

the Greek should be published *en face*, as a reminder that the translation is not intended as a new poem, but as an accurate guide to the original. Certainly in his new translation of *Μυθιστόρημα* Beaton appears to take Seferis' injunction to heart – most immediately in the translation of the poem's title, *Novel*, which doubles as the title of the anthology itself. This baldly literal translation may be unsettling to those familiar with the Sherrard/Keeley version, where the title is simply transliterated, in acknowledgement of the fact that many connotations of the Greek word are entirely absent from its English equivalent. In an accompanying note, Beaton acknowledges that the use of the English word 'novel' will be surprising, but argues that the word is 'a perfectly ordinary one in Greek'. Its ordinariness, however, is challenged by Seferis' own note to the title, which here appears alongside Beaton's: the reference to 'myth' in the word 'μυθιστόρημα' is vital to Seferis' use of it, whereas the sense of 'contemporary, new' inherent in 'novel' has quite different and indeed contrary associations. It could be argued that in this case rigorous fidelity is in fact misleading. Nonetheless the translation of the poem as a whole, while scrupulously faithful to the Greek, is also a sustained and sensitive rendering into English of the lapidary imagery and deep, controlled emotion of the original.

The same cannot be said of the selection of short experimental poems from Seferis' first published volume of poetry, *Στροφή*, which follows. Here Beaton (unlike Keeley and Sherrard) abandons literalism in an attempt to reproduce the metre and rhyming scheme of the original, but the result often seems contrived and even trite, as in the famous first verse of the poem *Αρνηση*, 'Upon the hidden shore so fine / as fair as any dove / we thirsted from the sun above / the water though was brine' where the poignancy latent in the simple words of the Greek is entirely absent. Later, in the translation of similar verses in *Θεατρικοί*, M.A. from *Log Book II*, a similar attempt to reproduce the jaunty rhymes of the original again seems forced and awkward. Beaton is much more successful at reproducing the ruminative and elegiac voice, in blank verse, with which Seferis is more usually identified.

That said, the excellent translation of *Ερωτικός Λόγος*, also from *Στροφή*, is quite distinct from anything else in this anthology. Here Beaton eschews both literalism on the one hand, or any attempt to reproduce the rhyming decapentasyllabic verse of the original on the other. Instead he manages to recreate the effect of Seferis expressing modernist ennui in the traditional Greek ballad form, by employing blank iambic metre, frequent alliteration, and richly suggestive language to produce a comparable experience for the English ear. It is a remarkably impressive achievement.

Andrew Watson  
Athens

Marjorie Chambers (trans.), Iakovos Kambanellis, *Three Plays: The Courtyard of Wonders, The Four Legs of the Table, Ibsenland*. London: Colenso Books, 2015. Pp. 196.  
DOI: [10.1017/byz.2018.17](https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2018.17)

Iakovos Kambanellis (1921-2011) was as versatile as he was prolific: lyricist, poet, screenwriter, journalist, and author of the concentration camp memoir *Mauthausen*, it is as the father of contemporary Greek drama that he is best remembered. In a career spanning over half a century and filling nine volumes, the autodidact Kambanellis shaped a theatre at once outward looking and introspective, in dialogue with tradition as much as with innovation, a theatre which enabled audiences to explore the fluidity of national, social and personal identities in relation to both the past and its myths and the present. In the first full-length study of Kambanellis' theatre, Giorgos Pefanis speculates that an anglophone Kambanellis would have enjoyed the reputation of an Arthur Miller.<sup>1</sup> This underscores the importance of the title under review, the first commercially published volume of English translations of Kambanellis' plays. In it Marjorie Chambers brings together three plays from distinct phases of Kambanellis' oeuvre: the realist *The Courtyard of*

1 Γιώργος Π. Πεφάνης, *Ιάκωβος Καμπανέλλης: Ανιχνεύσεις και προσεγγίσεις στο θεατρικό του έργο*. Athens: Kedros 2000, 33.

*Wonders* (1957), the play that cemented the author's reputation; the family satire *The Four Legs of the Table* (1978) and the probing metatheatrical *Ibsenland* (1994).

The publication of a collection of Kambanellis' plays in English is long overdue and fills a void; hitherto published translations have been restricted to literary and academic journals and thus a volume such as this has the potential to assist enormously in the continuing promotion of Kambanellis' work in theatres and universities outside Greece. Chambers is a highly experienced practitioner, with translations of some of the most important poetic voices of the twentieth century to her name, including Ritsos, Gatsos and Vrettakos. In addition to the three plays, Chambers includes an Introduction with a brief biography of the playwright and lucid summaries of each play, as well as Kambanellis' own Forewords to the plays as published in the Kedros series. There is also a fascinating Appendix containing three short pieces by director and fellow translator Louis Muinzer, an erstwhile member of the legendary Belfast Group of intellectuals and poets. Muinzer describes the afterlife of two of these translations at the Lyric, Belfast, which hosted rehearsed readings of *The Four Legs of the Table* and *Ibsenland*. Muinzer reports on the actability of these texts, as well as the cultural affinities between the Hellenic and the Celtic. He also provides an account of seeing *Ibsenland* (performed in the Greek) at the National Theatre, Oslo in 1998, where the potential for Kambanellis' international reach was strongly felt.

Of the three plays, it is the second of Kambanellis' so-called 'Courtyard Trilogy', *The Courtyard of Wonders*, that poses the greatest challenge to the translator. Set in a working-class Athenian courtyard (a space familiar to the modern Greek stage), its dialogue is far from homogenous; the large and disparate cast represents a rich textual mix and linguistic range including the faltering Greek of the refugee against an intimate, default colloquialism. A further difficulty lies in the play's own relationship to time. Kambanellis' text clearly defines its world as 'εποχή σύγχρονη' (96)<sup>2</sup>. However, the translation (albeit accurately) states the play is set in 'the 1950s'; this choice inevitably historicizes the text, and applies pressure on the dialogue to evoke a lost world, rather than a vanishing world. As a result, certain formulations draw unnecessary attention to themselves, striking a very different chord in English. In Act Two, Stelios complains about Babis: 'Έλα ντε ... Είδες τι άκουσα εγώ ...; Τρίχα με είπε, τράκα με είπε ... Το τομάρι ... Ευτυχώς που τον ξεφωρτοθήκαμε ...Το κάθαγμα ...'<sup>3</sup>(130). This speech is translated as 'Huh, did you hear what I had to listen to? He called me a pipsqueak and a sponger. We're rid of him anyway, the chancer' (34). Where the translation sounds dated, the original does not. Moreover, sacrificing Kambanellis' meticulous punctuation flattens the rhythm and energy of the line. The reader is left with the impression of a lack of consistent editorial principles. Chambers uses stage directions to give useful cultural context including a definition of the 'amanes' as an 'urban blues refrain' about to be heard (19). However, this definition is an unhappy one. The word 'effendi' (65), meanwhile, is left untranslated in the dialogue where a footnote would be helpful.

*The Four Legs of the Table*, the satirical family drama exploring contemporary urban character and how it responds to power and capital, presents the seven children of a wealthy dying patriarch, who maintains his control of 51% of the family business. The dialogue is a more closed system, consisting of many more lengthy speeches than *The Courtyard* - and Chambers controls these to great effect, convincingly establishing complex, often cantankerous relationships and conveying the stasis within the family unit.

Finally, the highly self-referential *Ibsenland* is both Kambanellis' homage to Ibsen (whom he always referred to as 'my first teacher') - and a nod to Pirandello. The actors/characters have just finished a performance of *Ghosts* when Kambanellis decides to reanimate the relationship between Mrs Alving and Pastor Manders that took place many years before the curtain rises on *Ghosts*. Kambanellis, unlike many readers and critics of *Ghosts*, does not underestimate the importance of this backstory and reworks the material in a moving and thought-provoking play, faithful to the spirit of Ibsen's work. Chambers adeptly renders all aspects of Kambanellis' work in this translation, and the reader is left agreeing with Muinzer's assessment that 'the dialogue was fluent, the idiom sharp' and 'carried Kambanellis' drama forward without a single stumble' (189).

Chambers has done an immense service to the playwright and to anyone wishing to stage these plays in English. The selection of plays conveys a flavour of Kambanellis' dramatic range and the accompanying essays provide a useful introduction. It does, however, feel to this reviewer at least, that an opportunity has been missed; the opportunity for an edition with a stronger editorial vision (there are two spellings of the dramatist's name; the approach to his punctuation is

2 Ιάκωβος Καμπανέλλης, *Θέατρο Τόμος Α*, Athens: Kedros, 1978. All references are to this edition and are indicated by page number in parentheses.

inconsistent; there are no indications of insertions and deletions). A more detailed introduction to the rich theatrical context of his work would have been of value to students. Kambanellis, whose life spanned nine turbulent decades, is frequently referred to as 'a child of history' - but he was equally a child of theatre history: the first production of *Courtyard*, after all combined his talents with those of Koun, Tsarouchis and Hadjidakis.

Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife  
*Oxford*