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Kyriakos Charalambides, *Myths and History: Selected Poems*, selected and translated from Greek by David Connolly, with an introduction by Theofanis Stavrou, Nostos Books on Modern Greek History and Culture, no. 26 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Nostos Books, 2010), 101 pp.

“Art, my boy, should affix the truth to things” (“Odyssey 11, 2” [from *Quince Apple*])—so declares the poet in one of his poems in the collection under review. Art is an interpretation. Now, that would seem to contradict the poet’s assertion cited above. After all, interpretation is subjective. How, then, can something so multifaceted—expressing a moment in time, while simultaneously evolving through time—“affix the truth” to anything? One answer: only through a deep—I would even say visceral—conviction that distills from the fleeting mass of the ephemeral the abiding core of the eternal; that gives cogency to the unceasing onrush of time and to the propulsion of events, through the enduring power of symbols, now animated by the breath of life.

In fact, most of the poems in the collection *Myths and History* by prize-winning Cypriot poet Kyriakos Charalambides deal with themes from Greek antiquity, that period in time and consequently that region of perception in which myth and history, myths and facts, appear interlaced, becoming both methistoria (Greek *μετά*,

‘with/after’), i.e., within the historical context, viewed through the lens of times past; and mythistoria, an interweaving and interpenetrating amalgam of history and myth, with its incorruptible, enduring relevance and power. Hence, the title chosen for this collection. As Theofanis Stavrou notes in his introduction: “For in Greek the word methistoria could easily be suggestive of meta-history, integration with history. David Connolly, the translator, did well in choosing *Myths and History* as the title of this anthology, because he rightly sensed the author’s passionate devotion to his muse, his cultural heritage, and his cause.”

Other historical sources of inspiration for Charalambides include events from the time of the Roman Empire, as well as the Byzantine period and Cypriot history. All are expertly translated by the well-known English-born translator, David Connolly, a naturalized Greek citizen since 1974, whose love of the Greek culture and language is reflected in sensitive, probing translations, which convey a sense of the original Greek (ironic tone intact), while reading easily and idiomatically in English.

As I, the reviewer, stroll through the many cities and sites Charalambides brings to life, let me stop before some poems that etch themselves indelibly in memory. From the first collection *Meta-History* (1955): “Graeco-Roman Civilization,” a hilarious poem about Nero’s chariot race and his mishaps at the hippodrome of ancient Corinth; “One Who Tears Down His Statue,” inspired (as so many of the poems of Charalambides are, in tone if not in specific subject matter) by Cavafy and featuring excellent imagery, characterization, and action, as well as an oblique reference to Shakespeare’s *Richard III* at the end (“a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!”); “Salamis Bay,” an affecting poem on many levels, from the comically bleating “Salamis Bay ... Bay ... Bay” to the touching conclusion: “the soul of a living woman is worth a thousand lives and lands”; and “The Virgin

Helen,” a long, fascinating poem replete with humanity and irony.

The selection from *Dokímin* (2000) offers up such a varied, colorful cast of characters, it is difficult to choose favorites: Helen (“Palinode”), Medea (“Willingly”), “Candaules’ Wife” (a naughty, naughty girl), and “The Beautiful Pantika” (“What a brow and what eyes and what / arms, what mastic-scented hair! The girl caused a current as she danced”); Alexander (“Death of Alexander the Great”), all the way to “The Gods Amuse Themselves” (“environmentalists by definition”).

The most extensively represented collection, *Quince Apple* (2006), lives wonderfully up to its name. A graphic, highly dramatic, richly hewed pageant of mythological personages, tart and tangy in personality and action, unfolds before us: Theseus (“Perhaps accidentally in my sleep / I poked out its eye with a horn; all’s possible...All around bubbled barren earth— / its foundations trembled in my nostrils”), Clytaemnestra (“My rattling resounds, to hide the hell-fire / of my passionate love”), Oenomaus (“For Oenomaus surges after them / in his unstoppable chariot brandishing / a bronze spear”), Creon (“Creon the king who reflects / that the light is more difficult / than the pain of darkness”), Hephaestus (“...Venomous / in his resentful heart Zeus / grabbed me...so I might see what it means to be lord, unworthy I to tie his laughter’s laces”), Sappho (“How can we explain the tenth muse, / once amazed in Lesbos / by the power and waning of love”), Odysseus in “Odyssey XI, 2” (“The nightingale, my boy, makes its nest / where it hears water and the stars come out”); and, further down, the lines with which I begin this review: “Art, my boy, should affix / the truth to things”). This collection, and this volume, ends with a mosaic of six short poems, which, with “International Poetry Day in the Athens Metro,” lands us, secure and satisfied, in our modern world.

This is poetry by a proud Greek from Cyprus—relevant for Greece, relevant for our time, and engrossing—infused with passion, rooted in myth and history, and informed by personal and poignant experience by which it is inspired and because of which it is inspiring.

Miltiades Matthias, *New York*

Susan Matthias, *New York University*

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The main objective of the *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* is the dissemination of scholarly information in the field of modern Greek studies. The field is broadly defined to include the social sciences and the humanities, indeed any body of knowledge that touches on the modern Greek experience. Topics dealing with earlier periods, the Byzantine and even the Classical, will be considered provided they relate, in some way, to aspects of later Greek history and culture. Geographically, the field extends to any place where modern Hellenism flourished and made significant contributions, whether in the "Helladic space" proper or in the *Diaspora*. More importantly, in comparative and contextual terms, the Mediterranean basin and Europe fall within the province of the *Yearbook's* objectives. Special attention will be paid to subjects dealing with Greek-Slavic relations and Eastern Orthodox history and culture in general.

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