

A word about translating the poems of M. Kokkinos

This interpretation of the poetry of Michael Kokkinos is more than just the translation of one language, Greek, into another, English. Grammar, vocabulary and syntax are all vital elements in any translation and without doubt require special attention when it comes to translating poetry. Prose translation is a fairly simple process in which descriptive narrative or event relating text usually operates on a more or less face value level of communication between the author and the reader. The creator-receptor relationship in poetry involves additional consideration, for it is essentially more of a relationship than of a simple communication rapport between author and reader. Anyone attempting to translate poetry really has to know something of the poet, to be sensitive to his character, his moods, his use of words, his personal symbols, his perception of things and to be able to utilize all this in the poet's initial inspiration be retained in a pungent form and not lost or watered down in the translation process. For poetry is very much like an essential oil or essence where a few carefully selected words can create an insight, an emotion or soul pervading experience, just as a few drops of pure perfume can pervade an entire room and fill it with its aroma.

Translating Sti Michaela for me marks the completion of a cycle in my relationship with the talented Michael Kokkinos, his beautiful wife Eleni Kodogouri, their daughter Michaela, and Kokkinos Gallery. For just over a year we have all worked together to create this gallery, or to be more apt, art environment. An environment which to many can be seen as a fascinating alternative to everyday life, to others as a barb in the side of complacency and yet to others as a sanctuary where they can experience the world of art and be confronted by art in all its forms from grotesque to aesthetic. Each work of art bears witness to a being's aspiration to immortality; art is proof of an existence, an existence that was fired by the desire of the artist's soul to live on in the work of art.

In the same way that Kokkinos Gallery makes this valuable contribution available to everyone and gives them the opportunity to appreciate it, or to become owners of works of art, so do the poems and paintings in Sti Michaela provide a mirror or a filter through which to share one man's response to a world, to life and to death. Michael Kokkinos as a true artist has revealed his soul. I hope that my translation has succeeded in relaying this to his English readers and that the poet's inspiration will continue to live on in those who read his poetry.

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