

Despite the reservations noted above about selection criteria and dating, *Clearing the Ground* is an interesting creative experiment and a pleasure to read. It is the fruit of a very long scholarly engagement with Cavafy and also the work of a skilled translator with acute critical sensibilities and a wide-ranging knowledge of nineteenth through twenty-first century literary, 'medical' and scholarly works. McKinsey and his publishers have produced an attractive, user-friendly, creative and informative volume, which will delight and enlighten many readers.

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George Seferis, *Novel and Other Poems*, translated by Roderick Beaton. Athens: Aiora Press 2016. Pp. 216  
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In the present unfavourable environment, good translations of Modern Greek literature struggle to see the light of day. In this context the contribution of Aris Laskaratos, founder of Aiora Press in Athens, should be applauded: since 2002 he has been publishing slim and affordable editions of selected 'Modern Greek Classics', both poetry and prose, translated into several European languages and occasionally produced as parallel texts. Many are found on sale in Greek tourist resorts alongside foreign bestsellers, encouraging the inquiring visitor to sample something of the literature as well as the local cuisine. It is not always clear what the criteria for inclusion in the series are: indispensable works such as *Η Φόνισσα* are found alongside less obvious representatives of the canon, and while there is a noticeable preponderance of 19th century prose works, in poetry the 20th century prevails, with recent bilingual editions of selected poems by Cavafy and Vrettakos, both translated by David Connolly. Rather than this apparent bias being a reflection of a definite editorial policy on the part of the publishers, it is likely that Aiora are prepared to consider for inclusion any good translation of a Modern Greek classic that a reputable translator makes available for publication.

The latest welcome addition to the Aiora series is *Novel and Other Poems*, another anthology of selected works by a major Greek 20<sup>th</sup> century poet. This is a bilingual selection of George Seferis' poetry, with translations by Roderick Beaton, until recently Korae Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies at King's College London. His previous work on Seferis includes the distinguished biography *Waiting for the Angel*, published in 2004, a testament to many years of engagement with the poet and his work. It is clear that the intention with this anthology is not primarily to provide a representative overview of the poet's work, which one might expect to include *Κίχλη*, *Ο Βασιλιάς της Ασίνης*, or even *Επί Ασπαλάθων* (as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1967 coup approached), none of which appear here. Instead we find (very accomplished) translations of *Ερωτικός Λόγος* and *Τρία Κρυφά Ποήματα*, which many would consider less central to Seferis' oeuvre, alongside several important poems from *Log Book II* and one, *Engomi*, from *Log Book III*. The criteria for inclusion are explained in Beaton's own introduction, where he states that 'the translations presented here bring together for the first time the fruit of more than forty years'; indeed his version of *Τρία Κρυφά Ποήματα*, dates from 1972 and is thus published here for the first time – unrevised – forty-four years after it was written. The only poem which has been newly translated for publication in this anthology is *Μυθιστόρημα*, which occupies a prominent place at the start of the collection. Thus this volume is as much an illuminating record of the translator's craft as an introduction to the poet's oeuvre; it is an anthology of Beaton's attempts to render Seferis' poetry in English over a long period of creative engagement.

The translator of poetry inevitably has to make decisions about the extent to which he or she will be constrained by fidelity to the language, metre, or rhyming scheme of the original; in this selection it is instructive to observe how at different times and with different poems Beaton has come to very different conclusions about the strategy to adopt. Inevitably he will be compared with previous translators of Seferis into English, especially Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, whose translations were produced over a long period of close collaboration with Seferis himself and finally published as a Complete Works in a bilingual edition in 1995. In a conversation with Edwin Honig published in *The Poet's Other Voice* (1985), Edmund Keeley recalls that '[Seferis] held the principle that the translator of his work should be as literal as possible' and insisted that

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.

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Marjorie Chambers (trans.), Iakovos Kambanellis, *Three Plays: The Courtyard of Wonders, The Four Legs of the Table, Ibsenland*. London: Colenso Books, 2015. Pp. 196.  
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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.