



Kyriákos Haralambídhis. *Methistoria*. Athens. Aghra. 1995. 166 pages. ISBN 960-325-132-1.

The title of Kyriákos Haralambídhis's seventh verse collection since 1961 may best be translated as "Beyond History." Indeed, some fifty-three pieces in it derive from major or minor events in the long historical record of Hellenism and especially Cyprus, his patria. However, the two longest compositions, "Helen the Virgin" and "By-work," deal with Homeric echoes and handlings of mythological data in ways relating their poetic truth to contemporary situations as they—indirectly at least—bear on the poet as a commentator.

As a philologist, Haralambídhis is known for his understanding of the poetic idiosyncrasies of Cavafy, the great Alexandrian poet whose influence on modern verse (not only Greek) has been lasting. Like him, the Cypriot master treats minute, momentous, or highly specific happenings as stimuli that trigger his thinking process. Certainly, he does not possess the subtle irony and proverbial economy of expression that became the trademarks of Cavafy; still, Haralambídhis's plethoric diction is often polyphonic in ways that would have won Cavafy's approval. His novelty, though, is observed in his sudden bursts into a modern-day vernacular or even slang which, removed from the historical aura of the context, drastically air his awareness as a spectator who recalls and peruses facts. This can be seen in the first three lyrics of *Methistoria*, or in "Model of 1880," which is quite humorous in its mild supernaturalism.

The moving poem about Emperor Constantine Paleologus's refusal to surrender Constantinople to Mohameth the Conqueror presents the tragic king as using a Cavafian style himself—a fine reminder of the importance of linguistic mannerisms in moments of historical significance. The conclusion, however, returns the speaking consciousness to Haralambídhis, who ends the poem with touches of surrealism: "Constantine Paleologus then / with his tears purple in his heart / and with clear dream-like eyes / shuts the gate of Santa Sophia / and weightlessly flies on to his death."

Some twenty pages of explanatory notes about the poems' various allusions and echoes enable us to realize how the gifted Cypriot poet captures and re-creates the poetic essence found in many sad, tragic, or ironic instances in our destinies.

M. Byron Raizis
University of Athens