

Poetry And Eco-Criticism: Environmental Ethics And Nature-Loving In The Works Of Odysseus Elytis And Nikiforos Vrettakos

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Abstract—A new subfield of literary and cultural enquiry that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, devoted to the investigation of relations between literature and the natural. Ecocriticism is not a method of analysis or interpretation but a redefined area of research and rediscovery. Most of this work has been pursued in the USA, where a special emphasis has been given to Native American folklore and literature. Ecocriticism is also the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation.

The relationship between people and the environment has long been documented through literary works. In the foreword to *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*, Edward White cites Adam and Eve's journey through the Garden of Eden (in the Bible), and Odysseus' dangerous trek across the Mediterranean Sea in Homer's *Odyssey*, as early literary examples in which human paths cross with nature.

Environmental criticism, also known as ecocriticism, is a rapidly emerging field of literary study that considers the relationship that human beings have to the environment. Thus, if we wish to understand our contemporary attitude toward the environment, its literary history is an excellent place to start. Deforestation, air pollution, endangered species, wetland loss, animal rights, and rampant consumerism have all been appearing as controversial issues in Western literature for hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of years.

Referring to the Greek literary production and reality, an excellent example is the well-known Greek writer, Odysseas Elytis, who with his lyrics glorified the beauty of Greece as much as anyone else. In fact, for his poetry, which, enlivens with sensual power and spiritual clarity of view the struggle of modern man for freedom and creativity, won the 1979 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Odysseas Elytis had the amazing ability to make the "images" of his poems spring up before

our eyes with all their colors, their fragrances, the memories they evoke. Images of light, sky, the endless blue of Greece, dream images always in the light of the Greek summer. This is how Odysseas Elytis enlightened our world and continues to do so through the work he has left behind. The words of this great poet who gave us so many beautiful images and so much wisdom in 28 poetry collections and poems, are even more important today, in the difficult times we live in.

Reading Elytis, we find again the courage and the strength to continue for a better tomorrow.

On the other hand, another excellent Greek poet, Nikiforos Vrettakos, was perhaps the most human of the modern Greek poets. A great Humanist spent his eighty years in the service of the homeland and the people, of the culture and the language.

Vrettakos's was the one who managed to put pure poetry in the service of man, that is, of his fellow man: not of his own, individual person. He put pure poetry in the service of human problems: existential, national, environmental, but in close connection with the social and historical conditions of their genesis.

We will deal with the works of these two exceptional Greek writers and their relationship with nature, through the eco-critical dimension of art.

Keyword: *Ecocriticism, literature, Odysseas Elytis, Nikiforos Vrettakos, Environmental ethics, Eco-critical dimension of art.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Poetic and eco-critical

The anthology of poems with flowering plants, the bearing flowers, was a fashion of the Victorian era, as well as the Glossaries of flowers, to which the symbolic meaning of each flower was attributed. The first flower glossary in the western world is considered to be Charlotte de Latour's book, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, written in 1819, which became very popular and countless such glossaries have since been published in Europe and America. Their goal was the

language of flowers in poetry, which was now passing due to the great spread and in everyday life.

Plato in the dialogue *Timaeus* mentions that plants were created to help man survive. Aristotle also mentions in his treatise *On the Soul* that the soul is defined by the nutritional ability, the ability to feel, mental ability and movement. Of all these abilities, plants have only the nourishing power of the soul. Thus, although Aristotle emphasizes the common mental background of all living beings, he adopts for the soul of plants a more biological meaning compared to Plato's reference.

Plato's reference to the senses and desires of plants triggered, in conjunction with Neoplatonism, the spiritual reception of plants by the philosophy and literature of Romanticism. Plants in literature, myth and even everyday life are charged both emotionally and ideologically.

The idea that plants correspond to an archetype or express and prove a divine effect on nature has been central to the literature and philosophy of Romanticism.

Moving from romanticism to modernism we will find in Baudelaire, the poet of anti-Nature, not in the sense of the opposite, but in search of the beauty of evil in nature, as the title of his collection *The Flowers of Evil* states. But Baudelaire's poetry marks something else, the transition from nature to the big city. In a note, Baudelaire will write that "the dizzying feeling one feels in a big city is proportional to what one feels in the middle of nature".

But if in Baudelaire there is still a harmonious relationship between the world of nature and the world of the city, a characteristic of modernism is the rupture between man and nature. The Eliot *Waste Land* is considered in the scientific field of eco-criticism to be a harbinger of the ecological crisis we are experiencing today. According to Elizabeth Black, the *Waste Land* presents a society alienated from nature and on the brink of environmental collapse.

"April is the hardest month," Eliot writes in the *Waste Land*, as the awakening of new life brings back hard memories that were forgotten and buried in the snow. Finally, the traumatic feeling of a lost past and the feeling of the painful disconnection from the nature can be found to some extent in Seferis as well¹.

¹ https://www.hartismag.gr/hartis-4/biblia/pws-na-exhghseis-th-zwh-soy-s-ena-dentro-polewshttps://el.lipsumtech.com/ecocriticism-environment-emotions-112976_ (Retrieved 12/01/2021). For more information see A. Hume, «Imagining Eco-poetics: An interview with Robert Hass, Brenda Hilman, Evelyn Reilly, and Jonathan Skinner», *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 19/4, 2012, p.p. 751-766. M. Kirkby, *A Victorian Flower Dictionary: The Language of Flowers Companion*, Introduction by Vanessa Diffenbaugh, Random House Publishing Group, New York 2011, p. 5. Πλάτων, *Τίμαιος*, εισαγωγή, μετάφραση, σχόλια Βασιλίας Κάλφας, Βιβλιοπωλείον της «Εστίας», 2013, p. 298. Αριστοτέλης, *Περί ψυχής*, Ζαχαρόπουλος-Δαίδαλος, Athens 1990, p. 86-

It is noteworthy that Eco-Criticism is a broad field, which has not been utilized by the modern Greek literature, although it is experiencing great growth in European and international studies and is shaped by the collaboration of environmental science with the literature and art. Ecology and eco-criticism are the terms used to denote the new relationship of art with nature and are usually associated with issues related to the global ecological crisis.

Ecocriticism investigates the relation between humans and the natural world in literature. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment and attitudes towards nature are presented and analyzed. One of the main goals in ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react in relation to nature and ecological aspects. This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention during recent years due to higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology. It is hence a fresh way of analyzing and interpreting literary texts, which brings new dimensions to the field of literary and theoretical studies.

Ecocriticism first became a major theoretical movement in the 1990s. It seeks to relate literature to the natural environment, with the hope that we can take action against climate change and the destruction of natural habitats. Ecocriticism thus has a strong ethical aspect, as the reading of literature should ideally inspire political activism and real change. Literary texts can help us realize how human beings use nature for their own ends.

At the same time, literary texts also teach us to appreciate nature fully. They describe the beauty of

87. P. Mosley, «Introduction», in Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Intelligence of Flowers*, translation and introduction Philip Mosley, State University of New York, 2008, p. xiv-xvi. F. W. Leaky, *Baudelaire and Nature*, Manchester University Press, 1969. K. Donn, «Beyond the Wasteland: An Ecocritical Reading of Modernist Trauma Literature», in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, επιμ. Hubert Zapf, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2016, p. 551-568. Γ. Σεφέρης, *Μέρες Δ'*, Έκδοσις 1977, p. 150 (15 Δεκέμβρη 1941). A. Hume and G. Osborne, «Ecopoetics as Expanded Critical Practice. An Introduction», στο *Ecopoetics: Essays in the Field*, University of Iowa Press, Άιοβα 2018, p.3. S. Iovino S, *Ecocriticism and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. N. Turi, *Ecosistemi Letterari. Luoghi e Paesaggi nella Finzione Novecentesca*, Firenze UP 2016. C. Salabè, *Ecocritica. La letteratura e la crisi del pianeta*, Donzelli Editore, 2013. <https://www.amazon.it/Ecocritica-letteratura-crisi-del-pianeta/dp/886036969X>. <https://www.librinews.it/recensioni/ecologia-letteraria-ecocritica-definizione-testi>. <https://www.laletteraturaenoi.it/index.php/interpretazione-e-noi/748-non-%C3%A8-la-fine-letteratura-come-ecologia-ai-tempi-della-crisi-ambientale.html> (Retrieved 21/01/2021).

our environment, and they give us the desire to immerse ourselves in the natural world. Ecocriticism is the result of this new consciousness: that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful in nature to discourse about, unless we are very careful².

Ecocritics examine human perception of wilderness, and how it has changed throughout history and whether or not current environmental issues are accurately represented or even mentioned in popular culture and modern literature. Other disciplines, such as history, economics, philosophy, ethics, and psychology, are also considered by ecocritics to be possible contributors to ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism is interdisciplinary, calling for collaboration between natural scientists, writers, literary critics, anthropologists, historians, and more. Ecocriticism asks us to examine ourselves and the world around us, critiquing the way that we represent, interact with, and construct the environment.

Taking an ecocritical approach to a topic means asking questions not only of a primary source such as literature, but asking larger questions about cultural attitudes towards and definitions of nature. Generally, ecocriticism can be applied to a primary source by either interpreting a text through an ecocritical lens, with an eye towards nature, or examining an ecocritical trope within the text³.

2. Odysseas Elytis: The cosmological and naturalistic dimension in his poetry

Of the four most prominent figures of the Greek poetic renaissance of the 1930s, three are internationally renowned. Both George Seferis (1900-1971) and Odysseus Elytis (1911-1979) received the Nobel Prize, while the work of Yannis Ritsos (1900-

1990) has been translated into dozens of languages. Nikiforos Vrettakos (1912-1991), though recognized in Greece and widely translated abroad, has remained largely unknown in the English-speaking world.

"I like to begin where winds shake the first branch."

Odysseus Elytis, *Open Papers*

Nobel Prize-winning poet Odysseus Elytis was born in the city of Heraklion, on the island of Crete, on November 2, 1911. Elytis was relatively unknown outside his native Greece when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1979. Although the Swedish Academy of Letters had bestowed the honor upon other previously little-known writers (Eugenio Montale, Vicente Aleixandre, and Harry Martinson) their choice of Elytis came as a surprise nonetheless. The academy declared in its presentation that his poetry "depicts with sensual strength and intellectual clearheadedness, modern man's struggle for freedom and creativeness. Elytis' poetry gives shape to its distinctiveness, which is not only very personal but also represents the traditions of the Greek people.

Thus, Elytis adapted only selected principles of surrealism to his Greek reality. Free association of ideas, a concept he often made use of, allowed him to portray objects in their "reality" but also in their "surreality." This is shown in various poems, as when a young girl is transformed into a fruit, a landscape becomes a human body, and the mood of a morning takes on the form of a tree.

"I have always been preoccupied with finding the analogies between nature and language in the realm of imagination, a realm to which the surrealists also gave much importance, and rightly so," claimed Elytis. "Everything depends on imagination, that is, on the way a poet sees the same phenomenon as you do, yet differently from you."

Certainly, one of the most famous verses of Odysseus Elytis is the following: "If you disintegrate Greece, in the end you will see that you are left with an olive tree, a vineyard and a boat. Which means: with so much more you can rebuild it."

"But you must know that only who fights the darkness within will the day after tomorrow have his own share in the sun."

Odysseus Elytis, *The Axion Esti*

"If a separate personal Paradise exists for each of us, mine must be irreparably planted with trees of words which the wind silvers like poplars, by people who see their confiscated justice given back, and by birds that even in the midst of truth of death insist on singing in Greek and saying eros, eros, eros."

"I can become happy with the simplest things

the most insignificant

even the every day ones of every day.

It is sufficient for me that weeks have Sundays

² <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095740919>. <https://natureofwriting.com/courses/writing-about-literature/lessons/ecocriticism/>. *Ecocriticism: An Essay – Literary Theory and Criticism* (literariness.org). *What is ecocriticism?* – Environmental Humanities Center (ucsb.edu). <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0014.xml>. <https://www.easlce.eu/about-us/what-is-ecocriticism/>. <https://nick-demott.medium.com/a-brief-history-of-ecocriticism-a120614d30fc> (Retrieved 19/01/2021).

³ For more information see C. Bressler, *Literary criticism: an introduction to theory and practice*, (a second printing), March 2011. C. Glotfelty & H. Fromm, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, University of Georgia 1996). C. Timothy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, Cambridge UP. p. 2. ISBN 9780521720908, New York 2011. Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew; Weik von Mossner, Alexa; Malecki, W. P., "Empirical Ecocriticism: Environmental Texts and Empirical Methods". *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. 27 (2): 327–336. doi:10.1093/isle/isaa022. ISSN 1076-0962, 1 May 2020 (Retrieved 27/01/2021).

and I am satisfied that years keep their Christmas
for the very end

that winters have stone houses dipped in snow

that I know how to discover the hidden bitter herbs
in their hiding places.

It is enough for me that four people love me

a lot...

It is enough for me that I love four people

a lot

that I spend my breath on them alone;

that I am not afraid to remember;

that I do not care if they remember me;

that I can still cry

and that I even sing sometimes...

that there is music which fascinates me

and fragrances that enchant me..."

With these words, Odysseas Elytis encourages his compatriots, giving hope, joy, optimism for the future of our country, our personal and spiritual upliftment.

The resolution of Elytis seems, after all, to be an almost moral attitude, it is based on Sappho and Heraclitus and is placed in a different context from that of the bitter pessimism of his time.

Odysseas Elytis was one of the last representatives of the literary generation of the thirties, one of the characteristics of which was the ideological dilemma between the Greek tradition and European modernism. *Prosanatolizmi (Orientations)*, published in 1936, was Elytis's first volume of poetry. Filled with images of light and purity, the work earned for its author the title of the "sun-drinking poet."

With the advent of the World War II, Elytis interrupted his literary activities to fight with the First Army Corps in Albania against the fascists of Benito Mussolini. His impressions of this brutal period of his life were later recorded in the long poem "A Heroic and Elegiac Song of the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign."

Elytis's *axion esti* (1959), came after a period of more than 10 years of silence. It is a poetic cycle of alternating prose and verse patterned after the ancient Byzantine liturgy. As in his other writings, Elytis depicted the Greek reality through an intensely personal tone.

"Your mouth speaks with four hundred roses, beats the trees, overwhelms the entire earth, pours the first shiver into the body."

In an interview for *Books Abroad*, Elytis summarized his life's work:

"I consider poetry a source of innocence full of revolutionary forces. It is my mission to direct these

forces against a world my conscience cannot accept, precisely so as to bring that world through continual metamorphoses more in harmony with my dreams. I am referring here to a contemporary kind of magic whose mechanism leads to the discovery of our true reality".

"Beauty and the Illiterate"

"Often, in the Repose of Evening her soul took a lightness from

the mountains across, although the day was harsh and

tomorrow foreign.

But, when it darkened well and out came the priest's hand over

the little garden of the dead,

She Alone, Standing, with the few domestics of the night—the blowing

rosemary and the murmur of smoke from the kilns— at sea's entry, wakeful..."

.....
"Far from the pestilential city I dreamed of her deserted place

where a tear may have no meaning and the only light be

from the flame that ravishes all that for me exists.

"Shoulder-to-shoulder under what will be, sworn to extreme silence

and the co-ruling of the stars,

"As if I didn't know yet, the illiterate, that there exactly, in extreme

silence are the most repellent thuds

"And that, since it became unbearable inside a man's chest, solitude

dispersed and seeded stars!"

Odysseus Elytis, *Eros, Eros, Eros: Selected & Last Poems*

3.Nikiforos Vrettakos: Singer and apostle of nature, love, peace "

Nikiforos Vrettakos (January 1, 1912 - August 4, 1991) was a Greek poet, novelist, translator, essayist and academic. He is considered one of the greatest Greek poets. His poetry is essentially dialogic.

He practiced various professions but his main occupation was poetry. "In poetry," he writes, "I gave my soul. And without being sure that I am a poet, I know now that I am nothing else. " Vrettakos's poetry is distinguished by an optimistic mood and a deep love for nature, for life and for man. He published many

poetry collections and received many national awards for poetry. He was proclaimed "The Saint of Greek poetry". He also received an Honorary Doctorate in literature from the University of Athens, and was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Poetry.

After the military coup of April 1967, however, he left the country for a seven-year period of self-imposed exile ("The Rock and the Hawk," "Journey to Sicily"). He settled in Switzerland at the Pestalozzi International Children's Village and later lectured at the University of Palermo, where, in failing health, he wrote his deeply personal testament, "The Seven Elegies." With the restoration of civilian rule in 1974 he returned home. He died, much honored, on August 4, 1991. The last two decades of his life were among his most productive.

Nikiforos Vrettakos is undoubtedly one of the noblest forms and at the same time the most rugged voices of our poetry. A very productive poet, he sealed modern Greek literature with his intellectual nature and moral personality in a rare coincidence of work and life.

With consistency and honesty, virtue and militancy, he raised with his lyrical poetic speech, his own Universe and his own form of freedom, especially in the harsh times that ravaged our homeland. Having lived a life rich in trials and struggles, Nikiforos Vrettakos fulfilled his promises, serving to the end Literature, Humanism and the deeper essence of social progress.

With his lyrics, which reflect love and protest, pain and optimism, he expressed the beauty of nature and the sensitivity of the Greek popular soul, the misery of ordinary people but also the social visions arising from his personal life and the adventures of Greece.

With the debt of conscience, - one of the greatest lessons - experiences offered by nature - he found himself almost automatically, and immediately confronted with the disorder of the other side of the world: the social.

But this absolutely opposite pattern, consisting of physical order, social and historical disorder, should not be construed as a bitter conflict. Vrettakos conveys from nature to people messages and examples of harmony, order, power, experiencing himself.

That is why many times, with a reverent confession like a prayer, he reveals to us how he solved the problem of his place in the world: leaning with devotion and trust in nature.

In "Evening Confessions," the slopes of Taygetos are "the first poem / I read as I opened my eyes," and in "The Horizon and the Stone" the sky is "this God-engraved tablet / I've gradually learned to decipher." The poet's "reading" is simultaneously a rewriting; as Vrettakos notes in "Remaking," his task is "To create a world without any part / missing" and "To pour water and grass / from my words." Yet the power of poetic

creation remains rooted in a submission to earth: thus, in "Seminar," he urges flowers to "teach me the light."

It is in this solitude that the world must be mended and made and where, in the soul's darkness, the burden of night must be pulled through "a blind expanse" of snow "that nowhere connects with the world" ("The Sledge"). Snow is again the dominant motif in "An Eagle," where the quest for existential purchase in the world culminates in an image of frozen effigy:

Poised like an eagle, I stand above the world/one claw in the snow, the other in the clouds/immovable, white./My crested head a stone outcrop./My eyes two blizzards.

By nature Vrettakos draws faith. From the unchanging, indomitable, orderly nature he derives the motivation to tell the social truth, in his own tone, - quietly, simply, but: unceasingly, steadily, fearlessly, whether it is sun or bad weather, ruin, fascism, war, occupation, tyranny.

"A smaller world"

"...I seek a shore where I can fence in a patch of the horizon with trees or reeds./ God hopes that at least in the poets' sobs paradise will never cease to exist..."

"The field of words"

"...Like the bee round a wild flower, so am I. I prowl continuously around the word. I thank the long lines of ancestors who moulded the voice./ Cutting it into links, they made meanings. Like smelters they forged it into gold and it became Homer, Aeschylus, the Gospels and other jewels..."

Vrettakos' primary encounter is with the given natural world, endlessly reweven in the psalm of his praise. Though the beauty of this world can sometimes be terrible and though man is forever challenged to find his home in it, it is for Vrettakos source of value. As its beauty is reconstituted in the poet's act of witness so too it appears uniquely reflected in the eyes of the beloved, as in "The Green Garden" where it makes a triad with the sea and the sky, or in "Infusion," where God's "fathomless ineffable light" is received "inexhaustibly" in the beloved's glance.

This image, like many others in Vrettakos, bespeaks the profoundly religious sensibility that informs his work as a whole. It is a sensibility shorn of dogma or salvific expectation, one that borrows freely from the Christian and pagan elements of Greek tradition to articulate a sense of the sacredness of being, the world of miracle.

Thus too he can embrace all of history and human suffering as the "thrice-thousand little son" of earth ("Liturgy Under the Acropolis"), and beg ecstatic immolation, like rebirth from the sun:

And I said: Sun, Lord,/ has your servant pleased you?/ If so, cut me a golden shroud/ from your glory and dress my body/ alive, for I will not die.

Vrettakos believed that Man is called to realize the mysterious primordial origin which is the "infinity", the biological God inside us, deeply, in order to draw all the power he needs and to raise the world symbols of his cosmic cohesion with the universe. So the great request of the poet is the restoration of the centuries-lost unity of man, for his reconnection with the overall rhythm of creation and nature.

Always true and authentic, he left collections of poetry that glorified love and humanity. Finally, the bucolic element and nature with all its powerful elements and extensions also played an important role in his poems⁴.

Furthermore, the Sun for Vrettakos (as, after all, for Elytis) is a symbol of divinity and to him everything returns. In his poetry, the Sun is the "bright ocean eye", an existence that is neither pagan nor Christian, an existence that is far removed from traditional perceptions, more characteristic of the world of nature than the world of dogma. The Sun is the lifeblood, the driving force behind every activity. At the same time it appears incompatible with darkness and death, which are negatively signified as the undoing of light and life. The contradiction lies in the fact that in both practical and mental experience, the sun, its properties and function on nature and man appear - and are signified - as absolutely positive.

4. Conclusions

Odysseas Elytis and Nikiforos Vrettakos, with common experiences and historical backgrounds, these two multi-talented poets and writers left us a new Greece, a homeland that shines in three thousand years of gems, words inspired by God and a Greek miracle.

Elytis' poetic system is erased from the beginning as strongly naturalistic and symbolically heliocentric. Elytis' heliocentric optimism is related to his positive

⁴ For more information see X. Αδαμόπουλος, *Ένας διάλογος για τον άνθρωπο: Δέκα αναφορές στον ψυχισμό και στα οράματα του ποιητή Νικηφόρου Βρεττάκου*, Οι εκδόσεις των φίλων, Athens 1986. N. Βρεττάκος, *Αυτοβιογραφικά*, Φέξης, Athens, 1961. A. N. Γκότοβος, *Για το Νικηφόρο Βρεττάκο έξι μελετήματα*, Σοκόλης, Athens 1995. A. Καραντώνης, «Νικηφόρος Βρεττάκος», *Η ποίησή μας μετά τον Σεφέρη*, Δωδώνη, Athens 1976. p 60-89. N. Βρεττάκος, *Μελέτες για το έργο του*, Διογένης, Athens 1976. <http://www.mixanitouxronou.gr/nikiforos-vrettakos-opamftochos-poiitis-poy-protathike-4-fores-gia-nompeli-diktatoria-metaxa-ekapse-ena-vivlio-toy-kai-to-kketon-diegrapse-gia-ena-allo/>. <http://www.potheg.gr/ProjectDetails.aspx?Id=1171&la>. <https://www.krokeai.com/nikiforos/aboutvrettakos.htm>. <https://24grammata.com/thirty-years-in-the-rain-the-selected-poetry-of-nikiforos-vrettakos/> (Retrieved 02/02/2021).

decision towards love, both in his cosmological and in his purely human version.

Therefore, the light that dominates everywhere in his work is his own form of resistance, his own way of Being:

"The misery of death set me on fire so much that my radiance returned me to the sun, into the perfect composition of stone and ether."

A poet with his work and sensitivity does not only serve poetry and art, he does not only enrich language and thought, he shapes aesthetics by discovering and revealing new emotions.

Obviously now more than ever, we need the great standards of thought and sensitivity that have defined our cultural identity. We need Elytis, because he raised and promoted spiritual values, born of our place, our history, our culture, our language, our natural environment, to integrate them in the world ecumenical heritage.

On the other hand, according to Nikiforos Vrettakos, realizing the Self, the human person unites with the original Word, in a relationship of complete identification and reciprocity. The human person exists fully only after being united with the divine principle; separated from it he is incapable of creating. The restoration of the whole person in the place of the individual is the request expressed by the poet. In other words, Vrettakos also aimed at the "global brotherhood, global unity":

"If you didn't give me poetry, Lord, I would have nothing to live on. I don't throw away a crumb from what you give me".

Nikiforos Vrettakos was a faithful servant of poetry. It oscillates between optimism and pessimism, between joy and disappointment. The intense historical and social events of World War II, the Resistance and the Civil War marked him and played a decisive role in his writing. So, according to our author, man fulfills his duty as a man only through struggle and social participation for the good of the whole world and not for himself. This participation that can lead to the sacrifice of the individual is at the same time a need and redemption.

The struggle for a better tomorrow is a source of redemption and mental health for the individual who finds the meaning of life in participating in and fighting for national independence, natural freedom and social justice⁵.

⁵ See Γ. Αργυροπούλου-Παπαδοπούλου, *Νικηφόρος Βρεττάκος. Ο Υμνητής του Ηλιου και της Αγάπης*, Palmografos.com. Θ. Γκότοβος, *Το μυθικό και ιδεολογικό σύμπαν της ποίησης του Νικηφόρου Βρεττάκου*. Φιλισπότης, Athens 1989. E. Καψωμένος, «Κοσμολογικές διαστάσεις της ποιητικής μυθολογίας», *Πρακτικά διεθνούς συμποσίου για τον Νικηφόρο Βρεττάκο*, Athens 2004. Κ. Φράιερ, *Σύγχρονη ελληνική ποίηση, από τον Καβάφη στο Βρεττάκο*, Athens: Κέδρος, 1982.

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