

Ioanna Tsatsos, *My Brother George Seferis*. Translated from the Original Greek by Jean Demos, with a Preface by Eugene Current Garcia. A Nostos Book. Minneapolis: North Central Publishing Company, 1982. 260+xvi pages.

E. C. Garcia is quite right in observing that «this will be no ordinary compilation of biographical minutiae, but a work of art painstakingly wrought from a lifetime of inchoate memories» (p. viii). Mrs. Tsatsos's story of her older brother's life is, indeed, a personal statement with genuinely lyrical touches; it is not an academic treatise following models and styles normally utilized by scholars who «recreate» the «life and opinions» of a creative writer through inference, deduction and hypothesis. Thus, while the academically-oriented reader or researcher may find this book not directly relevant to his strictly scholastic purposes, the lover of modern poetry — and especially the sensitive person who is both charmed and challenged by Seferis's poetic achievement and aenigma — will be rewarded for this unique chance to follow the Wordsworthian growth of a poet's mind as told by a fellow poet who was his dear «little sister» and lifelong confidante.

After a few prefatory remarks, the distinguished authoress — a doctor of laws, poet and prose writer, married to a former President of the Republic — presents her intimate portait of the poet in six chronologically-organized chapters. I «1912-18, Another Era», II «1919-22, Our Native Country Free», III «1922-25, The Doom of Ionia», IV «1926-31, Our Exile Returned», V «1931-34, London», and VI «1935-41, Poetry and Politics». A Biographical Note (with facts and dates), and an Index (with names and titles) complete this most readable translation of the 1973 Greek original.

While following the chronological development of events, Mrs. Tsatsos avoids the pitfalls of a strictly linear account by aptly transposing her narrative to the future or the past as circumstances warrant, integrating thus themes, motifs, and observations that complete the picture of a human being as he progresses from childhood and adolescence, from innocence and wonder, to the stage of maturity and professional distinction.

Supporting her explanations and comments by means of letters by and to her brother, registering many discussions and episodes, and frequently quoting his poems and other writings, the biographer succeeds in sounding authoritative while, at the same time, she never allows George Seferis to become the cold subject of a routinely academic dissertation. The special charm of *My Brother George Seferis* radiates from the fact that brother, artist, thinker, and man are never treated as separate entities. To his younger sister he was always an accomplished, three-dimensional, and dynamic personality whose devotion to Apollo and his Muses could not be isolated from his love for and loyalty to family, friends, country, moral values, and professional integrity both as a diplomat and as a writer.

The purely factual information in all chapters shows how family upbringing and ties, momentous historical events (such as the 1922 Smyrna Disaster), studies in Paris, relations with several men and women, and career as a diplomat contributed to the formation and conditioning of Seferis's personality and artistic sensibility.

An avid reader of Greek poetry, the young law student in Paris came to ma-

ster and to love the works of Laforgue, Moréas, Valéry and others in France, before making the acquaintance of T. S. Eliot's poetry and essays during his first (1931-34) official assignment in London. A master of the French language, the young Seferis contemplated composing verses in it. Soon, however, he realized that Greek was his natural medium (Chapters II and III).

Under the spell of Eliot's verse and thought (Chapter V), later on, Seferis once more allowed his Greekness to prevail, absorbing from the celebrated Anglo-American innovator only those artistic traits that would help him improve, further develop, and establish his own artistic sensitivity and style as they had been intimated for the first time in his 1931 *Turning Point*.

The son of a distinguished Venizelist professor of law, himself a democrat with Liberal sympathies, George S. Seferiades (1900-1971) was ironically destined to serve royalist and conservative administrations, and to live through two dictatorships, both World Wars, and the communist insurrection in his country before retiring as ambassador to St. James's Court in 1962. «Wherever I travel Greece wounds me» — an epigrammatic line from his poem «In the Manner of G. S.» — tellingly sums up the impact of Greece's drama on his spirit. Nor was his youthful soul unaffected by the unfulfilled eros he felt first for Jacquellin and then for Kirsten, the French and the Norwegian girls who profoundly moved him in Paris, long before he met and married Maró Zannos in 1941.

Ioanna Tsatsos ends this captivating story of her illustrious brother — the man who defied the Junta in 1969 — with two brief notes about events in 1940 and 1941. Most subsequent happenings have, in a sense, been intimated or foreshadowed in her earlier diachronic statements and observations. The 1963 Nobel Prize was but an official and international recognition of Seferis's genius, a genius she had instinctively sensed, known, admired, and adored, in ever increasing degrees of awareness, ever since both of them were carefree and innocent siblings enjoying domestic happiness in Smyrna and other enchanted spots of erstwhile Hellenic Ionia.

*The University of Athens
and Southern Illinois University-Carbondale*

M. BYRON RAIZIS

Donald C. Swanson, *Vocabulary of Modern Spoken Greek* with the assistance of Sophia P. Djaferis and a forward by Theofanis G. Stavrou. A Nostos Book, The North Central Publishing Company, St. Paul, MN. 1982, X+410 pp.

The appearance in 1959 of the late Prof. Donald C. Swanson's *Vocabulary of Modern Spoken Greek* marked a watershed in the field of English-Greek and / of Greek-English lexicography. Practitioners in the field of Modern Greek Studies in the United States (language and culture) were quick to perceive its uniqueness and within a very short span of time it had been sold out. A second printing came out in 1967 but it, too, was soon out of print. A persistent demand for yet another printing was voiced at the *First Conference on Modern Greek in the Universities of the English speaking World* (held in Athens in 1980) and Prof. Theofanis G. Stavrou took up the challenge. The book under review is the result.