefeli—and her generation—on occasion nature does not fail to speak to her intuitively, archetypally, through her collective unconscious, through inheritance, through the inherent power of the Aegean land-and-seascape as it pierces the thick screen of sensory and spiritual pollution. A dimly conscious, instinctively painful nostalgia upsurges in her as for a lost world and contrasts with the Antiphonist's conscious nostalgia. There lies the power and promise of her salvation.

XII

Maria Nefeli has already been fully translated into English by Athan Anagnostopoulos [Houghton Mifflin, 1981] and selectively by Nanos Valaoritis [Penguin, 1981]. The poems translated in this issue, different from those selected by Valaoritis, may not encompass the entire thematic and technical range of the sequence; yet they represent and express its central themes, its style and broader references. The translations in this issue are the introductory "The Presence" followed by three pairs of poems, a pair from each of the three sections, and concluded by the final "The Eternal Wager." The following commentary will try to supply the missing transitions.

"The Presence" sketches dramatically the individuality of each speaker and their initial polarity, and indicates the distance between them to be bridged. If concessions are involved, these are mostly by the Antiphonist, whose understanding, without self-betrayal, widens as to perceive what in Maria Nefeli enhances his view of the world. Within her, already palpable, apart from ugly realities about her, is an *otherness* which, the Antiphonist describes, *"As if something is happening elsewhere—which only she can hear, and then she becomes frightened."* Contrasted to the *here* is a *there*—a spiritual realm in the duality of things. She assumes that he, as the poet of another time and world, cannot understand her, but he does; he associates her with the commemorative, lasting purity of little dead girls holding birds in their hands, who appear in Greek museums, sculpted on the steles of graves. To one familiar with Elytis' poetry, the *"Lady, bearer of Verdure,"* in his "Other Noah," may come to mind—the one who *"may ascend naked the stream of Time,/And who, opening her fingers with a regal deliberation, will send the bird once and forever/Over men's impious toil where God erred, by letting fall drop by drop/The trills of Paradise"* [*The Sovereign Sun,* Friar, trans.].

Yet if the Antiphonist associates Maria Nefeli with the dead girl on the grave stele, she, in turn, strives to decipher the names *Marina, Efi, El* (probably for *Eleni*) which partly refer to girls in his earlier poetry, while forming an anagram of her own name

so as to make her their culmination. It is as if those names, too, are carved on grave steles, yet partly effaced by time, or in fact, absorbed as already *passé*, by her own name which symbolizes the poet's recognition of her new reality. Moreover, in the identification of Maria Nefeli with the little girl on the stele, death joins life, the past joins the present. Her current reality and circumstances may be the dark side, affecting her, but the contradictions, sorrow and rebellion she expresses, her need for revenge, record her opposition. Time and again, she longs for another, pre-natal, astral reality, the soul's realm as dimly recollected, that of Platonic pre-existence often suggested in *The Light Tree* as well as in this collection. That is the state she has fallen from. Her wish to regain it proves her essential purity and sanity. Not accepting her worldly decline, she tries various kinds of escape, even though these may lead to cheap, popular consumerism easily available to her. Sleep, Dream and Fancy are her means of escape; yet in her, Sleep and Death have a primeval brotherhood, as alternate releases from reality.

She speaks of *"that great sleep which will come one day full of light and warmth and small stone steps."* Those steps, characteristic of Cycladic architecture, suggest symbolic equivalents of the ladders of Jacob and St. John of The Cross. The Antiphonist joins her, almost on her own terms, in her uplifting reveries. She then expands on the worldly evils which plague her, evils partly echoing those condemned in "The Passion" of *The Axion Esti,* and which have turned both speakers into self-exiles—him, as expected, into the realm of "sun and light," and her, a lonely soul "among men" and their savage world.

She describes that world, "The Forest of Men," in her first monologue—a world as wild, primeval and *'megatheriac'*—monstrous—as ever, and she offers, as a maenadic priestess, to initiate the Antiphonist into its creatures and rites. To her offer, he counterposes "The Stigma"—that term in Greek refers to the mark of disgrace or of suffering (of which he is equally the sharer), and to a ship's "fix," indicative of his position in the ocean of life. That fix is his belief that *"Whatever you see—well seen/as long as it is: an Announcement,"* a meaningful message, a revelation that fills the world for the perceptive eye. *"When shall we, all of us,"* he writes in *Open Book, "feel how deep, serious, charm-*

ing life is? To see it, to see it always as different in every second, virginal and passionate, transposing the element of eternity from the features of immaterial notion, which is its form, to the features of its own becoming?" [p 135] Revelatory announcements may come from a cloud [*nefos,* for Nefeli] or the moon or even from the sound of the diesel engine of a remote boat. Poetry is then summoned as a saint to help the poet stay alive and reach the *"other shore,"* provided that he recognizes, as Heraklitos, and embraces the changes that time brings, so that he won't be *"slowly murdered by the past."*

XIII

This spirit of recognition and the creative assimilation of change basically inspire the Antiphonist's response in *Maria Nefeli.* Through the girl, Nature announces and reveals: *"Along whatever path man searches for truth, he is bound to arrive at nature"* [*B.A.,* p 637], and the girls in the works of Elytis have always been embodiments of nature's power and eternal laws, besides being their transcendence as well. What follows is Maria Nefeli's disquieting questioning of the truth of his belief in transcendence. She even questions the value of his existence. This causes his crucial statement: *"And if every tempest will stay/ indelibly on me like an encaustic* [possible reference to the "Stigma"],*/the end of days will come/when I shall efface myself in reverse order* [*voustrofidhon,* the way plowing oxen efface their steps in turning]*//Unless even that self does not exist,/ unless the blond days sinking in the ocean's depths took with them/once and for all the idol/the Light Tree."*

Occasionally in his later poetry the existential scepticism of our age about man's spiritual essence, the soul's immortality, seems to pierce, momentarily, his Platonic, metaphysical faith, although, perhaps, the self-effacement in the quotation means to go deeper than the perishable ego. The solitude of his "solar" self-exile is not always impenetrable. He is, perhaps, implying that in response to the non-believers—his critics—he is willing to consider more pragmatic alternatives.

As to *The Light Tree* looming in his previous homonymous collection, that appears as the supreme symbol of his solar

metaphysics, standing for the tree of life in its instantaneous, luminous, revealing incandescence that of the "exact," the "precious," transcendent moment when youth in us communicates with the mystery of the universe and discovers its meaning. In the later poems of *The Light Tree* and again in *.Nefeli,* a painful wondering is expressed as to whether the brightness of that tree can be easily, intuitively regained when time and experience have diminished the innocence and intuition of youth and have dimmed the brightness of that tree's light. If there are sunrises, there are sunsets as well, followed by nights when the path of that light can only be a contemplative awareness of how the clouds obstruct the brilliance of that light. The work of the poet is to recreate that light from within as his ego yields to that wider, Universal Self that is encountered in Oriental thought.

His quandary leads him to bid farewell to "Paradises and unsought gifts" (toil is only to earn those "gifts"); he asks the girl to take his hand and be his guide. In the following pair of poems she is "Nefeli"—the cloud drifting "from day to day,"—and he is, correspondingly, "The Cloudgatherer"—the epithet of Zeus as a sky god (one of Elytis' few references to classical, or any, mythology). He, as her "gatherer," will discard his ego, the grandeur of his reputation and accomplishments and will drift with her where only Eros can lead.

The titles, contents, references and settings of the next pair of poems take us to the revelatory, "apocalyptic" realm, the extension of the natural into the supernatural. Her "Patmos"—the island where John received his Apocalypse—is coupled with his "The Revelation," equivalent to the Biblical Revelation. She speaks of death as existent, and of the way it alters an individual even before it finally conquers him, thus filling the world with living *morituri* who rule it with their corruptive deadness and their incapacity to receive any heightening, solacing calls from nature's inspirited elements. Instead of sacred Patmos, there has been for her another island: the touristic Mykonos whose cheap and massive consumerism makes her feel she has no share in the sun. She has only her body to give. The sky above her is empty; yet, she has had the vision of being on a lonely shore where, as she says, *"Up to my knees in water, I began to glow/within me with a strange yearning;/I spread my legs and slowly slowly my*

entrails began/to fall out, mauve, blue, orange—/stooping with affection, I washed them carefully/one by one, particularly the places where I saw/the tooth marks of the Invisible had left scars."

The passage invites comparison with "The Autopsy" in *Six and One Remorses for the Sky*. In death's reality, that autopsy revealed the poet's microcosm exposing its macrocosmic pure eternities; the girl's dream is a ritual of self-purification inspired by her "strange yearning" for a pure realm. The ritual is to purify her inner self from the scars, the *"tooth marks"* of the Invisible, and from the pain of her longing. Some cuticle scissors, in her waking, suggest the means of liberating herself by cutting the ties with the world that holds her enslaved in misery. Sleep and death appear again as twin redeemers.

When the poet's turn comes, the *"way"* he calls *"narrow"* must be that which leads to nature's revelations—Anaxagoras' "glimpse of the unseen" in material appearances, or Pythagoras' discovery of the "Unlimited as existing in perceptible things." Besides, the road to virtue is never wide. Through minimal things, greatness is revealed, and that revelation requires, as Blake has said, the power to "see a World in a Grain of Sand." The kiss the poet gave Maria Nefeli, with the sound of the sea as an accompaniment, opened mystically the way *"wide"* for him. That sea then reached into his sleep and ate *"the hard stone"* (of pain?) and opened *"immense distances,"* much as the roar of that same sea, in "The Girl Brought by the North Wind" [*The Light Tree*], *"ate up the darkness within me like a goat/and left me an opening that beckoned more and more to the Felicities"* [Friar, trans.]. In the world of Elytis, the sea is no less feminine and erotic than his young females. Both are inseparable reflections of the sky's purity and immensity. The sea is second only to the sun in the hierarchy of elements, as *"a second earth to be cultivated"* [*B.A.*, p 637]. In his poem "Delos" [*The Light Tree*], diving at the bottom of that sea—*"the heir of the Hellenic tradition,"* as he calls the Aegean—he discovers the heart of the sun. In Maria Nefeli's "Discourse on Beauty," the sea is part of her instinctive, awe-inspiring concept of beauty and of the Inconceivable. In the Antiphonist's corresponding poem, sorrow shines like a pure *"waterdrop/of beauty trembling on the eyelashes;/a sor-*

row transparent like Mount Athos suspended from the sky." Much is implied in this image beyond its visual grandeur; if Athos is the holy mount of Greece, the sea is, obviously, in the briny tear of Maria Nefeli.

In "The Revelation," her kiss and the sea grant the Antiphonist that revelation in *"words I have learned/like the green passages of fish."* In swimming, he *"felt and interpreted/St. John of Eroses"*—referring to the mystic of Patmos. As the poet subsequently lies in bed in a provincial hotel, he wonders about man's nature and purpose, about the meaning of man's superiority or *"magnificence in the animal kingdom"*; he wonders, too, whether that magnificence is other than man's capacity to receive, if he desires, in the midst of suffering, transcendental messages.

The seer-poet, with his "inner vision of things" in the old Plotinian sense, detects and deciphers those messages with that illuminism that traces its descent from the ancient Egyptians, the Orphics, Pythagoreans and Platonists, to the Hermetic and Christian mystics. Akin to Swedenborg's illuminism with the notion of "correspondences" (later favored also by Baudelaire), are Elytis' theories of "analogies"—correspondences between the material and the spiritual world as they are "joined in the Word"—that universal language which Swedenborg called "the Speech of Angels."

In Maria Nefeli herself, this new angel of clouded brightness, as already implied in "The Presence," Hubris and Star become identical, expressing life's unity in its ἐναντιοδρομία —its running in contrary ways. She grants the poet-seer a revelation of man's purpose, of life's meaning as divinely ordered, and the alternation of good and evil, of joy and sorrow, where man is expected to accept both, blending and transcending them within his nature. In the *Open Book* the poet confides: "I had to ruminate, to recast within me several years of childhood sickness, of family mournings, of neuroses, and to give them the ἀγωγὴ —the character—of a proud mountain; the συνήθειες—the habits and manners—of sunrise and sunset." Much of what is in this passage is expressed in *The Light Tree.*

Equivalent to John's Revelation, the revelation of the poet bears the stamp of his world and temperament. To mention some of the adjustments: the "four beasts full of eyes" standing "in the

midst and round about the throne" of God, in Rev. 4:6-8, become *"four boys with dark-skinned faces,"* as announced by *"a hum as from a conch"* (instead of a trumpet). They appear "in the light"—the sunlight of God's presence, where the divine epiphany itself takes the Homeric-Biblical shape of *"an old man who looked like a shepherd/his feet naked on the stones,"* whose words echo partly those of the one "that holdeth the seven stars in the right hand, who walketh into the midst of the seven candlesticks,"—i.e., the seven divine Spirits, in whom is foreshadowed the coming of Christ "with clouds; and every eye shall see him" [Rev. 10].

XIV

On the whole, Elytis' Biblical references and borrowings here and elsewhere, their assimilation into his own frame of mind, their meaningful adjustment into his own world, are fascinating. A striking parallel is Eliot's use of Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* as a mythical framework for the "fragmentary" unity of *The Waste Land.* Yet, there is a major difference: Weston's book may have served Eliot *ab initio* as a skeleton, an outline of mythical patterns and notions to guide the shape of his poem; the borrowings of Elytis serve to expand, extend and enrich. His world and his notions pre-exist to absorb, assimilate and modify what he borrows.

The difference is in the order of precedence. Even in *The Axion Esti,* which seems close to *The Waste Land* in some respects, that order applies. Elytis ingeniously borrowed the structure, pattern and other elements from the Byzantine mass as a thematic and technical framework within which to project his concept of the Aegean world—and the Greek conscience—as tested by the painful experiences of the 1940's. The Christian tradition was made to fit into the poet's dominant view; Elytis has his own notion of divinity—Gnostic rather than Orthodox. His humanized, not humanistic, God has not avoided the confusions and errors for which He rather than man should feel *"six and one remorses."*

Much as in the Oriental cults, the Vedas and Upanishads, even nature itself, with its primordial sanctity, surpasses God in

wisdom, order, purity and virtue. In "The Revelation," nature gives rise to that revelation—perhaps, John's revelation had a similar Aegean inspiration. It is man's spirit that should ascend to a height of vision, a distance of equanimity, a *"third state"* as expressed in the equivalent of the Archimedean saying, the motto at the end of "The Revelation," which states: *"If you do not brace one of your feet outside the Earth/you will never be able to stand on Earth."*

In the remaining pairs of poems in Section I, Maria Nefeli's "Through the Mirror" reveals her longing to pass—as Alice passed—to the other, the imaginative "angelic" realm: her "The Thunderbolt Steers" is an obvious reference to Heraklitos' [Fr. 64] "τὰ πάντα οἰακίζει Κεραυνὸς"—i.e., "everything is steered by Thunder." [In his *Vorsokratische Denker,* Walther Kranz has meaningfully followed this by Fr. 30: "κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἁπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀείζωον, ἁπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα,"—i.e., in Burnet's translation, "This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living Fire, with measures of it kindling, and measures going out"].

To Maria Nefeli's "The Trojan War," the Antiphonist responds with "The Aegeïs"—his equivalent of Plato's Atlantis. The "Hymn to Maria Nefeli" and "Helen" raise the girl to that archetype of beauty inspiring all Trojan Wars. If for Maud Gonne, in Yeats' "No Second Troy," there was not "another Troy to burn," the chances for archetypal Maria Nefeli are endless.

XV

Preceding the girl in Section II, the Antiphonist, in his ironic "Pax San Tropezana," depicts in sharp strokes the mundane beach of southern France; ironically sanctified as a center of peace, it is actually the setting for the extremes of perversion and ridicule of sex and love, causing him, in his next poem, "The Dagger," to wish to use that dagger to *"rescue lust, at least,"* and return it to its sanctity.

To the Antiphonist's poems correspond Maria Nefeli's "The Planet Earth" and "Each Moon Confesses." In the first, she speaks of the Earth as having shrunk to a miniscule world inhabited by idiotic, beastly, avid, self-deceptive and self-destructive creatures. It is located *"at the very edge of the universe,"* and she wonders whether our *"planet"* should not more accurately be called a *"plani"* [πλάνη]—i.e., a fallacy or deceit as propagated by the founders of great religions to reduce man to an *"obeisant"* creature. In "Each Moon Confesses," she tells the Antiphonist that his flirtations with eternity have brought all times together, that he has escaped the death-traps set for him, has kept his world invulnerable, and that as the moon sets, he rises wearing the sun.

The next pair of poems—his "The Ancestral Paradise" and hers "The Paper Kite"—express respective *"meteorisms,"* their longing for an ascent to the heights, to a paradise as each understands it. In defending his belief in the sanctity of the senses, of nature and of our earthly substance, Elytis—in Psalms X, XIII and XVI, in Odes j and k, and the "Prophetic" reading (all parts of "The Passion" of *The Axion Esti*)—condemned the notions of the Fall and Original Sin as fostered by Western Christianity. They have perverted and negated the very notions of earthly love and, in fact, the enjoyment of God's creation.

For his unyielding praise of body and nature, his unwavering commitment to Eros, and his affirmation of life as given to us, the Philistine critics of Elytis—as we are told in Psalm X—have called him *"the naive tourist of the century . . . who trusts his body only. . . . The antichrist and callous satanist"* [*The Axion Esti,* trans. Keeley and Savidis, p 71]. In his Psalm XIII, responding to these calumniations, he congratulates himself for his stand, opening that psalm with *"Good for you, my first youth and untamed lip,"* and closing with *"All my ideas I turned to islands./ I squeezed lemon* [as purifying] *on my conscience"* [*Ibid.,* p 87]. "The Other Noah" [*Six and One Remorses*] expresses the same negation of sin and the same self-defense of his insistent *sameness—"It is time, now, I said, for lust* [as Friar translates ἀσέλγεια—which literally means *wantonness, lasciviousness*—suggesting the puritanical view of lust] *to begin its holy career, and in a Monastery of Light keep secure that wonderful moment when*

the wind scraped off a bit of cloud above the furthermost tree on land" [*The Sovereign Sun,* p 125]. *The Light Tree,* too, does not fail to touch this same point.

This same issue is again in "The Ancestral Paradise" which begins: *"I don't understand a thing about original sin/and other contrivances of the West."* Memory recalls the *"coolness of the first days"* when the *"angels' white garments"* looked *"like the uniforms of those girls who work in beauty parlors."* In the sensual, euphoric imagery drawn from nature, from the Greek flora and fauna, all spirited by Love, even the angels are playful, teasing the Antiphonist with their seminal questionings. All negate the belief that death and sin entered the world because the "protoplasts"—Adam and Eve—tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Others, through their perverse thoughts and actions, have created, have caused and perpetrated death. Archangels, at the end, burst into laughter, knowing that man himself invented both sin and death. The closing motto is that *"Truth"* is *"made up"* in the same way that lies are concocted.

Correspondingly, in "The Paper Kite" Maria Nefeli has her own imaginative, self-redemptive ascent—a flight through less lofty, less spiritual means. She feels as if born to rise on a paper kite, with a thrill of fear, to a sky of popular sex, in the company of the *"upper men,"* her human angels as contrasted with the lower men of materialistic corruption. In her flight, she is entertained by popular music recordings, phonographs and cyclists, her equivalents of the troubadours, the serenaders and enamored knight-errants. Opposing her, stands a condemnatory, narrow-minded, morally hypocritical Puritanism as symbolized by *"those with the pointed hats,"* dark wizards scheming with her mother, regarding her *"deontologically a monster."* She has always been nourished by opposition, the feeling of sin and guilt, which is momentarily and miraculously washed away as if by *"fountains"* sprinkling her with *"immaculate whiteness."* Yet, these are only faucets running in the bathroom next door, whose sounds she hears as she sleeps in a miserable provincial hotel.

The remaining poems of Section II develop much in the same spirit: contrasting reality and imagination, the uninspired and the inspired view of life. The Antiphonist's "Upper Tarquinia" speaks of the Etruscans who, contrary to the boring dead-

ness of the Romans and of the rational perfection of proportions in the Renaissance, continued posthumously to enjoy the *"unbroken continuity"* of life in their beautiful, artistically enriched necropolises, thus rising to the "third heights" and negating death.

Elytis obviously shares this belief with D.H. Lawrence. Another view of this life-and-death relationship is in Maria Nefeli's "The Eye of the Locust"—its title possibly alluding to Rev. 9:3-10: *"Two or three yards beneath the earth,"* she is plagued by rapacious human insects, and tries again her possible visionary escapes. She decides to go against money, the wind, security and agony; she decides to choose her position *"between Lady and Kore,"* Demeter and Persephone in their unbroken cycle of life and death, of earth's renewed fertility, so as to escape a position *"between Prosperity and Death."*

XVI

In the Third and last Section, Maria Nefeli regains her precedence over the Antiphonist. Her "The Twenty-Four Hour Life" sums up her wasteful, mechanical emptiness contrasted by his "The Lifelong Moment." Saints and mystics have spoken of such lasting moments: *"Catch the lightning on your road,/. . . give it lastingness; you can!/. . . all in a single moment, all your only/lightning for ever"*—again the lightning of Heraklitos.

Similar is the contrast between her "Electra Bar" and his "Parthenogenesis." In the former, again, *"two or three steps below the surface/of the earth,"* like many of her generation, she chooses Baudelaire's *paradis artificiels* (not those of Villon which ingratiated his poor, illiterate mother), so as to have *"all her problems immediately solved."* Yet, the need persists for revenge (which Elytis elsewhere praises as a healthy element) against the *"shrew"* that is "fate" who always turns her back on the unlucky ones. Maria is among the unfortunate. Identifying herself with Euripides' Electra, she regrets not having an *"unknown brother,"* an Orestes, to rescue her from the equivalents of Klytemnestra and Aegisthus. There are not many references in the poetry of Elytis to a tragic sense of life or the ancient tragic muse; this instance is, perhaps, the most extensive.

A contrast between heaven and hell, within the range of her perception, is implied in Maria Nefeli's envy of Erika, *"the flying hostess of the Olympic Airways,"* who *"passes high above capitals,"* while she, herself, *"must pass beneath them/beneath the cetaceans"* where, in a false existence, even the tragic sense is only a show, as in the movies. In her abominable state, her only solace is her waiting for *"the message—the first rooster in Hades"*—symbolic of a rising from the state of death-in-life. Of such an expectation, she is not deprived. She exclaims: *"Only now does the Earth reveal how truly great she is."* In the Antiphonist's corresponding poem, that true Earth makes her revelation.

World mythology is full of stories of virgin motherhood, of births by virgins. As Mircea Eliade informs, the sacredness of woman is related to the holiness of the Earth: "Feminine fecundity has its cosmic model—that of Terra Mater, the universal Genetrix" [*The Sacred and The Profane,* 1959, p 144]. The "Parthenogenesis" of Elytis, indebted as it may be to Hesiod and to Christian precedents, is strikingly characteristic, part of his personal cosmology, his belief in the purity of the senses and of Eros, part of the physical and spiritual beauty of femininity as life's mystical essence—in short, part of his *sameness.* The "girls," with Earth and nature in them as well as spirit, have given him, to his body and soul, the way to poetic redemption. They have raised him to the *"third heights"*—to the earthly-unearthly charm of the *"invisible gardens."*

Yet, there is more to his parthenogenesis—cosmic extensions as drawn from Plato. While living in Paris and studying at the Sorbonne in 1948, Elytis experienced a period of apparent silence which was, in fact, a time of extensive exploration into his Greek cultural and intellectual inheritance. Accumulating considerable creativity, he discovered Plato, among others, as a power of self-preservation that helped him resist post-war decadence, the despair and existential anguish surrounding him in the West.

"The West," as he states in *Open Book, "even in its best moments, the most revolutionary, has been Aristotelian. . . . Not that it has not had a sense of the transcendental, but always* this side, *never at all the* other side *of the* Curse" [p 351]. By that *curse,* as he explains elsewhere, Elytis means the wrong understanding and the wrong, humanistic, materialistic interpretation

of the Ancient Greek spirit as prominently, even exclusively rationalistic, and the development of a guilt-and-death-ridden Christianity. With obvious fascination, Elytis further quotes, in *Open Book,* Plato's *Phaedo* 109, particularly the passage where the soul emerges from the darkness of a rational and grim understanding of life, as a fish emerges from the dark, unenlightened world of the sea, to discover and contemplate the *real,* the *ideal,* the true Earth that is in the heavens.

That passage Elytis partly quotes again in "The Parthenogenesis," as expressive of a birth into the *"third heights,"* exquisitely described in the poem. He begs the earthly elements themselves, the *"inexperienced little girls of the rain"* to raise him *"among the rotating cogs/ of the ethereal heights,"* to reserve for him a place *"to the right side of spring,"* where he will *"go on unceasingly/ with mountain ridges engraved on* [*his*] *chest/ the sun's roundel on* [*his*] *hair,"* to reach the alphabet of the true self.

XVII

In the remaining poems of *Maria Nefeli,* there is her "Djenda" where in her feminist indignation, she speaks of her precedents as prostituted femininity in corrupt ancient legendary cities. There is, too, her "Stalin." In *"Ich Sehe Dich,"* the Antiphonist avows her presence everywhere; he imaginatively sees and recognizes her in *"a thousand pictures"* as a *"new Lachesis"*—the Fate who disposes lots—as a Nereid, as a Radiant Lady, as a puma, and in her various personae in the fashionable trade, advertisements and commercial products. To her "Stalin"—with its notion that that *"the several corrupt the One"*—the Antiphonist responds with "The Hungarian Uprising" and its contrasting belief that *"the One corrupts the many."* Here the two conflicting socio-political visions imply that, from whatever view, selfish materialism inspires prejudice and accounts for the evils of the world.

Thus, we reach "The Eternal Wager" with its clear and radiant conclusions touching on prophecy. The dialectics of the paired poems have penetrated into the deeper strata of conflict between Maria Nefeli and the Antiphonist. Beyond the indi-

viduality of each speaker, two worlds, two views apparently clash as to the source of life's complexity, as to the very nature of life itself and the way it is to be interpreted and mastered. Some contemporary minds have questioned the permanence and value of the beliefs embodied in the world view of the Antiphonist as heir of his Greek and sunny Aegean heritage, his affirmation of life in the face of suffering.

Yet penetration into the deeper, universal strata, below the contradictions that time seems to bring, can help to reveal the inherent harmony beyond the conflict. In the process, the victim of contemporary life, Maria Nefeli, the individual victim, has been elevated through love and perception, through association with the wonder of life, to heights of universal grandeur. There she is hailed as the embodiment of light, as the liberating redeemer of life, who transforms life from a physical to an ethical force. She is the water and the sun of life, as abiding as death; she will learn nature's universal language from the birds, wear it as a raiment of foliage and thus make her Greekness invulnerable. A water-drop—a tear—on her eyelashes will with its purity carry pain beyond tears. The world's cruelty will become a throne of rock whereon she will sit, a bird in her hand, thus uniting with the eternal blessedness of the girl sculpted on the ancient grave stele. The prophetic hymn reaches a solar climax, characteristic of Elytis, in the identification of her grandeur with the sublimity of sunrise and sunset. All that the poet has ever praised is embodied in her.

XVIII

Elytis characteristically ends visions in wishful prophecy. This has expressed his *meteorism* which has earned him the title of optimist. In his maturity, he has certainly not been unaware of the contemporary crisis, of the gathered darkness that obstructs foresight of what is to come. Elytis has not been untouched by despair; it is perceptible in the lower tones of his verse. Even indignation has often been the point from which he rises toward brighter visions, at times in terms of self-defense. The challenge has caused him to enrich and broaden his initial intuitive commitment, his *sameness,* by embracing the strength he has found in

his heritage. What he has found agrees with his belief in the spiritual Oneness of life beyond its seeming changeful multiplicity, in the inseparability of matter and spirit as sharing equally in the sacredness of the universe. His poetic development has been marked by the gradual rising of the initial leaven.

To discuss in detail specific references drawn from his heritage, the degree of his commitment to them and their effect in forming a philosophic system, is a complex endeavor. Poets are not philosophers—though Plato may be a singular exception to this rule. Poets are not expected to have fully articulated philosophical systems.

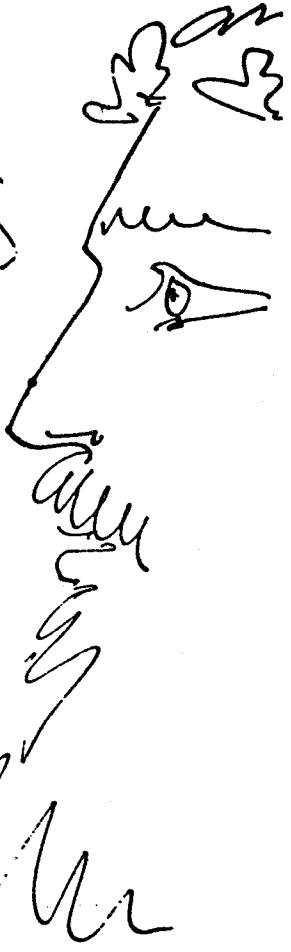
Elytis has been the visionary, certainly far less enigmatic than Blake of *The Prophetic Books,* yet still in the same school that counts Novalis and Hoelderlin among its luminaries. Blake once wrote that "if the doors to perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite." The faith of Elytis is not far from this vision. In "Crazy Jane and The Bishop," Yeats declares, "Fair and foul are near of kin/And fair needs foul." That, too, is in the creed of Elytis. (Indeed, the parallels between the two poets deserve a much fuller consideration than the purpose of these pages allows.)

To conclude, in *Maria Nefeli* the most recent work of Elytis, the girl is the double-sided femininity of life in its variety and power. She is the duality—body and spirit—that must be mastered and transcended. Such mastery and transcendence is fulfilled in the poetry of Elytis even while it remains faithful to its origins and initial commitments. It reflects a journey—a range of experiences and achievements—worthy of his namesake, Odysseus.

POVR
ODYSSEVS
ELYTIS

Picasso

PARIS le 29 Juin
1951



from MARIA NEFELI

BY ODYSSEUS ELYTIS
translated by Kimon Friar and Andonis Decavalles

But I say unto thee, that ye resist no evil.
—Matthew 5:39

Guess, toil, feel: On the other side I am the same.
—"The Concert of Hyacinths"

THE PRESENCE

MARIA NEFELI AND THE ANTIPHONIST

M. N. *I walk amid sharp thorns and in dark places*
toward all that is to come and all past traces
my only weapon and my one defence
are my mauve fingernails like cyclamens

A. I saw her everywhere. Holding a wine glass and staring into the void. Lying on the floor and listening to records. Walking in the street in bell-bottoms and an old trench-coat. Standing before children's windows. Much sadder then. More nervous at discos, biting her nails. Smoking one cigarette after the other. She is pale and beautiful. But if you speak to her she doesn't hear you at all. As if something is happening elsewhere—which only she can hear, and then she becomes frightened. She holds you by the hand tightly and her eyes brim with tears, but she is not *there.* I could never catch her or get anything from her.

M. N. *He understood nothing. He would always keep saying to me, "Do you remember?" Remember what? I remember my dreams only, because I see them at night. But during the day I feel bad—how can I put it?—unprepared. I*

found myself in life so suddenly—when I never expected it. I said, "Never mind, I'll get used to it." And everything around me kept running. Things and people kept running—until I, too, began running like mad. But it seems I overdid it. Because—I don't know—something strange happened to me in the end. First I would see the dead man, and then the murder would take place. First the blood would flow and then the blow and the cry. And now when I hear it raining I don't know what lies in wait for me....

A. "Why don't they bury people erect like Archbishops?"—she'd say to me. And I remember a summer on the island once when, after returning from an all-night party at the crack of dawn, we jumped over the railing into the Museum garden. She danced on stones, oblivious to all.

M. N. *I looked into his eyes. I saw a few old olive groves.*

A. I saw a grave stele. A girl in bas-relief on stone. She seemed sad and held a small bird in her hand.

M. N. *It was me he was looking at. I know it was me. We were both looking at the same stone. We were looking at each other through the stone.*

A. She was tranquil and held a small bird in her hand.

M. N. *She was sitting and she was dead.*

A. She was sitting and held a small bird in her hand. But you will never hold a bird—you are not worthy!

M. N. *Oh if they would only allow me, if they would only allow me.*

A. Who won't allow you?

M. N. *He who allows nothing.*

A. He, he who allows nothing
cuts away from his shadow and walks elsewhere.

M. N. *His words are white and ineffable*
and his eyes are deep and sleepless....

A. But he had taken away all the upper part of the stone. And together with it, her name as well.

M. N. *ARIMNA... it's as though I can still see the letters chiseled in the light... ARIMNA EFI EL...*

A. Missing. All the upper part was missing. There were no letters at all.

M. N. *ARIMNA EFI EL . . . there, on that EL, the stone had been cut and broken. I remember it well.*

A. It seems she must have seen this in dream also, since she remembers it.

M. N. *In my dream, yes. In a big sleep which will come one day full of light and warmth and small stone steps. Children will be passing by in the streets, arm in arm as in some old Italian movies. You will hear songs from everywhere and see enormous women on small balconies, watering their flowers.*

A. A huge seablue balloon will then take us up high, now here, now there, and we will be buffeted by the wind. First we will distinguish the silver domes, then the bell towers. The streets will seem narrower, straighter than we had imagined. The roof-terraces with their pure white television antennae. And the hills all around us and the paper kites—we will graze them as we pass. Until at a certain moment we shall find ourselves gazing on the entire sea. Souls above it will leave small white vapors.

M. N. *I have raised my hand against the black mountains and the evil spirits of this world. I have asked love, "Why?" and have rolled it on the floor. Wars have been fought again and again and not even a rag has remained to hide deep among our things and be forgotten. Who listens? Who has heard? Judges, priests, policemen, which is your country? I have only my body left, and I offer it. Those who know cultivate upon it whatever is holy, the way gardeners in Holland cultivate tulips. And within it drown all who never learned of the sea or how to swim. . . . Currents of the sea and you, far-off remote influence of the stars—stand by me!*

A. See, I have raised my hand against them all—
the unexorcised great demons of the world
and my sick side I've turned against the sun
and cast myself an exile into light!

M. N. *And I was turned and twisted by great storms and cast myself an exile among men!*

Maria Nefeli says:

PATMOS

It's before you know him that death alters you;
by living with his fingernails upon us,
half-savage, our hair disheveled, we bend
gesturing over incomprehensible harps. But
the world departs . . .
Ah, ah, the beautiful does not come twice
nor love.

What a pity, what a pity, world,
the dead of the future dominate you;
and no one, no one has ever chanced
has ever chanced yet to hear
the voices of angels and of many waters
and that "Come!" I dreamt of in nights of great sleeplessness.

There, there I shall go to a rocky island
where the sun crawls slantingly like a crab
and all the trembling sea listens and responds.

Armed with sixteen pieces of luggage, sleeping bags and maps
plastic sacks, close-up and telephoto lenses
crates with bottles of mineral water
I set out—for a second time—and nothing.

Already nine o'clock on the pier at Mykonos,
I faded off amid ouza and the sounds of English—
the frequenter of a light heaven where all
things weigh twice their weight
as the umbilical cord from the stars stretches
to the breaking point, and you vanish . . .

I slept only as one may sleep
on a bed warmed by the backs of others;
I was walking, it seems, on a deserted shore
where the moon was bleeding and you could hear nothing
but the steps of the wind on rotted wood.
Up to my knees in water, I began to glow
within me with a strange yearning;

And the Antiphonist:

THE REVELATION

Narrow is the way—I have never known it to be wide
unless it was that one time only
when I kissed you and heard the sea . . .

And it is since then I say—it is the same sea
which reaching into my sleep has eaten the hard stone
and opened up the immense distances. Words I have learned
like the green passages of fish
with an azure chalk engraved
deliriums I unlearned on awakening,
and once again in swimming felt and interpreted
St John of Eroses
as I lay prone
on the bed blankets of a provincial hotel
with a naked bulb dangling on a wire
and a black cockroach stopping above the wash basin.
What does being human mean
as a degree of magnificence in the animal kingdom
what can it mean
unless thou hast an ear to listen
fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.

I did not fear
I have endured not at all humbly
I have seen death thrice
I have been driven out of every door.

If thou hast ears to listen. I have heard
a hum as from a conch
and turning suddenly saw in the light
four boys with dark-skinned faces
who were blowing and pushing, pushing and bringing
a narrow strip of land encircled by a stone wall
seven olive trees all in all
and among them an old man who looked like a shepherd
his feet naked on the stones.

I spread my legs
and slowly slowly my entrails began
to fall out, mauve, blue, orange—
stooping with affection, I washed them carefully
one by one, particularly the places where I saw
the tooth marks of the Invisible had left scars,
until I had gathered them all in my apron.

I was advancing, although I had not taken a step,
music was blowing and pushing me,
patches of sea here—patches of sea further beyond.
Dear God, where does one go who has no luck
where does one go who has no luck
empty the sky, empty the body
and only bitterness, round and full
stirring its thonrs in the half moon,
one more female sea-urchin you shall never
be able to catch.

At that point I awoke in the unfamiliar house;
groping in the dark, my hand found
the sharp point of the nail scissors.
Deliverance from the skin's continuity
the sharp point as deliverance from the world's continuity.
On this side loss—on that side salvation.
On this side mercurochrome, band aids
on that side the beast ravaging the wastelands
howling and biting
dragging the sun through smoke.

When you hear the wind
it is Serenity that has turned into an evil spirit.

"It is I," he told me. "Fear none
of those things which you are destined to suffer."
And stretching out his right hand
he showed me seven deep grooves in his palm:
"These are the great sorrows
and they will be written on your face
but I shall efface them with this same hand
that brought them."

And suddenly behind his hand I saw—there appeared
a mob of many men stupefied with fear
who shouted and ran, ran and shrieked
"Here comes Abaddon, here comes Apollyon."
I felt greatly agitated and was seized
with fury. But the same man continued:
"He that is unjust let him be unjust still. And he
which is filthy let him be more filthy still. And may
the righteous be more righteous." And because I sighed
he placed his hand slowly
over my face with a boundless serenity
and it was as sweet as honey, but my belly turned bitter.
"Thou must phophesy again before many peoples
and nations, and tongues, and kings,"
he said, and emitting white fires merged with the sun.

Such was my first dream which I still
cannot separate from the voices of the sea
nor save it cleanly.
The dream cannot be caught in words.
My life is so true
that my lips are still burning.

If you do not brace one of your feet outside the Earth
you will never be able to stand on Earth.

The Antiphonist says:

THE ANCESTRAL PARADISE

I don't understand a thing about original sin
and other such contrivances of the West.
But truly there far away
in the freshness of the first days
before our mother's hut was built—
how beautiful it was!

If I remember rightly the angels' white garments
could be closed in front but were left unbuttoned
like the uniforms of those girls who work in beauty parlors—
what a miracle—and on a long whitewashed
stone wall you could see all
the geraniums turned to the wind, grinding
the dark kernel of the sun unceasingly.

Days so fresh in umber and sienna
that the island looked like an endless Lasithi
weightless and set lightly
on a dazzling and shattered sea.

With one foot over the other
on a sandy shore rippled by a wind
filled with golden sparks struck off by spurs,
I would see, I remember, girls of the sirocco
with dew-fresh buttocks as they galloped past
unraveling their locks of clover;
and my heart across the barren mountain
resounded thump thump like a motor boat.

This was in the time of the Glittering Leaf
when Sathis and Mirioni reigned.

I took on meaning at night and gave it to all the nightingales
till my sleep was sweet, filled with half moons
and rills in C major for viola d' amore.

And Maria Nefeli says:

THE PAPER KITE

And yet I was made to be a paper kite.
I liked heights even when
I lay prone on my pillow
punished
for hours and hours...
I felt my room rising
I was not dreaming—it was rising
I was scared and liked it.
What I saw was—how shall I put it?—
something like the "recollection of the future"
full of trees that fled and mountains that changed shape
geometric fields with curly thickets
like pubic hair—I was scared and liked
to touch the belfries lightly
to fondle their bells like testicles and to fade away...

Men with light umbrellas passed by obliquely
and smiled at me;
sometimes they tapped on my windowpane: "Young lady"
I was scared and liked it.
They were the "upper men" as I called them
they were not like the "lower";
they had long beards and many held a gardenia in their hand;
some half-opened the balcony door
and played strange records for me on my phonograph.
There was, I remember "Annetta with Her Sandals"
"The Spitsbergen Geyser"
and "We have never bitten fruit, May will never come for us"
(yes I remember others too)
I say it again—I was not dreaming:
for instance that "Half-open your dress, I have a bird for you."
It was brought to me by the Knight-Cyclist;
one day as I was sitting and pretending to read
he propped up his bicycle very carefully
against my bed;

There were daisies you could eat
and others that burst in the darkness like fireworks;
thorn shrubs were groaning and making love;
stars passed under your feet
like schools of fish and the deep blue wind
from the strait advanced into your entrails—
how beautiful it was!

The angels teased me; many times
they gathered about me and asked:
"What is pain?"—and "What is sickness?" but I did not know at all.
I did not know nor had I ever heard
of the Tree from which death had entered the world.
Well then? Was death real? Not that one—the other one
that will come with the first tears of the newborn? Was injustice
real? That mania of the nations? And toil and trouble night and day?

In the bed of plants I suckled the vervein
and all the Archangels, Michael Gabriel
Uriel Raphael
Gabudelon Aker Arphugitonos
Beburos Zabuleon laughed and shook
their golden heads like ears of corn
knowing that the only death, the only one, is that
created in the mind of man

And that big lie of theirs, the Tree, did not exist.

One "makes up" truth
exactly the way one makes up lies.

then he pulled the string and I ballooned into the air
my colored undergarments shone
I saw how transparent those become who love
tropical fruits and handkerchiefs of a distant continent;
I was scared and liked it
my room or I
kept rising—I've never understood which.
I am made of porcelain and magnolia
my hand is descended from the most ancient Incas
I slip through doors like
the slightest earthquake
sensed only by dogs and infants;
deontologically I must be a monster
and yet opposition
has always nourished me, and this depends
on those men with the pointed hats
who converse secretly with my mother at night
in order to judge. At times
the sound of a bugle from the distant barracks
unraveled me like a streamer and everyone about me
applauded—all suspended fragments
of times unbelievable.
In the bathroom next door the faucets were running,
prone on my pillow
I watched fountains sprinkling me with their immaculate white;
how beautiful my God how beautiful
trampled on the ground below
to hold in my eyes still
such a distant lamentation of the past.

Imagination can even be worn inside out
and in all its sizes.

Maria Nefeli says:

ELECTRA BAR

Two or three steps below the surface
of the earth—and immediately all problems are solved!
You hold the small world in a large crystal glass;
through the ice cubes you see your fingernails colored
and faces vaguely smiling;
you see your Luck (but always with her back turned)
a Shrew who has wronged you but whom you have never wronged . . .

Ah how clever of Erika
the flying hostess of the Olympic Airways—
she passes high above the capitals;
but I must pass beneath them
beneath the cetaceans—underneath fat satiated bodies,
if I can ever be worthy (and that's rather doubtful)
without the added help of some unknown brother,
of that vein in which Agamemnon's blood still flows—

Give me another gin fizz.

How lovely it is when the brain blurs—there the Heroes kill
in make-believe as in the movies
and you take pleasure in blood; but when the real thing
streams down the stairs
you touch it with your fingers and the curse awakens within you,
a Queen with spiders
her eyes unbeaten, filled with darkness
and I, ugly with shorn hair, graze the swine
for centuries now beyond the city walls
and wait for the message—the first cock in Hades
something like a saxophone with a celestial glitter,
little girls who run mounted on rubber dragons.

And the Antiphonist:

PARTHENOGENESIS

Esparto grass
esparto grass and maple trees
mushrooms and snailflowers
inexperienced little girls of the rain where have you conceived me?
There? On the third heights? Made of the flower-dust of invisible gardens?
It is I then. I confirm it. I.
Yes, to be there was I born, to be there was I announced by the light
that gave you this power of lightning.

Why did I not die long ago so that,
emerging from the sea like fishes, I could have seen
what was
the real earth?
It is her I want to see, her I want to inhabit
in her wondrous beauty of royal purple and gold
as white as plaster and whiter than snow...

Raise me among the rotating cogs
of the ethereal heights, leave me
in a shower of citrus trees that
my weight from one body to another may change perhaps
into a dazzling radiance around innocent creatures
whom only I and no one else ever wanted.

Esparto grass
esparto grass and maple trees
prickly ivy and clematis
tuberoses and marsh marigolds
inexperienced little girls of the rain reserve a place for me
from this time on to the right side of spring
there on the third heights; I go

Only now is it revealed how truly great the Earth is
Zeus thunders
intense darkness
Zeus thunders
this is neither defeat nor victory.
We in our graves must dare something else.

He who can electrify solitude
has mankind within him still.

lifted high—your men and boys blow
with swollen cheeks—I go on unceasingly
with mountain ridges engraved on my chest
the sun's roundel on my hair
the dragnet in my sea-hand . . .

Alpha: time the unaging
Beta: Zeus the bright-thunderer
Gamma: I the indigent.

If something grows impatient in the wild mint
it is the hound of your sanctity.

THE ETERNAL WAGER

I

That you will one day bite into the new lemon
and release
enormous quantities of sun within it.

II

That all the currents of the sea
suddenly illuminated will reveal you
raising the storm to an ethical level.

III

That even in your death you will again
be like the water in the sun
that turns cool by instinct.

IV

That you will be catechized by the birds,
and a foliage of words will clothe you
in Greek to look invincible.

V

That a drop will culminate
imperceptibly on your eyelashes
beyond all pain and much after the tear.

VI

That all the world's cruelty will turn into a stone
on which you may sit majestically
with a docile bird in your palm...

VII

That alone at last you will adjust
slowly to the grandeur
of the sun rising and the sun setting.

NOTES

MARIA NEFELI—**guess, toil, feel: On the other side I am the same:** quoted from his early poem "The Concert of Hyacinths" (Kimon Friar's translation in *The Sovereign Sun,* p. 58).

THE PRESENCE—**into the Museum gardens:** The Museum is not identified. **As to a grave stele. A girl in bas-relief . . . in her hand,** there are several such steles in Greek museums, best known among them those of Arístylla, Mnesagóra and Chorygís (Nos. 766, 3845 and 892) in the Archeological Museum in Athens.—**ARIMNA EFI EL . . .:**Anagram of Maria Nefeli. ARIMNA is also an anagram of Marina, and EL is probably the beginning of Eleni, both with a long and distinguished career in Elytis' verse.—**judges . . . your country:** for their inference see the Sixth Reading called "Prophetic" in *The Axion Esti.*

PATMOS and THE REVELATION: Companion pieces. It was in a cave on the island of Patmos where John received his Revelation.

PATMOS—**voices of angels and of many waters:** Several are the angels in John's Revelation (5:10 and elsewhere) whose voices and messages are heard as expressive of God's justice, vengeful and destructive to the evil, and rewarding to the good and faithful. The voice of waters occurs in "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps" in the company of the Lamb (Rev. 14:2). The harps are referred to in the poem in the **gesturing over incomprehensible harps.—and that "Come" . . . I dreamt of:** In Rev. 6, the "Come" is heard from the four beasts surrounding the throne of God (possibly the Evangelists), and again in 22:17 from the Spirit and the Bride. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—**the beast ravaging the wastelands:** Probably a reference to either the locusts and scorpions or to Abbadon-Apollyon in Rev. 9:3-11, this latter mentioned in "The Revelation" of the Antiphonist that follows.

THE REVELATION—**St John of Eroses:** St. John as viewed by the Antiphonist, i.e., inspired by divine Eros in his Revelation.—**unless you have ears to listen:** Matthew 11:15 and elsewhere in the Gospels as well as in Rev. 2:11, 3:13 and elsewhere.—**fear none . . . suffer:** In Rev, 2:10, as spoken by God.—**four boys with dark-skinned faces:** Probably Elytis' Aegean equivalent of the "four beasts," in Rev. 4:6-8, guarding God's throne. "And the throne a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and

the third beast had the face of a man, and the fourth beast like a flying eagle."—**seven olive trees all in all:** The olive tree, the gift of Athena to Athens, is the most expressive of the Greek soil. Elytis' favorite, Pythagorean number seven finds full symbolic support in the seven Spirits of God (Rev. 1:4), the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:12), the seven stars (Rev. 1:20), the seven lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5), the seven seals (Rev. 5:1), the seven horns and eyes of the Lamb (Rev. 5:6), the seven angels and their trumpets (Rev. 8:10), and the seven plagues (Rev. 15:16).—**an old man . . . a shepherd:** Apparently Elytis' own version of God's epiphany with a Homeric earthliness in him, corresponding to the one in Rev. 1:13-14 where "in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man. . . . His head and hairs white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire."— **"It is I . . . destined to suffer":** In Rev. 2:10, "Fear none of those things thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—**he showed me seven . . . on your face":** In Rev. 15:1, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God."—**"but I shall efface . . . brought them":** Rev. 22:19, "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of the prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." In Rev. 22:18, it is God that "shall add unto . . . [man] the plagues that are written in the book," while in Elytis' version, the plagues are "seven deep grooves in . . . [the old god-like man's] palm," probably suggesting that they are grooves of destiny shared by both God and man.—**"Here comes Abaddon . . . Apollyon":** Rev. 9:11, "And they had a king over them [the locusts coming out of the bottomless pit at the sounding of the fifth trumpet], the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." *Abaddon* is derived from *abad,* "to perish," while *Apollyon* means *the destroyer.* The title of one of Maria Nefeli's monologues, "The Eye of the Locust" in Section II, probably alludes to the same Chapter 9 in Revelation.—**"He that is unjust . . . more righteous.":** Rev. 22:11, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still."—**and it was sweet . . . turned bitter:** In Rev. 10:8-10, instead of God's hand touching John, it is the eating of God's little book [his testament?] that causes this effect. The passage reads: "And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth . . . And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey, and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter."—**"Thou must prophesy again . . .**

and kings.": Quoting Rev. 10:11.—**If you do not brace . . . on Earth.:** Probably echoing the Archimedean *dictum* "Give me a ground to stand and I shall move the Earth."

THE ANCESTRAL PARADISE—**Lasithi:** Fertile plateau in the easternmost province of Crete.—**the time of the Glittering Leaf:** Probably a reference to the ancient world, before the notion of sin invaded the sacredness of the senses.—**Sáthis and Miriόne:** personifications of the ancient names of the male and female genitals. *Sáthe, membrum virile,* occurs in Archilochus Frg. 97 and Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 1119, while *meriόne, pudenda muliebra,* from *meroi,* the thighs, occurs in Rufinus Frg. 35 (*Antologia Palatina,* V).—**the tree from from which death entered the world:** Genesis 3. For Elytis' implied condemnation of the notion of sin see further Psalms XVII and XVII, Odes c and h, and the "Prophetic" Reading in "The Passion" section of *The Axion Esti.*—**Michael Gabriel . . . Zabuleon:** The angels who will govern at the end of the world, according to the *Revelation of Esdras* (*Ante-Nicene Fathers Library* VIII, 573).

THE PAPER KITE—**those men with the pointed hats:** Apparently suggesting magicians or wizards if not even the Calvinist Puritans.

ELECTRA BAR—the title suggests Maria Nefeli's identification with the tragic Electra.—**a Shrew:** Translates "Megaira," the name of one of the three Erinyes (Furies), commonly used in modern Greece to mean a shrew.—**without the added help . . . brother:** Orestes, who came to Electra's rescue.—**a Queen with spiders:** Klytemnestra in Euripides' *Electra.*—**ugly with shorn hair . . . swine:** In Euripides' *Electra,* Aegisthus forced Electra to marry a peasant and live with him out in the fields.—**the first cock in Hades:** expected harbinger of a new rising to negate death's finality. Cocks were dedicated to Apollo because they give notice of the rising of the sun.

PARTHENOGENESIS—**on the third heights:** Occuring also elsewhere in Elytis' later poetry to imply "a third state of the spirit where opposites cease to exist" (B.A., p. 623), which he identifies with the state of poetry. We read in "The Two of the World" (*The Light Tree and The Fourteenth Beauty*): "Another one, a third life made of two ideas put close together started crying like a newborn baby!" In Elytis' notion, the third heights, that third state of the mind, is reached through the merging of the physical with the spiritual world and their extension into that state.—**emerging from the sea . . . the real earth:** In Plato's *Phaedo* 109E, Socrates speaks of what he believes the "real earth" to be as contrasted to the one we live on. The passage, in Harold North Fowler's translation (Loeb Classics), reads: "For if anyone should come to the top of the air or should get wings to fly up, he could lift his head above it and see, *as fishes lift their heads out of the water* and see the things in our own world, so he would see things in that upper world; and if his nature were

strong enough to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the real heaven and the real light and *the real earth.*" Plato's Myth of the Cave is bound to come to mind for its similar message.—**in her wondrous beauty . . . than snow:** Further echoing Plato's *Phaedo* where 110B-C reads: "the Earth when seen from above is said to be like those balls that are covered with twelve pieces of leather; it is divided into patches of various colors, of which the colors which you see here may be regarded as samples, such as painters use. But there the whole Earth is of such colors, and they are much brighter and purer than ours; for one part is *purple of wonderful beauty,* and one is *golden,* and one is *white, whiter than chalk or snow.*" (emphasis added).

A. D.

ELYTIS AND THE GREEK TRADITION: an essay

BY EDMUND KEELEY

I

To most English-speaking readers the phrase *the Greek tradition,* immediately recalls images of Classical Greece—Plato, Aristotle, the Greek dramatists, Thucydides—or perhaps pre-Classical Homer and the great epics, or even more distantly, strange gods and their bizarre metamorphoses. Readers in the West would naturally assume that this ancient tradition has a particular relevance for Odysseus Elytis, born in Crete in 1911, trained in Greek and French literature, and sufficiently well-known in the West to have won the 1979 Nobel Prize in literature. Every educated Westerner knows that the Greek tradition did not stop with Euripides and Plato, or even with the Hellenistic poets thereafter but travelled from Alexander's empire to Rome and on to Constantinople, across many centuries. Probably, of the English-speaking readers who have begun to become acquainted with Modern Greek literature through an interest in one or the other of the Greek writers now earning an international audience, few realize that some of the best poets and critics in Modern Greece feel at least as much kinship with their medieval Byzantine heritage and the Christian tradition in literature as they do with its pagan antecedents or the subsequent incursion of Renaissance influences from the West. Elytis is clearly among these.[1] Furthermore, to a contemporary Greek poet, *tradition* without any qualifications, usually means the demotic tradition that shaped the language of contemporary poetry, beginning in medieval times and progressing continuously—if sometimes haltingly and under attack—[2] through the folk song culture and what is known as the

[1]The most articulate and learned presentation of the case for Greece's need to reassert the vitality and relevance of the Christian—as against the Renaissance—tradition is made by the Greek poet-critic Zissimos Lorenzatos in his book *The Lost Center and Other Essays in Greek Poetry* (Princeton, 1980).

[2]See "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante," *Ibid.,* for a succinct history of the changing fate of the spoken language as the language of literature in Greece.

Cretan renaissance, on into the 19th century demoticism of Solomos, Makriyannis, and Palamas, and finally to the work of those writers most familiar to current readers in the English-speaking countries: Cavafy, Kazantzakis, Sikelianos, Seferis, Ritsos. This latest phase of the three-thousand-year long Greek tradition has also been a vital influence on the work of Elytis, as will be demonstrated below with specific reference to Sikelianos and Seferis.

Besides their failure to recognize the full character and range of the tradition most relevant to Elytis, English-speaking readers have been heir to several presuppositions that distort the image of the poet. One that still endures especially in England—the Western country which has been slowest to appreciate Elytis—is that the Greek poet remains more French than Greek. Robert Graves is reported to have said some years ago: "Elytis is just Eluard pronounced with a Greek accent. Just another French surrealist really." A second, more generous distortion has been encouraged by English and American philhellenes who see Elytis in the same light that they have sometimes seen his country: an open territory for discovering their less inhabited and more hedonistic selves. (For Henry Miller, getting to know Greece is "like falling in love with one's own divine image").[3] This philhellenic representation is expressed poignantly in Bernard Spencer's "A Spring Wind," written during World War II, a poem that celebrates the nostalgia for Greece which many of us in the West who have come to know that beautiful country begin to feel with the first cruel stirring of April year after year. As Spencer writes: "Greece, I have so much loved you/out of all reason, that this unquiet time—/its budding and its pride,/the news and the nostalgia of Spring—/swing towards you their tide;" and when spring shakes the windows of Spencer's war-time London, making the doors whang to and the sky shine like knives, Elytis is specifically before him "uttering the tangle of sea, the 'breathing caves'/and the fling of Aegean waves."

Elytis, Poet of the Aegean Islands, its maidens, its sun and sea, its liberating light, poet of youth and optimism, of lyricism, fancy, imparts lightheaded surrealist excess. A true image in some

[3] *Greece* (New York, 1964), p. 45.

measure, but this is the Elytis of Spencer's works and days, not ours; though the distortion shaped by nostalgia has some relevance to the work Elytis published before and during World War II, that image is a partial representation at best. Yet "Poet of the Aegean" is still the cliché most frequently heard in the West when Elytis' name comes into the conversation or the literary exercise. Almost as frequent is that which Graves is said to have accommodated for Elytis' denigration: just another French surrealist spelled with a sigma—this again a cliché engendered by Elytis' earliest work.

II

If Elytis is the "Poet of the Aegean" in the lighter aspect of his sometimes truly dark vision, the question of French surrealist influence remains to be explored. That influence is presumably the most glaring in his early verse. As indicated elsewhere, the two volumes Elytis published during the late Thirties and early Forties was a surrealism with a highly personal tone and a specific local habitation, neither of which had much to do with French sources.[4] The tone was celebrative, adoring, even ecstatic; the habitation, what appeared most often as the object of his ecstasy, was the particular landscape projected by his native land —and that landscape includes characteristic figures as well as a poetic rendering of those vistas familiar to every tourist who has fallen in love even briefly with what the light does to the mountains and the ruins and the waters of almost any place far enough from Athens to be still habitable. My early commentary on Elytis suggested that the evocation of landscape and climate through surrealist images is not only everywhere apparent in Elytis' early verse, but also focusses so consistently on the sea and the sun as to suggest a pagan mysticism, a pantheism, a worship of the gods of water and light. What must be emphasized is that however free-wheeling the images may appear to be, however fanciful the poet's juxtapositions, however startling the sudden metamorphoses—a girl becoming an orange, another's morning mood be-

[4]In the portion of the Introduction to *Six Poets of Modern Greece* having to do with the Elytis selection in that volume.

coming a mad pomegranate tree, summer becoming a naked ephebe--his surrealism is always rooted in a literal native landscape identifiable within the poem. Take the most flamboyant of his early surrealist exercises, "The Mad Pomegranate Tree"—its "saffron ruffle of day/Richly embroidered with scattered songs," and the tree of the title "adorn[ing] itself in jealousy with seven kinds of feathers,/Girding the eternal sun with a thousand blinding prisms," finally "fluttering a handkerchief of leaves of cool flame." The poet's imagination seems to have taken on the wings of Ikaros and flies perilously close to the sun, the *Greek* sun his hubris courts. In the final stanza, the Orthodox feast of the Virgin on August 15, which marks the close of summer for vacationing Greeks, becomes at least one of the rhetorical excuses for this mad tree's uncontained hilarity and generosity:

In petticoats of April first and cicadas of the feast
of mid-August
Tell me, that which plays, that which rages, that
which can entice
Shaking out of threats their evil black darkness
Spilling in the sun's embrace intoxicating birds
Tell me, that which opens its wings on the breast of
things
On the breast of our deepest dreams, is that the mad
pomegranate tree?[5]

In another early example, "Drinking the Sun of Corinth" from the 1943 volume *Sun the First,* the celebration of landscape seems almost a religious exercise:

Drinking the sun of Corinth
Reading the marble ruins
Striding across vineyards and seas
Sighting along the harpoon
A votive fish that slips away
I found the leaves that the sun's psalm memorizes
The living land that passion joys in opening.

[5]Translations of Elytis' work are from *Odysseus Elytis: Selected Poems,* ed. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (New York and London, 1981).

I drink water, cut fruit,
Thrust my hand into the wind's foliage
The lemon trees water the summer pollen
The green birds tear my dreams
I leave with a glance
A wide glance in which the world is recreated
Beautiful from the beginning to the dimensions of the heart!

The title and the first line establish the precise local habitation, but even without reference to Corinth, most of the details in the landscape are familiar to travellers in Greece: the marble ruins, the vineyards, the lemon trees. The concluding image, in its surrealist mode, has the world "recreated/Beautiful from the beginning to the dimensions of the heart"—a seemingly arbitrary bringing together of time and space in a manner that Breton would have approved—even here a hidden echo of Seferis is in the phrase "dimensions of the heart." Behind Seferis' "from the down of the kiss to the leaves of the heart" of the "Erotikos Logos," are Seferis' own sources—folk songs and the *Erotokritos,* that 17th century Cretan epic-romance which strongly influenced the modern Greek tradition. Elytis translated his early surrealism into the language of his country's landscape and literary heritage in ways that might escape readers brought up on the Classics and European literature, who have little first-hand knowledge of the Greek tradition that is most relevant to modern Greek poetry.

The best statement about the way Elytis accommodated French surrealism to his own purposes and related it to the Greek tradition he considered his most vital resource, comes from the poet himself in an interview with Ivar Ivask.[6] Elytis questions the characteristic image of Greece familiar to most Western readers, and he indicates why he felt that surrealism could counteract this image. He apparently saw it as a major distorting influence within his own country, an attempt by intellectuals—foreign and domestic —to impose the Renaissance on the culture of a people who

[6]First published in the special issue of *Books Abroad* devoted to Elytis (Autumn, 1975) and reprinted in *Odysseus Elytis: Analogies of Light* (Norman, 1981), pp. 7-15.

survived outside that movement during 400 years of Turkish occupation and whose true roots are elsewhere:

> *I and my generation—and here I include Seferis—have attempted to find the true face of Greece. This was necessary because until [our generation] the true face of Greece was presented as Europeans saw Greece. In order to achieve this task we had to destroy the tradition of rationalism which lay heavily on the Western world. Hence the great appeal of surrealism for us the moment it appeared on the literary scene. Many facets of surrealism I cannot accept, such as its paradoxical side, its championing of automatic writing; but after all, it was the only school of poetry—and, I believe, the last in Europe—which aimed at spiritual health and reacted against the rationalist currents which had filled most Western minds. Since surrealism had destroyed this rationalism like a hurricane, it had cleared the ground in front of us, enabling us to link ourselves physiologically with our soil and to regard Greek reality without the prejudices that have reigned since the Renaissance. The Western world always conceives of Greece in the image created by the Renaissance. But this image is not true. Surrealism, with its anti-rationalistic character, helped us to make a sort of revolution by perceiving the Greek truth. At the same time, surrealism contained a super-natural element, and this enabled us to form a kind of alphabet out of purely Greek elements with which to express ourselves . . .*[7]

Elytis then speaks specifically of his desire to coordinate the surrealist belief in the value of the senses with the Christian notion of sanctity, elevating the senses "to a level that is sacred."[8]

In this conjunction, perhaps, is the clue to what Elytis means by the phrase *purely Greek elements*. They would seem to be not so much those elements fostered by the Classicist offspring of the Renaissance as those engendered by Byzantium, by the modern

[7] *Analogies of Light*, p. 7.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Greek folk tradition, and by the demotic tradition from the Cretan renaissance on through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This phase of the Greek tradition is most apparent in his major work, *The Axion Esti,* published in 1959, which translates his early surrealist mode into a new style that is usually more subtle and more controlled, than what appears in his early poems; yet that style retains a lyrical vitality and an ingenious arrangement of evocative images.

An exploration of those traditional elements that count most for Elytis, is illuminated by a passage from the first section of *The Axion Esti* that illustrates the change in style. The passage again relates to an Aegean landscape—or seascape, more exactly —and to the Cyclades islands and again renders those elements most worthy of celebration because they contain an eternal majesty, or impose a realization as close to it as mortals can experience in what Elytis calls *this small world the great.* The evocation here is not so much through startling images, fanciful juxtapositions and the like, as through significant details and a dramatic inter-play of voices. There is the voice of the infant poet awakening to the knowledge of his country and the shapes in it that will constitute the material of his poetry. There is the voice of his spiritual advisor and alter ego (for lack of a better definition)—the *one of many centuries ago*—who helps to create this brave new world for the poet in rhetoric that here seems entirely appropriate to the context (though not always so in the early verse or in this poem). The new world here emerges, detail by bright detail, in a manner that Pound of the early *Cantos*—those with passages of lyrical geography—might have admired:

And ample the olive trees
to sift the light through their fingers
that it may spread gently over your sleep
and ample the cicadas
which you will feel no more
than you feel the pulse inside your wrist
but scarce the water
so that you hold it a God and understand the
meaning of its voice
and the tree alone

no flock beneath it
so that you take it for a friend
and know its precious name
sparse the earth beneath your feet
so that you have no room to spread your roots
and keep reaching down in depth
and broad the sky above
so that you read the infinite on your own

III

The mix of sources—traditional but non-Classical or Renaissance—that helps to create the texture of the poem is most evident in its middle section, "The Passion." Constant echoes of the Greek Orthodox liturgy, of folk songs, of Dionysios Solomos and other 19th century demotic literature, as well as a number of experimental verse forms clearly link this poem to the Byzantine and post-Byzantine tradition. For example, the prose poem under the heading "Second Reading" (the title itself establishes a liturgical analogy), renders first of all a brief moment in the Albanian Campaign of 1940-41 against the invading forces of Mussolini; in that heroic action, when the outnumbered Greeks pushed the Italians at least part of their way back home, the poet participated as a young officer. The rendering has distinct Biblical echoes and at the same time reflects a calculated attempt to invoke the style and verisimilitude of General Makriyannis' famous *Memoirs* of the Greek War of Independence. That beautifully honest, down-to-earth prose document in a version of 19th century demotic, which required the illiterate General to become an autodidact in the written language, George Seferis described as being "like an old wall in which, if one looks closely, one can trace every movement of the builder, how he fitted one stone to the next, how he adjusted every effort he made to what had gone before and was to follow after, leaving on the finished building the imprint of the adventures of an uninterrupted human action."[9] Elytis' text in translation cannot possibly convey all the rich echoes

[9] *On the Greek Style: Selected Essays in Poetry and Hellenism,* trans. Rex Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos (Boston, 1966), pp. 31-32.

of Makriyannis' style that color the original, but a few lines of "Second Reading" suggest the subtle fusion of past and recent present that makes *The Axion Esti,* in its best moments, a moving contemporary document that carries forward the tradition of national lyricism inaugurated by Dionysios Solomos early in the 19th century:

> *In those days, at long last after three full weeks, the first mule drivers reached our territory. And they told us a lot about the towns they'd passed through—Delvino, Saints Saranda, Koritsa. And they unloaded their salt herring and biscuits with an eye to finishing up as soon as possible and taking off. Because they weren't used to this booming from the mountains, it scared them, and so did the black beards on our wasted faces. . . .*

Elytis' emphasis on Byzantium and the demotic tradition, especially effective in the fusion this passage (in the original Greek) reveals, does not preclude his use of Classical and pre-Classical sources, least of all during the period under consideration (what he himself calls, perhaps a bit self-consciously, his "middle period"). The fusion of sources is a matter of degree; his reticence in this connection reflects, perhaps his feeling that other modern Greek poets have depended too much on the ancients in creating their image of contemporary Greece. Elytis has even implied that some, because of their neo-Classicism, may have earned a broader audience outside Greece than he himself has earned (or had earned until his Nobel Prize). In the interview with Ivar Ivask, Elytis remarks:

> *I have never employed ancient myths in the usual manner. No doubt it is advantageous for a Greek poet to employ ancient myths, because he thus becomes more accessible to foreign readers. A Greek poet who speaks of Antigone, Oedipus,* et cetera, *moves in an area which is well-known; through these mythical figures he can comment on contemporary events. This was done by Sikelianos and, above all, by Seferis. In the case of Seferis it was almost natural, because he was influenced*

not only by his own Greek heritage but also by the manner of Eliot. Ritsos, too, especially in his latest period, employs figures from mythology and Greek tragedy. I have reacted against this, often quite consciously, because I thought all this was a bit too facile, yes, even in the theatre. Many French and other European writers have, as you know, adapted the Electra myth, among others. Since my chief interest was to find the sources *of the neo-Hellenic world, I kept the mechanism of mythmaking but not the figures of mythology.*[10]

Elytis goes on to explain that he has in mind the kind of metamorphoses already identified above, in "The Mad Pomegranate Tree" and "Body of Summer." As he himself indicates, this technique, which he labels "myth-making without evoking any mythical figures," is chiefly in his early work. As his poetry matures, his use of ancient sources closely approaches the method of Sikelianos and Seferis. In certain passages of *The Axion Esti,* the ancient gods and their habitations, even the mythical figures in Homer, not only hover in the background but also sometimes appear palpably. For example, in lines from the third section of the poem:

Hera of the tree's ancient trunk
the vast laurel grove, the light-devouring
a house like an anchor down in the depths
and Kyra-Penelope twisting her spindle
The straits for birds from the opposite shore
a citron from which the sky spilled out
the blue hearing half under the sea
the long-shadowed whispering of nymphs and maples

This passage reveals something other than myth-making through metamorphoses in the manner of the ancients. Here the mythic figures of Hera, Penelope, and the whispering nymphs come directly onto Elytis' stage. The important point is that they are made to seem entirely at home in a contemporary setting, as in the poem's third section, appropriately called "The Gloria."

[10] *Analogies of Light,* pp. 10-11.

(In this section of *The Axion Esti,* incidentally, Elytis comes closest to realizing his aspiration of elevating the senses "to a level that is sacred"—as he stated in the interview—because "The Gloria" is an extended hymn of praise for the holiness of those things in this world that most satisfy the senses, or that best unite what the poet identifies as the *now* and the *forever.*) The ancient tree-trunk in this passage is a natural modern abode for godly mystery; *Kyra-Penelope* is an appropriately modern name for the faithful old woman often seen in the rural doorways of contemporary Greece, making yarn from wool—if not actually weaving and unweaving a winding sheet—while she waits for her husband to come home. Those nymphs appear casually among living trees, their traditional habitation, trees as natural to this white mid-day landscape as all the other elements that define this poet's *small world the Great.*

IV

Elytis' mode of introducing mythic figures naturally into a contemporary setting is reminiscent of Sikelianos' mode. Although Elytis may be reluctant to acknowledge, he may well have learned something from Sikelianos about how to use ancient mythic sources without making the mythology seem an alien intrusion, as it often is in French and Anglo-American literature, sometimes even in the work of those who practiced, in the early decades of this century, what Eliot called the "mythical method." Eliot himself is a case in point. In certain passages of *The Waste Land,* for example, a figure out of Greek mythology appears somewhat awkwardly and bookishly, in a contemporary London setting to comment on the local scene in a way that is ironic more than anything else: a tongue-in-cheek revelation of the disparity between the high style of the ancients and the sordid preoccupations of modern urban citizens. Eliot's ambition in the poem is clearly not limited to irony, especially when Tiresias is the speaker. As Eliot tells in a note to the following passage, Tiresias is "the most important personage in the poem," and "what Tireseias *sees,* in fact, is the substance of the poem":

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I, Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays. . . .[11]

A first response to this passage and the lines afterward is to smile at Eliot's wit; something in that smile is also occasioned by the discovery that the noble Tiresias is forced into alien territory to play the blind voyeur so that he can "see," not the cruel fate of Oedipus, but the quick seduction—"unreproved, if undesired"—of this indifferent London typist by the "young man carbuncular." The effect of Sikelianos' use of mythological figures in a contemporary context is different. Compare, for example, the following stanzas from Sikelianos' "Pan," written just a few years before Eliot wrote *The Waste Land:*

Over the rocks on the deserted shore, over the burning
heat of sharp pebbles,
beside the emerald waves, noon, like a fountain,
rose shimmering.

Salamis a blue trireme deep in the sea,
in spring's spindrift;
the pines and mastic trees of Kineta a deep breath
I drew inside me.

The sea burst into foam and, beaten by the wind,
shattered white,
and a flock of goats, countless, iron-gray, plummeted
headlong down the hill. . . .

[11] *The Complete Poems and Plays,* 1909-1950 (New York, 1952), pp. 43-44.

Then we saw the herd's lord and master, the he-goat,
rise alone
and move off, his tread slow and heavy,
toward a rock

wedged into the sea to shape a perfect lookout point;
there he stopped,
on the very edge where spray dissolves,
and leaning motionless,

upper lip pulled back so that his teeth shone,
he stood
huge, erect, smelling the white-crested sea
until sunset.

As suggested elsewhere,[12] Sikelianos' poem opens with what seems a characteristic lyrical rendering of the contemporary Greek landscape and seascape in the mode of those poems which offer a subjective, often rhetorical celebration of the natural world that Elytis later celebrates in a surrealist mode. The natural world of "Pan" served as a mask for the supernatural world, and the flock of goats plummeting down the hillside on the shore opposite Salamis were an occasion for the kind of mystery that could plausibly show the herd's lord and master metamorphosed into the god Pan, with his identity designated by the title alone. Unlike Eliot's Tiresias, Sikelianos' mythological apparition bears no hint of irony and does not reflect on the disparity between past and present—a disparity which can sometimes seem almost comical. The unstated mystery of Pan's appearance at noonday on the seashore near Eleusis, home of the ancient Mysteries, emerges naturally out of the poet's native landscape, where (as suggested elsewhere) ancient presences survive in the names of places and of people who live there and in the very language the poet uses to describe his setting.[13] The poet thus needs no literary allusions to sources in his own or more remote traditions so as to dramatize

[12]"Ancient Greek Myth in Angelos Sikelianos," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, No. 7 (1981), pp. 109-110.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 112, and in "Seferis' Elpenor: A Man of No Fortune," *The Kenyon Review* (Summer, 1966), p. 378.

his belief that the ancient pastoral gods still inhabit the region he celebrates.

V

The surviving remnants of the ancient Greek world in language and setting clearly provide advantages for the contemporary Greek poet who wishes to demonstrate the relation of his contemporary world to its historical and legendary antecedents. This advantage works well not only for Sikelianos but also for Seferis.[14] Seferis is also among those predecessors in Greece who influenced Elytis in the use of traditional Greek sources and in the development of his personal voice. Seferis provided a model for the progress from French symbolist and surrealist expression to the kind of expression that can be said to reflect what Elytis called *the true face of Greece.* In Seferis' work the progress was aided, as he himself implied, by his discovery of Eliot's poetry in 1931 and his response to the English poet's "dramatic manner of expression" and representation of "thirsting despair" through "actual human character"—human character often clothed in mythological dress, alien or otherwise.[15]

Several texts in Seferis illustrate the early shaping of the model. Perhaps the most obvious is "The Mood of a Day," written a few years before Seferis read Eliot.[16] This poem reveals the Greek poet's close affinity to the surrealists during the first phase of his career and also demonstrates what Elytis later discerned as his affinity to Seferis. The first three stanzas are dominated by images that in their violent yoking together of disparities would have appealed to the surrealists André Breton and Paul Eluard: for example, the "marble setting" of September; windows and doors opening their mouths like wild animals; love cutting time in two and stunning it; and boredom spreading like a drop of ink on a handkerchief. The same mode carries over to the fairly arbitrary logic of the progression between stanzas which leads finally from the tired man laying out cards in the mess and

[14]As is discussed more fully in the *Kenyon Review* essay and in "Seferis and the 'Mythical Method,'" *Comparative Literature Studies* (June, 1969).

[15]*On the Greek Style, op. cit.,* pp. 166-168.

[16]*George Seferis: Collected Poems,* trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Princeton, 1982).

monotony of his room to the concluding image of a fated vessel out of Poe.[17] It travels the seas with a dead captain and a dead crew on board, as though compelled by some inevitable destiny beyond mortal control or understanding, and the ship's rigging fills with pride among the flashing dolphins. Only the smiling mythical mermaid and a single forgotten sailor witness the ship's mysterious courage.

The significance of this apparently doomed voyage is disclosed several years later, shortly after Seferis, during a London fog, picks up a volume of Eliot and feels himself transported back to the imagery of his childhood by the vision of a lovely bow forging slowly ahead in Eliot's poem "Marina": "What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands/What water lapping the bow/And scent of pine . . ." etc.[18] This vision relates to the subsequent discovery of Eliot's dramatic manner of expression through actual human character, sometimes with mythic overtones. (Seferis cites specifically the passage in *The Waste Land* where Stetson is addressed as the speaker's companion in the ships at Mylae.)[19] These discoveries lead to Seferis' crucial 1935 poem in twenty-four parts, *Mythistorima.* In that poem the central image (sometimes an aspect of the volume's central drama) is a voyage that has no end through an arid seascape; one of the central characters is a modern Odysseus trying to return home to a world of beautiful islands and blossoming almond trees just beyond his reach, while his ship is of rotting timbers, and his crew a weak, submissive lot, given to hubris and hedonistic excess.[20] Seferis thus moved from his early surrealist expression of "thirsting despair" in the manner of "The Mood of a Day," to a more subtle drama of the same theme that exploits Greek sources in landscape, language, and mythology much in the tradition of Sikelianos' "Pan." As pointed out elsewhere, Seferis offers a landscape and seascape immediately recognizable by any contemporary traveller passing along the coast of Greece, as in Sikelianos' poem and in the passage from "The Gloria" quoted above.[21] Seferis' setting is often relatively barren—a few rocks, a few pines, empty cisterns,

[17] As is indicated by the epigraph to the poem.
[18] *On the Greek Style, op. cit.,* pp. 166-167.
[19] *Ibid.,* p. 168.
[20] See the two essays on Seferis cited in fn. 14 above.
[21] *Ibid.*

a solitary chapel, a whitewashed hut, all much tormented by maddening heat and wind and the absence of water; some readers might see its origins in part V of *The Waste Land,* except that its setting is entirely characteristic of what is usually encountered among the smaller, virtually uninhabited islands of the Cyclades or the Saronic Gulf. In this realistically rendered contemporary landscape, Seferis' ghosts from the ancient past appear, sometimes by allusion, sometimes by way of the setting's legendary or historical associations, sometimes by a familiar image from a mythical story he has told elsewhere or the name of a familiar character in that story (e.g., Elpenor)[22] or a familiar word with ancient connotations (e.g., "angel-messenger").[23] The mode is at times clearly related to that of Elytis' "Hera . . . Kyra-Penelope" stanzas.

VI

Sikelianos and Seferis thus appear as the two immediate predecessors of Elytis in the Greek tradition who guided him most toward developing a voice that could hold in just balance the Greek past and present, specifically through the example of bringing myth effectively into a contemporary context. They did so not so much through a recreation of classical works or "by speak[ing] of Antigone, Oedopus, *et cetera*" (to use Elytis' own phrase) as through the creation of a contemporary image of Greece and a moment of contemporary drama or mystery that—naturally, plausibly, usually without underlining or explicit commentary—subtly reveals its mythical presences and aura out of the ancient Greek tradition. The best example of an equally effective and subtle merging of the lingering ancient Greek past with its more accessible present in Elytis' mature work is the 1960 poem "The Autopsy," from the volume *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky:*"

[22]In addition to the *Kenyon Review* essay, op. cit., see the best source on Seferis' use of Elpenor: the poet's own "A Letter on 'Thrush,'" *Anglohellenic Review,* Vol. 4 (July-August, 1950).

[23]The problems the translator faces in rendering the various associations of Seferis' "Ton angelo," which opens *Mythistorima,* is discussed in "On Translating Cavafy and Seferis," *Shenandoah* (Winter, 1972), pp. 40-41, and in an interview with Warren Wallace to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Transatlantic Review.*

And so they found that the gold of the olive root had
dripped in the recesses of his heart.

And from the many times that he had lain awake by candle-
light waiting for the dawn, a strange heat had
seized his entrails.

A little below the skin, the blue line of the horizon
sharply painted. And ample traces of blue
throughout his blood.

The cries of birds which he had come to memorize in hours
of great loneliness apparently spilled out all at
once, so that it was impossible for the knife to
enter deeply.

Probably the intention sufficed for the evil

Which he met—it is obvious—in the terrifying posture
of the innocent. His eyes open, proud, the whole
forest moving still on the unblemished retina

Nothing in the brain but a dead echo of the sky.

Only in the hollow of his left ear some light fine sand,
as though in a shell. Which means that often he
had walked by the sea alone with the pain of love
and the roar of the wind.

As for those particles of fire on his groin, they show
that he moved time hours ahead whenever he embraced
a woman.

We shall have early fruit this year.

The Autopsy portrays what the poet finds most vital in his contemporary landscape through the metaphor of a body cut open to reveal concealed mysteries. In the first instance, the body of the poet seems to be the subject of the autopsy, and the prob-

ing knife uncovers those sources in the modern world that have best nourished his poetic voice. But as is usual in Elytis' verse from any period, the figure of the poet cannot be separated from its roots in his native soil. The dissected body is also that of his country; the autopsy reveals the timeless collection of features that gives to Greece what Elytis sees as her true face. The mythical dimension emerges with the reader's growing awareness that this autopsy is also meant to suggest a kind of ritual sacrifice that seeks perennial fertility according to ancient tradition, specifically that of the resurrected Adonis. That is why the poem ends with what would otherwise seem a highly enigmatic tag line about this year's early fruit.

This commentary may make the mythical dimension appear more obvious than the poet intended. As in the best of Elytis, the mysteries here that lie beyond explication keep this poem as vital as it was when published first more than twenty years ago, and demonstrate that after his long silence following World War II, Elytis' gift was still wonderfully alive. Now, that gift has earned him the Nobel Prize; if the gods continue to look on him with favor, this belated recognition abroad will serve to bring him the full international audience his work deserves.

from OPEN BOOK

BY ODYSSEUS ELYTIS

Equivalencies Chez Picasso
translated from the original French
by Joyce Miller

By following closely the manner in which an artist transposes reality into visual form, we often recognize what may be called a "system of gestures." While representing the reaction of the creator to the world that surrounds him, this system also can—by that very act of transposing reality on to a scale of spiritual values—reveal to us, *by analogy,* a table of multiple equivalencies. In the world at large, as in the studio, man is called upon to enact the same drama. Confronted with the enigma of reality, he plays out his human destiny, and like the tragic actor, with grand gestures, he moves from triumph to despair.

Thus we find the painter who, a victim of his fate, seizes a ready-made fragment of nature and takes shelter behind it. We find another who, in order to defend himself, by careful calculation extracts pure and clear tones from the reality he confronts, while the totality of that reality forever eludes him. We see others who violently attack their own idol—a sacred image of reality—and vaunting their heroic defeat, return from the battle with their worthless booty. Finally there are those who with infinite patience and skillfully attentive hands await that auspicious moment when they will at last untangle the *Gordian Knot* of Reality.

In the midst of this company of unwitting actors, Picasso suddenly appears, like a new Alexander the Great: in his right hand the painter's brush is the sword that ruthlessly slashes through the "Real" and opens up the road along which he advances. He knows that he must advance, whatever the cost, by whatever means necessary, except subservience, compromise or blind obedience.

When a secret resists him, he attacks it with another secret;

if an obstacle is insurmountable, he transforms everything around it so that it no longer appears to be an obstacle. The speed of his action does not harm him. It is for him the natural way to proceed and enables him to muster all his creative powers and achieve those masterful sweeps that seize and transfix forever the many hidden aspects of Reality. Speed permits him to concentrate and compress his movements into that fraction of time required for the eye and the heart to move forward together, without forethought, toward the discovery of the poetic equivalences of the world.

In this way Picasso succeeds in "disconcerting" or "upsetting," as it were, the very nature of things. It is as if an object—familiar because of the way artists have approached it throughout the centuries—were using everything in its power to preserve its secret and yield only a small part of itself; then suddenly surrounded, besieged on all sides, and no longer knowing where to escape, it finds itself conquered and, like the beloved finally giving herself to the lover, capitulates.

Thus the most disobedient child of our age, had, himself, to force concrete reality to obey *him*. Precisely in proportion to his own disobedience, Picasso is able to provide us with a new notion of Reality. By virtue of his refusal to obey, he becomes the first Realist of the New Age.

Let us go back now and trace that bold and daring course. Let us experience for ourselves the enactment of those forms, where all imitation of reality has been excluded, but where, nevertheless, the resemblance with the world bursts forth, more real, more vivid than ever before. A uniquely human vision imposes itself.

Indeed, the painter who acts in such a way, is he not the man, who instead of accepting charity, on the contrary, asserts the pride of his condition and seizes what he has the right to seize? Is he not the generous spirit who disdains the profit that he could earn from his wealth? For him, the act of creation has replaced gold and is a wealth he urges us to share, as a man who does not spare his own resources. He does not *take care* of himself. To know, as he does, how to stray from the straight and narrow path in order to follow it better, is to be a lover and to conquer the beloved in the only way that she can be conquered.

To affirm, as the whole of his work affirms, that the most fertile field of the artist's imagination is not found in the heavens, but in the most humble objects that surround us, is to have confidence in human life and its infinite richness.

In the same way as the stark, strong lines of a bald mountain, by virtue of their clean simplicity and severity, evoke corresponding qualities on a moral plane; so, the works of Picasso, as we follow the astonishing course of his career, teach us the marvelous adventure of discovering the world, and they lead us, beyond all preconceived notions, to a new understanding of its poetic potential.

We might say, despite what has been so often repeated, that Picasso has never been concerned with representing his own age. He has, certainly, lived close to his time, but not in order to translate into visual form the preoccupations that are the glory of our age. The facile portrayal of human suffering, the idolatry of the morbid, the exhibitionism of despair and, on the other hand, the mystical panaceas and dime-store philosophies—these originate in a spirit diametrically opposed to that which underlies Picasso's very manner of drawing and painting. If we study his most recent works, we are likely to conclude that Picasso wanted to *oppose* the errors of his contemporaries with something solid and strong, a kind of physical and moral health which his passionate devotion to the search for truth could give him, and which should probably be regarded as the ultimate wisdom acquired during his long career.

Picasso never searched for Greece, but Greece found *him.* Since that day, the sea of the Golfe-Juan and the sun of Vallauris have guided his steps. He tells us about the Universe through the woman he loves and his children. Standing straight and tall, his face burned by the sun, he goes forward, followed by the two archetypes that best represent his message: the pregnant woman and the legendary goat.

As soon as we enter the cool shade of the studio at Vallauris, we feel that same stiff breeze, which under a fiery Mediterranean sun stirs the waters and covers the dry shores with all manner of objects: pieces of an old basket, some bits of branches, an empty tin can, two half-broken jugs. I was in no way surprised to find them there, these careless remains of a forgotten moment, incor-

porated solidly into a work of art, made flesh and blood with the color and composition created by the artist's hands. This gesture, which with another painter might be only a game, assumes in Picasso's work the mysterious solemnity of a ritual act of some unknown religion. I have never been able to define this religion, but it is familiar to me. And suddenly I am jealous, that these great symbols of the "Midi"—the South—these archetypes which go back to time immemorial, were not created on one of the Aegean islands; there where so long ago artless fingers, who had not learned to lie, first dared to mold matter into form. But it's of no importance; the lesson is the same: it is enough to say what one loves, and that only, with whatever means one has. But it must be said in the most direct way; it must be said with poetry.

The poetic instinct, the creative instinct, *par excellence,* we find in the humble joy with which the fisherman builds his boat, the village people their houses. And that joy is what we discover in the works of this great man of the people; his works are *useful* like the boats, like the houses. We can *inhabit* their human warmth and we can be carried forward by the prows of their boats pointed toward the Future. When we contemplate them, little by little, a land is created for us, a land where the idea of fertility reigns, where the figure of the goat evokes harsh rocks, dry bushes and the sea; a land where at night we see the large eyes of the owls, and in the day the rows of pottery and the tiles painted in a thousand colors; it is a land which takes us back to the multiplicity of the world, and to its unique essence. Whether it is called "Vallauris" or "human dignity," this land is there, offered to us once and for all, like a part of the soul. There, falseness is inconceivable, flattery is unknown, deceit is impossible. This land represents, finally, the marvelous equivalent of the gestures which Picasso uses to confront his age and that extreme point where—we might say—the light of the sun and blood of mankind become one.

INTERVIEW WITH YIANNIS TSAROUHIS

BY EDOUARD RODITI

Introduction

My few meetings with the Greek painter, Yiannis Tsarouhis, had occurred in Athens, presided over—it now seems to me—by that strange, winged genius who, in Greek myth, is held responsible for the kind of situations that one blames, in England, on Puck. Whenever I called on Tsarouhis in his home on Odhos Evzonon, he was out; so I was never able to visit his studio at my ease and thus observe a representative selection of his works of the last few decades.

As he has also refrained from having a telephone installed, I had particular difficulty trying to reach him at home for an appointment. On one or two occasions, he left messages for me at my Athens hotel, in reply to my letters, and asked me to drop by at a specific time. But when I was admitted then to his studio, there was one of those large, varied and excited crowds that a successful and hard-working artist often finds himself obliged to endure—if, in despair, he decides to receive in one motley salad the whole rag, tag and bobtail of those who have been clamoring for weeks to see him.

As my visits to Athens are distressingly rare and brief, this state of affairs continued in my relationship with Yiannis Tsarouhis until the Spring of 1959. I then spent a whole month in Greece, but again that Greek winged genius whose impish sense of mischief had been frustrating my desire to see the painter and his work, alone, seems to have been particularly busy that year. When I was in Athens, Tsarouhis was away for a few days in Olympia; when he returned, I had gone to Crete—and so it went for a whole month. Finally, we managed, after a spate of letters from me and of his replies left with my hotel-porter, to agree that I call on him one evening at six o'clock, for a long chat, in the

course of which we would be alone, and I, at last, would enjoy the longed-for opportunity to study his work in peace.

But, when I arrived at his home on the appointed day at the appointed hour, I was greeted by his secretary: at noon that very day an urgent phonecall from Covent Garden Royal Opera had summoned Tsarouhis to London, at once, by the first available flight. The sets—his secretary explained—and costumes which Tsarouhis had designed some months earlier for the Dallas Opera's production of Medea *with Madame Callas, would not be available as had been expected, for the forthcoming London production of that opera. Tsarouhis, therefore, would have to supervise on the spot the execution of new sets and new costumes, preferably on the basis of new designs which might be more appropriate for the new production. Tsarouhis had duly departed from Athens that same afternoon and had left for me a hurried note of sincere apologies and regrets.*

Fortunately, I was to be in London two weeks later. There, I was able to reach him the day after my arrival. In London, that impish Greek winged genius seemed powerless. Tsarouhis was staying in a hotel which had a very efficient switchboard operator, and the telephone service at the Royal Opera was also excellent. We thus met, by appointment, in the backstage room of Covent Garden where Tsarouhis was then designing his new sets and costumes.

It was not an inspiring room, too much like a dismally grey workshop. As we spoke, I was never tempted to look out the window, so certain was I to discover there—not the blue sky and over-view of Athens and the Attic hills I had seen from his window on Odhos Evzonon—only one of those depressing grey-ish-brown glimpses of an inner courtyard or a ventilation shaft familiar to London.

I did, however, feel immediately, as I entered the building by the stage door, that slightly feverish, artificial excitement that characterizes in any theatre the weeks of rehearsals which precede a first night. It was in this atmosphere in such a setting that Yiannis Tsarouhis was working. At first we sat and chatted in his improvised designing-room; later, we lunched together in the Royal Opera's basement canteen, one of those very Neo-British institutions that seem to serve in the Welfare State the same kind

of social function as Bath's Assembly Room once served in the age of Beau Nash.

A slightly-built man with thin, greying hair and a light complexion, Yiannis Tsarouhis looked on that occasion more of Northern Europe than of Greece. But one is always surprised in Athens, to meet Greeks who look more Anglo-Saxon or Slavic or even Oriental than Greek. The so-called Greek type is, in truth, more psychological than physical; it reveals itself in quickness of wit, liveliness and spontaneity. Tsarouhis, I hasten to add, was true to that type. We carried on our conversation, however, neither in Greek nor in English, but in fluent French.

E.R.: What is the ideal which has always inspired you in your theatrical work?

TSAROUHIS: I drifted into theatrical work without any particular ideal or ambition; only gradually did I realize the passion of my attachment to the theatre. Since then, this relationship has been like one of those grandiose romantic love-affairs with a history of quarrels and reconciliations. Every so often, I experience a crisis: I am suddenly disenchanted with theatrical work and abandon it for a few years until the wound has healed. Then I am ready to start again.

E.R.: What disappoints you so bitterly in theatrical work?

TSAROUHIS: The fact that it isn't all play, magic, illusion, mystery or improvisation. I tire of the cost-accountancy and public relations; I mean the business side of my work as a collective enterprise. I cannot endure the routine which threatens at all times to establish new conventions, academic tricks and devices and styles which no longer create any illusion at all. There's a kind of perfection of method in theatrical work, that kills all illusion. I mean the perfection of Max Reinhardt and of the German theatre as a whole. There, the stage-designer becomes a decorator, the stage a *Schaukasten or* shop-window that is simply dressed like any display of textiles, though with a great deal of technical knowledge and taste. I can never disregard when I see such a production that it's all play-acting, not at all magically real.

E.R.: But the Germans think so highly of their tradition of theatrical production that they have convinced the whole world

of the genius of Max Reinhardt and of some of the artists who designed sets and costumes for him.

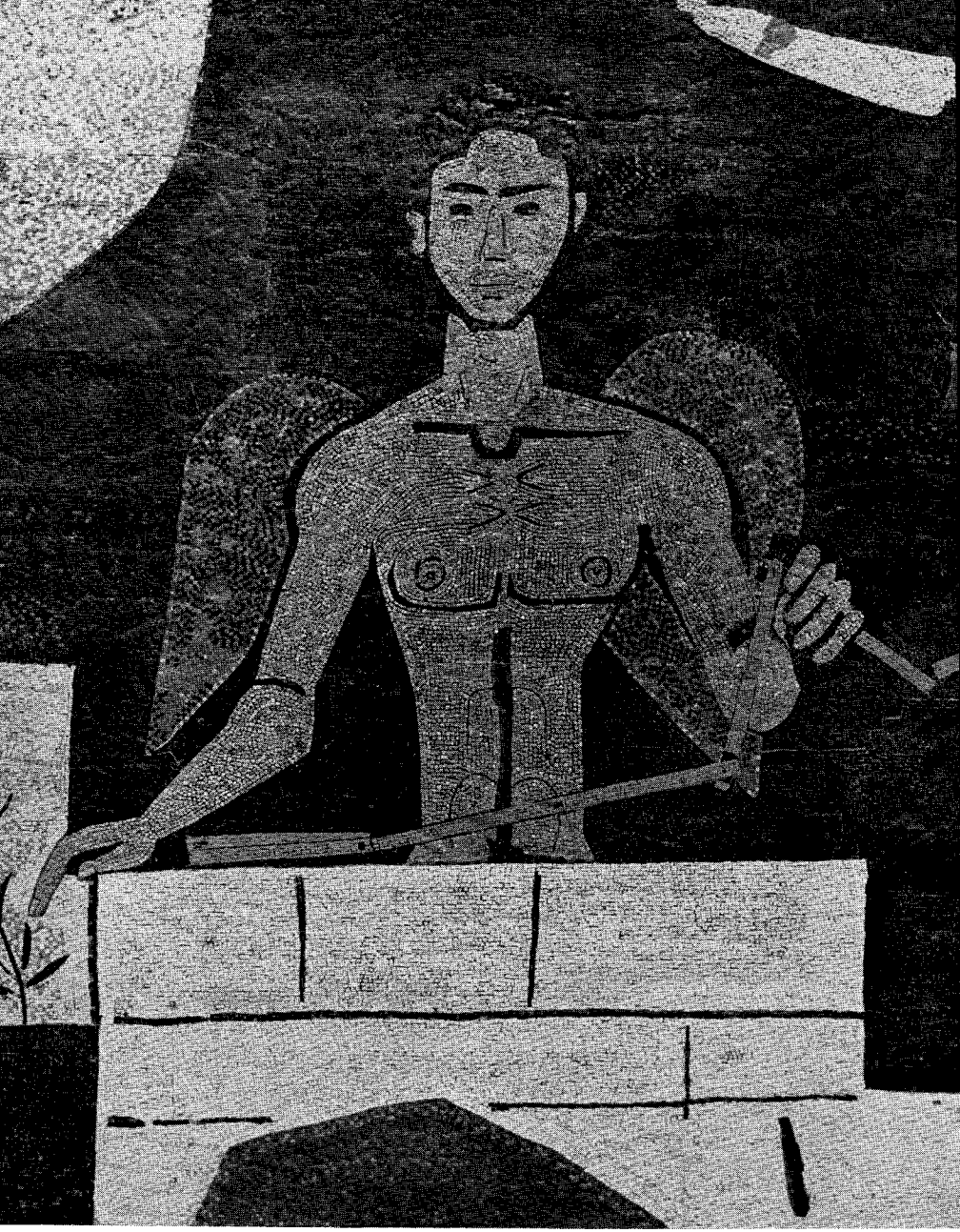
TSAROUHIS: The Germans are very thorough, almost pedantic, and we live in an age that readily confuses good workmanship with creative ability. The art of designing for the theatre requires far more than meticulous and conscientious workmanship or showmanship on a grand scale. It has much in common, of course, with fashion designing and interior decorating. In these, too, one must be able, nevertheless, to discern the difference between the gift of creating style and the skill of fabricating good industrial products. Much German designing for the theatre simply fails to create styles. For this, one must be inspired by an ideal of elegance and never be merely practical, down-to-earth, or scholarly in one's reconstruction of the past.

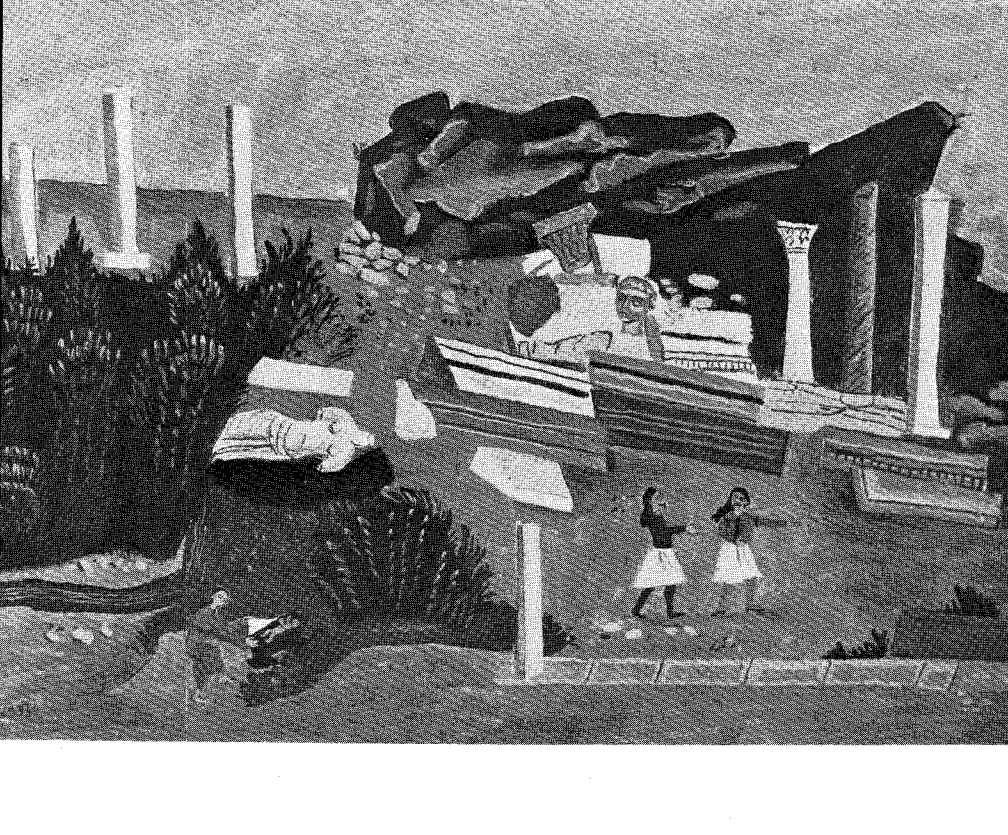
E.R.: But I have seen some German productions that seemed to me to have that magical elegance. I'm thinking especially of the sets and costumes that the late Paul Strecker designed for the Berlin theatres between 1946 and 1950. But Strecker's work is unknown outside of Germany, and he lived between the two wars, for many years in Paris, where he was a close friend and associate of Pavel Tchelitchew and Christian Berard, both of whom designed sets and costumes for the Russian ballets.

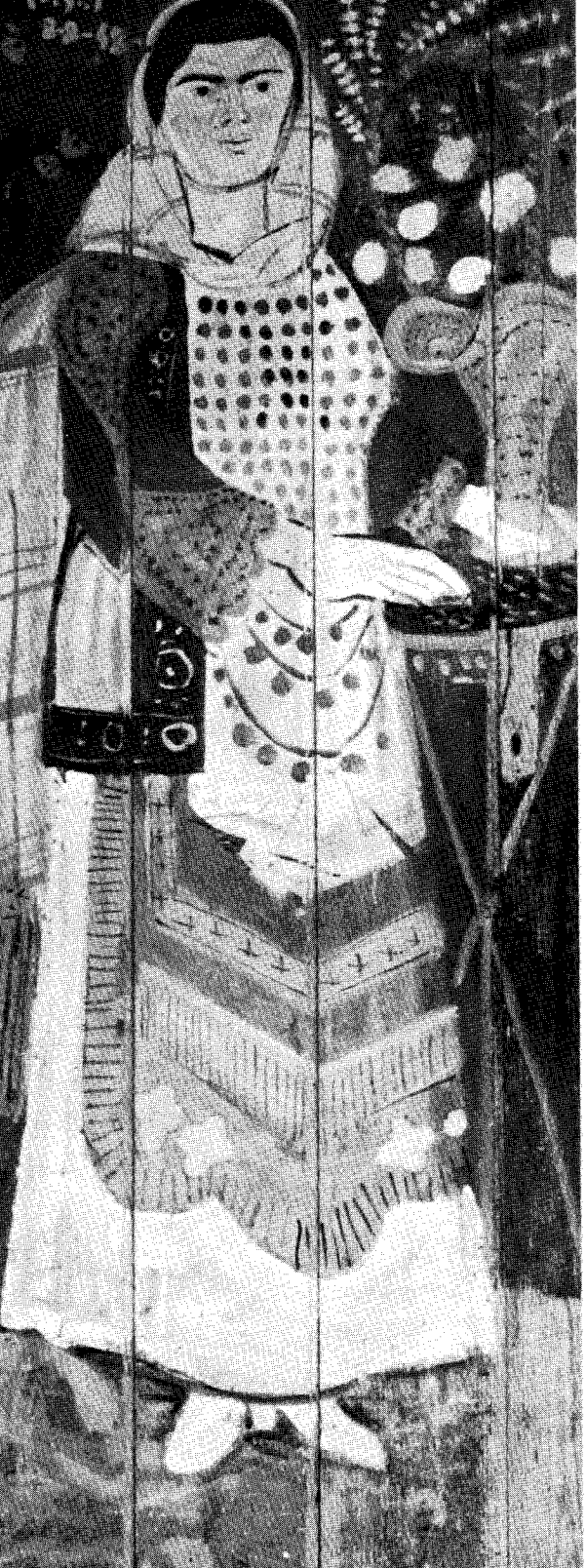
TSAROUHIS: I have seen only those *Kolossal* German theatrical productions that have been exported abroad. I find them generally a bit overwhelming, too obviously professional to create any really magical illusion. There's too much pageantry about them.

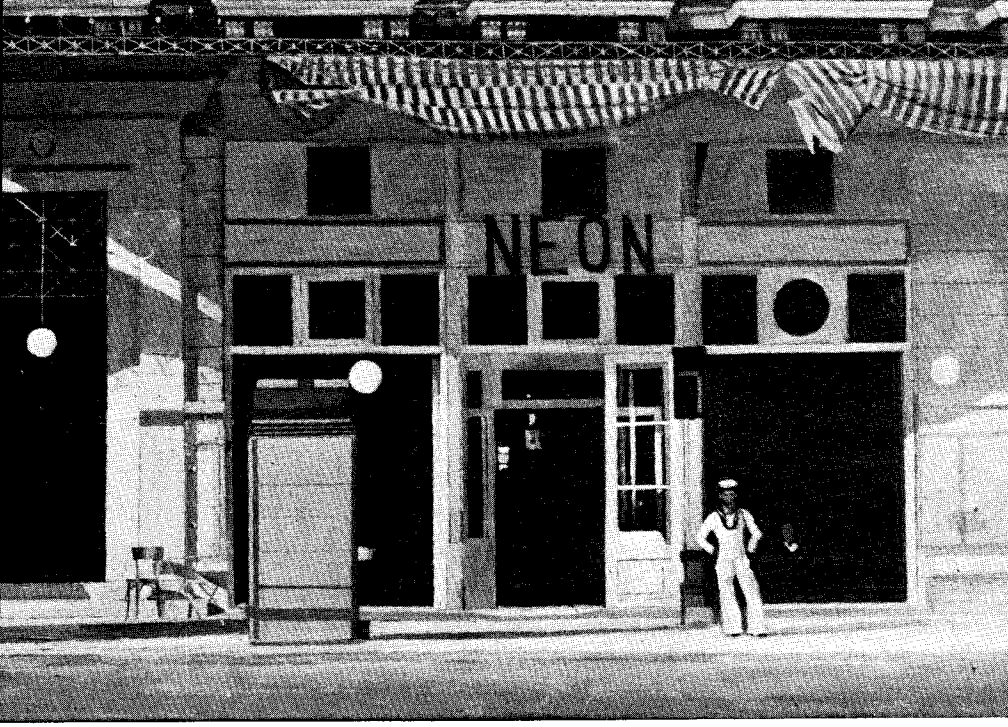
E.R.: Would you care to define in greater detail this relationship between theatrical art, magical illusion and fashion?

TSAROUHIS: The purpose of real fashion—I mean *haute couture* as opposed to the clothing industry—is to create an illusion whereby an otherwise prosaic or pretentious society-woman is made to appear before us with some of the glamor of a goddess. The sets and costumes of a theatrical production should serve a similar effect—transforming a case of rather dreary and vain actors, who are only doing their day's work and earning their living, into beings of a world that appears to us more real than the one where we sit, from which we watch as spectators. Fashion and the theatre have much in common; the stage-designer





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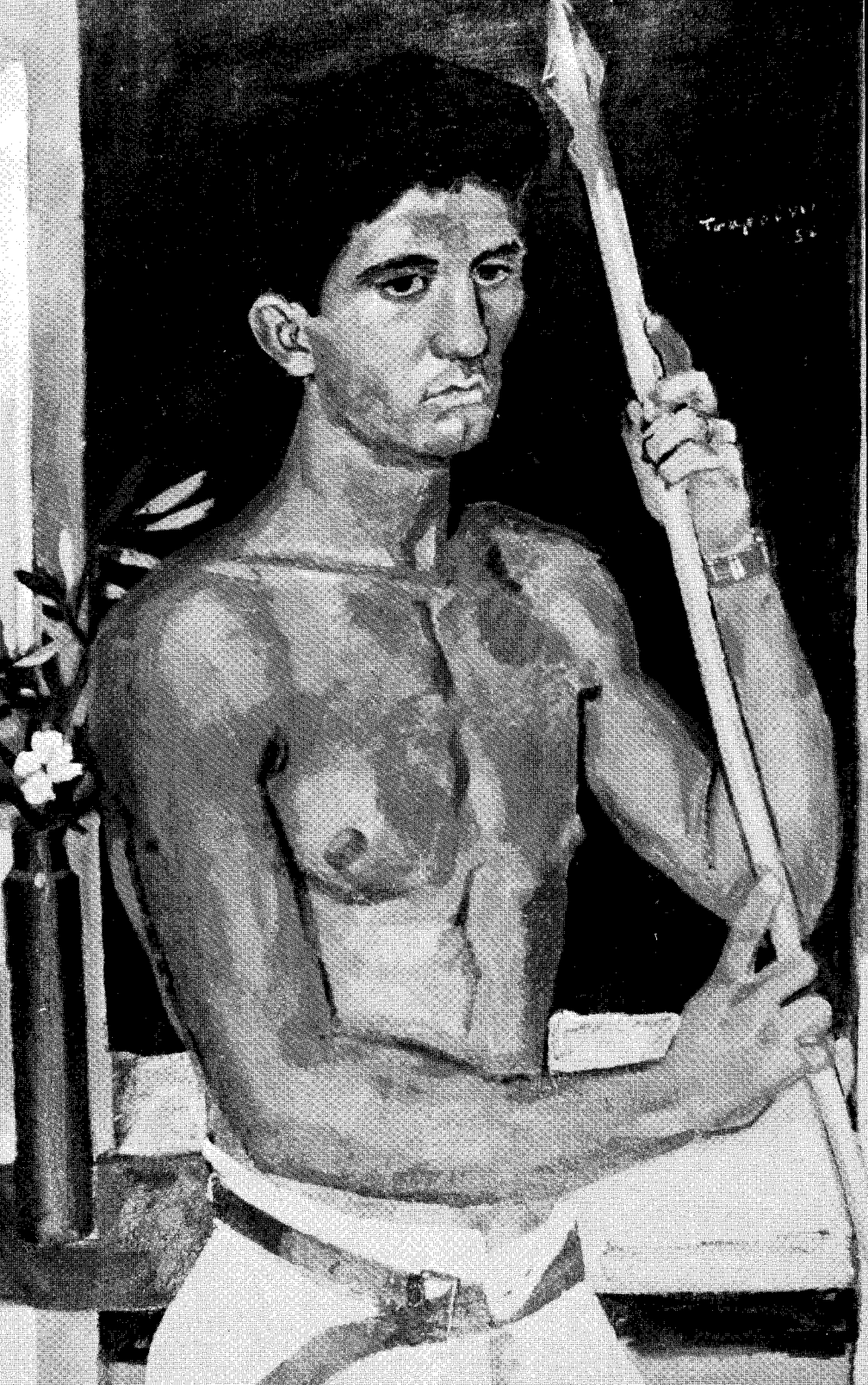


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is often a creator of fashions, too, or he follows very closely the dictates of current fashion. The theatre imitates life, and life also imitates, at times, the theatre, so that sets and costumes can make the world of the stage seem utterly alien to us or somehow more familiar, according to the requirements of verisimilitude. A *Hamlet* in modern dress, if produced with real talent, can startle us so as to cause us to rediscover the basic humanity of Shakespeare's characters who have, so to say, accumulated through the centuries, the dust of too many productions which have made the play historically remote or legendary. On the other hand, a production of a Greek tragedy with set and costumes that are utterly unfamiliar to us can evoke the mythical quality of the plot, the religious function of all Greek tragedy. A Greek tragedy produced as a kind of mystery-play, gains the freshness it has lost as a result of too many neo-classical or humanistic productions.

E.R.: You seem to me to be quite appropriately stressing again the importance, in all theatrical production, of the element that Aristotle, in his Poetics, calls *opsis,* I mean *spectacle.*

TSAROUHIS: Yes, but I have already said that a theatrical production is basically a collective enterprise. Because of the many conflicting personalities involved, it can easily degenerate into something loose or anonymous, if not actually confused or discordant. The artist's task, in designing the sets and costumes, is to impose on the whole show the unifying element of his personal vision or style. The artist and the producer must then work in close association, so that the movements of crowds and the gestures of individual actors are in harmony with the mood or spirit of the initial vision which captures the audience the moment the curtain rises. That moment, when the curtain reveals a scene, is the decisive magic instant when the spell is cast. If the illusion is achieved, it must then be maintained. The audience has been drawn into a personal dream-world, that of the individual who designed the sets and costumes. The whole production, as a collective enterprise, must maintain this singular illusion throughout the performance and until the curtain falls again. Diaghilew and Bakst were in this regard a team of magicians; thus they were able to create such enduring masterpieces of theatrical production as some of the earlier Russian ballets. As the curtain rises, the moment of revelation should be so enthralling, so astonishing

that the audience actually gasps. That is what I mean by the magical reality of a theatrical production, its viability as an illusion.

E.R.: In your opinion, this magical reality depends on an individual style or vision rather than on realistically correct or historically accurate detail.

TSAROUHIS: Certainly. Take, for instance, this production of *Medea* on which I'm now working. Actually, it's an eighteenth-century opera, one of those "Louis-Seize" neo-classical jobs in which the traditional characters of ancient Greek tragedy were originally made to appear in periwigs, with the dress and behavior of eighteenth-century princes or courtiers masquerading as heroes and heroines of antiquity. Were I a scholar rather than an artist, I would be designing some rather cute sets and costumes according to that obsolete but rather interesting style. Besides, neo-classical rococo happens also to be the style of Cherubini's music, which he conceived and composed according to eighteenth-century notions of the musical modes of classical antiquity, much as Glück did in his *Orfeo*. But Madame Callas and I have agreed that we both *feel* this whole opera as Greeks rather than as heirs to eighteenth-century tradition which was born in Central and Western Europe, in Vienna, Venice, Dresden and Paris, but never spread as far as Greece. On the other hand, we are both Greeks of the twentieth century, not at all Greeks of classical antiquity. This means that we are both heirs to a very complex tradition. It may go back originally to classical antiquity and even to Homeric times, but it has also been enriched, in the past two thousand years, by the heritage of Byzantium, by Slavic infiltrations, by the Turkish domination and, too, by the Venetian Empire. So, Madame Callas decided to sing *Medea* as a Greek, with specifically Greek conceptions of feeling, rather than as an heir to the Italian operatic tradition, and I have accordingly decided to design sets and costumes in a contemporary Greek style of neo-classicism, seeing antiquity with the eyes of a twentieth-century Greek.

E.R.: How would you define this contemporary Greek style of neo-classicism?

TSAROUHIS: Some years ago, I shocked a Greek theatrical producer by designing sets and costumes for a production of a

tragedy of Sophocles, in which all the men were to wear moustaches like Greek men of today. I felt it is impossible for me to visualize Greeks, even those of antiquity, except as having the appearance of my compatriots of today. In the same way, I am now visualizing the architecture of the sets of *Medea* as neoclassical Greek architecture of the past hundred and fifty years. I mean the style that owes much to those older buildings of Athens which were built in the nineteenth-century, mainly by Greek architects who had studied in Vienna, Berlin, Munich or Paris, and who adapted the Empire and Regency style of such German or English architects as Schinckel or Nash. I am, however, an artist, and a Greek of a later generation; so I visualize Greek architecture in a style which is my own, not of the neoclassical Athenian architects of the past century. We now know more about antiquity than was known a hundred years ago; however, we are no longer governed by some of the nineteenth-century notions of the grandeur of antiquity that inspired the artists of the Romantic era. We see the past differently—perhaps, more clearly—but we still see it to some extent in light of the style and artistic achievements of the nineteenth century. If we strip an opera like *Medea* of all that might reduce it to an eighteenth-century period-piece, we must revive to some degree its mythical quality as an ancient tragedy. At the same time, we must avoid restoring it with the pedantry of a learned but unimaginative archaeologist. As an artist, I can visualize antiquity only in the light of my own experience, of living in the twentieth century, but with all my awareness of the intervening centuries, too. That is why Minotis, the producer of *Medea,* Madame Callas and I have agreed even to change the libretto of the opera. In the last act, for instance, the original eighteenth-century libretto had a small ballet of three Furies; it may have inspired admiration and horror among the composer's contemporaries but it certainly would seem tame to a twentieth-century audience which has known the much wilder music of the Romantic era, from Berlioz to Wagner, and all the far less stately choreography of the twentieth-century Expressionists. Instead of that rococo ballet in the last act, Madame Callas appears as a *dea ex machina,* in a chariot drawn by serpents, according to the last act of a Greek tragedy.

E.R.: All that you have just explained about a contemporary vision of the style of antiquity reminds me very much of the works of the Greek poet Constantine Cavafis, so many of whose poems are modern vignettes illustrating specific moments of Greek history.

TSAROUHIS: Certainly, and I am a great admirer of Cavafis. In fact, I have always sought to achieve, whether in my paintings or in my theatrical work, something analogous to his poetry. I have tried, as he did, to develop a style that is individual and contemporary but yet suggests the past, in handling material that might similarly have served as a theme to a Greek artist of antiquity or of Byzantium.

E.R.: This would explain the strikingly Hellenistic or Alexandrine quality of many of your studies of contemporary Athenian types. I remember, for instance, some of your male nudes; the men were recognizable Greek types of today—young men seen everywhere in the streets of modern Athens—who suggested, at the same time, the Greeks of the generation of Lord Byron and the War of Liberation, and also of Hellenistic Alexandria or even of classical antiquity.

TSAROUHIS: That is what I am trying to do now, in the costumes and sets of *Medea,* and what Madame Callas is trying to do in her interpretation of her role. We want to broaden the scope of the whole opera, to create something both modern and ancient, in fact eternally Greek, rather than a rococo or neoclassical transposition of an ancient Greek tragedy.

Of course, some critics may find that Madame Callas is violating the spirit of Cherubini's music, or that my designs are scarcely appropriate either to an eighteenth-century opera or an ancient tragedy. We are both trying to approach this opera as creative artists rather than as scholars, and to imbue it with the life and the magic of a new work of art rather than of a carefully detailed revival. This gamble is big, but the artist is essentially a gambler who stakes all his individual talent on success.

[*Tsarouhis then interrupted our talk to show me a few of his designs. I was struck by the intense sobriety of his vision. The pure contours of his sets, the restraint of his use of color in the costumes, his reliance on greys and beiges rather than on brighter harmonies. He seemed to sense my surprise.*]

TSAROUHIS: Of course, these designs should never be viewed as paintings. As such, they seem to be too flat, perhaps too colorless. On stage, the lighting and the movement of the singers and the chorus make them appear in three dimensions, differently. These are blueprints, specifications which must be understood clearly by the scene-painters and dressmakers who must carry out my instructions. Were I now to produce designs which already communicate the magic of the finished production, they would be full of ambiguities, difficult to understand as blueprints and to carry out. That is why most theatrical designs seem colorless and flat or garish and protesque; like blueprints or caricatures, they lack the magic of illusion, the texture and brushwork of a finished painting or of a sensitive or inspired sketch. In a way, they are more like the designs of an architect or a fashion-artist than like the sketches of a painter. After all, I am designing here a three-dimensional world in which live actors must perform, not a two-dimension version of a landscape with figures. Besides, I am working here with a whole staff that has little experience of my work, so that I must be particularly careful to make my drawings quite clear.

In this respect, Bakst was more fortunate and could draw his sketches more freely; Christian Berard, too—for they generally worked with the same teams of scene-painters and dressmakers. But very rarely and under exceptional circumstances, can an artist who is working for the theatre allow himself now, as they did, the freedom of producing sketches and designs which are works of art in themselves.

THE WOMAN OF ZAKYNTHOS

BY DIONYSIOS SOLOMOS
translated by Marianthe Colakis

Translator's Prologue

The Woman of Zakynthos was written between 1826 and 1829. During the War for Independence, Missolongi successfully withstood the first Turkish siege, but in 1826 the garrison was reduced to a few hundred starving and exhausted men, most of them wounded or sick. The fate of the homeless from that city touched Solomos deeply. In *The Free Besieged,* begun in 1826, he focused on the heroic defiance of Missolongi. *The Woman of Zakynthos* presents the opposite side of the picture—the cruelty of some of the Zantiotes toward the refugees.

The work was never completed and was not published in its entirety until 1927. Iakovos Polylas, who gave it its title, included only a brief excerpt from the third chapter in his collection of Solomos' works in 1859. Whether the finished work would have been prose or verse is not certain, but in a note to himself, the poet specifies: "Take care that each line does not always end in a dactyl."[1] The numbered paragraphs which form the chapters would, then, each have been a stanza. Raizis points out that the longer paragraphs contain enough material for an *ottava,* but on the whole there is only enough material for quatrains, or fifteen-syllable lines rhyming in couplets.[2] The short verse in the sixth chapter would become part of the first draft of *The Free Besieged,* which is also narrated by Dionysios, the Monk.

The pages of the original manuscript are divided into two columns. The left column, in a clear hand but not without corrections, is the text proper. The right column, hastily written and difficult to read, consists of the author's notes to himself, mostly in Italian. Although these are of little help in understanding the

[1]Dionysios Solomos, *Peza kai Italika* (Ikaros, 1955, ed. L. Politis), p. 68, n.26.
[2]M.B. Raizis, *Dionysios Solomos* (New York, 1972), p. 94.

overall meaning of the work, they indicate what the finished product would have been. In a prologue, the poet himself is visiting the cell of a late Monk reputed to have had prophetic powers. On his deathbed, the Monk is said to have struck the wall behind him three times—to the bewilderment of all who were present. Overcome by curiosity, the poet strikes the same wall. A piece of it falls away, revealing the manuscript of the Monk's prophecies—the story of the Woman of Zakynthos. Solomos also noted: "Place the description of the Woman into the mouth of the Devil. Make him appear ironical, like one concerned with what will happen on his account."[3] The Devil, who appears once in the well, at the beginning of the story, was to have appeared twice more—in the middle, and again at the end, seated beneath the hanged body of the Woman, laughing with her laugh. The poet intended to expand the Missolongi chapters with a scene of confusion and panic and a description of the women, children, and old men departing by boat for Zakynthos. In the last sections, the three phantoms are described at greater length. The daughter watches silently, the frightened mother tosses a rope at the Woman, and the father (described in the notes as a "ridiculous buffoon") prances around with a chamber pot on his head.[4] The story apparently was to end with the Monk finding himself back at the Three Wells after more thunder and lightning, and the Devil singing a satiric song to the Woman's cuckolded husband and to T., one of her lovers. However incomplete, the piece in its present state is polished and vivid prose. As Papanicolaou has said, "*The Woman of Zakynthos,* for all her wickedness and ugliness, becomes beautiful through the power of Solomos' pen."[5]

Bizarre as the work may seem, it parallels other works by Solomos. Two poems in particular stress the supernatural. In another early work, "*Lambros,*" the Don Juan-like central character goes to church on Easter Sunday night. He prays, but finds the saints "deaf, motionless, like tombs." He denies the existence of God and turns away in despair. When he opens a door, a voice says, "Christ is risen." He rushes to a second door and hears the same words, and yet again at a third door. The voices, which

[3] *Peza kai Italika,* p. 65, n.6.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 70, n.51.
[5] *Apanta,* p. 682.

are those of Lambros' three dead sons, pursue him through the church. Like the Woman of Zakynthos in Chapter 9, he also is compared to a summer comet as he flees. When he stops running and asks what they want, they kiss him on the lips. He stands "like a statue" until dawn, then, terror-stricken and remorseful, he commits suicide. In *"The Cretan,"* the first of Solomos' mature poems, a Cretan and his beloved are in a boat, escaping from their native island after its conquest by the Turks. During a thunderstorm, the sea suddenly becomes calm, and the Cretan sees before him a divinely beautiful woman whose eyes, he feels, are reading his thoughts. When she vanishes, the Cretan hears eerie, unearthly music. When the epiphany ends and he reaches shore with his beloved, he sees that she is dead.

Of Solomos' other satires, *The Woman of Zakynthos,* because of its bitter tone, closely resembles "The Dream." The poet describes a nightmare during the funeral of Martinengo, a cruel and usurious Zantiote. As the nobleman lies in state, the ghost of the satirist Koutouzis rises to revile him for his avarice. Solomos' unwritten satire, *The Hair,* also notes a dream-framework; at the end, when the narrator wakes, everything he saw in his dream is still there, and his room smells of sulphur—a sign of the Devil's presence. The line between dream and reality, as Solomos depicts, is not clear.

The Woman of Zakynthos does not use the dream-setting, but the abruptly-changing scenes, the intense emotions, the figures who appear and disappear unexpectedly, create the effect of nightmare. The broad humor of Solomos' early satires is missing, but there are touches of wit: the hideously ugly Woman, fancying herself a beauty, tries to flatter her daughter by telling her that she is as pretty as her mother; the stuttering old man remarks, "I marvelled greatly, since it was the first time I had heard a human soul stutter." The poet's notes seem to indicate that the completed work would have had more humor, but the prevailing tone is grim. The piece has rightly been compared to the Apocalypse of St. John; it uses other Biblical allusions: the Woman is reminiscent of the Whore of Babylon; Dionysios' search for five Just Persons recalls Abraham's intercession on behalf of Sodom (Genesis XVIII.22-33). The prose itself has a Biblical flavor, particularly in the repeated use of "and."

The Woman also has much in common with medieval religious literature, such as parts of Bede's *Church History of the English People*. The loud noises and voices, the mysterious beings suddenly appearing, the total darkness just before a revelation, the deathbed torment of the unrepentant sinner—are all recurrent motifs in such visionary writings. Parallels with Dante, Milton, Goethe, and the *Hypercalypsis* of Solomos' fellow Zantiote, Foscolo, have also been noted.

Even so, most of the allegory remains obscure and elusive. Much scholarly attention has been devoted to determining the identity of the Woman. One suggestion is that she represents the British government of the Ionian Islands. Romilly Jenkins has worked out the details of this interpretation:

> *The Woman's daughter will be the Ionian Islands, the daughter whom she compels to sit still under dire threats of penalty, and her sister will be Greece, whose beauty she envies and whom she smiles to see in destitution. The British Empire is thought of as dying of consumption . . . the fifteen mourners are pro-English nobles. The dogs which assail the Monk are perhaps the cowardly English soldiers who set upon the innocent and inoffensive Zantiotes of Ipsolitho, and the delight of the Woman at the hanging of Greeks may refer to the same episode.*[6]

Several biographical sources have been suggested: the Woman is the first wife of the poet's brother Demetrios, Helen Arvanitakis, whose domineering character forced her brother-in-law to flee Zakynthos. When he was reconciled with her, he put the manuscript aside forever. This may also explain why Demetrios Solomos did not want the piece published. Perhaps the Woman is Stella Makris, the wife of the poet's other brother, Robert. Mrs. Robert Solomos was a Turk-sympathizer who also tried to cheat Dionysios and Demetrios out of their inheritance by claiming they were illegitimate. Another possible prototype is a Miss S. Messalas, a woman of bad reputation who hated her sister and was hated by her mother. The precise details of the

[6]R. Jenkins, *Dionysios Solomos* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 121.

Woman's appearance suggest that the poet had an actual person in mind, but many of them—small thin body, long face, drooping nose, rotten teeth, bad complexion—are like a Greek's caricature of a "typical" Anglo-Saxon. Probably she represents the Zantiote aristocrats, particularly the women, who had no quarrel with the Turks and were unsympathetic toward the struggle of their fellow Greeks for independence.

This translation is based on the text of George N. Papanicolaou, *Dionysios Solomos,* (*Apanta,* v.1, Athens, 1970).

CHAPTER 1

The Monk is embittered

1. I, Dionysios, the Monk, resident of the monastery of St. Lypios, give the following account of a matter that concerns me:
2. I was returning from the monastery of St. Dionysios, where I had gone to speak with a priest on certain spiritual matters.
3. And it was summer, the time when the waters grow muddy, and I had reached the Three Wells, and there were puddles all around, since the women frequently go there to draw water.
4. I stopped at one of the Three Wells, and, placing my hands on its rim, leaned over to see if it had much water.
5. And I saw it was half full and said, "God be praised."
6. Sweet is the coolness that refreshes a man's heart in the summer, great are His deeds and great man's thankfulness.
7. And the Just, according to the Holy Writ, how many are they? And as I considered this, my eyes fell upon my hands clutching the rim of the well.
8. And wishing to count the Just upon my fingers, I raised my left hand from the well, and looking at the fingers of the right one, I said, "Are these too many, perhaps?"
9. And I began to count the number of the Just whom I knew on those five fingers, and finding those too many, I subtracted my little one, concealing it between the well's rim and my palm.
10. And I stood looking at the four fingers for a long time, feeling great impatience, because I saw that I should subtract another, and I placed my fourth finger next to my little one, where that was concealed between the rim and my palm.
11. There remained then only three fingers beneath my gaze, and I kept tapping them restlessly on the well's rim to help my mind find even three Just people.
12. But because my insides began to tremble like the sea which is never calm,

ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ 1

Ο ΙΕΡΟΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΠΙΚΡΑΙΝΕΤΑΙ

1. Ἐγὼ Διονύσιος Ἱερομόναχος, ἐγκάτοικος στὸ ξωκλήσι τοῦ Ἁγίου Λύπιου, γιὰ νὰ περιγράψω ὅ,τι στοχάζουμαι λέγω:
2. Ὅ,τι ἐγύριζα ἀπὸ τὸ μοναστήρι τοῦ Ἁγίου Διονυσίου, ὅπου εἶχα πάει γιὰ νὰ μιλήσω μὲ ἕναν καλόγερο γιὰ κάτι ὑπόθεσες ψυχικές,
3. Καὶ ἤτανε καλοκαίρι, καὶ ἦταν ἡ ὥρα ὁποὺ θολώνουνε τὰ νερά, καὶ εἶχα φθάσει στὰ Τρία Πηγάδια, καὶ ἦταν ἐκεῖ τριγύρου ἡ γῆ ὅλο νερά, γιατὶ πᾶνε οἱ γυναῖκες καὶ συχνοβγάνουνε,
4. Ἐσταμάτησα σὲ ἕνα ἀπὸ τὰ Τρία Πηγάδια, καὶ ἀπιθώνοντας τὰ χέρια μου στὸ φιλιατρὸ τοῦ πηγαδιοῦ ἔσκυψα νὰ ἰδῶ ἂν ἤτουν πολὺ νερό.
5. Καὶ τὸ εἶδα ὡς τὴ μέση γιομάτο καὶ εἶπα: Δόξα σοι ὁ Θεός.
6. Γλυκιὰ ἡ δροσιὰ ποὺ στέρνει γιὰ τὰ σπλάχνα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ καλοκαίρι, μεγάλα τὰ ἔργα του καὶ μεγάλη ἡ ἀφχαριστία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.
7. Καὶ οἱ δίκαιοι κατὰ τὴ Θεία Γραφὴ πόσοι εἶναι; Καὶ συλλογίζοντας αὐτὸ ἐπαίξανε τὰ μάτια μου στὰ χέρια μου ὁποὺ ἤτανε ἀπιθωμένα στὸ φιλιατρό.
8. Καὶ θέλοντας νὰ μετρήσω μὲ τὰ δάχτυλα τοὺς δίκαιους ἀσήκωσα ἀπὸ τὸ φιλιατρὸ τὸ χέρι μου τὸ ζερβί, καὶ κοιτώντας τὰ δάχτυλα τοῦ δεξιοῦ εἶπα: Τάχα νὰ εἶναι πολλά;
9. Καὶ ἀρχίνησα καὶ ἐσύγκρενα τὸν ἀριθμὸ τῶν δικαίων ὁποὺ ἐγνώριζα μὲ αὐτὰ τὰ πέντε δάχτυλα, καὶ βρίσκοντας πὼς ἐτοῦτα ἐπερισσεύανε ἐλιγόστεψα τὸ δάχτυλο τὸ λιανό, κρύβοντάς το ἀνάμεσα στὸ φιλιατρὸ καὶ στὴν ἀπαλάμη μου.
10. Καὶ ἔστεκα καὶ ἐθεωροῦσα τὰ τέσσερα δάχτυλα γιὰ πολληώρα, καὶ αἰστάνθηκα μεγάλη λαχτάρα, γιατὶ εἶδα πὼς ἤμουνα στενεμένος νὰ λιγοστέψω, καὶ κοντὰ στὸ λιανό μου δάχτυλο ἔβαλα τὸ σιμοτινό του στὴν ἴδια θέση.
11. Ἐμνέσκανε τὸ λοιπὸν ἀποκάτου ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια μου τὰ τρία δάχτυλα μοναχά, καὶ τὰ ἐχτυποῦσα ἀνήσυχα ἀπάνου στὸ φιλιατρὸ γιὰ νὰ βοηθήσω τὸ νοῦ μου νὰ εὕρη κάνε τρεῖς δίκαιους.
12. Ἀλλὰ ἐπειδὴ ἀρχινήσανε τὰ σωθικά μου νὰ τρέμουνε σὰν τὴ θάλασσα ποὺ δὲν ἡσυχάζει ποτέ,

13. I raised my three fingers and crossed myself.
14. Then, wishing to count the Unjust, I buried one hand in the pocket of my cassock and the other in my belt, since I understood, alas! that fingers were entirely unnecessary.
15. And my mind grew dizzy at the great number. Yet I had to admit that they all had some good in them. And I heard a terrifying laugh in the well and saw two horns emerge.
16. And foremost of all those I thought of the Woman of Zakynthos, who strives to injure others in word and deed, a deadly enemy of the nation.
17. I searched to see if in this soul, in which the evil of Satan rages, there ever came the hint of the tiniest good.
18. And after I stood up to think hard, I raised my head and hands to the sky and cried, "My God, I realize I am looking for a grain of salt in boiling water."
19. And I saw all the stars shining above me and recognized Orion, which cheered me greatly.
20. And I hastened to set out for St. Lypios, since I saw that I had wasted time, and I wanted to get home to describe the Woman of Zakynthos.
21. And lo! a dozen fleahounds wanted to block my way.
22. And because I did not wish to kick them lest I touch their ticks or blood, they imagined I was afraid of them,
23. And they approached me, barking. But I made as if to stoop and pick up a rock,
24. And they all turned tail and vented their rage, the accursed ones, in biting one another.
25. But someone, the master of some of those fleahounds, took a rock himself,
26. And taking aim at my head, that of the Monk Dionysios, the sinner did not hit it, for in his great hurry to hurl the rock, he stumbled and fell.
27. Thus I arrived at my cell at St. Lypios, soothed by the scents of the fields, the sweet flowing waters and the starlit sky, which shone over me as brightly as a Resurrection.

13. Ἀσήκωσα τὰ τρία μου ἔρμα δάχτυλα καὶ ἔκαμα τὸ σταυρό μου.
14. Ἔπειτα θέλοντας νὰ ἀριθμήσω τοὺς ἄδικους, ἔχωσα τὸ ἕνα χέρι μὲς στὴν τσέπη τοῦ ράσου μου καὶ τὸ ἄλλο ἀνάμεσα στὸ ζωνάρι μου, γιατὶ ἐκατάλαβα, ἀλίμονον! πὼς τὰ δάχτυλα δὲν ἐχρειαζόντανε ὁλότελα.
15. Καὶ ὁ νοῦς μου ἐζαλίστηκε ἀπὸ τὸ μεγάλον ἀριθμό· ὅμως μὲ παρηγοροῦσε τὸ νὰ βλέπω πὼς καθένας κάτι καλὸ εἶχε ἀπάνου του. Καὶ ἄκουσα ἕνα γέλιο φοβερὸ μὲς στὸ πηγάδι καὶ εἶδα προβαλμένα δύο κέρατα.
16. Καὶ μοῦ ἦρθε στὸ νοῦ μου περσότερο ἀπὸ ὅλους αὐτοὺς ἡ γυναίκα τῆς Ζάκυνθος, ἡ ὁποία πολεμάει νὰ βλάφτῃ τοὺς ἄλλους μὲ τὴ γλώσσα καὶ μὲ τὰ ἔργατα, καὶ ἦταν ἔχθρισσα θανάσιμη τοῦ ἔθνους.
17. Καὶ γυρεύοντας νὰ ἰδῶ ἐὰν μέσα σὲ αὐτὴ τὴν ψυχή, εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν ἀναβράζει ἡ κακία τοῦ Σατανᾶ, ἂν ἔπεσε ποτὲ ἡ ἀπεθύμια τοῦ παραμικροῦ καλοῦ,
18. Ἔπειτα ποὺ ἐστάθηκα νὰ συλογιστῶ καλά, ὕψωσα τὸ κεφάλι μου καὶ τὰ χέρια μου στὸν οὐρανὸ καὶ ἐφώναξα: Θέ μου, καταλαβαίνω πὼς γυρεύω ἕνα κλωνὶ ἁλάτι μὲς στὸ θερμό.
19. Καὶ εἶδα πὼς ἐλάμπανε ἀπὸ πάνου μου ὅλα τ᾽ ἄστρα, καὶ ἐξάνοιξα τὴν Ἀλετροπόδα, ὁποὺ μὲ εὐφραίνει πολύ.
20. Καὶ ἐβιάστηκα νὰ κινήσω γιὰ τὸ ξωκλήσι τοῦ Ἁγίου Λύπιου, γιατὶ εἶδα πὼς ἐχασομέρησα, καὶ ἤθελα νὰ φθάσω γιὰ νὰ περιγράψω τὴ γυναίκα τῆς Ζάκυνθος.
21. Καὶ ἰδοὺ καμία δωδεκαρία ψωρόσκυλα ποὺ ἠθέλανε νὰ μοῦ ἐμποδίσουνε τὸ δρόμο,
22. Καὶ μὴ θέλοντας ἐγὼ νὰ τὰ κλοτσοβολήσω γιὰ νὰ μὴν ἐγγίξω τὴν ψώρα καὶ τὰ αἵματα ποὖχανε, ἐστοχαστήκανε πὼς τὰ σκιάζουμαι,
23. Καὶ ἤρθανε βαδίζοντας σιμότερά μου· ὅμως ἐγὼ ἐκαμώθηκα πὼς σκύφτω νὰ πάρω πέτρα,
24. Καὶ ἔφυγαν ὅλα καὶ ἐξεθύμαιναν τὰ κακορίζικα ψωριασμένα τὴ λύσσα τους τὸ ἕνα δαγκώνοντας τὸ ἄλλο.
25. Ἀλλὰ ἕνας ὁποὺ ἐδιαφέντευε κάποια ἀπὸ τὰ ψωρόσκυλα ἐπῆρε κι᾽ αὐτὸς μία πέτρα,
26. Καὶ βάνοντας ὁ ἄθεος γιὰ σημάδι τὸ κεφάλι ἐμὲ τοῦ Διονύσιου τοῦ Ἱερομόναχου δὲν τὸ πίτυχε. Γιατὶ ἀπὸ τὴ βία τὴ μεγάλη, μὲ τὴν ὁποίαν ἐτίναξε τὴν πέτρα, ἐστραβοπάτησε καὶ ἔπεσε.
27. Ἔτσι ἐγὼ ἔφθασα στὸ κελὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Λύπιου παρηγορημένος ἀπὸ τὲς μυρωδίες τοῦ κάμπου, ἀπὸ τὰ γλυκότρεχα νερὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν ἀστρόβολον οὐρανό, ὁ ὁποῖος ἐφαινότουνα ἀποπάνου ἀπὸ τὸ κεφάλι μου μία Ἀνάσταση.

CHAPTER 2

The Monk strives to console himself

1. Well then: the Woman's body was small and wrinkled,
2. And her chest was almost always scarred from the leeches she would put to suck out her consumption, and her breasts hung like tobacco pouches.
3. And that small body always walked quickly, and her joints appeared unhinged.
4. Her face had the shape of a shoe-horn, and there was a long stretch from the tip of her chin to the top of her head,
5. On which there was a coiled braid and on it a huge comb.
6. And whoever wanted to approach the Woman to measure her would have found one-fourth of her height on her head.
7. And her cheek oozed pus, and it was at times lively and at other times pimpled and withered.
8. And every so often she would open a big mouth to ridicule others and show her small and rotten lower front teeth, which met the long, pure white uppers.
9. Young though she was, her temples and forehead and eyebrows and drooping nose made her seem aged,
10. Utterly aged—especially when she would rest her head on her right fist to plan wickedness,
11. And that crone-like face was lit by two shining, coal-black eyes, one of which was slightly crossed,
12. And they darted here and there seeking evil, and then found it even where it did not exist.
13. And in her eyes there flashed something which made you think that madness had either just left her or was about to boil up.
14. And this was the abode of her wicked, sinning soul.
15. And she showed trickery both in her speech and her silence.
16. And when she whispered to destroy someone's reputation, her voice was like the rustle of straw trodden by a thief's foot.
18. And when she spoke aloud, her tone was that which is used to mock others.
19. And yet, when she was alone, she would go to the mirror and laugh and weep as she gazed,
20. And she believed she was the most beautiful woman in the Heptanese.
21. She was as skillful as Death in separating couples and siblings.
22. And whenever she dreamed of the lovely form of her sister, she woke frightened.
23. Envy, hatred, suspicion, and falsehood gripped her insides continuously,
24. Like the neighborhood's slum-children, ragged and dirty, who ring the festal-bells and drive people crazy.

ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ 2

Η ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ ΤΗΣ ΖΑΚΥΘΟΣ. Ο ΙΕΡΟΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΠΟΛΕΜΑΕΙ ΝΑ ΠΑΡΗΓΟΡΗΘΗ

1. Τὸ λοιπὸν τὸ κορμὶ τῆς γυναικὸς ἤτανε μικρὸ καὶ παρμένο,
2. Καὶ τὸ στῆθος σκεδὸν πάντα σημαδεμένο ἀπὸ τὲς ἀδδέλλες ποὺ ἔδανε γιὰ νὰ ρουφήξουν τὸ τηχτικό, καὶ ἀπὸ κάτου ἐκρεμόνταν δύο δυζιὰ ὡσὰν καπνοσακοῦλες.
3. Καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ μικρὸ κορμὶ ἐπερπατοῦσε γοργότατα, καὶ οἱ ἁρμοί της ἐφαινόντανε ξεκλείδωτοι.
4. Εἶχε τὸ μοῦτρο της τὴ μορφὴ τοῦ καλαποδιοῦ, καὶ ἔβλεπες ἕνα μεγάλο μάκρο ἂν ἐκοίταζες ἀπὸ τὴν ἄκρη τοῦ πηγουνιοῦ ὡς τὴν ἄκρη τοῦ κεφαλιοῦ,
5. Εἰς τὴν ὁποία ἤτανε μία πλεξίδα στρογγυλεμένη καὶ ἀπὸ πάνου ἕνα χτένι θεόρατο.
6. Καὶ ὅποιος ἤθελε σιμώση τὴν πιθαμὴ γιὰ νὰ μετρήση τὴ γυναίκα, ἤθελ' εὕρη τὸ τέταρτο τοῦ κορμιοῦ στὸ κεφάλι.
7. Καὶ τὸ μάγουλό της ἐξερνοῦσε σάγριο, τὸ ὁποῖο (ἦταν) πότε ζωντανὸ καὶ πότε πονιδιασμένο καὶ μαραμένο.
8. Καὶ ἄνοιγε κάθε λίγο ἕνα μεγάλο στόμα γιὰ ν' ἀναγελάση τοὺς ἄλλους, καὶ ἔδειχνε τὰ κάτου δόντια τὰ μπροστινὰ μικρὰ καὶ σάπια, ποὺ ἐσμίγανε μὲ τὰ ἀπάνου ποὖτανε λευκότατα καὶ μακρία.
9. Καὶ μόλον ποὖτανε νιά, οἱ μηλίγγοι καὶ τὸ μέτωπο καὶ τὰ φρύδια καὶ ἡ κατεβασία τῆς μύτης γεροντίστικα . . .

25. But speaking constantly of other women's sins gave her life and warmth,
26. And she would savor its sweetness until she could plot again, alone.
27. In sum, she subsisted on evil deeds.
28. But when she heard people call her ugly, her self-esteem was shattered, and she sinned.
29. And in the end she lost power, etc.

CHAPTER 3

The women of Missolongi

1. And it came to pass at this time that the Turks besieged Missolongi, and Zakynthos would shake from the constant cannon-fire, frequently all day and sometimes all night.
2. And some of the Missolongian women would wander about, begging for their husbands, sons, and brothers who were fighting.
3. At first they felt ashamed of going out and they waited until dark before extending their hand, since they were not accustomed.
4. For they used to have servants, and, on their vast estates, many goats and cows and sheep.
5. They therefore grew impatient and would often run to the window, watching for sunset so that they could go out.
6. But when their needs increased, they lost all shame, and were running about all day long.
7. And when they grew tired, they would sit on the beach and listen, for they were afraid Missolongi would fall.
8. And people saw them hurrying along the crossroads, to houses, upstairs and downstairs, to churches and chapels, begging.
9. And they would receive money and bandages for the wounded.
10. And no one refused them, for the requests of these women were often accompanied by cannon-fire from Missolongi, and the earth trembled beneath our feet.
11. And even the poorest gave their pennies, crossing themselves and looking towards Missolongi and weeping.

CHAPTER 4

The women of Missolongi go begging and the Woman of Zakynthos is busy

1. Meanwhile, the Woman of Zakynthos was holding her daughter on her knee, trying to win her over.

2. So the madwoman tied her daughter's hair—which the child had tossed about in her restlessness—behind her ears with a ribbon, and kissing the little girl's eyes said,
3. "My love, my darling, be a good girl so you can get married, and then we'll come and go and look at people, and sit together at the window to read the Good Book and the Arabian Nights."
4. And stroking her and kissing her eyes and hands, she placed the child on a chair, saying to her, "See, here's a small looking glass. See how pretty you are, just like me!"
5. And the daughter, who was not accustomed to good manners, quieted down and wept for joy.
6. And behold there was a great clatter of footsteps, growing ever louder.
7. And she stood still, gazing at the door. Her nostrils flared.
8. And behold the women of Missolongi appeared before her. They pressed their right hands to their breasts and bowed, and remained silent and motionless.
9. "What is this? What are we going to do, play a game? What do you want, ladies? You made so much noise dragging your shoes coming up here, I think you came to give me orders."
10. And they all remained silent and motionless. But one said, "You're right. You're in your own country and in your own home, and we're strangers who must always be pushed around."
11. And then the Woman of Zakynthos interrupted her and retorted, "Schoolmistress, you lost everything, but from what I hear you still have your tongue.
12. "I am in my own country and my own home? And were you not 'your ladyship' in your country and in your home?
13. "And what did you lack? And what harm did the Turks do you? Didn't they leave you food, slaves, orchards, riches? And, God be praised! you had more than I have.
14. "Did I perhaps tell you to attack the Turks, since you now come to beg from me and to rebuke me?
15. "Oh yes! You came out to be heroes. You women went to war—a fine thing to want to be outfitted with rifles and long skirts! Or did you wear trousers, too? And at first you did something, since you took the poor Turkish lads by surprise.
16. "And how could anyone ever have suspected such treachery? Was it God's will? Were you not meddling with Him night and day?
17. "It's as if I were to plunge a knife into my husband's throat tomorrow morning—Devil take him!
18. "And now that you see it's going sour for you, you want to throw the burden on me.
19. "Very well! Tomorrow Missolongi falls. All my hopes rest on the kings, to put the crazy Greeks in their place.
20. "And those who survive the massacre come to Zakynthos so that we can take care of them, and they rebuke us on a full stomach."

21. She was briefly silent, looking the women of Missolongi in the eye.
22. "I know what I'm talking about, don't I? Now, what are you waiting for? Do you perhaps find satisfaction in hearing me talk?
23. "You have nothing better to do than beg. And, if we tell the truth, I think it must be a palliative for the shameless.
24. "But I'm busy. You hear? I'm busy!" As she shouted this, she was no taller than a short stove-pipe, but she seemed of normal height,
25. Since she had risen on tiptoe in her rage and barely touched the floor. And she glared, and her good eye appeared crossed and her crossed eye straightened out. And her face was like the plaster cast an artist puts on the face of a corpse.
26. And anyone who saw her resume her usual form would say: "Perhaps the Devil seized her because of her hatred of people, but then he changed his mind and let her go."
27. And her daughter looked at her and screamed, and the servants forgot their hunger, and the women of Missolongi left quietly.
28. Whereupon the Woman of Zakynthos, placing her hand over her heart, sighed deeply and said,
29. "How my heart pounds, my Lord, because you made me so good!
30. "Those whores made me ill! All the women in the world are whores!
31. "But you, my child, you won't be a whore like my sister and the other women around here!
32. "Better dead! And you are frightened, my darling. Come, be still, because if you get up from that chair I'll call those witches back and they'll eat you."
33. And the servants had gone to the kitchen, without waiting for the Woman's orders, and there began to speak of their hunger.
34. And then the Woman went into her house.
35. And shortly thereafter, came a great silence, and I heard the bed creak, at first a little, then more. And sighs and moans were heard among the creaking,
36. Such as unfortunate porters make when they carry an unbearable burden on their back.
37. And I, Dionysios the Monk, fled from the scandalous place. And as I was going out the door, I met the Woman's husband on his way up.

CHAPTER 5

A prophecy on the fall of Missolongi

1. And I followed the women of Missolongi who had scattered along the shore, and I watched them from behind a fence.
2. And each took out what she had collected, and they made a pile.
3. And one of them, palm outstretched, sifting the sand, cried, "Sisters!

4. "Listen! Did Missolongi ever make such a tremor before? Perhaps it's victorious, perhaps it's fallen."
5. I turned to go and saw behind the church (find out its name) a little old lady who had set small candles in the grass and was burning incense. The candles shone in the green, and clouds of incense were rising.
6. And she raised her withered hands, holding pieces of incense and weeping, and she prayed, moving her toothless mouth.
7. And a great commotion was within me and in spirit I was borne to Missolongi. And I saw neither the fortress, nor the village, nor the encampment, nor the houses, nor the salt lake. And a cloud of smoke, full of flashes, thunder and lightning, completely covered everything.
8. And I lifted up my eyes and hands to Heaven to pray with all my soul's fervor, and I saw a woman, lyre in hand, lit by an unwavering sparkle, standing in the midst of the smoke.
9. And no sooner had I time to marvel upon her dress, black as rabbit's blood, and her eyes, and the rest, she stood in the smoke. She looked at the battle, and thousands of sparks flying high touched her dress and died.
10. She spread her fingers across the lyre and I heard her sing the following:

    "At dawn I set out on
    the path of the sun,
    on my shoulder my lyre
    which justice has won.
    From where the sun rises
    to the place where it sets . . ."

11. And when the Goddess had finished her words, our men raised a terrible cry for their victory. And I could no longer see them or anything else, and my insides were fearfully shaken again, and I thought I had gone deaf and blind.
12. And in a little while I saw the old lady in front of me, saying, "God be praised. Father, I thought something had happened to you. I called you, I shook you, and you didn't hear anything, eyes fixed on nothing, even though just now the earth was heaving up like boiling water. Now that my candles and incense are finished, it's quiet. Do you think our side has won?"
13. And I turned to go, with Death in my heart. And the old lady, after kissing my hand, genuflected and said, "How icy your hand is . . ."

CHAPTER 6

The future becomes the present.
Wickedness is the end.

1. And I looked around and saw nothing and said,
2. "The Lord wants me to see no more." And turning around I set out for St. Lypios.
3. But I heard the earth tremble beneath my feet and a multitude of lightning flashes filled the air, the brightness ever increasing. And I was frightened, since the time was near savage midnight,
4. So frightened that I groped before me, moving like a blind man.
5. And I found myself behind a mirror, between it and the wall. The mirror was as high as the room.
6. And a loud voice struck my ear, saying,
7. "Monk Dionysios, the future will now become the present for you. Wait and behold God's judgment!"
8. And a second voice repeated these words, stuttering.
9. And the second voice was that of an old man I had known who had died. And I marvelled, since it was the first time I had heard a human soul stutter. And I heard a third sound, a murmuring, like a wind in the reeds, but I heard no words.
10. And I looked upwards to learn where those voices were coming from and saw nothing but two long thick pegs protruding from the wall. The mirror rested on them, bound in the middle.
11. And sighing deeply, as a man who finds he has been tricked, I detected the smell of a corpse.
12. And I came out and looked around and saw . . .
13. I saw a bed opposite the mirror in the corner of the room, and near the bed a light. And no one seemed to be in the bed, and over it clustered a swarm of flies.
14. And on the pillow I thought I saw a head, motionless and gaunt, such as sailors tattoo on their arms and chest.
15. And I said to myself, "The Lord sent me this vision as a dark sign of His will."
16. And so I approached the bed, fervently praying to the Lord to grant me understanding of this enigma.
17. And something in those filthy, tattered, bloodstained sheets moved.
18. And as I looked closer at the face on the pillow, my insides were shaken, for by a single twitch of her mouth I recognized the Woman of Zakynthos, asleep, shrouded to her neck, all wasted with consumption.

CHAPTER 7

Vengeance: "I won't give you even a crumb"

1. But I looked closely at that sleep and I understood that it would last a long while, to give place to the other kind that is without dreams.
2. And since neither friend nor relation nor doctor nor priest was present, I bent and gently urged her to confess.
3. And she half-opened her mouth and bared her teeth. She slept on.
4. And behold, the first, the mysterious voice, said in my right ear, "The wretch always enjoys imagining gallows, prisons, Turks conquering, and Greeks being slaughtered.
5. "At this moment she is dreaming of what she always desires, to see her sister begging, and that is why you just saw her smile."
6. And the second voice repeated the same words, stuttering, with many oaths, as had been his wont when alive:
7. "Truly, b-b-by the Virgin Mary, listen here, t-t-truly, b-b-by St. Nicholas, listen here, tr-tr-truly, by St. Sp-Spyridon, truly, by the sac-sac-sacred mysteries of God. . . ." And behold once again came the murmuring, like a wind in the reeds.
8. Suddenly from the sheet, the Woman thrust her hand and lashed about and the flies scattered.
9. And through their buzzing, I heard the woman shout, "Get out of here, you whore! I won't give you even a crumb!"
10. And she flung her hand about, as if to push away her sister who she imagined had come to beg from her.
11. And she shook off most of the filthy sheet, and she seemed like a dead cat uncovered by a gust of wind on a dungheap.
12. But her hand struck a coffin that suddenly appeared there, and the sinner's dream was interrupted.
13. And she opened her eyes and shuddered at the coffin, afraid that she had been placed there for dead.
14. And she was about to scream out that she was not dead, but behold a woman's head appeared from the coffin. She, too, was wasted with consumption, and though older much resembled the Woman.
15. She leaped to the left side of the bed, but her jaw struck a second coffin, and from this came an old man's head, the old man whose voice I had recognized.
16. And thus I understood that the Woman would find herself surrounded by her father and mother and daughter before she herself was dead.
17. And I shivered and turned away, and studied the mirror again, which showed only the Woman and me and the light.
18. Because the bodies of the other three were at rest in their graves, among those who will be resurrected when the Trumpet sounds,

19. Together with me, Dionysios the Monk, with the Woman of Zakynthos, with all the children of Adam in the great valley of Jehosaphat.
20. And I began to meditate upon God's judgment which would be manifest today, and my vision (fixed on the mirror) was blurred by my thoughts,
21. But shortly thereafter my thoughts were confused by what I saw,
22. For as I kept looking here and there, as a man, pondering, strives to understand a difficult matter,
23. I saw from the keyhole that something was obstructing the light. And the thing remained a while and then was gone,
24. And then from the other room, I heard a murmur and understood nothing, and I looked back at the place of the vision.
25. And there was deep silence and not even the buzzing of one of the many flies that were all swarming on the mirror
26. Which was blotched the color of the black velvet mourners wear when a family member is gone for ever.

CHAPTER 8

The belt

1. But her mother, without looking towards the door, without looking at her daughter, without looking at anyone, said,
2. "At this moment your child's eye and ear are observing you through the keyhole, and she is abandoning you because she is afraid of your evil. Thus you abandoned me, too.
3. "For this reason I cursed you in my soul's bitterness, kneeling, disheveled, when all the church bells were ringing on Easter Sunday.
4. "I cursed you a second time before I died, and now I do so again, you evil, twisted woman!
5. "And the triple curse shall be true and quick upon your body and soul, just as the three faces of the Holy Trinity are true and quick in the corporeal and spiritual worlds."
6. Saying this, she took out a belt—her husband's—coiled it three times and tossed it at the daughter's face.
7. And the old man stuttered these last words, and like a half-dead bird, the little girl quivered on the red pillow.

CHAPTER 9

The Woman of Zakynthos receives her final test

1. And they vanished with the caskets, and the Woman, left alone, felt strong enough to spring up.
2. She rushed out, leaping high, like a summer comet, ten yards long streaking across the sky,
3. And she dashed herself against the mirror and the flies swarmed, buzzing at her face,
4. And she, thinking them her parents, ran here and there,
5. Clasping and unclasping her fists as she tried to defend herself, she found the belt and began to lash out with it.
6. And the more she lashed out the louder the flies buzzed, and the more terrified she became, until she finally went mad. And she lost her reason but not her vices—suspicion, cruelty, evil, scorn, etc.
7. As she ran about in a night-dress which in her stinginess she short-ended, she looked in the mirror,
8. And she stopped, not recognizing herself, and she pointed and laughed.
9. "Oh what a shape! What a shape! What a night-dress! Ah, I understand. What trickster can hide his cunning from me! That night-dress makes me realize he is pretending to be mad, to be ready to seduce someone!
10. "But who is it? To tell the truth, it's a bit like her . . . Ah! It's you! Caricature! Whore! Madhouse-flyspeck! Sow's blear! Turd! Ass! Shit-mouth!
11. "At last what I predicted has come true for you and your beloved friends. You haven't even a cup left to beg with.
12. "You're in my hands. What do you want? A donation from me? I'll give you one now. To see if you'll still be able to say I'm mad."
13. Saying this she spun around and lost in madness hurled herself into a dance, and her short night-dress twisted up in her face. And her hair, black and oily, like baby snakes who tear one another to pieces in the dust.
14. And in the frenzy of her dance she made a loop with the belt, and continued dancing until she had made a noose.
15. And she said, "Come behind the mirror with me, and I'll make you a donation,
16. "Because once in a while that ass of a doctor comes—then he'll have you, too—and he has got it into his head that I'm sick."
17. And she went behind the mirror and I heard her create great confusion.
18. She gave a loud laugh, which the room echoed back, and cried, "Here's your donation, darling!"

19. Then I fell on my knees to beg God not to let her be in frenzy during the short time left for her to live, and to stop her wickedness.
20. And when I had finished my prayer, I looked at the ground behind the mirror, believing she had fainted, and she was not there.
21. And I felt the blood drain from my cheeks,
22. And my head fell on my chest and I said to myself,
23. "The Lord knows where the wretch has gone, while I prayed for her with all my soul's fervor."
24. And I walked forward, my head bent in thought, to go find her.
25. And I felt something strike me on the forehead and I fell backwards, startled.
26. And I saw the Woman of Zakynthos hanging. Her body swayed.

CHAPTER 10

Epilogue

1. And I stood up, utterly terrified, crying, "Remember me, Lord, remember me, Lord!" And I heard the footsteps of men along the stairs.
2. And they were about fifteen men, all masked, except five, whom I recognized well.
3. The one [depict all five of them] . . .
4. And because, without loving the Woman, they used to visit her house often, they all began howling.
5. And I turned to them and said, "Get out! Get out! Your sins have dragged you here! This place invites the thunderbolt because God hates it."
6. And they were frightened but did not depart.
7. And I stood silently, searching for something to say to make them go.
8. And I said, "My sons, hear the words of Dionysios, the Monk. I go to pray and I leave you here.
9. "Search your conscience, M., and you, G., and you, K., and you, P., and you, T.—I don't know the rest of you—and consider what can happen if you stay. The police know you; and if they find you here, they will say that you were the ones who strangled her."
10. Then I saw them all turn tail, one pushing the other, in haste to be the first to escape, and they ran down the stairs with such noise I thought most of them had crumpled down.

REVIEW OF BOOKS

I

PHAIDON K. BOUBOULIDES, *Prosolomika*: Volume IV. *Antonios Martelaos ke i Peri Afton.* [*Antonios Martelaos and His Circle*] Athens, Michael D. Petropoulos, 1977. pp. 111 + 1 plate. Paper.

This volume is the fourth in a series about literary figures on the Modern Greek scene prior to the national poet of Greece, Dionysios Solomos. Previous volumes presented the works of S. Xanthopoulos, A. Sighouros, N. Koutouzis, and Anonymous verse texts. A projected fifth volume will cover the remainder and any additions.

Little is known about the life of Antonios Martelaos, and what has been said is undocumented. Professor Bouboulides provides an annotated work based on original documents, wherever they can be found. The greater part of the works of Antonios Martelaos has been lost. Born of a noble family in Zakynthos in 1754, Martelaos was the son of a priest of the same name and of Anna, daughter of Ioannis Soummakis. Though declared a "Reader," he was clearly, never ordained; some thought he was destined to succeed his father as priest of the Church of the Holy Ascension. Exact details about his education are not known, but he was reputed to be a teacher of Greek and of wide learning. He married Vasiliki, daughter of Demetrios Martelaos-Jelaïtos, and they had a daughter. He died in 1818.

Antonios Martelaos declared his support for the French Revolution and later for Napoleon Bonaparte who, he hoped, would help the cause of Greek liberation. Extant works include a "Hymn to France," a Marseilles Martial Song, fragments of others, a work "To My Student Nicolo Foscolo," translations, hymns, a Canon of the Paraklete to St. Dionysios (in eight odes), and church speeches on fasting, faith, the glory of man, and prayer. Unpublished works include an epithalamion, a hymn to Georgia, and a song to freedom. Other works reflect topics of his day: France and Napoleon, Voltaire, and the question of the dissemination of education. Works lost or wrongly attributed to him, include a hymn on the election of Parthenios Nerantzis, a hymn to the Russian Emperor Paul, a manual of Greek grammar, a funerary oration, and various speeches.

Phaidon Bouboulides' book offers much desirable information about Martelaos, including reproduction of his verse texts, two wills with accompanying notes, a special vocabulary, an index of proper names, and an introduction and texts of two authors influenced by Martelaos—Nikolaos Logothetis-Gouliaris and Nikalaos Kourtsolas.

Though these figures lack high literary rank, they are historically important for a full understanding of the development of Modern Greek literature.

IOANNIS D. BOUGHATSIS, *"To Attikon Imerologhion"* [*The Attic Almanac*] *tou Irineou K. Asopiou.* Athens, 1978. pp. 114 2 illustrations and 1 plate. Paper.

Irineos Asopios (1825-1905), the son of a distinguished scientist, was born on the island of Kerkyra, attended the School of Philosophy and then of Medicine at the University of Athens, received his doctorate from the University of Pisa in Italy, and spent four years in Paris where his interests definitely turned toward literature and journalism after intense contact with some of the great men of letters of his time. Returning to Greece, he edited the journal *Chrysalis* (January 1863 to December 1866). Intent upon bringing to the attention of Greece the current ideas of Europe, in 1867 Asopios founded *Attic Almanac* [*Attikon Imerologhion*] whose purpose was "to familiarize the intellectual public of Greece particularly with the philological movement of the West and through manifold translations and commentaries contribute to a regenerative effort" [p. 3]. He was referred to as the "patriarch of popular philology" and was recognized as the first person formally to introduce modern literature to Greece.

Asopios' *Attic Almanac* was published from 1867 to 1869, when it was suspended. Resumed in 1871, it was suspended again in 1890 and resumed for a final volume in 1896. In 1888, a pioneering women's section was added. Written in katharevousa, the *Almanac* contained 11,550 pages of which 2,850 were written by Asopios. Prose texts of quality were included, especially topical commentaries and humorous articles. Among Asopios' best contributions, begun in 1872, were his "Epinomides" (pieces of comment and humor). The principal sections included the Almanac (daily, monthly or feast day), "Epinomis," Bouquet, History, Philology, Archaeology, Miscellany, and Poetry. All kinds of other minor features were also included, and noteworthy texts from French, German, English, Italian, and Russian were published in Greek translation with some poetry in French and Italian. About 240 plates generally without text were also published.

In an effort to make the work of Asopios more generally known and appreciated, I.D. Boughatsis has provided in this volume a bibliography of 1095 items from the *Almanac* and an index of the authors and the proper names of the articles of the bibliography, and the titles of the plates as a part of a larger bibliographic study of journals, almanacs, and newspapers under the direction of Professor Ph. K. Bouboulides.

GLYKERIA PROTOPAPAS-BOUBOULIDOU, *Georgios Paraskhos.* [*George Paraskhos*] Ioannina, Greece, 1977. pp. 39 + 1 plate.

The present compact but very useful work is in part a reprint of an article that appeared in volume VI of *Dodona: The Annual of the School of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina* [pp. 55-69] and has since been supplemented in

this format by an anthology of the poetry of George Paraskhos (1820-1886), a representative of the Athenian School for whom patriotic, religious, and romantic elements are paramount, combined with exaltation of the spirit of free thinking but also embracing the characteristics of European romanticism with language that ranges from the most demotic to archaic. In technical, metrical and poetic terms, he is a secondary figure in an atmosphere created by the brothers Alexander and Pan. Soutsos and by George Zalokostas. Professor Protopapas-Bouboulidou's work provides an overview of Paraskhos and his work, and a working bibliography.

Born on the island of Chios, saved from the Turkish massacre by the French, Paraskhos fled with his father to the Peloponnese, and in Nauplion met many of the legendary figures of the Greek War of Independence--both military and literary. Educated in Greek and French, he remained consistently a patriot and admirer of the manners and works of the generation of 1821. He began to write in 1838. Original poems, translations, prose texts were published sporadically. No complete edition of his work appeared in his lifetime. The best criticism of Paraskhos, according to Professor Protopapas-Bouboulidou, is probably that of the noted Palamas. George Paraskhos was a mediocre poet of greater learning than his more poetically-gifted brother Achilles. Poems, versified texts with a dramatic character, prose texts (speeches and narrations), and translations from works of classical antiquity and European literature are what he has left us. Archaism, patriotism, and a melancholy attitude characterize them, fitting qualities of nineteenth-century Romanticism.

What emerges from Professor Protopapas-Bouboulidou's study is a second-rate figure, full of enthusiasm, knowledgeable and well-meaning, but an "incomplete" author, an amateur who never quite succeeded in the literary world and whose impact on the subsequent development of Modern Greek literature has been gradually fading.

ANESTIS I. GHANOTAKIS, *Ghrizi Horizontes: Ekloyi Piimaton 1962-1976* [*Grey Horizons: Selection of Poems 1962-1976*]. Athens: Kedhros, 1977. pp. 55. Paper.

In 1975, the first small collection of poems in Greek by Anestis Ghanotakis was published in Boston *Poems 1962-1973*. Now an enlarged edition of his poetry has appeared under the aegis of a respectable Athenian publisher. Transatlantic notice has now clearly been taken of a Greek-American poet, born of parents from Rhodes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, who studied at the University of Manchester in England, at Harvard and Boston Universities and who now lives in Arlington, Massachusetts. Anestis Ghanotakis is professionally an economist employed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Health Department. He has taught in various colleges in the Boston area and has published his poetry in various Greek and Greek-American period-

icals. He is also a painter who has had a number of exhibits in Boston.

Anestis Ghanotakis' 1975 collection contained thirty-two poems. The current edition contains thirty-four. The same crystalline quality of the previous collection characterizes this one. Critics have described his poetry as Cavafian: it is, no doubt, urban as well as urbane, cosmopolitan as well as historically rooted in Hellenism and in his own experience with Africa, Europe, and America. Though some glimpses of joy mark this new collection, it also clearly reflects disillusionment with the effects of urban decay, moral and physical, on the humanity of the individual—the loneliness, the despair, the insecurity, the injustice, the isolation, the dehumanization of the individual in the modern Western world notwithstanding all the wonders of modern science and technology. There is the fear too that Hellenic identity—and all the good it has for so long represented—will be swallowed up by a modern Babylonia. *Grey Horizons* shows a poet involved in a kind of reflective brooding on the contemporary scene. His is not a biting critique of the present human condition but a sad, contemplative commentary that will surely cause the reader to re-examine the hurried and often thoughtless pursuits of contemporary life.

GEORGE THANIEL, *Ta Epitheta: Piimata 1968-1980*. [*The Adjectives: Poems*]. Athens: Amarantos, 1980. pp. 126. Paperback. No price indicated.

GEORGE THANIEL, *Poems in English*. Toronto: "Amaranth Editions," 1979. pp. 55. Paperback. No price indicated.

George Thaniel, born in 1938 and raised in Greece, has lived in Canada since 1964 and is currently Associate Professor of Modern Greek at the University of Toronto. He is a poet who writes in Greek and in English. Six little volumes of his poetry have appeared in Greek: *Cycle* (1957); *The Silver Rain* (1959); *The Nails* (1968); *The Vessel* (1974); *The Lettuce* (1976); *The Adjectives* (1980). He has also published in English *The Linchpin* (1969) and *Poems in English* (1979). His works have appeared in various Greek and North American journals. In Greek and in English, he may be described as an epigrammatist.

By his own admission "the drama which underlies most of his poems is, however, checked by an inborn thoughtfulness and a subtle sense of irony." He is much concerned with the proper use of metaphor to assure quality in poetic expression. He should be included in any survey of Modern Greek poets available to North American readers because he is recognized as a Modern Greek poet by the Greeks themselves. Nobel Prize winner George Seferis said of George Thaniel's poetry, "It has been a very long time since I've read such pure poetry, in Greek." Thaniel writes from experience but he also draws on the classical literary tradition. He sees poetic meaning even in ordinary realities as they sharpen existential questions which must be asked again and again. He writes

with clarity and pointedness.

Poems in English reveal Professor Thaniel as a classicist. The first section, "Villa Vergiliana," was inspired by the poet's two visits to Italy in 1968 and 1978-1979, and is named after the Villa at Cumae, where members of the Vergilian Society of America usually reside. Echoes of Vergil, Horace, Suetonius, Propertius, and Sophocles are present but the classical element is closely focused on our own contemporary predicament:

> These skeletons
> these telling figures
> should not inspire dread to
> our eyes
> but rather bring us a catharsis
> to some of us long overdue.
>
> Behind our ivory sunglasses
> the cameras the guidebooks
> under our hats of straw
> let us review the prism of
> our vanities
> ere the lava of time presses
> heavily
> upon us all.
>
> ("The Skeletons of Pompeii," p. 21)

or by "Stone Throwing":

> He throws stones here
> and he is hit by stones there
> the other sits again
> counts the stones.
>
> (p. 57)

Many of the poems in the current collection are dedicated to individuals well-known in Modern Greek literary circles, like Nikos Kachtistis, Nasos Vayenas, Pantelis Prevelakis, Maro Seferis, Kostas Kazazis, Kimon Friar, and John P. Anton, to mention a few. Classical themes—the Trojan Horse, Orpheus and Eurydice, Pindar, the Villa of Hadrian—illustrate the poet's belief that "poetry is the visible hand of memory" and that "reality cannot be ultimately rationalized" but "that a sense of the ineffable and a kind of awe about the world are the best starting as well as finishing points for any poet." Both *Ta Epitheta* and *Poems in English* amply fortify the assertion that George Thaniel is a Greek poet of considerable power and seriousness.

A. PERNARIS, *Hippokrini: Piimata* [*Hippocrene: Poems*] Nicosia: "Theopres" Edition, Ltd., 1977. pp. 56. Paper.

A Cypriot author who has written poetry, plays, literary studies, school books, and a *History of Cypriot Literature,* A. Pernaris clearly reflects the current tragedy of Cyprus in his latest collection of poetry called *Hippokrini.* In antiquity "Hippokrini" was the name of a spring on Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses and Apollo and hence a source of poetic inspiration. According to legend, that spring suddenly gushed forth at the stamping foot of the winged horse Pegasus. The poetry of this volume was evoked by the trampling foot of the Turkish forces who mercilessly invaded Cyprus in 1974, rendered homeless over 200,000 Greek Cypriots, ravaged and occupied the richest forty percent of the island. The melancholy of that national tragedy permeates

the first fifteen poems of this collection; as the poet ironically notes, "In the storm the calm of the soul is the calm of death." Pernaris, however, warns against a pessimistic predeterminism and advocates a new confidence in the ability of his people to continue the struggle for a renewed national life, for regeneration through faith.

In the second section, twenty-nine poems reflect an alienation from extreme emotionality, and a pursuit of a measured dramatic realism. Both sections demonstrate that for a Cypriot there can be no real separation between the personal and the national, between the world of nature and the world of man.

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II

Notes on Modern Greek Studies

The fate as well as the glory of Modern Greek studies in America has been bound with the resourcefulness, tenacity, and luck of individual scholars and men of letters. Except for men like Kimon Friar and George Savidis who seem to practice a kind of "shuttle diplomacy" between Greece and North America, most Modern Greek scholars and intellectuals are anchored in some big city, usually at a university. They function mostly alone or with a minimum of help from others; their achievements are, thus, all the more impressive. Few people in Greece know their work, and the matter is further complicated by the fact that some of those few who do know, prefer to suppress their knowledge for reasons of their own.* American Neo-Hellenists like Peter Bien and Edmund Keeley may be able to move with greater ease among publishers than their Greek-born colleagues, but the truth is that almost all Neo-Hellenists confront great difficulties in their effort to teach, write, translate, and publish their work in book form and in journals. These individuals are pioneers in a region whose borders are uncertain and whose terrain still needs much exploration and development. One thinks of the Modern Greek Studies Association and its fine work in terms of Symposia, Seminars, and publications, of the editors of *The Charioteer* who have sacrificed much time and energy to ensure its continuation, of the group of men around *The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora,* and of the late G.G. Arnakis, whose heirs must be praised for their resolve to continue publication of *Neo-Hellenika* (now edited by Dr. C. Proussis). Many other such pioneers with many more contributions are worthy of mention. The list would be long.

Here I will single out Theofanis Stavrou of the University of Minnesota and the impressive array of "events" and publications with which he has enriched the field of Modern Greek studies during the last few years. As Professor of History, Stavrou has a world view of Modern Greek culture and has tried to honor as many aspects of it as he could. Since 1978, the annual celebrations of Greek Letters at the University of Minnesota are admirably illustrative. These celebrations

that include both lectures and displays have been matched by publications, each of which makes a slightly different but valid contribution. Ritsos' *Dhekaochto Lianotraghoudha tis Pikris Patridhas* [*Eighteen Short Songs of the Bitter Motherland*] have been printed in the beautiful handwriting of the poet, together with his own illustrations and a competent translation by Amy Mims. Kimon Friar's *The Spiritual Odyssey of Nikos Kazantzakis* provides a good synopsis of the great Cretan's *agon* with himself, his "real enemy" (in the Seferis sense of the term, "the stranger and enemy, we've seen him in the mirror.") John Anton's *Critical Humanisms as a Philosophy of Culture: The Case of E. P. Papanoutsos* reminds us of both Anton's older tribute to the renowned Greek thinker by his translation (with B. Coukis) of Papanoutsos' *Foundations of Knowledge* and of the latter's recent election to the Greek Academy. It must be noted that shortly before the Second World War in Greece, Anton had a decisive student-teacher relationship with Papanoutsos. The translation by Jean Raphael Demos of Ioanna Tsatsos' *O Adhelfos mou Yorghos Seferis* [*My Brother, George Seferis*] makes that interesting book available to the English-speaking public. Even more deserving of English translation are Seferis' diaries; their cosmopolitan air and insights would certainly appeal to an international audience. Decavalles' *Pandelis Prevelakis and the Value of a Heritage* (which includes Prevelakis' *To Rethymnos os Iphos Zois* in a translation by Jean H. Woodhead) also matches one of the aforementioned celebrations of Greek Letters (1979). If Kimon Friar is the Greek-American authority on Kazantzakis, Andonis Decavalles is certainly the corresponding authority on Prevelakis. [See also *The Charioteer* 16/17 (1974-1975) a special issue on Prevelakis with a thirty-page introduction by Decavalles; that issue was reviewed by the present writer in *The Athenian* (September 1977)].

Forthcoming is another book in this series, on Angelos Sikelianos, a sequel to the 1981 celebration of Greek Letters marking the thirtieth anniversary of the poet's death. Further good news is the University of Minnesota's decision to publish a *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook,* intended to be "a supplement to, rather than a rival of, any of the other journals in the field."

*I have in mind a miserly, not to say slanderous, article which appeared more than a year ago in the Athens daily *I Kathimerini* and was signed by a Greek writer who had spent two years in the U.S. on a scholarship but had failed to remain in the country as a university lecturer and chose to conceal as well as vent his anger in a supposedly objective account of the state of Modern Greek Studies in the U.S.

ANDONIS DECAVALLES, *Pandelis Prevelakis and the Value of a Heritage.* Edited and Introduced by Theofanis G. Stavrou (Minneapolis: The North Central Publishing Co., 1981).

Centrifugal and centripetal forces have been at work in Greek literature since the formation of the

Modern Greek state. The centrifugal Odysseus of Nikos Kazantzakis who leaves Ithaka for a second journey of no-return contrasts with the heroes of *Pandelis Prevelakis* who make at least conscious efforts to go back to their native land and try to find the lost center. Prevelakis is a Greek writer who trusts in tradition and has successfully tried over a period of fifty creative years, in fiction, poetry, drama, and criticism (consider, for instance, his recent, impressive study of the poetry of Yannis Ritsos), to tap the sources of tradition and raise his own bastions of resistance against the sterile *athymia* of the century and the confusion of literary styles.

Pandelis Prevelakis and the Value of a Heritage, this slim but beautiful volume that issued from the Second Annual Celebration of Modern Greek Letters at the University of Minnesota, is due homage, in English, to a Greek writer, who, though learned and eminently perceptive of foreign, that is, non-Greek, intellectual realities and literary trends, has chosen to stress the native ethos and adopt familiar forms of expression in his own work. After Prof. Stavrou's concise portrait of Prevelakis in the Introduction, Decavalles, the American authority on the Cretan writer, traces in a well-articulated essay (originally, the key lecture at the aforementioned Celebration of Modern Greek Letters), the enduring elements and the dominant traits of the *oeuvre* of Prevelakis: his integrity as a writer and his dynamic sense of tradition in its Cretan particularity. Decavalles discusses the intellectual history of Crete that involved El Greco, the so-called Cretan Renaissance of the seventeenth century, the difficult centuries of the Turkish occupation, and the more recent years involving the other great Cretan, Kazantzakis.

Prevelakis has responded to all of the above phenomena in the history of his native island. He has written scholarly studies on El Greco, while his *New Erotokritos* recalls V. Kornaros' *Erotokritos* of the Cretan Renaissance. Several of his "myth-histories" and his plays dramatize the struggles of Crete for liberation from foreign conquest, and he has viewed Kazantzakis (his senior by twenty-seven years) as both a mentor and a fellow-laborer in the paths of spiritual fulfillment. Prevelakis memorialized his native town, Rethymno, in a compact narrative, *The Chronicle of a City* (written early in his career). A review by Prevelakis himself of the same book (originally delivered as an address to his fellow Rethymniotes) in an excellent translation by Jean H. Woodhead, "Rethymno as a Style of Life," is published as a supplement in the volume discussed here, together with a seventeenth-century engraving of the town.

In his essay, Decavalles also discusses Prevelakis' dramas which are profound treatments of perennial human problems and dilemmas, existential and ethical, as well as his partly autobiographical prose trilogies *The Paths of Creation* and *Hermits and Outcasts.* Special attention is given to *The New Erotokritos,* the summation in poetry of all Prevelakis' work. The title and contents of this long poem—nine songs, or canticles—reaffirm the au-

thor's allegiance to his land and his Greek heritage.

This is a gem of a book, a worthy link in the distinguished series of Nostos publications, which also includes Kimon Friar's *The Spiritual Odyssey of Nikos Kazantzakis,* Yannis Ritsos' *Eighteen Short Songs of the Bitter Motherland,* and Ioanna Tsatsos' *My Brother George Seferis.*

X

PANOS IOANNIDHIS, *I Atheati Opsi. Dhiyimata.* [*The Invisible Side*] Nicosia: Kinyras, 1979. 92 pages.

Greek Cypriot literature has come of age, and one of the keenest Cypriot writers is undoubtedly Panos Ioannidhis. He has a masterful command of language, adroitly avoiding superfluities whether he uses ordinary Greek or, as in his plays, the Cypriot dialect; his heightened social awareness is striking—so, too, the brave, sometimes implacable surgery which he applies to the characters and events of his stories.

In previous works, Ioannidhis has treated themes that reflect the past, mythical and historical, of his island as well as its contemporary life. The five narratives of this collection, *The Invisible Side,* are based on recent Cypriot experience, the Turkish invasion and its effect on characters who represent a cross-section of society. An interesting point is that the various settings of these stories seem to follow a line from the North Eastern tip of Cyprus, at Carpasi, to Paphos, at the other end.

In "The Uniforms" and "The Suitcase" the Greek-Turk encounter works to a degree: in the first story, the characters are compelled by circumstances to transcend, briefly, the obstacles the war has raised between them; in the second, long-standing acquaintance between Greek and Turk is shattered by the pressures of the same war. In "The Escape" some deaf-mute children flee from their temporary "haven," returning to their former school and possibly to death in the occupied area. Theirs is a silent protest against the irrationality of their plight and the fact that nobody had the courage to explain to them, even in sign language, the cause of their exile. In "Another Schweitzer," the young physician Nicolaou learns that his idealistic resolve to help everybody, leads gradually to his own isolation. After a brief revolt against corruption, he resumes his habit of saying, "Yes, why not?" to his fellowmen, but no longer with any illusions as to the meaning or purpose of his acquiescence:

> He continued to say, "Yes, why not?" to human cowardice, to wretchedness. Why should he say "No"? Annita [the woman he loved] was lost from his life . . . half of Cyprus was lost and the whole of Famagusta . . . the war was lost. Why should the young men suffer? Treachery was complete. It is our duty to save, from now on, whatever we can, he thought.

In the last story—its name identifies the collection—the pseudonymous painter Zefteris Photinos, another *homme revolté* is against

the adulteration of a tract of land, Cavo Greco, whose original bed, full of bones, stones and serpents, is now hidden by vegetation. The change was caused by some refugees, followers of old Granpa Varnavas. Photinos is deeply shaken to discover that Maria, the girl he loves, has a dark side in her past: the child she clutches with desperate tenderness was fathered by the enemy during the war that has taken her husband's life. The story is a striking blend of Oedipean surprise and inevitability.

Every good writer offers a new vision of life, even when he reaffirms established realities. The vision of Ioannidhis is compassionate but not sentimental, and his irony does not dissipate after it makes its mark, but strikes deep into the paradox of human existence. Dialogue is woven skillfully, almost unobtrusively, into the description, and the language, rich and varied, spiced with Cypriot colloquialisms, never offends. The art of this writer compensates amply for whatever pain the reader may feel from stories that have welled up from first-hand experiences of human conflict and loss.

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III

ODYSSEUS TSAGARAKIS, *Open Roads*. Translated from the Greek by Jean H. Woodhead. Great Neck, N.Y.: Todd & Honeywell, 1981. 179 pp.

This is an unusual novel: set in a Cretan country village, ancient in ways of life and thought, the action occurs in modern times and dramatizes a contemporary problem. Christina, a lovely peasant girl who is deeply in love and about to be married to Achilles, a young tailor, discovers that a lump in her breast is malignant and requires a mastectomy.

The story is not about the operation itself, but about the psychological trauma that these two people experience before they are ready to face the fact that life, and love, can go on. The strength of the novel lies in Tsagarakis' ability to portray how this modern medical desecration of the body sears the souls of individuals whose entire value system is of another age.

The story could, also, be interpreted as a parable of Modern Greece where the soul of an ancient people is being scarred by the ruthless yet necessary demands of modern life, but this is not a political or symbolic novel. Tsagarakis has too much affection both for his characters and this simple life to be distracted by meanings beyond their particular experience. The strength of the novel is precisely that he makes the suffering of these two people too real to be reduced to symbols.

Ms. Woodhead's translation is clumsy in spots, particularly as to English equivalents for the Greek country idiom. But she does retain the straightforward simplicity of the original.

It is a pity that this novel is attracting little notice in America. Many readers would enjoy the book, regardless of any prior knowledge of or affection for things Greek.

James W. Manousos

IV

Voices of Modern Greece: Selected Poems of C.P. Cavafy, Angelos Sikelianos, George Seferis, Odysseus Elytis, and Nikos Gatsos, translated and edited by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Princeton Univ. Press, 1981.

Modern Greek poetry has had several significant developments since 1961 when the translator-editors of this anthology published *Six Poets of Modern Greece.* The winning of the Nobel Prize by Seferis in 1963 and by Elytis in 1979 was largely helped by their gifted English translators, among whom Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard have been prominent. Their translations of Cavafy (1975) and Seferis (1967) are well known; so, too, the translation of Elytis' *The Axion Esti* by Keeley and Savidis. Drastic revisions of their 1961 translations have made this new anthology a necessary response to the English-speaking world's increased interest in Modern Greek poetry.

Voices of Modern Greece is undoubtedly far superior to *Six Poets* in the quality of the revisions, the representative selection, and the more than fifty added poems. This anthology, though comparatively limited, is a stimulating introduction to some of the best of Modern Greek poetry.

ANGELOS SIKELIANOS. *Selected Poems,* translated and introduced by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Princeton Univ. Press, 1979).

In all respects a major figure in Modern Greek poetry during the first half of this century, Sikelianos embodied the poet *in excelsis.* His life and work inseparable, he was prophet and mystic, high priest and hierophant, the Dionysian visionary, in fact a kind of demi-god who, earth-bound, seemed to share physically and spiritually in nature's daemonic forces, as their procreative, revealing and transcendental voice. He is perhaps the most sensuous and yet most metaphysical poet of Modern Greece. His ties with the primeval and mythical, with the Pre-Socratic and the early ontological Greek mind, were deep. In his work, Dionysian, Eleusinian and Orphic elements converge with the mystical depths of Orthodox Christianity. To Sikelianos, Dionysus, Apollo and Christ were the divine offspring of Mother Earth-Persephone, expressing the essence of the Greek soul.

The works of Sikelianos are undoubtedly among the most difficult Greek texts to translate, for much of his power lies in his style. His often rhetorical effects are full of grandeur and ritualistic solemnity, a thunderous, resonant torrent, ranging from exuberance to tragic Aeschylean dignity. This is perhaps one reason why he is not well known abroad. Wisely the present translators have avoided his long, complex visions, and offer shorter poems through which he gained wide fame.

Ritsos in Parentheses, translations and introduction by Edmund Keeley. (Princeton University Press, 1979)

More than eighty books of poetry are the continuous record of the personal Odyssey of Ritsos and of his country's experience, particularly during the last fifty years, with several meaningful projections into mythical and cultural precedents. His creativity is astonishing: voluminous and innovative. The English translations available represent only a small portion of his work. Its variety has ranged, in manner and tone, from the traditional to the experimental, to the expressionistic and the surrealistic. Beyond his dogmatic, politically-inspired, at times emphatically communistic poems, are those which express a deeply humane acceptance of life. Several longer poems have been inspired by ancient tragic myths; many shorter pieces speak eloquently of his personal experience and of Greek reality at large.

In this selection are shorter poems which have often been translated. The title, *Parentheses,* as Keeley explains, "has more to do with the metaphor than with judgment in any case. I am not sure what Ritsos himself has in mind when he offers the term, but certain metaphoric possibilities suggest themselves if 'parentheses' are seen in the context of mathematics and symbolic logic, that is, as a way of designing separate groupings of symbols that form a unit or collective entity." The selections indicate different stages in the poet's career, each discussed in the translator's Introduction. The pictorial simplicity of these poems easily lends itself to English rendering, far more so than the rich imagery of Ritsos' longer, and more complex poems. This bilingual edition gives the knowing reader a welcome chance to enjoy the best of the two worlds.

ODYSSEUS ELYTIS, *Selected Poems,* chosen, translated, and introduced by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Penguin, 1981.

As an initiation to Elytis' poetry, this handy paperback of 115 pages has unquestionable value. The selections do not illustrate the full range of the poet's technical and thematic variety. The accuracy of some of the translations may be questioned but on the whole, high quality prevails. For the wider audience, this book will certainly increase the popularity of the Greek Nobel Prize laureate abroad. A more thorough treatment of Elytis' work, is in the Keeley-Savidis translation of *The Axion Esti* (1974) and in the translations and extensive Introduction and Notes of Kimon Friar in *Odysseus Elytis: The Sovereign Sun* (Selected Poems) of 1974. The significance of these two volumes in helping Elytis win the Nobel Prize of 1979, cannot be overlooked.

ODYSSEUS ELYTIS, *Maria Nephele: A Poem in Two Voices,* translated from the Greek by Athan Anagnostopoulos. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

Maria Nephele, the most recent

poetry of Elytis, has been a shocking surprise to several of the poet's long-time devotees but it has won unprecedented popularity among younger readers because of the novelty of its colloquial language as well as its concern for their problems. The poem recognizes their courage in facing the alienating forces of change. Though much seems different, the poet believes life's predicaments are still the same, challenging our capacity to recognize them and to transcend them.

The text of this poem, highly complex in its expressive variety and its apparent directness and simplicity, confronts the aspiring translator with several difficulties which require considerable intimacy with Elytis' poetic art, his poetic world, views and inspirational resources, as well as his cultural background and references. The conscientious struggle of Anagnostopoulos to be faithful to the Greek text is obvious in his English version, but it also shows a lack of experience and intimacy with the subtleties of the poet's art. For a true rendering of these, literal translation does not suffice.

YANNIS RITSOS, *The Lady of the Vineyards,* translated by Apostolos N. Athanassakis. (New York: Pella, 1978)

This poem of Ritsos, its translator informs us, is "a sort of victory ode written to celebrate the victory of occupied Greece over her Nazi conquerors," but the poem is far more than that. The victory spurred the poet to make his poem a storehouse of the cultural wealth of the Greek world—its everyday rural life, tradition, ethos, ritual, and historical experience—all that the poet's mind and soul gathered in his upbringing—in short, his Greek conscience. His expression is richly demotic, full of music and imagery, bold and traditional, with surrealistic elements in a Dionysian orgy of the senses and the mind, the conscious and the unconscious.

The Lady of the Vineyards appeals deeply to a Greek, especially to a nostalgic expatriate like Athanassakis. He has responded admirably to the challenge of re-creating that text in English and has enriched it by his familiarity with what it means and implies. His translation is in many ways masterful.

Yet certainly, if in that poem richness is a supreme virtue, it is also, in some respects, a serious defect. Its torrential outpouring considerably deprives the poem of form, of clarity and economy of expression. These shortcomings become obvious in a translation where much of the auditory, visual and poetic power of the original Greek cannot possibly be translated, and where much of what that poem means to a Greek, is lost to a foreigner.

MANOLIS ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Target: Selected Poems,* translated with an introduction by Kimon Friar. New York: Pella, 1980.

Friar's introduction wisely provides a full account of the major

political and social events in Greece during the last forty years. Without such information the average Greek reader and more so the foreign reader would have difficulty understanding much in that poetry which is actually an emotional record of those events from the poet's leftist point of view. The three books, *Epochs, Epochs 2,* and *Epochs 3,* followed by another three *The Continuation, The Continuation 2, The Continuation 3* and later *The Target,* covering the period from 1941 to 1971, trace the poet's experience from his initial melancholy romanticism to his ideological and active communism, his commitment as tested by suffering, defeat and despair, and his feelings of guilt for those who perished in the battle. The whole experience enabled the poet to formulate and strengthen his faith in a non-dogmatic, non-prejudicial, deeply humane "social realism" so as to face critically the decline of ideas and ideals betrayed by a conventional, comfort-minded middle class.

As Friar notes, "perhaps in the last analysis one must think of Anagnostakis not specifically as a poet, or even as a totally political man, but as a human being involved in the attempt to advance the cause of personal and public freedom, to arrive at justice and truth by using whatever tools he can find, poetic or political." By this, Friar certainly does not mean that several of Anagnostakis' poems are not remarkable in their non-lyrical, non-rhetorical, matter-of-fact economy and directness, their honesty and sincerity. Friar's English rendering is as faithful and successful as his translations always are.

M. Byron Raizis. *Greek Poetry Translations.* Athens: Efstathiadis Press, 1981.

As is well known, the complex and perilous process of translating poetry involves many difficulties, technical and otherwise. The problems of translating into one's own mother tongue are numerous, but when one translates into a language which, though considerably mastered, is still not one's native own, they multiply formidably, especially when the text is traditional or formal verse relying on the unique wealth and subtlety of its language.

Byron Raizis has translated much Modern Greek poetry into English, which is in this collected edition. The variety of poets and texts is wide, but this is a selective, not a representative anthology. These translations were done on various occasions, mostly as illustrative parts of scholarly and critical texts and projects. A major heading "Traditional Poetry," is not followed by another to indicate the passage from the traditional to the non-traditional verse. Solomos is widely anthologized in twenty-four pages; then follow single poems by Polemis, Drosinis, Gryparis, Karyotakis, Stasinopoulos and Kazantzakis, and by the surrealists and other modern free-verse poets. The volume ends with the full texts of *Three Secret Poems* by Seferis.

Obvious and touching are the seriousness, the skill, and the amount of work involved, as well as the pleasure the translator must have taken in his task. The result, in its varying degrees of success,

illustrates the variety of difficulties encountered. The author's Introduction speaks amply and knowingly of "The Nature of Literary Translation," of "Schools and Methods of Translation," and "Tips in the Translation of Verse." The more traditional and formal the verse, however, the more the difficulties seem insurmountable. Yet much of the best traditional Modern Greek verse—too little known to the English-speaking world—needs to be translated, and Raizis has responded bravely to that need. He is generally successful in his versions of non-formal, of free-verse poems where there is much to be cherished in his renderings.

X

JOHN ANTON, *Critical Humanism as Philosophy of Culture: The Case of E.P. Papanoutsos*. Minneapolis: The North Central Publishing Co., 1981.

A Third Annual Celebration of Modern Greek Letters, as directed by Prof. Theofanis Stavrou, was held at the University of Minnesota in May 1980 to honor the accomplishment of the outstanding Greek thinker, philosopher, and educator, Evangelos Papanoutsos on his 80th birthday. This volume of the lectures delivered on that celebration, was sadly destined to become also Papanoutsos' memorial when he died early in 1982.

Following Professor Stavrou's highly informative introduction, John Anton's evaluation of the distinguished thinker's qualities and accomplishments has the affectionate intimacy of a pupil honoring his master, and the deep understanding of a fellow-philosopher. For more than sixty years, the penetrating intellect of Papanoutsos was creatively, even reformatively active in the Greek educational and intellectual world; he shared in his country's painful political and cultural experiences, and worked always to help it face the problems and challenges brought by the turmoil and crisis of the contemporary Western World. Starting from an interest in religion in Plato's work, in his further effort "to defend on rational grounds the religious philosophy of Christianity," Papanoutsos was influenced by Anglo-American pragmatism. After an in-depth critical examination of Western culture, he, like several contemporary fellow-Greek thinkers, embraced the 18th century spirit of the Enlightenment as connected with that of the classical Greek of the 5th century B.C. He felt close to David Hume and Immanuel Kant. In Humanism he saw progress, but he wished it to be a "critical humanism" inspired by love of mankind, social solidarity, distributive justice, and the ideal of freedom—in short, an ethical and democratic humanism sustaining perennial human values. According to Papanoutsos, the modern Enlightenment, with its unlimited cognitive power and its *criticism in extremis,* has been constructive in demythologizing our world; however, complete trust in the rationality of the human brain has caused several evils: "We have, indeed, made progress but we have failed to be happy." Epistemology has buried the ontological quest and the question of Being; there, is the problem of "critical humanism,"

from which Papanoutsos expected stress on ethics. As applied to Greece, that humanism should draw much from the ancient heritage, should "embrace the lasting ideas of classical Greek philosophy, the living social message of Christianity, and the political insights of the modern Enlightenment."

The complexities of such an intricate conglomeration—which are far from accepting easy and comfortable solutions, while giving the impression of some "dual loyalty" in Papanoutsos—are thoroughly discussed by Prof. Anton whose study also fully explores our current cultural malady, the dead end of our development, and possible constructive approaches as recommended by Papanoutsos.

KOSTAS KINDINIS, *Poems: Reinvestigations* and *Descent from the Cross,* translated with a preface by Kimon Friar. Minneapolis: North Central Publishing Co., 1980.

In his short Preface, Kimon Friar quotes Kindinis who calls himself "a revolutionary/without precise chronology"; yet, there is more than lack of chronology to puzzle the reader of these poems. The poet does not seem willing to specify the stand of his revolutionary spirit. His commitment does not go beyond his being vaguely critical and at odds not only with the contemporary world but also with human nature, including his own self. Much in his verse is too personal, too fragmentary and cryptic. There are the happy lines and absurd associations which reflect the absurdity of life and of man's mind. A key-poem, "The Salvation," reveals: "Deep within me truths/ fornicate/ and give birth to monsters./ Whatever seems to save me/ confines me,/ flattens me out.// There where the revolution smites my conscience,/ the solution frightens me."

A longer, more ambitious, "Descent from the Cross," seems to cope with the weight upon us and the meaning of Christ's passions as centering on blood sacrifice.

C. CAPRI-KARKA, *Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot, and Seferis: An interpretation with detailed poem-by-poem analysis.* New York: Pella, 1982.

The long association, in criticism, of Seferis with Cavafy and Eliot may be said to have begun in the lecture "C.P. Cavafy and T.S. Eliot: Parallels," delivered by Seferis at the British Council in Athens, December 1946; it was later included in his *Dhokimes.* As a fortunate listener on that occasion, I still remember the lecture's impact.

The massive wealth of scholarship, interpretation and commentary on the works and inter-relationships of the three poets, which has accumulated during the last forty years, is the basis of this voluminous 370-page study by Mrs. Capri-Karka. It is, in fact, a comprehensive, conscientious and impressive critical review of its precedents.

In the works of the three poets, the author traces, meticulously and

extensively, the development of what she deems a dominant theme: the quest for love in the form of a symbolic journey. Fifty poems of Cavafy, T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and "Journey of the Magi," and some forty or more poems of Seferis, including *Mythistorema* and *The Thrush,* are interpreted though not exclusively in relation to that theme. There is, thus, much repetition and some fragmentation of thematic unity. The conclusive chapter, "Comparisons," succeeds in unifying and synthesizing the essential findings—all enriched by interesting commentary.

The author's point as to the central significance of the love quest and journey in the work of the three poets is well chosen and convincingly presented, though possibly exaggerated as to some particulars. Cultural and personal similarities and dissimilarities are adequately discussed as decisive in the individual quests. Cavafy, "the least hermetic of the three" and inspired by Alexandrian sensual excess, moves from a wasteland of isolation and guilt to the celebration of sensual love in the acceptance of his homosexuality. Inspired but restrained, both Eliot and Seferis, in their *Waste Land* and *Mythistorema,* respectively, descend to the Underworld. Eliot eventually rises to a Dantesque fulfillment of a Love-union with God. Seferis, plagued by some "deception in love" which "poisoned his life so deeply,"—as the author stresses—fights against sensuality. His answer to his love problem is philosophic and symbolic rather than Christian or metaphysical and is drawn not from Christian faith but from Socrates and the last words of Oedipus to his daughter Antigone.

HARRY PSOMIADES and ALICE SCOURBY, ed., *The Greek American Community in Transition,* with a Bibliographic Guide by John G. Zenelis, New York: Pella Publishing, 1982.

The first Greek known to have reached the New World was Don Teodoro, in the early part of the sixteenth century. He was the first of the "false starts and early beginnings" of the Greek-American community in the States which had its real beginning in the mass migration of the decades between 1890 to 1920. There has been a long story of high adventure and struggle ever since; according to official figures, more than 700,000 Greeks have made the States their new home, and almost three million American citizens are estimated as being of Greek origin.

There are partial accounts and records of that story which is now being put together, systematically, by a number of interested historians, political and social scientists and others. Their interest has been stimulated, particularly since the 1950's, to counteract the previously prevalent notion of cultural assimilation.

It is gratifying for Greek Americans to learn of the wider cultural developments in the Greek-American experience. Its progressive stages, the matters and problems our Greekness and its transformations from one generation to the next, arouse serious wonder about

our future cultural survival and of the form that survival might take.

Dedicated to the memory of Theodore Saloutos, whose *The Greeks in the United States* of 1976 still remains unsurpassed as an initial and rich foundation of research on the topic, the essays in this present volume, by thirteen qualified scholars and writers, give each a different aspect of the Greek-American reality. The study by Prof. Charles C. Moskos is considerably thorough as a critical survey of the developments in the Greek-American studies, while providing valuable factual information of the total historical experience as drawn from the extant sources. The two studies by Prof. Alice Scourby speak of the cons and pros in the notion of the "new ethnicity" and of the differences in "The Three Generations of Greek Americans." Mr. Emmanuel Hatziemmanuel, in his article, deals with the "Hellenic Orthodox Education in America." The novelist and journalist Athena G. Dallas-Damis writes on the "Greek Heritage and Its Impact on the Greek American Writer."

Other pieces discuss the role of the Orthodox Church, the ethnic language, the Greek involvement in American politics and other relevant topics. Of much value to the researcher is the extensive "Bibliographic Guide on Greek Americans" compiled by the librarian John G. Zenelis. This collection, with its wealth of information will, no doubt, stimulate further studies about our cultural identity and its future in the American Scene.

X

PETER BIEN, *Antithesi ke Synthesi stin piisi tou Yanni Ritsou* [*Antithesis and Synthesis in the Poetry of Yanni Ritsos*]. Athina: Kedhros, 1980.

Not only the study and appreciation of Ritsos' poetry, but the practice of Modern Greek literary criticism and its methodology as well, have much to gain from this volume containing, in excellent Greek translation, five English articles written for various occasions, about Ritsos and his poetry. A first-rate American scholar enamored of Greek creative intellect and deeply conversant with much of it and its language, Bien has an experienced, systematic, sharply perceptive and original mind: he applies his extraordinary talents mostly to a single poem by Ritsos, *Philoktetes*.

A general Introduction about Ritsos' life and work speaks knowingly of the essential traits, objectives and virtues of the poet's mind and verse: his tendency to mix the present with the past for mutual enrichment and elucidation, his astonishing "metaphorical" ability, his prevalent pictorial gift, his expressionism in identifying the external with the internal world, his intensely personal and yet socially and politically concerned vision.

Of the three articles on *Philoktetes*, the first explores the essential difference between the treatment and function of ancient myths in Modern Greek literature and in Western literature at large. The second article which explores the myth of Philoktetes in Sophocles and in Ritsos, develops a methodology for the comparative study of such pairs. Continuing that meth-

odology, the third article, more "philological," compares the vocabulary and expression of Sophocles and Ritsos, as each continues tradition and yet expresses different times and circumstances. The fourth and last piece ventures in the same interpretive vein to another mythical poem of Ritsos, his *Orestes*.

Beside the double gain to be derived from Bien's probe into the multifaceted essence of a literary work, there are astonishing discoveries, all enhanced by the critic's mastery of his material. There is, besides, the delight in his charming prose that loses none of its directness and spontaneity in the complex mental weight it carries.

PANDELIS PREVELAKIS, *O piitis Yannis Ritsos: Synoliki theorisi tou erghou tou.* [*The Poet Yannis Ritsos: A Survey of His Works*] Athina: Kedhros, 1981.

The publication of this book has already caused no little surprise, admiration, and gratitude. Its more than six hundred pages, written in an amazingly short time, are only one reason for admiration. It offers a "running commentary" on the more than eighty books of verse produced so far by Ritsos and is the first critical evaluation and meaningful interpretation of Ritsos in his entirety; it restores the poet to his true self, liberating him from the ideological and other bias, the narrowness and prejudice projected upon him by leftist and rightist critics. Prevelakis has restored the poet's personality and poetic grandeur, and thus has returned him in purer form to his nation and to his world-wide reputation. Correctly has Andreas Karandonis, in his review, seen in this book an act of "purification" that enables the veteran readers of Ritsos to see him in a new light, free of prejudicial infatuations.

No little cause for surprise in this book is a wonderfully fruitful exchange between two apparently antithetical figures in the Greek literary world. Hardly anyone would have expected Prevelakis—the fervent Cretan democrat, the traditionalist, the Christian humanist, the classicist with an expressed preference for the Renaissance artistic code, the illustrious chronicler, novelist, poet, dramatist, and art historian—to devote his formidable intellect in deciphering, judging and justifying Ritsos, the fervently-avowed communist. But Ritsos, after Kazantzakis, offered Prevelakis a great challenge: to weigh and reveal him and thus to reveal himself in a mutual interpretation. Prevelakis speaks touchingly of that convergence of spirits; he explains the reasons for his decision to write on a poet whom he had admired for many years. "Under similar circumstances," he tells us, he wrote *The Poet and the Poem of the Odyssey,* dealing with Kazantzakis, adding that "for about half a century, two authors, connected by undisturbed friendship, despite the difference in their political convictions, have not ceased to exchange their books and the ensuing criticism in their correspondence." There was long emotional gestation before his speedy writing.

It is impossible in a short review to touch upon the wealth in this

volume. It wonderfully reveals, among other matters, that Ritsos in the amazing variety of his poetic creativity richly expresses the Greek-Christian tradition in which he grew up. Marx did not efface Christ as a symbol of that tradition. Thus the poetry of Ritsos is, at its best, the voice of his Greek conscience.

PANDELIS PREVELAKIS, *Monaxia* (a play) [*Loneliness*]. Athina: Ekdhosis ton Philon, 1981.

To those familiar with Prevelakis' work, more particularly his dramas, this early play, *Loneliness*, of 1937, published now for the first time, marks an interesting tangent from the main line of his creativity as to his themes and the sources of his inspiration. In his works the theme of loneliness has recurred, but in an intellectual-cultural rather than a psychological, personal light—as in this play: a parochial schoolmistress, in her excessive, self-sacrificial kindness becomes the victim of those to whom she gives her affection.

NIKOS DEMOU *Ena simio epaphis anatolikis ke dhitikis skepsis.* [*A Point of Contact between Oriental and Occidental Thought*] Athina: *Epoptia* 52, 1980.

Prosengissis: Elytis, Eliot, Skythinos, Seferis, Schultz. [*Approaches*] Athina: Dhiahroniki 1979.

To read Nikos Demou is a delight. His academic studies and training in philosophy combined with his wide knowledge of literature and modern thought, are a solid foundation and source of reference for his alert, challenging skepticism which ranges freely in the fields of literary, philosophical, cultural and sociological criticism.

In *A Point of Contact between Oriental and Occidental Thought* he challenges the common consideration that the Hellenistic times were a period of darkness and decadence. With ample references to Arrian's *Anabasis* and other sources, and to Sceptical philosophy as initiated by Pyrrhon, who followed Alexander the Great in his Asian campaigns, Demou convincingly argues that Scepticism marks a new era in Greek philosophy. That philosophy gained a new depth and "internality" from its fresh contact with Indian thought, more particularly Jainism and Gymnosophism. The traditional search for truth, and the consequent frustrations of that search were abolished in Scepticism for the sake of the individual soul's serenity (*ataraxia*) gained through the belief that nothing is certain. All is a matter of impressions and possibilities. One, therefore, should keep one's distance from the endlessly conflicting issues, and should accept life as it is in its entirety. Scepticism was soon to influence both Stoicism and Epicureanism.

In *Prosengissis* (*Approaches*), four essays are devoted to the works of Elytis, as if to vindicate his poetic and philosophic stand—their originality and significance and, in fact, their grandeur. I do not know of any other evaluation of Elytis as fundamental and all-encompass-

ing in its brevity, and as unreserved in its praise as this little volume. The critic's admiration for the poet makes some brilliant discoveries. In "The Magic of Odysseus Elytis," "Logic and Logos in Odysseus Elytis," "The Wisdom of Odysseus Elytis," and "An attempted Biography of Maria Nefeli," Demou presents the poet as a culmination of the long dormant potentials, the experiments and practice in Modern Greek poetry. The points made are well-documented; to Demou, Elytis is "The metaphysician of the sensory (or sensual)"; in him, "thought becomes sense"; he is "the most rational" of the Greek poets, a "Geometrician" of steel discipline, never afraid of ideas, but able naturally to transform them into poetry; a "dialectician" whose rich dialectical, spiritual learning and wisdom are assimilated and poetically transcended in his verse; he has that capacity in common only with Solomos. His principal, almost exclusive, basic concerns are freedom and language. His poetry hides the depth of thought and the artistic toil, as well as the complex processes of his mind which make him a philosopher-poet. The supreme lyrical genius of Greece, he is in essence an epic poet, the first to succeed in producing well-structured and unified works of great variety; his surrealist reversal of logic is itself a superior logic in its bright limpidity (*dhiavyia*) as inspired by the Greek sunlight. In his solar metaphysics, the beyond and the sun are both physical, representing the here and now.

⚜

MARIA LAMPADHARIDOU-POTHOU. *Odysseas Elytis: Ena orama tou kosmou.* [*Odysseas Elytis: A Vision of the World*]. Athina: Philippotis 1981.

Emphatically interpretive and appreciative, imaginative rather than critical, adventurous rather than orderly, this study of Mrs. Lampadharidou has been inspired by an intellectual and emotional affinity she feels to the point of identification with Elytis. A poet herself, prose-writer, playwright, and the winner of literary prizes, she studied, under a French scholarship, philosophy at Sorbonne. Her study of Samuel Beckett—*The Experience of Existential Pain*—has served her study of the work of Elytis.

Her familiarity with ancient, particularly Pre-Socratic philosophy, combined with her inclination towards Existentialism and mysticism, forms much of the prism through which she views Elytis' poetry as a "visionary journey" to the realm of mystery, a journey incited by his incurable, romantic, nostalgic longing for his "transcendental fatherland." He is "the mystic of a new vision," inspired by major existential concerns, and drawing much of his impetus from the ancient "offsprings of knowledge," the Pre-Socratic thinkers, Plato, and the mystics. As if in Platonic recollection, we are told, he strives to merge into the universal, the "pre-existential," the "pre-cosmogonic memory," so as to make it "present," and help it re-emerge in its spiritual essence. A "miracle" is involved of which the present interpreter attempts to give her imaginative account. On the whole her

approach possibly overemphasizes the metaphysical element in Elytis, and underestimates the physical. Her approach contrasts with that of most interpreters who have generally failed to consider adequately the spiritual dimension of Elytis.

Intensely personal, idiosyncratic, often ecstatic, this study, does not follow a chronological or thematic order, but traces a series of short entries, poetic rather than critical, on notions, words and statements in Elytis' work. As if in a diary, the author speaks much of herself, of her mind and soul as catalysts to the impact of Elytis' poetry. There is, in a sense, a feeling of emphatic sharing in the poet's creativity.

It would be interesting to know Elytis' reaction to some ideas attributed to him here: that "matter is the downfall of the soul," or that he is a "tragic poet" according to the author's own non-Aristotelian notion of the tragic. Her view is that "man facing destiny is both innocent and tragic," and so she finds Elytis. Yet if according to the long-established belief, tragedy involves a downfall with no hope of transcendence, then Elytis, an emphatically transcendental poet, is not tragic. She, herself, elsewhere in her study, speaks amply of his notion of poetic redemption. Is there a contradiction involved?—unless that redemption is to be understood only as *katharsis* in the Aristotelian meaning of the term. On the whole, Mrs. Lampadharidhou's study is a valuable contribution to an understanding of Elytis' work from an existential view.

KIMON FRIAR. *Ta Petrina matia tis Medhousas* (Dhokimia). [*The Stone Eyes of the Medusa,* an essay] Athina: Kedhros 1981.

To those familiar with Kimon Friar as the man who since the late 1940's has devoted his life almost exclusively to making the best of Modern Greek poetry accessible to the English-speaking world through his superb translations, introductions, studies and commentaries, this book must be a valuable offering. It contains, in Greek translation by various writers, including Nikos Kazantzakis, twelve essays, articles, and lectures Friar wrote from 1940 to 1978. Grouped under three major headings—"Allegories and Symbols," "English and American Writers," and "Ars Poetica"—they deal with the myth of Perseus as the archetypal experience of the poet, with myth itself, with metaphysics and politics in modern English and American literature, with W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas and other writers, with the writing, translation and interpretation of poetry, with the problems these present and the ways to solve them. There is here a storehouse of wide learning and experience, of scholarship, inspiration, creativity and ingenuity in accomplishments most valuable in their own right as well as in eloquently illustrating the gifts that Kimon Friar has brought to his translation and interpretation of Modern Greek poetry. As we have remarked elsewhere, Greek poetry has gained immeasurably because of his devotion to it. Already an accomplished intellectual of wide renown when he went to Greece, he dedicated to that country's literary

world not only his gifts as a poet and translator but also those of an extraordinarily endowed scholar, critic and educator. His influence has been considerable, particularly upon the younger poets.

MARIO VITTI. *Idheologhiki litouryia tis ellinikis ithographias.* [*The Ideological Function of the Greek Ethography*] Athina: Kedhros 1980.

In this study of writing inspired by customs and folklore, the distinguished Neo-Hellenist professor of Modern Greek at the University of Palermo, traces the developmental stages of Modern Greek fiction from a romantically inspired, parochial, picturesque, idyllic, idealized presentation of life as drawn from folk customs and lore, to its current realistic social awareness. The critical account opens with the prose of A.R. Rangavis and Pavlos Kalligas in the middle and late nineteenth century, and closes with that of Stratis Myrivilis in the middle of this century. The works of Myrivilis amply enriched with elements of Greek country life and traditional lore, in their stark account of his experience in the trenches during the Balkan Wars, make him the first, full-fledged realist in Greek prose, and the first significant prose writer in the Greek literary renascence of the 1930's.

MARIO VITTI, *Fthora ke loghos: Isaghoyi stin piisi tou Yorghou Seferi.* [*Waste and the Word: A Study of the Poetry of George Seferis*] Athina: Kollaros 1980.

In introducing the work of George Seferis, this detailed study takes full count of the views expressed by the poet's critics, interpreters and commentators so as to develop its own point that Seferis' poetry is the record of his fight against waste (*fthora*), the waste plaguing twentieth century man. In its early stages, that poetry considers everyday life in its disconnected and meaningless sequence of events, and its helplessness. In its mature, later stages, that poetry strives toward a higher, more exacting level of expression—from the fragmentariness of everyday experience toward assimilation and fusion into a synthesis of major tone where waste is transcended through the poetic word.

GEORGE THANIEL, *Nikos Kahitsis: O lepidopterologhos tis aghonias.* [*The Lepidopterologist of Agony*] Athina: Nefeli Publishers 1981.

There is much to regret in the loss of Nikos Kahtitsis who died in 1970 at the age of forty four. What that gifted, supersensitive and nostalgic expatriate was able to accomplish under the inauspicious circumstances of his short and wandering life, more particularly in his novel *The Hero of Gand,* is testimony enough of the promise in him. He was fortunate, however, in his friendship with George Thaniel in Montreal during 1965-1970, who took good care of Kah-

titsis' writing. That friendship qualified Thaniel for the account he gives of his lost friend as a man of refined taste, an idealist, a dreamer, a thinker, a writer, a devoted letter-writer, a poet and translator, and the amateur printer and publisher.

This is the first of two volumes about Kahtitsis whom Thaniel describes as the "lepidopterologist of agony" for his frailty, sensibility and refinement, his commitment to the exotic and the dream world, and his taste for the unusual and the remote. A highly informative introduction is followed by approximately forty letters of Kahtitsis to Thaniel which, talking of ideas, tastes, writers, writing and publishing, speak much of the man himself. The volume closes with some of Kahtitsis' prose and poetry, and Thaniel's English translation.

KIKI DHIMOULA. *To telefteo mou soma* (poems). [*My Last Body*] Athina: Kimena, 1981.

A painfully growing awareness of aging and of the physical and mental diminutions that life's inescapable decline brings to us, is the insistent theme of this new poetry by Kiki Dhimoula, entitled *My Last Body*. Such an awareness could easily have resulted into a jeremiad of endless lament, yet not so. In these twenty-nine poems, sincerity and frankness deepen that awareness in its universal truth. A live, inner strength, an alertness, a combative and inventive spirit, an imaginative and artistic originality, all resist in an effort to uplift and transcend its burden. Life constantly summons its resources to fight against death approaching. In the process, there is an unceasingly inventive interplay between the internal and the external world, between soul and nature, between personal experience and life's wider essence and pattern. In the alchemy of Dhimoula's art, abstractions are concretized and made physical, while the concrete embodies the spirit and abstraction, yet with no loss of touch with life's intimacy. No metaphysical escape is attempted anywhere. The solemn mixes with the light-hearted and the humorous in bold associations through image, simile, metaphor and symbol. As to the language itself, fine mastery makes its variety inventive and ingenious. Learned and formal terms mix with colloquial and idiomatic expressions in contexts that modify their usual meanings so as to bestow a new meaning.

There is fascinating artistry in Dimoula's verse which never becomes mannered. It enhances preparation for "the great journey," her facing the "deep and remote change" where she goes, with much to be genuinely cherished. *My Last Body* is a real accomplishment of extraordinary quality and originality.

TAKIS VARVITSIOTIS. *Synopsi: Piimata,* Vols. I & II. Thessaloniki: Eghnatia 1980 & 1981.

Prominent among the virtues of the distinguished Thessalonikan poet, Varvitsiotis, is his craftsmanship in handling the subtle musical

nuances of his verse as that has progressed while remaining faithful to the post-symbolist mood and to *poesie pure*. He won the Poetry Prize of the Twelve in 1959, and the Poetry Prize of the Academy of Athens in 1977. Twelve books of verse, published from 1940 to 1980, are in this two-volume edition, illustrating the growth of his art in mastering and refining its means. Dream imagery, snowy landscapes, and a constant communion with the inanimate express his inner world and his soul's longing for a spiritual purity, beauty and calm, unaffected by external reality and changeful time.

D. P. PAPADHITSAS. *Dhyoïdhis loghos* APOEMSQ [Dual Word]. Athina: Ekdhosis ton Philon 1980.

Papadhitsas has been one of the few among the leading poets of his generation who did not commit himself to the political and social issues that developed in the painful war decade of the 1940's and afterward, but who took Elytis as his guide and embraced surrealism as a liberating force for the positive elements in the Greek world and tradition. Papadhitsas has, much like Elytis, used that liberating force as an antidote against the prevalent war and post-war feelings of conflict, frustration, despair and anguish.

There are the obvious affinities between Papadhitsas and his predecessor but striking differences reflect their different age, personality, temperament and craft. Whereas Elytis, the sun worshiper, was eventually to subdue surrealism and its subconscious effusions to a highly conscious art of almost Apollonian control, economy, clarity and balance, Papadhitsas, no less the craftsman, has been more Dionysian in allowing a freer play of the irrational, in the mental and emotional effusions of his verse. A cascade of free associations in word and imagery, drawn from the Greek world, its setting and life, its rich linguistic resources and its intellectual and spiritual tradition, often fuses and reconciles opposites into unexpected communon, and ties together meaningfully, revealingly, the external world with the soul. The mystically and metaphysically oriented Papadhitsas is man in quest of God through love; he is, too, the heir of the Byzantine world with all its pagan antecedents. As a poet of his time, however, Papadhitsas does not fail to express his painful awareness of the inherent duplicity of the world, of the divisions and alienations that plague the modern conscience. The titles of his last two books, *Enantiodhromia* (*Opposite Ways*) of 1977 and *Dhyoidhis Loghos* (*Dual Word*) of 1980 indicate the poet's coping with life's dualism and disparity which poetry through its ecstatic upsurge needs to transcend.

KLITOS KYROU. *I kataskeves: 1949-1979* (mia epiloyi). Athina: Kedhros 1980.

The title of this selective edition of Kyrou's poetry is possibly intentionally cryptic: *kataskeves* may

mean *structures, constructions, compositions,* or even *fornications.* Is the poet referring to the poems themselves, or to the circumstances that inspired them, or to both? These poems record the poet's emotional reactions to the turbulent, heart-rending period of the 1940's and its aftermath, disappointments and despair in the defeat of the leftist cause as that defeat was brought by the enemies as well as the unfaithful devotees of that cause.

There is little specific reference to the historical events themselves. The intimacy of a fighter's own painful reaction, in progressive stages, reflects the events and the reactions shared with comrades whom these poems frequently address. The memories turn nostalgically to the time when, no matter what the risks, the dangers and the losses, life had meaning as a struggle for some ideals, and there was hope for success, before they were betrayed and abandoned. Reflecting that change, the warmth and enthusiasm of the early poems yield to the coldness, reticence, epigrammatic brevity and obscurity of the later works. Kyrou shares much of his final disappointment and despair with his fellow-Thessalonikan poet and contemporary, Manolis Anaghnostakis; a comparative study of these two poets has much to reveal about their parallel testimonies.

NADHINA DHIMITRIOU. *Taxidhia sti nostalghia* [*Journeys to Nostalgia*]. Cyprus 1980.

This volume carries this distinguished poet of Cyprus further in her "quests," as she called her three previous books of poetry. Several of the "Snapshots" opening this book have a powerful impressionistic, epigrammatic succinctness of thought and image in skillful combination; the longer poems show her conscious artistry in various ways, in her thoughtful contemplation of nature and the human world in themselves and in their meaningful interactions. Her well-wrought landscapes suggest the spiritual essence and the emotional memory that inhabit them.

NIKOS SPANIAS. *Foros timis ston Giorgio de Chirco.* [*A Tribute to Chirico*]. Athina: Ghnossi 1981.

Giorgio de Chirico, the Italian surrealist born in Greece, with his dream world of picturesque and motionless loneliness that is full of memory in the landscapes of his "metaphysical painting," inspires Nikos Spanias with a feeling of affection, of eclectic, intellectual and temperamental affinity articulated in this new set of poems following his *Poems of the Third Avenue.* In what they blend and contrast, in their setting and imagery, these new poems express the poet's exiled and disparate soul and the absurdity of the world in which he lives. Their confessional frankness results eventually in self-liberation whereby the poet accepts his true self as an erotic being with his own beliefs and preferences. The poems range from landscapes of the soul to dramatic monologues. In one of

these latter, Shakespearean Laertes, who serves as a *persona,* regrets his wrongheaded, adversary vengefulness against Hamlet, and realizes that he should have taken Hamlet's side, should have adored him, erotically. In another poem, "In Memoriam," W.H. Auden is hailed as the supreme, all-encompassing voice of our time and as Spanias' own wise provider, guide and mentor.

NANA ISSAIA, *Morfi* [*Form*] (poems). Thessaloniki: I Mikri Eghnatia 1980.

Much as in her previous verse, here, too, Nana Issaia, emphatically personal, self-centered and introspective, gives further voice to her over-sensitive, isolated, and wounded soul in its crushing loneliness. There is often despair in her incapacity to love, to communicate with others, to come to terms with their mentality and the world. What is left for her is poetry itself as "Form," of a highly self-conscious, delicately balanced musical art where every word, sound and image, every element is meticulously weighed for precise effect. Its agony is existential. Her craftsmanship in *Morfi* reaches a high point, thanks in part to the compact and highly suggestive economy of her expression.

NIKOS STAFYLOPATIS. *Piimata* [Poems] (1940-1980). Athina 1980.

What inspires most of the poems in this collected edition, covering a period of forty years, is the nostalgic recollection of a world blessed in its picturesque and affectionate purity and simplicity—a world long lost, of the poet's childhood and youth. Traditional and unaffected by modern trends, his verse is most appealing in its touching sincerity, its genuine emotion, its directness, and musical tones of another time, all expressing the poet's nostalgic attachment to his native island of Siphnos, to the Aegean Sea that surrounds it, and to the people who once formed his soul. There is, besides, his empathy for suffering humankind in its contemporary alienating adventures.

A.D.

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