

LOOK BACK



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50 YEARS AGO IN THESE PAGES

The “Open Book” of Odysseus Elytis

Elytis served on the 1972 Neustadt Prize jury, which chose Gabriel García Márquez for the award. His nominee was the French writer Claude Simon. Elytis won the Nobel Prize in 1979.

“BEYOND THAT POINT, we can say that the place of the sun in the moral world plays the same role that it does in the nature of things. But the poet is a cutting edge of the moral and the real world. The part of the darkness which is neutralized within him, because of his conscience, is added onto a light which repeatedly returns to him in order to render constantly purer his idol, man. If there is a humanistic view about the mission of Art, this, I believe, is the only way it can be understood: like an invisible operation, which is a facsimile of the mechanism we call Justice—and naturally I am not talking about the Justice of the courts but about the other Justice, which is consummated slowly and equally painfully in the teachings of the great magistrates of mankind, in the political struggles for social liberation and in the loftiest poetic accomplishments.”

—“Selections from the ‘Open Book,’” trans.

Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Books Abroad* 49, no. 4 (Autumn 1975): 657

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