

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑΣ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ

ΕΚΤΑΚΤΗ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ 11^{ΗΣ} ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ 2002

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΙΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΓΑΜΟΥ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ (ΖΗΖΙΟΥΛΑ)

ΕΠΙΣΗΜΗ ΥΠΟΔΟΧΗ
ΤΟΥ ΑΝΤΕΠΙΣΤΕΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ ΜΕΛΟΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑΣ
EDMUND KEELEY

ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΑΝΤΙΠΡΟΕΔΡΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑΣ κ. ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟ ΣΚΑΛΚΕΑ

Κυρίες και Κύριοι Συνάδελφοι,
Κυρίες και Κύριοι,

Τὸ ἀνώτατο πνευματικὸ ἴδρυμα τῆς χώρας ὑποδέχεται σήμερα καὶ περιλαμβάνει στοὺς κόλπους του, μεταξύ τῶν ἀντεπιστελλόντων μελῶν του, ἕναν ἐκ τῶν πλείον διακεκριμένων διεθνῶς διδασκάλων τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς (Ποιήσεως καὶ) Λογοτεχνίας, τὸν Ἀμερικανὸ Καθηγητὴ κ. Edmund Keeley. Ὁ κ. Keeley, μετὰ ἀπὸ λαμπρὰς σπουδὰς στὰ Πανεπιστήμια Princeton καὶ Ὁξφόρδης, δίδαξε τὴν Ἀγγλικὴ λογοτεχνία σὲ πολλὰ Πανεπιστήμια, μεταξύ τῶν ὁποίων τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν.

Ἡ σταδιοδρομία του ὅμως ἐξελίσσεται στὸ Πανεπιστήμιο Princeton ὅπου, ὡς Καθηγητῆς, δίδαξε, ἐπὶ 40 χρόνια, ἀγγλικὴ καὶ ἐλληνικὴ ποίηση καὶ λογοτεχνία καὶ ὑπῆρξε Πρόεδρος, ἐπὶ δεκαετία, τῆς «Ἐπιτροπῆς Ἑλληνικῶν Σπουδῶν».

Μόνος ἢ μὲ τὴν συνεργασία συναδέλφων του, μετέφρασε ποιήματα κορυφαίων Ἑλλήνων ποιητῶν, ὅπως τοῦ Καβάφη, τοῦ Σικελιανοῦ, τοῦ Σεφέρη, τοῦ Ἀντωνίου, τοῦ Ἐλύτη, τοῦ Ρίτσου καὶ τοῦ Γκάτσου καὶ συνέβαλε στὴν διεθνή προβολὴ τοῦ ποιητικοῦ τους ἔργου.

Ἀγαπητὲ συνάδελφε κ. Keeley,

Ἡ Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν μὲ χαρὰ σᾶς ὑποδέχεται σήμερα, ὄχι μόνον ὡς ἓνα ἐξέχοντα ἐπιστήμονα, διανοητὴ καὶ φιλέλληνα ἀλλὰ, δὲν διστάζω νὰ ὑποστηρίξω, ὡς ἓναν αὐθεντικὸν Ἕλληνα.

Ἐκ μέρους ὄλων τῶν μελῶν τῆς Ἀκαδημίας, σᾶς εὐχομαι εὐτυχισμένη μακροημέρευση γιὰ νὰ προσφέρετε τὶς πολύτιμες πνευματικὰς ὑπηρεσίας σας καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν νέα θέση τὴν ὁποία ἐπισήμως ἀναλαμβάνετε σήμερα.

Καὶ τώρα παρακαλῶ τὸν Ἀκαδημαϊκὸν κ. Νικόλαο Κονομῆ νὰ λάβει τὸν λόγο, καὶ νὰ παρουσιάσει τὸ ἐπιστημονικὸν ἔργο τοῦ κ. Keeley.

ΠΡΟΣΦΩΝΗΣΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΑΪΚΟ κ. ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟ ΚΟΝΟΜΗ

Ὁ καθηγητὴς Edmund Keeley γεννήθηκε στὴ Δαμασκὸ τὸ 1928. Σπούδασε στὸ Πανεπιστήμιον τοῦ Princeton (B.A. 1949) καὶ στὸ Πανεπιστήμιον τῆς Ὁξφόρδης (D.Phil. 1952). Ἐργάσθηκε ὡς καθηγητὴς τῆς ἀγγλικῆς λογοτεχνίας σὲ διάφορα ἰδρύματα, ἀνάμεσα στὰ ὁποῖα καὶ τὰ Πανεπιστήμια τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν. Ἡ κύρια θέση του τὴν ὁποία κράτησε γιὰ περίπου 40 χρόνια ἦταν ἡ διδασκαλία τῆς Ἀγγλικῆς καὶ Νεοελληνικῆς ποίησης καὶ λογοτεχνίας στὸ Πανεπιστήμιον τοῦ Princeton. Ἐχρημάτισε πρόεδρος πολλῶν προγραμμάτων σπουδῶν καὶ λογοτεχνικῶν ἐταιρειῶν· μεταξὺ ἄλλων ἐχρημάτισε Πρόεδρος τῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς Ἑλληνικῶν Σπουδῶν 1985-94 στὸ Πανεπιστήμιό του. Ὡς ἐπισκέπτης καθηγητὴς δίδαξε σὲ ἀρκετὰ ἀγγλικά καὶ ἀμερικανικά Πανεπιστήμια περιωπῆς. Ἀπὸ τὸ 1994 εἶναι συνταξιούχος καθηγητὴς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου τοῦ Princeton.

Τὸ δημιουργικὸ γράψιμο καὶ ἡ ἐρμηνεία καὶ παρουσίαση τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς λογοτεχνίας ὑπῆρξαν οἱ δύο τομεῖς ὅπου ὁ καθηγητὴς Keeley διέπρεψε. Μαζὶ μὲ τὸν Philip Sherrard καὶ τὸν Rex Warner ἀνήκει στὸν κύκλον τῶν ἀγγλόφωνων φίλων τῆς σύγχρονης ἑλληνικῆς ποίησης. Ὁ καθηγητὴς Keeley, ὅπως εἶναι γνωστό, ἔχει διακριθεῖ ἰδιαίτερα ὡς μεταφραστὴς στὴ μητρικὴ του γλώσσα σύγχρονων κυρίως ἑλληνικῶν ποιητικῶν κειμένων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς συγκριτολόγος καὶ ὡς συγγραφέας γενικότερων θεωρητικῶν ἔργων γιὰ τὴ νεοελληνικὴ ποίηση.

Οἱ ἀγγλόφωνες μεταφράσεις του τῆς σύγχρονης ἑλληνικῆς ποίησης ἀποτελοῦν κείμενα ὑψηλῆς στάθμης καθὼς ὁ καθηγητὴς Keeley ἔχει ἐμβαθύνει στὰ συστήματα τῶν δύο γλωσσῶν, τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς καὶ τῆς Ἀγγλικῆς, καὶ οἱ μεταφραστικὲς λύσεις πού ἐπιλέγει ἀνταποκρίνονται πειστικὰ σὲ μιὰ συμμετρικὴ ἰσορροπία ἀνάμεσα στὸ πρωτότυπο καὶ τὴ μετάφραση, διασώζοντας ἔτσι δυναμικὰ τὴ νοηματικὴ καὶ αἰσθητικὴ ἀρτιότητα καὶ τῶν δύο ἐπιπέδων. Ἡ μεγάλη ἐπάρκεια τοῦ ξένου νεοελληνιστῆ-μεταφραστῆ ἐπιτρέπει τὴν ἄνετη μεταφορὰ καὶ ἐγγραφή τοῦ νεοελληνικοῦ

ποιήματος από τὸ ξένο κοινό. Μὲ τὸν τρόπο αὐτὸ ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα τοῦ ὅλου ἐλληνικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ ὅπως τὴν ἐκφράζει ἡ νεοελληνικὴ λογοτεχνία γίνεται ἀνετα προσιτὴ στὸν ξένο ἀναγνώστη παρὰ τὶς μακρὲς ἐξελίξεις καὶ τοὺς ιδιαίτεροὺς μετασχηματισμοὺς ποὺ ὑφίσταται ἡ μακρὰ ἐλληνικὴ παράδοση.

Λόγω τοῦ περιορισμένου χρόνου δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸ νὰ γίνῃ ἐδῶ διεξοδικὴ ἀναφορά σὲ ὅλα τὰ ἐπιστημονικὰ δημοσιεύματα τοῦ καθηγητῆ κ. Keeley καὶ θὰ περιοριστοῦμε σὲ σύντομη ἀναφορά στὰ κυριότερα μόνο ἔργα του.

Μὲ τὴ συνεργασία τοῦ Philip Sherrard μετέφρασε ποιήματα ἕξι ποιητῶν μας, τῶν Κ.Π. Καβάφη, Ἄγγελου Σικελιανοῦ, Γιώργου Σεφέρη, Δ. Ἀντωνίου, Ὀδυσσεά Ἐλύτη καὶ Νίκου Γκάτσου. Ὁ τίτλος: *Six Poets of Modern Greece*, Λονδίνο 1960. Οἱ ἴδιοι μεταφραστές ἐκδίδουν τὸ 1966 στὰ βιβλία Penguin: *Four Greek Poets*, Καβάφη, Σεφέρης, Ἐλύτης, Γκάτσος. Μὲ τὸν Sherrard ἐκδίδει ἐπίσης George Seferis, *Collected Poems*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1967-1995. Μὲ τὸν ἴδιο συνεργάτη ἐκδίδεται τὴν ἴδια χρονιά ἡ ἀνθολογία: *Voices of Modern Greece*, Princeton University Press, 1981.

Τὸ 1981 ἔχουμε ἐπιλογὲς ἀπὸ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἐλύτη: *Προσανατολισμοί*. Ἕλιος ὁ πρῶτος, Ἄσμα ἡρωϊκὸ καὶ πένθιμο, τὸ Ἄξιον Ἐστί, Ἐξὶ καὶ μία τύψεις, Τὸ φωτόδενδρο, Τὰ Ἐτεροθαλῆ, Μαρία Νεφέλη, μὲ τίτλο: *Odysseus Elytis, Selected Poems*, Anvil Press Poetry (Chosen and Introduced by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Translated by Edmund Keeley, George Savidis, Philip Sherrard, John Stathatos, Nanos Valaoritis), Λονδίνο 1981. Προηγήθηκε μὲ τὴν συνεργασία τοῦ Sherrard καὶ τοῦ Σαββίδη ἕνας τόμος Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1975, καὶ ἀναθεωρημένη ἐκδόση 1992 καὶ μὲ τὸν Sherrard, Angelos Sikelianos, *Selected Poems*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1979 ποὺ ἀποδίδει τὸ ἐλληνικὸ κείμενο ἀκριβῶς ὅπως εἶναι: ὅπως παρατηρήθηκε, ἐδῶ ἔχουμε ἕνα εἶδος διαθήκης, πὺλὸν σάν φωνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ παρὰ σάν φωνὴ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου.

Ἀπὸ τὸ ἔργο τοῦ Γιάννη Ρίτσου ὁ Keeley ἔχει μεταφράσει: α) *Τὶς παρενθέσεις* (1946-47 καὶ 1950-61). Τίτλος: *Ritsos in Parentheses*. Translations and Introduction by Edmund Keeley. Princeton University Press, Princeton-New Jersey 1979. β) *Ποιήματα ἀπὸ τὶς συλλογές*: «Ὁ τοῖχος μέσα στὸν καθρέφτη», «Ἰπόκωφα». Ὁ τίτλος Ἐπιστροφή ἀπὸ τὸ ὁμώνυμο ποίημα τῆς συλλογῆς «Ὁ τοῖχος μέσα στὸν καθρέφτη»: Yannis Ritsos, *Return and other Poems*. Translated by Edmund Keeley, Univ. of Alabama, 1983, καὶ γ) Yannis Ritsos, *Exile and Return*. *Selected Poems 1967-* Translated by Edmund Keeley. The Ecco Press, New York 1985 (καὶ νέα ἐκδόση: London 1989). Ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο ποιητὴ μεταφράστηκαν: Ἐπαναλήψεις, Μαρτυρίες, Παρενθέσεις *Repetitions, Testimonies*, Parentheses, Princeton University Press 1991.

Σὲ συνεργασία μὲ τὸν Sherrard ἐκδίδει: *The Essential Cavafy*. Ecco Press, 1995.

Ὡς συγκριτολόγος ὁ Edmund Keeley μελέτησε μεταξὺ ἄλλων τὴν παρουσία τοῦ T.S. Eliot στὴν ποίηση τοῦ Σεφέρη: «T.S. Eliot and the poetry of G. Seferis», *Comparative Literature* (1956) 214-226. Ἐπίσης «Seferis and the Mythical Method», *Comparative Literature Studies* (1969), 109-125 (ἐλληνικὴ μετάφραση: «Ὁ Σεφέρης καὶ ἡ μυθικὴ μέθοδος» στὸν τόμο: Ἔντυμοντ Κήλυ. Μύθος καὶ φωνὴ στὴ σύγχρονη ἐλληνικὴ ποίηση. Μετάφραση: Σπύρος Τσακνιάς. Ἐκδόσεις Στιγμῆ, Ἀθήνα 1987. Ἀκόμη ὁ Keeley ἐξέτασε τὴ σχέση Καβάφη καὶ Browning μὲ μιὰ ἐργασία πού εἶναι καταχωρημένη στὰ Πρακτικά τοῦ Τρίτου Συμποσίου-Ποίησης, Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Κ.Π. Καβάφη, «Γνώση» 1984, 355-62.

Μαζί μὲ τὸν Peter Bien ὁ Edmund Keeley ἐπιμελήθηκε τὴν ἔκδοση τοῦ τόμου *Modern Greek Writers* (Solomos, Calvos, Matesis, Palamas, Cavafy, Kazantzakis, Seferis, Elytis), 1972. Στὸν θαυμάσιο αὐτὸ τόμο ἐκτός ἀπὸ τὸ δοκίμιο τοῦ Keeley γιὰ τὰ νέα ποιήματα τοῦ Καβάφη ὑπάρχει μιὰ ἐπιλογή ἀπὸ τὰ καλύτερα δοκίμια Ἑλλήνων καὶ ξένων γιὰ τὶς κυριότερες ποιητικὲς προσωπικότητες τῆς νεώτερης Ἑλλάδας.

Μόνος του ὁ Edmund Keeley ἐξεπόνησε δύο αὐτοτελεῖ ἔργα, χρήσιμα γιὰ τὴ σπουδὴ τῆς καθαφικῆς Ἀλεξάνδρειας καὶ τῆς σύγχρονης ἐλληνικῆς ποίησης:

1) *Cavafy's Alexandria: Study of a Myth in Progress*. Λονδίνο 1977 (καὶ στὰ Ἑλληνικά: Ἡ Καθαφικὴ Ἀλεξάνδρεια. Ἐξέλιξη ἐνὸς μύθου. Μετάφραση Τζένης Μαστοράκη. Ἰκαρος 1979). Στὸ ἔργο αὐτὸ περιγράφεται ἡ Ἀλεξάνδρεια ὡς κεντρικὴ ποιητικὴ μεταφορὰ στὰ ποιήματα τοῦ Καβάφη καὶ ἡ λογοτεχνικὴ-αἰσθητικὴ πρόσδος τοῦ ποιητῆ κατὰ τὴ δημιουργία ἐνὸς μύθου πού ἀναφερόταν σὲ ὁλόκληρο τὸν ἐλληνικὸ κόσμο.

2) *Modern Greek Poetry. Voice and Myth*, Princeton University Press 1983. Στὸ ἔργο αὐτὸ πού μεταφράστηκε στὰ Ἑλληνικά ἀπὸ τὸν Στ. Τσακνιά, ὅπως ἀναφέρθηκε ἤδη, ἔχουμε δοκίμια σχετικὰ μὲ τὴν προσωπικὴ φωνὴ καὶ τὸ ἰδιαίτερο ὕφος τοῦ Κ.Π. Καβάφη, τοῦ Σικελιανοῦ, τοῦ Γ. Σεφέρη, τοῦ Ὁδ. Ἐλύτη καὶ τοῦ Γ. Ρίτσου. Ἐπίσης ὁ συγγραφέας ἐπικεντρώνει τὴν προσοχὴ του στοὺς ποικίλους τρόπους μὲ τοὺς ὁποίους οἱ ποιητὲς αὐτοὶ χρησιμοποίησαν τὴν ἐλληνικὴ μυθολογία ἢ μυθοποίησαν τὴν ἐλληνικὴ ἱστορία, προκειμένου νὰ καταστήσουν τὴν ποιητικὴ τους ἀναζήτησι γόνιμη.

Σὲ ἓνα ἀπὸ τὰ τελευταῖα βιβλία του μὲ τίτλο «Ἀναπλάθοντας τὸν Παράδεισο: τὸ ἐλληνικὸ ταξίδι 1937-47», πού ἐκδόθηκε τὸ 1999, περιγράφει τὴν παρατεταμένη διαμονή στὴν Ἑλλάδα τοῦ συγγραφέα Henry Miller, λίγο πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἔκρηξη τοῦ Β' Παγκοσμίου πολέμου. Ὁ Miller καὶ οἱ ἀγγλοσάξονες φίλοι του εἶχαν τὴν

εὐκαιρία νὰ ἀπολαύσουν μιὰ σύντομη ἀλλὰ παραγωγικὴ συντροφιά μὲ τοὺς Ἑλληνας ὁμοτέχνους τοὺς ὅπως ὁ Σεφέρης, ὁ Ἀντωνίου καὶ ὁ Θεοδοκάς καὶ νὰ ἐμπλουτίσουν τόσο τὴν ἀμερικανικὴ ἐνόραση γιὰ τὴν Εὐρώπη, ὅσο καὶ νὰ διαπιστώσουν ἐκτὸς ἄλλων τὴν ἀφοσίωση τῶν Ἑλλήνων ποιητῶν στὴν τέχνη τους. Ὁ Keeley ἔχει γράψει καὶ τὸ ἱστορικὸ βιβλίο: Φόνος στὸ Θερμαϊκόν: Ὑπατοι, πραιτόρες, τύπος στὴν ὑπόθεση Πόλκ.

Ὁ Edmund Keeley ἔχει ἀκόμα στὸ ἐνεργητικὸ του ἐπτὰ μυθιστορήματα ἀπὸ τὰ ὁποῖα τέσσερα μεταφράστηκαν στὰ Νέα Ἑλληνικά: Τὸ πρῶτο ἀπὸ αὐτὰ εἶναι «Τὸ ἡμερολόγιο μιᾶς ἔρημης χώρας», Ἐξάντας, Ἀθήνα 1986. Σ' αὐτὸ ἐξιστοροῦνται οἱ περιπέτειες μιᾶς γυναίκας πού δραπετεύει ἀπὸ τὴν πατρίδα τῆς τὴν Καμπότζη καὶ καταλήγει στὰ στρατόπεδα προσφύγων στὴν Ταϊλάνδη. Ὑπάρχουν συγκλονιστικὲς περιγραφές καὶ ἡ διαγραφή τῶν χαρακτήρων γίνεται μὲ ἐπιδεξιότητα.

Ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ αὐτό, τὰ ἄλλα τρία βασίζονται στὸ τοπίο καὶ στὴν πραγματικότητα τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Οἱ τίτλοι εἶναι: Ἡ Σπονδὴ, Τὸ τελευταῖο καλοκαίρι τῆς ἀθωότητας καὶ Ἡ σιωπηλὴ κραυγὴ τῆς μνήμης. Ὅλα ἔχουν ἐκδοθῆ ἀπὸ τὸν Ἐξάντα.

Γιὰ τὸ σκοπὸ τῆς διάδοσης τῆς νεοελληνικῆς ποίησης στὸ ἀγγλόφωνο κοινόν, ὅπως ὀρθὰ σημείωσε ὁ Peter Green, ὁ Keeley ἐργάστηκε σκληρὰ καὶ μὲ μεγάλη ἐπιδεξιότητα κι ἔγινε διάσημος, κυρίως ἀπὸ τίς μεταφράσεις του στὰ Ἀγγλικά τῆς νεώτερης Ἑλληνικῆς Ποίησης. Ἡ ἀγάπη του γιὰ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ λογοτεχνία καὶ ἡ ἀφοσίωσή του στὴ μετάφρασή τῆς βοήθησε ὥστε γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ οἱ σύγχρονοι Νεοέλληνες ποιητὲς νὰ γίνουν γνωστοὶ στὸ ἀγγλόφωνο ἀναγνωστικὸ κοινόν.

Γιὰ τὸ σημαντικὸ πρωτότυπο καὶ μεταφραστικὸ ἔργο του, γιὰ τὴ διὰ βίου ἀφοσίωσή του στὴ μελέτη καὶ τὴ διδασκαλία τῆς νεώτερης ἑλληνικῆς ποίησης, γιὰ τὴν καλοπροαίρετη στάση του ἔναντι τῆς χώρας μας, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη του γιὰ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα καὶ τὸν ἑλληνικὸ πολιτισμὸ γενικότερα ὁ καθηγητὴς Edmund Keeley ἐκλέχτηκε ἐπάξια ἀντεπιστέλλον μέλος τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν. Χαιρετίζω τὴν παρουσία του σήμερα ἀνάμεσά μας καὶ τοῦ εὐχομαι μακροήμερευση γιὰ τὴ συνέχιση τοῦ σημαντικοῦ ἔργου του.

CAFAFY'S LEGACY IN AMERICA

EDMUND KEELEY

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY OF ATHENS

I want to preface my remarks today by first of all thanking the Academy for the honor it has given me, further evidence of something I have come to acknowledge over time, namely that whatever little I may have tried to offer this country is indeed small return for what Greece has given me by way of its people, its poetry, its landscape, and its way of life. With regard to people, I want to share this honor in particular with those who have helped me most in my effort to bring the Greek poets to a larger audience in the English-speaking world. I have had many collaborators in this effort, and though the word "collaborator" has negative connotations in English, I declare that my collaborators have all been fine people and have had a wonderfully positive influence for the good on my life at the literary barricades and elsewhere. First of these was Constantine Trypanis, a member of this Academy who was my professor at Oxford and who introduced me to the work of Cavafy, Sikelianos, Seferis, Elytis and other poets who have so enriched my life. Then there was George Savidis, fellow student in England who helped me understand Cavafy and Seferis while I was working on my doctoral dissertation and who later collaborated with me in the translation of Elytis' *The Axion Esti* and Cavafy's *Passions and Ancient Days*; I honor George especially today, the anniversary of his death in 1995. And Philip Sherrard, my faithful and learned collaborator for many years in the translation of Cavafy, Sikelianos, Seferis, Elytis and Gatsos among others, who also left us in May of 1995. And finally, most of all, my wife Mary, who has collaborated with me not only in literary matters but in so many other generous ways for more than 50 years.

I turn now to the greatest of the Greek poets I have had the privilege of studying during the past half century, C.P. Cavafy and his legacy in America.

Among early 20th century poets on the European side of the Atlantic who require translation into English, Cavafy is now one of the major figures that an American poet is likely to consider essential reading at some point, if not today, then maybe next month or maybe next summer, someday soon. But if this statement is true, it is only fairly recently true. Though Cavafy had his devotees in England well before and during the Second World War – E.M. Forster, T.E. Lawrence, and Arnold Toynbee, among others – and though John Mavrogdato's translation of his poems appeared in the United States in 1952, it was

not until the next decade that American readers of poetry began to take an interest in the Alexandrian's work in significant numbers.

The first source of this growing interest was the publication in 1961 of the American edition of Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* in which Cavafy appeared as "the Poet of the city" and "the old man", in both instances identified by the novelist in an end note and celebrated by Durrell's free translations of Cavafy's poems "The City" and "The God Abandons Antony" in an addendum to the first novel of the quartet, *Justine*. Durrell's work became an immediate and enduring best-seller in the United States, as it previously had been in England, and Cavafy's reputation began to prosper to a degree as a consequence.

But the principal source of his increasingly central standing in the minds of American poets was surely the introduction that W.H. Auden provided for the 1961 publication of Rae Dalven's English translation of Cavafy's poems. Auden, then living in the United States and the dean of poets for many younger American writers, revealed, at the start of his commentary, that for over thirty years Cavafy had "remained an influence on my own writing; that is to say, I can think of poems which, if Cavafy were unknown to me, I should have written quite differently or perhaps not written at all". And he added that this influence was exercised not by way of Modern Greek, which he did not know, but by way of English and French translations. This suggested to him that though he had "always believed the essential difference between prose and poetry to be that prose can be translated into another tongue but poetry cannot," he now had to acknowledge that "there must be some elements in poetry which are separable from their original verbal expression and some which are inseparable". In the case of Cavafy, he finds that what survives translation, any translation, is Cavafy's "unique perspective on the world" and "unique tone of voice". Let me add a personal note here: when Auden visited Princeton University in the late 1960s to give a lecture, I had a chance to ask him if I was right to think that his poem called "Atlantis" was a work he might have written differently had he not known Cavafy. His answer, to my mind only half in jest: "If I'd known Cavafy would become as famous as he's becoming, I wouldn't have published that poem at all".

Auden's 1961 revelations, in the same year that Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* appeared on the literary landscape, surely led American poets who considered Auden their mentor to look more closely into a Greek poet then known only by the few who happened to have come across Mavrogordato's 1952 translation or who had been introduced to his work by the occasional translations

appearing in literary quarterlies. And, as is indicated by the dates of composition of some of the poems by American poets that I'm going to present today, during the two decades following Auden's 1961 remarks, several of the best poets of the post-war generation on the American side of the Atlantic offered poems that were modeled after Cavafy, Alan Dugan, James Merrill, and Daryl Hine the earliest of these.

But it took at least another decade for Cavafy to become established in America as a major foreign poet of the twentieth century, the kind of voice that any aspiring poet ought to listen to with serious –though not somber– attention, even in translation. A new collected edition of his work in English appeared in 1975, the so-called Keeley-Sherrard version, along with several critical monographs, and during the 1980s the discussion of his work broadened measurably among both critics and general readers of poetry interested in the work of the best foreign writers. Then an event occurred in May 1994 that made Cavafy a sudden, if relatively brief, best-seller among poets: the last of Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis's companions, Maurice Tempelsman, read a translation of Cavafy's "Ithaka" at her funeral on the 23rd of that month, this because it had been among the lady's favorite poems for some time, and he added lines of his own at the end to give the poem a directly personal relevance. I quote Mr. Tempelsman's parting gesture toward one of Cavafy's most ardent readers in America: "And now the journey is over, too short, alas too short. /It was filled with adventure and wisdom, laughter and love, gallantry and grace. /So farewell, farewell".

In reporting the funeral, and after a bit of transatlantic research that included a phone call to me at ouzo hour while I was visiting friends in Thessaloniki, *The New York Times* decided to publish the full text of Cavafy's poem in English along with the addendum I just quoted, and as a consequence, in the weeks following the funeral, the American edition of the Alexandrian's *Collected Poems* sold some hundreds and hundreds of copies, almost doubling the sales of twenty years in as many days. Then sales returned to the slow poetic rhythm of relatively silent feet so familiar to foreign poets and their translators, though Cavafy has again been resurrected in this context by the inclusion of "Ithaka" in the recent volume of Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis's favorite poems gathered by her daughter Caroline.

When W.H. Auden suggested to the reader of his commentary that Cavafy led him to write certain poems "differently" than he might have without Cavafy's guidance, he provides me with a theme for these remarks. The way one writes

“differently” because of Cavafy’s presence as the guiding spirit of a poem can serve as the defining mode of the poems by several of the American poets that I’m going to read to you today. And when Auden speaks of the Alexandrian’s “unique perspective on the world” and his “unique tone of voice,” he seems to me to identify the essential inherited qualities, even received by way of translation, which characterize most of the poems that American poets have chosen to designate, either by title or epigraph or the phrase “after Cavafy” as offerings in the mode of their Alexandrian predecessor. Two years ago my friend the poet and critic Nasos Vayenas decided to collect as many poems as he could by European, Latin American, and Anglo-American poets that indicated a stated affinity to Cavafy either by attribution or title or quotation in a poem’s text, and he ended up with contributions from some 29 countries. These were published in Thessaloniki by the Kentro Ellinikis Glossas in a volume called *Συνομιλώντας με τὸν Καβάφη: Ἀνθολογία ξένων Καβαφογενῶν ποιημάτων* (roughly translated *Conversing with Cavafy: Anthology of foreign Cavafian poems*). The American section, which I helped him select, included thirteen poets, and that was merely a partial representation. I don’t have time today to introduce all of these, but I’ll try to provide a sample that focuses on two of the principal preoccupations that appear in Cavafy’s mature work, what he himself called “the erotic” and “the historical”. And as he also pointed out, those two categories often merge.

I begin with the Cavafian perspective on what one might designate as the “divinity” of unconventional love among those who are less than divine but who are given to a sensuality that the poet calls intoxicating, even at times orgiastic, as in the poem “One of Their Gods”, where those who reside in the August Celestial Mansions cannot resist coming down to earth to share certain of the fleshly pleasures available in the world of mortals:

*When one of them moved through the marketplace of Selefkia
just as it was getting dark –
moved like a young man, tall, extremely handsome,
with the joy of being immortal in his eyes,
with his black and perfumed hair –
the people going by would gaze at him,
and one would ask the other if he knew him,
if he was a Greek from Syria, or a stranger.
But some who looked more carefully
would understand and step aside;
and as he disappeared under the arcades,*

*among the shadows and the evening lights,
going toward the quarter that lives
only at night, with orgies and debauchery,
with every kind of intoxication and desire,
they would wonder which of Them it could be,
and for what suspicious pleasure
he had come down into the streets of Selefkia
from the August Celestial Mansions.*

James Merrill was among the very first American poets to recognize Cavafy's genius, to comment perceptively on his work, and even on occasion to translate him. And though Merrill's own voice is generally more elaborate and stylistically playful, some of his very best erotic poems clearly demonstrate that they have learned from the Cavafian perspective. In his "Days of 1964", the title echoing a number of the titles of Cavafy poems that celebrated love in an advanced Alexandrian mode half a century earlier, we find the speaker setting his poem on Lycabettus hill in Athens, which he climbs often to bring wild flowers home to his lover and, on one occasion, a strange tale of finding their cleaning lady, Kyria Kleo, transformed into a mysterious goddess of love. This is a woman the speaker has earlier described as fat, past fifty, like "a Palmyra matron / Copied in lard and horsehair" who sighs the day long with pain from her hurting legs or with love for so much of what is around her –including him, his lover, the bird, the cat– that the speaker thinks "she *was* love". But on this particular day, when he sees her by chance trudging into the pine forest on Lycabettus hill, her face appears to him suddenly painted "Clown-white, white of the moon by daylight, /Lidded with pearl, mouth of a poinsettia leaf", what he takes to be "the erotic mask /worn the world over by illusion /To weddings of itself and simple need". But I'll let the rest of the poem speak for itself:

*Startled mute, we had stared –was love illusion?–
And gone our ways. Next, I was crossing a square
In which a moveable outdoor market's
Vegetables, chickens, pottery kept materializing
Through a dream-press of hagglers each at heart
Leery lest he be taken, plucked,
The bird, the flower of that November mildness,
Self lost up soft clay paths, or found, foothold,*

*Where the bud throbs awake
The better to be nipped, self on its knees in mud –
Here I stopped cold, for both our sakes;
And calmer on my way home bought us fruit.*

*Forgive me if you read this. (And may Kyria Kleo,
Should someone ever put it into Greek
And read it aloud to her, forgive me, too.)
I had gone so long without loving,
I hardly knew what I was thinking.*

*Where I hid my face, your touch, quick, merciful,
Blindfolded me. A god breathed from my lips.
If that was illusion, I wanted it to last long;
To dwell, for its daily pittance, with us there,
Cleaning and watering, sighing with love or pain.
I hoped it would climb when it needed to the heights
Even of degradation, as I for one
Seemed, those days, to be always climbing
Into a world of wild
Flowers, feasting, tears – or was I falling, legs
Buckling, heights, depths,
Into a pool of each night's rain?
But you were everywhere beside me, masked,
As who was not, in laughter, pain, and love.*

In yet another Cavafian mode, one that treats erotic frustration, illusion, and even loss with irony, we find an early poem by Daryl Hine called “What’s His Face: after Cavafy.” Again, the voice is Hine’s own, and the wit a touch more flamboyant than what we normally find in the Alexandrian, but in this evocation of a “zoomorphic” and “ithyphallic” god, there is enough of the Cavafian perspective, if not the tone, to justify the poet’s signal of adaptation in the title:

WHAT’S HIS FACE: After Cavafy

*The god that is leaving me – perhaps has left
Already (relieved of his presence, I feel sorry) –*

*What was his name? Apollo, Eros, Zeus,
 As he pretends? Or one of their attendants,
 By turns erotic, appalling, zoomorphic?
 He must have been some merely local demon,
 His divinity unknown to the tribe next door,
 His attributes demonic to a fault,
 Ithyphallic, pushy, mischievous,
 Wickedly undependable, adept
 At deceit as he denies he led you on,
 Impalpable, incomprehensible...
 He appeared in the flesh, what? Half-a-dozen times?
 Smiling his cryptic, unforgiving smile,
 Saying little, glimpsed in intervals
 Of sleep or at a distance, domestic idol
 Destructive of trust and quiet. Now he's gone
 Life is private again, desecrated, dull
 Without his infrequent, fraudulent manifestations,
 Without his unconvincing oracles.
 His image, which was cast in terra-cotta
 And clumsily but not unattractively modeled,
 Smashed, and his untidy shrine abandoned,
 After giving nothing to his votary,
 Has he turned his face towards the dawn?
 Is he visiting with the Hyperboreans? God
 Forgive me, what made me think he was a god?*

Other essential aspects of Cavafy's erotic perspective are those that Louise Glück highlights in a brilliantly perceptive note that she sent me to outline her long-standing debt to Alexandrian's poetry and to explain what it was that she had learned from his work, including those poems that Cavafy characterized as erotic. Louise Glück, winner of America's prestigious Pulitzer Prize and other distinguished awards, is not only a major poet in America but also a fine essayist on the art of poetry. In her note she sees Cavafy presenting eros as both solitary and acutely dependent, and sometimes as what she calls "fated submission"; but perhaps most important of all, she highlights his capacity to reveal the secret and not so secret sensations of love by suggestion rather than bald depiction. I find her remarks especially compelling because they show us the sympathetic

response of a woman to an erotic world that in one sense couldn't be farther from her own, yet a response that illustrates how successful Cavafy's poetry was –and still is– in transcending the poet's own eccentricities, transforming his idiosyncratic vision into the kind of universal poetic statement that readers could appreciate whatever their personal orientation. Here is Louise Glück's full note:

Because Cavafy was the first poet I read whose erotic poems corresponded to my own perception of erotic experience, he made a world that had been unavailable to my own art possible: a crucial gift, given my own obsessions. Most of what I had read that appeared to be, or was discussed as being, erotic, reported ecstasy direct from the embrace, from within the embrace: it was explicit, physical, active, and, when not brilliantly written, embarrassing. I suppose this is a description of heterosexual male fantasy, but these terms seem too simple. In any case, such art seemed remote from my own perception of experience. What I found in Cavafy affirmed an experience of eros as profoundly solitary and (simultaneously) acutely dependent. This was eros as non-dynamic: in stopped time, the dynamic has no function. Reading Cavafy for the first time (in English, I should add) I saw the infinity I knew about, an immense vista of silence between one line and the next: eros was that interval, not the action of the sentence. Or perhaps what I responded to was simply the atmosphere of fated submission. I might have found another model (but have not), and my own poems about physical love seem to me tribute to the great poet in whose debt I remain.

In what time I have left I want to focus on versions of the unique Cavafian perspective and unique tone of voice in those American poems that draw on the Alexandrian to speak within a historical, or pseudo-historical, context. Cavafy's "Waiting for the Barbarians" is the most dramatic model in this context, but since there is no need for me to bring that most familiar of all his poems before this audience, I will instead indulge my affection for a lesser known poem, one called "Ionic", where the erotic and the historical merge to provide something more than the usual ironic commentary on the ignorance or hubris or complacency of the mighty who are unprepared to suffer the fate that awaits all things mortal. There is irony in this poem: a Christian speaker, living around 400 A.D., who proclaims that the pagan gods have not died simply because his fellow Christian converts in Asia Minor Ionia have broken their statues and driven them out of their temples. From this speaker's point of view, it is in fact clear that the gods, if they ever left, have now returned as ethereal presences in the hilly

landscape, brought back to this region by their love for the “land of Ionia” that is carried still in memory by their souls. The representative godly presence that the Christian speaker encounters is an “ephebic” figure of the kind that perhaps most appealed to the poet’s hedonistic bias, but his arrival on the scene is in the context of the poet’s celebration of landscape – a rare preoccupation in his poetry. And it is also accompanied by a lyricism that would seem to transcend the poem’s irony as it offers a deified image of enduring beauty in a country of day-dreams.

IONIC

*That we’ve broken their statues,
that we’ve driven them out of their temples,
doesn’t mean at all that the gods are dead.
O land of Ionia, they’re still in love with you,
their souls still keep your memory.
When an August dawn wakes over you,
your atmosphere is potent with their life,
and sometimes a young ethereal figure,
indistinct, in rapid flight,
wings across your hills.*

History in Cavafy always rises to the level of metaphor, and as I’ve suggested elsewhere, over the course of years, his historical and pseudo-historical poems created an ongoing myth that celebrated the virtues of historical perspicacity, though of seeing things not only for what they are but for what they are likely to become, including the inevitable reversals in history that finally teach one not so much the moral as the tragic sense of life. His myth also teaches the virtues of irony about the hubris that often accompanies the game of nations, the ideology of the mighty, and as we saw in “Ionic”, the victory of one religion over another. And in his version of the ironic mode, there is often a degree of distance between the poet’s perspective and that of the characters he portrays or even the speakers he creates to narrate the events that shape his historical metaphor.

I will offer two examples of poems by American poets that pay homage to this aspect of the Alexandrian’s perspective, both poems included in the Vayenas selection, along with several others that might be characterized as historical. You

will immediately recognize the two poems I've chosen as being in the Cavafian historical mode, yet both transform that mode imaginatively without the poets losing their characteristic personal voice. The first is a prose poem by Christopher Merrill called "Sagebrush: After Cavafy," a work that subtly captures the perennial ironies that rule the blighted land of those who wait for the barbarians at the gate, the new barbarians of our days, anticipated by the general who lifts his fork before his starving troops, and the foot soldiers reaching for their inhalers, while maybe only the asthmatic priest and the prisoners behind the last barbed wire line of defense are capable of knowing the price of wisdom in their threatened waste land. It is a poem that now, in the best Cavafian tradition, carries a certain prophetic aura:

SAGEBRUSH: After Cavafy

These are the last days of its empire. No flags fly from its dead limbs, nor do its branches lost to age or blight bend in the wind. Only two outposts remain, two settlements of gray and green, in the largest house of which the general lifts his fork before casually signing marching orders for his starving troops. Here in a field of shrunken cabbages the asthmatic priest wakes in the night, gasping. Foot soldiers reach for their inhalers. Courtesans bronze their nails. In a world of whiskers and spent flowers there are always rumors of barbarians gathering beyond the barbed wire the prisoners strung across the last meadow on our maps. Even our bravest cartographer prefers the company of the general to wandering past that fence, though the general will never share his food. No doubt a messenger from the capital is already on his way to the first outpost, bearing orders for our retreat. Who will inherit the promise of these stiff limbs? Ants, grass, and wind. What is the price of wisdom here? Only the priest and prisoners can tell.

The second poem that I take to be clearly a legacy of Cavafy's historical mode is Carolyn Kizer's "The Oration: After Cavafy", again a poem written by a woman who won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize and who has had a long-standing affection for the Alexandrian's work – in fact, this poem was written specifically for the Vayenas anthology. Here we are offered an unidentified poetic speaker in an unidentified time who, against the wishes of a certain "savior" in his passion, turns the murderous mob around with his eloquence only to learn that the minute he is gone, the savior makes outrageous statements about being the son of God and such that get him strung up again for crucifixion. But in the true

Cavafian mode, it is the speaker's sense of his own grand eloquence that becomes, to his mind, the enduring legacy of this pseudo-historical moment:

THE ORATION: After Cavafy

*The boldest thing I ever did was to save a savior.
I reached heights of eloquence never achieved before
Or since. My speech turned the mob around!
They lifted the rood from his back, they dropped to the ground
Their nails and flails. But the whole time I spoke
(It's a wonder it didn't throw me off my stride)
The prophet or seer or savior, whatever you care to call him,
Kept groaning and muttering, telling me to be silent.
He was mad of course, so I simply ignored him. Poor fellow,
The beating they had given him must have turned his wits.*

*Every ounce of persuasion it took to convince the crowd
In the powerful sun, including the priests and his followers,
Exhausted me utterly. When I was sure he was safe,
The ungrateful fellow! I took my way home and collapsed
On my cushions with chilled wine. Then, I heard later,
The savior harangued the mob with outrageous statements
That roused them to fury anew: he denounced the priesthood
As corrupt; he pronounced himself king of the world;
He said God was his father. So they strung him up again.*

*A violent thunderstorm woke me to a sky full of lightning
So I rushed out in the rain, forgetting my cloak,
And found him dead and alone except for a handful of women
Weeping and carrying on. Well, it taught me a lesson,
To mind my own business – Why, the crowd might have turned on me!
Still, I have to be proud of my eloquence.*

It was the speech of my life.

This tribute to Cavafy by Carolyn Kizer was included in *The Best American Poetry 2000*, and in that volume she provides us with an illuminating note on the poem that seems to me a valuable addendum to the theme I've been exploring. I quote it here in part:

My friend, Edmund (“Mike”) Keeley..., told me he was collecting poems by American poets who had been influenced by Constantine Cavafy. I had always cared deeply for Cavafy, but I had never modeled a poem on him. So now I did. My first effort was a close imitation, called “Days of 1986” (a number of poets have used variants on this particular poem’s title and content). But on thinking about it, I realized that one of [Cavafy’s] most characteristic innovations was to write about an important historical or mythical event or person from the standpoint of an insignificant person, a bystander, “an attendant lord”. So that was the usage I adopted in writing “The Oration”. When I wrote that the poem was “after Cavafy” I was rather shocked when the editor of *Threepenny Review*, who conditionally accepted the poem, inquired if “after Cavafy” meant that it was a translation! I replied that “after” meant “in the style of”. I had thought that every literary person accepted that. Anyway, she printed it. Another remarkable thing about Cavafy’s poems is the absence of specific metaphors. There is an overriding metaphor in most of the poems: the comparison of what *was* with what *is*. I’ve always been drenched in metaphor – although wary of the word “like”. So now, having immersed myself in Cavafy yet again, I shall try to be stingy with metaphors.

As we have seen, Carolyn Kizer’s adaptation is appropriately stingy with specific metaphors, but what her note underlines elsewhere is also demonstrated by her poem: first, the advantage for irony, especially dramatic irony, of seeing the historical moment from an outsider’s limited point of view not shared by the poet or the perceptive reader, and second, the crucial presence of an overriding metaphor that not only puts the specific historical moment, what *was* into what *is*, but, as the finest overriding metaphors have a way of doing, into the realm of perennial truth: what will *remain*.

I want to conclude these remarks by pointing to a bit of literary history that some may see as another instance of Cavafian irony. As far as I know, each of the American poets I’ve quoted here came to the Alexandrian poet as Auden did, by way of translation. And one or another of the translations they encountered – whether in Mavrogordato’s early version, or the later versions that followed – eventually inspired the American poets to attempt an adaptation or, more precisely, a transformation: that is, a creative act “after” the translated poet or “in the style” of the translated poet which at the same time became a personal evocation in the poet’s particular voice. And these creative acts in turn inspired a

Greek poet, Nasos Vayenas, to collect the work of Cavafy's American heirs for publication in Greece. Here is what some might take to be the Cavafian irony: publication of these transformations not in the original English but in translations into Greek. So what we have at this moment in the Alexandrian's legacy is a celebration of his Greek poems that were translated into English and that subsequently inspired poems in English which have now been translated into Greek. But I don't find irony in this so much as a further affirmation that translation – yes, even translation of poetry when the poet is as original and as evocative as C.P. Cavafy – continues to be an essential bridge between different literatures. It can also be an enduring source of inspiration for those practitioners of the art of poetry who have discovered, as Auden finally did (and I quote him), that “it is possible to be poetically influenced by work which one can read only in translation” and, as I hope we have seen, to be influenced in ways that, in the best of our poets and the best of their sources, serve so well both to teach and to delight.