

interpretations. It could also be argued that in seeking the origins of the Cold War within the scope of the Soviet - American power struggle Paterson has tended to oversimplify a condition in which *both* states were the victims. Nevertheless, his principal contention, which he has based on massive evidence, emerges incontrovertible: of all the actors in the postwar international arena, the United States was by far the most powerful and thus far more capable of influencing the course of events. To that extent, the Cold War may be viewed as the consequence of the failure of the United States to apply its strength — economic, political and moral — constructively and effectively, while also averting a head-on collision of global proportions with its principal competitor.

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Odysseus Elytis, *The Sovereign Sun: Selected Poems*, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Kimon Friar, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1974, pp. 200.

and

Odysseus Elytis, *The Axion Esti*, An International Poetry Forum Selection, Translated by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974, pp. xv + 159.

The poetry of Odysseus Elytis is not unknown to the Greekless reader of modern verse, for its first translations into French, English, German, Italian, Spanish and other languages — in book form as well as in literary periodicals — started appearing right after the Second World War. The simultaneous publication of the above two volumes will, no doubt, generate more interest in his work. Moreover, the quality of the translations and the calibre of scholarship and savvy that went into the making of these beautiful books, may well result in earning for this Greek poet a place on the modern international Parnassus right next to those occupied by Cavafy, Kazantzakis, and Seferis — the only modern Greek poets who are well known in the English-speaking world.

My statement implies no attempt at evaluating Elytis's work by means of comparing, or contrasting, it to the poetry of any of the other three. Odysseus Alepoudhélis — Elytis is his pen name — was born in Crete, in 1911. When he got his first poems published in an issue of *Nea Ghrammata* (1935), Cavafy had already been dead for two years, Seferis was publishing his third book of verse since 1931, and Kazantzakis was a well-known (though always controversial) literary figure.

Like George Seferis, Elytis in his youth became acquainted with the work of the French poets of the modern tradition and especially the surrealists. Unlike Seferis, he was never attracted by the irony of Laforgue, the malaise of Baudelaire and the other «damned» poets, or the nebulous symbolism of Mallarmé — elements which probably account for Seferis's later change of course toward the direction of T. S. Eliot. Initially influenced by Paul Eluard (whose poems he has translated into Greek), because he preferred his delicate handling of surrealist expression and imagery to André Breton's rougher automatic writing, Elytis eventually developed a poetic style and idiom uniquely his own.

In terms of thematic preoccupations and concerns as well Elytis was averse to the prevalent poetic modes in his youth: he had no use for the morbid pessimism

of Kostas Karyotakis, the dry irony and detachment of Cavafy, or the stoic acceptance and Olympian intellectualism of Seferis. Similarly, grand-scale expression of socio-political cosmotheory in verse — Kazantzakis's preoccupation — had no place at all in Elytis's lyricism, in a poetry that was «pure», yet not in the aesthetic sense that Mallarmé and Valéry implied in their definitions and practice of «poésie pure».

Elytis's pure lyricism — full of Dionysian impulses, dynamism, but no dogma — needed a special setting and a number of characters for its animation. The Greek milieu (land, sea, and sky) provided the setting of his verse: the luminous Aegean sea, the cerulean aura, the pastel hues tainting islands and shores, the ever bright and hot sun of Greece — the Sovereign Sun — and the half-naked close-to-nature lads and maidens of his youth's memories, playing, suffering, loving, and living against this dream-like and idyllic landscape of the mind, whose origin was actual reality «distanced» by the lapse of time and the moving from the world of innocence into the darker realm of experience.

This kind of lyricism characterized Elytis's earlier poetry. Kimon Friar, in his detailed and penetrating 40-page «Introduction» to *The Sovereign Sun*, discusses brilliantly the cultural backgrounds, growth, and evolution of Elytis' poetics and poetry. In his excellent poetic translations of some seventy short and long (book length) lyrics, Friar presents to the English readership abundant samples from all of Elytis's phases in his long and distinguished career as a poet. Friar's selection is organized chronologically — as it should be — and contains perhaps the best specimens from each of the poet's books or collections: *Orientations* (1939), *The Concert of Hyacinths*, *In the Service of Summer*, *Sun the First* (1943), *Heroic and Elegiac Song* . . . (1945), *Axion Esti* (1959), *Six and One Remorses for the Sky* (1960), *Villa Natacha* (1973), *Death and Resurrection of Constandinos Paleologhos* (1971), *The Light Tree and the Fourteenth Beauty* (1971), *The Monogram* (1971), and the couplets of *The Sovereign Sun* (1971). The editor and translator completed this admirable volume with explanatory notes (pp. 179-87), and a Greek and foreign bibliography of Elytis' texts, editions, translations, and the critical commentary that they have inspired in various languages (pp. 191-5).

Most of Elytis's titles give a good idea of how skillfully he employs surrealism in his lyric utterance. For instance, the phrase «concert of hyacinths» — despite its superficial strangeness — implies that flowers (hyacinths) can play music, which is an extremely beautiful and very poetic idea, although its verbal expression challenges momentarily our logic. An idea of Elytis's favorite imagery, with its ubiquitous touch of disciplined surrealism, may be communicated by means of the following two very different stanzas from «Beautiful Girl in the Garden» and the end of «The Sovereign Sun», respectively:

High up with your morning delight
Filled with the grasses of the East
Filled with birds for the first time heard
Oh how beautiful you are
Casting the waterdrop of day
On the beginning of the trees' song! (p. 71)

and

and high up on our lookout mast we keep for sentry one
who ever and anon remains our Sun our Sovereign Sun! (p. 175)

Genuine and profound joy often emanates from Elytis's lyrics, but the reader shouldn't be misled into assuming that this poet's work is facile, pretty, light and simple, full of nature descriptions and warm feelings verging on the sentimental. Friar's careful selection shows Elytis's sophistication as an artist and thinker in works like the lyrical prose of «Death and Resurrection of Constandinos Paleologhos» and the early «The Concert of Hyacinths», or the symphonic complexity of the long and moving «Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign».

Elytis's astonishing originality as a composer of poetry whose roots extend deeply into the cultural consciousness of Hellenism is not manifested only in lyrics whose subject-matter has been provided by medieval or modern Greek history. His greatest *opus* to this day is, undoubtedly, the long secular oratorio *Axion Esti* (Worthy It Is) (1959), whose intricate and complex form, metrics, and meaning are insightfully explained by Kimon Friar («Introduction» pp. 25-30) and represented by one dozen autonomous pieces from its main parts and their subdivisions: Genesis, Psalms, Odes, Prophetic, and Gloria — types and genres found in Byzantine devotional poetry and hymnography.

The Axion Esti can be viewed — without losing one's sense of proportion, of course — as contemporary man's carefully thought-out and splendidly executed equivalent to Beethoven's magnificent *Ninth Symphony* (Choral). Popularized by the appropriate music that Mikis Theodorakis composed to suit its Protean moods, tones, and themes *The Axion Esti* does uplift today's sophisticated connoisseur of esoteric verse in perhaps the same way that Schiller's jubilant and idealistic «Ode to Joy» (An die Freude) uplifted Beethoven and myriads of romantic souls ever since its composition.

The significance and striking originality of this impressive poetic sequence enabled the director of the International Poetry Forum to include *The Axion Esti* in its excellent series. They also inspired Tasso and Jane Katselas and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America to support its publication with special grants. The task of translating, annotating, editing, and presenting was undertaken by Professors Edmund Keeley and George Savidis. As was the case before, Keeley and Savidis achieved their goal with distinction.

The greatest asset of the Keeley-Savidis book of Elytis's poetry is its bilinguality — Greek and English texts printed clearly on facing pages. This enables the reader who knows Greek to compare the translation to the original and reach his own conclusion as to its value. The two editors' short preface and notes (a total of ten pages) provide some assistance to the reader of this poem. Since, however, *The Axion Esti* is here in its entirety (The Genesis, The Passion, and The Gloria with all their parts and counterparts) apparently Keeley and Savidis did not feel the need to provide an analysis of its structure as elaborate and extensive as the one offered by Kimon Friar in his edition.

The best brief but telling description of this poem, as well as a statement of its theme, can be found on the cover of the book. I quote: «Though the poem can perhaps be understood best as a spiritual autobiography which dramatizes the national and philosophical extensions of a highly personal sensibility, it is also read as an expression of the revolutionary spirit in Greece. *The Axion Esti* mirrors man's merciless struggle against the powers of darkness as the poet gives to an imaginary Christian liturgy a context which is revolutionary from several aspects besides the religious:

the social, the aesthetic, and the philosophical».

Since it is far better to experience poetry rather than describe or summarize it, I wish to complete this presentation with a characteristic passage from the fifth Ode of «The Passion», quoted in the original in the Friar as well as in the Keeley-Savidis versions:

Ἑκατόγχειρες νύχτες	*	μὲς στὸ στερέωμα ὄλο
Τὰ σπλάχνα μου ἀναδεύουν	*	Αὐτὸς ὁ πόνος καίει
Ποῦ νὰ βρῶ τὴν ψυχὴ μου	*	τὸ τετράφυλλο δάκρυ!
Μὲ τὸ λύχνο τοῦ ἄστρου	*	στοὺς οὐρανούς γυρίζω
Στὸ ἀγιάζι τῶν λειμῶνων	*	στὴ μόνη ἀκτὴ τοῦ κόσμου
Ποῦ νὰ βρῶ τὴν ψυχὴ μου	*	τὸ τετράφυλλο δάκρυ!

Nights with a hundred hands stir my entrails
Throughout the firmament. This pain burns.
How can I find my soul, the four-leaf tear!
With the star's lamp I roam the heavens.
In the frost of the meadows, the world's only shore,
How can I find my soul, the four-leaf tear!

(Keeley - Savidis, pp. 62-3)

and

Nights with a hundred arms	*	in the vast firmament
Set my entrails astir	*	This agony burns me
Where I might find my soul	*	that four-leaf teardrop!
With the lamp of the star	*	I went out to the skies
In the meadow's chill air	*	on the earth's only shore
Where I might find my soul	*	that four-leaf teardrop!

(Friar, p. 107)

It is difficult to say which of the two translations is better. Perhaps it all depends on one's artistic sensitivity or taste. At times Kimon Friar renders things more accurately and very eloquently; but at other times Edmund Keeley and George Savidis succeed in sounding quite poetic while still being precise and idiomatic. In terms of approximating Elytis's style and various forms, however, Friar seems to be «il miglior fabbro» — to echo Dante and T.S. Eliot here.

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Marshall Lee Miller, *Bulgaria During the Second World War*, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1975, pp. xii + 290.

Bulgaria's modern history has been covered in two contradictory academic trends. In the American and English academic world this field has been covered very sparingly. On the other hand, the most persistent of Bulgaria's problems, that of Macedonia, has been dealt with in numerous publications, although most of them have been of the most blatant propaganda nature.

The more worthwhile treatment of recent Bulgaria has been offered by such works as: J. F. Brown, *Bulgaria Under Communist Rule* (New York, Praeger, 1970), Peter John Georgeoff, *The Social Education of Bulgarian Youth* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1948), and L.A.D. Dellin, Ed., *Bulgaria* (New York, Praeger, 1957).