

Poetry

CRITICISM

VOLUME

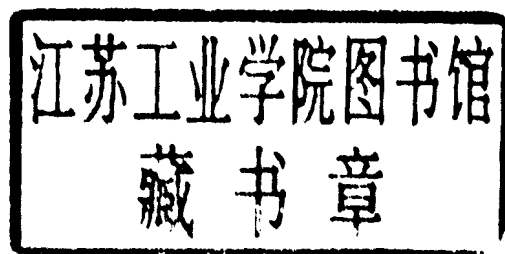
36

Poetry Criticism

*Excerpts from Criticism of the Works
of the Most Significant and Widely
Studied Poets of World Literature*

Volume 36

Elisabeth Gellert
Editor



GALE GROUP

THOMSON LEARNING™

*Detroit • New York • San Diego • San Francisco
Boston • New Haven, Conn. • Waterville, Maine
London • Munich*

STAFF

David Galens, *Managing Editor, Literature Product*
Kathy D. Darrow, Ellen McGeagh, *Content-Product Liaisons*
Elisabeth Gellert, *Editor*
Mark W. Scott, *Publisher, Literature Product*

Jelena Krstović, Michelle Lee, Allison Marion, Ellen McGeagh, *Editors*
Madeline S. Harris, *Associate Editors*

Jenny Cromie, *Technical Training Specialist*
Deborah J. Morad, Joyce Nakamura, Kathleen Lopez Nolan, *Managing Editors, Literature Content*
Susan M. Trosky, *Director, Literature Content*

Maria L. Franklin, *Permissions Manager*
Lori Hines, *Permissions Assistant*

Victoria B. Cariappa, *Research Manager*
Tracie A. Richardson, *Project Coordinator*
Sarah Genik, Ron Morelli, Tamara C. Nott, *Research Associates*
Nicodemus Ford, *Research Assistant*

Dorothy Maki, *Manufacturing Manager*
Stacy L. Melson, *Buyer*

Mary Beth Trimper, *Manager, Composition and Electronic Prepress*
Gary Leach, *Composition Specialist*

Michael Logusz, *Graphic Artist*
Randy Bassett, *Imaging Supervisor*
Robert Duncan, Dan Newell, Luke Rademacher, *Imaging Specialists*
Pamela A. Reed, *Imaging Coordinator*
Kelly A. Quin, *Editor, Image Content*

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, the Gale Group neither guarantees the accuracy of the data contained herein nor assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions or discrepancies. Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

All rights to this publication will be vigorously defended.

Copyright © 2002 Gale Group, Inc.
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

Gale Group and Design is a trademark used herein under license.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 88-641014
ISBN 0-7876-5221-0
ISSN 1052-4851
Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

*P*oetry Criticism (*PC*) presents significant criticism of the world's greatest poets and provides supplementary biographical and bibliographical material to guide the interested reader to a greater understanding of the genre and its creators. Although major poets and literary movements are covered in such Gale Literary Criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (*CLC*), *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (*TCLC*), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (*NCLC*), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (*LC*), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (*CMLC*), *PC* offers more focused attention on poetry than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries on writers in these Gale series. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the generous excerpts and supplementary material provided by *PC* supply them with the vital information needed to write a term paper on poetic technique, to examine a poet's most prominent themes, or to lead a poetry discussion group.

Scope of the Series

PC is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, *PC* is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research. Each author entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that author's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's Literary Criticism Series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *PC* volume.

Organization of the Book

Each *PC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by the title of the work and its date of publication.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections and book-length poems. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. For foreign authors, the editors have provided original foreign-language publication information and have selected what are considered the best and most complete English-language editions of their works.
- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems and poetry collections by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given

at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.

- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *PC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *PC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *PC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order all individual poems, book-length poems, and collection titles contained in the *PC* series. Titles of poetry collections and separately published poems are printed in italics, while titles of individual poems are printed in roman type with quotation marks. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

Citing Poetry Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in the Literary Criticism Series may use the following general format to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

Sylvia Kasey Marks, "A Brief Glance at George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*," *Victorian Poetry* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1983), 184-90; reprinted in *Poetry Criticism*, vol. 20, ed. Ellen McGeagh (Detroit: The Gale Group), 128-31.

Linden Peach, "Man, Nature and Wordsworth: American Versions," *British Influence on the Birth of American Literature*, (Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 29-57; reprinted in *Poetry Criticism*, vol. 20, ed. Ellen McGeagh (Detroit: The Gale Group), 37-40.

Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Managing Editor:

Managing Editor, Literary Criticism Series
The Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
1-800-347-4253 (GALE)
Fax: 248-699-8054

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpted criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Detroit Mercy Library, Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library Complex, and the University of Michigan Libraries for making their resources available to us. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *PC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN *PC*, VOLUME 36, WERE REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

American Book Review, v. 1, December, 1977 for a review of "Hijo del Pueblo" by Karl Kopp.; v. 16, April/May 1994; v. 18, July/August 1997. Copyright © 1977, 1994, 1997 American Book Review. Reproduced by permission.—*American Mercury*, v. 38, 1933. "The Genesis of Spoon River," by Edgar Lee Masters. Reprinted by permission of Hilary Masters.—*The American Poetry Review*, v. 26, September-October, 1997 for "A Hand, a Hook, a Prayer," by Edward Hirsch. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingue*, v. 12, January, 1985; v. 12, September, 1985 for an interview with Leroy V. Quintana by Douglas K. Benson. Copyright © 1985 Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Reprinted by permission.—*boundary 2*, v. 9, Winter, 1981 for "Many of Our Waters: The Poetry of James Wright," by Walter Kalaidjian, pp. 101-22. Copyright © 1981, Duke University Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.—*Centennial Review*, v. 24, 1980. Excerpts of Edgar Lee Masters' work are reprinted by permission of Hilary Masters; v. XXVII, Spring, 1983. Copyright © 1983 *The Centennial Review*. Reprinted by permission of Michigan State University Press.—*The Explicator*, v. XXII, December, 1963; v. 54, Fall, 1995; v. 55, Winter, 1997. Copyright © 1963, 1995, 1997 Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Reprinted with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.—*Fiction International*, v. 16, Summer, 1986. Reprinted by permission.—*Harper's Bazaar*, n. 3019, June, 1963. Reprinted by permission of David Higham Associates.—*The Hudson Review*, v. 12, Winter, 1959-60 for "The Anguish of the Spirit and the Letter," by Anthony Hecht. Copyright © Anthony Hecht. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, v. 10, Spring/Summer, 1983. Reprinted by permission of Pella Publishing Company, New York, N.Y.—*Journal of West Indian Literature*, v. 1, 1986; v. 4, 1990. Reprinted by permission of the Department of Literatures in English, University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona, Kingston, Jamaica.—*The Kenyon Review*, v. 6, Spring, 1984, for "James Wright: The Garden and the Grime," by Peter Stitt.; XVIII, Spring, 1996 for "Re: Wright," by David Baker. Reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*The Literary Review*, v. 28, Fall, 1984, for "The Reconciled Vision of James Wright," by Randall Stiffler. Reprinted with the permission of the author.—*Midamerica: The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature*, v. VI, 1979; v. VII, 1980; v. VIII, 1986. Reprinted by permission of The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature.—*The Midwest Review*, v. 29, Summer, 1988; v. XXXVII, Summer, 1996. Copyright © 1988, 1996 by Pittsburgh State University. Reprinted by permission.—*Mirror*. "To Webster Ford" by Carl Sandburg in *Mirror*, 23:7 (November 27, 1914). Reprinted by permission of the Carl Sandburg Family Trust.—*Modern Poetry Studies*, v. 10, 1981; v. 11, 1982. Copyright © 1981, 1982 by Media Study/Buffalo, Inc. Reprinted by permission.—*The Nation*, v. 263, 1996, for a review of *Small Hours of the Night: Selected Poems of Roque Dalton*, by Chris King. Reprinted by permission.—*The New Republic*, v. 207, 1992 for a review of *Spoon River Anthology* by John Hollander. Reprinted by permission.—*The Ohio Review*, v. XVIII, Spring/Summer, 1997. Copyright © 1977 by the Editors of The Ohio Review. Reprinted by permission.—*Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics*, v. 23, Summer, 1987. Copyright © 1987 by The Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Reproduced by permission.—*Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, v. 16, 1991 for "The Vision of a Practical Man," by Rodney Jones; v. 18, 1992, from "A Review of Selected Poems" by Susan Lasher; v. 18, February, 1992, for "Out of the Heartland," by Turner Casity; v. 6, Spring/Summer, 1978 for "Open Secrets," by Stephen Yenser. Reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*Perspectives on Contemporary Literature*, v. 12, 1986, for "Inner and Outer Realities of Chicano Life: The New Mexican Perspective of Leroy V. Quintana," by Douglas K. Benson. Reprinted by permission of Douglas K. Benson.—*Poetry*. "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg, originally published in *Poetry*, 3:191 (March 1914). Reprinted by permission of the Carl Sandburg Family Trust; v. CLVII, March, 1991 for "Another Shore," by Ben Howard Copyright © 1991 The Modern Poetry Association. Reprinted by permission of the author and the editor of *Poetry*.—*The Progressive*, v. 60, September, 1996. Copyright © 1996 Progressive Incorporated; v. 63, November, 1999. Copyright © 1999 Progressive Incorporated. Reprinted by permission from The Progressive, 409 E. Main Street, Madison WI 53703, www.progressive.org.—*Publica-*

tions of the *Arkansas Philological Association* (now *The Philological Review*), v. 9, Spring, 1983. Copyright © 1983 by the Arkansas Philological Association. Reprinted by permission.—*Publishers Weekly*, v. 243, July, 1996 for a review of “Small Hours of the Night: Selected Poems of Roque Dalton.” Copyright © 1996 Reed Publishing USA. Reprinted by permission of Publishers Weekly.—*Race and Class*, v. 39, October-December, 1997 for a review of “Small Hours of the Night: Selected Poems of Roque Dalton,” by Chris Searle. Reprinted by permission.—*Salmagundi*, Spring/Summer, 1973. Reprinted by permission.—*The Sewanee Review*, v. 65, Autumn, 1957. Copyright © 1957, 1985 by The University of the South; v. LXVIII, October-December, 1960. Copyright © 1960 by The University of the South. Reprinted by permission of *The Sewanee Review*.—*The Southern Review*, v. III, January, 1967 for “The Emotive Imagination: A New Departure in American Poetry,” by Ronald Moran and George Lensing. Reprinted by permission of George Lensing.—*Southern Humanities Review*, v. 6, Spring, 1972 for an interview with James Wright by William Heyen and Jerome Mazzaro. Copyright © 1971 by Auburn University. Reprinted by permission.—*Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, v. 9, Spring, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by the University of Iowa. Reprinted by permission.—*World Literature Today*, v. 63, 1989 for a review of *Un libro levenmente odioso* by Seymour Menton; v. 67, Autumn, 1993 for a review of *Selected Poems* by Andrew Salkey; v. 70, Summer, 1996 for a review of *To Us, All Flowers Are Roses* by Adele S. Newson; v. 74, Winter, 2000 for a review of *Turn Thanks* by Cyril Dabydeen. Copyright © 2000 University of Oklahoma. Reprinted by permission.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN PC, VOLUME 36, WERE REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Alexiou, Margaret. From “C. P. Cavafy’s ‘Dangerous’ Drugs: Poetry, Eros and the Dissemination of Images,” in *The Text and Its Margins: Post-Structuralist Approaches to Twentieth-Century Greek Literature*, edited by Margaret Alixiou and Vassilis Lambropoulos. Copyright © 1985 Pella Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission from Pella Publishing Company, New York. N.Y.—Barnstone, Willis. An introduction to *Spoon River*, The Macmillan Company, 1968. Copyright © 1968 by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission of the author.—Barnstone, Willis. Selected excerpts from *Greek Lyric Poetry*, translated by Willis Barnstone, Copyright © 1962 by Bantam Books, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the Willis Barnstone.—Beverley, John, and Marc Zimmerman. From *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions*, University of Texas Press, 1990. Copyright © 1990. Reprinted by permission of The University of Texas Press.—Birbalsingh, Frank. Interview with Lorna Goodison in *Frontiers of Caribbean Literatures in English*, St. Martin’s Press, 1996.—Bowra, C. M. From *The Creative Experiment*, 1967.—Capri-Karka, C. From *Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis: An Interpretation with Detailed Poem-by-Poem Analysis*. Copyright © 1982 C. Capri-Karka. Reprinted by permission from Pella Publishing Company, New York. N.Y.—Forster E. M. From *Pharos and Pharillon*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1923. Copyright © 1923 by E. M. Forster. Reprinted by permission of The Provost and Scholars of King’s College, Cambridge and The Society of Authors as the Literary Representatives of the Estate of E. M. Forster.—Friar, Kimon. From *Modern Greek Poetry*, Simon & Schuster, 1973. Copyright © 1973 by Kimon Friar. Reprinted by permission of The Joy Harris Literary Agency, Inc.—Hartman, Geoffrey. From “Beyond the Middle Style,” in *James Wright: The Heart of the Light*, edited by Peter Stitt and Frank Graziano, University of Michigan Press, 1990. Copyright © Geoffrey Hartman. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by permission of the author.—Hyman, Stanley Edgar. From *The Critic’s Credentials: Essays and Reviews by Stanley Edgar Hyman*, edited by Phoebe Pettingell. Copyright © 1978 Phoebe Pettingell. Reprinted with the permission of Scribner, a Division of Simon & Schuster —Jusdanis, Gregory. From “C. P. Cavafy and the Politics of Poetry,” in *The Text and Its Margins: Post-Structuralist Approaches to Twentieth-Century Greek Literature*, edited by Margaret Alixiou and Vassilis Lambropoulos. Copyright © 1985 Pella Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission from Pella Publishing Company, New York. N.Y.—Keeley, Edmund and George Savidis. From *Passions and Ancient Days: New Poems* by Constantin Cavafy, translated by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, The Dial Press, 1971. Copyright © 1971 by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis. Reprinted by permission of Edmund Keeley and Manolis Savidis.—Liddell, Robert. From *Cavafy: A Critical Biography*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1974. Copyright © 1974 Robert Liddell. Reprinted by permission of Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.—Lowell, Amy. Excerpts of material by Edgar Lee Masters in *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, Macmillan, 1917. Reprinted by permission of Hilary Masters.—Maronitis, D. N. “Arrogance and Intoxication: The Poet and History in Cavafy,” by D. N. Maronitis in *Eighteen Texts: Writings by Contemporary Greek Authors*, edited by Willis Barnstone, Harvard University Press, 1972.—Masters, Edgar Lee. Quote from correspondence, Masters to Dreiser, November 27, December 3 and 9, 1912; Quote from correspondence, Masters to Dreiser, April 8, 1915. Reprinted by permission of Hilary Masters.—Pollard, Velma. From “Language and Identity: The Use of Different Codes in Jamaican Poetry,” in *Winds of Change: The Transforming of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars*, edited by Adele S. Newson and Linda Strong-Leek. Copyright © 1998 Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. Pollard, Velma. From “Mother-tongue Voices in the Writing of Olive Senior and Lorna Goodison,” in *Motherlands*, edited by Susheila Nasta, The Women’s Press Limited, 1991. Copyright © Velma Pollard, 1991. Reprinted by permission of the author.—Pound, Ezra. From *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*. Copyright © 1950 by Ezra Pound. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing

Corp. and Faber and Faber Limited.—Putzel, Max. From *The Man In The Mirror: William Marion Reedy And His Magazine*, Harvard University Press, 1963. Reprinted by permission of Max Putzel.—Ruehlen, Petroula Kephala. From *Nine Essays in Modern Literature*, edited by Donald E. Stanford. Copyright © 1965 by Louisiana State University Press. Reprinted by permission of Louisiana State University Press.—Scott, Nathan A., Jr. *Visions of Presence in Modern America Poetry*, pp. 225-51. Copyright © 1993. Reprinted by permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.—Seferis, George. From “Cavafy & Eliot—A Comparison” in *On the Greek Style: Selected Essays in Poetry and Hellenism*, translated by Rex Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos. Published by Bodley Head. Reprinted by permission of Random House Group Ltd.—Stein, Kevin. “A Dark River of Labor’: Work and Workers in James Wright’s Poetry,” from *Private Poets, Worldly Acts*, Ohio University Press, 1996. Copyright © 1996. Reprinted by permission of Ohio University Press.—Swenson, May. An introduction to *Spoon River Anthology* (1962), Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc. Used with permission of the Literary Estate of May Swenson.—Untermeyer, Louis. Excerpts of material by Edgar Lee Masters in *American Poetry Since 1900*, Henry Holt and Company, 1923. Reprinted by permission of Hilary Masters.—Untermeyer, Louis. From *American Poetry Since 1900*, Henry Holt and Company, 1923. Copyright © 1923 Henry Holt and Company. Published by arrangement with the Estate of Louis Untermeyer, Norma Anchin Untermeyer c/o Professional Publishing Services Co. This permission is expressly granted by Laurence S. Untermeyer.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS APPEARING IN PC, VOLUME 36, WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

Goodison, Lorna, photograph. Reproduced by permission.—Masters, Edgar Lee (wearing a tweed suit and vest), 1946, photograph. Courtesy Hilary Masters. Reproduced by permission. —Quintana, Leroy, photograph. Reproduced by permission.—Wright, James, photograph by Ted Wright. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of James Wright.

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board

The members of the Gale Group Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board—reference librarians and subject specialists from public, academic, and school library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature criticism products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

Dr. Toby Burrows

Principal Librarian
The Scholars' Centre
University of Western Australia Library

Steven R. Harris

English Literature Librarian
University of Tennessee

Mary Jane Marden

Literature and General Reference Librarian
St. Petersburg Jr. College

Catherine Palmer

Instructional Services Librarian and English and Comparative Literature Librarian
University of California, Irvine

Patricia Sarles, MA, MLS

Canarsie High School Library
Brooklyn, New York

Mark Schumacher

Jackson Library
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Gwen Scott-Miller

Humanities Department Manager
Seattle Public Library

Ann Marie Wiescinski

Central High School Library
Bay City, Michigan

Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments ix

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xiii

| | |
|---|-----|
| Constantine Cavafy 1863-1933 | 1 |
| <i>Greek poet and essayist</i> | |
| Roque Dalton 1935-1975 | 119 |
| <i>Salvadoran poet, essayist, and novelist</i> | |
| Lorna Goodison 1947- | 139 |
| <i>Jamaican poet, short-story writer, and illustrator</i> | |
| Edgar Lee Masters 1868-1959 | 160 |
| <i>American poet, novelist, essayist, dramatist, and biographer</i> | |
| <i>Entry devoted to Spoon River Anthology</i> | |
| Leroy V. Quintana 1944- | 247 |
| <i>American poet and editor</i> | |
| James Wright 1927 -1980 | 277 |
| <i>American poet and translator</i> | |

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 407

PC Cumulative Nationality Index 491

PC-36 Title Index 495

Constantine Cavafy

1863-1933

(Full name Constantine Peter Cavafy. Also Konstantinos Petrou Kavafis) Greek poet and essayist.

INTRODUCTION

Despite sparse publication of his poems and little critical attention during his lifetime, Cavafy is considered among the most significant modern Greek poets. Living most of his life in Alexandria, Egypt, a setting which plays a prominent role in his poems, Cavafy identified himself as a Greek in language and culture. He published few poems during his lifetime, preferring to distribute his verse—after severe and constant revision—among his friends. Since his death, Cavafy has garnered great critical attention and has been praised for his unique use of language and skill at merging historical subjects with modern sentiments to create a universal statement. He is credited with establishing many facets of modern European poetry and moving Greek poetry in a new direction.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Cavafy was born in Alexandria, Egypt on April 17, 1863, the son of Greek parents who had immigrated to Egypt in the 1850s. His father ran an import-export company with business dealings in Liverpool, England. After his father's death in 1870, Cavafy moved to Liverpool with his family so that his older brothers could manage the business. Cavafy spent the formative years between his ninth and sixteenth year in England, where he was exposed to British literature and the English language. The family returned to Alexandria and later moved to Greece, after the family business was mismanaged. During his teen years, Cavafy began to write poetry as a means of exploring his Greek identity and homosexual feelings. In the 1880s Cavafy returned to Alexandria, where he secured work as a newspaper correspondent. He worked as a stock broker on the Egyptian Stock Exchange before hiring on at the Ministry of Public Works in 1892. He worked his way up from special clerk in the Irrigation Service to assistant director during his thirty-year career there. During this period, Cavafy established himself within Alexandria as an impressive poet. He spent each evening writing and endlessly critiquing his poetry. Periodically, he would self-publish a poem he deemed worthy as a pamphlet or broadsheet which he distributed among his friends. Cavafy exhibited a great interest in Greek history, particularly the Roman [395-1453 A.D.] and Byzantine periods [146 B.C.-395 A.D.] in many of his poems, he focuses on historical

settings and characters. In addition, Cavafy grappled with the conflict between his Christian faith and his homosexuality. By 1902, Cavafy appears to have come to a resolution about his sexuality, increasingly writing erotic and openly homosexual poems after this period. He died in 1933 of throat cancer, bemoaning from his deathbed the lack of time to write more poems.

MAJOR WORKS

Cavafy left only a small number of poems, numbering less than 200, many of which were not published during his lifetime. Cavafy favored intense scrutiny of his poems and long periods of revision before he would allow his poetry to be read by others. He self-published 14 poems when he was forty-one, reissuing them in revised form with an additional seven poems six years later. His work can be classified chronologically and topically. Cavafy began his career as a poet in 1891, the year he wrote the sonnet "Builders." However, he believed that his best work was accomplished after 1911. Cavafy wrote the majority of his poetry in Greek. Many of his poems feature historical settings and characters, particularly those from the Greek diaspora in Alexandria and Antioch. Cavafy's historical poems bridge the circumstances of the past with the sentiments and conditions of the present, merging ancient and modern culture to create universal and timeless themes. For instance, in the poem "Those Who Fought for the Achaen League," Cavafy links an ancient Greek military loss with the fall of Asia Minor in the 1920s. Historical poems such as "Waiting for the Barbarians," "The God Forsakes Anthony," "In the Month of Athyr," "Alexandrian Kings," and "Darius" are considered among his best works. In addition to his historical poetry, for which he is best known, Cavafy wrote many erotic poems, especially towards the end of his life. In such poems as "Stairs," "On the Street," and "At the Café Door," the poet laments love which cannot be expressed openly—a forbidden and censored relationship. Increasingly, Cavafy was openly sensual in his treatment of physical love. His tone favors situational and linguistic irony, and his use of Greek combines ancient formal language with vernacular phrases and slang heard at the turn of the century on the streets of Alexandria.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Critics have almost universally praised Cavafy's poetry over the past century. In 1923, after spending time in Alexandria, where he was introduced to Cavafy, novelist

E.M. Forster published an article describing the merits of Cavafy's work, his unique use of language and his unusual philosophies. Forster's essay introduced other modern writers, such as T.S. Eliot, to Cavafy's poetry. Critics identify Cavafy as being one of the first modern poets, establishing new parameters at the same time (but in isolation from) as many noted European modernists such as William Butler Yeats and Eliot. In addition, scholars cite Cavafy as a major influence on modern Greek poetry. Scholars such as Petroula Kephala Ruehlen (1965) and C.M. Bowra (1967) praise Cavafy's individual mastery of language which mixed the high Greek of scholarship and ancient texts with the everyday slang of modern Alexandria. Critics maintain that through his careful use of language, often so subtle that it defies translation, Cavafy perfected his tone and contributed to the impact of his poetry. In much scholarship, critics focus upon Cavafy's use of historical matter and his manipulation of time. Scholars disagree over Cavafy's method of interpreting time and the nature of history: while some argue that Cavafy favored the use of history as myth, a symbolic language through which to depict universal themes, others claim that Cavafy's philosophy of history was more complex. For instance, Roderick Beaton (1983) believes that Cavafy is able to transcend mere historical narrative to achieve poetry by juxtaposing individual experiences with historical subjects. Although critics disagree about how Cavafy achieves his startling emotional impact from verse written in flat, prose-like language filled with distant historical descriptions, they agree that his poetry transcends his situation as a provincial poet and establishes him as an important voice in modern Western poetry.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

Poemata 1935

The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy 1948

Poems 1951

The Poems of C. P. Cavafy 1952

The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy 1961

Hapanta 1963

Fourteen Poems 1966

Poemata, 1896-1933 1966

Autographa poemata (1896-1910) 1968

The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy 1968; revised 1976

Collected Poems / C. P. Cavafy 1976

Before Time Could Change Them: The Complete Poems of Constantine P. Cavafy 2001

CRITICISM

E. M. Forster (essay date 1923)

SOURCE: "The Poetry of C. P. Cavafy," in *Pharos and Pharillon*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1923, pp. 110-17.

[In the following excerpt, Forster—a noted British novelist and friend of Cavafy—describes Cavafy's stature and work in modern Greek poetry.]

Modern Alexandria is scarcely a city of the soul. Founded upon cotton with the concurrence of onions and eggs, ill built, ill planned, ill drained—many hard things can be said against it, and most are said by its inhabitants. Yet to some of them, as they traverse the streets, a delightful experience can occur. They hear their own name proclaimed in firm yet meditative accents—accents that seem not so much to expect an answer as to pay homage to the fact of individuality. They turn and see a Greek gentleman in a straw hat, standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe. His arms are extended, possibly. "Oh, Cavafy . . . !" Yes, it is Mr. Cavafy, and he is going either from his flat to the office, or from his office to the flat. If the former, he vanishes when seen, with a slight gesture of despair. If the latter, he may be prevailed upon to begin a sentence—an immense complicated yet shapely sentence, full of parentheses that never get mixed and of reservations that really do reserve; a sentence that moves with logic to its foreseen end, yet to an end that is always more vivid and thrilling than one foresaw. Sometimes the sentence is finished in the street, sometimes the traffic murders it, sometimes it lasts into the flat. It deals with the tricky behaviour of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus in 1096, or with olives, their possibilities and price, or with the fortunes of friends, or George Eliot, or the dialects of the interior of Asia Minor. It is delivered with equal ease in Greek, English, or French. And despite its intellectual richness and human outlook, despite the matured charity of its judgments, one feels that it too stands at a slight angle to the universe: it is the sentence of a poet.

A Greek who wishes to compose poetry has a special problem: between his written and spoken language yawns a gulf. There is an artificial "literary" jargon beloved by schoolmasters and journalists, which has tried to revive the classical tradition, and which only succeeds in being dull. And there is the speech of the people, varying from place to place, and everywhere stuffed with non-Hellenic constructions and words. Can this speech be used for poetry and for cultivated prose? The younger generation believes that it can. A society (Nea Zoe) was started in Alexandria to encourage it, and shocks the stodgy not only by its writings but by its vocabulary—expressions are used that one might actually hear in a shop. Similar movements

are born and die all over the Levant, from Smyrna and Cyprus to Jannina, all testifying to the zeal of a race who, alone among the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean, appear to possess the literary sense and to desire that words should be alive. Cavafy is one of the heroes of this movement, though not one of its extremists. Eclectic by nature, he sees that a new theory might be as sterile as the old, and that the final test must be the incommunicable one of taste. His own poems are in Demotic, but in moderate Demotic.

They are all short poems, and unrhymed, so that there is some hope of conveying them in a verbal translation. They reveal a beautiful and curious world. It comes into being through the world of experience, but it is not experience, for the poet is even more incapable than most people of seeing straight:

Here let me stand. Let me too look at Nature a little,
the radiant blue of the morning sea,
the cloudless sky and the yellow beach;
all beautiful and flooded with light.
Here let me stand. And let me deceive myself into
thinking that I saw them—
(I really did see them one moment, when first I came)
—that I am not seeing, even here, my fancies,
my memories, my visions of voluptuousness.

It is the world within. And since the poet cannot hope to escape from this world, he should at all costs arrange and rule it sensibly. "My mind to me a kingdom is," sang the Elizabethan, and so is Cavafy's but his is a real, not a conventional kingdom in which there may be mutinies and war. In "**The City**" he sketches the tragedy of one misgoverned, and who hopes to leave the chaos behind him and to "build another city, better than this." Useless!

The city shall ever follow you.
In these same streets you shall wander,
and in the same purlieux you shall roam,
and in the same house you shall grow grey. . . .
There is no ship to take you to other lands, there is no
road.
You have so shuttered your life here, in this small corner,
that in all the world you have ruined it.

And in "**Ithaca**" he sketches another and a nobler tragedy—that of a man who seeks loftily, and finds at the end that the goal has not been worth the effort. Such a man should not lament. He has not failed really.

Ithaca gave you your fair voyage.
Without her you would not have ventured on the way,
but she has no more to give you.

And if you find Ithaca a poor place, she has not
mocked you
You have become so wise, so full of experience,
that you should understand by now what these Ithacas
mean.

The above extracts illustrate one of Cavafy's moods—intensely subjective; scenery, cities and legends all re-

emerge in terms of the mind. There is another mood in which he stands apart from his subject-matter, and with the detachment of an artist hammers it into shape. The historian comes to the front now, and it is interesting to note how different is his history from an Englishman's. He even looks back upon a different Greece. Athens and Sparta, so drubbed into us at school, are to him two quarrelsome little slave states, ephemeral beside the Hellenistic kingdoms that followed them, just as these are ephemeral beside the secular empire of Constantinople. He reacts against the tyranny of Classicism—Pericles and Aspasia and Themistocles and all those bores. Alexandria, his birth-place, came into being just when Public School Greece decayed; kings, emperors, patriarchs, have trodden the ground between his office and his flat; his literary ancestor—if he has one—is Callimachus, and his poems bear such titles as "**The Displeasure of the Seleucid**," "**In the Month of Athyr**," "**Manuel Comnenus**," and are prefaced by quotations from Philostratus or Lucian.

Two of these poems shall be quoted in full, to illustrate his method. In the first he adopts the precise, almost mincing style of a chronicle to build up his effect. It is called "**Alexandrian Kings**" and deals with an episode of the reign of Cleopatra and Antony.

An Alexandrian crowd collected
to see the sons of Cleopatra,
Cæsarion and his little brothers
Alexander and Ptolemy, who for the first
time were brought to the Gymnasium,
there to be crowned as kings
amidst a splendid display of troops.

Alexander they named king
of Armenia, of Media, and of the Parthians.
Ptolemy they named king
of Cilicia, of Syria, and Phœnicia.
Cæsarion stood a little in front,
clad in silk the colour of roses,
with a bunch of hyacinths at his breast.
His belt was a double line of sapphires and amethysts,
his sandals were bound with white ribbons
embroidered with rosy pearls.
Him they acclaimed more than the small ones.
Him they named "King of Kings!"

The Alexandrians knew perfectly well
that all this was words and empty pomp.

But the day was warm and exquisite,
the sky clear and blue,
the Gymnasium of Alexandria a triumph of art,
the courtiers' apparel magnificent,
Cæsarion full of grace and beauty
(son of Cleopatra, blood of the Lagidæ!),
and the Alexandrians ran to see the show
and grew enthusiastic, and applauded
in Greek, in Egyptian, and some in Hebrew,
bewitched with the beautiful spectacle,
though they knew perfectly well how worthless,
what empty words, were these king-makings.

Such a poem has, even in a translation, a “distinguished” air. It is the work of an artist who is not interested in facile beauty. In the second example, though its subject-matter is pathetic, Cavafy stands equally aloof. The poem is broken into half-lines; he is spelling out an epitaph on a young man who died in the month of Athyr, the ancient Egyptian November, and he would convey the obscurity, the poignancy, that sometimes arise together out of the past, entwined into a single ghost:

It is hard to read . . . on the ancient stone.
 “Lord Jesus Christ” . . . I make out the word “Soul.”
 “In the month of Athyr . . . Lucius fell asleep.”
 His age is mentioned. . . . “He lived years . . .”—
 The letters KZ show . . . that he fell asleep young.
 In the damaged part I see the words . . . “Him . . .
 Alexandrian.”
 Then come three lines . . . much mutilated.
 But I can read a few words . . . perhaps “our tears”
 and “sorrows.”
 And again: “Tears” . . . and: “for us his friends
 mourning.”
 I think Lucius . . . was much beloved.
 In the month of Athyr . . . Lucius fell asleep. . . .

Such a writer can never be popular. He flies both too slowly and too high. Whether subjective or objective, he is equally remote from the bustle of the moment, he will never compose either a Royalist or a Venizelist Hymn. He has the strength (and of course the limitations) of the recluse, who, though not afraid of the world, always stands at a slight angle to it, and, in conversation, he has sometimes devoted a sentence to this subject. Which is better—the world or seclusion? Cavafy, who has tried both, can't say. But so much is certain—either life entails courage, or it ceases to be life.

Petroula Kephala Ruehlen (essay date 1965)

SOURCE: “Constantine Cavafy: A European Poet,” in *Nine Essays in Modern Literature*, edited by Donald E. Stanford, Louisiana State University Press, 1965, pp. 36-62.

[In the following essay, Ruehlen posits that Cavafy was a European poet because of his firm grounding in Western culture and his continued relevance to European readers.]

On the twenty-ninth of April 1933, Constantine Cavafy died on his seventieth birthday. A few days before, he had jotted down for a friend to read—cancer of the throat had deprived the poet of the ability to speak—“And I had twenty-five more poems to write!”

In 1963 Greece, the world, celebrated the centennial of Cavafy's birth and the thirtieth anniversary of his death. A tasteful new edition of his poems, by G. P. Savidis, has marked the occasion.¹ This new edition follows (for the first time) the scheme set out by the poet himself for an arrangement of his poems in a thematic rather than in a

chronological order.² Apart from this fine tribute, the most exciting landmark of the Cavafy Year was the release—by the poet's heir—of the rich collection of Cavafy papers, which up to now had been closed to the public. The collection, containing approximately five thousand papers—personal and family papers, essays, notes, as well as unpublished poems—was entrusted to Mr. Savidis for eventual editing and publication.

I had the good fortune to be in Athens during the summer of 1963, where Mr. Savidis very kindly allowed me to look at the Cavafy material. I suppose every lover of literature who has ever had the chance to find himself among long-hidden and unexplored papers of his favorite author has experienced the awe I felt that summer afternoon when for the first time I was able to touch and examine the yellowish pictures and manuscripts of Cavafy. There they were, neatly filed—first the family pictures, where one could only guess which of the grave-looking boys was Constantine; then the pictures of the young man, dressed and combed with extreme care, with the features of an unmistakable personality and a deep somewhat troubled look in his dark eyes; and the more recent pictures of the poet's maturity, most startling pictures of an intellectual who had been through agony of body and spirit and who had not come out unscathed. Then there were the pictures of the house on Rue Lepsius, half-lit rooms with oriental furnishings, heavy draperies, low sofas, carved furniture, tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl, elaborately wrought brass chandeliers, huge mirrors in heavy gilt frames, old-fashioned china lamps. And suddenly I could see the figure of the tragically isolated old man walking once more in those empty rooms where he had lived alone for so many years, working over those exquisite verses of utter lucidity, which have the power to evoke a world.

Half past twelve. Time has passed quickly
 since nine o'clock when I lit the lamp,
 and sat down here. I have been sitting without read-
 ing,
 and without talking. With whom could I talk
 all alone in this house.³

It was here, in Alexandria—the old capital of the Ptolemies, the crossing-path of East and West, the melting-pot of races, cultures, and religious—that the scholar spent his nights studying ancient documents until the past was present and alive and those troubled, confused, tragic figures of history were caught once again in the whirlwind of our passions and came back to repeat the pathos of their lives among us.

Ah, here, you came with your undefinable
 fascination. In history few
 lines only are found about you,
 and so more freely I molded you in my mind.
 I molded you handsome and emotional.
 My art gives to your face
 a dreamlike attractive beauty.
 And so fully did I vision you,
 that late last night, as my lamp
 was going out—I deliberately let it go out—

I thought you came into my room,
 you seemed to stand before me as you must have been
 in conquered Alexandria,
 pale and weary, ideal in your grief,
 still hoping they would take pity on you
 the foul ones—who were whispering, “Too many Cae-
 sars.”¹⁴

There is magic in those lines in Greek, and only he who has attempted to translate poetry—that part of the meaning which lies in the suggestive quality that words have acquired through the centuries—will understand the frustration that is involved in the task.

To an international audience Cavafy is accessible only through translation, because he had the disadvantage to be writing in a language which, of however, glorious a past, is little known today outside Greece. This is especially unfortunate because one of the most important features of Cavafy's originality lies in his unique use of words and in effects achieved through elements intrinsic to the Greek language. A great many of Cavafy's stylistic innovations are due to the fact that he was writing at a period when Greece was creating a new language out of a confused and divided past. In English there is nothing comparable to the conflict between purist and demotic Greek. Purist Greek at the time Cavafy began to write was the official language of the state; yet it was mostly a written language, which had lost contact with the mass of the people and the life of the nation and consequently had become artificial and dead. However, it was a language with a vast tradition; through ages of theological controversies it had developed if not a power for lyrical expression of feeling—except perhaps in church hymns—yet a remarkable synthetic power, subtlety, precision, concreteness, density of expression, and a certain austere beauty. Demotic Greek, on the other hand, was the language of the people, mostly a spoken language, with practically no pretensions of erudition or sophistication, yet with a rare freshness and inventiveness which had already found expression in folk literature in the mainland of Greece during the long years of Turkish occupation, and which had proved its potentialities by achieving excellence in more sophisticated treatment in some of the Greek islands which were free of Turkish rule and able to follow the European literary trends of the time.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the beginnings of the twentieth, the poets of the newly freed Greece were ambitious to establish demotic Greek as the language of literature, the only language fit to express the spirit of the new nation. The poetic movements of the time were discovering and exploiting popular and folk materials, especially folk songs, and they were exhibiting a dominant lyrical tone. Although he adopted the cause of demotic Greek, Cavafy's loyalties in language were divided. As a son of a well-to-do family of merchants related to the tradition-minded Phanariot circles on his mother's side, he was brought up and educated in the formal purist tradition. Moreover, since early youth he was an avid scholar showing great interest and erudition in Greek history and language. His early poems, which he later abandoned and

which are not usually included in the collections of his verse, are written in the stiff, formal, purist Greek of the “Romantic” tradition in vogue at that time in Greece. However, in Alexandria he became involved with a group of young demoticists and came to be an enthusiastic supporter of the demotic movements of his time in poetry. He embraced the movement, but not its narrow-minded fanaticism. Cavafy, by temperament and upbringing, was a traditionalist. Although capable of expressing strong lyrical sentiment, as seen in some of his most evocative erotic poems, Cavafy was the heir of the long-forgotten art of austere economy and perfect balance of the ancient Greek epigrammatists and of the precision and meticulousness of the Byzantine theologians and scholars. However, these were qualities which could not be abstracted from the language in which they had been achieved; Cavafy was mature enough not to reject the past but to try to preserve it, build upon it, and make it a part of the present life of the nation. Four hundred years had created a dividing gap in the Greek sensibility and letters—I do *not* mean a loss of national feeling or of a sense of identity—and Cavafy knew that unless Greece bridged it, the literature, the history, and the great civilization of its ancestors would become those of a foreign people. “I am not a Greek, I am Hellenic,” he used to say, trying to encompass the totality of the physical and intellectual expansion of the race through the ages.

Cavafy knew, of course, that language changes and that the conditions of our life change too. He had no illusions about restoring ancient Greek or something close to it, as some of the most fanatical purists seemed to have. But he knew also that a nation which denounces its past has no hope for the future. Taking his cue perhaps from the idiom spoken in Alexandria, which was something of a mixture of purist and demotic elements, Cavafy developed his own personal style—a perfect amalgamation of the life and emotive power inherent in demotic Greek and of the dignity, density, and suggestive and illusory possibilities of purist Greek. His language is full of turns of expression and words borrowed from the entire Greek linguistic tradition since classical times. And so perfectly could he integrate his diverse material that in poems like “**In the Month of Athyr,**” or in “**Come, O King of the Lacedaemonians,**” he achieves the perfect *tour de force* by integrating whole ancient Greek passages in the modern Greek context while being not only perfectly clear and intelligible, but absolutely natural too. He did not employ or try to bring back to use archaic expressions long forgotten or belonging to the province of the literary historian or the linguist. Although comparable to Joyce's and other modern writers' attempts to break down the linguistic frontiers, Cavafy's experiment—although equally bold—was, I believe, more successful, for every archaic or unusual word in his poems is within the modern Greek linguistic consciousness and is perfectly clear to the average educated Greek.

It took a vast knowledge of the language and an unusual sensitivity and power over words to perform the task; for,

as I said, Cavafy's language is not demotic Greek sprinkled with purist or archaic expressions, or vice versa, but an ideal fusion. "I have tried to blend the spoken with the written language," he wrote to his friend Pericles Anastasiades; "I have called to my help in the process of mixture all my experience plus as much artistic insight as I possess in the matter—trembling, so to speak, over every word. . . ." The result was a style of deliberately prosaic quality, simple, concentrated, almost dry, economical, unadorned, divested of every element which would cause it to deviate from the strictest austerity—at its best, inevitable. Cavafy's poetry is highly intellectual; yet it is deeply suggestive and characterized by strong emotive power. "A more elaborate style and a less controlled imagination would have destroyed Cavafy's subtle and special charm," remarks C. M. Bowra.⁵

Since they can hardly be rendered in translation, these features are necessarily restricted to the appreciation of the people of the poet's own race and language. What is it then that survives translation in Cavafy? Eliot said that great poets are more translatable than minor writers because, although just as much of the original significance is lost as is lost when we translate lesser poets, "there is also more saved—for more was there."⁶ Obviously much is saved in Cavafy's case. His poetry does not appeal to the wider public; except for a few lyrical pieces, it is a difficult kind of poetry, demanding a certain degree of erudition, sophistication, and ability for abstract thought if it is to be fully appreciated. Yet Cavafy's reputation abroad has been steadily growing. His complete poems have been translated into French and twice into English, not to mention several translations of individual poems in various languages. There is something in Cavafy, apparently, which is capable of transcending national limits. Auden, who doesn't know one word of modern Greek, defines this element as Cavafy's unique tone of voice. He has read translations of Cavafy made by different hands, he says, but every one of them was immediately recognized as a poem by Cavafy. Nobody else could have written it; it revealed a person with a unique perspective on the world.

Discussing Great Europeans, Eliot said that in figures like Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe, the quality which survives translation and which "is capable of arousing a direct response as of man to man, in readers of any place and any time," is wisdom.⁷ I am not going to plead Cavafy's greatness or wisdom here, for both have to be tested by time. The point I want to make is that for a poet to appeal to a wider audience than that of his place and time, and for that appeal to be not the transient one of a passing fashion but a deeper and more permanent relationship between himself and his readers, he should share in some degree in the qualities which make a poet transcend the limits of his country and become, if not a Great European—at least a *European* poet. He should have, if not the wisdom of the great sages—for those are few—the relative wisdom of the serious artist who has something significant to tell to his fellow men. In this respect I believe that Cavafy is not only a Greek poet but a European poet too,

for even in translation his poetry remains highly relevant and significant to the European reader, arousing that "direct response as of man to man" that Eliot was talking about.

By "European" audience I do not mean an audience strictly confined within the limits of Europe, but one which emotionally and culturally is within the European, or Western, tradition. A part of this essay will be devoted to the examination of the qualities which are essential for a poet to be called European, and the way these criteria can be applied to Cavafy. Eliot, in his discussion of what is a classic, what is a universal classic, and what is a Great European, has given us a set of values by which the greatness of a poet can be established. The criteria in this discussion will in part be an adaptation and combination of Eliot's values as they apply to Cavafy as a European poet.

My first criterion is a quality which can best be termed as *maturity*. As Eliot has said, maturity cannot be defined. We cannot make its meaning apprehensible to the immature; if we are mature we will recognize maturity when we encounter it, either in a civilization, or in a literature, or in a personality. However, in order to make my point clear, I shall distinguish four qualities which a poet should exhibit in order to be recognized as properly mature; or rather, since these qualities do not exist independently from each other, I shall call them four aspects under which maturity is revealed in poetry. These aspects are a sense of history, maturity of mind, maturity of manners, and maturity of language.

There is no doubt that one of Cavafy's most important features is his use of history. "I am a historical poet," Cavafy used to say. By that he did not mean his erudition in classical, Hellenistic, and Byzantine history; he did not mean that he used those eras as settings for many of his poems either; nor did he mean that a great many of the characters in his poems are personalities we read about in history books. What he meant was that he felt in himself that particular consciousness which makes us aware that we are not living in an isolated present in a vacuum of time; that the past is not the special domain only of museums, historiographers, or antiquarians; and that our present experience would be a succession of meaningless facts unless seen in relation to parallel human experiences in the past.

It is the European poet especially who cannot turn his back upon the past and hope to bring order in the present experience or find a meaning in it. It is not only because European history has been too long and too complex, or because too many countries and civilizations rose and fell, that we cannot ignore the destiny they have traced for us; other civilizations besides the European have had a long and bloody history. But it is that the experience of all these ages of our history has been made *meaningful* to us through a body of historical knowledge and literature which we cannot afford to pass over. The fact that Mark Antony and Cleopatra have existed, loved, lost a kingdom

of half the world, and died for that love; and the fact that Shakespeare has created through them his immortal symbols of great romantic love in the name of which a man has been able to say,—“Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space”—have forever changed our concept of love. No man will sacrifice the world for the love of a woman again, no poet will immortalize the sacrifice or bewail the death of the capacity for it, but the line or the work of art will bear a relation to the myth of Antony and Cleopatra. At the present time, when modern man is confused and lost in a chaotic universe because he feels that his life and his experience are so radically different from those of his forefathers that the wisdom he has gained through the ages cannot help him to find order and meaning and catharsis in his existence—at the present time it is incumbent on the artist to rejoin the broken threads of human experience and assert once again the common destiny of man.

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not a lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered⁸

said Eliot, who in so many ways has stressed the importance of the historical consciousness in modern literature.

In that still very significant article of his on Joyce in 1923, Eliot made the statement, “In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. . . . It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious.”⁹ At the time Eliot was writing those words I do not believe he knew of the existence of Cavafy. As far as I know, the first time Eliot came across Cavafy’s poetry was through E. M. Forster about 1928, which resulted in Eliot’s publishing two of Cavafy’s poems in the *Criterion*. I do not know whether Eliot would have modified that statement about Yeats had he had a chance to be earlier or more intimately acquainted with Cavafy’s poetry; Eliot’s and Cavafy’s personalities were too different for a liking at first glance, and we must not forget that it took Eliot many years to find an interest in Yeats. But my point is that it was not Yeats only who was the first contemporary to feel the need for the mythical method. Although probably at that time not aware of each other’s existence, Yeats and Cavafy started developing the mythic method almost simultaneously—Cavafy some years earlier, as a matter of fact. The two poets were almost exactly contemporaries—Yeats being two years younger and dying six years later than Cavafy. Both belonged to small but proud countries engaged at the time in strong nationalistic movements, a fact which might partly

account for both poets’ strong sense of the past. Both had an aristocratic attitude towards life and their art, being perhaps the last patrician poets of our times. Both started publishing poetry in the late eighties—in neither case considered their most representative work. Both were poets of middle age, achieving their major work in their fifties and later. It was only when they saw experience in retrospect that its manifold significance was revealed to them; it was only in later maturity that they both attained the impersonality that Eliot sought in art—the impersonality of the poet “Who, out of intense and personal experience, is able to express a general truth; retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol.”¹⁰ And it was at the time of their full maturity that they started using the historical past in its cyclic recurrence or in its timeless presence as their major theme and method of symbolism. The fact that two poets of distant and different backgrounds have followed parallel courses of artistic development points perhaps to the most significant fact that the development of the mythic method was not generated by happy coincidence but by something deeper in the need of the times.

Even in poems written around 1904-1906, like “**Expecting the Barbarians**,” “**Trojans**,” or “**King Demetrius**,” Cavafy has shown a conscious and mature use of history. By 1911 he had reached an advanced enough stage of development to produce a poem like “**The God Forsakes Antony**,” which apart from its being a very good poem in itself, is the poem where Cavafy’s myth of Alexandria found its first distinct formulation.

When suddenly at the midnight hour is heard
an invisible company passing
with exquisite music, with voices—
your fortune that is now yielding, your works
that have failed, the plans of your life
that have all turned out to be illusions, do not mourn
uselessly.
As one prepared long since, as one courageous,
say farewell to her, to Alexandria who is leaving.
Above all do not deceive yourself, do not say that it
was
a dream, that your hearing has been mistaken;
do not stoop to such vain hopes.
As one prepared long since, as one courageous,
as it befits you who have been worthy of such a city,
firmly approach the window,
and listen with emotion, but not
with the coward’s entreaties and complaints,
as a last enjoyment listen to the sounds,
to the exquisite instruments of the mystic company,
and say farewell to her, to Alexandria you are leaving.”¹¹

The characterization is mature. The poem is an address to Antony, yet the speaker’s voice is not overbearing. Although he utters no word, Antony emerges from the poem a distinct personality, three-dimensional, effortlessly carrying on his shoulders the tremendous burden of Plutarch and Shakespeare—not refuting them, not ignoring them, not even trying to supersede them, but silently acknowl-