

II - 6A

1st. session of D.C.'s essay
on Modern Greek Poetry.

(New Writing & Daylight, Autumn '44)

1/3/3-1

5. Χειρόγραφον τοῦ πρώτου σχεδιδάσματος
τῆς 'Εἰσαγωγῆς εἰς τήν Σύγχρονον
'Ἑλληνικὴν Ποίησιν'

5. MS. of 1st draft "Introduction to Modern
Greek Poetry".

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An Introduction to Modern Greek poetry

An introduction to a foreign poetry is one of the most difficult things. Poetry means language — the inmost essence of language — and since the days of Babel men have been condemned to speak different languages. "Let us go down", God said, as we read in the Bible, "Let us go down, and there confound the language of men that they may not understand one another's speech." — And this difficulty of men in understanding one another's speech, one another's language, does not only mean a difficulty in understanding one another's rational meaning. If one wants to convey a simple rational meaning to somebody else, if one wants, for instance, to make somebody else understand that one is

hungry and that one wants to be given something to eat, or that one is thirsty and that one wants to be given something to drink, it is not important ~~to~~ ~~make~~ in which language one expresses something like that. Besides in such cases there is the universal language of gestures which helps in similar cases. In ~~such~~ ~~similar~~ cases the important thing is to be given something to eat or something to drink.

I do not think that the British soldiers who found any difficulty in making themselves understood by the Greeks about things of everyday life. But language does not only express simple, rational meanings.

The language of a people is the expression of the soil and the mind of the people - which are full of ~~ice~~ irrational treasures. The language of a people contains ~~the~~ not only the meanings of the things about which people talk with one another; ~~it contains~~ ~~only~~ it has in it the nature, ^{the landscape} of the country in which the people lives; ~~it contains~~ it has in it ~~the~~ sound the sound of

the wind and the waters
 of this special country, —
 it has ~~the shape~~ in it
 the light of the mornings
~~and~~ the afternoons, and
 the darkness of the nights
^{of this country,}
~~of this country~~; it has in
 it the sun and the moon,
 the colour of the sky, the
 colour of the sea, the trees
 and the mountains of this
 country. A language has
 the shape of the bodies
 of the people who speak it,
 and it contains not only
 their present-situation, but
 all their past, all the
 joys and the ~~tragedies~~
 tragedies of their history;
 and it does not only express
 what these people are, but
 also what these people
 are going to be; it con-
 tains ~~in it~~ their ~~most~~
 most-secret dreams and
 aspirations, ~~and~~ their
 fears and their ~~and~~ faith.
 A national poet is the
~~the~~ man who can use ~~the~~
^{of his country}
 language in such a way
 that all these irrational
 things, which the language

~~of his people has in it po-~~
~~tentially contain as poten-~~
~~tialities, ~~even~~ contains, become~~
 clear to ~~the~~ ^{speaks} reader. This reader
~~is~~ usually the same language
 as the poet. They usually belong
 to the same ~~or~~ circle of life
 and they can understand one
 another. But the difficulty
 is to make a national poet
 understood to someone who
 does not belong to the same
 circle of life - to a foreigner.
 Translations in poetry are al-
 most useless. ~~Two verses might~~
~~say the same thing~~ Two verses
 in two different languages saying
 the same thing are not the
 same thing. Their sound is not
 the same, and sound expressing
 so much of the irrational
 meanings, ^{of a poem} ~~of poetry~~ is of extreme
 importance in poetry.

~~In spite of these~~ (yet in spite
 of these difficulties I shall
 try to give you a picture of
 modern Greek poetry. In spite
 of all differences of language,
 all people have many things
 in common. There are things
 like life and death, love and
 hatred, nature and dreams
 which are common to all man-
 kind. In spite of the curse
 of Babel, although people
 have been separated by
 differences ~~of~~ languages, ~~and~~
 thought and outlook, they