

with it, homogeneous in its variety, questioning but within a framework of weighty and meaningful foundations.

The opportunity of the above remarks was given by a significant recent publication of Princeton University Press, under the title *Modern Greek Writers*, edited by Professors Edmund Keeley and Peter Bien. It contains the papers read at the symposium sponsored by the Modern Greek Studies Association on the campus of Princeton University in the Fall of 1969. The topic of that symposium was «Modern Greek Literature and Its European Background». The speakers in it were scholars gathered from various parts of the United States, from France, England, Switzerland, Italy, and Greece. The authors dealt with were Kazantzakis, Solomos, Kalvos, Matesis, Palamas, Cavafy, Seferis, and Elytis.

This publication deserves to be greeted as an outstanding landmark for sundry reasons. It is, first of all, the first intellectual common product-in-print of the activities of the Modern Greek Studies Association founded in 1967 with the general purpose of «fostering and advancing modern Greek studies, particularly in the United States». Of its birth and growth Professor Bien, in his excellent Introduction, gives full account. It was born not only to be the directional, encouraging, and helping nucleus, uniting the previously rather haphazard and divided activities, but also to supplement constructively these activities with the aura and weight of scholarship, and so help modern Greek literature, as a recognized and established field of study, enter, in the New World for the first time, universities and scholarly institutions and communities. It was born to unite and coordinate the intellectual activities and interests not merely of a Greek minority abroad, but of all those who, regardless of origin and nationality, have in common an interest in, love for, and devotion to modern Greek culture in general.

One is admiring the perception and familiarity with which Professor Bien, a «foreign Greek», reviews in his Introduction the phenomenon of modern Greek letters as a fusion, «a merger of the foreign with the indigenous, the cultivated with the popular», as this view is amply illustrated by the individual studies in this volume, the merit of each of which needs not be praised individually. They all have in common the advantage of viewing Greek literature — its standards, claims, and expectations — from the objective distance of an international and modern vantage point. An impressive accomplishment, this foundational collection of studies, of a subject of fast-growing interest, is indispensable to any sophisticated reader in the field, for it is an advances initiation into the core of that literature's involvements.

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C. P. Cavafy, *Passions and Ancient Days*, New Poems Translated and Introduced by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, New York, The Dial Press, 1971, pp. 68.

C. P. Cavafy, *Selected Poems*, Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 97.

Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933) is one of the few modern Greek poets whose work has achieved international fame. Next to the works of George Seferis and Nikos Kazantzakis, Cavafy's major poetry has already appeared in book form in four different English translations, two French ones, one German, and one Italian. Individual pieces by this great Alexandrian artist had started appearing in the non-Greek literary press, in the original or in translation, as early as 1924, when E. M. Forster persuaded T. S. Eliot to publish «Ithaka» in his influential *Criterion*.

The unique and sophisticated blending of Hellenism and universality, personal honesty and artistic conviction that are the hallmark of Cavafy's verse has attracted poets, translators, and scholars ranging from W. H. Auden and Kimon Friar to Konstantinos Lardas and Minas Savvas, among several others. Some translators, like Mr. Friar, rendered Cavafy's Greek into a poetic English idiom which combines readability with precision. Others produced free and imaginative adaptations — remaining faithful to the spirit of the original — which they presented under the self-explanatory categories «anaplasteis» and «parasyntheta». A strict philologist may wish to take issue with the liberties of some of the latter. In the English-speaking world, however, and especially in the United States, free adaptations of foreign verse have become increasingly popular since very often the result is a beautiful and convincing poem in English. The artistic success of Robert Lowell's recent «imitations» is a telling example.

It is not my purpose to discuss here the originality and greatness of Cavafy's verse. My goal is an evaluation of the contribution of Edmund Keeley, Philip Sherrard, and George Savidis to the spreading of this Greek poet's reputation to the English-speaking public.

Generally speaking the impact of Cavafy's poetry in the literary circles of England and America began to be felt soon after the publication of Professor John Mavrogordato's British translation, *The Poems of C. P. Cavafy* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1951). This volume which was introduced by Professor Rex Warner, received good reviews in the British and American periodical press, sold out fairly fast, and was reprinted twenty years later. Dr. Rae Dalven's first American edition, *The Complete Poems of Cavafy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961)—by no means a «complete poems» edition, despite its title—introduced by the greatest living English poet, W.H. Auden, was generally received favorably, though a few critics were somehow annoyed by certain inaccuracies and the rather prosaic quality of her poetic medium. This fact, however, did not prevent the book from appearing as a paperback, shortly afterwards.

When Professor George Savidis published in 1968 the poems of Cavafy that had not been released before by the poet's heirs and literary executors, *Ἀνέκδοτα Ποιήματα, 1882-1923* ('Αθήνα: Ἴκαρος, 1968), the corpus of Cavafy's work was significantly enriched. The need then for a translation of these hitherto «unknown» pieces became apparent. Professors Keeley and Savidis must be commended for having answered that need with spectacular success.

*C.P. Cavafy, Passions and Ancient Days* (1971) — this title was found in Cavafy's own papers — is a beautifully printed and bound bilingual selection. Keeley and Savidis selected twenty-one out of the seventy-five poems of the 1968 Ikaros edition. Their artistic taste and sensitivity must be praised because they managed to translate and include most of the more significant or interesting poems. Moreover, their lucidly written, informative, and properly documented «Introduction» (14 pages long) traces with meticulous care the progress and general development of certain poems from the time they were conceived or outlined, to the time when the poet thought that they had almost reached the desired form. «In Church» (p. xi) is a good example of Cavafy's preoccupation with his art.

This thin volume contains adequate Notes explaining the historical and other allusions in the poems, and offering information about the history of individual poems. Finally, the presence of the Greek text (on opposite pages from the English) enables the reader who knows Greek to judge the quality of the translation himself, without having to take it for granted that these scholars' work does indeed do justice to the original.

To form an idea of how accurately and artistically Keeley and Savidis have rendered Cavafy into literary English, I offer here their translation of the poem «Κρυμμένον» p. 30, in its entirety, as well as Professor Minas Savvas's competent version of the same piece.

## «C o n c e a l e d»

From all I did and all I said  
 let them not search to find who I am.  
 An obstacle stood and transformed  
 the actions and manner of my life.  
 An obstacle stood and prevented me  
 many times from speaking out.  
 My most underserved actions  
 and my most concealed writings—  
 from these they may perceive me.  
 But perhaps it does not merit  
 such care and such effort to know me.  
 Later—in the more perfect society—  
 another created like myself  
 certainly will appear to act with freedom.

Minas Savvas's translation in *Chicago Review* (August, 1969), p. 5.

## «H i d d e n T h i n g s»

From all the things I did and all the things I said  
 let no one try to find out who I was.  
 An obstacle was there transforming  
 the actions and the manner of my life.  
 An obstacle was often there  
 to silence me when I began to speak.  
 From my most unnoticed actions  
 and my most veiled writing—  
 from these alone will I be understood.  
 But maybe it isn't worth so much concern  
 and so much effort to discover who I really am.  
 Later, in a more perfect society,  
 someone else made just like me  
 is certain to appear and act freely.

Keeley and Savidis's translation in *Passions and Ancient Days*, p. 31.

A comparison of these two versions reveals that the Keeley-Savidis one is more idiomatic, smoother, and less formal than the other. Even their title is more suggestive than the adjective «Concealed». Although Savvas's translation reads well, he does write «who I am», where Cavafy has ἡμουν, which Keeley and Savidis have rendered correctly as «who I was». Savvas prefers to render θὰ μὲ νοιώσω as «they may perceive me», thus making it more conditional; whereas Keeley-Savidis come closer to the Greek with their «will I be understood», a simple reference to future time. Also Savvas's «in the more perfect society», is too Greek and less successful than «in a more perfect society», of the other two scholars who seems to be better versed in the subtleties of the languages involved.

The appearance of *Passions and Ancient Days* undoubtedly added new and valuable material to the Cavafy bibliography in English, though many a devotee of the Alexandrian poet, and especially researchers and serious scholars, would wish to see all of his recently released poems in good and reliable English translations, I am sure.

The aims of the second book, which is equally beautifully presented and printed, are considerably different and perhaps more ambitious. *C.P. Cavafy, Selected Poems* (1972), in which Professor Keeley collaborated with the British philhellene Dr. Philip Sherrard (with whom he had translated George Seferis's *Collected Poems, 1925-1955*, in 1967), contains new and improved translations of sixty-nine of the best known Cavafy poems. Thus, in a sense, this latest selection supersedes previously published translations (including earlier versions by Keeley and his associates), and offers a better text—the dream of all lovers of literature—for the benefit of the English readership all over the world.

Since the earlier volumes of Cavafy verse in English have already created a public that is greatly interested in his work, the desire of Keeley and Sherrard is understandable and legitimate. In addition to the sixty-nine poems, this slim volume contains Notes, a Biographical Note, a Bibliographical Note (selected items in English), and a Foreword. «Thermopylae», «Ithaka», «Waiting for the Barbarians», and most of Cavafy's epoch-making poems from the three traditional categories of the poet's poetic corpus—historical, philosophical, and erotic—are included in it, as had been done in *Passions and Ancient Days* as well. Referring to the need for these new translations, in their Fore-word, these two scholars write: «Our realization of the need for new versions of poems already available to the English reader arose out of a growing sense that Cavafy should be rendered in a style that is neither stilted nor artificial. Cavafy's use of language—a carefully modulated synthesis of *katharevousa* and *demotiki*—easily lends itself to mistranslation. It has become increasingly clear to us, during our work on Cavafy's poetry over the past twenty years that his voice is more natural, immediate, and even colloquial than extant translations—including our own earlier selections—would make it appear» (p. v.).

This claim is adequately supported by a careful comparison of their latest version to older ones. For example, the conclusion of «Waiting for the Barbarians», in its newest version is as follows:

Now what's going to happen to us without them?

The Barbarians were a kind of solution (p. 7).

Their earlier version, published in *Six Poets of Modern Greece* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1961) and elsewhere, is less colloquial, less natural:

And now, what will become of us without barbarians?

Those people were a kind of solution (p. 32).

although it is literally closer to the Greek text. Professor Rae Dalven's rendition is even more formal and much less poetic:

And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?

Those people were a kind of solution (p. 19).

The word *shall* adds a pedantic touch which is alien to Cavafy's demotic diction in this particular passage. And the word *any* is certainly an addition arbitrarily expanding the meaning of Cavafy who intentionally wanted to be laconic and epigrammatic in his conclusion. The poet W.H. Auden had mistranslated this poem by making its end conditional and less direct when he wrote, «Those people *would* be a kind of solution».

A similar verbal and artistic improvement is noticeable, for instance, in the poem «Ithaka». Compare these three different versions of its famous ending, whose Greek is colloquial and quite unpretentious:

(1) And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not defrauded you.  
With the great wisdom you have gained, with so much experience,  
you must surely have understood by then what Ithakas mean.

(Rae Dalven, p. 37)

(2) And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.  
So wise have you become, of such experience,  
that already you will have understood what these Ithakas mean.

(Keeley-Sherrard 1961, p. 37)

(3) And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you'll have become, and so experienced,  
you'll have understood by then what an Ithaka means.

(Keeley-Sherrard 1972, p. 19)

Trying to remain uncomfortably close to the Greek Miss Dalven resorts, once more, to prosaic and formal expressions in English, like the verb *defrauded* in (1). Keeley and Sherrard in (2) use the more colloquial verb *deceived*. Also, their «So wise have you become» is much more idiomatic than the literal «With the great wisdom that you have gained» of (1). In (3) Keeley and Sherrard even avoid the awkward plural of *Ithakas*, and substitute for it *an Ithaka* which, in addition to being more idiomatic, implies also that there are more than one Ithakas, as is the spirit of the original.

Comparisons like the above can be made in many more cases. The result however, is always the same: the latest Keeley-Sherrard version easily supersedes, especially in achieving a poetic effect, the pioneer efforts of earlier translators and of themselves.

Both of these Cavafy volumes have been hailed as substantial literary achievements by the reviewers of the American press. No one can honestly disagree with them, although at least one (the novelist Lawrence Durrell in the *New York Times*) went perhaps a little too far in his praise of the erotic poems (i.e., «The Bandaged Shoulder») at the expense of other less personal pieces. A professional historian or philologist may perhaps object to the way Keeley and Sherrard transliterate Greek, Roman, and Byzantine names by oversimplifying their orthography. For instance, the quasi-phonetic transliterations Dimitrios (*Selected Poems*, p. 9), Antony (p. 10), Selekfidis (p. 34), Anna Komnina (p. 51), Dimaratos (p. 54), Kantakuzinos (p. 60), and so on, differ considerably from the scholarly, traditional, and perhaps better established, spellings Demetrios, Anthony, Comnena, Seleucides, Demaratos, Cantacuzene, which classical scholars and historians will recognize immediately. Moreover, the phonetic substitution of an English *i* for a Greek *n* will cause a non-erudite English reader to mispronounce these names. Dimaratos and Selekfidis will be read, by many, as Νταϊμάρτος and Σελεκφάιντις, as experience teaches us. But this, of course, is a trifle when one thinks of the achievement of *Selected Poems* as a whole.

In their Foreword Professors Keeley and Sherrard announce that a «complete bilingual edition of the Greek poet's mature work» is forthcoming. This is good news. After the success of their collaboration on Seferis's *Collected Poems, 1924-1955*, and in view of what Keeley, Sherrard, and Savidis have accomplished in *C.P. Cavafy, Passions and Ancients Days*, and in *C.P. Cavafy, Selected Poems*, one may legitimately expect a definitive and possibly a monumental edition of the works of the great Alexandrian Greek poet.