

GREEK WRITERS TODAY

AN ANTHOLOGY
VOL. I+II

HELLENIC AUTHORS' SOCIETY

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An Anthology, Vol. I+II

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Biographical Information

HELLENIC AUTHORS' SOCIETY

The Hellenic Authors' Society, a non-profit organization established in 1981, is the principal association of poets, prose writers, essayists, translators, and literary critics in Greece. Literary authors writing in Greek and residing in Cyprus or elsewhere are also among its regular or corresponding members, while distinguished foreign authors are honorary members. Membership depends on peer selection. Candidates must have published a significant number of works of recognized literary value. They must be nominated by seven standing members (one of whom drafts a recommendation) and approved by a majority vote of the annual General Assembly. The Hellenic Authors' Society, also referred to as the Greek Writers Society, currently has over three hundred members. Nobel laureate Odysseas Elytis was its first honorary president.

Members of the Society have a distinguished presence in Greek literature with original work, publications in periodicals and media, reviews and translations as well as an extensive involvement in literary activities in Greece and abroad. There is hardly a cultural event of major significance and Greek interest, whether inside or outside the country, in which members of the Society are not involved in some way. European and international organizations in which the Hellenic Authors' Society is active include the European Writers' Council, the Conseil Européen des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires, the International Parliament of Writers, the International Network for Cultural Diversity, the Three Seas Writers' and Translators' Council, as well as international book fairs in Thessaloniki, Frankfurt, London, Paris, and Madrid.

An overall objective of the Hellenic Authors' Society is to act as a link among its members and defend freedom of expression.

Particular objectives include

- ◆ Safeguarding the creative and professional interests of Greek authors
- ◆ Representing its members in their relations with Greek and other authorities and relevant institutions in general

- ❖ Providing information to its members through publications
- ❖ Promoting the engagement of its members in other institutions in Greece and abroad
- ❖ Sponsoring cultural activities on a local, national, and international level
- ❖ Cooperating with corresponding European and international organizations
- ❖ Promoting Greek literature abroad

PREFACE

With the exception of very few names, contemporary Greek literature still remains largely unknown outside Greece. Though there have been efforts, on the part of both the state and private agencies, to promote it through translations into other languages, the appeal of Greek literature in the international book market is inordinately limited in relation to its quality and dynamics.

For instance, the bulk of first rate Greek poetry is confined to marginal scholarly or bibliophilic publications addressed primarily to academics.

And this does not apply solely to contemporary authors but also to the established poets and prose writers of the 19th century.

The main reasons usually cited to account for this are the difficulty of the Greek language and its nuances, the quality of the translations and the mostly parochial themes that still prevail in current Greek literary production.

The predominant emotive leitmotifs (memories of Asia Minor before the Disaster of 1922, Civil War 1944-49, emigration to industrial centres abroad 1950s-70s, etc.) do not really touch a chord among foreign readers, while the lack of a systematic promotion of and support for the production of translations by major publishing houses abroad causes even greater difficulties in the field.

However, it is evident that a view claiming that contemporary Greek literature, more or less, is merely the management of an ancient literary tradition does not stand. Modern Greek literature can be said to be sailing as an equal amongst the fleet of world literature.

On the other hand, modern Greek is a language into which almost everything has been translated, from drop-out poets to the most popular novelists, from a multitude of languages from all over the world.

The aim of this e-anthology is to acquaint English-speaking audiences with the work of about 200 contemporary authors (poets, prose-writers, essayists),

members of the Hellenic Authors' Society, who have selected their own texts and their translators.

*

In September 2003 the Hellenic Authors' Society issued a volume entitled *Greek Writers Today – An Anthology, Vol I*, edited and introduced by its member, professor and translator David Connolly.

That volume, now out of print, included prose, poems and essays by 117 members translated into English.

This e-edition essentially incorporates the first volume and includes additional material with self-selections by a total of 210 members, presenting the texts of all authors who participated in the first edition (including those since deceased) together with texts by new members. Certain translations of the first edition have been substituted by new ones as supplied by the writers themselves.

The tasks of gathering and editing the texts were undertaken by our members **Klaiti Sotiriadou** and **Themis Liveriadis**, while the writer's resumes were edited by **Miltos Frangopoulos**.

Dimitris KALOKYRIS

President of the Hellenic Authors' Society

PREFACE *to* THE FIRST EDITION

It is quite remarkable that, for the foreign reader, the term 'Greek Literature' or any reference to 'Greek writers' almost invariably calls to mind Homer, Sappho, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and a whole host of other Classical and Hellenistic Greek writers, as if Greece's literary output had somehow come to an end in the ashes of the ancient library of Alexandria and, unlike the mythical phoenix, was never to arise again. The burden of Greek antiquity is such that we are obliged, today, to talk of 'modern Greek literature' and 'modern Greek writers' in order to avoid confusion, and it goes without saying that very few foreign readers would be able to name even one 'modern' Greek writer.

It is also remarkable that neither of the two modern Greek writers who did achieve international recognition in the 20th century were considered in their lifetimes as being representative of modern Greek writing. Constantine Cavafy was born and lived most of his life in Alexandria and made only two short visits to Greece, while Nikos Kazantzakis, who also lived a great deal of his life abroad, received little recognition in Greece until after his international success. And although, today, Cavafy has been appropriated and given pride of place in the canon of 20th-century Greek literature, Kazantzakis is still regarded somewhat suspiciously by contemporary Greek authors because of a folkloric image of modern Greece that his books (at least as these have been exploited by film directors and tourist organisations) have helped to create. And apart from these two rather uncharacteristic cases, even the award of two Nobel prizes to modern Greek poets – to George Seferis (1963) and Odysseus Elytis (1979)– has done little to create any interest abroad in modern Greek writing.

It might be thought that the problem has to do with a lack of (good) translations. Yet, in recent years, a sizeable number of works by contemporary Greek writers have been translated and published in countries such as Germany and France, Spain and Italy, where translated literature represents a fairly large percentage of these countries' annual book production. And even in the English-speaking countries where, regrettably though not surprisingly, translated literature

is only a very small percentage of annual book production, the list of works by Greek authors translated into English is quite astounding. The fact remains, however, that these translated works rarely reach the major bookstores, let alone the reader, and generally fail to make any impact in the foreign book market.

The reasons for this lack of impact are many. In the modern era, the promotion of modern Greek literary works abroad has not been helped by the fact that it is written in what is a language of limited currency or by the fact of Greece's position, literally and metaphorically, on the fringes of Europe. Similarly, most foreign readers still associate Greece with its glorious past or with its image as an 'exotic' tourist destination, factors which create certain expectations among the foreign readership. The international success of books by foreign writers on Greek themes or with Greek settings which meet these reader-expectations provides ample evidence of this. A further aspect of this same question of reader-expectation is that foreign readers exhibit a certain wariness when it comes to modern Greek writers. It is not without significance, for example, that Colin Wilson, writing in 1962, remarked that Kazantzakis' name remained almost totally unknown despite five of his major works having been published in translation in England, and even more in America. He attributes this curious situation to the fact that Kazantzakis wrote in Greek, and that modern readers do not expect to come upon an important [modern] Greek writer. He adds, somewhat ironically, that if Kazantzakis had written in Russian and been called Kazantzovsky, his works would no doubt be as universally known and admired as Sholokhov's. (Of course, Kazantzakis' international recognition was subsequently secured with the success of the film "Zorba the Greek").

It must be remembered, nevertheless, that when Wilson wrote this, foreign authors were often translated and presented abroad as representatives of their literary traditions and cultures, with the aim of highlighting not only the individual author but also the whole of his or her literary tradition. This is particularly evident with authors writing in 'languages of lesser currency' or 'minor' languages, with Greek being no exception. Forty years later, in an era of globalization, international book-markets and publishing conglomerates interested in 'fast-sellers' rather than national literatures, a writer's nationality and literary tradition is of less interest than

whether he or she can write good books and whether these books are commercially viable.

The Greek writers whose works appear in this anthology are not presented as representatives of a national literature. Rather, the anthology has as its aim to provide the writers anthologized with a platform on which they may converse with and stand beside their international counterparts. It is also intended to bring the work of these writers to the attention of foreign publishers and agents and, as such, will be regularly updated and expanded in future volumes. The publication of the anthology was partly dictated by the lack of any platform for the presentation of contemporary Greek writers. There is, for example, no publication in Greece similar to the annual *New Writing* anthologies published in the UK, which would provide examples of the work of contemporary Greek writers, nor indeed any journals similar to *New Books in German*, or *Books from Holland and Flanders*, designed specifically to inform foreign publishers, editors and agents about recently-published literature in Greece. [...]

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By means of this anthology, we, too, wish to show that, despite the unavoidable comparison with its glorious past, despite the lack of currency of its language, despite its fringe position as a political and economic power, contemporary Greece possesses, nevertheless, a notable literary output and significant writers who are engaged in a cultural dialogue with their international counterparts, and who bring their individual contributions to that dialogue on the basis of their own perceptions, sensitivity, experiences and traditions. We consider

that Greek writers deserve a place on the international stage by virtue of being good writers and not simply as representatives of an 'exotic literature'.

And here it should be stressed once again that the present anthology does not claim to be representative of every trend and mode current in Greek writing today. Rather, it is a selection of extracts from works by contemporary Greek authors and, more specifically, of authors who are members of the Hellenic Authors' Society. Of these members, roughly half submitted extracts of their work in English translation. Responsibility for the accuracy and quality of the English texts rests with the translators who undersign them and with the authors who submitted them for inclusion. To avoid any confusion, the authors' names appear in transliteration in keeping with the Society's handbook of members.

The interested reader may consult the Society's website (www.dedalus.gr) where more translations and information on individual authors can be found.

David CONNOLLY [2003]

Kostas AKRIVOS

Pandemonium

a. 'I WISH TO REPORT A CORPSE'

I, Ilias (Liakos) Nousias, son of Athanasios and Stergiani, deputy inspector of police, from the village of Vovoussa, Ioannina, make today, 16 April of the current year, this report, and the reason is that I wish to inform you that a corpse has been found in a monastery here, on Mount Athos.

I will start from what happened first and the main events will follow. From the previous day —yesterday, that is— there was nothing to indicate that such events would occur. The day followed its course quietly, there were the usual visitors and the weather looked as if it would turn rainy. At six in the evening I went down to the ground floor to close the doors and windows and to lock up the jeep. I brought an armful of wood up from downstairs for later. I was on duty alone. My colleague Milto Kirkisidis had the day off and had gone to see his family at Rendina. I often let him have my day off as well; how would I get to Epirus? The wind started to blow early in the day, together with the rain. I make no secret of the fact that I was concerned because some friends of mine were due to come to spend the evening with me. They only just got here before the storm. As soon as he came in, Thodoris said: 'Sod this lousy weather!'. I was expecting the two of them, not the third. He seemed younger than us, around twenty-five, a great gangling fellow. 'Let me introduce you to Father Gerasimov — Russian, I imagine'. I caught Lambros giving a wicked grin. Together with us, he had serious drinking ahead of him. At this point

I must explain that I am writing in such detail about what went before because you asked me to. When I reported the occurrence to you on the telephone this morning, Inspector Karasoulas's orders were: 'Write it all down with every last detail. Everything, got it? Even the things you think aren't important'. So what do you expect me to do? I'll do as I'm told and carry on.

Outside, in the meantime, all hell was let loose. The cold north wind swept down from Athos and was fit to blow the roof off. The rain bucketed down. And it went on like that all night. After a while we forgot about the lightning flashes and the rolls of thunder no longer bothered us. We finished the first bottles of retsina and moved on to some more — and so on. I'd done my bit for the arrangements. I'd baked some potatoes in foil, I'd sliced three tins of spam, I'd boiled some greens, and to finish up, the dish of pickled ham. They enjoyed the whole lot. [...]

b. THE HOLY EVDOKIA, MARTYR MARCELLUS, MARTYR

' ... The angels are changing their wings. They sprout new ones on their shoulders, gleaming white and downy. The old ones are ground into tiny pieces and scattered in the sky. When they fall to earth, they freeze and become the snowflakes which cover the houses, trees, pastures, often even boats. Not many people know where snow comes from ... '

Niphon turned up the high collar of his thick cape. His mother's words were whirling in his brain — what she told him when he was a little boy and looked out of the window of the house at the falling snow. He wanted to smile. So that's the way it was, was it? 'The angels are changing their wings ... '

The angels again. They'd dogged him all his life: from the day he was born until now, at his age. A sudden blast of wind made him close his eyes. He bowed his

head lower; he almost tripped and fell. He should have expected it: 'March that skins you alive, March for log burning'. Apart from the fact that by the old calendar it was still February. 'First of March today, minus thirteen days: 16 February.' And so the cold and the frost were to be expected. And again, not that it was the first time that it had snowed at this time of year. He himself remembered snow even at the beginning of April; the older monks could tell you about Easters when it was white over, many years ago.

He'd better get a move on, increase his pace. Yes, of course, he was in danger of slipping or of losing his way and finding himself in the direction of Pantokratoras. But if he wanted to secure the boat, he shouldn't hesitate for a moment. The thing was he'd been kept late with the refectory; for them to gather up the plates and glasses, to wipe the tables — it had taken him more than half an hour. It couldn't have been done any sooner. Up to now, in so many years on the Mountain he hadn't missed Matins or the Liturgy a single time. Was he going to miss them now for the sake of a fishing-boat?

But yet, this boat was his great weakness. It didn't matter that the HODEGETRA was an ancient hulk, a five-metre boat that Niphon had inherited from his first elder. He'd had to spend a lot of time on caulking and painting. The few hours, to which he was due for recreation, he had spent at the boathouse working on the little craft. And he'd given it the name of Our Lady Guide upon the Way — Hodegetra— so it would bring him safely back from his fishing trips. Niphon remembered as if it was yesterday the joy he had felt on the day he bought the engine. That evening he went out to sea without oars. The sea was like a millpond and the shore was out of sight. He turned off the engine, stood upright, turned towards the west and knelt down. He prayed with the summit of Athos in the

background dyed red by the colours of twilight — an unrepeatable spectacle. Paradise itself.

From that day on and for the years which followed, fishing became his main allotted task. In order to get a good catch, he often thought nothing of going as far as Ierissos or even Thasos. Not that he didn't help in the gardens, the guesthouse, in the choir, or wherever else he was needed. But everybody at Stavroniketa knew that when they saw fish on their plate, it was from Niphon's nets or longline. Is it surprising, then, that they thought a lot of him? This meant in the language of the monks: excused from heavy tasks and free not to attend the vigils and all-night services. Although, of course, Niphon was not reckoned as that kind of monk: first in fishing; first as well in the rites of the faith.

Although he wasn't a heavy man, he suddenly slipped and fell. He felt a pain in his back and a sharp jab in his hip. He got up with difficulty, shaking the snow off himself. A little further to go — a hundred or so metres — and he'd be down there at the boathouse. He'd already seen the HODEGETRA at a distance. The snow had completely covered it. It looked lonely and unprotected in the sea. He would pull it up with the winch which they had on the quay and put it in the protected shed of the boathouse. He would look after it as only he knew how. But if only he'd thought of it before nightfall! Hadn't he realised from the frost that snow would be on the way? Because even his breath was producing tiny crystals.

He pushed open the heavy door with his shoulder and went into the shed. It was here that he put the boat as soon as the weather turned rough. Or when it came on to snow — 'here you are!'. He stopped for a moment to catch his breath. He looked around to see what metal ring he would tie it up to, and then through a crack he looked out at the sea. Snow, endless snow. He suddenly froze. Out of the corner of his eye, in the depths of the shed he saw another boat, a new one. But what on

earth ... ! At Stavroniketa they only had one boat, his own. Who could it be? Probably some fisherman-monk from another monastery who'd been caught by the weather at their boathouse. But in that case, why hadn't he gone up to the monastery to seek help? For them to assist him in his need, to get a plate of food, somewhere warm to spend the night?

Translated by an EKEMEL workshop

Orestes ALEXAKIS

INTRODUCING MYSELF

*My name is Orestes but don't stop
at the word*

*behind the word please try
to see the night of snow
—and hear the wild beast's
vain crying
in the solitude*

AESTHETICS

*With the density of a stone or iron
or the even more dense
death*

DARKNESS

*It's got dark in the room mother
would you like me to light the candle*

on your forehead?

VISITORS

You hear heavy footsteps on the snow?

It's the comrades

returning

from the frozen future

THE WINE PRESSES

I enter restrained into the empty storehouse

Old barrels and

scattered beams

I sense the smell of rotten wood

and sour wine

— and the girl

lifting her head out of a barrel

they've no harvest in the underworld she says

they've no wine presses they don't celebrate

and she looks at me sadly

MARIA, *or* THE MIRACLE OF RAIN

As

*I'm shaking
the almond tree*

a shower of almonds fall

*and you
my, how you shine*

but you aren't annoyed

*you just
look at me*

and you smile

beaming with joy

And I'm

madly shaking

the tree

and my God I'm

afraid of you and

I like you

*and you keep on being immersed in the light
and in
your blinding radiance
you fade away*

*And I
weeping
—laughing
and weeping —
am shaking the tree
and*

wake up

*and there's
no longer light
there's no tree*

*only a grey
cloudy room
and it's raining
raining
raining
and
you aren't*

*no one is anymore
and rough muddy
waters cover me*

*waters
and years*

DETAILS ABOUT HOUSES BECOMING OLD

*No one knows where
houses
are looking*

*Through their open windows
they rotate their look like a searchlight
lighting a world of their own*

*At night
they now close their eyelids
sinking deeply into their existence
they too feel their bodies
they hear
their stony veins swelling*

In their cells revive

water's whispers

wind's voices

Houses are much alike graves

where the dead and the living coexist

their time comes to a standstill

their past and their future

fit in

their wide and firm present

However

they too die one day

darkness amasses in their breasts

the weight breaks their bones

and suddenly

one night

they collapse

with a deep startling sob

WHAT WE NEVER LEARNT ABOUT DOGS

Dogs have their own fate

they worship the face of their own god

they scan their own sky

they have their own way of defining men
They maintain memory
of the flood
the thrill for an unknown homeland
they search the forest under the city
they want to breathe their last in other places
Sometimes in dogs' sleep
mourn the wolves
fear stirs its heavy branches
snake-like hunger hisses its fury
At the far end they hear the old wailing
isolation's woeful call out
they bite the invisible chain
red light strikes them blind

They remember flames and
uprooting

The wild beast wakens in them
and cries

THE OLD WOMAN

The street shines in the rain and I can't
remember where I'm going and the woman

a barren sickly old woman
shuffling along the threshold, with a sad
smile says: *Where are you going?*
No one lives in this town anymore
in every house the lamp bracket trembles
in every house the last person closes up
leaving only a crack
for the adamant ones but now
all the streets are deserted the squares
dead the shipyards in ruin
and our men expatriated long ago
forgotten in old voyages
and the place has no more women
to welcome you and settle you down
and only I remain my good fellow
a barren
a sickly old woman
to press you to my dark bosom

NAVIGATION HOTEL

I never forget that hotel
The smiling hotel manager
one eye always closed
as though having found the solution to the riddle

*The chambermaid with a black tooth
going through the empty corridors
holding always an unlit lamp
as if having something to reveal to us
The room with the twelve beds
—all around suitcases
bundles
crutches
and everywhere the smell of rotten herbs —
The sound of rain coldness
tucking yourself in dirty sheets
the fellow next to you sticking his face
out of the blankets saying:*

Cover yourself well not to catch a cold
At night we'll sail round the castle
there's a freezing draught through the fissures

THE BASSOON

*I open the small glass door
of the dark secondhand shop. An antiquated
bell rings but no one
comes. Ashes of silence and death's stillness
reigned all around*

Is anyone here? *I ask*
and the bell
rings again as the door shuts
I feel I'm entrapped
in an impassive burial place of things
Faded portraits
antique vases and mute clocks
stuffed animals and birds
gazing at me with their dead look
A porcelain dancer smiles
A happy Buddha gives me a friendly nod
I feel something like a bit of fluff touching me
Is anyone here? I ask again
and then
the space is flooded with a dim glow
A blonde girl sticks her head
from behind the rotunda and says
putting a finger to her mouth:

Quiet, lest he should hear you and stop
He is playing the bassoon again, can you hear him?
He is playing the bassoon
down
in the foundations

ADAGIO

In memory of Christos Bravos

*Sad people walk in the streets
with a city guide of their own
They opt for side streets
small
noiseless arcades
bypasses
You won't find them in large parks
but in small church gardens
next to old and blind persons who forget themselves
They gather early
having no friends
they live with hangovers of an earlier day
with a few manuscripts
of youth*

*Many a time
they stare
at the white wall
dissolving in its pure light
they jump over the hedge and run in another garden
they see images
which they remember again
— Some depart*

*for the past
others return deep
to the future —*

*These sad people know who opens
the door, who crosses the threshold
who fabricates shadows on the roof
who signifies
destiny
They know what time
claims them
what space
is getting dangerously smaller*

THE DECEASED

(Father passed away at the age of one hundred. 'His advanced years were the only reason,' the doctor opined. And with a bitter smile he added: 'Would that we live that long.' Friends and acquaintances offered their condolences. What could they wish the dearly departed? 'Live to remember him,' they said...)

*Of course we'll remember you, father.
But what do we stand to gain from it?
The point is what you are doing now
What is left to you of all those*

*—let's not talk about it ... we know what—
that all those years supported your life
like beams pop up a roof
Now nothing more... nothing more, father
And we
the only thing we can do is to remember you
as we look at the empty armchair
the empty place which is presence
not yours anymore of course
but of the gap remaining behind you
which up till now we didn't see and yet
it was always there
in the same place
hidden you'd think in your image
in your look
in your words or your silence
and now all at once it appears before us
impersonal and stony
to remind us
that you were a mere variation*

STORY

*On summer nights
—with or without moon it's immaterial—*

*under the main bell tower
he sits on a step
motionless and silent as usual
till daybreak
For years now he sits there every night
when all his fellow villagers are asleep
Arms against his thighs
and with a blank look — out of time
Speechless and poker-faced like a statue
the sculptor not having given it a breath of life
At dawn he gets up from his seat
and slowly and noiselessly he leaves — like a shadow
He is nowhere to be seen in the day
'He lives in his own world,' friends say,
'but innocuous, very quiet
away from earthly rhythms.'
One night I ventured to go to him
My greeting remained unanswered
He remained silent to whatever I asked him*

*Time passed. The day was breaking
when I ventured again: 'What are you looking for?'
'I strain my ears on the chance of hearing,' he said
and hastened to add: 'But up till now
nothing alas... dead silence...
Only a mysterious hum*

like water flowing in an underground ditch.'

'Why do you persist? *I asked again*

'From a sense of duty,' *he replied, 'an obligation*
which burdens me from my birth

To strain my ears

To strain my ears

Though I hear nothing...'

THE UNEXPECTED WOMAN

But

who are you who surprises

—with such glitter, such music—

the gloomy realm of my silence?

Who intrushes suddenly, a flood of light,

into these peaceful penumbras where

for ages now I maintain

my few anaemic memories?

With such dazzling beauty? With such

a deafening presence?

What does your figure recall to my look?

What heaven? What distant homeland?

And that bright smile of yours

—like sudden lightning against a black background—

what impossibility does it insinuate and what

shores beyond time does it predict?

*On the edge of a cliff you wait for me
and with a gentle smile you motion me
to trust imaginary wings;
to dare trapped flights*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

Mitsos ALEXANDROPOULOS

From

Scenes from the Life of Maximos the Greek

Maximos knew nothing of Czar Ivan's secret decisions. However, he did know that this was to be his own last battle. He earnestly believed that if he could convince the Czar, everything he accomplished and suffered in life would instantly make sense. If not, then all would have been in vain.

'Czar Ivan,' he said, putting heart and soul into his words, 'listen to what I have to say. Hark back to our own Byzantine emperors who perished, not for anything else, but because they were the first to sort out words from deeds. Afterwards all the others followed suit, and we drowned in sin. God will not ask you what you said, but what you did, even if you are not a Christian, even if you have never kissed an icon – this is not the point. Think of King Cyrus. He was not a Christian; he was impious and a heathen; but the Lord exalted him; He induced him to grandeur, because his deeds were virtuous and Christian, and his judgment was just and merciful... And do look at this, Your Majesty!'

Lightly, sprightly, his eyes sparkling with excitement, the monk ushered the Czar before a table on which spread a sheet of paper with a sketch.

'What is this?' inquired the Czar loftily.

The enthusiastic monk began explaining to him.

'Sooner or later I'll be dead. With my savings I commissioned someone to paint an icon that I may offer to the Holy Trinity. It will be my spiritual will, my blessing and my curse!'

Ivan looked silently at the sketch.

'The colours are missing, Your Majesty, that is why the depiction is not very distinguishable,' murmured humbly the hagiographer Anastasios, bending down as though begging forgiveness.

'I can see that,' said Ivan, and indeed his keen eyesight had no trouble making out the shapes. 'Here are sowed fields, there the Lord with his Apostles, and beyond the castle and the city. What does it describe?'

'It is the Lord walking through the crop,' Maximos explained. 'Jesus is talking to his disciples, and they, scattered in the field, cut the corn and eat it because they are hungry. And over here, a little beyond the gate of the castle stands a group of Pharisees, casting sly looks at the Apostles. Because it is the Sabbath. The Pharisees taunt the Lord, saying: 'Today it's the Sabbath; look what your disciples are doing!' And Jesus says unto them: 'Have you not read anywhere what King David did on the Sabbath, when he entered the temple, in the time of the high priest Abiathar, with his starving soldiers? He was hungry, and partook of the offertory bread destined for priests, giving also his hungered men to eat. The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The Son of Man is also the Lord of the Sabbath'...'

The monk spoke with all the warmth of his soul. He spoke as did David and Christ. And along with his words, it was as though his soul expired – there was nothing more he wanted to say, now and forever, Amen. He fell silent, and fixed his gaze on Ivan's face in expectation.

Alas, he could not read the secret thoughts of the almighty Czar. However, his experienced eye could see that neither his words nor the example of Jesus brought the coveted result. The Czar remained poker-faced, as though having heard or seen nothing.

'Czar Ivan,' he continued in a low, deep voice, 'I beseech you, do not go to Beloozero! Your decision will count for much. And if you pay heed to my advice, you will be doing a great service, great beyond imagination. And great shall be your reward and glory. Think: the people in your kingdom live bitter and painful lives, their thoughts are humble. The farmer is unread, just a small ignorant child. Take hold of him, guide him, feed him well to grow up, school him. What can distant pilgrimages and churches with tall belfries teach him? The tip of the cypress also extends skywards; you look up and your mind reels. To what avail? The stature of a cypress tree may dazzle us, but it provides no bread, or a fig, or a grape and an apple to sweeten our poor palate... Czar Ivan, I kneel and kiss your feet; do not go on this pilgrimage!' And indeed that very moment the Czar was thinking of the gravity of his decision. If he did as the monk advised, it would mean that the latter still had influence; that he had lost nothing of his willpower; that it would take long to get rid of his advisers who now ruled the nation. But if he finds the courage to say no to this oldster, whom all regard as a sage and a saint, it will mean that his will has set, has consolidated, has become a bastion, and the time has come for him to rule as a true Czar and Emperor.

He asked the monk:

'What if I undertake the voyage, old man, as I first planned?'

The monk's dark look glowed harshly.

'Aaaah!' he growled shaken, as though seeing horrendous scenes. 'Woe is you! If you do not listen to me, Czar Ivan, you will cause great harm to Orthodoxy. And analogous shall be the pain you will suffer. And you too shall come to great harm... And soon enough, mark my words!'

An enraged Ivan asked:

'What harm are you talking about?'

'I am telling you,' replied the monk dryly, 'what the priest Achia said to the wife of Jerovoam: going where you are, means losing the Czarevitch.'

Ivan grew deathly pale. The monk's words frightened him; but stronger than fear was his willpower.

'Are you threatening me?' he shouted. 'How dare you, you a mortal, say things that only God can decide?'

'He will go,' the dreadful thought flashed into the monk's mind, and he felt his powers failing him. But he plucked up courage and said:

'Do not be angry, Your Majesty; get hold of yourself. Of all the planets the brightest is the sun, and of all the people the brightest is the Czar. Your purpose is to lighten, not to shade. Should anger penetrate your spirit like a black cloud, it obliterates everything. Show yourself to be a true and magnanimous sovereign; do not subordinate virtue to passion!'

'Monk,' Ivan said, gritting his teeth and narrowing his eyes to the extreme, 'you have passion in your heart. It is not out of love that you are telling me all this, but out of malice for what you have gone through. You want us punished!'

The monk pressed both his hands to his heart, as though afraid of losing it. 'In God's name, no! Czar Ivan, what sentiments and what rancour are you mouthing?

For what reason? Here, in the Russian realm, I suffered martyrdom. I have lived here for forty years. My tears were kneaded into your soil... Even the demigod Prometheus, Czar Ivan, when the gods finally deigned to release him, not for a second did he remove from his wrist the iron bracelet with the hard stone from the rock of his martyrdom. Therein were his tears and sighs. Divine Prometheus came to love Mount Caucasus as his second motherland. This is what people are made of.'

His words, dewdrops, steamed and dissipated in Ivan's inflamed mind – he had heard nothing.

'Monk,' he said shaking, 'you seem to know a lot, and you have the gift of the gab. But the only thing I want to hear from you now is this: take back what you said about the Czarevitch!'

Maximos saw fear trembling in Ivan's eyes for what he prophesied. In the Czar's fear glimmered an only hope.

'God help us,' he said, and crossed himself. He approached Ivan and looked him deep in the eyes.

'Czar Ivan, if you do not listen to me, the child is lost!'

Groaning with rage, Ivan stamped his foot and rushed to the door.

Translated by Yannis Goumas

Dimitris ALEXIOU

A Letter with Question Marks

I wonder where you might be?

'In Loutraki,' as I was told?

Shall I believe them?

Did you cut your hair short?

Do you live in a single house?

In a house with pines and cypress trees all around?

In an apartment with a balcony and many flowers?

Are you enclosed in by high walls and bars?

In the morning do you wear the jeans I know?

Do you find deserted beaches?

Are you swimming –still– naked?

How much freedom do you have?

Are you still wearing your black dress?

Are you going out at night?

Do you pick quite bistros?

Are you listening to the 'Old songs with sounds of the future'?

Do you have any children?

Are they blond as you wanted them?

Are you caressing their hair?

Do you teach them how to sing?

Does your room face the sea or the mountain?

Are you enchanted by the Gulf of Corinth?

Do the Geranian Mountains cause you ecstasy?

Are you still in the habit of reading poetry?

Is it cool during the night there?

Do you cover yourself with the linen sheet?

Do you leave the window open?

Do you have... any windows?

Marigo ALEXOPOULOU

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO MENELAUS

*The draught of nepenthe,
the one given to you
by Helen so you'd endure
the closed corridors
and the coming of spring,
is not for sharing out to right and left,
it may not suffice you after all,
and then the truth
will be clearer
than the light after
your term in the darkness.*

PENELOPE'S 'YES' OR 'NO'

*In retrospect historians
interpret the myth according
to the sources.
Though what escapes them
is the difficulty of the decision
(and Penelope's dream).*

CASSANDRA BEFORE

Serpents, women and dreams.

*It's not a tale,
not a movie,
a moment of pain
of almost visionary frenzy.
I'll say nothing of the shadows
or the tone of your voice.
I see you simply guiding,
simply pondering
the color of day and night.*

*I don't know if I wasted time
looking at you,
anyhow you should know,
even without the light of Apollo
there's no change at all*

(in the tone of your voice).

ELECTRA'S ANGER

Electra

*felt great anger inside,
and so, when she tried
to talk to him,
she'd never told him
that it would have been better
if she'd killed him.*

Translated by David Connolly

PARTIAL POETRY

*I remember half of the way,
and then that bitter cold
upward slope.
We are still walking through the dark
but I am not afraid of you.*

*(For silence
has become shadow — aerial photo.)*

A MATTER OF RECOGNITION

*You left me your glasses,
days now looking at them*

and thinking of

your eyes.

Wanting to stroke your hair

and not being able.

The whole house

waited for you.

Only now that

you're back

I can see none of the

signs of recognition.

I couldn't find that garden with the apple trees

the flowers you plucked for me

and your promise to teach me

the fruits of knowledge.

I buried your glasses

in the rear of the house.

I set the table

and waited for you.

We resumed our talk

from where we had left off.

*Nothing had changed
word-wise
hair-wise.
Only now in your eyes
had settled a stranger.*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

SMALL PRAYER

To Yiannis Ritsos

*I asked you to share
bread
and salt with me.
Then on Sundays I wouldn't be afraid
of saltiness anymore.*

*However you sang alone
fuzzy tunes
incoherently.*

*I only heard you saying
the body,
the body
(where the soul inhabits).*

A GOOD THIEF

D: Tears his garments.

N: He is a burglar — in the middle of the night

D: a good thief

N: who knows how to use codes in the dark

D: he walks in the bitter cold

N: he hides his wounds and withdraws without warning.

D: It wasn't me. I've nothing to do with this good luck.

N: He is a good thief. He has never gone bankrupt.

D: But how sacrilegious that he shouldn't admit

N: that he'd rather not open the fridge on the sly.

D: Searching is better carried out without anyone knowing.

N: Not hiding his age.

Holding his head high.

No longer afraid

D: of being caught red-handed.

N: Besides, a burglary could cost him his life.

D: He prefers this. He is a good thief.

MANUSCRIPTS OF AUTUMN

*As Kalamata spreads out
I show you the brightest path.
In the meantime, father is waiting
quiet and thoughtful
to console me.
'The visitor didn't come', he tells me,
'but you should always remember
the wooden ladder I helped you climb
as a child and the perforated autumn light'.*

*I pack my things hastily.
I feel repressed in here.
The walls have memory.
Silence is electrified.*

*The moment I go
I want to kiss you.
Stop crying.
It can't be every time you dream
to be robbed of your flowerbed,
to be deprived of the joy of return.*

*All right, you say to yourself,
after all, I owe nothing to nobody.
I only owe an apology
to memory
and to Ms Polydouri
while browsing the manuscripts of autumn.*

Translated by Roula Konsolaki

THE DANCE THAT DID NOT BECOME ROUTINE

I

*Suppliant at your door
In a foreign land.*

*Miracles are not
For passing winters.*

*Suppliant at your door
Humiliating silence
With no responsibility.*

II

*He is not a refugee
He simply wonders
Like the wind
Homeless.*

*Who will supply
A woman's needs
For solace
And gratification.*

*I write to tell you
Of an olive branch
Which finally won
The kindness
Of a quiet afternoon.*

III

*Having succumbed from the start
To what we call care
I return with no rest
To a deserted house.*

*From early morning
The same music is heard*

The wind whistles

There is no return.

You just come across kindness

By accident,

You too a supplicant

But of your own choice.

Translated by Vally Despotopoulou

THE CITY DUMP

At night,

pace is slow

and again angry people

in turmoil.

We are not the city dump

we're like on a school trip

at the beginning of spring.

We are not the school dump

we are the souls

hovering during holiday.

Harlem, Exarchia

*districts of love,
Athens, Berlin,
cities of light
travelling,
intact travellers
and junk.*

*The students that went mute,
the trees that became cement.
The cities that turned into disposers.
Outside at night the moon tilts rudderless.*

ODE TO SUMMER I

What's the cicadas' note?

ODE TO SUMMER II

*In summer the fruits come
to rescue dry thoughts.
Sandy tastes: from melon
to Madonna lily.
The insects uninvited.
On the beach plenty of room for everybody.*

Cicadas singing.

Unbuttoned shirt.

You'd like to make a snowman right now.

The ferry schedules.

You become a sailor, night visit,

tsipouro without anise.

You declare yourself something between a humanist and a bomber,

both innocent and guilty.

Your country is closed

but the seas won't calm down either.

Translated by Roula Konsolaki

Vassilis AMANATIDIS

THEY ARE BUILDING NEW HONEYCOMBS

*One cannot help noticing
that when bees burn
they become soft like red velvet
brittle as the naked pupils of blue eyes
and then die*

*Before comes the fire
that melts the honeycombs
and the ascension of the beehive's
last dreams.*

*In fact, for a moment, there is
a slight commotion in the air
then they vaporize.*

*And since bees' dreams
smell of flowers,
for a long time after
will the next beehive
search in vain on high
for a garden*

THE PARABLE OF OMISSION

He bought a stone in a box. On it was inscribed: *Stone That Changes Colour When You Look At It*. He rushed home for a better look. On arrival, he looked at the stone fervidly. For hours. It wouldn't change.

He thought I must be blind. Never have I seen what I've seen. The proof is this stone that changes colour when you look at it. Mortified, he placed the stone back in its box and shrunk into sleep.

(Shrunk, because there's no point in staying up when you can't attract something. Not even a simple stone that changes colour when you look at it.)

The stone in its box all night.

But.

While he was sleeping, something oozed at every pore. Dark green foam, a myriad sequels of all colours. Thus stealthily, colonies sprung and spread on his skin, until a chromatic epilepsy overcame him. But, come morn, all was instantly wiped clean.

(You see, they had failed to print the word *your* on the box. It concerned a *Stone That Changes Your Colour When You Look At It*.)

He woke up again in his own colour. He held the stone and looked at it fervidly. For hours.

It wouldn't change.

From *Dormitory. Nine nocturnal Parables*, 1999. Translated by Yannis Goumas

INCIDENT WITH STRAWBERRIES THEREAFTER

'It's cold!',¹

he said

– he died²

Shame because for a long time

I've been saving him

fresh strawberries...

CHRISTMAS SONG *or* FREE TRANSLATION IN DEPTH OF TIME

Christmas nine years old *Jingle bells, jingle bells* Under the christmas tree *Jingle al the way* I'm reading 'Professor Brainstorm's mad inventions' *Oh what fun it is to ride* Bugs Bunny on TV *Jingle bells, jingle bells* From the room next door discernible sounds of my mother (41 years old) my father (51) my brother (14) And me *Oh what fun it is to ride* gathering warmth *In a one-horse open sleigh* since outside the window the night was quiet then, and snow was always falling

even when it wasn't³

¹ It was hot actually, summertime.

² And yet he comes, we talk again. But he's dead, how is it possible? As if he didn't recognise me, 'I've always loved strawberries' he says. I say 'should I bring you some?' he says 'yes, thank you, kind sir'. I pretend I didn't hear, 'here you go, nice and red, do you want sugar?' I say, 'should I put them in the fridge to make them crusty?'; he says: 'I prefer them fresh, fresh and warm'; I say 'do as you please, suit yourself', he tries, but: 'I can't' he says, 'what a shame, I can't eat strawberries, my mouth won't open anymore... Maybe I won't after all, kind sir, I won't take any, thank you'. I say 'What's with all this polite nonsense now that you're dead? I don't care about the strawberries. Don't do it again, please.'

THE LIFE OF A FLOWER SHOT ON TAPE *or* MULTIPLE RESURRECTION

... No. Thing.) Until:

It opens.

Slightly.

More.

Slightly more

even more, until:

Flow, er

until: It closes.

Slightly.

More.

And even more slightly mo

slightly more, until:

³ TRANSLATION OF THIS FORGOTTEN LANGUAGE: Thirty four years old, Christmas, under the christmas tree, *Jingle bells, jingle bells*, 'Mum, I've noticed recently that you're out of breath when you climb the stairs...', 'No', she says, 'I'm fine', 'Ok', I say, 'I'm not saying you're not fine, it's just that, well, the mother of a friend, you know, Evi, she was climbing the stairs with the shopping last year and she was out of breath, and her husband dragged her willy nilly to the doctor– just like you, she didn't want to go at all – and he told her you have a blocked valve, *Jingle bells*, you should be operated in spring, but in the meantime please do not let anything worry you, it is dangerous to let things worry you, it's a good thing you came, *jingle all the way*, you could have died unexpectedly, your heart could have failed you just like that. Do you understand, mum? That's why I'm saying that maybe we should go to the doctor, just in case it's blocked and it needs replacing, I hope I didn't upset you'. 'I'm sixty six', she answers, 'what difference does it make? Will you allow me not to accept your offer? My sweet boy, I don't mind dying unexpected, I'm tired of always expecting; don't you worry, that's all I care for, but come, *jingle bells*, come to the window, look how lovely it is outside – with or without snow, look what a *silent night*, how wonderfully quiet, how quiet is the night'

(No. Thing...⁴

From 4-D: *Four-dimensional Poems*, 2006. Translated by Sakis Kyratzis

THE CANYON *or* THE INVENTION OF SADNESS

Forever in the canyon.

Where not a house nowhere.

The one thing always all over: snow.

Soft, very, warm for us, as far as

the end of the canyon. Not from above.

Never from heaven the flakes – not one, none.

Then whence the snow: from deep below

within the earth. Like an unwilting

sprout from a root of white:

snow swelling underground.

And upon it

us:

(Constant.) ((Perpetual.))

((Recurrent.)) (((Contented.)))

Because in our possession a language devoid of verbs.

⁴I touch your hand, I guide it to the remote control, and together we press rewind. (On the screen: The rose: In resurrection fast backward.) We press play, fast forward. (On the screen: The rose: Lives fast and then it dies.) I won't let go of your hand, we press immediately rewind. You say: 'Will we never give up on this resurrection?' I won't let go of your hand, we press play – fast forward – forever rewind. I say: 'No, my love, never. Never on this resurrection...'

Because utterly unneeded.

Because never an action between us ever.

Since between us nothing with nothing for nothing to nothing.

Thankfully.

((Hence, rather unperturbed.)) ((And unsuspecting.))

(And untouchable.)

Like so: Upon the snow growing

suddenly a single sole shape.

Wandering, footprints phosphorescent and then evanescent.

Oh, beautiful sudden red light!

((Overturn of figureshape)) – ((immersion in snow)) –

(disappearance) – appearance of another.

Another similar shape wandering and growing alone.

Appearance of others similar simultaneous and others yet.

Oh, sudden beautiful red lights!

((Overturning of figureshapes)) – ((immersion in snow)) –

((disappearance of some)) – (others remaining) –

appearance of new similar and

others yet.

Since here no night never.

Only a time, for each one different,

of sleeping. And then a time, for each one different,

of waking.

Because around us and before us no adversary.

Thankfully.

Since on the canyon only us.

The constant who constantly,

old and new present, with

even pace to and from.

And thus always around us a never like always,

where cold no more.

Blessed, oh bles

sed life

From 7: *Poetry for video games*, Nefeli 2011. Translated by Sakis Kyratzis

THE ADDITION AND THE SUBTRACTION

(It)

(It is)

(It is wonderful)

(It is wonderful having)

(It is wonderful having something)

(It is wonderful having something here to)

(It is wonderful having something here to touch)withthehandyouhave

: thus the creature builds, like a wordless prayer, its internal addition

(It is wonderful having something here to touch)withthehandyouhave

(It is wonderful having something here to)

(It is wonderful having something)

(It is wonderful having)

(It is wonderful)

(It is)

(It)

: thus the creature builds, like a wordless prayer, its internal subtraction.

PROSPERO

No matter if colours are missing now

He's lying face down on me dead methinks

His lips at war like no other

They refuse to rest upon each other

Are they afraid their meeting might shatter the self

that surrounds them?

His two lips are resting upon me however

Around us the windless weather is incapable of even lifting a feather

The sky above us immovable

We often glimpse through fortuitous corridors at the outside sea

It exists yes with fortress waves

But we are a compound

Gaping over the anthill

Relentless stares in millions march and engulf us

The anthill is mercilessly inhabited

It belongs to us like everything on the island it is ours

Hence if we so wish we can be as blind as the sea

In this universe we have defined we are its eyesight

From 7: *Poetry for video games*, 2011. Translated by Sakis Kyratzis

Katerina ANGHELAKEI - ROOKE

Tristiu

[PROLOGUE]

*Poems fail when loves fail.
Don't listen to what they tell you;
A poem needs love's warmth
to endure time's coldness.*

[1]

*A place I have invented
to go when I am deeply sad
sad right down to the unmelting ice inside me,
the crystals of tears
until regrets my little white panther cubs
start biting and their bites how they smart!
Tristiu I call the place I have invented
to go when I am deeply sad
a state continuously intensified
since all the grand landscapes of the end
begin to smell stagnant water
and rotten fruit.*

[2]

*In Tristiu you arrive without a sigh
only with a slight pressure inside
recalling love standing hesitant
at the threshold of the house.
Here you'll find poets living in 'sacra-cy'
lofty ones, who with the shake of the head
signify: 'no... no... it's a mistake'
or even: 'what a pity, now it's too late',
while a beggar on the corner keeps mumbling:*

*'The good thing about desire
is that when it disappears
the value of its object disappears as well'.*

*Here all the failures of youth
Have become silent public squares
The mutilated passions, dark parks
And the last pitiful love exchanges
Underfed dogs wandering in the alleys.
Worse than old age
This place is inhabited by wasted youth*

[3]

*In Tristiu I am constantly in tears
from the moment you showed me
the value of sorrow...
No, it is not the negative of fertility
but the positive of absence...
You said and your profile disturbed me
as if it were carved in the hardest of rocks,
your eyes made of sulphur
alarmed, alarmed me...
Let's weep, then, and let's call it joy
joy because we are still here, suffering.
At daybreak we will enter another harbour
like entering a new poem
and in the frost I will hold
the last line of an untold love story.
The voice, the height, the line of the neck,
they are all eternal repetitions of the insatiable fear.
Looking at you I discovered
the hinterland of feeling.*

[4]

*The most beautiful man in Tristiu
found a black butterfly dead, in his streets.
He was naked and slightly sweating*

*he shone but not as much as it did
with all the light coming out of death.*

*The winged symbol of superficiality, the butterfly
motionless, dressed the colours of the night
was found lying there as if, immediately after an orgy,
death had got up and left.
Or if it was resting before starting its difficult
journey from blackness to perfection.*

[5]

*The youngest woman in Tristiu is me
who looks and looks and can't believe
that so much dust has accumulated
on the path of joy.*

*I tell myself that there must be some mistake
and I never followed the road of Silk,
I never touched the hero of my poem on the chest.
His heart only I imagined standing
like a Bank that we see and think
'How many things are locked in here, how many riches'.*

[6]

*What you lose stays with you forever
and Tristiu is a place that I have fabricated
there to be one with everything that I have lost
when the unsufferable dusk comes
or the mute sunrise
and it is again as if you were waiting for the school
bell to ring, the lesson to start again
yet another exercise on an unknown theme.
You look down, the school yard's cement
or pebbles, you brush away a few crumbs from your school uniform
and you enter the classroom;
you enter the monotony of tasteless time
the vagueness of existence
which, I know, a bit altered
one finds again toward the end.*

[7]

*Religion in Tristiu
is a Headless Meaning.
Her statue stands quietly
next to those of her sisters:
Virtue, the most beautiful and Wisdom
with the best proportions.
But Meaning is adored without a head
and when the one I would love if ...*

*comes to worship her, he wears pink shirt
and is aroused
because everything means something to him,
it's opposite too.
Here love and death became one body
and the grass growing
in between the open legs of the lying statues
makes them resemble living souls
who grieve in the green and shipwreck
in foreign eyes and in love suffer.
In Tristiu love-death is worshipped
as a unique sense, headless because without hope.*

[EXODUS]

*Leaving Tristiu behind
I realized that I had lost my sense of direction
towards something that would be real small
and real wrist with beautiful pulsating life.
I turned once round myself
and while I was heading for the boat
I found myself in front of a closed shop.
Behind the black –from dust– windowpane
a tragic jacket was standing: no one*

would ever seek warmth in it, ever.

The sun had set

and the streets all together

were howling 'impasse'.

I left. In between my palms

as if a frozen bird's

the last breath

I was protecting the last handshake.

[END]

Translated by the author

Andreas ANTONIADES

Playing Away

First Episode 'LYDIA'. *Where the opening of a Greek movie in Grevena changes the life of a 'slow striptease' dancer...*

Lydia was not even called Lydia when she was born in a small village near Skopje thirty years ago, neither when she was a student at the elementary, high school or lyceum, not even when she graduated from the Belgrade Academy of Gymnastics with honours written on her diploma and pain in her heart for parting ways with her first great love, the gymnastics professor, a very handsome Croatian.

She took the name Lydia five years ago as she crossed the borders of her country into Greece with a fake passport she had paid for dearly to a manager of artistic ensembles, since that was the only way she could leave her war-stricken country. As a dancer !

In the first two years she worked at 'Fever' just outside Kastoria, a chaotic joint with a capacity for a thousand, featuring an elevated dancing floor in the middle surrounded by tables, whilst on either side of the dancing floor huge counters accommodated those men who did not want to sit at a table. From midnight to seven in the morning, Lydia and an additional twenty girls, mostly imported ones, danced in turns, either solo or in groups. The only requirement was that she undressed slowly to the rhythm. It didn't take her long to learn, being ever so diligent, did so with dexterity and grace, so much so that she became one of first names in the joint.

She left when early one night, a bit before midnight. as the girls were getting ready for the show and the waiters were settling the finishing details, an explosion was heard in the main hall and the joint was wrapped in flames. Within hours, the 'Fever' was gone, leaving behind it a multitude of victims. Ten injured, five dead.

Some talked of a gas leak accident, others of a settlement of disputes, and others still of an act of vengeance on behalf of the 'protector' on account of a belated deliver of his due share.

Whatever the case may be, Lydia. thankfully untouched by the fire, was left without a job not to mention without a boss, since the manager was among the dead.

The opportunity presented itself for her to disappear. Amidst the panic and turmoil of the first day, she picked up her stuff and went, contemplating either Athens or Thessaloniki.

However, the truck driver who picked her up off the highway was heading to Grevena. So she made a stop in the city for o couple of days and stayed there for three years in a row. With the broken Greek she spoke at the time, she told him that she'd love to work at a gym-whereupon she showed him her diploma — or a dance hall, or maybe a bar. The truck driver responded that two cousins of his were managing bars, the one in Makrochori, just outside Veroia, and the other in Grevena, 'down the road from the pizzeria we are now'.

And because it was the early afternoon and at that time of day, at 2:00-2:30pm, the cousin would always clean up the joint, they passed by and found him doing the dishes.

The truck driver and his cousin exchanged a few words and then the latter suggested that Lydia work for a trial period of one week, as a girl providing company to patrons, nothing more, 'because this is a serious joint, no tricks going on here or anything weird like that'.

And to Lydia stayed. The truck driver, who drove the same route once a week and spent the night in Grevena, fell in love with her; so did she. And so the cousin let anyone interested know that Lydia was available for 'nothing more than a drink and some chitchat'.

Many men go to disreputable joints not to get laid but to pour out their hearts, half-drunk, over small talk. Otherwise put, they are looking for an after midnight shrink. Lydia was more than happy to accommodate and in doing so would learn stories, either real or imaginary, from the patrons, whilst waiting for her weekly appointment with the truck driver.

In the meantime she left the cheap hotel and rented a small apartment near the central square by the City Hall, at a six-minute distance from the bar she worked at, taught herself how to speak and write Greek, nothing fancy, just the basic stuff, but above all she 'acquired neighbors'. The cheese seller, the greengrocer, the guys at the pizzeria where she usually had lunch, the landlady who would invite her for a coffee in the afternoons, and not only when rent was due, the shopkeeper who would fill in the lotto coupon she played in the hope of winning and setting up a health studio – that was her neighborhood, the people keeping her company. This is how she passed her week until the truck driver would arrive on her day off – granted by the cousin without further negotiations.

Every Thursday she would put on a respected, no-cleavage, on bare-back dress, and they would go to a fine meat tavern and then to a bouzouki joint just outside the town, where they would stay until late. She admired her truck driver, especially when he would grow merry and dance the zeimbekiko as a prelude to the love he would make to her at dawn, only minutes before she would bid him farewell with her stomach tied up in a knot.

Sometimes he would appear unexpectedly, especially during the peak period of peaches, seeing that his company promoted the fruit of Imathia country to Europe and the itineraries became more frequent. He would bring her a crate or two of peaches, but he'd never stay the night. In fact, he once confessed he did it in order to check up on her, to make sure she was faithful. How elated she was! – yet didn't say a word to him. For months on a row she would recall his image in her mind, his sneaky eyes mellowing up upon confessing his childish experiment! In the summer, they would go to Platamonas for a week and enjoy happy moments by the sea, as if extracted from an American movie.

That afternoon, when the truck driver's cousin arrived to find her in the kitchen having coffee with her landlady, she immediately knew something had gone amiss. After all, why come here, since he would soon see her at the bar?

She left her landlady and walked into her bedroom-cum-living room with the cousin. Without so much as sitting down, even before she had time to offer him coffee, he told her in brief that the truck would not come next Thursday, or any Thursday for that matter; see, he had left the order to marry the daughter of his manager, the peach-owner in Veroia. Before he left, the cousin added that she could take the night off, relax, and 'come back tomorrow, half an hour early, and we'll talk things out'.

She cried. Oh, how she cried! She cried as much as she did when she left her village outside Skopje, leaving behind her parents and friends lost in the war.

She spent the whole night awake, zapping through the channels without stopping to watch a film or anything else.

When day broke she leaned on her pillows worn out, but first she pressed on the remote control to switch the TV off.

Without beating around the bush, the cousin told her that if she wanted to go on working at the joint she would have to get herself a protector, which as Lydia now discovered, was what her truck driver implicitly was, or do tricks with clients to cover up her expenses. Seeing as he did that she was at a loss for words, he told her to take her time before getting back to him.

‘No worries, just let me know tomorrow. What are you looking at? Have you lost your voice? You’re a beautiful girl, you look just like Onattopp girl in James Bond, did you know that? Only you’re not evil like her! You’ll get through. Get up, go for a ride, take the night off. Come back tomorrow, I’m here for you’.

Excerpt from the novel. *Translated by Despina Pirketti.*

Eugenios ARANITSIS

On Infants Who Depart this Life

Though barely twelve years old, I'd already realised that the key is the first thing that enters the house and that, for the majority, time was something distinct from the body, a wave of anxiety in the void, a sea shoot in the bareness of hearing. The world was tilting towards the shores of uncertainty. In order to support myself, to acquaint myself with danger so it wouldn't assail me, I had acquired certain fixed ideas, for nothing is so familiar as the fear of change. To these ideas was added the image of a girl; one the same age as me, the daughter of Greek and English parents who had come to Corfu on account of her father having been transferred to the Consulate. It's now impossible for me to bring her face up on memory's screen. All I can present is an outline.

The young girl was called Cynthia, a name somewhat arbitrarily chosen, as her father explained to mine, in an attempt to render in English something of the wonderful cadence of the Greek name, Chryssanthi, handed down by a grandmother from Patras (with equally wonderful genes, no doubt!). Such echoes of poetic naming are abundant today, but at that time Chryssanthi sparkled among the countless Marias and Sophias like the Crystal's crown. A name bearing flowers tainted with gold; the Moon favours the harvest.

Inevitably, that name gave birth to a thunderbolt that passed right through me; they say that either you fall in love in the first three minutes or not at all. From there derive all the later senses of dijü-vu, those scintillating yet terrifying pleasures of recollection's specialist. When I say 'I fell in love with her', perhaps I simply mean

that, outside school, I saw her very rarely, a faint aquarelle on the pavement opposite, a highlight of melanin, from her hair, at the cinema, five rows in front of where I was sitting. On an excursion to the hill of the Resurrection, lying as she was on the grass in an aura of paradoxical naturalness, she let her blouse run up a couple of inches and her lovely navel gazed at the sky like an eye with no eyelid; the sky had left a little spittle there, a drop of Michelangelo's blue.

Today, I'm aware that men love such women because they love their sorrow, their grave melancholy, the impression of a kind of delicate self-denial. Then, of course, I had no idea. Love is precisely this terrible unawareness. However funny it seems in retrospect, it was because of the fairy-like gaze of that Chryssanthi (or because of the fascination of her name) that I'd ceased to eat and that I slept sitting up, while my friends grew fewer day by day, just like fair-haired people the further you go south. I dreamt while awake that I was being chased by death in the form of something at last heroically missing, like a saddle galloping without the horse. For the sound of the galloping is the time measured by the heart.

On Good Friday, at around eight, just before the start of the procession with Christ's bier, the pupils of three schools, together with a group of scouts and the band, gathered, as we'd been instructed, outside St. Eleftherios' church, beside the harbour. The girls waited separately from the boys, as was only proper in those times, the two sexes forming the poles of a voltaic pile. The girls carried circular baskets full of those blossoms that the Corfiots call 'lilacs', large mauve clusters with a seductive fragrance – a precise allusion to the female principle of things, when the madness increases, you want to embrace them, so beautiful they are with their formal costumes, so unapproachable and at the same time so vulnerable. For if fragrance corrupts, then absolute fragrance corrupts absolutely.

Chryssanthi (or Cynthia; or Kynthia; who knows!) had her hair tied back in a ponytail and avoided looking at me. Perhaps that's why, in the growing dusk, the crowds were gradually sinking into the invisible hemisphere of things, into the depths of a still silence, and in the fade-out I could see only my tiny star lighting the dusk, twinkling, exchanging a few words with her friends, growing impatient, bored – or feigning all this on my account, for me, the astronomer.

Someone was late in coming –the mayor? the prefect?– and the delay encouraged the slackening of the groupings; the spring fervour in the air whispered to us: 'Dare me!', while the more impatient musicians blew low notes on their wind instruments, till she and I, blushing excessively I think, found ourselves in the lane nearby, face to face. Out of her hope that no one was watching us, she began to excrete something looking like amber, and then we kissed. I don't recall it, but I know. Suddenly, the reality around us had become unbearably dense; you could touch the fragrances with your fingers. Which means that we had arrived at the zero point of human history, where all measurements come to a halt before they begin. We were radiating. At that moment we must have been visible from the Andromeda constellation.

It was then that I realised that, contrary to what the teachers inferred, not only did the present exist, but, in my view, only the present existed. A kiss, though momentary, lasts for eternity, with a sweet vibrato and quivering dialogues that are unheard. C. (it goes without saying) had closed her eyes, while her two large eyelids said to me: 'We're hunters of bee-eaters; regard Our plunder...'. And her nose, charming and investigative, asked: 'Does the bed of Christ's funeral bier have one pillow or two?' I think that it's from the taste of that girl on my lips that I acquired the gift of predicting the future. I'm sorry if my predictions are disagreeable, if my texts are sown with funeral steles.

Then comes amnesia, orphanhood, harshness seen from a distance. Reconciliation with sleep. The inopportune character of the comic element. I'm not recording this recollection in a mood of nostalgia, but out of a wish to say that, today, thirty-five years later, I find it difficult to decide whether this episode was simply the activation of some glands that literature hastens to idealize or if it was, in fact, the closing of the circle that had opened with Mary Magdalen's convulsion. None of you know either. That's what unites us.

Translated by David Connolly

Giorgos ARISTINOS

Descent

And they raged and they frothed about the corpse, it was the most murderous of battles and the arrows fell as rain from the embrasures and the buckets and cauldrons of boiling water and hot oil which spattered and poured together with insults and curses, base and vulgar, and look how the sun was tumbling down and all about was shaded purple, dark, omen which meant that sometime soon they had to cease, because the moon was on the wane, they said and how could they see only from the light of the torches and from the explosive bursts of gun-fire, but the corpse had to be shielded, the body which was lying there in the dust, in the ploughed and furrowed sod, was sacred, as if it summarized history and all the myths of generations, as if it chaptered the whole of their world and it was all they had which they recognized as a human which held them together and kept them standing, because, he, or better yet, the splendour of that rigid body marbled to the repose of the Unknown Soldier, or stiffened by tetanus, was the vestuary of passion, of memory, or labour and childbirth and of countless deaths and they thought that if it were snatched and desecrated by the adversary, those damned vultures of prey, who came from afar, uninvited, to elbow them out, to push them out into the sea, to uproot them from their paternal soils, they would surely die an instant death, as if darkness were to fall of a sudden and it was this sheer stubbornness of will which made them defend it from the tribulation of dismemberment and this the reason which Ferdinand paced to and from astride his Mavro, gripping hard on the horse's' reins and sinking his spurs into its leathery hide, with his dagger sweeping circles

over the enemy's head and sharpening the blade of his sword across their skulls, indifferent to the spill of blood which flowed broad as the river and he heard the roar of his own screams which stretched his jaw to breaking, 'the moon will take you down you viziers and seraskiers, you fucking beggars and you Mehmet Pasha Hadzipetleri, I myself will pluck you from under the shining sun and I'll celebrate this day that you cast us to the gutter for no damn reason', and the horses were in frenzy, because the moon was bruised and bloody and they too ached and bled while the dust rose thick and every now and then bodies fell, at times, slow, as if in slow motion, because whilst in mid-gallop they fell with such impact against the defence wires that tumbled over the horses' flanks like spastics, or that's how they seemed to someone watching from a distance and other times they fell like flops of dung, bit by a bullet which took them by surprise leaving them indignant, for they never had the time to see, to even suspect, the approach of death and they expired like farts, their souls passed from their bodies as wind and then the panic accrued, 'let's get out from here, let's get out from there', a multitude of voices were heard to cry, but how could they hurdle the sacks of bodies piling slowly into mounds and the hooves of the horses slipped but still they persisted because the violent mania to live smoked them and enraged them to such eye-popping, combustion and thus Ferdinand became all the more obdurate and it was then that he found himself before Metzo Arapi, that brutal and elusive gut-ripper and with one artful and tremendous gesture he reaped his head, which rolled and all the bile of hatred was digested by the (infinity) of death and it was a glorious but temporary victory because the opponents retreated with a strange and synchronized drone, only to re-group and coil together, whilst the most fanatic of our men dismounted and nailed the astonished head to a pole and brandished it about and it was the midnight hour and his men mourned his loss in muted sobs and then someone improvised a poetic

dirge, 'Oh you were well safe Metz in the mountains, safe too in Akkrata, whatever did you want in coming down to the valley of St. George?' and the atmosphere became all the more suffocating because whilst the landscape began to clear, we dismounted and with voracity we began the loot: crucifixes, icons, tobacco-cases, gold-plated chains, identity bracelets, lighters, talismans and charms, boots, gold teeth which we gouged out with the knife. Devil what a lust for death this was, and many more ornaments and diamond studs which adorned the leather shirts and the ephemeral husk of the soul and all this took place in haste and bedlam, in a malignant bog of murky water, but Ferdinand will never forget how came it be that he was there, that ultimately it wasn't merely his claim to defend the body, but rather a subterranean and inexplicable furore, an unbridled fanaticism which pushed him to the brink, to those twilight zones, there where the innermost part of the soul germinated and thrived, that part which was pulverized by the millstones of logic, but which never perished, on the contrary, it found the turf for its coarseness to bloom, which was why, with every blow, where metal crossed metal and sparked, it ignited within him the vertigo one feels before the abyss, an abyss which must be filled and it filled only when his blood reeked of decay and when evil glimmered before him like a rancid eternity, this was the will which tugged him to the grime and drew him to whatever the putrid breathe, it was then that Dimitri, who followed at his heels, was heard to wail: that the moon came up dark and bleeding, whilst the clouds which galloped wild through the smoke gave the place a pale and yellow hue of soot and not even the stars, not the Great Bear, nor Venus were visible, which was why the battle would be aimless, shouted Dimitri and they should retreat to closer ranges, 'why shed so much futile blood?' he wondered but Ferdinand driven, as if a recollection of the aimless and the futile had grafted itself to the skin of his soul.

Translated by Melia Tatakis

Kostas ARKOUDEAS

Alexander in Babylon

Alexander lay staring at the ceiling in the palace of Babylon. His eyes following the flowing lines of carved men and beasts. Babylon... mysterious, seductive, insidious, deadly. Why hadn't he destroyed it when he could? Not Persepolis, Babylon. Here where Hephaestion was buried. Here, where he himself was dying.

The fever had raged for twelve days. His strength had dripped away till little was left. The hot baths had helped as little as the sacrifices to the gods. He was burning slowly, tortuously, like the trunk of an olive tree. And the fire would not go out. The day before yesterday, he had thrown himself into the waters of the Euphrates. In search of cooling? In search of death? He could not recall. Though he remembered Roxane jumping in after him and pulling him to safety. The cries, the tears, her fingers squeezing roughly, begging him to live.

The doctors had lost all hope. He was in the hands of the gods now, they said. They left it to them to slowly put out the fire, to soften the profound, unappeasable pain in his lungs.

His lips twitched.

Had the gods abandoned him?

Babylon, Babylon... The Chaldean soothsayers had warned him not to enter the city through its western gates. The omens were bad, said Marduk, their god. And he had listened. He had tried to enter from the east, but the swamps had stood in his way. In the end, he had entered Babylon through the western gates. He had done so because there was nothing else he could do, because the gods would protect

him at the end. Isn't that what they'd always done? Hadn't they saved him from the terrible chill he caught in the freezing waters of Kydnos? Hadn't everyone considered him as good as dead then? Hadn't he recovered in no time at all? In fact, hadn't his most deadly enemy, Memnon of Rhodes, fallen ill and died instead. Hadn't they made him a gift of his beautiful widow, Barsine, after the battle of Issus?

But he had entered a different Babylon. Dark, half-empty. It was raining. The great Processional Way was deserted. Just a few dogs, two or three beggars, and dead crows...strange dead crows their horses' hooves had mashed to a pulp. The city had seemed sombre. There was nothing to remind him of the Babylon he knew. Where was that Babylon? Then, the inhabitants of Babylon had welcomed him as a liberator. One sunny day, he had driven down the Processional Way in Darius' golden chariot. And entered the legendary palace of Babylon as its conqueror; he, the young and victorious commander. That same evening, he had slipped away from everyone and found a dimly-lit balcony in Darius' palace. There, alone, he had let Babylon conquer him in her turn. Bustling, intoxicating, wanton. There were torches burning everywhere. The city was celebrating, the people rejoicing in his name.

That was how he wanted to remember Babylon.

Now the air in the palace was moist and stuffy. Some lunatic got past the guards, no one knew how. He appeared out of nowhere and sat on the throne, donning the mitre and the royal mantle. Another bad sign. The madman was punished, but how could the omen be washed away? In the meantime, everyone waiting, paralyzed. Ambassadors from every corner of the world, emissaries, diplomats, satraps, mobbing the guards, seeking an interview with the king. And he could not receive them.

'Alexander.'

It was a struggle to open his eyes.

'Alexander...'

It was Roxane, bending over him. She laid her cool hand on his forehead. Roxane was expecting a child at last. He would not live to see it. He should have heeded Parmenion's words: marry before the campaign and leave an heir behind him in Macedonia in Olympia's care. But then, aged just twenty, he had considered political expedience superfluous.

He wanted to speak to Roxane.

He couldn't. His voice was gone.

He hid his face among the pillows.

Mine was not a sudden illness. I was the only one who knew. Aristotle loved medicine and so did we. That's how I knew... Some whispered that I'd been poisoned. How wrong they were! It was the arrow on the acropolis at Malla that spelled my end. That arrow had been made with hate. Calanus had pulled me back from Hades, but not for long. I never recovered fully, I never returned to how I was before. The wound in my lung never closed, because it could not close. It was like a tiger that returned again and again to haunt my dreams. I was often in pain, often short of breath. From time to time, I would secretly spit blood. I said nothing to the doctors. They would have prescribed a special diet and a great deal of rest, but I was running out of time. Since I was a child, I'd somehow knew I would not live long. And I had so much still to do.

The soldiers filed past Alexander's couch, one after the other. They had come to bid him farewell, mute, tearful, as silent as he. This wasn't the first time they had heard Alexander was dying. How could it be true this time? He recognized them,

acknowledged them, greeted them with a movement of his eyelids, an indiscernible inclination of his head. He remembered the stories of their lives, their bravery, their wounds and when and how they had received them. He remembered the time, on the endless steppe, at Gaugamela, at the decisive battle, when he called them the sons of Helios, and Darius' endless army—so many colours, races, weapons—all those Asiatics, the bastard offspring of Selene. He remembered how he himself had burst forward like a bolt of lightning, like an arrow, his armour ablaze, his white crest flowing. How he'd leapt ahead, alone, for all to see, with a few Hetairoi at his side, charging towards the very centre of the battle line. At Darius on his golden chariot. He didn't deviate, made no evasive manoeuvre—everyone expected that—but kept on hurtling into the heart of Persia, into the heart of Asia. At the centre, at Darius. And he'd caught him by surprise. Darius was taken aback, he hadn't expected it, he hadn't imagined it. He must have seemed like a madman to him, or a god. Startled, he turned his chariot around. He knew that if the Great King fell, everything was over. And that's what happened; they'd all taken to their heels. Trampling each other as they fled. Galloping behind him, his own army now faced a simple task. And that was how the few had defeated the many, so many more, on that desolate plain. The most glorious victory of all. The battle at which Persia fell — where Asia, in essence, fell—was neither long nor bloody. Few men had fallen that day. Even now, that thought brought him relief.

The soldiers continued to file past, taking their leave of him. Macedonians, Thessalians, men of the Peloponnese, the islands, the colonies, Ionians... all those who had followed him on campaign. But not all of them. All save the Lacedaemonians: the Spartans hadn't sent a delegation. So be it, no matter. Strange he should remember them now...

He closed his eyes. He was a little tired.

Someone searched out his wrists, felt his pulse, took his temperature. Roxane... No, he wasn't going to open his eyes. Roxane, so explosive at other times, fell silent. Her lips formed just one word: his name. Not like then, in Susa... where the peoples had become one... where they would unite their blood. Where he, his generals, and his officers were to marry high-born Persians at a glorious feast. He was to take Stateira, Darius' daughter, who had her mother's name. It was a pity Darius was not alive. He would have honoured him, as he had done Poros. But he did punish Bessus, the man who had betrayed him. Darius should have lived to see the new state that was coming into being. A state of many forms, languages, and religions, with Greek as the common language of the citizens of the world... with arts, literature, trade, knowledge, ancient wisdom, diversity... No, Roxane knew nothing of politics. Roxane was furious because he was to marry Stateira. The palace at Susa had shaken with her rage [...]

From Alexander the Great and his Shadow. A historical novel, 2004. Translation by John Davis

Tatiana AVEROFF

From

August

[...] She was awake waiting for me when I got home. I had just tiptoed through the front door, cursing at the noisy latch and creaky hinges, when I suddenly saw her before me and I jumped in surprise. She sat crouching on the bottom step of the wooden staircase, which led to the bedrooms, one arm hugging the railing, her head resting on her arm, a far-away look in her eyes. She was fully dressed, although she didn't have that ready-to-get-to-work air about her. She looked untidy, as if she had been sleeping in her clothes, or had not slept at all. In fact, she looked positively exhausted and distraught.

I decided that my best line of defense was to attack.

'Oh *really*, mother...!' I threw up my hands, 'Haven't I told you not to wait for me? You weren't honestly *worried*, were you?'

She looked at me, saying nothing.

I was not going to cower by one of those tearful 'you-should-know-better' looks, so I kept on as best I could. 'Well, I was sure you'd figure out that I got caught up in the storm... That it would be too risky for me to make my way back in the gale...'

My mother said nothing.

'I *had* to wait it out... That was the only sensible thing to do...' I stopped, sensing that something was wrong. My mother was staring at me with a strange look on her face.

'The police came...' she faltered.

(Oh really mother, the police, whatever next?)

'Law and order... No order... Your father did not come home last night. We searched, but... They think he may have drowned in the storm. Nonsense! Of course he hasn't drowned! He should have told me... He never told me that he wasn't coming home. Why does no one ever tell me *anything* round here!'

That is how my mother got her Alzheimer's. Or so the doctors said. What they meant was that that is when it began to show. But *I* knew she had it all along. My mother was born with her Alzheimer's, or whatever else you wish to call it. At first, people would describe her as having a certain stubbornness of character. Many admired her strong will. Father did. But as she grew older, her Alzheimer or whatever it was, grew with her. In fact, it seemed to grow at an increasing pace with every war, strife, death, famine or even childbirth she had to go through. By the time I came along, as I was fifth in line, most people had stopped calling her stubborn and strong willed, but thought of her more along the lines of 'willful', 'capricious', 'difficult', 'domineering', 'contrary', or just plain 'eccentric' (such a nice, accommodating word!)

My father, as it appeared, had been out fishing that night. He liked to go out fishing at night sometimes alone. All day long at the fisheries he had to see, feel and breathe those slithery creatures, yet still he wanted to go fishing in his spare time! Sometimes my father was difficult to understand. He used to say that night-fishing had a certain charm of its own. It reminded him of the good old days when he was young, and a man was a man, and a fish a fish, and there was honour and glory in every battle one fought. Then he would talk of the stars and the moonless sky, of man and Nature and how his fishing-lamp lighted up the secret world beneath the sea. He was a strange man, my father. And now he was gone.

I looked at my mother but I wasn't convinced. Father had to come home soon. It just couldn't be true that he'd drowned. Maybe this was some new punishment my mother had devised to make me feel the magnitude of my crime. Maybe it was just her Alzheimer's taking hold of her mind.

It was everything.

That night I lost my father, and my mother, and everything I believed in and held as true. That night, the night I became a woman, the whole world came to a halt. It no longer existed as the safe, predictable place I had always known it to be. And I was no longer the blameless, carefree child I had been for the past eighteen years. The night that I lost my father –and my mother– I wasn't even there. I was busy fucking Paul.

We never found his body, although the search went on for weeks. Everyone who had a boat in Messolonghi or who could lay hands on one, was out searching. Fishermen and relatives, friends and neighbours, wellwishers, policemen and busybodies. Then, one by one, they shook their heads in grief, and went back to their everyday lives. But not us. We never went back – how could we? Mother still made us set father's place at the head of the table, and every day she forgot anew that he was not coming home. Sometimes she would not let us start our meal without him, and we would go hungry. Other times, when she remembered, she would get Markos to row with her out into the lagoon to search some more – always some more, because we never found his body and she wouldn't listen to reason. Mother knew full well how Penelope had humoured her suitors for twenty long years, never once believing that Ulysses had been lost in Troy.

And then the rumours began. First it was his closest friends who started hanging around, asking half-questions: Had we found anything... anything unexpected or somehow... underground? Maybe something hidden among the fish

pots in his boathouse? Or stored away at the back of some closet in our house? 'No', we said, 'What do you mean?' we asked. 'What is it that we should be looking for?' But they shook their heads and went away. And then suddenly, I began feeling awkward when I was among people – at school, at church or walking past the cafes in the square. I had this strange feeling that everyone was talking about me behind my back. Then, at last, Paul came home on leave, just for one night. I cried. He told me what people were talking about, behind my back: about my father and how he had turned out to be a communist all along. They said that he had formed an underground group, which met on moonless nights in his boathouse and wrote subversive pamphlets for the overthrow of the junta. They said my father printed these pamphlets on a mimeograph which he kept hidden in the boathouse. They said my father had not drowned at all. He had been murdered by the secret police, while others said my father had gotten out in time... Out to Russia. America maybe. And still others believed that my father had been thrown into jail or taken to some island prison-camp. They believed my father was alive.

But I believed he had drowned in the storm.

And another part of me believed that he'd show up for dinner come evening.

And another part of me knew that he wouldn't have drowned that night, if I had stayed home.

Excerpt from the novel *August*, ch 2., 2003. *Translated by the author*

George-Icaros BABASSAKIS

Dispragement

'Disparagement' is a purely postmodern contemporary novel, an achievement in terms of language, apparently uncommercial, but ultimately able to generate an ever expanding fan base. It is a work with multiple references and allusions, where literary language effortlessly meets with a flowing vernacular and an auctorial slang. The chapters in whole are, in a musical way, split into six parts, three narrated in the first person and three in the third, alternately, so as to dismantle any authority the narrator might lay claim to, and drag the narrator/hero's name through the mire; ultimately, however, this dragging through the mire turns into an encomium.

The language used has a musical quality, and there is a well-structured plan under the superficial disorder.

'Disparagement' stands out among the plethora of contemporary novels and seems to either completely ignore the developments in the novel (and art in general) during the last fifty years, or be unable to incorporate them harmoniously in their works. 'Disparagement', besides being an important work of its own merit, ambitiously and strategically seeks to bring back into relevance those audacious Greek writers and poets who honored the flexibility and richness of language through close contact to an uncompromisingly bohemian way of life.

They get to the National Tourism Organisation office, says Manos to Nikos. And they ask to see the Director General, says Manos to Nikos.

Manos takes up the thread ~ he says:

The secretary (you must picture a setting from a black & white comedy of the Golden Decade, with Lambros Konstantaras and the works!), to the musical accompaniment of some piece of well-played domestic jazz and with a brilliant smile, asks who wants to see him, slightly nonplussed (for all her smile) since Markoulis and Kazazis are bandaged, sun-stroked, fed-up, disgusted (if not also manacled); in short, they are a right mess. Still, she smiles at them, a professional twitch (because it's stupid to talk about professional conduct in Greece-the-Diamond-on-the-Ring-of-Earth in the sixties, n'est-ce pas?), a brilliant smile, asks them to wait, opens the double sliding doors (they never used intercoms and things back then – even if they had them, they never used such gadgets), and says to Dodos, to Director General Mr Theodoros Bakopoulos, two gentlemen are here to see you. What gentlemen? asks Dodos. Wounded gentlemen, says The Smile. How do you mean wounded? asks Dodos. Slightly wounded, elaborates The Smile. Don't do this, Filitsa! It's a bad enough day as it is. Tell me, what are these gentlemen's names and what is it they want! snaps Dodos. Quite right, sir, I'll just enquire and get back to you. She walks out, enquires and returns. They introduced themselves as Messrs Markoulis and Kazazis, sir, and they asked me to tell you that they want to join up. What!!! Oh-la-la!!! cries a suddenly cheerful Bakopoulos who happens to have an unbounded admiration for Markoulis and Kazazis, for both their lifestyles and for Kazazis's work (because only Kazazis has produced anything so far, whereas Markoulis merely envisions a magnificent work and has only presented some morsels of this great work, and so on). Show them in at once, he tells Filitsa, and see that we are NOT disturbed by ANYONE, this is an IMPORTANT MEETING, no

interruptions at all, is that clear Filitsa? Yes, sir. Just a minute, don't go, listen, call Mr Alekos, you know, and tell him to prepare a generous, rich assortment of snacks for two, for four – nice, well-made, he knows – and the attendant ouzo drinks and so on, and tell him also to be on the alert for urgent refuelling, is this clear Filitsa, my child? Very good, and as I told you: NO ONE, I repeat NO ONE, is to disturb us!

Let me refill our glasses, in the meantime, says Nikos to Manos. On the record player the last note (*note?*) sounds of Veteran's Day Poppy, the last piece on the flipside of the second record of the twin album *Trout Mask Replica*. In the sky, as it could be seen from the French window in Maronias Street, Kolonos, some clouds are trying to form as they dance next to the rainbow of gravity. Here on Earth, at this point, as seen from nowhere, Nikos Velis and Manos Yannopoulos remember, while listening to Captain Beefheart, smoking Gitanes (the former) and Players (the latter), and drinking Irish whiskey (both), a story that featured Yorgos Markoulis (= thinker, poet, saintly bum, polyglot master of Nothingness) and Nikos Kazazis (= Poet with a capital P, master of profundity, detective of the ontological riddle and first-class drinker. Social drinker.

And at some point dawn breaks.

Manos lights his nth cigarette, remembers once again to say in a loud, crystal-hoarse voice the phrase You might say that I live like a gilt nothing.

Nikos drinks his nth sip of Irish, contemplates the ceiling with a vague expression and wishes first of all that nothing will happen to the friendship among friends, and also that no doctor, vile or otherwise, will ever ban him and his friends from smoking drinking eating fucking reading writing singing running daydreaming partying...

Remember last year, Nikos? Was that thing with Marianna and Lena crazy or what? Nikos Velis hears Manos Yannopoulos say this as he returns from the kitchen.

VI

Yes, alright, it's true. We did go and asked them to marry us. Both of them. Together. With flowers, neckties and all mod cons. Nine o'clock in the morning. After the marathon with Beefheart and the story about Markoulis and Kazazis, and a boilerful of Irish whiskey in our bloodstream. We went.

What do you mean, Markoulis and Kazazis? Ah, you mean how did that story end? It ended like this: So they went and asked to join up, fine. Dodos, overjoyed to have his routine interrupted, orders ouzo. *Ouzaki*, they used to call it then. Let's have some *ouzaki*, they'd say. So he says, welcome, boys, I was just thinking...

They start talking about poetry, about this and the other poet, and here is one ouzaki, here's another, toasting each other and eating snacks and again more ouzaki for hours on end, they get up at dusk, they are thinking of going for an omelette at a good place in Pangrati. Dodos takes them all in the new Audi, they drink some more in Pangrati and then Dodos leaves, he has a lot of work in the morning and why don't they drop in again anytime they want, yes? Yes! It was great, and then Markoulis and Kazazis try to recall why on earth they had gone to Dodos but it was impossible to remember.

Yes, it was days, even weeks before they finally remembered.

Marianna who?

Ah, yes, got it now. It's just that a plain Marianna didn't ring any bells. They go together: Marianna and Lena. That's how I remember them. Together.

They lived in Kefalinias Street. A large building. Very Nice. A piano and all. Almost at the corner of Patission. Next door to Au Revoir. I can't remember whose

idea it was. Probably Manos's. Probably. I was still getting over the paranoia with Olga, I was in no state to come up with such ideas at the time. Unless it was part of the context, you know, as in *The Anxiety of Influence* and stuff like that, Harold Bloom with chips, since we were talking about that story of Markoulis and Kazazis and how they went to Bakopoulos and asked him to get them a job with NTO, and then I may have come up with the idea of Manos and me also 'joining up' in a way, settling down so to speak – you know. I may have dropped something like this by way of contributing to the talk about joining up, I may have said let us join up too, why not? We can't be bums forever, I am already past thirty and Manos is approaching thirty as well, no, that's a lie, he is thirty, so I may have said something like that and Manos, instead of stopping me, bringing me to my senses, he took it at face value and, being a clever man, you know how sharp he is, not only agreed but set a specific target, too: Marianna and Lena. Don't they live together, Nikos? Together, Manos. Aren't they friends, Nikos? They are, Manos. Haven't we known them for years, Nikos? Decades, even, Manos.

Well, the time has come to go *deeper* into the relationship, Nikos.

Are you being vulgar, Manos?

No, I am being serious, Nikos.

Are you, Manos?

Pour another one, Nikos. I will, Manos. Good man, Nikos.

Shall we chance it, then, Manos? Yes, Nikos. Shall we go and ask them to marry us, Manos? Let's go, Nikos.

Who gets whom, Manos? How do I know? One gets Marianna and the other gets Lena, Nikos. Yes, obviously, Manos, but who gets Marianna and who gets Lena? Why are you asking this, Nikos?

What do you mean why I am asking, Manos, shouldn't we know who's going to ask whom? No, Nikos, we don't need to know that and I insist that it does not matter, what matters is that we settle down, what matters is that they are two fine, affectionate, tried-and-tested girls – okay, okay, women, fine – of known quality, with their French and their piano playing, intelligent, fine kids, Nikos, why bother with such details as who gets whom, let's just get dressed and go ask them to marry us and that's all there is to it. To get it over with, Nikos.

Yes, to get it over with, Manos.

So we went.

Alexandra BAKONIKA

THE HIDEOUT

*In your bedroom where we made love
a dark brown colour prevailed
from the moquette, the furniture and the covers.
It was relatively dark,
for when I came in —end May afternoon —
you had already shut the shutters,
and the curtains in front of the windows
let no light in.*

*Your bedroom looked like
a dark cave and the hideout of the damned
along with lovemaking on the bed.*

*Afterwards, when I came out
and walked for quite some time,
the strong, diffuse light of May,
the opulence of colours everywhere,
and the warm atmosphere
that so suited my mood.*

THE REHEARSAL

*To the troupe rehearsing the stage play
the director would often repeat
to his actors:*

*'Give vent to the core of feelings,
reveal yourselves outright.'*

I think:

*What poetry itself ardently calls for,
to reveal your intimate self
to the utmost.*

POSITIVE ENERGY

*Her small shop at the town centre
sold cosmetics and jewelry.
A shapely woman, around fifty,
she emitted positive energy and vitality.*

*I took my time choosing
a present to my liking.
A number of customers kept coming in.
She served them with unfailing grace
and suppleness of speech,
with her almost teenage spontaneity,
and in particular with inherent instinct she psyched them out.*

*Without affectation she by herself created
a lovely performance,
an excellent combination of reactions,
movements and speech.
Her small shop throbbed with life,
and if I were to take even longer choosing I wouldn't mind.*

AT FIRST HAND

*With clear lines for the cut
that hurts:
In the jobs I was employed
I was worn out by routine and hardness.
I took lessons from devastating
rivalries destructive to the end.
I was worn out by the iciness of livelihood.
I clenched my teeth that I might resist the monster
named reality.*

The monster stands out there dauntless.

TRAY

A painting exhibition in a gallery;

a reception towards the evening for the opening.

*The noted university professor
—columnist in a leading newspaper,
chairman of various committees—
goes into the foyer.*

*Behind him, obedient and servile
like a faithful servant,
follows the gallery owner,
carrying a tray of goodies.*

*The professor is in a position to introduce him
to significant personalities.*

*With painters who have his need
to exhibit in his gallery,
as a bigwig, he turns cynical and harsh.
He tramples on them for the merest trifle any time he wants.*

THE CHERRIES

*Words of an immigrant woman from Georgia:
'I worked day and night in the house of an old woman.
You don't know what I went through,
she never stopped humiliating me.
I try to think no more of it but it always comes back.
I remember her putting cherries in a plate to eat,*

*leaving the shriveled ones aside.
'These are for you,' she told me when she finished,
pointing to the shriveled cherries,
what was left of the almost uneatable lot.
Humiliation day after day.'*

THE VISITOR

*With an air of a lissom and beautiful woman,
she walked along the corridor of the large enterprise.
She knew the director fairly well
from various circles and receptions.
Self-confident and briskly
she entered his office
— the door was ajar —
to ask for something.
He shouted at her to get out
for not knocking at the door.
Besides, in areas of authority
one enters with some respect,
some constraint.*

*When at receptions he made eyes at her
she wouldn't give him a single hope.
Thus venomous were*

his shouts at her.

NIGHT

Bars and cafeterias

all along the narrow sidewalk.

As she sips her drink

she notices her lover in the bar across the way.

His tall and thin stature

moves among the outdoor tables

talking to friends.

He doesn't see her in the crowd.

Like a candle she burns with desire,

but she won't go to him.

He left her a year ago.

On the lovely sidewalk

with the lights, the shadows and the patrons,

she remains stuck to her loneliness.

THE WARDROBE

Working-class family. The father a seaman.

When he was widowed, he brought in a woman to live with.

His children — a boy and a girl —

*reaching the end of puberty.
Estrangement and gloom reigned at home.
The boy, an unruly youth,
at the slightest thing thrashed his sister
and then shut her in a wardrobe.
This maltreatment made her faint.*

*The sixties.
A street separated us in the neighbourhood.*

HE DEMANDED

*When I went to bed with him, I remember him saying:
'Get up and show me your charms.'
I regarded it as an order and wasn't exactly pleased.*

*But the worse was to come.
As we were dressing he demanded
that I fetch his shoes.
As though hypnotized
I did him the favour.
Dragging them carefully with my foot
—from the corner where they lay—
I brought them to him.
He got angry that I didn't bend down*

and didn't hand them to him.

He considered it an omission on my part:

I should have bent down.

Submission doesn't count if you don't bend down.

A LOVE OF MINE

Spread on sofas, floors and walls

were displayed carpets imported from the East.

The people I was with vied with one another

who was to pick the best one

and who the most expensive.

They created a hubbub and a hysterical show.

'Admit it, they are graceless,

and there's you suppressed among them.

Their bawling is ludicrous,

I'm surprised that you can put up with them.'

I turned and looked at him as he suddenly

appeared before me, cautioning thus.

He told me off, his eyes lovelorn,

he told me off, his drawling voice

lovesick —

he ticked me off in a bland manner.

And he was my antidote,

the truest antidote

for my waste, joyless mixing with others.

BOWING

She gave a vivid account:

'From instinct and experience I don't easily give in.

*I want for a man to be assiduous going after me,
to beg me, to lose his senses for my sake.*

*I hold in mind an admirer of mine
on a trip.*

*Before going to bed, and as I was standing up,
he went down devoutly on his knees and bowed
to my naked body;
then he started kissing me from the knees up.'*

MAKESHIFT MATTRESS

*After the employees had left,
late in the afternoon, he waited for her
in his office.*

*They undressed, and his greedy tongue
went as far down as her feet,
and frozen as they were
he warmed them with his mouth.*

*They made love on the floor,
on a makeshift mattress
of large settee pillows.*

IN THE BAR

*He was on the way with his girl to a bar
frequented by youngsters,
to hear an excellent negro singer.
Before going in he warned her:*

*'I have a crush on a woman
who might be joining us tonight.
With the awe and devoutness
that one enters a church,
would I enter her body;
and I'd be keyed up
to satisfy her,
to be up to the occasion —
whereas with you I don't mind;
I have sex with you just like that,
like the way I talk.'*

*The atmosphere in the bar was magical.
People had become one with the rhythms*

and the singer's voice.

*The benumbed girl was trying to simmer down
her shock.*

*Her friend's coarseness
prevented her from becoming one with anything.*

LATIN POEMS

*They rolled around conflagrated by passion.
Still dazed by his kisses
she thought it was raining out, but he anticipated her:
'It's not rain but the cracking of dry sprigs
that the gardener is burning in the garden.'*

*They got dressed, and after pouring her a drink,
he took out and read to her Horace's poems
in the original.*

*He read her nuptial hymns.
Idiosyncratic roulades and phonemes
and juicy Latin words.
After sex they ended with verses.*

IMPARTIAL CRITIC

*I am prone to sorrow,
it contains me like a melancholic darkness.*

*I look into my poems
to find which one is amiss in its contents
and reject it.*

*The most impartial critic of my verses
is my sorrow —
it seeks the essential.*

THE LAST ARTICLE OF CLOTHING

*He had been after her for long now,
and when he found her lying on the sand
among friends and acquaintances,
he placed his bath towel next to her,
and close as they lay, he kept touching her.*

*Lucky for him she wasn't long
responding. Up she got and led him
to a remote part of the beach.*

*They stopped out-of-sight,
and with her experience with men
—she knew what excitement she provoked in the nude—
she took off the last article of clothing
and started going in and out of the water.*

*She went in and out a number of times,
and in a flamboyant manner, as if telling him:
'You'll die adoring me.'*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

John N. BASKOZOS

The Arab

The Arab went through the entrance of the National Radio building unenthusiastically. He headed to the bar, his head drooping. The indolent waiter, another civil servant, passed him the plastic cup with the black swill that some might call coffee. He dropped three 100-drachma coins on the tattletale grey, formerly white, marble and headed to the lift. He realised it was usually out of order, turned about and climbed the stairs to the third floor. He pushed the door open and the familiar stench of his isolation assaulted him.

Only he and the 'Italian' ever entered this room. Their job was to translate the news bulletin of the National Radio for the audience in Arabic and Italian-speaking countries. One was there in the morning, the other at noon. The place served as a storeroom that housed antiquated computers, rickety printers, dead telephone sets, as well as other devices of unknown identity that had long served their purpose and had been waiting for a spring cleaning in the indeterminate future. The last one had taken place 25 years ago according to his friend, the doorman.

The 'Arab' –each colleague owes their nickname to the nationality of the news they present– put the black leather bag on the filthy desk. It was a present from his brother, who now used a bag bought in London. He eyed the metallic label on the desktop reading 'Tassopoulos Bros'. 'Do they still make such desks?', he wondered. He looked at his bag. He realised that opening it was of no use since, for no good reason at all, he hadn't been by the office of the editor-in-chief to get the bulletin that he ought to translate and then present. He considered going downstairs

to get it. The prospect left him cold. It occurred to him that he could read yesterday's news – no one would notice. What if his Arab listeners complained? He wasn't sure he had any listeners, but if he did...

The editor-in-chief wasn't there. It was time for the afternoon siesta. He lived nearby and he would always go home for a nap between 3 and 5 p.m. When he was younger, he used to go to his mistress, a typist who worked under him. However, his priorities had changed. He would come and go, punch his card at regular intervals, pocket his salary regularly, too, and damn if he understood what he was overseeing. He was just in charge of certain standardised procedures.

He made up his mind. He would not pick up the bulletin. He couldn't be bothered to go down two flights of stairs and no one would care to remind him what he was meant to read in Arabic. The Arab opened his drawer. He put some work documents aside and produced striped, white paper sheets marked with ink. He perused them: the poems of the Italian. He would write them in Italian and hide them in the drawers, secure in the knowledge that no one would touch them and that if anyone found them, they would have to speak Italian to understand their content. However, the Arab knew the language. He had studied at the Italian School in Alexandria, but they repatriated once he turned 15. His mother also spoke Italian and helped him not give up on it by supplying him with fresh reading material.

He had discovered the poems of the Italian a month ago. Ever since, he would dive into them as soon as his work was done. At first, out of idle curiosity. Then he discovered it was a bitter love story, the story of a life. It was clear they were songs of experience. He referred to someone called Paola, a married woman with three children. The Italian was also married and had two children. The poems resembled letters and portrayed a relationship that spanned at least 20 years. However, that was not the draw. The poems often referred to events in Greece, in

Italy –where the Italian had studied– and to major world events over the past decades. His writing was philosophical, yet permeated with eroticism. The love of two people in different parts of the world was entangled with crucial post-war events.

Yesterday, he had translated four of these poems to Arabic on a whim. He thought the sonorous musicality of the Arabic language was a good match for the lyricism of Italian. He started reading them out loud to compare the musicality of the two languages, switching between Italian and Arabic. He got carried away and, insensibly, he turned on the recorder he used for the news. The tape screeched briefly and started to record. When he had finished, he listened to them again. Then, it came to him. He took the mic and read the intro, as usual: 'you are listening to the news in Arabic and today is Thursday, 3rd March 1996.' He gave his all with such care as though he was reading to an audience. At the end, he closed with the familiar outro: 'It was the news bulletin of 3rd March 1996, in the Arabic language. Dear listeners, have a good night.' The news was always broadcast at night. He thought of an Arab resting from the exhaustion of the day. How would he feel about receiving such an unusual broadcast from a distant country?

He took the tape and replaced it in its case. He put the poems of the Italian back in the drawer, got his bag and left with a smile, closing the door softly behind him. He dropped off the tape at the technical department so that it would be played at the designated hour and he hurried to the exit. A wave of relief washed over him as though he had just robbed a bank.

It went on like that for the rest of the month. The Arab would take the poems of the Italian, translate them to Arabic and present them in lieu of the daily news. It was a Monday when the editor-in-chief asked for him. He gave him two letters. The first one expressed the gratitude of the cultural attaché of our embassy in Cairo. He

praised the initiative and the inventiveness of the National Radio. The other letter was the Italian's dismissal.

Later, on the trolley, he regarded the tired look of people getting home from work. He thought that he may also start writing something. Like what? He didn't know, but he'd find out.

Kyriakos CHARALAMBIDES

STORY WITH A HORSE

*Sometimes they see me astride my horse
high in the sky over Nicosia.
Hurry come see, they say. But I can't see.*

*Yet one day like today – oddly enough!– I saw
what it was they meant. And don't think
I'm talking about the likes of Pegasus.
It was a strong and sturdy steed
without wings and with a bridle
as thick as hail – and though I've never
mounted a horse, I was galloping along.*

*From my earth I was about to greet
my heaven-sent self – such a fool
the world has never seen.
For he who with a proud steed ploughed
the space above me, shot a look
both glaring and ruinous; I shuddered.*

*Before I could recover, could lift
my face and also my spirit somewhat
he circled me again put the fear of God in me*

*brandishing like a mace a sack
with a moon or a bloated sun inside.*

*But, paying no attention to the others
who acclaimed him with handkerchiefs
and fattened sheep and rattles,
I plucked a reed from the marsh and fashioned it
into a jousting lance –an awesome spear–
and as he passed by me I pierced the sack
and toppled his horse.*

*If you were a mother to see you'd shudder
grieving for the deflated sun and
your fine young lad who without
that horse of his took to his heels.*

*But I caught up with him before the king
and finished him off without ado – so they won't say
that they see me astride my horse
high in the sky over Nicosia.*

September 1987

THE VIRGIN HELEN

*I came to this foreign land and had
thirty-two drachmas in my pocket.
With my girdle's clasp broken
and my long white legs bruised.*

*In his haste to snatch me Paris
knocked me down and broke the vase
with my perfumes. I told him 'don't act
like that, my dearest, see I'm yours.'*

*But so very green and excited he
was in search of love in the palace
and foolish as I was with two children
in the cradle and without shame
I broke my wedding vows.*

*Blindly I followed him over here.
But despite all the cajolery
and shades of dream lavished on me by
Aphrodite, my sight is no longer blurred.*

*It's Hera I now have beside my pillow –
the Austere Goddess' shrine is my shelter.*

*Fire lights my sleep and Paris
cannot come near me. A slave girl*

*guards the entrance to my chamber
and whenever he appears, she showers him
with such abuse that he is put to flight.*

*At times I pity him and my heart's iron
melts, but the other ladies
around me –Greek women
on their mothers' side– bring me straight to my senses.*

*One day Priam came to my chamber
accommodating as ever and polite.
He brought me good tidings; that if I wanted
waiting for me on the doorstep
(so to speak) outside Troy
were the Achaeans.*

I looked him in the eye:

*'Tell me, truly, and when I've gone,
do you think they won't lay the city to waste?
Was it for me they came, do you believe that,
and Cassandra's black eyes
or was it perhaps...'*

He stopped me and barred

*my mouth's sweet words, caressed
my velvet eyebrows.
'Immortal,' he softly whispered, 'even if
Paris, Hector, Aeneas and Glaucus*

*were willing to submit to the Argives,
by the goddess Aphrodite, I never would!*

*I won't surrender you, without you,
Troy has nothing for me, no path.
You are my horses and heavens,
you are the River Xanthus, the meadows
where the flocks graze, the birds
that flutter from tree to tree.'*

*I grew alarmed at suddenly seeing
this old drunkard before me. Arise
my loyal handmaids, take him and bind him
before morn comes and he is covered
with shame's nakedness by robed
Dawn – stupid Tithonus, dotard!*

*What's this I see! You dither and perspire;
tears dwell in your beard –
drops of light placed
before my divine altar.*

*Old man, I give you
half a chance to save yourself; don't
of the seven deadly sins
choose the most glittering, the most entwined
with gold thread, fashioned by the hand*

of Hephaestus, craftsman of the gods.

*I can make coffee; drink, I'll add
forgetting's magic herb
that cures all pain and sorrow.*

*He wouldn't hear of it. He unfastened
my holy girdle and brought
to my mind my twins who now
must have become boys of renown
for their virtues throughout Sparta.*

*O, if only I could see them, clasp them
to my bosom like my girdle
and give them my pledge of love!*

*But it's too late. It will be raining there now,
it will be cold –my words are but
repetitions, winged sound–
and I will heed your command, old man.*

*Besides, what use was Hera to me?
She could have sealed my belly
in countless ways; she knows from Zeus'
carryings-on, she's a seasoned hand.*

*I'll take my hobby horse,
become a little child; I'll surrender to you
in my sleep my lord – in my heart
Artemis Ourania and Pandemos will weave
love's most innocent song.*

*And as she reclined to open her legs
the heavens open and up above
the angels struggle with the Trojans
and the Achaeans, for whom someone
for a fee of thirty-two drachmas had opened
the secret portal allowing them all to enter.*

1. 3 Aphrodite's girdle had great alluring power.

STATUE OF ANTINOOS

*Antinoos in alabaster dominates
the room; his hair reveals
it was adorned by a gold wreath.
His languid and tender body
leans with a girlish sweetness
to hear the guides' words
about Hadrian. His favorite,
and most loyal, he deemed it worthy*

*for such an emperor to give
one's life even, as in fact he did
with his voluntary drowning in the Nile.*

*He was barely twenty years' old
and took no account of his life.
Now that he's aged in the water's depths
he sets aside the superstition
that the drowning would become a basket
—a room more like— for offerings; foolishly
he sacrificed his life's beginnings to present
his future to his patron.*

*Prosperous Hadrian at once had
exquisite coins cut with his image,
set up sanctuaries, everywhere erected
splendid statues. Yet Antinoos,
despite imbibing such fame he drank, now stands
apart in the room and weeps.*

*His only consolation is this statue;
one of the most beautiful, so he hears.*

THE GODS AMUSE THEMSELVES

With a little sky and sea

the gods' pots are washed.

Their paper cups do not need

washing. It's preferable,

given the day, to lose no time.

Besides the Gods of the Upper World,

environmentalists by definition,

know the how and why of it.

One alone

garbed in human attire, goes

from time to time to the Delphic Oracle.

He's in the habit (is fond) of playing

with the Pythia's embroidered speech.

He pays ten minas with Zeus'

head on the obverse side.

But I too have need to guard

the friendly god's back.

Certainly not to declare his name,

For, if I was decreed a poet, I owe it

in part to him –as I was being born

he lent a hand– so enough!

And say all you want of the gods in general and

of their goblets and their wonders!

THE KOUROI AT THE DIPYLON GATE I

*And my mother said to me: 'Take good care
of your brother. He may be an awesome size,
but he's still green and knows nothing
of life's ways.' I gave her my word.*

*Yet in the midst of battle we both fell –
I on the right, he on the left with his horse
that became a lion upon his tomb
while I'm adorned now by a sphinx.*

THE KOUROI AT THE DIPYLON GATE II

*Tall like a kouros at the Dipylon Gate (two ten)
that's me, see now I'm watching you
surveying this my votive offering
that digging with your nails you found
in a supine position. Stranger, know
that, like you, I started out with other plans
but things turned out differently.*

THE GUILLOTINE

Just as he was about to chop

*her crystalline neck, he stumbled
on her perfume of cedar,
lavender, citrus, rose petal, jasmine
and in addition released
vanilla, iris and sandalwood.*

From Meta-History, 1995. Translated by David Connolly

Christos CHARTOMATSIDIS

Hot Dog

I like to piss in front of the Opera. I get a kick out of it, as they say. I think of it as a radical action. A Protest! That's why with an exasperated look on my face I lean on the Doric column. I spit between my teeth and relieve myself. The guard shouts from inside the place. He often comes after me to beat me up, but I always manage to run away from him. I cross the road and check him out.

'I'm gonna get you!' he screams on the top of his lungs 'One day I will beat the crap out of you!' I ignore him and this enrages him even more. He takes it all out on poor Babis.

That's because what I do now has copycats. They get really excited. So Babis, wanting to play rebel, pees on the Opera. But the guard gets him and kicks him senseless. He then comes to me to complain.

'Not everybody can be a badass, asshole!' I tell him 'Guys like you are only good to sniff my ass!' But the moron doesn't get the allegory and tries to actually put his face in my rear. I suddenly turn around and show him my teeth. Only then he gives up. He's that kind of idiot! I don't even want his company but he keeps following me around.

So, the two of us wander around aimlessly. We head for the market, to the butcheries. And there, amidst the alleys, we hear a commotion. We make haste, to get there in time. 'Step right up, step right up!' someone shouts 'Nellie is in a mood and puts out'. As if we needed more than that! We rush to the alley and head for the back yard. I know Nellie too well. Now and then, her hormones go to her head and

she screws with whoever is available. Of course, our old pal Tasos doesn't leave anything to chance. He's an ex-cop and always strives to maintain order. 'Are you a fool, doing it for free?' he says 'You should provide for your later years!' Nellie doesn't care, but Tasos makes good bucks. He is a pimp and a crier. He screws her himself for free and then shouts 'Step right up, Nellie is in a mood!'

When we reach there, the back yard is choke full of guys. In the middle lies Nellie on all fours, with her eyes closed. Her titties are long and black and her nipples are huge! The smell of the mucus from her twat is everywhere! Strong and intoxicating. I have the privilege of not having to wait. Or to pay. Someone complains but Tasos threatens him. 'Do you mind that the girl has feelings too? Do you have a problem with that?' To tell you the truth Nellie has a soft spot for me. And Tasos, the good businessman that he is, cuts her some slack, so she can be more productive later. I lean on her back and she bends under my weight. She tilts her head a little and recognizes me. Her eyes float in the mucus, distant and blurry. On the first one, she sighs. Her favorite is 'Rocco, Rocco, Rocco!' because I have blue eyes and she thinks she is doing it with a young Alain Delon in 'Rocco and his Brothers'⁵. To stay in the spirit of old Italian cinema, I answer her 'Shut up, you whore, Tsotsarka!'⁶ She is crazy for stuff like that. She used to be a film critic... As I finish, I hear the market clock strike midnight. I must hurry to make it to home before the masters return. They will be back soon and the right thing to do is wait for them in the hallway, sleepless and devoted.

I used to live with some repatriates. There was no schedule there, no discipline. I went home whenever I wanted and always received a warm welcome. The host was a scientist— an astrophysicist, his wife was a piano instructor. Their

⁵ From the movie *Rocco and his brothers* 1960 directed by Luchino Visconti with Alain Delon

⁶ From the movie *Two Women*, directed by Vittorio De Sica with Sofia Loren, actress, in a Leading Role Oscar, 1961

home was a derelict shack in Menidi. But it was crammed up with books. They haven't even unpacked them from the consecutive relocations. When mister Agathon, the host, was drinking, he used to sit next to me, on the floor, and stroke my head. His sorrowful wife played 'Peter and the Wolf' on the piano. Then she changed it to a lengthy one about some lieutenant named Golitsin. At that point Agathon threw fits! He used to cry and scream and throw the empty bottle out of the window. His wife would leave the piano alone and cry with him 'We need to be strong, Afonja!' she told him 'Everything will turn out good in the end, you'll see!' This mess was choking me, it really made me sad. So I joined them in their howling, only I didn't get drunk or throw stuff around. Someone had to stay cool-headed. Then I grew bored of them and left them. That's my style, I run away every now and then.

My new masters want me to always stay at home. They don't let me wander around. That's why, when they are not home I make my little escapades, as is the case now. I barely make it in time. I hear their footsteps, slow and blurred. She is drunk, as always, which means she has the blues. Her husband is the silent companion. I welcome them joyously, with a gleam of devotion in my eyes. Mrs Lula trips in her high heels. She throws her coat away and lands on the couch. Then I lie at her feet.

Naked.

She knows what to do. She starts stroking the hair of my leg with her foot. Slowly she goes higher. She gently touches the scrotum and drags her toes upwards. Now she starts with the sweet-talking 'Do you like it, do you like it, silly?' I do not react. I can't decide what stinks worse, her sock or her twat. Her twat has a peculiar odor, kind of fishy. I hold my breath as I reciprocate her caress. I growl with pleasure, that is. Once, to test my limits I jumped on her as she was bent over. My

strength knocked her on all fours. I started rubbing myself on her and dry-humping her, but strange as it seems, I scared her and she did not appreciate my erotic mood. She got the leash from the hanger and started hitting me, in the face, to the body. The bitch even aimed at my balls and that was dirty because it was she that had me initiated into this kind of stuff, and now she played strict. After a few minutes, when the scare had passed, she brought me food and started humoring me again, but I acted tough and I didn't eat from her hand that night neither I let her stroke me. Of course later we buried the hatchet because she is the true boss of the house and I must respect her. Besides, I owed her my indulgence as she had got me off the street.

Here is how it went. I was wandering about, dirty and hungry as always, and out of nowhere a couple showed up. The lady was heavily drunk and her husband was holding her patiently on her feet. The boss is a true gentleman. With his belly and his baldness and his money, he is the provider of the house. Mrs Lula on the other hand is both ugly and old. Her hair is orange and rug-like. She always makes these beauty masks and ointments on her mug, to hide the bags under her eyes, the wrinkles and the blotches. She is a filthy hag, that's why she got me off the street, to cause trouble for the poor guy.

'Dimitraki, look at that cute doggie' she told him and he mumbled something that I couldn't make out. 'But it is so beautiful!'

'Big deal, he's just a cur'.

'Jimmy' the crazy lady suddenly was serious 'don't you wonder why is it following us so persistently?'

'It's hungry' said Jimmy blandly and with that he ticked her off.

'How can you be so stupid! Look at its eyes! Don't they remind you of something?'

'What do you mean?' the poor guy didn't understand but his crazy wife had gained momentum:

'Don't make me tell it to you word by word! Remember it can be a loved one... that we think is gone... and is back... maybe in another form but with the same feelings. Don't its eyes remind you of no one, goddammit?'

She had him in a pinch. Mr. Dimitrakis had lost his mother a few months ago— she must have been a very understanding woman to tolerate this bozo that her son was married to. And Lula wanted to pay her back.

But that was not the point. I watched their conversation in awe. And of course I wasn't his dear mother. But someplace back there, there was a bright past. Human and almost forgotten. A whole world that you miss out on, and you can't understand how and why you suddenly find yourself living a dog's life that you hate but cannot escape from. Even if the leash is tight. Even if they only feed you leftovers. I remember Tasos the pit-bull asking me 'When the Judgment Day comes, will we present ourselves as dogs?' And maybe this is the true question and not the metaphysical mumbo jumbo! I didn't answer him. But the question keeps bugging me. And when the time comes, I want to present myself as Human!

Translated by Christos Chr. Chartomatsidis (Junior)

Yiorgos CHOULIARAS

THE SIRENS

*No creatures in the world
were less musical than the Sirens.
Someone deaf must have passed
those places first, however,
who started this story
about their irresistible song.
Everyone who followed was lost
vainly trying to sustain what gets
lost no matter how much you listen.
So their fame was confirmed
as it happens in such cases.
Who would any longer dare
dispute a supposition of this kind?
Odysseus was ignorant of the Sirens
but he knew people.
In the ears of his companions,
beeswax sealed their mouths.
There was nothing they could say
while he would have proved
that even for the most irresistible
song it is hard to escape
from a strongly bound person*

who does not want to listen.

Translated by David Mason and the author

CONFUTATION OF DUALISM

*It is unfathomable to his mind
that the idea of passion
has overcome his body*

*and now a body
is all he has in mind*

Translated by Maria Koundoura and the author

REFUGEES

*On the other side
of the photograph I write to remind myself
not where and when but who*

I am not in the photograph

*They left us nothing
to take with us
Only this photograph*

If you turn it over you will see me

*Is that you in the photograph, they ask me
I don't know what to tell you*

Translated by David Mason and the author

Mother Brecht

BRECHT ABOUT HIS MOTHER

*I loved her in my own way.
But she wanted to be loved
in hers.*

BRECHT'S MOTHER ABOUT HIM

*He loved me. That
was his way.*

MRS. BRECHT ABOUT HER SON

*I loved him. Was there
some other way?*

MRS. BRECHT'S SON ABOUT HER

*She loved and she was loved.
There was no other way.*

Translated by David Mason and the author

Dimitra CHRISTODOULOU

THE MESS

*Left there, on the chair
The jacket that was carrying my day.
One sleeve hanging towards the floor
Like a dog abandoned away,
That shovels with its paw, to hide
The fresh bone of its exile.
I didn't leave inside the pockets but a few coins.
Tomorrow I'll have to pay the fingers
That give the tickets in the river
With such chatty larks from the forest,
In every place that the fog's instinct has passed
Putting the light on and off.
With the deep hunter's darkness
The fox will emerge from the slippers
Bad sleep, body to body,
She smells among the covers.
They pass, some say, on top of the untrodden leaves
Those who go get their mess
Their minds back in their cardboard beds,
Could they be stolen, or messed up
From cold wind's overcoats.
As they return to the mortgaged house*

To fall asleep among the brushwoods.

EMPIRES

*Shall the first verse be given to me
The old lady on the second floor
Will again become my mother.
Not an acquaintance of mine, however, so sad
Her growing badly old...*

*She, once, was lively and nimble
Getting in and out of continuous working shifts.
Obedience, production, savings
And a black little curtain between
The older and the younger daughter.*

*She now lies in stiff bed sheets
Heating with a gas heater
An unfairly big room
Counting in gulps of breaths
How many healthy nights and days
Her uncertain pension can secure*

*And while sickness moves on properly
In between the terrified daughters*

*Illegally snoops, the simple touch of caress
Of a gold dusted afternoon
Abundantly covers the duvet
As if the old tumescent woman
Is Catherine of the Great dynasty
Who managed to lead a nation to the sea.
But scarcely can call for the doctor.*

CHARMING SUBURBS

*One whole square block
Sleep has set it down in the grass
In a yellowish rain mist
That could not be worn by the lights.
When the ambulance arrived
The driver pulled the brake
In amazement of so many serpents
Running here and there
Suddenly homeless.*

*In every house a couple of newly weds
The one already petrified and the other
Continuously cutting his hair.
The bride's hair growing rapidly
The groom's changing color.*

*If you wanted to have a companion
You had to fight mayhem with the scissors.
The rest of the town, still far away.*

*Let's make this sad ballad stop here.
In the Town Planning Services a patch of ground
Gets covered quickly by fermentation
Of undertakers and doctors
New institutions will emerge high up
'Til the moment were the others,
Drowned among the weeds
Will start to uplift the scenery
Of a short, almost costless
Family excursion.*

Translated by Tzoutzi Mantzourani

THE BEGGAR

*Look at him. With degrees and a moustache of stone.
He drags two three hungry babes
Feeling completely illiterate
Next to the Old of the Days. His creditor.*

*He pushes a puppy in his belly.
He hates and is ashamed and afraid.*

His mouth gapes from difficult breathing.

Does not expect clean air.

All his thoughts a stain with his finger

On the name, the origin, his kilos.

Sketched in a bill

He passes directly to Charon.

Not even there he's welcome.

First he has to beg for the fare.

Translated by Dinos Siotis

Yorgos CHRONAS

THE DEAD HAVE FILLED THE CORRIDORS

Do not insult the memory of the living by talking of your dead.

Especially if it's a Saturday or Wednesday, do not talk of the dead.

And if you recall their form, how they got on the train, how they walked up on to the roof;

and if the name comes to your mouth, change the conversation;

speak about the film you saw yesterday,

that's an easy solution.

At any rate keep mum about him who sat in the cafe opposite you and stared at you while you were smoking.

You know that he too is already dead.

Say, if it escapes you, that he was wearing a white shirt

– insist on the white shirt.

You know very well that the shirt was black

and his trousers tight-fitting and cheap.

Do not insult the memory of the living by talking of your dead.

ODE TO MARILYN MONROE

Paint on my body all the craters

of the earth's volcanoes, the smallpox of New York's longshoremen.

Paint on my body the new emperor's

eunuchs, the cry of Ibis' cranes.

Paint on my body my mother Ethel

—wasn't she called Ethel?— my last lover

killed on a motorcycle in Chicago.

Paint on my body the communion of jazz,

of rock'n'roll, of hashish and barbiturates.

Paint on my body the wet dreams

of Kinsey's homosexuals and the whores of New York.

Engrave on my body that lady

on television who says 'Tibetan mushrooms are preferable

for a Wednesday meal.'

Engrave on my body my voice on a 78 RPM disc

singing the Star Spangled Banner.

Then circulate my face at night on pennies

on toilet paper

on copybooks

on cheap underwear.

That's what Marilyn Monroe said that morning

going into the loos of New York

holding her womb in her hands

her false eyelashes and her head.

A BANNED CHRISTMAS LOVE SONG

*I don't think we were ever photographed together
But I do remember
one day coming out of the cinema
and seeing our shapes in the mirror
of a shop selling Formica furniture
tables and, I think, cheap paintings, and you quickly did up
the top button on your shirt as though you'd been to the hammam
in Zenon or Epicurus Street and made passionate love
in the hammam and walking out of the hammam into the street that afternoon
you watched your step, the glances, the swing of your arms.
We should have thought of it earlier,
before winter set in, to take a photograph
together on a Sunday, as on those excursions
on a moped to Marathon, Villia and Loutsa
when you danced to jukebox music the Tequila Mambo
or a folk dance or a melancholy samba, and got drunk.
We should have thought of it earlier,
before winter set in, to take a photograph
together on a Sunday, then you'd be free to leave
for the Nile or Algiers with the sun cyclists.
Nowadays I no longer have a name in the afternoon
If I go out I've resolved to answer to the names of
Alexandros, Alexios, Alexis, Vassilios, Yerassimos,
Grigoris, Rachel, Dimitrios, Yannis, Leonidas,
Nikos, Mihalis, Martha, Konstantinos, Manolis.*

PARMA

*Hills and swamps originate from our look
our desires rot in pouring rain and dead letters
At night, drunk before broken wardrobe mirrors,
we make our way with extinguished cigarettes
with records of oldies pictured amid trees
robbed of their fruit and the Genoese sun without the malady of March
Most of our memories expired in the morning
next to sleeping bodies and forgotten smokes
thus the dreams we expected and never came turned into
tunnels through which pass trains, sewers, boys with ballbearings and ambulances
In the evening, up on the roof among pigeons
congealed in childish talk and myths untold,
at an unsuspected time, I feel dubious of Atzesioano
irreproachably taking the knife from the table
and putting a simple end to his life, like a late-night broadcast
on a New York radio station for listeners
half-doped with Veronal
Since we never met at Parma station
and didn't speak of such things as Martha mowing without hands
in Megalopolis or Kostas leaving with his ship
for Piraeus, let us remain mere spectators
in the Orpheus cinema, Ash Monday afternoon, balcony seats,
at another unsuspected time, when Etruscan and Sanskrit*

*were not spoken, and wait for Caesar
to cross the Rubicon while shouting: alea jacta est!*

MY FRIEND THEA

Afterwards we stood on the roadside and imagined her in one of those long dresses walking through the endless wards of St. Luke's Hospital A malfunctioning erotic machine she, abandoned after the rainfall and embalmed as a beautiful mortal myth on a balcony and summarily named Perpetuation or chlorophyll With an uncommon sadness in the eyes, not hers but of a former rationale

There we were, lovers of the samba and unquenched desire hailing from La Spezia mounted on vespas parasites to unsuspecting pedestrians in the streets of Milan where it always rains before dusk who hear on the radio their Italian passion calling them to the plains without ever discovering it save in the lethargy which follows each extension

There we were, eating spaghetti on the roadside shirts unbuttoned waiting for her to appear from the dark rooms of children playing cards and absorbing gaslight and with her white gloves tap us on the shoulder

Thus when she came, a malfunctioning erotic machine born always after your specific distinction of her, she sat down on the steps and picking up her dress from the asphalt bid us all goodnight.

THE RIVER LOUSSIOS

To Nikos Gatsos

This is the River Loussios

Its source is on the mountain here

No one knows it

no one sees it

It flows over stones for a stretch

over fields

Some fine horses, some free birds

quench their thirst in its waters

Farther on it runs into the ancient River Alpheus.

Only the vast sea that receives it

keeps silent as it vanishes.

PORTRAIT

Every Sunday afternoon, alone, he'll be taking his constitutional down Pandrossos Street,

carrying the last edition of the International Herald Tribune,

its news and features pass for the streets of New York,

a stranger in every city, upholding harum-scarum

the rank of tourist abroad, recalling

in the torpor of summer the return, the running tap,

and having a quiet drink and a snack in bars of tropic flight

with foolhardy fellows, clad in an old shirt,

dark rings under the eyes, the front and back pages without ads,

reduced prices for spicy inserts,

*a reporter of nonexistent reports, an unfrocked Soho priest
keeping in with The Washington Post and French publishers,
wearing sunglasses on the underground, touching the straphangers only,
the fair-haired Alexander, an habitu of parks,
a sucker for stations, a prolongation of receptionists' wanking.
An old acquaintance of mine before the fall of Constantinople,
I remember
the caretaker upstairs walking the permanent fall of a lonely man before death,
children's operations, the last rites of those in awe,
keeping quiet about the Administration's subscription discontinuance.
I remember him coming alongside the river banks, lighting
a fire in the rooms, and stubbornly denying the perpetuation of his kind,
a negro in his whiteness, meeting the publisher in the boathouse,
and making eyes at me and that soldier from Argostoli.*

*How could you stand listening to that song
played so many times on the gramophone
and outside it's dark already
Your eyes dead-like in sleep
your hands broken*

Gramophones will play as they did then,

*when Rita went away leaving us all alone
in the brothels.*

*We had no one to call our own. Nikos was only recently out
of jail, and Simos wheeled children
in funfairs in the provinces.*

*We came and stood in the doorways early in the morning,
passing a comb through our hair.*

*We wanted microphones, mourning veils across our shoulders,
expensive perfumes for our bodies.*

*Ah, Jenny! What were we to do? The market was full
of dead studs, and there we went shopping for fish.*

*

Having found him, hold on to him.

Whatever you can do, do it.

Don't let anything scare you.

Forget

what you weren't taught, whom you never saw again

how relatives walked past you, how at home

they shut the door in your face.

We know all about you –black lipstick

high heels– we know of your nightly escapades.

How heavily you breathed among the reeds, we know.

*

*And you who wear golden heels
who place flowers in your hair
who jangle bracelets on your wrists
when it rains in the fields, when out on the road
mud smears your feet
remember that I was the first to wear black heels,
off-the-shoulder dresses down to the knee, the first
to runaway from home*

I was the first to poison my heart.

*

*Hurry up, stranger, don't be long. Be quick about it
that neither your body shall be captured in the mirror
nor your shape impressed on my eyes.
That when you're over the horizon, having shut the door behind you,
there'll be nothing and no one to remind me
that you too came and went—
Died.*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

David CONNOLLY

The Fortunes of 20th Century Greek Poetry in English Translation

As Odysseus Elytis remarked in his address to the Swedish Academy on receiving the 1979 Nobel Prize for Literature, the Greek poet uses a language spoken by only a few million people and yet it is a language that has been spoken for over two and a half thousand years without interruption and with a minimum of changes. There was not one century, he notes, when poetry was not written in Greek, a fact which indicates the great weight of tradition borne by the Greek language and the great weight of responsibility for the modern Greek poet. In like manner, Constantine Trypanis notes in the Introduction to his anthology of Greek poetry from Homer to Elytis:

Poetry written in Greek constitutes the longest uninterrupted tradition in the Western world. From Homer to the present day not a single generation of Greeks has lived without expressing its joys and sorrows in verse, and frequently in verse of outstanding originality and beauty. [...] It is a happy augury that in the last hundred years better poetry has been written in Greek than in all the fourteen preceding centuries; and that in the last fifty years, by the surrender of its political or purely national aspirations, Greek poetry has again achieved universal validity and significance.

(The Penguin Book of Greek Verse, 1971, p. lxxv)

Few would disagree with Elytis or with Trypanis concerning the traditional role of poetry in Greece or its flourishing in the first half of the 20th century when Greece produced a prodigious number of major poets, regardless of whether or not these poets achieved international recognition. Trypanis, it should be noted, was

writing in 1971 when C.P. Cavafy had already attained international fame and his works were available in multiple English translations, when George Seferis had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (1963), and when Yannis Ritsos and Odysseus Elytis were at the peak of their poetic maturity and were starting to appear in English translation and to arouse interest abroad.

Today, some thirty years after the publication of Trypanis' anthology, the English-speaking reader will most likely be familiar with at least one of these 'Four Evangelists' of Modern Greek Poetry. However, apart from Cavafy, Seferis, Ritsos and Elytis (listed in chronological order of birth but also in the order by which they are generally known in the English-speaking world) few readers will have heard of any other 20th century Greek poets. The English-speaking reader might well be justified in supposing that these Evangelists left no disciples and that, in contrast to the first half of the 20th century, the second half has produced no notable Greek poets. This, of course, is not the case. Nor is it the case that subsequent Greek poets have not been translated into English. Nikiforos Vrettakos (1912-1991), Takis Sinopoulos (1917-1981), Miltos Sachtouris (1919-[2005]), Manolis Anagnostakis (1925-[2005]), Kiki Dimoula (1931-), Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke (1939-) and younger poets such as Yannis Kondos (1943-[2015]) have all been published in book form, while these and a host of others have been published in anthologies and special Greek issues of literary magazines. A great deal of Greek poetry has been translated but it has failed to make any impact in the English-speaking world and Greek poets are generally conspicuous by their absence from the shelves of English bookstores and from the international stage in general.

How is one to account for this absence? One might start in reverse by positing some tentative reasons for the relative success of the four Greek poets who attained varying degrees of international recognition, but also for their descending

order of familiarity in the English-speaking world. Taking their poetic stature as given, one might say that Cavafy was also fortunate in being championed by the likes of Forster, Auden, Durrell and Bowra and in writing a kind of poetry that because of its thematic content and Cavafy's peculiar tone of voice is familiar to the Anglo-Saxon poetic sensibility, especially in the rather prosaic and colloquial English translations in which he has come to be known. Seferis (Greece's first Nobel-Laureate), unquestionably influenced by Eliot and with his modernist use of ancient Greek myth, is also somehow familiar when read in English translation and, like Cavafy, has just enough exoticism and antiquity in his themes to beguile the English reader. Ritsos, who was hounded in Greece for most of his life because of his political persuasions, really came into his own in the English-speaking world during the Seven-Year Military Dictatorship in Greece (1967-74) when to translate him became an act of defiance against the military regime and a cry for democracy. Since then, he has sunk once again into obscurity in the English-speaking world, despite his having being characterised by Louis Aragon (1971) as 'The greatest living poet'. A French poet's susceptibility to Greek hyperbole? Perhaps. Yet nevertheless, a statement that should at least arouse the foreign reader's interest. As for Elytis' poetry, intrinsically linked as it is with the peculiar word forms and sounds of the Greek language, even the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979 did little to enhance his standing in the English-speaking world, and he remains largely unknown or ignored, despite the fact that all his works exist in multiple English translations. Of the four poets here, there is no doubt that Elytis has fared the worst in English translation.

Undoubtedly, what is a distinct advantage for Greek poets, namely their ability to draw on various phases in the Greek language –the ancient, biblical, medieval, learned and popular– becomes a distinct disadvantage for the translator

of Greek poetry into English, which does not possess the same range of linguistic keys to allow the translator to reproduce the music of the original. For example, no corresponding English idiom exists for the purist (katharevousa) language often used in contemporary Greek literature to produce literary effects ranging from the officious and pompous to the ironic and hilarious. It is virtually impossible for the translator to reproduce this admixture of language in English. Yet it is not only the language but also the legacy of Greece that becomes a distinct disadvantage in promoting contemporary Greek poetry abroad. Many contemporary Greek poets who have failed to make any impact in English translation have undoubtedly suffered from the legacy of Greece's ancient past and of a particular perception of Greece by Westerners. The absence in their works of references to antiquity or of folkloric images of Greece conflicts with what the English-speaking reader has come to expect. In contrast, poets like Seferis and Cavafy filtered their reflections on modern Greece and their personal response to modern man's predicament through the familiar prism of ancient Greece and Greek mythology. Ritsos, too, in his later period, makes liberal use of the themes and characters of ancient Greek myths. Elytis, who consciously avoids any reference to ancient myth, nevertheless uses images from the Aegean world as a recurring motif in his early poetry and these images are reasonably familiar to the foreign reader.

Given that so much contemporary Greek poetry has, in fact, been translated, the lack of international recognition for the poets concerned might be attributed to the quality of the translations. It is always easy to put the blame on poor translations. Yet perhaps one should look to other equally important factors such as the distribution and marketing of Greek poetry in translation, and also to the lack of any effective policy on the part of the Greek State concerning the promotion of Greek literature abroad. Regrettably, the fate of modern Greek poetry in translation

is often sealed by slim volumes published by small publishers which never reach the bookshops, let alone the reader.

In the thirty years that have elapsed since Trypanis' appraisal, two whole generations of new poets have appeared whose poetry, even more so than that of preceding generations, is characterised by 'universal validity and significance', and who with their own concerns and modes of expression continue the unbroken Greek poetic tradition. Writing poetry always was and still is a national preoccupation in Greece, even if in recent years its privileged position in the preferences of the reading public has been lost to the novel, largely due, it must be said, to the marketing policies of the Greek commercial publishers. It remains, nevertheless, deeply and passionately rooted in the Greek psyche and the poets who succeed in achieving recognition represent only some of the peaks appearing above the surface of a deep sea of collective poetic conscience. If contemporary Greek poets are to have a readership beyond the borders of Greece and the Greek diaspora, this will require successful translations of their works and an effective policy for promoting them.

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Veroniki DALAKOURA

WHAT VEREFON SAID TO PEGASUS

A young woman I am no longer, Horse, which is why, when you fly so high, my heels keep their silence while touching your ribs: what do my feet have to say once your body enthralls my thighs? My curled fingers, though, caress your neck with the improbable wrath of haste. Down in the world of mammals I wish for the false friendship of the winds. The soles of my feet once more, seeking your nose, mount your forehead, crying out at your hair : 'Stop!' I am not sure whether the doubtful breathing of your cheeks can be loved. I myself never fly because it has been said that by remaining on earth I owe your own pleasure plus the goose pimples on my breasts.

O Sea! O Sea! Infinite Depths , where are you? Where does the dawn find the drowned over whose short voyage you keep vigil?

O Sea! O Sea! Why do I, who have thus fashioned my own life, have to lose it thus-high in the sky, looking down at the castles?

PASSIVE NATIVITY

I copy out the poet Henks's words: 'Don't speak to me about water anymore. Today I have come back from my father's farm. There I filled the drinking trough for the cows, helped a mare to give birth, gelded the pig. I felt full of paternal earth, replete, I might say, with golden hens.

'During all that time I did not study anything. I did not even think about lovemaking under the blue sky. I have returned to my work. I have told my pains to

Elizabeth, who was shooting at the clouds. How I wish you were at my side. I thought about you as I was fixing breakfast.'

The essence of God was conceived by a naive virgin who was ultimately raped so that she would die less chastely. The conjunction of such a factual dimension spurs on the sadness of the idea. Like mythic rivers, the Aouses, the Achelouses, and the Sperchioses flow through valleys, flood the avenues of the deserted city on the eve of the Passive Nativity.

The grasses bend beneath the flow, rise once again, as apartment buildings fill with water.

VISIONS

In a strange dream, numbers replaced my words.

Not knowing how to express truth by equations, I preferred to use down-to-earth notions that would not wound sidereal cogitations.

The friends of planets got angry, vipers spit their venom at me, axioms of superb minds continued to flee from orifices.

'We are alone, dear Cor(ruption),' whispered my companion into my ear.

I observed him. He was very tall, dark green in color, and ashy sparkles flowed for miles from the pupils of his eyes.

'Girl of the Compassions,' I corrected. 'Girl of the Compassions who seeks love in pieces of fruit.'

ROYAL PEACOCK

Here is what happened the other day: I was staggering down awful stairs, my weight had doubled. My fellow citizens, indifferent to the drama that was taking place before their eyes in plain daylight, which make my dilemma all the more tragic, led me to the sea.

Go into the water, royal peacock—could be heard from everywhere—delight in the departure of the cranes. And as the symbol of a wretched species becoming extinct, I waded into the water and then swam to the coast. I enjoyed the anxiety of everyone who was applauding. I shook my feathers and, giving out a terrible yelping, managed to be heard by the bastards on the other shore.

WOMAN FRIEND

A single ray of light was shining through the entirely white forest from one end to the other, and this increased the bewilderment in that the mass of the firmament was still reasserting its darkness.

The sun had not yet risen. The snow was weighing down the branches and had drifted up to the first step, preventing our door from opening easily.

This segment of the day, which was supposed to be early morning, was immaculate, fragrant. A cherub bent on rousing insects kept repeating: 'Steadfast love, resplendent body.' I recognized Sonia's voice. As I approached, she appeared ever further away, but the tracks that I noticed in the snow, in the forest clearing, were hers.

I PLAY AND I LOSE

Under the light of a lunar night, a silent man bends over and draws cards from a deck. His face has the intent look of a card player, yet the man, lost in his calculations, is dwelling, with the greatest discretion, on the next day.

Is it maturity or coincidence that has pushed me near him, during this stroll in the depths of a city belonging to him?

Scattered words, transgressions, throbbing heartbeats, widespread disorder, and then She who slaps me in the face crudely and pathetically, biting my lips, yet seeking what? 'Mother,' I stammer, exhausted, 'it's not my fault if I have lost my way in a red fog. Look!' An astonishing assertion of self.

ADANA

My battered old face cannot ensure a sequel to any fling. This does not mean that I have forgotten: your own face never actually existed, even if fate made us neighbors—friendship was excluded. Later I gave in. Unborn yet already my brother's guardian, I kept returning to a town that I did not acknowledge when I incited the guffaws of its dark-haired men.

Dark like circumspection:

The image on the lake's edge.

An exodus toward the sea?

A disorderly march to Nothingness.

This is insane.

AVERSION

Mountain, mountain, the sun rises on the ruts. Every evening, arrogance, with lying as its sole counterpart, waits for a glimmer, oh my wound.

And yet I have committed myself to building and destroying enormous ossuaries. (They belong and will belong to the environs.) Soul, whispers the companion—formerly—of the flesh, you have sunk into darkness out of charlatanism, look inside yourself! Soft and scattered, these sounds demarcate the hills by piling up the ground that will modify them. I smell tar and think: ‘Foolishness makes me lose your face, scoundrel.’ And then, as I am always on the side of the battered victim, I hit out against all that is dispersed, losing the part of lustfulness.

Good God—me, me with you! Have a little pity, for these scraps of a corpse inspire only apathy.

Silent demons.

Dawn, dawn.

INITIATION

Although neither Gaspara Stampa nor a Marina, she, the sterile one, thus opens the outer doors of brothels in order to listen to the hurrahs of fertility. His days spent with oily hashish, his nights with a punctured lung, the doomed man sleeps carefree next to her. Irrevocably, except that the very qualities of a poet presuppose a familiarity with utter disarray. Yet

Atrocious, all that remains even after the equally atrocious end. Murmurs like ‘pray for me’ replaced confession or participation in barricade battles on the avenues. Panting, he climbed the stairs. The crazy husband was hiding somewhere, perhaps

at the end of the street where he had another woman. In order for winter to exist, contamination needs to be followed by corruption. Yet even if she admitted that she had willingly tarnished her soul, did she really have to lose her body forever?

From Wild Seraphic Fire, 1997. Translated by John Taylor

Zefi DARAKI

Golden Apples Moved

*Over all four walls
the mirror curved its light the girl
wanted to transcend her seventeen
her eighteen years*

*Golden apples moved
in the eternal light assuming a rosy hue
in all encompassing love
as we say April
as we say May*

*With a sad luminescent song
you covered yourself in
the branches of the days
so you would not be crushed by the monster of time*

*When Saturday dawned
the seconds of our bodies
dissolved in our hands*

*The past of the future
was closing in*

From *The Body Without a Pass-Key*. Translated by Tom Nairn

Nikos DAVVETAS

DREAM

*I was hungry in my sleep
and all night my dead sisters
fed me salt*

*later an intolerable thirst gripped me
my throat dried up
'if anyone offers you water
— they whispered —
don' t look them in the face
if you want to wake up'*

*terrified I went down to the yard
our well was sealed up
on it sat naked an unknown woman
from her nipples ran fresh water
I looked in her face
she has no eyes
just two silver coins.*

*My thirst went, but I was hungry again
and all night my dead sisters
fed me salt.*

THE RIVER

*At twilight a blind sea follows me
through the labyrinthine city
I hear her stick tapping oh the flagstones
her white dog barking
at the crossroads;
I try to get away from her
my aimless walk
takes on strength and purpose
sometimes I turn up unknown alleys
vainly seeking a safe refuge.*

*Myself in front and the sea behind
as the years pass I've become accustomed
to her calling me Acheron
to her believing poor creature
that sometime
I shall go back with her
to the forests of the deep.*

Translated by Simon Darragh

ACT III

*They said she was over eighty
but her body looked brisk, youthful
as they brought her onto the stage
with the frayed rope round her neck
the scratches on her chest and face*

*under the ivory skin
the vertebrae of her backbone in relief
step by step
they led up to the forest of her hair.*

*With a wet sponge I cleared away the blood
I washed her chest and armpits
so that beautiful she could travel to the daffodil pastures
but her braid lay in my hand undecided
between black and white*

*God keep the clay
and return to us her soul
for as long as the gates of heaven
remain unguarded.*

Translated by Peter Constantine

THE DOLL'S HOUSE IN ARLES

*Deep in the earth
a severed ear floats on the stream like a plane-leaf;
Sometimes we would whisper in that ear
during public ceremonies, in private moments
sweet words, or severe
now in the earth it can't make out
the footsteps of him who dripped
poison into its labyrinth
nor shudder at the grinding of the knife
on the iron biers of Arles
it remembers only the Spring
when birds nest in the roof
and the dolls stir their stitches a little
stretching their sickly limbs
trying their rusty joints on the boards.*

*In the heat the black Symplegades open
only the cicada passes
on a palm-breadth of light
to sing monotonously
for those who wake with their thoughts on death
but lightly put it off till tomorrow
secretly hoping
all might begin again from nothing*

*just as every March
a new world turns green
and fondly the worms can remember
corpses preserved by the Winter's frosts
and rain-washed roots
like horns buried
in that wandering headless body
can take hope
in Van Gogh's yellow darkness.*

Translated by Simon Darragh

Marisa DE CASTRO

THE NEW ACROPOLIS MUSEUM, MONUMENTS AND MEN

GORGON, A MONSTER THAT MAKES YOUR BLOOD CURDLE

Archaeologists guess that the head of the Gorgon Medusa was the akroterion —the sculptured figure placed on the corner of a roof— of Hekatombedon, an old Acropolis temple.

Why would they put a monster's head there?

Perhaps it was meant to frighten those who were disrespectful to the goddess.

Far away in the west, even further than the Garden of Hesperides and the Kingdom of the Dead, there lived three sisters: Stheno, Euryale and Medusa.

No one dared approach their land. The rocks at the end of the earth, where they lived, were scattered with carcasses. And whoever dared talk about the sisters, god or mortal, had nothing but horror stories to tell.

They were horrifying to look at!

Serpents grew from their heads instead of hair, wild boar's teeth shot out of their mouths, no one could escape if caught in their copper hands and no creature could fly faster than they did when flapping their golden wings.

The two elder sisters were immortal, but Medusa, the youngest, was not.

She had an invincible weapon, though. Her eyes!

Her eyes were so penetrating that they could turn to stone anyone who dared look at her!

The myth says:

Medusa was a beautiful girl with wonderful, long hair. But one day she boasted that her beauty surpassed that of the goddess Athena. The goddess was furious and turned her into a monster...

No need to be afraid! The marble head of Medusa with her deadly eyes has lost its power! She was killed by Perseus who offered her head to Athena.

The goddess put it on her shield to scare off enemies. According to another myth,

Medusa's blood had magical properties: if it ran from her left side, it was poisonous; if it ran from the right, it could bring the dead back to life.

Perseus collected the blood in two vials and gave the good blood to Asklepios, the god of medicine and healing, and the poisonous blood to Athena to use against her enemies.

*

A little calf for the goddess

They found me in a pit on the Acropolis along with many other statues. I carry a calf, so they called me Moschoforos, the calf-bearer. The calf is leaning his head on my shoulder, ever so gently. I can feel his breath on my face. His tail is resting on my arm. The marble I am sculpted on has been dug up from the pit-mines of mount Hymettus. Hymettus is very close to Athens, so it was not too tiring to cart the marble to the workshop.

Take a closer look at my head.

My hair is long and curly. I wear a hair-band to prevent it from falling into my eyes. The hair-band may have been painted...

My eyes are large and they are expressive even without pupils.

I am smiling softly, perhaps to show that the man who offered this statue of me to the goddess was happy with his act.

I have a beard, which shows that I am a grown man.

Despite that, I resemble a kouros — a statue of a young man. Like those figures, I am standing upright and making a little step forward with my left foot. It is with this step, and the smile, that the sculptor made me look alive!

I have a short cloak on my shoulders, a himation.

I wonder if I look like Romvos, the man who offered me to the goddess.

You can find his name on the inscription at the base.

Can you decipher the letters? They are Greek but belong to the era archaeologists call Archaic. That period extends from 600 to 480 BC.

The shape of my body forms a letter. Can you work out which one?

*

The Graces

To begin, the sculptor would choose a piece of marble suitably sized for his work. He might have drawn the representation on the stone to use it as a guide.

Next, with chisel and hammer, he would carve off the marble around the figures to produce a rough approximation of their shapes. He would then use finer,

toothed chisels to work on the details. Finally, he would smooth the surface of the relief with emery and paint his work.

Here, you can clearly see the figures projecting out from the stone. Who are these girls carved on the relief dancing to the tune of the flute? Are they the Graces, the graceful, beautiful daughters of Zeus and the Oceanid Eurynome? Are they Euphrosyne, Thaleia and Aglaia? Maybe...

How about the little boy at the end of the line dancing with them?

Is it Erichthonios, the mythical son of the goddess Athena? Archaeologists can only speculate about these identities, although Pausanias — the travel-writer — did write about a shrine of the Graces on the Acropolis.

The Graces personified grace, beauty and joy. They passed their time accompanying Athena and Aphrodite, frolicking in the open air together with Dionysos, dancing to the sound of Apollo's lyre...

*

Silent Athena

The relief of silent Athena was found near the Parthenon in 1888. We do not know who created it, but we have a rough idea of when it was created. It was sometime between 470 and 460 BC. A time when sculpture workshops in Attica were very busy and sculptors worked long hours.

The danger of a Persian invasion was now over, and the citizens made votive offerings to the gods to thank them for their part in the victory.

Athena tilts her head slightly to the left resting her chin on her shoulder. She is serious, without even the hint of a smile. Her helmet does not seem to weigh her down. A peplos enfolds her whole body. Her right hand rests on her waist. Her left foot is set firmly on the ground. The toes of her right foot barely touch the earth. The spear pointing downwards supports her weight.

Is she sad?

Is she deep in thought?

What might she be thinking of?

Is something bothering her?

Or is she simply resting?

Perhaps she stoops to read the inscription on the stele next to her.

We will never know what the sculptor intended by giving her that expression!

What do you think?

Excerpts from *The new Acropolis Museum, Monuments and men*, 2009
Translated by Eleni Antonopoulou

Alexandra DELIGIORGI

NEW YORK

A Fragment of the last chapter entitled 'New York' from the essay *Anoston Emar*, ed. Agra Athens, 1998, enriched in its English translation under the title *Dystopian Homeland. Travelogue in N. Calas's Art Criticism*

[... It is difficult to understand why N. Calas attempts to reconsider surrealism through the prism of Wittgenstein who put limits to language, when Surrealism wanted to sweep them away. It would be difficult to imagine the answers of the Austrian philosopher of Cambridge, in such a difficult dialogue opened by Calas, if Calas, himself, in an article dedicated to the painter Shusaku Arakawa,⁷ had not suggested that he was interested in the Wittgenstein of the second period. This is the period when the Austrian philosopher abandons his effort to create an ideal language, whose conditions and proposals would 'reveal to us without any ambivalence the logical form of the data they refer to'⁸ and he now realizes that there is not one but two realities: 'the reality of symbolic logic (science) and our own reality (solipsism) that goes on its way through a chain of metaphors and metonymies'. What we can see from Calas's contemplating reference to Wittgenstein, in his essay 'Freedom, Love and Poetry' is this : after Schopenhauer's failed attempt to establish an ethics of non motivation with the argument that neither absolute ethics nor theories of intentions could provide standards or satisfactory criteria for regulating conduct, Wittgenstein was also interested in promoting ethics of non motivation whose rules, contrary to what Schopenhauer could claim, can be put in words. This was possible by perceiving language as

⁷ See 'Reading Arakawa', in *Transfigurations*, op. cit., p. 189;

⁸ J.-P. Saint-Fleur, L. Wittgenstein: 'La transcendance de l'ostension'. Dossier «Wittgenstein et l'esthétique» in *La part de l'oeil*, no 8, 1992.

behavior and by substituting pronouncement, considered as action, for the psychologically vague category of motivation that Wittgenstein refers to. but he does not confirm. By focusing his attention on pragmatic and (not on moral) rules that govern the uses of different expressions, Wittgenstein tried to overcome transcendent ethics whose standards of absolute morality cannot be put in words, and thus he freed the individual from the moral obligation to link standards to facts⁹.

For Calas, this shift from moral to pragmatic rules and from transcendent to pragmatic ethics, seen in psychoanalytical terms, is of extreme importance because it does not downgrade will, contrary to Schopenhauer, who, by claiming that the solipsistic individual, in his will for self-preservation, ignores or overlooks the sameness of nature of the individuality he shares with others, concluded the renunciation of will.

For Calas, ethics of desire to which only the free man is to be bound, can be pragmatic rather than idealistic in its struggling against obstacles to its fulfillment. In such a pragmatic ethics of desire, the will which obeys to pragmatic rules (artistic or political) established by the language used in the making of the artwork (or of the work of politics) , is the sine qua none and the key-term at least for those whose desires in order to be fulfilled, do not necessarily surrender to an internalized superego that forbids desire's fulfillment in the name of religious or political salvation or in the name of social conventionality. In a divided world of happy and unhappy ones whose perspective is not a single or unified one but double will which might be unnecessary for the happy ones who have the freedom of choice, is what is most needed by those unhappy ones(the oppressed) who have not the freedom of choice, in order to fight against injustice and oppression. In his approach

⁹ N. Calas, ' Freedom, Love, Poetry' in *Transfigurations*, op. cit., 97.

to Wittgenstein, Calas attempts to renew humanitarian attitude and conduct by giving to its fundamental values like fraternity, solidarity and freedom which are being gradually debased in the conditions prevailing in postindustrial societies, a less vague or programmatic content and meaning. Thus, this is not the only reference to Wittgenstein we can find in his work *Transfigurations*. As Calas confesses, it was from Wittgenstein that he learned that paintings are best described when they are perceived as verbal games that have metaphysical significance but where, nonetheless, such pragmatic rules are still operative. Wittgenstein's idea that one can imagine that two people should play chess in a world where there would be no games otherwise, and moreover that they should start a game and then interrupt it, fascinated Calas who by opposing to Kant's definition of art, does not see art as a play. but who, in the same time, clearly distinguishes the field of the artwork from the field of wage labor, by claiming that art is disinterested in satisfying practical needs ; since artist resists in his integration in the social division of labor, it is in the radicalization of the concept of game that Calas finds the key-idea to suggest that the role of the avant-garde critic is not to legislate (criteria of beautiful or sublime) but to unsettle¹⁰ the established ones. In an exhibition of 'Games without rules' at the Fischbach Gallery, of 1966, whose joint organization he proposed to some artists, Calas willing to defend the role of the absurd in the domain of art, did not hesitate to 'include, by poetic license, (besides) games that set new rules', games without rules. Calas himself proposed a game with chessmen identical in shape and color for both players ¹¹. Was only by poetic license that he proposes games without rules, and, if this is not enough provocative, games that set their own rules? The answer is unhesitatingly no, given that in early 70s, besides the climate of war due to Vietnam,

¹⁰ *Transfigurations*, op. cit., p.6.

¹¹ See Games, in *Icons and Images*, op. cit., p. 317.

art by its contributions to the sign-system of popular culture, has been turning rapidly to a branch of commodity production. In his essay ' Games', he is explicit when he opposes the game — a prototype of rational conflict— to contract which is the prototype of rational agreement in order to point out that the spirit of the game is polemical and its function is to channelize aggression. He makes clear that the analysis of art in terms of a game is at the antipodes of appreciation through effective identification with the work, as a method grounded on psychoanalysis. Calas explains this shift as ' reflecting a loss of confidence in a contractual order and a mounting aggressiveness toward one's neighbors' ¹².

But as Calas' criticism has not the character of a sterile polemics but rather that of a uncompromising and fruitful analysis of artwork, the idea of art as a game helps him to adjust his conception of artwork as the result of the artist's struggle to fulfill his desire against the obstacles raised up by the social system and by his own psychological structure to the conditions prevailing in the postindustrial society that pushes the artist to become a pragmatist, if not a cynical. As Calas had never claimed that art is the carrier of high spiritual values, but only of those existential ones like freedom, fraternity and solidarity, we can guess what brings this Marxist and Freudian rebellious critic close to the restrained Wittgenstein: the latter's interest in dissolving the misunderstandings accumulated in the field of Aesthetics in order to undermine the overestimated importance of aesthetic issues. I assume that Calas would be very enthusiastic when he read Wittgenstein's remark that traditional Aesthetics fell in the trap of language, by starting from the concept of the beautiful and sublime and by trying to give them definitions, while it should have

¹² 'Games' in *Icons and Images*, op. cit., p. 322-324.

started not from words (nor from concepts) but from certain circumstances and activities which are integrally connected to aesthetic modes of expression¹³.

Calas interested in the sublime, agreed with Wittgenstein in his considering ridiculous the view that Aesthetics is the science of the beautiful .¹⁴ He must have been enthusiastic also by the fact that Wittgenstein criticized the attempts of psychologists to turn Aesthetics into a field of experimental psychology, thus reducing the problem of esthetic expression to the definition of the results that cause certain resonances and arrangements of form and color on our psychological composition. The same is true in relation to the fact that he wished to restore to Aesthetics the lands it had lost after the invasion of psychologists in its territory, by showing that their attempts to create a mechanics of pleasure was irrelevant to aesthetic pursuits .

In fact, Calas believed that aesthetic and empiricist psychological approaches were incompatible, and that aesthetic pursuits had nothing to do with mere pleasure and beauty. In contrast to Wittgenstein, he was clear that aesthetic pursuits were, as we shall see, more relevant to artist' s agony and fears. It was also Wittgenstein's break with the Kantian *Critique of Judgment* and particularly Wittgenstein's view that pleasure always presupposes knowledge that brought Calas close to his ideas. Because Calas's credo right from the start was Da Vinci's Delphic verdict 'saper vedere' reinterpreted in 'know what to see' (for the artist) and 'know how to see' for the critic.¹⁵

A more systematic approach to Calas's critical essays has a lot to say about his turn to the Austrian philosopher who resorted to the Anglo-Saxon philosophical

¹³ *Op.cit.*, section II and 2

¹⁴ *Op.cit.*, section II and 35

¹⁵ *Sapere Videre*, in *Transfigurations*, op. cit., p.209. Calas refers to *saper vedere* also in his essay 'Recent Developments in Tek Art', in *Icons and Images*, *op.cit.*,p. 308.

paradigm in order to put to the test the modes German idealism and romanticism conceived and exercised freedom. In his manuscript of the *New Prometheus*, written just after the World War II, Calas decided to talk about the main issue of his thought – freedom – but in a language that had not learned yet to spare its powers, after so many attempts to break the barrier of silence which presumably limited it.

Almost two decades later, having Wittgenstein behind him, who admitted from the start that there are things that cannot be said, secrets that are not revealed, Calas reminds us that although we cannot think without signs that signify sensorial data, these latter can barely render the whole of experienced and yet inconceived and unknown reality. As he states, ‘all that we know about the inconceivable are the names we give to it ... As he{the artist} creates an imaginary representation of the unknown, his [Arakawa’s] works become metaphors of the impossible’.¹⁶ This phrase explains Calas’ s constant concern about symbols which increasingly disappear from the field of art. For him, signs as substitute of symbols, do not only impoverish art, they also disorientate its role and function...]

Translated by Fotini Apostolou

¹⁶ Reading Arakawa, in *Transfigurations*, op. cit., p. 194.

Angelos DELIVORRIAS

Great Sculpture in Fifth-Century Athens

ATOSSA: *Meanwhile, my friends, I would like to learn where Athens is located.*

CHORUS: *Far from here, to the west where the last rays of our Lord the Sun set.*

AESCHYLUS, *The Persians*, 230-232

Needless to say, Athenian history –the history of an incalculable contribution to mankind– does not begin in the fifth century B.C., which was to become known as the Golden Age of Greek antiquity. Nor did Athenian sculpture begin then: it started much earlier, following remarkably closely the progress of social and intellectual evolution, that is to say the gradual transformation of the political system through the ages until finally it crystallized as an unrivalled model for the administration of public affairs. Ever since then, this has been the yardstick by which all constitutional systems in the world have been judged.

THE END OF THE LATE ARCHAIC PERIOD

Overture: Adagio con spirito, sostenuto. In monumental sculpture, as in every other manifestation of the need for self-expression, the artist's struggle to externalise his feelings is vitalized chiefly by an absolutely conscious tendency to free the dynamic of art from the shackles of materiality. This is a fundamentally important attribute of artistic creation which, while guaranteeing durability and the immutability of values, remains indifferent to the challenges of spatial relationships and the attraction exerted by untrodden paths beckoning him towards new forms – or rather

the attraction exerted by the flight from the apparently real to the really apparent. In the Archaic period, during the sixth century B.C., materiality as a value and immobility as a virtue quickly reached the limits of their revelatory powers, juxtaposing creativity with visual charm, in other words with that which is cheerful and pleasing, with a view of the beauty of things that is admittedly optimistic and positive but nonetheless purely external. However, the wonders of the world, a world in motion, naturally provoked reactions of a different kind and raised questions of a different order with ever-increasing frequency.

Knowing that man had been posited as the measure of all things, artists soon yielded uninhibitedly to the mystical enchantment of an exploratory frame of mind that leads almost inevitably from the fascinating charm of form to the consuming excitement of its content, from its visible outer trappings of its hidden inner kernel, from the mythical dimension of its value judgments to its deeper existential meaning. In this way they discovered in movement the fundamental activating force of life, and in the anthropocentric approach to all things they discovered not only the relative contributions of individual responsibility to the conception and rendering of the world but also the potentialities of personal participation in its formulation and interpretation. In this mobile universe, respect for the pictorial elements of form and an obligation to penetrate and understand its inner meaning are kindled by the mechanisms of an unprecedented kinetic vitality, and they quickly move on from observation and admiration, optimistic acceptance and abstract generalization to active searching for its root causes. That quest in turn leads on to a dynamic remoulding of the ingredients of reality through the transference of personal characteristics on to the harmonic frequencies of a process of idealization, which, however, never transgresses the strict boundary separating

the natural law from the sin of hubris. And this is a hallmark of the subsequent evolution of ancient Greek art.

I have no idea whether a foreigner arriving in Athens in the fifth century B.C. would have been able to realize what had gone before; whether the images of the works of art he encountered on his peregrinations would automatically have made him think of the epic struggle for self-expression, which had followed the same path in other, unexplored fields of artistic and intellectual creativity; whether he would have been able to discern the common factors that had led to the revelation of history (for example, through the realization that the responsibility for man's fate lies with man himself just as much as with God) or the birth of the theatre (where this realization is made the object of a shatteringly critical self-examination) or to the search for true knowledge through philosophy (where thought is elevated from the fundamental questions suggested by the horizons of the natural environment to the mysterious realm of human behaviour). Times had changed, of course, and democratic government had become firmly entrenched after the famous victories of Marathon (490), Salamis (480) and Plataiai (479). Following the repulse of the Persian invaders, some of the destroyed monuments of the Archaic period were used as building material for the city wall that was to protect Athens from similar harrowing experiences in the future, while others were buried devoutly under the soil of the Acropolis, where the foundations of fifth-century art were laid, as a lasting reminder of the universal significance of the conflict between the Athenians and the despotism of the East. Remembrance of the past was kept alive not by the fetishistic conservation of ruins but by a culture that strengthened character through the precepts of self-knowledge, thanks to the power of suggestion and the fact that the lessons of history were taught more tellingly through the example of mythology. From then on –and this was a characteristic of the whole gamut of Greek art

throughout its dialectical continuity— exploratory trends in art were never inhibited by regret over opportunities lost in the past: on the contrary, they were encouraged by the promise held out by the present for future success in striving for an unchanging ideal.

THE SEVERE STYLE

March: Allegro marziale con anima. A lively sense of history, especially as regards the correlation of history with the preservation of memory, can be discerned in every branch of the arts, in the shape of large-scale projects commissioned by the state as soon as life in Athens had started returning to normal. The famous bronze monument to the Tyrannicides (Harmodios and Aristogeiton) represents the city's first honorific commemoration of its historic past, shortly before the production of Aischylos's *The Persians* at the Theatre of Dionysos in 472 B.C. This sculptural group by Kritios and Nesiotes was put up in the Agora in 477/6 to replace the Archaic version of the same theme, which had been carried off by the Persians and would never have been restored to its original home without the help of Alexander the Great nearly two centuries later. The fame of this work and good likenesses of it have been preserved by numerous Roman copies in marble, which testify to the stylistic magnificence of the original and the Romans' skill in reproducing old masterpieces to meet the ever-increasing needs of the imperial period. The vivid depiction of the tyrannicides' indomitable boldness and self-assurance and the almost naturalistic ripple of their muscles, breathing life and movement into their bodies, are still worlds away from the more advanced anatomical knowledge of Archaic sculpture. The relationship of the two figures in the original work and the question of which was the front side have been the subject of interminable debate,

but the message for today's viewer is one of valour, conveyed by the glorious deployment of the axial lines, which pierce –or rather which seem to be break through– the obstacles to communication and the optical barriers of conventional pictorial space.

The trend towards greater realism in sculpture as a mark of respect to the natural environment is equally apparent in other works of the early fifth century B.C., the period of what art historians call the Severe Style (490-460 B.C.). Many sculptures of that time are remarkable for their bold freedom of movement, the ruggedness of their facial features and a certain despondency of expression. All those characteristics are typical of a great Boeotian sculptor working in Athens, Myron of Eleutherai, whose best-known work (made famous by Roman copies) is the bronze group of Athena and Marsyas set up on the Acropolis circa 450 B.C. Here the compositional relationship between the two figures possesses a unity derived from a state of mind that can now be called Classical, for it has outgrown the explosive extroversion of the Severe Style and keeps the autonomy of the figures within the bounds of a closed, unified world teeming with nuances of meaning. Myron is also credited with a number of other works that are either lost or dubiously attributed to him, including a statue of Erechtheus and one of Perseus holding Medusa's head, both on the Acropolis, and two more groups depicting Theseus in combat with the Minotaur and the bull of Marathon. Throughout the fifth century the exploits of Theseus, the Athenian hero par excellence, continued to provide inspiration not only for artists but also for official Athenian propaganda, as symbolizing the union of the Attic demes and the birth of democracy in Athens. The cycle of his youthful exploits, the coupling of his name with that of Herakles in the story of the Amazonomachy at Themiskyra and his two great personal triumphs in the Centauromachy and the Athens Amazonomachy, all of which served to remind

the Athenians of their superiority in struggles against uncivilized enemies, were retold again and again in the great public works projects of the Athenian state.

The female figures of the Severe Style are characterized by a heavier structure, greater emphasis on the weight of the garments and noticeably more restraint of movement. These basic specifications were retained until about the middle of the fifth century and are still apparent in the 'Cherchel Demeter', a statue type that appears to have no stylistic antecedents, where the gravity of the godhead is accentuated by the heaviness of the simple peplos with its few relieving folds. In the 'Mocenigo Demeter', another unclassifiable type, the graceful drapery of the chiton has already begun to express the dictates of a different kind of harmony. The chiton, pleasingly combined with the tonal variations of the folds of the peplos round the body, epitomizes the aesthetic taste that was to prevail during the thirty years of the High Classical period in such works as the 'Albani Kore'.

The sculptural potentialities of the peplos and of the chiton and himation are exploited together in one of the most impressive and original works of the next thirty years: the large relief of Demeter, Kore (Persephone) and Triptolemos from Eleusis, probably intended for ritual purposes and obviously carved by a very fine sculptor, whose high reputation is evidenced by the number of Roman copies of his work. Other sanctuaries in Attica, too, with their splendid new temples erected on the ruins left by the Persian invaders, were adorned with an astonishing number of magnificent sculptures; and the same is even more true of the temples, sanctuaries and public places in Athens, especially the Agora, where work had already started on the sculptural ornamentation of the Temple of Hephaistos and Athena, the best-preserved Classical building in Greece. It is absolutely out of the question that the production of major sculptures in such extravagantly large numbers could have been the work of Athenian artists alone, and in any case the demand created by the

acceleration of building programmes is known to have attracted a lot of experienced sculptors from other Greek cities, each working in his own aesthetic tradition. The assimilation of these different artistic approaches, with Attic workshops exerting a dominant influence and with the genius of Pheidias putting its imprint on everything, was what gave Athenian sculpture of the time of Perikles (461-429 B.C.) its special character.

THE HIGH CLASSICAL PERIOD

Song of Praise: *Allegro maestoso, vivace*. Few of the attributed sculptures of the thirty-year High Classical period are mentioned in the written sources, and even fewer have survived the ravages of time. However, the existence of Roman copies that capture their essential qualities gives us a good idea of what many of them looked like and has enabled scholars to decipher the spiritual message conveyed by their mode of expression, using the Parthenon sculptures as a yardstick. For at no other time was the greatness of inspiration so faithfully served by inspired carving of the marble as it was in the sculptural ornamentation of the temple erected on the Acropolis as a tribute to the city's patron goddess and her system of government: of that there should be no doubt. Never before or since have historical facts been epitomized with such shattering eloquence in stories from mythology; never before or since has there been such an exciting correlation between the level of self-knowledge and the level of expressive skill, between religious feeling and social need, between individual liberty and personal commitment, between the experience of the past and the expectations of the present, between political propaganda and the ideology of a state.

In the various parts of the Parthenon's ornamentation art historians have discerned the hands of a whole host of different artists, 'poets working with chisel and stone', each making his own contribution to the realization of Perikles's vision and the overall design co-ordinated by Pheidias. Plutarch expressly informs us that 'everything was managed and superintended by Pheidias', and his reliability is not in question here. That explains the fact that it is not just a matter of superb technical skill: the inner unity of the overall design is apparent in every part of the decorative scheme –even in fragments of marble fragments– and in the majestic inspiration of the guiding hand that lifts every craftsman to the peak of his potential in a chorus that is polyphonic in structure and symphonic in its organization, a chorus in whose composition the human dimension is fused with the divine.

In the unification of the architectural design, the ornaments and the figural sculptures an important part was played by the metopes, carved in bold relief, which ran round the outside of the building on all four sides, subduing the upward thrust of the colonnades and reinforcing their stability. The metopes at the east end, over the entrance to the temple, were badly mutilated in the Early Christian period, but traces remained of the outlines of the figures and an analysis of the subject was published by Camillo Praschniker: almost certainly, these metopes depicted Athena and other gods and goddesses in scenes from the Gigantomachy. Also badly damaged are the metopes at the west end, which depicted the Athenian Amazonomachy with Theseus playing a prominent part in the defence of his homeland. Responsibility for the almost complete destruction of the north metopes with the exception of the 32nd, which remained intact in situ, has to be shared between the religious fury of the early Christians and the bombardment of the Parthenon by Morosini's Venetian army in 1687. Yet even here archaeologists have managed to identify the subjects of some of the panels depicting the dramatic events

of the siege of Troy, giving prominence to the feats of the Athenians and especially the participation of Theseus's two sons, who were shown rescuing their grandmother Aithra from captivity. The metopes of the south side showing the Centauromachy, unlike those on the other three sides, are in very good condition, especially since the marvellous restoration of the central section from a large number of fragments identified and pieced together by Alexandros Mantis. Apropos of the brutish assault on the bride and guests at Peirithoos's wedding, Theseus is once again held up as an example of the values cherished through the ages by the Athenian political leadership. Much has been written about the symbolic implications of these mythological stories and their connection with Athenian ideology of the Classical period: the main point here, of course, is that the conflict between the power of reason and mindless violence is to be understood as analogous to the conflict between law and order and lawless abuse, between the Greeks and the barbarians, between the Athenians and all their enemies.

An Athenian citizen would no doubt have been filled with a similar sense of pride in his country and its political system on looking at the more conspicuous sculptural groups in the pediments of the Parthenon, the birth of Athena at the east and the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Attica at the west. Running through these highly significant compositions is a more profound train of thought and a dialectical analogy in which the patron goddess, seen as the personification of her blessed city, is the linchpin connecting a whole series of contrasting pairs of oblique allusions: in the east pediment, the peak of Mt. Olympos with the entire Hellenic pantheon welcoming the newborn goddess; in the west pediment, the flat summit of the Acropolis with the mythical founders of Athens passing judgment on the gifts offered by the competing deities. In the former, and event of the utmost theological significance projects its apocalyptic grandeur on to

celestial, or rather cosmic, co-ordinates, with the rising of Helios (the sun) at one end and the setting of Selene (the moon) at the other. In the latter, the terrestrial component of the divine nature is taken as a function of human need, with the cosmic dimension of the subject limited to the confines of Athenian territory. Here the personifications of the River Kephisos, the River Ilissos and the Kallirrhoe Spring mark the outermost limits of a marvellous work of narrative sculpture which, while vindicating the Athenians' choice of the gifts offered by Athena, shows a decent generosity of spirit by giving equal honour to Poseidon – and quite properly so, in view of the Athenians' growing interest in the sea.

The Parthenon sculptures, or those of them that have escaped the fate of most Greek antiquities, breathe the rarefied air of an expressive range too vast to be compared with present-day values, conveying a feeling of immense freedom that knows and respects its limits; a freedom that extends its embrace in equal measure to inspiration and to execution, that goes far beyond the parameters of time and space, a freedom for which no match is to be found in the earlier or later history of sculpture. That is why they have so far withstood all attempts by art historians to explain the meaning of their forms and the significance of their subject matter. The great Greek archaeologist Christos Karouzos put his finger on the truth when he declared, in a similar context, that the dialectical miracle of the High Classical period can only be expressed in feeble oxymorons: during those thirty years in particular, he said, 'Tranquillity is a form of terrible spiritual and mental conflict, universality a form of superabundant individuality, ideality an expression of the most familiar reality'. His pithy and perceptive words come closer to the gist of the matter than anything that has been said on the subject before or since.

The only other point I should like to make about the Parthenon sculptures in particular concerns their musical tonality, that is to say their underlying rhythmic

structure and their melodic values. To me it seems really remarkable that their essential quality is still expressed in musical metaphors, in spite of the gaps left by mutilation at the hands of the early Christians, destruction or damage caused by the bombardment of 1687 and systematic looting in 1800-1803, with the result that what remain of the Parthenon's sculptures are scattered in countless museums and private collections in Greece and abroad. So I would speak of a crescendo that starts at the east end –the heavenly, divine end– and grows in volume at the west. For the west end –the earthly, human end– was the first subject of the sculptural counterpoint to be seen by the pilgrim as he emerged from the Propylaia to be confronted by one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Gerasimos DENDRINOS

Looking back on the years of grief. The gradual transformation of grandmamma. The seamstress Kleopatra Laoumtzi.

...Father, indeed, never lent an ear to these stories. Only at the beginning I remember, he fixed his drowsy eyes on his plate and didn't utter a word, and in fact if he had uttered it would have been to find out what sort of food grandmamma intended to cook for the next day. Generally he considered her goings on to be fantastical and ridiculous, particularly as his mother-in-law maintained that her grief was especially deep since, after mother (actually in March of the same year), it happened that King Paul died. For all that her tears had in due course dried up in my presence, her excruciating sighs dragged on for a long time, the shakings of her head, the stifling monologues and, very rarely, when no solution was to be found for some family problem, the fearful curses against our lot. My room (it was from there that I heard everything, whisperings which I took for the buzzing of insects or at the most the sound of grand mama's worn slippers as she shuffled along the damp corridor), ended up as a refuge, a sort of confessional where, most of the time, I talked to myself about whatever troubled me and, as usual, I never found a solution ever.

The first year of mourning we lived like the blind until one day grandmamma opened the windows wide with all the appearance of indignation, and the balcony doors, she put on formal clothes and finally invited her women friends to our house. Perhaps she had believed till then that regular visits to the house, after the sad event, would entail a ceaseless flow of condolences from the

curious and from humbugs, for that reason she took care, in a skillful manner, to get rid of as easily as possible every inquisitive visitor who ventured to cross our threshold. 'My son-in-law doesn't want anything like that,' she would say, 'and any talk of my daughter really cuts him up.'

Thus, the visitors began. Friends who had been forgotten in the meantime, appeared with their perpetually ailing husbands who never even thought of lifting so much as a finger to help them – 'but mark my words, God, who sees everything will punish those who want everything served up on a plate' – all of this they said in front of their husbands who just laughed as if the whole thing was a joke (under no circumstances did they want to accept their wives' instructions), and as for the point of the visit, it was obvious that they had been beguiled by their wives into going to see a woman who never looked one in the eye.

I detested as nothing else these friends of grandmamma. I couldn't understand where they found the courage to joke and snigger at a time when, for all that they had just passed fifty and were the same age as grandmamma, they looked so prematurely aged. Only to see their face was enough: their flesh was pendulous, divided by deep wrinkles like incisions, while their hands were already dotted with a few brown freckles like burns. Whatever they said about the past, the stories were for me unique, because they were describing with such persuasiveness an epoch better than our own, even if it was a time of pain, poverty and war, it was one of greater integrity and benevolence, as they asserted, than today's world. Furthermore it was very difficult to believe that these women really were, as they declared, good and honest and not just frightful gossips who could not accept even once that they were in the wrong. Their gloomy faces remained forever distant even when they burst out laughing and from the many prejudices they had, one stood out: men made the mistakes and it was they the victims who paid – the women!

But the husbands too, who had about a ten – or fifteen—year difference in age with their wives, were for me ‘very old’. I, seated usually in a low chair in the drawing-room listening to the sensational accounts of Messers Papios Apostolos and Phiteoglou Abraam, IKA pensioners and fanatical Karamanlis supporters, I would imagine them frozen in their coffins, with their hooked noses jutting out, and you would have thought they wouldn’t be able to close their parrot-like mouths so as not to complain, only that now the complaints continued from the mouth of the ‘widowed’ spouse, who vociferously maintained how she suffered from a supposed loneliness and despair.

One afternoon as I had been swept away by these imaginings of mine seated right next to them, I thought that suddenly there rose up in front of me – as then with mother – enormous candlesticks which burnt all night, and seated opposite was aunt Irene, mother’s sister, continuing her wailing which died away all at once in the silence, she had shrunk so much, I could well believe that she would be lost in her mourning weeds. Those were strange years, I believed at that time to the point of madness in sprites and nymphs which on being transformed into beautiful girls would go as far as to seduce you, but according to Sophoula, my grown up cousin, mother would never become an apparition except in dreams – ‘don’t be stupid’ she would tell me, ‘and if sometime, you idiot, she appears in front of you, it will be to protect you.’

Father never gave any credence to these inanities, he maintained that all that sort of thing was a way of taking in the unsuspecting. One day, however, in July 1965, when a political storm had broken out in Athens over the repeated letters sent out by King Constantine to George Papandreou about the leading role of his son Andreas in the secret organization of captains ‘Aspida’, and grandmamma was continually cursing the two-faced ‘demagogic and provocative Old Man’ who ‘owes

so much to the Palace, but who has left his son free to knock about like an unfenced vine in the army', making it necessary for me to withdraw to my room, from the corridor I caught a glimpse of my father in the bedroom, he was pleading wholeheartedly in front of the icons for some unforeseen misfortune he had suffered (I didn't manage to track down what it was at the time), I was surprised to learn that deep down he too believed, for all that to us he displayed a general countenance of disbelief until, two days later, when it appeared that everything was going really well again and as a result he ordered grandmamma to make amygdalota and loukoumades, his favourite sweetmeats.

Because of this incident the icons were, from this time on, completely lost in the haze of my imaginings. The Archangel Gabriel for example, who, in the oil painting hung in my room by my late mother, so dark and ghastly at first, girdled with belts and weapons, became with time a 'good spirit' (not, certainly, Anaskelas the cross-eyed demon in the shape of a donkey who was always turning into a woman or a dog), and piercing the glass of the icon at night was approaching my pillow to deliver me from bad dreams, giving me in exchange ones that were bright and heavenly.

Outside my own world of tortured visions, grandmamma was getting along very well and she took the decision at last to open the windows. She wore lighter and lighter coloured clothes (the change of colour lasted for about a month), and from time to time she dug her old outfits out of the cupboard, removed the anti-moth bags from the dresses, spread them out on the bed and inspected them for ages, as if she intended to select the best, or to decide on their fate. From that day on she didn't call for any more blessings with holy water from the priest of the cemetery who in the summer habitually circulated amongst the tombstones with an

antiquated umbrella, mother's grave she abandoned at nightfall, when the cemetery closed.

Our house, despite all the changes that time managed to bring, retained its internal gloom. In mother's bedroom there was always a diffused atmosphere of woe, which neither the open windows nor the jokes that grandmamma made could dispel, and something unspecified – perhaps the absence of a loved face which I hadn't had time to enjoy, not even this is known to me completely – tormented me. When I was upset then, I had the impression that I heard mother's footsteps outside – her firm, heavy tread on the wooden floor of the passage – which changed in tone, just as in the past she used to approach my room and enter for a drawn out kiss...

Extract from the novel *Chairetismata apo to noto* (Part 1, chapter 2)

Sotiris DIMITRIOU

From

The Vein in the Neck

She had kept some of his shirts and a jacket or two. At night, she would put her arms around one of them and would surrender to a delirium of tenderness. Should she forget everything, she could never forget the sweetness in her mouth. She had never said this to anyone and had never heard anyone say it. When he touched her, and held her, her mouth would fill with a sweetness that rose from deep inside her. When the sweetness flowed, it was unbearable and she would swallow it again and again to send it back where it came from. She would choke, she would lose the world around her. His clothes offered her only faded traces of that sweetness. In moments like this she intensely, totally, felt his absence. In her anguish, the only words she could utter, the only words that could remotely express her feelings for him were: 'Oh, God!' 'Oh, God! God! God!' She was silent and shielded herself when in the company of people. It was only when she heard of some other man who had cancer — and she often heard such news, being a widow — she was still hopeful, he might live, she couldn't help saying. 'Let's wait and see, we don't know yet...' [...]

Kiki DIMOULA

NO-STAR BRANDY

The words of tears get completely lost.

When disorder speaks order should be silent

–loss has great experience.

Now we ought to stand by

the pointless.

That slowly memory might again find its speech

give fine advice for a long life

to whatever's dead.

Let's stand by this small

photograph

that's still in the bloom of its future:

young a little pointlessly locked in embrace

facing an anonymously

cheery seashore.

Nafplio Evia Skopelos?¹⁷

You'll say

and where wasn't there sea then.

¹⁷ Nafplio is an historic town in the Argolid. It became the first capital of Greece in 1929. Evia (Euboea) is the second largest island after Crete. Skopelos is an island in the Northern Sporades.

As If You'd Chosen

*It's Friday today I'm going to the market
to take a walk in the decapitated gardens
to see the oregano's fragrance
a slave in bundles.*

*I go in the afternoon when demands' prices have fallen
you find the green easy
on beans marrows mallows and lilies.*

*It's there I hear how boldly the trees express themselves
in the fruit's sharp tongue
heaps of orators the oranges and apples
and a slight recovery starts to grow rosy
in the sallow cheeks
of a muteness within.*

*I rarely buy. For there it's choose for yourself.
Is that an advantage or problem? You choose and then
how do you bear the unbearable burden
of your choice.*

*Whereas that by chance is so feather-bed soft. At first.
For afterwards you stagger beneath the consequences.
These too being unbearable. In fact it's as if you'd chosen.*

*If anything I'll buy a little soil. Not for flowers.
For getting accustomed.*

There it's not choose for yourself. There the eyes are closed.

RE-RUINATION, II

And
I'm even afraid of my hands'
touch on these stones
lest it accentuate the decay, accelerate
the ruins' ruination.
ATHOS DIMOULAS

*When was it you brought me here
to show me round the oracles?
So I might inquire of the sibyl Memory.
The other one beside, the high priestess Lethe,
has crowds of people is up to the neck in work
swallows unchewed the fummy leaves¹⁸
of everything forgettable.*

*It's been raining since yesterday.
Whatever I see from the restaurant window
wants to disappear. It's a job to keep the columns
of Athena Pronaia¹⁹ opposite from falling
-I must be careful when I copy out this view*

¹⁸ Reference to the fact that the priestess at Delphi, the Pythia, chewed laurel leaves and inhaled the fumes rising from a fissure in the ground to induce a state of prophetic trance.

¹⁹ *Pronaia*: literally 'in front of the temple', as this temple to the goddess Athena is situated below the great temple to Apollo. Dimoula makes a pun on the sound of the word, which could also - erroneously- be written *pronea*, meaning 'formerly young'.

*not to get carried away by the consonance
and write Pronea. They'll say I'm showing
a mirror round the ruins.*

*It's raining. Large groups of noises
take refuge in the restaurant.*

*Locals, history's lovers, couples
in love – students of their own futures
touring pensioners,
renovators of ennui families
societies chairmen bouquets of speakers.*

*Foreign languages flow in cups of our own
the rain fences with the cutlery
portions of conversations are devoured, bottles
of wine stretch their necks to recount
anecdotes jokes laughter break out.*

*Waiters the impressions bound enraptured
from table to table
vociferous desserts are ordered by camaraderie.*

*While I'm respectful; I eat in a low voice
in the company of my one Apollonian cover.*

Philip DRACOD Aidis

The Message

«... On the occasion of the taking of the Winter Palace and the victorious progress of the long years of struggle endured by the Russian people, You personally and Your Collaborators, I congratulate warmly and side wholeheartedly with you, convinced of the progress of the revolution and the prosperity of Your country.

EMILIANO ZAPATA, GENERAL OF THE LIBERATION ARMY OF THE SOUTH ANENECUILCO, PROVINCE OF MORELOS, MEXICO, 28th October 1917».

– We are not at Anenecuilco, Emiliano Zapata's secretary Manuel Palafox grumbled.

– But that was where my election took place, the general reminded him.

He signed the letter, folded it, put it in the envelope, and wetting the edge with his saliva he closed it. He had to be informed about events in Russia; the anarcho-syndicalists and the vagrant missionaries of the rebellion and the imminent overthrow of mundane affairs had written and proclaimed so much that he had only retained in his memory the barest minimum, which is not far from the truth. He had no special faith in the trumpeting of the press.

– We have added no number to the register, remarked the secretary.

– Call me some volunteers, Emiliano Zapata ordered.

A soldier opened the door of the general's office.

– So you are the first? asked Emiliano Zapata.

– I have the honor to report that I am the first volunteer, sir.

– Who is the second?

– I have the honor to report that there is no second volunteer, sir.

Thus came about the selection of the volunteer who was to take from Emiliano Zapata's hands the paper of unknown contents –*the message*– in the closed white envelope and set out within the next few hours (at any rate that very day) from southern Mexico, on horseback, to get as fast as possible to the center of Moscow and hand it over to the great Lenin. There was no need for him to stay for an answer, and he had the right to return at his leisure on condition that he remembered everything that might be transmitted to him, orally and briefly, by the Leader of the Bolsheviks. What matters is what we ourselves do, not what others see fit to let us know. Manuel Palafox would take upon himself to provide the volunteer with supplies of sandwiches and the necessary passport for his transit through friendly regions of the country and through each foreign state. A map was not needed. From the province of Morelos in Mexico to Moscow is not very far, what it takes to smoke a cigar at most.

– Let him take along several boxes of cigars, said the general.

– I do not smoke, sir, said the volunteer.

The Leader of the Bolsheviks would appreciate the message from the General of the Liberation Army of the South: Mexico had stolen a march on Russia; the revolution had begun already in 1911, it would soon be in its seventh year on end, and it would last as many years as necessary, seventy, seven thousand at that; time does not matter, even if traitors try to corrupt the revolution.

The soldier had been told straight from the general's mouth that the envelope must not be lost whatever happened and that the bearer ought to be careful not to lose his life, for no one would follow on his heels like a relay runner to pick up the message and carry it immediately to the addressee. This certainly did not mean diffidence and giving way or compromise. A bearer leads a natural life like anybody else. And the soldier understood that we hold our lives in order to

carry a message from here to there, and with some luck, all the way to Moscow. He did not even know where to find Moscow, nor how to reach its gate. But he thought that all roads lead to Rome if you ask your way. It would not do to lose one's way and go to Saint Petersburg. The revolution may have started there, but like all revolutions it hurries to meet its forefathers and have their blessing. Thus it obtains long duration, perhaps even lays claim to eternal life. Saint Petersburg was the foretaste, Moscow the eternal city.

The great Lenin did not expect any written message –congratulations or anything else– from the general. Besides it is doubtful if he had any idea, even the vaguest, of his existence, or if he had followed, how ever superficially, developments in Mexico (adequate testimony to the contrary is missing). Certainly not out of conscious downgrading of the value of the insurrection, but that issue at the other end of the world was a mandatory heritage from unimpeachable wills. A despotic president of the democratic republic had lost power, another individual –a mediocrity with limited mental faculties (Francisco Madero)– had followed him, only to be assassinated shortly after and leave his position to a general who was defeated right away by regular and irregular troops from every point of the horizon and who had disappeared to be replaced by the next one –the «rebel» Venustiano Carranza– disrespectful of the constitution which had been passed by vote. All this can be worded in a single phrase in a country where you will receive the following answer if you ask when there is the least rainfall, in winter or in summer: «It depends, sir, there are not fixed rules».

Could it be possible that the great Lenin sent a note –*a message*– to Emiliano Zapata? Would such a thing not be like that art which is evident in the note to N.A. Semasko, the People's Commissar for Public Health?

«With me is comrade Ivan Afanasjevitch Tsekunof, a very interesting farmworker who propagates the fundamentals of Communism in his own way. He lost his eyeglasses and paid 15 roubles for the junk. Can we not help him to get good eyeglasses?

I beg you to help him and to ask your secretary to let me know *what happened*».

Original title: *To Mήνυμα*, novel. Chapter 4. Translated by Eric Bartholdy

Maria EFSTATHIADI

Textilen

THEATRICAL PLAY

In my solitude, you haunt me
With dreadful ease of days gone by

[extract]

2500 years ago, this place was an aqueduct.

.....

The daughter will say
I had got down to the garden
The others were still at the table
I was allowed into the garden on my own
That forensic creep, grandma's cousin, was there too
Kept harping about the communist threat
The cut-throats and that dad should watch out at the factory
Sunday it was
The kid who helped the gardener was piling weeds in sheaves
His name was something like Petros...Petraakis...I'm not sure
He was five-six years older than me
Had curly black hair
Came and took me by the hand
Are they eating in there? He asked pointing at the house

Yes, I nodded

Let's go quickly, he says

And we ran behind the bushy cheesewood

Take it off, he said and lowered his trousers too

He played his dick touching me

Count, he said and before I could count to ten he smeared the thick white stuff on my belly

He laughed and said, now you're going to hell

If I tell you're sure to go to hell

And I kept begging him, don't tell don't tell, and with my palm I'd spread the gluey thick white liquid on my skin

Then you're coming back

Yes, I'd tell him, next Sunday

And I came back because I liked this secret and I liked being afraid that he might tell

But one day I saw the gardener with another boy

Ugly, blondish

No sign of the first one

I heard him tell Clio that Petros got the sack for being a bad sort

A pity

When my breasts started bulging, it felt good to fondle the nipples

We did that a lot with my girlfriends, the one to the other

I'd like to be a redhead with freckles like my dad, but I'm not anything like him

My mum must have had me with some swarthy guy – she's always been a whore – and then maybe she cut him up into little pieces and dumped him in the rubbish and as she chose an orphan with no relatives no one 'd ever look for him

Why else would I be so dark

Honey-skinned grandpa calls me

When the time comes to cut off the braids you must make them into a nice switch,
that's what he says

Poor grandpa, everybody's waiting for him to die but he won't, he's clinging on to
his wretched existence

That's what self-made people are like, they think they'll salvage something by
prolonging their lives

And the grandfather says

There was a time that I had everyone eating out of my hand

Now they're nowhere to be seen

Waiting for me to die

Fat chance, they'll have to wait long

There's still life in this dirty dog

Ha!

They've run away with the idea that I'm feeble

Everyone now pretending to pamper me

And then behind my back...

It's true I feel weak now and then

Thank heaven for those movies,

Not that I get horny anymore

Besides...

Fuckfaces all of them!

But way back then!

What beauties, those Parisian courtesans, real ladies!

Their brothels just like palaces

From one ball to the other

I hardly had time to change my collar

Those were the days!

And to think that when I got there I knew no French

Her name was Giselle

She was the one who taught me

She taught me plenty!

I wooed her no end

Plump, elegant and courtly

As if she had been brought up in Versailles!

I owe her so much

I took her with me everywhere, she even helped me with my deals with French businessmen

You'd think her presence reassured them, somehow they took me for one of their own

How prettily she fixed the house I rented for her...

27, Rue Bonaparte

Discreet

Never asked for anything more than the pricey gifts I showered on her

Eights years I spent with her

Some of the best years of my life

Then...

One evening she announced she was getting married

Just like that

A bolt from the blue

I nearly strangled her, had her by the throat and was squeezing, squeezing, her maid intervened

I never saw her again

Sent her a message to keep all the stuff, jewellery and what not, heaven knows why I did that...

She must have sold it

To keep him in comfort

A pretty boy gone to seed, gambler and drunk...

It took me time to lump it

It helped that I was trading with England by then

And I phased out my visits to Paris

I wonder what became of her

Did she die broke?

Is she still alive?

Among the women in my life she was next to none, except...

I was stunned when my son first brought her over

That hussy was the spitting image of Giselle then

A regular doppelganger

Shy and sweet, light as a feather

I fell for her big time

I don't know when I surrendered unconditionally

Maybe...after Sofika's death

She used me no end

Let me have next to nothing

Whore!

Bitch!

Prick teaser!

All these years she only gave in once...

It was summer, around midday

She had sent the little one to the beach with Miss Agnes

Walked into my study

Supposed to be helping me file the records

Can't remember how it started

She took off her clothes just like that

Yes, just like that

Walked into the study, shut the door, took off her clothes and stood in front of me

I was speechless

So many times I made advances and she wasn't having any, as if she didn't get it,

had no idea, all the time leading me on innocent as you please

I jumped up, grabbed her, fretting she would run away

She gave a slutty laugh, got hold of my thing

We lay on the carpet

She removed my clothes

There's never been a woman to make me feel this way

Ah, ah, Giselle, Giselle!

Have no idea how long it lasted...

There on the carpet, that's where Clio found us when she came in with my coffee

Next day I made over the estate to her

As for Clio, I shut her up with a modest rise in salary

The housekeeper will say then

Less than six months I'd been with the mistress when she brought me to this hell

I can't be dead sure, I was still a tiny mite, but I remember their place as a – what's that word – an oasis

I never understood why her father gave her to that beast

Such a delicate lady!

Truth be told, he was a different man at first

Took good care of her, watched over her

Till he got the textiles going

Then there was this sharp change and day by day he grew unbearable, crabby, violent, a black-marketeer

Even before the child was born they stopped sleeping in the same room, I thought it was temporary for my lady's peace and quiet but that's how it was to her dying day

He never came on to me, not out of respect, fat chance, but I wasn't his type it seems, though he made passes on plenty of broads much uglier

Oh, well...

During the war our house was requisitioned, first by the Italians then the Germans

We were never in need

When people were dying of hunger out there, we had everything

Those were the only years he forgot how to be mean

Before and after, heaven help us

Kept everything under lock and key, except when there were guests

Then he was a prince

How could visitors guess how it was with us here?

Well then, during the war this Italian came, spent six months in our house with four others

Guido was the name

All smiles, dark like he was one of our own, signorina this and signorina that

We had no other girl then, I took care of everything, I was young at the time, you see
Comes into the kitchen one day, makes me sit on the chair, gets hold of my foot right
where I wore the slipper

I got a fright at first, he kept asking a question, no idea what and with his palm he
measured the sole

He was saying what size, don't be afraid, all in Italian

Che taglia... non aver paura

But I couldn't make it out

A few days later he brought me a pair of leather shoes, black with high heels

I've still got them ... I'm saving them

Some other time it was stockings and chocolate

Little by little I got to trust him, he was teaching me Italian, I was teaching him
Greek, I didn't know how to write, I just learned it by heart, we laughed a lot

He was from a village outside Naples

He made love to me five-ten times, I still remember how sweet he was, came into
my little room at night when the house was asleep

Ti amo he said, ti amo

I'll take you with me to Italy

He gave me two pictures, one of him the other with the church-tower in his village

I kept thinking he's not the enemy

And sooner or later the war will be over

But the Italians left before that

As he was going he said not to worry I'll come and get you, we'll get married

No sight of him, never heard from him

He's dead for sure, they killed him

I never wore anything but black since then

My lady tried to find me a husband but I wouldn't hear of it

I had the picture and the shoes

How could I betray him?

My lady was real nice

That dirty old stink, that miser led her to her grave

There are times I think I'll get the knife and as he's sitting there I'll cut off his head, a clean cut right through, just like the cut-throats did in the civil war, just like they do in wars now, they learn how at their villages dragging the animals to the slaughter, one neat cut, he won't feel a thing, I'll be doing him a favour, let them put me away, it won't be any worse than this, I've done time here, a life sentence...

Translated by Memi Katsoni

Giannis EFSTATHIADIS

Black & White

Dear old Alexandra

so many weeks

months

years

have gone by since

yet I can't get out of my mind

that phsss

of the gas stove

funny

there are so many things

to remember you by

your words of wisdom

your precepts

your advice

yet a gas stove

and a phsss

bring you closer

to me

Neni EFTHIMIADI

From

The Adventurers

At the Cleaner's I was meticulous with the stains. I checked them over insistently, then gave orders for the use of the right chemical so that they would disappear and the fabric would not lose in quality and colour.

I observed Roulis as if he was a huge stain and tried to discover his components. I detected nothing special and, had he not threatened us with death, I would maybe become his friend for the evening in some beer cellar, because he had traits I liked, clarity in speech, politeness in silence, stability in movement. And he looked sympathetic. Controlled glance, normal weight, and a face with contained wrinkles. I guessed, from the neutral conversations we held in the living room, that neither his education nor his reason was contemptible.

Unfortunately Roulis was the stain, but the cloth was missing – I did not know his environment, the place he lived and moved in, the profession he exercised, his family, if any naturally, his wanderings, or his profound preferences. So, I could not take measures against him, because making disappear a stain depended on the composition of the fabric and its colour. [...]

As soon as the policeman left I had an idea. And while Aris stood at the glass doors swaying strangely, as if he suffering from sudden fits of dizziness, I remembered that the night of the disaster, the moment Dino pounced upon him and he bent to the right, something slipped from his pocket and he caught it in the air. I managed to see what it was. A mobile phone, what Thomas challenged me to get. I

did not pay then any attention; Dino's blood mixed with broken glass came first, survival as well, because the Stain had appeared on top of the stairs.

Now, in the benign living room of pretexts I had to dare, because I would not speak German but Greek and I definitely lacked elemental protection using a landline phone. I approached Aris and said straightforwardly:

'I saw you have a mobile.'

'My mistake', he answered. 'It ruined my life.'

I didn't grasp his meaning, but he was not the stain to be analysed. Another came first.

'Can I borrow it for a few hours?' I asked him. 'I will pay the double of what I'll spend.'

He took it out of his pocket, he slipped it into mine and said:

'Keep it until the end of our great vacation. But put the marks where you know!'

Thus I became self-dependent, but could not make sudden moves, because as I was watching the Stain, the Stain watched me too. I found the opportunity when the cook brought the fruit in for lunch. I served myself a glass of beer, went to the office next door and sat in an armchair in a way that my back remained visible, but not my hand movements. At length I leafed through the telephone directory making notes.

I behaved like a capitalist drug addict, I called up the private eye with the most spectacular add, although I agree with Inge, size never means quality, it remains size and as such imposes. After the operator and the private secretary, I got to the person himself. I told him I wanted information about the life of a man, because things were easier if I knew the origin of a stain, I reacted differently when

the client indicated that he'd spilled desert of his coat the night before and differently when ignorant, without a CV and dates. Was it easy?

'A piece of cake' he answered.

Promptness was a must. I needed the information in a day, maximum two – time is our life.

He bragged that his office was the fastest in Europe and asked:

'Give me a name and address or car plates. And the data of your credit card.'

I started with the easy ones. I had my credit card in my pocket; I spelled it out, waited for him to make sure there was credit in my account. He came back to the phone excited and I found the courage to confess:

'I don't know the address. And he didn't come by car, he brought a boat I cannot describe.'

A heavy silence on the other side of the line was broken with delay:

'It's OK, the first and last name will do.'

The mobile phone almost fell off my hands. I may have heard his first and last name then, at the old robbery, but I did not remember, and what did we call him now? 'Boss' or 'Snake' or 'Worm'.

'His first name maybe Roulis and his age about fifty five' I said softly.

He laughed:

'And you want me to look for the whereabouts of a certain fifty five year old Roulis in the whole state?'

That's what I wanted, the situation was complex, otherwise I would not ask for info.

'Does he threaten to kill you?' he asked seriously.

I didn't say yes or no and the truth is I did not know what Roulis wanted of us.

'Do you have any picture?' he insisted.

I was desperate. I didn't have the Polaroid with me, the one that perpetuated Inge's sweet moments, but even if I had it, would the enemy let me use it?

'Can you describe him?' he continued irrepressible, and I deserted.

I said he was one meter seventy five or eighty five, maybe ninety three, could not calculate accurately, most of the time he was sitting, but his weight was normal, although I could not rule out traces of fat around the waist, because he covered it permanently with a newspaper. But his speech was lucid, his manners polite and I could befriend him for a night at a beer cellar.

'What is the colour of his eyes?' he said suddenly.

In his tone I felt he was not asking about Roulis anymore, but rather questioning my state of mind.

'Brown' I said confidently, but in seconds changed to black, then blue, until I ended at a shade of doubtful gold, the one that changes with the hues of light and darkens at night.

'Is this some kind of practical joke?' he asked stiffly. 'Is it possible that this man does not exist?'

I reassured him he existed, he was in the living room, but I could not observe him like Rot's stains, with him I lost my powers.

He didn't say any more. He waited for me to hang up.

I apologized humbly, promised to get back to him with more data and pushed the off button. Just before I caught a sarcastic laugh that will haunt me to the end of my days, the way Thomas is tortured with the expression of a lady client who bought a sour cake.

I remained awkward, mobile phone in hand, and the stain theory that I had to refute.

Translated by Klety Sotiriadou

Lily EXARCHOPOULOU

Arcadian Nightmare

I'm just a name, my name is Turkolikas. A strange name; this is good, because whoever hears it keeps it in mind. Only the journalists find it difficult to pronounce it properly and clearly. Some people put the stress on the wrong syllable: Turkolekas. Some others spell it wrongly: Tourkolakkos. Others confuse the gender or the case: 'Tourkolika'. Well, I am male, I am Turkolikas, so in the accusative I become Turkolika, just like somebody whose name is Dimitris when you call him, you say 'Dimitri'. The tradition, however, goes that this wasn't always my name.

Once I used to be a village. A village in every way: with its inhabitants, its authorities, its politicians, its church, its monastery and its schools. I used to have my land, my trees, my bushes, my animals and my beasts, my birds and my reptiles. At Fretzioka, next to the brook called Ryaki, there was a family of wild boars which made me very proud. My inhabitants though were very poor and every time they managed to catch a boar they slaughtered it and prepared a feast, a real *fkete*, just like the ones we have for the Assumption of the Virgin or the athletic games called 'Nikitaria'²⁰. While feasting they all played clarinets, tabors and fiddles all night long. Shod or barefooted, they staggered while dancing because of the raki and the unseasoned wine, and they were in high spirits.

Once I used to be a green village. That was at the time we all had colours: the trees had dark green foliage, their trunks were brown and the bushes were copper-green, sometimes darker sometimes lighter, depending on the season. Most of the

²⁰ Nikitaras is the name of a Greek national hero who fought for Greece's freedom during the Greek War of Independence.

houses had snow-white walls that used to be freshened up before Easter and their shutters were painted green, whereas the old stone houses were brushed with special scrubbing brushes and were repaired so they wouldn't differ from the more recent ones, built with the same technique, by Albanian builders. Most of my inhabitants could not afford such a luxury: they made their own designs depending on the taste of the times and, the outmost luxury was to decorate them with reddish roof tiles. Each resident had his yard, small or big —it didn't matter—, his pots, his flowers, and his vegetable garden. In the old times we used to have wells but lately we've stopped using them and took water mainly from Kanalos, the spring below, or from the other one at the end of the village, next to Sara's' creek. Sometimes our sky was ominous and dark and sometimes we looked up to witness a deep blue colour above our heads. The sweltering sun made the fields and the Nature golden; the beasts strove for water and ran on the tops of low hills and stony cliffs to quench their thirst with the tears of the springs.

In recent years tourists started visiting our village and noticed I didn't have a square in the middle like most Greek villages, and complained about it. But we, my inhabitants and I, never missed having a square, typical as it may be. We went together downhill to Nikitaras, a large plateau, where the statue of the most famous son of ours for the past two centuries was recently set up. There were also some other children of ours who were slain in the battlefield —some closer and some further away from their native land— but Nikitaras the Turkolkas or Turkolakiotis is our only hero recorded in official history.

I have a problem with my name. Quite a few people detest it; most even avoid marking it in the official maps. A lot of my neighbouring villages have fewer inhabitants, less land, smaller fields and fewer beasts. The prefix, Turk, of my name repels people not out of xenophobia or nationalism, but because of the ancient

imbued memory that flows through the veins of some of our compatriots and cannot be uprooted or tempered by the more recent policies. I don't know if they are right or wrong. Maybe our old hero, Nikitaras, the so-called 'slayer of Turks', might agree or disagree with such a view, but for one thing I am certain: he would laugh wholeheartedly at the fear caused by the name. 'It means 'Go, Turk, just go and leave us alone', you numskulls', he would explain. 'You've all learned to work with dictionaries and you forgot how to grasp the easiest meanings. The Pashas of the old times have burnt our old village and turned us out of our houses, so we had built this new village and we gave it a name which is exhorting every invader'.

The nearest village is dear Ellinita(=small Greece,f.), diabolically haughty, yet completely abandoned by both mortals and immortals; she only has her name to be proud of but without any of its grace left. In old times she was called Memi, but that name sounded odd and betrayed a foreign denomination; therefore, she was ceremoniously baptized anew and was given the name of the neighbouring mountain. Yes, I am jealous, I can't help it; of her name, of her fertile female existence.

I also have some difficulty with colours. Now, in my old age, I am affected by colour-blindness. Everything is black and dismal all around and I stand in the middle wounded by a murderous hand. I don't recognize my land anymore; so grey and dry without a trace of life. Just pebbles and boulders, no flower, no fruit. I'm trying to appease my soul and I hear groans, growls, baas, barks. Eh, you, Olympia, I say, you are more famous and many of your beasts have been taken away, they have been transported to nearby places so as not to disturb the foreign visitors, to be able to see them only from afar. Of course, not even these beasts escaped death, they fell on the field of the burnt land. They seemed to want to justify every politician's bawls claiming he has been handed over 'burnt land', i.e. an empty treasury. The

fauna was victimized in your neighbouring villages, Mvrakas and the rest, but all the same, the animal groans sound anguished and more distant in the remote places who cannot identify them with the general lamentation. Of course, my dear Olympia, you've got the foreign voices that are beyond our artificial borders that shout and echo in your thickets for the magnitude of the ravage in the primeval area, disregarding –the ignorant! – that all of us, whether officially dug or not, are immemorial sites and our eyes have witnessed a lot.

They say I belong to Falessia, I am a Kapodistrian community district²¹. As far as I am concerned, I say I am a village, a primeval settlement since the times of the ancient Aegyptis. My eyes have seen a lot, good notables, but mainly bad ones, who in the old times tried to turn against Sparta, the queen, and so disaster came upon us, we started falling into decline. Through the centuries, I was transferred time and again, together with the inhabitants who followed me, the ones who refused to emigrate, from mountain to cliff and from ravine to plain. When I got burnt again during the Turkish occupation, I was taken and transferred for the last time. The enemy also had his reasons: it was the time of klephts²² and during this insurgence, some people had no means of living and attacked the others, either the wealthy or people of another religion. I have recorded a lot of tragedies: the killings, the plundering of my villagers from the tyrant and the notable, the helplessness of my people. If one was outlawed, then his whole family immigrated: some went to Mani, others to Kalamata, a few more to Langadia.

I stand at the Castle of Oria, a prestigious spot, overlooking my ashes. According to the myth the beautiful maiden had jumped from here to escape the enemies and avoid dishonour, but if she could see what is going on now, she would

²¹ Kapodistrian system, is the name of a local authority system for dividing areas in different districts.

²² *Klephts* = Greek partisan groups at the time of the Turkish occupation

not do it, she would strive to bear children who would later try to save the region from ravage. My children have immigrated to America, Canada, Australia and Germany, but they always spend the first fortnight of their August vacation here. They all have cars, so there is a traffic jam; all of a sudden I have the problems of big cities and nobody can do anything about it. Nevertheless, I am glad and I never stop guiding them proudly to the places they were born and the untrodden thickets they should explore, as adults, on their own.

The past is united with the present, because there is no tomorrow. The elderly who still live here have lost their property, the younger ones, though they swear to revive me, are terrified, and the children are extremely frightened. My unburnt cathedral, Virgin Mary, is sobbing; her few remaining believers can hear her clearly. The priest is mourning for the ravage of the villages; he hopes our brides will come again to perform their weddings in their ancestral villages, that our cemetery will expand, though awkwardly, so that the dead will rest in peace. As far as I am concerned, I know my soil is not light, it has been through a lot. My minerals have either been burnt or have sunk in, my slopes shiver from fear that the early fine rain may wash them away and make them fall on the neighboring area.

Arcadia, my mother, most celebrated from time primordial, has lost her ancient significance. It used to be a place of serenity and relaxation, a land of fertility, literally and metaphorically, but now her greatest part has turned to ashes. She used to be the home of poets, but now she has surrendered herself to wailers. Helva, Messinia, Lakonva, her sisters and Euboea, her cousin, are also mourning on their ruins. I sympathize with their grief, I don't forget the villages who are my brothers, sisters and cousins, I don't forget their dead and their disasters, but I'm in urgent need to speak of my own children and their tragedy.

My name is Turkolkas, I am a village and I suffer from colour-blindness. I don't know if I'll see any of my inhabitants again, if I'll be transferred someplace else, if I'll be revived, reforested, recultivated, seeded; if I'll have beasts again; if birds will ever come back and if there will be trees for adders, the little snakes, to bounce from one point to another; if I'll ever see any greenery at all. If I'll see foxes and their young, puppies and wild boars, goats and sheep and dogs, carrion crows, wild pigeons. I don't know if I'll be renamed and if they'll call me 'Unburnt' this time, so as to renew their exorcism for the evil spirit as they did in the past. I don't know if I'll be marked even in the few detailed maps one can trace me today. I, however, know that I will never be the same village again, I will never be the same Tourkolkas and my stubborn, mountainous inhabitants will never be the same either. Efialtis²³ went down in history because he was never forgotten, while the dream or the dreams that are ephemeral have never prevailed in our lives. 'Peloponnesos haunts our dreams²⁴' say some people from the neighbouring villages, and I keep wondering whether they mean the bad dreams, the nightmares.

'Asseverate', a word used in the old days and now almost forgotten. I, Turkolkas, asseverate to be reborn as a village and make my whole land bloom, I asseverate to help my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren the way I didn't manage to help my poor children. I asseverate, I take an oath, I give my word, I swear that with the same or another name, in the same or another location, I will do my best to give life. I, Turkolkas, intend to see my green landscape again, to become a village again, to stand proudly and defiantly in the land of Arcadia. I asseverate ...

²³ Ephialtis was the name of the person who betrayed Leonidas and his 300 brave Spartans at Thermopyles in 480 BC; in modern Greek the word is synonymous to nightmare.

²⁴ Alludes to a verse by the Greek poet, T. Sinopoulos which was used as the title of a recent Greek novel by K.Voulgaris. It should be noted that both writers come from Peloponnesos (=Peloponnesos in Greek).

[Arcadian Nightmare was written two days after the fires burnt the actual village Turkolekas. Long extracts of the short-story were published on 4-09-07 in G. Kaplani's column in the Greek daily *Ta Nea* and the whole was published in the Sunday issue of 9-9-07 in the Greek daily *Avgi*. Shortly after it was also uploaded in the official site of Arcadia, www.inarcadia.gr and published in English in *Helios*, the bilingual magazine of the Writers & Translators' Centre, Rhodes.]

Michel FAIS

Aegyptius Monachus

A TALE

With one thing and another, the merciless God of asphyxiation came and installed himself in their home. He ate from their plate, slept in their bed, chatted with them like an old and trusted friend. So, even the last sad spectre of desire left them. On precisely that day, that's not sufficiently day, and yet a day sated with night, a day that you never want to see the likes of again, but that doesn't oblige you, of course, since every day from now on, better never to start, is that same identical day dawning; on that day then, a day sated with night and refusing to dawn, she began keeping all-night vigil for him as if for the dead. What did she do exactly? She pretended to be asleep and as soon as he'd closed his eyes, she'd got up, stand still till her eyes were accustomed to the darkness and stare at him. His tranquil body in the half-lit bed. Then she'd weep for his forehead. Quietly. She'd weep for his shoulders. Quietly. She'd weep for his legs. Quietly. But all the tears in the world weren't enough for her when it came to his lips. The thin upper one, the thick lower one. To his saliva, which at times smelled like a wine cellar and at others like a tobacco warehouse. She dressed in black. For his kisses. Avid, tired, weary. For all his kisses. She rubbed ashes into her hair. Even for his kisses not kissed. She fasted. Since a kiss is a word unsaid, the most profound ejaculation, the last breath. Could she live with a man with kisses alone? Yes. With him, yes. Besides, only a kiss can unmask the lies of the flesh, unlock the secrets of the mind, astonish the secrets and the lies of the character. That's why she feels nauseated when she sees a couple kissing at the airport, at sunset, in a car, at parties, outside apartment blocks. Kissing

on the cheek, on the forehead, on the hair. Kissing with the concealed eroticism of children and the ideal eroticism of angels. Kissing with the anxious eroticism of couples, where, when one begins a sentence, the other completes it lest boredom should manage to come out with a few words. Boredom that opens wide the door of fear. Of the fear of habit. Of the fear of silence beside the other. Of the fear of incessant chatter beside the other out of the fear of silence. Yet also of the fear of having second thoughts. Tell me, are you thinking of me at this moment? Of the fear that believes only in miracles. Ah, if only we could wake up like on the first day we met! Of the fear that believes only in violence. To hell with the man we once gave all our heart to on a plate and who threw it into the rubbish bin after he'd had his fill of it. She wouldn't stoop to fear these variations on fear that encase more and more fears, likenesses of the most fearful fears, with the fear of the metaphysical trial, with the fear of the essential, and shut him inside; him, how should she call him? Lover? Father of her children? Daddy of her childhood? Narrator of her life?

Curtain.

That same man who now fell into bed like broken branches into an a raging flood.

We've gone on long enough. There's no story for us to tell, no story for us to hear. Eventually the heart moves from its place, is catapulted into the darkness of the mind. It dozes between the eyebrow, is restless between the legs. Then the only story you can tell, that you want to hear, is the story that's told by *every man for himself* and that's heard by *take to your heels as fast as you can*. Sentences with the heart in the mouth, words that jostle with each other, as if the one wanted to hide behind

the other, silences that deafen you. Which is why this story has no backbone, a cat squashed on the road, it leads you nowhere, the wheel of death without death.

Nineteen eighty seven, second of December, Wednesday, to nineteen ninety nine, seventh of November, Tuesday. Ten whole years. The chronicle of a difficult love? The journal of a weak heart? The cassette of a branded liar? A mixture. But, above all, the preparation for a transvestite.

You've just seen a man shaving his legs, putting on lipstick, plucking his eyelashes, brushing his hair, padding his breast with cotton wool, sticking down his dick with tape, learning to balance on high heels, wearing women's underwear.

A man masquerading as a woman, to his wife. Not to reverse the roles in bed. Nor to pick up other men. His aim is not to get horny. He masquerades in order to pluck up courage to talk to her. Dirty talk? Not at all. Simply to tell her what he didn't have the courage to say as a man.

Speaking as man to man
to his wife.

A transvestite of his wife.

Speaking. For the first
and last time. Speaking
to himself. Face to face.

In his life. Instead of him. Speaking.

To Her on his knees.

*You, my incurable love
and enormous heartache.*

Eye to eye with Her.

My lovely story

my life's finale.

Date under the ground.

Farewell?

Speaking.

Translated by David Connolly

Evgenia FAKINOU

The Tree

I love women. Women and wild flowers. I love the colours of wild flowers. White, yellow and purple. These are the colours of the land. In ancient times people painted their statues those colours, and in later times they painted their doors and window frames the same. People don't paint their doors and windows frames any more. Those are the colours of crocuses and anemones, lilies, irises and asphodel. White, yellow, and purple.

Women are suffering greatly again. It is women who write History. They carry the world's great events on their shoulders.

In the old days, the maidens from the distant North would come, and we would talk together. Then came the priestesses, clad in white, with copper gongs, and garlands in their hair. In their white robes they would lie down and wait and listen for the whispering of my leaves.

They would ask me of things both great and small. And I would tell them. Because I know. The birds from Libya used to tell me; and the snakes from Acherousia; and the Sun, the great lover; and the invisible flowers; and the far-off stars and constellations. [...]

Will my Archontoula remember the road? And the house? Will she remember to turn off the crossroad and take the right path?

He was bringing down animal skins. Stretched lambs' skins and young goats' skins. He was sitting on the cart, on the wooden driving seat, and I was standing at the fork in the road, wearing my black clothes and holding my

pomegranate. I'd done what the woman with the metal sandals told me to do. I'd gone south, and I was asking everyone I met:

'Have you seen a little girl with a blue skirt and a little cross on her shoulder?'

I went through villages and hamlets and shepherds' pastures, and everyone I asked said to me no, so in the end all I said was:

'A girl...blue skirt...little cross on her shoulder...'And they all said 'No'.

And I was going further south all the time. By now I had reached the outskirts of Larisa. I saw a pomegranate sticking out through someone's fence. So I did what the woman with the metal sandals had told me. I stole the pomegranate.

I'd never seen a pomegranate. It was huge. Come what may I would have taken it. Just as I was breaking it off, a girl came out of a gate in the fence. She looked me up and down. I must have looked like a gypsy. My clothes were hanging off me, and I had no shoes. The soles of my feet had become hard with walking barefoot. I used to dye them with henna, to make them red, because Andronikos liked that. And my hair was hanging down, unwashed and uncombed...

'Would you like a drink of wine, Auntie, to help you on your way?'

'Auntie', she called me. So that's what you've come to, Dimitra...! Once you were a goddess, and now you're 'auntie'... If Andronikos could have heard that! Twenty-three years old, and people were treating me like an old woman!

She took me into her cabin. She gave me some raki to drink, and some bean stew. 'Are you from round here?' she asked.

I shook my head, and immediately asked:

'A girl with a blue skirt and a little cross on her shoulder. Have you seen her?'

She didn't answer.

'Are you a refugee?' she asked. And before I could answer, she said: 'there are a lot of women who come looking for their lost sons and daughters here. Some looking for their husbands, too...' At that, we fell silent. What more could I say to her, or she to me? Then she got up and went to a chest and pulled out some black clothes.

'Take these', she said. 'They were grandmother's before she died. They're quite clean –and she died in old age. Wear them. Don't walk around like that...I'm afraid I have no shoes to give you, though'.

I made the sign of cross over her, and left. I had my pomegranate, and I had the black clothes. They were a complete outfit –a petticoat, a skirt, a blouse, a large head-scarf, and a knitted shawl. I went down to a deserted spot by the river, among the reeds. I took off my torn, dirty clothes and went and stood in the river. I washed and washed and I felt like a proper person again. I rinsed my hair again and again until I'd washed out all the dirt. I stood up to get dressed. And there, where the river hadn't been muddied, I saw the woman that Andronikos used to call his 'goddess'. The only difference was that I was thinner now, from being so tired and from walking so much. Andronikos's drawings on my body looked strange, considering the state of the rest of me. And it was then I saw it, rolling down slowly on top of the water –Andronikos's beautiful head. That was the first time it appeared to me. I rushed to take hold of it. It never even occurred to me to wonder how Andronikos's head had got there, all the way from Vourla to a river in Larisa. I ran and tried to catch it, but it kept moving away. And I must have been making a noise as I splashed about the water, shouting: 'Stop, Andronikos, stop and let me hold you...' And the women who were doing their washing further down must have heard my shouting, and they came to look. And when they saw me they froze. And I froze too.

I was naked, with Andronikos's drawings on my body, from my breasts down...What must they have thought?

One of the women started screaming: 'run, run...Don't you see, she's a witch...She'll steal our voices...'

And before I could make a move to say, 'no, I'm not a witch,' they had all run off in terror.

I dressed as quickly as I could and hid my own clothes under a rock. The only thing I kept was my white petticoat. Or, rather, it was white once, with lace and embroidery. But it was now full of holes and grey with dirt, and patched, with the little pockets where I kept my seeds. All kinds of seeds. Sorrel, spinach, lentils, basil, marjoram, beetroot, cauliflower, buck-beans, limes, peas, yellow marigolds, and all different colours of carnations. I'd had mania for seeds. Some I picked and some I found. I stitched them into little pouches, which I sewed into my petticoat. I thought, 'when I find my Persephone, I shall make a little garden the like of which has never seen in all the world. But first I must find her'.

When I was dressed, I wrapped my headscarf round tightly to hide my blond hair. My hair was golden-yellow again now that I had washed it. Better for me to look like an old 'auntie' than a twenty-three year old. I had seen and heard many things. [...]

From The Seventh Garment. Translated by Ed Emery

Andonis FOSTIERIS

METAMORPHOSIS

Sometime I will stop speaking.

My hands will be branches

My eyes will be flutes

My thoughts will be wings

My mouth ah my mouth

Shall flood

Shall drench

The poems.

EROS

Love, he whispered, love

In the darkness

Is a body without bones

But how

Do you wander there whistling

A small crazy child

A child just now taken

Out of the tomb.

THE TRAIN

*A rattling train passes through my brain
Filled with passengers traveling toward death.
In the front carriage Christ stands erect
Reading them metaphysical poems.
And you whom I recognized, and you whom I didn't see,
Fearful, with your inner eyes at the windowpanes,
And you, my accursed world,
A coal, a coal burning in the train's bowels.*

And the night above, a canopy over Christ's dead body.

AN INFLAMMATORY POEM

*Tomb-plants sprout within me
And I await the time when they shall bear fruit;
Whatever their wrinkled roots suck up
In the caves and mud of my mind.*

*I also provoke my own ruin
I provoke my own ruin and burn
Burning*

*Yellow leaves of old poets
And whatever else I loved
In the first period of hate.*

*Listen deeply to the voice of our veins;
Bullets circulate in the blood
And detonations in an uncertain future
That cowers behind the railings of angry time.
I say: let's turn on the gas and let
Our intoxicated verses become kindling
For a bonfire of lawless dens
For the poisonous skyscrapers of the spirit.*

From *Dark Eros*, 1984. Translated by Kimon Friar

Poetry in Poetry

4

*On the verse I shall write I walk the tightrope
On the verse I have written I find my balance
The poem is a strong branch
Where from time to time I tie my swing
And hover over the blackness.*

*This poem writes this poem
Cuts from its body and feeds itself.
Its words are tossed up high and fall back down
It opens a passage across the snowy page
– Amazed I watch it reveal itself to me.*

15

*Tonight the night rains all my fears.
To you I run for shelter, art of poetry,
I struggle tooth and nail to build a poem,
Panting, I crawl inside it for protection
And then behind me shut the final verse.*

16

*The poem.
Motorbikes
And tanks
On the white
Landscape.*

Translated by Christopher Robinson

THE DEVIL SPEAKS

'An angel knows nothing about

An angel's beauty.

I, only I,

Who betrayed my nature

–That was at first angelic–

Can now adore it properly

Can fit upon it entirely

Sucking repentance with kisses

Can dream of, can fall in love

With what I have disowned.'

THE ANGEL SPEAKS

'The devil knows nothing about

His dark beauty.

I, only I,

Who plugged up my ears during the revolt

–My inner voice–

Can now hear it properly

Can look with love upon him who was wronged

Spewing out the fire of indignation

Can atone, can redeem myself

From what was won.'

From *The Devil Sang in Tune*, 1984. Translated by Kimon Friar

THE SOUND OF WORDS

My words are made of wood. I paint them black and suspend them carefully from the ceiling. The breeze of days blows through the windows and clumsily shakes them up. It is night inside and outside the room. I only hear their lazy rustling as they whirl around. Occasionally they bump into each other and that's when the noises become intolerable: a bell in a village where a fire is spreading – groans of the sick man whose breath is being sucked by the time – claws of a bird plucking a violin – explosion at a factory with four dead and sixty wounded – a pistol begging – laughter sobbing.

Translated by James N. Stone

TO BE OR NOT ?

To be or not?

So mused again my heart's

Hamlet

And then:

How can you say the reverse

It's heard in the eyes

Firm like a mire.

(How heartless

That habit kids have

Of turning a tortoise

Upside down

*A beetle – poor creature
Shakes tiny legs of supplication
And feels shame
With all the secret signs
Of its generation in relief
In the light: little
Adam
Who lost
And to conceal the wound
Plucks fig leaves
He plucks the tree hoping for
The mercy of a nudge that, the reverse
Of the reverse, would set
The cosmos at his feet
Anew).*

*So tell me
Then
You who know:

To be or not?*

Translated by David Connolly

DOMESTIC FOREST

*In your cool living room a forest rustles.
These pieces of furniture that you hear breathing
Still keep in their foliage
The flying creatures of instinct. And if they creak
Each time a new visitor walks in
It must be because they feel somewhere a hidden axe
Being sharpened. This time
It is just a polite smile.
At night they panic
And their thick nail made from a root
Is thrust
Into a rock of cement. Their branches
Ruin the ceiling; here look at the cracks
In the wood as it groans. Leave them alone;
Neither truth nor deceit will smooth down
The knots on the bark of the old age; leave them.
And if the ticking of the worm acts like
The beat of their heart
They keep dreaming of the heroic flame
That will separate at last the spirit
From the body
– Gleam from coal.*

Translated by Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke

I DO NOT THINK – THEREFORE I AM

*In a sea of summer laying back
Loosened limbs and breathing in
Salt of the sun, entire
On the tiny finger of buoyancy
The weight of the brain melts
With boundless
Orange-colored darkness that rushed
Right to the joints
How easy
As each idea empties out
And upside-down
Sucks the ineffable pleasure
of-the-no,
Until, so clearly:*

'I do not think – therefore I am'

*Glowing
Riveted the thought
To my thought.*

WHERE YOU ARE

*I hear it is always freezing.
And you didn't even take a blanket
When you left.*

*Cover yourself well
With your earth.*

CARNIVORES OF THE ROOM

*I listen to the barking
Of the wolf
In the yard.
To the tiger
Purring
In the softness
Of the sofa.
And as darkness quickly falls
Lizards and crocodiles
Climb across the ceiling
Slow worms.

That's why the alarm*

Sounds

The tom-tom

In the chest:

To remind us

That sometime

Their ancient blood

With a new roaring

Will tear us apart.

It has enough logs.

Leave the television on

Until late

And before

They have time

To find us

Let's run

To hide ourselves

In the caves

Of the blankets.

From Precious Oblivion 2009. Translated by Thom Nairn & D. Zervanou

THE BLACK

*The black is the words
That fell one on top of the other
The printed poems
One on top of the other
And all the colours that sought
The ultimate refuge in there.*

DECADENCE

*If I write poems it's because I know
All the alphabets in the world have melted
All the words and all the lines have ended
The days their lame limb knocking on my door
Their ferocious slobber their laughter of glass
And the poems
The silverware I won't sell
—Who would buy it?—
A dead loss for that
An utter debacle.*

THE PRODIGAL

I'll cash in with gilded words

*The bullions of darkness I've been saving
In the treasury of the chest.*

*Then I'll go out in the streets
With millions of poems
Dishing out to my fellow citizens
The unforeseen legacy
Of poverty.*

TAKE-OFF

*I hear you singing, you are far below
It is your broken voice so long not thought of.
Into my sleep at nights wakeful you show
The clatter of the rotor blades during your take-off.*

*In a putrid light fly birds I had so much
Loved through my prime death and my prime existence.
And you with them are the dawn as such
All I had hoped for behind the sunset in the distance.*

*Seething darkness and blood spill forth from the light
The sun spills over at some point now, melting.
To our ardent voices time is deaf alright
And every poem has a beginning and an ending.*

Translated by Irene Loulakaki-Moore

POETRY

Metaphors, similes, hang

Like offerings. I add one more:

Words' elixir.

A POEM

Since no definition

Is definite

And since of the thousand versions

None answers

What

A poem is,

I imagine three more words

Won't be too heavy:

Rhythmically

Cogitating

Feeling.

POETS

After a poem

Poets

Feel sad.

Like animals

After copulating.

BUILDING MATERIAL – DEMOLITION MATERIAL

What a mad greedy

Dog is time licking

Our bones.

*

Behind the face, the mask.

*

So many books, yet incapable

Of teaching

Ignorance.

*

Hypocrisy: the grandma of virtue.

*

Millions of breasts

Dripping —

For milk to shine

In the firmament.

*

The moon's bodiless head.

Translated by Yannis Goumas

Miltos FRANGOPOULOS

Magnificat

Here there was no forest. And there was light. The city in the morning is a hard place, as it splits the crystals and memory struggles. No thought can catch up with the traffic in the street. But this is perhaps why the attraction the city exerts on us is so powerful. How human is the city. How little is it divine. How much *ours* it is. That's why now, before Victor disappears into the world of the theatre, I will call him from afar: Stay there, Victor, for a moment and tell us, what do you see?

And he turns his head around.

I see people looking and shopping in the market place. I see the shop windows displaying the merchandise. I see a woman taking a garment out of a plastic bag and showing it to her friend, telling her how cheap she got it. And her friend is amazed. I see the street vendors gathering crowds around them. I see the swindler playing his skin game with virtuosity and taking what is his due. I see the bleached light of the supermarkets. I see people laying their hands on things. I see our lives filling...

Go on Victor.

Filling with objects to blow your mind. From the corner of my eye I see the phantasmagoria. The dusk and the dawn of our soul as it sets and rises, again and again until it dies out...

Oh!

I see the kebab joint and the bookstore. I see the toaster and the dishwasher. I see the video player and the adverts of the movies. And I long for the full-bodied amber texture of a beer...

Aaah. But is there ... go on Victor, you know the lines.

But is there a more beautiful place than the flea market? To go around the stalls with all sorts of merchandise and choose? To take something home with you, and keep it there and show it. To make it your own. And when the time comes to be able to say 'I leave this to you' to someone you love. How much more human than to seek the blissful sorrow of some grand project every day. How much more human, truly human this is. To have something of your own to leave behind. And who would refuse this, the innocent joy of such an act?

But...

...but you must now how to choose in the marketplace. This is the difficult part. A hand can only hold a few things. This is the true art.

And to know how to choose, you must know how to dream. Isn't that so Victor?

Victor did not answer. He was in a hurry, and he was tired.

Translated by the author

(Fifth Chapter of the novel *Port Bou*, a short interlude in the action where the culture-besotted hero is urged to acknowledge everyday life around him)

Antia FRANTZI

The Unsaid Sound

to Lizy

*There are days when I wish I am a tree
drinking my raisin as a balm
my leaves scattering around and shedding no tears
but instead seeking the lost centre.*

*Listen from down below rises the lost incantation
from the land of our fathers and of the wanderers;
the seeds of the body of hidden people burst open
but there again remains unbridged the gap of the unsaid sound.*

Translated by Katerina Angelaki-Rooke

The Poem of Love and Dashed Hope

[1]

*This poem rolled
Like a stone rolls
From my heart to over there
Then it cam back, paused*

In my heart.

Now I must choose

Stone or heart?

[2]

All the half-rubbed out

Shapes I see on the glass

Caught in the time of the old frame

The face with the swollen eyes

And you correcting the image

Sometimes with colour

Sometimes with a light movement

Of wind behind the curtain.

The glass that separates us

Unbreakable as death

The hand that passes

Through the glass

Of a shattered love.

I open the window

the black bird beating

Its wings

Waiting to go.

*The glass that always separates us
Like the sea that spreads
caresses the broken glass
Bleeds—
It is of love.*

[3]

*My face moved toward you
The light of the sun pulled back
The arrow of love
Then it grew dark
And became deep purple
Night that hit the crops hard
Froze the water and the heart
Writhed in my mouth
And said:*

*I am not unless there is
You in the ark
Of day and night*

*I am not unless there is:
Me in the ark
Of sea and viscera.*

*I am not unless there is
Light in the darkness
of dashed hope.*

[4]

*This poem that rolled
Like a stone*

*It couldn't have been written
It paused in my heart
It is waiting for my to choose.
Poem or heart.*

Translated by Philip Ramp

Rea GALANAKI

From

The Life of Ismail Ferik Pasha

On the day the fighting began, I caught sight in the distance of the house where I was born. We set fire to the village, and I was seized with a great anguish, through I bore no responsibility for the fire, at the thought that the house might be turned to ashes. But it remained unscathed, because a May shower, intervening in my favour, checked the flames that had attacked the adjacent houses. I was filled with awe at this demonstration of benevolence from the elements. As I sat astride my horse, wrapped in a piece of oilcloth reaching down to my horse's hooves, welcoming the rain, which sounded as if nature were softly weeping, I told myself that this was the way it had to be: not because I had returned home, although even an iniquitous homecoming such as mine may still have been honoured with nature's weeping, but because the moment I saw the house, I remembered suddenly that I had a home.

Ioannis had told me in Egypt that according to one report, my mother had returned to the village after the massacre and met her end in the house; but its image had never tormented my spirit in the way that the memory of the plateau as a whole had done. While the rain lasted, the sight of the house pierced me unexpectedly with the sharpness of iron nails. I heard the nails being implanted in me one by one as the raindrops hit the oilcloth that covered my body. It occurred to me that during all these years I had perhaps dismissed the memory of the house in order to protect myself from the harrowing interdiction against crossing its threshold again, or from fear that it might have fallen into ruin; the land itself, in contrast, was not subject to

such dangers. The vigilance and speedy action which the imminent battle demanded of me would not leave much time to look into the matter further. All I had time for, as I listened blissfully to the rain of long ago, was to reflect that for many years I had, unawares, substituted in my memory the outer for the inner world; which meant that I had no real knowledge of all that my soul enclosed. The memory of the cave, for a number of reasons, had never become identified with the memory of the house; it had rather become a part of nature, or of my subsequent tribulations. Now I waited for the rain to stop so that I could take a second look at the house, fearing that I might have been the victim of an optical illusion.

I could have visited it in the days that followed; I longed to do so. But I kept finding excuses: the demands of the campaign, the human lives that depended on my decisions. I took part in the fighting as if drugged, and tried to keep my mind clear as best I could, with a great effort of will. Much as I longed to visit the house, I needed to prepare myself first. I still found it incredible that the house had survived, that it stood there waiting for me to return – but then, was it really waiting for me? Incredible, indeed that I should have acquiesced to the bloodshed of this war simply in order to remember the house's existence, to receive this very quintessence of memory. I felt that it held the promise of an ominous yet voluptuous catharsis; that I was somehow betrothed to it. I kept turning round to gaze at it, reintegrating in into its natural landscape, persistently probing its stone walls for some hint of their intentions. They seemed to allow me a glimpse of the interior. The house received light either from the wide open front-door or from a flickering oil-lamp carried from room to room, as I began to recall in a swift rush of memory. Was it really waiting for me then, I asked again.

I decided to visit the house on the first evening after the fighting ended. I was pressed for time, because we had completed our operations on the plateau, and

for my part, I could not bear to stay on and watch the looting. I found the key under the stone where we always used to hide it. I was pleased to note my spontaneous use of the pronoun in the first-person plural; it meant that the house was indeed waiting for me. I wondered whether the gentle metallic sound of the key in the lock could still imply that life –whatever kind of life– retained its continuity. The sound of the key in the lock reverberated like a gunshot, filling me with terror. I considered the possibilities : the Ottomans’ weapons were probably loaded, since they had been licensed to loot the village for three days running; the Christians, on the other hand, had taken their weapons with them up on the mountains, but a straggler or two may well have been lingering in the evacuated village. I had to make haste.

The door creaked open. I stepped inside, closing it behind me. Then I leaned back against its thick boards, trying to feel the grain of the wood, the knots, the nails that delineated the door’s skeleton. Sudden tears forced me to shut my eyes. Blindly I began to suck in the familiar air. Some moments went by before I could open my eyes again, having had my fill of milk. I discovered that the door I leaned against had grown taller, while I had shrunk to the size of a child. I wiped my lips with a child’s hand. I pulled myself away from the door and attempted to walk; I felt frail, perishable. With the same childish hand I held on to the wall as I wandered round the house. I came to the fireplace, and I removed a brick from the wall; but my sling was no longer there. I told myself it did not matter; when I grew up I would go shooting birds with a gun. I placed the rusty blade from the cave and Antonis’s last letter in the hole in the wall, where I used to keep my sling, returning them where they rightfully belonged; if, that is, an object can be said to belong to a particular place. I put back the brick, sealing up the hiding-place; burial, I added to myself, that might be one form of such a belonging. Besides, I did not wish to have

inquisitive onlookers jump to conclusions, should these objects be found on my corpse.

I had no way of knowing whether anybody had lived in this house after my mother, since I had accepted the version according to which she had lived and died here alone. I was unable to find any evidence of a stranger's presence, for the house was completely bare. I remembered every single object that had been in it with an extraordinary clarity: the simple appurtenances of a rural household, the few things needed to bring comfort to toil-worn bodies. But despite my memories, the house remained bare, indicating that it had not been lived in for many years. As if the horizontal and vertical lines, the curving arch, were trying to convey, in a scarcely perceptible manner, that all feeling was absent from this place; a message diffused in things like the dust, the spiders' webs in the corners of the rooms. The same childish hand would be needed to part those gossamer veils.

I stepped forward and stood exactly under the arch at the house's centre. I dug a small hole in the floor of beaten earth. But I lacked all that was required; nor could I offer any other blood but my own. I slashed the frail wrist with my yataghan and let a few drops of blood trickle into the hole. Then I sat back waiting, uttering the words. I waited a long time, as if the shades were resisting my entreaties. I feared they would not heed me, because I lacked what was needed, or for other reasons which could spell my undoing in this house. Finally, late in the day, a subtle change occurred, like the fortuitous flutter of an eyelid, and the horizontal and vertical lines, the curve of the central arch, began to quiver, losing their precision, spilling on to the floor, their vacant interstices quickening into vibrant space. Familiar human voices reached me, the sound of domestic animals, the sound of the weather, of singing, toiling, mourning, feasting. Then along came the smells: bodies, trees, cloth, winter fire in the hearth, harvested fields, ripe apples – that last smell

invaded the house, dyeing it crimson. In the red apple-light I saw her hand, no longer in arrested motion on the spindle, twitching its fingers at last; and my father's hand, which had been frozen in the act of gripping the reins, flexing at last at the wrist.

The hands were the forerunners; the full-size figures soon followed. She was the first to approach me, to welcome her long-lost son, the fey one, tormented by a love without issue. How had he found the courage to reach down to her, undaunted by any religious restraint, she wondered? He was so handsome, though, coupling manhood in its prime with a child's innocence, as tenderly as the outline of the mountain merged into the heavenly vault before fading with it into the night. Let him draw a little closer to her, let him behold in her eyes the weariness of work in the fields, soothed by a dish of hot food and easeful sleep; so that he might also behold the weariness of his Egyptian life, soothed by the forgotten touch of her hand stroking his hair. But let him not draw close enough to witness her ordeals, let her remain forever as he had known her. He knew of course, her beloved one knew that they would soon be together and rejoice, bodiless and sinless. Therefore he need not fear the gardens and sweet flowing waters that might visit him in his dreams.

I ran to her. She disappeared instantly. I sank exhausted to the ground. After a moment I heard a voice chanting a hymn. I looked up and saw my father coming towards me, dressed in gold-embroidered vestments, chanting 'The birth, Jesus Christ our Lord', for he always remembered I had been christened Emmanuel. He had registered me, in his own hand, as Emmanuel Kambanis Papadakis, son of Franghios. He no longer knew how to address me, by my Christian or my Muslim name; which was the reason he chose to chant that hymn, continuing to call me inwardly by my Christian name. Some things can never change, he said, and that is why I accept you, though I had great trouble arriving at that decision. Some things

never change, even in the kingdom of the shades, only it sometimes happens that the shades, too, are maddened by the south wind and appear in a different, unfamiliar guise. I want you to know that I would rather be slaughtered again than dishonoured. However, the kind of life that has been your lot is another matter. You prospered, and that is a fine thing; only you lost the connection, the continuity; you broke off, and I was broken off with you. What may redeem you is that you never wished, or were never able, to obliterate us. I am a man who has felt the thorns and barbs of progressing along a single course, so I can recognize the difficulties of a dual course. I mean to say, I can comprehend your striving for atonement. I will pray for you. No, I do not know in what manner you will meet your death. I can only tell you that it is fated to be hard. You must be brave; you must not fear. We will meet again soon. [...]

Translated by Kay Cicellis

George GAVALAS

THE WOMAN WHO PICKED UP KISSES

*Everyday she exorcised Evil
on her right always the enigmatic mirror
put on her violet suit slowly
throwing on it the lace shawl
and walked along
the street all scattered
with broken glass*

*From the slabs of pavements she picked up
carefully
discarded kisses
of erotic effusions
hiding them in the bosom*

*Evening
before the lovers' ball started
she was exquisitely tired and returned
to the old house*

On the table she spread

*the collected kisses
undressed
and the with longing
brought them to the lips
the cheeks
all over the body*

*So adorned with lust
in front of the dark mirror
she got dressed in courage
for one more
night
lost.*

INTROSPECTION

*With so much suspicion falling on him
he was unable to carry
his feeble body*

*He went down on his knees
put his days
in a row
counted up to a thousand.*

*Then he lost control
of the senses
to the point of
discovering guilt
even where culminated
the sacrifice.*

THE CHAIRS

*The chairs always know how to wait
at an end of the room
or round the table*

*The chairs are quiet
Waiting for visitors
they don't get restless
discriminate none from among them*

*They wait in silence
relating ancient stories
they have heard
at times of rejoicings
or sorrow*

The visitos with pale faces

and names that are common

such as

Yannis

Charalambos

Thanasis

come in

greet

and sit down

Sometimes they feel in the air

the presence of the dead

and they are anxious

fidgeting on them rhythmically

At this time

the bread lessens

in the corner of the table

Then they start talking simply

— Rain was late in coming this year

— The birds pluck out

mosquitoes in the air

Words that are trite

common

human though.

The chairs note down

*all they hear
and bury it.*

Christakis GEORGIU

From

Archipelagos

(TWENTY YEARS IN LABOUR)

The small church that carried the centuries like dust hanging from the chandeliers had become the nationalists' headquarters. The iron gate that opened to the courtyard was guarded by five impassive men who examined passes before allowing anyone to enter.

The English conqueror, who carried the rust of time in the form of a cruelty strewn with civility, said: 'there are colonies, which, because of their nature, will remain for ever colonies.' And the new Press Law demanded the depositing of a sum of five hundred pounds as a guarantee against violation of the law. Sedition was the word that began to appear in government communiqués for the first time after the Second World War. And then it was everywhere. Not to express your thought. The Saxon experience over many years showed that thought without a language is a harmless intellectual exercise. 'Five-finger exercise', the Colonial Secretary had said jokingly.

And the informers, a special unit attached to the Information Service, plain-clothes police sergeants, began to assemble. Two were well known, Salingaros and Poullaos. They attracted attention so that the less known could do their job better. They leaned their bicycles on the trees or the low wall opposite and vanished into the small crowd that had gathered in the square.

Salingaros' hair, thinned by time, formed tiny paths on his head while his false smile had something of a wrinkle on it, like his entire body. The other one was entirely different. Erect like a horse, muscular but always a kind of shadow in his eyes. Maybe it was that shadow the Information Service had trapped.

'To the insolent provocation of the foreign conqueror that we are for ever like brutes to carry our colonial yoke, and like brutes not allowed to look at the sun of our freedom, we shall answer with all the strength of our Greek soul.'

In the atmosphere there is electricity in a latent form. And a latent conflict. Those from Kyrenia had lost the leadership battle. 'Makarios II is dead. Long live Makarios III.' However Makarios III is not from Kyrenia. A plot is being hatched.

A struggle. Those from Kyrenia filled the void with a stream of words. The Parthenons and the blue-white flags become verbal sweets. They talked about heroes and the necessity of material compensation. Money to compensate them we had. Heroes we didn't. The son of the so-called white politician from Limassol –in recent years his white hair and his unearthly appearance did justice both to his name and his real character– talks about lurking dangers, quixotic adventures in mid twentieth century. However now there are no windmills but iron birds and tanks. Shouting drowns his words. A plot was being hatched. And outside Salingaros and Poullaos, with the information unit, tried to put their fingers on something.

They dragged themselves through the fields. The Larnaka lights twinkled. Somewhere there are the palm trees, and beyond, the sea. The palm trees with imperceptible movements underline the up and down movements of feet and bodies. The glances move up and down too. Instantly they are stopped in the middle. Beyond, to the east a metal structure is sleepless in the night and through its intestines it vomits electricity, which is stored in huge metal wires and transported to all the spots of the horizon. A horizontal movement, incessant. A vertical

movement could stop it. To cut it as if by knife. And the electricity would be swallowed by darkness and absolute darkness would reign for three hours, and Nicosia would in vain try to stand on its feet. It would stumble in every step on the absolute darkness and would be immobilized. And the English would be running, swearing, in all directions.

They dragged along cautiously breathing the starry night with the passion of an unlawful love. They carried a reel of thick rope. They would throw it over the thick wire carrier. The short circuit would stop the flow of electricity. It should take two or three hours before they discovered the damage. In the darkness they would be at their mercy.

'Are you afraid?'

'Something is hovering inside of me. You think it's fear?'

'Maybe. With me it's the very opposite. When I'm afraid I feel nothing.'

'It's better like that. I find this hovering a bit annoying.'

'There in the middle, are those the lights of the palm trees?'

'I think so.'

They arrived at the spot that had been pointed out to them. They dropped the reel of the rope at the foot of a tree and advanced a few steps to examine the wire at the point where they would throw the rope for the short circuit. The first one glanced at his watch: two forty-five.

'We've still got ten minutes.'

The other one glanced at his watch, but said nothing. They went back to the tree and began to unroll the rope. Under the swift surface of their movements nothing could be seen. Two fifty. The instructions were clear: at two fifty Cyprus would sink into darkness, especially Nicosia. Two fifty-two. The rope had been unrolled.

'Don't leave the tree until there is deep darkness. Then you vanish. We'll meet at the Virgin Mary of the Vines. On the little mound. To the west of the village. From then on everything will be easy. Ready?

'Ready.'

The rope is dragging through the green grass of April. The previous evening he had fastened a lead counterweight on one side. And suddenly there was darkness.

And there was light: from his childhood this phrase had stuck in his mind. The scene changed: and there was darkness. He vanished in the night. He has two hours in front of him. He has until five o'clock to be at the Virgin Mary of the Vines. At times he felt the morning dew stroking his legs. His trousers got caught on the thorns. He didn't care.

This time, the palm trees suffered from a heavy immobility, seemingly nailed on the night itself. His mind, however, stumbled on his feet. He breathed heavily – the fucking smoking. From time to time he cast a glance in the direction of Larnaka. Darkness swallowed it. Headlights of a delayed car or maybe one on an early morning errand lanced the darkness –beams of steam– then at a bend were swallowed by the hills. He moved on. He knew where he was heading. At four-thirty he arrived at the little church. [...]

George GOTIS

DISTANT PHOTOGRAPH

*The world flowing in front
inside its molten metal.*

*Echo of a distant photograph
in eyes that remain shut
although seeing us.*

*All change here. The outside remain steady
and the inside earn their own permanence.*

*The finger draws the blooming
window-panes of night.*

*The real becomes a memory and it
a small wind that you can
press at your finger tips.*

*A small boat passes the dream of sleep the linen waters
to take you to life's other side
which is the same colour, future, present, and
past, of the flag of time.*

*Only for you to believe that
a moment contains a whole life. Aw you wake up.
Day break, a turtle-doves springing from the grass.*

HIDDEN PICTURE

I usually keep my hands closed.

*Occasionally I open them fan-like —
wings for me to fly. And whatever can be seen
better I hide from those you want to see.*

*Occasionally tiny white flowers hurt
sweetly and sprout on my body. This way
goes the day, cloud and smoke.*

*And I am expecting you to embrace me
almond-tree like the north wind or snow.*

LIKE A DOWSER

*It's day-break and raining again; like other times, do you
remember?*

*Those things that emit a small daily glare
in the might mine become visible.*

*With the rain prospering the smell
of a new day and everything starting again.*

*Monday, Tuesday and mighty Sunday where
the other days gush up. Everywhere around
beauty given to you if you recognize it.*

*Taking the form of a blond flame
to light your hands which I am holding
like a dowser, searching for the jolt
of a secret vein from where
a new source of life will spring up.*

*Monday, Tuesday and mighty Sunday
for us to hold on to the small life-jackets
of habit lest we cross
the ocean of losses till we come across
that other artist, the foundation stone
of another life, which completes everybody's
picture offering an immortal look.*

Translated by M. Byron Raizis

THE KING OF THE MARKET

*The king of the market is selling the desert
that grain by grain for so many years
he's been hoarding inside him.
His kingdom a world of hypocrisy
He kowtows and ansewers to it daily.*

His golden crown he exchanges

for the iron one of black gold.

*He dazzles the ones who need to be dazzled
with the lurid jewels of his heart.*

*He throws around titles to his subjects
to make them seem important and equally
them to deceive them, changing his face
like a clown, with a conjurer's trik,
so they're kept poorer but happier.*

*Voices inside call him to exchange
his place on the throne for a true friend,
for true love, peace of mind.*

But he keeps on galloping wildly.

*His steed, a chess knight,
the castle, his queen.*

Translated by Angelos Sakkis

Stathis GOURGOURIS

DIVER IN LOVE WITH OBLIVION

I throw myself

bait

to sleep.

I sink at once.

I dangle handsome

irresistible

before the eyes

of desperate

fish.

I unhook myself.

At night

I carry my dreams

in fish crates.

POSEIDONIANS (*fin de siecle*)

I

We live in a peculiar time.

*Around us gather heaps
of unknown translucent nights.
Within us flicker stories of life.
Before us, a visible black star
more black than the most red
more visible than the most deep.*

*(Someday, the national poets will name us
mythdivers vanquished by myth.)*

*There was a time we mastered
the infinitives of matter.
The substantives were lost.
Such voyages, such worlds
with mind forever flowing
not toward maps but verbs
toward the algebra of the flesh
the salt of sadness.*

*Captives of coincidence —
in other words:
gramophones out of control
Bedouins whose horse is the phrase of God.*

*As Greeks, we left behind
lonely and homeless columns
turning to face the sea
like still-voiced women.*

*To strangers we showed
what psyche means, what is infinity.
Without a compass, without purgatory
(foreign inventions)
we took to the dark seas
out of sheer fondness
for studying stars.*

*Eventful ruins never caught up with us,
no matter what they say, how they admonish us,
these poets of misfortune.
Such catalytic fraud was known already
to the irascible Heraclitus –
that lyric goddess of the desert
who cast a spell upon Berlin.
To her we light these fires
on Patagonian rocks,
throwing all passwords to the sea
along with all grand shadows raised
by walls collapsing.*

*Indians always of our own dreams.
With a window flung open in our memory
so as to call on a few trees
few birds
a salty breeze over the branches
leafing through time's wrinkled pages.
An earsplitting silence.*

IN THE MANNER OF S. G.

*The Ancient Egyptians believed
in seven souls, slingshots.
They embraced the orbit of every soul
not like prisoners who were about to die
but like winners in the Olympic Games.
How foolish they were sometimes!
But whatever they left behind
they really left it,
no matter how much it hurt inside.
With each flight, they gained new soul –
only this mattered.
So they could never understand return
nor rupture,
and when exactly their last soul
was flung into the darkness,*

they couldn't quite tell you.

*The other dead in the Other World
envied the Egyptians.*

THE DREAM OF PENELOPE DELTA

*The book cover of my pain
a smile that bound me tightly
as one morning
a bullet struck
love's infertile breath.*

*You died as when I first met you.
Dressed in your linen suit
a naked country's
monarch in rags.*

THE DREAM OF ODYSSEUS CRUSOE

*They are busy staging my drowning. The cameras have already filmed whatever casualties
the sea will dredge. We sit and smoke, waiting, like unemployed Albanians. Penelope,
Telemachus, Friday – an all-saints calendar of natives. We place bets on the dilemma: who
will play the chorus? The suitors or the cannibals? At least, I know I will be recognized by*

the dog. An island all over me, this scar. A criminal wanted by the winds. The bow will rest next to the calendar. To be shipwrecked means to miss the target.

ATHENA'S DREAM

Cool afternoon in August.

North wind on Branger St.

*An Albanian pondering desperately
the secrets of a lighter.*

*A hard sidewalk bending
the high heels.*

*Punishing the violators
of summer-leave who bathe
in the dusty city light.*

The Albanian's name is Edison.

*His name marks the lightning birth
of the nation's First Electrical Plant.*

*But now he flirts with fire,
a new Prometheus*

*bound again by a foreign gesture
in a world that suddenly goes black*

so that the dark Acropolis now looms

whiter than ever

*and in black cinema-parishes
new citizens from the East*

*sacrifice their patrimony
to the luminous screen, where high
over enormous mysteries
of the Wild West
rides the white priestess
Annie Sprinkle.*

DREAM TIMES THREE

*I told her I did not
oppose her return.
I longed for 0*

not for o-micron.

*Still, she ran upstairs
and found old letters
scattered on the bed.*

*With eyes open
you cannot read them,
I thought of saying.*

You only need to use your hands.

*Letters are the buttons
of your dreams.*

She circled dreams three times.

*The repetition, I realized,
was not in my handwriting.*

*With eyes open
you cannot read the times*

*we spent in old letters,
I thought I said.*

*(As if I'd just woken up
in someone else's bed)*

Only with dreams that fit your hands.

*She tore the sheets in thin long strips
and fashioned angels with cufflinks.*

THE BRIDE WITH THE BULLETS

*In the end they shave the dead
claims an old folk proverb
now long forgotten
perhaps because the end induces fear,
even if proverbs never adhere
to a single phrase
for a whole life.*

*And so the once unshaven man
was once a groom
planet to an orbit from another sphere
(even if he thought he was the sun)
lover of proverbs –
Enormous Error –
because he never thought to hide
secrets from his tongue
forgetting, proverbial groom,
how the smallest deviations
change the turning of a sphere
hence the folds of time,
so that he suddenly finds himself
with his back against the steel door
facing the firing fragments
of a trigger-happy bride
in another world fully intact
but in this one unjustly treated,
since even proverbs claim*

*there never was a goddess of the just,
and language draws its every twist,
threshold, story from its own end.
Like the event that suddenly gives
a full stop to our life
the bride with her bullets
makes the whole world her target
since, without god, her own world had always
been duly indebted to a groom
and now this had to end
before the echo of a bullet
slow to come to a conclusion
catches her unprotected,
a bride without a veil,
slipping through the other door
of silence like a vortex.
And if just now she would slip
into a sphere, foreign, dark, not here
she'd know her target had been hit
even if she lived for a single phrase
a proverb now long forgotten –
perhaps because the end induces fear –
a bride without a thought for memory
intractable, carving bullet spheres from fate,
and a groom immobile in the end
waiting for his morning shave.*

Translated by Karen Van Dyck

OR

*Only a saint would wake
In a shawl of tears
Or possibly a child
Betrayed by the coldness
Of an unbearable dream
To face the mystery
Of yet another life's morning
For waking means
Either bliss or terror
Depending on the reality
Of dreams
Or whether dreams fail
To bear real pain
Or pleasure of discovering
Again the arms of a beloved
Otherwise morning means loss
In real time regained
Or love in dreamtime lost
So sounds of life
Either become themselves*

Unbearable

Or break the stillness of the future

So even the child who wakes

Again without a mother

Can bathe

In a shall of tears.

THE INSURMOUNTABLE WITH YOU

I

My body tears like paper

Nothing with you is mere fortune

Your black eyes deepen

The yearning of the sea

By the breaking waves we leaf

Through our own mortal story –

Language and letter rising at once

And against what's written –

If we're alive tomorrow we'll meet in the dark

As letter to candle as flame to dream

Tears fashion the language of the sea

My body tears like a prayer

II

*How we got across the border
We'll never understand
Except if silence strikes again
Though great thieves
Never return
To the scene of the crime
Nor do bombs ever strike again
The same target
Because in the meantime
Earth is always moving
And getting lost
Beneath our feet
So it's impossible, my love
To ever understand
How we got across the clouds*

III

*I want there to be more life
Not to live through something else
Something now unknown
Or otherworldly
But live again the known and the same
The insurmountable with you
So that each day reminds me*

*How we are finally so small
In a world so vast it chooses to evade us
And yet how vast we are despite
In a world discretely getting smaller
So that each day I yearn to live again
Beneath the fragile living light
Our every uncalculated turn
Our every word, glance, breath, passion
Our every error, grief, submission
To death
I yearn to relive it all exact from birth
Again to bear a child
In fear we might finally grow up
And lose the world from sight
Because one life does not suffice
To throw my arms around the sea
I want there to be more life
But there is none.*

ORACULAR DAY

*If only man was a cicada
And lived by feeding on the sun,
Thought one fine day
Apollinaire, the poet*

*Raising his eyes to the sky
Just as the shrapnel rained down
While he kept pissing
In the corner of a muddy trench
Next to those others digging madly
On the off chance to unearth
The final serenity
Of sun.*

Takis GRAMMENOS

Sepulchral Poems

BIOGRAPHIES

1

*I thought I could explain the universe
through painting, words, music.
Now I lie here, my clothes in tatters,
and of my bones
perchance some few remain.*

2

*For years, I was
under the influence
of the classical ideal
in all its manifestations.
Now, I am pursued perpetually
by beasts and birds
and the sun no longer shines on me.*

3

*While I lived, I was wont to analyze
universal phenomena
continually constructing theories.*

Like the spider and her web.

*The web has fallen over me
and sleep holds me fast.*

4

*The revolution led me
to sitting and drinking my own urine
in solitary confinement.*

*The bones of some were already
on the seashore, bleached white
by the memory of the sea floor.*

5

*While I lived, from everything I touched
even embroidered
flower petals
blood gushed forth.*

6

*Someday the sun will die.
And I will guard its jet-black mass
in this sarcophagus
as in a rusted
water cistern
full of bulbs or seeds.
One day its bright light will forsake me.*

7

*My hands were eaten away
by the porous blocks of this castle
and after placing them in piles
I went up to have a look
from up high, where the flag was flying.
The wind blew me away, and I left life.*

8

*What business had I with the mandolin
on Venizelou Street?
I should have gone
to the assemblies of the gods
along the seacoast.
And asked my questions directly
to the dead.*

9

*I quickly left off writing prose.
Thus I escaped the implacable ones
who nurtured of an afternoon
their genealogies and family tombs.
I lie here now
with the rain and wind.
Or so to me it seems.*

10

*In flight towards the floor
of my sarcophagus
I asked the ancients a quick question
about the stance
I should have taken.
Passerby, gaze at this inscription
on grey marble
to see what they said
to me.*

11

*The wind from the ashes
of my future fame
has brought me here.
Passerby, at least leave untouched
this sarcophagus
made of grey marble.*

12

*I was wont to keep my distance
from both men and gods.
Among the dramas enacted on both land
and sea, amidst its waves.*

13

I was often angry at the ancients.

With but a few exceptions,

they might have been

more lyrical.

They could have been.

For they were rich in blood and

soul-defying dramas

praise God.

14

Normally, in the formation

of ideologies

I held back.

But I too was

an ideologue.

15

I explored the depths of my soul

That is to say, its universal conditions.

But to these were added history

and psychic pain

day by day.

16

In life, it is true

*I read about
all the experiences of the afterlife
written on stone and other materials.
Inscriptions blown by wind in cemeteries
funeral ceremonies in libraries.
Passerby, show at least some sadness.
For I can no longer write anything
of what I see where I lie now.*

17

*I never claimed to be
a god on earth.
Passerby, the proof lies in the fact
that if you shift the soil hereabouts
you'll find my bones forthwith.*

18

*My dream was to fly
sea-borne to Homeric cities
perhaps even to their hinterlands.
There where timber grows
and rivers find their source.
But I wavered continually
between the rain-swept gates
and thus departed,
believing I'd been born away*

by the Aegean waters.

19

*The sun rose
over a scene with distant trees
nearly burnt by its brilliance.
And the smoke behind Mt. Ionas
seemed like my soul
above a few faint waves.*

20

*My bones lie here
well-protected
dry and white now.
I mingled life and death
to the extent this was possible.*

21

*I had begun to live
even as the sun's orbit
was waning.
Not only when it waxed at full force
in summertime.
But now, I have quite lost it
from my sight.*

22

*Passerby, dew, rain and snow
pass through me as well.*

*Don't ever think
that I don't recognize
the change of seasons.*

*It is but the sun and moon
I cannot see from here.*

23

*At last I had grown weary
each time it happened
this quickening of inspiration
in a flash determining
to express in words
divine pronouncements
concerning all I saw
I, a mere mortal.*

24

*For many decades
—of course, just to get by—
people may recall me
I was a jewelry-maker
but who collects my creations now
unsigned and dimod.*

*I inscribed names
on wedding bands and ID bracelets,
and on rings, initials.*

25

*I was handsome and frail.
A stone portrays such beauty
to the nth degree, I'd say.
Dampness and life
lie in the trees around me.*

26

*The last opinion I expressed
was for the good of my country.
At length, these small stone cupids
covering me
express it in sculpted relief.*

27

*Perhaps my parents' great mistake
was not telling me what really happened
They sealed their lips hermetically.
The result was that
I'd sit and re-create
the world in those days past
and still do so, from where I lie.*

28

*I am one of those
who served history
that is one of those
who never uttered a peep.*

29

*It is true that I took part
in some processions, North or South.
Sometimes when the sun beat on sidewalks
sometimes in lightly-falling rain
with musicians where the intelligentsia gathered
at the sea and in arcades.*

30

*In life, I was not my self
those were images that fell
just as now
like curtains covering
the face
of my sarcophagus.*

31

*In but one case
did I attempt to turn*

poetry into life.

and all went up in smoke.

32

Psychologically I was a tangled skein

the earth came to cover me

and now I am unraveling in peace.

33

Oh, for the corners of apartment-blocks

their small trees and flowers

in the Balkans.

Like the corners of my sarcophagus

and the weeds in the earth around it.

34

There came a point

when all I thought about

was what would happen at my funeral.

Which I did not see

but which I continue to imagine

from my current resting-place.

Translated by Deborah Brown Kazazis

Nikos GRIGORIADIS

NO BEAUTY

*This poem, born of you, I write,
I wash it,
I comb it, to make it sweet-smelling.
I then caress its closely-woven flesh.*

*And yet, no beauty can replace
Another beauty. No poem
Can give off your perfume*

YOUNG GIRL

*The young girl with her archaic smile
Has never forgotten her reverie
Though
Forty odd years have passed since.*

*Noiseless in the dark she comes at night
Offers her succulent breasts
To me to suck the ancestral of oblivion,
Which suddenly sets like plaster on my lips
And freezes me*

THE HAND

*His firm and once muscular, hand
In the shades of colour of an old icon or
Restless blood,
Now atrophied, pale and cold
Shuffles, with weak movements
The dried ears of corn of verses.*

THE POET

*Nothing ready does he have to offer;
He just builds a cabin, decorates it,
Arranges the lighting correctly,
Chooses the appropriate melody
And withdraws.
Happiness
Rests entirely
With the lovers.*

Translated by Kostas E. Evangelides

Thodoros GRIGORIADIS

From

The Waters of the Peninsula

The sun shone upon them again as they left the forest behind them. The horses looked very tired. The travellers' throats were completely dry.

Strangely enough after an hour's walking they did come across a leaning brick building, with a an old inn next to it. The road that used to traverse this place was completely disused. The cross-roads down the road no longer forked; there was but one road left. The construction of new roadways towards all kinds of destinations had rendered the old paths useless.

They dismantled and crept into the derelict inn, which must have at one time housed a bakery and shops. An old man came out to greet them. There was no one else left but him. The travellers saw a tiled courtyard, flanked on three sides by the wings of the building. The rooms were empty and filthy, with a wooden loggia above. They hadn't been used in a long time.

They quenched their thirst at a well situated at one end of the courtyard. The old man explained that the well was bottomless but no one would believe him. He told them that a few years ago a grandchild of his had fallen in, and they never managed to get her out again. Only Nikiforos listened attentively.

Stephen began to wander around, scanning the area for any traces. Could Blunt have also put up at this place? On the marble tympanum above the doorway the foundation plaque could be read: This building was built in 1830. That meant that Green couldn't have put up at this inn, unless there had been an older one its

place. Pointing at the date, he asked the old man why the building had been left to crumble so.

The elderly man talked without waiting for the translation assistance of Nikiforos, who had to stand between the two and speak simultaneously to both of them.

'The whole area has been deserted,' said the old man. 'All the locals have moved towards the coast. The Bulgarians are pressing in upon us and we are gathering back into Turkey.' He stressed that it was the Greeks who did most of the fleeing.

The old man feared no one. How much longer did he have to live anyway? 'I speak both languages, and I may kneel before one altar as easily as before another. As if I know why the Church split up in the first place. I can live with whomsoever. I just don't like getting harassed.'

Stephen didn't know whether to look upon such an attitude as adaptability or as chameleonic fickleness.

The tiny chapel adjacent to the inn was dedicated to Saint Paraskevi. The bath beside it was relatively new, built under the trees.

Stephen crept into the tiny chapel and noticed that the sacred spring was shaped like a tunnel. Perhaps the bath's water and the sacred spring's water both flowed from the same source. Be that as it may, Blunt's book made no such mention.

In the small domed bath, Yunus was already splashing happily. The pool was small, a natural cistern carved into the rock, and the water came up to his chin. Darkness had descended. The old man let them have a battered lamp and asked them what to prepare for dinner.

Stephen called Nikiforos to him as they sat at the wooden kitchen table. He was fond of the clever Greek, who liked to keep himself to himself. Stephen told him

that so far everything was coming along smoothly, although this was just the beginning. Still, the road they were on was the right one.

Nikiforos asked the old man for some tobacco and he rolled a cigarette. It was the first time he smoked during their trek.

‘Why don’t you have a bath too?’ Stephen asked him.

‘Let the mudlark get rid of all his grime first!’ Nikiforos said in Greek and then translated.

Stephen discerned a certain spite and selfishness in the interpreter’s words.

The old man first served them a sour drink – watered yoghurt it was. Stephen asked him if the inn still ran properly. The old man shook his head. The train had lain all these roads to waste, even though it was hours away. Nevertheless, he still kept it as a home. He had nowhere else to go. From time to time woodsmen came from the Rodopi forests for a few hours, or some passer-by dropped in for a cup of coffee. That was all. Gone were the wayfarers. People didn’t walk as they used to in the olden times.

‘Oh, Turkish soldiers come now and then for a drink of raki. They’re guarding this bridge, about an hour’s walk to the west. They’ve been left to guard it even though it’s of no use to anyone. It is a frontier, they say. Whose frontier? They don’t know any more than you do... Do you know which country you’re in at the moment?’

Stephen got distraught. In his imagination, a map large as a wall rose before his eyes. Unfortunately, it was a geophysical one and of little help in his effort to define the exact frontier lines.

The old man asked him in Bulgarian:

‘What are you doing in our parts?’

Nikiforos kindly asked him to use Greek. He spoke Bulgarian rather well, but the old man used a local dialect.

Stephen pondered on how to reply. He could see that Nikiforos was also not very forthcoming about their journey. For a moment he considered giving some rational reply but he was unable. He could say something along the lines of 'We are searching for the places where the first Christians who were baptised in Fillipi passed through and spread the word of Paul the Apostle... We yearn for that long-forgotten Church...' But how could he possibly translate... 'comprehensiveness'? Or should he perhaps tell the man that he was on a voyage into poetic Byzantium – a spiritual journey towards the springs of a civilisation that spread its lights to Europe... What could he say when even his fellow-travellers failed to understand him!

The old man's eyes drooped with sleepiness. He seemed not to care about springs and holy baths. He could only narrate the same story over and over again. How his grandchild had drowned and how no matter how long a rope they lowered into the well they couldn't find her, yet they found a holy icon which had been cast there in an effort to save it from the Turks a good two hundred years ago... On the icon, the child's face had imprinted itself. So her mother took the icon to a monastery in Rodopi and then she was able to die in peace.

They interrupted him to ask a few questions of a more practical nature. It turned out that the old man was useless even as a guide, just like everyone you met on these Balkan routes.

Stephen made his way to the baths. Nikiforos followed him. They both undressed down to their long buggy underwear.

On the slat beside the pool, Yunus lay relaxing, naked as always. He barely glanced at them. His face was lit with unexpected bliss, an expectancy, a certainty for something that would soon reach fulfilment.

Stephen lowered himself into the pool first and felt the hot water pressing in all around him. He had a hard time breathing.

'It seems sulphurous,' he told Nikiforos who had dipped his head into the hot water.

For a moment Stephen lost him completely. He became angry.

'This is not funny,' he told him. 'You could drown!'

Nikiforos' head emerged from the water.

'Will we find baths wherever there is a sacred spring?' he asked Stephen.

'Not necessarily. We could though. Who knows what state they'll be in when we find them... We've got quite a few surprises in store still.'

Nikiforos gurgled in the water, washing his mouth and teeth.

Yunus sat up. Stephen asked him if he was going to turn in. Yunus looked at him in bafflement. He looked terribly dizzy. Stephen's face suddenly lit up upon noticing Yunus' manly arousal.

'Yunus, have you ever been with a woman?'

Nikiforos translated.

'No. At the Seminary marriage was forbidden till the age of thirty.'

'Well you don't have to wait any longer. You can make love.'

'Love is everywhere. Love is great. It is the union with god,' said he voluptuously.

Nikiforos felt discomfort at having to render these words into English. He worried that he might confuse certain concepts and acts.

Feeling uncomfortable by the fact that Yunus unabashedly sported the full length of his nature, Stephen turned his head to Nikiforos. Thank heavens the entranced man from the East went away leaving them on their own. Undoubtedly, Edward Carpenter would have approved of such company, thought Stephen, and solaced himself with the thought of the 'prophet' who favoured communal living. There he went again, thinking the same thoughts that he was trying ever so diligently to erase from his mind.

'And what about you, Nikiforos, I imagine you...'

'I have a certain girl on my mind back in Anghialos. She waits for my return.'

'Don't you sleep with other women in the meantime?'

'In Constantinople I used to go the 'girls'. Quite often, as a matter of fact. But I never felt anything special.'

Stephen's tone of voice became more personal. It was now his turn to speak. 'I've split up with my girlfriend. She got angry with me because I went on the road again. She couldn't accept my readings or my views. I asked her to let me have a year in order to accomplish this mission. She refused. She understood nothing at all. She may be clever but she lacks depth. Straight from the outset she disliked the fact that I've got so many interests, that I enjoy reading poetry. All that money she possesses ends up being an obstacle to her development as a human being. Art, in her eyes, is a tedious pastime. She abhors anything artistic, poetry for instance. I wonder if women really need the arts. In some way they have assimilated them in their femininity. Of late, my ex-girlfriend has retreated to her mother's house in the country. I haven't missed her so far...'

He dipped his head underwater for an instant. Then he tried to exclaim: 'We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins'. He broke into laughter all by

himself. 'I wish I had been excommunicated from all Churches. Only that way would I recapture the true meaning of belief.'

He dipped into the water once more.

'But then the Church is one, don't you agree?'

Nikiforos didn't reply.

Stephen shouted 'I'm happy' and almost slipped all the way into the pool. He noticed the gloomy look on Nikiforos' face.

'What's wrong?' he asked him.

Nothing was wrong. But then he thought better.

'I'm homesick. I miss the girl I was telling you about. I miss the vineyards and the salt-pits. The sea I always used to look out to, no matter if it were only the Black Sea. Have you any idea why these countries here in the middle of the peninsula are so struck by pain and misery? It's because they're landlocked. There's no sea breeze. That's why they're restless to find a way out to the sea. Summer is so very beautiful by the water. I used to swim all the time.'

'You talk as if there's no chance of you ever seeing any of that again,' said Stephen.

'You're right. I have an ill foreboding. And this isn't just my intuition talking.'

'Are you perturbed by Yunus' presence?'

'No. Well, I'm not sure. He scares me. More than anything, what scares me is that we don't even know who he is. You've seen how he carries on. As if he comes from nowhere.'

'Not even he knows where he's from.'

'That's exactly what has me worried,' said Nikiforos stepping out of the water. It turned out he was just as aroused. It must be the hot water...

'Sometimes I sit and wonder if he's really human, actually walking beside us.
But... what's the matter, Stephen? Why are you looking at me that way?'

Ayiasma, in Greek, refers to water flowing or springing near an old chapel,
and which is supposed to be sacred. It may also refer to hot mineral springs. [...]

Translated by Leo Kalovyrnas

Ilias GRIS

GOD'S CONFESSION

*Everything is divine and for everything the world
Is a fire which flashes smoking
the sky's cloth or sail. So don't ask
If God died
From Niche's lips deported .
So don't ask what the carefree journey
Of the changing color lizard hides
In the sun's threshing floor where the source flows.
Don't ask those who dig the sleep
Ritualize so that it rains angels.
Don't ask for the old heart that jumps
In the childhood photograph. for the ocean's
belly which gets the ships drunk don't ask
how come the whole earth breaths in your chest
how come the cat's moaning
awakes the lilies
in the watered trench. Everything is divine
into the strange miracle and the ethereal
law of death. So don't ask

what the voices of those who didn't come hide
since everything is devine, but god doesn't exist.*

SOME WOMEN

Some women are like deserted cottages and from their fences migrated desires are running and lying down.

There are some women like dilapidated castles. Their eyes like grassy roads where frantic looks used to walk by. You see them everywhere and not only in Syndagma Square or in Voukourestiou and Solonos street. They pass by silently like at night in an grove with a lit cigarette the dead romance walks.

Some women are like deserted cottages and they are calling you. Then you become a sea which compassionates from its depths with a wreck.

TO A YOUNG POET WHO IMPERSONATES POUND

With this persistence of yours to provoke, my poor child, Cocky as a sole cock among the hens who ignores the poor one the knife. With this passion of yours to show as great, with attitude and only with that to become Pound, it is a little bit difficult. Let alone

You have to learn Provencal and Chinese

THE CHILD AND THE FIRE

*Back Then the soil used to smell like paradise
And the night used to bite the wind
Which was crawling in the burned spring*

*As a child he was learning that the night had no teeth
and the wind changes his skin like a snake
to dress the spring's seed
As time went by he was learning that the night
Is lying through the open window caressing
a nude child with moons on his chest*

*As in deserted roads blows
a story as old as hatred
as old as the dead who beg
for paddle cuddles to sail in our sleep
as for years now dogs and merchants scramble
the ashes. He was only learning that*

*everything that changes from within sets fires
and only when it is been made fire forever rises high.*

TWELVE YEARS

Since a clamp crashed her mind

and she became a skein of unmoving bones

she used to hold my hand like a baby who

holds tight her mother's finger

she used to bring it to her lips forgetting

the sighs, the curses and the groans. One day

before she closes her eyes forever

I caressed her ever honored snows

And said : sleep. I will see you again tomorrow,

I spoke to her ear. And tomorrow came

With a sucking death rattle in a distant angelness

before I could say a 'thank you mother'

that for twelve years like a secret

and undelivered letter was hanging from my lips.

Translated by Ioanna Bakalaku

Natasha HADJIDAKI

Dark Red

*Tonight I am Theda Bara
lying on lion's skin
in a Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer set.
It is Autumn and my sewing machine
has rusted, but I'll come to find you
as soon as my heart beats reach
their natural height.*

*I am Dorothy Lamour
as I float on a sea made of pearls and seagrass
behind the groves of Ecstasy.*

*I am Jane in the arms of Tarzan
and at the end of the comic strip
the child of the jungle will thrust
his knife in my back.*

*I am Anna-Maria Pierangeli and
I'm sitting with my legs open
on James Dean's silver shining Porche
just before he turned for the final
California Dreaming.*

*I am Daisy Buchanan
in this dirty hotel lobby*

just before Jay Gatsby starts talking.

*I am Natalie Wood drowned in the
red dress of Splendor in the Grass.*

*I am Janet Leigh naked in my bathtub
and I'm waiting for Anthony Perkins
on this rainy American night of Psycho.*

*I am Charles Manson's wooden chick
and I invite you tonight for a blood bath.*

Translated by Kimon Friar

Thanassis HATZOPOULOS

BEE-HIVE TOMBS

(THE ANCESTORS)

They lie in beds that sleep can't reach

Still like prayers or

Like incense in a crisis of calm

Stripped of gaze, stripped of fear

Acrid in body and unarmed in soul

Dead that waited for someone to be found

To cover them and blind dream of a little earth

In rooms stripped of light and empty of ways

On their fingernails the echo writhes

On a marble slab they lay to sleep

Their mother's unburied dead

An Antigone robust from her load

Stands by their hides and their shells

Stalking the light from the unburied

Men in the entrance guard the half-light

Her senseless waiting that never became

Nor was ever meant to become lamentation

HUNTER OF SOULS

(THE PROPHECY OF THE FORGOTTEN)

Not yet daybreak the hunter

With bird calls in his hands and lips

Invites birds' voices

To enter the leaves of his lurking

To be buried in the dew

To be blinded in the torch's glare

Voices, trills of souls whose souls

With likenesses of dirges, of lullabies

Try to deceive that dryads

May come to emerge in the morning mist

There where the first light condemns the darkness

To death on three counts

That there they may leave the shadows for the water

And after bowing to him

Before the rifle barrel

Be killed a second time

Translated by David Connolly

Lia HATZOPOULOU-KARAVIA

We Recognise the Angels No More

We recognise the angels no more.

They walk about amongst us without wings or haloes

usually in boots

instead of a white robe they wear casual clothes, even rags

whatever could possibly hide the nails

the marks of nails on their bodies.

They ride on noisy bikes, have earphones

drums, electric guitars, whatever could cover

the bitter memory, the jeering, the pounding of the hammers.

We recognise them no longer; moreover, we feel indignant

not one angel as promised by the myths

the grandmothers the high clergy and the simple priests

the poets and the painters –

bearing some emblem of the past

a faint smile golden hair light blue eyes

not one single angel corresponding to, say, one billion persons

while we had expected one for each of us

our guardian at the edge of precipices and a handkerchief for our tears.

We need the angels.

No one has told us the other side of the story

they stretch imploring hands to us

and others are unable to, they have no hands

*they growl and snarl threateningly
wrathful angels of death
blind among throngs of blind people
the angels of our times
in the midst of desperate men, they themselves the most desperate.*

Stratis HAVIARAS

LOOSE FOR A LITTLE WHILE

for Seamus

Terms ten the tenth time, ten times ten, ten times a hundred, and at the close of the great millennium, loose for a little while, as foreseen and told in writing, except you never knew it would be your lot to uncap the pit and unchain the beast. So long, then, so long and no longer, the beast having in the meantime fattened and the pit narrowed, the smell of rotting flesh and waste so vile all you need is a match and the air will ignite and the pit erupt just in time for the Memorial Church bell tower to strike midnight –if it ever does strike the hours past Five P.M.– the beast’s eyes burning at the sight of you, at the sight of light, and you are having second thoughts about your task, come to think of it, if you think not of it on your own, this hour comes not from the cooling core of the planet but from another source altogether, say a plagiarized mood-emotion-insight-experience, for when piecing together the unprecedented carnage and firestorm of the Year 2,000 retrospectively, the clock on the Mem Church spire did strike twelve, but whether it was midnight or noon it was never recorded. They now say the end of the world is only the end of the world as you know it. I say, Over my dead body.

KARYATIS

for Tatiana

A young Caryatid from the Treasury of the Siphnians signals me to approach, to listen, to attend her. She has a clean, smooth face, and her cheeks look healthy, her eyes bright in the rain and the morning sun, her hair twined with staffs of wheat. When I am close enough to hear the voice between her lips (marble rusted by eons of silence), she whispers, 'Please, carry this capital, this burden of mine for a moment. Beauty gives good weight, it won't crush you...' I know the myth. Beauty does give weight, but the capital doesn't. The capital has crushed or diminished a myriad. 'But not you,' she explains, 'not if you don't cave in, not if you, the darer of astral sandstorms, are not lesser than Herakles who relieved the perpetual carrier of the firmament, Atlas, that he may take a moment or so to scratch behind his ear.' And she says, 'It should take me no longer than that to bend down and shoo that living charm that adorns the strap of my sandal, that four-footed creep archaeologist, that marble-foot-fetishist lizard, the age-old salamander that may also have been sculpted in marble – how can anyone tell.' And she adds, with an archaic smile, 'It's once in a lifetime that you have this chance to risk getting crushed into gravel; not to perish diseased, not to succumb to external erosion, to internal terror, and not to live to regret it, but to carry that crushing weight for a moment forever, your concept of the firmament small enough not to diminish you, large enough not to choke in your hold.' So I plant my feet on firm ground, and the girl hands me the whole world. And she bends to shoo the lizard from the strap of her sandal, and her freshly washed peplos unfolds, showing the youthful elegance and strength of her thigh. Except the lizard turns out to have been made of the same marble as the sandal, and when the girl touches its tail her fingertips remain attached to it, fingers of marble. I have carried the firmament for a moment forever, and if my hands were free I would gently stroke her cheeks as though I were one of her sons or she my daughter.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE GREAT CICADA PROMISE

Seventeen years to be born, five weeks to die; Magis Cicada Septendecim, the periodic cicada, said to live only five or six weeks after emerging from where it spent seventeen years preparing for its brief life. Under cover of darkness, young nymphs dust their fine wings and climb the nearest tree, determined to excel in the arts and sciences, and get married and have children before it's too late. Sure enough, the males are already waiting, having spent their first full summer day noisily composing paeans, prothalamia and great multigenerational sagas. Or turning out beautiful hardwood sculptures that would live a thousand years. But it's only days before the females are laying hundreds of eggs and dying, while the males are still out there, wailing away. They too, of course, die soon afterward, wondering what ever happened to the great cicada magic and the great cicada promise. I myself am sitting by the window, typing down my ra-ta-ta-ta thoughts on the subject, still blaming others for my ineptness, compromises, and relentless failures. If the artefact is flawed I'd say the tools must be crooked — mallet speaks no English, chisel no Greek... The day ends, cold rain falls steadily until dawn, drenching trees and vegetable gardens. I spend the early hours of the day tending the plants, wiping the green tomatoes on the vine with paper towels before the midday heat can boil the raindrops still clinging to them. Horses of ignorance draw the chariot of the sun through the clouds toward the day's first clearing. The workday is long and the night full of paid informers and killers. The sun of justice and the moon of love shine on overhead in all innocence, until proven guilty.

GREEN LEAF BUG WRITES ONLY AT NIGHT

for Elektra

The August moon rose over the island, and a breath of cold air crept across the water. A fisherman, bringing his boat in, is singing a long-forgotten love song — the love-part perfectly unrequited. Up in a pine tree, a green leaf bug is trying to finish typing his novel before the first frost. But it's still summer... But Bug writes only at night... But summer night is short... But day goes on as if there's no tomorrow... He is typing all this. He reaches for his fountain pen and even does some handwriting: If my hand is an extension of my mind and my emotions, and the pen with which I write an extension of my hand, extension of what, if I may ask, is the difficulty with which I write? Green leaf bug writes on even though night dampness slows him down. I wish an angel were here to give Bug a hug. But like Rainer Rilke I'm afraid she might crush me in her stronger embrace.

From Millenium Afterlives

Argyris HIONIS

Stories of a Time Past That Never Came

A JAPANESE MINIATURE PAINTER writes a poem on a grain of rice, while another Japanese miniature painter paints the scene on the tiniest barnacle surface, where it is naturally impossible to distinguish the poem from the rice. But if you pay attention to how perfectly the writer's ecstasy and agony is retraced on the barnacle, you will be certain that someone is writing a poem on a grain of rice.

HAPPINESS IS A BIRD, said a Japanese wise man once, and the greater the happiness the farther it flies. Grief is a tree and the greater the grief the deeper its roots. Man is the soil. Inside him grief grows the deepest roots, while he sees happiness fly the farthest away.

WHEN THE UNDERTAKER DIES, he is buried by other undertakers. But I like to imagine him driven to his last residence by all the dead he buried in his lifetime, as an instance of appreciation for his services, or even that he alone, with his slow official step, carries his own self to the tomb, to lie down and pull the soil over him as a blanket.

THE FLY TRAPPED in honey discovers suddenly and irreversibly that even the sweetest death is very bitter.

From Motionless Runner

Athletics

HE APPLIES HIMSELF IN ABSOLUTE IMMOBILITY, to the erasure of every pulse of body and soul, even the barely perceptible. A difficult sport, perhaps the most difficult of all, to swallow ceaselessly, without remorse, all internal and external movement. It is like asking a lake to remain unwrinkled, despite the thrown stones.

A HUNTER OF CHIMERAS, he has arrested numerous such monsters, only to free them at once, not because he is an animal lover, but because he is certain that, were he show these chimeras to any fellow humans, not one would believe them to be genuine.

TO FISH THE MOON you need interminable patience and persistence but mainly endurance in the face of sure failure. Moon-fishermen, armed with hooks or fishing nets (or even buckets, when fishing in wells), usually sit on the banks of a serene lake and wait to see the moon in the water. Fishing begins then and ends with the light of day, when the moon retires into the dark depths. The fishing nets naturally come up empty, the hooks are left untouched, but the dedicated moon-fishermen do not relent and quit the game only when the moon empties out and goes into hiding in order to regain fullness.

They say that if you bait the hook with a star, you're sure to end up with a moon in your frying pan. But how can you catch a star, since everyone knows stars are not reflected on the surfaces of lakes.

THE WRESTLER who decides to wrestle with time covers his body with oil so as to slip from time's powerful grip. But everybody knows time has no hands and therefore no one ever slips away.

WHOEVER RACES with Charon and beats his speed reaches the end first.

LONG-DISTANCE swimmer inside a well.

Immobile on the Riverbank

HE WAS ALWAYS SEDUCED by stories of people to whom nothing ever happened, people who lived without the event of their birth ever becoming noticed, people who never died because no one ever felt their absence. Difficult stories, the most difficult of all, told only with the mouth closed.

WITH THE USE OF ALCOHOL, he tries to tame the wild days, since alcohol obviously has the capacity to repress the extreme, almost maniacal, and certainly useless insistence of the everyday to become eternal.

WITH APATHY, he sees his dreams drowning. Hands in his pockets, he observes them sinking out of sight. He has no rope to throw them, something to grab hold, no life-jacket, no saving raft. He stands there immobile, almost content, watching them drown. Deep down, there is a relief, a consolation, finally to be without dreams, since dreams are known to have the ceaseless tendency to get shipwrecked and you must ceaselessly engage in rescue operations.

From *Esotic Landscapes*. Translated by Stathis Gourgouris

Dimitris HOULIARAKIS

THE CONDUCT OF THE MOUTH

*Mouth look not into the darkness
That growls and opens up before you
Mouth go not mad on the peaks
Score not your tongue with razor blade
Mouth spit not your teeth
Close not open not
Mouth your dead blood
Keep to your palate.*

THE BLACK BOX

*Who will find the black box of our lives
among the hapless smoldering wreckage
who will gently lift it out and then
who will delve into it solemnly
to analyse the causes of our tragedy.*

*Yet even if this is done what the benefit
since what was meant to be became*

*since pale we search the shattered
flagstones of our youth
and now we know no one
now we ask for nothing.*

*Yes better that the black box
of our lives be never found
better that it rot away somewhere in the fields
while the silent grass grows up around
till it's quite covered
and all that remains is a
hump in the ground.*

CHILDREN'S CANDLES

*Light up the children's candles once again
with your little ribbons tied around
light them up and shine on the dusty
waste and bow close over the body
cheerful candles that once we held
light them up and warm us just a little
be you the escorts to the cold earth
to the shadow and the stone.*

If only we could suddenly awake

*and there in the darkness
candles burn and drip
their wax on rosy hands
and we children all devotion
in the church with eyes of wonder
look ahead and wait and stand.*

IN A PORTRAIT OF EL FAIYUM

*Beloved face with long departed gaze you look on me
your black hair in the sand quite
faded your lips are cold
your rosy cheeks now funerary white.*

*Lovely face who may you be
what your descent what woes brought you down
what bodies tasted the joy of your touch.
Cherished face I have naught for you
but tender words; you're like me
you alone in this cold museum mausoleum
I too alone in the wilderness of the world.*

Translated by John C. Davies

Elena HOUZOURI

Cotton Motherland

That same moonless night also marks the night between the 8th and the 9th of October 1967. In fact when the train with the many coaches on the Tashkent-Moscow line arrives at the 1st station in European Russia, in Orenbourg, the old clock of the old stone-built station built during the czarist era indicates that it's three o'clock in the morning. Everyone inside is sleeping in the berths. Everyone, that is, except Dr. Stergios X. Stavroula in fact is snoring lightly. Evidence enough that she's tired, mentally exhausted, and sleep finds her vulnerable, bringing to the surface that innocence which she never lost, and filling Dr. Stergios X. with guilt. Even now he is feeling guilty as he observes her thessalonian face, with fine aging lines surrounding her half-open lips; with her eyes closed, there were guilt feelings even though her well-intentioned look and her questioning silences didn't always meet his eyes directly; and that, because even to this day, with everything behind him, with everything left behind him, and once again taking responsibility for his actions, ever more difficult and demanding, because he isn't deciding only for himself any more... even today, I narrate, a voice intercedes between Stavroula's innocence and my guilt. For no matter how he attempts just the opposite, this voice is in his ears, *'do you know what Orenbourg means, my dear, it means a 'hungry wolf', once people went hungry there, and I'm afraid that they're still hungry there today, it's a very poor city, when you pass by on the train, you'll see their wooden houses – isbah they call them, and you know how they make them? They place huge tree trunks one on top of the other, and the houses look beautiful in the woodlands, you should see them, my dear, they smell of poverty,*

but also of warmth,' that's what the voice was telling him when he was getting ready for his first trip to Moscow, which in the end never took place. Now in the darkness of this moonless night, how can Dr. Stergios X. make out the wooden houses of Orenbourg, which they call *isbah* and which reek of poverty and warmth?

Yet despite the fact that the doctor cannot make out anything else except poorly lit czarist yellowish stone buildings with arched windows – as of course all czarist stone buildings were, as were also the central buildings of Tashkent University Hospital – the female voice continues to sound in his ears, and strangely enough he is not confused at all with the sound of the train, a fact that instead of reassuring Dr. Stergios X., upsets him even more. *'Do you know, my dear, what the paramount characteristic of a Russian is? The need to believe. And right behind that?? The need to be sacrificed. Russians love feeling like candidate martyrs. But what's characteristic of a Greek?'* Dr. Stergios X is confused, and while clearly hearing the question, as he stores it into memory, is unable to hear his own answer; he thinks hard, 'what had I answered really', as the train's whistle sounds, indicating that in a few minutes, seconds, Orenbourg, with its wooden houses, its stone czarist station, will also belong to his personal story, just as the prior 18 years belong to his life.

Those years, Doctor, in order to bring you back to the sequence of the novel, begin at exactly the moment – what irony of History! – that the Liberty revs up its engines and begins slowly but steadily to move back out of Dyrrhachion harbor and in a few minutes become lost in the moonless humid October night. Where can an American-built vessel sailing under a Soviet flag be headed in the dark of night, and better yet, what has been filled to capacity in the ship's huge hold, as some Britons with justifiable suspicions seem to have asked themselves, since the white blip of this *Soviet Liberty* would appear on the radar of their submarines' that were patrolling the waters ever alert on the Mediterranean approximately all the way up

to the Dardanelles. Some persons indeed, the most suspicious and most conscientious of them, must also have sent the required telegraph signals. Tap tap tap tap ...Soviet ship located in the Adriatic... STOP. Tap tap tap ...heading towards the Ionian Sea...tap tap ... following it . . . STOP. They were watching you, with good reason they were watching you, because what would the Soviets possibly be looking for in those waters, if you don't mind my asking? *'Didn't we divide up into zones of influence, gentlemen? Didn't you agree that we would keep Greece?'* Therefore, these stubborn bone-headed Greeks had given Joseph Vissarionovich a real headache. This Caucasian didn't like Greeks, above all he didn't trust them one iota, you don't know what trap they can set for you from one minute to the other, a Greek was one who raised a paring knife against his shoemaker father, there in the Caucasus, and the Great One hadn't forgotten it, but that which he couldn't stand the most was their disobedience, their proclivity for doing whatever they wanted to do, particularly their first and foremost indescribable leader whom he sent to Siberian Kolyma, having remembered to send him packing the sooner the better, just as he had sent packing those others, those compatriots from the Crimea, who went in '37 to cause him trouble, 'but he's a madman, as if he didn't have enough problems and went to create one with his civil war, I've got so many to take care of now, thousands, I learned how it is to help someone escape and where to take them, no way should Churchill, that English fat fox get wind of it, you understand, Comrade Laurenti⁶, what they're doing to me , you understand?' Like a wild beast, it is said, the first-in-his-class Great Comrade Stalin would come and go to his office in the Kremlin at ten, maybe even eleven o'clock at night – a time when he usually held his meetings – in late September of 1949. With every step, pain(s) stabbed him literally, winter sank deep into his bones, and his rheumatism began to flare up, Moscow didn't agree with him anymore, and then there were those terrible sleepless nights

to boot, and as soon as he would manage to shut his eyes a bit after sunrise, and certainly in no way was he going to take sleeping pills that were recommended to him by his doctor, Vinogradov⁷! 'Why is the Jew so insistent? What's he up to? Sleeping pills? And what if I don't wake up? I'll fix that wily traitor, first chance I get, I'll take care of him.' And so the aging Joseph, in all his pains and fears and rage against those undisciplined and disobedient Greeks, and his mother wasn't near him to console him, to offer a tender 'My little Soso' when he was a little boy in the Caucasus, and would run and hide inside her apron strings, to be saved from the vulgar shoemaker, Beso, that was his nickname, who through bad luck happened to be his father.

And it is said how on that rainy and already cold Moscow night, Comrade Stalin, Heart, Soul, and Mind of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the only thing he had on his mind was to return to the beautiful sanitarium complex furnished with the most modern equipment, that had been erected at the year's beginning especially for his ailments, i.e., 1949, on the coast of the heavenly beautiful mountain Lake Ritsa, well where else? In the Caucasus, of course, in Abkhazia, at an altitude of a thousand meters, specifically, where Soso could once again return to his childhood and suffer neither from his damned rheumatism, nor from his diabolical conspirators who he felt were increasing in numbers around him day by day. For that reason, he was in a hurry to close the subject on 'Greeks' as soon as possible. It is said that there, where he was pacing up and down, he stopped for just a couple of minutes – not even five, truth be told – in front of the great window. Joseph Vissarionovich marveled at the Kremlin's magnificence; and he believed that the red glistening of the perpetual flame at the highest point of the medieval Russian palace, lit up not only Red Square, but the whole world...the world that *I rule!*. He thought deeply within his soul, and this very deep satisfaction, this endless pleasure that it

brought about at the same time a wave of deadly fear that choked him, and immediately afterwards infuriated him to death. They say he turned suddenly to the man who was following him quietly, but quite malevolently, waiting for his decision which he announced as follows: 'To Uzbekistan, to Tashkent. Take them to Tashkent. All of our factories during the war have been moved there. We have need for workers. There, far away, in the desert. And they'll work there, and they won't cause any more trouble. Do you know what the other name for Tashkent is, Comrade Laurenti? 'The city of bread.' Therefore, these Greeks should be eternally grateful: for salvation, for work, for bread.'

From *Cotton Motherland*, 2009. Translated by Sydney Kornberg

Katerina ILIOPOULOU

'On weakened legs I walked around the town the whole day. I took photographs'

The Hungarian photographer Andri Kertez with his walking (during thirty years) wore out the network of streets of at least three cities. Eighty-five now, confined (by grief) to his apartment on Fifth Avenue in New York he photographs whatever is around him with a Polaroid.

With the delicate movements of a glass statue he changes his position in the room. He shifts the focal axis of his gaze.

He doesn't need to go anywhere.

He says: 'I forgot to eat. I took photos. I started at daybreak and waited until dusk. I took photos again and again. I forgot my medicine.' Two years later in the book entitled From My Window you can see the city melting through the window pane, you can see the shadow of a hand menacing a shiny doorknob without ever reaching it, a diaphanous glass bust slowly digesting the naked trees of the park and the twin towers above the window sill.

You can see what you don't see.

He did come outside again. He photographed the spasm of a little girl running in the park and the half figure of a man in black disappearing. In Paris he photographed himself double closing his eyes and a crumpled half-opened white door reflected in the mirror.

Every day he collects the brittle honey-less wasp nests

Restless wax catacombs of buzzing.

Every evening he empties them in his bottomless archive.

There's no way he can stop this

It's not a place that would be possible to leave.

Every formulation, every construction of death

*Is resurrected in the buzzing that seeks still more.
More snow and networks of traces
More mirroring of the shadow on the whitewash
More walking with a strange suspension of joy
When he lets the sting prick him again and again.*

From *The book of the soil*, 2011. Translated by John O'Kane

HOW TO ADVANCE IN A FIELD

*Even though there's no door we entered somewhere.
At once we came face to face with the process of transformation.
Tens of tiny birds (previously invisible) took flight from the ground
Touching the tops of the standing crops.
Thus making them breathe
Making them take part in the flight.
Every corn stalk it seemed gave birth to a bird.
At a certain moment they stopped.
Not one of them remained.
We didn't know yet how to advance
With our question pale green in the hand.
Had it been a well we could have cast a stone
And waited for the response
Or it might have been enough to seize some elements
(plants, a little earth)*

*In order to draw our conclusions.
That is to say by an attack or theft.
We decided to forget ourselves in our little choreography.
Forgetting just like entering is a departure.
What ought we to have left behind?
Giant thorns with a saturated orange color
Turned their heads in the imperceptible air
As if they were about to move forward.
In the whole place as we were approaching
What we would call center
There was only the sense of beginning.
The field, a clenched fist that wouldn't show.*

THE FOX

*In the sheath of light she appeared
Crossed the road
A small brown fox.
And again the next evening
Behind a bush fleetingly
And another time only her tail
Swept the darkness
And from then on
Her paws walking inside your eyes
Her warm furry body
Quivering between us.*

Always passing never stationary.

'But who are you?' we asked

'I am' she said, 'what is always in excess.'

TAINARON²⁵

Here the days do not dissolve in the air

They drop into the water

Forming their very own layer

A surface of separation.

A hawk flies above the body of the summer

It dives again and again

Feeding and getting drunk from falling.

There is nothing here

Only crazy wind and stones

And sea

A random promise

Sharpens our lust with the blade of the moon.

When I arrived for the first time in this landscape of endings

The wind entered my mouth with such fury

As if I were its sole receptacle

Until all my words disappeared.

²⁵ Cape Tainaron (Ταίναρον) is the southernmost tip of continental Greece. Ancient Greeks believed it to be the end of the world

*Every tree receives the wind differently
Some suffer others resist
(I met a palm tree that gave birth to the wind and distributed it
in every direction)
Others shake all over and change colors.
I of course am not a tree
I sat down and wore the wind as a coat.
I bent my head and looked at the ground.
From its crevices, the roots of thyme
With their hieroglyphics struggled to enter the light.
Then the words came back.*

THE SONG OF EURYDICE

*Keep your promise Orpheus
Look at me
Cultivate with your gaze
The meadow of my wandering
Dig for me the journey with
The stiletto of your eyes
Cast your net and
Draw it up empty
Gather in the drops:
In each one
My face will be mirrored*

I am the border which continuously recedes

The guardian of distance

And your song Orpheus

Is distance.

Don't leave anything untouched

Whatever thing you touch

Will never become your own

Every touching all the more foreign

The more foreign all the more gripping

And ready to touch you back

As it alone knows how,

To start up the dissolution machine.

And with a holding of your breath

All the blurred red takes you in.

Hold on to the breathless void and weave it.

HERE THERE EVERYWHERE FOREVER

I do not cultivate my garden in depth

I am only trying to cover the surface

Therefore, I plant footsteps.

If you strip waiting of all expectation

What is there left?

A constant presence.

To be sure, in order to be invariably present
You ought to learn to be absent.
Myself, I picked out a white dress.
Others invented different devices
For disappearing:
A bee-keeper's outfit, for instance.
Yet others, set themselves up inside a window-frame
and stayed stock still.
It appears static, but it's not.
Duration is to blame, which crystallizes it.
The mechanism is:
Vibration
Abandonment
Faith
Annihilation
Joy
Not in that order
And without the feeling

From *Asylum*, 2008. Translated by Konstantine Matsoukas

Klitos IOANNIDES

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD

A small remembrance
were you
Unknown one
in the infinity of His unknowing.

*And the third day of Epiphany,
piece of a boundless sea
and memory of his reign
from the Andes
came to our time
a holy reference
water of an untraceable source.
And his nature
is in our inmost being.
A cry of flesh from his flesh
the holy of holies
of his agony.*

*Then the daughters of the sun
spoke of the impossible
of the surprise of transformation.
Tongues which are lost*

*in the manna of his love
recent diamonds
in the theosis of antiquity.*

*At these last words
appeared indescribable colours
angels of an incomprehensible night
divine appearance
blessed from afar
by God.*

*And the Unknown ever present
eternal person
king without heir.
He watched and the world was born.*

*In this splitting of eternity
where God did not resemble God
the dwellers of his throne
told us to wait.
There is, they said, a long way yet.
Beware of the steps
do not remain behind.
Restoration will not take place with you.
It will be made by one to one.
As for us we await*

*his next breath
in the hope that we may be assimilated.
Our life, incredibly,
an endless succession of deaths.*

*At this new beauty
whose ancient image is lost
the guide prepared for recognition.
And joy was mixed with grief.
It is not you, was horribly heard,
and the slopes looked at each other with awe.
The sky shuddered.
The climber then went on bitterly
on his way.
He crossed himself mid-way.
The mountain he was conquering
was called Negation.*

FLEETING

The next door resident
permanently dissatisfied
persistently inquired if he was included
in the expansionist plans of God

*For fourteen years now
a dried up desert
he anxiously awaited the invasion
of the hyperborean brothers
And his expectation was
a tempest
rain
destructive hail.
In those years
no wind was seen
and snow was scarce.
Although he spoke and spoke again
of redeeming femininity
of the ebony of the sky.
Afternoon and evening
in times of joyful weeping
often from his lips was heard
lettest thou thy servant depart
a reflection of angels
the untimely springtime of the stars.*

*And all this pain because
from his base
rockets were not fired
and in his century
interplanetary voyages were banned.*

*He too was an historic man
incarnate
there was in his mind a deep wound
the knife of infinity.
And he continually complained
about Dion of Syracuse
wishing his relatives well.
From Platonopolis
with love
an undelivered letter to the fortunate
was his mournful worry.*

*Daniel in the pit of the dying
wearied by deferment
by the auditing of deeds.*

*This man
a golden ant of God
at the borders of the world
had no possession other
than the war of flowers
the promise of the night.*

*And in his breast
the Greece of women
a bitter indigestible apple*

*he mourned;
an unbearable tridion
the colour of his isle.*

*He went and in his going
the winter brightened
he came and in his comings
the eyes of prisons opened
the sun appeared once more.*

Translated by Rhea Frangofinou

Panos IOANNIDES

Chinese Fondue

The formal dining-room shared a common wall with the drawing room or double reception room. This wall, on the right as you entered, was covered from end to end by a collage, about six metres long and one metre high. It was a composition of photographs: animals and birds, fish and reptiles, shellfish, lichen, fruit and plants. They were all cut out, mounted on a gold background, life size, without connection or association. The photographs, taken by a master of the art, were so perfect you might think that the inhabitants of the giant collage would escape at any moment from their silent, stationary world and the konaki²⁶ would suddenly become a garden of paradise or would be flattened by their by their unbridled flight.

On the opposite wall was a second collage, narrower about sixty centimetres high, with the same gold background. This was a different collage: of forks and spoons, ladles, serving spoons, skewers and tongues, knives and saws and butchers' knives, of every age and kind from primitive ones of bone and stone to modern ones of silver, steel, gold. All authentic, gathered from the ends of the earth, stuck on the original wall painting.

'Life in a jaw,' Kay linked the two compositions with their transparent allegory.

²⁶ large house or mansion

The oblong table or 'tavla'²⁷ as he heard Paul call it, was laid with crystal and silver and fine china. Around it Kay counted eighteen chairs, robust and made to bear the weight of men 'of large displacement.'

Three smaller tables had also been laid behind and at the sides of the big one. Round each of them were drawn up chairs like those round the 'tavla'. 'Please sit down! Wherever and with whoever you like,' said Jenny. 'There is no protocol tonight.'

The announcement caused the guests –all of whom were at home with the strict formality of the house– numbness and inertia. For a few moments they were at a loss, undecided as to how to act. Some, the most intimate, hastened to sit in the places which etiquette normally assigned to them. Others, the less daring, waited to see where friends and acquaintances would sit.

Kay, who naturally belonged to the second group, was about to sit at one of the smaller tables next to Barry Mikailovits when he felt with impatience the arm, long as an anaconda, wrap round his waste. He recognized it before he saw it from the touch and the weight.

'Though we have no protocol tonight I have reserved a special place for you', the host told him. And went on, 'tonight you are Number One! You noticed, I imagine, the invitation...'

With this, one of Kay's queries was answered. The numbering of the invitation was not chance. How could it be? So far, so good! But the explanation raised a new question. Why was he, of all of them, the guest of honour? He, the most lowly of them all? What had Carolos thought up? What was he planning? The arm led him to the big table, opposite Jenny, between the Minister of Coordination, and his fiancée.

²⁷ large table in traditional style

He sat down. He drew his chair up as much as possible. The Minister smiled coldly at him, leniently. The 'fiancee' was the mature spinster he had danced with a little earlier. He heard them call her Joanna and immediately there flashed through his mind the explanation of the joke that Litbranski had made. She was the 'certain Miss Joanna Mylona' and the 'brainless' gorilla she had fallen in love with –that's how he had described him– was none other than oily, hairy, tall from the waste up but short-legged Minister of Coordination, Mr. Maleas!

Behind the semi-circle formed by the heavy silver knives and forks and the glasses, in full array, was the menu, standing up and half open. He hesitated to take it, to study it as most of his table companions and Miss Joanna on his left did as soon as they had sat down. He tried to make out from his place what the long list in elaborate French included but it was impossible. The acute angle between the opened pages and the optical angle of the menu did not permit it.

He lifted his glass and moistened his lips with water. He noticed the crest of the house engraved on the crystal. He looked round. It was repeated on all the cutlery, on the embroidered table cloth, on the silver napkin rings.

As soon as he put down the crystal glass a waitress appeared at his side (until then he had not seen her next to him) and refilled it to the original level. Then she vanished again! The same waitress appeared several times later when he had swallowed the first drop of white wine, when he rolled the red wine round his palate and so on. She came and went noiselessly and was positioned so skilfully that she remained completely out of sight for as long as the plates and glasses held the first serving that each guest received. As soon as the level of the glass fell or the plate half-emptied, the houri became flesh again and restored the order of things precisely. Unless the abstemious turned her away, as he himself did on two occasions. 'For goodness sake, I shall burst!'

Kay noticed that the same or more or less the same thing was happening to all the guests, regardless of the number on their invitation, with the same professionalism, grace and order. He noticed, too that the guests were not silent and discreet like the houris who materialised and vanished next to them, bringing nectar and ambrosia. They shouted, told jokes, chewed noisily, gestured, laughed loudly and in a room which, just as all the other rooms in the house, did not allow sounds to enter or even slip through its boundaries, but kept them all jealously, preserved them, magnified them, counterbalanced with those here the others outside... Kay, at times, had the impression that he had buried his head in a bowl, a bell which echoed above, around within him...

He noticed further, as the dinner progressed from starter to the first, second and third course and so on with the precision and rhythm of a Swiss Patek Philippe watch, that though the fifty-five or so guests had heroically attacked the appetisers and snacks that had been served in the reception room they appeared very ready now to do justice in full to the new harvest of 'gastronomical magic' as the Minister described it to his friendly fiancée.

The menu which Kay did not open but exhausted included a starter of prawns, mussels and crabs mixed with pickles, capers, finely chopped gherkins and set in aspic. The first course was 'Iberian eels', in size and quantity like spaghetti, with optional dressing. Then came lamb – neatly shaped cutlets cooked in breadcrumbs and a mixture of garlic, rosemary, crushed coriander, parsley and other herbs. To accompany it were served beans, potatoes no bigger than marbles and small pastries filled with spinach or grated carrot and cheese. Then followed the surprise, the 'clou' of the evening, the third main dish, optional: 'Chinese Fondue'. And to cap the meal, desert, coffee, cheese and cigars.

As for the drinks, three wines were offered which clearly bore the same name, Carolos: 'Carolos Blanc', 'Carolos Rose', 'Carolos Rouge'. As Miss Joanna explained to him when he asked her after she had unexpectedly and in a friendly way lifted her glass and toasted him, they were all three a special order for the cellar of Carolos. A well-known winery in Limassol had prepared them for him from rare varieties of grapes. Special order, too, from a winery in Paphos, were the brandy and liqueur. Mrs. Carolos had given her name to these: 'Jenny of the five stars' to the brandy and 'Commanderie de Jenny' to the liqueur with a taste between passion fruit and papaya.

Although Kay had gone into the dining room determined to eat only a little – he was a small eater and at night ate only fruit or salad– tonight he could not resist the temptation. Each time the waitress came round he thought like the ladies outside, 'shall I or shan't I?' 'I'll try just a mouthful.' But in the end he was carried away by the smells, the flavours and the appearance and emptied his plate. What he sedulously avoided was finishing the second helping, which the 'invisible' waiters placed before him, willy nilly, as soon as he finished the first. This was not because he lacked the appetite –far from it– but for tactical reasons. He had noticed that when you finished your second helping before the others at the table you were confronted with a third one. This happened to the Minister two or three times, without of course him seeming to be displeased. Because the lamb and herbs was really a dream!

But let him not cast aspersions on the Minister. It happened to him too – through ignorance rather than from a desire to please Jenny and Paul– with that incredible fondu!

Events developed rapidly and he was trapped. Before he managed, tipsy as he was, to alert his defence mechanisms, he had already perpetrated the crime and he had been the first to commit cannibalism...

At some moment, between the second course and the sweet, Paul announced to the lovers of Chinese food that he had a surprise tonight!

'Who is brave enough to try it first?'

Everyone with 'oui', 'jawohl' or simply 'yes' and 'Σ·Θ' with raised hands, with the chinking of crystal and laughter, readily proposed himself. The sole exception was Kay. He was always conservative in food as in love. Perhaps because he had not yet found an 'Olivetti' cookery book and bed.

'I first tasted this dish in Shanghai,' explained Paul. 'Since then I order it whenever I travel to the Far East. It's difficult to make the decision to try it, especially for us Westerners who have no imagination at all when it comes to cooking. However, once you take the plunge you love it for the rest of your life. That's what happened to Jenny and me! We haven't served it at our parties before because we didn't find the ingredients in Cyprus, first and foremost the fish Betty Boop. The scientific and Chinese names escape me so we, or rather Jenny, Christened it like that. Well, after a lot of effort I managed it. An acquaintance of mine who was returning from Sydney via Taiwan brought me several dozen a few days ago.'

From *The Unearable Patriotism of P.F.K.*

Alexandros ISSARIS

After Sunset

Death is quietly whistling in my sadness

It spreads on my limbs like a bruise

A worm that climbs to

My heart.

The distant landscape sinks into the mist

Peacocks are in hiding

Freezing weather.

I withstood it for years

In seas of fickle colours

Like the desert's echo

Like smouldering hope.

My mother walked on tiptoe

Right behind it

Saying prayers and incantations.

Loves of mild months

Earth in my empty mattress

Fleshy roots amid

The spirit's stones.

Angels' hallelujah arias
Beneath transparent domes
A phallus as from a pool of blood.

Clouds went in and out of the room
Memories reclined
And I on my back counted the wounds:
94 82 82 77 76 75 73 68
Nothing ashore.
I waited for the waves to withdraw
That I may incline and see
The plain of dreams
White shells, conches
Kouroi, turtles, fossils of kisses
Medusae and music boxes.

I think that I only by
Moulding light of mud
Reversing the sunset
And pawning my body
To the sky
Will I memorize what little is left.

And when our bare feet
Will step into the black sea
They'll ask us: did you love?

*With heads hanging
Cheeks burning
Bitterly
We'll whisper
Oh yes, again and again!*

*I always remember
Remember last year
Ten twelve years ago
A tell figure in the rain
Remember the hill and the train
The back glowing in the light
The chestnut hair in the park
The festive night
The sweet-scented dark armpit
The brittle words in my ears
The lilies in the frost
The first snowfall
The hundredth kiss
I always remember
Remember nothing.
You rise as if out of sleep
With a broad-leafed embrace
And you shape undecipherable.
Rose saliva with pencils of remembrance
Sperms spasms against a copper background*

You writhe with light. Dusk.

Brook, brook, brook

Water will flow

Time will come

We'll reach the sea

And with our brothers

The butterflies, the gazelles and the Centaurs

The lizards, the eagles, the violets

We'll become drops without memory.

But just before

We'll stand naked behind a wall

And when they ask us

Did you love?

With heads hanging

Bitterly

We'll say: yes

Again and

Again!

Victor IVANOVICI

Standpoints in Balkan Literary Comparativism

(FRAGMENTS)

[...] The need arises to reconsider the epistemological orientation of literary comparativism in the Balkans. The subject readily lends itself to meticulous consideration. For obvious reasons, however, I will now briefly elaborate on just a few points (three, to be accurate), which are of course subject to further discussion.

1. The invasion of South-East Europe by the Enlightenment towards the end of the 18th century resulted in the immediate dismantling of the single historical and political pattern to which all the nations in the region had more or less contributed intellectually. I am referring to the Byzantine Commonwealth –after Dimitri Obolensky– or rather, to put it more accurately, to its late phase, which in a well-known book Nicolae Iorga, a Romanian historiographer of international acclaim, dubbed Byzance aprθs Byzance.

Furthermore, Romanticism –which generates no conflict with the Enlightenment in our region, because ‘tamed’ (V. Nemoianu, *The Taming of Romanticism*, 1984) when it arrives– further contributes to this course of development in two ways:

- On the one hand it helps construct the individual ‘national identities’ of individual ‘cultures’, by endorsing any local *differentiae specificae* at the expense of the Byzantine – post-Byzantine *genus proximum*. This is effected within the ‘master narrative’ [le Grand Ricit] of each individual national history, the compilation of which constitutes a major task and aspiration of Romanticism. Extensive chapters on the common past are thus practically ‘deleted’ and ‘re-written’ as episodes in each individual ‘narrative’.

[See, for instance, the diametrically opposed appraisal of 'Phanariot rule' and of the Greek Revolution from the Greek and the Romanian historiography viewpoint respectively].

- Romanticism engages in directly linking the newly formed cultural patterns with a more ecumenical centre, which will henceforth be located in the West. National literatures now claim their due within the so-called Weltliteratur (Goethe), which is identical with the Western Canon. The ensuing epistemological processes are inversely proportionate to those referred to earlier: unlike what happened with the dated Canon, where specific points of difference as well as the detachment of each 'national culture' were underlined, within each 'national culture' features contiguous to the West are sought or even invented.

[Thus, again in the context of the two cultures of the region I am most familiar with, several Greek theoreticians and historians overrate the contribution of Byzantine men of letters in exile to the launching of Western Humanism, even as they speak of the Cretan Renaissance; their Romanian counterparts, on the other hand, detect Gothic style elements in the popular architecture of Northern Transylvania and refer to a multi-faceted and manifold 'Romanian' Baroque at the beginning of the 18th century. Along more or less the same lines the Ukrainians claim their own version of the Baroque: an offshoot of the Polish Barok Sarmacki – even though this is not readily acknowledged in the Ukraine]

2. If the above is true, and if –as I tend to believe– this double Romantic venture was crowned with success, we are logically led to the conclusion that, at least as regards South-Eastern Europe and at least as regards the modern period, the comparativism of influences has lost all its objective underpinnings. For about two centuries now

there has been no direct contact or interaction between Greek, Romanian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Serbian... authors, intellectuals or artists, not even a common reception of external cultural stimuli, only distinct instances of reduction to Western reference systems. 'Balkan comparativism' ought to be redefined methodologically as a comparativism of parallelisms viewed under two headings:

- The first involves the comparison of domestic cultural products with their presumed 'prototypes' (literary and art movements, intellectual and ideological trends and so on) in the area of the Western Canon. What is at issue here is determining which specific 'refraction angle' the reception of these 'prototypes' involves; but also appraising whether, how and to what extent the opening of each 'angle' is (or is not) affected by factors like 'national tradition', mentalities and so on.
- The second phase will involve a comparison of individual 'refraction' instances, in search of analogies and differences. Such elements (if they exist) constitute what we call the 'Balkan dimension' of the local realization of any aesthetic or ideological current or movement in the West. Yet this dimension is neither 'specific' to nor 'inherent' in the objects compared; observable only as a deviation from the Canon, it essentially constitutes an extension of it.

3. My final standpoint might appear the most daring of all three. If nowadays:

- the cultural patterns that have formed in the region are directly linked with West- European culture and dissociated from one another,
- whatever 'originality' they possess can only be conceived of as a Western Canon 'refraction',
- while their common dimension is construed as a deviation from it, hence as an extension of this very Canon, then Balkan comparativism, given the European reference system, is also in need of some criterion for a careful assessment of the 'contribution' of each culture in the region to the above processes. This leading role belongs to the specific cultural pattern which –its historical-cultural presuppositions being similar or analogous at the outset– appears relatively more advanced than other 'national cultures' of the Balkans in terms of Europeanization.

For reasons that are beyond the scope of this paper, I believe that such a measure of comparison can indeed be supplied by Romania, a country which can boast both a broader and a more constructive contribution to the intellectual movement of the West, having achieved a fuller and more solid assimilation of the Western Canon. In short, the comparative approach to any literature in the region can only benefit from being paralleled with Romanian letters.

[...]

Before closing, however, I wish to be allowed a digression and a personal thesis statement.

In my paper, I noted the loss of our former cultural identity, which was derived from a single cultural model, as well as the gradual but also direct linking to the Western Canon. When it occurred, this change of 'paradigm' must have been painful; still, we are neither the first nor the last to have suffered something of the kind.

In my main professional capacity as a Hispanist I had the opportunity to observe from pretty close up how similar processes –in Spanish-speaking America– have long been the cause of hermeneutic deliria involving strong regret over the supposed 'dependence' of the supposed 'colonial' intellectual production upon the cultural market of the supposed 'metropolis' (that is Western Europe and USA). To realize just how ridiculous these 'supposedes' are one need only consider the fact that nowadays this 'dependence' has at last secured the participation of Latin America in world cultural events on equal terms, as well as that its 'colonial' products are nothing less than Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mario Vargas Llosa or Carlos Fuentes... In the Spanish-speaking world, 'bloomers' of this kind, produced in monotonous abundance by the

'School of Resentment' –as so aptly pointed out by the Western Canon theoretician [Bloom 1994/95, 30]–, feed off the remains of a Third World leftism, toned up by injections of made in USA academic 'political correctness'. In any case, these arguments must also greatly appeal to the ears of our 'right-wingish' nostalgics, who are constantly flinging all sorts of arrows at the decay brought upon the time-honoured 'Hellenic-Christian tradition' by Modern Greeks 'euro-starvelings'.

As far as I am concerned, I find it absolutely positive that, both culturally and otherwise, we have cut ourselves off from a satiated, archaic model and joined the modern 'paradigm'. Far from being levelling, this evolution opens up the horizon of Weltliteratur, which can only be conceived of in the Western Canon framework. There was of course a price to pay, too, which was, until recently, the lack of contact with the immediate cultural context. The situation largely holds to date and constitutes an objective reality, which is why I have taken it to be the starting point for the views expressed above.

However, things have been somewhat 'loose' lately, which, as hoped by the advocates of postmodern evaluation relativism, may be seen as foreshadowing the eclipse of –whatever– 'canonicalness'. I do not in the least believe this is something to wish for, if it entails the 'Balkanization' of the Western Canon. If, however, it is to bring about the abolition of the one-sidedly hierarchic centre-periphery relation, with the simultaneous re-establishment of the Canon cohesion upon the principle of polyphony, that is on the basis of multiple and multiply connected and related centres, then the emerging change will prove particularly fertile.

In our epistemological sphere, for instance, there emerges in this case the possibility of supplementing comparativist parallelism with a comparativism of mutual encounters [...].

Roula KAKLAMANAKI

Yannis and the Other

However much he tried, he couldn't get near. The wall was impenetrable, misfortune great. It was the tears of a brave being streaming down his cheeks, but the eyes would not clear. Everything was blurred. Just like that. Unable to fathom the reason why, he fluctuated between corruption and incorruptibility in his effort to find a way into his soul.

Because everything was to be found there. Both Yannis and the Other, and what intruded into love and banished it.

Because this loss was not only immense and unfair, but also, and more importantly, unwarrantable. To find the thread implies to find the reason. To hear with your own ears and see with your own eyes.

Yeah! The enemy was insidious. Invisible the veil, immense his power, and time on his side.

Yannis was neither a beast nor a saint. Just an ordinary Yannis, of those you see in the street, who, even though stooping, taciturn, with a vacant stare, the usual cigarette in his mouth, you felt like approaching, greeting, finding an excuse for entering into a conversation.

But Yannis didn't have a ready tongue. He wasn't easy to talk to. When he wasn't eating or drinking or smoking or speaking (rarely, when it came to the latter), he played with a twitch on his lips, a game varying from anger to indifference.

And that was the problem. 'All other things make sure of explaining themselves or laying claim to the mystery,' says the Other.

'Lay claim to the mystery,' repeats Yannis between his teeth.

'From anger to indifference. That's what I want to know,' persists the loquacious Other.

And Yannis bends over slowly, slowly, even more than his usual stooping position, to the point that he has difficulty in seeing the lower half of his interlocutor's face. He looks round with due urgency. He finds a stone, or something that looks like a stone. He fumbles it in his right hand. Then, lifting his arm diagonally, with an analogous movement of the body, he hurls it. Bingo! The stone lands beyond his field of vision.

'And woe to him who gets in the way?' asked the anxious Other.

Yannis chuckles to himself.

The Other grows cunning. He sits in a low chair, brings his hands forward, wriggles them, places his palms on his cheeks, and props his elbows on his knees. He is trying to think.

Yannis chuckles again.

Perhaps they had already come to an understanding.

For it was exactly then that it happened: what will connect us with Yannis' mysterious anger and his even more mysterious indifference, and with the stone he threw not unintentionally, without rhyme or reason, in answer to the Other's questions.

Be that as it may, not even he realized what had exactly happened.

Not only unexpectedly, but also inexplicably, he found himself recovering from a lethargy; coming round after being anaesthetized; as if surfacing from a great depth –sea, well, subterranean life– and asking: 'Where is the Other?' His voice reverberated a thousandfold. His mouth shut.

'The Other! He's asking for the Other!' A discussion was heard from afar, which also resounded with echoes.

'Just a mishap,' he was told. And as the echoes gradually diminished and he began to see and realize that he was in something that looked like a hospital – that all around came and went stretchers with injured people, nurses, doctors and other medical officers distinguished by their uniforms, some white and others blue, he asked what had happened and where the Other was.

'The Other? What Other? Everybody is an Other. Each one and an Other. There's no Other of your own. All the Others are Others. One goes, another comes. Sometimes no one comes or more come.'

'My Other was there.'

'Was! Past tense. Then. Once. But who wasn't?'

'So sudden?'

'Not sudden. For ages now!'

'Who hit me?'

'Everyone did.'

'Is there no culprit?'

'The culprits are many.'

'What about the Other?'

'The Others are many.'

'So sudden?'

'Not sudden. For ages now.'

Until Yannis stopped using his wits and resorted to his senses, trying to contrive a means of protecting himself.

'And the Other?' he asked himself, forgetting for a moment the new situation. 'What Other? The Others are many!'

And someone who was attending to his wounds burst out: 'The year 2000. A round number...'. Then, abruptly, he swallowed his tongue. But Yannis, too, recovered quickly and resumed his calculations. Taking things into consideration, weak as he felt, bedridden (well, something like a bed), wrapped in bandages (maybe his entire body and his head, with openings only around the mouth, the ears, the nose and the eyes), he tried to piece together those words necessary for his being. He, himself, but also the Other, whom he considered an essential existential link, and whom he couldn't see, hear or feel. And this is what worried him, as he kept confusing him with 'What Other? The Others are many.' He sought the Other, although he suspected that same had met his fate, something which plunged him – not surprisingly– into the depths of grief, while also causing him anxiety about his person and his position in the world. An anxiety not entirely justifiable, at least vis-à-vis the important issue of the Other, by all accounts no longer in existence. 'I must have a good look round. I can't content myself with what they tell me. I should rely on my senses. I can hear now. There remains for me to see, smell and touch. Even feel,' he said to himself once alone. There was no mirror. Whatever he saw was a repetition of what these people had spoken earlier. Indistinguishable distant sounds, a faint light as if through slits forming the shadow of a network on the opposite wall, and on the ceiling nothing of interest. His faith in his own instincts began to shake.

Until he remembered those three things that occurred before the incident which brought him to this new and unexpected situation of Himself and the Other. He had thrown a stone far, far away, without knowing the outcome of his action. The Other, who was always standing by, said: 'Woe to him who gets in the way.' He sat opposite him in a similar position, and they looked at each other. They agreed on a number of things without exchanging a single word. [...]

Translated by Yannis Goumas

Dimitris KALOKYRIS

A Cat Called Age

They say that King Cyrus was raised by a one-eyed female dog. Zymbragos by the dark Charybdis. Telephus, the illegitimate son of Hercules, was brought up by a doe. Paris, of the Trojan War, was raised by a bear. No need to mention of course the wolf-nursed founders of Rome, but we will recall the fine Aesop fable about the cat which, in some unknown way, had fallen in love with a young man and pleaded with Aphrodite to transform it into a woman. The cat's plea was heard and the young man was quick to respond to the wiles of the feline-born beauty. Now wanting to test whether the young woman had also been spiritually transformed, goddess Aphrodite sent a mouse her way. And she, upon catching a whiff of the rodent, left the young man high and dry in bed and ran to capture her dinner. Raging with indignation, the goddess of love turned her back into a cat.

But Alcozaran was raised by the absence of a cat.

We must also make mention here of Lewis Carroll's bodiless Cheshire cat, of Bulgakov's diabolical (and keen cigar-smoking) cat, of the introverted Prince of Chavarese, who was cat-ified in 1925, and of Eliot's divers silly cats. It is rumoured that the tame old Chan, a cat belonging to a European doctor living in the outer districts of Saigon until 1899 (the year aspirin was invented), was a debauched opium smoker.

Brecht's Herr Keuner did not like cats because he did not consider them a friend to man. However, when some stray whined outside his door, he would get up and let it into the warmth of his home. 'Their plan is a simple one,' he said. 'When

they yowl, there will always be someone to open the door for them. And when people stop letting them in, they'll stop yowling. But even yowling shows some progress.'

Being in favour of vocalness, we proceed progressively and unabashedly to the modern city. The city of people and the city of cats are found one within the other, commented Italo Calvino, but they are not the same city.

And yet Alcozaran was born in the city of Toledo and what's more, on April 28th, 1896, the day that the statue of the Charioteer in Delphi was dug up. His father was a merchant of white linens and his mother a natural blonde. He had two sisters, who were, in turn, on the plump side but crushingly respectable. He studied law, owned white cats (Bellfinia, Ystaspa, Cojones and Miamor) and he was fluent in German.

He showed leadership, mild ambition, an inclination for recognition and all other features that co-habit in people with high levels of uric acid in their blood. He remained among the conservative while he had an arranged marriage with the sister of a noteworthy clergyman, who had even unexpectedly served as a naval officer. He acquired a wary daughter and the life-tenancy of a ground-floor shop near Madrid's central train station. He loathed cold coffee and any form of rebellion.

During Franco's regime he found himself working in the diplomatic service in countries of Central America where he metaphorically won laurels and literally won nominations of honour. In the summer of 1962, I think it was, he had a disagreement with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and in the throes of rage sent a decorative bronze inkpot flying at him, causing scratches upon the said Minister. The incident was hushed up but it contributed to his being demoted to commonplace position in the corps until he was finally forced to voluntarily resign from civil service.

For a time he wandered around with his spouse on unofficial visits to cosmopolitan capitals of the world, spending modest amounts of money on the gambling tables and entangling himself in French conversations about the high intelligence quotient of the cat; perhaps this was his way of discreetly rekindling old acquaintances.

What is the relation of philosophy to humanism? None. To the Freedom of the Press? Minimal.

On the balcony of some hotel in Zurich he coincidentally read an article about a rhapsodist from Knossos named Thaletus and about the philosopher Theano, also from Crete, the legendary wife of Pythagoras, who, as you may remember, formulated three main theories: first, never breed swallows under the eaves of your roof (a most unwholesome habit of dire consequence) and second, do not describe the image of God in the circle of a ring. The reason is obvious.

So, in late March of 1968, we find our traveller in the loft of the monastery in Arcadia. Was he occupied with the dark truth about the holocaust? Was he concerned about the tremors of the desert? I do not know. Zachariah the cat gazed into the night air rising from behind the walls.

The benevolent Alcozaran decided that this was the land for him. He rode the bus around the neighbouring mountain villages and finally found an inhabitable room near the corner coffee-shop in Myrolithos.

In the years of Ottoman Rule, the area had been plagued by a dragon of feline form, which gulped down fire of any sort. It was not a slight of hand; it was merely the nature of its nutrition. But the world was getting cold. No one could cook. There was a famine. As the story goes, Saint Myron went to visit this dragon one afternoon in the threshing floors of the fields. They argued and in the heat of the

moment he threw a pebble at it. What followed was a miraculous rainstorm of stones of unknown origin which buried the Saint. The dragon repented, took on the Saint's form and ended up as an archimandrite. On the hill that was formed by the storm of stones the present town flourished.

Time passed, as it always does, with uncertainty. It's true that the villagers considered Alcozaran an outsider. In spite of all their fabled hospitality, they viewed him warily and provided him only with the bare necessities. This unusual stance originated from an unconfirmed rumour that this man was connected to the importation of a Spanish breed of sheep called merino, which had not become acclimatised to the White Mountains, a fact which had grave financial consequences on the area; in addition he was also suspect because the marrow of the sheep in question was certifiably thought to eliminate the desires of the flesh.

It was only the warrant officer that deeply valued him because he instinctively considered all Spaniards to have identical political ideals, that went along with reborn phoenixes, the emblem of the Greek dictatorship. I wonder if he knew my motto that democrats cannot love cats without being punished. I doubt it. I think he felt his vulnerable authority being attacked at the times which, according to custom, the sericulturists of the province spread false rumours. Let us remind you that this method is believed world-wide to speed up the hatching of the silkworm.

Alcozaran, however, reconciled himself diplomatically with the kittens Xasou and Charkia and lived for four months watching the light play on the clouds. He wrote two commanding letters to his wife: the first one to say he was still alive and the second to request the monographs of Alexander Garden and Michel Bignon (the guardians of the ethereal gardenia and the colour-begetting begonia respectively) because he had recently developed a sudden interest in horticulture.

One night he rose from his bed to make a visit to the outhouse and upon his return saw himself pale and immobile lying in his bed. He immediately collapsed.

The village doctor, Athanasakis, administered first aid and then threw up his hands in despair. Relatives were informed via the embassy and they found him well-steamed, sowing wheat germ to be consumed at his funeral.

For three days the Spaniards wandered around the village gesticulating wildly. At least they consumed vast quantities of omelettes and boiled chicken at the local tavern.

The priest was finally informed that Alcozarγan had fixed his gaze on the ceiling and was watching the angel, so two dark-skinned peasants lifted him by the armpits and made him walk around the bed (because he hadn't yet filled his life's quota of steps, so let him take them and be done with it).

They took him down to the Catholic cemetery in Heraklion in a truck. Funeral announcements were printed in two languages, where all his titles were mentioned, but unfortunately with inexcusable typographical errors. Close by the relatives stood the warrant officer in full regalia, some unknowns and a cat called Age.

On the spot where the cat later died no moss ever gathered.

Translated by Thalia Bisticas

Tassos KALOUTSAS

From

Regarding Sophoula

'Pay off your debts, find a job and come . . .' we heard her say to Antony a couple of days later. One could tell just by listening to her words that she had lost all confidence in herself, and all confidence in her strength. Eleni once again reminded me that this was exactly who Sophoula was and she would have found it strange if things were otherwise; if she suddenly were to change into an independent person. 'Don't you see the situation she's put herself in?' she told me. 'I can't see how, after all she's told me, they are going to get back together. Deep down she has always been a romantic!' We also learned at around the same time that Antony had continued his crooked ways, as if he had never stopped. Perhaps this time he had set his mind on a much more purposeful track. Regardless, he went crying to his son and said, 'Better for her to leave, since she is the one with a lover, and we can live together in the house,' as if he had ever lifted a finger when it came to taking care of their home. Then one morning he made a phone call to the bank and, with a somewhat wretched air about him, let her boss know that Sophoula had made him a cuckold, and with a fellow co-worker at that— and further, if he wanted, he didn't have a problem with naming him. It went beyond all measure. Sophoula locked herself away for two to three days in her house and wouldn't see anyone; with us, over the phone and with utter despair, she said she wanted to slash her wrists.

She also confided to us that everyone at work began to look at her as if with pity. At the end of the same work week, during a meeting, she felt a pain in her chest and she couldn't breathe. Words failed her. Soaked in sweat, she was

overcome by the urge to vomit. She fainted and didn't remember a thing afterwards. Her friends from the bank grabbed her—they truly did care about her—and rushed her to the hospital (to two hospitals to be exact), where, if only for a moment, an ignorant nurse smacked her back into consciousness. Hospital regulations required her to stay for awhile so tests could be conducted, but she left in the afternoon. Her brother came for her. The doctor's prognosis was 'hysteria,' as her body trembled for all those hours in the hospital; she had lost touch with all those around her.

I almost didn't recognize her when she came to visit us one afternoon. She had a grim look on her face, her body was emaciated and a bit hunched over and her legs were like two quivering twigs wrapped within the creases of her dress.

As dictated by her anorexia she continued to drink only milk and coffee, her weight dropping to around thirty-eight kilos (my daughter, at the age often, was around thirty-two!). I couldn't believe she continued to travel the streets in her condition. She experienced dizzy spells, had trouble sleeping and began taking pills. We nostalgically discussed the days we spent during the summer at our country house. She said that 'he' had unexpectedly come down from Sozopouli one day and appeared, without warning, in her bedroom with his dog. He looked completely different, with a tuft of balding gray hair, sunken cheeks and a toothless mouth; he had aged before his time. He addressed her in an audacious manner, 'It's my house, and I can come and go as I please.' He wanted, he said, to once again live with her, to begin things anew, like a happy couple and proceeded to demand that she cook for him. The next night he attempted to have sex with her against her will. With what little strength she could muster, Sophoula pushed him away; 'You disgust me!' she threw at his face and watched his eyes as they flared with rage. He chased her into the hall and slammed her hard to the wall. She fought him off and managed to escape, locking herself in the bedroom. Her heart raced as he banged on the door.

He was unrepentant, without a dime to his name, demanding that he be the only one to care for his wife, expressing some very belated concern. After the fight, he even once offered to drive her to the bank.

Sophoula, after the last miserable episode he put her through, simply couldn't tolerate looking at him anymore and moved her things into the house she grew up in to live with her aging father. Later, at dusk that very same night, my wife's uncle, a Mr. Panayioti, heard a dry crash as he was in the kitchen on the third floor, but he couldn't pinpoint exactly what it was. He had just finished preparing another glass of milk for his daughter, and was on his way to give it to her on the balcony so she could drink it in peace, in her little corner, as she had grown accustomed to doing. Even he couldn't manage to convince her to eat some mashed potatoes that he had prepared for her. During these last couple of days which she had spent at home, away from work on sick leave, her father had displayed the same touching care for her as he had in the past. At the moment, though, he had been startled. He took slow, deliberate steps towards the balcony with a feeling of dread not far behind and when he saw the crowd below and heard the ruckus he added to it all with a yell of his own. tore at his hair as his body went numb, and fell to the ground.

No one could tell with any certainty if it was an accident or something else. After all, it occurred around the time when the shadows began to darken due to the oncoming night and there were no witnesses. Sophoula, some concluded, had stood to drink her milk, leaned over perhaps a bit more than she should have to see something below in the streets and may have lost her sense of balance and fell. The rest was gossip that spread from mouth to mouth, in whispers.

The funeral service was held in the cemetery's chapel and Sophoula's remains were laid to rest in a closed, white casket. We followed the procession

towards the gravesite, with Uncle Panayioti in front, in tears, held by his grandson. The old man's knees gave out as he knelt atop the grave. Some said that it would soon be his turn, since she was the only thing keeping him alive.

During the reception which followed there were few who remained silent. They could speak freely now about the emotional drama which Sophoula had lived through all this time, about her anorexia, which had turned her into just a shadow of her former self— barely half of her former self— and about her nerves which had literally been smashed to pieces. Deep down, she was simply a child, a colleague of hers told me. She was such an innocent soul that it could only be expected that she wouldn't be able to live through it all. We suddenly noticed, Eleni and I did, that Antony was missing from the mourners. 'He didn't come,' Sophoula's brother spoke softly into my ear. 'My nephew told me he forbids it!' Lately, he continued to whisper to me, they had managed to meet a couple of times, just the two of them, in an attempt to find a solution, but not only was one not found, George wouldn't have anything to do with him and had left upset. For the first time, he said, they really had the opportunity to discuss certain things and he couldn't find any common ground with him. How could it have been possible for his mother to waste her entire life on such a low-life!

From the corner of my eye I looked for his nephew and saw him sitting at the end of the long and narrow table, silently squeezing a glass between his fingers, deep in thought. It was difficult to believe that this tall, sturdy young man, with his muscular physique and broad chest, was Sophoula's son. One would think it was the military service which had toughened up his features and transformed him into what appeared to be a mature man. I also learned that soon after the meeting with his father he managed to trash the pills he had been taking. 'If he dared to set his

foot here he would kill him!' his uncle added spoke with a low tone in my ear. 'But even if he doesn't show up, I'm not sure that he's going to get away with it...'

Translated by George Fragopoulos

Ismene KAPANDAIS

Floria of the Waters

Chapter 1

I knew I had to go, I knew the time had come for me to go, even before I closed his eyes — yes, it was I who closed his eyes, yes, it was I — but I believed it beyond the shadow of a doubt only when I retrieved the trunk from deep inside the armoire. For the last twenty eight years it was inside this little trunk that I had stored my clothes.

I opened it, and as the musty smell struck my nostrils along with the faded odors from the savory and dry rosemary we use to keep insects away from stored clothing, and as I saw my ‘multicolored rags’ — that's what he said when he first caught sight of them, ‘Give her,’ he said, ‘some clothes to wear, I will keep her, I don't know what she can do, we'll see later, just get her out of those multicolored rags and dress her like a Christian’ — when I saw them there in front of me, I knew this was it, that the time had finally come.

I shook them and laid them out with care. The colors have faded here and there, and in a couple of spots I'd need to sew the seams that have come undone, but even so it's a good thing our clothes are made that way, wrap-around skirts and over-sized blouses, because otherwise how could I have worn them after so many years, although I have not gained that much weight or lost my shape the way she did, but still a girl's body is not the same as a middle-aged woman's.

Tomorrow, after the funeral, I'll put on my clothes and leave, and this time it will be final. The other two times, once after the incident with his son and again, years later, when he returned from his trip to Leucas bringing with him that nondescript who will be standing, dressed in black, beside his coffin in church tomorrow, that's why I had left, to make him run after me and bring me back because I knew he would come running after me, but now that he is the one who has left, such gestures have become pointless.

Tomorrow, as soon as the funeral is over, I'll put on my own clothes and leave. These last few days, that was the thought that kept running through my mind. I realized it, I could see that the time was finally drawing near to take to the streets, that for so many years I've been living an unnatural life that had to end, that I had been wrong to live such a life up to this point, nailed put in the same spot, I, a gypsy of royal lineage, condescending to live off 'the crumbs which fell from the table' of another woman — the other woman always existed, always, present or absent, it made no difference, the other woman in whose place, the place of lady of the house, I never sat — this thought kept running through my mind over and over, but the certainty came only when I opened the trunk and caught sight of my clothes. Of course, there had been that frightful scene earlier over his corpse.

'Who closed his eyes?' she asked, a bit out of breath.

I had sent for her when I saw he was worsening, but if luck was against her and she didn't make it in time, it wasn't my fault.

For twenty six days, she on the one side and I on the other, 'one on the right hand and the other on the left,' fixed and immovable, we tended to him in his illness. For twenty six days neither one of us left his side any longer than required to take care of our basic needs and, as fate would have it, he ended up dying in my arms.

I wasted no time. I stooped down and, after kissing him on the lips, closed his eyes. I had won the final battle. At the moment of his death he belonged solely to me.

As I was folding his hands across his chest, she came in huffing — she gets short-winded easily ever since she gained weight.

‘Who closed his eyes?’ she asked.

I stared her in the face. No, I did not want to show I held her in contempt, but in the hour of death I think it is permissible to overlook all those silly rules. ‘I did,’ I told her, and her hand fell forcefully across my face.

They separated us at once. They managed to hold me down, that is, but not before I had yanked out three of the five remaining hairs on her head. She hit me again and again with the hand on which she wears the ring, their wedding ring, and blood ran from my split lip.

‘Let me go,’ I said to the slaves restraining me, ‘or I will put a curse on you. May you never bear children and may your flesh begin to rot,’ and I kept on cursing in my language, realizing that the sound of incomprehensible words frightens them more than words they can understand, but it was the artist who put a stop to the frightful scene.

‘My lady,’ he told her, ‘calm down. Our master has died ...’

At first she looked at him as if she did not understand what he was saying. Then she gave a slight shudder, the way horses do, and turning her face aside, ‘Take her away,’ she said. ‘Get her out of my sight.’

Then she made the sign of the cross — from left to right, as her religion dictates — and knelt beside him.

‘Tell me,’ the artist asked me before letting me go through the door of my room, ‘have you given any thought to what you will do now that ...’ and he waited.

I gave no answer.

'Perhaps you will go to your daughter ...?' he asked, pausing again.

I wiped my lips and squeezed them, trying to stop the bleeding.

'I'm going away,' I was ready to say, but as I looked up, I saw his eyes, eyes full of pity, and my voice froze in my throat. Then I buried my face in my hands and began to cry.

He didn't say a word, nor did he make the slightest move to console me. He stood there and listened to me. When I calmed down, he said, 'Send for me if you need anything,' and left.

Translated by Rick M. Newton

Tassos KAPERNAROS

I WASH MY HANDS

I

*My left hand
that has not written a line in all its life
has gone crazy
and in its old age has donned rings and bracelets.
And the rings are all old
Bishop's seals.*

*An illiterate and useless hand
capable only for waving from a distance.
A hand that, were I to be drowning,
would, like a casual bourgeois hand that happens to be passing by,
only be interested in not getting wet.
A hand thirsting for greatness
a hand, crazed and despotic.*

II

*My right hand, an indefatigable worker
who never loses his way.
By day or night,*

exchanging caresses, slaps, and handshakes.

By day or night,

albeit lettered, a faithful servant.

*It would like to write nothing but verse
and yet from the day he was born he has
undertaken all kinds of hard labor.*

*At times carrying shopping
or a soft pillow*

*and then at times a provocateur or an infantryman
clueless when it comes to jewellery,
my large-bond right hand.*

And yet ever ready

to flight itself to the dogs for me.

THE HEAD OF SAINT MARKELLA

*Five centuries my throat slit
on this seashore.*

And yet I do not live here.

*I am not an empty skull
that struck roots in the deep
in a sunken grave of the sea.*

It is as if I were elsewhere.

In an Eden of time

perhaps butchered perhaps not

but with eyes fixed on the altar.

I do not live here.

*And yet my back is moistened
by the vapors of the sad sea.*

*Hunted back then, I dragged myself
to the desolate bay.*

To the line where waves die.

*Back then there was no pier
upon which the future dead
endlessly stroll.*

I remember,

*time comes when man remembers all,
a shattered boat*

*immersed to the neck in the water,
the terrified hush of springtime
nature. My father's knee.*

*That was all I managed to see. For the knife flashed
and all my paths flared up before me.*

*Whichever I had chosen
would have taken me out into the open sea.*

Five centuries.

Time for pondering.

*For whoever has
things to ponder upon.*

Translated by Peter Constantine

Tasoula KARAGEORGIU

THE KERAMEIKOS TORTOISE

*If you are lucky, like me,
and find yourselves in April among the graves of Kerameikos,
all of a sudden you may see her
swishing and swaying
through the green shamrocks.*

*And if the grave steles around you stay still
and if Dexileos on his horse revels in his death,
even if you are moved by the art of silence only,
pay a little attention to
the miracle God painted on her carapace,
yet even more
her stubborn, indifferent crawling to the graves.*

*(Tortoise the Greek,
homeland of mine, tardy sculpture, passing by Hades.)*

INSIDE THE WHISPER

And if all of our places have gone,

*I feel while sitting
on the wooden bench
here in the shade of the fig tree
staring at the aquatic plants
which flood the Eridanus banks
I feel that there is a strange 'nostos'
for it's the time souls come out
outside time,
far from time,
and free
from forms caged
in time
they make oleanders bend
and myrtles wave
and always ask for the mystical signs
so that the memory of water shivers
so that recognition comes.*

*(Emigration lurks outside
With its shrill sounds;
Here, inside the whisper, lives our deepest homeland)*

THE MARBLE BULL

A copy in his place

from above stands over the area.

*And he is now trapped in the museum atrium
—he, the authentic Dionysius monument,
an old Kerameikos emblem –
the marble bull with the animal fury
with the fierce look and with the bulky body
bending the head
about to attack oblivion,
he snorts and gets fidgety
ready to escape.*

*I feel his tremendous rage from his open nostrils
like a shiver indefinable, like a mysterious puff
rushing and blending sexually with my coward anger.*

*(The way things work out,
the room's windows
will surely break into pieces).*

THE ARCHAIC KOUROS

*He didn't lose his ghastly, unearthly 'smile'
even when in the ground
facing downwards*

*—this was his posture when he was found—
even when in the ground
served as material for fortifying
the Themistokleian wall.*

*He's now standing upright
a splendid sample of archaic sculpture
bright masterpiece of 7th century Art.*

*Don't think of beauty that always triumphs
look only at Kouros moving forward,
with a mutilated leg,
soaring over the grey dust
consoling the humbled
—like the pride of the sky that blossoms in the ground.*

The Kerameikos Tortoise, 2011

THE BEAST

*Today again 8 o' clock in the morning
we run to get guzzled
by the escalator that rolls endlessly
towards the pandegmon underground;
we run to get devoured
by the iron teeth.*

*Fellow passengers of mine,
we are nothing but
a wall painting in the nave of a Byzantine church
lonely souls,
cramped, in the underground queues;
what makes us push each other
to get into the mouth of the Beast first?*

IN THE COMMITTEE

*The Committee members sniggered
while reading
Iphigeneia's CV
with the Greek metaphors
which denote
words forgotten, out-of-date, like 'sea'.*

*While other candidates hold postgraduate degrees
and legal stamped copies,
she's only obsessed with
that old story in Aulis.
She gets old, you see, and she needs
to redeem a bit of dead calm.*

But who cares for winds nowadays

*(The birds are still at any rate and the sea is calm;
hushed are the winds
and silence broods over Euripos²⁸)*

The Metro, 2004. Translated by Vasso Oikonomidou

²⁸ See Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* (lines 9-10), translated by E.P. Coleridge

Vasilis P. KARAGIANNIS

Sweeper of Leaves

A permanent resident of Kozani, every other afternoon and once a week, on Wednesday mornings, he sets out on his way up the chapel that used to be known by the name of Low Saint Elias, walking up through the historic cobbled street of P. Papasiopis or through that of Delmouzos.

He zigzags his way through the two ascending trails that cut through some huge, magnificent boulders, which lead to the area known by the name of Skr'kas (protruding rock in Slavic) to the hill chapel of St. Anna and from there to the desolate Xenia hotel, eventually arriving at the church of The Saviour's Transfiguration, the so-called Low Saint Elias.

This is personal territory to Mrs. Sweeper of leaves, the local leaf-gatherer. The lady in question loafs about the streets dressed in motley attire of colored rugs and heavy trainer shoes, her wrinkled earthy-looking face deeply furrowed like a ploughed field. The open grounds there are hers in their entirety. It is here that she piles up all her movable property consisting of all sorts of trash and junk that hill visitors and church goers dispose of in their fly-tipping habit. But despite the vulgar spectacle, the ugly sight of it all, our lady does perform beneficent and pious work. The hill, replete with deciduous trees which cover the entire place with leaves and pine-needles throughout the year, can easily fall prey to fires. She is there to sweep away and gather every single one of them, no matter what season, with due zeal, genuine ardour, devotion, true love, and in perfect, immaculate order. She is there daily to attend to the chapel yards, clean the grounds, condition and fix the

vegetation as well as see to the smooth continuity of its growth, the stray cats of the area being her sole companions. She shares her supper of sunflower seeds, as well as her life with them – both cats and sweeper lady being under the protection of a stray God, preserver of all the poor and lonely creatures – while she is resting on the yard bench of St. Anna...

She is mute, deaf and dumb by birth, hence the phrase 'here comes the mute one' hurled at her in abuse by the local brats frequenting the central square and the adjoining pedestrian road with the chestnut trees in its centre.

When the night falls, she is out and about on her rounds with a huge crutch on her side. Walking with a firm step, she descends the hill and crosses the main pedestrian road of lifelong boredom. At around 10 p.m. in the summer, she assumes her usual position within the niche of the entrance to the local jeweler's shop, stretching out her hand shyly to beg for whatever passers-by can offer. She is constantly at war with the young brats of modernity who will not let her co-exist with the rest of the world. They dash at her in numerous ways, either to ridicule or beat her just like they did the other day when the stone they flung at her gave her a black, swollen eye. She keeps recounting the incident in her own special way, narrating, in her own silent language, her anger, her rage and pain. In the end, she crosses her fists in similar fashion to that of criminals when the latter get busted and handcuffed by the police, implying that this is the very same treatment her young tormentors-persecutors would surely deserve.

However, for the wretched town children of the nearby flats there is always an abundance of stones around to use. Deprived of proper countryside grounds and thus lacking the open space required for their all-time favourite stone-throwing battles, they substitute their game by way of throwing their stones at the said one,

Mrs. Sweeper of Leaves, whom they have turned into their own much sought after object of their semi-wild, cruel, ruthless games.

Each time he meets her on his way up or down the hill or while he is strolling about her territory, she becomes aware of his presence solely through eye sight, addressing him in the silent language of the deaf and dumb, her very own language which she has been a true master of since childhood. Her interlocutor keeps losing track of the conversation, tending to agree, most of the times in error, both with what she is actually saying and what she really means amidst a host of inarticulate cries and telling gestures.

You go past her, but she is totally unaware of your presence, lost as she is her own thoughts, those of her own silent world. She is, moreover, afraid of mingling with the other, respectable ladies of the congregation who go up the hill every Wednesday to attend the Eucharist mass at the chapel, within which everyone are supposedly equal to everyone else. For her part, she insists on staying outside, while nostalgically looking in through the windows of Saint Anna like a persecuted animal. She won't enter, although no one ever forbids her to. Some innate reluctance, bashfulness rather, forces the Sweeper of Leaves to keep some sort of safety distance from this closed, even hostile church community. An exile in her own native land, she patiently waits for the worldly crowds to depart, so she can get back to her cherished kingdom of the leaves she sweeps, the weeds she uproots, the wood she gathers and the trash she keeps piling up, all being part of her world and of the sacredly insignificant life she lives.

As for him, he always makes it a habit of lighting three candles every time he enters these chapels. Often, there is a live prayer burning next to them.

Translated by Anna Koustinoudi

Dionyssis KARATZAS

SOLITUDE BIRTHDAY

*Bitter sorrows
and seawaters.*

THE DAY OF WATER

*Born on the Day of Water
I was christened by Love
on Abyss banks.
As a grown-up I encountered the night
and transformed in
discourse and writing
I fought
to conquer your heart.
But you
you simply gave all your blood
to an oblivion tree.*

*Should I know
I could become soil
which you recall in every raindrop*

deeply in your roots.

IN THE WATERSLANG

You speak seaslangwise?

In a kiss

of waterdrops

I will lavish upon your body

and

when I reach your

deep, delicate darkness

on a dead island

I will anchor

where to meet all angels.

ON YOUR DEPARTURE

When you go

not frighten the birds.

Instead,

vigorously withdraw heaven aside

so I can count Night like Home

and cork the sea so firmly

that water cannot stop

and rain cannot fall.

Ignorant as I am

I may slip

and get drowned in solitude.

Translated by Nicholas Chrysochoos

Vassilis KARAVITIS

A FEW FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS AND PERHAPS ONLY ONE

How they say goodbye to love

How they fall in love with loneliness

How they tame fear

How they take in pain

How they disuse hope

How they exile faith

How they trust thought

How they get used to doubt

How they slip to apathy

How they end up to silence

How they transform life

How they deceive death

How they keep on asking

How they find out an answer

How

ABSTRACTION

*He hopes to reach sometime
Another degree of happiness:
To recall the world
as do the dead*

And also miss it.

MEASURE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

*After some thirty years
Of fruitless revolution
You understand at last
How simple
How easy it was
For the world to exist*

*Some twenty centuries
Without you.*

DISCOLAND

*There was here once silence.
The finest thing in the world.*

RETROGRADE MOTION

I ripen

As a futile fruit

and as a debtor to soil

(which feeds me slyly).

Written in English by the author

Olympia KARAYORGA

Nights in Cairo (a return)

ONLY THE RIVER KNEW

Only the river knew

The miles of desert I had walked

in cold conceited cities

Trying to grasp their locked up

fake wisdom

And now it smiled a liquid smile

as it passed

the boat of light

the boat of joy

that held us in its arms

high up between the moon and sky

For I was back

Where life, my life, had started

And now I knew

And now I saw:

The sand, the pyramids enveiled, the eyes

of this ancient land

Was all I had ever wanted

Was all I had ever needed

As now I need your hand

(Cairo, November 1993 — thanking Seif for saving this poem for me)

SLEEPLESS NIGHT IN CAIRO

No, I didn't want to share this night with

my room

– room at a hotel

every door locked

every life locked

in a hotel–

When you were there in the same

city

Though in a different dream

Smiling at a different non-mine

face

A face maybe not glad, not so

glad to see you

As mine would have been

*By candle light after so long
By Nile light after so long
By day or noon or evening light
after so long*

*So long, so long as to see
My tender skin become a scaring stranger,
My wondering eyes lose their daze of
lasting innocence
And my body going its way without me
without me,
without...*

*Just come,
—the door will open of its own accord—
Stand behind the tall chair where
I sit writing this poem
Into this deep Egyptian night that
Won't, won't let me in*

*And take my head,
My ageing life in your two hands
—your young, your slender oh! perfect,
young perfect hands—
And the poem will stop
And my ageing life will stop*

from ageing

At last—

And then the moon will kiss the Nile

And nothing will age

anywhere

anymore

—for I am tired of ageing—

At last

(Poems written originally in English)

Ioanna KARISTIANI

From

Suit in the Earth

The freezer with the AIDS virus, mother.' Kyriakos Rousias, after a silence of three or four hours and absorption in notes, little lights, lenses, half-turned round, pulled his mother's black kerchief a little to the side, and showed her at the end of the corridor, behind the empty desks, BL3, the prohibited zone, which was where the large black refrigerator, like a two-doored wardrobe, marked in yellow DANGER - AIDS - HIV, with billions of viruses in frozen ampules, double-locked and at a temperature of minus 80 degrees, also stood, She checked her fingers on her knitting, so as not to lose any stitches and followed him with her eyes, without comment, until they returned, two minutes later, he to his computer and she to her purple wool.

Rousias had first seen his mother's hands, the nails battered with old, slain blood, at the age of seven, when he put on glasses, five degrees of myopia in the left eye, three and a half in the right. Up to then, he had seen half of what other people did.

Many of the things which they had considered normal ever since they were babies –a lammergeier carrying off a wild cat and the ensuing mayhem in the middle of the sky– Kyriakos became aware of at the age of seven, and the child was staggered, because everything came all at once, suddenly the world around proved longer and higher, at least four times as big, it wasn't a vineyard, a garden and the familiar Valyris, Pateros, Sgouros, and Klados families.

In his adult life, he wrote off many persons and things, he left as a bridge to the things of the past and the old place his mother's hands and one or two personal

possessions. In major difficulties, in certain long, sometimes all-night, telephone calls with Hatziantoniou, just Hatziantoniou, because of the host of Georges in their small, closed circle, or with Germans and Chinese who were associates in his work, even with unknown postgraduate students, sick people or relatives of sick people from Crete and the whole of Greece who, whether or not he was the right person, turned to him, he wouldn't allow the person at the other end to say good-bye, as if he couldn't bear to ring off, he would constantly draw lines on his forehead with the cross he wore and dig up old stories, make up questions, draw out confessions, prolong the dialogue, prolong the monologue, to drag out the phone call.

On the day of his birthday –Friday, 17 July 1998– Kyriakos Rousias lost the little cross given to him at his christening. And after he had disturbed and lifted the cushions, he investigated the recesses of the settee, combed through the long-haired rug, turned his shaving kit upside down in the bathroom, shook out his briefcase, searched his dirty shirts which were left about everywhere, rummaged through the leavings of yesterday night's small party for his forty-somethingth birthday, come on now, come on, he begged a thousand times, but the little cross didn't come. At twenty past one in the morning, he set out for the laboratory, to look there. He left behind the tall trees of Gaithersburg and took the 270, which he once had called 'Technology Corridor' and passed, with some self-satisfaction Comsat with its satellites, Human Genome Science and its genetics, Perkin-Elmer with its computers. There are some highways which are all order and boredom, as if their left-hand lane had tired of looking at the right, and the right at the left – the 270 was such a case. It was still night, traffic light. Where can I find an amulet of the True Cross to send you? – the cassette was a present from Hatziantoniou, he'd been for Chicago all along, which he'd been listening to since 1974 and had distributed, and with him Rousias had learnt it by heart, together with his friends, overseas Greeks, the

diaspora, and Americans. So Kalatzis was singing, a normal sort of voice, never in great high spirits and party mood, and it sounded as though it was coming from across the way, like a neighbour in his white vest at the window, and perhaps that's why they liked it that bit better, it didn't distract them from their work.

An amulet for her to keep, even if she doesn't love me, the cassette went on, Rousias entered into the song, Kalatzis was singing about an amulet, he meant his little cross.

The voice would keep him company on the forty-six kilometres to Frederick, as if he had his wife next to him –if he'd had one– and they had been talking quietly and a bit boringly, about familiar things.

And with his mother, when he had a bad conscience about the long silences, though he wasn't the only one to blame, he would put on the cassette at home, in the car, in the laboratory when he took her with him for company, Kalatzis, mother, he would tell her.

When he was twenty-eight, he'd brought her to America for three winters, for four or five months each time. They'd listened to the songs hundreds of times; they too were a part of their silence.

His head was still heavy.

Someone from Kolymbari, who had his reasons, had sent him as a present a demijohn of old Kissamos wine and they'd downed half of it together with the Polish chicken which the Epirot's Lilka had cooked for them, don't you come because we're not going to speak English, there's no way we're going to translate for you, they'd warned her, as usual.

Kyriakos Rousias the Cretan turned forty-three in the company of the two Georges from work, the Voliot molecular biologist, the Epirot physicist, and Lilka's

chicken, exactly as he had turned forty-two the year before, forty-one the year before that, forty in exactly the same way, thirty-nine, and so on.

In the sparse conversation they said various unconnected things, raised their glasses to the toast –death to women– and in low voices, as if they were conspiring, broke into their songs and again it was the best moment, as if the three of them were going arm in arm on a major nocturnal binge.

At Gaithersburg, outside, night was everywhere and the moon nowhere. They didn't know how it had got lost, it had been submerged in their boozing, we'll find it and we'll leave like gentlemen, the two guests promised.

They got drunk twice a year, in April on St George's day, either with Hatziantoniou in Chicago or with the Voliot at Rockville or with the Epirot in Baltimore, an hour away –he had lived there since he worked at Johns Hopkins– and they got drunk again in July on Rousias's birthday.

These two piss-ups were absolutely necessary so they could forget the competition, the hypertension and the workload face to face with death.

The toasts continued, to football, to their villages, there was the mandatory one to Asia Minor, a concession to the absent Hatziantoniou, to Dior, as they called their friend the thoracic surgeon, because he always had one or two needles pinned under his lapel, for sewing.

Then the Epirot, whom they called the still married one, as if to say get on with it, get a divorce, got up from the rug, which even in summer was always at the foot of the settee, took off his shoes and socks, gathered up Lilka's tupperware and announced that he had a good offer of a job from a university in Australia.

'One less George,' was the way he put it.

Once again, Kyriakos Rousias caught Frederick napping.

There wasn't a soul about in the little town, a light at a very few windows, some chatting-up, marital talk, illness and insomnia, one July with ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit and humidity which stuck to your skin like celluloid.

Four or five streets all in all, little two-floor wooden houses, painted a faint blue, a faint pink and cream, something like primary school paper cut-outs next to the vast former chemical warfare military base, fifty kilometres north of Washington, which for some years now had hosted three thousand researchers of the NIH, the National Institute of Health.

There were some two hundred Greeks, one of them being Rousias.

'The night bird again,' said the guard, and, without looking at Rousias's ID, raised the bar.

The silver Achiura rolled unhurriedly over the flat area, over that level affair which a row of distant lights over there, seven hundred metres away, made to look like a waterfront in the earth. Its lighthouse was the sole tall building, the four-storey dark-red anthrax building, haunted, mother, he turned to say in her ear whenever he brought her to America and dragged her with him to work so that she wouldn't be on her own at home, particularly at weekends, when the laboratories emptied of their scientists, secretaries and cleaners. Then, without the Japanese and Spanish smiling at her condescendingly and supposedly taking notice of her, Mrs Polyxeni was at home ensconced in her chair and at the same time absent, present wherever her thoughts sent her, two or three places all in all – to the events of her life, which had not used more than these.

Mrs Polyxeni had no problem with the language, she was quiet in Crete and even quieter in America, nor did she want any dialogue with her son, so as not to interrupt him.

The two of them got by between the small and the large centrifugal separators and super-separators, which were like washing-machines, and the high-precision balances and the PCR.

The old woman didn't ask any questions, as if she knew about such things, and Rousias, bent over buttons, luciferase, fireflies, mother, he would sometimes say to her, winking, and she would go on knitting, with the ball of wool unwinding at the feet of her son, the desks, the machinery and around her black slippers.

He parked outside his own laboratory, the parking lot was empty. He stuffed the cassette in his pocket, unlocked the iron gate, and pressed the switches to turn on the light bulbs.

It was ten to two in the morning. There was no need to shout is there anybody here, night work was a kink of the Greeks and the two Georges, hard drinkers, would already be snoring away in their beds.

He jammed his eye to the microscope, a first movement out of habit, he then began to search at random, to lift up piles of prospectuses, diskettes, to stick his finger into the box of paper-clips, to turn pencil-holders upside down.

The wastepaper baskets –empty; the carpet– swept; the corridor –washed; the glass partitions– without fingerprints; the toilet-sparkling clean. Their Puerto Rican had a mania for cleanliness, not a pin escaped her.

She loved Rousias, because when he talked to her, he looked her in the eye, the others simply looked in her direction. She called him a sweetie, poured away his cold coffee and gave him some hot, and it was only his absent-mindedness, which didn't make her bark. She went through the wastepaper basket and picked out his glasses case, keys thrown away and twenty-dollar bills, dusted them down and left them on the desk.

The night of the seventeenth of July – nothing. And to phone her he would have to wait until a decent time.

'Hey, Rita, you're like my godmother,' he would say to her, and certainly they scored a draw on breasts, my little cross, fuck it, he would complain to her, it can't have got lost somewhere with the chain as well, but fat Rita with the swollen knees would be fast asleep and so Rousias, with his hands in his pockets, wandered round the fifteen offices of his associates, everywhere there was the menu card of the Chinese restaurant, some SOS deadlines, the Pan-American congress at Keystone, March 2000, photographs of their Swedish girl who had gone back home, to Karolinska, clumsily torn pieces of paper with fax numbers on them, the behind of a top model with sand clinging to it, the German with family in the Samaria Gorge, and Mr Babis, father of the Epirot, photographed standing smartly to attention next to Jackie Onassis's grave.

Takis KARVELIS

From

Metaphassi

[17]

*It's time we got accustomed to holocausts.
If a house catches fire
or someone in a moment of despair
decides to immolate himself
or some racketeer walks toward us
disguised as a respectable homeowner or a pimp
we have one hand held out for a handshake
the other one on the trigger
and that's how we while away our lives.*

Translated by Eleni & Bertrand Mathieu

Nikos KASDAGLIS

From

Shaved Heads

It wasn't the first time I promised marriage. I did it once before I got drafted. There was a man from the village – we'd been fighting since our school days and he'd always get beat, except when he was with his friends.

We grew up and stopped the kid stuff, but he could never abide me. One day, coming back from the fountain, my sister tripped and fell. Fotis happened to be there at the time and he made a dirty comment-what would she do now that her little jug was cracked-and stuff like that. She cried all the way to my uncle's house. But that wasn't enough for him. He had to make the sluts he had seen in town none was as well built as my sister. He forgot, though, that he had sisters, too.

I heard about it as I was irrigating the truck farm. I dropped the winch and ran. There was a group around him when I got to the coffeehouse. They saw me from far away and shut up. Fotis stood up and grabbed a bottle before I could get to him.

'Did I hear right, Fotis? Did you bother my sister at the fountain?'

'That's right'.

I almost choked. In my village, I was considered the best fighter, but right then I couldn't be satisfied just to beat him up or knife him. I couldn't get even with that sort of thing. His friends were on the lookout to see when we'd tangle so they could part us, but I turned my back on them, instead. They eased up and started to laugh.

The next day Fotis was out with two of them, knives stuck in their belts. They were afraid. I'd come on him unawares, as though I couldn't knife him at midday in the square if I wanted to. But I was biding my time.

I went after his younger sister. She couldn't get to the fields without running into me. After a lot of manoeuvring, I managed to get her to sneak out of the house at night and meet me. I promised her everything till even I didn't know whether I wanted to trick her or if I meant everything I said. Before day broke I took her back to her house and told her to tell her father that I'd be back that evening to ask for her hand.

She was afraid to tell him what we did.

'Don't worry about it,' I said. 'We're going to get married anyhow, right?'

When the sun rose again, it shone doubly; sucking air into my lungs, I never felt such joy or saw how beautiful the colours of the earth I dug were, or breathed in its smell, I sweated and dragged up water, washed up with both hands, lay under the shade. My mind wouldn't leave the girl.

But in the afternoon my mood weakened as the sun fell and I began easing up on my work, wishing the sun would never set. Night fell and I was still digging away, saying to myself that it'd never do for me to leave the row half-done. Then I stopped everything 'cause I didn't care about the row, I just didn't want to go into the cafe and do the dirty work. But it couldn't be helped 'cause the villagers, for days now, laughed whenever they saw me in the square. I ordered mastiba at the cafi –I was treating– and a group gathered around me. But my tongue was tied and I talked about a calf of my coumbaro and the late tomatoes that hadn't budded yet.

I was wondering whether it wasn't better to go and ask for her hand after all, and maybe I'd have done it if the evil hour hadn't come. Fotis showed up, looking for me.

'Yiannilo, I've come looking for you to let bygones be bygones since you're going to join our family.'

As though I needed – I laughed.

'Get lost', I said. 'Cuckold'.

He didn't understand right away and was stunned.

'What's the matter, Yiannilo? Why're you talking like that?'

'Cuckold,' I said again, this time venomously.

Then he understood and changed colour. He lunged to grab me and we exchanged punches before being separated.

Afterwards, he locked his sister up in the house and beat her all night; the neighbours didn't sleep at all listening to the racket. We had another fight, this time with knives, and if I hadn't been drafted, one of us would have killed the other for sure. When I was in Basic, I got a letter from my uncle saying that the girl couldn't take the abuse any more; she left and never went back to the village.

Angela KASTRINAKI

The Terms of Faith

When Ulysses went abroad for twenty weeks,
as a visiting lecturer at various universities,
Penelope retreated into her shell.

She gave up cinemas, tavernas and her correspondence with N.

From his point of view, N thought that now they would communicate easier and meet each other more often. But Penelope was rarely in the mood to go out and when she was, she visited some close friends or her in-laws.

She now contacted Ulysses almost everyday by email.

She reported on everyday life, her thoughts and her dreams.

Anyway, at that time, she dreamt only of him.

As for Ulysses, he tried in vain to 'have a nice time abroad' as he put it.

During his outbursts of talkativeness (loneliness seemed to hit him hard),

He confessed to Penelope that he had tried to stimulate the interest of a postgraduate student – unsuccessfully, since the young lady in question was an ardent Saturday-night-Sci-Fi-viewer (those movies full of mummies back from the dead) and on Sundays she attended morning mass at the Greek Orthodox church; the whole thing made Ulysses realize that he couldn't keep up with the pace and habits of today's youth.

Penelope did, of course, complain bitterly about these attempts of his, as she did about his constant babble.

So she remained faithful for twenty whole weeks.

For twenty whole weeks, her only thought was the absent Ulysses and her only concern was their correspondence.

Three days before his return, Penelope met Z.

And while Ulysses was struggling to cram into his bags
all these piles of loot from his travels

(mainly books), she was putting little Telemachus to bed
and started hanging out.

The anticipation of Return

had agitated her.

She welcomed the expatriate with open arms

and arranged for telephone dates with Z;

they would be in contact secretly and they would meet whenever
the situation allowed.

Yes, after Ulysses' return, Penelope found herself a friend who
was quite difficult to meet.

She couldn't help it: she just couldn't exist without
someone being away from her.

Nikos KATSALIDAS

Maternal Temple

A priestess now, she walks to the altar of the fountain, bent, exposed, deeply absorbed in the waters, she offers invocations, libations, raises her head shyly to the ceiling of the sky, covered by God's offshoots, with naked breast, to wash, to comb with unction in the healing waters, to perfume her bosom. Her boobies were quince different in her youth, that sacrosanct enticing temple of the teat that nurtured our world. What happened, where has it gone her left breast? What happened, where has it gone her rosy, roseate teat, the spout where fits of milk gargled into my inflamed lips? She takes out her blessed, her holy only breast now and holds it hard in the lunar fist. The other has gone, she says, gruesome stabs cutting metastasis' storm and maybe bitches ate it down in mortuaries, in vaults. Or, maybe, professors emeritus experiment with her bosom's cells. Unibreasted now the mother stands in her handicap, she washes her only breast and stuffs it back inside, because it's well in there, he has forgotten it and Charon should not see it. Because, she says, he might have cut it off as well, the black Charon, when he passed on his black horse by her alley one day.

The Heraldics of Thrush, 2008. Translated by Klety Sotiriadou

Rina KATSELLI

From

Blue Whale

[11]

My wife says that the bad thing about me is that even though I'm a refugee I've found a way of furnishing myself free of cost with many blank sheets of paper, which I fill up without control. But in this world, if anyone has any duties, it is to a clean sheet of paper, which he alone must fill up responsibly. No one is too unimportant or too great not to do such a thing. So I, the least of men, whom injustice has forced to get rid of his Christian name, feel that I have that duty. Sometimes I wonder whether this here is my page or I must start somewhere else, and I lie awake at night tormenting myself. As long as I am unable to find an answer the least I can do is to continue writing to seek the answer with the wish that you, friend, fill your page whatever it may be.

[12]

As I have introduced the subject of sheets of paper and writing I shall say a word about my cousin who takes writing extremely seriously and struggles to find the money to have her books printed. She came yesterday and we discussed literature, philosophy, history and the like. When one is in her company one has no choice save to talk about those subjects. When I mentioned to her that I am writing something, which I shall send to 19 acquaintances, she was brash enough, to suggest that I add

several pages of her own. She said she wanted my acquaintances to read some explanations about her last book, which had been misinterpreted. I refused because I did not want to get mixed up with the bran for fear that the chickens might peck me. I am poultry farmer, I raise and sell hens and I do not want to allow myself to become their food. Fundamentally she got what she deserved. When they take everything you own, your squeals are like those of pigs, which disturb the public peace, cause trouble, but are futile. I have never heard of a pig being saved because it squealed while about to be slaughtered and I know that because my grandfather was a butcher.

You may ask, 'Mister D.G.C. what are you doing; don't you squeal like a pig?' No! I'm writing this especially for you friend, so that you are careful and you do not let them take you to the slaughterhouse like they took me. I'm shouting now to prevent your screams. I am aware, not only of my own worthlessness here on earth but also of the worthlessness of our planet in the vast universe. If, however, I send a warning just to you alone I will feel that I have done my duty as a human being because as far as I am aware, up to now no pig has squealed in order to save the other pigs from death....

Although I turned down my cousin's request to put her writings here, I regretted it at the last moment. Deep down I am good-hearted although my wife remains unmoved by that. 'That 'deep down' always remains 'deep down'. I never see it come to the surface so that I can see one good day from you,' she tells me.

How did I come to change my mind? When she got up to leave I was tempted to ask her why she tried to present in art form her experiences and to publish things that normally should stay locked away in her drawer. She replied that she no longer had a drawer since she was also a displaced person and that a great man said 'if there is something good about art today it is that it can serve man to help him understand

himself and the reality in which he moves'. I wanted to learn his name. 'He's a famous director who makes quality films. His name is not important,' she replied.

I was ready to argue with her but she seemed very bitter. I guessed that she had problems and troubles because like me she was a refugee. My heart softened and goodness welled up within me. What a pity my wife was not there to be proud of me. I asked her to give me what she had written and I promised to add something here. Today, through the post, I received her literary work, the little book which contains her experiences during the Turkish invasion and the subsequent loss of her home. The reasons for their presence take up eight closely-written sheets of paper which begin:

'This book is a small cry of pain from the heart. A small cry of pain, which was brought about by the blows which the powers of injustice and evil wrought on me, on you and on the who/e of Cyprus — a small cry which I should very much like to stifle. This little book disturbs me unbelievably and I should be extremely happy if it disappeared from my life, from your life, from the life of Cyprus and from the face of the earth. I shall retract it. But how? Can they take back the blows which gave rise to it?'

Afterwards, in a typically feminine manner she gossips a great deal about niceties and continues:

'This book does not set out to cover historically everything that happened in Cyprus in the second half of 1974 — a person who could do so would certainly be admired. A cry of pain so personal and isolated cannot include everything from alpha to omega. This essay is given to those who have the ability to understand human suffering so that they may get some idea of what happened in the ruined place, what happens when people are made homeless and destroyed either here or in another corner of the earth.'

Again she says many things before she adds:

'This little outburst of anguish which has become a book is disturbing. Please tell it to keep quiet by removing the reasons for it, if you can. Each one of us can do so, if he sits down and tries to work things out, if he thinks rationally and unemotionally yet humanely and struggles for the salvation of all of us. With the above precepts each one can do something for the salvation of our country, and for the salvation of the who/e world. If you cannot do so, follow the example of a friend of mine who cannot bear to see in the newspapers and magazines photographs of children with bloated hungry stomachs and the slaughtered bodies of fighters so she quick/y turns to the pages where she finds pleasant short stories or literally immerses herself in the humour column.'

This book, which is a cry of pain, disturbs its readers but nothing is achieved by provoking those who were forced to utter that cry. They did not want such things to happen and they would be the first to wish that they did not have to write accounts of such things. And do not ask what others would have done in our place and how they would have either shouted or kept quiet. Who is so sure of himself that he knows what he would do in a given situation and if he would be able to shout. It is not easy to have a voice at such moments and more than that to have the courage to express one' s feelings. It is enough that this voice is sincere and if it appears somewhat oppressive you have every right to stop up your ears and shut it out. It is nothing more than a small insignificant cry among the screams, which you did not bother to hear. As for me, I very much regret that I sinned by surviving and writing my experiences, so I ask for forgiveness.

I found my cousin's book very mild, and many of my refugee acquaintances agreed. I noticed that if you live through a terrifying experience and afterwards you see it transformed into an art form it does not satisfy you. Whatever is expressed as art is lessened in impact whether by words which are of limited endurance and significance or by colours which everybody strains to describe as perfect in regard to

their harmony. Perhaps the cinema with its devices can capture some of the terrible realities and I would agree with the words of the great director... But the cinema is almost always a commercial venture. For that reason, even here I'm afraid of describing how they took from me all the respectability I had inherited directly from Homeric times. I do not know whether in a few years time I'll dare to write something. The events of 1974 are great wounds inside me, which, if I scratch them, will bleed making me burst with revulsion at the emotional portrayal of the horrifying reality I lived through.

Such revulsion I felt when I looked at some so-called famous paintings, which attempted to show the horror of the burned bodies of our brave young fighters whom I chanced to see and whom I took to the hospital during the weekend of the invasion. In remembrance of those young men who were roasted alive by napalm bombs, the artists paint pictures of those same young men, their faces bathed in serenity with a few superficial bullet holes here and there. That serenity and those few bullet holes heighten the physical beauty of the young men and at the same time makes me despise the triviality of art because those pictures had nothing in common with the heaps of human pulp which I had seen in the trenches. I ask myself if those who survived the destruction of the town of Guernica and who happened to see the painting of the same name by Picasso, felt the same. I'm not trying to blame the painter or my cousin for the little book she had printed. The thing, which drives me mad is how art reduces reality to mediocrity thus cheapening it. Perhaps man, instead of expanding his horizons, limits them. Thus works of art with a message have ceased to speak to people because the latter do not bother to listen and to hear. They learn English, French and Esperanto and they speak those languages. Others consider art as floating in a void and they are certain that today art has lost its link with man and that it no longer functions in society, and now is above it and they

insist on 'art for art's sake'. Thus man stays outside the language of art, he hardens, he casts aside humanity and his natural self and he has become a synthesis, which has no relation with the infant, which comes forth from the bleeding womb of his mother. For that reason it is high time we produced an artistic form, which speaks directly to us — an anti-art of necessity, which will represent the current tragedy — the tragedy of a grain of sand in infinity. We should try to portray the disappearance of the blue whale and the destruction of a Hellenic core and its culture in Northern Cyprus in a way that no way diminishes its significance. It should satisfactorily portray the destruction of Byzantine murals, the broken crucifixes from our churches, and our cemeteries. These and many other things happen and art has the duty to find a way to speak without minimising the significance of such events so that everyone can understand, not only an elect few, even if such works of art seem cheap and even if they are fit only to be sold at fairs.

Kostas KAVANOZIS

Pork and Cabbage

The chairs were part of a set, along with a round table, her taste, and she saw no reason not to buy them. Furthermore, her husband had no objection, having noticed the price which relieved him of the burden of justifying their purchase with their fine quality and practical purpose; there was also the color, dark brown, a color most appropriate for a kitchen with brown cabinets, a fact he posed often as the main reason for agreeing to the purchase to whomever noticed the new acquisition, but seeing that no one paid him any mind, he resigned to listening along with everyone else to the reasons expounded upon by his wife, who pointed out their sturdy and high back, the weave of the straw matting, how well it wrapped around the frame, indestructible those chairs. As for the table, what could you say, it served its purpose, didn't take up much room, not that there wasn't room to spare, and which could be made larger if need be. Reasonable as well, his wife went on, to which he nodded in agreement, she had a good job bargaining with the carpenter bringing down the price considerably to her husband's great satisfaction. This was no time for frivolous expenses since they had just bought the flat with his retirement bonus and a not so negligible loan, paid off in installments from their monthly pension, not that it wasn't enough, but at their age they had to put some money aside for a rainy day. Life can be full of surprises.

Their son wasn't there when they brought the chairs home. He was still living with them and it would be another year before he moved into a tiny one

bedroom apartment to be near his job, much to his mother's dismay. Come now, she'd say, that job is not forever, and why would you want your own place anyway, there are expenses – why don't you just save the money. In any case, he wasn't there at the time, but even if he was he would have paid no more attention to the chairs than he did when he came home a few hours later. He barely glanced at them, said hello and plopped himself on the one that would break three years later, though not irreparably so, during one of those negligible in cause yet frequent and intense family arguments. The chair was comfortable enough, but he didn't particularly care for it. He said nothing, of course, since he had no say in the furniture and the decor of the place in general, though his parents intended it for him – they had already bought a place for his sister when she got married, which she is now leased out to pay the rent where she is living. In any case, his mother would never go along with anything he suggested, she had definite ideas and once she made up her mind, no one could convince her otherwise. With time, this particular chair inaugurated by the son accommodated all three of them, as well as the daughter and her husband whenever he came along. Plenty of relatives and friends also took turns sitting on it, those close enough to be seated in the kitchen, that is, most often women chatting with the lady of the house, either discussing grandma, who, by the way, had repeatedly availed herself to that chair, the weather and its turns in the days to come, the meals they prepared obviously in harmony with the weather, they might even have discussed what the government may be up to, and even discussed the wife's younger nephew, the son's first cousin that is, the one doing graduate studies abroad, a grave concern for his parents who feared not only the dangers lurking in that foreign land, but also the tuition which was too high for their means, since their son hadn't gotten a good scholarship, though he still hoped and searched and his parents continued to anticipate, while claiming they had come to terms with it,

tightening their belts until their son finished his studies; he was nearly done, they said, he would do his military service, then find some good paying job if he was lucky, seeing such things are difficult. At times, sitting in that or any of the other five chairs in the kitchen, the student's mother wondered aloud whether it was all worth it and was weary, resting her back against the chair, wondering what sort of chair rested her son's back so far away. She was not impressed when she visited him once, her child lacked the most basic of conveniences, but what can you do, that's what he had chosen for himself, she couldn't stand in his way; he would eventually make something of himself, her son would, she knew that, he had always been a good student ever since he was a child, his teachers still remember him. She wondered whether she could send him some food, worried he would come back home emaciated. Rinsing some fruit by the sink, her sister interrupted concerned her own son was thin as well, not eating well since he went off on his own, he comes by for lunch of course, but God knows what he feeds himself at night. It was such and other things that were discussed in that kitchen, with emphasis on the weather, on cooking and most particularly the state of family affairs.

The day before her son smashed the chair on the kitchen floor with all the strength he could muster, Monday noon it was, the daughter called just as the three were done with lunch and said she' be coming to the city for some shopping without her husband and would spend the weekend with them. She had been living in a rather small provincial town for the past five years, a place where other civil servants like herself and her husband served their tour of duty, and from time to time she indulged in some shopping in the capital city, clothes mostly, seizing on the opportunity to spend some time with her parents and brother. She lived in a newly built house, newer than her family's — they had bought the flat from the previous owners at a good price — and her kitchen chairs were somewhat different than

theirs, more contemporary, as the mother was in the habit of repeating to relatives and friends with plenty of smugness and unable to conceal a hint of criticism, perhaps insinuating that her daughter's taste would eventually converge with hers; she had no doubt her children had taken after her, and though it wasn't yet clear, it was their lack of experience and once this deficit was made up for, their good taste would emerge without fail. The daughter is doing well for herself, the mother would say, no children yet, but there is plenty of time, she is still young and might as well enjoy herself with her husband for the time being, they have steady jobs, their income is good enough for their circumstances and most important, it's regular, children will come eventually. She was more concerned about her son, not so much about his age, well over thirty, it was his attitude that worried her, and she talked about this to her husband for hours on end in the kitchen, or while carrying on with her housework, and he sat in one of the chairs listening and nodding in agreement. The husband never initiated such conversations and had them all memorized by now, our son must come to his senses, he must find something permanent so he could have some security, he is still so immature, when is he going to find a nice girl and settle down, so and so's daughter would be good for him, her mother is interested, she brings it up all the time, and the girl's got a steady job. Though he never started these discussions, he endured them with sincere interest, or so he thought. Afterwards, he would leave the kitchen, he would make his way into the living room, turn on the television and listen to the news, the weather, temperature was no joke, the norther or austral winds brought on remembrances from his youth, weather conditions had changed since then and that's a very serious issue, he would say, and whenever his wife complained that he didn't care about their son's future, what do you want me to do, he'd say, I can't help it he hasn't got a brain in his head.

When the daughter was done talking to her mother on the phone, she spoke to her brother who promised to take her out Saturday night; and where could he possibly take a married woman especially in this weather, the mother thought but said nothing, content to observe to her husband later that it had been a while since the last time they were all together, and what a great opportunity it was to spend the weekend with the children, she'll even make walnut cake, a dessert she knew both her children liked, though her son had been staying off sweets lately, why is that, she wondered aloud, could it be there's something wrong with his health and he is keeping it from us, he's got such a temper lately, have you seen how quick he is to pick a fight, she said to her husband at night and he agreed but reassured her, that's the way he's always been, and then, the temperature is going down tomorrow, he observed, make something nice and hot, how about pork and cabbage, I'll go to the butcher shop in the morning and then to the farmer's market, it's Tuesday tomorrow, his wife added, we have no more fruit, get plenty since our little girl will be with us.

The following morning, the wife was busy giving the kitchen a meticulous scrub down and carefully dusted the six chairs. Last, she dusted the one her son would smash in a few hours with such strength it would fall apart and rattled against the floor, albeit free of dust. She would have exhibited the same thoroughness in dusting had she known it would break, no excuse for dust on a household item, regardless its state. She was cooking in the meantime, her husband was done with the shopping very early, pork and cabbage, it was a good suggestion, just what a cold day called for, and she secretly hoped her son would eat a little more than usual, that child has lost a lot of weight lately; she would have his sister talk to him hoping to get something out of him, how and where he spends his time,

who he keeps company with, if there's anyone in his life, alas, she knew nothing about him since he left home she thought to herself as she was winding down her housecleaning and smelled the strong and rich aroma coming from the pot; her husband smelled it in the next room where he was ironing his son's clothes; the aroma wafted throughout the house, we'll be dining well today he said, what time is he coming, meaning his son, as she shut the kitchen door to prevent the smell from permeating the entire house, it's hard to get rid of the smell of cabbage.

Translated by Connie Mourtoupalas

Nikos A. KAVADIAS

From

Flight in the White

Nausicaa, what is happening to me is strange. I'm flying, Nausicaa. I am telling you the truth; it's not a writer's fantasy. Don't laugh at me, I have the feeling of a strange event, and it is indeed strange the flight in this tunnel of bright white light –if it is light, for it doesn't blind me– with the strange but beautiful music –if it is music– that comes from everywhere and nowhere. I am flying with unimaginable speed, knowing neither the way nor the reason, nor the destination of this flight. And, the other strange thing is that I don't care, I don't feel fear or enthusiasm. It is like being a machine; I have no emotions, although I retain their knowledge, and simply I register what I see, hear, and read – not books, Nausicaa, but thoughts and feelings that are appearing in front of my sight at high speed like passing on the screen of a computer. I can't find any other way to describe it for you, but you can understand how important it is for a writer to be shown in such a simple way the inmost worlds of people, their secret lives – the really hidden ones. This was my inaccessible dream, right from the start: to penetrate the mind of people and witness first hand events that are authentic – not substitutes; in other words, Nausicaa, to write THE BOOK. This moment, however, when I have the possibility of doing it, I don't care for it at all. I only know. I know that I know what was happened in the past, what will happen, and what exactly all these people feel and think; these people, whom I see as being simultaneously children, adolescents, young persons, middle-aged and elderly, in a perpetual present. Should I call it dream? In dreams, however, one

doesn't see so many details, neither colours, nor oneself; yet, I see myself lying down on our bed, in our bedroom in the small house of Rafina – near the bed I see the night-table with my watch, my pills, my eyeglasses and the glass of water on it, a little far from it I see the armchair with your unfinished needlework laid on it's back, my woollen jacket hanging on the clothe-horse that we had bought from Monastiraki – and at the same time I see myself in Corfu, being a seventeen years old boy, and having the sudden idea to estimate the age of the old houses from the layers of the colours that I discern in the wounds of their walls: the grey-green of mould, the carmine, the white, and the ochre. Nevertheless, in the same scenery there are also present the members of our family, each with it's own motions and characteristics, and other places and landscapes of our island, and other people, friends, known and unknown persons, to whom I stare all the time feeling nothing but the knowledge. The faces are coming more and more closer, growing in size as being looked from behind a magnifying lens; at the banks of their wrinkles there are discernible layers similar to the ones that the wounds of the walls of the old houses have, and the pores of their skin seem similar to craters, whence hidden loves, sorrows and hopes spring up like fumes.

Ilias KEFALAS

DREAMS

No, I can do without dreams, murmured my father. Because even in dreams I am unhappy. Even in dreams I feel tired. Besides, dreams are like flowers. With choise earth and regular watering, they blossom and flash in the garden. But lackihg earth and water, what garden can grow? Hence, from our poisoned lives, what pleasant dream can blossom? No, I can do without dreams, stated my father, in his endeavour to get rid of life' s nightmares.

SILENCE

What a deafening void dead silence forms. I beg, beg, for a few secret whispers, a hint of rustling yellow leaves, a far-off breathe its last on me, sending shivers down my back.

AGAIN SILENCE

I know her window is open, and that the wind is caressing her. Silence that extends. Even as far as here I her shawl waving. And the silk of her stockings creaks, as though a predator has grasped her two legs and is squeezing them. I rub my hands that the crust of silence might crack, for if she calls for help, only I shall hear.

SNOW'S HESITATION

Steps in the snow
They come and go
The soles empty
Having shaken off man
Stripping him of his existential weight
This, at least, will remain
The empty footprints
You can believe it, I say to my mind
And afterwards:
–immobility–
–hesitation–
What do you hope for?
The darkness encircles us
Amid this snow- white silence
Come, come
You, so near and yet so far
Come to me
Before we depart forever
No thought can save us
No dream can take us far

THE BLIND MAN

It's not only a matter of seeing
Others should also be able to see you

Said the blind man switching on the lamp.

The room instantly brightening

The night was repulsed

But it found in the light

Its airy crutches.

He, bathed in the light

Thought that if there was something he could see

That was words

Which limpidly rolled in his mind.

Innermost words, warmed

By his mind's solitude

Deeper than anyone has ever known

Crimsoned by the dawn's darkness

And the blaring of a sun that rose

Behind the mountain range of knowledge.

Only with words do I see

The blind man repeated

As though using a torch to fence with nothingness.

SOLITUDE

Solitude, said the bird pecking at

The wind's fleeting sighs.

Solitude, said the wet moss

Drinking the leisurely drops of rain.

Solitude, echoed the forest

Smothered with its dense darkness,

And the soul's hollowness echoed: solitude

And the river's bareness replied: solitude

And the ancient thirst implied: solitude,

Only solitude (everything settled

In this black stuffy nest).

And where was I?

Where was I and said nothing?

What were I and the word didn't house me?

Or was I the word that housed everything?

THE SOLDIER

The young soldier is reading

*A letter from his sweetheart
Sat on the ground like a silent bird
With the smile of a god at peace
A ravine between his eyes
Dripping salt
And fingers plucking harp strings
Without cease*

*Up flies his beret and settles
On a pole
Out of his pockets come fags
Matches comb mirror
And a drachma note*

OLYMPUS

*Like a hovering nest of clouds
Powdered with its thick snow
Olympus flies skywards each morning
'Are you real or false?'
Grandpa would shout enthusiastically
Looking admiringly at the mountain's ivory aspect.*

*Be it of water or ashes the years go by quickly
Grandpa is a remembrance now*

*And the mountain there stalwart and invincible
Inciting its white edge into the void
Looking immaculate
Broad and sharp and finally
Imposing itself on the clear sky.*

*Grandpa's words are whetted on my tongue
'Are you real or false?' now I shout
And entranced I look admiringly at its holy cone.*

JACK

*Jack, is it snowing up there?
Jack, is it raining?*

*Who has hung out his snow-white sheets
Which spread and flutter in the sky?
Like the waters of a white sea do they rise
When it foams with the wrecks of dreams
Alarming us with its roaring.*

So, Jack, tell me. Is it snowing up there?

*Here it's a cool high summer
Here it's night
Here blows the wind of misfortune*

I want to leave

The roads are closed

Our orchards have no fruit

Something invisible scares us and worries us.

Jack, Jack, Jack,

The dragon is here.

Where's your bean stalk?

Cough, sneeze, laugh, and let me hear you, Jack.

THE THINGS

The things that are born inside us

Are in a hurry to go

Only their anger lingers on

Eating silence and love away

I have found my life as I left it

One evening of summer

Since then I have borrowed sensations

To be conscious of my fall

Maria KENTROU-AGATHOPOULOU

THE MOTORCYCLE RIDER

What happened

To that noisemaker

Of the midnight before

That rode his mechanical animal

Roaring on the asphalted road

Without brakes

That had fun, during sleeping hours,

With our brain

Here inside

The crippled skull

On the midnight before

As I was looking at the new moon

Outside my window

I heard a strange noise

Coming from high up

And I thought I saw him:

An angel on a motorcycle

Crisscrossing the roads of the sky

Looking in sorrow at me

Through his broken mirror

*Please take
A nice picture of me
Riding my motorcycle
I want to send it to my girlfriend:
One hand on the brake
The other fixing my curly hair
I want my leather jacket
And my iron helmet
To be in full view
Above all, they should be clearly seen
The vertigo on my face
And that premonition of inevitable
Death*

From *Marine Journal*, 1981. Translated by Dino Siotis

Panagiotis KERASIDIS

The music we grasp

*The music we grasp leaves us.
Reality's so-called birds of pray
that train in abeyance
ripping freedom's music scores
emitting groans of immortality,
songs almost.
Felicity's gaps that we stutter.*

*Musical pieces that we utter
in the language of those absent.
Wounds that remain voiceless
with the eloquence of those present.
As though we are stubbornly giving
the kiss of life
and the breath sticks to the spittle.*

*Sounds of suffocation
of an irritated body seesawing,
a hungry drama,
with the speed gathered by the fall*

*when they push us to make us fly.
Whereupon we leave the breath free
to flee into its nightmare.*

*With wind instruments
proclaiming the touches taken from us.
Groping such deep mourning.
Such crumbs of sound
that emerges from the nails.
A deep cut from the string
that at night we tighten.*

*Music that children grasp
when they play and roll about
in the earth of forgotten graves
through friction composing
a different lullaby.
Rousing.*

*Spouting distillations of senses
that failed to become feelings.
When we sing as though cursing.*

*The music that we played alone
with the keys of silence,
of the last breath.*

*The music played by the eyes
In the wind of shipwrecks.*

*Permanently mendicants demanding
that the music we grasp in absence
belong to us.*

*Just as the drums of life
belong to the skin of death.*

*Just as the drums of death
echo the scratches on the skin.*

Translated by David Connolly

Yannis KESARIDIS

The Dirty Dress

The stain on Seva's dress appeared just a few months after her wedding. It was midday and her husband had come back early from his usual haunt. The meal wasn't ready; she hadn't been expecting him. He staggered in and started complaining.

'And change that dirty dress, haven't you got anything else to wear?' he said finally before going to lie down.

She was puzzled. A young bride in dirty clothes. Why hadn't she seen it herself!

She went over to the mirror.

The years passed with the dirty dress clinging to her body, with that stain just below her right lung. It was brown in colour, like oil.

The first time she saw it, she put the dress in a basin and left it to soak in hot water. When it had dried, she spread it out to iron it and saw: the stain was as bright as day. The whole dress shone brightly and the oil stain with it. She carefully laid it out on the bridal bed and saw her body writhing inside it, just as when she had slipped out of her mother's womb. She felt it belonged to her more than anything else in the world.

This swaddling garment that had received her body. And there on the right was a shadow all her own.

At first, she hid the dress and went to look at it from time to time. She cared for it in the wardrobe as though it were a baby. She aired it, cleaned it, hung mothballs on it. Each time she looked at it, she felt it was her protection, a coverlet for her body.

In time she came to believe that it deserved more than being shut up in a wardrobe. She wanted its warmth to spread over her body and so, one morning, she wore it tight to her skin. And she never again took it off, stain and all.

That evening when she saw her husband fall down drunk in the front yard and collapse in the snow, it was the dress that saved her. As she was unable to drag him into the house, heavy and drunk as he was, she got a thick sheepskin, wrapped him in it and lay down beside him in the weather's white sheets till the morning. Her body wasn't affected by either the cold or by the earth's damp.

That same evening, she realized that the dress was an amulet and the stain a guardian angel come down to earth to protect her.

For years now, she had been enduring the life of a widow, burdened with the cross of loneliness and with her amulet clinging to her skin. Her husband's days were numbered in drink far more than in the caresses he gave her, and his departure from her was inevitable. Her only consolation was the dirty dress; a smell of mustiness for those who came into contact with her on the street or in her tiny room once in a blue moon, but for her the only source of strength enabling her to endure everything foreign and indifferent in life. She would often be heard talking to herself with one hand constantly caressing her belly and with her head sunk in the orbit of her navel, as though she were a member of some contemplative order. Seva's carryings-on were seen by others as eccentricities that would sooner or later lead her to the other side of life, the dark side.

She moved house and went to live in a block of flats, on the ground floor where the sun was a rare visitor. The one friend she had left, Mene from way back, found the coolness of the place balsam in the summer months and her innocent soul a respite from cares. She would lie down with her in the summer afternoons. They spread a blanket on the floor, stretched their swollen legs one over the other and began their prattle, sometimes in Vlach, sometimes in the local dialect. In the dimness of the room, two pairs of pallid legs gave a sickly hue to that long past of a life of deprivation, yet one full of dignity and forbearance.

What balsam!

The woman saw only kindness in the other's eyes. And she opened up her heart.

In the final summer, the dress bore into the woman's body and imprinted its shape on her skin. Like a message that the time had come for her body to take its leave of the soul.

And the stain took its place deep in her innards and it was this that guided her. Seva, another Sinbad of the streets, constantly stumbled and grabbed at the houses' cornerstones, without hope and without neighbours, without any welcoming door. This route reminded her of the way her husband would return; it pushed her into the streets and then led her back dizzy to the shady ground-floor room. Her friend searched for her in the town centre. To no avail. Seva disappeared into the streets. The next day, the stain again took her for a stroll round the shop windows and the open market. Her face was still bright with that sheen that the Vlachs have when they marry, that gives them a certain noble air...

Later, in the Old Peoples' Home, the nurses did everything they could to erase the shadow of the dress in the bath every Saturday afternoon. Seva patiently endured it.

In time, her skin wrinkled with all the scrubbing, but the shadow remained,
a crumpled dress.

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[*Chronicle of a Premiere*] 1997. Translated by David Connolly

Natasha KESMETI

In the Land of the Purple

Memorial D. G. Oreopoulos, Physician, Professor of Nephrology, Mentor

Very close to the shore, rising from the sand in ephemeral bloom they must surely have a name, even one of distinction — precious, that makes melody to the ear. But since nobody seems to know it, we called them *The Purple*.

Even in this way, with no other description, their name distinguishes them from all other purple.

Five petals, with highlights at their curly edges, become more powerfully purple at the depth of their hearts. In the morning they glow, at noon the fragile petals filled with flaring wrinkles fade and by late afternoon, it is already 'too late' for them: they are carried off by the wind. All the hours even when the wind has lifted them from their long and deep calyx they retain a refined integrity.

When standing alone they draw the eye towards their delicate loneliness. Otherwise they make great companions and together raise up a purple wavy Altar. If angels do not come, tiny insects as mass co-fellows approach: sometimes humming and other times silent.

The purple do not mourn. Even if at the sight of them one should contemplate grief, it is because sadness is rooted in one's own heart. The purple at their best time illumine the present moment. They invite you to concentrate on it wholly

It is neither easy nor simple. But every purple sways and insists: I am the daily bread, panem nostrum. Who are you that look at me?

The purple do not satisfy greed, but can remind you of the fullness possible from the tiniest crumb. It is enough that you are— and that you are known to another .

However *'The self-willed man does not believe and does not meet. He does not know solidarity or connexion, but only his feverish world outside and his feverish desire to use it. (...) .When this man says 'Thou' he means 'O my ability to use' ²⁹*

The white pestle attached to the Purple Heart retains an unseen dedication to the holy liturgies – a collaborator who will fly near touch it in a shared devotion.

It is easy to be greedy and rare to enjoy fullness of devotion. The common path trod by millions is full of provocative signs that stir the mania for profit and more profit. Eyes to meet with the purple, never will they be found there.

In the land of the purple, someone might enter the inaccessible sanctuary of exceptional loneliness. But not desolation. Rather a solitude whose boundaries exclude all but being in relation.

I met a man who saw his students, colleagues, collaborators, nurses and patients as co-pilgrims and collaborators. He believed in an absolute way in the 'healing touch'. The only sign marking his own creative path insisted: 'Offer even at your own personal loss'

In the end messengers from every corner of the earth and the depths of his heart began to bring him daily crumbs of profound peace. He understood why he lived and every fear of death abandoned him.

²⁹ Martin Buber

The purple illuminate the eternal present. *The relationship is reciprocal.*
How delicate every revelation of Thou !³⁰

Translated by Lydia-Chara Pavlopoulou. Translation suggestions and comments by Dr (Fr) Stephen Muse

³⁰ as above

Yannis KIOURTSAKIS

We the Others

SKYROS CARNIVAL, 1971

Night had already fallen by the time the boat arrived at Linaria – it had hit bad weather and the journey had lasted longer than ever before. It was cold. The wind was picking up as they entered the ramshackle bus to cross the island; it looked as if there was going to be snow. Eventually they arrived at Molos. They left their things in the circular, middle room of the old windmill, looking out over the angry, ink-black Aegean, and headed for the village. At the little bridge over the stream they met three masked boys. He felt odd when one of them shouted, ‘Bend down, uncle, I want to tell you something,’ and hissed in his ear a shameless song: ‘*Y’ mother’s twat don’t want old cock*’ – the rest was drowned out by a chorus of sniggering. How could the children be so foul-mouthed?

They climbed up the old cobbled road holding a torch that illuminated their way and the edge of the cliff: the familiar mountains around them had vanished; the night was pitch-dark. The clouds must have been heavy; the wind was growing stronger and stronger. And then, suddenly, they found themselves at the edge of the village where the wind swept fiercely through the white, serpentine streets like an invisible beast that pushed you along, whistling, grew calm for a moment, and then turned violent again, pushing you along, whistling, whistling incessantly. In front of them, a wrinkled old woman, only so high, wrapped in a headscarf, walked hesitantly, touching the whitewashed wall with one hand, as if she was afraid that

the wind would carry her off, her other hand clutching a bundle of kindling to her chest; through the window of the small house you could see the glimmer of a flame growing and diminishing, illuminating, at the back, the wooden divan with the bed. After that, the road was empty – they walked spellbound amidst the silence, the smell of burnt wood, the lights.... And the wind whistled, whistled, more and more threateningly, as if it wanted to rouse the entire village.

But they had finally arrived at the marketplace and had ducked out of the cold into a cafe. They had had time to exchange a few words with the locals who were slowly sipping their drinks there; one group had sent over some *meze* and wine. And now they looked around with curiosity, at the red faces of the patrons, at the frosted window panes, dizzy from the wine and the loud voices, their weariness from the journey, the flush of warmth after so much cold. At the back of the cafe next to the stove, a toothless old man was making himself hoarse chanting a strange tune that everyone called the song of the *Korela*. A carnival song, but slow-moving and sad; mournful, you might say; virtually a lament. He sang it over and again, insistently, as if he was the only one left who remembered it, the only one who could still sing it.

And all of a sudden, from the end of the road that disappeared up the hill, echoed a tremendous, other-worldly ringing, coming closer and closer, ever more deafening. A goat's head appeared out of the darkness at the opaque window; then another, and another. Shepherds' crooks struck the doorstep, and the door opened as if of its own accord. The three masked revellers burst in, just like wild animals – now you could see how they were dressed, too, with their hand-made leather sandals, called *trochadia*, their high white woollen socks, their animal pelts and hoods, their black and white goat masks, the strings of bells that rang together as the *geroi* ('old men' as everyone called them) leapt about as if possessed, creating such a

din that for a moment they feared that their human eardrums would burst and the window panes shatter.... The other world had emerged out of the night, there, in the small cafe on Skyros.

And the next morning, the island too emerged from the vastness of the sea, between the black and white clouds. Opposite them, the sea – the sea, as far as the eye could see, foaming in the grey and silver light. Not a single boat out there; nothing else apart from the endless rolling of the waves, urged on by the wind. Away to the south, a bare rugged cape – the same cape rounded by Achilles' ship, so they say, on his way to Troy, unchanged since then. Land of beaches, rocks and crevices; its meagre soil retained by stone walls. A little higher up, a hint of green; fields and blossoming almond trees with their first leaves. The fig trees – leafless branches, grey, tormented, like calloused fingers pointing at the black sky. The pastures with the few wildflowers – hyacinths and anemones. The paths lost on the mountain, among the dense bushes. Shepherds here and there with their breeches, jerkin, headscarf, belt and *trochadia*. Flocks and pens – made of stone and crowned with thorns, with a half-open wooden gate creaking in the wind. Buildings sown on hills, continuing nature's work, similarly unchanged from one generation to the next: floors strewn with sand; whitewashed walls; small windows; a flat roof covered with blue-grey earth; thin smoke streaming from the chimney; a sheepdog sitting on the doorstep. And all of a sudden, on a bend in the road, opposite them, the village again, new, as if they'd never seen it before: a compact mosaic of small cube-like houses, little churches, arches, conical domes, resting there, between the earth and the sky, between the steep rock of the castle and the placid slopes of the mountains opposite, reaching down as if to fold it in their embrace; resting gently as if on a palm – 'Like the palm of God?' he asked himself.

And once again, the climb uphill through the white, serpentine streets with the tireless whistling of the wind. The shadowy church with the carved icon screen giving form to ancient fables: a dragon with scales and wings holding an oil lamp in its teeth. A perfectly round human head amidst the foliage. A bird whose tail became a flower. And again, the old woman with the kindling walking right next to the houses; and the other one with the distaff, spinning next to the fire. How had this microcosm of Homer sprung up here, amidst the vast wilderness and eternity of the Aegean? A world closed around its hidden centre, just like a circle – that pattern that repeated itself wherever you turned your gaze: in threshing floors and windmills, in domes and arches, opening or closing again as if to hoard the secret essence of the life of this place, where everything – plants, animals and manmade things – seemed destined to be endlessly sown, die, and be reborn. A world that is closed, like the oven where bread is baked, like the womb where life is fed and a new body is formed. Closed around the flame of the fire or that flame that lights inside our bodies, pushing them irresistibly to couple together in a room so that life can bloom again, while outside it is still the depths of winter and the snow of death silently falls. Closed around roots warmed deep in the earth, where the very first sap of spring is already flowing.

And at the marketplace, again, the tremendous ringing in the pale light of the sun that emerged from the clouds in the afternoon: the troupes of *geroi* with the costumed young men trying to outdo one another by lifting the most of the heaviest sheep-bells, going down to the square, brandishing their crooks in the air and striking them, bodies jostling together in rough fights, with the *geroi*-goats butting heads or giving themselves over to a tireless, repetitive dance, imitating copulation, with their crooks all laid on the ground, the hyacinths tied to the handles appearing

to have blossomed just at that moment from the dead wood. How did the first seed of the theatre germinate again, through that primitive dance? How did it grow here, on this threshing floor in the wilderness of the Aegean?

And in the evening, again, the tremendous ringing, the pandemonium from end to end of the marketplace: the *geroi*, leaping in the tremulous light of the lanterns, entering and leaving the cafes, tavernas and houses, like ghosts allowed to come and go freely from the other world to this one. And, late at night, groups of drunken revellers, returning from their merrymaking, sauntering through the streets, singing. And that tall thin shepherd that no one knew – the others called him Tramountanis – who stopped him in the middle of the marketplace, shook his hand forcefully and holding it like that for a good long while, started to sing to him – to sing for him personally – the sad, slow-moving song – mournful, you might say, for a carnival – of the *Korela*, looking intently, with his drunken gaze, deep into his eyes.

Extract from the novel *Εμείς οι Άλλοι*. Translated by Paul Edwards

Nena KOKKINAKI

The Parisian Ambassadors

I've always trusted my dreams, even as a child. Those saved in memory and those that weren't lost in the morning light like illusions. I wanted to recall them, to expose them to daylight. I was terrified by their clarity; for dreams have no mercy.

I was still living in Athens when I dreamt of this unknown grey-haired man in a long, black trench coat. His form was vague. I was very thirsty and he offered me a glass of cool water. But as I leaned forward to accept the glass, it slipped from my hands and shattered on the floor. He stood there staring at me, laughing. He was laughing out so loud that I dug my nails into his face in furious anger. I was watching the blood furrowing his cheeks, a frightening red streamlet, and woke up sweating, overwhelmingly thirsty.

This dream came back identical when I first met with the new boss. The red streamlet was captivating, this time I wanted to touch it, to feel the blood with my hands if I could, but the man would disappear into limbo; his shape only, not his laughter.

I felt that this dream was a bad sign. Recalling it, I tried to describe the man who was laughing at my mishap. But I just couldn't. Who knows how he sprang up so stealthily; who knows what he prophesized— we don't usually recognize the faces looking at us through our dreams, although they might want us to.

Today, after the horrors we went through, I could give an explanation. Someone wanted to play with me; someone was amused at my failures, my

mistakes. The man in my dream was no longer unknown to me. He was Nikitas Patellis!

I met him a month ago. Paris, end of October, 2005. The riots had just started. Two youths of North African descent, playing football in the Clichy-sous-Bois ghetto, are electrocuted as they run to a nearby power substation to flee the police. Their death sparks civil unrest; violence takes over at night. The riots spread to the suburbs and last for weeks. Immigrants throw rocks and molotovs; they burn cars and police stations; police respond with tear gas and rubber bullets. Many of the rioters ('scum' and 'hoodlums' according to the Minister of Interior and eventually President of the French Republic) are arrested. The riots spread to Lyon. Paris would need three weeks to return to normal.

Protected within the security of our home, we are practically glued to television. Scenes of horror and flames are everywhere. I'm scared; horrified. That's the word, horrified. Horror and nausea, together with a strange, unexplainable and mind-blocking premonition. If only Smaroula were here. When the times get tough my thoughts turn to her, although I'm convinced that she talks behind my back. She thinks I'm selfish, and a hypocrite. She was disappointed with the position I took in that indescribable meeting and has kept a distance ever since. But, I do miss our walks and chats over coffee on Wednesdays.

I'm looking for ways to approach her. The new boss's decision to assign both of us the same project –due before Christmas—will make the rapprochement easier for me. We have to prepare the documents to cover the shipping cost of household goods. Many have left the post, some replacements have already arrived; figuring out the cost of transfers is time consuming. I hope our old friendship will rekindle during this time.

We are sitting in a small room next to the kitchenette facing each other. We are mixing papers and words together. The signals of communication are strengthening. Smaroula opens up, jumps from one subject to another and makes comments like she used to in the good old times, avoiding references to our previous conflict. She cares what the new chief thinks of her. She is no longer calling in sick, neither is she grouchy when asked to run the errands. On the contrary, she's willing to take over any job assigned to her. Smaroula knows how to handle situations and what strategies to use for different circumstances. This is her third year at the post. To secure two more, she'll need the new boss's excellent evaluation.

'I knew he would be something like that,' says Smaroula without clarifying what 'something like that' meant.

'A cultured, sensitive and low key person,' I said to make things easier for her. She doesn't seem to agree, though.

'This can't be a qualification. Not for his position. Being sensitive I mean.' She corrects me. 'Management, like politics, is meant only for the tough. If you're sensitive and stuff, you better stay out. What I'd like to know, though, is what made him leave his well-paying job in Greece for such a modest allowance. Hasn't anybody told him?' she wonders.

We knew nothing about his personal life. Someone said he'd been a widower for quite some time. His wife died suddenly, maybe in an accident, who knows... No other information. Patellis, a loner, stayed away from social circles and was cautious with private conversations. He knew how to safeguard his personal life.

'There is no rush. We'll find out. There must be somebody who knows. The world is small, and Paris even smaller,' hopes Smaroula insisting that they're all the same, selfish, and willing to grab every single opportunity.

I am not interested in what she's saying, but I let her talk. I'm thinking of his eyes, so full of meaning; the sealed lips, the graying temples matching the light colored eyes; the thick hair; the wrinkles on his forehead and under the eyes. The new boss has entered my life out of nowhere; and he's attractive and handsome, no doubt. An unspeakable, invisible wall is standing between us. If I could only knock it down...

'Where are you traveling to?' Smaroula brings me back. 'I hear you,' I reply. 'I was just thinking that Patellis has nothing in common with the rest of them here. He is not an ordinary man.'

'Sure,' says Smaroula. 'And he's undoubtedly handsome. Don't you agree?'

That November night, the riots in the suburbs were going wild. Confined in our Rue de la Faisandrie apartment, we were getting phone calls from Greece inquiring about our safety. Over the window, I was watching the big city, its countless roofs and the millions of lives it kept inside. I had been added to these lives with the illusion that freedom is to be found in the open horizons. I opened my arms to embrace her. And I was caught in barbed wire.

[Notes from Nikitas Patellis' journal]

Cities are like human beings. They have character, temperament, personal moments, and special colour. They are, perhaps, 'our own powerful image as social beings,' according to an academic, hero of an English novel. Human beings,

however, fully confident about the invulnerability of their nature, consider their cities to be their very own property until eternity.

Paris is a proud and understandably authoritarian city. Noble and courteous, she allows you all sorts of exploration in exchange for a romance, a flirt with your dreams and feelings. Around noon, people stand in line outside the bakery to buy a baguette or a sandwich. They wait patiently. The city makes them happy and they give in to her charms. They take pictures by her monuments, and set off to explore her by foot, like clouds travelling aimlessly, without a compass. Most of them, though, follow a daily routine, a specific schedule determined by others. They follow it obediently, observing the rules of the city, the city that makes you feel you're beyond the limits of time.

We met long time ago. I was a student when I first saw her —the city I mean— and she was in her highest glory. I looked at her as if she were human. The more I stayed the more I loved her. I even believed, as faithfully as youths believe, that somewhere near —actually right next to me— dwelled 'les moments bienheureux,' those 'blissful moments' emerging occasionally from Proust's involuntary memory, a 'Remembrance of Things Past.' I had to get much older to accept the scarce and temporal bliss of human life, and even more to understand that happiness is not as simple and obvious as many believe in my own country. In the land of ancient gods, people mention the word happiness frequently; they wish for it, pursue it, run after it. They equate the word with words like wealth and power, forgetting the beauty of a single moment, a scent, or an embrace. Then, memories faint away and people get old, innately unhappy, unable to reconcile with the moments of happiness that touched their lives.

Dimitris KOKORIS

Summarizing Yiannis Ritsos' poetry and poetics:

Martiries (= Testimonials)

Martiries consist of three series of poems: the first one includes seventy-nine (79) poems written during the years 1957 until 1963. In the second series there are a hundred and ten (110) poems, written between 1964-1965 and the third one consists of forty (40) poems, composed from 1961 to 1967. Ritsos has spoken in an explanatory manner about *Martiries*, possibly forced to do so by the inner feeling that these particular poems, not only as far as their content is concerned, but obviously because of their form, did not harmonize with the emotionally and verbally prolific registrations, which gave the stress to his poetic work during the decade of 1950. Ritsos in his 'essay' 'As an introduction to *Martiries*'¹ which was written in 1962- while he was in the writing process, but having crystallized the poems' form and content— is confessing:

'I can not exactly tell, how and why, whereas by tendency and preference, I have basically worked on many-versed, complex poems, I occupied myself with particular persistence and love, continuously for so many years and even until now, in parallel with any other of my work, I'm dealing in a sustained effort with 'Martiries', paying so much attention to them and being in the process of continuous writing these laconic and often epigrammatic poems. May be because, by origin, I'm Laconian, (and this is just not a play on words); may be by a tendency to prove to the others and myself the ability to express myself in a well-knit and summarizing way; may be by a mood of resting after the sleepless tense of long creative periods; may be by a need of an every day practice for improvement and preparation of form, so that it can be immediately and unwrongly developed in art, the continuously renewing

experiences; may be by an effort of summarizing expression or of reacting to the danger of verbosity, which is often lurking in long poems; may be by a need of a flash of response to crucial and urgent problems of our era; even may be by a will of abstracting and capturing a moment, which would enable a thorough examination and the discovery of all the elements of time, which would probably vanish within an endless width— that is a ‘by division’ concept of the undivided, a ‘by holding things still’ concept of understanding the perpetual motion.’

Ritsos’ continuous poetic progress looks like a complicated crooked line and not as a rough and one-way straight-line. Many poems foretell the poet’s next steps and others embrace older aspects of his poetics, attached to unfamiliar to him poetic actions.

‘We don’t have prejudices and self-interest and oppositions towards the objects, not even competition nor respect (as we do towards ideas and feelings), so we can both respect and acknowledge and trust them’.

In *Martiries* Ritsos doesn’t only exploit central symbols— objects of his general poetics like the ‘mirror’, the ‘lamp’, the ‘tree’ and the ‘moon’ or just the breeze that the objects give out, like the changing of their colors. Humble, every-day objects are transformed into wagons of high-rate emotional power. The brushing comb, for example, appears both as a clear reference but also as a distinct hint in seven poems. Considering the general dynamics of the living symbols in Ritsos’ poetry, birds and horses, whose poetic use starts creatively from the early stages of the greek rhythm expressions, originating in Homer, play a vital role. In thirty-one (31) out of 229 poems in *Martiries* birds play a leading part and in twenty-three (23) we can spot the presence of horses. Birds and horses in Ritsos’ poetics constitute extensions of the human existence and are in harmonic co-existence with human bodies and faces,

even if sometimes the emotional power of this co-existence leads us to feel the 'breath' of the existential dead end.

Statues also play an important part even in *Martiries*, as it happens whatsoever in other representative samples of Ritsos' poetics. The effort to explain this symbol leads us to the simple every day man who by fighting and hoping can surpass different kinds of obstacles. This aspect does not correspond to the Seferian way of understanding the statue. Seferis uses it as a symbol of the alienated man. One can find in *Martiries* and in other major Ritsos' contributions poems with ancient content in which he uses the mythical method: this mythic element is the vehicle for transmitting external existential sensitivity; it's a pivot connecting the past and the present, revealing the prospective of the future. The homerogenic²⁴ poems in *Martiries* are characteristic and one can spot poetic approaches of the other mythical fields.²⁵ I prefer to remind you the poem 'I epta' (= 'The seven men') probably generated from Aeschylus. It summarizes the rhetoric of mourning, the role fate plays in an emotive way, fitted to the scene of ancient and also contemporary funeral libations.

The question as a way to shock stability and certainty, the confessed even by the poet frequent use of 'may be: and 'or' force 'the reader towards creation[...] that is to his own discovery or at least to research', as Ritsos underlines. The subtle foundation of the time's disintegration, imminent to all poems in *Tetarti Diastasi* (= *Fourth Dimension*) and basically one of the vital aspects in Ritsos' poetry couldn't be absent from *Martiries*.

The modernistic way of writing comes out of the verses in a rigorous way. It's not only the free-verse dynamic and the simple, 'well-knit' vocabulary. It's the high level dramatization, that is the compact sequence of pictures and feelings inside the poem itself and the fertile surprise which springs out from — in wise

doses calculated— breaking the realistic regularity and leads sometimes to the fertile puzzleness as far as the content exactness and clearness is concerned but almost always to an adorable sentimental clearness. Ritsos, without being the only one of his team of the '30s having succeeded in it, accomplished to combine in his post-war writings all three distinguishable tendencies which are already coded in the poetry of the representatives of the first post-war team: social-political, existential, surrealist. The social tension, the existential thorough examination and the breaking of the realistic regularity are highly combined in many poems.

What we have till now struggled to trace as a content and form key-stone of *Martiries* is spotted as a crucial characteristic of the general contribution Yiannis Ritsos has paid to poetry. The following aspect summarizes Ritsos' total contribution and is valid for *Martiries* too, because these poems indeed summarize his poetry and poetics:

'Soil, stone and gold in Ritsos' poetic world and dīcor interchange and are put on the same level. The every-day, handy objects become valuable considering them this way. The human body, naked or clothed, claiming its own indefeasible virtue and beauty. Its components and parts attract each other, pair off and protect each other from disintergration and death'
(D. N. MARONITIS).

The love tension, ranging from latent to undisguised and the writing of poems of poetics are organic characteristics of Ritsos' literature. Exploiting in a reference level the eloquent poetic vibration of silence and the poet's conversion to a creator of clay or plaster he stresses the inner adventure the poet-creator is in.

Translated by the author

[For the essay in a complete form, see *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science (USA)*, Vol. 1,
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Dimitra KOLLIAKOU

Becoming Yourself

Walking up the road in the morning stillness, she had felt certain about it: She had been here before, she had heard the creaking warning of the pines. It was audible for tiny fragments of time, when no car passed by and the hammock stood still in between two swingings. Then you could tell it had nothing to do with your body weighing down the netting. It was not you, but the pine trunks that going numb made an effort to shift their weight. It was long ago, she was probably still in primary school. It must have been some feast, and the hosts had summoned her mother to give them a hand. Left alone in the hammock, she had studied for long the cherry stain on the hem of her skirt. Short and pale yellow, the skirt was second hand. They often got hand me downs from some lady friends of Mr Dalmatis.

Now, the sight of the house with its plain iron gate made her change her mind. Never before had she come to this address. The thought of a hammock hung from pine trees and a cherry-stained skirt had rung in her mind a doorbell that did not ring. Just like the real one. Deliberately she pressed it with force, but it gave out no sound or the sound did not reach the front yard. The gate door was chained, although they must have been told she would come by. Two balcony doors on the facade. Sliding shutters from plastic in a mahogany brown that were closely drawn. The only sign that someone lived here was the old white Honda parked in the street, with fossilized bird shit on the roof like chicken pox scabs. The car emblem on the back had been sprayed with red, by a stoned youngster or a prospective thief who had paid a reconnaissance visit. She could hang the plastic bag with the provisions

on the railings and beat it, she thought absurdly. With unexpected daring she tugged at the chain. It came down with a thud, dragging along the padlock that was attached to one end. Feeling behind the latch, she easily removed what held the twin doors in place. A U-shaped iron had been put through the holes that were meant for the padlock shackle. Someone had found the right piece of metal and given it this shape. The chain with the real padlock was there for camouflage.

She followed a cement path along the external house wall that was decorated with small cactuses in olive oil cans. It led to a low tiled veranda in the back that was crammed with junk. A rusty bedspring was leaning against the grained wall in between another pair of sliding doors with the same plastic shutters in mahogany brown. There was a narrow side door with a matching shutter and a doormat. Here too, all the shutters were tightly drawn. 'They can be trusted', her mother had said, 'they are old friends of Mr Dalmatis.' She could remember their son from when he was little. 'Miltos', the son had introduced himself over the phone and had offered to give her a lift on her very first visit. He called back a little later to cancel. Something had come up and he would not be able to escort her, he explained almost apologetically. No idea why, she preferred it that way.

The pine trees were dense on this side, thin and anaemic, with grey trunks reminiscent of birches. A wire mesh fence separated the plot of land that came with the house from the adjacent plot on the right hand side. Behind the mesh, the forest was thicker, interrupted only by a ramshackle hut. There seemed to be no neighbors. The trees had been stripped in the back to build pink maisonettes that were still unfinished.

She put down the plastic bag – following Miltos' instructions, she had bought them milk and bread at the square. As she was rummaging in her rucksack for her mobile she noticed a light through the slits of the narrow door shutter. In the bright

autumn day, it looked like plain color. Someone had been watching her from there, and, whoever it was, now gave the door a swift push making it totter in its aluminium frame. Instinctively, she grabbed the bags, ready to retreat.

She came face to face with a short and fat woman that could have hardly been a beauty even in her youth. She wore low heel leather slippers and skin color ankle socks under bare legs. An old jersey headscarf curiously lifted her ultra-thin eyebrows that must have long stopped growing back.

‘What do you want?’ asked the woman timidly, using the polite form. She took no step forward, forcing her to move closer to the doorway.

‘Miltos asked me to come.’

The woman did not react. Her eyes glided apathetically to the plastic bag with the provisions that she had lifted from the floor. Now she positively felt like an intruder. The old lady did not seem to know who she was or why she had come. Perhaps it was the wrong house, she thought and tried to steal a glance at the lit interior. A fridge of huge proportions. Beside it, a round table that was covered with a flowery tarpaulin. On a shelf fixed to the wall on top of the table, she noticed an oil lamp with a pale flame under the electric lighting.

‘Mrs Chelmi?’ she tried once more, as there could be no mistake about the name. One of her professors last semester was also called Chelmi. She had found her course tricky, but she eventually managed to pass it with an almost decent grade.

‘Chelmi’, echoed the woman in a strange accent — a ‘chi’ sound that was called a ‘velar’ in the course taught by the other Chelmi.

Then another person emerged behind her back. It was a man with a stern face and unkempt hair. His first words were indistinct, as he uttered them slapping himself against his thigh.

'Move' he ordered the woman, in order to take her place at the door. He was clearly older and the skin under his chin hung loose like an empty pouch.

'What do you want? Who gave you the right?' he confronted her now in a tone that made it impossible to interpret the plural as a polite form. He was furious about something she was certainly not responsible for, but it would not be trivial to point this out to him.

'We don't need anything... You have no right...' he went on in plural as though addressing a group of invaders, ignoring the woman behind him who was trying to intervene.

'Lambros, she is coming from Miltos...'

This time he did notice, but these words irritated him further.

'Leave us alone! We need nothing... Get out!' He spread his arms almost provocatively, as though expecting some reaction, and then let them drop lifelessly at his sides.

Suddenly, without warning, he stretched his right hand and grabbed the bag with the provisions. She let go without resistance, realizing only too late that she had forgotten to remove from the bag the receipt, as Miltos had instructed her to do over the phone.

The old man leaned heavily on the sliding shutter and pushed it hard along its aluminium track, as though someone was obstructing him from outside. Before the click of the door, she had a glimpse of his hand with the loose skin and the bog standard wedding ring on the third finger, a hand sinking in a sleeve that was too big for it and excessively heavy for a day like this. Not a dressing gown, she realized, but a padded jacket, a dark men's quilted jacket, that was faded at the seams and must have once belonged to the wardrobe of a taller and younger man.

Extract from the novel *Becoming Yourself*. Translated by the author

Lila KONOMARA

From

The Representation

In the last few days I've been reading a book about Japanese gardens. There was a time in the past, a difficult time, when I would often find refuge in it, as if it contained all the solutions I was looking for. And every time I did that I was incredibly comforted. Time passed. I forgot all about it until one day I would again accidentally come upon some picture, a drawing, or a text with relevant references. The other day I received a letter from a friend who has been abroad for a long time. In it was enclosed a photograph of a Japanese garden. I felt that the picture was winking at me. I got hold of my book again and turning over its pages I thought that that was exactly the way I wanted to write.

Looking closely at the pictures, one quickly realizes that in Japan the idea of a garden is not the same as ours. A Japanese garden may exclusively consist of stones and sand, rocks and water, materials it would never have occurred to us to use. Moreover, the arrangement of the materials is dictated by a different mentality. Here we would be aiming at a beautiful aesthetic effect. A whole philosophy would be revealed there: the yin and yang, the energy that is transmitted, the garden's orientation. Every element plays its role as much on its own as in combination with all the other elements. Nothing is done in an arbitrary or accidental manner; and yet it is not at all in the style of the French artificial gardens or the English ones with their feigned naturalness. Japanese gardens do not imitate nature; they are the essence of nature, life itself. The uninitiated are not likely to recognize the design in

its entirety; nonetheless, they are carried away by the sense of a profound symmetry, an emanating holiness, an ideal fusion of the natural and the spiritual. A Japanese garden is an entire universe, pulsating with ideas and emotions that draw together and part, converse and fall silent, flow and vanish, in order to re-emerge further down or a little later at some other time of the year. The initial design may be completely changed over; the garden is being endlessly reshaped: a twig bent by the wind, thus altering the view, plants drowned by lichen, an unnecessary rain or a summer that lasted too long. All this is happening imperceptibly, secretly, to the tune of a prayer. The garden speaks to the visitor and the visitor listens to it, deep in thought. He feels the quivering of the leaves on his fingers and the whistling of the wind on the grains of the sand. He participates in the fluttering of the cherry tree blossom in the spring breeze. At the same moment he is transformed into a stone with the water lapping against it or into a stork that has just spied a tiny worm basking on the stone.

I would love all the whisperings of nature to echo in the turn of one of my phrases, even if that phrase was the only one I ever wrote. I would like you to see these gardens. I'd love to find you inside them. But this is not possible. My chrysanthemums provide no perspective, my carnations have no fragrance. They are just pictures: a representation, a mere imitation. How strange... The larger the space, the more level the ground: a tiny spot on a map without north and south, without rivers and mountains, with no legend. Only some local festivals compulsively crop up here and there, filling the place with the unpleasant smell of barbeque. The town of Xanthe is vainly proud of itself and so is Athens, though on a different scale, both turning their backs on the urban sprawl that has swallowed them. 'Below the façade, a void.' I can hear the clatter of the keyboard from another room, where the youthful Marina, my secretary, is in quest of chat-friends on her newly created blog,

'2b.' And what about us two? I wonder where we are going to meet. Could it be in the world of now that has already moved into the future? [Could it be in a transitional world between the present and the future?]

PAINTING III

A white snowy landscape. Where does it exactly begin? Where does it end? That is not very clear, its borders have been wiped off. Neither can you see what is below it: roads, lakes, fields, properties, a deep ditch? It looks as if it has always been like that. Is it likely to conceal traps? Who knows! It seems so peaceful. The eye stops at nothing in particular. Nothing? Not exactly. A more careful look belies the initial impression. Something dark appears to the right: three black and slim shapes. They are quite discernible, separate, and yet intertwined, forming a continuous surface. They could be human figures. Of course, it isn't possible to tell with certainty. But they look as if they were. Those dots at the top seem to be eyes, don't they? What else could they be, after all? But where the ears ought to be, there is nothing. Perhaps ears are not indispensable. The same applies to the mouth. There is no mouth, it has been effaced. This can well be explained. The snow may have done it, for example. It is well known that the snow can smooth out everything: corners, edges, protrusions, peculiarities. In their place you get shapeless masses, an indefinable impression. The figures stand still, but you have a feeling that there is motion: that slight forward movement. They may be going somewhere; they may be on their way. Perhaps they are manifesting an intention like someone who has a plan in mind. They are about to make a movement which is finally held back; by what, one wonders? Could it be a temporary change of mind, a perpetual postponement or a cancellation? It is not very clear. The movement may be there simply as a possibility that lasts forever.

Perhaps. The white snowy landscape offers an impenetrable wholeness. All these thoughts are unlikely to have passed through their minds. They may just be the gazer's. And the figures may not be human figures at all. No one can tell with certainty; nor can anyone assure us of the opposite.

Translated by Vally Despotopoulou

Manos KONTOLEON

From

Dominic

Dominic stood on the roof; it took a few seconds for his eyes to become accustomed to the reddish light that lit up the sky like the glow of a huge forest fire. Suddenly the sky was clear of clouds but the red colour remained.

The wind had grown much stronger. It blew, whistled, roared, and hit Dominic like a burning blast – could it have been from a hot desert somewhere?

The roof wasn't a big one. It had a wooden floor and there, right in the middle, it had a horizontal slab. A black, stone slab with a prickly surface and rough sides.

With great effort Dominic managed to overcome the resistance of the wind and approach the slab. The black colour attracted his gaze. He kept looking, as though pushing his whole body into a dark room. Light! Where, at long last, could he find the light of an answer? And then, on the surface of the black slab, some letters began to take shape. They were all gold and all mixed up. The M was beside the R, the F beside the O, further away was the A, then the E, somewhere else the L. Dominic looked. So many letters. How could he choose the ones that would form an answer? And then the wind died down. A light sea breeze came up – what beach had it come from? Then Dominic knelt down beside the slab, took the other daisy petal out of his pocket and let it fall on the stone surface. The breeze started moving it around, sending it from one letter to the other and Dominic made a mental note of the order in which the letters were now arranged:

ASKTHECHILDRENINTHERIGHTWAY

So that was it! Dominic got up and the gold letters vanished. Only the white daisy petal remained – now motionless – on the black slab. And Dominic ran toward the stairway, and began running down hurriedly.

‘Ask the children in the right way!’ he murmured, as he ran down the steps two at a time.

Of course, the children know; as long as you ask them in the right way, they will reveal their wisdom to you.

You have to talk to children in stories.

Dominic was sitting on the wooden floor of the veranda on the first floor when he started telling his story. Little children tentatively began poking their heads around the balcony doors and listening to him as he related his story:

‘That morning –it must have been spring– the sun came out, as always, from behind the highest...’ Two girls and a boy approached him, sat down beside him, looked at him and listened.

‘Meanwhile, the father had gone to the middle of the field in front of the house...’ Now there were twenty children sitting around Dominic: nine with white faces, two with brown, six with black, three with yellow. They looked at him; they listened.

‘In the palm of his hand, he held the last piece. It had a strange shape. It looked like a star ... Here, this is it!’ Dominic took the clay star out of his pocket and showed it to the children, There were fifty children sitting around him – thirty-three

girls, sixteen boys. They were looking at him; they were listening. And Dominic told them the story of his life.

Around him on the floor of the veranda, more and more children gathered. The veranda was full. And all the children were listening. They looked at him, they kept silent; they understood.

And the white daisy petal showed the letters in order. First the A then the S then the K... 'Ask the children the right way' I read. Dominic stood up, and the children looked at him. 'Have I asked you in the right way now?' asked Dominic. How light he felt! And how good it was to share your life with others!

The children nodded their heads, gesturing 'yes'. And then all together in one voice, they answered him.

'The Nameless Forest is there...' and they all raised their arms to indicate the west. 'That's where the Lady with the Beaded Hair Who Speaks in Rhymes lives. When you find her, she'll show you the doors made of trees from the Nameless Forest.'

'How far is it from here?' asked Dominic.

The children paused.

'We have heard some people say it's two hours from here; others say two days. And still others two years. We don't know.'

Dominic smiled. He got the point.

'Each person,' he said, 'knows his own way.'

The children looked at him with admiration. A little black boy touched his arm. 'You should know,' he said, 'that when you get to where you're going, you will no longer be the person you were when you started. You'll be someone else.'

'You won't be anyone else. You'll be the same, but different, too!' added a dark-skinned girl.

'In what way?' Dominic wanted to know.

And the children, all together, told him:

'Then we'll be calling you 'Dominic the Great'. That's what we'd think of you!'

Dominic's eyes filled with tears. Emotion, sorrow or happiness?

He waved his hand over the children's heads.

Then he went down the stairs, walked on the red earth and looked westward...

The red colour of the sky kept changing, going from deep cherry red to dark purple, then black. Dominic walked. In his fist was the clay star lighting his way.

Yiannis KONTOS

RALLY

*Today I'm driving my armchair
recklessly at high speed.
I've already broken
the smog barrier three times.
Many doubles of me have been
maimed and killed. I'm left alone.
Alone I drive this danger.
I flash past and they stare at me
in wonder. I've never understood
why I speed motionless, distracted,
gazing at the calm elsewhere.
Someone's altered the road signs
and they forever signal one-way.
I've often seen the town
in reverse or landed in deep water.
At other times the potholes are covered
with cotton wool, the visibility perfect.
As you can see,
everything is driving me mathematically
to the next bend where waiting are:
cliff, sea and take-off.*

HUMIDITY IN THE CITY

Summer, like in a play

by Tennessee Williams.

We're sitting on the veranda

in vests – half-naked

the women are drinking

lemonade. We wipe

the sweat with paper napkins.

The languor has taken us

with it and involves

the moon too in our case.

Everything is rotten and

silver. Cats beg

for food. As for us, we learn

our roles. The stage-director

shouts: 'Don't drink too much

liquid, we're on in a moment.'

Someone throws rubbish

in time's interim.

Rushing to get on stage

we imprint in the mirror –that's

hanging before us– an uncertain

shape, a line, rust,

fear at what's to come.

THE ACTRESS JULIE CHRISTIE, NOW OLD

to Kostas Kazakos

She gazes at the blue corridor.

The curtains would billow

if suddenly the windows

were to open. But what prevails

is calm and room temperature

carefully maintained. Outside, as usual,

the clouds rub against the old buildings

producing light rain, that enters

the cracks in walls and souls.

On that English evening, she waited for me.

Alone as she was, she sang a few

verses from old ballads. In the wardrobe,

her velvet dresses sighed,

and the wood creaked. She took the brandy.

Smelled it, drank. The hearth glowed.

She strained her ear, she'd heard many sounds

of late, mainly of love, and laughter.

Adopting a serious mien, she crossed the iron

bridge, with its numerous lichens and damp vegetation,

and came towards me: I tried

*to unscrew my thought from her body
and to sleep quietly without the lights
of the cinema.*

From *Absurde Athlete*. Translated by David Connolly

Takis KOUFOPOULOS

The Actor

The actor had barely spoken the last word when backstage a mechanic pressed the button and the heavy velvet curtain dropped. Now, to be accurate, the last word was not so much a word as something like oh or ah or ha or ha-ha-ha. Still, it hardly matters. That's the way the playwright wanted it, that's how it was in the text, and the director had agreed; the long monologue which was really less a monologue than a series of grimaces and imperceptible movements on the part of the leading character, with a few words in between, words such as 'here', 'there', 'afterward' 'I'm thirsty' 'you rats' – anyway, this last monologue was to end with oh or ah or Ha or ha-ha-ha, and the curtain was to drop immediately. In fact, the director had insisted that the curtain start to fall even before the oh or ah or ha or ha-ha-ha had been uttered, so as to catch it in midair, and both should fall together. True, this had caused an argument. The playwright claimed the curtain would muffle the sound of his words, which ought to ring out clear and strong. The director said the thick, heavy curtain would have an even greater impact than the sound. The playwright insisted but, since director and playwright were one and the same person, in the end the actor was instructed to utter that oh or ah or ha or ha-ha-ha somewhat louder.

So the actor said it loud enough –it rang through the centuries– and the heavy curtain dropped. What followed is hard to describe; literally, a pandemonium, unique in the annals of such theatres throughout the ages. No Roman arena, no liberation of Paris or successful explosion over Hiroshima, no return of victorious butchers from the various fronts could hold a candle to it. The entire building –that splendid building– was shaken to its foundations as though by

a real earthquake. They say the crystal chandeliers were smashed and the walls and ceiling cracked. That may be an exaggeration, but it is a fact that not one of the spectators remained indifferent or unmoved. They were all on their feet, some climbing on the pillars, some standing on the seats, others on the shoulders of the ushers and policemen –who were trembling– as they cheered, whistled, booed, clapped. Even the officials in the first rows –ministers, generals, and so on– took part. They didn't stand up, of course, since everybody knows that the thin little legs dangling from the seats cannot support them any longer. Nor did they clap, for their broad, puffed, heroic chests, covered with names of electoral districts and glorious battlefields, wouldn't allow their hands, hanging from equally thin little arms, to meet. Nevertheless, they shouted at the top of their lungs, 'Bravo, bravo, to the gallows, to the gallows!' and waved their short arms and legs.

Even the critics, who had always been unanimously opposed to modern art and had come only to denounce it again the next day from firsthand knowledge, and to put in a formal application for its suppression by the Consul, even they – maybe from fear of the mob's staring, black, round eye, maybe because they thought it wouldn't hurt them after all to keep an open mind about these wild theories (if only those bums who accept them and fall into ecstasy would go and wash a bit, in the same river of blood where they themselves had washed, and then come back for discussion, but on the basis of the eternal principles of art, ethics, and logic and not merely because he had said so), or maybe because they had been truly moved by that oh or ah or ha or ha-ha ha, which was so well timed and so well spoken – anyway, they too put down the crowned busts they were carrying, stuck the actor's head on their lances, raised the lances and waved them. The ladies and young girls, seeing the head on the lances, wagged their fingers at it shouting, 'yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo!'

Those, however, who had taken the lead in the whole auditorium, were the spectators in the balcony. It was they, really, who had caused the incident; long before the curtain, before the last act and last cry, some of them had risen to their feet and begun to analyse and interpret the play. Their neighbours pulled them by their jackets, the audience in the orchestra turned and hissed 'Shhhh, shame!' but there was no stopping them. The director, who was watching through a hole in the wall, feared they were going to ruin the show. He therefore gave instructions to the ushers, who rushed up to them and told them something confidentially (it's rumoured those people had been hired to applaud, and the director threatened to withhold their post-paid wages, but this is obviously slander) – anyway the ushers told them something that calmed them down right away. Now these people could not be controlled. They danced, gesticulated, howled, and then exhorted the rest of those in the balcony, and they all marched to the railing, and, one by one, jumped down to the beasts.

Meanwhile, the actor stood motionless behind the curtain, in the last pose of the play, listening, dazed. He had never dreamed of such success. Of course he had worked hard for the part, even since childhood. He had sacrificed his whole life, and not only his own. Study, memorizing, acting, exercises in diction, in impassivity, in pain control, and above all a program with everything timed neatly – food, sleep, maxims, all in the proper moment and place. Naturally there had been no room for weaknesses such as wine, tobacco, or even women – and not because he was sexless as his enemies asserted. But was all that enough? Hadn't so many good actors – maybe better ones– almost failed before him, in that very same play? We say almost, because some of them did begin by showing a good box office and a number of beheadings, but in the end it all remained within the circle of the intelligentsia, it

didn't move the masses to hysteria, to genocide, to folk song, to processions and massacres.

To be sure, those others had not uttered that oh or ah which is so human, and more particularly that ha-ha-ha which is so divine. The more naive among them preferred to finish by spitting contemptuously, while the cleverer ones chose silence. And yet not even that was enough, for ultimately it is up to the public to decide and the public is imponderable and unpredictable. You never know how to catch an audience; by the hand, by the collar or by the neck. Or when to capture it; when it is fasting or belching, when it is about to murder or has already murdered, when it is walking into the gas chambers or coming out. You know nothing about it. Everything is decided on the spur of the moment. And now the moment looked good.

The actor motioned, people ran to assist him out of his last posture in the play, he was given something to cover his nakedness, and he advanced proudly toward the curtain. In the auditorium they were now chanting his name in three-four time, accompanied by the noise of the seats and swords. His tiredness was gone, and so were his objections to the text and the scenery. He no longer worried whether it was to be Isaac or Iphigenia, Paul or Saul, 'Take aim' or 'Fire'; gone too was that fright he had felt in the middle of the performance when he saw the public yawn, unbutton their waistcoats, and scratch armpits and cuts —it was then he had turned to the director, trembling, and the director ordered the auditorium to be sprayed with deodorizer and the heat turned off. All that was now forgotten. From behind the curtain came shrieks of applause, firecrackers, wailing. The people wanted him, they were ready to fall at his feet. History opened the way for him to sign his name.

The actor reached the middle of the stage, put on his best smile –a smile of both indulgence and affection– raised the curtain, and stepped forward. But instead of finding himself in the presence of the worshiping public, he encountered a second curtain. It was lucky there was a double curtain, because as the first one dropped it upset the part in his hair. He smoothed it down, smiled again, and raised the second curtain. Only there was a third curtain, then a fourth, a fifth, a sixth... The actor stopped out of breath. Velvet enclosed him on all sides. He tried to figure out whether he had walked in the wrong direction, but no, there he was in the middle, where the two parts of the curtain meet, the right and the left. He mopped his brow and thought a while, and then suddenly his face lit up. He remembered that the director had ordered the curtain to be composed of successive layers, so that the horrible things that happened on stage between acts would not be heard in the auditorium. The opposite, of course, did not happen, for everything that took place in the auditorium was audible on stage, but that did not matter. In fact it helped, for it let the director watch the public's reactions and determine how the play was going. Not that he would change the text (even if he wanted to it would have been impossible since the actor –who was a different person– had learned that text and would stick to it), but, depending on the mood of the public, he could alter the sequence of the scenes and so avoid trouble, like the time he presented the Supper scene to an audience that had just finished eating and was therefore totally unmoved.

The actor remembered all that, took heart, and prepared to go on. But suddenly he noticed that the noise from the auditorium decreased, then died down altogether, and in complete silence somebody marched onto the stage and took up a position in the middle, declaring he was a relative of the actor and would now give a funeral oration for him. The actor, who had no relatives, became very angry and

began to raise the curtains quickly. But the audience was also annoyed, for, instead of delivering a funeral oration for the actor, the man on the stage was delivering a funeral oration for the audience. Somebody got up and shouted, 'What are you talking about?' and two or three others joined him and shouted the same thing, but instead of replying the speaker turned toward them, made the sign of the cross, and the poor fellows instantly melted into thin air. Then the rest became very angry too, stormed the stage, seized the speaker, and set up a summary court of justice to try him for unwarranted exercise of power, and that was the end of him.

It appeared, however, that the man had friends in the audience because, whereas after the incident everybody was ready to resume the applause and lynching, some people –the man's friends, of course– began to say first in whispers, in talk, and finally in bellows that the man was no relative but the actor himself, whom we were waiting for and who had left the stage through a side door, that he used his real face, which we hadn't seen before, and that he had spoken in parables. Naturally, those who set up the court protested, saying this was a lie since the actor had died, and anyone who claimed such things was a heretic. Then the others cried, 'Traitors', the first group said, 'You are instruments of Satan', the second said 'You are instruments of the oligarchy', and since they all had naked swords they rushed at each other. It is hard to record the number of heads that fell and the number of watches and purses stolen. The fighting was mostly face-to-face –the way the seats were arranged– but often it came to close combat where everyone fired freely, with a number of individual deeds of valour and heroism. The battle had many stages. For a moment one side advanced and the other fell back, then the other advanced and the first retreated, so that it was hard to know whom to bet on. From time to time someone climbed on a seat and shouted, 'Brothers!', then both sides quickly stopped, fasted, confessed, turned toward the curtain, lit candles and fire crackers to

it, waved swords and amputated arms at it, and then turned back to each other and resumed the butchery.

Meanwhile on the stage the actor was still struggling with the curtain. He went on lifting, one with one hand and one with the other, tensely and hurriedly, for time was running out and the audience —his audience— was slowly forgetting him. True, there remained a few old women and retired officers, but the public, the great public of today and tomorrow, had stopped calling for him after having given him such an ovation. It was busy with other things, with other wars, not his own, and it didn't even mention him in connection with them. It did of course come toward the stage, to light candles and fire-crackers, but this could as well have been meant for the relative. So he had to come out, to appear, to say I am your chosen actor whose name you called out in three-four time. They told you I was dead but I am not dead —because if I were it would be awful for you. I just got entangled in those damned curtains, and other phonies came and took my place and pretended they were me, but here I am now before you, all of me, bring me my speeches so I can see if they are right, bring me my portraits for me to approve, bring your children too so they can contemplate me in my glory and worship me even as you have done. Those were the actor's thoughts as he threw himself wildly against the curtains, opening, raising, pulling, tearing, but there was no end to the curtains.

For a moment in the auditorium the one side... no, the other... or rather —let me have a look— ah, yes, the one side captures the stage. Then the others, seeing their holy sanctuaries in the hands of the enemy, become very angry, they close ranks, sing their national anthems, increase the portions of mess food, hurl themselves forward, and reach the stage, but then the ones who were watching started shouting 'Dirty bastards!', 'All right' the others said, and retreated, only to gather fresh momentum and rush forward again, this time not only capturing the stage but

routing their opponents. It looked as though the battle was won. Bets were counted, the proper sums for taxes, stamps, and rent deducted, and calculations made as to the amounts due for straight bets, double bets, split bets, and so on. Actually it was not all that simple. For the one side, seeing its position was desperate and no help forthcoming from either Saint George of the infantry or the Taxiarchs [patron saints] of the air force, rushed off to get some tough mercenaries and put them in the first lines. As soon as they saw the mercenaries, the other side said, 'Oh, yeah?' 'Why not!' said the first side. Then the other side rushed and got hold of some of the same mercenaries and the struggle took on new vigour. Fresh incidents, fresh heroes, fresh martyrs, fresh packs of cards and chips, and soon fresh desertions –by those called to the phone or those who lived far away and had to catch the last bus– and again fresh reinforcements and so on and so forth.

In the end, after all of them were slaughtered many times over –it was getting late and we had to go to the office tomorrow –they put on their scarves and overcoats and gradually, chatting in small groups, began to move toward the exit. After a while the auditorium was empty and quiet. Only a slight rustle could be heard now and then among the curtains.

Translated by Rodis Roufos

Vassilis KOUGEAS

THE RESTLESS DEPTH OF FIELD

*Even if the person in the picture
is only one
it should be standing
right in the middle of it.
So that,
the tree behind and the road on the right
will look hazy,
a truth that reveals
the depth of the field.
The sounds and the silence
should be audible
before and after speaking words,
so that the distance in between
should be a visible one.*

*Both
the hand and the mind determine
this difference
in speech and in image, too.*

In the passage of time,

that very landscape

was burnt in the blaze.

The same picture

that was so artfully worked upon,

now depicts

something that no longer exists.

The same occurs

with words.

Nevertheless

everything that can be visible

is an answer to a single question,

and the question that corresponds to this

is always the wanted.

Thus,

the interpretation of the signifier

usually relates to the how and the why

of every minute,

the restless

depth of field

selected.

LOSS IS A MATTER OF METHOD

As target moves to the distant future

its nature and outcome

are at stake.

*As knowledge deepens, the goal becomes mutable
repeated effort*

*leaves one with something better than before –
a subtle difference is always present.*

*Learning leaves a new trace in the notebook
yet always*

loss is inevitable

*because of the sign that rests
upon the old one.*

Loss is a matter of mutation

mutation is a matter of learning

loss is a matter of method.

THE PASSAGE IN-BETWEEN

*The passage in-between was of slow pace
but this*

*did not manifest itself in the picture
that froze the scene*

thus the time

had as a starting point disparate moments

two time phases

*that autonomously intersected
all the time in the future
aiming at a correction of tactics
that in reality were not of benefit
to anyone.*

*Keeping the candle lit
from one end of the lake to the other
again and again
because it kept being blown away*

THE JOURNEY

*A horse stands in sadness.
I saw from the third
the man who hastily walked out to the Square
he seemed a little one and flashes
were passing through
to the charged clouds.*

*I rested my palms on the rough trunk of the tree,
and felt its need to narrate
to the skin
the lesson of love —
lesson for breath
by erasing*

meaningless words.

*The meadow was progressing slowly
between the still sheep,
the journey
had already begun.*

TIME

*Light disturbs
eyelid struggling to keep
the taste of kisses given to the lips.
The day kicks rudely at night?
No. Simply
light differs from darkness
and the difference is a sign
that something else came up and happens.
One hour seems to vary
than it succeeds
when it changes everything
and whoever lives.
But for her, that perpetually returns,
for what remains still unchanged
time does not exist.
The before, now, after the,*

are words

only for what resides time.

Now, I'm elsewhere.

I left out of there before I was.

Hand, caress you not here anymore

The picture changed means

the passage of time.

The body often wonders

if it wanted

to be made of stone.

PROBABLY NOT

He takes a look, just a while ago

walks ahead and gazes at the sea, the same one, for years

at the people on the street that passes

the derelict building

and the place where it no longer exists, something that used to exist.

Staring upwards lying on the bed

he gazes at the void of the ceiling

where instead of this void God should be,

he hears words empty of meaning

he sees the fluid molecules on the glass surface

the volatile words, the drippy rain

*pouring downwards all of them
to nowhere
the fluid, the restless depth of field —
what importance is there in them
in this stares ?
Is he waiting for something? Probably not.*

*The hands touch the moment
the eyes, and all of them together with the lens,
the ears, the mind
embrace the present
after a while
the illusion of before and of back then
the deceptive continuity*

KNOWLEDGE IS BEING EVAPORATED

*A snake
moved dexterously through the dry – weeds
of that summer
and came right next to me so quietly
that as I was watching it,
I thought I had lost my hearing:
my senses did not match one another.
The knowledge is being evaporated.*

*The certainty of believing
that something will or will not happen
becomes subverted.*

*Now
a unknown hand knocks on the door.
He went a long way to reach the house
he has no commands to deliver
but he brings the unexpected. Whatever he believes.*

*And
whatever you have learned
should be employed. Otherwise
the heart will be plundered,
the mug
will turn into shatters
influenced by shouts
and the body will never quench
from the saltiness
of that summer.*

THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE

*In the kingdom of That
light and darkness are the same.
The mouth closes tightly and doesn't leave*

*get out a word that
implies punishment.
But the teeth should
be kept clean,
they are in the gate
of a function of pleasure and of language.
The gate controls That through Me.
Teeth not
so blackened from smoke and food
but from what is kept
in silence in their cave ,
The white teeth again
do not mean the opposite
but simply show
a diligence to hide the fact,
until sometime
to stay one tooth alone
still
deep in the soil
without That without the Ego*

WHEN

*The operating instructions are written everywhere
on the cover of the game on the cover of Life,*

*when darkness falls they lead to the light switch
when multiplying alternatives highlight the most useful.
Often instructions are translated into rules
the benefit is not always visible but least
may avoid punishment or penalty.
The user writes the expert or the manufacturer
who directs the doing.
The instructions without restricting the freedom to prohibit,
if game can voyage arbitrary
as they describe steps and slopes
that the author has chosen as victorious.
These are the information is useless
when the universe collapses and the sky fall down.*

TRANSFORMATION

*The soul was loaded unnecessarily with a body:
any question of coming out therein as wound
each concern as disease.
Got time to unite both in one:
so painful yet so simple
found the reason to continue life.
Such as
from the glass poured the water in the basin,
ends from where it was*

and the new surface is larger

but now

the new body follows

the limits of the soul.

MEMORY

Names without names for things

and humans

once passed.

The glimmer of the moon divides the landscape

of the room in the middle.

The ear listens to its displacement

but no response

is given to the absence.

The tree grows on the table quickly.

The foliage climb with speed and they shake,

as the responsibility was bestowed upon them

to represent

words and passion

that no longer exist.

Pieces of rust

fall off the walls

and the soil is revealed.

*Grooves of water and memory
flashing
like a neon light
until the gap is clipped
with images that are born incessantly.*

FLOW

*Both the blood and ink have to go through the tubes.
Sometimes the tubes are transparent other times they are made of copper
Sometimes you see through them, others not
[Silence as affirmation].
Then the voice says:
sometimes separately, other times as a mixture
less or more pure the red or the black,
the black-red as the broken brown-black.
Wondering what is the right one to get terminated
but not,
let the words flow,
and the color
to take its course*

*Even though I am dead
I understand.*

Menis KOUMANTAREAS

From

Koula

Two evenings later, Koula left her office at a run. All through the afternoon, she kept consulting her watch and glancing at her pocket mirror to check her make-up, her hair. What if he got there first and had to wait! Being late was bad manners, she pleaded with herself, it was strictly against her code of behaviour, her habits.

The Monastiraki station was packed; it was the rush hour, closing time for offices, folk art and souvenir shops, furniture shops, smart boutiques on Ermou Street nearby; a motley crowd converged on the station. She grew desperate; they could easily miss each other in the rush. She sat down on a bench near the left-hand exit, so as to be facing the first carriage when the train came in. She let her gaze wander beyond the precincts of the station. She noted some of the old buildings still surviving in Athens; old walls corroded by humidity, wrought-iron balconies with griffins and swans, broken ornamental roof-tiles. From a distance they looked pretty, but she couldn't help feeling glad that her own two-storey house, built soon after the war, stood in green, peaceful isolation in Kifissia. She found the big apartment blocks of Athens constricting, stifling, but on the other hand old houses like these had a dreariness about them that depressed her even more. She believed she had done wisely to choose a house in an area that was both convenient and quiet. Yet she had to admit that whenever Athens happened to be in turmoil – celebrations, demonstrations, tear gas, barricades– an undefinable feeling of uneasiness nagged at her, sitting safely in Kifissia with her family, away from it all.

But then the comings and goings at the tax office, the harassed people who came to complain, protest, appeal, and more often than not left in despair, only to come back again in a few days – were they not tangible manifestation of the city's daily turmoil and struggle? Was her involvement in that not enough to free her of guilt? She smiled to herself and glanced once again at the little mirror in her handbag.

At that very moment she saw him leap out of the train, in his red sweater and bell-bottom trousers. He beckoned to her to board the train so that they wouldn't have to wait for the next one. The cypress-green figure flashed across the platform; she fled to him, and barely squeezed through the closing door. This was the first time they both had to stand, chests, hips, shoulders pressing softly against each other, cushioned on all sides by the surrounding crowd. Koula's eyes were unusually bright and youthful. How beautiful you are today! he blurted out, and added quickly: where do we get off? what would you like us to do? Koula remained silent. I've got an idea, said Dimitri, what about getting off at St. Nicholas? We could go to the square... All right, said Koula, but then she remembered that was where his friend, the young architect, had got off the other day. The square, she asked, what will we do at the square? I know a little taverna there; it's in a basement, there's wine and a juke-box, the sort of place working people go to, said Dimitri, do you mind? Rather than sit in a boring cafe or tea-room – personally, yes, he definitely preferred the local taverna. As you wish, she said, not wanting to spoil his pleasure. To be sure, she had never been to a working-class taverna in a basement before.

Walls blackened by smoke; here and there wall-paintings of revellers in water-colour; tables covered with greasy oil-cloth, glinting in the neon light; a blaring juke-box in the back. The customers were a mixed crowd; plebeian types, soldiers, students, one or two drunkards, real ones, not like the ones on the walls.

One of them, a middle-aged man, was stumbling around in a parody of a hassapiko dance; now and then he stooped unsteadily to slap the tiled floor; he let out loud hissing sound as he stamped his foot and threw back his head. His dancing partner, a skinny, sickly young sailor, did his best to cut a dashing figure, swerving and jerking in an unconvincingly rakish manner. Cut it out, the customers shouted, give somebody else a chance! Dimitri watched Koula anxiously. She reassured him with a glance. Everything's fine, nothing to worry about. She slung her bag on the back of her chair and drew her legs together, patting her skirt into place over her knees. She looked faintly surprised, but interested, definitely interested. Two waiters, one lame and the other toothless, spread a sheet of greaseproof paper over their table and offered to bring them some taramosalata and smoked fish. An elderly man with an unnaturally black moustache sat at the next table; his companion was a young boy with fuzzy hair arranged in stiff ringlets round his head. His face was totally expressionless as he swayed to the beat of the music from the jukebox, slapping his hands rhythmically. Now and then the elderly man sidled up to him and whispered something; the boy shrugged him away, leave me alone, he seemed to be saying, give me a break, for Christ' sake.

Koula drank in little cautious sips. After the second glass of wine, she began to warm up; she leaned over to Dimitri, I like it here, she said, it makes me feel carefree. The young man took out his cigarettes and offered her one. She accepted it hesitantly and placed the filter tip carefully between her lips. Go on, smoke it, he urged her, can't you see, everybody's smoking here, we don't want to look like convent-girls, do we? Well, I am one, practically, said Koula shyly; when my mother died my father sent me off to a girls' boarding-school, I spent four whole years there!

The juke-box churned out popular songs like 'Your eyes are shining,' 'We parted one evening,' 'Life has two doors.' In the brief intervals between songs, the

customers exchanged jokes and bantering comments; they all seemed to know each other. Somebody called out to the elderly man with the black moustache: that lover-boy of yours is worth a lot of money! Not for the likes of you, the man retorted; holding the boy's chin he forced him to turn his face away from the customers' lewd gazes. From where she sat Koula could smell the stench of alcohol and nicotine on the man's breath. What did he mean by 'lover by?' asked Koula. Dimitri burst out laughing in reply. A cold shiver ran up her spine, then quickly turned into a fiery streak that made her blood tingle. Oh dear, she sighed, what sort of place have you brought me to, I shouldn't have listened to you, Dimitri! She kept laughing nervously; it was almost a giggle. Dimitri laughed along with her and raised his glass in answer to the friendly toasts and sallies that were lavished on them from the neighbouring tables.

Do you have to answer everyone, Koula asked. That's the way they do things here, he said. It's the custom. He caught hold of her hand and clasped it hard. Koula felt the warm young hand in hers, pressing her, carrying her away – where? She could not tell. How long have you been coming to this place, she asked. Since last year, he said, I need to unwind now and then. I suppose you bring your girlfriend here, said Koula. No, he laughed, she's much too snooty, she wouldn't appreciate a place like this. Like what? she wanted to ask, but the wine had already gone to her head. So you come here alone? It depends, said Dimitri, it's not always easy to find the right sort of person, and he looked at her straight in the eyes. Koula lowered her gaze. I bet you like going after girls, she said in a gentle, scolding tone. He pretended he hadn't heard. Why don't you let your hair loose, he said, you always look as if you'd just stepped out of the hair-dresser's. he stretched out his hand and ruffled her hair. Instinctively Koula made as if to pat it back into place. There, you see, you won't let yourself go, you're always buttoned up. And that long coat you

wear sometimes, it's time you threw it away; give it to some old lady, it's all wrong for you, you're young. Young... she repeated, laughing nervously again. His eyes sparkled, his lips were very red, as if they'd just been kissed.

The place resounded with the noise of clashing plates, blaring music, gusts of loud laughter. It's too noisy here, she complained, we can't talk. Be patient, he said, there'll be a time for us to be alone together soon. He went on filling her glass. There was something in his manner that repulsed her and attracted her irresistibly at the same time. All around her the walls receded, the taverna seemed to expand, her past life fell open, unfolded...

The place resounded with the noise of clashing plates, blaring music, gusts of loud laughter. It's too noisy here, she complained, we can't talk. Be patient, he said, there'll be a time for us to be alone together soon. He went on filling her glass. There was something in his manner that repulsed her and attracted her irresistibly at the same time. All around her the walls receded, the taverna seemed to expand, her past life fell open, unfolded...

She saw herself as a young girl walking home one spring evening after classes at the accountants' school. She soon became aware that a boy was following her. He kept pestering her, and in the end he pushed her against a wall covered with a billboard. She could still feel the kiss he planted on her lips. Then she remembered a certain Sunday with her husband in a waterfront restaurant at Porto-Rafti, not long after their wedding. They were served by a dark young waiter with wanton, long-lashed eyes. As he leaned over to serve her, he brushed against her arm discreetly but meaningfully. When her husband went off to make a telephone call, the waiter quickly stooped and whispered something to her. She felt rather than heard his voice – a hot breath against her ear. All night long the searing sensation stole over her entire body. She woke up next morning with a horribly bitter taste in her mouth.

Oh dear, she said to Dimitri, why did I ever listen to you! But he only laughed carelessly and raised his glass: 'Here's to us! Cheers! Bottoms up!' [...]

Translated by Kay Cicellis

Zeta KOUNTOURI

A Winter Storm

As he was getting ready for his evening stroll, a strong breeze came up. He looked out of his window to where warning clouds were gathering. It was still winter and his doctor would certainly scold him if his fever and chest pains were to return. He hesitated momentarily and then put on his coat, wrapping himself up in the garnet-red scarf Niki had knitted for him on the year of her accident, when she was for months bedridden.

Walking is good for me, he thought. I'll just get worse if I stay inside all the time. He took the usual path through the poplar trees. He should have taken his umbrella. As usual, he'd tend to think of things in retrospect. He picked up his usual pace, careful not to fall short of breath.

He found Svetlana sitting on her usual bench, young Arion playing next to her together with other noisy kids. Every now and then, he would remember to run and throw breadcrumbs to the ducks.

He paused, taking in the scene, his gaze drifting between Svetlana, blond Arion and the small lake, as would a professional photographer judging to freeze the best possible frame before printing it. He, not having paper, stored it on the hard drive of his memory. So many of them, too many... He often wished some could be erased, especially at nights, as he turned off the light, and became tortured by all sorts of pointless pictures from his past. He went over and sat by her, as he always did.

'You're late?!' a polite question in her statement. She turned off her cell phone, knowing how it irritated him. 'I was afraid that you might not make it because of the weather.'

'Afraid? You were afraid for me, my dear lady?' he smiled, experiencing again that peculiar emotion that he had several times lately, an emotion he refused to acknowledge, that made him feel foolish and older than he was.

He thought of those he'd scoffed at the previous summer, before he met her. Elderly officers, like himself, escorted to the club by gorgeous young women, like Svetlana, invariably in miniskirts and patterned tight tops that afforded a good dose of cleavage. People would snicker behind their backs. On being widowed or later on, after their children would leave them, they'd hire them initially for daily chores and, more often than not, would fall into the trap of marrying them.

'No one has ever called me as 'lady' before. Svetlana replied sincerely 'Not ever, neither here nor back home.'

She'd been three years in Greece and every so often she'd misuse a word, which in his eyes, simply added to her charm.

'But a lady you are, my dear Svetlana, no matter if you've been obliged to clean houses and look after other people's children.'

He wasn't aware of it but as he spoke to her, his gaze took on a younger, almost boyish sparkle and she, although not looking at him, drew slightly away.

'What are you afraid of?' he asked.

She paused. 'I'm afraid of war, snakes and the police that may find at any minute that I have no papers and deport me. I'm also afraid of poverty'.

He had often noticed how intelligent she was, how effortlessly she'd steer away from conversations that could become disagreeable.

‘And you? A man who has been in war, is there anything you still fear?’ she asked and from his silence she thought he hadn’t heard her.

‘The darkness, most of all’ he mumbled after some time, as if to himself. ‘And of whatever that might mean.’

He had first met her at that very bench a few months ago. She was working as a live-in at a house near his, looking after Arion and his older brother of school-going age. It was the end of summer. He had recently been discharged from hospital and in the evenings would enjoy a short walk around the lake, he too throwing crumbs to the ducks, the way kids did. He also feared the growing loneliness, but didn’t say so. Most of his friends had already passed away.

‘They might let me go from work. Arion’s going to kindergarten in September and I’ll be jobless. I might be forced to leave. There are no jobs anymore. My daughter’s growing older and in desperate need of the money I’m sending.’

Going home at nights, improbable thoughts ran in his mind. He’d wonder how it would be if Svetlana were there waiting for him. He could offer her employment as a housekeeper, to take care of him, iron his shirts, cook and put a bright flower or two in his empty vases. But mainly to offer him her dazzling smile. Niki, who never recovered from the hit and run —the driver that flung her across the street had n’t been traced— before passing away, would tenderly urge him to not remain alone, to find another wife... Without doubt, the kind of woman she’d been thinking of would have borne no relationship to his young Moldavian.

‘I could come and work for you. I’d do whatever it takes to bring light in your darkness’.

She had often dropped hints in the past. Now she didn’t beat about the bush. ‘Please.’ she added and all at once blushed. ‘I’ve had to do all sorts of despicable things so far in my life that I’m not proud of’.

There's nothing more ludicrous than an old man with a pretty young woman, he thought bitterly, knowing that that's how it would turn out. That's what he would subliminally be hoping for. Still, what if? He too could in some way make her life brighter, help her bring her daughter up and offer fleeting happiness to one of the too many Svetlanas of the world.

He observed her hands, nails broken and unpolished, making it obvious that besides taking care of the children, she also did chores and of the heaviest at that. Her veins, fine black rivulets, seemed to him too swollen, as if they too, in their own way, were pleading.

'Come September, you can stay in my house.' He said 'stay' not 'work'. He wasn't at all clear in his head. He felt a flutter, as if he'd made a declaration of love or a marriage proposal and she'd accepted.

'Come sooner, you don't have to wait till then, come anytime you like ...' and carried away, on impulse reached out and clasped her hands.

Check out the feisty grandpa'.

He looked up in surprise. Teenagers, around sixteen, one with shaved head the other with a greasy ponytail, on one bike circling threateningly in front of them. 'Leave her alone, you dirty old man, before I get down 'n give you one. You get me?'

'Svetlana, Svetlana!' shouted Arion 'Run see Svetlana. This duckie we gave food to yesterday is not eating 'n looks like it's gonna die...'

He felt a shooting pain in his head, searing, as if one of the youths had run a blade into his brain. He got up gingerly, supporting himself on both hands.

'Go on Svetlana, go see what Arion wants', he smiled tiredly 'we, we'll maybe speak some other time'.

It had just started to rain.

Translated by Nafsica Georgopoulos

Maria KOURSI

DIMINISHED

My stories don't have an end anymore

My stories don't have a story anymore

A human abstract

During a holiday

Are my stories

From *They Think I am not here*, 2001

EPHEMERA

There small pieces

with the heroism of the moment

are scraps of the immortal

My pencil's memory is black

From *Exact Copy with Hair*, 1987. Translated by Christos Triantafyllou

UNTITLED

Pieces of water pieces

of fire

Pieces of the road take me back

to where

I come from

From *The bracelet on the neck*, 2013. Translated by Christos Triantafyllou

UNTITLED

I was here before you

I will leave this place before you

(Were you here when I told you

That I love you?)

From *It says it's a garden*, 2012. Translated by Christos Triantafyllou

Demosthenes KOURTOVIK

From

[It is Accomplished]

These are the two most famous kisses, both in the history of photography and of the 20th century. The first was spontaneous; it was shot by the photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt on Times Square in New York, on August 14, 1945, the day Japan surrendered and the war ended. The second kiss was given in 1950 on another square, Place de l' Hotel de Ville in Paris. But its own authenticity is disputed; it is probable that the photographer Robert Doisneau helped a little bit, one way or the other, in the public expression of the two lovers' passion. We shall see later what this could mean.

It is of course no coincidence that the post-war period was inaugurated by two kisses that became legendary and have since decorated, as posters, the walls of millions of people; after a war that had proved how easily human flesh could be reduced to an amorphous mass of meat, free expression of the body became a maxim in the three decades that followed. In a sense, it is not accidental either that both kissings take place on a square; more than ever before, love in the new era needs space to express itself, it wants to spread its energy far beyond the private universe of the couple, to become the force that will change the world.

A world that needs urgently to be changed, as the second picture shows (and if only for this reason we should suspect this photograph of being doctored). Let us pay attention to the two frowning persons, the man and the woman who frame the young couple. They are two of those figures we meet everyday on the street almost

without noticing them. But how graceless, stiff, dry, cobwebbed they look next to the kissing couple! They are both staring in the same direction, but away from the kiss: the joy of love is absent from their horizon. In contrast to the bright faces of the two young lovers, their faces are grey (how not suspect again that the photographer manipulated the picture playing with the light?). The world these two passers-by represent is the aged world of yesterday, deformed by the subjection to conventions. It must be overthrown. Love will overthrow it.

In both photographs the most vivid, the most vibrating, the most ecstatic part of the couple is the woman. She is the one who lends tension to both scenes. Let us observe how the body of each girl is curving like a bow, yielding to the male power, if one wants to see these pictures through the glasses of traditional conceptions, but prepared to correspond to its own passion, ready to emanate its catalytic energy through a tremendous explosion, if we follow the language of the pictures themselves. This is not accidental either. The woman was to be the more dynamic sex in the new era. It was mainly her who was to question the worn-out values of yesterday, who was to prove more adaptable to a world where the old roles were in discrepancy with reality and the new roles demanded flexibility, tolerance, sensitivity, freedom from obsessions. The dawning period was the era of the woman. Maleness had finished together with the Second World War – its last, strongest and fatal convulsion.

The couple in the probably non-authentic photograph of Place de l' Hotel de Ville is an authentic couple. The couple in the authentic photograph of Times Square is a non-authentic couple; they are a marine and a nurse who met as strangers in the crowd and kissed each other in their enthusiasm over the end of the war. They never met again. The nurse was identified long ago. She is still alive, being today an old lady of seventy-five. From time to time different men presented themselves to her

pretending to be the marine in the picture. But she always detected them as swindlers by asking them what that man told her the moment he kissed her. All gave the wrong answer. Until, one of the days in which I write this and the 50th anniversary of the famous photograph is celebrated, the marine too was at last identified. Also he is alive, he is a retired policeman. He gave the right answer.

One is tempted to ask which of the two pictures is the most moving. Perhaps most sentimental natures will prefer the authentic couple of the probably non-authentic scene. Undoubtedly this picture, faked or not, is a wonderful hymn to love, youth and beauty. But its perfection has maybe something cool and remote. Besides, the thought that the photograph may have been doctored stirs up some vague, unpleasant feelings in us. If the couple was really in love, why should they have needed the photographer's urge to kiss each other? And if they were ashamed to kiss each other publicly, because this was still unusual at that time, what made them obey the photographer? Do we have here the anticipation of a situation only too familiar to us now, the invasion of our private life by the camera, which does not only record it but forms it?

Personally I prefer the other photograph, the one with the accidental couple. Even if it were not authentic, it would seem to me more characteristic of our time: today it is mainly the accidental, unexpected encounters that reactivate our zest for life and our passion. But since the photograph happens to be authentic, I see in it also another, even more comforting message: it is in the accidental, fleeting encounters offered by the new era that we rediscover our spontaneity, the genuineness and meaningfulness of our gestures which in our everyday, established relationships are usually lost among purposeless or too purposeful words.

Besides, the right answer to the question what the marine said to the nurse, the answer that no scoundrel could think of was: nothing.

Translated by the author

Panayotis KOUSATHANAS

My Mother

Normally, my sister would look after her. I say 'normally' since many times because of her work –she owned a hotel– I was replacing her. A nurse was out of the question. What would people say? Three persons, my father, me, and my sister and to abandon her into the hands of a stranger? Besides, we were dissuaded from the rumours. They beat and pinch the elderly. When there is no compassion atrocities can happen.

She was over eighty. Almost blind – 'what a shame it is for me to be alive and already not be able to see you...' One of the few times she used the first person in her speech. Her needs, her feelings were drowned in the anonymity of the third person. 'It's sleepy, don't wake it up! It's hungry, feed it!' She would never return to the agony and the demands of the 'I'.

Her hands, which were once upon a time plump like an Easter bun, her sweet smelling warm fingers which were healing the evil eye with the aid of burning clove and were dipped into the hot olive-oil of the vigil lamp to rub my painful neck and crotches in the winter, are now dry, frozen. She is holding tight to a box of matches, so as not to stay in the dark in case the lights go out. Only now and then, coming out of the open sea where she is floating like a cork, she reaches out her cold hand to caress my cheek. Then, after a while she asks: 'Where am I?'

I know that in a while she will not recognize even me, her 'beloved', whom she loved the most, she will not care even if I die – there is no greater sorrow. But

the day after tomorrow her memory will reward me with a tear, which will lighten my wasted years.

Five years on the wheel-chair and under her the chamber-pot at all times. That was what my mother had become now. Beyond recognition. Something about her however had remained unchanged, her worries about me.

'You should wear something warmer. Do not sit in the breeze, you will catch a cold. You should find a young woman to settle down, to have your food warm and your clothes clean...'

I was feeding her and her first spoonful was an exhortation.

'You should also eat half of it.'

Her last, a blessing.

'May God keep you safe, my darling.'

What did it matter if she wanted to color the eggs red on Christmas or bake a Christmas pudding on Easter? To me, she was still *my* mother.

Taking care of her has been automatic – all those years. Lifting her up from the bed, placing her on the chair, putting on her hearing aid, her glasses, her dentures...Without this equipment her senses were not functioning. I was mechanically –and without complains– doing my 'duty'. Only her ringing voice was functioning without supporting equipment; she was singing the couplets of her youth:

My eyes have love and inside drizzle,

The boats are sailing in the mizzle.

She was speaking to her lost grandson, whom she hugged every night warming him up –'Nanna, I am cold, really cold!'

Until one day the routine was broken. As soon as I opened her bedroom door, I realized it immediately. An unexpected foulness invaded my nostrils. I didn't need to approach her bed in order to attest her culpability: Curled up, a tangle, a fetus, face turned towards the wall, fingers which were struggling nervously to cover up with the edge of her nightgown the proof of guilt – a brown, disgusting river; and tributaries. Streams and branches on the white sheets. It is unbelievable what kind of mazes runny shit can draw.

Henceforth one can easily imagine the windows I opened, the gloves I wore, the warm water with soap in the basin, the long intervals between breaths, better still the agony of my suffocation, and this hiccup of vomit, which was rising up to my mouth and I was thrusting it back to my stomach, I was thrusting it and it kept rising up. In the midst of all this fuss I remembered the paradox of an aphorism: 'An old man without an anus could be charming.'

I wiped her with the sheets. Then I began washing her. Her hip, now a blade of a cleaver, was bruising the shriveled flesh. She didn't make a peep. She stood patiently with the guilty posture and only her fingers were fiddling with the nightgown. I sought for some courage to comfort her.

'Hang in there, mother! From now on our life will be an endless shit. You will shit; we will wipe it away and wash you. Hang in there! These are the games of the body. They start with a prelude and they finish with a coda. They are one and the same. Only on the scale of smell there is a difference. So why should you be upset? What is man? A sack of shit, a grave whitened with the whitewash of beauty.'

I did not open my mouth however. It was not the right time for musical parallelisms and philosophical reflections. The incident was unbearably ill-scented. I was wiping the shit off my mother, who had wiped my shit off. Finally, people are

right. Everything in life is on loan. But who will wipe off *my* shit when I grow old like her? 'You should find a young woman to settle down, to have your food warm and your clothes clean...'

I forced her legs apart, which she had firmly closed, and on her saggy cheeks flushed a virgin ruddiness. Suddenly, the stench disappeared, my disgust was not disgust anymore. The plastic gloves were now out of place. Without realizing it I threw them away and I cleaned with naked fingers the dark spot from where, forty something years ago, I came out, the one and only Thanasis Panayotvdis. It was the first time, if it is true that we are born blind, that I was seeing the gate from which I crossed from 'the mystery of nothing' into this world.

From short story collection, *The rocking-chair and other stories*, 1996. Translated by Maroulina Nazou

The Will-o'-the-wisp

II. VERBS THAT RAVE

.....

5. THE INVOCATION

My Lord Will-o'-the wisp

I have recourse to your grace

Practise I implore you

the sorcery of forgetting

that brings with it healing

Expel guile and baseness

let me be refreshed in your navel's saltern

I don't peer at you I gaze

The mirror where you show yourself to me

vigil of the memory that was

and of the memory that will be

– hollow shade and dream

I fight with shadows

We all fight with shadows

Yet others encounter you only once

we walk hand-in-hand

Which is why Lord I exhort you

do not lie an incubus on my breast

do not plunge me into despair's pitching

Grant me faith in my land

to say its name without shame

and if at all possible

let the dry-wall's stone remain

that the lark might sing

to alleviate man his burden being too great

As long as I hold life's pawn

keep my eyes unharmed

that they might know where to look

*or take them Almighty
that I might not see wars and heroics*

*Deign to be a guarantor
of the vanity of writ and deed
that the beast in man might see again
not seek the other's destruction
Help that I may remain foolish in the land of gnostics
who turned love's cry into a death rattle
even if they point me out*

*Reveal Keeper of records
the inexorable word I seek in winter's hardships
and extricate me from life's
and immortality's cobweb
Before your unnegotiable wisdom
your prudent severity
I will array my honed silence
I have but my unhewn pencil
take it and grant that I might not see
the end of the friends I loved*

*Hearken to me Will-o'-the-wisp
Omnipresent as you are
Each moment a moment nearer to you
bone with bone we will merge one day*

*but let the merging be soft
dispel the delusion that after death
no longer available is the love
left over in life*

Executioner of Sorrow

*heal me from the heart's fistula
desire
and treat me Alchemist
to love's dregs
Tenderly open your embrace
for I have so missed that
a bosom*

The Boy the Kouros Will-o'-the-wisp

*take me Fisherman in your calloused hands
Naked untie the cable and plunge with me
into the sea of jellyfish
Wriggling on your hook
I will fill your breast's cup
with my heart's wine
and I will write mournful letters I will
with my dagger on the rock
'Cheers to your curly hair'
I'll say as I drink your soul
'Good health to your eyes of coal*

*to your diamond-shod feet
and to your hook cheers'*

*You will spread roots inside me Charmer
and like a black coral I will clamber over you
you will prune me and I will grow thick
but don't forget my share
the music that you promised me
the flute on the boat to Rhenea
the violin on Koufonissi island
the sun's harp in Keros's deep seas
Flute violin harp
the islands I loved*

Excerpt from the poem *The Will-o'-the-wisp* (1990-1994), Part II., 5. The Invocation, cf. *Τα ποιήματα και τέσσερεις αναπλάσεις* (with an English translation of the poem *The Will-o'-the-wisp* by David Connolly), 2011

Chloe KOUTSOUBELLI

1. TIME

*For moment is a swift deer
leaving behind a tearful, velvet glance
before plunging
into the void forever*

2. MY FAMILY

*Dad always put on a raincoat
and held a gray umbrella for the sun,
he loved women and was ever gone,
he played in spy movies
the part of a door-lock
or an open window
in the heart of a desert.
Always very fond of hats.
My mother wore beautiful hats
with living, headless peacocks quarrelling.
My brother was a crystal
and transparent swan,*

*cracked in a thousand places
and so very, very vulnerable,
that I was always tempted
to throw him down and see him break.
And I was so adorable,
dressed always in white,
eating my cake of loneliness
sitting on a shaky balcony.
Then my mother was lost inside the mirror,
my father fell in love with a bird and flew away,
my brother was wedded to the Night,
and my balcony collapsed into the sea.
What was then left of my family
was only an album of shadows
chasing each other endlessly into the night.*

3. ROTONDA

Rotonda.

Day or night.

Raindrops of little birds.

You don't touch me.

And yet,

the whole of you is inside me.

4. TRACES OF MOLTEN SKY

*I am not afraid of this pencil
not leaving ink
but traces of molten sky,
nor am I afraid
that instead of paper
I write on your body,
warm amoeba of scented chamomile,
everywhere around.
I am only afraid
that some day
I will again be writing in ink
poems on paper.*

Translated by Toula Papapantou

5. THE TICKET

*I bought a train ticket
to come and find you.
So simple to get onto a train
with an operator, money collector, other passengers
rails touching the ground*

and all stops pre-announced.

*I forgot how black the train of love is
how it burns coal and every hope
with a blind eye and a gaping mouth
an orchid engine forever hungry
how rhythmically it groans
like a gigantic serpent
in and out the tunnels of fear.*

*I forgot how lonely the train of love is
the inspector so often
validates the tickets and
the money collector
a wax resemblance of himself
always waiting at the station.*

*I bought a train ticket
to come and find you.*

*As though I didn't know what is always the voyage
and whom are we really looking for
in the deserted station.*

6. THE REFLECTION

*Behind every mirror
there is always a reflection*

hidden in the back.

No one cares for It.

*Its life unfolds noiselessly
on the glassy surface.*

*No one touches It
and It doesn't recognize
the stranger who each time
stands in front.*

*Mechanically It mimics his movements
when he raises his right arm
It raises the left
when he coughs without any noise
It moves its lips.*

*Only when the house is empty
the reflection takes a razor
and touches the veins of its wrists
just to feel alive.*

But only the void replies.

So, be careful with the mirrors.

*If you are really lucky
there is a possibility to see It.*

Behind your face.

The reflection which screams.

7. PENELOPE (a)

She knows by now.

It's not the foolish Sirens

who sing pretending to create Art

nor the old Circe

with her lust

hidden in windbags forever sealed

nor the misbehaving Nausica

trapped in a wrong age

in white socks and childish dress.

Neither the Lestrygonians nor the lotus

that keep him away from her.

Not Poseidon's petty anger

or the mix-ups with his old comrades.

Penelope knows by now

her last message will remain unanswered

they'll never talk to each other again,

reason compels him to stay away from her

Everywhere around her

her suitors drink raki

they wallow in the arena

male lions full of lust

define their space with their arrows.

And Odysseus?

Penelope doesn't even remember him anymore.

She only knows that she slept with a stranger one night

and when she asked his name

'I am Nobody' he replied.

PENELOPE (b)

I waited for ages

without a body

just a soul

like smoke from the fireplace.

Only in my needlework did I find comfort.

Of course I had the suitors

but I was bored to death with their blatant jokes.

Telemachus was a relief

although he too was searching for his father.

One night I slept with one of the servants.

His body was like warm bread

dipped in wine and honey.

It didn't matter that it happened.

What matters is that History completely ignored it.

8. A PERFECT DAY

It wasn't the seashore

*of Thessaloniki
during the daybreak
so cleanly washed
in all shades of rain
nor the sea
hoarse, violent
like a wild lion projecting blue flames,
nor the benches in rows
with the unctuous loneliness
of their emptiness
it was that last night I dreamt
that just for once,
for a first time, for a first death
you entered my body
behind my soul
under the mouths of my body
you entered me and remained there.*

9. ANTIGONE

*Antigone always forgets something when she leaves.
A lacy glove on the satin bed sheet
a steamy drop of lemon
on a friend's cheek
a fugitive touch on a lover's arm*

*a lip-mark on a porcelain cup of tea
which she hastily drinks.
She is Antigone who forgets,
the delicate handkerchief
moistened by the sudden tears
the light umbrella softened by the fragile rain.
She is Antigone who forgets
her dress rustles as she walks
she changes seasons with her fan.
She always forgets something
that is why she always leaves.
Only some nights she starts remembering.
She then wears her death mask
sprinkles ashes on her hair
buries herself in her cave
and laments for her unburied dead.*

10. THE SPHINX

*The oracle wasn't distinct or I didn't understand it.
I hoped then, I hoped again.
Blind with swollen feet I started off
Sphinx was at the station waiting for me
desperately I asked the same old riddle
she then turned into stone*

and dissolved into dust.

Not even she, could deny me for one more time.

11. THE PLAQUE

*The ship is full of immigrants
they wear flat caps and worn suits
they stare at a quay full of dust
they paint the void with their handkerchiefs.
On the platform a violinist plays his red violin
I wear a black dress and I have no hair.
You cry and I know not how to comfort you
as if we travel through time
on phantom shipwrecks
that always run against submerged icebergs
only in order to
in order not to
because you cannot do without
but not even with
the violinist plays with passion
and while everybody starts to dance
he secretly winks at me
back in the city
rats have already started spreading*

*the plague
that everybody carries in the ship.*

12. COLD FISH

*There are men who are cold fish.
Their eyes are motionless beads
which stare the void.
After they make love they retreat
they sleep in moldy shellfish.
I personally love the others
who dance with their demons
and the more the shadows suck their blood
the more they love them.
I love the ones who live in dark houses
with the dust eating the furniture
the ones who cut off their flesh
and write in silence.
All the men I love is Me.
Crocodiles tear me to pieces every night.
Absolutely nothing to do with the small fish of a river.*

13. THE YELLOW CAB

No sir, there has been a mistake.

*I was not the one sitting in the yellow cab
nor was I ever in the same back seat with you.*

*Also it didn't snow, I am very sure of that
so no snowflakes fell on my hair.*

In fact I have no hair.

You didn't kiss me or else I would remember.

But even if you did, I was not there.

Neither did the driver even once turn back his head.

*He crossed the lake silently to the very end
dipping from time to time the oar
in the black surrounding waters.*

14. ALL ABOUT MEMORY

*For a goldfish memory lasts a minute
for an elephant a whole year
for the piranha is only the greedy now
for the silkworm the caterpillar.*

*How slowly the centuries are moving
away from you
like huge mammoths on their way to die.*

15. WHERE DO THE POETS GO AT NIGHT

Where do poets go at night?

Why do they wander with bloodied hands?

Why do they scream on top of the roofs?

Why do they have a bandage over their heart?

Why do the letters they painfully carve on the paper

with pen or pencil

leave small traces of blood?

Why does the swan so white and pure

quiver

As it spreads its wings

and writes its last verse?

From *Cloe and Alexandra*. Translated by Manolis Aligizakis

Stathis KOUTSOUNIS

DISGUISE

*With light
Borrowed from your eyes
It came
Sweating colours wriggled
On blistered fingers
And you had moved almost
Completely inside him
I could see that in the navel
Red milk gushed
Moons fell from eyelids
And between the limbs a puppy
Howled with tearful eyes
Baring its black teeth*

From Blood Harvest. Translated by Philip Ramp

THE LOTTERY TICKET

Good evening, it said, I chose you
Put me on

*I was walking along a main avenue
Damp sweltering heat still wringing out
The closing hours of the afternoon*

*Suddenly a Suit
Rushes right at me*

But it's hot, *I said*, and furthermore
I'm not used to wearing suits
And here in the street how can I have a fitting
With all these people milling round

Don't worry
People are minding their own business
They won't notice that
You don't even need to take your clothes off
I fit everyone and I'm not choosy
And you'll get used to the heat and anyway
They'll all put me on sometime

But I'm not ready, *I replied*
And before I could defend myself
It had already wrapped itself around me
And was terribly tight

*My limbs grew numb
And my vision steadily diminished
While it slowly moved me along
And I no longer saw people
Bustling along the avenue
But a crowd frozen
In the final click
Of my camera*

From Variations of Black. Translated by Philip Ramp

HELEN OF TROY

*She was sitting alone in her bedroom
Her sensual flesh kept her memory alive
And scenes from the war
Came to her
Young men killed in battle for her sake
Heroes languished for a touch of hers
For a look*

*She liked Paris and Menelaos
And so many other Trojans and Hellenes

Now as she stands naked before the mirror*

*Given over to lust
Still boiling in her body
She sees her wrinkles as remorse
For the lovers she desired
And didn't carry her off*

*And she bursts into tears
When she considers how many other Troys
Her unbridled craze
Could take by storm*

From *The Terrorism of Beauty*. Translated by Yannis Goumas

CRESCENDO

It's the danger that enchants me inside you and those folds from your body paths leading to derangement

*Your legs are rivers and their black source a mirror constantly drawing me to my first waters
And when your skirt is unfastened birds are released the granary shines bathed in dew wheat
fills the bed to feed hungry wildlings*

*Wildlings that bellow in despondency searching for food wanting to quench their thirst in
your riviulets to climb your rises and plummet into your ravines*

*Unrestrainable you stick your left heel into my ribs supine you suckle the drive
that your boundless mouth may be filled*

And a ewe my tongue greedily grazes in your grass the skin below becomes irritated

deep breathing encircles us on all sides

It's not the danger that thrusts me inside you but the terror of your beauty

From *The Terrorism of Beauty*. Translated by David Connolly

SINKING

to Alkisti

*Today I took my daughter
For a stroll in the park
I held her hand and walked
Along the playground with the swings
The slides the seesaws and horizontal bars*

*Now how my daughter became
My mother, and I
The child that clutched
At her dress scared
That I might lose her
I'll never know, reader*

*I trembled, a stag caught in a trap
And all keyed up*

*For time to pass
And shake off my fear
I became an old man
And beside me my daughter, now a grown woman
Holding me by the arm
As we walked in the park
Me an old wreck*

*Well I did manage
To get over the child's fear
Since where I had arrived
I had nothing more to lose
But when I reflected on this
—that I had nothing more to lose—
An even greater fear seized me, reader
So unbearable, so onerous that I lost the grip
Of my daughter's hand
And sank
Sank into the park's
Greensward*

*From *Insects in Intensive Care*. Translated by Yannis Goumas*

THE WAND

I am not who I was

Nor will I be who I am

Always and constantly a Circe

Touches me with her wand

From Snapshots of the Body. Translated by Yannis Goumas

Achilleas KYRIAKIDIS

Bonsai

I'm looking at the river
But I'm thinking of the sea
RANDY NEWMAN, 'In Germany Before the War'

Age 43. Single. Works in a tailor's shop. The tailor's is owned by a Jew in every sense of the word and is at the far end of an old arcade, to the right. He works eight hours a day, six days a week. Every day, at eleven, he takes his break to eat his snack. His snack is a sandwich, brought from home. Home is a two-room flat. One of the rooms overlooks the street. The street is the one that comes down from the station, passing the library and, five blocks down, changes name. The man's name is ordinary. Ordinary is also the way he spends his evenings. Evenings, in winter, draw in quickly, but he prefers this to returning home in a sweat when it's still light outside. He enters his home, and if he has to, switches on the light; he sits in his only armchair, in front of the window in one of the two rooms, the one that overlooks the street. The street is the one that starts from the station but we've said that. The station is a grey iron building like all grey iron buildings that are stations. It's the one where he got off thirty years ago. The years have passed.

He has never known love. He still goes to the street of the girls, two Sundays a month, now it's Nina, in that big house with the three steps at the entrance and the lame woman. Nina knows. Nina undresses in front of him and calls him 'Sonny'. Then, the street, the other people, the quick steps, the sweat, the three panting floors, the trembling key, the cold water draining from the tub to water the city. The cold water that washes the contact off him and flows to water the city. The city grows.

At the police station they told me I haven't done anything but I should be careful. The city's full of perverts, they said. I told them I haven't done anything and they said that that's what we just told you. That's what they told me.

Before the day they called him to the station, he'd only been there twice or three times at most – once when he was eighteen, when he had an ID card issued; the other, when he needed to renew it, ten years later, because the photograph no longer inspected the future with such insolence. There might have been a third time, but he doesn't remember. He couldn't even remember how his doorbell sounded. It took him a few seconds to make the connection between the sound of the bell and the last visit someone had paid him, twenty odd years ago: a telegram. He was absent two days for the funeral; he made up for them in Sundays. He stood over his father in his coffin observing all the flaws in the old man's jacket.

Now the bell rings again, but there's no more death. He opens and the constable hands him the summons paper. He decides to go to the police station the very next day. The local police station is a yellow brick building. He shows the paper, they ignore him. He shows the paper again, nothing. Someone motions to him to sit on the bench and wait.

There was a bench, I sat down. I call it a bench because it was like the ones in the park. Maybe they call it something different, maybe they call it bonbon or tree or mama.

The park opposite the arcade. He goes there often when the sun does. At midday. He takes his bread and sits on the bench without being told, just like now. He knows the benches by heart and cares for every single one, but most of all for the

lonely or ailing ones – that one with the flaky back, the other one with the rusty legs. Once he played God and he gave them names. His favourite was one that hiding behind the big lane lined with eucalyptus trees. Only a few couples would walk past looking for niches to be shipwrecked on, or a ball that had rolled away from the children, or a child looking for his ball. One day after his lunch, he stood up and was ready to go back to the tailor's, he saw the ball rolling and stopped it with his foot. The child looked him in the eye.

An hour passes and still no one. Then a door opens and they call out my name. The gentleman is polite, the gentleman behind the desk. They say what's my name but they know since they called me earlier.

Every morning, on his way to the tailor's, he walks past the cinema with the unlit photographs. At night, when he returns, they are blazing. Only in the evening, he makes a slight detour not to tread on the red carpet that sticks its tongue out onto the pavement. Then, in two hundred and thirty two steps, home. One Sunday, he thought he'd go in to see. He didn't like it when the lights were dimmed and some horses appeared. Then, there was shooting. He left.

The Jew is a good man. Once, when he was ailing, he called him to come up front, to the brown parlour with the full-length mirror. The Jew sat gasping from the illness. He looked at the Jew's trembling hands with the pincushion and the chalk. He was looking at the garment that didn't quite fit the body. The client looked at the client.

My fingers fiddle with my fingers and the callus in between. I don't know what it is this gentleman is asking me and if he wants me to reply. Now they tell me about a little girl that's missing.

The constable is very courteous. He respects him – or all these excessive formalities are getting at something. The little girl, in any case, went missing from the park, the park opposite the arcade, and has he by chance seen anything. It's the first time anyone needs him. It's the first time he can be of assistance, contribute and give alms to the truth from his surplus or charity.

Then they lead him to a room. In the room there are others. The others are citizens. The citizens are standing back against a wall. They are all about same age, more or less, mostly less. One modestly holds his cap in his hands. He holds nothing. They ask him to stand between them, the others make room for him, the wall is cold. And then they bring the woman in.

Visibly shaken, she looks at each and every one lined up against the wall and she looks at them again and racking her tired brain to match one of these faces to the image of the man who took the little girl by the hand into the trees, and that's when he looks at the woman and smiles, and in his gaze is his whole life in this hothouse with the named benches, the humid suffocation and the hired affections, and in his gaze is all his desire to be chosen, to be vindicated and, finally, to be given his share of that guilt.

The woman pointed at him.

Maria KYRTZAKI

The Song of Solveg

Do you look at me
with bashful eyes? Can you deny me
when I plead?
HENRIK IBSEN, *Peer Gynt*

*Let me come with you,
the poet implores.*

*And she leaves without him
And that is why she leaves
To leave without him.*

*I'm going, she says, far away.
To a white land.
To a land of sand.
To a white house.
With a warm fire burning at night.
Sparks for listening to and the gusting
breath of the desert Livas wind. I will go
To an endless extent of night
Of snow or sand. Alone
In the white of the land
which I will name Alaska*

but will also call Morocco. There

between sky and white

I will stare only at the white.

And when I see one black spot,

Far away.

Out where the game of the country of the eye is defined

and the white country of earth is divided

from the blue country of sky

and later once more from the deep blue of night.

When there I shall see a black spot far off on the horizon

heard as a dissonance – like burr in the throat that echoes

in the honey of voice. To say

The one man coming may be him.

To prepare to receive him.

To not be startled by his breath.

Even if he is holding a knife

it will seem like a purple flower

on the white visage of the world.

Let me come with you, you said to me.

And above the moon persisted

indifferent full

whoever wants to come with you

To go through owes it to the white

to first become a black spot on the horizon

*Showing he
is the only sign of life
that takes no notice of death.*

*In the land I named Alaska
but which I also called Morocco
a polished wind reddens my skin
My soul grows fierce
Animal that dissolves in the sun glow of night.*

Translated by Philip Ramp

Eleni LADIA

Cain's Offering

Cain's hand rose to the sky. A long hand with a rough and knotted palm, engraved with stony lines, as deep as ravines, a forewarning of his cruel fate. The hand, hot under the sunlight, dropped. The beads of his sweat glowed like tears on his swarthy flesh. The hand moved up, coming close to his burning forehead. It stroked his thick hair, then slid downwards till it stopped at his manly, supple and muscular waist. Cain sat down on the earth to rest. He loved the earth and knew her secrets, her hidden sources and the labour pains of her fruit. Lying in his vineyard among the creeping grape vines and fragrant juices, he looked up at the sky. When he was tired from toiling the earth he always observed the sky to rest, that blessed roof that set the limits to the chaos of the world and of his soul. And drenched in abundant light and reconciled with every sound he looked in wonder, for the first time. He looked up in wonder and shivered with joy.

'I have known the rustling of the poplar trees and the transformation of the plants. I have known the course that the fruit must follow from birth to death. I have known the coming of the rains and their ambivalent presence. I have taken the apple trees into my arms and worked the vineyards. But I know nothing I have not even guessed at the deeper causes. Yet today, in the noon full of light. I can feel you God! And I believe you are the creator of the world. And I am happy that after my hard toiling the responsibility is no longer mine. Because I am the small creature that knows other small creatures. I am the insignificant grape among the others, the tender plant swaying slowly by the huge plane tree. Oh Lord, Lord, I am your slave and I am grateful. Blessed be the first beginning and the creation of the universe.'

The hand groped for his flask of water. Cain drank and the thirst from his toiling was quenched. His new knowledge and the cool water made him feel happy. And, in his affluent solitude, this great humble man thought he would gather the fruit of his toils and make a sacrifice of them to God. It did not occur to him that he was giving away part of the great gift. At dusk the offering was ready, fruit from the pain and the toil of Cain's hands, the overflowing gratitude of a humble spirit. Cain waited, plunged in a strange, eternal time; he waited for God to show a sign of his presence. He waited, lifting his knotted hands to the sky, prostrating himself in worship and prayer. Seasons and years went by, the sun turned and turned again in the black nights. The scorching sun burnt the flesh harshly and the snows froze it while Cain waited, kept on waiting for the divine sign to appear. Half-crazed by the waiting he interpreted light as a sign, darkness and fire as a presence, the flight of the butterfly and the blooming of flowers as the gentle breath of God, till he tired of the vigil and the waiting. God did not show him any sign. He didn't want his sacrifice and Cain lowered his head sadly and frowned, fury tearing his soul apart.

'You didn't come. You never came when I called you. You never wanted anything from me, cruel self-sufficient despot. You didn't come: you never saw my love nor my sacrifice, you never responded to me. It was in vain that I cried out for you in the seasons, hoped for your presence in loss. Fire never appeared in the sky to show you were speaking to me. Nothing, nothing! Everything is void of you, void and pointless in this dark and frozen universe. See, my whole sacrificial offering stands rotting and decaying in these terrible centuries; nonexistent being, you didn't manage to come. I brim over with fury at your absence, at your betrayal which has been deceiving me into believing it was hope so many years now. Well, I am alone. So what? I, Cain am alone, all the night. I am both master and slave,

I

sleep alone and awake alone

thirst alone and quench my thirst alone

*I, Cain
born and passed over
from no cause and for no reason
Lie here
on the earth I loved
see, my strong hands rise in liberty and rebellion and
and my soul no longer believes.'*

Wild and frowning darkly Cain destroyed his sacrificial offering, killed hope, deserted the fields and the mountains and descended to the plain, fearful and audacious. And there, the virginal farmer came to know men and love woman only to augment his solitude. Away from his mountains and trees he was tormented by the relativity of laws and of morality. He was corrupted by the contradiction and discrepancies of the human community. He became dizzy and confused in relationships and ideologies. At every moment some minor death occurred only to certify corruption of the whole. The stink of decay constantly made him feel sick.

*'I, Cain, became human amongst mankind
and came to know the filth inside me.
I was sullied and corrupted.
Oh, Lord give me back my childhood innocence,
the angel who is my age
and make me believe in myths and fairies.'*

Shattered by sorrow Cain sought God again with a passion, but his mind infected by human logic now would not let his pure and innocent soul become one with the absolute. Amongst people but far from things human he dreamed of the old pastures. And little by little he discovered the size of his terrible mistake. No, he should not have become angry that God did not deign to look at his sacrificial offering. And above all, he should not have demanded to see a sign of the divine

presence. That only showed that his love was inadequate, and that his faith was lacking. Now he no longer sought any sign. He believed that the Great Spirit was scattered everywhere. He wanted to find it again and hated his mind for obstructing him in his quest.

Cain's small prayer
(My God, give me absolute madness: destroy my mind.
I want to believe in you.)

Then a voice was heard through the windstorm. 'Where are you, small Cain, boy with knees grazed and bloody from your games and from your kneeling? Where are you, burning adolescent, who used to converse with God? Cain, where are you?'

'I am here, my Lord, adrift in my fear and confusion.'

'Why, Cain, did you kill your brother Abel?'

'I have no brother, my Lord. I am an only child and completely alone.'

'Confess your crime. What is that blood I see upon your hands?'

'I killed myself, my Lord, that day I made the sacrifice. I myself am Abel whom I killed. My twin brother. Oh, Lord, where shall I find the humble Abel again? We have been separated by a stream of blood.'

Cain awoke from his dream, left mankind and returned to his fields and mountains, determined never, to seek the divine presence again. He wanted to believe without proof. He was back to where he started from. He began working the land again. He worked hard, with no desire for profit or reward. He worked to forget the new traps that his mind kept setting for him. He became one with the plants and the earth again, abandoned to his affluent solitude. And he never spoke again of the big questions simmering in his mind and of the doubts that tore him

apart. After many years, just how many is not known, his grave was discovered. A small tree, had been planted near the poor and humble coffin. And an inscription which may have been written by someone who'd heard of this brief and bitter story, declared that:

*Here lies
Cain, the great worker
he worked hard on the land hoping
to find God again.*

There was no date on the inscription nor age of the deceased. The event remains eternally dateless and timeless...

(The above transcript was featured in *Stand Magazine* in the autumn edition 1992)
Translated by Parina Stiakaki

Maria LAGOURELI

Our Decisions

No, we don't take them.

The come and take us.

Our decisions

however much dominion we may have

however much we may ponder

before the ultimate step

in front of us, They rule.

Shadows living in our home

they load the revolver of despair.

They are the snakes an unseen fakir

has seduced and turned into telephone wires.

The 'no', the 'yes',

the 'always', the 'never',

the 'forward' of destiny that rules

we announce, like microphones.

Sometimes they come with billy-goat legs

and kick our cooling soft loaves of bread

and other times they fall like thunderbolts

on our wash hung on the line to dry.

They pronounce us navigators

with charts we had nothing to do with

*and we end up hanging on rigging of shipwrecks
or in marinas silted up by fear.*

*For ages now in the Mount of Olives friends,
soldiers, slaves, Judases with little lanterns
and a kiss, are anticipating our ruination
and we surrender with mixed feelings
certain that such a freely arrived at decision
is bound at some point to save the world.*

*Poppies we have never sown
bloom inside cells like microchips,
blind bats with blood in their eyes
with darkness handling their navigation
supposedly fall bull's-eye on their aim
and on our conviction.*

No, we don't take them.

They come and take us.

Our decisions are

necessities

And we are just their choice.

Maria LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

The Last Liturgy in the Hagia Sophia

Night is falling over the long-suffering Imperial City that is about to die. Night is falling on the God-protected City of Constantine. Is falling on the anguish of those about to die. Behind the unending flow of tears, all things take on a crystalline appearance. I look at the bloodied horizon and shudder.

The last dusk, I say to myself, and my glance turns insatiably toward it embraces the Thracian plain, and rushes down to the Sea of Marmara, to the golden waters of the Bosphorus, which carry the seafaring myths of my race, and to the wounded Golden Horn.

‘Tomorrow, I repeat trembling, tomorrow...’

The sweetly-echoing semantha of the Hagia Sophia are sounding, the glorious bells are tolling, and people are hurrying from all parts of the Imperial City to take part in the great liturgy of supplication. They have put on their best clothes, they hold tapers in their hands and ancient icons, heirlooms, and they run now toward the Hagia Sophia. The Forum of Augustus and the royal Mese Hodos are filled all the way down to the half-ruined Hippodrome. Filled, too, is the huge peribolos of the Hagia Sophia, which is lined with arcades, and whose nine gates open wide to receive the long-suffering populace that has borne the cross of its martyrdom for fifty-seven days.

I make my way into the crowd that is mourning and running about dazed, to reach the Column of Constantine. That is where my Eleni will be waiting. She is holding our son tightly in her arms and looking around with anguish.

I take them both in my arms.

'Let's go, we're late,' she says uneasily and pulls me ahead, 'the Emperor just passed by...'

Greeks and Italians. Soldiers and non-combatants. All of them, united, run toward the Hagia Sophia with tears in their eyes. Today, yes, today the union of the Churches is taking place.

Today, Orthodoxy accepts the *Filioque* of Rome, because no one is interested in that any longer. And all those priests, who have obstinately refused to conduct a service in the Hagia Sophia for five months now, all the fanatical antiunionists, now run in silence to pray in the same space with the others, to celebrate the liturgy together.

My Basileus sees these united hordes, sees the triumph of a 'union' that has taken root deep in the soul and a smile lights up his eyes.

My Eleni takes the stoa-covered uphill path that leads to the women's section, and I run to the military retinue of the Emperor.

Demetrios pulls me close. 'Ioannis was looking for you...' he said to me and I was puzzled, 'Ioannis... but I saw him just a short time ago... what did he want? 'You will be among those who lock the fortress gates... After the liturgy we are all to go to our posts, in the peribolos of the Outer Wall, and the fortress gates will be locked behind us...'

I shuddered. The hour is approaching, I thought, the final hour.

'Yes, I will see him,' I answered, deep in thought.

'We are to deliver the keys to the Emperor, those are our orders.'

Those frightening words roused me. My soul immediately stirred, seemed to stand upright, beyond the fear that eradicates. My soul stood up.

'We will prevail or we will all die...'

Demetrios went on. And I looked at him roughly.

'By the faith, we will prevail!'

I pass through the royal gate, with the Emperor's retinue and reflect that Justinian, too, passed through it, on December 24, 537, when it was inaugurated in formal splendor. I close my eyes and try to imagine that winter morning. Perhaps there is freezing rain and biting cold, the streets are icy and the sun's rays pale. Foaming waves arrive, galloping, on the Bosphorus, and bring prophecies and garlands of gods on their backs.

O Lord, my God, thou art very great...

I hear the voice of the priest. I am leaning against the green column that was brought from the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, and I try to elicit, from the depths of the thousand years, that wintry morning, to hear the glorious sound, then and now.

Will the echoes meet in the fullness of time, in the completion of the circle!

He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth it's going down.

My mind is immobilized. *The sun knoweth it's going down.* One day or one millennium.

What are the laws of longevity?

What is their ratio relative to mortal time?

And I? Where am I? What is my path? How did I reach the wintry morning of the consecration? Or perhaps it is suspended somewhere on the notches of time! Has the Hagia Sophia clothed herself in her grandeur tonight in order to die brilliant, clothed herself in the centuries of her grandeur, before she clothes herself in the frozen night!

I look around. I am blinded. She is brilliant. The wintry morning is dull and grey, but hidden suns shine in the sanctuary of her altar and the lighted votive lamps make the precious stones radiate their inner light.

I know that I must return to the present, to this painful reality moist with the tears of thousands of men about to die, who are praying around me in pious concentration. I know that if I raise my eyes I will meet my Eleni's eyes; surely she is watching me from the women's section. But, a moment longer, I say, one tiny moment to wander through the desert of negated time. It is as if I am taking my leave of the Imperial City. Or as if I am trying through the power of my mind to inscribe this final hour in the collective memory of the world, so that it is never lost, never forgotten.

I escape. I go further and think. I am a pure Byzantine. When on September 18, 324, Constantine the Great with his steel-clothed troops was defeating Licinius on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, I was there. It was then, when ancient Byzantium, which was colonized by Greeks, descendants of the Megarian Byzas and of the followers of Antes, opened wide its gates to receive the victor. For a thousand years before that, since 658 B.C., Byzantium had stood. And now Constantine, dazzled by its beauty, gave it his name and proclaimed it his capital. Weary of the corruption of the West, he preferred to make lovely Anatolia the bulwark of Christendom. And with a passion he established a New Rome.

But I am a Byzantine.

Because I am descended from those Greeks who came from Greece, the forerunners of civilization in this exquisite cradle.

I press my hands to my temples. I feel faint. All these thoughts hammer at my mind. A sudden need to trace my roots, my identity, I am the Greek, I am the Byzantine, I am the Greco-Roman.

I look up at my Eleni. Her gaze is upon me, anguished, as if she wants to take away the historic moment, to negate fate. But I am elsewhere. I am still wandering through the negated cycles of time. I want to see my passage. My tracks.

And here I am, on May 11, 330, at the inauguration of New Rome, this beautiful City of Constantine, which is still small, stretching from the Four Stoas, the ancient agora of Byzantium, to the magnificent Forum of Constantine. It was then that Constantine, raised on his tall stele, pointed toward Anatolia, to the spot whence the conqueror would come one thousand years later.

Ah, how the ancient prophecies came to pass, one by one, those prophecies written on parchment rotting in moist linen-chests. And look, I am here again. I, the witness of the confirmation.

I, the witness of history.

I, who am about to die.

I, the innocent one.

(...) Ioannis standing tall beside the Emperor. He is wearing his black clothing, and atop his gold encrusted sheath shines the silver handle of his sword. He is the giant who wept earlier, the demigod who ached with mortal pain, and he was not afraid to show his tears. Perhaps deep inside, he felt proud of those tears. Because he was, above all, human.

His gaze passes me over. He is already seeing tomorrow. And I ask myself, has that fearless and proud body intuited its death. I wonder. What messages, what dark premonitions had his lion-hearted soul sent him.

I try to immobilize time – an isolated moment – to take it with me. It is the unique moment when man meets History, I reflect, and I am the witness of this meeting.

The Emperor is chanting along with his people. The beloved Basileus. He chants for a few moments. His eyes brim with tears again, and he turns to leave.

The valiant man has departed, never again to see his people, never again the Hagia Sophia, because the dawn will not find him among the living. He comes only

at nights now, when darkness falls and an otherworldly chanting is heard. He comes like a breeze and a shiver. He enters through the secret gate and stands, covered with blood, sword in hand, beside the two-headed eagle. Many say they have seen him. Every night, at the same hour, the lamps of the Hagia Sophia flicker and the mosaics weep in the darkness, because he is there, repeating over and over again the oath of the valiant man.

From the novel: *The Last Emperor of Byzantium* (1996, 19 editions). Translated by Theony Condos

Nikos LAZARIS

LIKE A TENDER BLADE OF GRASS

*Hold me in your memory
like a tender of grass
that has untimely sprouted
amidst white thorn
and there lost its face
like a foaming forest
after a heavy rain,
like a difficult stone
you could not lift,
hold me
like that white line
a ship leaves behind it
as it leaves.*

THE LIGHT CUT OFF

*You will come sometime
out of the night
with a white tulle*

*over your hair
and a speared moon
walking
on your shoulders.
You will tread on tiptoe
softly
and before I have time
to react or defend myself
you will turn on the switch.
But you will find
the liht cut off.*

THUS

*Wandering from place to place,
my mouth flaming like a conflagration,
digesting thuds
and cries,
brooding in silence on lonely
benches,
guessing at terror behind obscure
ebb tides and a nylon hearts.
May I be judged thus:
like a sudden crack in your mirror,
like inflammable material in the glass*

eye of the afternoon.

Translated by Kimon Friar

FRENZIED

Frenzied

Let us look behind us

to discover the magic moment

of purpose

the transient scraping

of the blades through water

and the goal

which one day shall tempt us to flit

like moths

on the still abiding lawn

before computers erase

our countenance for good

and worms recover

they lost assurance

poised on unmounted body

of one untimely lost.

THE VANQUISHED

*Remember these moments
When pistons thrust forward
Wine for the vanquished
as they are shoved uncrowned
on decrepit trucks at night
wild phosphorescent horses
set the clouds awhirl
as phantoms awake
and pitch camp around
placing hot steel plates
on the brows of tender newborn babes.*

PROFUSE LIGHT

*Spellbound we shall draw close one day
to that distinctive odour
of tender flesh
trapped in the narrow cavity of a crater
the rowers' oars
will tear the clouds asunder
at the blue heel of dawn
which hangs aloft
like an inverted ball
while the wind rumples the waves*

*and children play
with plastic toys
hand across
the lap
and profuse TV light
lighting up their ganglia.*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

FORGOTTEN GLORY

*Let me get out at last
out of this vicious trap
let me be free as the seagull
that moves upon the wind
behind ungoverned ships
hoping for the unhopeful
ice skating careless on the waves
believing that he will never fall
into the jaws of the voracious beast
the beast who wants to swallow everything
incapable of paying attention to the leaves
that lie upon the frozen grass
incapable of paying attention to the forgotten glory
of a sort-lived but still*

human moment

MATERNAL BODY

You thought it was the rain

but it was only the birds

walking on the iron trap-door of the roof.

You thought it was your husband

behind the door,

but it was only his cough

coming from the next world.

You thought it was God reprobating you

but it was only the voice

of the newscaster from the television.

Now, sitting deep in your armchair,

64 years old, you are being transformed, it's like a miracle:

you 're becoming baby again, then little child,

then girl that shines in the circle of the dance,

woman bearing a child during the Occupation

(your belly up your mouth, and you waiting

for your missing husband),

mother jailed

inside time

inside your kitchen

inside habitual acts.

*And now you don't hear anymore
neither the sweet melody of your granddaughter's crying
neither the ringing of the telephone,
the precious calling
—as you start flying lighter than air
upon the feathers of your wedding dress
towards darkness.*

KIFISIA or THE END OF THE EPIC WAS RAINY

*The images of the wet suburb that we loved
will fade away wiping out one another,
its colours will rush towards the water,
the roads that bear our steps
will return to the same starting point again.*

*And it will not be a human,
It will be an animal eye that will be staring at us
Through the darkness.*

*The bodies that have touched us will hang
in mid-air for a while before disappearing into the void,
the old gestures will be vainly recalled,
the rain will be falling down without
waking up the melodies of our soul.*

*And it will not be a candle, it will be the moon
of the poets that will melt away
in our fingers.*

*The hill that you can see from your window
will fall down full of innocence and fear,
the mouth of the river will dry out,
a childish laugh from afar
will drop into the sewer.*

*And it will not be the caress of the departing dawn,
it will be the frozen hand of the wind
that will build our lives on the roadsides.*

IN THE BEACH OF MARATHON

*Heat of June, unconnected images,
sea that is not yet properly
mirrored inside, lights
that turn on only after
touching the irrevocable border of memories.*

*We are here, it is Sunday,
in this beach that saw Kynaegiros fight,
a thousand bodies towering over the sand,*

*people floating in the air
pushed from an inexplicable, primordial pain
like this sea flying balloon
that goes up impressively
and the wind assisting
disappears where the eye
blots out the horizon.*

SAINT OLGA INFIRMARY

*I was driving my mother in the wheel chair
through the dirty corridor of the hospital
when I felt the panicking near the entrance,
I heard the crying of the young woman
and the yells of the usually restrained
stretcher bearers who were calling for my help.
Like I was in a X-ray machine the sound
came through my whole body which
moved weightless obeying
to the simple and innocent art of Man,
tuned to the rhythm of a deeper, ancient Life.
And then I was touched by the warm hand of death
as I was helping this tall man
through the narrow gate
—his pyjamas half torn, his eyes closed,*

*his body heavy, unmoveable,
and his brown slippers
forgotten for a long time afterwards
upon the corridor bench,
waiting for the cleaning woman to take them away
or for a delayed angel
to transfer them together with the rest high
upon the sky.*

WOMAN WAITING IN A BUS STOP

*Oh anonymous woman what are you waiting
under the zinc of the shed?
The bus will not come.
Love will not come.
He will not come.
Through your wrinkles
I can see the
life that faints away—
this monochrome television set
showing only one channel
its screen often going black, full of white noise.
Small rooms, many children
moisture in the bones and in the heart
hard times*

hard times

hard times.

*You are not the woman who
won my admiration the other day in the pages of Elle,
I have not seen you in the new film
of Antonioni or Truffaut,
I don't know any grand poet or painter
that has praised your face.
You pass every day among us
nondescript,, almost invisible,
always waiting for something
that will not come,
writing from time to time
with your menstruation blood
cries of despair upon the air
while the background of the picture
shows the blue magnificence
of the attic sky.*

In my dream I see my father. We are sitting in an iron bench in the edge of a grassy hill. It is a clear and sweet day. A big lake spreads its shallow waters below us and in the middle of the lake we can see a small church surrounded by hundreds of visitors. One of them has climbed over the dome and paints the sky with yellow paint. Suddenly my father says: 'I'm cold' and starts shrinking like he did that afternoon in the 'Pammakaristos Hospital' when he felt that his end was near. I get up and look around trying to find a cloth to put on his shoulders.

When I come back my father is gone. In the place of the bench there is a deep hole and inside the hole two black horses lying dead.

Early this morning a young and beautiful nun tried twice –but in vain– to cross the small seaside road of Aigeira, the waves were rushing over the beach frothing out a white lace in the asphalt, the nun moved back and forwards making small cute steps like a ballet dancer, then she stayed hesitant for a while and suddenly she stretched out her hands, flew like a bird over the waves and disappeared far away in the grey blue horizon.

Translated by Tasos Anastasiou

Cleopatra LYMPERI

WERE EMILY LESS SAD

I 'm Nobody. Who are you?
Are you —Nobody— too?
EMILY DICKINSON

*I, the poet, gallop on pages-horses
on Emily's grass – am I Nobody too?
Oh, Emily, how soft is vanity
when it drags you to yourself.
But usually, nobody is something – perhaps the
horse that carries the rider, perhaps the cloud
on the top of the painting
or the bosom that suddenly bursts and you fall
in your deepest center.*

*If I am the nobody that never became the being
if I am the rider that never became the
supervisor of the abyss, it means that the word 'to love'
aged inside me before I begot it
(that is, I didn't remake the universe)
that's why I remain on my horse's belly
like some redundant horsefly.*

*If I am the loving, I might be the Nobody
whose every deed saved the words.
But poetry has rather little to benefit this way
(what poet would ride on such a horse?)
So let horse and rider run together
on thistles, along cliffs, on direful trails,
so let the horse limp
until the rider abides
by the ill fate that anointed him poet.*

SITUATION: COUPLE

*Two birds equal one. On the branch
the closeness, the situation 'couple'.
I, a bird; you, complementary fluttering
on the waltz of my seasons – I name you
ladder of the most secret galaxy.
This is how it happens; the nature of the plumage
prepares the nature of beauty
what protrudes from the branch, our nest, language
(words like leaves like red apples).*

*Two birds equal one. The ages flow
the moon incessantly diminishes
upon your glowing plumage my desire insists*

you be complementary, feathered.

You, a bird; you happen within speech;

(a forest rustles inside my mouth

when I call you absent when I elevate you

on the tree of futile toil).

Two birds equal one. You were the one who

would leave, who would return – a feathered life

from branch to branch. I was the one who remained

bearing words in the great solitude of the nest.

Sometimes the summer would find us changed

within the pecking of the fruit

(I wonder whether that implied a capability to adjust).

Two birds equal one. The nature of mathematical signs

resolves the nature of rhythmic designs.

(One bird equals two.

The one who remains on the branch

always contains

an other.)

THE WORD WOMAN

From a universe that cracked woman

sprang. From her man's leg

from his leg's tears.

Now she knits questions:

Does infinity contain me?

*(His knee nurtured me, this
hole in the galaxy.)*

*I am the Word Woman in seduction,
extracted from the fruit's
core*

I return to my origin; where

I was named

Giving.

*I am the light, over my mortal
depths I floated
— the stars, my homes, were departing.*

*(I am an inhabitant of naught
so that I steal eyes.)*

*Let me wear the thieving eye that
plundered me. Oh eye, my eye
— eye — thieves we all are
and that's why so sad.*

Like old men's tapers my wo —

my words tremble, secret little candles

in my love's heart.

I am the she-bridegroom

Rejoicing in the name of

Giving.

But, further down, in the bitter meadows

echoes the

love of bodies. That's why

I will say it so that it resembles what

the poet used to say, and we loved it – formerly:

Come then, Panagiotis, Pana Panagio – oh!

come, come! Beneath your arches I stand

– dreamwalking – Panagiotis, my kiss, Pa-

of the myriad breaths, Pana-

giotis of scents, feather Pana-

gio-

(little moon, why say it was you who made Panagiotis

mine) you are

every day's harvest, a mouth that speaks me

Pana-

like a pebble in the abyss, in forbearance

Panagiotis, the chamois of blood, let me hold on to it,

let me dance on the fur of whole-

ness, Panagiotis, oh!

*don't wear me on your eye
my love.*

*(At night, in the precipice of celestial springs
I tasted a body made of peach.)*

*The man steals speech
the woman is hungry, a sarcophagus of alien
dreams. But now the apple chose me
it rolls, tumbles
the thing went down. Here,
dawn holds onto the mouth
(silence endures)
and from my speech
I beget my children.*

*(The woman says: how do I become blunt
in my finest tap,
and the drop of naught slips away.)*

*I am the Word Woman – I pre-existed
as an alabaster ear in concentration. Now
my bowels run like crying kittens
my little words run like
mice.
(In-fi-ni-ty in-fi-ni-ty, what does it mean?)*

*Panagiotis would deprive me of my speech
inside his waters-kisses,
in the little house of language
I would empty the language – dancing, leaving
dancing, staying
(in your dance will I become a dancer of
infinity?)*

*So take my finest apple:
A Paradise like black milk
and Hell rounded.
You bite I bite.*

THE STORY OF THE PUMP

*The pump paces footless;
It is the First that learns and then the
foot wears a toe, it teaches
style and language only a daredevil
knows; but the foot, having lived
in the body's warmth, unwinds and
acquires speed while immobile;
thus at the feast it will dance
wiser; I wonder,
will my foot love me? Says*

the pump

*I unwind: the sky,
a melodist, corresponds to every lover
(if the eyes eat them); in the
living room there is a violin, meant to play Ellie
by the hair*

(The moment lulls its cradle)

*The pump, imitating the foot,
borrows only the interpretation*

TANGO

*The closet often roars to the hangers when
mummy returns from her taffeta; at the ball
my father would tell her your arms my dar-
ling what dexterity in dominion
the arms the delicate hair locks of
naught your dead father wrapped you in.*

*I will tell her: your wig is on fire
mummy; on the ashes I feed;*

*but now, infinity brought me down to the little bit and
you almost seem to me like a hen from a hen the
waving of the head, your egg a hen's
falling on her knees your egg — me —
a deed-egg a frock coat that smothered me
into tango*

WHEN THOU COMEST INTO THY KINGDOM

*Poem, soon you will leave, you will roam
the streets like a dog
like a cut dahlia — what will I have then,
who will I be? What home will I sleep in
with no food, no water, no body?
Poem, you throw me so many dead bodies
so that I am covered by all existence
and the densely written pages of the desert
all the winds, the bird formations and
their nests, their emotional tempests.
Poem, you, the omnipresent, the prowler
in lowlands behind eyes and brains,
in all the words that cast me out of the
nest, in visions spitting into my mouth
like shamans
but also in Alpine howlings*

(that much snow piles up when you're gone).
Poem, who are you? Who are all we,
hidden inside the one who is speaking now?
If you become the rhythm, the form, the tremor
the bosom of the winged zealots of the languages
you will light up like an Easter candle
like Eros of the One.
Poem, remember me when thou comest into thy
kingdom, the house of No one.

Translated by Tatiana Sergiadi

TABLE TALK

– My good looks at my bad in a
mirror; are you the bad – it sais – or

– My good bad curls up on
the mattress; perception's apertures are blocked
and I can't see what each bad has brought to
its good

– If you put nettles something will happen; thus
rose is made whole

– *Is good an orange's beauty or
the sour*

– *Beauty uglified by its beauty*

The whole is an apple that fall out of its shadow

Translated by Yannis Goumas

LE DUR DESIR DE DURER (The constant desire for duration)

One-two, one-two, I am marching on the word 'duration'. Duration is something different than the word 'duration'. Duration is staggering. Staggering like zero. Tone of zero and rhythm. Duration constantly hungers. It eats the bones of time. It holds the whole alphabet in its belly. Even death fears it. 'Books vanquish death', T.S.E. wrote. Books eat the bones of time. (To give the devil his due, immortality shouldn't be a few men's concern; there is always something – a deed, a behavior, a plan – that is worth being salvaged, immortalized; perhaps exactly that which doesn't intend to be marveled at. Whereas, the phrase *The basic motive of the artist is the constant desire for duration*, surely cycles towards a puddle). Let me say no more about the void.

Translated by Tatiana Sergiadi

ADAM SPEAKS TO EVE:

You leave but your back returns to me.

Translated by Yannis Goumas

Christoforos LIONTAKIS

APPRENTICING SATELLITE

*The cold mist
on the rose bushes of the filling station
interpreted time differently.
A wrong manoeuvre and his fingers got soaked as
they and the motorbike ran into the foliage
shattering the hands of his Rolex
that only measured repetition.
A faint moon in the guise of an hourglass
and the first sounds of waking in the morning.*

*The light brings a touch of nympholepsy to his face.
Stressing the bounty of sorrow
it re-forms the ancient beauty.
Apparitions of sleep, the helplessness of beauty and
that certain unexpectedness of the nightingale invigorate him.
And he takes off, revving, despite the loss.
An apprentice satellite of Orpheus.*

Translated by Stratis Haviaras

19, RUE DE MILOZES, BRUXELLES

For Angela

*Palm-Sunday Eve and with a blossoming whiteness
the garden bids good morning to the equinox.
A little boy moved the globe
blushed at his mischief
and the eastern corner reddened.
How strange the light at the heart of Europe
it brightens the dogs' fur
and dims the luminous signs.
How strange the light! As if they've borrowed it from Delos
offering euros as security.
How strange the light! It shows
Rimbaud and Verlaine wrapped in snow.
How strange too those birds
tracing shapes from the deep in the sky.
Nice weather, says a voice
as if not having spoken for several days.
And a tree of unknown name
persists in blossoming amid the white.
The crack beneath the eye has reddened
the broom's yellow ready to burst.
And may time treat you well.*

Translated by David Connolly

Themis LIVERIADIS

THE DEATH OF THE ANIMAL

*Up till now I got along
As a race horse
Keeping myself in form
By the skin of my teethe
But I didn't always spend my time racing
May be no proper use was made of me
However I was well taken care of
The food was well chosen
Those who rode me
Were not particularly heavy*

*The other animals showed understanding
Sometimes envy
I wouldn't say love*

*Until the carriage came along
Then, a stable boy pulled me aside
Nailed horseshoes to my feet
Even this was not so painful
Until I saw father's silhouette
At that door*

With ritualistic pity

Loading the pistol.

From *The death of the animal – I*

THE DAWN

I had heard about it, but I didn't pay any attention until I saw them with my own eyes.

Some while before the dawn, when it is still dark, they appear from that corner of the upper town, coming along the street. They fill almost all its width. When you first see them flowing down the road, you can't believe your eyes. So many living beings in the heart of a dead town. Like a white river.

As it was the first time, I felt surrounded. They were so warm, spreading their dirty smell. Then I saw the black dog. On the other side...He had already distinguished me from those sheep and goats. Rearing on his hind legs, he showed all his teeth suspiciously, smelling my fear...

Soon enough I realised that it was better for me to stay with them. I was hoping — if possible, that this flow would never stop. Their stink had become mine. And their fur so warmed me at that day-break... I had surrendered to their protection.

I always knew that sometime it would happen. Now this wild black dog is waiting for me... powerful, invincible with strong legs and pointed teeth. It's hopeless to fight.

Everything that comes after will be humiliation.

From *Notes for Ifigenia*. Translated by Evelyn Toynton

THE REFUSAL

You've just borne a moribund baby

And you won't admit it

Its book is open at the first page

Weight and eye color

Now the hemoglobin count is rising

As the relatives' gather in the waiting-room

The doctor suggests a transfusion

You insist on wearing this raincoat

You refuse to take it off

You refuse to acknowledge the birth

It's impossible, you are saying

I never became yours.

From *The death of the animal* – II

EROTIKO

More inflexible than a statue

You are the guarantee of my loneliness

*You seem to respect only madness
Like someone who considers reason a begger
You put into the palm of my hand
The coin of guilt
You have aborted the fetus passion
Escaping on yellow steps
You gave me these scissors
For the pages that were to come
Useless the pencil now
You are reshaping to some Unknown
Mirrors open to receive you
Some women in black
Cover them with white sheet
My teeth are knocking
Like the blind man's steps
The sky shudders with
The chill of lightning*

*Father is still working far enough at that stable
Killing the wounded horses
There is the old man too
With holes instead of eyes
I feel him observing me
In the moment I kneel
To kiss the dust*

*You insist on
Defending your sanctuary
For years now, standing in front of a Dream,
You never let me sit.*

From *The burial of Ego*

PASSAGE

To the memory of Can Yócel

*Ever more slowly the ship
Cuts this sea
Thick like gauze on the wound
The City all around us
Turns on the kilowatts for another Night
It's heart-rending how foreign pilots navigate us
So that we get out through these narrows*

*Father, get off that bridge
Gray fog is enveloping everything
Come close to me
Better recall nice memories
Roumeli Hissar and Xastero
As well as Balioukli and Skouteri*

*And me in its flower gardens
On this bicycle that life gave me
Look at me
I am still keeping my balance
And getting it
Do you remember
How they took our picture
They've been hiding their faces
since then
Under those black hoods*

*We had flowers in our hair
Wobbling now toward
The next 29th May on 3541
Only sea-gulls
Fly lower than my fears
Let's go below now
When we're crying
I don't want the Turk to see us.*

At 'World Renaissance', upon the waves of the Black Sea (Nov. 1994)
Translated by Amy Mims

THE EXPLOSION

Most of them were young, in their mid-thirties, for what is worth, for the cassock like the uniform, make people look older in the eyes of others. Bowed, the shoulders hunched with no reason...I do not believe that it was due to repentance, some crazed apprehension rather kept them bent ; moving somehow femininely, always speaking in low voices, so as not to wake up the Wild Beast. The old men, however, looked more masculine.

I was waiting for my friend, from far-off Peru, to have his sleep out, as they had the vigil of John the Divine overnight. I chose to stay outside, sat on a stone bench in the yard. At a time, dropped in fatigue, worn out by a lifetime full of vigils, my eyelids and joints weighting down, some more visitors arrived, clergymen as well as laymen that were surrounded courteously and obediently. The door-keeper started gathering them up in the inner yard, piling up the suitcases one beside the other, a blurred scene reminding of the time of school strolls when we were briefly introduced to Greece.

Embarrassed, I stood up and went to the reception, where a priest –at least thought so-revealed to me that he was, as it were, Most Reverent, Bishop from Lesbos. ‘Each year I pay the Mount a visit’, he confided in me and thought I reminded him of someone of his family that has been away for years. Besotted by sleep, since the host monk had left us alone engaged in showing around the newcomers, I offered to make the coffee for both of us. I entered the small kitchen. At the corner seven boxes of delights were piled one on top of the other for treating ‘travelers or ill people’... Certainly, we look seriously ill. They see us running around, while they move slowly and pray... This is when I felt sobbing my heart out, having stifled my feelings for years. I turned on the gas cylinder, full open ; the spare cylinder too. I had just the time to see once more the treacle look in the Most Reverent and drugged the match with firm fingers. It was the very explosion that a

Sunday afternoon, on the ninth of October, one thousand nine hundred eighty eight years after 'our Savior's' birth, blew up the Monastery of Stavronikita, located in the eastern part of the Holly Mount and scattered the twenty-six monks among the cabbage and leek orchards.

The funny thing about it is that I was not heart. I went out again, full of vigor. I walked toward that wooden workbench at the edge of which a black clamp was attached. It was half-opened, suited me perfectly. I put my whole left palm in and started with my right hand squeezing my fingers full tilt to the bone. I was seized with a mild numbness, like a sweet faintness from head to toe, until I felt the outflow. In soft spasms, as if disciplined by an omnipotent order, I started ejaculating as I stood there, staring straight ahead of me at Mary, through the dirty window, with the eyes wet, trembling from anticipation, and throwing her clothes off one by one.

—What are you up to there? Εξ'από'δω ! Go and have your smoke elsewhere.

A monk was showing me reproachfully the way out. This one, I thought, had caught sight of me ... smoking ; this is only what he perceived !

—'I am a worker', I replied. One of those you called to fix the roof, now that winter is near and the roof is leaking.

At Holly Mount Athos – Greece.

Translated by Irene Skouzos

Vakis LOIZIDES

BLACK

Black

hides inside all the colours

hated by colourists

worn by mourners

Classic and rock if you want

take charcoal

and write night.

ANCIENT MOTO

On the lapel of every poem

you find an ancient moto

you need a footnote to be guided

sea to be released

by the ancient grand style

He is religious

yet suddenly innovative the author

definitely concerning about rare species

decadent honours hunter

even if not an avid alchohol drinker

blinded by what we say

Enternity.

IT'S A SHAME TO BECOME A LEGENT

It's a shame to become a legend so early

It's a shame to become a legend

Not to live entirely as mortals

It's a shame for our little joys

To become alien joys

It's a shame for our sorrows

To obtain dimensions out of this world

It's a shame not to preserve something

Clearly personal

Not to keep one of our defeat

confidential

One of our vision surreal

DIVISION

Of division

since a child I carry fear

When was taught of it at second grade

my land was divided in two acts

Now that I teach it

to my child

I am afraid

The quotient shall be

verified.

DIALOGUE *or* MONOLOGUE

Depending on the light

Absorbing all the garment colours

And dressed in black

Moving beyond logic

Trembling on

And at other times

I want the water lily on the heart position

Do you hear me condensed darkness of existence?

I want to bloom.

'IN THE RUSH HOUR'

What sort of racists are we

*self-appointed little protectors of the east Mediterranean
who so easily forgot
that our own forefathers
used to arrive in the Great THEN Britain
or in the new Australia
as unskilled labourers
just like this Asian
riding a bicycle
insisting on getting across town
in the rush hour.*

REASONABLE WONDER

*What style and reference
should I throw in the sea
To have a scoop
when the world is losing its cohesion.*

HEDGEHOG

*The hedgehog has never been praised
in any poem
until he managed to inflict a wound
on the almighty serpent.*

Who bestowed upon him such armour?

THE DELAY OF NIGHT

*I blame the sun
for the delay of the night
and then I regret
If it didn't mist to reign gloriously
almost midnight
unlit would remain
unknown aspects of the city
Possibly contributing to the lie
carrying on me for the harbour
of the North
But as oxymoron it may sound
the light hides the truth
and the seagull-besiegers
at dusk do not rest
in Gothenburg.*

Translated by Christos Koumides

UNTITLED

Homer did not
Secure his copyright
He knew that this
Only time could do.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

*Mine layers and dancers
At the same time
We carry the arrogance of three continents
As unprepared hosts of butterflies
In the infinite shades of ochre
In the place inside and outside of the universe.*

THE DEMON AND THE POET

*The demon is a wind
a river
it blows and flows dangerously
has as many variations
as are the people
who offered him shelter.*

*Poet why do you desire
a climax in decay?*

IN THE FIRST TIER

*They are objects
that even if you renounce
or hide in the attic
appear in the poem.
The half-burned iconostasis
rusty scissors,
unfinished handicraft
and the sucking-cups in the tin box
they have a place in the first tier.*

THE GIFTS OF ASIA

*Aristocrats inhabit every small harbour.
Lighthouses of all sorts
some white, with caps sometimes azure
and sometimes in the colour of terracotta,
and others provocatively dressed
in striped suits.*

*They are the descendants of those who once
welcomed to the city
ships from the east Indies
laden with spices and aromatic teas,
full of expectations of the gifts of Asia.*

MODERN FAIRY TALES

*The fairy tale as a teaching tool
seems like a delightful tragedy.
All the animals having inverted characters
are lame, despite the iconographer's support .*

*In the mind of my son
no good-hearted wolf can fit in.*

HINTERLAND

*And if hymns of chaos I have not read
it does preclude me being the child of discontinuity.
And if the mother on her departure
like a wave
enriched the dry land with the sea
life goes on*

*shallow abyss
with paradisiac bones
abandoned in the countryside
and whose synonym
is the word hinterland.*

Translated by Christodoulos Callinos

THE ANGEL AND THE SCULPTOR

*The angel ended
where should
his face start
The halo
was lying in front
of his feet
He gave the impression
he was weighing something with hands
I saw no wings
To be precise
the sculptor gave him
a toy to hold
He was excited
He marched as a Kouros*

*It seemed
to him tiring
neighbouring with Divinity*

*

*No mountain is in a hurry
to catch up the evolution
No mountain tip underlines
the mountain end
On a crust of an ocean old we sit
and on a serpentine leafed plain
Teucrium, Euphorbia and Sumac we scent
with an angel who bears the stigmata
of asbestos in the lungs
continues years now to mountain trek
with the miners' souls*

*

*It is not a focal point
the wing on the angel
It is a pole of fantasy
And if you don't see
Assume
Starting at a cloud
traveling silently*

at the time of the storm

*

He pours water in the wine

He comes down the stairs

He gets the microscale

You give him the frame

He dances with it

You call him common

Like those in the arch

With their dimensions

who do not obey

the icon of the angels

*

*The angel with the daguerreotype
of the dragon*

At a holiday noon

he woke up with me

The following day

I saw him to the shore

with a wave high

even though you said

nobody gives away

the gifts of the angels

*

*A quarter of catastrophe
plus three quarters of Triumph
the life of angels*

Sculptor I cannot believe you

*

*On times of euphoria
the angels become so mortal
They frighten me*

Right ghosts

*

*The Angel
that rests his mind
in a small garden
aiding the gardener
to carry earth
Can you ignore him?*

*

*They still
are dense the elements
of the angel's manuscripts*

*No life
is only verbal*

Nobody travels within their own destination

*

*One seeks angels wood carved
Varnished wood
For the wings to scent
Detrivores reside
in the carvings
so they have something half finished
Let them fly over
here and there
Let them throw the celestial vaginas
into the sea
The new fertility
Shall bring the wild waves
to you*

*

*An expressionist angel
deviates and enchants
on memories of the underworld*

*The form breaks
Into thousand pieces
you find the inspiration
Who shall give you
the impression of angels?*

*

*I shall not give angels
Butterfly wings
I shall not whiff them up
With strange desires*

*

*The silk mercer
in the lemon tree orchard
do not remove him
from the angels' neighborhood*

*Even the angels are moved
by the lemon blossoms and silk*

*

*Even a plough
the angels pulled
And they touched the barbed wire
and they bled
They washed their wounds
and they were aching
How can you
Shape them only with image*

*

*The girl painted
The angel with a kart
full with sandglasses
From toys, that were missing something
They said she was praying
not to ever end
the time and the game
of the angels.*

*

*In the elastic uterus
of the petite angel
he planted waterlillies
To give another roster
to his inspiration*

*

*The angel with the broken hand
and the straw hat
He called him crazy the village sculptor
So he discharged him
off the stereotypes of the angels
and with a toy with wheels
he returned him to the childhood*

*

*As he saw the angels
holding telescopes
to see the Perseids
he was astonished
He thought that the stars
are part of their daily lives*

*

*The altar doors were returned
The angels were missing
They were not destroyed
They were removed carefully
to be placed elsewhere
not to shorten the distance
between a super power
and our passions
Not to function in their own manner
at the time of the sacrament*

*

*Our need for comfort
is known by angels
And we are not abandoned*

*Without prologue
Yet no epilogue
the life of angels*

Translation by Christos Koumides

Eftichia-Alexandra LOUKIDOU

OF CREMATED DAYS

Eventually everything bids you farewell.

*A grey streamer the smoke of cremated days
traverses the trees' patience.*

*With all its lights dimmed, it glows in wingless birds' aquaria
—uncovered the dead are cold you see—
virtuoso of distortions it bypasses memory's outlines
though the soul's street plan is still unknown.*

*On empty beaches shouting and laughter is heard
a drifting rowboat carries smashed pomegranates
'We'll rest, we'll rest' said Sonia and then
our priority is to pick up the panes from the floor
to erase the crooked and the straight lines
etched on the palm.*

*Yet why did we want these handshakes with love?
And what use to us were so many pomegranates anyway?*

WHAT I DIDN'T HEAL

*Now that things
are about to become allegories of things
the waves' writing becomes readable at last.*

*You'll say to me...
And the shadows chased by children?
The stained glass at the stations?
For getting's defenseless suburbs
Illuminated by the unfulfilled?*

*What I didn't heal is what defines me.
And the spacious desolation
and the night gleaming from the tears
and love inclined, so the meaning might slide.*

*Just imagine
I saw you as an excursion and you were but a memory
more like a noisy silence
a saving right hand and the cliff edge
—perhaps even the cliff itself.*

*So don't forget yourself in dreams
their streets have no lamps
only swarms of bees, illiterate orators, unemployed gardeners
and ghostly at the corner that same age little girl asking despairingly:*

'If you don't need your Sunday, mister, could you give it to me?'

THE HOUSE ENDED UP IN THE SEA

*I remember we were cheerful then
angels would come and go in the house
would eat with us at suppertime
tread the same wilderness as us
and each departure was postponed for some other daybreak
when dream would have locked us out.
Touch's meanings were still untranslated
chinaware echoed in the lounge and drawn back the curtain
supervised the street and sea
lest they got carried away
lest order was cancelled and we started searching for ships at stations
and trees on the rolling deep.
Kollias, as you told me, thought the sea capable of anything.
And then, it escapes me how
—but without any warning—
whether some feverish words
trusting in the final harvest's 'wide range'
whether the breath of workers' lips
whether credulity
characteristic of the illiterate and small children
anyway the house ended up in the sea*

*ashen yet sturdy we watched it floating
of the words only the dative were saved
and among the missing both of us
just a few blocks away from the saints
causelessly drowned on the asphalt.*

From *Basement Level One* (2008)

PAINTING WITH RUST

*Each morning an impudent autumn
thrusts into my breast you'd think
wood of wild rose and the first rains.*

*I survey the room
damp from the emptiness
—somewhere here
perhaps your knees were forgotten—
the walls
with hastily nailed
the vertigo of dilemmas
throwing off their frames
the pastels travelling
on the furniture and carpets
and generous hopes
behind the snow's tyranny*

foretelling the Easter of bodies.

Yet at night

I withdraw into cloudless oblivion

surrounded by icy masks

weird grimaces of charitable ladies

children who with my tears wash

their hair.

At first I was afraid.

A blood-red crab

painted my father's innards with rust

packs of wolves wintered

in the right choices

pulled the stool from under my feet.

Then, I didn't grow accustomed.

One day I'll take me in my arms to comfort me

born thinly clad like that.

BASEMENT LEVEL ONE

Death blocked our path last night

and I who from being small

was terrified of summers

*all it needed, I said, was a gesture
an unhoped-for closing of accounts
just as
when you turn a coffee cup upside down
and all the snakes, enemies and closed paths
like melted threats tumble
into the sink.*

*Yet life is a smithy
and the last world an irremovable weight
when in electric waiting rooms
weak bodies hang on the coat stand
and empty overcoats
enter to be radiated.*

*In the months when the crab is asleep
I almost come to believe
that you may even hear me
that I too moved You somewhat.
Then, I reflect, most likely the fault is
I don't know the dialect of the doves
perhaps my unstable character
maybe even that habitual sleepiness of mine
at matins on Sundays.*

However let's face it

*the time's come
for us to get used to stone-throwing
now that midnight's struck
and the golden carriage
has again become a pumpkin.*

DESSERT

*For a change, dear friends, I suggest
that we start the evening with dessert.
Besides, you never know what might happen
dangerously ill that we are.*

*And if we were lucky up till now
and sometimes we lay down
without forgiveness
it was because we believed
that sudden separation
does not concern us.*

*We always reserved a pew
for them
but then
how many crimes
do you think are premeditated?*

*We hoped —naoove that we are—
in a causeless magnanimity.*

*We even felt grateful
for never knowing
to whom in particular we owed it.*

Yet the threat was here.

It still is.

*Toasts and whistles
in no way avert it.*

*So, as a result, dear friends
and to be precautious
tonight let us start
with dessert.*

ALEXANDERPLATZ, BERLIN

Rightfully they call me Sonia.

Franz named me Mitse

—one-armed, he is, but how to embrace he knows.

In the day I prefer to sleepwalk.

With a coin hidden in a hankie

I walk quickly past the suburbs

I sell agile shadows in Alexanderplatz
I burst bubbles in aquariums
and having gone through the mist
of dreary happenings
I find myself safe like dead
at the end of the sad story.

*Instantly the square filled with perfume shops.
Beyond the wounds' fissures
an unmanageable flood
lavender and frankincense
musk plant and inense.*

But I, Franz,
always told you the truth.
Oh, but yes, only you
could I love
the other one was a lad, perhaps even an old man
don't rake up old affairs
he simply drank a brandy
set the puppet's hair on fire
and afterwards disappeared.

Come now, Franz,
why must you open the cage
let the bird stay there

don't smother it
I'm hurting, Franz, you're squeezing me, Franz
all the water is spilled on the floor
never again chirping
never again half a cuddle
the air is full of down, Franz
I can't hear you anymore
down and feathers
I don't feel for you anymore
feathers only
I don't mind anymore...
*People in the forest
always die of shame.*

From *Dessert* (2012). Translated by Yannis Goumas

A LOW BOW

*Out on the streets choirs and celebrations
wooden stands with sweets
conspiracy and ignorance.*

*In playgrounds old carriages
are feverishly being converted
into dressing rooms with coloured feathers.*

*Unlit fairy lamps, phosphorescent shadows
satin robes and fur muffs
are preparing to glitter
on the night of applause.*

Stage director:

Be quick to scatter
spices and vervains on the scenery
to cover up the smell of naphthalene
by this afternoon...

*Amateur pyrotechnists
and police officers
are carrying about in the form of the Epitaphios
cages with shy Ambroses
and seedy-looking Julias
—they are holding some lighted candlesticks
and recite—*

*the very moment that elsewhere
at a dark damp depth
Greta is already making up
ready to be seen in the tears
of yet another unworthy fan
who'll refuse to shoot her
while handsome Olivier*

*rehearses his bow
to Audrey's black cocktail dress
who is feeling cold.*

Town crier:

Today
the famous theatre company
is visiting our town
for only one evening
and will present on stage
well-known dead actors
of the classical repertory.

For just one evening
an entire era will be resurrected
but it won't know it.
Consequently you should pretend
that they never died
that they continue playing and don't age
that no earth, effusive tributes
and nostalgias interposed.

You must all be there without fail!

And, of course, don't bother about tickets.

Tonight the shivers

are free!

THE EQUIVOCAL WHITE

*And if now I'm tidying up and settling with
affected manners
peels of distrustful words
and bottles of ether
and ask for what is indefinable
to appear*

*it is because
the creaking of anything ajar
has done me in
because the opinions
—even of experts—
are divided
if, for instance, we lay
a white nuptial sheet
or a mortuary pall.*

*But more so
because it is whispered
that the wood is already chopped
and gathered in a corner*

*and beyond us
a merciless fire is preparing
branch by branch.*

INTERLUDE

*At long last, let's talk of insignificant matters.
of those hidden behind some act
like bashful children
behind a skirt*

about whirlpools and electrodes

*the unfair fight
and the futile reward*

about distance.

*How did we get involved
in this demonstration at night?
Not that we had time to spare!*

*Only hands did we have
stretching all atremble
in quest of handcuffs*

*and perhaps a foreboding
that the bond will be paid without fail
and the keys
—more likely—
won't fit the lock.*

From Let's Blossom Till Nothing (2004). Translated by David Connolly

Giorgis MANOUSSAKIS

REFLECTION

*The tree near the shore
the hill behind the tree
the man with the fishing rod.*

*Everything is repeated in the same way
on the motionless surface of the water.*

*Which is the real picture
which is the reflection?*

*Mind prefers what is up
heart what is upside down.*

*Mind what is firm,
heart what is elusive.*

*Both images are true.
Like faces on the playing cards,
half upright, half down.*

COLOURS

In the vase three flowers:

Red, yellow, white.

*A bee came inside from the open
window and visited them one by one.*

*It tried to persuade them about something
but they were persisting in their opinion:*

Red, yellow, white.

A TREE IN THE FOG

*It is only a tree
something like a naked skeleton
of its summer multiple self.*

*But when the fog comes down from the mountain,
passing through its branches
the tree becomes enigmatic
it is wrapped in a mystery, it plays
between existence and non-existence.*

*Spectral, elusive shadow
moves up the upper room of the myth.*

THE PRAYER OF THE BLIND

*Rain waves beat the window glass.
Behind the glass a blind man is sitting.
He is listening to the sound of rain and feeling
the water flowing on his face.*

*He is shutting his eyelids, he is praying
'Lord of the waters, wash out
my blindness too, make me
when I open my eyes
to see the rain's colour.'*

MOMENT

*She was sitting in the garden reading.
Her neck was stooped; her eyelids were declined
her hand was left on the right page.
A butterfly came and sat
on her shoulder. Time stayed stile
and everything was sending out a calm of eternity.*

*Suddenly her head went up
her hand turned the page*

The butterfly flew. The moment shattered.

and I

who had believed so much to its eternity!

Argiro MANDOGLOU

All on Zero

She went into the forest, found the wolf and brought him home

If you are afraid of the wolf, don't go into the forest, says an old Russian proverb. Avgi repeated this saying many times during the day, feeling as if it gave meaning to her every movement. She whispered it as she deleted yet another phone message from her ex; said it out loud as she tripped on one of the boxes she had not yet managed to unpack after her move to the house on the shore; and louder still as she took from the closet, gaping like an open mouth, a black skirt and blouse — the clothes she chose to wear tonight. *If you are afraid of the wolf...* Avgi stopped mid-phrase. Passing by the mirror in the entrance hallway, she caught sight of a woman with pallid face and unruly dark hair who seemed to stare back at her suspiciously: 'Who is this wolf? Where is this forest? And what was she so afraid of?' She straightened her back, raised her head and voice and tried a new tone: *If you are afraid of the wolf, you should go through the forest....* At that moment, a different Avgi appeared in the mirror: the crease between her two brown eyes and critical eyebrows became deeper; her glance took on a new decisiveness, softening the malaise that had taken up residence in her face these last few years. She smiled, and a web of wrinkles bunched at the corners of her eyes; her face glowed with some inner bliss. She had the urge to share this with someone, but there was no one else at home — or inside her either, for that matter. She forced that thought aside and, winking at her reflection, addressed her doubting self: *We've done it; we've made it*

this far, to point zero. In a few hours, we'll have gotten past it, and we'll have all the time in the world to ourselves. She checked the date on the calendar and put three exclamation marks beside it in red pen; she looked at her hands, which were faintly trembling, and commanded them to stop. Then, she picked up a notepad that was lying on the table. She tore off the first page, covered with her handwriting, and after scanning it hurriedly decided it was useless; she angrily balled it up and tossed it into the already full wastebasket. Pages filled with her tiny letters, all slanting to the right; letters in a fragile balance, stuck to each other as if ready to collapse if left alone. 'Your handwriting reveals an introvert with artistic tendencies', a graphologist had once remarked to her. 'Introverted character, artistic, possibly risk-seeking' he had added, laughingly completing his diagnosis, and Avgi, at a loss for words, had awkwardly shrugged her shoulders and laughed too.

She took the notebook in her hands again, tore out another page and tossed it into the wastebasket: yet another failed attempt. Maybe her introversion was to blame. 'You need the wolf in order to show your teeth', she would say to him if he were across from her now. She emptied the wastebasket into a black garbage bag. Dozens of pages with her daily 'Instructions to the self': pages full of lists and observations, everything she had written today was useless. Her mind was elsewhere: *In the forest.*

It was the end of March, but for Avgi it seemed like August. The absence of noise, the absolute silence of the house, the mute telephone and the deserted interior: everyone was somewhere else, and she came here to this unfamiliar space in order to confront her fears.

If you are afraid of the wolf, don't go into the forest — her mother was the one who reminded her of this saying early in the morning in the only phone call which she

had received today, when Avgi was about to tell her how difficult it was to live with herself. In between wishes and bits of advice, she remembered to add that Avgi was now thirty-six years old and didn't have any time to lose.

'What are you talking about, Mum? I'm here trying to concentrate', she protested.

'Well, that's not the way to do it. Your real life is here. In London. People don't have to escape from life in order to 'concentrate'. You were doing fine here, she insisted, and Avgi recognized, once again, the voice she adopted whenever she was trying to persuade herself, rather than someone else. Her mother had, by nature, a depressive temperament, and after everything that had happened with her father, she now made no effort to hide the fact.

Avgi should close up the house, give it to a real estate agent and come back; she shouldn't stay all alone in such a big place. If she rented it, she would have a tidy little income. Thirty-six years old today she reminded her, as if she could forget: 'It's so sad that you're alone on your birthday!'

Extract from the novel *All on Zero*, 2009, Paperpublishing 2014. *Translated by Don Nielsen*

Niki MARAGOU

ROSES

*In company with the aphid and the grasshopper
I have planted roses in the garden this year
instead of writing poems
the centifolia from the house in mourning at Ayios Thomas
the sixty-petalled rose Midas brought from Phrygia
the Banksian that came from China
cuttings from the last mouchette surviving
in the old city,
but especially Rosa Gallica, brought by the Crusaders
(otherwise known as damascene)
with its exquisite perfume.*

*In company with the aphid and the grasshopper
but also the spider mite, the tiger moth, the leaf miner,
the mole and the hover-fly
the praying mantis that devours them all,
we shall be sharing leaves, petals, sky,
in this incredible garden,
both they and I transitory.*

Aris MARANGOPOULOS

From

Love, Gardens, Ingratitude

[FOREWORD] We all live two lives: the transitory life of baseness and Ingratitude, and the other, the life of wild, unattainable Love. Between them lies a vast Garden, ancient, nameless, invisible to many. It is here that the two lives come together, hate each other, part and then of necessity meet once more.

Love, Gardens, Ingratitude is a stealthy game laying political claim to this Garden. It concerns only those readers who question daily their precise everyday existence and hope to escape, albeit briefly, into the wild life of communal Love –the sole way out on this virtual planet.

Love, Gardens, Ingratitude is a tough game about the liberated women in large cities who live like male beasts although (they act as if) they don't know it. It is also a tender game about the humanitarian visions of some (very few) men.

Love, Gardens, Ingratitude is the time-tested comedy of rebellion and love, which stubbornly resists these thankless times when such vital necessities are offered for sale in the luxurious shop windows of the global village. But maybe it is simply a comedy of naive misunderstandings, like the similar-sounding slogan: Bread, Education, Freedom.³¹

Athens, which is the entire world, lay clearly before his eyes. A vast monster has covered the earth, the heavens, the water, everything. Wood: there is nothing

³¹ Launched for the first time during the 17th November 1973 uprising against the dictatorship.

made of wood. A land of desolation, a landscape without music. He cannot hear a sound, or rather— his ears are about to explode. He cannot hear a sound, or rather— his ears are about to explode. He can hear no human sound... a click... or rather – his ears are about to explode... because he cannot hear any familiar sound... He hears a click, he hears a clack, he hears a boom, he hears a gdoop... he hears a gdombo, he hears a grombo, he hears a gramboo, he hears a grimboo, he hears a gremboo, he hears a kraab, he hears a kroob, a greb, a krab, a kroob, a krob, a kreb, a krab, a kroop... kroop, kroop, kroop, his ears are about to explode from this sound –which—isn't a... which isn't... which probably isn't of this world, a cling, a clang, a click. There is no music. He hears a – or rather he hears a – he hears a – or rather he hears a... noisy, crashing, pitiless sound. Pitilessound.

Athens, which is the entire world, seems to be breaking through the earth's crust. Beneath his feet it is cracking through the crust. The earth makes a crick... crick, just like a rocking chair. Whatever he does, wherever he looks: the airplanes' cruel beaks; people's floating cigarette smoke; the cavernous wounds and the elegantly finished (by third world hands) suitcases; the porters and the hoarse loud-speaker; everything is flowing, dust, crawling, shoes, on the shiny plastic floor of this sweaty plastichospitalairport, everything, their things, he, she, them, but he can still hear a goop, he can hear a grap, he is flowing with them and he can hear a kroop, kroop, kroop, this is all he can hear, he can hear just this tormenting sound. Criiick.

His temples were throbbing wildly. His eardrums were pulsing orgiastically. Noise and hubbub. The prehistoric Monsters who rule the planet seem to have spilled out en masse into the streets of Athens –and especially into this provincial street, inundated with glass factories, which led from the airport to the city. Legions of

mercenaries, wearing their official disguise as ministers and managing directors, were organizing festive parties on the pavements and in the side streets and avenues, buzzing like a million bees, in honour of the (extended to infinity) rat-a-tat-tat of the standard machine guns and the comforting froop-froop of the shells of all kinds which are being aimed by remote control at every single region of the planet. An unbelievable new order was spreading swiftly to the outermost fringes of this utopian city, Athens, with an inconceivable racket: great automobiles were hurtling through the air with a demonic din, their shiny bonnets open repulsively wide (gaping sharks' jaws); fountains of motor oil and petrol were spurting forth forcefully, spilling out everywhere, catching fire easily, making dark brown stains in the blackish sky; thousands of recyclable soft drink cans were raining down from the aircraft flying overhead, aluminium feuilles-volant landing with an unheard of noise on the well-asphalted earth, beside tons of shattered cars, disintegrating video players and other Japanese domestic equipment of outdated technology. The Monsters were buzzing restlessly, like millions of worker bees, the city was burning, burning, scorched in a pandemonium of criits-criits (and buzzz-buzzz), while, from time to time, a heavy one swooped down and crushed everything, drops of blood, gap, gap, and once more: gap. Clouds. Forgotten sunless marshes. Trapped lizards. Phlegm, gastric fluid, the moaning of invisible supercelestial infants... the typically Greek taxi driver stank of unwashed flesh, everywhere smelt of an ancient Balkan war.

Where the hell does this noise come from, this accursed click. Can't other people hear it? Groop, grap, grap. Then again after a moment: gap. What sort of place is this? Why? His ears are about to explode. «Put some music on,» he screams at the driver, «Put some music on, damn you!» The driver presses the hell button and the sound is murderous, screeching, infernal, it is a krab, it is a krab, krab, krab!

Mountains of recyclable rubbish, smashed videos-cars-soft drink cans are overflowing on to the kerbs, he can barely make out the dome of the sky and... what country was here once? Whereabouts in hell has he landed?

He hides his head between his knees as gdoops and squeakings and crackings and screeching noises slip through his temples, penetrate into his noise-racked body, to his kidneys, his stomach, his ears, his joints, his heart, his lungs, his chest, his fingers, his fingernails, the soles of his feet, his ankles, his back, his loins, everywhere pain, pain, pain, noise, din, din, a scream, a shrill scream pierces his heart, what would save him now would be to get hold of a piece of wood, he longs for a piece of wood to hang on to. A little bit of wood. He had a piece put away in his suitcase, in the boot, he now needed that bit of wood at all costs, he made the taxi stop, he got out carefully just as if he were in an area under bombardment, as if he wanted to dodge the shells, or more as if it wasn't possible to dodge them and at least he wanted to be able to see, to have some visibility, not to be wiped out without reason in the taxi.

He got out somewhere in Syngrou Avenue. He opened his suitcase in the middle of the street like a madman, a tramp, like a heedless tourist amidst the respectable toing and froing of the Athenian building site. He had come from nowhere to nowhere. There was nothing recognisable in it, nothing familiar in this place where he had landed. He found the piece of wood quickly. He took hold of it, gripped it hard in his palm, a longish wand, a slim wand of maple wood from the forest of his French walks, worn smooth by the passage of time. Just an insignificant little piece of wood. He squeezed it again and again, with all his strength, trying to wring out all its energy, its pores into his pores. He knelt down and closed his eyes in order not to see. Not to see... he bent double, became one with the piece of wood and the pitiless sounds all around him began to subside like frightened rabbits.

[...] To the Greek in his servitude, servile thoughts are an ancient habit which no longer shocks the native-born. In his mind now rose thoughts of Sanidopoulos, recently repatriated. Dispirited, he kicked a pebble into the lake. This disturbed the nocturnal rhythms of the Garden. Sleeping geese ruffled their feathers slightly, frogs dived into the depths, peacocks fidgeted, sparrows fluttered in the foliage, bushes rustled, and Ben, who just a year ago had ceased to rely on the petty journalist within him for food and drink, wondered like a terrified petty journalist: 'Am I or am I not a suffering Indian, a black child, a Muslim woman; am I or am I not a tortured resistance fighter in the Civil War, a betrayed Spanish anarchist, am I or am I not...' Was he, or was he not, untamed Laodameia, repentant Achilles, tramp-like Odysseus, bankrupt Rigas Velestinlis, ruined Makrygiannis, humiliated Theophilos, betrayed Belogiannis, martyred Ploumpidis, passionate Lambrakis, Paul Lafargue and Laura Marx rolled into one, beaten up student of sixty-eight and seventy-three, even despised poet – or was he simply a useless, bootless life?

Benjamin Sanidopoulos, journalist by profession to earn his living and poet to earn his death, really wondered whether, for lack of any drastic historical events (and given that the prospects of overthrowing Injustice were minimal), he could finally bid a silent farewell to the world in the summer monotony of the National Garden.

Translated by Caroline Harbouri

Eleni MARINAKI

*One by one,
I shred my branches
letting them dry
as my feelings,
that I struggle every night
not to grow leaves out
and wrap me.*

*Then,
I place them
with respect
on the ground,
singing a traditional song
and bury them
in the large cavity
of the garden.*

From Here in the little, 2007

*You went for a hunt again
to reap dreams.
In the opposite branch*

*the birds are sleeping quietly.
Only the wolf
suspects the trap,
the chasm you 've opened within
for so many nights,
and grew.
The whole road became a gap.
You cannot pass.*

*Here, in the little,
you will learn to walk.*

Right now blood, 2005

DRAUGHT

*Sometimes during the nights
death comes as a young child.
'Do you want us to fly together?' he asks.
Then he stands with his glass wings
fluttering as a fish in the air.*

*The sky, a white background,
comes down, deep inside me.*

BRIBERY

*In the morning, she was taking pills
to get used to the day.*

*At noon, she was shutting the blinds to the sun
and was going down the stairs.*

*In the evening, she was feeding bones to Cerberus,
outside the bars
in order to let her pass through, quietly.*

Without barking.

From *In a foreign sky, 2011*

A CARELESS BUTTERFLY

*God, give me
the wings I lost in the gardens
the veils I was destroying during the nights
the dust I spread around.*

*Give me, the colours back
that I trusted
to usurer dream hunters.*

*I naked my soul
and I am cold.*

From *The time past*, 2013

Prodromos H. MARKOGLOU

THE POET

*The water
carried him away
his saturated flesh
about to decompose
his voice only just swirly.*

*He's alone
and a white bird
fast on his chest
awaits
out of the water and the radiant depths
on the edge of the cascade
to hold him
under the arm
and raise him up high
in the sky.*

THE PAINTER

In the dark room

*he paints windows
the falling rain
effaces them.*

*He paints birds
a dark wind blows
the birds migrate
to the white heaven.*

*He paints
completing the destruction
and he must start
from the beginning
with new colours.*

(1962) From the *Ultimate Promise* (1958-1992), 1996. Translated by Yannis Goumas

OUR SOULS IN THE HANDS OF SPECULATORS

*Our souls
are hides nailed on planks.*

*We grew up the way a tree steadily spreads its rings,
while arsonists threaten it,
we travelled without moving*

*and our roots fell
into clear veins, into rotted waters,
the thunderbolt chose us for its shelter many times;*

*we did not deny our souls
because pain is not the greatest of dangers,
because love is not the ultimate limit.*

*Our souls,
 hides on planks,
with nails and grappling irons,
every day
in the hands of speculators.*

GRAPPLING IRON

*They thrust the grappling iron into his heart
and dragged him away.*

*He drew along with him
a landscape thickly planted with memories,
ruins of women weeping
and imploring.*

With his tongue clenched between his teeth.

*The others contested for the body
to hell with the soul,
the body is their property
they ripped out his heart
and his eyes.*

*He denied nothing,
not a single assertion,
because their every deed or probably gesture
justified his love,
enlarged his store of visions
stripped naked the incomparable grandeur of trivialities.*

(1964) From the *Ultimate Promise* (1958-1992), 1996. Translated by Kimon Friar

WE WILL LEAD OUR LIFE AS WE KNOW

*How hard it is to utter a word
While eyes are exploring you
Waiting to grasp the words as birds in the nets
They seek for a warm gesture to kill
For who is willing to believe
That those hands desire to embrace
And not to strangle
Who is willing to take a risk*

*Abandoning his soul among strange hands
And how can one live
With mutilated gestures, unexpressed
Cries which denote the primitive pain
Besieged by the terrorized souls of the others,*

*This life is not for us
This humiliation is not for any of us
We will lead our life as we know
Even if we end up to an ultimate despair
Even if they exploit our own grief
Being intoxicated by speculation
They won't suspect our love
Our endless land we create
Shedding our blood in drops.*

*From the *Ultimate Promise* (1958-1992), 1996. Translated by Helen Thames*

ASCENT

They broke our bones.

*In horrible pain
in amputations
the veil falls and the world*

*sinks
to the final point.
They all wait for us to surrender our soul.
Nail pierces the bone,
knowledge emerges
like a glistening knife,
ascends like a flare,
supreme and awe filled knowledge
in and beyond any death toll,
it sets us on our feet again,
ready to lose and win the world
over and over.*

(1964) From the *Ultimate Promise* (1958-1992), 1996. Translated by Barbara Cohen

THIS WOMAN

To Helen

*This woman
who walks with her head held high
has caught my sperm,

all the tears of chasms
all night schedules
and great decisions*

*all the naked years of our flesh
have rolled down
into her warm blood,
and now
they enter deeply into her cells
transporting the shattered light
I have been treasuring
in dark and blind cellars,
crying out
at death and at hope.*

*This woman
who advances like a ship in the azure day,
quiet, proud, feels
the rhythm of the world
knows how to go beyond my own death,
from her virginal eyes
the optical angle begins
which aims at
the projection of the world I shape with my own hands,
the woman I love
ascends,
an elevator for the new world,
a belly that glows
a hundred – windowed dome
and promises*

the high continuity of the world.

From the *Ultimate Promise* (1958-1992), 1996. Translated by Kimon Friar

Thanasis MARKOPOULOS

WHENEVER YOU LAUGH

*Whenever you laugh
A geranium blossoms
on the opposite window ledge
Every time you sigh
A red apple
Falls on the earth*

From *Escape Attempt 1975-1981, 1982*

THE DEAD MAN OF THE COFFEE-SHOP

*Years after the Civil War
He's sitting dead on the chair of the coffee-shop
As if he was tied up backwards
The Authorities decided
That he's not going to smell
The land is so sparsely populated
However just in case
They are ordered to hold off*

*The announcement of death
For as long as they can
So they avoid the interrogations
And the always possible chance
Of things going wrong
During the processes of concealing evidence
After all the notification of death
Might raise concerns
And then try and stop the hicks
If they figure it out*

From *Our correspondent's*, 1985

PORTRAITURE

*My father
He had two hands bombarded fields
A cape in his gaze
And on the shoulder a worn sac
With the gear of the revolution
Adze plummet meter trowel
And a hammer

The scythe he had it in the head*

From *Body model*, 1988

GUEVARA

Occasioned by a photograph

In an atmospheric bar

You're drinking sip by sip the sorrow

Sieving the silence

With lit cigarettes

At the other table Guevara

Harvested plain

Night blows in his hair

The yellow stars around go out

On the one hand you were lucky

My own Che

You played and you lost

It is us you should come and see

Who are losing without playing

From *Open vein*, 1991

THE LIE

*Up to the neck
Up to the slit of the lips
In the caves of breath
In and out
The debris level
And the thick desperation should play
The gory memory
Of the immersed ideologies
Until the helmet lowers
The sky of the gaze
And the light gets hungry

Then light for him the next lie*

From *The gun of silence*, 1996

THE TENANT OF THE THIRD SOLITUDE

If you happen to call an elderly person that you know he lives alone don't rush to hang up no matter how precious your time is no matter how impatient life has turned you into don't say he must be out or dead because then nothing is wrong something is going on if he is alive and he's home so don't hang up you don't know thanks to the little empathy you will show he might be crawling helpless like a snake on the harvested floor and he might make it the poor man you don't know just like that a man is saved with nothing

CHRISTOS VLAHAVAS' LIFE AND ACTION

dedicated to Kleitos Kyrou

With shabby shoes and a worn coat of the UNRRA he descended towards the other district in the wild winter nights he who serves as a village nurse Christos Vlahavas once exile at the Aegean rocks tobacco producer in Kranidia later with a crippled wife and three daughters so he descended through the flooded stream the only star his lit cigarette and after he injected with the gear she had already sanitized in the pot the always aged woman he began his way back leaving behind him the fear and the suspicion that all of this could not possibly happen for an idea

1985 in the midsummer Christos Vlahavas leaned without a hand to hold his shadow

From Fatigue test, 2002

THE CROCK

This crock that you see

Carrying his shadow around uncomplainingly

In the hospital corridors

Desperately seeking for a glance

To uphold his demolished figure

*This crock you see
Gave birth to Marilyn Monroe
Rosa Luxemburg
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
You that you read me
Me that I write*

OUZO SAVES GALILEO

*After the legendary breaking
In front of the Inquisition
That morning of the 22th of June
Of the liberating year 1633
Galileo
Withdrew again in his haunt
Drank exceptionally
A whole pitcher of ouzo
And he returned home
Blissful that the world went on rotating
Along with his head*

IT'S THE DESPAIR I'M THINKING ABOUT

*It's the despair of the landscape I'm thinking about
When after the first rains
It watches the summer visitors
Packing the parasols in a hurry
Hermetically sealing the windows
Leaving
Leaving behind them pits in the sand*

*It's the despair of the dead I'm thinking about
When after the filling everyone withdraws
And leaves him alone*

I DECIDED TO WRITE

*I decided to write a poem for a dear friend
He's so sad he lost his mother
Though old and full of days
Full as a figure of speech because really
What age can declassify a mother
So I want to show the vast steppe of his sorrow*

*He's silent and silence is leaking
He looks deep in him – sunken landscapes
He sighs and a sudden wave wipes the eyes*

*At such moments I leave the pen and grasp the phone
From the other end comes the mother's indignant voice
She complains about my repeated nuisances
And even though she yells at me I'm happy
I hang up I close my papers*

A poem can't be written with alien pain

From *Short breaths*, 2010

Yorgos MARKOPOULOS

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

*On Sunday afternoons
apartment block doors
seem like lordly mausoleums long since abandoned.
And if they happen to have an ivy growing by their entrance
or some other climbing plant
well then that completes the picture.*

*This is where our girls slept, anonymous, unknown.
They couldn't bear to choose,
not even when the last opportunity had come:
to remain sentimental.*

*You switch on the light. You put it out.
I want to love you like nothing else.
You switch on the light. You put it out.
An old, god-fearing woman feeds the cats on the back stairs.
You play unsuspecting. Hair long, legs long and bare.*

The wind catches hold of your dress.

THE BAND

*The band marched along the provincial esplanade,
sounding martial airs. A boy of fourteen,
in a wide hat and the proper uniform,
playing the trombone, didn't notice the turning ahead.
When the band wheeled, the boy continued on
with his wide hat and trombone.*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

A POEM SAID THAT IT KNEW WHO MITSOS WAS

*Mitsos got his bag from the lost property desk
at the Preveza coach office. Alone and quite calm.
Then he entered Athens, Sunday afternoon,
no fuss, unnoticed, to start his electrician's course.*

*He went past the closed builders' yards
along the Iera Odos, past broken down trucks, two-stroke vans,
and the locked up factories of Aigaleo.
In the distance Mitsos saw Mount Pendeli, Kerameiko...
So this is Athens, he thought.*

*Then he crossed Omonia Square, utterly deserted.
There was a lad from his parts, in national service.
He pretended not to recognise him. 'Hey, you! Is that you,
Mitsos!'
And Mitsos answered, 'No',
his mind all confusion,
thoughts of his barefoot childhood
and shaven head — all ears — back home,
and Stella, the girl from Veria he'd fallen in love with,
who ended up married to a livestock merchant from Livadia.
So this is Athens, thought Mitsos again.
That evening he ordered a plate of spaghetti
at a bistro in Veranzerou street - then went for a stroll.
And spent the night at the Hotel 'Beautiful Epirus'
in Menandrou street.*

Translated by John C. Davies

IN THE ASYLUM YARD

*One Sunday we were sitting in the glare of the asylum yard
till suddenly someone got up and said: 'tell us about her'.*

And so I began:

'Her soul a country cottage in winter

where each morning you saw the oranges in the garden
and you thought to yourself someone will come
some rightful heirs will cut down those trees.

I opened it then and went in.

In the hills I encountered gun emplacements
abandoned from some other occupation,
graveyards in the infants' section
with Easter candles
and tiny wreaths blossoms of white and pink.

And time passed

with me always all alone sharing her deep loneliness
like beasts do the water at their watering hole
till years later I was present at her wedding.

Everyone laughed at that sorrowful fete
and that father of hers kept washing his hands
before giving away her slaughtered will
to time great tamer of wishes.

I remained looking at her from aside.

She'd been slaughtered, with her breast bare
and her hair loose.

A sleeping beauty for her grave, I shouted,
in the next world I want to be a river and she a spring
dark Alpheus and distant Arethusa
that our waters might mingle in the depths of the sea.

I no longer retain details.

Just in spring

I dimly recall her in my lucid periods.'

*And they all grew sorrowful at my story and no one spoke.
Only at dusk when the sun was struggling with night
someone called to me: 'the woman you told us about is passing on
the horizon'.*

*I turned and gazed far off.
Passing by was a stream of people
Young and old from a world gone by; with overcoats. Ragged.
With a ripped belt round the waist. Ranked.*

*And last of all was you. Alone.
Testing the way with a stick, like the blind.*

ALCESTIS

*Alcestis deeply hidden destiny and Alcestis my fate
so much that suddenly one morning
believing I could bear the happiness no more
regard your face in my hands
the boat that you find in the tiny harbour
with no fisherman in it for ten days
and regard your body a closed-down quarry
where I stood away waiting to hear the explosion*

alone, Alcestis, I cried out.

*Into my depths you come, advance,
and like five quails my words
fly up amid the rubble terrified.*

*You grasp my hands
and these await you, like a nanny two children
that she takes out after illness, they await you.*

*Into my depths you come, advance,
or into my dream once where I lost you and suddenly
my sleep became a scene of travelling players
in which the wind blew down the scenery
and all that remained was the storm lamp, the pitcher of water
and the arm suspended, with the strings,
that moved the puppets, Alcestis, that moved them.*

*My mind a lull at sea, Alcestis,
stirred by doubt about your love,
an arm out of the water
last signal from a person drowning
and my soul a glade when thunderbolts strike
to gaze on you with eyes that are startled
or to shine on you through a rent in the sky,
O Alcestis, to shine on you.*

*Alcestis, resonator of untouched time
stifled cries, birds that flew low in pleasure
and hand whereby you touched me and on my shoulder
a mad medlar blossomed in the marble's cleft.*

*You are the head from an archaic female statue,
found in the field of a poor farmer
who hides it,
to gaze at it in the evening alone.*

*You are the ship preparing to sail
after first sowing evil,
the mine taken for a clock by some poor wretch
that removes three of his five fingers
that you might sit and take care of the rest
like two orphaned brothers one of which we've christened
though we also take gifts to the other,
you're valuables that the thief can't sell
since in the market they all know you're mine,
you're the city's glare — at night — the golden ecstasy
at which, lost and startled, the wild beast stares,
trying to explain it from the hills,
the alarm of the breeze that beset my body
a garden fenced all round
and the spittle a snake's path*

*the suspicion on your nipples of another man
when secretly, O Alcestis, my tongue questioned them
when secretly it questioned them.*

O Alcestis!

*House whose lock in my absence they once changed,
hillock of a mountain headquarters
that at midday I might climb to view the captive lands to view them
and, lastly, you're the umbrella I don't have
when alone I cross,
when alone I cross the soul's hills.*

RETURN

Since morning I've been thinking of sleep
and the storm's caused a mist amidst the crosses.

I roam the streets alone
and at the service I recognised in the saint's remains
the half a heart of my now dead father.

Pale loves on the park bench secretly invest in memory
for when they'll part.

I halted in the countryside
and recalled that former prayer of mine:
*'Once I hunted for verses in fine books, Lord,
like a child does butterflies in the public gardens,
like this learning suffering's pain,
the disarray of the adolescent's
irresolute heart, while growing,
or the tortoise's unflinching gaze,
that interrupts you while secretly seeing
in the bushes a body that you shouldn't see.*

*Tears, tears, tears
all I remember since then, Lord, tears, tears
and at festive times I was crystal
with my loneliness exposed to the callous, exposed.*

*O do you remember when
for the first time I came to you, Lord,
warmth, everywhere, biblical warmth, the plain scorching
and the river that soundlessly leapt
like the thermometer in the sun?'*

I returned to my family home.

I ran my thumb down the poor dog's back
and brought it sorrow.

Translated by David Connolly

THAT OLD MAN

All around him doctors, though everything dim in memory's northern reaches. His arms like veins of wood, while his eyes, raised in despair, are two globes randomly turned to the beyond. They put the X-ray to his back and at once the growths inside him 'shine', an aerial night photo of Rome or (switching off the ray) the sea's hazy hidden reefs, engaged at night by the dark oil-tanker — his heart. They line up his lung and, suddenly, as when moving after a time, he makes one last heave, the accordion from parties in the fifties that, on dying, his companion left inside him, while the vein at the bottom of the leg next to the ankle, gulps down his remaining time with rhythmic greed, like a hidden snake does milk. Again he falls into a stupor. They tell him to open his mouth and then like a half-moon the forgotten sugared pill struggles in his tongue's subterranean panic, in the flaming red dawn of the throat. Afterwards they leave him and all go away. Beside him he hears — sees — white three-wheeled trolleys and thinks that they're handing out sweets; hears them shouting out types of serum and thinks they're names of towns.

Then by himself my father switches off the light and straightaway turns to sleep in music of another gorge.

Translated by David Connolly

Jenny MASTORAKI

Tales of the Deep

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE WHERE ALL THOSE TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN

Let the air first spill over, heavy and red after years of battle.

And the smoke from the mountains where ancient ruins still glow, scenes of triumph and murder.

Let the forest be dark, so that kings on night-prowl lose their way, or the mutineers, pallid, unsheathing their daggers.

But the hunter alone everywhere with pursuers on his trail.

THE UNFAITHFUL

Let the knock in the underground troughs and the tunnels remain unexplained, like the fugitive by the lake at dawn.

While winds heave with ages of sorrow, dragging fears of clandestine loves, amulets, black locks, small pious oblations, young men soaked to the bone by a sudden storm at dusk.

And many rivers carrying away the roofs of the wretched, messages that never went far, urgings, oaths, admonitions, embraces and tears. Carrying away the beds of the unfaithful spouses, and the unmanly words 'I need you'.

THE UNFORTUNATE BRIDES

As in sad ballads, chased with sobs and glorias, in dresses long and red, and ankle-length, in hunting boots, the dowry promised once, now soft and moss-grown, with flames and fuming and wild laughter, so they don't see him threaten, they leave—

the way a rooster lights up Hades, or a gilded jaw the speechless night, a beast jangling on the run, and the rider bubbles up gold.

THE CELLARS

The houses they built in those days were left hollow underneath and they called the spaces cellars. They kept odd things in them: old clothes, shoes, jewels, beautiful glass, stiff wedding gowns and albums, bits of furniture with difficult names, and quite often some people they dearly loved. When this was the case, they kissed them hard and locked them in, and then quickly bricked up the doors so they couldn't open them and leave.

Since there wasn't an exit and the walls held tight, the old loves lasted well and everyone took them for immortal.

THE GARMENTS

The evidence stayed in the murderer's garden forever, shredded by a perfect blade, like clothes from a dowry sunk in marshes, thoughtlessly sown by someone on the run. Velvet cloaks, silk and dimity, with the splendor of a bygone era, warm changes of clothing, saturated with smells and noises, white vests and corselets spangled with stabs and festoons, and those fragile garments they used to call camisoles.

Deaths are dreamlike, but the agent is innocent. And his wound like a window that only gets trespassed at night.

THE DIVERS

The 'nothing, save to see you, my love,' hushed conversations, the words to exorcisms salvaged from difficult times, the quiet footsteps, poems, attempts of those missing for ages,

you must dredge it all up from the depths, from the great darkness, intact, from the silence of a ruined metropolis, the Fall, the plague, the flaming sword: like the diver encumbered by his prize in the bottomless sea, or patricians who hack the fair maiden and the best takes her head—

So that you will return and come over and talk, words from great romances that happened long ago, the traces of glorious beheadings, and those 'with kisses,' yes with kisses, and the bite, at last, gilded by time.

A SHORT ODE FOR UNCLE JULES SO HE'LL COME AT NIGHT, WHISTLING, WITH HIS LANTERN UNLIT

There is no way to trace the drowning, nooses, and rattles, some sailors pale, and others blue as giants.

And like the traveller who suddenly, on his way home, sees his balloon catch fire, riddled by savages' arrows –like him you will leave fresh midnights for grand courtyards and meadows, you will arrive as if from foreign lands, breaking through the damp walls,

timid, so that I can tell you tales.

TREATISE, WRITTEN BY AN UNKNOWN HAND

Certainly there are those who caught fire as they picked their way through a wasted mine. And others who lit up like torches as they dove from balconies of downtown buildings, and still others who ended up in flames (drifting at sea in some sort of unsteady vessel, a brazzera perhaps).

No one knows what happened to those, hard to find, who circulate among us as miserable middlemen and deserters. It's simply noted that they have been seen in big cities, with their burn now shiny from the passage of time. They don't discuss it, but they show it —hardly ever, it's true, only when necessary—like a seal on an imperial missive, stolen en route, gone astray, and while the insouciant emperor dines, his postman lies in a deep field of blood and is late.

AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN WHO WAS MURDERED

Years later some want him a prefect, others a maid's illegitimate son, and still others a pimp serving ignominious nobles; and a few —once again, how opinions differ— a swordsmith, a collector of precious stones, an anatomist and most certainly a widower whose harlot wife of astounding beauty died in an epidemics which the trade caravans brought over.

The victim will always be on the move; to the infant ruler's crib or to the clearing with the butchered fugitive, to the robbers' den, the ravine where patriots loot a stolen carriage, to the avenger's secret preparation, to city lights that dazzle after years of blackout,

he'll travel all over under various disguises, fellow conspirator, lover and sea-farer, wily inkeeper, captive explorer, with borrowed lives to spare.

WHAT THAT MISSIVE SAID

But when someone talks to you with terrors, with voices of those lost in ghastly caves and marshes,

above all you must consider what he might mean, what dismembered corpse he is hiding in his cellar, what biting kisses, murders, muffled nights, crossed noiselessly by trains (darkened by heavy curtains, with rags and cotton round the wheels), what iniquitous desires, rages, murmuring, howls, fireworks by the tombs of patron saints, avengers who soak him in blood while he sleeps, what thief, finally, in a deep brass bedchamber, smothered in linen, crying,

and you must feel for him, above all feel for him, my dear Arthur or Alphonse.

Translated by Karen van Dyck

Pavlos MATESSIS

From

The Daughter

The first Quisling collaborations to pay the price were Madame Rita and Siloam.

Madame Rita was a whore by profession. Rita was a pseudonym. Vassiliki was her real name. Madame Rita was the most respectable whore in Rampartville. A real star she was, I copied a lot of her tricks later on my acting career. She had her own brothel, but she did call-out work too. For the Germans mostly, at the 'Crystal Fountain' restaurant where I took her the holy bread from father Dinos that time during the Occupation. The rumour was they had relations that father Dinos, he was a real skirt-chaser, plus his wife was super religious. Homely too.

When Rita went by on the street all the honest women crossed themselves. Holy Virgin protect us from such a fall, ma said one time, right in front of Mrs. Kanello. That was back in the signor Alfio days. No smart remarks from Mrs. Kanello, though; she never looked down on ma on account of she was seeing two Italians.

Madame Rita was a public official. Swished around like a church bishop, she did. Everybody greeted her on the street, even the judges and as she walked along she was glancing right and left and making a mental note when someone didn't say hello. A man ignored her at his risks and perils and if he did, Madame Rita tore into him right there in public, in the middle of the market with curses to make your hair stand on end, reminded him how many times he visited her girls, at half price. Only accepted high-ranking civil servants, she did. And military men, from captain up.

Me. back before the war, I got goose bumps when I saw her, how grand she was. Only two people gave me goose bumps as a kid, Madame Rita and the queen, when I saw her for the first time. Unfortunately, we never met again. She came to Rampartville on the royal tour, still only the wife of the heir to the throne she was, so the little people would fall in love with her. There was such a huge crowd at the welcoming ceremony, we lost track of ma. The crowd kept pushing us back until we ended up in the very last row, daddy hoisted me onto his shoulders. Look at the queen, he was shouting, look at the Queen. There was a big crowd, we were all the way to the back, and daddy never even saw her in the end, being short as he was, but he was weeping with devotion. Madame Rita was there too, even though she wasn't with the dignitaries. Greeted the Perfect even; smart man, he returns the greeting, How are you, Madame Rita and how is business?

After Liberation they demolished half her brothel to make an example of her and took away her permit for a whole year. But she opened right up again when the Allies arrived thanks to our member of parliament Doc Manolaras; he was still a doctor back then. In fact later on she added three extra rooms onto the main brothel with money from the Marshall Plan people said, from the budget for war reparations, claimed it was destroyed in the bombing, all of that during the Tsaldaris administration.

That was how Madame Rita was punished for collaborating with Enemy.

Siloam was the other one.

Siloam was a tailor. He only went with men and didn't even hide it. Stelios was his real name, I didn't know what it meant, 'going with men', or why they gave him a woman's name (Picked it out myself, dearie, he tells Mrs. Adrianna latterly; everybody who comes up to me, I want them to know what I fancy, not going around afterwards saying I lied to them. Like a sign in a shop window so people

know what they're getting and who they're getting it from. You've got to tell the truth).

Siloam was nowhere near as grand as Madame Rita. But he was good-natured and a bit of a sad sack, nobody was scared of him, or should I say her? Everybody who went by he greeted with deep bows, like he was begging their pardon and they were obliging him by saying hello Orphaned from age thirty, he was and he kept his hair combed into a pompadour.

A first-class tailor though, took pride in his work and if wanted to swear on something, he said 'by my scissors'. Just how good a tailor, Doc Manolaras told my father, back before the war. And a useful man to have around; he was the one who made men out of most of the boys of Rampartville, on top of him was where our young men learned their lessons. Seeing as how the girls were all honest and they never went with a man before marriage, first they got married and then took a lover.

Anyway, nobody bothered him. Seems he knew plenty of secrets; many of the worthiest married men of Rampartville served their apprenticeship with Siloam. God forfend I should ever say a word! He used to say. Ass may not have bones but it sure can break bones.

Collaborated with the Occupants too. Come the Liberation they arrested him but in jail he cooperated with the partisans so they let him go. After, the X-men arrested him but in jail, he cooperated with the X-men so they didn't ship him away.

When you come right down to it we never did figure out what Siloam's real political beliefs were, if he was a leftist or maybe a royalist. They were influenced by his emotions of the moment. He was in love with a partisan? Well, you got a lecture about Marx and little embroidered hammer and sickles. He was head over heels with an X-man? You'd find him wearing a little crown pinned to his lapel. But he was no double-dealer, he stood up for his beliefs every time. Once during the

Occupation he even gave me an egg. And when our whole family left town after the public humiliation, he stopped by to pay mother his respects.

Siloam stayed on the Rampartville. But after the partisans, the X-men and even the Brits (they took the bread out of my mouth, he always said) let him down, so people say, he finally put his foot down, cut his hair and went and got married. Today he's faithful to his wife and his scissors turned out fine children. So, I heard. Of course, it did happen that he fouled his wedding wreath from time to time. They say he used to tell his wife: listen here woman, society is society, family is family and ass is ass.

Siloam and Madame Rita may have been the first of the traitors to be punished, but the other Quisling women weren't far behind.

We were liberated a good three weeks by then, cleared away all the dead bodies from the city streets. The burned stench just wouldn't go away, but we were used to it by then. The only thing we couldn't stand was this particular stink, right in our neighbourhood it was. Wouldn't be coming from your house, by any chance, said this woman cattily as she went by; from a couple of streets over she was, dead now.

One morning we were playing with Mrs. Kanello's seven kids in front of our houses and I lean against the wall of the church and I feel a kind of dampness on my back. I turn around, there's a thread of green slime oozing down the wall, from the top of the bell tower all the way down to the ground. And that's how we discovered that the little partisan's dead body was still there, all those weeks. Some people climb up to the top, covering their noses with hankies. He's decomposed they yell down. Mrs. Kanello hands a sheet of raisin cloth up to them and they haul him down. The body was dripping, nothing was left but this sodden shapeless thing like crushed grapes in the raisin cloth, how can you bury this, this... thing, somebody

said. Day after day we scrubbed the street, sprinkled quicklime, nothing doing. The stink was still there when we left Rampartville; probably still there in fact.

They took him to the graveyard; me, I didn't participate because at that very moment the truck came to take mother away. Mother didn't put up any resistance. I can't even remember where our little Fanis disappeared to, but I wanted to follow along, only the vehicle was moving too fast and I couldn't keep up with it.

Maybe an hour later it was, I spotted her on the main street, you know, where the nice folks take their evening promenade, she was standing there in the back of the open truck. The sun was hot. The truck was an open truck and the Quisling women were standing there, thirsty, hanging onto each other so they wouldn't fall over. But they didn't have to worry; the truck was moving real slow now, at a slow walking pace so everybody in town could enjoy the public humiliation. All the women's hair was gone, cut off with sheep shears. Mother's hair too, it was cut off. There she was, standing at the back of the truck, not even trying to hide, she wasn't. Was she looking at something? Don't know.

The truck was just crawling along, the driver had his instructions, but there were people everywhere, in front of the vehicle, behind, on all sides and so the driver was creeping forward, had to be careful not to run down any of the citizens, laughing merrily as he went. The whole crowd was enjoying itself in fact, everybody was laughing and all the windows were full of spectators and the proper gentlemen stepped out of the coffeehouses to stare at the passing truck. Most of the people in the crowd were carrying goat horns or full animal guts cut open, all free from the municipal slaughterhouse, some others were ringing sheep or goat bells, where did they find all that stuff? Some were carrying flags and waving them patriotically over their heads. And the goat horns they were waving them in the air too, dancing around, and sticking them against the truck. What I mean is, they were trying to hit

the sheared women but they were missing mostly and only spattering them with bits of green filth, plus a few of the honourable people standing around, but nobody seemed to mind what with the general Liberation high spirits and they just kept on dancing around and around.

Me. I got my hands all smeared with the stuff, I was hanging onto the truck like a bunch of grapes, but when the second slug of guts hit me I fell off and now I had to run, run to catch up, ma was all the way to the side of the truck now, like she wanted to climb off and guts were smeared all over her, up climbs another guy, hangs a pair of horns tied together with animal innards around her neck and a sheep's bell and everyone is clapping and cheering and there I was, following along behind in slow match step.

That went on from ten in the morning till maybe six in the evening, up and down every street we went, downtown and uptown, but I wasn't going to leave. And lots of people were hammering on empty tin cans with rocks. And church bells were ringing. Not at Saint Kyriaki's though; father Dinos refused, locked the church doors tight.

Come afternoon we passed by the 'Venice' pastry shop, the place where the better families of Rampartville used to go for French pastries before the war. During the Occupation, of course, all they served was diluted grape marmalade on tiny little plates. Fortunately for me, I fell off right in front of the 'Venice', seeing as Doc Manolaras's wife was sitting with some friends of hers right there at one of tables and she shouted. Don't trample the kid! Waiter! And when I came to the waiter poured a pitcher of water over my head. Mrs. Manolaras had a name with a big reputation. So she says: Go home little girl, what are you doing here? Go on home, you shouldn't be seeing this, you'll only remember it all your life, go on home and

don't worry, it's just one day and it will be over soon, this evening they'll let them go.

I felt better already. Then I remembered something Mr. Kanello told my mother. So maybe you were a whore for a while but it was for Christian and moral reasons. Mother never did admit she was a whore on account of she had two Italians. But she was an illiterate woman and she respected Mrs. Kanello's opinion and since Mrs. Kanello said, she was a whore that got mother really upset, but she accepted it. So when the truck stopped outside our house to pick her up for the public humiliation, ma climbed right up almost eagerly, never crossed her mind they were wronging her punishing her the way they did.

Me, I grab the pitcher out of the waiter's hands and run off to catch up again and scramble up the side of the truck and pour water over my ma, standing there all day in the hot sun with her hair cut off, can't let anything happen to her I was saying to myself. And the sun was getting hotter even though it was almost afternoon, the sun was getting hotter and I don't remember anything more.

Translated by Fred A. Reed

Lia MEGALOU-SEFERIADI

From

The Joy Is in the Journey

Steps, steps, steps and more steps! Up and down, up and down! In a way it's fun...and how could I resist washing laundry today, with such a lovely wind blowing and the air so fresh that the clothes will dry in a moment? As soon as you hang them out they begin to flutter. Whenever I see white shirts and sheets lose their weight and start waving, dazzlingly white against the blue sky, I get carried away and in my imagination begin travelling on my beloved Aegean Sea to the Cyclades, to Tinos my homeland, where it was my fate to land on August 1922. It was a time when, once again, the Greeks had to pay for their sins because of their puffed-up dreams. My friend Niki, who is a retired teacher of Greek, tells me that there are many ancient Greek sayings in praise of moderation, a virtue which, it would seem, we lacked even in ancient times. As I was saying, after the disaster of 1922 many refugees came to the islands. The majority went to Syros, fewer to Tinos and Mykonos. Among them was a certain Eleni. She was a newborn babe when Smyrna went up in flames. The Greek boats that came to the rescue could not take all the people, and so the parents of the child, wanting to save her life, entrusted her to a sailor from Tinos. 'Take her to your island', they told him, 'and if we survive we'll come for her. But this is the end for us, at least let the child live...'. The sailor took the baby —almost the entire crew was from Tinos— and, on reaching the island, put her in his wife's care. They already had children, two boys, but decided to keep the little girl that God had put into their care. As far as they knew the girl had not been

baptized, the parents in their agitation had not mentioned any name, and so they named her Eleni. 'Elenitsa' I was called. I had no idea of all this. I thought I was their real child and that only my schoolmate Foteini was a little refugee. She had been saved in the confusion of the disaster by the captain of the same boat. He had no children and made her his daughter. Foteini was very pretty and they doted on her. They even sent her to secondary school. Later on she married a sea captain, had children, a house, property. Her two children received a good education; her daughter became a notary, her son a ship builder. Smart as anything, that Foteini of ours. She never learnt the truth about her birth, though. To this day she doesn't know. We were told her secret by my father in the course of a conversation about parents' interest in their children. I was saying, I remember, that if a child is your own, you feel for it and suffer and so on, but that with a child that isn't really yours it is different. My father then said: 'It's not quite like that, Elenitsa. I know that Captain Elias took little Foteini in 1922 from the refugees and ...' 'What! Foteini is not really their daughter? She's a refugee?! And they treat her like a princess?!' 'Yes, Elenitsa. It's as I am telling you: it's not just birth that counts, but rearing the child, living together, sharing its joys and sorrows. The actual birth is not enough: the heartache comes later ...'. Amazed, I listened to my father, never realizing that what he was saying concerned me directly. He would then tell us about that day when the port of Smyrna was so covered in human bodies that you couldn't even see the sea: it was absolutely terrible. You can imagine how it felt when a few years later I learnt the secret about my birth. By then I was a grown-up girl; it was during the years of the German Occupation, when we had to exchange all our best things for a little flour, a little oil. My mother kept her jewels in a little casket, which was emptying fast. One day, my big brother went over, opened it and took out a gold medal shaped like a teardrop. The medal hung from a gold chain together with a gold cross

with a rose instead of a Christ. 'With this we'll be able to get a whole sack of flour', he told my mother. 'No!' she exclaimed, 'Not that! Not that!' 'But that's all there's left!', he insisted. However my mother took the medal, cross and chain from him and put them back where they belonged. I wanted to see them, but she wouldn't let me. Still, I was too curious, and went and opened the casket while she was sleeping. Holding the gold objects in my hand, I saw the date of my baptism, my name and underneath the words 'little refugee girl' engraved on the back. At first I couldn't understand, but then I got very upset. These ornaments had been around the baby's neck, with nothing written on them. The inscription was added later on, for my baptism. Maybe the 'little refugee girl' was written by mistake, maybe they thought that some day my real parents would turn up, maybe again they had intended telling me the truth early on but somehow didn't, who knows... It was a serious blow to me when, willy nilly, I made them tell me the whole story. I tried to imagine my parents, but could never see their faces: all I could see were hands handing over a baby. And blood, and fire, and ashes. These pictures haunted me for a long time. Just as a girl would feel after foolishly abandoning her illegitimate child on the steps of a church and then wanting it back: she will never find it, however much she looks for it and her life becomes a torment. That's just how I felt. Until I finally realized that the chapter of my birth had ended and all I had to do was close it once and for all. My parents were those who brought me up, loved me and who, in turn, I loved, dearly and truly. And indeed since then, this is the first time that I re-open this chapter. Though maybe not. It opened of its own accord once, when I was watching old 'news' on television and suddenly Smyrna appeared on the screen, all in flames: 'Oh, my God!' I yelled. 'Oh, my God, my parents are being burnt alive!' And I burst into tears like a small child, though I was already a granny, with grey hair and all. That's why, though travelling to Turkey has become very easy now, I refuse to go, I

don't want to set foot in Smyrna. The years may go by, bringing about many changes, but some things never change. One never knows when the small child inside one is going to cry.

Translated by Maria Teresa von Hildebrand.

Marios MICHAELIDES

THE RATTLES OF TIME

On the plateau, the wings were blowing from every direction, as if entangled, causing an unprecedented howling; wrenching leaves, branches and bushes, which were swirling in front of the entrance to the cave. Strange. He stretched could hear the fragments of a melody ensnared in minor scales. It crossed his mind that he heard sobbing. The woman of steel, he thought, how did she weather such wind? When the dust had settled, he saw her image. He was shocked. The woman had let her hair down, loosening her braid; disheveled, blowing wildly, and, every so often, she would raise one hand as if to beg for something or to dictate a command. Yes. It was the command of an indestructible archetype ordering the holders of the keys to, at last, seal the secret funnel; the crater vomiting time into the universe.

The wind subsided, together with the neighing on the horses. She approached the fence: he felt his whole body burning. Something like burning lava flowed through his veins reaching all the way to his fingertips. And, still more, he felt the boiling bubbles seep through his skin and transform into light; a trace of pleasurable heat: a sign of rebirth amidst unrelenting torture of the years, were some had been burned to ashes and disappeared, while others, who had withstood the trial, were degraded.

The horses seemed immersed in a kind of timelessness. There was something peculiar about them. Like the aura of youth had passed above them. He saw how they held their head on the shook their main: the curvature of their tails. Beautiful horses! Full of vigor and without the passions, which infatuate those who get caught

in the web of trickery woven by fate. For a second, it seemed to him, they stood facing each other in two rows and, as if lead by invisible horseman, they united as one; and, then, began an endless whirl of circular trotting, in the opposite direction.

From Ta krotala tou hronou, 2010. Translated by Maty Linda MacNeely

LATER on

The birds flew

Electrified

Their wings

flapped in dim light

Like scorched banners

They did not care

so inflamed that

The exasperations of the universe

overwhelmed them

Then they surrendered

To an elliptical orbit

Down below

The electric wires were still

Conveying vague messages

About their fate

AROUND midnight

A cricket was heard again

A weird sound

Loaded with ash and pain.

'The voice of desolation' said my friend

And he started speaking an apocryphal language

Suddenly a flutter was heard

And something like a tree began to grow

On the arid land

Filled with shiny thoughts

Who drifted in the wind

In the wake of the birds

In the meantime

The tree instead of leaves grew words

And all kinds of birds in the air

Flourished

Around midnight

While my friend

Shrieked unintelligible sounds

IN THE meantime

On the horizon appeared a flock of

Birds, black birds.

All were startled

And they started to study

The innards of the day that had passed away

And began to fester.

Nothing.

Then they summoned the masks of spring and

Some got to dance.

But the witch-dawn looked at them

With one cloudy eye

And cast a dark cloud over them.

They surrendered.

But the flock of birds

Was still there

Nailed to the horizon.

They were dumbstruck.

But soon they fathomed the situation

As their minds filled with

Black plumes and fluttering birds.

to Voula Priovolos

*THEN SHE TOOK her brushes,
Stripped down to her wonderful canvas
And she began to collect scattered
Purple and blue,
Orange and white, unruly clouds*

*In her room
A gust of wind blew from time to time
Which grew stronger.
And these clouds quivered
And interlaced with visions of birds*

*The indignation of black and gray
Dripped with Venice yellow
And Constantinople gold
And though she swallowed her brushes
Seeking the intangible color
To smear on her the canvas of
So that nothing is deceived and escapes ethereal*

(Meanwhile Ritsos went on reading *The Moonlight Sonata* on the radio and the room filled with invocations 'Let me come with you ... Let me come with you...')

*IT WAS August
My friend was standing erect*

And gazing at the sea

Waiting.

Nothing

Time near sunset

And the air filled

With secret wings fluttering.

Suddenly he was surprised

Forgotten seagulls flew over

Wondering increasingly

Who was to appear

Over the fuzzy horizon

Something they had heard of the bitter poet

But it there was no time left for untimely recollections

Besides, these were not people

Only seabirds...

My friend was standing, but grew weary

And got to swimming in the sadness of the sunset

In life he had witnessed many things

But it was August

And the memory carried

Improbable visions of the Moon

'It will turn up any moment now, It will turn up any moment now ...'

Until he started crying

And began throwing stones

At the last seagulls

Which hovered in his bowels

As well as inside his soul

THIS IS WHAT happened next

The cross-lobotomy

Allowed

Impacted birds to escape

And they flew out and were lost

In the desolation of the universe

Down below

The body quivered

Left as it were

In the lust of recollections

He got increasingly anxious when

The birds would return

Who were confounded by the idea

of a final migration.

(However, the weather climbed the old trail and got lost. The body after surgery was transferred to the resuscitation room. 'A sensitive doctor', they say, 'listened to the last chills and full of angst said the birds had perished, gone. But others recounted they had seen huge birds hit the glass windows with their beaks... Late that afternoon was the funeral. The poet sent off the distressed seagulls, finches, sparrows, many sparrows, and starlings. The next day, the doctor wandered in the deserted streets on his own and whispered over and over, 'Lord, not him, not him, Lord ...)

THE BIRDS WERE unable to withstand

The endless fall of the meteorites

Poor souls

Oblivious

Of the universal coordinates

Or of the theories of colliding particles

Hence, the hapless creatures

Felt the touch of the curse

And saw their plumage disperse into the abyss

Only the shadow of their flesh

Remains now

Travelling for light years

Like an adversarial fate

Dragging our humble bodies

Into the furnace of our ancestral scream of despair

That is why I am telling you

I am afraid

Amanda MICHALOPOULOU

Woman in Tree

Marianna Domvrou stepped out of the corner store carrying a red bucket and matching mop. She liked running errands in her new neighborhood, as if she were an ordinary woman in need of ordinary things. When people recognized her and smiled at her Marianna would return the smile and continue on her way. She understood that some people hated her. Just the other day a man spat on the sidewalk at her feet to show her how much she disgusted him. Marianna tried to remember that people saw her as a symbol, not a person.

It was a hot, muggy day. Turning left at the main square in Psychiko, Marianna shifted the mop to her other hand and wiped her sweaty palm on her jeans. The sky was growing steadily darker.

As she passed by the park she heard a girl's fragile voice: 'Lady, hey, lady!' She peered through the railings of the fence. The playground was deserted. 'Up here!' The voice was coming from the sky. She raised her head and saw a huge, desiccated pine tree—these days on the news they were talking about Mediterranean pine disease. 'Here!' The girl was perched like a cat on a high branch. She must have been eight or nine.

'What are you doing up there?'

'I climbed up and now I can't get down.'

Marianna looked around. Not a soul in sight. She opened the low gate of the playground and set the mop and bucket down beside her on the sparse grass.

‘Where’s your mother?’ she asked. With children of that age she presumed there was usually some parent around, or a nanny, particularly in areas like Psychiko.

‘My mother’s dead,’ the girl said faintly, and as soon as she heard that Marianna turned the bucket upside down and used it as a step to help her climb up into the tree. What on earth had she been thinking, asking such a personal question of a little girl she didn’t know. She kept stretching her arms out as far as she could to grab hold, and every time she reached a new branch she thought she really needed to start working out. She needed to stop spending all her time painting.

At some point a branch forked in a strange way. The lower branch was scrawny, while the other shot up high at a dangerous angle. The girl was perched at its very tip. ‘Can you give me your hand from where you are?’ The girl shook her head several times and started to cry. Her blond ponytail shook, too.

Just then the first fat, scattered drops of rain started to fall. ‘Okay,’ said Marianna. ‘I’ll come up to you. What’s your name?’ The sky behind the branches was pitch black.

‘Aella,’ the girl said, and wiped her eyes.

‘A what?’

‘Aella. She’s the fastest of the Amazons.’

And here she was, the fastest of the Amazons, stranded in a pine tree, clinging to a branch—and Marianna, with her perfectly ordinary name, trying in vain to help. *Do you feel at all like Joan of Arc?* one quick-witted journalist had asked. *Are you trying to help others, to show them something they can believe in?*

'I can't climb any higher,' Marianna said, raising her eyes entreatingly. Then she looked back down at the ground. 'Doesn't anyone ever drive down this damned street?' Perhaps she should have stayed on the ground and waved down some passing car—only what she felt for strangers was, in the end, a kind of controlled anthropophobia. When people tried to talk to her she would smile politely and keep walking as if she hadn't heard, or as if she was in a terrible rush. She would move off at an angle, like a spider that had decided to weave its web elsewhere.

'No one's going to come,' Aella said. 'We're in trouble.'

Marianna was close to her now, and could see clearly the tight little mouth and puckered forehead. The girl had uneasy eyes and bony wrists. She was trying to get through life by climbing trees, Marianna decided. Meanwhile, the rain was getting heavier.

'Give me your hand.'

The girl refused, stubbornly shaking her ponytail. 'Okay, then I'll come up there. And you'll climb down over me. I'll hold you. Does that sound good?'

Aella nodded and hugged her arms tightly to her chest.

'Okay, I'm coming.' Marianna climbed out onto the branch. Her shirt was clinging to her back and her hair was dripping. She felt as if it were her mission to save this girl, just as two months earlier it had been her mission to save all of Greece. *How does it feel to have created such a major scandal with your work?* one journalist had asked, putting a little metal-meshed microphone in front of her mouth.

The talk show hosts had less direct, more offhanded ways of trying to draw her out. They complimented her on her portraits as the technicians shoved tiny microphones under her blouse. Then the studio would fall silent and the hosts would introduce her with phrases such as, *Today we have with us the woman who toppled the government, or, the artist who painted an Inquisition of her own.* There would

be a short break in the studio as a pre-recorded montage went back over the timeline of events: her solo exhibition 'Greek Dreams' at a gallery in Metaxourgeio, where a crazy religious woman with a switchblade had slashed a painting that showed naked monks and ministers of Parliament kneeling in the Vatopedi Monastery. Then the incident with the other painting, which some members of the right-wing organization Golden Dawn had taken off the wall and smashed over her head so it hung around her neck like a collar; she had painted them naked, too, eating a Greek flag, and had lined up their various symbols on a table like a still life, while through a skylight behind them came what the critics described as 'pure Flemish light.' The montage continued with the brawl in Parliament and the hundreds of thousands of people who had gathered outside brandishing pieces of wood on which they had pasted blurry reproductions of her painting that showed ministers of Parliament rolling around in the mud.

While the video played, the host would lean forward in his chair and try to engage her in conversation, using words like 'amazing,' 'unique,' 'impressive,' the kinds of adjectives she often heard from people who didn't know a thing about art. Marianna would make an enormous effort to smile, as if they were expressing deep truths. Then the montage would end and the questions would begin.

How did you decide to become an artist?

Her answer: Before this happened, no one ever asked me anything serious about my paintings.

What do you think people saw in your paintings? After all, these scandals were already well known. Shouldn't we have had enough images of them by now?

Her answer: My paintings have no parapolitical value, nor any trace of humor. I'm interested in the classical values of painting. In the shades of the ministers' skin as they dive into the mud.

Aella crawled on her belly along the branch and Marianna grabbed her and lifted her into the air. She was thin. Aella tried to get a footing a little further down and Marianna threw a leg over each side of the branch as if riding a horse, balancing her body so as to support the girl's weight. Aella's ponytail had gotten wet, and her green hairband was the last thing Marianna saw as she placed one Converse on the lowest branch and the other on the thick trunk of the pine.

'Thanks!' the girl called. 'I'll wait for you here. Climb down!'

It was then that Marianna realized what was going on with the tree. If it had been a drawing, she would've erased it and started all over again. But it wasn't art, it was reality. The idea crossed her mind that something similar might have been happening with the ministers, too, or the monks. Her elegiac tone had been all wrong, and that made people think about the scandals in a different way, one that had nothing to do with the actual events, but with the angle they were seeing them from.

The strange perspective of the rising branch made it impossible for Marianna to put her foot into the fork where the branches met without getting dizzy, without being afraid she might fall.

'Come down,' Aella called.

'I can't. Go and get someone. Tell them to bring a ladder.'

She was wet to the bone. She imagined herself as the central figure in one of her sought-after paintings. A faint light would be spilling through the dark clouds. The red bucket upside-down on the grass. And she, behind the ailing branches. Her title would be simple as always: *Woman in Tree*.

Translated by Karen Emmerich

Zdravka MIHAYLOVA

The 'Reception' of Cavafy's Poetry in Bulgaria

In 1963, on the occasion of the centenary of C. Cavafy's birth, a collection of his poems was published in Bulgarian. It had a great impact on local readership: the 'reception' of Cavafy's oeuvre in Bulgaria is inextricably connected to the name of the devoted translator, poet, thinker, philologist and literary critic Stefan Gechev. In collaboration with a team of poets – G. Mitskov, Al. Dalchev, Al. Muratov, Kr. Stanishev – Gechev rendered into Bulgarian the original profoundly humane message of Cavafy's poetry.

Not only for poets but for the whole of Bulgarian intelligentsia, coming across Cavafy's poetry was a shattering and exceptional experience. As author Georgi Danailov remarks in the introduction to the *Anthology of Modern Greek Poetry* by Stefan Gechev, 'this particular poet is not simply a new galaxy that we are discovering with the help of an ultramodern telescope. Cavafy is the discovery of a whole new law of nature'. Thanks to the 1963 translation-edition of Cavafy's poems, Bulgarian spiritual life was infused in the spirit of Cavafy with a new vision of things. The Cavafian method of objective detachment from emotion, and his spare style employing a superficially emotional vacuum results in intellectual excitement. Also, the ironic way in which the poet confronts matters introduces a different point of view.

Bulgarian poets, engaging in a dialogue with Cavafy's poetry, are influenced mainly by his philosophical and historic poems. Most often interpreted are the great

Alexandrian's poems *Waiting For the Barbarians* and *Ithaca*, followed by *Walls, The City, The Pawn, The First Step, An Old Man, Thermopylae*. Some of the poems are dedicated to Cavafy. Another one is dedicated by one of Cavafy's translators to his colleague Stefan Gechev.

The poem *A Portrait Of An Old Man* gives an opportunity to poet Kiril Kadiiski (1947) to dwell on the subject of old age, depicting an atmosphere of pessimism provoked by the feeling of loneliness and the unavoidable end.

Blaga Dimitrova (1922) in one of her poems influenced by C. Cavafy, entitled *The Barbarians*, and Dimitar Vassilev (1926) in his poem *The New Barbarians*, introduce their new interpretation of the epoch of Alexander the Great's successors as a period of decadence in parallel with our modern times, analyzing society not only as social texture but as spiritual atmosphere as well. Identifying time present with times past, the verses of both poets contain elements from the Cavafian notion of history. Here Cavafian motifs in Vassilev's verse resound as a modern satire. Their poems reproduce Cavafy's epigrammatic style and his subtle irony.

With the poems *The Last One At Thermopylae* and *Roi Mat* Ivan Borislavov sets off from Cavafian symbolism and introduces his own interpretation of human grandeur as encompassed in humbleness, the sense of self-sacrifice with 'wounded chest' when those defending Thermopylae already know that 'the Persians will still pass through'.

The only reference to the native of the poet city of Alexandria is found in the poem under the same title (*Alexandria*) by Ivan Theofilov (1931), dedicated to the memory of Cavafy himself in which the wonder of creativity emerges from the skin-deep impression of daily routine of the life of a public servant of the Egyptian Ministry of Irrigation.

In the poem *Epilogue* L. Levchev (1935) identifies Ithaca with an ideological ideal, while *Odysseus* by Parush Parushev (1947) treats the subject of homecoming, that of Odysseus, and expresses the value of simple pleasures and excitements of life when finally a man arrives to his destination after a journey full of knowledge and adventure.

The motif of the icy walls which imperceptibly cut off man from the surrounding world and from his own self can be traced in Blaga Dimitrova's poem *Building Walls by Myself*. In this poem B. Dimitrova is inspired by the theme of the Cavafian *Walls*, combining the Japanese haiku with the form of a poem by Wallace Stevens (*Thirteen Ways of Looking At a Blackbird*). The opinion Cavafy once expressed about himself that 'he is a poet of future generations', along with international acclaim, is also confirmed by the 'reception' of his poetry in Bulgaria 80 years after his death.

Translated by the author

Christoforos MILIONIS

Fryni

Our Fryni did not have the pallor of the ancient flute player. A pallor which, in man's strange imagination, was the reason for giving the name of the toad, the most repulsive animal, to the most divine creature, 'the most beautiful courtesan of all time', who had inspired an Apelles to paint the Anadyomene Aphrodite, and a Praxiteles to make the Cnidos statue of her. [...] Our Fryni had a dark complexion, browned in the sun, and eyes that cast dark, lustrous glances. And as her body... Now that I think about it all, here in my apartment in Ippokratous Street, I must have been the luckiest person in the world of 'the closed rural community', as those who have studied the subject call it, when they talk about the time, which, they say, is lost forever. With comments like that make me feel that I am the last witness or, to put it another way, the person who has been given this privilege.

Anyhow, our life was indeed so rural, that it was full of the smell of horse manure and rutting animals, and was so confined, that if you dared to cross the village boundaries, you would most probably have found yourself in front of the hollow eyes of German machine guns that crouched in their lairs, guarding the roadways.

[...] Outside the village, there was a deep ravine beneath a huge precipice, where birds of prey nested, and all around there was dense vegetation: large maple trees, plane trees, covered with wild wine and clematis, so that Fryni and I would get lost in the damp, sunless footpaths. Then the gardens began –little stone hedges among cherry and walnut trees, going down to the stream below, with its

maidenhair and large willows leaning over the water that flowed nimbly away, after it had first been churned up into a white cloud by the huge waterfall. We all used to water our gardens together, and then go down to the stream.

[...] One day, in the middle of summer, when the place was seething with cicadas, Fryni suddenly groaned, and threw away her basket. 'Aah, I'm suffocating', she said, and tossed back her head. And then she said: 'I'm going into the waterfall'. Her eyes shone. I was speechless, standing with my mouth open. She went behind some heather bushes, and threw her frock on the branches. She was left only with a white petticoat. And then, stooping over, she climbed the rocks that were slippery with moist vegetation. The white cloud of water enveloped her, and she began to shriek, her cries, her cries drowning in the roar of the waterfall. Only when I called out, 'Fryni, you will slip', did I hear her say, 'You come too'. But I pretended I hadn't heard her.

From Kalamas and Acheron. Translated by Marjorie Chambers

Amy MIMS

BRIEF EXCEPT FROM PART THREE OF

Greek Trilogy

The strongest link between Kevin and Daedala was their passionate interest in Cyprus. In May of 1977, they began intensive work on a 90— minute documentary film commissioned by ERT ONE for Greek Television, focusing on the theme of Cypriot Resistance to Foreign Invaders through the Centuries. Ever since her first contact with Cyprus in 1960, Daedala had been fascinated by this theme, which vividly reminded her of Irish History. As for Kevin, he had approached similar aspects of Greek History through the Ages, in his book entitled 'Athens Alive'. — like Kevin's other books, none of which have been translated into Greek! — most Greeks have not even heard of this book! (As usual, the MME prefer to promote other —for the most part, second-rate —'better-sellers'). Anyway, Kevin was delighted to select the most enlightening texts collected in Cobham's 'Excerpta Cypria' about all the foreigners who had invaded Cyprus since the 12th century — beginning with the Crusaders under Richard the Lionheart and later on, followed by the omnipresent Venetians, until 1570... at which point, Bragadino was forced to surrender Famagusta to the Turks, who continued to rule Cyprus until 1878... at which point, the British 'purchased' Cyprus for a pittance, and governed the Island until the resounding defeat in 1959...[But as everyone knows, the British still play an important role through their inordinately large bases in Dekelia and Episkopi. Indeed, British conduct in Cyprus was so insufferably arrogant that long before Daedala met Kevin, she had written the following violent protest:

‘One day, the glorious British Empire, in praise of which Queen Victoria used to boast: <THE SUN NEVER SETS ON MY EMPIRE!!> will shrink to the size of Adam Smith’s proverbial head-of-a-pin!!’

Fortunately, for the purpose of the aforementioned documentary, Kevin approached the period of British Rule in Cyprus in a thoroughly objective way – a billion light-years removed from Daedala’s Anglophobic outbursts. He was the ideal writer for the historical background of the Cyprus film – capable of discussing each and every Foreign Rule in Cyprus in a historically balanced perspective, while at the same time, also recording the great Resistance of the Cypriot People, who – at least, until 1977 – had so bravely confronted each and every ‘Conqueror’.

*

Near the end of the summer of 1989, one August evening Daedala saw Kevin Andrews for the last time. When she passed by just after sunset, she found Kevin hard at work tapping away on his antediluvian typewriter. Earlier that same afternoon, he had reached the End of his Magnum Opus on the betrayal of Cyprus. For several months he’d been preoccupied with decoding an extraordinary interview with Turkish Prime Minister, Ecevit, tape-recorded at the BBC in April of 1989. This controversial document had been sent to Kevin by Marion Sarafi, widow of the renowned ELAS General. At the core of the double-talk on this tape was Ecevit’s twisted account of his Peace (sic!) Mission to Northern Cyprus, peppered with phrases such as his ‘love-affair (sic!) with Greece’... at the very moment Turkey was mercilessly bombing the most beautiful Cypriot town of Kyrenia.

With his usual meticulousness, Kevin had ‘decoded’ the tape, copying out every single syllable of Ecevit’s mumbo-jumbo and underlining with red ink any question-marks there might still be. The text of the interview had become a palimpsest and in the final task of presenting it, Kevin surpassed even his own

record for finicky corrections. Every time Daedala had visited him during those last weeks, he had just discovered some new error — minuscule, but for his own perfectionist ear, this newly discovered decibel might prove vital. Nevertheless, even by Kevin's most rigorous standards, by the time his friend came to visit him, the Ecevit text was finished!

While Kevin added the final touches to the Table of Contents and title-page of this book, Daedala sat in his workshop-kitchen, listening to the actual BBC tape. How could she ever forget this scene, with the summer twilight starting to darken through the open door leading into Kevin's meddler-tree garden... With the tapping of the typewriter keys in the background and the slippery, smooth, oh so suave (and oh so false) intonations of Ecevit in the foreground, Daedala was mesmerized for the umpteenth time into re-living the Invasion of Cyprus. Just as the tape drew to a close, Kevin burst into the kitchen triumphantly and handed Daedala the absolutely final text of the absolutely final chapter of his devastating revelations connected with the Betrayal of Cyprus. This climax of the book, which he had entitled 'Bomb in the Labyrinth', he had just decided to call 'Rondo a la Turca'.

From this point on, the remainder of Kevin's story reads like an ancient Greek tragedy. In the tortured process of waiting for a reliable publisher now that his own work was completed, Kevin was dangling between Scylla and Charybdis. The 'Flying Dutchman', as he called his quondam publisher of 'Greece in the Dark' had disappeared in thin air and Kevin was so desperate to get his cry in the wilderness into print that he fell into unscrupulous hands. Robbed of his usual clairvoyance, he allowed himself to trust untrustworthy promises. Like another tragic figure from ancient Greece, he had set himself the implacable task of seeking the truth and fearlessly revealing it, even if this meant his own downfall. Under ordinary circumstances, Kevin would have re-examined every single promise and

source suggested to him. But as a result of the total silence from any proper publisher and without any tangible audience on the horizon to hear the truth he had discovered, Kevin finally lost his patience. And this was even more unendurable, because the truth he longed to reveal involved a whole People, not only the history of a single monumental character, such as Oedipus. An entire People – but an immensely courageous People.

Today – April, Anno Domini 2014 – almost twenty-five years after Kevin’s loss on September 1st 1989 – a whole quarter of a century of unforgiveable silence for Kevin’s buried books, which he gave his life to write What has become of the Cypriot People? The answer to this question enters the most tragic realm of all in Kevin Andrews’ story, for many of the Greek-Cypriots in power nowadays are about to bow down to the lowest evil of all:

C o m p r o m I s e.

God forbid – but if this does indeed happen, what will be the Cassandran end of the erstwhile legendary Resistance of the People of Cyprus? Daedala could not help wondering if it was not worth Kevin’s life to die for a People betrayed not only by the so-called ‘Great Powers’, but still worse, by their own present-day petty politicians now in power. Daedala wondered if Kevin should not have persisted, until his bitter end, with writing his buried ‘Bomb in the Labyrinth’ indictment against the Betrayal of Cyprus. And Daedala went on wondering if Kevin should have withdrawn in time from a Cause condemned – irrevocably condemned – to lose its age-old Struggle for Freedom.

However, Kevin himself never thought like this. His favourite image was an open palm of the hand, always ready to welcome the right moment for the right action, however perilous it might be. Only this time the right moment never came... Less than a month after that long-ago August 6th twilight when Daedala sat in

Kevin's workroom listening to the unforgettable notes of this 'Rondo a la Turca', came only the deafening echo of his mysterious death off the coast of the remotest Ionian Island: Cythera.

Along with many other stunned Athenians, Daedala refused to believe that Kevin had drowned. Despite his epilepsy, he was a fine swimmer (as well as mountain-climber, all by himself, clambering up to the top of Mount Olympos and the Pindos). As for the convenient scenario invented by several malignant chroniclers, who hinted that Kevin had intentionally drowned himself, no comment! Kevin had such a healthy gratitude for life that he would never have taken such a cowardly way out. Furthermore, he would never have chosen to be compared with Icarus, even though Icarus was the hero of his best-known work (entitled 'The Flight of Icarus'). In the ancient Greek sense of the word, the salto mortale performed by Icarus was *h y b r I s*. And Kevin believed in that other ancient Greek motto: 'Παν μέτρον ἄριστον! Best to measure everything!'

NO!

Kevin would never have rashly challenged the storm-tossed Sea. He would never have chosen to defy the Elements of Nature. Because if he had done so, he would have given his enemies the right to say: 'It's his own fault! He deserved to die! Let's forget him!' And Kevin Andrews did not wish to be forgotten – not for himself, but for the books he had laboured on so many decades. With every text he ever wrote, Kevin was struggling to keep the lessons taught by Greek History alive and during the last fifteen years of his life, exactly the period when Daedala knew him, he also lived the History of Cyprus, at a time when the maxim of the magnificent philosopher, Santayana, remained uppermost in Kevin's mind:

'The Peoples who forget their historical catastrophes, are condemned to relive the disaster'.

And Kevin's lifelong purpose was to help the Greek People's memory remain alive and in order to do so, he would never have immolated himself.

Title of Volume 3: *Daedala's Helladic Travels and Kevin's Buried Books*

Dimitris MINGAS

From

It Rarely Snows on the Islands

Every September, a few days after the opening of the new school period, I have the feeling, almost the certainty, that most of the children are familiar to me, that they had been students of mine again earlier in the past. They have the same characteristics the same (as the last time) stable age and slightly altered names. In all my transfers and school changes I deal with similar situations. Up to a point coincidences entertained me but as time went by these incidents begun to occur worryingly often.

Many times I get carried away and I qualify their progress taking under consideration criteria and data from years before, sometimes I am even lenient with them – according of course to the place and the period we had first met in the past.

By time I got used to it; I accepted, an irrational according to the facts situation as if it was something almost normal. But when one morning I faced in the classroom of the last grade of high school a girl, who I very well knew that had died years ago, I was shocked. She looked very much like a schoolmate of mine, whom I had loved since the first classes and I unexpectedly lost afterwards.

As years go by similar experiences multiply, they seal my life and they define my attitude. The other day she revealed herself to me again. From the desk face to mine a teacher who had just arrived was smiling and waving to me. It was she again! Her face was glowing and she looked older than the day we had met in the classroom of the last grade and even older than the last time I remember her at

the island, walking slowly along a snowy landscape and coming smiling towards me.

I saw her again the next day at a literary meeting on Alexandros Papadiamantis. There were many people there. She was standing leaning her body against a pillar of the amphitheatre, still, attached to the lecturer. She was more mature than the previous day at school, almost close to the age she would have had – if she had been alive of course. Despite my interest in what was said, my look was set upon her all the time; her presence monopolized my attention. Time was passing by and she wouldn't move. The lecturer finished his speech, the audience applauded and she was there, standing still. I was worried. She realized that she had died – I thought – and may be she understood that this is not our island. I stood up from my seat; but in vein.

She moved on. She went towards the platform and she opened her books and notes. She started speaking. She isolated from the work of Papadiamantis the incident of the meeting of Diamantis Agallos with the shadow of Mirsouda at the river of Kehria – December and it was snowing. Her subject was the extended story The Rose Shores. She spoke of expanding and surpassing reality...

I didn't go near her when her speech was over nor did I follow her when she got out of the hall. And where would she go? Her house at the island was on the hill above the port and this city was plain, almost Mediterranean.

But I could not sleep all night. I fell asleep at dawn; and then I could not wake up.

The next morning I was late for school. I found the classroom door shut; I thought it was strange. I try to listen and with surprise I distinguish her voice amongst all the other voices. In my own classroom! I stand unable to decide. It seemed that she was kind and foreseeing enough to keep the children busy so that

they would not notice my absence. I knock discreetly on the door, they would not open; harder... I insist; nothing. I push the door slightly and it gives in; I get inside, I make two steps and...

Among my present students and our old schoolmates, is sitting Mavretta –a mature woman now at the right age– she is reading. Nobody is disturbed by my presence. After the first shock I realize that she is reading my verses, unpublished ones. I walk quietly along the classroom, next to the wall, without disturbing them, I get to my desk and I seat down, next to Aethonas and Stratis –friends from my childhood, schoolmates– who were listening attached to her and became aware of my presence only the last moment. Aethonas makes space for me and then he bends down so as not to be seen and points with his eyes persistently out of the window. It is snowing outside; for the first time in one of my poems.

Michail MITRAS

Transitions

1

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

the sea is always far away

(when I'm looking for it)

3

room room room room

room room room room

room room room room

room room room room

room room room room

room room room room

room room room room

room room room room

room room EMPTY room

5

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

touch touch touch touch

(when I touch you)

Kostoula MITROPOULOU

From

The Old Curiosity Shop

The young girl came again on a Sunday. He had opened up the shop very early in the morning and for no special reason, he was singing and looking out onto the street. She came in wrapped in a bright red knit that made her body appear naked.

‘What do you sell on Sunday?’ and she looked at him provocatively and with that naivety of girls her age. ‘Aren’t you going to kiss me, Daddy? I’ve come a long way.’

He pushed the door noisily and held his arms open. ‘Careful, you’ll ruin my make-up, don’t be such a savage, you devoured one of my earrings together with my ear, take it easy, I said, this is a very expensive dress, do you like it? No, I’m not wearing any underwear, it drives you wild, old man, right? No, I’m not taking it off, I’m cold, I’d like a very hot cup of tea, do you still have such a thing in here? It feels like I’ve been gone for more than a month, what do you think? What are you looking at me like that for? It’s me, I came to see you, I missed you, and now quick the tea. I’ll lock up and then I’ll tell you a story.’

She spoke to him and constantly changed place, from his arms to the middle of the shop, among the furniture and the antiques with the dust of years, ‘I like it in here, as if I’m on a trip, only my suit-case is missing.’ And her laughter brought tears to his eyes, as he prepared her tea and the words ‘she’s back’ lodged in his mind, which could mean love. Nonsense, can a young girl love her father sexually?

And yet she had come back to him, which meant she had chosen. In heaven's name, how could he endure such happiness?

'The tea's ready' and he saw her behind the old console, wrapped in the cover of the sofa, naked and the bright red dress laid out on a lame chair. He knelt and kissed her toes, the dimples in her knees, her belly, her rosy breasts, her shoulders, her eyes, her mouth. 'Now you've come I'll begin living.' And he gently rested his face on her belly. 'Stay with me' and his warm tears aroused her.

'What are these antics, Daddy? You're crying? I'm here, I'm not going away, I'll be good to you, what lovely tea! Is that from Africa too? Know something? I'm beginning to get used to you and I don't much like it. I was always free, understand? Hey, psst, what are you doing there? You're driving me mad. Don't stop.'

He had thrust his head between her open legs and was sucking the warm fluid, he could feel her quivering like a bird, he was sucking, swallowing all her juices, burning fluids and the scent of flowers of the field, 'You're magnificent,' and her eyes, half-closed, drove him wild. He fell on top of her naked, desolate, despairing, he thrust himself deep into her womb and that languished 'ah' of hers stunned him and he would begin all over again, 'I love you.' Her face became exaggeratedly drawn from the same contraction many times and then she tumbled onto the middle of the sofa and became a rosy little ball and snuggled up to him, 'I love you,' and he kissed her everywhere, bewitched.

She gave him a cigarette one of hers. 'You were magnificent and that's why I shan't scold you for the word you used' and she closed her eyes, 'I'm cold.' He held her wrapped in his arms and with the old embroidered cover and again he kissed her everywhere and she grew impatient, 'Enough, I'm tired, and don't ever say such disgusting things again. What does 'I love you' mean? Old words that don't mean a

thing, just listen to him 'I love you,' in other words 'stagnation'. Cover me up, I'm cold. What time is it?'

He would become terrified each time, scared that she would disappear suddenly and he would never see her again. 'It's still early, I want to hear the story you had to tell me.'

He sat on the floor and rested his head on her legs. 'I'll call you desolation, abyss, Acheron. I'll call you southern star and flood-tide and ebb-tide. Tell me how you'd like me to call you so you come, so you hear me and come, a devastated life is all I have to give you, but I will love you faithfully, all right, fine I won't say that word again, I'll be faithful as faithful as a dog to you and you'll kick me and I'll be glad. Do you want me to pretend I'm a dog to show you?'

He fell on all fours and barked plaintively and rubbed against her and she burst into laughter, 'I'll call you Blackie, I had a dog that died, now you'll be my Blackie, come on, Blackie, run so I can see you, but on all fours, no fooling around.'

He would soon be out of breath. 'You've grown old, pal. Come here now, I've got a bone for you to lick, beg, there's a good boy! Here, catch!'

She wrapped her bare leg around his neck and he grunted, like a dog 'Thank you' and then like a man 'Thank you' and with all his senses heightened so that he could keep this happiness for afterwards when she was gone. Her voice reminded him of music. He sprang up startled.

'Now I'll tell you my story. I went on a trip without a boat or train, without a car or plane, nothing like that. I had a buddy, we grew up together, we were both nineteen, 'Shall we take off?' he said to me. I didn't understand. 'Why not?' and I went with him. What are you looking at me like that for? We didn't make love you dirty jealous old man. He gave me 'hash' to smoke and we 'got it on' together for eight days and nights. I don't know what we did, what went on in that room but one

day I got bored and when he was in the bathroom I took off. And you know something? I had fooled him and I wasn't taking the dose he gave me, I'd let him get 'high' first, and then I'd take a little, out of curiosity. A shame though, eh? My buddy kicked the bucket! I found out about it afterwards. They found him in the bathroom dead as a doornail. Good thing I'd gone, because otherwise I'd have blown it, eh? Did I scare you? Big deal! I saw some strange happenings on this trip and I think I got as far as Africa, imagine!

Translated by Elly Petrides

Klairi MITSOTAKI

Princess Tito and I

Princess Tito has now come down into the garden. Yesterday upon her return she realized she had lost two of her ribbon strips, and today she came back to look for them. I saw one of them fall on the lawn, just to the right of the fountain. She must have been entirely absorbed by the whispering sound of the running water of the fountain and never sensed her ribbon strip slip off. I have no idea where the other ribbon strip fell. She may well have lost it days ago without realizing it. She doesn't count her ribbons every day you see. But yesterday was an unfortunate day. The sun hid away for a while, and unable to keep herself busy with something else, Princess Tito, decided to count her ribbon strips. But alas! Two were missing. She raised the roof. It was the loudest fuss ever made, and I simply can't imagine a worse one. Of course I didn't say a word about having seen the ribbon strip fall on the lawn, to the right of the fountain, nor will I ever tell her I did. Not even if she turns the world upside-down.

Nothing unusual in Princess Tito making scenes of course. They come to her as naturally as talent to other people. And what joy it is to watch her in that state. An entertainment granted at no cost.

But now she really is searching frantically. Princess Tito is exceptionally obstinate. Not only has she never concealed this, for she loves honesty, but her very name spells it out: Princess Tito. PRINCESS TITO is just another way of saying OBSTINACY, only in more words.

Princess Tito loves the water droplets that sprinkle from the fountain. They enchant her. And if an oblique sunbeam happens to pierce through them making them glisten in golden light, then Princess Tito loses her mind completely. There is probably something atavistic about this. What other explanation could there be. I keep myself perfectly composed before this extraordinary phenomenon. Of course, I do not accompany her into the garden, and still less would I go with her to the fountain. However, as soon as I see her in a better disposition, I approach her and skillfully try to instill in her the idea of taking a stroll as far as the fountain. And there I think it is always possible that in her enthusiasm she may lose one of her ribbon strips. But there she goes again in a frenzy with the sprinkling droplets. She has forgotten she went all the way out there to look for her lost ribbon strips.

When she comes back she will be in despair. Once more I shall hear the terrible command: 'Unreservedly! Off to the gallows!' Where on earth does she find such words! She doesn't even know what they mean and yet she brings them out every time something goes wrong. What am I to do? Shall I leave her alone? Shall I intervene? What if I were to wait for her behind the door and as soon as she came in say to her: 'How did your Highness enjoy herself in the garden?' She might be startled, and freeze to the spot. Then I would cross over, stand on the other side, and like a thunderbolt strike her with the question: 'Is your Highness holding something in her hands?' She would be so frightened that even if she had found her ribbon it would drop from her hands, and then I would blow it away, puff! and then we'd see if she'd ever find it. She'd never ever find it at all. That's what would happen.

There is Princess Tito now on her way back. But what has happened? Why won't she stand still for a moment? Why doesn't it ever occur to her that I might have something to tell her? I must run up to her.

I didn't catch her. She turned at the end of the alleyway and disappeared. Why was she in such a hurry? Was she trying to hide away from me? Did she want to hide something from me? Had she become absorbed in something else? Was she really holding something in her hands? One must keep in mind that Princess Tito is exceptionally secretive. I don't mean secretive as in unable to extract a secret out of her. No, I just mean it in the sense of trying to get an idea of what goes on in her head. Generally speaking, she does combine very contradictory characteristics. I said just now that she is honest, and so she is. And now I say she's secretive. And she is that too. Here is an example. I can recall the scene as if it was going on before me right now. One day when she just wasn't talking at all I said to her: 'Why is your Highness so thoughtful today?' She kept silent for quite a while and then suddenly turned her long pointed plume towards the windows and replied to me in a low voice 'You have to understand that I was born thoughtful. And you should also know that for the first years of my life I had my eyes shut —not because I was asleep, but because I was thinking. I shan't tell you what I was thinking, naturally, but at that time I thought of almost all there is to think about. And now, when you see me looking thoughtful, it is not because I am thinking. No. When you see me looking thoughtful like this you should understand that I am not thinking at all, but remembering. I am remembering the things I had been thinking about then. Because I no longer think, I just remember.'

What could I say? I keep realizing —and it embarrasses me — that although she has completely lost her wits, her Highness brings out some very sane remarks. Once when I noticed a certain agitation about her I wished to understand at least how she was feeling, so I asked her: 'Could your Highness be suffering from the heat?' And after fluttering her fingers and her toes, she answered in a deep voice: 'How could *you* know, how indeed? But heat creates slight vibrations in the air, after

which all the numbers are periodically re-circulated and all clocks run backwards and forwards until they come to rest at a point of balance that shows the correct time.' I cannot find words to describe my astonishment which certainly lasted for quite a while, at which she made a monotonous gurgling sound and turned her back on me in order to leave, while I, who both think and feel, felt such love for her and such longing that I trailed after her, calling out desperately: 'And cold?' And she, almost contemptuously, and without for one moment slackening her tireless stride, hissed back at me: 'Cold is a long series beginning from nowness.' [...]

Translated by Christopher Scott

Andreas MITSOU

The Feeble Lies of Orestes Chalkiopoulos

I still talk a lot. Waters boil in me and are disturbed.

I am afraid. I have no other means of salvation that once more to create my story and narrate it.

It makes me feel bad that I can't keep my mouth shut. But I can see no other cure or antidote to set things right.

I realize that every time I finish my story, I will be abandoned. Once again I will be alone.

Before I began this story, before I began talking, I felt as small as an ant. But now I know I've grown wings. I bear in mind of course that: 'The ant when it is about to perish grows wings'. All of this concerns 'metamorphosis', it is a natural process and takes place when a species is about to perish.

But I don't care. If I am an ant I prefer to be a winged one.

For now I must search relentlessly to find another woman. Later I will tell her my story. Surely I will convince her. This one I will keep.

Translated by Thom Nairn and D. Zervanou

Michalis MODINOS

Wild West: A Love Story

I don't invent anything, Teresa McEldowney says back in August 1989, fifteen years after our first encounter, while I'm at the brink of falling asleep in one of those uncomfortable chairs at Adamas Port, exhausted from such a long waiting for the boat to arrive. A story is not necessarily better than reality just because you invent things, she continues. Besides, my own story is indifferent. Typical perhaps, but definitely indifferent. I am an American, this is why you're soaking up whatever I say like a sponge. What if I were Hungarian, or say Egyptian? Would you care as much? I doubt it. I belong to the dominant culture, you say, therefore I'm doomed to set the tone. I belong to the Empire. That is precisely why you find me so interesting. For years now you've been listening to my personal narrative, but at the end of the line you're discovering America. And where am *I* in all this? I mean I as a person, Teresa McEldowney from Great Falls, Montana. Unless you believe that our national identity determines all other identities. Or, maybe, geography does. Your silence is confusing and so is the fact that I have no idea what you expect to gain from me. Okay, a story. An American story, you're saying, as other stories do not exist, and if they do they tend to be American as well. That is an overstatement, my dear Greek friend. Still, let's suppose for the sake of argument that America provides the context, the archetype; suppose that she does create History and that —despite the hatred she raises— everyone hastens to imitate her. Suppose. Suppose. Suppose. And what about people? Where are people in all this? It is annoying, you know. You

have been arguing that subordinate cultures lack cultural excellence because their role in History is marginal, and that as a result, they cannot invent roles for their people. You say that the prevailing culture constructs Good and Evil as if life were a Western. You are exaggerating, my dear. And let me tell you that I can see despair behind your melancholy. Your marginal tongue. Your life and work at a dead end. Bullshit. And *I*, your muse, your salvation. Twice bullshit. Do you hear me, or have you fallen asleep?

When I am finally fully awoken, I'm all content with myself for managing to get some sleep in such a noisy, crowded place, with car exhausts, dust, and scattered luggage all around. Once again, I am in this port as back in 1974 when i first met Teresa —although no longer peaceful as it was— waiting for the boat to Piraeus, which, we hear, is stranded at the island of Kimolos with some mechanical problem. I feel proud of myself for being able to follow the details of the story, including the comments on the feasibility of storytelling. It all has to do with the ability I acquired—something like hypnopaedia— after years of systematic fishing for stories in unknown territories and far away seas. A spiteful literary critic, one of those guys reaping money, glory, and paid travel expenses from the government's purse, used to call me «sleepwalker of fiction». Unable to figure out exactly what he meant —but well aware of his undeniable intention to rebuke me— I recorded it in my favour. Yes, my dear enemy, a sleepwalker indeed, a voyager to the edge of the night, like Celine, no matter if the quality of my writings is miles away from his great talent. So be it.

Reality is different from the story you might write about me one day, Teresa continues undauntedly. Reality is objective by definition, ergo the only possible, albeit intangible, truth. On the other hand, I am *I*, something inconceivable, completely distorted, prettified or uglified as circumstances dictate. Are you

following me? Never mind. I don't know what I'm talking about tonight, she says, and all of a sudden turns away to order a glass of water and a piece of watermelon pie, her very favourite local delicacy, which I incidentally find indifferent and decadent.

An airplane, flying over the gulf of Milos, was winking at me like a celestial lighthouse winning out over the electrical pollution of the pier. Then, it hid behind the broken lamp of a pole and as much as I naturally expected to see it again emerging from the other side, it did not. The sky was clear and despite the ample illumination around the port, you could still see here and there a falling star burning up upon entering the crystalline ether, a frequent sight in this part of the world, but also in Montana, as Teresa had explained one night, down at the Cave of Papafragas, under totally different circumstances. Where did the airplane go? What kind of reality swallowed it up? For a while, I looked out for it. Then, restlessly, I touched Teresa's arm, a little too hard perhaps, because she turned to me in surprise. Is anything wrong? she asked. I set my restlessness aside for a minute, and immediately responded with what she would probably like to hear: I just wanted to make sure you're still here. She smiled happily and said in a rather self-mocking tone, ah, my dear Greek writer, here is something I haven't heard for so long, — although irrelevant at the moment. A moment later, in the intelligible head of the gulf, right above Provatas Beach, or perhaps over the Shell Lake, I spotted the blinking lights of the plane —for some reason I was certain it was the same one— and I calmed down. Things were making sense again. All of a sudden, a deep silence dominated the dark gulf. Behind the cape, our boat, all lit up, its decks empty, was furrowing the dark fluid smoothly, yet triumphantly, unexpectedly close to us, majestic and silent like a dream.

This was back in 1989, as I said. Fifteen years earlier, during the summer of the Cyprus invasion and the collapse of the military junta, exactly under the same external conditions, we had passed by the uninhabited islands of Akrothiri standing like guards at the entrance of the gulf, when Teresa —leaning on the rail of the boat— had exclaimed in admiration, my God what a large bay! The largest natural harbor in the whole Mediterranean, I replied, with a sort of pride, as if I were the bearer of our geological heritage. Throughout history, innumerable ships have sailed here to seek refuge from the weather, to get supplies, or to escape from enemies, I added. My great grandfather was a port pilot. Port pilots had their houses built up on the Castle, the highest spot of the island, with a splendid view to the gulf and the nearby islands as far as Crete. They could watch way out to the open Aegean and as soon as they spotted a fleet arriving, they rode down to the port. Later on they would guide the ships through the archipelago to their final destinations — Cyprus, the coast of Asia Minor, Syria, Lebanon. Another great grandfather fought in the naval battle of Navarino in 1827 and was declared a hero, decorated by Otto, the first king of the newly established Greek state. That's where they kept their dens, on top of the conical hill over the town of Plaka, overlooking the island, I said and pointed towards the illuminated chapel of the Virgin Thalassitra — patroness of sailors. Floating serenely above our heads, the chapel looked like a round boat, sliding peacefully through the dense, black fluid. Remember? We gazed at it again from the village of Tripiti where we had dinner the other night. Yes, I remember, said Teresa, yawning and leaning her head on my shoulder. What a great watchtower! Back in the Rockies, my grandfather Nicholas had built a tiny wooden house high on an old fir tree. When we were little, my brother Mike and I would spend hours up there gazing at the green sea of mountains spreading all the way to the Great Plains. If we saw something threatening, or even suspicious, we were to

call papa, who was down below cooking dinner. This was our mission, to watch. And we would stand by, of course, to help wayfarers and other people that might have lost their way in the dark green passages, said Teresa and hid inside her sleeping bag.

The boat was heading northwest towards Sifnos and now it was getting a bit chilly. Salty droplets were sprinkling us. I fell asleep as I was searching for the kind of adjectives that could illuminate reality, a soothing exercise that would prove useful in due time.

Translated by Georgia Galanopoulou

Sophia NIKOLAODOU

One Blonde, Well Done

A neighborhood greengrocers, pressed onto a street-corner like a thumbtack. A dullish afternoon. For a month now the clouds have been spewing out a dusty mist of rain. The road has turned slippery. The floor of the greengrocers, covered in slush since morning, refuses to dry. Mud, slime and muck. Father and son have gone home for lunch and a siesta. She stands hunched behind the cash register. Bored, chewing gum. Rolling the rubbery white wad between her teeth. Tiny bubbles pop convulsively under her tongue, in a sputter. Across from her a customer is feeling around in the apples. Poking her hands into the crates, taking a long time to decide. Trying to pick the best fruit. The telephone rings unexpectedly. She picks up the receiver, still feeling bored. He talks for some time in a loud voice. He screams, gets all worked up. She tugs at her bleach-blond hair, where partially broken spinach stems are entangled. They won't come loose. Then she loses her temper. Who do you think you are anyway, she growls. I make mistakes and so do you. She glances over at the lady near the fruit. Hang up. I'll call you back later.

She walks away from the cash-register in a huff. She goes into the back, to the storeroom. She grabs a bunch of fresh greens and slams them against the counter. She beats them to a pulp. A veinless mass of skin. She watches the greenish juice running like saliva over the counter. She plunges her fingers into the withered greens and stuffs some in her mouth. She comes back out chewing, calmed. The customer has chosen what she wants, she's been waiting for some time at the cash-

register. She rings up the order lost in thought. She won't call him back. She'd rather have it out with him at home.

Translated by Jane Assimakopoulos

Iro NIKOPOULOU

Pacman

The big red mouth was incessantly opening and closing with a steady rhythm, regardless if there was something before it or not. Its profile was jagged, creating an incongruous right angle which broke the perfect circle of the rest of the shape. In every opening, in every movement, the same exact sound repeated itself, but, as time passed, it became all the more threatening, all the more nightmarish.

Head and body were one. He was undrawn after all, he had no shape, he was ugly. This made him even more threatening. His moves were stiff, but he was sliding fast in the claustrophobic corridors, he turned the corners with agility, moving quickly his unbending profile and avoiding efficiently all the obstacles that appeared in his way; and his only care was the monotonous annoying sound from the opening and closing of his red mouth, anxious to annihilate all obstacles, to eat, to win. The pale blue and grey light of the corridors outlined the flat red merciless and shadowless mouth more distinctly.

Miltos was running hard without stopping, his breath was shallow, and when sometimes he thought he could take a short look behind him, he paid a very hard price, as he heard the big mouth rattling even closer behind him. On the other hand, he himself was not making so much noise, in fact he was not making any noise and this was numbing him quietly, a covert fear of inexistence was spreading inside him like mist. Due to his stress and terror, he wasn't able to avoid the obstacles set in the narrow corridors; he was falling on them, he was losing points,

he was running non stop, he was trying, he was sweating, but the distance between them was narrowing. The opening and closing red mouth was coming closer and closer.

A racket from falling pots and pans, the insatiable male cat of the neighbour that always came back at this time full of scars, blood and pride, or the last obstacle he fell upon and hurt himself? Deafening noise. Miltos jumped suddenly up with his eyes wide open, screaming 'What? What? What?' He violently unplugged the silicon ear plugs he was wearing every night. His breath resembled the mad tempest of a muddy lake. He hastily drank from a forgotten can of Coke he found on his nightstand, 'Yikes! Since when is this piss here?' He looked around like a stranger trying to recognize the place. His room always had a heavy smell, but today it was literally stenching. He never aired it, fearing that, if he opened the window, the slight personal bad smells would vaporize, and if he lost them, he would lose very important information about himself, his existence, forever. And even the front door, he opened with tremendous speed, as if he wanted to prevent the escape of a wild and probably fast animal, lurking sleeplessly behind him. He felt very threatened. He was very absorbed within himself, and mainly with what concerned him, and he had built a system on and around his body, which had no room for anyone else. Besides, all these absorbed all of his energy and there was no reason, he believed. He needed noone. Anyway, the old Coke and the stench worked their miracle and Miltos woke up and thought, What the hell, it now haunts me in my sleep as well. He lifted the yellow stained quilt, full of laces drawn from previous and recent sweating, and a strong sour smell filled the air. I have to do something about it. He walked barefoot in the bathroom and, after looking at himself in the mirror with a serious and determined expression, almost heroic that is, he got into the bathtub and turned the tap on.

It's been more than three weeks since he subjected himself into something like this, maybe even four as he was not counting, and he knew that today it would not be easy to avoid it again. Anyway, a ritual like this was not happening for no particular reason and most definitely without a future sacrifice. Milto had his reasons, even though these were not very clear to him so far.

He rarely bought clothes, as he usually had no money, and either way he never was in the mood for shopping, so he felt satisfied with the few he had; he found his last clean sweat shirt in the closet, an ancient purple cotton one. He wore it and then put on his not so clean jeans, but jeans deserve to be dirty even more so than any other piece of clothing, and it is even somewhat necessary, as dirty means stylish, or was stylish for many decades.

Fresh, clean and hungry, he hit the streets at 5 o' clock in the afternoon. He wanted to spend his day differently today. He would first have a bite to eat, then he would go to have a fight with his tenant who was delaying the rent: 'what will it be, mister, how are we going to live, what do we have to wait for, don't you understand that this is my only income, you have your job, your little wife, your children, your friends, what do I have?' He was practising his speech, while eating, but his mood got darker and darker by doing this. He dealt hastily with the matter of the rent, ordered a second hamburger and went on planning the rest of his day; he could go to the cinema or something like that, even though you need company for these things, but anyway everyone makes his life as he pleases; because he had no friends left at all, as it's been a long time since he gave up on his last one, a retired seaman, he called friend, just because he wanted someone to call friend, so as not to feel bad in front of everybody else.

Today he was determined – just like every day – not to go to the fruit machine place. He bet he would keep his promise today. That was it! He wouldn't

go, not even for a few minutes, not even to see the others addicted to the machines. He didn't talk to anyone anyway, when he entered the place. He lost himself in there, he travelled far, to another planet, he completely forgot himself, he forgot to eat, to drink, to stop, and this was very relieving, but no, today he wouldn't even go past the place. The reason for this was not only self-discipline, but his financial status, going from bad to worse. And the money he spent, stuck so many hours in there, every day, without a single break, was much, too much. He started owing money to various people and he had no other source of income, except for the small two bedroom flat he had inherited from his mother. He had to do something. The thought of getting a job wasn't even crossing his mind. His mind was completely stuck. It was always blurred by the cigarette smoke of the players – he wasn't smoking himself, he believed in healthy living – palled upon so many hours of hard battle with his noisy opponent. And he was always losing in the end. It was impossible to think clearly.

He was pointlessly roaming the streets, until it got dark and he started feeling cold. His soul felt cornered. Only for a little while, he thought, only for one game. I will win some money and go. I will immediately walk away, he thought, and started rubbing his fingers on his palms until they felt sore.

He started to go there. He bumped on a young man with baggy jeans and red hair, who looked like a rooster; 'watch it', he said, but he didn't answer, he didn't hear him. He was walking with his eyes fixed on the ground, following the vision. He went in the corner shop, just a block from the place, put a coin in the payphone and he wrapped his left hand around the receiver like a funnel: 'Good evening, are you the owner of the place? Listen carefully then: for about a year and a half, my brother comes there every day and spends a lot of money and many hours in your machines, in your pacman machines, and he has no mind to get a job or

anything else, he is weak and makes promises he never keeps all the time, we have no money left, he is on the verge of losing his mind. What do you care? Watch it, friend, don't tell me it's not your job, it is very much your job and it will be even more so, if you don't do as I say. Don't let him play again. Turned him around the moment you see him. He will come there in about a moment, I saw him, I understood where he was going even if he said so otherwise, he got all dressed up to come there. I beg you not to let him set foot there again. He is the only one I have left in the world, I have no other and I am losing him. And be careful, I know very well that your little shop works without a permit. Be careful, because others might find out as well!

And one more thing so as to easily recognise him. He wears blue jeans and a purple cotton sweat shirt.'

Translated by Vassilis Manoussakis

Elena NOUSSIA

THE RUNNER

*I always wished to write a poem
about that Swiss bank employee
who one fine afternoon in Zurich
threw off his clothes in the middle of Bahnhof strasse
and started running stark naked.*

*Well, I don't think this Mr. X was ever arrested
or put on trial, nor — as the newspapers wrote —
that he cried apologetically at the public prosecutor's feet.
I believe that he is still running stark naked
in our midst. In Zurich and elsewhere.*

*He passed into the prodigious category of runners,
and as such he will remain
in the street's history.*

From *The Completed Era*, 1985

*A SECRET INSCRIPTION WAS CUT on the locket
worn round the young motorcyclist's neck
on a gold chain*

*who suddenly came to a halt
and looked goggle-eyed about him.*

*Now around these very eyes
gathers the face of a sacrificed ox
Gathers an ancient yard
in which a screaming crowd is throwing flowers*

*Whilst a little beyond the sun
is setting behind the tall mountains*

YOU CAME TOWARDS ME WITH OPEN VEINS

*and I became your picture
in a headlight
over there on the motorway
in a remote wilderness*

*Sex rolling down from the top to the foot of a hillside
a scene that became independent and swooped down on the towns
where it is now repeated here and there
before the amazed eyes of thronging crowds*

From *A Slow Moment on the Stairs*, 1990

*I wonder who will cure
A fainting star cast by the wind
On the city roofs
Only you are holding it in your arms
Look yourself in it, recognize in its depths
The other shore, running, full of lights
Rushing towards your forehead*

From *Hollow Moon*, 1994

THE STATUE OF LABYRINTHS

He was walking, and as he walked, of a sudden — just like that — he found himself, step by step, in the labyrinths of night, where for years he wanted to go without knowing how. He was told: 'In order to get there you must first leave behind you everything: the space-suit, your face, even your name, and your very history.' That is why he was puzzled now, having discovered that nothing was left behind, that all was there. All. With a single difference: his voice had ceased to comply. Every time he tried to utter a word, his voice sounded other words, of its own, incomprehensible and completely irrelevant to what he intended to say. This terrorized him, for he was told something in addition. To get out of the labyrinths of night, it entailed finding someone to show you the way out. So, how could he ever

tell this someone what he wanted, if he was no longer in a position to utter even a word?

Thus, as he was walking along deep in contemplation, he came across in the dark, much to his surprise, the white and tall statue of labyrinths. Ramrod straight, it advanced towards him, moving only its long, stiff legs from one spot to another. Finally, it came to a jerky, unusual halt before him. It resembled someone who suddenly confronted what for years now he had hopped to meet. And the very moment they exchanged glances, the following odd thing happened: The statue's two stony eyes, as they penetrated into him so effectively, exerted such mastery on him that, being totally incapable of offering any resistance, he was instantly transformed into a huge, white and rigid statue.

As for the statue, it was no longer a statue. It, too, underwent sudden transformation. And it acquired a space-suit, a face, a name and history. Also a voice, which complied with his wishes and was now demanding to know the way out of the labyrinths of night. It was then that he realized the he now knew the way out. And since he had no other option but to abide by the former statue's demand, he acted accordingly. However, since he was now a statue, and statues were not allowed to go through the gateway, he was compelled to return at once to the labyrinth. Where he disappeared. His two stony eyes looking for the other one, whose turn it was to show him the way out. Why this other one existed, he knew. And he regained his voice that satisfied his questions.

From The Theatre of Rags and Other Stories, 2000

EMANCIPATED DRESSES

'Two dresses walked along hand-in-hand, going up and down pavements and crossing the streets. They had abandoned the woman who wore them, for she never laughed nor smiled, something that troubled them throughout the time they had been together. And here they were, looking for the wardrobe of another woman, pleasant this time, in which to accommodate themselves. They were so happy as they went their way, laughing and joking and playing pranks on passers-by, who dispersed amazed seeing them in their midst. And the woman to whom the dresses belonged ran after them. In vain, for it is impossible to catch emancipated dresses.

It is also useless trying to get away from emancipated clothes, once they find the person they wish to dress. Something that presented no problem to the woman the dresses finally chose. The dresses she found in her wardrobe one fine morning were very much to her liking. And they, wild with joy on seeing her, grabbed hold of her and began dancing — a frisky circular dance, rustling and waving..'

The foregoing account is a part of a history whose outcome remains unknown. All those who read up to the circular dance are so enthused, that they go no further, with the result that no one knows what ensued.

'HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT HOW YOU'LL GET BACK?'

The nightgown, as it suddenly slipped through the half-open door into the room, swished softly towards me, as though fearing of waking up someone. 'Have you ever thought how you'll get back?' 'Get back where?' I was about to ask, never occurring to me that I needed to get back somewhere. However, 'Have you ever thought how you'll get back?' the nightgown asked again, interrupting my thoughts.

Then, at once, it rushed out of the window and began flying in the night. And I followed it, until I came here, to this place from where I am talking to you. I know very little about it. It must exist in a strange dream, but whose dream I can't say. The place is secluded, and my course through it is flame-assailed. This really scares me, because I risk being reduced to ashes. On the other hand, I don't even consider giving up and looking for shelter elsewhere.

The reason: I know (among the few things I know) that on this same road and with the same speed as me moves towards me another figure, also flame-assailed. And I also know that if I stick to my course, eventually our paths will meet. And I want this so very much. Because what eggs me on is love of this particular figure, love so great that for sure it would have killed me were I not a dream's figure. More so, since in my passion's clarity I also discern that this figure is governed by an equally enormous love for me.

Might we get the chance to meet before he who dreams of us wakes up?

From Crescendo, Short stories, 2004. Translated by Yannis Goumas

Pavlina PAMPOUDI

Foto in color.

The players startled, red-eyed like rabbits.

(trapola means trap)

How did I come to be here?

On someone's account. Some common ancestor most likely.

I fancy I didn't want to play.

I don't recall.

Anyhow.

Okay.

It seems

A simple game of cards. But

It's not always what it seems.

Often

A daybreak

Playing partners invisible amid the smoke

Gods,

These too condemned in their power,

Shuffle other cards.

In the world above

They shuffle, cut and deal

Other cards.

They cheat me.

Me, who's inexcusably mortal.

From *The Black Album*, 1999. Translated by David Connolly

Giorgos PANAGIOTOU

[*We Belong to the Age of Our Dreams...*]

We belong

To the age of our dreams

Locked

In their frenzied sounds

Abattoir of sleep

Guilty fever

Rivering woman

Summer trigger

Lightning incisions

Seeking absolution

Meeting fear

Surpassing mercy

Discoloured flags

Crescent girls

The boredom of

Fugitive

Board fees of virtue

Fissured night

I set my words asail

When

The artist's tool

Is freedom

Translated by Yiannis Goumas

Alexis PANSELINOS

From
Zaide

CHAPTER 28, *In which Geroulanos has a shave and the nobles a consultation*

The town of Corfu, with its old fortress perched high on the rocks and its natural harbour lying at their feet, proudly displays its domes and tallest buildings to the ships sailing in to moor under its walls. The sea laps on the shore; behind the barrier of dark cypresses the olive trees shine silver in the morning light. The bare masts of the ships lying at anchor resemble a forest in winter. Merchant vessels are moored in the centre of the harbour, from where a trail of heavily laden carts can be seen making their way uphill towards the public highway. Among the shining barrels of the cannons, high up on the ramparts of the fortress, guards pace to and fro, weapons at their shoulders. From time to time the seagulls spot a fish and swoop down to seize it; at the end of the mole children are fishing with rods, their cries shrill with enthusiasm each time they land a catch that sparkles in the light. To the sides of the port, left and right, lie the Russian and Turkish ships: two men of war and eight schooners. Outside the harbour, at a radius of a couple of miles or so, three more Turkish ships are patrolling under half their canvas. Every vessel entering or leaving the port is identified and checked beneath the mouths of their uncovered cannons.

The fishing boat from the mainland opposite was examined just within range of the artillery in the fortress, after which a signal was immediately sent that this

craft was in order. From the deck of their schooner the Turks had contented themselves by simply casting a glance at the fish lying heaped in the creels.

Geroulanos leant against the ropes as the fishing boat slipped through the tranquil water, gazing at the shoal of fish playing under the keel. From the land a tall man with his breeches rolled up to the knees was cupping his hands in front of his mouth and shouting to them to moor beside a long and narrow two-masted vessel which was unloading bundles of hare skins, barrels of dye and enormous bales of cotton and linen from Arta into the waiting carts.

The fishermen washed down the deck with buckets of sea water; whatever remained of their catch after the quartermasters of the allied forces had taken their pick would be sold within an hour, for the town was once again suffering from a shortage of food. Geroulanos took off his shoes in order to be ready and turned to the boat's owner, who bade him 'God speed, Sior Nikon.'

As the bows touched the sandy bottom, Geroulanos jumped into the warm, shallow water and hurried ashore. Someone threw after him his small kit bag, carefully tied up at the top. He caught it and set off uphill. It had been a week since he last shaved and he stank of fish. He never for a moment ceased feeling his master's sealed letter pressing close against the flesh of his stomach. All the same, in spite of his sense of urgency, it didn't occur to him to present himself in his current dishevelled state.

As he reached the main road at the top of the hill he caught sight of the fortress and the two allied flags furling in the breeze at its battlements. He spat on the ground. The master supported the French – and so did the servant. He hadn't forgotten all the slogans he'd heard, right at the very beginning when everyone's enthusiasm was wild, no matter that other less pleasant memories had in the meantime been superimposed. Ideas are lasting, as Count Andreas used to say. Even

if circumstances forced the French to behave like tyrants, the ideas didn't change. Thus Geroulanos eyed the imperial eagles of Russia and the crescent moon of Turkey and gritted his teeth.

In the distance he could make out the bell tower of the cathedral and the imposing dome of the church of St Spyridon. Outside the Venetian bailey a group of Turkish guards were laughing, their muskets laid on the ground, their heads swathed in green and white turbans resembling fresh cabbages, their short caftans open at the breast. He spat once more and quickened his pace. His money was scanty, he must make careful use of it. Who could tell how long he might have to remain on the island while the ransom was being got together? Taking care to avoid any encounters with the foreign soldiers of which the port was full, he slipped into a barber's shop and asked for a shave.

'A shave is all very well, friend,' commented the old barber, 'but what you could do with is a bath to get rid of the stink!'

Geroulanos nodded in agreement and sat down on the bench. Siora Margoni who looked after him whenever his master's business brought him into town would heat up water in the copper for him to wash before presenting himself to Capodistria. Yet would he find her? The widow had a little house at Sarocco which she'd repaired as best she could – for the French had razed the suburb lying just outside the entrance to the town, fearing that its taller houses could be used as strongholds by the besiegers.

Beneath the Venetian mirror whose corners were beginning to become spotted was arrayed a whole series of little bottles and jars containing all manner of cosmetics and unguents: poudre de Chypre for older clients who still wore wigs, Italian pommade, musk, aloe, myrrh, mint, frankincense, narcissus, cinnamon, spikenard – all of them mixed with essential oils, especially essence of rose. A row of

Venetian razors with bone handles each bore a scrap of paper stuck on it with the name of the client for whose use it was exclusively reserved.

For Geroulanos the barber got out of his drawer a black-handled razor with a long blade honed only on the front. He rapidly ran his finger through his customer's beard to assess its stiffness, then wrung out a towel in the hand basin on a three-legged stand at his side and draped it round Geroulanos' neck. He threw a handful of grated soap flakes into a shallow basin, poured in warm water from a jug and mixed it swiftly with the shaving brush. The soap bubbles filled the air with their scent.

Athena PAPADAKI

WASHING UP

*The dust settles as the light falls.
A whole heap of dirty plates awaits me
like a mountain awaiting its prophet,
a way out to a whiteness that's
pointless,
pointless
crushed as I am by dates and rules.*

*At other times
I absent myself in transparency.
The moment of breast-feeding tastes of nothing.*

IRONING

*Brain-shaped clouds
row across the clean window
as the azure rises
I iron
a damp shirt in puffs of steam.*

The ordered-ness of things repels me.

Heavily, an anchor dubs me sea-bed so I am necessary.

Yet

*I expand towards desertion as if I'd never passed
through the lines of the Lilies.*

*what strength I need not to give in
to the role of honourable housewife.*

For years now

the laundry basket

with its clothes like curled up lambs

grabs me

and devours my song.

I am almost panic-stricken.

I search for a name for my naked elbows.

As

the silent furniture

looks out to sea

and I lean on it,

the dust it leaves on my fingers is welcome company.

HOUSEWIFE

*Time for a rest,
with arms crossed, amid the crops.
I had measured the four correctly
but I found myself a little short-weight in sugar.
I couldn't be otherwise.
This is my life, the corridor which
links the bedrooms to the sitting-room.
What else?
I dare not say.
Something is surreptitiously sucking me in,
the walls, like white Patriarchs, bless
my work.
when I bend down
they do not see
how, as I squeeze the floor-cloth,
my tears run down towards their roots.*

From Ewe-Lamb of the Vapours (1980). Translated by David Connolly and Christopher Robinson

MOTHERHOOD

Milk

that first domestic animal.

Humble in cotton

and spinning the white until

she becomes at last

a Pasiphae.

And to all and all around.

The baby embraces the breast.

Heavy

and like a prophet it descends.

The future,

beardless and yet, wise.

Touch.

Before knowledge,

Love.

And like a horn as it

lodges itself in the body.

The road to the holy wound.

From Earth Once Again (1986). Translated by Christopher Robinson

SECRET JOURNEY

I will die

*a vagrant,
my veins
condemned,
to zero.*

*I concede to zero.
Incorruptible mourning.*

From *Pale almost White*

SLOWLY BUT STEADILY

*The places change with the dreams,
when the mountains rise diaphanous from the steps,
Gardens reach down to the bowels of the earth and co-exist with the snows.
So peaceful, you pass the night where you choose.
My pillow widens like a cloud
assuring the rains,
even stones need it.
I heard it beyond sleep, from that time
every space in my imagination is filled with gardens of flowers.
So let them talk.
I am the celebrant of love
and all my clothes are unbaptized in order to deceive
I am so exposed*

like the tiny red spot on the wreathes of souls.

Tomorrow another dawn will break.

EVDOKIA

April — a last enigma in the mind.

Everything in order, but scattered.

Wild and passionate, while towards evening,

all become silent, become zeros.

All things grow more expensive in the silence.

There where the vowed belong,

exemplified by the housewives

and as they bend to pick up

those crumbs from the tables,

throwing them to the birds,

and just in case everyday life grows wings.

But wonder is incessant,

with each passing moment

everything happens as if in a target zone.

If I relax,

for God's sake preserve my everyday virginity,

which considers even bread, a routine.

A PRAYER

At the dawning of the world I lit a candle.

I witnessed the roots of the water,

the still immaterial flower

enwrapped there in its scales

of aroma and chlorophyll.

I try to articulate

both everything and nothing.

Lord , don't expect too much of my youth

for if I grow younger, I'll die.

WORSHIP

The measured words of god

twist the tangerine trees

down to the deep pools.

The earth's only armour is the seed.

A north wind blows

for everything and so much unknown.

It takes me in a vowed red dress.

I return to the blue-black thorns of the wells

to be redefined once more from the outset.

Ah, my close and closing winds,

*there and with your far-fetched
roarings
of the end of the world.*

RECEPTIONS

*When the guests departed
I leaned into the cushions.
I looked.
What remain of the reception?
A sacrifice laid bare on my table,
with the bones of hyperbole.*

Translated by Thom Nairn and D. Zervanou

RURAL RESIDENCE

*I'll live with basil plants and pulses,
folding my arms in cohesion
I ask that my circle close gently.
The ceiling of trees lower
and the doorstep two inches above
the silver driftwood on the shore.
At the turn of the skies, around dusk,
you lose authority*

*but gain radishes,
running water.
I go out for some air on the balcony.
Between door and horizon God mediates.*

SUPPERS

*When the guests left
I lolled on the cushions,
staring.
What's left after a celebration?
A sacrifice revealed on my table
with the bones of excess.*

From *In the Realm of the Balcony* (1998). Translated by David Connolly and Christopher Robinson

SLEEPING IN THE OPEN

1

*The cicadas expand the infinite
every night, an inch at a time.
I grow more humble when I sleep outdoors.
Oh, most gentle of the senses,
what would beauty be without the invisible,*

or sound without silence?

Between the thorns and the coolness

sleep vanishes, I lose it.

On a simple balcony

I found a place of prayer,

holier than an olive grove.

2

I sleep on a balcony of stars,

decent linen covers touch my body

which at dawn is thrown to the howling dogs.

The fate of the party changes easily.

From *In the Realm of the Balcony* (1998). Translated by: Thom Nairn and D. Zervanou

ASH AND ASH AGAIN

The world is falling, falling.

With everything winged and fragrant,

a drop of oil on my passion.

I owe my infamy to fire.

Like to all that's fateful

it mobilizes hosts of dreams

till it scorches utopia like grass.

*Sometimes this too is revived,
a gazelle by sweat's horizon,
to once again stir the dry air
amidst the lentisk.
I believe in all that burns in vain.
Transient and speechless.
I see mammals blazing
in the festivity of milk.
I'm precious,
I guarantee nothing but ash.*

*From *The Sentinel in the Skies* (1995). Translated by David Connolly*

ID ALL THE SAME

*... and they say
that I came between you.
Me, a nothing,
a son of nothing.
EURIPIDES, *Ion**

*Without friends,
children,
house or home
or master.*

*Without love,
books
or a tax number.*

*Without trace,
goal or
garden,
arm or uniform.*

The no-one.

From Toward the Unknown (2005)

ADVERTISEMENT

*That's me there.
Me, the cannibal
with the lipstick.
— Chanel 36*

A SERVANT GIRL

A woman out cast,

*cast away.
And to these strange and
foreign hands.
Lobbed in here and like
the chamomile
that is lobbed in to
the rolling of the boil.
Reieving,
bud by bud and
bit by bit,
that strange and
foreign pain.*

From *By Lamplight and with Wolves* (2010)

IN REFLECTION

*The frog springs
all leaps and bounds
and from star to star.
There and in the still
waters
of the brook.*

From star to star

*to star and making
less than nothing
of the space there
all in-between.*

From *See the Miracle* (2012). Translated by: Edward Blake

Maria PAPADIMITRIOU

REVENGE

*When you die, I shall buy a black designer dress
and wear it. When you die, I shall buy a black dress
and wear it with a deep red rose at my breast.*

*And since there is nothing sadder than
moulting fur, I'll buy a black panther coat
minus its green eyes yet with its claws
hanging from my shoulders like a second pair of hands:
these I'll use to embrace your body, in order not to feel
the deadness of your flesh.*

*I shall dye my grey hair copper-red
and my lips a smouldering crimson: erotic, lips to kiss with.*

*A gently breeze will lift my copper hair
back from my forehead, revealing on it the faintest hint of a mark.*

*There is a great relief when childbirth sets you free
and another, as great, when you're set free by a death.*

*Thus I shall stand at your grave with a fullness in my body
akin to that I felt the day I bore my child.*

*There stands a weeping willow, it too stirred by the breeze
so that its leaves seem to swim through water.*

This man is not my own blood.

*I shall play with colours just as, when a child, I played with the coloured
marbles. I shall keep silent for hours on end just as, when a child,*

*I sang within myself, not to disturb my parents
while they slept, and I shall caress my body.
There is measureless poison in deprivation,
there are many geraniums that withstand the winter cold.*

Yannis H. PAPPAS

PRICELESS NOTHING

*Nothing is a baby's cry
hot bread in immigrant palms
a glass of water for thirsty lips
is nothing*

*nothing is the first light of dawn
a teenage girl's 'I love you'
a roe deer's frisk
is nothing*

*Nothing is a tear on mother's cheek
the bell ring from a faraway chapel
the rooster's call at dawn
is nothing*

*it is every day that eagerly goes by
our life itself – nothing.
Nothing is this priceless nothing.*

DEATH'S MISFORTUNE

*Does Death have any kids to look after
and to sing them lullabies?*

He bears no responsibilities

Who would accept Death's lullaby?

*Death is miserable, an outcast, unwanted;
He's been alone and friendless for centuries.*

Who would want Death's friendship?

*Kindless, cruel and vulgar Death is
Always uninvited and without a gift*

Who would take Death's gifts?

*Death is so unfortunate
that he doesn't even have a death to expect.*

DEPARTURE

To George Michos

Time's hourglass is running out relentlessly
MANOLIS ANAGNOSTAKIS

*I see them take off in random order one by one
Angels without wings, poets and captains,*

eponymous and anonymous people.
Rebellious on the mountains, disciplined in life and to their ideas,
Restless again as on their way to the other world.
Silent because of 'need and fury'.
Aside!
Don't narrow the horizon!
The Old World is gone with them.
And the New World nowhere to be seen yet.
20 and 30 – year-olds have already taken place around the walls
without the sensitivity and the mercy of their forefathers.

IN A BAR AT MAKRIYANNIS' DISTRICT

To George Myaris

It was in a bar at Makriyannis' district the other day
There entered a guy wearing a white kilt; he had a broken arm.
He came and sat with me to drink a shot of raki.
After a while we started dancing and we sang old Greek songs
'The sun has set, my Greek, and the moon is gone'.
We drank and danced all night and as we sat to rest I ask him:
'Where did you break that arm?'
'At the windmills of Anapli', he replies
'Why did you break it?'
'For this homeland. And now I see no justice from anyone.

Vanity and selfishness make a stifling net, guile and deceit'.

And so he cried, hunched, with bitter tears, until I choked up and cried along with him.

POETS' NIGHT

*Don't try to catch the poets,
they will slip through your fingers.*

Alda Merini

*The night suits the poets
when time is exiled
and the commotion of the market is silenced.*

*The darkness suits the poets
like the owl or the nightingale
with the honey-sweet sound.*

*The sorrow suits the poets
as they walk all alone
in the narrow alleys of memories.*

*The birds suit the poets
which fly over
the vast sea.*

*But the poets, in their silence,
are heard even more than
the thunderbolts of a storm.*

THE RIVERS INSIDE ME

To Yannis Dallas

*Two rivers flow inside me
two veins pulsing strongly.
Arachthos and Louros coming from high above.*

*One is coming from mountain Tomaros,
a snake skinning itself through the wild mountains
until it comes out in the open.*

*Plane trees and willows, clover and corn,
and at its end olive and citrus trees,
sagebrush, oak trees, old aqueducts, watermills,
washing mills and inns.*

*The other, Arachthos, fierce,
and getting fiercer with people's tears,
with their everyday labor.
Stone upon stone; on every stone a saint.
Stone bridges, chapels, holy icons,*

threshing floors, water fountains, terraces of the dry-stone wall.

Ways of the water, of the people and of civilizations.

*Two rivers flow inside me
two veins pulsing strongly.*

Translated by Vasilis Sxoinas

Stratis PASCHALIS

FORLORN

*Tonight I suddenly found myself before an obelisk
it was no dream, it was rain
far off the world was fading in misty stretches,
and I could clearly read
the gloomy writing. It said: 'I spent a whole life
gazing at forests
from the train window,
without knowing whether I'll ever arrive
without knowing from where I set out
without knowing what it is I'm crossing,
my coach was called Chimaera
and I was its only passenger'*

THE CARNATION

*A smell of spices
your petals, velvet
of bitter almond, a stem
crisp at the cutting.*

*I walk in union with your boldness
thick with colour and scent*

*of another race the rose
more magical and celestial
concealing the angelic
thorn of arrogance*

*whereas you dispense
sensuousness and forgiveness
without any care
for surreptitious danger*

*which is why you don't easily age
don't easily lose your leaves*

From *Gazing at Forests*. Translated by David Connolly

Sotirios PASTAKAS

GOOD-FOR-NOTHING BODY

An apple-core.

Someone was sitting here

biting an apple.

Then he disappeared. The same day

that History recorded three

deaths in the center of Athens.

Someone else at another

spot left his cigarette butt

before he disappeared too.

History only records:

apple-cores, cadavers, ashes.

*

I set the table for one.

For myself. Turned the teevee on.

Sat down. In order to save capitalism

sacrifices are required from all of us.

The phone rang. You asked

if you could come.

You could. I turned off the teevee.

Got up. Capitalism

is hemorrhaging and is dying. I said.

I changed the tablecloth.

I set the table for two.

*

*You would certainly have seen
the snuff from my cigarette
behind lowered awnings
among lovely ornamental plants
glowing at four in the morning
having again stayed up all night
in constant drizzle, a bottle of ouzo
and infinite cigarettes, something
certainly hasn't escaped your eyes,
a mere footnote in the text
of your own night,
a reminder and reference
to all the countless losses;
one who's lost all he had to lose
lost in the end even his sleep too.*

*

*An abyss, a flash
the 'Never' and the 'Always'*

between two darknesses.

Cars speeding

toward Oropos, let's say

toward Eretria. Nightfall

just before May. A woman shadow

of women who'd come before:

let's share this speed

like light in shadow is shared.

The vertigo in kilometers.

The salary in stamps.

The drunkenness in the precise

and repeated

measuring of the barman.

*

Saturday evening I see you

being bathed. Creamy foam

your body. Aloe

your tits. Dripping honey

in the water

between your legs.

I'm the little cord

that's hung with a blue

bead at its end on the bathroom

tiles. You don't see me.

*And if you were to pull it,
I still wouldn't hear you, I've been
absent from your life for many years.*

*

*Those laurels I harvested
in transient beds
I never fashioned into wreaths.
I didn't frame them.
I don't contemplate them on nights
of black loneliness,
during forgotten anniversaries
and during the epic
confessions between men.
I save them in a little box
on one of the highest
shelves in my kitchen
which I can only reach with difficulty
so that they every once in a while may
add flavor to my lentils.*

*

*The church calendar's plush
for a guy alone.*

*Religious holidays,
National anniversaries. Little
by little a hypodermic hatred
develops toward Religion
and Nation, then
for the name-days
of friends and certain universal ones
of the persecuted. He recalls
some birthdays from Chicago,
the date of Kileler³² and Stalin's.
Only those does he celebrate.*

*

*It's the sea tonight
that sings a cappella to us.
We leaned our guitars
on the terrace of Anemomylos.
We indulged in our amorous mood
with teasing and jokes
till dawn. Toasted our old
carefree summers.
Broke the empty retsina bottles
on the rocks, as of old
we were crashing our bodies.*

³² Massacre of March 6, 1910 of peasants in the village of Kileler demanding land distribution.

*We grabbed our pencils
and connected, from old crosswords
that remained unfinished, lost causes,
scattered dots in the firmament.
We formed a single and unique
star with five red rays
like the one all of us
will sew on our berets.
And we'll write new songs
and new poems this winter.*

*No, I don't come from Eleusis. Southern Italy.
Sandy returned from the Aegean rally in Nisyros.
I found Yannis in 37 and he bought me a mojito.
Mihos has reached the final stage
of his glorious grieving. Maravas undertook
painting the first rung of the ladder.
X2, true to his nickname,
keeps chicks for only two weeks.
Fotis is sick of his mug and wants
to undergo face plastic surgery. Goumas
hasn't set foot out of Chalandri. Nikos
informs us that the Secret Service
stopped monitoring his computer.*

It always happens like-so.

The Furies have chased Irene out of Argos.

Dimitri, his bosses out of Zara.

Hector's been kicked out of his house. Laskaris

never stopped asking for loans in June, July

and August. Kostas managed to double

his profits. And Spyros writes a poem every

day in Marseille, Glyfada and Olympia.

Yannis and Tasia celebrated 50 years of

marriage in Rovies. Mitsos voluntarily entered

Sinouri's clinic for a month. Elena said she

was cutting down on wine, then changed her mind.

It always happens like-so.

Gheli returned from a plain Chalkidiki with the doctor

two years now still unmarried. Joanna escaped for a bit

from her kids and her husband and went alone

to Pylos. Katerina bought a small one-bedroom flat

on the top floor in New Smyrna and is blissful.

Maraki returned from her one-night stand

to a cold douche at dawn. Lina was afraid to carry

from Colombia a souvenir coca-leaf for everybody. Our wives had

sex with our friends and we with the wives of our friends.

Those of us who happened to still have children

sat down and patched things up. It always happens like-so.

Before the Revolution.

FOOD LINE

*It smells like Sunday roast
in my balcony. I stretch
my hands and find
the stove turned off,
the plates cold. I forgot again
to cook. I feel full
just with the aroma, even though
nobody's asked me to share
the chicken and potatoes
split in three. It wasn't by chance, I figure,
that I'd served in a battalion of undesirables.*

*

*Fifteen years ago
I buried my father.
Fifteen years later
I buried my mother.
Today, on the fortieth day, my sister
was telling me, we fed
one hundred and fifteen people.
Today I know that no matter*

*how much I eat from now on,
I'll never feel satisfied.*

*

*My cat is purring
as I rub his underbelly.
If I could feel full
stroking my own belly,
like when I fondle my prick
and ejaculate, I'd be
the happiest of men.*

*

*I open up a can of tuna
Rio Mare for me
and one of cat food
for Jorge.
With today's
tin cans
you can't
slit anybody's throat³³.*

³³ Refers to mass assassinations [throats allegedly slit by tin cans] by retreating communists in Athens in December 1944.

*

*With barley-broth
and garlic
the pyramids were built.
Man needs
nothing more
in order to leave
monuments behind.*

*

*A man who eats
a cabbage salad and beef—
stew by himself in the cheap diner,
a tin carafe
of white wine at Thomas',
silently wipes
his mouth and leaves.
With a fork and sometimes
without knife we eat
our daily
death.*

*

*Fresh salmon from Norway
up to 6 Euros a kilo today after 11
at the central fish-market.
Freshest anchovies for frying
or the oven 2.5 Euros a kilo.
Sardines for frying 1.5 Euros a kilo.
Salpas for poaching in sweet wine
3 Euros a kilo! Freshest bogues
or mackerels 4.5 Euros a kilo, etc.
Ouzo is drunk in daylight,
after the bell at noon
till nightfall.*

FLOW OF RAKI

*May the trees love me tomorrow.
May they love me tenderly,
just as I hug the trees
tonight, in muddled dance steps
and reeling toward my demise.*

*

*From verb to existence
or from existence to verb?*

*Whatever the answer may be
to the Morelli dilemma,
there's only one truth:
slowly, slowly and methodically
I'll be sinking.*

*

*Sometimes you need
courage to get up
from the table and go
toward the toilet.
Especially when you know
that by the time you return
from the restroom friends
and girlfriends will be gone,
years of sensual pleasure.*

*

*The stewpot to be boiling
along with the bean soup.
So that the squabbles stop,
at once, the cursing,
the obscenities. So that
from the light well
I can only smell onions,*

beans, family tranquility.

Throughout the realm.

*

Pizza, internet,

green beers.

I count the likes

on face-book.

With 4,798 friends

and here I am eating alone

every night.

*

Let's surrender to decay.

So that a hand might shake us

from the balcony, crumbs

of a crumbled loaf of bread,

to the birds of the heavens.

*

To go out with the ants

to stretch on a chair in the dirt.

To have a sweet cup of coffee

with my dear mother.

*

*Let no one mention
Greece
in the main news
bulletins, in the newspapers.
Poverty has ceased
being news
in Europe.*

*

*Among rivers
like Pinios,
Guadalquivir,
Tiber,
you must mention
also the Raki river
that flows quenchingly
through my friends;
making fertile and fruitful
these barren years.*

*

*I ought to break the piggy-bank.
Take out one-by-one the kisses
I'd be hoarding up,
for the time of need*

that I have right now.

*

*To count out the underwear
tee-shirts, briefs, socks.*

The shirts.

The trousers.

*To count the mouthfuls of food,
the apologies.*

*Finally to sew
the button on the left
sleeve of the blazer.*

*

*Roasted chick-peas and raki,
the relatives getting together
in the dining room,
so that my father can spread
the accounting sheets,
and record the votes
for the nine political parties.*

*Only the dead are
poor, Angela Merkel.*

Translated by Jack Hirschman and Aggelos Sakkis

Yiannis PATILIS

ONLY LOVE IS ABSURD

*At the same seasons the wild beasts were cooling themselves in the mountains
we drank orangeades in the summer outdoor movies.*

Late at night we would fall into a bed.

There our bodies were waiting for us.

When the body had finished we'd put on the radio.

Listen to what it says. We shall part.

We shall wander in endless offices with a piece of paper in our hands.

At the end we shall fall sick. But we will not die.

We shall live sick until the end of the world.

MAN IS THE DOG

All the pains of mankind have become dogs.

When man converses quietly in the parlor

his pain hides itself in the heart of a dog

who wants to rush down the stairs

skid out into the streets

and fall howling before the wheels of a truck.

[I AM IN THE LIGHT...]

*I am in the light. I am not the light.
A flaring match
Before the endless sun.
With all my thought
I commit adultery with sensations.
But I also think
In favor of sensations.
(When I am in the streets I surrender
To visions.)
I live inside the air.
Inside the light.
Sometimes I put out the light
And breathe in the darkness.
(Rehearsals
To accustom myself to Hell.)*

Translated by Kimon Friar

KING KONG

*He is King Kong, the patron saint of civil servants.
When the civil servant sees this monstrous body
emerging from behind buildings,
he brims with a secret agony.
He stands up baffled, as if to sharpen his pencil,*

*or searches through drawers, feigning indifference,
while casting tender glances at the window.*

*Yes, the State Machine does pose something threatening, something colossal,
but it lacks the monstrous rush of the supernatural.*

*When the civil servant goes on strike or makes love,
it's the cry of King Kong tearing through his chest.*

ARGO

For just a pack of cigarettes

An afternoon beer outside Orchomenos

A dusty sunset between two buses,

I'll do whatever you demand, dear Reader

The Wandering Rocks and Sirens are mere routine

The summary of Orpheus, a midnight bar like a dogpound

Scylla and Charybdis, sheer tedium

And Polydeuces, just a suburban karate school

But this fatigue, like any other working man's

Departing twice a month from Colchis

Caressing small Golden Fleece souvenirs,

I shall remain where you left me last

Temporarily exhausted between two more feats

As if among the furniture of an exhausted move

All but your chair whose loss, of course,

You no longer have cause to fear

As you once did, remember?

When uninvited you suddenly saw me in your room

Avenger

With a blackened stare, one-sandaled vagabond.

POST (MORTEM) MODERN

When they heard

Now or Never,

They all cried Never,

And lowered their heads

Over their work

Again.

ATTEMPT AGAINST SILENCE

Since the vortex of colours

Is white, is silence

The great contortion of all that's spoken

No one will be able to analyze

Silence, no spectroscope

A desert inside everyone

Thick dust that time's slow wind

Cannot exhaust

*Raising the small clouds of idle talk
In various shapes (sometimes poetic)
Which change shape again since
Dust will never settle
Because time—the one who blows—
Is Madness (and nothing
Stops Madness). The fools we are
Continuing to talk of silence
As if a grain of sand could talk
Of the desert
(Which settles inside everyone).*

PERSEPHONE

If only I could get lost
Like all who pick flowers get lost
He thought
Crossing the traffic lights in Omonia
To go down
Not down to Hades (not yet)
But down Omonia's immobile escalators
If only I could become a grain of Spring
Which condescended even
To the dusty tents of Kerameikos St.
He said as he took
A leaflet from a young woman

Calling all textile workers
To one more twenty-four hour strike
If only I had twenty-four hours
Of absolute life
Caressing the vibrant breast
Of this day here
Settled with divine violence
On the eyes
He thought, head down, as he passed
By the wooden flute
Accompanying the tape player
Of a blind man adorned with lottery tickets
If I only had some luck, some light
From that one kind residing inside the other
As I climb the stairs up
To the world above
A virgin child to get lost
Like all who pick flowers got lost
And once again to find myself
Upon the earth.

Translated by Stathis Gourgouris

THE SCAVENGER

*As long as you are still young and beautiful
you will polish the silverware and wash the dishes
at night your body will occupy the mattress
until you grow old enough for Mr A. to twist you out
like a burnt bulb and throw you away
Marvelous your breasts were and slender your waist
your hips high and strong
but you lacked the party with the powerful protector
or the grand artist as your agent to fame
And somewhere near here your story would have ended
if it not be for the eternal suitor Mr B.
passing by with his scavenger's cart*

CONTRADICTION, YOU SLUT!

Dimoula, maybe Karouzos, I can't recall.

*With you
the day embodied the night
the laugh enclosed the tears
suddenly a road
came out of a dead-end
and the road itself
became a smashed window shop
Resurrection and crucifix in one*

*You were a girl when I met you
an exclamation mark alike
that filled up my days with question marks
from those wherefrom the end is coping significance
Your nude beauty made me stammer
and the music of your voice
settled my silence to verse
Tabula rasa I was by your side
without knowing
I thought, how naive of me – poor guy—,
that I've been making love to you
but it was you who knocked up my memory for good
implanting in my DNA
the germ of return
just for seeing once again
your eyes on the street
For a long time we have been drinking together at 'Atlantis'
at the bottom of the most gorgeous sea
brought about by the wilderness
of the man
How can you ever recall
only those growing old know
while you will remain forever young
nursing time
suckling at your vigorous boobs
over and over new infants*

*A nice girl you are, Contrie,
I now sit for hours and hours
admiring your plaits
from my own wheelchair*

Translated by Elena Stagkouraki

ALCOHOL IN REMISSION

and if I do not see
before Greece's sanctum
tangled in a dance
Freedom and the Muses
it is death that I desire
ANDREAS KALVOS, 'Hope of a country'

*I found you in the turmoil
with a borrowed coat, sleeping
on a bench with memories from the future
and it was London cold, toxic
I do not know if God speaks Greek
but surely the Greeks here
will soon speak it less and less
If they talk at all, that is
Sit up on your mattress a bit to see
the garbage it drags along*

the wind of change
bottles, the brave
of the boodle emptied
And hold on as strongly as you can
because the alcohol is in remission
bringing the hypodermic shudder and torpor
the nightmares from the assault of the vacant
I saw them in my sleep the other day
Venizelos with Bakalagos
—Freedom and the Muses—
tangled in a dance
under the cypresses of Stadiou street
singing praises to the West
en th twon nyn Ellhnwn dialektw³⁴

Greece Hellas of the New Age
a neoteric fantasy you were
delivered as a test
by three flagships³⁵
To be nourished by the unequalled corruption
The coinherence of the socialists
with the scum of the Earth
The compound of Family and Parliament

³⁴ In greeklish: «in the language of contemporary Greeks».

³⁵ Reference to the flagships of the fleet of the three protector forces (England, France, Russia) which devastated the Turkish-Egyptian fleet in the Naval Battle of Navarino (20-10-1827), securing the independence of Greece.

London one thousand eight hundred nineteen

Andreas Kalvos Ioannidis

HOPE OF A COUNTRY³⁶

what a modern title, my god

and even if it was written two centuries ago

how desperately

prophetic

Translated by Vassilis Manoussakis

³⁶ *Title of a poem by Andreas Kalvos, published in 1819 in London, two years before the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in 1821.*

Titos PATRIKIOS

THE LION'S GATE

*The lions had already departed.
Not even one in all of Greece,
Except for a rather solitary, evasive
Lion hiding out somewhere on the Peloponnesus,
A threat to no one at all,
Until it too was slaughtered by Hercules.
Still, our memories of lions
Never stopped terrifying us:
Their terrible images on coats of arms and shields,
Their terrible figures on battle monuments,
That terrible relief carved
Into a stone lintel over the gate.
Our past is forever full, terrible,
Just as the story of what happened is terrible,
Carved as it is now, written on the lintel
Of the gate we pass through every day.*

LETTER

Our life has become like a letter

*Bearing some crucial message,
Both sender and receiver
Lost in the waves of refugees.
The letter comes and goes
From post office to post office
Without anyone to open it,
Without anyone to throw it away.
The envelope is always marked URGENT
And the names on both sides are fading.
Only postmen read it now,
In the same wise tones used in laboratories
To pronounce the names of extinct species.*

Paris, November 1959

OEDIPUS' STORY

*He wanted to solve the riddles,
Cast light on the darkness
Everyone feels at ease with,
No matter how heavy it is upon them.
What scared him most wasn't what he saw,
But the refusal of the others to see it.
Would he always be the exception?
He couldn't stand loneliness anymore.*

*In order to find his neighbors
He thrust the two pins
Into his eyes.
He still understood by touch
Things nobody wanted to see.*

January 1971

ALLEGORY

*When the oak tree fell
Some people cut a branch, slammed it in the soil,
Calling the others to worship the same tree;
Some others lamented with elegies
The lost forest, their lost lives;
Others made collections of dried leaves,
Exhibited them in fairs, earned a living;
Others affirmed the destructiveness of deciduous trees,
Disagreeing, though, about how to, or even whether to reforest;
Others, and me with them, maintained that as long as
There are earth and seeds, there exists the possibility
Of an oak tree.*

The problem of water remains open.

June 1973

ZEBRAS

*Light through adjustable wooden persiennes
Of half-closed hotel shutters,
To the left of the train station's square,
Light cast in shreds
Dressing us up in zebra skin:
Two zebras wrestling in light and darkness,
Black and white stripes drawn
Diagonally by the headlights of cars,
Black and white immersion in your body.
So many years later, I sometimes see again
Black and white zebra flutings on my skin
Each time I stay alone in a seaside town hotel.*

Translated by Christopher Bakken

Dimitris PETSETIDIS

Away Ground

For a moment I thought of asking her, given that she smiled as she greeted me, 'Do I know you?' But then I felt embarrassed because of my memory and walked on, between the cafe tables, stumbling and tripping as if drugged; I was playing on an away ground, I found the cigarette smoke annoying, not even the music, which seemed as it were coming out of the ceiling, was to my taste.

She was wearing a short miniskirt and her smile painted an image of audacity on her harsh face, her unkempt bleached hair made her seem like a caricature, the pupils of her eyes appeared hugely dilated. I thought to myself 'You can go to fuck yourself too,' but where did I know her from? Had we met years before, had we chatted, what if I'd confided in her any of all tormented me and still torments me night and day, to hell with my memory, I need to exercise it, start doing crosswords. I strive to recall a poem by Embiricos that I'd once learned by heart, little egoistical twerp, what you did to try to impress, and all I can think of are some lines by the poetess: *'In their ostensible nonchalance there's always the horrible suspicion.'*

There's plenty of time, I thought, we have time, leave it for later, why rush, and if we lose out of meeting some new chick or lose out on acquiring a new position, what's the big deal. We've taken care of all three of our dimensions—that's care for you too!—and we've acquired a belly ignoring the fourth dimension, the treacherous one, that pervades us and slowly erodes us, the one that is the flesh's canker. And we never realized when the body-beanpole, when the body-cypress became like that, so that you pee and you can't see your willy, you hear tell of

beanpoles and cypresses and your mind turns elsewhere, a shudder runs through you.

Three boys are smoking and drinking their coffee; one of them can't be more than fifteen, a deep scar on his face, disfiguring him. A car accident, even so he was lucky, his friend who was with him on the speeding bike is in the hospital, a vegetable, and his folks don't want to pull the plug.

I keep going and arrive at a chair in front of the bar's marble surface, I'll order an ouzo, no cooked meats in the meze, maybe I'll have a second. Once upon a time, I used to come here with Angeliki, how the years had passed, thirty, may be more, it was a cafi then, but there was always ouzo and fresh tomato and cheese for the meze. Angeliki and I used to drink ouzo, she'd been accepted into the School of Architecture. 'How much can I possibly mean to you now?' I said to her, 'you're going to become an architect, what am I?' Someone looking for a job in a newspaper, at least let me get into an advertising agency, ideas for sale. Angeliki's eyes filled with tears and, moron that I am, I never gave it a thought, I pretended to be the tough guy, I must have seen some film earlier that evening at the cinema, the hero was speaking through my mouth, not to mention that I was convinced I looked like him, as I came out with all that supposedly gallant bullshit, all that worthless drivel.

And as the time passed, you'd park yourself every other day in the cafi drinking your ouzo, you asshole, you avoided looking in the huge mirror on the cafi wall, like *'someone sick who prefers not to see how his appearance is constantly deteriorating.'*

A young lad is talking loudly with one arm round his girl and a cigarette in the other hand; the girl, like the lad, is smoking like a chimney; he's saying something to her about an old man, he turns towards me and in a loud voice

continues to relate the business with the old man, continually stressing the words *old man*; he sees another lad who has just walked in. 'Over here, dude,' he shouts.

The girl stares at me, I detect in her gaze more of an inquisitive air than a disapproving one, that's it! As if she were grinning while drawing on her cigarette and blowing the smoke in my direction.

The barwoman is an acquaintance of mine, I knew that she'd married a lackey of the ruling party, I was amazed to see her working in a cafe. 'We split up,' she tells me, 'in a few days I'm starting work at a fast-food restaurant in Tripoli, to get away from this lousy city, and I'm never coming back.' Don't you know, poor Danae, that the city will always follow you, better for you that you don't know or perhaps heaven help you that you don't? No they hadn't had children, I remember those dreadful scenes when my folks announced they were splitting up, the deafening sound of that word *divorce*.

'It's fortunate you don't have kids,' I told her, without her hearing me, she had moved away and was serving a group of soldiers in civvies who were saying various things to tease her, I'm alone again with my ouzo.

Now on the wall where the huge mirror used to be, there are bare stones, strange-shaped electric lamps and some wooden contraptions that don't seem to have any use, that must have been the decorator's idea.

I reflect that we've remained kids. I could fall in love with the girl opposite who continues to stare at me inquisitively, her boyfriend is still sounding off about old men. I reflect on love, loves, long-lost desires, desires linked to faces and bodies, all covered in the mist of a memory that gets weaker by the day.

I try to work out how many years are still left, but I've resigned myself to it from my youth.

From nothing to nothing and however long you live in between, How have so many years gone by already? Spring, summer, autumn, winter and again spring, summer, autumn, winter, again spring, summer, autumn, winter, I feel dizzy, it's also the fault of the two ouzos I've downed.

I get up to leave the café with the American name, once it was the 'Cosy Spot' café, now I find it difficult to walk with a steady step in the direction of the door, I recall that I didn't say goodbye to Danae and turning round I wave to her. I look at the table where the girl was sitting with her friend who was railing about that old man, they're hugging and kissing, I can only see their backs. I open the door and as the cold wintry air hits me in the face, I mumble to myself: *'We're like the old man who supposedly doesn't know...'*

Translated by David Connolly

Gina POLITI

'The Gibbet-maker'

TIT. News, news from heaven! Marcus, the post is come.
Sirrah, what tidings? have you any letters?
Shall I have justice? What says Jupiter?
CLO. O, the gibbet-maker! He says that he hath taken them down again
for the man must not be hang'd till the next week
(IV. iii. 76-81)³⁷

To my knowledge, the laconic yet highly tragical narrative intimated in the clown's answer to Titus has received little if no attention by critics of *Titus Andronicus*. Yet, the 'plot' seems to bear a striking resemblance to a contemporary event which Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience may have 'read' in the clown's cryptic words. Thus, the comical 'misunderstanding' occurs within, but perhaps not without the play where the clown's true interlocutor is situated.

The tragical event to which I refer may become more eloquent if reproduced in the words of the man who 'must not be hang'd till the next week':

So that I with my fower other brethren, were the 23 of the third month [March 1592/3] condemned, and adjudged to suffer death as felons... Upon the 24, entry in the morning, was preparation made for our execution: we [were] brought out of the Limbo, our yrons smitten of{f}, and we ready to the bound to the cart; when her Majesties's most gracious pardon came for our repri{e}ve... Upon the last day of the third month [Saturday 31 March], my brother Greenwood and I were very early and secretly conveyed to the place of execution. Where being tyed by the necks to the tree, we were permitted to speak a few words... And having both of us almost finished our last words;

³⁷ All quotations are from *Titus Andronicus*, ed. J.C. Maxwell, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London, 1968).

behold one was even at the instant come with a retri{e}ve for our lives from her Majesty. Which was not onely thankfully received of us, but with exceeding rejoysing and applause of all the people, both at the place of execution, and in the wayes, streets. and houses, as we returned.³⁸

Seven days later, on 6 April 1593, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood were huddled out of prison, conducted to Tyburn, and there hanged.

If this striking analogy between fact and fiction at all holds, then the hypothesis may be entertained that *Titus Andronicus* was not composed earlier than 6 April 1593. Whitgift's violent reaction in the course of Barrow's Examination: 'Away with him! Clap him up close, close!'³⁹ is not dissimilar to Saturninus's: 'Go, take him away and hang him presently' (IV. iv. 45). Thus, the Clown's cryptic narrative and cruel fate, besides providing us with a possible clue as to the much-debated date of the play, may also shed a modest ray of light on another unresolved 'mystery': the famous Peecham drawing of *Titus Andronicus*. Lord Burghley, in whose papers the drawing was found, was a remote kinsman of Robert Browne and it was through his influence that Browne was released from prison in 1581. There is also some evidence to show that he endeavoured to save the lives of Barrow and Greenwood but 'was frustrated by Whitift and other Bishops'.⁴⁰

Perhaps, it is not without significance that Lady Ann Russell, to whom the 'Browniste' Henry Barrow addressed his letter, was the third wife of Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Lord of the Manor at Stratford 'for the first twenty-six years of Shakespeare's life',⁴¹ as M. M. Reese notes.

³⁸ *The Writings of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow; 1591-1593*, ed. L.H. Carlson (London, 1970), pp. 248-50. 'Letter to an Honourable Lady and Countess of his Kin{d}red yet Living. April 4-5, 1953'

³⁹ Quoted in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, eds L. Stephen and S. Lee (London, 1890), Vol. III, p. 297, Barrow Henry.

⁴⁰ EB, 11th edition, Vol. IV, Browne Robert and Vol. III, Barrowe Henry.

⁴¹ *Shakespeare His World and His Work* (London, 1980), p. 3.

Shakespeare religious beliefs; his attitude towards the Puritans and his political ideology may have to be re-examined if *Titus Andronicus* is read as a 'speechless complainer' from whose 'dumb action' 'an alphabet' may be wrested to make known its 'meaning' (III.iii. 39-45).

From *Notes and Queries* (Vol. 236 of the continuous series. [New Series, Vol. 38]. No. 1, March 1991)

Marios PONTIKAS

The World History of Super Market

Morning shopping is less tiring than evening shopping, *thank you* is written on signs everywhere in the store (inside and outside). But people who have morning jobs find it difficult to follow this friendly recommendation. Still, there are many who give it a try, wake up early at dawn and wait for the supermarket to open. Few manage to get in. Most leave without having done their shopping. Full of disappointment, they run to catch buses or trains, for now they must make haste to be at work on time.

So from six in the evening until late at night, all these people, together with those who have ignored this friendly recommendation, form new queues outside the supermarket, while inside its various departments, it is impossible to move around. Because of the overcrowding, it smells of sweat, cheap perfumes, cheese, human breath, stench from roasting chicken (ready-made food for working people), blood from women's menstruation, soap, meat, hotdogs, brooms, detergents, deodorants, beer, wine, value packs of glasses, quilted robes, plastic washing bowls, sweepers, flowery sheets, cans, biscuits, chocolate, coffee, spaghetti and legume, milk, butter and yoghurt, oil, books, wooden toys, confectionary, music CDs, it smells of all this, most people seem to absorb their packaged smell, or it's the products robbing the human smell, anyway it even smells of the buzzing sigh of the citizens jostling in there. Their fragmented, non-sequential thoughts smell, everything smells in the supermarket.

To be fair, we must say that some people do feel sorrow and anger for what they've become, they suspect that the signs do not actually make a friendly recommendation and that the phrase MORNING SHOPPING IS LESS TIRING THAN EVENING SHOPPING, THANK YOU is a disguised trap. Yet, they do not react. They have got used to waking up at dawn and rushing to the supermarket, maybe they hope that one day there might be a lottery, especially for those who follow the recommendation, maybe for a TV set, a car, why not a beach house. And while they sense it's a trap, they still look forward to a reward of some kind.

'It's a trick so that they can sell more, they have reached a dead-end with all these thousands of new products they launch every once in a while, they are all the same and they do not know how to sell them, those who earned two now want to earn four and tomorrow eight, and the next day sixteen, and the very next day thirty two and then sixty four while we, gentlemen, today earn sixty four, tomorrow thirty two, and the next day sixteen, and the very next day eight, and then four, two, nada'.

Who speaks, whose is the voice coming from the speakers?

Then I suddenly wake up, I look around but I'm not in my bed, I'm at the supermarket, they push me and I struggle to get to the shelf with the things I want, I cannot manage to get all of them because I'm drifted away by the stream of consumers, next to me crawls a man dying of suffocation and we carry him along in the various departments, it's Saturday night, I seem to have fallen asleep in here and in my dream I saw that I was right where I've been since this morning, that's why I saw that I was at the supermarket where I'm right now (that is Saturday night) and I'm elbowed, and get in and out of the several departments of local vegetables and imported fruit and suddenly I hear a voice that says something, it must be a tape heard from the speakers, anyway we can all hear this voice and the noises and

whispers die out, there is silence as if we are in a group tomb, it's a pleasant voice, full of confidence and from the very first words we have come to love it, this voice resounding in the supermarket which makes the managers feel uneasy, because we can see employees in red sweaters pushing the crowd violently, trying to make way in order to reach the source of the voice.

The voice stopped suddenly, just as it began, we opened up and a clearing was formed in front of us. Then we saw a young man forced to his knees by the employees in the red sweaters who twisted his hands behind his back. We took a few steps back taking care not to bring down the cans from the shelves, but two bottles of nitric acid fell down and opened a hole on the plastic floor.

The young man smiled even though they had him on his knees, he didn't seem to me as if he was expecting some kind of help.

Several minutes passed, the employees in the red sweaters were waiting for someone, this thought crossed my mind because they made no move, so I thought to myself they must be waiting for the supermarket owner who will give them the necessary instructions, but they were not waiting for the supermarket owner, they were waiting for the employees in the black sweaters who were holding handguns and wore black gloves and their face was covered with black hoods! At some point they showed up, pushed us even further back pressing their guns against our bellies and took hold of the young man. Then the employees in the red sweaters formed a circle around him and we could not clearly see what was going on in the center. I managed to see more, because I discovered a gap between two of the employees in the black sweaters.

First they strangled him, I could not see clearly, I think one of the employees in the black sweaters pushed his two fat fingers inside his nose and another one shoved his entire fist into his mouth. Anyway, the young man died quickly; thank

God he died quickly, the poor lad didn't suffer much. Then, they took out some small plastic boxes from a large container they had brought with them; it looked like a freezer on wheels. They put these small boxes in order, then stripped the dead man of his clothes, put his clothes on hangers and sent them to the value -for-money department.

So they stripped the dead man, and with axes they cut his body in five parts: neck, chest, belly with genitals, thighs, knees to toes. Every employee in black sweater had (so I figured) a specialization area. One gathered the blood and poured it in small jars like those packaging marmalade, jam, honey etc. Another chopped the flesh in small pieces and packaged it in small plastic bottles. Another gathered the intestines, the genitals, the brain, the eyes, then the speakers made a hhhhhhsssss, frrrrrrrr sound, a woman's voice kindly asked us to continue our shopping and apologized for this little incident and reminded us of the friendly recommendation MORNING SHOPPING IS LESS TIRING THAN EVENING SHOPPING, THANK YOU and then soft, lounge music.

We slowly spread around, continued our shopping, we were happy they apologized to us, the tills started working again and made sounds like automatic war rifles, what can you do, we have needs, we need to change our home furniture, go out more often, get an engine boat , buy a small house in the country, buy cosmetics, get a wig or plant natural hair on the bald spot, get plastic genitals so that we will not need the real ones which do not work properly anyway, get fitness equipment, get an alarm system, get a fire, life, accident, older age, disease and pension insurance, buy two more TV sets for the rest of our apartment rooms, get a wine cellar, buy automatic sound systems so that we can perfectly enjoy the music we love, travel abroad, buy a second car, hire a security man to protect all these goods of God, make more money so that we can buy more things, I'm thinking of

buying some antiques and paintings and other rare art objects to fill up my house,
and then we can sell the country house we bought and get a better one,

From Hurrah, 2012. Translated by Penny Fylaktaki

Lefteris POULIOS

Oh God

*I am naked without the garment of your compassion
you superior human being
victualler of these verses
murderer and butterfly
you are
it is
also the music of earthly sorrow
two gods welling up from the well-springs of their non-existence.
You gardener, you binder-of-the-stars, you udder of the storm,
human bloodshed. This is your gift:
pollen collected from all things.
Make me into a child
please make me a carefree creature
make me even the grease-rag of your sun
give me favourable words. Demon with your golden hair,
man and horn of godlike whores
unbearable lie forcing my lips to tremble
in the pudenda of your goodness –
well then, speak up
pouring orgasms of human sensitivity into the womb*

of poetry.

*Piece of sculpture helping my effigy to travel in your plastic
universe, I lift my arm in supplication,
violent and bestial I howl
I call you on the telephone, I open my heart to you
I'm on fire, leaping beyond the flesh,
holding flowers and the lava while living
in the experience of grief
to pay for the fact of my bond
with this world and most probably the next.*

*And I have a lame arm, my hands cannot grasp truths.
I toss and turn inside my skin like an embryo in some senile womb;
knots and marbles, when hard pressed, collide
and explode in the magic darkness
legs full of membranes yelling through the eyes
inside the centre
electrons and energies and relativities.*

*You are a bone thrown to a dog
I am a fool in the Milky Way by the name of 'pitiful little light'
I'm akin to a barnacle, to seaweed, a beggar, a fish, to urine.*

*The flag of victory is hoisted upon acquaintance with my woe.
You rock – you fire or thunder or Cow or Zeus or Brahma
or Allah, make this poem howl*

like a cyclone clothed in the vast awe of my corruption.

*I am at your mercy, a flame galloping from one generation
to the next, though feeling boredom.*

Oh deliverance, my mind cannot contain you.

Oh daisy — decomposition

so then, is the earth the coin whereby

you intend to settle your debt?

Phoebus Apollo, you mendicant, come and fill

this life of mine

with your own face. Let my soul spout like a fountain

outside the grave of existence playing the heartaches

of eros

exhaust-fumes coming from your own machine.

Stop killing me little by little on the day of the deposition

from the cross

amidst the infinite laughter of the nuclear bombs

in quick succession keep striking the ciborium-canopy of cosmogony

with the stones of my eyes. Out of my entrails shape

the burning phoenix on some enormous matchbox.

Inconceivable caress in the middle of the limpid gazes

of exquisite female constellations.

Drown me forever

you cataclysm of human limbs.

Rend the city with the phallus of war, crush

the human beings, the crawling trains, the flying objects

*flapping their wings to tear the nylon day
into myriads of rags ripped out of mysterious evolution.
Gulp the lines of the horizon
Bury Time in its grave
Make me into a stone with a pip.*

*Each day ends like gravel turning into air
gleaming as it rests upon the great regal
hearse
Lady Earth.*

From Poetry 2. Translated by Amy Mims

Manolis PRATIKAKIS

THE GRAND GUEST HOUSE

*Pale and weak as Helpinor just before
he took a bad crash in the house, and so, from incurable
ascites 'his soul moved into darkness'.*

*Pale and weak, Look into the smoke,
already a dark magnet accosts us, reaching for us,
the death train – it sucks two or three of us...*

*Jack you know all I am is my veins. Careful Jack,
Jack, this thrombotic web is my life. And no more cut shit,
son of a bitch, I'm talking at you, you dumb junkie. Ethereal
Kytheria. My own Pan in a syringe...containing the universe.
And that girl Fleurie ...colic, cramps and all the rest...*

*She screamed and she screamed. The faded flesh like ounces and
ounces of calico. Diaphanous and sweating like the mirror.*

Until Fleurie checked out. Big time.

*And all night a mute rain fell in the gutter
twisting our bones. OK OK Jack. I was falling apart
right there ... thanks, it was a decent hit on me for now.*

But Jo-Jack – captive voice in sick flesh.

*That stench of love is a chaos. How many milligrams at Circe's
place?*

In a night-overtaken haze.

*See: the death train. And we're young Jack, young
through the dark glow of our pain – right to the edge of our time.
And Fleurie – Fleurie – Fleurie... Flash... OD... G'night... OD...
white light ... wild animals out on those slender branches. Once ...
she... like... an angel with burnt wings. OK OK Jack ... Fleurie,
we'll talk – talk a-a-g-g-g- gain ... b-b-bbye ...
bye now... bye now... b-b-bye now ...*

*From a precipitous place I heard a half-uttered
phrase fading away. It was a winter's night. My mother said
that her scream only meant a nightmare. I was lying
in bed when I saw them through the window, an interior
perspective.*

*People, immobilised, petrified. I ran
to touch them. My god, I remember. Their long, stony
hands. Their cold-curved lips. Their immobile thighs.
Petrification! I cried in terror. My parents. My brothers.
All petrified and unable to hear me. I was there. I ran
from one to the other. A tremulous coming and going
among people made of plaster.*

*They were all strangers. Perhaps only some distant,
decadent kinship. Perhaps only a coincidence
of this moment in history which found us in co-
existence. But it can't be: no, no I thought. Maybe*

*some kind of bad joke. Mother, Mother, I kept repeating,
what's this sick conspiracy of silence?
This story plexus crushing my heart?
No one answered. They were gathered
in a close granite circle. As if these strange
faces of my family were in a mausoleum. Those forms,
every one enclosed in itself. That afternoon I saw
the slashes in the house for the first time. They covered them all
over
carefully with pieces of wood and burlap.
But they still grew endlessly and spoke to me.*

*Words which remained speechless, they parted.
Leaving a deafening, hollow sound in our minds. Like
a misfire. Like some unspeakable murder.*

Like a dark delivery – and no child.

From The Grand Guest House

I. BEING PHOTOGENIC

He is sitting on a plain bench in the garden. Legend has it that he was born in Nafplion. He studied Law at the University of Athens (what a surprise!). Flowers like small flames hide his knees. Many stones and thorns, all around, but never swamps, bring back memories (is

this the territory of his art?). Tacit foliage like swallows on sleepless temples transformed to sky blue by madness. (His back is against the wooden bench but his lips are on his lucky talisman). With a fading hand he holds the cigarette, heavy white ash, a sigh he has no dreams of any Ithaca. His hoarse glow – like a Brahman epiphany – and slow movements intensify the surrounding photosynthesis.

His voice is nowhere that is why he germinates among the stony petrifications.

To all photojournalists: this is what we mean by pure photogenic quality of being. This is what we mean by immortalisation of the wild Hestian wind.

A musical voice among the deserted bamboo.

Yes, he wheezes. But his lungs are already harmoniums of the vast sea.

And his pulse the chattering of paradise.

VI. HIS REAL COUNTRY

*He was emerging from ward 605, almost
dragging his steps, as if he was moving from within
a great Silence, as if that was his real country.
And with his trembling hands he kept on saying:
'having richly perfumed my sleep with horror
the words became thorns
above a headless statue
in wreathes of emptiness'. But we could comprehend nothing
from the muttering voice of his hands
because his sheets were on fire, the flames
leaping out of the windows and the doors*

sounding like millions of swarms of bees.

VII. BURNING

*Looking at his white hair – this burning of
black colour into a horror of whiteness
his cells have never experienced.*

*His steps – a rotten staircase; you cannot see the
door which excludes him. That silent precipice
when time goes bankrupt inside him
on contact.*

*He says: will you all write history now instead of novels? No my child,
this laborious breathing of existence since birth
on a camp bed (I won't unleash the centuries
before my birth; and then be saved
as a hydrocephalous, incomprehensive diagnosis).*

*He swear at the nurses, he swears at the whole household
of health as if he is destitute, he will go no further.*

*He pulls out the intensive care unit's drips and noisily disconnects the
multifunctional, leafy machines.*

*I asked you if you could give me intravenous
injections from heaven? Eh then, get out my backpack,
I think something of nature beckons me.*

*For God's sake ladies, hurry up, straighten my collar
a bit and sprinkle a little perfume on me for*

*this miserable passage. I am thinking of the flash of death,
I don't want it to find me with a degraded body. What do you think you
wretches? All night bending like the slopes of a low hill.
Compassionate flesh springs. Good-bye.*

From *The indecipherable Colours of the End*

From

THE WATER

One drop out with the text became a spring and conjoined
as many drops — and so — became as one.

*Five years later. I finally succeeded in comprehending
what it was that I found so seductive about water. It was its
demonic grace in escaping and becoming an invisible
kingfisher in the west-wind. Its capacity to discover the
smallest crack and to delineate it. That which makes it
unpredictable, and so, the essence of Becoming. A cistern
on the earth and a wandering garden in the sky. Its
notorious detachment and its contempt for the value of its
use. The way it amasses letters in a grammar as yet
unconceived. Its ebb, flow and sway which begets Nausea
to existence and mocks stability. What it leaves unspoken*

*and un-confessed and will always veil the rest. That quality
making it playful and happy (you know, within whatever
flesh it may inhabit). Self-complacent and biblical in every
root, the primal matter from which dreams are kneaded.*

*(A washer-woman washing linen in the sky. Or long, shiny
animals in the half-light-dark of everything?)*

Uncompromising and unyielding; in this tacit epic poem.

*It hammers at the door in the night with the voices of the
drowned.*

It beckons us to where our desert heels catch the scent of oasis.

*Full of stars. It may walk, it may lay down in its decent,
primitive, nature.*

Translated by Dionyssia Zervanou

Haris PSARRAS

ADJOINING LOSSES

*The sun is blinder than Homer.
Its black light uncoils inside us.
Faced with death we are all civilians.*

*You turn in early. You lower
the voice of love. You say: I am mortal.
In your sleep you destroy and rebuild Troy.*

*Killed Hector flows in your veins.
You pay tribute to him by running in his blood.
Leafing through oblivion, your daily life
strives to free itself from care, innocent but an Atreid.*

*Homer too was blind. Blind is also the sun.
Death drafts both the good and the bad.
I repent means I venture to narrate
how Hecuba and Priamus suffered.*

THE ART OF QUIET

*And when God forgot us, we spared no effort
to get to know Him again. A betrayed truth
is His voice, it's not audible on earth.*

*We removed the trees from the ashes,
we raised them again in ashen coppices,
and reckoned we were nightingales.*

*And on the unripe branches quietness dwelled,
for our chant also found no receiver
and worries surrounded the spineless life.*

*With awkward hands we brought down the trees,
their foliage we consigned to the ground
and we reverted to being mortals, as befits.*

From *Ta Ontos Onta*, 2012

ARGONAUTS

We hoisted the sails, but there was no wind.

I pluck a cyclamen's petals.

We have been spared

of great expectations. For a moment

a nightingale sang in the foliage.

*And our last trip to the country
was put off. Yesterday
the ship went up in flames.*

*There's no smoke without fire.
The bloodhounds of Corinth scented*

sabotage. There was talk of infanticide.

Our seed was wiped out.

Only

*the disconsolate father, Jason, was left to lament
the Golden Fleece falling to his lot.*

Baffled and cut up, I go to rack and ruin.

It wouldn't be

a lie if I were to say that God

luckily forgot us.

From *The Glory of Carefree Life*, 2008

THE FALL OF ICARUS

*Bird-like I'll rise and leave
bothering the earth with my wings,
projecting my expectation's orders,
far from anything tangible surrounding me.*

*The blood's humming has turned down
and I construct feathers
to throw myself, a perishable apothegm, straight down
on the earth covering with dust girlish skirts
and with mud soldiers' boots.*

*Death harpoons us in its pitiless light,
as with torches and brands a fisherman catches trout.
I assimilated the precept of the crawling caterpillar
which culminates on a sudden, and now I let*

*the sun's impudent smile
crush me and at the same time rejoice,
and afterwards intact, darkening staunchly
taking care of my legendary fall
which drives every flier to despair.*

AN AGREEMENT

The poet makes a compromise with chance

*he comes upon it in cool places
even frozen
and there he ventures a lame transaction
after which he pretends to be a listener of nightingales
or with the blessing of certain couplets
he sets a timetable for imagination
to abide.*

From *Handmade Matches*, 2002. Translated by Yannis Goumas

APPROACH

*My sorrow at meeting
'by dying will come'
lying on death's
touch that matures you.
Its body extreme white
swans' pining feather down
of the fearful dawn
the white-heart cherry lip
of delightful joy.
Decay running thread
bares her breast
plunging in the mirror's
shooting star glances.
Lowering the earth speechless*

*it leapt into the dispersion
moving and remains
to live its destruction that
the writing may be obscured.
Point of homecoming approached
in time to which soul
and body and love's
alertness is given...
In a newly-created sky's
puberty to sun itself.
It lay down and slept.*

Translated by David Connolly

CLOUD SEEDING

*A craftsman with a poor name
slips and falls in the wind.
His fame, a hermetic stone,
advises Aeolus:*

*'Enunciate my voice,
make it heard by waves
rising, promising time's
condescension before too late.*

*A warm re-hearing, a hammer's sound.
And let them call me
flowers' pollen, spread all over the place or
the artificial rain that everyone deserves.'*

FORECASTING THE WEATHER

*Fifteen leagues under clouds —
the circumnavigation of earth.
Running round in circles
a beautiful lady makes us bleed and the wind*

*places his breath on soil, his last one.
Take it as it comes.
The perfect shape has always been
the shape of the end.*

*It shines on the horizon
with rubies, emeralds and sunlight.
It shines and cuts the links that keep us together.
A crowd of clouds,*

*cloudiness. It's just your heart knows
the rain. As it runs from one room*

*to another, the rain has no end,
ends up your friend.*

From *In the Circle's Embrace*, 2004. Translated by Jennifer L. Williams

ENCLOSURE

*The garden is a jagged cliff,
a thorn, a delicate liquid
sealed in a jar.
It cautiously watches
for those who will come,
for those who will not
and for the one who will topple
Spring.*

From *Handmade Matches*, 2002. Translated by Andrew Barrett

CIRCE PENELOPE

*Sea eyes, dark hair
light the day
and the night.
The crickets*

*listen to your bed
when you make love
bearing fire, a red glow.*

*Blaze
so your love
can see your beauty
and your embrace.
You were my pillow,
a sense of relief
but your logic
and your desire*

*to lie with anyone
make me sick.
I kiss your breasts
and the taste of mint
troubles my calm gaze.
I follow you at dawn
Circe, my sweet Penelope.*

From *The Glory of Carefree Life*, 2008. Translated by Andrew Barrett

Dimitris RAFTOPOULOS

From

The Barbarians

[...] Speaking about the «metamorphoses» destined to transform books, writing, and language, metamorphoses that have already affected our habits, but which our traditions still deny, Maurice Blanchot notes:

[...] Reading, writing— we have no doubt that these words are summoned to play quite a different role in our mind than the one they played at the beginning of this century: that is obvious, no matter what radio set, no matter what screen alerts us to it, and even more obvious is this rumor surrounding us, this anonymous and continuous murmuring within us, this wonderful, unheard, agile, tireless language, endowing us each moment with a direct, universal knowledge and turning us into a simple passage of a movement in which each one of us is always, already, in advance, exchanged for everyone else.⁴²

The consequences of these changes in culture and life in general are and will be immense. The rosier prospects are summarized, inspirationally, by one of the new technology prophets in the field of communications, Marshall McLuhan:

«Our new electric technology that extends our senses and nerves in a global embrace has large implications for the future of language. Electric technology does not need words any more than the digital computer needs numbers. Electricity points the way to an extension of the process of consciousness itself, on a world scale, and without any verbalization whatever. Such a state of collective awareness may have been the preverbal condition of men. Language as the technology of human extension, whose powers of division and separation we know so well, may have been the «Tower of Babel» by which men sought to scale the highest heavens. Today computers hold out

⁴² Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à Venir*, Gallimard, 1959

the promise of a means of instant translation of any code or language into any other code or language. The computer, in short, promises by technology a Pentecostal condition of universal understanding and unity. The next logical step would seem to be, not to translate, but to bypass languages in favor of a general cosmic consciousness, which might be very like the collective unconscious dreamt of by Bergson. The condition of «weightlessness,» that biologists say promises a physical immortality, may be paralleled by the conditions of speechlessness that could confer a perpetuity of collective harmony and peace.»⁴³

With the «technological Pentecost» —or rather with the Ascension— we will then ascend into the heaven of harmony via elevator since we could not do so with the Babel of language. Amen. But what about literature? She exists too in the space of signs. She is the language of a language that underwent two geological upheavals so far, that of writing and that of typography. Logically, both of them should have annihilated her, for communication technologies, like other technologies, are always invented by practical economic needs. The transition from oral to written and then to printed literature has changed literature radically. From being a common property of a small-size cultural community, the literary work (oeuvre) became personal, fixed and immovable. [...] The Gutenberg «typhoon» swept away the last remains of the myth community and oeuvre mobility from copyist to copyist, from hand to hand.

Writing, according to Socrates/Plato, is a lifeless reflection (*eidolon*) vis-a-vis the spoken word (alive and animate) to the man who really knows (*tou eidotos logon*). Shadow of the shadow, poetry becomes shadow squared with writing, and shadow to the third with typography. Therefore, it would be justifiable for the lawmaker, this moral-political thought introduced by Plato, to banish the poet for being «third from the truth» (*ton triton apo tes alitheias*). Writing, especially literature, is lawless

⁴³ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, McGraw-Hill, 1964

and immoral, subversive, against the authority of the father, the spoken word (logos), the king. Writing introduces violence. The sorcery of writing conceals death under the semblance of the living, notes Jacques Derrida⁴⁴ in analysing the platonic «Accuse» against writing in the *Phaedrus*. [...] Writing is essentially evil, does not produce memory, but memorialization; not knowledge but opinion. It is no truth, but verisimilitude. Derrida notes that the criticism against writing in the *Phaedrus*, and against democracy in *The Republic* is parallel, almost identical. But Plato himself writes to disseminate these, in other words, essentially, he recants them. And even if he does not expect to be the last one to write, his inconsistency implies that writing must at least be protected from playing «irresponsibly» when it is not a mere memorialization (*hypomnesis*) of the dialectic that it must reproduce. This analysis by Derrida provides a solution to this contradiction of imposing a «written sentence» on writing, a sentence, however that remains suspended.

It is no coincidence that Platonic thought, which lays the foundations of Western metaphysics, opens the trial of writing, a patricide trial, a trial of art and literature par excellence, a case of expressing the non-true, the image, the imitation, and the fantasy.

The Platonic dialectic had already discussed the issue of the alphabetical structure of writing, and of «grammar.» The representation of sounds and phonemes with neutral symbols (lacking the signified), reveals the rationale underlying the Western, alphabetical civilization. McLuhan, again, reminds us what David Hume demonstrated in the 18th century: that «there is no principal of causality in mere sequence» and that Kant confessed that Hume's reasoning had awakened him from his «dogmatic slumber».

⁴⁴ Jacques Derrida, «La Pharmacie de Platon», *Tel Quel* 32, 33, 1968

McLuhan argues, however, that neither Hume, nor Kant revealed the hidden cause of Western tendency to equate sequence with logic, namely the omnipresent technology of the alphabet, and believes that today, in the electric age «we are free to invent nonlinear logics as well as non-Euclidean geometries.»

Without digressing from the governing principles of discourse, literature contained, at her best moments, a denial, or, at least, disquietude towards its linear alphabetical and grammatical logic. Poetry, an ideal attainment of individualism, no matter how much imbued with ideology —this historical and social grammar— bears within herself her own contradiction. The genres, styles, modes and rhymes, all the «typical» and ritualistic approaches of artful discourse, may as well be the result of poetry's subservience to the system with a preoccupation to speak nicely of this world. Through these, however, often blows a breeze of disharmony vis- à-vis the dispersion of imagination-emotion-discourse, like an unconscious effort to re-invent the semantic and dramatic content of the sign and the sound. [...]

The Barbarians ante portas. (Is there a need to recall that this concept was initially linked to language?) Nevertheless, those who do not understand Greek, Latin, or English are no longer the non-Greeks. From the linguistic point of view, always, barbarians are all the categories of Babel, the alienation of communication. Ownership, appropriation, is a precondition of alienation. And precondition of preconditions is the appropriation of discourse. Always, the concentration of power, in parallel with its expansion in space, is followed by the concentration and the ghetto of knowledge. [...]

Starting from Hölderlin's insinuations and the searches of Mallarmé, Blanchot concludes, through a new «excavation» of the masterpieces of literature, that the literary space is the same as the space of death, understood as evidence of the absence of an end (*telos*). But, whatever the pronouncements of such a marginal

experience, the revision of «the literary» from the internal perspective deepens the research that was made possible with the tools provided by structural linguistics, psychoanalysis, anthropology and other human sciences. The fragmentation of literature and the abandonment of the scope coherence-complicity with the «useful discourse,» have a more general significance I believe, which literature addresses first in the problem of communication. [...]

It is known that stuttering is often connected to forcing a natural left-handed to write with the right hand. Stutterers, however, do not stutter when they sing, and some of them, as a matter of fact, stop stuttering when speaking a foreign language. The fact that literary writing «stutters» lately is not, by any means, a symptom of the same psychokinetic disorder. It is tempting, however, to think that with the dada experiment, the automatic writing and thereafter, the disorder of writing represents a permanent defence to the violence over the soul and body exercised by coordinated discourse with the norms and militarisms that it serves. [...]

I would like to conclude with an enigmatic phrase by James Joyce in *Finnegan's Wake*: What bird has done yesterday man may do next year. What did he mean? Flight? Song? Or that man has no other historical past than that of the serpent?

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Translated by Georgia Galanopoulou

Stelios RAMFOS

From

Silence: Withdrawal from Speaking

Silence, as withdrawal from speaking, is as closely linked with stillness as withdrawal from activity. The word –the logos– provokes a feeling of freedom and power; it is itself a power exercising spiritual influence, an expression of our vital personal realm endowed with a critical social aspect. It was inevitable that such a dimension should occupy the attention of the desert fathers. Moreover, it had from ancient times attracted the notice of learned men, who studied it as a vital characteristic of the human person and cultivated it carefully. The same was true for the secular Church, which produced so many eloquent orators, but not for the hermits. Their interest was not centred on the study and cultivation of the word; it was centred on withdrawal, on a profound, purifying silence [...]

THE MEANING OF SILENCE IN THE ASCETIC LIFE

Silence as withdrawal from speaking does not entail a withdrawal also from the word, the logos. The ascetic pursuit of silence is more a pursuit of purity than an abolition of the word. It is significant that in about the fourth century silent reading first makes its appearance, thus emphasizing the entry of the human person into an era in which the interior life becomes predominant. For inwardness accompanies the discovery of the word, but the idea of God's dwelling in the heart in Christ is needed before it will flourish. Hence an economy with words did not lead automatically to a development of inwardness. One purpose of the ancient Spartan

frugality with words, for example, was that the citizen should not be distinguished from the group as an individual, that there should be no rupture in the cohesion of the group. Of course, four centuries before Christ the Stoic philosophers had distinguished the immanent logos from the uttered logos and showed that the word –the signifier– and that which it manifests –the signified– differ. The uttered logos is of material dimensions; its meaning is incorporeal. That is why even our thought is expressed by means of sentences and not simply by words: it is the sense that communicates, the logos in its grammatical structure and syntax, never the isolated words, which explains the exclusively human creation of composite meanings, while animals receive only impressions, even when, like the parrot or the crow, they articulate words. In spite of all this, inwardness has limits which weaken it. So long as truth remains in the end external, the logos manifests it exclusively, and silence is ignorant of it or conceals it. Silence will receive the logos by right when truth comes to dwell within us. The silent person cannot then be a person who denies spiritual life; but he can be a person who loves the interior logos. By what criteria can the interior logos be described as authentic? By the same purity of heart which protects the authenticity of prayer and stillness. If the word embodies the love of wisdom, silence expresses the wisdom of love. This is why Poemen teaches that silence is deprived of benefit when it coexists in the human soul with the condemnation of others. Only with the presupposition of sudden misfortune we do not fall silent; we are struck dumb. Something that astonishes us leaves us speechless. In these situations existence for a moment loses all meaning and our voice is lost with it. The word comes to fill a void, a gap. Silence, on the other hand, presupposes a certain fullness. Silence without fullness becomes oppressive, a disorientation with regard to the meaning of the world and of the other person. Idle chatter not only shows indifference towards the word and its recipient; it shows above all an anxiety about

a void of our own. By contrast, silence comes from interior serenity and fullness. Fear may prevent us from speaking, but as with misfortune or surprise this does not mean in any way that we are silent. Silence is something more than the natural absence of sound. It is a mark of consciousness and therefore as aposiopesis can become a form of concealment. We have seen that there exists a threatening silence and there also exists a silence of thanksgiving. In the latter case it does not refer to inwardness in general. Inwardness in general gives precedence to the Ego over everything else, and in this sense finds a refuge in the rational faculty or is recognized in ecstasy. As something rational, inwardness is expressed in the feeling of discipline and responsibility. As something mystical or ecstatic, it is manifested in the emotional passion of an Ego which cannot bear its limits. By contrast, the inwardness of thanksgiving is the content of my relationship with the other person and the world, a relationship outside the division between subject and object which provokes and foments the modern divisions of the soul. In this perspective one could think of silence as a withdrawal which allows persons and things to remain in their authentic being, a mode of life unrelated to any kind of tactical manoeuvring. When silence becomes a self-seeking tactical game, it loses all spiritual significance. It hides rather than reveals and deceives rather than cleanses. Silence must always remain a form of withdrawal, because withdrawal is fundamentally thanksgiving.

Irene RINIOTI

VERTIGO

1.

I'm walking uphill

Some demon-angel

slipped me the news

It is worthwhile going up

seeing the world from on high

Well worth it

The tree branches join together

Casting shade on my path

The hat is gaping in the rain

The overcoat in the wind

The soul in danger

The wind beats against the face

The dirt against the eyes

The ache against the heart

2.

I'm making my way

in between stones and scraggly bush

I carry a garden in my breast

The toil of gardens challenges me

It's that they thirst for water

hunger for sun

grow desperate

are resurrected

Since childhood I carry dirt in my pockets

to remember where I come from

remember where I'm heading to

3.

I burn up at nights

Lie on the earth smelling it

Burning

I used to have a house once

One morning there was grass growing on the furniture

it asked me for a field

I didn't have one

the balcony asked for sun

there was none left over

my bedroom set out sails

the bed sailed off into thin air

I tied it down

I watched it sink

I opened the door

4.

*The soul will bear fruit
by the time I get to the top
it will*

I follow the path

I have no expectations or remorse

I have no guilt or visions

I die

I am resurrected

I keep heading uphill

*Right up on the edge
against the unavoidable
the wings flutter open*

5.

There is a precipice before me

Its edge is my summit

I spread out my arms

I shift my weight testing

I mean to fly

I grow bold

I grow old

I grow bold

I am swallowed up by vertigo

6.

I hover in midair

The city hums below

First time I see it clearly

An ant's nest at peak time

We move from the surface into the ground

without seeing sky

A shadow amongst shadows my shadow

Now a sunray

All that uphill climb for a precipice

All that precipice for the sun

GALLOWS

*... and we started drawing
our self in the gallows*

For every wrong letter a body part

Every word a hanged man

*It is how we learned to spell
poetry*

FAIRGROUND

*They told us: there is music here lights
Won't you come in*

*But before we had our fill of play
the Ferris Wheel got stuck high up
and we have to leap into the void
to effect a landing*

Do you feel the rings around your neck?

The target in the shooting gallery

*is a forest of human hands
The carousel has grown dim
Its horses hungry
The train tears reason asunder
inside the ghost tunnel
Once out into the light
again we will forget*

*If you survive the madness
you see the meaning of distortion
by looking at yourself in the mirrors*

*As an alternative
there's a free ride on offer
on the Topple Tower*

NIGHT

*It is daybreak
yet the hand is driven by night*

*A blind root
the depths which define me*

Some dark blues entwined in the blackness

stumble around my tongue

The eyes shutters that lock against the sun

Outside the window

the light

shows me what I am not

CHECKMATE

Friend, do not recommend the unbreakable

I will take the one that's chipped

and if you want the tale I will tell you

One day the queen climbed on the throne

took off the crown, the purple mantle

and leaped into the abyss

'I was cracked for the winds to blow through

to liven up the blood

to rid the soul of dust

the eyes of rust

because the gaze grew cloudy with the ash of things

and it is now late, far too late, for me to wait anymore '

CONFRONTATION

*Lying down on the shore for the lovemaking
do the lovers know
the history of the sand?*

*The sea receives in her bay the rock
until the spasm of lust and anoints it*

*When desire is sated
when love's passion moves on
she feels the rock's roughness
and beats at it rabidly to pulverize it
till she spews it out in tiny bits on the coastline*

CYCLING

The bicycle shone in the sun

A small ride! I said

*I can't balance properly
but I dare take a fall to learn
If it is all I've ever learned*

*Desire every time
catches me unaware
as the saddle the pedals the wheel
get strewn in all directions*

*only the front light
stays on course*

JOURNEY

*The ship sailed outside the painting
crossed the room
dropped anchor by the bed
sank into my dream
from where surfaces timidly
a poem's bubble*

PRESCRIPTION

*The patient will survive mustn't worry
We won't lose him for now he's holding fast*

Only for vision to focus more sharply

*squeeze every day at dawn
a few drops of lemon in the pupils
to help the gaze grow familiar with pain*

GARDEN

*I'm balancing on thin legs
my tail colourful
my beak made of granite*

*I watch myself through the pane
alternately looking at my other form
and again bending over the desk*

*So I'm a bird and didn't know it
So I have a chance of flying*

*But as I lean my beak down to the ground
I'm caught in its claws*

In the claws of the cat that I am

SIBERIA

*I swim inside her womb
listening to the blood
eavesdropping on the heartbeat*

A leaf greening from the root

*Thus I met her, but
once torn away from her body
she was no longer nestling ground*

Mother? I ask, she makes no answer

*She tidies up the snow inside the house
and smiles at me*

HALO

All those we love are here

*They lie in our bed
sit at our table
drink from our glass
speak through our voices
no matter that their shoes are worn right down
the heels as one with the earth*

the flesh eaten away

*Those sockets you're looking at used to be eyes
with shady lashes as of thick forests
between their legs a flock of trees
balancing on the precipice
swarms of birds, arrows*

*Look, phosphorescing in our palm
the teeth of the dead smiling*

AUTOPSY

*It was the first time
on a khaki army blanket
which scratched her skin
that she witnessed her body convulse*

*Yet this poem wouldn't have been written
if the lacerations hadn't deepened with time
if Eliot hadn't played the four quartets
if time had not become expanded
if she hadn't conceded
to lower herself into loneliness
the traverse incision of the senses*

The detail is telling

SELF-PORTRAIT

*The halo was too big for her
and it slipped into a noose around her neck*

*Her hand feverishly painted
while she dipped her gaze in the mirror*

*when with a jerky move
she kicked the stool from under her
and was left in midair
like the last brushstroke
dangling*

DREAM

The clouds are thickening

*I am shrouded in fog
and see you no more
nor do I recognize myself*

*A woman spreads her thighs
Receives an army of men waiting impatiently
She has no name and neither do they
They merely survive through the flesh*

*How to give you the picture
when I am inside the picture?
At nights I wake up soaked in sweat
I sit up in bed
I have no features or gender*

*With the round tips of my fingers
I touch smooth skin
which is shrunk in the morning by the world's wrinkles
and memory is impassable
as I hear the soul hurling itself
against a lit stove
as it emerges all black
beating in terror against the walls
looking for a window
but*

Things aren't like they told us, not any of it

CARPENTRY

No rest

for the soul in my daily body

Its limbs protruded

from the stretching rack

set up in the basement at home

where the family's

accoutrements were kept

of blood's culpability

Nails

for our pain to cut deep

when relationships snapped in two

and we hammered them back

with the bolts of obligation

Glue

to sustain the weight of the unforeseen

which was your due to bear

Presses

for the levelling of incongruities

so the gap wasn't visible to the naked eye

*With the help of my near and dear
I sawed back the wings
so they fit in the ephemeral*

*no longer to have to listen to how disturbing
the sound was of my rising up
every time I looked for sky
in a cradle of light
constructed with darkness*

CIRCLE

I want to give you a circle

*To step on its circumference
and simultaneously look at
the world inside and outside*

*If you long for fire make of the circle a sun
If you choose solitude call it a moon
If you want to send a message use it as a sphere
If it is lust you feel take it in your teeth like a nipple*

If you should choose demise, tie it around your neck

George ROUVALIS

Devastating Hunger

You tell me I am chubby. Ever since I was a child, that was my intention and I will not go on a diet. I have suffered much from hunger in my life. Devastating hunger...

At home there were four of us, kids. My father kept an inn, unfortunately he died young and so we were orphans. It was impossible for my mother to control me. I was way too wild for her. Where did you go, who you were with, why were you late, none of this she could tell me, because I was always out looking for something to eat. Down at the slaughter-house in Nafplio where we lived, we'd go and take the animals' heads which they would throw out. We'd wash them by the tap, and some long worms, I don't know what they call them, would come out of their nostrils. We'd bring them home and cook them with pasta, well that was the meat we ate. I tell you, we were hungry...Our staple was porridge which we gobbled down burning hot without even waiting for it to cook properly. My brother had burnt his lip from gulping it down. All year long we waited for the 4th of August, anniversary of the dictatorship, to come when the unions held barbecues on the beach and there was a big feast. I would take a pillow case from home and fill it up with meat they gave us. "Hurray the 4th of August! Hurray the Big Chief! We'd shout and head back home with the meat. Only then we would eat it.

Goffer, servant, slave, that's what I was for all the ladies of Nafplio's upper class society. I ran all their chores so that I could get some tips and go and eat. At Chronopoulos', the shoe store where I worked, on the Main Street, there were twenty two employees and I was the youngest. My boss would give me

Sidiropoulos' shoes who was the head of the Rural Bank to have them delivered to his house; some shoes they were, huge, like boats. He'd give me a ten drachma piece, imagine! What should I do with it? If I took it home, they would say where did you steal it from, hand it over, I'd loose it. Throw it in the piggy bank we kept at the store for the tips, I'd wait six months to get something when it would be full so we could break it and share the money. I'd ring the piggy bank with the coin, so that it would clatter like I threw it in and pocket it. I'd buy roasted chestnuts, donuts, I'd rent a bicycle and ride in the gym, under Grimani's wall that had some rough road and was fun.

Twenty nine years in the community's gutters. The respected archaeologists that receive their paychecks, have their cars and if they happen to be women, as we're talking and it's now noon, they're cooking and have no idea how many taps are in our city. Ask me? Twenty-six! I know them one by one and I had actually set them up in the 60s after the Prefecture building was ruined from the fire. Do you know how many they found? Four! They come and beg me to show them the rest. I say, ok, but you have to give me five hundred thousand drachmas!

All these years all I managed to get are two bicycles. This one that I am riding now and which I call Rosa and another one that a prefect gave me to become a squealer. I told him that I am a communist and will not be a fink; you made a mistake. He says, give me back the bike. Ya, right, I say, I am not giving it back, That one, I call Panagioti and I've got to have it fixed now, it has major damage.

Translated by Elly Papamichael

Liana SAKELLIYOU

‘Επόησεν’⁴⁵

Gerhard Falkner ‘s ⁴⁶ *Pergamon Poems*

I. APHRODITE

*Eva⁴⁷ has dark eyes and hair,
a black tattooed dragon on her heart,
feels the torn emotion within her
to engage or please
forming connections.*

*Eva talks with the essential grace
that enters her goddess
and has the taste of the giant’s blood
on her lips,
she loves that she cannot love.*

*Running the lance through his body
she negotiates for happiness*

⁴⁵ *Επόησεν*: *Made it* – an inscription on the frieze of the Pergamon Monument

⁴⁶ Gerhard Falkner: German author, famous for his Pergamon Poems among other works

⁴⁷ *Eva* Meckback, *Tilman* Strauss, *Sebastian* Schwarz: German actors who were filmed while reading the Pergamon Poems

*Eva is young and forces her way into the past
herself in the present so much.*

II. ARTEMIS

*It is early morning at the summit
of the museum mountain,
the mists unfold in the violence of white
and the goddess – strong and absolute –
commands the animals to hunt.*

*Tillman's dusky eyes
watch her draped body enter the cave
(tendons, hair on fire)
search for her on the relief panel
and the lance angles
in a shooting stance,
(marble flexible and muscled)
her knee touches him,
her sandal touches him
and the intrusion of his words
exists in a new way.*

*Tillman and Artemis know this affinity –
the resemblance they display*

across the frieze, on film

(I sense the terrain of that inner event).

III. APOLLON

He brings his radiant innocence

to the wide museum,

now in Berlin I hear him –

a young man called Apollo –

speak to every captive soul

including all specifics of music and light,

now in Athens Sebastian speaks in a central hall

(sensuous mouth, hairy chest –

his strands of immortality)

The camera centered on eye, ear, temple,

fragmented his lance,

recorded him upside down.

Now he breathes like the beating of Icarian wings.

There is no lyre, pomegranate, wreath or bird.

No blood.

IV. POET

*Athens, Pergamon—
their Gigantomachy in London, in Berlin—
but what can you tell me,
of that season of promise?
The nervous system is shattered,
the power game still accumulates more marble,
I too am lost for words.
Tense light filters thinly
the mechanics of vision,
a mortal reaction, don't you think?*

*A world of words this is,
a transcontinental etude where
marble is lines and museums are poems.
Computer's warm breath has faith in the miracles.
Perhaps an identity is forming,
a little vain, decisive maybe
and —since in progress— suspended
like an extended lance.*

Athens, October 2013

From

Portrait Before Dark

*Petals are shed everywhere.
They stick in my hair,
grab on my dress,
till I bloom too,
as her who's been touched
by — who knows what?
And the groom asks me:
What happened to you?
A strange tree, I answer,
electric.*

[...]

*I will move all the trees
and dance for them.
Let them know
that they should be tender with me*

*because when I dance
I meet their sounds
and, immersed in them,
I break the silence.*

*I will relax in your eyes afterwards —
awaking in the forest*

or sinking.

*An azure refraction overflows me.
Like a sleepwalker I mount the stairs
that lead to your sky.*

[...]

*Once more that song converges on the air
and I'm scared.*

*A fear it's difficult to name.
How shall I dance fear?*

*Meteors rend the foliage,
mighty tree trunks glimmer and snap.*

*I remember once thinking
we might be safe.*

[...]

*It was just a dream.
Go back to sleep.*

There was a boy on that ship

writing in a book.

*Whatever it was he needed to say,
he wrote rapidly,
with the urgency of a survivor.
He scraped the page
and the birds sensed his predicament.*

*The leopard that he allowed to roam
in and out of his pen
was growing stronger.*

From Portrait Before Dark, 2010. Translated by David Connolly and Liana Sakelliou

DESCENT INTO HADES

Poros Cemetery

*Time is ours at last.
I listen to the stories of the others.
Around us desolation.*

*The cypresses darken.
The birds go silent.
I watch the fish splashing in the bay.*

*He shows me the eggs they jettison,
The seashells with their luminous inhabitants.
As the shore recedes
The bones of the dead light up.*

THE TREE OF LIFE

When I was young my mother had an operation. What remained was a scar that crossed her back like a swollen rivulet, and a transparent box inside of which was a tiny tree. The tree had grown inside her body, porous and grey with many branches. They uprooted it from the injured kidney, put it in that box, and offered it to her like a present. She placed it carefully in her drawer.

My mother's name is Zoe. I called it 'The Tree of my Life.' Later in the East I found page markers and carpets with the tree of life woven into them. This one was an apple tree. It had round red fruit. Under its thick foliage, my mother was always there.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSES

On days we took the boat to go buy shrimp and fish for red snapper, we'd let the engine idle as we approached the slaughterhouses. We'd pass the skiffs with calves tied by their horns to the oarlocks. The calves would be hurled up to the stone houses, where workers would stab them in the nape with a small-blade knife, then slit their throats. The channel would fill with blood. Punta would turn red, Stavros beyond. The calf-heads dangling from hooks. Their

suffocating stench. The breeze buffeting them to and fro. Sometimes, looking back, we'd even see dogfish.

SHARDS

*A night of sacrifice at the temple of Poseidon
floating up from the archaeologists' screens,
and so the narrative assembles:
oil lamps illuminate the banquet
of common animals—
pigs, goats, sheep, cattle.*

*One part of the offering
is given to the priest.
Another to the god.
Beware, though, of the sacrificial knife
on the painted shards.
The hand that holds it belongs to a woman.*

Translated by Don Schofield

Zoe SAMARA

THOU SHALT NOT

- *Don't stand*
- *(There is no seat)*
- *Don't stand here. Go to the lounge*
- *(There is no lounge)*
- *Don't stand here*
- *(There is no 'there')*
- *Where are you going*
- *(There)*
- *(Where is ... there)*
- *Where 'don't' does not exist*

THE JACKET

They gave me a jacket as a present
I wore it with grace
but it was tight
tight and unbearable
You mean unworn
No many wore it
It was a perfect fit

*I take off the jacket
I return the gift
Let me go home alone*

AT THE DOOR

*The knock on the door was persistent
and I asked in vain
who
I untie the chains
go to the door*

*I guessed right
It was I
I pushed me
I pushed me to enter*

*Do not come in
said I
this door
is but an entrance*

Christos SAMOUILIDES

Parallel Monologues

A COMIC DRAMA IN FOUR SHORT ACTS

ACT ONE

(When the curtain rises, the radio is playing the flute tune which is the call sign of the Athens radio station. Leandros, who is sitting at the desk writing furiously and continuously, absent-mindedly picks up the telephone with his left hand, while continuing to write with the right...)

LEANDROS: Hello! Hello! Who's calling please? *(The call sign fades out and the announcer says: 'Athens calling, National Programme. Our next programme will be a jazz concert'. Leandros carries on writing).* Yes, go ahead; I'm listening! *(As soon as the jazz strikes up, he jump feet with his papers in his hand. He reads out:)* An atomic bomb? What? A hydrogen bomb? My God! But that will mean the end of millions of people! What, what did you say? A hundred megatons? *(The jazz swells in volume).* God Almighty! Have they gone completely mad? The earth will become one vast dust-bowl. The human race will vanish altogether. What do you say? It doesn't matter that war hasn't been declared. Perhaps it never will be. But tell me, how can we go on living in the face of such a terrible, such an inconceivable threat? (...) *(The doorbell rings. Leandros jumps up from the settee and dashes across to the desk. He fearfully and cautiously picks up the telephone and puts it to his ear).* Lakis, my boy, is that you? Where are you? Is everything all right: health? Spirits? *(Meanwhile, Lakis has entered through the street door).*

LAKIS: *(Wildly enthusiastic):* Father, everything's going to be all right. We've got wheels, Riris has bought a Buick.

LEANDROS: (*Still on the telephone*): The times are evil, my boy. Watch out; don't go far from the house. You don't know what a fright I got just a little while ago...

LAKIS: (*Approaches his father with undiminished enthusiasm and pleasure*): Don't worry, father. It's a good car – and brand new. We've already been for a drive along the seafront; 'by the unharvested sea', as Homer says.

LEANDROS: (*Still on the telephone*): My dear boy, you don't seem to realise what a hydrogen bomb means. The end of the world is at hand. Sodom and Gomorrah, the Tower of Babel, the Flood! Annihilation! See?

LAKIS: (*Moves in front of his father and waves his arms enthusiastically*): It goes like a bomb, father. You've no idea what a powerful engine it has. It whistles and buzzes. It's a beauty of a Buick, you might say. (...)

LEANDROS: (*Imploringly*): Well, never mind. Now let me tell you something which I've been keeping from you for two days so as not to upset you. Your mother's ill and they suspect it's cancer. Whatever will become of us now that I've lost my job? Can you imagine?

LAKIS: I've been thinking about it, father. You have to buy me a car too.(...) I can't bear the buses.

LEANDROS: Lakis, my boy, we're in difficult straits financially. The situation is grave. The time has come for you to show that you acknowledge the sacrifices I have made for you so far. You realise what I mean: you'll have to get a job. (...) It's not difficult, my boy, you'll get used to it. You'll get any job to begin with, just to make some money and see how good it feels. At the same time you'll be looking round for something better.

LAKIS: (*Stubbornly*): Enough is enough! It makes me so ashamed. I feel left out, deprived, a nobody. No, I want a car of my own, I tell you-one all of my own.

LEANDROS: (*Despairingly*): But it's no disgrace to work, my boy. You'll see how self-confident and proud you'll feel the day you get your first wage packet-money you've earned all by yourself, by your own efforts.

LAKIS: (*Whines, but still angrily*): But I wasn't saying you should buy me a Buick, even an Opel would do.

LEANDROS: And what about your mother? Think how fond she is of you, poor woman, and how pleased she'll be when she sees you on the right road at last.

LAKIS: (*With finality*): The thing that interests me above all is never having to get on a bus again. I'm not too bothered if it isn't showy; get me whatever kind you like. If the worst comes to the worst, get me a Volkswagen, if that isn't demeaning yourself. Yes, even a Volkswagen would do.

LEANDROS: (*Desperately*): I wouldn't be imploring you like this, my boy, if it wasn't that starvation is staring us in the face. Can you imagine what'll happen in a couple of months when we've run through all our savings? It makes me shudder just to think about it.

LAKIS: (*Self-pityingly*;) It really is dreadful. Here I am, going so far as to put up with a Volkswagen, and you don't appreciate my gesture. You, my own father. My God, what have we come to? (*Suddenly loses his temper*;) Are you going to get me a car, yes or no?

LEANDROS: (*Still on the telephone*): Of course, if it turns out that your mother doesn't have cancer, that'll make things much easier. Perhaps you won't have to work for very long.

LAKIS: (*Imperiously*): I can't wait more than two months. I want the car by Easter at the latest!

LEANDROS: And what happens if, God forbid, your mother's right and she does have cancer? What will we do then? It appals me to think of it.

LAKIS: There's no need to worry, I can drive. I got my licence years ago, thanks to my mother. She gave me the money behind your back.

LEANDROS: Of course, with all my experience of financial matters, I'll be looking round for some company or other which wants someone to do its books. But you'll have to help too, my boy. Don't expect everything to fall into your lap. Don't expect me to do it all.(...)

LAKIS: Just wait and see how I'll pull in the girls. They'll gine anything to be friends with me, because I won't be Lakis the odd one out, Lakis the poor relation of the party. I shall be Lakis the gent with a car of his own.

LEANDROS: (*Still on the telephone*): But where's your mother got to? I'm beginning to get worried. What can have happened to her? It's late. (...) Just nip across to the Cancer Hospital and see what's keeping her, will you?

LAKIS: (*Looks at his watch*): My God, is that the time? I'm late, my friends will be waiting for me. (*As he exits*.) Bye, bye, father. And don't forget, even a Volkswagen will do, eh? (*Exit Lakis*)

LEANDROS: (*Puts down the receiver but rests his hand on it for a little*): That boy, he'll soon be an old man, and he's still not married. (*Suddenly struck by the word 'married', he picks up the receiver again and starts shouting into it*): He's not married! He's not married! Eureka! Eureka! Lakis! Lakis! That's it! Eureka! Lakis! Are you listening? I've got it! (*He hangs up happily and rubs his hands, dropping the sheet of paper he has been holding. Almost immediately we hear the doorbell. Leandros rushes to the radio and tunes in to a waltz. He begins to dance.*) What a marvellous idea, a stroke of genius, as they say. We' re saved! I'm saved! (*Enter Zenobia*)

ZENOBIA: (*Overjoyed*): Hurray, Leandros, hurray! 'Tidings of great joy'! I'm saved! I'm OK, I'm going to live, do you hear me?

LEANDROS: (*Waltzes with her, but without touching her*): A first class idea. A positive inspiration. Deus ex machina. I'm saved, Zenobia, I'm saved! I'm saved!

ZENOBIA: (*Waltzing now by herself and now with Leandros; they do not touch each other*): Hubby dear, you've no idea how I feel, you can't imagine. All the tests were negative. And when I heard that...

LEANDROS: (*Stops dancing*): It's a mad thing, life. Most peculiar. Just when you think you've had it, when you're slipping over the edge of the precipice, you suddenly feel a strong hand pulling you back and saving you.

ZENOBIA: (*Stops dancing*): All our fears have evaporated. They've scattered like black clouds before a driving wind. I'm well, Leandros! In perfect health. What a relief!

LEANDROS: And how unexpectedly it occurred to me. What a coincidence it was. I just said the word 'married' about Lakis and it was as though thousands of lights went on 'in the dark night of my soul'.

ZENOBIA: We'll have to think how we're going to celebrate. The results of the tests have been like the Resurrection for me.

LEANDROS: It's something I've heard from lots of people; a sound bridegroom, they say, is money in the bank, it's a sure-fire trading asset. It has a certain value which can be converted into cash. But I always rejected that point of view. I didn't agree. And now that's what's going to save me. Can you have any doubt, Zenobia? (...)

(Written in 1963. Played in 1974 by stage Theatre of Northern Greece. *Translation by prof. Kox*)

Sotiris SARAKIS

THE PERFORMANCE

The chorus now stopped.

*With an assured voice the corypheus
explained to the speechless crowd
that the performance
would have to start anew, from the beginning
that all the murders
would have to be committed again one
by one
in the hope that –this time– they would succeed
in the hope that –now– they'd lead
would lead
to the much desired catharsis.
How many times will I have to pay off
this never ending bill?
screamed some Clytaemnestra
at the third row of seats.
A futile effort;
besides, she knew off all the rules
when she agreed
to take part in a tragedy.*

*Then all the spotlights were turned off
the blood began to warm up again
so that it'd be steaming hot at the right moment
the owls rehearsed their calls
at the ruins across the stage
and a benumbed moon
tested its hesitant rays
from the highest peak of the horizon.
The spectators –now silent– descended
carrying, each to his own private place
that ineffective pain.*

From The Fleece. Translated by Marina Saraki

ACCURSED CHILDREN

*I have no other way of parting
Medea explained
I must go wherever his father-in-law
commands, I'm already gone, gone
far, far away
I'm not concerned about him, see him
or not, alive or dead, not concerned
an easy end*

but

there

those children

are the two of us

both of them

both of us are children each one

together, inseparable us two

constantly, all the time, now

he and I together

those children

how can you endure it

and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, terror

they leave, we leave unchecked

we disperse together in the ages

I have no other way of parting

Medea lamented

bring the sword.

VINCENT'S EAR

He runs pale-faced in the night, blood

running from the wound, he stumbles,

trips up and falls, has difficulty getting up, he must

*get there without fail
the heavy pain is unbearable
overhead is heard the first glory
to God in the highest, he clasps
his precious gift in his hand, he'll arrive
any time now, he sees
the surprise, the awe, in her eyes
my poor sediment, he whispers, the hymns
grow louder, they become more frequent, the pain
has alleviated somewhat, but his legs
are shaking, blood
paints the road, paints
his face
Paul has stayed home, he'll tell her,
luckily he's well, very well*

*he sees, listens to everyone's surprise and awe
deep in thought, an illegible smile, they talk
about the supreme sacrifice, the unprecedented
propitiatory act, the fools forget
that I'm a painter not a musician.*

EXPIATION

*Came the great Irishman Samuel
he came in my sleep and said*

*who are you waiting for no one's coming
the game ends here it has ended
before even beginning
I call him mad and he laughed
we both laughed till morning*

*and then the night was lost finished
then people left dispersed
a chance moment in a chance
moment I blindly persisting
to belong in the twentieth century*

*this is my time and I was there
a moment in chaos
this is my time the twentieth
century
and a laugh
as I leave from everywhere but mine
audible everywhere
a laugh.*

From Vowel Passions

I DON'T KNOW, I WON'T ANSWER

*And as most
of his guests had now
left, the last ones were about to leave,
only a few
remained here and there
dozing off inebriated; beating of feet
dancing, strains of cymbals, faint
flute sounds in the air
yet another of the governor's
grand banquets was coming to an end, he, himself,
did his utmost to remain sober, when
a leisured Roman approached him
for a chat, asking
for his opinion, what he regarded
the most significant, the most momentous
event of the year
that tonight had come full circle*

*and he racked his brains, he searched and looked into
what had taken place in Rome, the governor of Judea
yes, he, himself, who here
here in Judea a few months earlier
albeit halfhearted, albeit
cleanhanded, had
played a leading part
in the gravest event*

of the year, the age, the millennium plus.

From *Night-Time Journeys*. Translated by Yannis Goumas

Sakis SEREFAS

With Heart in the Mouth

*July, I come home alone
tired out from an outing
only to find, find what?
a ghastly looking Virginia Woolf seated at the glass table
wrapped in a wringing-wet black scarf
staring at me as if in a daze
I stopped dead 'shut the door' she begged
'is this a house without a fireplace too?
I nearly caught my death waiting all day' she gasped
and burst into tears
I was stunned 'don't just stand there, sonnie
light a fire to dry myself I froze in that river
drowning
wasn't the redemptive death I hoped for
'twas hell with those water snakes all over me
I took stones out of my pockets and hacked them
they cheeped inaudible on the morning riverbed
reddened the scummy sky
got entangled in my hair
'twas hell, my dear' and more tears like a little girl*

*I managed to recover 'do I see you or are you imagining me,
madam?'*

I asked intrigued lighting a cigarette

'you twerp!' she sneered 'and I thought

despair had taught you something – you're worthless'

and went up in smoke.

From A Furius Rush. Translated by Yannis Goumas

Aris SFAKIANAKIS

From

If You Didn't Know... You Should Have Asked!

Three o' clock in the morning. I toss and turn in bed like an eel. Thoughts gnaw at my brain. It's impossible to shut an eye. Beside me, Moira grunts in her sleep. She grates her teeth. Snorts. She's not happy either, but that doesn't seem to stop her from getting some sleep.

What keeps me with this woman, I wonder. Do I love her, as I claim, or am I simply bound to her by some sense of morality?

I get up carefully so that the bed doesn't creak, and make my way to the living-room. Dim light from the street lamps filters through. The night cold invades the room through the fireplace. Rain patters on the windows.

I make myself comfortable on the sofa and light a cigarette. I listen to the ticking of the clock. A wedding present.

It's been a few months now that I've had trouble sleeping. To be exact, I do sleep but it's with difficulty and fitfully. Of late, however, things have become really bad. Dawn usually finds me with my eyes wide-open staring at the ceiling. This is not good, no good at all, I confide to the incandescent tip of the cigarette; it hisses derisively. This insomnia problem –I start to expound to the sofa across from me– is a sign of a guilty soul.

'Only you don't believe in the existence of soul,' a voice descends from high above. 'Hmm, well, yes, but then why the devil can't I sleep?'

'That can be seen to,' the same voice is heard, this time from right next to me. I feel my hairs standing on end. I try to utter something but my voice is gone. All of

a sudden, the room has acquired a certain reddish glow. A fire has been lit in the fireplace. Feeling overwhelmed by a soothing warmth I turn my head.

He comes and sits near me, yet he chooses to place himself on the far side of the sofa, as if he is worried lest I were infected by some contagious disease. He is peering at the fire right in front; a crooked nose and bony cheekbones. He looks like a tired middle-aged man. As for his chin, it is decorated with a grey goatee which is more in keeping with a Chinese Mandarin than with the telltale pitchfork of Hades. Over his white shirt and red velvet trousers he's wearing a black anorak which is now dripping on Moira's settee. This somehow annoys me, for my wife is rather obsessed with her sofas.

'It's been raining,' he excuses himself as soon as he picks up on my discomfort.

'That's quite all right,' I hasten to reassure him.

A few moments of uneasiness ensue. I just hope this is but a dream. As for him, he is toying quietly with a ring in his hand; it is bejewelled with a red stone. 'Is that a ruby?' I ask, wishing to be sociable. He looks at me mournfully. I look deeply into his eyes, trying to make out the eternal flames of hell. I do actually see something, but it must be the glow of the fireplace.

'This ring,' he explains, and a breath of sulphur overpowers me, 'is for you.' Oh oh! we're already into nefarious dealings, I tell myself.

'Don't be so silly,' he snorts as he satanically reads my thoughts. 'It is only an honest contract that is exceedingly beneficial to the both of us. This stone,' he continues, 'is a garnet. You are aware, I assume, of the properties inherent in this stone.'

I sit up nervously. I offer him a cigarette in order to buy time. He points to the warning printed on the packet by the Ministry of Health with a pointed

fingernail. 'Insomnia is just as hazardous to one's health,' I retort angrily. 'Instead of being sound asleep in my bed here I am rubbing shoulders with nocturnal creatures and roguish rulers of the netherworld. Wouldn't it be far better if I were actually dreaming of you rather than have you here in flesh and blood staining my sofa?'

Totally unfazed he clicks his fingers, and out of the blue two tumblers and a bottle of whisky appear before us.

'Have a drink, my friend,' he invites me generously, 'there's no need to get all wound up. You know that we think highly of you.' Indeed they must, since it is due to my personal therapeutic intervention that a dancer, a bartender, two students and a poet have all deferred their journey to the underworld for some future date.

'Your problem, my dear old friend,' my fellow psychoanalyst from Hades explains to me, 'is that you have lost your sexual desire. This in turn gives rise to vexation, anxiety and, consequently, insomnia. This ring will restore your lost vigour.'

'Before you go any further, dear sir,' I interrupt, 'you ought to know that this problem does not stem from any lack of vigour — besides I'm not that old — but rather from my decision to remain faithful to my wife.' I didn't find it useful to mention the presence of a mistress just then. 'I have taken a vow to lead a monogamous life and...'

'To whom have you vowed, if I may ask?' he breaks in rudely.

'What, to myself of course!'

'With your permission, let me observe that such vows are not to be taken seriously. Therefore, I assure you that as far as your vows are concerned you are at liberty to revel in the fair sex once more.'

'Are you exhorting me to commit adultery?' I jump up in shock.

'Sir, it is not I that blessed this wedding,' he protests, quite rightly too.

I have a sip of whisky. Straight out of the infernal distilleries. Oriental houris to please my palate. Available only in select wine shops.

The Prince of Darkness looks at me askance. He lights a long, thin cheroot, which I find rather affected. 'Please refrain from jumping to any conclusions,' he says. And then, changing tactics ever so suddenly, 'How is sex with your wife, then?'

'Well, she's expecting,' I justify myself, 'and that has put quite a few limitations on our sexual life.'

'Does that make you sad?'

'There was a time when we were at it non-stop,' I admit.

'That is exactly why you need this ring,' he exclaims triumphantly and slips it onto my finger. It is just my size.

'If, nevertheless, your insomnia persists,' my apothecary from Erebus prescribes, 'we'll shall have to resort to more drastic measures. Do not worry, however. One way or another you shall get your sleep back.'

I must admit that it sounds rather comforting.

'I am indebted, sir,' I bow, 'and I'm willing to pay the price.'

'Have no fear, I shan't ask for your soul,' the hellish merchant from the river Acheron soothes me. 'What a childish idea. Be that as it may, there is one small favour...' He pauses. The rain has stopped. I realise that I've been holding my breath.

'Naturally, you know Sara...' he says. [...]

Aloi SIDERI

EXTROVERTED

*Travelling all summer through
drifting sometimes with the breeze, sometimes with the waves
I sought a phrase
a spurt that squirted for a moment only out of a current under ground
and presently altered its form
like a cricket that gives a shout in its sleep
and is lost again in the dense foliage of the night
its voice melted into other tunes
barbarian reposts of the bushes
the roar of a wave before the coming of its successor
or a sudden gust of sea wind*

*I was misguided by the moon
—it was almost full—
the hills and the rest of the vain geography of the island
as though all that were perceptible were consolations of fear
distractions from poetry*

*Travelling all summer through
—thyme, crito and other fragrances—
thus extroverted I was redeemed*

*the only thing I could stand being the exquisite sensation
left in the morning by a dream forsaken
carefully avoiding remembering the phrase
lest its magnetic attraction should lure me
to abysmal depths*

THE PERFORMANCE

*It was like a theatre stage
the colours of the scenery were unnoticeable or I forgot them
the faces — unknown to me—
lost in evident embarrassment
little by little their features changed as though they shed their guise
as though they were no longer acting
until I sensed they were in agony*

*There was something in store behind the scenes
something invisible to us
which with increasing intensity affected their stance, their movements
whilst at the same time they did not for a moment cease
to recite their parts with precision
postponing perhaps in this manner
certain unspeakable tortures
which they knew they would presently suffer*

Angeliki SIDIRA

THE MAILMAN DIED

*One by one the mailmen
Expire in the mail avenues.
The few who are left
Are bending more and more
From the weight of the silence
They carry
Tomorrow, the next day
Or perhaps next year
I will get the letter I expected
From you by email or fax
Machines that exterminate
Every so often
The bearers of news.*

*Yet I, before my saliva dries
I will send you my reply
Insisting on the forgotten pleasure
Of the tongue on the stamp
Just in case I may prolong a little
The life of the last mailman.*

SARAH

*My son! My child, you stranger!
Husband of mine, stranger!
I hated you so much
As I adore him.
My own flesh and blood.
Nine months
Two hundred and seventy days,
Thirty seven thousand one hundred minutes
And millions of seconds
He was mine alone.
His traces in my womb
Like his footsteps on the soil of the yard
Will plow my entrails forever.
His umbilical cord, that cord
I would like to wrap tightly around
Your old loathsome neck.
God! How do I know this God?
Sacrifice? Why did he not dare to ask me?
And my flesh! This body
I am ashamed that I gave it to you
So many times
For one only...*

*The unique time
Of his conception.*

MEDEA

*You would never bear
To end so outrageously your story.
In the fabric of that plot
Had been woven by a woman....
If Euripides knew that:
The pleasure of desire
The pain of betrayal
The maelstrom of the brain
Do not cancel the birth pains
Of the supreme creation
They are not enough to abolish
The unsuspecting smile of a child.*

Medea

*This evening as I lived again
The uniquely repeated
Miracle of birth
This evening I will definitely relieve you
Of your myth.*

BEAUTY AND THE BEST

in memory of my beloved father

*I only asked him
To get me a rose.
But he forgot
And later he forgot everything.
Sometimes he called me 'mother'
And other times 'his wife'.
He was always getting lost in the streets
And I was looking for him.
He was eating with his hands
And sometimes he was crawling
On his hands and knees.
Time, the magician, had transformed him
Into some spineless irrational monster.*

*I kissed him
When everything was finally over
And he became again
My father.*

From Mutual Attraction

TANGO

The tango is a sad thought, that can be danced, he said.

It is a condemned love, a forbidden love. Two

Steps forward to leave, to escape.

Compunctions; One

You go back. Again two steps, you decide.

Nostalgia? Guilt?

One step towards yesterday.

Undecided you sway and so

You almost never arrive and you're always in pain

And you hesitate

When you dance the tango.

From Attempt of a Landscape

MEMORY NANA HESAIA

She was always sitting aside

She was coughing, smoking

And smoothing g hew scanty hair.

That woman

Who had been loved madly.

*Everyone avoided her
She had died a while ago
But did not know it.
Their embraces have choked her superb body
Their kisses became black spots
Their caresses savage notches
On her face.*

*That woman
Who had been loved madly.*

*It is best not to look at her
It is best
Since you may not even see her.
She had died.
Seldom and by mistake she appear.
What you see
If you can still see something
Are the invisible parts of her self:
Silence, loneliness, sorrow.*

From Ineroxably Blue

THE JOURNEY

In memory of my brother

*Sometimes you come dressed
As a ten years old
Other times in you adolescent clothes
And most often those
Of your forty-five years
Which then stopped.
And all that only
So that I remember at dawn
That one Monday
Like someone packing his bags
To go on a journey
And he always forgets
Something important
You gathered your voice, your laugh
Your eyes, the hands
Your whole body
And you only forgot
Your absence here forever
In the house, so precious
Since it is all the things you were
And you are not anymore.*

From *The Briefest Walk*

UNEMPLOYED

*It is not the alarm clock
that makes him jump
out of bed, sweating
at dawn.*

*It is his heart beating
accustomed to being rudely
woken by the loud ringing...*

*Lazy sips of coffee
petrify poison stalactites
in his guts.*

*In the dregs
slowly sink
accumulated dreams
frustrated.*

*In the wardrobe
a grey suit
scarecrow on the hanger
with its striped tie
ties his neck in a knot
mocking him
and his shoes
shine grinning memories
of itineraries finally
cancelled.*

The walls

*the days
are empty
empty sheets the newspaper
as if the letters
had jumped off the balcony.
He goes out,
absentmindedly measuring
the void...*

From Unexpectedly Near. Translated by Platon Memo

Dinos SIOTIS

THE MANGO TREE

There is a mango tree in the living room. It is six feet eleven and eleven mangos hung from its bent branches. I'll tell you: It was about a week ago that I discovered it. I was going to work as usual at my office on the corner of MacLaren & Beacon that I first noticed it. The house had been empty since the last tenants moved south; that is at the South End of the city. I don't know if they had planted the mango tree in the living room, if it appeared out of the blue or if it was a miracle or the work of a shaman. But there is a mango tree in the living room. For a writer of my minimalistic proportion and reputation a mango tree in the living room is good company. Better those cacti I would say. When I open both the living room windows, the side door and the main entrance to the house a certain current occurs, almost a draft or a breeze, as if the house was located in the Mediterranean coast. The mango tree is not mute. At times, when there is a draft, it whispers seamless narratives of its lost past and I am afraid one morning I will wake up and the mango tree won't be there. Its branches will be shattered all over the living room, its leaves will be scattered on the floor, its fruit will form a line in front of the fruit basket. The mango tree will be standing naked without saying really anything. I will be crushed and very confused. In the long run, my house without the mango tree, i.e. my world without this particular mango tree, would become senseless, leafless, fruitless or even absurd. I suppose I will have to move to another house in another neighborhood or another city. On the other hand, my living room maybe never had a mango tree, in which case I will not have to move at all.

En route from Paris to Boston, between Iceland and Greenland, January 10, 1998

LIZ THE PARADOX

When stars collide an eclipse of butterflies is inevitable. The shrubs become orphans and the Spring has no voice to celebrate new flowers painted paraffin yellow. In the city the streets are jammed by gun holders who are buying tickets to see 'A Wish to kill.' 'This is all I could find,' says Liz the paradox to her busybody self in front of a two-way mirror. She offers herself the tongue of a dead bird hit by the theory on Language Poets. In ten minutes she had to train her eyes to the new reality: dead birds. Then a stretched limousine came to pick her up to take her to Quippacango. Since she had not been anywhere, least of all in there, she didn't mind.

Boston, August 4, 2000

NO CLOUDS BUT CRANES

In our story there were no clouds to speak of. Not a single cloud. The light showered over us in a limitless trade of affection. The rain (the trouble) seemed very distant but we proved wrong. In a few minutes the rain kept the pace of a song patronizing the missed opportunities. No one could tell if there were clouds because we were the only ones who could feel the dryness in the thin air. No one could explain the rain since there were no clouds. So we left. We left in a hurry without umbrellas and

raincoats stumbling on dolorous stones, while the cranes were forming strange paths in the glistening sky.

Boston, August 1, 2000

FINAL FOUR

Yes, I was thinking of reading out loud, a poem about a man driving on a California highway or was I thinking of writing a poem about a sunset by an abandoned window sill. Did I say window? Did I mention that the man's car driving on the California highway broke down? And did I say, Your Highness, that the sunset was considerably a non-stop glare of stretched storks heading toward the end of the mountain line, the ultimate surprise coming from the grey clouds? 'This isn't a question mark', said the California man to his wife riding in the passenger's seat just before she left him. 'This is a Chinese opera, and if you plan to walk out of our life before you light a cigarette, pass the daily escapes. It's natural'. And as I stand still by the window sill watching the sunset one eye, the California man with the other, I wonder Your Excellency, is this poem going to make it to the Final Four?

Boston, January 14, 1998

HEAT WAVE

1.

In the early morning hours such an oppressive heat hitting the buildings, the trees, the moving cars. Later, the dissatisfaction from a bad tan. Along the shaded streets a suggestion for steps to the way home. 36 Celsius means over a hundred Fahrenheit. No dog to cross the road, no defence against the heat, no price to evaluate the weather. In the house the old woman makes mint tea for the guests who sit silently in the back yard. Their silence is bold and is built around bland conversation. Don't ask them why they don't remember.

2.

Do angels of perplexity still travel by train, they ask. Look at their hands and see the warmth and brightness their handshake gives finds its way back to a humanity heated by the sun miscalculating the collateral damage. Their voices speak of photos of dead lovers taken in rifts of oblivion. Between bold sips of Chardonnay a mutilated memory travels in portions while the polyps of amnesia find their luck on foreign land waiting to be discovered by the gospel of selfishness. People are left clenched and isolated.

3.

Births, marriages and deaths swell on life like carriages full of promiscuity and regret. At the market place the green grocer sells memories with holes, lettuce with fine leaves, tomatoes with character. Then the quickened afternoon rushes to catch up with the rush hour to turn the air condition on to cool off sexy lovers. Adieu and maybe see you later.

Boston, June 18, 2000

ARITHMETICS

North of the border everything is cold. A winter without phone calls is like three winters on the row. On sudden turns the suspicion moves forward. You shift gears and that makes it six. The lake steals the image of the sky and someone jumps off the bridge. That makes it seven. On average, a lightning before the storm is an invitation for a thunder. People pile up just south of the border forming a line in front of the bridge. First come. First served.

Boston, July 18, 2000

A NEW GAME

Already it is late afternoon and fake cameras flash back satin sunsets. The fragrant napkins take their place on the dining table, the view of the lake is beyond belief, the fresh salmon is bathing in operatic music and the waiter brings out the good wine. Good to see you, says her Highness to her companion. In order to enter this colony I borrowed thy neighbour's DNA, replies the young man from the Lower East Side. The drinks are there, waiting for the guests to help themselves. Sip my blood, whispers Blood Mary to both of them. He opens her mouth to collect some new tears from the strong emotions of their encounter. For a moment—no, two—I thought it was a broadcast of a soap opera with yellow hearts turning red. But, alas, no. It was the ace of spades and its fear of a new game.

Boston, July 20, 2000

SHE

She has the charisma of focusing on the cracks of memory, taking off alien objects from her previous life. She spreads her body under the moonlight waiting for someone to make love to her (this is how she relives things past). She comes and goes and keeps arriving in deserted gardens with dried up trees where the wind unburies the stairway of an ancient temple. In a wrecked out-of-town house on Baker Road she sees another woman who looks like her ironing words on clean shirts. There is a man watching both of them. There is a girl with a note pad and there is a boy peeing on the porch of the same house. She sees the woman who is looking at her. She is again one woman split in two. The wind is blowing gently demanding nothing.

Tinos, July 21, 1995

Thomas SKASSIS

From

In the Athens Underground

During excavation of the tunnels and galleries for the Athens underground railway, it was observed that the health of three workers may have been adversely affected by protracted activity below the earth's surface. Perhaps because the incidents occurred at different times, or because the symptoms resembled none of the mental or physical indications scientifically associated with work in these particular circumstances, the matter was never given any significant 'play' in the media. (The first thing to come to my mind was the political angle: in politics, the scope of a project and the risk involved determine its importance, which in turn determines the only cost that matters to a government. Of course, I may be exaggerating.) Be that as it may, these days an event must be shown on television or written about in the press in order for it to exist unless –and on the off chance– it finds itself embedded in the pages of a report from the subway consortium's young industrial psychologist to the state monitoring agency.

Thanks to the disinterested friendship of a person who enjoys access to evidence that most of the interested parties would prefer to conceal forever –forty years at minimum–; a person who respects my fascination with phenomena that cannot be readily explained in terms of normal behaviour, and who trusts (wrongly, in the event) my ability to keep a confidence, a photocopy of this lymphatic 'existence' has come into my hands.

The author of the report, as would any scientist of integrity, attempts to describe the symptoms. But his writing style, though lacking the concision of a medical or even of a psychology text, reveals a certain literary proclivity. With all the impatience born of the unavowed though justifiable anticipation of future recognition, he hurriedly ascribes to them a novel term –‘Buried Past Syndrome’– a transparent attempt to lay down a possible interpretative framework (or to eliminate others). I have copied out several extracts of the report, in the hope that it will be of interest to those of our fellow citizens who continue to concern themselves with all that lies below the hypertrophied surface of things:

‘...All three suddenly presented crises of intense concentrative and attentive disability which lasted anywhere from one quarter hour (case of A. S.) to two hours (case of G. H.), the principal symptom of which is the blank gaze of the individual who has just been awakened from an afternoon nap and has temporarily lost all sense of time and place. In the case of foreman K. P., where acute symptoms persisted for two days, I suggested that he be granted a five-day sick leave. Patient then returned to work fully recovered. No loss of memory or other anxiety-related symptoms were noted, and the results of the exhaustive physical examination that ensued proved normal in all respects

[...] ‘These crises were accompanied by variants of the same vision. Though reluctant to provide more than the sketchiest of details, the patients did not refuse to describe what they claimed to have seen. Particularly striking was the fact that throughout their account, they displayed the calm assurance of men convinced that they had seen nothing out of the ordinary, and at the same time, of exceptional significance and unquestionable veracity.

[...] ‘All three reported the existence, in the deepest reaches of the gallery, some ten meters below ground, of a passageway leading into a labyrinth of streets

corresponding exactly with those on the earth's surface. The description given by all three concurred: these underground streets bore names which could be easily linked to the country's recent past, such as The British Factor, National Stance, American Influence, Civil Strife, The Highest Price, etc., carved (chiselled was the word used by one of the three) on the remains of walls behind which they could not recall having seen the ruins of houses or other buildings. A pale yellowish light of unknown origin and indefinable source suffused everything, causing the street names to gleam with a dull phosphorescence, as if the channels of the carved letters were 'lit by glow-worms' (in the words of K.P.). Everywhere total silence reigned, and the tepid atmosphere breathed no odour of earth, dampness or mould.

'None of the three observed any sign of life—whether animal or vegetable—but all were struck by a feeling of boundlessness. 'It was like a dream: deep, calming, not of this world,' said A. S., while G. H. described it as 'beyond place.' When asked, they were unable to indicate neither how long they had spent there, nor how their emotional state had altered during their wanderings. From their description, however, this writer is left with the impression that a single minute was equivalent to a century, and that in a state of timelessness, normal emotional functions become blunted.

[...] 'It must be remembered that among the hundreds of workers employed at the site, no one else noticed the existence of the passageway, nor complained of any related disturbance. The three themselves, when asked, made several half-hearted attempts to indicate exactly where they had passed into the subterranean city. But their attitude was one of indifference, as though they had been obliged to do so for the sake of appearances, fully convinced that any attempt to convey their experience was pointless. In fact, K. P., whose education consists of primary school,

was heard to mutter over and over again during the attempt to locate the passageway, 'now they tell us.'

'These events could be consigned to the category of collective auto-suggestion or hallucination if: a) they had not occurred at widely varying times, b) they had not occurred at different work-sites, and c) if the three had not, ever since, maintained a slight but constant smile.'

There can be no doubt that the author of the report has encountered some difficulty in maintaining the required professional distance from the accounts of the three victims (are they really?). Perhaps he has been misled by the prospect of discovery; perhaps by his youth... But he certainly oversteps the bounds of scientifically acceptable conjecture by concluding his text with a remark that raises questions about his own mental balance. 'What worries me,' he writes, 'is what may be happening even deeper down.'

Maria SKIADARESI

From

Brazen breed

CHAPTER 1: 1956

Niu was nowhere to be found. Never before had the cat gone missing for more than a day.

For Ersi Klari-Whitaker the disappearance of the animal was an omen portending her own demise –even as a girl she liked to challenge fate with weird wagers– so she started making preparations for her final journey.

She swept the house for various odds and ends stuffing them in drawers, closets and the Venetian acacia wood travel trunk, which faithfully accompanied her venerable late husband, Dr Whitaker, on his rare journeys. Before he met Ersi of course, since after their marriage he hardly ever left the house they had built with remarkable flair and furnished with the combined finesse of a cultured English commoner and a Heptanesian girl of noble birth, penniless though she was. The cause of her financial straits was –besides the established fact that a rise usually passes the baton to a fall– probably the reckless management of the family assets by Ersi’s father, Marinos Klaris, unique in the long family history of the Klarises in his refusal to bow to the principle that wealth is the cornerstone of human happiness.

The night before, while leafing through the table calendar as she always did before bed, she realised that the next day was her birthday. Knowing she was going to be a hundred she felt like a little girl abandoned by her mother in an inhospitable

house. She shivered with cold. She grabbed the shawl that decked the arm of her wheelchair and wrapped it round her shoulders.

Taking a deep breath she rose from the wheelchair and walked to the dresser opposite. She opened the first drawer and took out a vial she had hidden there years before hoping it might come in handy in an hour of need. And now that the hour of need had come, she went to the kitchen taking slow but admirably steady steps for a woman who had spent half her life in a wheelchair, filled a glass with water and returned to the bedroom. She opened the vial, emptied its content in the glass, drank it as if she were drinking her evening milk, wiped her lips with her sleeve and climbed into bed. She crossed her arms on her chest, closed her eyes and started measuring her life letting events flash by as if in a film. It was moments from her very first memories till she met the love of her life and from the day she gave up walking until a week before when Stamo died leaving her in doubt as to whether she would be able to find someone else to push her wheelchair. A little later a sweet sleep numbed her limbs and she left this world with an imperceptible sigh which only Niu would have heard and meowed back in consolation had she not been missing for three days.

Chalkino Genos (Brazen breed), A Novel. Translated by Leonidas Karatzas

Antonis SKIATHAS

THE SHRINE

(ICONOSTASIS)

The road made a coil to the right, a snake with its tail vanishing in the plain.

A lot of lights, road signs, and a gas station were hiding the view we had once from above.

We stepped back, walked down in small companies from the Albanian inland.

Unarmed, our cloaks full of lice. Hungry for three days, almost barefoot, water was bringing us near fainting. We took off our boots, the flesh between the fingers was detaching along with the socks.

The almond trees once again bloomed.

Hector took the way to the village, all our glory was a loaf of bread.

He took a few steps and then the explosion was heard. He remained there, we buried him offhand.

A long later time we brought a price of marble to guard him and a candle to give him light.

The road coiled on and on, a snake with its tail vanishing in the plain.

The gas station was on his head. Aside the marble gravestone the dustbin, with tows of flax, motor oils and gasoline.

The marble with the laurel vanished in the garbage.

The almond trees were cut down, the fountain dried up.

What did Hector want there alone without water, without candle, without blossoms of almond tree in Spring.

THE TESTAMENT

*We have nothing
We have sold even the water,
Nomads in the mud of the island of Milos.*

*The children have abandoned us.
The fire pierces us
and the sorrow
for the broken rocks of the Black Sea.*

*Only the Crucified hears
the moaning of the sea.*

*The wind scatters at the shores
heirlooms of the ancestors.*

*Papers that the sun toasted
Detached
the intestines of the Universe.*

*The city is threatened
the light is thrown down into tunnels
of brave hoplites.*

*The city is threatened
The kinsmen*

*of favorite poets consolidated
the black lists.*

*The city is threatened
the openings in the ground remind our power.*

THE TREE

At the first days of autumn it was approached by thunders and the entire House was illuminated.

In other times, at the beginning of Spring feathers of goldfinches, orioles and sparrows were soiling its blossoms.

The sea village was overflowing by voices as we were passing a rope around the board and we were going to and fro with the legs stretched for gaining impetus and this was creaking from joy, throwing down its flowers like snow.

At the mornings of August, while its temples were filling from hymns by locusts and crickets, the sun at its higher branch shined like a mirror from the island of Skyros.

At the Civil War, came a company and passed a rope around the fork.

The legs stretched, the wind was waving the breathless corpse to and fro for seventeen hours.

Silence,

Great silence, winter was entering.

The chain saw started up, chewing its trunk and this, with a prolonged creaking, fell down with all its fruits.

Thus stopped the cry of the Father who wandered in the foliage like a phantom, searching his child.

THE FARE

You talk a lot about the fare.

*You draw up contracts, bargain over the price,
study the hull's wood.*

*You stir the waters of glorious shipwrecks
But the wisdom in the voyage are the oars.*

*The oars,
their length and their number,
besides the oars are what change the place.*

*Sadly no wisdom lasts through time
save that which marks the horizon
of the eternal routine's tack.*

From Human Traces, 2006. Translated by David Connolly

FUGITIVE TIME

The century had gone away.

*In a huge bundle we took on cargo
all the silverware of the clan, Giannoulis Halepas' belongings,
with a change of underwear of the General in Revolution,
of Ioannis Roukis of Evia*

and
the seven embalmments of Ego,
double-stitched in a lining
of
Manto's Maurogenous
suit.

By this way encumbered, we crossed the Euripus Bridge
with thousands cages
of songbirds filling
downs with coins the lake-shore of the fatal we headed for the abyss of that silent port in
Anacreon's Town.

In the festive day of patron-saint's day, in Pedro Andrea Vallejo's great celebrations,
pretending the pedlars of civil wars in soul,

With words, verses and thoughts
we opened the churches
and saved the light on candelabra,

for the long nights
even this summer,
for the long nights
even in this ravage.

BY THE POET'S WAY

*In summer's mountains
where loves are wrapped by rains
and perfumes of cinnamon,
I rigged hull of ship of Spetses
for inland voyages
around in your body.*

From *Eugenia*, 2014

BORDER CEMETERY, IV

*A brass wind instruments band
shaping her divine body; but then all covered.*

*An eternal melody, while
the silk fabric caresses the body.*

love comes instantaneous, but always
the vagabond keeps on walking selfish and intrusive.

From *Border Cemetery*, 1983

SAECULUM

*Who talks about the illusions of matter?
Who talks about the circumnavigation of Acheron?
Who talks about the suns and the clear 'n' blue skies at Symi-island?*

Who talks about the solitude of Cape Tenaro?

Who will finally talk about the passage from the syllable to the word?

ARMENIS' CAFE

*The large shed, toward the harbor
was propping up the rainwater
and the Armenis' coffee-house.*

*In bygone days it was holding a detachment of police,
a couple of pimps and Helen.*

*Two white baguettes
of the symphony of Smyrna were
her feet. The bosom,
the Helen's bosom, smelled herbs as
she used to plant
in its groove
basil, peppermint, spearmint and the festive days
a wildrose.*

*In Armenis' cafe, all the seeds of the fruits of Salonika
used to close business for embarkation, women, hashish
and immigrants.*

*There Jason, a doctor from Tashkent,
kept a wooden box playing Tchaikovsky;
to those who lost the homeland,
to those who discover how strange was it.*

*The steamers used to bring and take souls
all summer and winter long,
all day and night long.
Every single morning Jason used to open the wooden box,
wear the accordion and play the National Anthem,
for all those guys in Armenis's cafe.*

The steamers used to bring and take souls
in the large shed
toward the harbor.

From *Ave Saeculo*, 2002

NOTE NUMBER 11

*He kissed her
in her chest, as angels do;
and she flew slowly on the high seas
becoming Skopelos, Ios, Evia
her body
covered by the ancient Mediterranean
of Crete.*

From *The horse of the waves*, 1990

BEAUTY

*A body is beautiful,
when it's adorned*

*in the sand of the Sahara
and the waters of the Volga irrigate
all the lemon trees
in the garden of its quarters; When the wind
tears up the Crosses
and the Lord is pulled
to bottomless pits.*

*A body is beautiful,
when its earth gets smoothed
and the sailors
recognize constellations over it,
showing
valleys with pomegranates
where love will promenade
through the infinite
and hear
slaughtered priests crying.*

*A body is beautiful
when it is filled with nests
of migratory birds
and caves
where rains are saved
until long droughts come.
When in its deep altar,*

a candle smolders

the body is beautiful.

From *A wayfarer's fantasies*, 1996. Translated by Katerina Tsiouma

Klety SOTIRIADOU

CASE IN POINT

*In alien lands again this year I loiter
I spend the days in silence at more hospitable shores
I count the absence diving in the sea,
Never expressing one single protest.*

*And this full, high-bodied cypress tree,
That from a distance gazes sternly on the deserted school,
With its tiny rounded cypress cones,
Gives nighttime refuge to all flying things.*

*They squawk, peck, flutter, are driven away
And return more demanding still –perpetually in motion–
For a simple night's stay on an unstable tangle of a twig,
Every night at seven –that Chair-on-high lecture
On Survival – at eight they fall asleep.*

*The case in point is not even a nest,
Merely a branch for them to rest on safely,
In company in the darkness of the night
But I have never learned to ask even for that.*

COHABITATION

Ioulis, Kea, Cyclades

*One fold of whitish goats
Under the shadow rests
And boldly ruminates
Ignoring the feline
Taking the sun in the Kean early afternoon
—Another cat lying
On the white-washed steps.*

*Tourists appear out of nowhere
Stride over rocks
Defy the conniving prickly pears
To immortalize the windfall find
Lost amidst the weeds
With its sardonic grin
The archaic frozen smile.*

*Leisured and nonchalant the lion poses.
Tis something it remembers of its life before it turned to stone
And uncannily its carnivorous mouth smiles?
Has it buried the hatchet in the imposed cease-fire,
Or an intimacy it fakes
And waits for the moment to attack
On instinct at its age-long prey.*

[Unpublished]

ENCOUNTER

*The magnetic pin trembles
– An implement compliant to the presence –
Trapped in a flat transparency.
A forgotten sense awakens.*

*It is not the touch; because this
Non-existent pertinence on cheeks
Does not remind
Passion's devoutness.*

*Sight is deceitful;
Time obviates obsessions
Posture and gesture*

Betray nothing any longer.

No taste;

The distance minimal but such

That totally excludes

Wanderings of the tongue.

Useless the smell;

Under so many layers

The acrid bitter-sweet

Mist of excesses is lost.

But one unaware magnetic field

Is absurdly attracted obedient to the sound

Of the same unchanged voice;

The entire being turns towards its north.

[Unpublished]

Translated by the poet

ODE TO THE DRYAD

You step forth from the dense matter of the forest,

A reflection of a serene wellspring.

*Your gaze a diaphanous promise
Meditates in an invisible inner world.
Tinges of ochre on your luminous cheeks,
Carmine on the rainbow of your lips.*

*

*And your body, rooted and almost unseen,
Gives off hints of warm, intoxicating scents.
Myrrh and sandalwood and jasmine
Weigh heavy on your eyelids.
You are not yet of my world.
You are not yet of the East, but you are rising.*

*

*I can't wait for the glass to shatter,
I almost touch the lighted blazing form.
A door half-opened, secretly reveals its oaken essence,
A labyrinth – one very hard to quit.
There in your closed hand
You tightly clasp the thread of life.*

From *Gifts in Return*, 2011

HOMELAND GEOGRAPHY

*High on the plateaus
In certain villages of Boyaca⁴⁸
The sky pauses to linger
On the rooftops
Leaves drops of diamonds on the grass.*

*Faces soiled by frost
Sinevy arms
Figures in shades of yellow ochre
Lined up on the Museum walls
Stoop to gather the potato crop.*

*The cornfields flap out their tasseled cheers
Clover grows fast over our foot-prints
The proud Chibcha⁴⁹ blood
Does not raise the glance
Does not face the stranger.*

TRACKING

*I track an indistinct latent sensation
A non-sensation better be called*

⁴⁸ Boyaca: district of Colombia, South America, on the Andean highlands.

⁴⁹ Chibcha: an indigenous tribe who lived on these highlands.

*Since it relates to a deathly hush,
To an interesting conversation that suddenly wanes.*

*Images blur, noises draw away,
Senses debilitate, a vacuum is created.
I'd rather say that it is like a prompter
Who hides beneath the words and calls for silence.*

*Barely distinguished, it lasts like concentration,
Most times like absent-mindedness.
It is not the distance between others and the self.
It does not focus like a lens on the priorities.
It rather joins the secret thread of life
With the ruthless daily duty.*

*Like clean air reminiscent of thyme or pine
To nostrils suffering exhaust fumes daily,
It helps to get up on the right side,
Much like this blue morning after the rain.*

*It may be just a disposition for acceptance,
An unexpected curtain, an attitude of life.
I could have named it
Automatic scavenger or a disguise selector.*

And I could have started once again

*Carrying no luggage for the takeoff,
If I was sure it is about a whole being,
One I'll be conscious of and I'll retain.*

From Gifts in Return, 2011. Translated by Jane Assimakopoulos

Ersi SOTIROPOULOS

White Nights at the Vatican

I am the slave of love. This keeps me awake at night. When it all began, last summer, I was about to go away on holiday. It was a Friday, July 22nd, and till Monday noon I didn't sleep a wink. During the heat-wave, every other night was a sleepless night. The holiday trip was cancelled and my friends shrugged and washed their hands of me. Though I didn't realize it then, love was eating up tiredness. No trace of drowsiness. It came to the point when I slept about ten hours a week. I'd never felt better.

From the feast of the Assumption on I took to the streets. As soon as the lights appeared on the bridges of the Tiber, the love craze pulled me out of the house. Off I went, off to the Trastevere, wandering for hours through the narrow streets, bored to death. I'd cross the Garibaldi bridge once again, then I would walk round the ghetto, drink coffee in Piazza Navona. Leaving the piazza I'd tell myself I would never go back there. I didn't go back there. Every spot I went to seemed to expel me, every night I chose another itinerary. Love pursued me uphill to Trinitö dei Monti and at the same time sent me headlong downhill to the Trajan's Column. Breathless I crossed over to the other side of the street. I went back to the Tiber. Still sleepless, I ran all the way to Ara Pacis, I ran to the Baths of Caracalla.

When autumn came, the situation worsened. Insomnia became invincible, the streets of Rome couldn't hold my love any more. So I moved to the Vatican. I rented a two-room apartment near a square called Santa Maria delle Grazie alle

Fornaci. It was supposed to have a good view of St.Peter from one of the windows. It is now November, and my life ploughs on, moving steadily against sleep.

So I live in the Vatican. Most of the tenants in this block are taxi drivers. Now my nights are entirely sleepless. I sit up in bed in the dark, staring at the lighted hall, and I count kisses. One, two, three, ten... twenty kisses. Kisses, kisses, I want more kisses. There are never enough. Some of them get lost somewhere along the walls. Other race incessantly or remain stuck to the electric bulb in the hall. Come back, come back to me, kisses... One is hiding behind the bathroom door. I take quick, short breaths. My lips have gone dry. It's cold, when I moved here I forgot to pack the blankets. I press my back against the wall, I wrap myself up in the sheet like a mummy and wait. One by one the kisses come to me and die away. Kisses, kisses, I can't have enough of them. When the bells of St. Peter ring for matins, I'm still there, frozen stiff, still counting. One thousand, one thousand two hundred kisses... Never enough. In the end they all come back and descend upon me in a great rushing heap. A single night may hold as many as three thousand kisses.

On Sundays after the football match, there are fewer kisses. But if the whistle blows for a penalty, I have time to count up to twenty-five. The taxi drivers are crazy about football. When my sciatica bothers me, on those evenings with a fine invisible drizzle, with the dampness rising from the Tiber and sticking to your skin, I go out and limp over to the 'Cardinal Lualdi' bar. A coffee, a glass of water, a sweet roll, I mutter, and stop exhausted into a chair. The waiter has already turned away, he knows my order by heart. And that's the end of it. Impatience gnaws at me, my nerves are in shreds, I want to get back home and count kisses. Before the tray with my order arrives, I fling some money on the table and get up with an effort. I run, I run, it's begun to rain hard. How fast can a lame person run?

The other days are like today. I stay at home. Why should I go out? My leg no longer hurts. Time passes, and I make a note of how sweet slavery is, and how much I like kisses. I wait for the television anchorman to shut up. At eleven o'clock precisely the neighbors turn their sets off. At midnight I begin counting. All is quiet, very quiet. Not a sound is heard. The water is running in the bathtub. Every now and then the refrigerator motor starts humming. I miss you, I have been missing you. I miss the kisses. Many kisses, more kisses, innumerable kisses. My throat's gone dry, I gulp in the dark. The water has filled up the tub.

Translated by Kay Cicellis

Mimis SOULIOTIS

THE WOODEN ONE

*Like an afterthought in the greater folly of thought
or like an irony of storytelling,
the horse rolled into the impregnable citadel of Troy
like a bitter pit in a sweet apricot,
like a fog in heavy air,
something else altogether.*

*Incredible that they went undetected –
their construction was far from flawless
and the commando's cover far from perfect.*

*It was taking air from all sides
and if you pricked your ears you could hear the short breaths,
the weight of the bodies on the concave floor,
the shuffling around on planks
even though they had lined the belly to muffle the sounds.*

The finish reeked of unwashed bodies.

*A Trojan man or any woman there,
armed with brains and a sense of smell
and the sixth sense of the times
would have gotten a whiff of the Achaeans
having drawn at breath's reach.*

The Trojans, whom I got to know in grade school

(they were seated on the left side of the classroom), were not fooled.

They just couldn't stand prolonging the show,

it was time to end this charade

so that the next Epic could begin.

Translated by Stratis Haviaras and Manolis Savidis

Antonis SOUROUNIS

With Spiro Hoursoutoglou in the Salonica Bar

Let me start at the beginning, then you tell me whether I did right or wrong. It was a couple of years before you got here, this huge flock of us northern Greeks arrived. They counted us down there, they herded us on, they herded us off, they decided we fit the bill and shipped us god knows where in the dead of the night. The next day we find out we're thirty miles outside of Dusseldorf. I'm telling you, it was Dachau all over again... I nearly lost it. The bus would come at night and pick us up for the factory, then take us back in late afternoon, more dead than alive. I mean it: Dachau.

But I'd had my fill in Salonica so I said to myself, Spiro, you rat, play dumb for a spell till we're out of the woods. Because believe me when I found out her old man, Shorty's old man, had gone bust, I felt like the fucking roof had caved in. You know what it means to track down the donkey, to catch it and tie it up, then a week before the wedding, you find out it's hightailed it and left you holding Shorty?

I'd quit my job. I mean, with Pops owning two stores down on Egnatia, it wouldn't do to have his future son-in-law asking the ladies, 'Would you like the feta hard or soft?' So I quit and played the lover-boy, until Shorty starts dropping little hints and letting the air out of my balloon. At that point I tell her to drop dead, and tell myself to drop dead, and seeing as I'd picked up different habits, I figure I either stick around and go on like nothing's happened, or I make myself scarce for a year or two till the whole thing blows over.

Fotis had already been here a few months and he'd sent me this colour picture of him with some German broad in a slip parked on his lap. I'd been here for about two weeks or so, slowly working myself to death, when Fotis sends word to be ready on Saturday night, he'll be by to pick me up. All that time the only women I'd seen were from the window of the bus coming back in the afternoon, so what the hell, I tell myself, at least let's get laid.

Fotis turns up in these tight pants, a check coat, and a hat with a feather in it. I nearly laughed in his face but then I think, easy, boy, it's probably the latest style. We go into town, have a beer, have another beer, and another, not a female in sight.

'Let's go to this other place,' Fotis says.

We go to this other place, and it's the same story.

'So Fotis old buddy,' I tell him, 'that chick in her slip, where's she at?'

'I dunno. This Greek pimp brought her by... Twenty marks a pop, thirty if you want your picture taken. She laid the whole dormitory in an hour, the pimp snapped the pictures.'

'And, 'er, exactly how often do those two make it by this way?'

'Beats me,' he says. 'They don't have a schedule. Whenever some girl starts to go, they ship her out of the city and take her on tour...'

I'm giving you all this background so you can see the kind of shape I was in when Shorty turned up. Monday through Saturday nothing but work, then jerking off on Sundays. There was a stack of girlie magazines going around the dorm, some even had dried cum on them, just the sight of them turned me off. Not the pictures, the filth.

It was something else that got to me though, I didn't even know where it came from. On Sundays, I'd have these thoughts – I had loads of time for that. Spiro baby, I'd tell myself, this just won't do. The factory's going to eat you alive, bones

and all... That kind of shit. And what about Spiro Jr.? I'd say (and there I'd unzip my pants to have a look at him), Poor devil, I'd say, the ladies used to treat you right, and now look at you, there's hardly anything left. That's more or less how it went, and as I sat there talking to it and stroking it, I'd get off. Can you believe it, sometimes I even had tears streaming down my face! A twenty-eight year old cock, right, and stuck there in fucking mothballs... Back then, I felt real love for it, like it was my son or something. You know, if life doesn't shove a finger up your ass, you die thinking the hole's only there to shit with. I loved my arms, too, my hands and my feet. I talked to them as if they were poor slobs who worked and suffered alongside me. Sometimes I started to wonder whether I'd gone nuts. And I'd say to myself, if this is what it means to be nuts, Spiro baby, you're better off this way. Did you ever stop to think how many turd-machines there are out there who forget they've got hands at all except when they're sitting on the bidet? And I'll bet you anything that writers are the same way: they look at their hands and all they see is the pen in their fingers.

I must have been going on four months without a whiff of pussy... It was afternoon, I was sitting with a few of the guys playing blackjack, and this Greek fellow comes in. 'Anyone here by the name of Spiro Hoursoutoglou?' he asks.

'What do you want with him,' I ask, but nothing doing.

'He in here or not?'

'Nope,' I say. 'He's in Germany doing time as a factory worker.'

'Well,' he says, 'if he turns up tell him some chick was here looking for him'

'Sure thing, buddy,' I call after him. 'If it's Liz Taylor, show her in. Otherwise forget it. Spiro and Spiro Jr. are taking the day off.'

You know, there was bullshit like that going around, there's a Miss soandso outside asking for you, right, or on the phone. No way, I wasn't going to let these hillbillies pull that one on me.

Two minutes don't go by when I hear 'Spiro...' I'm telling you, I almost passed out. I didn't recognize the voice but the tone – it was the same one I used when I was talking to myself. What the fuck, I ask myself, has my back learned how to talk, or my foot – or maybe Spiro Jr.'s grown up, the little bastard, and got himself a voice? That much tenderness from another human being! And in that sleazy sweatshop no less, with porno mags strewn all over our empty beds.

Let me tell you, with that 'Spiro' every cock in the house is standing in attention, that's how much reverence instantly came over us all. I go up to her, right, take her by the arm and lead her away from the others.

'What in Jesus name are you doing here?'

It was like I'd turned the faucet on. I mean, she was crying so hard I thought we were all going to drown in there. I put my fingers around her throat.

'Answer me,' I say. 'What'd you come here for?'

'I... I love you,' she says.

'Great, so you love somebody it gives you the right to pack up your bags and come after them? Did you ever consider asking the other person whether they loved you?'

She was crying like there was no tomorrow. Didn't say a thing, just cried and cried. I sat there going over everything in my mind. Okay, so I didn't love her. Still, it's no small thing for somebody to drop everything and come to the ends of the earth looking for you. That was part of it. The other thing was, as it turned out, the only way for you to get by in Germany was with a contract. I had one, but what

about my prick? Why shouldn't it have a contract of its own? Half an hour goes by like that, neither of us saying a word.

'You're too fucking much,' I finally say, laughing.

She starts laughing too, timidly at first, then the two of us together, loud. Have you ever had it happen to you, Andonis, where a woman goes straight from crying to laughing? I don't know, it had to be about the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. I go to smooth her hair and next thing I know she's all over me. We go off, into a corner and there, pardner, I learn what it means to be human again. I don't just mean the screwing, I mean afterwards, I held her in my arms and I cried. I cried for hours without saying a word. She didn't ask what it was about, but it was like she knew. She caressed my arms, my back, my legs – and they were the very things I was crying for. At one point she started to put her hand on my crotch, then realized that would change things, and she took it away. That was that. We got married, with Fotis as best man. We gave this sonofabitch –fat Aleko, remember him?– three hundred marks to find her work in Cologne. Every weekend we'd get together and count the money we'd saved, and the hairs on our butts. This setup lasted six months or so, until I managed to break my contract and come join her here. We got a room in Nippes: kitchen, bedroom, living room all in one – you know the deal.

But hell, we had good times back then, didn't we? Whooping it up from house to house on Saturday nights. And boy, did that girl ever know how to tsifte-teli! What the hell happened to us? Every now and then I see one of the old crowd in the street, and we don't even say hello. Any idea why it all changed? If only we'd had a scientist around to solve that one for us, eh? But then he'd had to have been through the same shit we'd been through, and that's asking a lot. Eighteen years in the factory... Shorty was a real trooper, I have to say. In all that time, not a word of complaint. Doing what she did, no less: washing the crap off old men – old Krauts,

no less. Just hearing what she put up is enough to make you love her. They didn't have anything better to do all day than tinker with their pathetic little things. They'd look at it this way, they'd look at it that way, they'd hold it up to the light, then call her over to have a look herself, that kind of shit. So anyway. My kid grew up on his own, locked in like a house cat. Nothing in my life turned the way I wanted. I wanted to be tall and I turned out short. I wanted to get some schooling and I never had a chance. I dreamed of a woman up to there, and I married Shorty. The only thing I didn't want was to be a factory worker – and Christ, that's just how I ended up.

I'll tell you something I've never had the guts to tell anybody before. I walked past thousands of women in all those years, right? And I looked at every one of them, square in the eyes. Not a single real woman ever looked back. Not even just out of curiosity.

You've done all right for yourself on that score, but if that's it, if that's all someone has going for him, good riddance, buddy. Because as far as I'm concerned, you are your work. I mean, some people take home in a day what for us is a month's wages, and you ask yourself, what's going on here? Why should twelve months of mine equal one of his? I'm telling you, just thinking about it makes me want to take to the streets with a gun. [...]

Translated by Martin McKinsey

Dimitris I. SOURVINOS

The Only Begotten

All alone

all night long

in the upstairs

demolished room

with the fond of solitude

chandeliers of stars

I

superior

to Fear and to Sleep

bareheaded and roofless

uncombed

fasting

on the yellow board

stooping

I plunge into my papers

like a soldier

hit on the chest

—formerly

charmer confessor

comforter

interpreter
specializing in dreams—
finally now
simply
the complaint of the dead
I hear
and their naked foot soles
in the Night's
palest courtyard
I
the unprotected by birds
the willing
and prepared for Worry
the only begotten of the Moon
the prey to Love
all alone

look I hear
write and weep

From *Complementary*. Translated by M. B. Raizis

Alexis STAMATIS

Twenty-six rosebushes

The Lancia Ypsilon with Caterina at the wheel crossed a landscape on which rolling hills stood out like arpeggios on a musical staff. I could see all possible hues of green; light green, almond-green, olive-green, turquoise, emerald-green, not to mention the silver green of the olive trees and the deep green of the cypresses, that like grassy poles created a natural windshield around the isolated villas clinging to the hillsides. The Tuscan sky was wrapped in an aggressive blue and an explosive sun hurled its golden darts in all directions.

I observed this landscape as I did all the beautiful things in my life; from a distance. The gaze, when it sees beauty, acquires an authority all its own, the eye imposes itself on the face, dominates it. You begin by looking at a vine radiating a brilliant green, then you stare at a stone-built house at the top of a hill and a ray of light slips into the retina gently triggering the muscles, that move slightly, just enough so that the inside of the vehicle carrying you is also included in your visual field. And from there, your peripheral vision grasps a fleeting sense of naked flesh, a white hand as it moves back and forth changing gears, and while you turn your neck in order to include the blond of the blowing hair, the slight breeze obliges you to turn even more, you are now between two temptations, the natural beauty of the countryside on the one hand and on the other her still unformed image, gradually revealed to you by your eye's iris, which longingly races to the left corner of your socket. The vine becomes Caterina's face, the radiant green a red dress outlined by a blond frame. And then it suddenly strikes you what it is that fascinates you so much

about that face. It is the extension of the landscape's breath, the reflection of the interminable in its existence. But isn't this what beauty is in a person? When the ineffable secretes tiny explanatory droplets.

Caterina's country cottage was twenty miles outside Siena. On arriving at Poggibonsi and having San Gimignano on our right, we turned left, leaving the main road and following a narrow road leading to a hill, three or four miles away.

'Now we're in the heart of the Chianti region. Can you see that vegetation up on the hill?' said Caterina. 'That's where the house is.'

The road passed through an expanse that was full of vines. All around there was nothing but a few scattered cypresses and a few cows grazing at the foot of the hill. The only sound to be heard was Mahler's *First* coming from the cassette player. I reflected that somewhere along this route was the scene of the gunfight with Esnaider. The main road was quite busy; no one would have risked an ambush there.

Two cars in chase on the road we were driving along. In front, Matthaiou, Magdalena and their friend, behind Esnaider and his thugs. The acceleration, the braking, the cornering... Then the shots, the blood... Matthaiou returning home, hastily packing, notifying the grandmother to look after the girl and then disappearing with Magdalena. Leaving... But to go where?

'What car did your father have?' I asked suddenly.

'A red Alfa-Romeo convertible. I know from my grandmother. But why?'

'How does a car chase with three people dead on the road you're driving along make you feel?'

'How do you know that it happened here?' Caterina asked.

'Why, is this where it happened?'

'It couldn't have happened anywhere else. You realize it would have been impossible on the autostrada.' Caterina stressed and, turning off the cassette player, continued, 'I've done this journey hundreds of times, knowing that this is where the gunfight happened. It's the first time I'm doing it aware of the reason why it happened.'

'Your parents' friend who was killed in the fight, who was he?'

'I don't know, somebody called Luigi. I never met any of their friends. Apart from Salinas, of course...' said Caterina as we reached the foot of the hill. 'Look, it's up there,' and she pointed to the top.

It was a white two-storey building, surrounded by cypresses. The car began winding its way up the hill. As we got closer, I was able to get a better view of the small cottage. Its architectural design was simple, a row of large openings in the façade, a gable roof and eaves decorated with floral depictions. It had a large double-leafed front door with a carved escutcheon on the lintel. When we pulled up outside, I saw that it was a small elephant.

'My father made it himself. A week before they left, so my grandmother said. It's one of the few images that I have left of him. Here, in front of the house, my father carving a large piece of wood and gradually an elephant appearing. Of course, I may have made it up myself...' said Caterina as she parked the car beside a cypress tree.

No sooner had we parked the car than the door of the house opened revealing an elderly woman wearing a white lace apron. As soon as she saw Caterina, she rushed up to her, hugging and kissing her.

'Yannis, this is Rosa. She's been taking care of the house since the time that my parents bought it,' said Caterina in Italian.

'Pleased to meet you,' I said, holding out my hand to Rosa. She was a restless woman, short and plump, with hair dyed blond that stood up with the help of some strong lacquer. Her face was a map of wrinkles, but her eyes, two blue buttonholes incessantly moving, missed nothing. Rosa seemed to be a woman well-versed in the art of observation...

We crossed the front garden passing beneath the pergola that was covered in climbing plants – ivy, clematis, creepers. Before we went inside, Caterina wanted to show me something. She took me round to the back of the house, where I found myself before an impressive sight. It was a large garden, I estimated about a quarter of an acre, full of plants, some in flower some not; honeysuckle, begonias, oleanders, jasmine, hyacinths, poppies, mimosa and whatever else you could think of.

'The Mateos' garden,' said Caterina with a wry smile.

I looked to the left. In a separate flowerbed, arranged in a line, was a row of rosebushes.

'Twenty-six,' said Caterina, 'one for every year since my parents went away.'

I noticed that the flowerbed was quite large. There was room for at least as many more.

Inside the house, I found myself before an apotheosis of wood. A floor of fir, a ceiling of walnut, an open kitchen with wood panelling, couches, armchairs, chairs and a semicircular interior staircase all made of wood.

In the dining room was a large portrait of a middle-aged man with a bushy moustache and coarse features. He was holding a seal and a scroll of paper on which were written the words: 'Glauben und Leiben', faith and love.

'My grandfather, Friedrich Hardenberg,' said Caterina, 'my mother's father.'

We went upstairs, where there were three bedrooms and a bathroom. Caterina showed me where I would sleep. I arranged my few things, after all we would only be there three nights.

Caterina went into the bathroom and I went downstairs. Rosa was in the kitchen preparing something.

'The signorina tells me that you are Greek too. Like Signor Mateo,' she said in a funny, squeaky voice.

'Yes, I'm from Athens.'

'Athens, he was always talking about Athens, about his house in Filiro.'

'You mean Faliro,' I said, laughing.

'Faliro, yes, that's where he lived, by the sea, he said. Signor Mateo was a very good man.'

The housekeeper appeared talkative by nature. I wasn't going to let the opportunity be wasted.

'Were you with them from the beginning?'

'From the time they bought the house in '69. I'm from San Gimignano. I was hired by Signora Magdalena to take care of it. We had three wonderful years. And then that thing happened, and they left. Since then...'

'What thing?'

'The killings... The blood... I don't even want to remember,' said Rosa with a theatrical gesture, 'but why I am telling you all this, it doesn't concern you.'

'I know all about it, Rosa. I've talked to Caterina. Wasn't it somewhere near here that it all happened?'

Rosa got going.

'Very near. Two miles from the house. That morning, the signor and signora left here with Luigi, a lawyer friend of theirs who was staying with them. The

signora was wearing a blue dress with yellow lace, she was beautiful. After half an hour or so, I remember Signor Luca, covered in blood, coming back to telephone. I thought he would call the police. I shouted to him, 'Call the police! Call the police!', but he didn't, he called Signora Sophia and spoke to her for a long time. He said, 'Great danger, we have to leave, take care of the child,' and such like... Then they left and I never saw them again.'

Translated by David Connolly

Kostas STERYOPOULOS

UNDER THE EUCALYPTUS TREES

*I don't mind the night falling
on these houses and under the eucalyptus trees.
I am learning to dwell in solitude,
and I am not afraid; I have taken my decision.*

*When numbness wells up from deep within,
then lips are sealed, speech is bound tight.
Chaos inundates us, for we have spoken
too many words.*

I do not seek the impossible: that the Wheel turn back.

*Give us at least a little certainty for this life,
when all the ropes that
held us have been cut.
Blow us the microbe of sin and of life
that we might not die of neutrality.*

From *Landscapes of the Sun*, 1971

DEEP IN VEGETATION

Deep in vegetation

*lurk in hiding the scorpion, the viper,
prehistoric monsters prepare their attack,
and the conquered moon, forever hypocritical
pretends to hide behind branches and clouds
like a shy virgin.*

Ancient objects still insist on living:

*a rusted rooster weathervane,
and in days to come a television antenna.
The mole whets its teeth,
and the naked snail tastes its saliva.*

But I no longer know them, and they do not
know me

From *Eclipse*, 1974

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

But why must I be bound?

*The stage setting is made of paper;
all the lightning flashes and thunderbolts too are fake,*

and when the lights go on, the audience will leave.

But why must only I endure?

When the lights go out again, I too will leave.

I want no one to suffer any more.

(I've been burnt enough by fire!)

And if the bird comes, I'll strangle it.

From *The Danger*, in supplementary edition, 1972

IN THE CAT'S CLAWS

*You too will writhe in the cat's claws,
and they who gamble with our souls at cards,
and they who stake our souls on dice,
here where demons and saints dwell together.*

But why should we speak of death?

There are so many living deaths!

I have swallowed many such petrified hours!

I have lived under the eyes and the claws of the

*shrew,
I have seen the silent hate of the beetles,
the spirit that blows from the deserts.*

*Thus have I always passed among flaming tongues and howls,
the breath of beasts touched the nape of my neck,
as I plodded on, hour after hour,
forcing my body to obey.*

*Even now in my loneliness here I scorn
the humblest of these:
double-faced weasels, rodents, beaten dogs.
I thrust my hand into the lion's mouth fearlessly.*

If you fear danger, it will bite you.

From *Eclipse*, 1974

HALF OUR COURSE

*And so from surprise to surprise and from rise to decline
we have sailed through half our course,
still holding in our entrails the storm's commotion,
always with this dilemma.*

*The weather clouding and clearing again
like a distant remnant from our childhood soul.*

*No one remembers any more how we started out
and how we found ourselves in the middle of the way,
betraying one of our selves after the other,
heaping oblivion on ash
and ash on oblivion.*

*What tree could ever strip itself of its rings
that increase with time in its trunk's core?*

*And now we continue still, I continue
always with this dilemma.*

*Unless, with a final betrayal, I manage to escape
naked, without luggage,
like a man shipwrecked far out in angry waters,
stripped by the sea before he reaches shore.*

From *Half Our Course*, 1979

CAVE KOUTOUKI

As soon as we crossed the threshold,

*the music of aillenia was heard,
when we continued on amid stalactites and stalagmites
enlarged throughout the centuries;
drops dangling for years on end and never dropping,
and pale marmoreal stalks that have sprouted rootlessly.*

Crystalline schist. Dolomite limestone.

*Men in their Sunday best
who had never before made such an excursion,
and the guide grown hoarse with explanations.
Women in trousers and men with stepped-up shoes,
souls that come in stupor and in stupor leave
and go to wake up in another body.*

*No one knew where we were going,
as night fell and day dawned
amid the dampness of pale marble.
Statues and crosses in writhing configurations,
an endless cemetery of— odd shapes
that altered their appearance
as soon as we stopped to stare at them.*

*But at a certain moment daylight appeared high up in the distance,
and we all believed some sort of an explanation had been given,
that we had found the beginning.*

*Yet even so we went on like sheep to slaughter
under the stones and the millenia and even
deeper still,
as we emerged finally out of the earth's bowels,
believing we were escaping her.*

*Until we found ourselves outside once more
in the luminous autumn of Attica.*

From *Half Our Course*, 1979

IN THE MIDST OF SUCH PRIVATION

*In the midst of such privation,
it is no longer possible for me to speak;
all these naked skeletons in the freezing cold of winter,
these stagnant waters on the voiceless plains.*

*The years gather slowly at first, then all the more swiftly,
the years gather like the white hairs on our temples.
And you feel sorry for the trees,
when the fog over the plainland becomes a gray, milky Sea
from which the hands of drowned men protrude.*

*From noon on
the day by degrees glides to its ending.
A few creases begin to appear under our chin,
a few wrinkles about our eyes;
cracks you do not immediately notice.
Only the afternoon sun is left for you
and the meditation of evening hours.*

*In the end privation becomes a doubtful happiness, like loneliness.
As though you were waiting for something that will not come,
or that will come and not be recognized,
and for a while you will not dare wait for anything anymore.*

*(If you were to come, even now,
you would be like the afternoon sun in my room after the freezing spells of winter,
my cells and tendons might then perhaps become new
again
and I would speed toward you with all my sails
if only for this pyrotechnics of a moment.)*

From Change of Lighting, 1984. Translated by Kimon Friar

Angeliki STRATIGOPOULOU

From

I Will Not Ask Daddy Again

The dress covered in spots. Indelible stains from the sweet pea and you with your gaze fixed on the trousers. Just like that. As though you were cutting locks from the head of a child. As though I were peeling fruit. With the bags scattered beneath the trees and the bodies warming the snow and covering the tracks. Or with the smell of cicadas and the parents out of the house. Don't make a noise. The bikes leaning against the wall. Ready to fly. Ready to love each other with a jolt of the saddle. A lilac walks on your chest. It crosses you and I'm envious. How you looked at me then! You let me gloat, unsuspecting, in a taffeta dress but I don't recall how I called you. All I recall is that you weren't like the others. That you were so brave that you took my body and distorted it in your own so much that afterwards I couldn't recognize it. Did I exist before becoming you? Who can be recognized after a union?

I don't even recall how I called myself then. All I recall is that I had a name that undulated when I lay down on it and I'd feel the vowels' noses rubbing my belly. And you baptizing me in your sweat, each day giving me something new. And I declaring I was present and meaning it.

Now you don't exist. I called you Christmas but you died. Now others wander in our fields. Where once only our words grew, their flocks graze and provide us with the yearly cheese. Since then I've lost all interest in cheese, because what good is it when the song has ended? When you're so grown up that you've learned how harmful it is?

The taffeta dress still has something of my old shape. It's as if it were wearing my neck and something of my breasts. Caught on its buttons are the tiny calligraphic letters I once wrote. It still dresses as if I were there. The straw hat frays from the wind that lifts the little girls' dresses. The wind needs sewing up, so it will blow only in the small square flower-bed dug by the gardener around the trees where we'd leave our bikes. The dress falls into the sea, still wearing my neck and something of my breasts. It falls into the water with its lovely buttons that mother had sewn on it; the buttonholes open and from inside escapes what had remained of me, when I was you. It travels afar as I write *elsewhere, without mother, the buttons*. The sea takes my traces and prepares a new dress. I'll wear it close to my skin and dry it, as I miss it.

I stitch the letters, the words on the paper and, barefoot the sentences climb up to the hat to save themselves. There they fashion chapters without dresses. The calligraphy pen pierces the hat with its straw and plastic cherries, and huge drops of verbs drip onto the pointed dance shoes.

Translated by David Connolly

From

Annunciation

'I was growing up sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. The river christened the living souls indiscriminately. My parents were frogs and reeds. Yet, I dreamed of the North with the well-groomed squares and the people I thought had nothing to share. I scoured the borders to find myself sometimes with Daddy and sometimes with Mommy, not with the easiness we have when we change rooms as

it happens with the other children, but with the anxiety that I might be conceived, illegitimately or not, it didn't matter. I felt danger enveloping me as I traversed the banks, feeling an outcast on both.'

Excerpt from the novel *Annunciation*, 2009. Translated by Liana Sakelliou

Phaedon TAMVAKAKIS

The truth of the matter

Not one escapes, listen to me.

I was listening speechless. This man, ugly by most standards, in a filthy gurney in midsummer, stinking of pastrami, swollen feet in flip flops, full of verrucae and dirt, his fat fingers with cuts all over making the beer mug disappear, always almost empty, was claiming to be a heartbreaker?

How do you do it? Do you have some technique, do you pretend to be a movie producer, some eccentric tycoon, do you promise to fulfill their hidden desires?

Everything starts with a big fart...

I could not imagine how that would work.

Listen, after surveying the territory and drinking a couple to get in the mood, I spot the most vulnerable and slowly move next to her without looking at her once. When the music dies down, I break a great one, like this...

He supports his words convincingly.

And she doesn't leave?

Rarely. Normally pretends she didn't hear. So I break another louder one, and if it doesn't work a third one... It's the whiskey and garlic you know. Because I am a bit overweight I eat a lot of garlic, it's good for the heart. Only one didn't seem to notice once, and I was desperate, but then I realized she had earphones. She caught the smell though and followed her fate.

And...

She would then turn and say something like ' how gross'. He bursts into laughter. He actually cries and shakes, making the bar tremble and the glasses rattle.

And then?

He tries hard to pull himself together, the others at the bar resume their work, he gulps the last drop and nods for a new round.

What time is it luv? Ten? I'll be far away this time tomorrow. You think I would be ashamed of something as insignificant, as a fart?

That's where you should be with your farts: far away.

If only you knew. Wish that was my problem.

A crybaby.

Then I keep silent. It gives gravitas to my case. What is gravitas? A lawyer I met at a bar taught me that. Means 'balls' in latin, but sounds much better. I am silent but wave to the bartender to get her a drink.

Thanks but I was ready to leave. Really what makes you so sad?

Then I speak of that rare disease that has been plaguing me for five years.

It is not contagious. It is a rare form of leukemia, incurable. I've spent all my money traveling the world, seeing experts, trying treatments. I became a guinea pig, because, you know, when you don't have money they don't let you die, they have you sign all these papers and throw all these medicines to see what works. If you are lucky and they work, they sell them to the rich. And I've spent all my money, and more. I owe money to the banks, to friends, I have lied to so many nice people. This is why I live in my little sailboat, because if I show up in Piraeus I will end up in a cell.

And they believe you?

Not yet. They have bitten the hook but I need the harpoon to bring them onboard. Then I mention this kindhearted doctor, with a summer house up the hill. Sometimes they've heard of him on the news, 'Dr Death', but don't know he lives here. Neither do I, but all doctors have summer homes on the islands.

You tell the same story at every port?

More or less. I met the old doctor once, he also has a small sailboat. We moored next to each other. An old 33 foot Carter. He was smoking a pipe and drank whiskey. Nice fellow. Easy going. He knew a lot but didn't brag. He made fun of everybody and everything. He didn't care what others said. He had lost his son to a disease of the immune system, didn't tell me more. He had escaped Death himself. Death himself, ha. Had a foot long scar across his chest. Heart attack, had to be carried in a helicopter, nearly killed him.

And he examined you?

Nah. We talked moorings and stuff. Now I remember he told me to check my thyroid. Good man. He administered euthanasia because he cared. He didn't say so, I gathered that myself. He'd seen a lot of suffering.

Then they believe you?

Partially. The more I refuse to talk about it, the more they insist on finding out what I am up to. They tell me ' don't do anything stupid', 'there must be a cure' but I don't want to listen, I have thought it over and over, I made my decision, everything is set. And then I get this inspiration. I ask the bartender for pen and paper and I scribble.

What is your name, luv.. Your father's? Married? An address.

What are you doing there?

I fold it and pass it to her.

Read it same time tomorrow.

She tries to open it, he touches her hand and presses it hard and then softly fondles it.

Cut out that nonsense. Buy me a drink. Life is sweet. I won't let you do anything silly.

You are the only person who cares for me at this point. I want you to remember what it means to me. Wish we had met earlier.

I won't let you. Take it back. I don't want it. You'll be here tomorrow and we will be having drinks.

If you say so. I just wrote what I felt like and I don't take it back. No regrets.

Besides, I know nothing about boats.

Sell it, spend the money. Drink to my health once in a while. It is a pity for it to end up with some bank.

Tell me about Dr Death.

You haven't heard of him?

She buys drinks.

To your health, I say and she gets upset. She says she is a doctor herself, she finds it terrible that doctors who have taken the oath, perform euthanasia. She says she will take me to the best specialists without having to pay a cent. She asks me about my blood, what sort of tests I have had but before things get more difficult I clasp her hand and give her a juicy kiss. And she, instead of pushing me back, grabs my thing.

Priapism. Common symptom. How long do your erections last?

Hey! Sometimes even three hours.

How often over an hour?

I get a bit confused there. I don't normally count. We continue drinking. She asks me all sorts of medical questions and touches my thing which with such attention refuses to calm down.

It's been over an hour and it hasn't got any better. We have to get out of here.

She drags me out, she pushes me in a dark corner and pulls my pants down.

I will perform some massage to make you feel better.

I feel better immediately, but I get excited right afterwards. Her hair smells so nice, she has silky skin, full breasts. This time she massages with her mouth and soon I am better again.

An hour twenty minutes. It can last four hours, which gets intolerable and even dangerous. Oops, there we go again, it is not over yet.

Now she gets serious, grabs my member and squeezes it hard, trying to make it behave. The more she does, the worse it gets. She pushes me down and sits on top of me jumping madly. Then she is in agony, as if she is the patient, and then is exhausted and stops. I am still erect.

Wait till I catch my breath, and we will carry on.

She is a pro, she won't let me until I am fully recovered. People exit the bar, some come our way, one almost pees on me.

Three hours, eighteen minutes. We should not get over four.

While I lay there panting on the damp stone she surprises me with her tenderness.

I've never felt this way before... Never... Not even before I discovered I am seropositive. (HIV positive)

I am seriously positive myself at least in the beginning. Then I mess up. I laugh.

She looks at me as if I didn't understand. She explains what HIV- positive is and that it doesn't matter to me, since I have made my decision.

Three years have gone by, I have never performed the trick in bars, since I don't want to pass it on to some poor girl. The only thing to do is wait until there is a cure for the virus and I am freed. Plus Dr Death died of cancer last year.

You know, if you use protection you can be safe. It is not as easy to pass on, as many people think. I am not a doctor, but I am a trained nurse at a hospital.

Nikos THEMELIS

From

The Reversal

In difficult times the house must have a master.' This sentence stuck in her, and after kyr-Ignatios' visit, she kept repeating it; and when she didn't mention it for a few days, I reminded her of it. We both knew who the bridegroom was to be: there could be no better one. The question was whether Anna would finally say 'Yes'; every time we broached the topic, she would fly into a passion. Anna dreaded, and at the same time adored, only one person in the family. The mistress placed all our hopes in him. For days on end she patiently waited for one of those moments when Master Antonis recovered his senses, and, grabbing the first chance, she went to work on him, dripping with honey. She was well-prepared and talked to him slowly, asking him what was to become of the family, the family the late Master so cherished, telling him what his friend Ignatios had said, how hard times lay ahead, full of danger, how everyone's happiness, but above all Anna's, as well as all our belongings, depended on her marrying, not just anybody, but Nikolis; she ended saying that he was not to let Anna leave his room till she gave her consent. He was to frighten her if necessary, to tell her she would cause him his death if she refused. My mistress said all this to him, and much more, I can't remember. Anna was writing letters that morning. Her mother called her into Master Antonis' bedroom, and then left closing the door behind her. She stuck her ear against the door panel to hear what they would say and I knelt and put my eye to the keyhole, blessing myself in apprehension.

Master Antonis propped himself up on the pillows with his good elbow and, gathering all his strength, all he had left in this world, without adding or leaving out a single word, faithfully repeated what my mistress had told him to say. Now and then he got mixed up, and would lose his words, breaking into a stammer from trying too hard, putting his good hand to straighten out his lips, massaging his throat to get the words out. Even his little finger on his paralysed hand began to shake from the effort. Now and again he would fall back exhausted, and just as we thought he'd given up and wouldn't be able to continue talking, he would pull himself together and take up his speech where he had left it, doggedly weaving his tale like a spider her web. As soon as Anna understood the first sentence, she pretended not to have heard any of it before, as if she was hearing this for the first time, from him. So he took up the story once again from the beginning, repeating it between moans, like a porter carrying a heavy weight. And then again, and again, and yet again, as if Anna was constantly saying 'no' with her mouth and her eyes. There we stood in front of the door, hearing Anna sobbing and begging her father to pity her, not to force her. But as long as she didn't say 'Yes', he kept on lashing out at her, tearing her to pieces, harming his health threefold for every blow he dealt her. When he groaned: 'It's your fault if I am lying here paralysed and it will be your fault if I die here and now', Anna bit her hand hard, as if to cut through her veins, and her sobbing turned to a blood curdling howl, alarming all the neighbourhood. My mistress held on to me as I stood there beside her, digging her nails into my shoulder in her anguish, and I held her tight, pressing her hand further into my flesh, regardless of the acute pain I was feeling. When finally, with her jaws trembling between her sobs, Anna gave him an answer, he went on like a demon, full of strength now, as if during all those long years of silence he had been gathering it in the innermost recesses of his heart, specifically for this moment: 'I

don't want any promises. I want you to swear. An oath. An oath on your knees.' A sound left her lips, as if she wanted to shape it into words, wanting to say something, but her pain twisted her lips into an awful grin. This was too much for my poor mistress who burst into the room, with me following behind; we found Anna had sunk to the side of the bed, clutching his good hand, the one with the ring, and raining tears on it, sobbing in despair, trying to say something but unable to produce a single sound, her jaws trembling hysterically, beating her breast again and again, her tears pouring over his fingers, her mouth frothing from too much pain and too much crying. Master Antonis remained stock-still; only the little finger on his bad hand shook uncontrollably. My mistress ran to him, and bending over him began wiping his sweat off his brow with her handkerchief, soothing him with words. When Anna, never letting go off his hand, finally collapsed on to the floor, he looked up into my mistress' eyes as she bent over him, looking at her as he had never looked at her before in all his life. For the first time seeking her approval. 'Eleni, my love, did I say everything you wanted me to say?' he whispered. This was the first time my mistress' real name was heard in the house. 'Antonena' he had always called her, 'Antonena' we called her too. She took his head –red and sweaty– in her arms, stroke it, as if forgiving him for all the pain of a lifetime: 'Not Eleni, Antonis my love, only 'Antonena', only 'Antonena', she murmured as tears ran down her cheeks, as they always did when he spoke roughly to her. It was only after Anna howled for a second time that we realized he had given up the ghost in my mistress' arms. It was as if he was giving up the spirit in exchange for having taken Anna's soul with an oath.

Giorgos THEOCHARIS

[UNTITLED]

*Slaughtered moon
abandoned in the vines and fields.*

The sun does not rise

*The black wind blows
among pistacia and cypresses*

*And thick blood comes streaming out
of the rock's vein*

[UNTITLED]

Then I remembered that sad lady. Her big eyes, lakes of despair. Her eye sockets. Her eyebrows, the littoral clusters of black fern.

I remembered that sad lady. Her childhood in cold-hearted hands. The infant struggling to suck nipples of stone. The flooded river forming her soul. The flooded river.

TONIGHT

The dogs were howling all night long.

I thought I heard my mother chatting.

I thought I heard her whisper: 'what are you doing here?', 'how did you come?'

I thought I heard her cry.

I thought I heard his distant cry.

I woke up and realized I had dreamt of my father alive.

Indeed.

*I found his shoe prints in the roots of the orange tree,
and orange peels scattered all his way down the dooryard.*

IN MEMORY OF A FATHER

I light your candle

and make sure it does not blow out

why do you keep on sticking memory knives on my sides?

Translated by Irimi Kondogianni

Nassos THEOFILOU

A Private Anniversary of a Great Public Holiday

Evangelia the beautiful placed the bunch of lilies on the bedside table, whereupon the bedroom glowed in the fragrant light that these special flowers began to emit. The way their white sheath-like petal is furled always reminded her of one of the ice-cream cones of her erotic summers; the yellow pollen-covered phallus in the centre stands up like a candle on a birthday cake. Every year, on this day, Evangelia's lost lover sends her this bouquet of flowers to mark the anniversary of their separation. For when she was twenty-one, on the day of the national anniversary, her angel had tenderly slipped out of her life. His light, however, remained. Though so much time had passed since then, she bent in emotion over these flowers of memory. Her lips brushed against the white trumpets and their cool freshness shivered down within her. She breathed in their discreet scent and minute kisses of pollen clung to her skin. She still could not quite believe that through all these years the invisible bond of their separation had endured so steadily. A perfume of reverence and nostalgia came over her as she took from the wardrobe the wreaths from their wedding –which had never taken place– and laid them on the bedside table. Floating in the tenderness that flooded her body, she fell back silently on to the bed. Her lover's absence was now stronger than ever – almost a mere breath away. A breath like a gentle breeze from the past, shiveringly susurrating over her body. Slowly, slowly she abandoned herself to the sweet intoxication of sleep, immobilised in her dreams. Beside her, the bedside table with the lilies and the wedding wreaths shone like a monument to fallen lovers.

It was then the period when the erotic flame burned unquenched in Evangelia's body, heralding a holocaust. Until one day the revolution of pleasure broke out. Her love was invincible throughout every battle. The wounds and traces left by their bodies' wild grappling became the sacred symbols of their struggle. Raising –like a banner– the gossamer underclothes that enwrapped her body, and with her breasts to the fore, she enflamed her erotic opponent and succeeded into drawing him into a struggle that did not end until the final fall. Her rosy flesh gave colour to the dawning of a new life. Yet the conquerors were doomed never to be crowned in wedding wreaths. Her beloved opponent was lost before he could enter the temple of love for the ritual reconciliation.

Now Evangelia was walking in the flooding moonlight of day. As she passed before the empty church she heard the far-off sound of a liturgy. The words and the chanting had never been assimilated by time and their surroundings, with the result that they had remained suspended in the air like some dream-like recording. She instantly recognised his beloved voice making the jubilant speech to mark the anniversary of their separation. A Bank Holiday of love. Everywhere bodies and souls in utter harmony among the crowd that had gathered from all directions, while innumerable sheets unfurled proudly on the buildings. Evangelia, wearing the blue and white flag of her wedding dress, went out into the Avenue of Parades, which was strewn with laurel leaves.

The air shuddered with clapping and cheering, as if lost heroes had returned once more. Although the moon could not be seen in the sky, its blinding light shone on everything, giving magic and brilliance to the day of the nation's rebirth. A perfect coexistence of the free-flowing crowd and the geometric formations parading past. Slowly, as if floating down the avenue, came tanks in a festive camouflage of multi-coloured flowers, with wreaths around their guns. The orderly ranks of bodies

wore flowering helmets and precise uniforms on which all the colours and shapes of nature were imprinted. Young girls and young men marched by, the unbearable vigour of their bodies masked by the heirloom costumes of History. Heavy lorries, their sound Byzantine and their speed velvet, towed huge, phallic trailers – detumescent now– recalling the airship Zeppelin of days gone by.

On the official rostrum, upright and shining, stood the global heroes of the cinema, of the sports field, of mass music, famous veterans, international television stars, magnates of the intellect, those who everywhere came first, those awarded all manner of prizes. As they stood there bathed in the moonlight of the day, they radiated a golden glow. Beside them the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Muses and the Choir of Angels were intoning an old hymn dating from the time of the erotic revolution.

In the dewy grove of dreams two battalions of brave lovers of my fragrant white flesh –cruel sadists– are picking lilies.

The crowd was shouting incomprehensible words belonging to some language of the future and waving jersey flags of rich design and soft colours. Every one of them bore symbolic medals on his breast. In the midst of the people's excitement, strange officials suddenly began to gather, their uniforms decorated with discreet stars, three or five or seven, like old brandies. Silence and awe spread all around. 'The allies!' someone shouted in illicit Greek. Instantly the inflated full moon appeared in the sky – the fruit of the orgiastic erotic time. Evangelia gazed, enchanted, at the huge moon-airship which was coming nearer and nearer until in it she recognised her beloved. He was beckoning to her in agony and urging her to get into the balloon quickly. The officials' stars were twinkling. She saw herself standing beside her beloved, although she had remained on the ground and was exactly

twenty-one years old. As she watched in amazement the balloon of the full moon gaining height, an official gave the order in a global language. 'In honour of the anniversary-y-y-y... Fire!'

Evangelia the beautiful shuddered from head to foot as she counted in terror the twenty-one cannon shots.

From What I Will be When I Grow Up. Translated by Caroline Harbours

Despina TOMAZANI

Because of the Enigma

To my mother Eleftheria (Freedom)

Since I am surrounded by night

I have become a star.

*

My friend Giuseppe Bella

asked me to talk;

what can I say?

Writing continues

while I still spell

the alphabet with the fingers.

I grope in the dark and tremble

in case I don't recognize the symbols:

the perfection of O-micron

and the anguish of Iota.

The rhetoric of the sea

in the Aegean will not let me rest.

It tells me:

There are no poets

only Poetry exists.

There are no writers

only Writing exists.

*Palermo, September 1994, Convention of writers and Poets of the Mediterranean.
Translated by Angelos Sakkis (July 2008)*

WATER OF SILENCE

Erotic fairy-tale

The National Holiday of 28th of October had arrived. Ten days before, a letter had come from my father through uncle Pantelis, one that had been sent again with some other traveller. 'By the gracious care...'

My father liked going to the port, just before the boat's departure, to chat with the people from his village he saw there and to hear the news of the island. He always had a letter in his pocket, sometimes two, one for his mother and one for me. He would always find somebody to take them. He sent all of them to the vegetable shop with some traveller. This way he saved the stamp.

In this last letter he had included a poem he had written for the 28th of October. If Miss Kiki was in love with the sound of letters, my father was in love with their written form, their motion, as I was too. I've never been able to imitate that labyrinthine 'delta' of his with which he started my name. It was a true ornament, with all its curlicues and the tail ends that ended nowhere. His 'rho' and

his *'mu'* had finesse like countesses in a ball, his vowels, in the way he filled them with ink on the one side, seemed like waxing heavenly bodies. Under every letter my father drew with tiny, tiny strokes... its shadow. Such calligraphy I've never seen again seen in all my life. Every letter had its own substance and its own life. And all his writing in a continuous longhand seemed like a single breath, as if a breeze from his very soul was blowing on it, and everything had an imperceptible tilt to the right.

'Our beloved daughter, may the All Merciful God grant you health and felicity. Health we enjoy and such we desire for you too...'

Sometime later he'd shown me two such letters, in his calligraphic longhand with the shadows, that he'd written in the course of his life. One to the Prime Minister Venizelos and one to the unforgettable General Plastiras. He'd also shown me the reply letters, for which he'd been very proud. His poem was written on a very thin sheet of paper. 'A Paeon to liberty', that's what he called it. I memorized it right away. It seemed to me to be of such importance that I carried it in my leather school bag and wouldn't part with it, mainly because it had unfamiliar words, whose meaning I didn't know, but whose magnetism I could feel. I'd repeat them again and again, so often that their meaning started seeming self-evident... 'Paeon, paeon, eh..., paeon means... paeon!'

I'm trying now to remember it; impossible. In the back of my head half of a sentence comes and goes like a rocket that's lost its course. 'Panhellenes celebrate this day...'. I may have forgotten my father's poem, but I do remember the day I went up to the green podium and recited it in front of the three elementary schools of our district.

Every church, or rather every parish, had its own public school. Saint George's school, Saint Mark's school, Holy Mother Erythriani's. They all came

visiting our own school first thing in the morning, with their flags and their drums, since ours was the largest. They wore white gloves. They had a paper badge on the chest in the national colors, blue and white that said 'NO, Long live the 28th of October'. The school was clean with many decorations, the teachers all in their Sunday best. Miss Argyro was dressed like us in a blue skirt and white shirt, Miss Kiki wore a blue dress suit over a white shirt. I kept looking at all that crowd of unfamiliar teachers and kids and was finding that we were better. A tall, dark-complexioned, very hairy man, the principal of one of the other schools, went up on the podium and talked about this historic day, when Greece had said NO. Afterwards the recitations started. One by one the children went up on the podium and recited patriotic poems. Then my turn came. I'd been carried away in all that atmosphere; the heroism of the Greek people, the flags, the drums, the songs, the blue and the white. I stepped up there and in a loud voice I started reciting my father's poem. It was a long one for my age. The stand on the podium was too tall, my head was barely visible over it:

'Our Greece, our country, the country of Giants....

I felt on my thighs the huge hand of the hairy principal.

'You who had spread the light throughout East and West...

His hand was higher by now, right under my pleated little skirt, and was cupped around my butt. In the beginning I'd thought he was doing it out of sympathy, because I was so good in reciting the poem. The words started coming out of my mouth like frightened birds. My patriotic excitement and sacred emotion

were getting mixed up with an excitement and emotion of an entirely different sort. The principal's fingers were now pinching me openly. My face was deep red. But, doesn't he feel ashamed in front of all those people from three schools who were watching? I was thinking. What if the other principals saw him? I'd imagined that poem very differently.

'My breast swells in front of all this grandeur

'NO', they thunder... 'NO, he's not going to pass...'

I tightened my butt so he couldn't get his fingers inside my panties.

'...The insidious enemy...'

I was really angry. My consternation was beyond words. I stepped down from the podium with a big secret and a red butt from the principal's pinching.

That man very soon became a school superintendent. He'd often visit our school for inspections.

There was a blond boy in our school, who was born in America. One day I saw the superintendent putting on some oversized leather gloves and boxing with him, all the while speaking to him in English. Later he became an English teacher. He'd come behind my desk and he'd lean his body on my shoulders: *'This is a book. What is this? This is a book'*, he'd pinch my arms. The other kids in class made fun of him. He was different from other teachers. He had a benevolent smile full of gold teeth and walked with a nervous energy in spite of his bulk. The kids told stories during breaks about his personal life: about having gone up to the roof terrace of his house in early morning, only in his underwear, and doing calisthenics; then at some

point having taken off even the underwear and standing in the sun naked. The women neighbors had been scandalized; they told the parish priest about it, who told the Police. The Police sent a report to the Department of Education, and so he lost his position, from superintendent he was demoted to a simple English teacher, *'this is a girl. Is this a girl? Yes, this is a girl'*.

Translated by Angelos Sakkis

Eurydice TRICHON-MILSANI

SCENE FOUR

The imposing glass structure of the Beaubourg has once again taken on the look of a gigantic shell in the depths of a murky gray sea. Beneath the pink sky of the Parisian night its silence is strange: the few foreigners passing by do not recognize it, and its neighbors are horrified at the idea of its impending death: a fossilized Beaubourg that will never again open its friendly doors and, hermetically sealed, will bury the treasures hidden in its insides.

In the museum the light blue safety lamps give off a sly and eerie semi-light. The absolute silence of the fifth floor is broken by a familiar metallic voice:

PICASSO: Giorgio, come quickly! Incredible! Your *Prophetic Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire* is hanging there again.

De Chirico jumps to his feet alarmed. His large body, usually sluggish and heavy, slumped like a sack on one of the museum's uncomfortable benches, suddenly regains its youth and suppleness. His chubby face with his double chin and Buddha-like serenity, breaks into an unusual mirthfulness. His thick lips open into a wide smile.

DC: Well, look at that, they decided to put it back up after all!

Pablo's eyes are shining slyly.

P: I see you're ready to shit in your pants from the excitement, and you were pretending to be so indifferent. What's the big deal? When it comes right down to it

it's just an oil painting and a small one at that! A cerebral and cold work that has nothing to do with life, with no passion firing it up!

DC: You're just saying that because you want to break my morale! The Joconda is also quite small, cold and distant, but for hundreds of years it hasn't stopped moving people!

P: Why, you conceited to compare your work to Leonardo DaVinci's? You think you're really something!...

I strongly doubt your portrait will last more than a century...

DC: Admit that it moved an entire generation! For decades it galvanized the imaginations of so many artists! And, as you see, for some weeks now it has had the greatest museums in the world all astir! A president and a director were quite blown away by it! That's nothing?

His chest heaves uneasily for a while. He stares at him, melancholy and downcast.

You're being unfair, Pablo unfair and greedy! You want everything your way. That's why they got tired of you and wanted to bury you long before you died. Because you wouldn't let anyone else get ahead, so it was urgent for them to get you out of the way and forget you as soon as they could.

P: Well, they didn't manage to! Not then and not now. Even after my death, as you can see, I'm keeping them busy and doing well! So many museums are dedicated to my art, and their sales are soaring! And my paintings continue to be discussed even today, because they're unusual and unconventional, and full of new verve. They're so suggestive and amazingly inventive! What are you next to all that? The painter of one single truth! While I had and will have thousands!

DC: Stop bragging...you conceited old windbag! You lived for almost a hundred years and you didn't learn a thing! You're mistaken if you think that you're way out ahead of the rest of mankind! I once thought that too, but my posthumous wisdom has made me wise up. I'm telling you, in two hundred years — what am I saying? in just a few decades, our paintings will look like they're related....So stop boasting and being so jealous.

He is quiet for a moment and then, looking at P with benevolence, says:

Come and share my joy!

P: Damn it, I can't see anything, it's so dark.

DC: I can see that the stitching is perfect and that the *Prophetic Portrait of Apollinaire* has embarked on a new career.

P: Bruised and mended.

DC: What does it matter? *His voice vibrates.* A work of art is an object of worship, a piece of eternity. It's a religious icon like in Byzantine times, but one that's free from religious ideologies and superstitions. You look at it and you get away from reality, you're propelled into timelessness, you become eternal.

P: Come now, Giorgio, did you think about all that when you were painting?

DC: Why not? Is painting nothing but drawing lines?

P: I didn't say that exactly, but in your case you were clearly carried away by that well-known feeling of intoxication that one feels when one is in his studio inebriated by the smell of paint remover and varnish...

Ah yes, of course, and that well-known obsession to do something out of this world, something that no one else has thought of before you. After all the things that have been said and done, it was supposedly only you who thought this all up.

DC: Well, that's no small feat, now is it?

P: I suppose so, I can't deny it. But you should know that you never would have been able to do a painting like that if the Cubists hadn't first rescued the mysterious power of geometry from oblivion.

A sly smile is written on his face.

DC: Yes but they, I mean all of you, with your geometry, you broke up the image and most of you never managed to reconstruct it! You broke it into little pieces and after that came decline. And you more than anyone are responsible for this disaster!

The fat man breaks out into lightning and thunder and, bursting as he is, his vest comes unbuttoned. His belly hangs out, detracting somewhat from his grandeur. But his vigor does not abandon him.

DC: You never could come close to the mystery of things. Cubism was an optical game that didn't last long because you loved life too much... You ended up going back to love-struck gods and human passions.

He pauses, out of breath. He calms down a bit and says:

DC: That's the only thing that's true, Pablo: you never learned what it means to think. You were ruined by your Mediterranean superficiality, your cosmopolitan lifestyle and all that philandering with women. But me, I was always interested in mysteries. Only through deep thinking can the curtain be lifted and a revelation takes place.

The other man laughs now, showing his white teeth.

P: And what about you? Aren't you a Mediterranean type? Did you forget about Volos and its little train? And Athens? The devastating Greek sun?

DC: Yes, but I steeped myself in Nietzsche from a very early age...I was baptized in the black waters of Boecklin's work.

P: Mmm, all this calls for a cigarette...Well, too bad, I had stopped smoking before I left this life and I've forgotten its smell. But my hand has not forgotten and it still looks for a cigarette. Something like a tic...You see I know that nothing can happen without loneliness. It doesn't matter that I was pursued by my fame. I had invented my own special loneliness that no one suspected.

He pauses for a minute.

My dear Giorgio, show a bit of sincerity. You always had a superiority complex and a nasty tongue. And that's why you had no friends.

DC throws him a crushing glance.

DC: What do you know about my life? I lived discreetly; I wasn't a show-off like you! That's why no one understood me.

P: You call that discreet! Even today they're prying into your past and attacking your paintings with knives, as if they were living things! Sometimes an insignificant event is enough to stir up one's conscience even more so than the overwhelming noise of publicity!

DC: It's unbelievable how jealous you are! You, the best-known artist of the 20th century! Never mind, I forgive you. Because if the painting was fixed that means that the retrospective show will take place for certain!

P: I hope so for your sake and for poor Berthier...

DC: I can't help him! I was never on good enough terms with the museums to ask for favors....

P: You mean they all avoided you and your awful personality.

DC: Berthier swears by me!

P: Because you've now been condemned to eternal silence!

DC: Put it any way you like....but I'm grateful for all he's done for me.

Giorgio goes up to the painting and caresses its surface with his cotton-soft fingers. With a serious and sulking expression.

DC: After what happened they should have put the *Prophetic Portrait* all by itself in a room with a special guard!

P: Are you serious?

DC: Absolutely! Do you think that's too much?

P: And why, such special treatment?

His voice rings deeply and imposingly out from within his hulking body and the folds of his suit.

DC: Because I was always the best and the most brilliant of all of you!

Strange Dialogues, play by ETM. Based on the novel *Artistic Frame-up*, 2012.
Translated by Jane Assimakopoulos

Sotiris TRIVIZAS

MAL DI LUNA

*The moon shone all night
like a red hot tooth.*

*With the darkness, the wind
and the black cloud between the legs.*

EACH MAN DREAMS...

*Each man dreams with his death.
I've retained a little of your breath
and the mute furrow of your lips
but you have no face, no body
every evening you grow less like a word
that cracked the wind without return.*

*Here each man lives his own death
every day hiding his hands
every night with music
and darkness.*

*But I met you in the light, years ago
I have known your voice and your smile
gleaming amidst words in smoke.*

Then you entered the vein.

Niki TROULLINO

With a Crate of Beer

He continued to smile condescendingly, as prescribed by the informal protocol of scientific meetings, while closing the laptop, and then, still with a smile on his face, made his way towards the exit. He rapidly picked up his few things from the room – his clothes and shaving gear – shoved them into the small red suitcase on wheels – Henrietta always wanted travel goods to be red – and called a taxi.

This was perhaps his first real holiday ever. Even when they would go somewhere, to the seaside, in the last years of Joe's adolescence, when Henrietta would insist: 'Joe is at a difficult age, he has a father but never sees him, I've found porno videos under his mattress and sex calls on the phone account, let's go somewhere, please. Just for a few days so you can talk...', even then he would take the laptop which was his lifelong appendage and would go on working. Even then he wouldn't leave his cocoon. Shut inside it for years, he thought he was living. So strongly did he believe in his brain's abilities and in what he could achieve with it. The ends will justify what preceded, he thought. But what preceded cannot be changed after the event. It is there. In other people's life and memory. There is no other way. It cannot change, nor can its consequences. Nor its effect on the lives of others. An avalanche. And towards the end he was doing things he no longer believed in, but here he was doing them. To be consistent. A duty to science? Rubbish! A duty to the *image* of himself that he'd constructed. The image reflected back at him in the eyes of friends and enemies, another golden boy of science and its

development. The image he milked from Henrietta's gaze in the first ten or fifteen years of their life together. Later on, Henrietta herself was changing, although he did not realise, did not have the time to realise; the 'process' must have taken years — the word was derived from science, and certainly not from the world of the emotions, although these too need time, however unforeseen they may appear — you don't wake up one morning, look in the bathroom mirror and say 'I've changed, you've changed, we've changed' — or, at any rate, their hidden movements only occasionally come into the open, dressed in unsuspected phrases: 'Bessy said...', 'Your brother's talking about...'

In 'The Lookout' Stefanos was given a front bedroom, overlooking the coast road, opposite the harbour arm. In the mornings he would wander round the small island on foot or on the slow, small bus with its frequent stops. At mid-day, lying on his bed, he would read about mutilated statues and dumps full of broken heads, the irony of history and the reversal of the image of the impoverished rock into a once wealthy home of gods and humans. In the afternoons he would go walking again or he would make the acquaintance of people whom Christoforos set in motion with a phone call. 'Did you think I'd leave you on your own, mate? Stay as long as you like, I'll be along from time to time.'

Marianna the pharmacist became his friend from the very first time he entered her shop looking for an ointment for the bites of marine insects — here's Henrietta again with her hymenoptera. She told him in brief the story of her life with that ease created by evenings in tavernas with a bit of wine and a portion of fresh fish, the exposed, tanned bodies of fellow diners, deep laughter, a contemporary hit song on the radio, the cats quarreling over fish heads next to the crates of empty beer-cans; Stefanos was realising for the first time how much he could love people in summer. He didn't hear anything strange or new. He heard

about the capital, about hours spent in the car, about friends who disappeared, or at least could now be reached only by phone or computer, about the sick mother on the island, someone had to look after her, and about the big decision, so it seemed at first, to go back to her birthplace, into exile. About how the place was deserted in winter, when the waves climb up to the yard gates and storms cut it off from the motherland — ‘It’s easier for the boatmen to do our shopping for us on the Turkish side’, she said with a laugh — and about her aging customers with their health insurance books, always with receipts for the same medicines, their complaints about the pain in their bones and their insomnia, on her way home at mid-day she would drop medicines off to some who were not mobile. About how everyone was impatient for the summer, for the foreigners to come, together with locals who had emigrated... But Marianna could also talk about other, pleasant things: about the island and its old stories, all of them connected with sponge-fishers. She even introduced him to some old men in the coffee-shop behind the library, almost next door to her pharmacy, so he could drink coffee in the mornings and listen to their stories. And for the old fellows, veterans of labour and the sea, some of them former smugglers, one more attentive listener was just what they wanted.

When Henrietta arrived on the island, some months later, after all that had happened, it was winter. The place was completely different, grey and dim, with everything soaked in the sea damp, the sun’s presence interrupted by clouds coming and going, with tones of black and white in the landscape, the grey didn’t seem bright to her like it once did, but simply the prologue and epilogue to the black, the salt spray which the wind brought in myriad drops reached deep into the houses in narrow alleyways at a distance from the sea, covering the arocarias and the unpruned bougainvillea’s; the glass opaque in the shops and the half-open windows, the things inside her opaque and unsettled, everything thrown higgledy-

piggledy into the mist... She wanted to get to know Marianna. To hear. To see. She had learned from Christoforos that her Joe had been here at Christmas. He had hidden it from her. Was it to save her from stress? Not to let her be jealous? What place was there here, and now, for jealousy? What meaning could it have now?

Marianna was a few years younger than her. Charming. With the charm of women who had made their choices and serve them faithfully, that's something she had in common with Stefanos. Not much bothered by what the notorious local society would say, but, equally, not explicitly provocative, her respect for her decisions and choices was reflected, it appears, in other people. And her willingness to give generously... And then the stories which, as she learned from Marianna, Stefanos adored listening to, sitting for hours in the coffee-shop. Stefanos, the man devoted to his science, indifferent to all else, intent on his career, intent to the point of fixation, Stefanos, the unbending, eternally dedicated laboratory warrior, spending hours listening to old men's stories about schooners and luggers! About the North Wind and the East Wind. About the naked divers and the sinker-stone. About the diving-suits, with their air-pumps, and the sickness they caused. About the 'glass', just a round can with a glass base. How they would place it in a the calm sea to 'glass', to look at the sea-bottom, to find its hidden treasure, even if the treasure was just a sponge. And then, Stefanos climbing on foot with Marianna as far as Our Lady of the Raki, searching for old churches with wall-paintings of sea-captain prophets. 'Henrietta, my wife, will love them', he told her that day, 'My mother too – her maiden name was Seaman, you know'.

Some lazy afternoons he would stretch out in the bedroom with Marianna, sex without any fuss, their bodies making no demands beyond the moment itself, ploughed into strips by the sun entering through the grid of the window bars. And drinking his beer in the neighbourhood known as The Steamship. He would often

ask about shipping routes and courses and compasses. It was here they told him the compass was sometimes called the 'needle'.

'But... that's not my Stefanos...', her voice was breathless, rising from a deep well, a monster ready to strangle her.

Stefanos Kokkinogenis drowned swimming at the spot known as Diapori, the crossing. Even the locals are afraid of the currents there. Unpredictable, threatening currents, the *crossing*, you see, *which unites and separates the two neighbouring islands*.

Translated by Alfred Vincent

Fotini TSALIKOGLOU

My Name is Martha Freud

My name is Martha. In April 1882 I made the acquaintance of a young doctor. I fell in love with him. I was twenty-one years' old. We were married. At first we lived in Vienna. We moved to London when the war broke out. He died in 1939. I lived for a further twelve years. I died in London on 2 November 1951.

My husband was an interpreter of dreams. He became famous. Through his work he disturbed people's deep sleep. He was Jewish. So was I. His father was Jakob, his mother Amalie. I loved him passionately. I wrote a book. Yet many years had to pass for the blank pages to fill with writing and see the light of day. All of them had to have died, there had to be no witnesses to those terrible years. The years have flown and no one is left. The time has come and it's now.

The book is a huge pretext. For me to be here. They say 'Martha Freud' and there's no recollection. Nothing. They say 'Martha Freud' and there's a blank. An unknown woman, like an unexplored Dark Continent.. In the end, I wrote the book. It's me. Feel the paper, the characters, the ink. If you listen a little harder, you'll feel a breath. It's me. Martha Freud. Here's the trace. The proof. The book.

It happens rarely, very rarely, once in a thousand years, for someone who loved passionately to resist death. One such woman is still alive. She's filling the blank pages of this book. She calls the book *My Name is Martha Freud*, and presents it to the public.

If today, at the dawn of the 21st century, I come to proclaim: 'I'm still alive', how will you characterise me? Moonstruck, demented, insane?

From times long past, only one woman was thus privileged to go on living after her death. Her name: Cassandra. She knows not only when, but also where and how she'll die. She is condemned to live, burdened with the scene of her death. The ultimate end of all hope, this is Cassandra.

I mustn't be afraid, no not afraid. Above all, not afraid. I mustn't renounce the improbable as being frightful. Even if I become obsessed with it. It's not a sickness, not something frightening. It's the little girl from Vienna who won't die and who keeps coming back, coming back to the edge of the paper, to the book and the word, coming back to tell her story and so be able eventually to die.

It's tiring to live without the one you passionately loved. Love is just such tiredness. It never reaches its limits. It never exhausts itself. It's just such tiredness that conceals Cassandra.

I dreamt of her last night. She held out her hand to me, spoke tenderly to me, almost sadly and calmly: 'Martha Freud, of all mortals, you are the one burdened with the scene of your death. I thought it was only me. But now you too are a prophetess, like me. Which god did you renounce, which one did you deny to be so punished by a frightful curse?'

I didn't reply. 'We shall be like sisters,' I told her. 'We shall embrace each other as sisters. You'll be me and I'll be you.' Then I implored her: 'Allow me to write this book.'

No, I am not a woman unknown and unexplored like the Dark Continent. It's not true. I'll speak about me, first about me and then about him. 'Allow me, my sister,' I begged her. And Cassandra nodded her assent.

THE FIRE BELONGS TO THE PAST

We live in an apartment in the centre of town. The Ringtheater, the largest and most splendid theatre in Vienna, once stood here. Five years ago, the building was destroyed by a great fire. It was demolished. They rebuilt it. In its place, a modern residential block rose up. The Emperor called it the 'House of Atonement'.

You said that's where we would live. I didn't want to. No, I didn't want to. I'd imagined our home differently. Differently. Far away from the fire. And the ashes.

8, Maria Theresienstrasse. You said that's where we would live. Without your taking into account the destruction that had gone before. Or perhaps taking into account precisely that destruction and wanting to overcome it. To disguise it using various devices. It was there exactly, the place where you decided we should live, that the misfortune had happened. There were countless dead. Burned alive. Tongues of flame licked their bodies. And their corpses were scattered where our garden is now. It's said that some three hundred perished. Among them women and children. They were turned into charcoal.

Flames of Hell. They rebuilt the place. Straightaway. The builders didn't wait even so much as a day. From times of old, no one here wants to remember. Everyone is averse to the loss that went before. 'Suhnhaus'. The house of atonement. That's the name of the new building. Everyone's forgotten about the fire at the accursed Ringtheater.

You wanted us to live here. With me raising the children and you healing your patients. I didn't want to live here. I admitted it to no one. Sentimentality is to no avail. It's a sign of weakness.

Come to your senses, Martha. The fire belongs to the past. Look at this fine building they've put in its place. Look at how tall, imposing and spacious it is.

Vienna is continually finding new ways of overcoming calamities. But for how long? It will exhaust itself before much longer. A little while more and everything will come to an end. But I'm not going to talk about that now. I'm still young. Just twenty-five years' old.

You were acquainted with fire from long ago. You made the fire yourself. You set it alight with your own hands. Remember. You were twenty-nine years' old. You gathered together everything you'd written till then. You made a bundle of it. Tied it all up. You went over to the fireplace. You threw the bundle into the fire. You stood there till the very end to see the cinders.

Translated by David Connolly

8 Hours and 35 Minutes

A STORY

Eight hours and thirty-five minutes. And then? Where will I wind up, Amalia? In a place our mother was afraid to love; and yet, that is where Menelaos was born, and that is where Erasmia and the other Frosso grew up. How can I end up alone in a foreign land? And why now, after all these years? An inscrutable and dark journey. At the most difficult moment. I'm afraid, Amalia. Sunday 20 January 2013, eleven in the morning.

Just before take-off. New York to Athens. Seat 3A, a window seat.

Why make this journey to a land she never sought out?

She'd trick me with all kinds of ruses and hide the truth. She'd drag me off to museums. She'd show me pediments, funerary steles, *kouroi* and *korai* statues. 'Look,' she'd say to me, 'open your eyes and look, or you'll be lost.' I was seven years old. She'd lend me her eyes. But, at a certain point, it became clear – clear as day – that she was revulsed by her country. She changed her name. Nothing reminiscent of Greece. Lale Andersen. The mutant mother.

'None of you are to call me Frosso ever again. From this day onwards, my name is Lale.'

You search for something with each trip. Aside from what you say, that which is evident, there's something more. Like a passionate and impossible love. Without it you're incomplete. A piece that's missing and makes you say: 'Now is the time to find it.' And yet, there couldn't be a more inopportune time for me to find anything in this country. Or not? Could it be that now that this country is giving in to the unthinkable and everything seems to be collapsing – could it be that now is the right time?

'Look or you'll be lost.' How can I look if I don't take my body, my arms, my eyes, my mind over there? You're with me in my luggage, Amalia, together with a photograph, an empty notebook and a guidebook to Athens. It'll be my first time there.

What am I looking for, who will tell me? A poet spent an entire afternoon searching for the other tiger, the one missing from the poem. Otherwise he couldn't write.

'Don't think so much, Jonathan, you lose yourself in your thoughts, and I I lose you,' you used to tell me.

To lose myself and to love you, to lose myself so as to love you, Amalia. You're my soul! In a few moments, JFK will be far away, and the skyscrapers, the

park, the quays, the river, the ocean will all become postcards, pictures from a paper amusement park, shimmering in the light of day until the sky swallows them up.

How long can I take being away?

Translated by Mary Kitroeff

Vassilis TSIAMBOUSSIS

A PAT ON THE CHEEK

She had always said, 'When I die, if my Angel comes and takes me for a last look at all the places I've ever lived in or been to, it won't take him more than a couple of minutes.' In other words, that's how sheltered and paltry her life had been.

But that night, when her Angel carried her off from the hospital, he left her suspended above her poor little house, like a balloon, for three whole hours, looking in through the window at her only-begotten son, whose eyes were deep wells of sadness, not just tonight but from way back. He was painting their single room for the wake, lest he and his mother become objects of ridicule in town. Painting and crying . . .

Who knows what came over her all of a sudden that, without permission, she came down and dabbed off his sweat with a clean towel, put an old jacket over his shoulders to keep him from catching cold, looked the room over, said, 'Nice job,' and gave his salty cheek a pat. Then she returned to the Other, who was waiting for her on the glass cloud, unruffled, unsmiling, showing no trace of anger or other emotion, maybe only slightly impatient to be off, as he spread his wings and, like a stork with its young one in its arms, began to ascend.

SALAMI

No sooner did they have him covered up than it started snowing. Those who knew him better went into the reception hall to convey their condolences. I wound up at the cafe across the street and ordered coffee. I kept my coat on, kept my hands in my pockets.

I had no particular reason for being at the funeral. Most of what I knew about him I'd overheard at the house, before they carried him out.

They had invited him to join the cooperative. 'What chance do neighbourhood grocers like us have, with all the big chains selling things at half the price?' He wouldn't listen. 'I didn't slave my life away just to have you pashas telling me what to do with my property.'

He was relatively young, and had little in the way of assets. He did all he could to hold on to his customers – carried their groceries home for them, delivered milk, even started giving credit.

When his daughter entered the University, things got really tight. He had no choice but to have his wife come down and tend shop while he went and worked mornings at his brother's bakery. Luckily the bakery was on the other side of town, he never saw anyone he knew.

The night before, he was having coffee with his wife. He got up to wash his hands, and fell forward into the sink. No cry, no spasms, no bulging eyes. His soul flew away like a small bird.

I still remember his greasy apron and how coarse his hands were. When I was little, whenever we had guests they'd send me down to his store to buy salami. We didn't normally shop there, but our regular grocer didn't have a cooler. He'd slice it with an enormous knife, and always ate the end piece.

'What do you sell it for?' I once asked him in my innocence. 'Why not eat the whole thing yourself?' He roared with laughter. 'You like salami?' he asked me.

'Love it!' I answered. 'Good. Here's what we'll do. When you grow up and make some money of your own, come on back and we'll open Up a salami business together. We won't sell it to anybody, just keep it all for ourselves.'

I paid for my coffee and went out. A thick snow was falling. I went through the heavy iron gate. The oil candles trembled in the dusk. I walked Θ to the fresh grave. I took it out of my pocket and reverently set it on top. I was a small Hungarian salami, the best money could buy. In Memoriam for I that is leaving and will never return.

Translated by Martin McKinsey

Makis TSITAS

God is my witness

There are four types of employers: the successful, those who owe money, the bastards, and the insane. I got the fourth kind.

He often addressed me as if he didn't know who was standing there, me or someone like me. If I was Chrysovalantis — his employee and friend — or my twin brother. Except that I don't have a twin brother, I have two sisters.

Whenever we met in the lobby at work, he would tell me to 'run and get there before me!' and then he would jump into the lift shouting 'no cheating' as it went up, forcing me to run up eight flights of stairs and count out loud the one hundred and forty four steps, yelling at me from the lift: 'Faster fatty! Where's your spirit?'

His company went bust at the end of 1980 and suddenly I was unemployed. I had worked with him for eleven years, but unfortunately I was taken by surprise, even though the rest of my colleagues had been actively marketing themselves for months and went straight on to other graphic designers. I could see of course that the ship was sinking, that things were going from bad to worse, but I didn't want to believe it. Why had I been taken in by Lucifer's fantasies: 'Even if all the others leave, there is no way you won't have work'. And I fell for it.

I was fighting with myself in the dirt. One of me was swearing at the other and trying to strangle him. At the same time we were solemnly chanting the Hymn of St Cassiani.

And then the two become one different Chrysovalantis, whose name was Psychovalantis, and he called out three times 'This air is choking me'. From somewhere indeterminate could be heard an aria from Tosca.

A strange dream.

*

I can't imagine myself turning into a gypsy or a tramp. But neither can I imagine my parents being taken advantage of by a third party and especially by any prospective daughter in law.

My father is now eighty six years old, a retired officer, a family man, studious and devout. He has a quiet life. He has always taken care of me, lent me money and helped me out.

He used to say to me 'be careful, be careful, be careful!' but I was a battered old saucepan without a lid, and let everything in. He was strict, my father, but easygoing. Meaning that when I insisted, he would give in. Yes.

'Dad, I'm going to London, give me 100,000'. He would give it to me.

'Dad, I have a small overdraft at the bank'. He would pay it off at once.

'Dad, I have to be admitted to hospital'. He would help me.

He never once said 'no' to me. Now that I think about it, he was all bark and no bite — I hadn't realised. I honor and respect him. Until I was twenty I was very scared of him. After that I simply respected him, because he has been through a lot. He is a man who has experienced life. A father never wants his child to suffer. He was happy that I was always in and out of monasteries and churches, he too is a god fearing man. All our family is like that.

When I was eighteen I got a place at the academy for non-commissioned officers in Trikala and he said 'well done', but then when I couldn't stand it anymore and dropped out, he didn't object.

He never stood in my way. Yes.

Maybe, I think to myself, maybe that is why I still haven't left home, even though I have reached fifty. Because I feel warmth and security.

I phoned an old colleague to wish her 'season's greetings' and to ask her about maybe working together and she put the phone down saying: Chrysovalanti, you've caught me at the door, let's talk another time'.

You see, the lady no longer has any need of me, she's got a job at 'Athens 2004' and she is getting two thousand euros a month plus bonuses, but sooner or later the party will be over and then we'll see...'

Moreover, many of the former colleagues who I've helped out frequently in the past turn nasty on me when I ask them for help now. And it's the same with the managers of small companies. When I was with Lucifer they were all over me to get them work, and now that it has dried up they pretend not to know me. It doesn't matter, god will provide. I wish them well. That's a saying I've got from my old man, I say 'god will provide' and I even say 'thank you' to people who have behaved badly to me, so that my conscience is clear. As far as possible I try to listen to my old man. He has told me what I must do in life, how to control it so that I don't end up in the loony bin.

When a person falls on hard times, he tries to get by with no money. He wants to drink a free coffee somewhere. He wants to sit down somewhere and talk. I have done a lot of research into penury.

That's why every Sunday morning, after the service at Ayia Eirini, in Aioulou, I pass by the Anglican Church, where they hand round coffee. And if you go in and

sit through their service, they present you with a religious book. In English naturally. (I may not speak the language, but no book is wasted on me).

I try to get by on the cheap. Yes.

*

But I've regretted it. As God is my witness. I bitterly regret everything I have done. I want to leave it all behind me and try a new beginning.

I don't want lovers or women of easy virtue or prostitutes. I want to be close to God. And if He grants me a serious woman, then fine, I will happily join with her in holy matrimony. If he does not grant it me, and wants me to be a monk, that's fine too.

There are plenty of people I have kept at a distance, because I saw that those people have nothing to offer me. They are leaky buckets. Swindlers.

I want him to hear me when I pray to Him. Keep me far from temptation, Oh Lord.

And I would prefer fewer friends too. Few but good. Calm, honest, people who won't smother me. Who won't give me an oxygen mask with one hand and spray me with carbon dioxide with the other. Waiting for the mask to break so I can suffocate, is that what they want? That's what we've come to. That, unfortunately, is the current Athenian mentality, which doesn't allow us to keep abreast either of our debts or our jobs. Right now it pains my heart to say it.

*

Mr I. and Mr T. when they see me, they always call me over to their table and offer me a drink. Their purses are fat, they get hefty pensions, and they each have five or six rental incomes as well. They see that I haven't any money and they offer me a drink. The other day they said to me 'Come over, Chrysovalanti, have something to drink', I started to cry — I don't know why. Maybe out of love.

The day before yesterday, when they saw me again and called me over, I didn't go and sit with them, I felt ashamed. Fifty years old and I can't even buy myself a drink. That's what Lucifer has done to me...

My friend X told me that he saw Roro with her new man, who is so unattractive, one wonders how she can bear to be seen with him. Two metres tall and very thin, like a telegraph pole. Consequently I believe that most women are full of shit. Does that halfwit think the scarecrow she has with her, that loser, is such a big deal?

I am thinking of making the title of my autobiography 'Memoirs of an ugly life'. Because I didn't begin my life like this; I believed in ideas, in greatness, in people, and I ended up a beggar on the streets.

*

I study the face of every woman, methodically. Is she troubled? Is she cheerful? Is she nicely made up? Is she excited, or unaccountably melancholy? Has the woman in question finally thrown down the reins? If you see that she's shaved her eyebrows, you know that she will shave you. Guaranteed. I can tell straight away if a woman is approaching me for money, if she really fancies me or is just having me on. I can tell. I've been around.

Time for myself I do not have. I run around all day, and pray to God that I'll be able to hold down a job, to lighten my debts a little. And some time, before I lay me down finally, I would like to wear a monk's habit and go to the Holy Mountain, to a beautiful and peaceful hermitage. The monk's habit I see as deliverance, a refuge from those people who call themselves my family. Just to have my little cell, my peace and quiet, so that I can finally live like a human being. I, unfortunately, have wasted too many years — I have been taken advantage of by prostitutes and ruthless employers. I was unlucky.

From the novel *God is my witness*, 2013. Translated by Irene Noel-Baker.

Yiannis TZANETAKIS

BLANKET

*Lift up the ground
it too is a blanket
play with the animals
they 're flying in the air
don't be surprised
indeed the morning frost upholds them
at this hour they hunger for the hunter
they are fables in need of us all
colours which need to exist*

THE TIGER

*Every man kills what he loves
sang the girl like Jeanne Moreau
and the tiger came closer
I, at thirty, still view my life as cinema
so I looked the animal in the eye
—against the experts' advices—
and toyed with it for hours like my toys*

*speaking in my true, my childish voice
And the tiger
seeing that it had nothing to fear of me
opened wide my mouth
and stuck its head inside*

HALLUCINATION

*Things age and look for
their loneliness
they go through pleasant moments as illuminated ships
hallucinated hills and clear skies that vanish
they hear inside them the hours passing
aimlessly and gently like miracles
they fade quietly into time
time is what
contains our love
it awaits us in other dimensions*

DESERT LIGHTS

*Setting off in time which cannot
bring you back
save as a burst in what we call*

*the spirit's quiet erosion
I feel bitter and contemptuous
for what the world has become without you
bends have simply disappeared
and life extends straight-lined
I'm speeding along with desert lights
fragrant and strange like a dream that ends*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

LOOP

*I saw you in my dream
emerging from the poem
verses like waters closing in your wake.
I spat a bit of galaxy like a child
enjoying bonfires and expected guests.
«Mommy», said I, «this was my favourite toy».
I picked a tear out of the closet
among the ones I kept for such occasions
and snuggled it all night like a loop.*

ANOTHER FACE

*I was about to slough off my skin
—this does, indeed, occur from time to time—
when her eyes looked at me
from another face.*

*I rarely believe my eyes nowadays
and thus I manage to survive.*

*I looked at her with pity
as if she were to melt away.*

*Time went by; Still
nothing happened.*

ALWAYS RUN OFF

*Always run off from me
—gaze at the stars from afar—
try other postures
discover other bodies, strange and wild.*

*Love knows its own
terror; it is no man's remorse.*

*Toss love and catch her in mid-air
—a ray of light.*

Thanassis TZOULIS

The Dog's Dream

*Dry rivers were rotting under the mist
suddenly insane voices reached our caverns:
Don't go near the dog the moment it remembers
it wants us to change its dream
as it listens to the frozen waters beyond the dry rivers
and we have no other picture
to hang where it sees
Before the waters the poet went
to play his blood in the lake with the hunters of the dead
his books shall remain blank he said*

*– Raise the children for it to believe from deep odour
when it dreams their veins
to sweeten under the vine arbours
– large turtles took them
who know of unbearable swamps
that lie below the blood of the poet*

*Only at night do they raise
and ask about Miaoulis's boats*

– Fasten the chain where the house was
and a domestic bird to thump the wing
to hide the void coming from the bones
– Casts its other end to meet our hands
to join the other half
or it won't find its blood

– Cut the voice's water
all dream in the dark
without poets
and with fiery cuppings on his abdomens
gather the fear like harmed blood
– Drowns in old sounds and howls
from blood to blood

– Kill it then under the mist
in the same void as the poets blood
and the unbearable swamps of the children
with the turtles on their backs
bathing in their milk to see

– I killed it
– And still it howls?
– It howls

– You killed it the moment it remembered.

From Isthmos. Translated by Mavroconstanti L. Thegna

Nanos VALAORITIS

Borisofki's Lair

The well of Borisofski – the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The fish in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The land of the fish of the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The shoulder of the land of the fish in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The road on the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The animal carved on the handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The mouth of the animal carved on the handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The huge mouth of the animal carved on the handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The tongue in the huge mouth of the animal carved on the handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The man on the tongue in the huge mouth of the animal carved

on the handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of the well of Borisofski. The knout held by the man on the tongue of the huge mouth of the animal carved on the handle of the knout held by the man who walks on the road of the huge shoulder of the fishes' land in the great empty mouth of Borisofski's well.

Thanassis VALTINOS

Triptych

1. ROMANCE

She wasn't exactly from the street. She must have run away from somewhere. She was clean and healthy. Her coat gleamed – she was extremely young, that is. One-and-a-half, two years old?

As I crossed Vassilissis Sofias, from Ploutarchou towards Rizari, she came up behind me. She was so full of life. She overtook me, her tail straight up, she ran ahead, she came back. Full of life. She followed me like this up to Vassileos Constantinou. We crossed together. We went up Antinoros. She left me behind again. Always running, always with her tail up. That's how she showed her joy. The joy to be alive, to come back and look me in the eye, the joy in trusting me.

At Astydamantos I stopped. I took out my keys. The time had come. She stopped running. She was still. The first fissure of doubt. Up high where I lived all I owned was a balcony. What could I do with her? I put the key in the door, trying not to look at her. Like a coward. I didn't manage it. My eye found her of its own accord. Without moving a muscle, with dignity in her stillness, she watched me as I shut her out.

2. VENETA SLAVEVA STOILKOVA

High up where I live I have a spacious balcony. It's a corker. Many years ago, when I moved here, my elderly friend Hanna, a Hellenised German, brought me a potted jasmine plant held up by a thin, dry, reed.

The wind didn't let the jasmine flourish. The reed flourished instead. In spring, it sprouted. The next seven or eight years I created a reed bed, in deep wooden pots, which opened, to let the earth replenish. All from that first, dry stalk.

On summer nights, the reeds would rustle in the wind. Like on the banks of the Eurotas. It was an outrage for the neighbours. The outrage escalated in autumn, when the leaf-spears of the reeds dried and fell down, onto the other balconies below.

I had to get rid of the reed bed.

Now I have evergreens: arbutus, bay, rosemary, Spanish broom. It's an outrage again. I have seasonal flowers as well: cyclamen, narcissus, pansies, hyacinths. Often, Easter violets too. Veneta looks after these.

Veneta comes from Blagoevgrad, formerly Tzoumayα, in Bulgaria. She works as a cleaner, and gets paid by the hour. She comes to me every Wednesday – she does the cleaning and ironing. The same things every time, but she does them consistently. I think it's her way of preserving her self-esteem.

Before the daily grind begins, she makes a triple black coffee, no sugar, and she drinks it outside, smoking her first cigarette of the day. She is in no hurry whatsoever. She tends the flowerpots, she waters them lightly, she gathers up the yellowing leaves. She talks to them too, I think. In her language. Veneta is green-fingered, and that is her time of day. The time she's happy.

3. *THE MEMORY OF BODIES*

I ran into Anna on the street. She was accompanying a young girl. 'How are your pomegranate trees?' she asked.

The pomegranate trees were before the bay and the Spanish broom, even before the reeds, in two large clay pots – two small blazing fires when in blossom. How many years ago now, twenty-five?

I wanted Anna then. She knew but didn't budge. Still repressed by her shipwreck of a marriage, probably.

One day she came up to my house. Late August, evening, we sat outside on the balcony. Her arms and legs bronzed from the sea. She showed them off easily, they were her possessions. I told her so, she laughed. 'Sheer torture', I said. She laughed again.

Night fell, a light wind blew. From the first flowerpot came the timid sound of a cricket. This hadn't happened before. A chink in the darkness. 'Can anyone see us here?' asked Anna suddenly.

No one could see us. My balcony was higher than all the others. Anna got up and stood in front of me. I took her hand. I then put my hand between her thighs, and she squeezed it. I tried to pull down her underwear. She didn't let me. 'I'll do that myself', she said. I suggested we go inside. For some reason she didn't want to. 'No', she said. She pulled away, sat down and took off her pants.

This is what happened next: I knelt down between her legs. The cement was hard and hot. And uncomfortable. I suppose it was for her, too – her hips and back must have hurt. There was no room to move, my knees hurt like hell. But I stuck it out. I went into her. She was wet, wonderfully wet, and I'd wanted her for so long.

I think that she had this scene in mind when she asked me about my pomegranate trees. Twenty-five years ago.

Translated by Joshua Barley

Yannis VARVERIS

PIANO OF THE DEEP

*These notes
I'm sending you
with the upthrust
are no longer of any
but any musical interest.
Ever since the wreckage
which sent us both
to the bottom
like a weight aghast
the floodlit liner's piano and I
have become something of a sunken ornament
a dull-sounding furnishing of the deep
an exotic flower
or an enormous shell
shelter of seahorses
fairway of fishes open-mouthed
before this black-and-white memory
of bow tie, keyboard an collar.*

*And if on one of your boatings
you detect on the calm surface*

*three, five, ten bubbles
like do, sol, mi
don't imagine music
it's only rust which on remembering
presses upwards.*

*So don't you worry.
My piano and I
feel very comfy here
producing from time to time random notes
but always within the safety of total loss
and at long last
far from
the prospect of drowning.*

Vassilis VASSILIKOS

Portraits of Cabbies

With my own title, 'Portraits of Cabbies', I have selected from Thrassakis's Diary those passages in which he attempts to analyze the Greek mentality by comparing individuals of the same profession (in the case, taxi drivers) from several different regions of the country. This effort reflects his deep desire to cease being merely a Macedonian writer, like so-called Macedonian halva, and to become more pan-Hellenic in his approach. 'Since all Greeks read my work', he writes in a letter, 'I should be writing about all Greeks'.

[1]

The first in the series of cabbies is a Vlach from Thessaly who married a woman from Corfu and settled down there, since, our writer observes, a wife often comes with a house (from her dowry) – and as everyone knows, everything begins with the acquisition of a permanent place of residence. It's Sunday and the banks are closed, so, after haggling over the price of the ride in Italian lira (in Glafkos's day, western countries, dispensing with the old border disputes, have replaced them with international monetary crises that bring about reciprocal depreciations of currency), Glafkos and Glafka finally get into the taxi to begin their pilgrimage-drive. It is morning of their return; they've just gotten off the ferry from Brindisi, and the sun hasn't yet risen above the square with its combed trees and freshly-washed stones.

Though it is early morning, their driver orders a cognac from the coffee shop on the square, which startles and worries the couple, since he'll be driving in the mountains on curves where the trees have rooted in the asphalt. But they say nothing. For them the moment has a special charm: everyone is still asleep, the shop is almost empty, just a few old regulars and a waiter watering the potted plants with a hose. Glafkos and Glafka look at one another, unsure whether or not they are still living in a dream. Ordering a coffee, in Greek, Glafkos feels a shudder pass through his lips, as in his school days whenever he got the best grade in his class on a foreign language exam. The driver is drinking his second cognac. In the village where they stop later, he'll drink yet another ouzo, so as not to displace the people who own the shop. But he seems to be a stable driver. Mild honks, gentle curves. Apparently the alcohol doesn't have much of an effect on him. This heavy-headed man, a Thessalian of the plain through and through, is unable to get drunk off the island's beauty. Born in the blind, stupid plain, he has to drink first before heading up into the mountains. In order to come out of his shell, to tolerate himself in his skin, he needs to be pushed from the inside. Thrassakis, on the other hand, is all smell (the earth after yesterday's rain) and sight (the kerchiefed old women, the goats, the sheep, the jagged hill), uplifted by these external stimulation's. At some point in the journey the driver starts complaining about the price of gas. 'Last year it was seven drachmas a litre', he says, 'now it's seventeen. Whatever money I make I throw right back into taxi, just to keep it running. And the taxi stand closes in the winter', he continues. 'Here on the island we take what we get working three months a year, during the summer. But this year, what with the business in Cyprus, and the other, there was hardly any traffic at all. Not a soul set foot on Corfu'.

This description of the dead summer should be compared to the sixth portrait, in which the cab driver likens the square in Navplio to a graveyard. But the

most important element in the narration, as the informed reader will understand, is the reference to the 'other', which is how the cabby refers to the 'cholera' epidemic, the seven years of shame. It has neither name nor gender – it is entirely neuter. At this mention of the junta, Glafkos and Glafka glance doubtfully at one another. (Later, with the experience he has gained, Glafkos will tell us that he would never have opened up to the cabby. But at that point, not knowing, he took a chance). 'The junta', he says, 'is the reason we stayed away for so many years'. The cab driver accepts this pronouncement calmly, his face devoid of expression, lighting a cigarette and offering them the pack. 'No thanks, I don't smoke'. Throughout the remainder of the portrait, as the day proceeds, the cabby's form grows darker. When they stop for lunch he orders spaghetti and drinks two beers, one after the other. Thrassakis, in his bathing suit, pushes his chair back to escape the sound of the cabby chewing, and is hit hard on the back by a young kid carrying a crate of fruit to the kitchen. The nudge of the homeland, he says to himself. In returning, I take up valuable space. I block the passage of others. Then, at the journey's end, he hears the braying of a donkey, turned him, and accepts it as a welcome into the small, bitter love of his homeland.

[2]

Leaving Igoumenitsa, they chose not the best cab but the youngest driver, a kid who honked at everyone on the road to Ioannina. Of course there weren't many cars, but he still seemed like lord of the place and the people. He was a carefree, light-hearted guy, though already washed in the slight melancholy that belongs not just to Epiros but to all of continental Greece. He had no tapes in his car, just the radio. They took a girl along with them to Ioannina who looked like anything but the cousin he said

she was; she slept in the front seat, waking on the wild mountain to say she had been dreaming of lightning. But it wasn't a dream, it really was lightening – a bolt hit the wires that hung in the air before them, throwing out sparks like fireworks that never go out. After Zalogo and Laka Souli they descended, while the storm stayed up on the mountain, like a scarf around a wild man's throat. They stopped at a spring. 'It has the best water in this region,' the cab driver told them. 'People come all the way from Igoumenitsa and carry it back in buckets'. There was a cafi next to the spring. An old woman was mopping the patio with chlorine. The cabby, always cheerful, always in high spirits, pointed out the camouflaged army tents set up in the surrounding mountains. He himself had gotten away without being enlisted because the army didn't have enough uniforms to clothe the new recruits. Glafka bought feta from the old woman. 'It's from the Dodoni factory in Ioannina', the old woman told here. There were hens in the yard, pecking at innards and corn.

[3]

They got to know the third cabby better, if only because the drive was longer – from Ioannina to Athens. They saw him unloading clothes from a washing machine and close him because his cab was sparkingly new. He was also their only life-long driver up to now. A veteran truck driver, he had 'put a cab on the market', as he put it, at a time when in hindsight it would have been wiser to stick to trucks, since the gas prices skyrocketed immediately afterwards. To Glafka's question as to why all the taxi drivers in the city's main square were over fifty, he answered that none of them were lifers at the job. Most of them had gone as young men to work in Germany, and had come back with a bit of money in their pockets, and instead of opening a store or a cafi preferred to sink their capital in a cab. Now the profession

was bottlenecked. They were even given specific numbers. (One exasperating thing in the 'Portraits' is the customer's right to choose his taxi, as he had once chosen horses at the track. But unemployment, you see... So if the square resembles a graveyard, as the cabby from Navplio says, Thrassakis is a ghost who has returned to a place suffering from apparent death). But hadn't the junta opened up the profession, to send in its spies? No. At least not out here in the country. Of course you had to grease palms here, too, to get a permit. At first the cabby's political stance is hard to gauge. Neither with one side nor with the other. Sure, for the political exiles to return to their villages from the eastern-block countries, 'all it takes is for people to need them in the fields'. 'But haven't they been forgiven by now, thirty years after the civil war?' 'How should I know what's going on? Blood is blood. If I were a little kid when so-and-so killed my father, how would I look at him now if he were to come back to the village?' Glafka is sitting in front, the curves make her dizzy. 'And our once-strong warrior?' 'If he'd been in the 1969 elections, he would've won by a landslide. But as they say, whoever dips his finger in the honey wants to eat the whole dessert'. The tape of Epirot songs keeps playing, again and again. He has other tapes, stored in a case, but his passengers always like this one best. Like the previous cabby, he too honks at the traffic cops he knows on the road. He seems to know everyone in Arta, Amfilohia, and Antirrio. But in the capital, he loses it. The roads, the noise, the bright lights and the honking make his head spins. All he wants is to unload them, quite literally, an hour early so he can head back up to his beautiful city on the lake, with its Ioanninian silver and the legendary Mrs. Frosini.

The cabs in the capital look awful. Thrassakis compares them to the ones the Americans abandoned in Cuba when they were kicked out. The companies that made them have since gone under, so they have no spare parts, and sink with time into the gutters of the roads. Headed for Tripoli, they end up in one such cab. The care and kindness of its driver, a young blond kid from Navpakto, aren't enough to make up for the brakes, which sound like the creaky pedal on some ancient piano. After Argos, in the steep mountains, though the moon's light erases the shadows from their cheeks, the air-brushing of this nighttime snapshot can't erase their fears that the taxi might tumble over a cliff as they veer around some curve. And the driver's enormous hands, his words of comfort –'Don't worry, we'll get where we need to go, the worst is behind us'– seem like a camel driver's consolations in the middle of a desert.

[5]

Once again, the square in Tripoli with its gray taxis. The better the car, the less attention they pay to its driver. The more the engine and shocks and tires protest, the louder, the more emphatic the conversation grows about how horribly the world is going, while what's really going horribly is that particular taxi. And so the driver from Tripoli to Sparta passes unobserved, like a tiny figure in a enormous fresco, while the Spartan's humanism becomes almost emblematic as he embraces our strangers and takes them wherever they want to go. He too has nice tapes. He's blond, an agreeable guy. In Githeo he turns them over to a man from Mani who will take them the rest of the way. This Maniat seems like the best driver of all, because the road, from Githeo to Gerolimena, is all highway. In his Diary, Thrassakis often returns to this trip. It stands out in the 'Portraits' for the manner in which the driver

himself becomes part of the landscape, as he holds steadily to the wheel, guiding his passengers through legendary Mani.

[6]

The Cabby from Navplio, whom I've already mentioned twice, is distinguished by the following characteristic: he refuses to drop his fares, though all the empty taxis lined up in the square make his insistence seem unreasonable. Work might be scarce, he says, but he isn't going to drop his fares when a new road that passes behind the ancient site of Epidavros – a road, as Glafka comments, which resembles the dictatorship that built it in the manner in which it avoids real life, bypassing villages, looking only on pine trees and rocks – looking, in short, on an inhuman landscape, whitewashed and idyllic, as the dictators wanted Greece to be, without Greeks, populated only by ancient ruins and ladders of light dancing the sirtaki to chords from an electric bouzouki. Yes, something like that. The cab driver, guessing that they belong to the 'other side', puts in a tape of Theodorakis. The driver is from Peristeri, outside of Athens, and before heading into the city center, they stop to see his sister and his brother-in-law, who has a truck and carries tomatoes to the farmers' markets from Kopaida. When they pay him in dollars, expecting him to be glad, he pulls a scornful face and says, 'What if I can't change them?' (Note: Due to 'Dillinger', anti-American sentiment in Greece had reached its peak).

[7]

A Cretan, transplanted into Old Greece, is a lost glory when the north wind is blowing. Such a man is the driver who takes him from Athens to Lamia, after calling

to tell his wife not expect him home that afternoon. 'As soon as they heard I was going up to Lamia, my little girls told me, 'Dad, bring us back some kourabiedes''. A family man, there's no need to tell him not to speed. In Bogiati, where he stops to get gas, he points to the army base across the way and said, 'This is where all the torment took place'. 'Torment', he says, not 'torture'. Exiting Highway I, passing through the second toll, he drops Glafkos off at People's Square in Lamia, where Glafkos rests in the shade of the ancient plane trees, once again, after so many years.

[8]

The last Cabby is the one who takes him from Lamia to the brother, by way of Katerini. A cheerful guy, down-to-earth, with a heavy accent – in short, an old-time cabby. His father is also a cabby and he himself has been on the job for fifteen years. A cab, he declares as he closes the window between the front and back seats to create atmosphere, needs three things. 'Tires, upkeep, and heart'. He stresses the last. 'Without heart even the best cab won't run'. He and his father used to have two cabs. Then they sold one, and now only this one is left. He tells stories about last month's mobilization. They took his cab too, of course. 'One of the officers says, 'I'll be driving this'. 'Over my dead body you will', I tell him. For a pro to drive it, sure. They even pulled down the telephone poles in Thessaly, so airplanes could land in the plain'. He breaks into laughter. When the cabby went to report for duty, they found him in no kind of condition. So they gave him a truck to drive, filled to the brim with ammunition. 'But the truck'll break down, it can't carry this kind of load. 'How was he to know – and here he bursts again into laughter – that the boxes were empty...

Glafkos notices fires in the field. They are preparing the ground for the second planting.

*

As a general observation on the 'Physiognomies', we might note that all the cabbies turn up the volume on the radio as soon as the news comes on. The cabbies who work out in the country are in contact with the people, the tractors and horses, while the city cabbies might honk at another cabby or two at the most. And from North to South, West to East, their concerns are the same: the skyrocketing price of gas, and the fear of another mobilization.

Thrassaki's dealings with taxis constitute an important element in his intellectual makeup. He is the kind of intellectual whose contact with the common element comes solely in the form of conversation with whatever cabby might be driving him from his house to some theater or demonstration – where, in his capacity as an intellectual, he will address the masses, finding himself once more behind footlights that distance and isolate him from the people. And, respecting the unwritten obligations of the ride, a cab driver usually feels obliged to answer whatever questions his customer might ask.

Such was the situation upon Glafko's return to Greece, flushed with the agent's money. He took cabs not only within Athens but between cities, paying the double fare for long distances, which, compared to the single fares he was used to paying abroad, still seemed like next to nothing. In Germany the meter starred at two-and-a-half marks, while in Greece it was eight and a half drachmas, a third as much. Besides, unemployment was so bad during the summer of his return that the drivers, most of them family men, dropped their prices for long distances. Would it

have been cheaper to rent a car and driver? (Glafkos himself, we should note, either didn't know how to drive or was scared to). Perhaps. If he preferred the taxi, it was because: 1. He could replace it with another at any point along the way; and 2. A cab driver comes into contact with every level of society, from wage earners on their way to the bouzouki joints to whores, thieves, spies. And since Thrassakis's only contact with the lower class came through his dealings with cabbies, he preferred them over some hired driver whose only customers would be people like Thrassakis himself.

The collecting of life from the back seat of a cab; communication with the driver through a window big enough to frame only his eyes; the paid relationship that furnishes him with information; the fleetingness of contact – all this is completely consistent with what Thrassakis notes in 'Lazarus's Return': 'My frame of mind is like that of the Italian actor who lends his voice to Marlon Brando's face for the dubbing of American movies into Italian'. This confession, though awkwardly phrased, constitutes one of my hero's rare moments of sincerity. Indeed, in every country that dubs foreign films into its own language (and Italy is the country par excellence of this practice), an actor is chosen from among tens of potentials, with the help of machines that test for compatibility with the voice being dubbed. How must this man feel, speaking from under the mask of another man's face? For this voice-actor, the alienation inherent to the representational arts must take on dreadful dimensions. And Thrassakis, eavesdropping on life, peeping through the closed windows of the everyday, identifies with this man who lends his voice to another, just as he accepts the voice of a life foreign to him, filtered through the impressions of another, of the man in the driver's seat.

*Oh, what weather. what weather!
All rain, all longing.*

*I'll find a voice with which to shout and speak
of the fading of my bitterness.
As I waited through the years
for the sun to shine,
I never noticed the well
they were digging beside me.
And when I finally yelled, 'Drawn,
radiant dawn, end of martyrdom',
I stepped forward, blind,
and slipped and fell.*

*Lying here in the suspicious whiteness
of lime,
I now look back and wonder,
How could I not have noticed?
The neighbor's kids are grown,
the neighbor inched
into places that once were mine,
and heartlessly they shut me out.
Oh, what weather, what weather!
All rain, all longing.*

Yiorgos VEIS

TIME'S (SIMPLE) REVERSAL

*«Through the orange tree's leaves
the day passes, cleaning its wings
silver words suspended: midday.
With your right hand you indicate the sea,
an absence of matter, tomorrow you 'll call it
departure. It's windy,
my ears filled with dust, truth's filter.»*

*I wrote and remained there.
Let me recall still more recall:*

*«My ears filled with truth, sand's filter
it's windy, return
a presence, matter, tomorrow you 'll call it
sea (again and again)
with my left hand I indicate
my silver seconds –
how they roll, how they return here where I am,
breakfast in Cairo or Folegandros in mind –
always the same hawk passes
cleaning its wings in the rain's wake
timeless».*

*I write and remain here
present
inexhaustible.*

Translated by David Connolly

LIKE DOGS

*All morning naked, with Ave Maria, with cigarettes
in the distance the lake of the Summer Palace
where we wanted to swim last summer
—now ice.*

*I love that sky that desires to become a moment
this is the hour the sense glow
it is good here, no one can find us
we'll spend the winter here, without qualms
or plans for this or that, our obscure future
for I know something of winters
they still confide in me and the birds
that have stayed on in the garden
are good here, with deep serene eyes
with moist wrinkles, like dogs
that sniff out the bones of the gods, unconcerned
with rains and glaciers, with the big rigs in the middle of the road
it is good here, no one can reach us.*

RETURN TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

*The world a drop of love on the wings of the weather –
flying low
from the window a rainbow, a deep glance
to catch once more the clouds on the pebbles
to believe in the day's duration.
Not long before, the sun a marble disk
now broken lamps,
with the final turn the horizon burns.*

*That hawk
which appeared on the edge of noon
fulfills a need, the steady passage toward age;
below spreads out the certainty of the forest
which yearns to turn us back into rocks and pines
so even the demon's touch won't throw us off our pace.*

*A ring of rain – will we have time to catch up?
There is no other path off the maps.
A river climbs down the sky
a cool breeze from the present
the plane banks decisively
in the direction of the invisible.*

Translated by Robert Crist

IF YOU COULD, YOU WOOULD KILL ME

*My hasty, frivolous foe,
If you could, you would kill me
Here in the deserts which I inhabit —
Even today with the setting of the sun
But I know you well: you fear the wrath
Of the holy serpents which will seek you
At the ends of the earth, to blind you
To leave you naked at the edge of the cliff
That you fall low, that you reach me again
A matched couple in the depths of hell —
But no, I will hide well in the forest,
I will become a bronchus of branches, iron leaves and thorns,
My foe, hasty, frivolous.
For you have not yet learnt anything from me
In the end it seems to me that I shall drink your blood*

FOR THE FROSTY NIGHT

Strength, splendour of correspondence with the stars

*Proud life of the eucalyptus trees give me
The single path, the firm hand of the desert
Innocent forest, tears mild conditions
The waves of judgment, the mute are steel less.
Yes, the wind confesses dream and audacity.
In the middle we. With voices and leaves of charming remembrance.
How do we rise now in the whirlpool, without ransom?
Wisdom, with roads that curve of one hundred miles per hour
From the Antipodes to New Rome, only the mad
Win at dices that roll, similar are those who look.
With all that is known to see the eye of the wounded
Abundance of seagull at the winters and the eternal summers
Open seas of destiny, justice in the open field*

THE SONG OF THE PHOENIX

*The stones never move, nor the glaciers
Who are you? Revenge I wish you never come in the lake
Where are the white horses? The music of Tchaikovsky
Where the deer passes when the rainbow appears
She thinks, we come always late,
Without money, always exhausted, but the gods are hidden in the trees, the rain is ours,
the little Spring at the edge of the rocks.
the divine retribution
She looks at us with the light, and the darkness that she has*

*The petals open phosphorus illuminated.
death is all around
whatever we are,
that is why the grass and the metals will find us
the coming generations are going to use us
they are going to divide their leisure time with the dogs pets
our hands are a custom to the music
they do not fear
the forest nor even the howling of the Satan
which is behind the door
when the shift terminates the END of the century*

THE USEFULNESS OF THE COFFEE SHOPS

*And even if I don't have fate on my side
And even if I don't have the sky
I will buy milk for those who live afar
I will even buy milk for the stars
May I remember women with green hair
Let me remember sleepers on eyebrows,
The snow, snow, blackened, erased
They told you I left, medicated and stoned
How I changed phone number so the snow won't find me
The air, the muted wariness, to become whole
Wheels of underground railways which derailed*

*Uncertain trips in the beaming light, flesh eating
They drink again my water, in foreign sleeps I stand
With black metallic finger nails on the corner of Brunswick
An imprisoned kiss, a gauge of the times
To shatter the marble to find the sound, death
Unfriendly seas: let me swim from the beginning*

THE WORK OF THE POET

*Even if tomorrow all! the landscapes become dry
Our hair will resist again, they will not become ash
Always faithful fine pieces of gold deeply in the roots
Dark wisdom in the leaves of the mulberry tree
The humble small shrub opens one by one it's petals
The dream in the cool dawn, the mouth knows
Filled up with cherries.
that we were yesterday night together
you telling me to read the poems
like the oracles and fine ornaments of light
your centre is everywhere but the circumference no where
internal moon, the truth a piece of heaven like marble
It takes a lifetime to hoe the correct names
Descendant of cosmic dust, a thousand times crystallized
The seal is obscure, a guardian at the abyss.*

WITHOUT COCAINE

*We don't know you, we don't need you Sea
With the deceiving gardens, the wild prow
It is cold and neither do I think, it is early blood
Again I fill with my legs wide open I look at you
The shallow current, the kisses of stone, dead they walk*

*They still dig up the past above new homelands
i clench my hands to so I may be born again O ancient pain
With the dreams I cut myself, the thorns that I may smell
Like an oracle we talk about the summers
Rocks in the depths, the skies are written with Asia
So much experience in a sunset,
so much experience in a bottle
in the corner where your destiny is erased I will hear you
I won't always have my teeth, slowly I will cut the bread
let the light burn in the dark forest so I may find you*

SOUTH MELBOURNE

*Never did the waters roll, the easy lakes
the lights are from trees, stones from a moon
corals bridges strong knees are nostalgic for you*

*in desert, in sea have mercy that the wind
will freeze that it will not age the righteous body
accustomed to continents it is not afraid to become warm
red wine to be poured not of dark
worship or abandon but of a harvest of dirt
names at the edge of fortune that my days
will not roll on top of you, measuring the extravagant afternoon,
the teeth of the for a sunset we came this far naked
in the prow of weather to the south open scenes
that you wake up in the morning at five that you do not bleed.*

Translated by Sarah Berry

Thanassis VENETIS

Disappearance

For years I tear the poems I write for father.

The time of the Occupation, my mother never believed he was dead.

'Kostas will return', she said, as dolphins leapt off her eyes.

*She was right, just as rivers guess springtime,
just as the wind discovers its tongue.*

He returned—and he left again.

*This was revealed as we kept wake over a relative
by butcher Socrates Romphaeas breaking his promise of trust.*

*In detail he related how father, twenty two
years after his disappearance, appeared like a migratory
Angel before him, got the necessary information for each of us
separately, cracked up for our unjustly slain Eleni, saw us all
like a thief, without our getting a clue and left again.*

for Paradise or his Hell sinking into the snow within himself.

*Far beyond the limits of my destiny, in the untrodden shades,
searching under the words to find the secret thread.*

I tear continually the poems I write for father.

*I pick up their pieces, and burn them. From within the flames he rises
in full life.*

*His eyes a house the earthquake found battered
his lips made of chaff, wreckage of fire.*

*Something clenches my heart and my voice vanishes
in the time's ravine.*

Iossif VENTURA

From

Kyklonio

Yoseph ben Malkah exile from the sea

with the desert in his mouth

mourned for a well

and his word was a wound

and his wound a word

You who waked in the shade of an apple tree

you who shone in the birthing coral

you who watered the flower of your love

you who longed for the taste of cinnamon

and the dark

for what is lost beyond the land's end

You came to cry out to your suspended sun

you came to walk on dead leaves

You came to aim for the moon

you came to measure the ink inside the stone

and the dark

that blots out the sky

The Saturdays in spring

lost

the Sundays in summer

lost

the feast days in autumn

lost

the fires in winter

lost

*

Limbs that leave no shadow

Skin and flesh of clay

Desiccated hay

Wound upon wound the desert

*

Meadow gone to blast

The moon's blood on the stepper

Your wounded feet Samuel

Your frozen feet Veta

*Tombstones you multiplied
with bitter almonds in the night*

Extracts from *Kyklonio* and *Tanais* (Two elegies for the Holocaust and the Jews in Crete). *Translated by
Yannis Goumas, edited by Peter Gimpel*

From
Tanais

[...] orphaned tree of my synagogue
which one of you from among the dead with a cracked arm
sowed screams of shells and shadows
in what seaweed gloom
did the sun loiter
our houses deserted and empty deep were the furrows
the flesh that drowned
nets were what expunged you
nets and a noose

*

I returned
drummer and companion

*on parallel seas
whom will you ask
what can I say
here are the borders
here are the taxes we pay*

*in azure mantle
pedlar of spasms in my stammering tongue how shall I utter dystocic consonants
I invoke and
commingle forms
of transitions
in fluid condensation*

*I hear the cry
and those around me
they circle
rain of living cells hydrates the skin
I hear the cry
the voice fades asthenic plunges
into the Aegean*

*I have spoken and have nothing further to say
I can read and write . . .*

Translated by Elisabeth Arseniou, edited by Peter Gimpel

From

The Arithmetic of Recollection

I

*December with roads full of carnage
and shutters secured.*

Three the signs of equilibrium

*one
the expressionless gaze*

*two
a line without undulations*

*three
the gone for good*

three in all

And three the signs of sounds

*one
the noise of immobility*

around a body stripped bare by debt

two

the croak of bellies

three

anarchic vowels adulterated by r

three in all

Later we spoke

about tranquility in lymphic clouds

as opposed to those drumming of turbulence

about the bronze figure that passes through the void

behind a breech-block

about your unmade brass bed

about the locked suitcase

full of silence

*Yesterday the belfries
with their dead sounds
dangling from five ropes
followed you.*

You entered the house with the signs

*Aesthetic Institute
was written on the sign
and I calculated
which aesthetic served
the deadliest of numbers*

*But it wasn't anyway
the subtraction of all your life
the multiplications were predominant
despite all the difficulty of transposition.*

*Oppressive operations
you would agree
Perhaps you should preserve
strained in the desert
and uncertain the desire
of a drop of sweat*

Anyway it's too late

*only the footprints are left
slight pressure on the wood and
the sign*

*Aesthetic Institute
was written on that sign.*

(Note: Aesthetic Institute is the Greek phrase for beauty salon)

THE TEAR

To Daniel

*He saw the tear of daybreak
on the face of the rose
(Three eagles lifted up
and hid in the sun)*

*I saw this drop
rolling down and growing
and gently touching
a poppy
I saw the sepals
that gleamed in the light*

*I heard gongs
and the galloping of horses
Then*

*An acacia burst
into blossom in the garden
(Captain Hook was hidden
and his grimace lost)*

POLYMNIA

And the Queen
Word of the world
And strangely enough
Light of my love
K. KARYOTAKIS

My fate lies in the hyacinth he said.

Uneasy he sat down on the marble bench because it seemed to him the moment had arrived when he would see the world inverted in the mirror the moment had arrived when he would recall texts and verses and he would leave flying because the city had progressed and extended outward on the rubble of demolitions stretching over large extents of ruins and he remembered who had once walked on the mountain paths who had breathed in the fragrance of the thyme and the crops who had chased the goldbug who had sung And thus said

So here is where we meet

So here we met and will meet on the margin left by the differential equations. And your hymn suspended there will be heard.

*The lyre echoes in the eaves of the roof
and the memories of years come alive*

Oh Polymnia

I will erase your wrinkles

Long live plastic surgery

*Your credit card is burdened with debt
and you seem rather pale*

With a mouth fleshless speechless

You no longer long for kisses

I write you in bits

words all alike

words of the world

and strangely enough

of my love

*And now if you publish, sell yourself
and lay yourself bare in verses*

in cement cities

and even if dead

your name remains

on a statue Polymnia

He said

And dreamed of tunnels lit by explosive flashes in the dark.

(Note: *My fate is the hyacinth* is the first line from the poem 'Triplets of the Mortals' by N. Karouzos)

BEATRICE IN METAXOURGEIO⁵⁰

Strolling through Metaxourgeio

Midday when joints rust

It was not the trees that had been coloured for me

— the silk-worms had long since died —

The man down on the sidewalk

Dead?

— a dog was licking his face —

Was wearing a jacket whose colour

Reminded me of Beatrice

But not the tranquillity her movements had

Besides

The roads were all flooded

They had been swamped with vehicles

Paradise.

THE SUICIDE *or* THE ONE WHO WAS GAZING AT THE HORIZON

...and Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled
a man with him until the breaking of the day
GENESIS 32:25.

to I. L.

⁵⁰ Metaxourgeio a district in Athens originally connected to silk manufacture: *Metaxourgeio* = silk-mill

*How he kept his balance on the electric lines
Just so he could gaze at the horizon
He had no idea
Waiting for the sun to speak
To see from on high the ears of corn
And the colour of the sun-flowers
He struggled through the night
With all they tormented him with
Far from the joy of Haran
For truly how far off was the morning
when the Earth promised him
would be found
A countryside without car exhaust
With a spaceship to be launched
From Omonioia Square.*

Translated by Philip Ramp

Anastassis VISTONITIS

The Garden of Selene

I

*I was watching the moon rise on the sky
losing myself in that dark plateau
and the sound of its shining came back to me
from the blue plain covering my childhood years.*

*In the whispering light from the house across the road
it's me walking, and outside it's autumn
returned like a dead man possessed to haunt the garden.*

*The soil of the old land rose up to my eyes
and I saw the hills encircled by fires
and from the north, horses descending the slopes
with the reins of dusk
and mirrors reflecting from their golden eyes
and, after many years, once again the scent
of grass wounded in darkness.*

*Over the waste that opens to the depths of these houses
the same sky reappears, a blue expanse
with its birds soaring and diving.*

II

*When birds drink water they see the wind
and the wind surveys the blue green plain
that mirrors the sky with its very own image,
its red ships, its flying fish,*

*its birds swimming over the soil,
its poplars nailed to the ground like banners of stony silver
billowing higher into the pulse of the breeze.*

III

*The night I left among musty fumes of trains
a damp image slithered over the window pane
and my thoughts went staggering off into darkness,
blind streetlamps along the tracks,
dark water cisterns in orchards and gardens,
one last glimpse of a ruined sentry post,
blackened grass on top of the pillbox
and, with rifle slung over his shoulder,
a guard patrolling under the moon.
In my face flickered a light like this one
now lengthening the shadows in this garden,
houses before me flashing past in the window
and high in the sky the city's shadow
mirroring an image I hardly knew.
The past poured away like water
from the cracked jar of dreams.*

IV

*Red and blue, the rocks on the mountains,
wings of birds and whispers of leaves,
diamonds of morning on the skyline
and along the paths wolves and deer
picking their way beneath a constellation of stone.*

*Autumn a momentary sea
bearing the ancient badge of the sun.*

V

*I was watching the moon rise on the sky,
many-notched disk of time,
eye escaped from some country of the blind –
tonight the moon will tell the story.
On one side of the wind the sea
and on the other a deserted plain.*

In the sea the past rises and sets.

VI

*I don't know if lightning is faster
than the wind. A stone in the garden is speaking
to the grass and the rising moon
is scattering silver calyxes into dark corners.*

*Playing with the light
in our eyes the world shrank.*

VII

*I was watching the moon rise on the sky,
nymph of fire and ice.
Among its shadows the black tulip memory
opened petals of cloud
and images of forever bloomed.*

*Here my face is a blue mask
far from the eyes of others, far
from that darkened track. And here, I touch
the deepest part of myself, a mold that contains
the damp casting of a breath of grass.*

*In this garden, just as on that old road,
faces pass at the far end
and the light vanishes with them
along with the faint smile that renders time resplendent.*

*I among these and behind me clouds,
before me trees of water and crystal,
flocks of birds describing the air,
time multiplying itself,
the wind widening space,
I was watching the moon bring in the tide,
I watched the moon:
most radiant apple of the Hesperides.*

1968

*The evening sank into the river,
a half moon rose behind the grass,
wind blasted into the curtain rails,
and the window a dead crater
watched the shadow, watched the blind man,
the tobacco leaves drying in the shelter.*

*I am a part of all that I have met,
I am the star that jumps out of the boat,
the music that flows and billows in the mind,

the river's dream and the mirror's shadow.*

MANHATTAN 1984

*Huge river, river-shadows,
bridges over water gleaming,
cloud-swaddled moon –
buildings talking to the night.*

*Foundations as if in the sky,
red helicopters, high on winds,
imaginary wings lifting curtains,
opening on time, an emerald giant
among chasms, lakes and phantoms.*

*Headlights biting cold boulevards,
in gulfs above, in the skies' depths,
in blues, reds, dark purples,
and in the mirroring moon,
and steel grins, blackness is whitened,
and the island rolls into the ocean
sheds materials, discharges stone,
vomits forth yellow darkneses.*

*And stone is devoured with the mud in the waters,
with geometries, with ancient surveyors,
and compasses, sextants and rice-paper,
and night the iron emperor
and tomorrow waving rags.*

*With fear and weeping, with crowds and myths,
with ash falling, with eyes looking up,
eyes that construct horizons.*

*Buildings shoot firebursts that spatter the void.
The hours go by. The sea whitens.
A dawn of snow and ice will come,*

*the dawn of the ant, the dawn of the dead,
dawn of the black planet.*

OLD STORIES

*Once poets dreamed
of waters and diamonds, of tears and roses,
but in my sleep I see burnt cities
and the last rags of their inhabitants
fluttering from gutted windows.*

*At this century's end it's difficult
to pass from day to dream, to the magic mountain
where the electric fireflies zoom.*

*No more is the foot of the devil cleft
(as John Donne might have put it).
May the flow stop dead and the mouths of sound
and the gates of fire and the diagrams
of death be deadened.
May the earth's magnetic field be reversed
and a solar wind descend on all the parliaments.
May the garbage of the nations be dumped upon the scrapheap
And harbours without lights sink into the depths of night.*

May the mind's motor be restarted by the sun.

*We are the children of armed peace.
TV's shine like stars in our living rooms.
Where do chaffinch, woodpecker and skylark belong?
May mist descend upon the mountains and the aerals.*

*Look at the universe if you'll learn
the age of time.*

*In my sleep cities are burning,
their ashes glimmering like rabbit fur.
Yet I have longed for the red of the russet fox
who saw the fire and understood
that multiplication tables are nonsense and lies,
that our cities are mirrors of the mind,
haunted factories, blocks of the dead,
squares that have been buried by light
opening up into a vast trench –
in which who knows how many lie lost.
By unwinding the spool backwards
you shall not find the beginning of the cosmos
but the end of a darkened dream.*

*If the earth's magnetic field is reversed
perhaps we shall even be able to fly
without wings without anchors
deep into the sea of stars
while far behind us will fade away
the Death Marches
the Lost Causes
the Realms of the Rat
the Lights of Auschwitz.*

AFTER THE BATTLE

*The battle raged on till the setting of the sun.
When darkness came they lay themselves down to sleep
the living alongside the dead*

and then they turned on their cool glaring searchlights.

*Tatters of darkness were fluttering
in the dust raised up by the wind.*

*The sounds of a wedding waltz
issued forth from the highest window.*

*The night was lit up
by a corpse in the ditch.*

*In the central square there landed
a firefly made of steel
out of which climbed Pylades
along with Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.
In the eyes of the pilot I recognised Orestes
as he glanced up at the sky
and then later they all disappeared together
among the deathly pallor of the searchlights.*

We lived beneath the star of death.

We ate black bread.

*Leaden forests
sprouted and thickened within our sleep*

Light, thick and filthy.

Days, of mud and insects.

*The insects took control of our homes,
they founded empires in our bedrooms,
they invaded our cemeteries,
they stood guard over our dead,
they built their mausoleums in the earth's bowels,
within the cities of Hades.*

*Out of the eye of water
was born the sun.
I shall give you my voice,
I shall give you eyes and skin,
I shall speak to you with the voice of the hawk,
in the flight of the sparrow
and in the tok-tok of the woodpecker.*

*The enemy entered by the north gate.
The rites of surrender were fulfilled.
We handed over our flags, our keys and our women.*

*There were a great many of them.
We called them the Usurpers of Time.*

Translated by Richard Burns and the author

Haris VLAVIANOS

AN EVENING WITHOUT AN EVE

I

*Carefully watch
the objects around you
(flowers, books, pictures),
watch them
as they sluggishly swing
in their metaphysical innocence.*

*You are not certain that they exist
yet you must go on
watching them
till the end of your time.
'It is a question of faith from now on'.*

*When does a familiar, rainy place,
a particular scenery,
change into a new thought?
When does an intimate sound
(of rows cutting the river in two),
become a strange melody in our mind?*

*Someone turns on the light.
Someone fears the dark,
— the sigh of autumn leaves —
the mirror games of memory.*

*Whatever is gone
is saved in us
as that which is gone.*

*'The daisies you hold in your hands
are not the daisies your hands are holding.'
They are dust.
Words that try to become the meaning
of this predestined gesture.*

Of this necessary but vain gesture.

II

*Another arrow always follows Zeno's arrow:
that which pierces and slices it in two.*

*So we wither away alone in our glorious present
as the day slowly, casually progresses to its end.*

*You will shut your eyes
and begin to dream of your exotic refuge:*

*the place where a new, precious life
is treasured for you.*

*Can you take such a reward?
So much generosity?*

Her name is still configured in the wind.

WHO ?

mis-echoing Blanchot

I come to light the minute I posit myself as a question.

*This question,
not the one with your angst or doubts,
constantly besetting you as you wrote,
is now present,
lying silent between my lines
patiently waiting the one*

who will attempt to solve it.

The question

(now posited in your absence)

is addressed to me

and is made of words

transformed, as if by magic,

into art.

The attention I show to myself

can be considered morbid narcissism.

Yet I defend my honor

by eternally questioning it.

I assert myself through an interrogation

that often leads to my disgrace.

My story is nothing but the chronicle of this interrogation.

The question cannot be answered

for, once posited,

it automatically becomes an accusation

against my means and ends.

My kingdom is built on my ruins.

If I have any power

I derive it directly from

this endless process of annihilation and re-creation.

Every poem that asks for a place in my history

*has to tell it anew
in ways not yet known.
If my past has to assume its existence,
my future is to have it in store.
But who can claim that he knows the future?
You?*

UNWRITTEN

On a theme by Williams

*I strive;
strive in every way to salvage this 'wonderful experience',
to transform it (for my own needs too)
into a convenient, subdued memory.
'Out of the air in the coldest room
imagination can fashion the warmest passions', you write.
If only you knew
with what devices poetry manages
—for the sake of this imagination—
to displace life,
to reduce it to a simple matter,
to discolor our every radiant word,
so that the most benign avowal*

*seems affected and contrived,
if only you could see,
even for a moment,
the light cast upon your beloved Aphrodite
by two eyes swifter and more passionate
than the painter's hands,
would you see why this poem,
why no poem,
can speak of us,
can speak of you,
can never be you,
for, though the day is coming to its close,
we have to pretend
that our life is beginning now,
that this last kiss is our first.*

AUGUST MEDITATIONS

1.

*If a man in his forties
is still drawing seas and dovecotes,
if in his thought is reflected
a sun more transparent,
more lucid than the sun of reality,*

*if the word 'Amorgos' is not just
the mask of a fleeting, adolescent memory,
then between the poem of desire
and the poem of necessity
real loss is throbbing.*

2.

*Prologues have been consumed.
They cannot always substitute the topic.
He must decide whether he can
hold on to this absolute idea
even if he has ceased to believe in its power.*

3.

*Successive metamorphoses of paradise.
The eye tries to interpret the enigma of beauty
while Delos is slowly emerging in the horizon.
Summer feels like an eternity.
The poem begins to invent itself
the moment he turns his face to the light.*

*(The moment the imagination,
freed from the sensation of the blazing white,
vertically rises in the sky.)*

4.

*Not one sail in the horizon
tearing the canvas apart.
The image of a tree
with its wind-swept boughs scavenging the ground
is not a part of the scenery today.
Yet, the old lady creeping uphill on her knees
tightly holding Her icon is.*

5.

*The man is walking on the beach alone.
He is still touched by the melodious whisper of the waves,
the way the water is persistently lulling the rock to sleep.
Nature around him
(cedars, rotten fishing boats, shingles)
has a melancholic, unaffected brightness.
If he were to die at this moment,
he would want to be here,
in this place, where he has been before.
Even for a while.
For now.*

AUTUMNAL REFRAIN

Following a lead by Stevens

*When the last leaves have fallen,
we shall return at last to our familiar, intimate place,
to this cherished sanctuary
that our fatigued body has left unfulfilled
for the necessities of inevitable knowledge.*

*It is difficult, almost impossible,
to choose even the adjective
that would lend some meaning
to this bare coldness,
this causeless grief
that spreads gradually, steadily,
eroding your life's most inner recesses.*

*A simple, natural gesture
might be the first step,
the beginning of a new attempt.
If not now, not today,
tomorrow without fail.*

*Lack of imagination?
That too will have to be invented, naturally;*

*and the stage will be set
as the instructions on the paper demand.
The stone house must be kept erect.
The arch in the front room
(your precious, priceless past), especially this.
And the old lintel with the mermaid.
And the fig tree in the garden, and the oleanders,
and the dry stonewall, all must remain.
All.
That the ruin, the rift, the absence may be revealed.
That the strife, the fall, the work may be appraised.*

*The autumnal wind
that gave these words their body,
fiercely effacing their metaphysical gleam,
knows all too well the secret they conceal.
As do you
who stoop to get a dry leaf from your doorstep.
The leaf of reality.
The exquisite poem of the genuine.*

DE IMAGINE MUNDI

For John Ashbery, φίλος

'How beautiful, how unexpectedly sweet life would be
if we were not forced to live it...'

Once, things were different.

*The messages that times bore with them
were part of an absolute truth;
the looks, the gestures, the trivial talk
meant something,
the errant signs
these too with their lurking conceit confirmed
that love was something more
than just a game of longing.*

*A clear sky
or a handsome man
poring over a Greek manuscript
(metaphors invented to contain us)
cannot engrave your face in my memory*

*cannot color the charted space
with the precision this recollection's shadow
demands.*

*I ask for more;
much more.*

A living context that can accept me,

*a density of light that can reveal
imagination's true possibilities,
a specific language whose subtlety's command
can endow that dazzle with the depth of your beauty.*

*What power can check the gallop
of the deformed dream plunging into the horizon
what will can interpret this decisive*

gesture

that interprets nothing?

The day comes to its end.

We have to stay here.

In this silvery daze

the soul grounds itself.

GLORIANA

*Life—how wonderful it is—
follows our traces
and slowly fades away
in the background of our dreams.*

'Of our dreams.

*There is always a way
to talk about them
as if their secret meaning
had been revealed to you only,
and yet this only
quite tersely shows
how little it holds.'*

*In the beginning everything seems easy
—almost inevitable.
On a beach, for instance,
with Hardy's poems in her hands
whispering meaningfully in her ear:*

*'I have lived with Shades so long,'
and later in the hotel room
after the last embarrassing assurances:
'How tender is this candle...
It bids farewell to the night
drying away its tears'.*

*Is there any point in confessing our pact?
In saying or writing that
'love may be no more
than an exchange of vocabularies',
when the emptiness that befalls us*

is already mirrored in the shattered glimmer of our eyes?

*The celestial darkness of the book
and the angst of the transparent man
in a translated world.*

*'Words do not fear words;
they fear the poem'.
The end is always the beginning
of a new grandiose disavowal.*

SONNETS OF DESPAIR

2

*Perhaps it is worth considering the losses
and profits of this scenario: if you hadn't been shipwrecked,
you wouldn't know which things the sea will wash ashore.
But you do: the armchair (the material repaired recently)
was neither so perfect nor valuable as you thought – it sunk to the bottom –,
while the hobby horse (long-since forgotten) bobbed beside you on the surface.
What is the use of this horse, you might ask, when everyone in the world
is ready to dig trenches again?*

*The coming war will take place on another field. Forget those fools
who still believe the game is called 'solitaire'.*

*Try to keep your eyes fixed on the shore,
and swim with rhythmic motion. Slowly, surely.*

It's very important this rhythm. Don't underestimate the body.

And above all don't look down. Not now. Not when everyone is shouting, 'Don't'.

Translated by Mina Karavanta and Evan Jones

Spyros L. VRETTOS

A KIND OF DESCENT *or* THE LABORS IN THE NETHERWORLD

*In the middle of the way or even just before
you need the words of the dead as a prophecy
or, at least, as new material
so you'll have something to tell us
to mince like a death experience.*

*But first hear the terms
before descending to the dead:
you have to suddenly occur for a moment
in some way that shows
that earlier you weren't;
difficult, of course, and deafening
— I imagine, for you to occur
something will have to be heard —
difficult, of course,
for you not to have pre-existed.*

*So suddenly pretend to be a shade
and with a big bang ravage
the orange trees of the nether world.*

*It's then that the first words will be heard.
So if they ask you to give the names of states
you'll say in short
ALVIRAKOU
and if they tell you to say Amvrorakikos
you'll list numerous names
of coastal villages
and not just biographical data
from a simple memory.*

*And when, hopefully, you pass this ordeal,
illegible voices will come
for you to distinguish,
to say to whom each belongs,
who it is who still commands
his voice.*

*If you find even one voice
the oranges will emerge in the darkness;
the place will become like life.*

*I don't want a prophecy, you'll tell them then,
— and here's the secret —
despite the kind words of those dear to you;
the one wishing me a safe trip
and firing a dart of water at me,*

*the other sending me off with kisses
in secret from the third,
and the third giving me longing
as much as is needed for such a trip.*

*As the darkness burns boldly
so too the level of death
will rise in brightness.*

*As for you, proceed with the unburned water
and the kind words of those dear to you.*

THE RHAPSODISTS

*We are winter poets
ever opening up caves
in our hunger for it to retreat.*

*An ascetic spring awaits us
and poems like locusts
in the bluegrass season.*

*As for summer don't ask,
we will be thirst's rayahs.*

We've become rhapsodists of epic winters.

From *From Homer's Table: Contemporary Greek Poets On Ancient Greek Themes*

SARCASM 1997

*And when
a stowaway in the open straits of a false tale
you raise your voice from the boat
and like a messenger of old
from the edge of geography
sculling you secretly cross your own voice,*

*then, corresponding Iranians and Albanians,
stowaways hiding from themselves,
will all let in water*

*— 'First let the women and children borrow
a sea so it won't sink' —
and precisely at the moment
again the port officials will find excuses:*

*'There was a lot of fog in that tale
and how could we know what he meant exactly?
besides we were confused by the voices*

*of some messenger of old
that we took for an armed myth.*

*But now
without any sarcasm
the hour of those shipwrecked and drowned'.*

From *Patras' Poets in European Languages*, 2006. Translated by David Conolly

THE TRANSFORMATIONS

*You 've still not been heard with a human voice,
the spell that bound you has not been neutralized;
since then a hot wind's been blowing
instead of breath.*

*In the house all methods have been tried;
we kissed the walls,
the floors, the pets,
set up a scarecrow in the yard
to drive the birds away
so they wouldn't wound your invisibility;
we took photographs as in bygone days
and among them there's someone who resembles you;*

*I also took the dagger off the bully-boy
to fork the burning air,
to see how deer down one could hear
the beat of cause,
and instead of breath, I took lightning
and instead of you, me.*

*In what form will you now be found,
and if suddenly you appear
what name will suit you?
Come down, ill-fated bird, come down in the house;
it's my turn to be transformed
and yours to sit at the table;
the moment they call you stranger
show them your eyes.*

From *Collected Poems*, 2000

HIS LAST LETTER IN THE WELL

*They count again and everything is missing,
along with the one lost on the borders of the mind
and no, he didn't grow up just like that,*

he is not the one who sat down next to them.

*Now they are leaning over deep wells,
on the contour of things, that is
—the stuff that's accumulated in the house is leaking
and the voice,
the voice, is going straight up,
because it now understands the blood as blood.*

*Then come other voices: 'The letter, the letter';
they're trying to see
which well it was thrown in,
what terrible thing it would say
and recite all by itself,
which deeds are to be resurrected on the words
—they fall there, bullets strike each other, stones,
and from the breaches in the body
—severed leg, lost bones—
the smell ascends in blood
and the dog's the first to get
the meaning of the deed.*

*His last letter
showed him with a dwindling body.
Listen to how the dog is still predicting
the absence;*

*and the old man of the house up the tiles,
now suddenly a prophet as well
his voice dripping earth
on the vacant spots of fate.*

*The missing one
no longer sends letters, nor even writing.*

*Will it be enough
that in secret
he has named every single thing
in his own name,
and when they call him
into the house now and then,
do they hear, instead of him, things
drawing near with their dwindling body?*

DAYS OF 1995 A.D.

*This also happened then:
while under the table
the mud no the shoes
and the grass all stuck together,
the vertigo of a rather grim*

*tale lay in wait,
above the table
he clasped the bread with his left hand
and with the right cut in deep,
right down to the crumb of sleep.*

*But when he emerged from the dream
snow came out of the earth.*

*'Hey, come here' the frozen beggar
of History called to him.*

*'Is that what I drummed into you
did I spend the whole night teaching
you to cut bread?'*

*And she snatched the bread from him
right down to the crumb of sleep.*

And then he said:

'It was a sudden winter.

Mud on my feet and the grass stuck together.

I came down through rent nations.'

HIS MYTH IN EVERY SINGLE THING

He's a chair,

he's a table,

his myth in every single thing.

*And he is a dark myth
to blame for a thousand deeds
and the images that consumes with fever
all who see them.*

*He's a chair;
soon his shape will be revealed by the legs,
then the upper body searching for hands.*

*He's a table
a shrivelled pomegranate on it,
knife in bread,
grapes with all their seeds,
until his hands dart out,
feinting at sharp fate with the knife,
slicing through the board
and high up on the ceiling
sticking a knife in at right angles to it
and ascending;
the sky is up above
an upside down table.*

*Finally, he goes past in secret
and leaves his marks;
a gaping pomegranate, not shrivelled, but of suspect blood;
knife not stuck in bread,*

*put in the keyhole of the door;
and not grapes, but a fig tree
whose leaves, just as morning breaks,
will fly off in black.*

*He is a dark myth;
lasting the length of a shudder.*

CONCERNING THE INEFFABLE

*Now in their old age all the things
that stayed invisible, lament,
because as they were about to be named
they started crying
before they were even dipped in the font.*

*The ineffable was left
ineffable,
the other
remained other,
and he who was passing
left dust behind.*

*But it is something
they called deep,*

*or rather depth,
and the remote one arrives from there
right next to us,
returns light-shadowed from his flight.
They called him Angelos,
they called him Kostas,
they called him both,
because he was two people with two depths.
The one extinguished way down the road
and the other full-bodied, near here.
Their eyes flicked rapidly
and it was as if the distant one had arrived
or the other one pulled back.*

*And in this way
as they got really confused once and for all,
they grew indignant
and cried out, enough of these names;
the unknown is a tail on every name
and the unknown more terrible
when it's called mistake.
The ineffable should stay
ineffable,
the other,
other.
And those that venture too often*

*into perspective should remain nameless;
let both of them be unknown
or poets,
who are looking for us.*

ON SAINTS

*Suddenly the ceiling soars upward
as if the proof aspires to a dome
and a very stern God
descends from the wall
and like a gold mosaic
falls in pieces into the yard
each one a saint ravaged
by his own solitude.*

*The wall comes undone like an epic
presses its dust like nostalgia
into our life.*

*Behind the saintly soul, the grim rock
hollowed out by the hand of the soul
the each time lifts itself to record,
and to erect, stage sets as numerous as country chapels*

*until the saints with their horses are let loose
and the place teems with rebels.*

From Collected Poems, 2000. Translated by Philip Ramp

Giorgos XENARIOS

From

At the Edge of the World

The first day of the march was over. Having spent that first evening asleep in carts, carriages or on the ground, the following morning found the Metics in front of the foaming waters of the Blackcloth.

Grigorios, Apostolou and Damianos were standing on top of the huge boulder that dominated the river's south bank, considering their chances. What do you think, can we ford it? No, and crossing the rapids is impossible. So what are we going to do? We'll wait, said Achilleas, joining them. Legend has it you should only cross the river overnight, lest you drown in its waters. Rubbish. Don't mock these things, Damianos; they could mean the death of you. Rubbish, I say!

Grigorios was troubled. They could not build a bridge, nor cross the river wading or swimming. With the dead, with the dead! shouted the notary, Protonotarios. What do you mean?

There was a special carriage at the end of the procession that the Metics, not wanting to be deprived of memory, had loaded with the bones of their ancestors – and the bones of those recently struck down by the disease. It also held the rotting bodies of those who had died since the exodus and during the previous day. The death carriage was being driven, voluntarily, by Mitsos Karalis, the knacker, whom the disease had not touched, despite the nature of his profession. Out of my way, fools, this is a job I know well, he'd responded, taking the reins proudly, to those

who had objected to his undertaking this duty. They'd even thought of towing a few more carriages behind the first death carriage, if it proved necessary.

What do you mean? We should tie the bodies tightly together with thick ropes, add some bones where necessary, we can walk on them to get across, the Blackcloth won't stop us. Should we do it during the day, or wait for evening? We'll do it at night, to soften the evil we commit.

Grigorios instructed them to gather the dead, wrap up them in the same tarpaulins that until a few days ago had been used to protect them from the rain and the cold – yellow tarpaulins, glowing in the dark – and tie them tightly together with thick ropes. Antonis, the fisherman, would swim across the river – the only one to get wet – and tie the end of the rope to a stake, forming a bridge (Deadbridge, said someone sarcastically) for the others to cross.

[...] Gerasimakis's foot, suspended in midair, was visible to all – or almost all – of the former residents of Saltponds. It was visible because he would be the first to attempt to cross over. His tiny frame was enough to make him seem the most suited for the task. So now, under the light of the torches lit by the Metics – for of course the crossing would be attempted at night – all eyes were on the dwarf's tiny foot. That tiny foot was suddenly at the centre of History.

Gerasimakis lifted his foot. He lightly stepped on the first dead sternum, which must have belonged to the muleteer, Spyrou, one of the disease's latest victims, and tested the bridge's stability. It seemed to hold, so he hesitantly placed both feet on the dead man. Memory saves, joked Sofia, as the dwarf moved over the first three corpses, ably connected with older bones, and was about to step on the fourth. He was almost at the opposite bank. As he was about to step on the next corpse, No, not my father, not my father, shouted Iakovos Moulkeas, who worked at the bank, recognizing his father as the fourth link in the chain of the dead, Ignatios

Moulkeas, the banker, one of the co-founders of the Bank of Saltponds, no longer able to count banknotes or inspect bills of exchange, wrapped tightly in his yellow tarpaulin, in the freezing caress of the foaming waters of the Blackcloth. Not my father!

The others attempted to calm Iakovos down. It doesn't matter, the man is dead. Would you rather we didn't cross for the sake of a dead man? My father, my father! he kept on shouting, but just then a solution presented itself accidentally: Gerasimakis, as he was about to step on Ignatios's bloated chest, slipped, grabbed hold of the ropes and without meaning to passed over the dead man, stumbled on to the next corpse, two or three more, and suddenly found himself standing on the opposite shore. It's alright, Iakovos, Gerasimakis didn't step on your father...

Grigorios stood alone on top of the same boulder where the notary, Protonotarios, had first suggested the idea that morning, looking, to the extent that he could in the darkness, at the opposite bank. By now several of the former residents of Saltponds had crossed over and large torches were already burning to light the way. Crossing the deadbridge would take a long time, maybe the whole of the next day. A bullet whizzed past him and lodged itself on the wall of the small chapel that stood behind the boulder, while riders with bandoliers slung over their chests moved through the darkness in front of him like ghosts. I stepped on my father, I stepped on my father, Iakovos's voice could still be heard echoing when the crossing was complete.

As the last man in the March, old Phaedon, was standing on the last dead body – wrapped in sacks tied with wire – one unexpected slip, a small, accidental digression from the path, and a barely audible splash: Phaedon managed to drag himself out of the water, but the dead man was unwillingly freed from his wires and sacks, and the makeshift bridge fell apart, the rest of the bodies separated and, free and fraying, floated away in the black waters, lit by the torches planted now on both

banks, turning the river to a real, underlit Acheron, leading its passengers who could say where.

And as the dead bodies, the pieces of this lifesaving bridge, drifted away, the one that Iakovos had claimed to be his father, in a motion that was no doubt caused by a small eddy, seemed to lightly bend its black-clad arm at the elbow, faintly waving goodbye.

Christos YANNARAS

Ouverture

*My beloved has gone.
My soul failed me when he spoke.*

We come to know love only in the context of failure. Before failure no knowledge exists. Knowledge always follows after eating the fruit of life. In every love the experience of tasting paradise and losing paradise is reborn. In the pursuit of love we are exiled from the fullness of life which love alone grants.

In the experience of love we are all like Adam and Eve. The experience of others teaches us nothing. For each of us love is the first and greatest lesson of life, the first and greatest disappointment. The greatest lesson because we pursue in love the *mode* of life. The greatest disappointment because the *mode* proves to be inaccessible to our human nature.

Our human nature (that indefinable mixture of our soul and body) 'knows' with absolute clarity that the fullness of life is attained only in the reciprocity of relation. In a reciprocal wholeness of self-offering. Consequently our nature invests love with an unquenchable thirst, a thirst for life that belongs to our body and soul.

We thirst for life, but the possibility of life seems viable only through a relationship with the Other. In the person of the Other we seek the reciprocity of relation. The Other becomes life's 'signifier', corresponding to the deepest desires of our nature. Perhaps what we are infatuated with is not the person of the Other, but our needs mirrored in his or her person. Perhaps the Other is a fantasy and our response self-deception. This only becomes apparent in the context of failure.

After the experience of failure we recognize that love is the *mode* of life, but a mode inaccessible to our human nature. Our nature thirsts hopelessly for relation, but lacking the knowledge of how to exist in the *mode* of relation is constantly disappointed. It does not know how to share, how to give of itself. It only knows how to make life its own, how to appropriate and exploit it. If the taste of fullness is a communion of life with the Other, our natural drive destroys this communion, turning it into a possessive and demanding domination of the Other. The loss of paradise is never an imposed punishment. It is an exile we bring upon ourselves.

The mode of life is something we seek as a lost paradise. Deprived of its presence, we fumble for it in the impression it has left behind. The mark etched by the mode of life is the bitterness of loneliness within our soul, a loveless solitude. A taste of death, and with this taste you measure out your life. Death takes you on board, as a member of his crew, for you to navigate your journey through life, enabling you to understand that existence is about the fullness of relation. Only then will you sight the shores of meaning: Life means stepping back from the demands of your own life for the sake of the Other's life. It means living unselfishly in order to receive the self-offering of the Other. Not existing and then loving as an afterthought, but existing because you love, and in the degree in which you love.

We thirst for life yet we do not thirst for it with thoughts or ideas. Nor even with our will. We thirst for it with our body and soul. Life's energy, sown within our nature, fills every corner of our being. It drives relentlessly towards relation, towards a sharing of existence: to become one with the world's objective reality, one with the earth's beauty, the vast expanse of the sea, the taste of fruits, the scent of flowers. One body with the Other. Reciprocity with the world only comes through our relationship with the Other. The Other is the world's face, the essence of its objective reality. This reality addresses me and calls me to a universal communion of

being. It promises me the world of life and shows me the breathtaking loveliness of wholeness. Through the one relation.

Translated by Norman Russell

Eleni ZACHAROPOULOU

INTEGRITY-LIKE

*A violent wind,
a downpour,
extinguished outlines,
erosions...
Shadows of things,
words tire us.*

*My hour of weakness
is a trackless forest.*

*Every evening
a needy memory
lurks at my window,
like the echo of a subdued comeback —
dismissed by my thought —
like the echo of a degradation
that points at me and executes me.*

*The reasons are nets in the mind
and none of their weighing
convinces me any more.*

*The hour of weakness
is a forest of abandonment.*

*Every evening
an anxious power
expands my wakeful hours;
stays up with me all night.
It demands to know the orbit
of its stars.*

*A stony weariness too heavy to be lifted
deeper than the abyss.*

From *Weaving Wind*, 2004

THE HORSESHOE

*A horseshoe
Hangs on the wall,
Reminiscent of a street, a gallop,
The musical harmony of movement.
A would-be shape, elliptical,
Open to interpretation.*

*Prompted by instinct you try to round it;
You insist on devising it
As a perfect circle.*

*It's that you reject deficient forms,
Signs that merely promise
Hope's free analgesic.*

*It's that you want to ignore
The fight in needfulness;
In scarcity the prospect
Of holiness;
Simplicity happy in myth.*

*It's that you fought hard
In the earth's harsh word
In order to accept
The circle, and the horseshow, and the myth.*

From
Time Immemorial

*Meditation, too,
Is a kind of loneliness.*

'How can I understand you?' you asked.

*Silence is in the words,
Beyond them
Lots of silences occupy them.*

*Which word of yours has room for
The soul's entire thrill?
And what voice, more divine,
Can join your cry?*

*There is always an extra truth
In the gorge of silence.
And our words
Are slippery dialectics,
Footsteps on the sand.*

*'Consolidate what?' you asked.
'Which movement
And which slow flow
Should I check ?
Reconcile how
Life's adversities
And contradictions?'*

*From time immemorial
Night has been parallel
To the reason of dawn.*

*Only the moment
Convinces me as time passes.
And what things fatally hurt us
Are trees in leaf
On the glowing shore across the way.*

And the more darkness, the more light.

TO MYSELF

I

*Don't awaken the memory
Saddened as it is;
Miserable accountancy,
A bitter tank,
Futile words.
Truth rests in matters,
In our heart options
And divine law.
And behind masks
And pretexts
The soul is alone
In sullen silence.*

II

*The crowd, triumphant in the cheering
Of the easy transaction, is in a hurry.
A raw thrill exists
In the love of possession
In the arrogance of certainties.*

*And the original fight
Is invariably lost.*

III

*Certainties don't exist
Nowadays;
The lightning of the next moment
Suffices for another step;
There where certainty and uncertainty
Are negated
And truth and lie
Are confused.*

IV

The past is spectral,

The future uncharted.

Time is either an unwritten agreement

Or a notion.

Chance in life is sometimes

Without pity and regrets;

Without sanctity.

THE PITCHFORK

to my mother

You came all of a sudden

In the midst of the night shadows

With willpower,

With temperate love.

You were holding a pitchfork.

'Are you still struggling

With those wretched verses? you asked.

'Still digging into abstruseness,

Weighing impasses,

Raking up uncertainties

And other wounds?

You've filled the pages with voiceless blood.

The mental weeds

Have come up to the landing.

Their hard roots are digging the foundations;

They've become veins in your body.

Can't you see?

You scolded me as when I was a child.

And all of a sudden, as you came,

So you vanished, a wind

From another time, from another memory.

You left the pitchfork with me.

SANCTUM

A poem has

An invisible mask,

The line of its lips

Enigmatic,

Eyes chaotic,

Taking pains to contain

More sky.

Behind the words

*Is the frightened look
As spectacles so performed,
The consecrated bread
Officiating in secret
In the sanctum of the soul.*

*A poem has
A sharp mask
Of crystallized memories
That furrow
Its innermost hideouts.*

PONDERING ON REASON

*The wall was there, right between us,
With harsh inscriptions, with gaping crevices.*

*'There's no moon tonight,
There's no visibility', you said.
And the darkest of nights
Engulfed the surrounding space.
But I could see the wall
Rising
And the moment falling
And vanishing in a flash.*

*Close at hand,
The road came to a precipitous end.*

*In the distance, a wrought iron gate shut,
And the dog's barking
Gradually faded away.*

*Did you hear a vanquished music
Tonight?
It was mine—
More spent, emptier, lonelier*

*Did you feel it? It was me
Behind the wall.*

From *Mutual Transference*, 1999

THE ATTENDANCE REGISTRAR

*With an attendance register in hand,
I feel depressed again.
Anna, do you remember?
'Don't mark me absent, you'd say to me,
Toying with my sense of duty
And our friendship.*

*I had guilty feelings,
But you shone with freedom
On the hill behind with the butterflies.*

*I feel depressed again;
So much
And so many are missing...
So many dear ones
A great way off
In the marble garden
With the oleanders.*

*The classroom is covered with shadows.
Their silences slide
On the papers, imploring me:
'Mark us absent as we are
That we should not be forgotten!'
The rules of the game
Change in time.
The pencil grows heavy.
The copybook is blank.*

Translated by Yannis Goumas

George ZARKADAKIS

The Passage

1.

We watched it together, the last sunset of the world. Sitting together in the hot and dump sand that stuck to our skin like a kiss. On the beach where I worshiped You and spent my days waiting for You to awake and enter the sea naked; then surface again covered in white salty froth. There were gusts of wind, sighs of sky, heaves of sea. We watched in silence. Soon enough the sun tumbled down turning pink, then bloody, a miraculous molten canvas of unimaginable colors, of reds, of yellows, of blues, of greens, of radiant intensity, a volcanic sun. There had been many sunsets since the world begun, each one unique a composition, each one unlike no other. Yet none like the one we saw together then; for that sunset would be the last.

This, I could not have known. Neither could You, nor anyone, habituated as we were in the wheels of repetition. You had become my sea and I had become your salt. We were transformed into a pair of abyssal creatures of the brine that knew no compunction, indifferent to the tides of impression. I was a different person then, sated, free of quest, lacking in nothing. Days came, then spent; I never mourned for their passing. The future, so folks savvier than us said, was pre-destined and oblivious to the whims of mortal souls; it sat in the limbo of our dreams, waiting. Waiting for us. You were my future. So I had no worry.

Wild rumors would occasionally reach us, about many things, imminent upheavals and the like; mountains that remained white-capped throughout the year, never melting their ice, refusing to turn whites into greens, solids to fluids, reflecting

the sunlight with conspicuous audacity; icebergs that floated audaciously into what were once waters of warm. Prophets were generous in their anathemas and warnings. And yet, somehow, all that irregularity seemed wonderfully meaningful to us, a sensual seduction to behold and reflect upon in childish wonder. Whatever we were told gave us pleasure. A meaning was to be quarried out of everything. For we thought we knew it all and nothing could hurt us.

And then the Cold came. When it was least expected.

Life ceased to flow, it crystallized, was trapped in incongruity. We became ignorant. We relapsed to barbarism. Everything we thought we knew, the infinite corpus of sagacity stored in auspicious libraries and the minds of wise teachers, our total learning through the ages was vaporized into nothingness — that's what I have to say, my final comment, my ultimate conclusion, my epitaph.

No one expected the Cold, not You not me, not anyone. Except, perhaps, the birds. They saw it coming all right. They took measures. Flocking over towns and cities, sky-scrappers and squares, parks and factories, harbors and rivers, fields and mountains, heading for wherever the sun had fled never to return. It was to be their last migration. The *last*. And all that followed, from the earth shattering to the least significant, from the smallest to the largest, would from then on, like a cursed stigma, bear the epithet 'last'.

That summer was the last.

We sucked at the ultimate drops of sun. We made plans for many summers-to-come. We didn't want to change, because we didn't believe a winter could come that would never leave. Not even the migrated birds had us suspecting that this winter was at the gates. Normality held such certainty for us. We paid for our ignorance in full.

'Extreme weather', television broadcasters opined at last, the newspapers, the radio, 'the greenhouse effect in reverse', El Nino and El Nina refusing adulthood, the Gulf Stream disarrayed, cyclones and anticyclones, conflicting currents that whirled indecisively, Antarctica spreading instead of shrinking, some unexpected realignment of the Earth's magnetic field, the glaciers returning ahead of schedule — quite frankly, we didn't have a clue about all those affectations, 'sensory delusion', the skeptics commented, 'temporary climatic anomalies', some experts soothingly declared, who'd grasp exactly what was going on after studying and analyzing it further, who'd come up with a solution. After all that's why we had conferences, symposia, conventions, round table discussions: to find the solutions. Everything would return to normal then, back in the familiar routine, the planet's thermostat ticking smoothly again, the migrations of the birds (not that we'd missed them that much) in working order, the natural flow of things restored, that flow so infrequently perceived, so undervalued and trivialized precisely because it's so, oh well, natural.

But the birds did not return. And the ice did not melt.

And the sun set for the last time.

We watched it together on that endless beach (do you remember?), silently. The heat absorbed in our skin. You had sand in your hair and sea-shells graced your toes. You drew a sky in the sand with your finger and said: 'Look. This is the sky, this is the land, this is the sea—you can tell from the waves—and these two dots are you and me.'

The sun was an apple.

'I'll make the apple hide,' you whispered. 'I'll hide it and if you find it, I'll be yours forever.'

Your apple sun sank into the sea, swallowed up by an abyss of boiling, seething waters. I looked around and You were gone.

These things—farewells—are always over so quickly.

And then the clouds came, sweeping in like black horses at a gallop.

Weather satellites recorded them, aircraft encountered them, researchers analyzed them, a mass of monstrous bruises that formed over the oceans, as though spewed out of their darkest depths. ‘Creation in reverse,’ came an air-head’s comment, ‘an aerial cyclone of gigantic proportions’ contradicted a more astute mind, ‘Chaos breaking free from Tartara and rising unto the Upper World,’ cawed everyone in chorus. And when enough clouds had gathered, they began to spread, like a many-headed, thick-tentacle monster preying on light.

The hemispheres grew dark, the north and the south.

The beach went out with a whimper.

Your drawing grew dim, like the apple that was our sun.

The stars were never seen again, nor the moon. The galaxies vanished and even the most powerful telescope proved powerless to find them again.

You vanished in the Cold.

I stood on the beach for a time numbly staring at the clouds that had come to stay. Sensing the world’s immovable edge grow dim. Attuning my ears to the waves’ quiet roar in the hope of detecting Your voice.

And when waiting grew too long to bear, when the water washed Your footprints from the sand, when my body ceased to need Yours, I found myself returning to the place I’d set out from; to the streets of the city that had held me prisoner before Your love had set me free.

And there everything began.

From *The Passage*. A novel, 2006

Yannis ZARKADIS

THE FIRE

*I' am sitting before the fire.
How long I can't remember
or if I ever moved away.
I don't know why
I' m sitting before the fire
or why I fan it
as soon as it's about to go out.
I don't even know if it's the fire
or the flames that are consuming it.
I've never heard of anyone passing it by
or anyone turning their back on it.
I'm sitting before the fire.
Behind it in the darkness are my folks.*

From *Sarcophagos*, 2002. Translated by David Connolly,

Katerina ZAROKOSTA

The Ephemeras

I didn't know the ephemeras existed until I met Dialehti.⁵¹ Summer was at its height. I'd found myself a Frenchman. He was in his thirties, a bit of a writer, a bit of a film director, he was pretty vague about it. Not that it mattered much. He was good fun, great in bed – that was enough.

We started out for the Peloponnese on a rented scooter. A tape recorder blasting in my ear, the Beatles, the Bee Gees – my generation. We lit up the evenings with beach fires, sped through time with our youth, sped the distances heading south.

We stopped at a petrol station – 'fill it up, please' – and then I saw her eyes, big and solemn behind her glasses. A tiny white cloud of mayflies followed her about. Not white, they were translucent and minute against the clear sky. 'They are the ephemeras', she said gravely. 'They come out in the morning, feed on flowers and die in the evening. That's why we call them ephemeras. They cluster around me and bother me in my work, but I can't chase them off since they don't have long to live. They cry when they're dying'.

We paid. She went to get the change, still surrounded by the white cloud that followed her everywhere. That night I dreamt about her. A radiance enveloped her like a halo, her big eyes staring out from behind her glasses. She spoke to me in a

⁵¹ Dialehti is a Greek name, meaning 'chosen'.

language I couldn't comprehend, although I knew somehow that what she was saying had significance.

After that, summer took on the colours of autumn for me. Outside it was shining but my heart was filled with ephemeras and neither the Frenchman nor the Bee Gees or the bonfires on the beach could change that. On the third day I said: 'let's go back to that filling station'. I wanted to see her again. She had a message for me. When she had brought me the change, I told her. 'I have to ask', she answered calmly as if she was expecting my proposition.

'Farewell to the Frenchman', I said to myself. 'My life has been a series of false moves. What's the difference if I make another one?'

I spent the rest of the summer with her. We worked at the petrol station mornings and evenings. At the peak of the heat we sat in the shade and she taught me the secrets. I learned why snakes go hunting at midday, I learned to sense the plant inside the seed, to see a star in a grain of sand, but more than anything I learned to master the ephemeras.

Gypsies had camped outside the village. It was the tomato season and they had come down from the north for day work. Skirts that seemed to flutter with life of their own; heads in scarves; open-necked dresses and eyes that reflected lost places. The men were dressed just like the locals. Even here it was the women who kept up the traditions, not realizing how this weighed them down.

In the evening the young men got into their trucks and came into the village. They whistled at us as we passed them on our way to the café Germania for an ice cream.

She liked to walk around outside the camp. 'Look,' my friend used to say pointing out their colourful weavings, their embroideries and their bright carpets

neatly stretched out on the dirt. 'They carry their home in their heart and even if they are setting up camp just for a day, they do it as if it were forever'.

At night as they danced round their fires, we hid in the bushes and watched. The ephemeras kept us company. She knew how to command them in a secret language. 'Usually they don't come out at night', she said. 'Only for me and a few others, because we are their soul'.

'There was a gipsy child', she said, 'naked as the branches of the winter trees. A car hit him on the road. It doesn't hurt being dead, you know. It's like before being born. His mother held him in her arms. Her other children hung on her skirt. All around the ephemeras glittered in the moonlight and she knew that although one fruit had died the tree had many more to give. Still she cried. That's the way it has been done since the very beginning. If you can feel that, you become immortal'.

I used to say: 'when a person dies a world dies with him'. She never replied. Her silence was as precious as her words. I had learned to understand it.

Memory has altered, maybe even distorted our conversations. It never occurred to me to ask her how she knew. I was peacefully enjoying the last of the summer. Each day enlarged my life's treasures. I was experiencing something unique: a state of sympathy for people, for the sunburned trees, the smooth hills, the sea, the moon and the night. I was near the quick of life, sucking its sap which felt cool like the dew on the grass and hides in small, humble things: the wind among the weeds, the ochre of an August afternoon. It also resides in great things – in work that stays after you're gone, in the high light of joy. My body was responding to the heartbeat of the world. I was alive – what a gift! But next to me she was silently folding up her wings.

Summer came to an end. I left. I was carried away by everyday restlessness, petty anxieties. The city at night. The moon coming down to the bars, reflected in a

glass of gin, shining in the caresses of passing love affairs, soothing the agony of those who attempt the impossible. Every now and then I would dream of her. The ephemeras lit up a gipsy skirt in front of the fire. The fields were folding in themselves for the night. During the day I forgot her. In those days I was struggling to raise my voice above the million others. But the memory of that other life stayed in me like a distant reverberation of a plain, simple nature – sowing and harvesting, beginning and ending, light and darkness. I had made my choice, but part of me lingered in another place, the secret, sealed world where fate is decided.

I went back at Christmas. All had changed. The colours. It rained. The field where the gypsies had made their camp was filled with garbage and plastic bottles. In my heart, the darkness. She had been dead less than a month. Death had been lurking inside her since summer, the doctor had said. Her parents did not welcome me. They had never thought much of our friendship. Fairly well off by their own standards – they owned the only petrol station in the area. This death struck at the order of things, it destroyed their middle-class certainty that all sorts of people have the same needs. They had lost a child they had never been able to understand. Death had taken away words that were never spoken, kisses that were never given. Without her husband knowing, the mother came to me, stifling her tears, and said that her daughter hadn't suffered much and that she had asked for me before dying. Her message was not to forget our secrets. And the ephemeras.

The rain washed her fingerprints off the pumps, washed away her footsteps between the office and the pump, the sound of her voice as she counted the change. The ephemeras had disappeared. Perhaps it wasn't their season. I kept remembering her words, her stature, her peaceful attitude. Something was torn up inside me, something beyond human nature. I fell into a ditch. It felt good to dip my hands in the mud, fill my hair with it, smear it on my face, my clothes. The earth was her

body. I couldn't cry, not with my eyes, but my hands, my breast, my belly were crying. My whole body mourned her.

Her name was Dialehti. She wasn't quite twelve. She taught me the secrets. I feel I have betrayed her.

Zyranna ZATELI

From

Death Came Last,

UNDER THE ODD NAME OF RAMANTHES EREBUS

And they saw it. The wind was carrying it here and there – they saw it again tossing about like a rag in the storm and the saddest thing about these rags is that they can suffer hell on earth. The children caught on; from the little they knew, they had caught on. Besides, they had already felt the first chill; it only remained for them to open their eyes.

‘Christ!’ said the one; and instead of crossing himself, he repeated nervously, almost without feeling, the words his older brother would say whenever he had a hang-up or reached a deadlock with his wife: ‘Christ, think Yourself lucky that You were crucified and not married!’

The other one stood stock-still, dumbstruck. ‘You call this a marriage?’ he asked himself without breathing a word.

And it was, in fact, equally racking, if not worse than being crucified. An unhappy moment, unhappy or perhaps unforeseen, had united two stray dogs for the purpose of propagating; but they were caught in the oddest and most lamentable manner and left to the five winds. And there they went, from Anna to Caiaphas, the female carrying on her back the male, the latter no longer up to par, of course: two poor dogs knotted together –one or two, you couldn’t actually say– resigned to their drama and puling; their drama unsparingly parodied and

prolonged, since nature won't allow them –them and wolves– to become disentangled and go their ways before reaching a climax.

And here they were now, driven to despair that would have excited the envy of the most distressed individual, searching for the treasure of a modicum of affection, in dire need of mercy –mercy or whatever: a coup de grace, for that matter– here they were, close to the children again. The children's despair, too, the envy of the dogs.

'What shall we do? Look at them!' mumbled the smaller-built one (though older by seven months), as one of the dogs, that which functioned as a pivot for the other, licked excitedly his wet sleeve, as if all the rain in heaven wasn't enough to quench its thirst; at the same time, the other dog, the rider, had come almost full circle at the point of conjunction – its hind legs in the air and the female moaning with pain – growling its entreaties to the second child who, scared stiff, had abandoned his mate and stood off. There he squatted and hunched his back, but not without turning to look at the goings-on from under his arm... But the muzzle of the second dog, the biggest, reached as far as him, its eyes and nostrils telling him what its mouth couldn't utter.

'What shall we do?' asked again the boy who kept on losing and recovering his speech. 'We'll melt in the rain; the earth has swallowed Zaphos up; what are we to do with these bloody dogs?'

'How do I know? I'm not God Almighty!' said the other irritated; and drawing himself up to his full height, he spat on the ground.

'Well, up till now it was do this and do that', the other one reminded him, averting his eyes – his dark look riveted on the canine mating.

'That was before Christ', muttered the older-looking one, who also couldn't take off his eyes and whose look wasn't any brighter.

Lightning danced everywhere, hissing in the air like fiendish snakes that had abandoned the earth only to return; the rain refused to let up; the day –if it was still daylight– resembled not even a night for werewolves, not even the whole thing, this confused situation; only some weird, nightmarish and incomparably awe-inspiring places nowhere to be seen, except perhaps in sleep, in some incredible dreams, thinking from a mind’s depth that hell and paradise must be something like this. However, all this, everything, lost impetus for the two young and hitherto Peeping Toms, even though they were somewhat unlucky on that particular afternoon: Zaphos coming off with flying colours and afterwards disappearing and leaving them on their own. For a moment or two, the one standing almost upright and the other still sitting, observed the two dogs twisting and wailing all the time, labouring to find a more comfortable position in their bodily melee; and once they found it – without surmounting their difficulties, of course – they both turned their heads towards him who showed greater indulgence. But before laying a tongue on him, they waited for a sign, some encouragement, or maybe a par.

‘Well. well, well!’ burst out the order. ‘Get up and give them a kick! They’ve taken you for a cripple!’

‘I... cccan’t... I feel sorry for them’, he replied coyly. ‘I feel sorry for them’, he repeated, this time clearly and outright and buried his face in his hands.

‘Then I’ll do it’, said the other. ‘I too feel sorry for the fuckers, but, well... it’s disgusting. Enough is enough’, he went on undecided, though one wouldn’t put it past him. He looked for this whirligig and it was nowhere to be found his hands empty – where on earth could the whirligig have gone? ‘Enough is enough’, he repeated.

The animals sensed the threat and barked wilfully; but they moved restlessly on the spot, almost defiantly — two dogs on six legs! — as though demanding from the heartless boy to do what he had to do and not prolong their hopes.

And taking off his right shoe with due tact, rain-sodden and heavy as it was, he flung it at them with a deep cry: 'Go away!' And the dogs once again took to flight — this time from Caiaphas to Anna, to the latter again.

She was called Anna, the woman beyond, Zaphos' apparent 'cousin', who had dreamed of wild roses the previous night.

Thrown against the wall, all shook-up after the last flash of lightning and the shriek that vibrated in the air following the long roll of thunder... and now lying almost unconscious on the ground after the unexpected easing off which somehow pepped her up and at the same time horrified her, to the point of collapsing — now that everything was fading out if what was happening around her was something totally different to a faint, elusive memory... all of a sudden she felt again that howl near her — in her ears, her nostrils, this close now — and a moist, tremulous breath on her chin, her cheeks and her temples, something which obliged her to open her eyes again with a pained curiosity and naturally she didn't want to accept the fact, she couldn't, that a whimpering dog with two heads was standing there, sniffing at her! 'Why has everything turned out bad today?' she thought, 'so very bad...' And she passed out.

It was an afternoon in late July, towards the end of the fifties, when all this happened; at sunset on a day surprisingly chilly for this time of the year, biting, as though caressing and with a strange light for this late hour, soft, roseate — 'What, is the day just dawning?' you might have asked — until all of a sudden things began to change, auguring disasters. All those whose houses stood at the foot of the mountain

— people living on their own or with families — and were lucky enough to hear the wind rising and the boom of the sea descending from the mountainside sweeping everything before it, spoke about something they had never heard before in all their born days. But they would have said the same about the lightning and something similar about the downpour. As for the rest, they'd be at a loss for words...

Translated by Yannis Goumas

Alki ZEI

Green Paint

They were all of them different now: his mother and his father too; even he himself. Only Antigone remained the same. She still put her hair up in sixty-eight curling rags every night, as she always had; she still scribbled poetry in a notebook with a red cover. And she still carried on endless conversations with Rita. Although Petros knew well enough that Antigone was every bit as hungry as he was, she and Rita never discussed food and eating. They just chattered about Uncle Angelos and that poet, Kosta Agorinos.

Every Saturday night Rita came and slept at their house. Ever since the Occupation a curfew had been in effect. No one was allowed to go about in the streets at night; and so, even though their houses were not far apart, the girls couldn't stay late at each other's houses. Even though Mama worried about Petros, she permitted him to go about as much as he liked, even after dusk. She insisted, however, on Antigone's getting home very early. If she were the least bit late, Mama would leave off working and wait at the window until she caught sight of her. In fact, ever since the day when Antigone encountered one of the Hunter's fellow officers at the entrance to the building, and he said to her in Greek, 'Good evening. Where did you get those beautiful brown eyes?' Mama always went downstairs and waited for her at the door whenever she was a little late coming home.

Saturday nights his sister could very easily have stayed at Rita's house, but Mama wouldn't hear of it. They had not yet begun to molest Jews in Athens. Still, you never knew what might happen. Supposing they burst into Rita's house without

warning, and took Antigone for a Jew too! And so, on weekends, Rita came and shared Antigone's bed. Petros could hear until late in the night. He couldn't help listening. They talked so loudly, giggling and exchanging a thousand silly secrets. But their chatter at least kept him from seeing visions of the starving people who had fainted in the streets.

The girls talked about the flower that Antigone had left behind one day at school. She had left it on a table which, during the day, served as a school desk; at night it was a desk for the staff of the magazine Pegasus. Antigone had discovered that it was, in fact, the very one that Kostas Agorinos used.

The next day, on the very spot where she had left the flower, she had found a white shell. On it was written in letters so precise that they seemed to have been printed, THANK YOU.

'You're in love!' Rita assured her. 'I was watching you when you picked up that shell. Your hands were shaking.'

'No other girl ever received a shell instead of a letter!' Antigone said it so joyfully you'd think she'd eaten a whole cheese pie for supper.

That evening Iannis came to find Petros, as he had told Mama he would.

'Can you come with us?' His voice had a conspiratorial ring to it. 'We are going out to paint the walls.'

'To paint the walls?' Petros echoed in surprise. This was something completely unexpected.

'Yes. That is, for the time being I'll do the painting and you'll keep a lookout. If you see anyone coming, you'll start singing a song.'

'What song?'

'We'll decide on that before we go.'

Petros was still having a hard time understanding what Iannis was talking about.

‘What are you going to paint the walls for?’ he asked.

‘We’ll write slogans,’ Iannis said. ‘Like ‘WE ARE HUNGRY! GIVE US FOOD’. You’ll see, Petros,’ he went on. ‘We won’t perish of hunger. This is the first step. Everything else will come later.’

It was as though he were listening to the lunatic in pyjamas. Was it possible that Iannis also knew Michalis?

‘Some write with red paint,’ Iannis continued, ‘and some with blue, and some with green. We’ll write with green paint.’

Petros nodded eagerly. Green was the colour he liked best.

They arranged to meet at six, near the school. They would go on together to a house that Iannis knew. There they’d pick up the paint and a brush, and then they’d start off. Iannis asked Petros’s mother if she would let him stay out until curfew. He explained that they would be going to the house of a friend of his to work on a shadow theatre. Mama liked Iannis, so she agreed.

‘You’ll be doing me a favour. I’d feel better knowing he was with you instead of roaming the streets.’

When Mama left the room Iannis added, ‘And we’ll be doing a shadow play, in a matter of speaking, so it’s not exactly a lie.’

Nevertheless, Petros scowled. He had been waiting for Iannis to ask them to blow up a train, or to set fire to the Commadatura, and all Iannis could talk about was painting walls.

‘What about that train you promised me?’

Iannis burst into laughter. The ball in his throat bounced up and down uncontrollably. Then he suddenly turned serious. ‘This is only the beginning. At the

house we're going to, I'll introduce you by another name. They call me Kimon. What would you like to be known as?'

Petros started to say 'Diakos' but it seemed rather ridiculous to be called after one of the greatest heroes of the revolution and then just go out and paint walls. Then he wanted to say 'Alexios', but Iannis broke in.

'Pompom. That's what I'll christen you.'

'Pompom!'

'Yes,' Iannis cried. 'Once, when you asked for me at school, and I had already gone, Andreas told me about it the next day. He's in my class, a terrifically funny guy. He said, 'Pompom was looking for you yesterday'. You had on a white knitted cap with a pompom on it.'

Petros was far from sharing Iannis' enthusiasm for the new name. It was as though Iannis knew that he had an argument with Mama over wearing that old white stocking cap: it had been his when he had been a little kid. But it had been freezing weather and he had an earache. Pompom! What would he say to his sons? 'They called me Pompom: it was a name that somebody pulled out of a hat.' He was about to insist to Iannis that they call him Alexios at least, but just at that moment Antigone burst into the room, and Iannis no longer seemed to have anything to say to him. He just blushed up to the ears and said to Antigone in a squeaky voice that you wouldn't have thought belonged to him, 'How's school?'

'All right, thanks,' Antigone replied haughtily.

'And how's Rita?'

'Oh, she's fine. She says hello.'

'Are you trying to act funny?' Iannis demanded hesitantly, not knowing whether to laugh or to be annoyed.

'I'm not trying to act in the least bit funny,' Antigone replied with even greater hauteur. 'And, after all, who are you to talk? When you are out in the street with other people, you make out that you haven't even seen us.'

Iannis stared at her, thoroughly perplexed.

Then Antigone went on to say, in a single breath, how they had seen him the day before when school let out, and he was walking with someone who was tall, olive-complexioned, with speckled green eyes, and who was wearing a thick blue sweater knitted three over and purl one. They had practically bumped into them, but Iannis pretended not to have seen them, and so then the girls decided to follow them. And they did. They saw them stop at a door at 36 Zaimis Street, a green door that was so dark it was practically black. They saw Iannis knock and a girl came out onto the balcony. She had curly blond hair and pale eyes. She made a sign to them and then she went downstairs and opened the door for them.

Iannis stared at Antigone in astonishment.

'But how did you manage to tail us?'

'What do you mean, how?' Antigone burst into mocking laughter. 'We just walked behind you, but you were so absorbed in what you had to say to each other that you weren't even aware of our presence!'

'A fine pair we must have made,' Iannis said. He frowned for a moment. Then he added, 'Would you like me to introduce you to him?'

'Of course!' Antigone said, excitedly. She had already forgotten her irritation. 'Rita will simply be thrilled! She says the tall man is the spitting image of Tyrone Power.'

That nearly started another argument because Iannis said that Tyrone Power was a stupid actor without a trace of talent. He had long eyelashes and absolutely

nothing else! Whereas his friend – well, when he introduced them to him they'd see for themselves!

From

Pertros's War

When I was small and they sent me to the island to Liza's side of the family, I used to say that there couldn't be any greater happiness in life. I was a quiet girl, insignificant. I didn't bother anyone, and I liked to walk around alone in the narrow streets of the island and tell myself stories. Sometimes I stayed with Liza's aunts and sometimes with her cousins. I put all my things in a little basket and each afternoon I chose which house I'd like to sleep in that night.

'Aunt Alcestis!'

'Aunt Amphitriti!'

'Aunt Yiasemouli!'

'Can I stay tonight?'

'Come on up, Daphnoula.'

All the aunts were plump and smelled nice. They spoiled me and I liked to sit on their laps and bury my face in their perfumed necks. Liza didn't like hugging and I was starved for affection. In my basket I had a zinc biscuit-tin where I kept thirty-one pure white pebbles. I collected them on the beach the first day I arrived on the island. My father wouldn't let me stay one day longer. Each evening I would throw one pebble into the sea, and as they got fewer, the sadness I felt about leaving overshadowed my joy, even if I had days still ahead of me.

In Rome I count my days by my visits to Gaeta Street. Twenty days still. Twenty more days with Jean-Paul. Twenty more days to be Daphne. I try to bury Eleni away somewhere. Gaeta Street, Liza's letters, and the Greek newspapers that they send me every so often make her appear, angry and threatening, in front of me.

'How could you...' How could I? Marie-Therese sent a telegram to Achilles about the visa and he answered: 'The requisite efforts are being made.' 'Don't let them be late, Achilles, these 'requisite efforts'; don't let them be late!'

Rome is a magical city. No, I wasn't renouncing anyone. Just taking a breath. The latest Greek newspapers write that they caught Windblown and Kostis. Only the Lion of Denfert escaped. Maybe Liza had hidden him. Kostis had promised me a new dress and a real dance. Achilles had promised that Athens would be ours in a year. Jean-Paul didn't promise anything – just a breath.

I close the newspapers and banish Eleni, Achilles' fiancée, to a distant land. Now I'm Daphne, Jean-Paul's girlfriend. 'La sua ragazza,' says the waiter at the bar where Jean-Paul and I meet, every day, late in the afternoon, to drink cappuccino. I like to arrive a few minutes late. He's already seated on a high stool with his back to the door. The waiter sees me come in and announces to him triumphantly: 'La sua ragazza' – your girlfriend! Jean-Paul turns his head without getting off the stool. 'I ordered your cappuccino,' he says and kisses me softly on the lips.

[...] When we get back to Jean-Paul's room it's already getting dark. I pull the cover off the divan, undress, and bury myself in the cool sheets. Jean-Paul lies down beside me. We leave the window open, even if it's still a little chilly. Our bodies get warm from each other. The pigeons fly off the terrace and go to perch on the low roof opposite. The bells ring for vespers.

At one such hour I spoke to Jean-Paul about Eleni, Achilles' fiancée. When I'd finished I was in agony. Maybe I shouldn't have said anything? I didn't dare turn

around and look at him. He stayed still for a moment and then hugged me tight. Maybe he was anxious for me to leave? No, he couldn't believe that I, who look like a carefree girl, could have been through so much in my life. He was especially impressed by Matina's story. How could such terrible things happen in such a beautiful country! He doesn't ask anything about Achilles. As if it doesn't concern him.

'Will you miss me?'

I don't see any sign of anxiety in his look. He lets go of me a little and answers calmly with conviction:

'How will you go there? They won't let you.'

He didn't say: 'I won't let you.' That much I'm sure of – he didn't say it.

'I'd like you to stay beside me all night.'

Jean-Paul doesn't know I haven't spent a whole night even with Achilles.

[...] I wake up with the touch of silk on my fingers. Achilles is asleep with his face turned to the wall. I get up and go behind the screen where Daphne's crib is. The light comes from a little night-lamp with a weak blue globe. When she's asleep she looks very much like Liza, the same fine features. I bend over and kiss her. 'We'll go to Greece, Daphnoula, you must see Liza, it's not right for you not to meet Liza. It's impossible for me to go back to bed. I go into the kitchen and sit near the table with my head resting on my folded arms. I haven't woken up properly. Tomorrow, that is, today, I'll call Andreas to come over and we'll telephone Liza. It's a month since they've installed our telephone and Andreas doesn't leave me in peace: Let's call Liza, and let's call Liza. I'm the one who puts it off. I feel as if, when I hear her voice, I'll lose my balance. A letter from Liza, sent two months ago to Marie-Therese, gave me two big pieces of news: my sister-in-law has given birth to

twin boys, and there's a telephone in our house. I remember how they used to call me to the phone from the cafe opposite. 'I'm writing you the number in case there's a possibility.' And now that that 'possibility' has come, I hesitate.

During our first days in Moscow, Andrea's nostalgia seemed to abate, and mine seemed suddenly to stop. I was overwhelmed by the thousand and one new and exciting things that I was seeing for the first time. But I hadn't noticed that my nostalgia had shrunk back, somewhere inside me, into a corner, awaiting the time when it would spring up again, fierce and tormenting. Andreas, too, rushed to the museums and forgot about the 'Angelopoulou' tram-stop and the sweets from the 'Teleion' pastry shop. And why shouldn't he put it all out of his head, since he had begun to paint again! Very tentatively at first, he made sketches in pencil on an awful old pad, the grocer's pad, I used to call it. One day, though, when he was sitting with Lev Illich in his studio, the old painter said to him, absent-mindedly: 'I can't pick up anything at all with my hand any more. Why don't you take the lot: paints, brushes, palette...'

From then on Andreas picked up the brushes and did not put them down again. No, his new works don't look at all like those of De Chirico. Lev Illich says they have strength and optimism and a lot of tenderness. Next year, for certain, he'll have an exhibition, Lev Illich promises him, and what's more he'll arrange permanent residence for him in Moscow.

On the kitchen table is a pile of books I was reading yesterday. If I hadn't had Michail Grigorevich to open up my mind, to give me the exceptions to the rule, the roots, the variations of language, I would have been in real trouble with my correspondence studies. But studying with him is a delight. I had to cross rivers and steppes to bring such a rare teacher into my life. Nadia takes me to the theatre and the ballet. Achilles rarely comes along. The theatre doesn't interest him, he only

visits the collectives and the factories, because 'in the near future, when we go back to Greece and take control of the country, we'll draw on the great experience of the Soviets.' It doesn't occur to him that we might return without 'taking control,' and that, at the very best, a door might half-open and we might quietly and furtively slip in, a few at a time.

From Achilles' Fiancée. Translated by Gail Holst Warhaft

Biographies

Kostas AKRIVOS

was born in Volos (1958). He teaches Greek and Literature in the secondary education. His first contact with literature was in 1985, when he was awarded with the first prize of young authors in a contest held from the newspaper *Ta Nea*. First book came in 1993. After this there have followed many more such as: novels, collection of stories, anthologies, biographical novels and books for the secondary education. He is the editor of the series *A City in Literature* by Metaichmio Publications. Published works include: *When the snake changes its skin* (novel, 2013), *Pandemonium* (novel, 2007) with rights sold to Italy (Crozzetti Editore) and Switzerland (Waldgut Verlag), *Manhood ceremonies. A life in seventeen episodes* (short stories, 2009), and *Does anybody remember Alfons?* (novel, 2010). The novel *Does anybody remember Alfons?* is successfully published in Germany (Groessenwahn Verlag) and *Pandemonium* is due to be published in Poland by Good Books (October 2014).

Orestes ALEXAKIS

was born in Corfu in 1931. He read law in Athens and worked as a lawyer till 1992. He has published the following collections of poetry: *Persephone of Returns* (1974); *The Condors and Countersloping* (1982); *The Brightness* (1983); *Depth* (1985); *The Registrar* (1989); *Honest Games* (1994); *Nictophilia* (1995); *It Existed* (a selection from previous collections and from the unpublished collection *Putting to Sea*, 1999); *They Are Beckoning Me* (poems in rhyme) (2000); *Disguised Time* (privately printed (2005); *Troupe on the Stand* (2006); *Scrapbook* (2009); *Poetry* (collected poems, 2011); *The Knocker* (selected poems, 2014). His collection of Constantine Theotokis' sonnets with a prologue and a lengthy introduction were published in 1999. He has been awarded the Nikiforos Vrettakos Award.

Mitsos ALEXANDROPOULOS

(Amaliada, 1924 – Athens, 2008) was a novelist and literary critic. Studied Law at the University of Athens and attended the Moscow Institute of Literature. Participated in the National Resistance during the German occupation (1941-44), and after the civil war among the political refugees in Romania and subsequently in the Soviet Union, where he married the Greek literature specialist Sonia Ilinskaya. Repatriated in 1975, they settled in Athens. Alexandropoulos' wide ranging work includes Short Stories: *Armed Years*, 1954), *A Recent Story*, 1962), *White Shore*, 1966), *Rough and Tumble*, 1977; 1983), *The Ninth Wound*, 1986, *Returns*, 1999; Novels: *Nights and Dawns*, Vol. I *The City*, 1961), *Nights and Dawns*, Vol. II, *The Mountains*, (1963), *Scenes from the Life of Maximos the Greek* (1976), *Miracles Come on Time*, (1976), *Small Organ for Repatriation*, (1980), *What Remains*, (1994); Biographical Fiction: *Books and Bread. Gorki*, 1980), *More Freedom. Chekhov*, 1981), *The Great Sinner. Dostoyevski*, 1984), *A Man, An Age, Aleksandr Gertsen* (1989), *Mayakovski. The Easy and the Difficult* (2000); Travel: *From Moscow to Moscow. Sailing on the Volga*, (1971), *The Armenians* (1982); Essays: *Resistance -*

Democracy (1975), *Five Russian Classics* (1975), *Russian Literature, From the Eleventh Century to the Revolution of 1917*. 3 vols. (1978; 1979) *A Meeting*. Seferis-Makriyannis (1983), *The King Who Died* (1990), *Demons and the Demonized: Revisiting Dostoyevski* (1992), *Tolstoy, Shakespeare and the Insane* (1996). He also translated numerous works by major Russian writers, such as Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov. He was awarded numerous distinctions, among which the First prize in the Resistance Short Story competition, "Korischades", sponsored by the journal "Epitheorisi Technis" (Art Review) in 1963; the Gorky International Literary Prize (Moscow 1979), for his studies and translations of Russian literature; the State Prize for his fictional biography of Gorki (1981); the "Toumanian" Literary Award (Armenia, Yerevan 1985) for his book *The Armenians* (translated into Armenian in 1984); the State Grand Literary Award (2001) for the entirety of his work; and the the Greek Society of Literary Translators Award (2002) for the Greek rendition from the Russian of *An Account of Igor's Expedition*.

Dimitris ALEXIOU

(Alepochori, Laconia, 1949) is a poet and short story writer. Studied Cinema Direction. He has published ten poetry collections including *Civil War Trilogy* (1976,1980, 1983), *Lexicography* (1979), *Hither side of Plakionas* (1981), *Childhood Sailing* (1983), *Superimposed Myth* (1984), *Toward Asopia* (1991), *Pandemos Aphrodite* (1993), *Contrariwise* (2006), as well as four short story collections *Old Notebooks* (1981), *Minima Athenaica* (1982), *The demolition prepared the construction* (1985). He has published reviews and articles in numerous literary journals in Greece and abroad and selections from his work have been translated into English, Italian, French and Bulgarian. His work has also been included in several Anthologies.

Marigo ALEXOPOULOU

was born in Athens in 1976. She read philosophy and classical philology at the Universities of Athens and Glasgow, where she also did her PhD. Her enthusiasm for comparative approaches to Hellenic studies is conveyed in her academic writing as well as in her work as a poet. She is the author of *The Theme of Returning Home in Ancient Greek Literature. The Nostos of the Epic Heroes* (Edwin Mellen Press 2009). Publications include *Faster than light* (2000); *Missing a day* (2003); *The envy-meter* (2006); *The starts move in line* (2008); and *The era before remedies* (2012). She teaches literature at Athens College.

Vassilis AMANATIDIS

(Thessaloniki, 1970) has published seven collections of poetry (*Dormitory: Nine Nocturnal Parables; House of Ice; Thirty-three, Summer Indoors; 4-D: Four-Dimensional Poems; 7: Poetry for Video Games; other poem: mono-logue*) and two collections of short stories (*Don't Eat Me and Charybdis's Dog*). Two of his plays were staged in Thessaloniki, where he studied Archaeology and Art History. Translated into eleven languages, his poetry has been

published in anthologies and literary journals. Authors he has translated into Greek include Witold Gombrowicz, Isaac Bashevis Singer, e.e.cummings, and Anne Carson. He has performed in international festivals in Italy, Sweden, the UK, Wales, and Germany among others.

Katerina ANGHELAKE - ROOKE

(Athens, 1939) is a poet and translator. Studied foreign languages and literature at the Universities of Nice, France, and Athens. In 1962 graduated from the University of Geneva, as a certified translator-interpreter. She was a Fulbright scholar in the USA (1980-1981) where she taught at Harvard, Utah, and San Francisco State Universities. She worked as a literary translator for numerous publishers both into and from Greek. Her long line of poetry collections include *Wolves and Clouds* (1963), *Poems 63-69* (1971), *Magdalene the Vast Mammal* (1974), *The Scattered Papers of Penelope* (1977), *The Triumph of Constant Loss* (1978), *Counter Love* (1982), *The Suitors* (1984), *When the Body* (1988), *Wind the Epilogue* (1990), *Empty Nature* (1993), *A Fair Desert is the Flesh* (1995), *Lypiou* (1995), *Matter Alone* (2001), *Translating Life's End into Love* (2003), *In the sky of naught with next-to nothing* (2005), *The Anorexia of Existence* (2011) *Poems 1963-2011* (2014). Has published several major writers from English, French and Russian such as Dylan Thomas, Beckett, Heaney, Shakespeare, Albee, Lacarriere, Mayakovsky, Lermontov, Pushkin, Voznesensky. Additionally, she translated and edited a volume of 20 Contemporary American Poets (1983), while she has also translated Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Suffering God* into English as well as the writer's correspondence. Her work has been translated into over ten languages. Has published in numerous periodicals in the U.S., Japan, India and European countries. Is included in several international anthologies, such as *The Other Voice* – Norton (1976). *The Penguin Book of Women Poets* (1978), *Longman Anthology of World Literature by Women 1875-1975* (1989). Contemporary Greek Poetry, tr. K.Friar (1985). In 1962 she was awarded First Prize for Poetry of the City of Geneva. Awarded Greek National Prize for Poetry, twice (1985, 2014) and "Kostas Ouranis", Athens Academy Poetry Prize, 2000.

Andreas ANTONIADES

(Director - Writer) was born in Nicosia in 1944. He lives and works in Athens since 1982. He has, initially, worked for Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation and then for Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation as a TV director, as well as a Senior Manager. He is a member of the Greek Directors Guild and of the Hellenic Authors' Society. His books are: *Familiar Sounds* (poetry), Kastaniotis, 1997; *Dates* (poetry), 2nd edition, Palimpsistos, 1986; *Wounded Horses* (short stories), 3rd edition, Hestia, 1985; *Theatrical plays-3 plays* (theatre), Nicosia, 1980. Selected works: Theatre : *The courtyard of miracles* by I. Kampanellis (Cyprus Theatre Organization, 2006). Selected TV works: *Loukis Akritas*, documentary, ERT, 2013; "Monogramma" series, ERT, 1984-2007 *Viron Fidetzis*, *Evis Gabrielides*, *Titos Patrikios*. ERT - "Theatre on Monday" series : *Perikeiromene* by Menandros, 1997; *The Imigris* by Sl. Mrozek,

1989; *To Meltemaki*, by P.Horn, 1984; *Axion Esti*, book show, ERT, 1994-1996; *Conversation on Ancient Drama* (Maronitis – Koun), ERT, 1986

Eugenios ARANITSIS

(Corfu, 1955) is a poet, novelist, essayist and literary critic. He has worked as a journalist (for the Athens daily "Eleftherotypia" from 1978 to 2014), and has also been active as a screen-writer and song-lyricist. In 1976 he founded the publishing company *Akmon* (Anvil) which published Greek translations of texts by major postwar thinkers such as Guy Debord, Roland Barthes and Raoul Vaneigem, as well as the first works of subsequently acclaimed Greek authors. His first published work was a collection of essays entitled *The Cain Complex*, in 1980, followed by the *History of Pleasures* (1982). In 1999 his volume of essays *To Whom Does Corfu Belong?* was awarded the Greek State Essay Prize. His poetry includes the collections *Poems and Acts (1980-1990)* (first edition 1990; second expanded edition 1993), *Physics* (1995), *The Sea* (1998), and *Summer on a Hard Disc* (2002). In 1986 he collaborated with Nobel laureate Odysseus Elytis, writing the texts to accompany Elytis's photo-collages in the volume entitled *The Picture Room* (1986). His prose work includes the novels *Africa* (1988) and *Details About the End of the World* (1993), which was translated into French and published by Flammarion in 2007 as *Details sur la fin du monde*, and the collections of short stories entitled *Stories liked by some people I know* (1994) and *The Schoolgirl who became an Almond* (2007). In 1990 he began the composition of an extended poem entitled *F.I.L.M.* parts of which have been published in the poetry journal *Poiesi*.

Giorgos ARISTINOS

(Kozani, 1945) is a novelist and literary critic. Studied at the Universities of Athens and Paris (Paris IV). Has worked as a lawyer, as manager of Greek National Television (1987-90), and has taught Modern Greek literature. His critical works include *An introduction to the prose of G. Cheimonas* (1981), *Essays on the novel and the literary genres* (1991), *Lively Thought* (1996), *Narcissus and Janus* (2007) *Toxic Refuse* (2010). In 1982 *Le sens de la coupure dans l'oeuvre de Georges Cheimonas* was published in Paris. His literary work includes two collections of short stories *Deathdesiring-Lovesuffering* (1992) and *Life is Good* (2003), three novellas *Adventure* (1982), and *Vanity* (2002) five prose narratives *Crisis*, (1984), *A March in Time* (1987), *Descent* (1991), *Sentimental Fixations; Of Love and Death* (1996), *The Writer's Revenge* (1998) and *Years of Guilt* (2000), and two novels *The Murderer* (2001) and *Flash at Night* (2011). He has contributed to several collective volumes, and numerous journals, and has also worked as chief editor for various publishing houses.

Kostas ARKOUEAS

made his literary debut in 1986 at the age of twenty eight with *Let Bob Marley Wait*, a collection of short stories. Since then, his novels, novellas, and short stories have assured him

a constant presence in Greek letters. He lives in Athens, where he works at the Ministry of Culture.

Tatiana AVEROFF

was born in Athens in 1954. She studied Philosophy and Psychology at Deree College, Athens (BA 1976) and Social Psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science (M.Sc 1978). For the next sixteen years she worked in the private education sector as an educational psychologist, publishing two books on cooperative learning during this same period. She is president of the E.Averoff-Tossizza Foundation and, since 1995, the director of the Averoff Museum of Modern Greek Art in Metsovo, Greece. Since 2000 she dedicates most of her time to writing and teaching Creative Writing to young writers. She is the author of five novels and several short stories. (Further information about her literary work can be found at her personal webpage: www.tatiana-averoff.gr)

George-Icaros BABASSAKIS

(born April 10, 1960) is a poet, novelist, short story writer, and essayist.

Alexandra BAKONIKA

was born in Thessaloniki, where she resides. She studied Medicine at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, but she did not complete her studies. She worked as an English teacher. Her collections of poems have been published with the titles: *Open Line*, publ. Diagonios, Thessaloniki 1984; *The naked Couple*, publ. Diagonios, Thessaloniki,1990; *Lovers and Lairs*, publ. Samkaleen Prakashan, translated by R. Scorza, New Delh (India), 1992; *The Divine Body*, Publ. Diagonios, Thessaloniki 1994; *Poems of Seduction*, publ. Bilieto, Athens 1997; *Surplus of Sensuality*, publ. Entefktirio, Thessaloniki 2000; *Field of Lust*, publ. Metaixmio, Athens 2005; *Carnal pleasures and dominance*, publ. Metaixmio, Athens 2009; and *The tragic and the retreat of the senses*, publ. Saixpirikon, 2012. Her work was presented at the symposium for poetry in Patras in 1994, also at the Hellenic Culture Foundation in London in 1996 and at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2012. Apart from her poems which were translated in English and published in India, selected poems have been translated in German, Swedish and Albanian.

John N. BASKOZOS

was born in Athens in 1952. He attended the German School of Athens and the First Model High School of Athens. He studied Mathematics and obtained a doctorate at University of Athens under the supervision of Professor Michalis Meraklis – dissertation topic: "Cultural trends during the period 1974-1989". He published the cultural study *The superfluous and the essential* (Delphini 2003); edited a collection of articles on *The Political Economy of the Globalisation*, (Papazisi 2004); wrote the short-story collection *MEZ* (Kastaniotis 2005);

contributed to the literary publication of the Complete Works of Dimosthenis Voutiras (a Delphini, Stachy co-publication). He published with poet Costas Ritsonis the literary magazine *Hoi Philoi* and was editor-in-chief of the annual literary publication *Epiligos*. He is a journalist and an editor of the *Diavazo* review since December 2005 and editor-in-chief of the e-magazine *O Anagnostis* (The Reader). He wrote the short-story collection *Pii akoune akoma jazz* (Kedros 2011).

Kyriakos CHARALAMBIDES

was born in Cyprus in 1940. He studied History and Archaeology at the University of Athens. He has published twelve books of poetry, two volumes of essays and he translated *Romanos the Melodist*. His books are: *The Vase With Designs* (1973); *Achaean's Shore* (1977); *Famagusta Reigning City* (1982), for which he was awarded the Cyprus State Prize for Poetry; *Dome* (1989), for which he was awarded the Athens Academy Prize; and *Meta-history* (1995), for which he was awarded the Greek State Prize for Poetry. He has also been awarded the Hellenic Society of Literary Translators Prize for his translation of three hymns by Romanos the Melodist, the Letters Excellence Award of the Republic of Cyprus, the International Cavafy Award as well as the Costas and Eleni Ouranis Prize of the Athens Academy for his entire poetic oeuvre. He is a corresponding member of the Academy of Athens. Some of his books have been translated in English, French, German, Swedish, Bulgarian and Albanian.

Christos CHARTOMATSIDIS

was born in 1954 in Bulgaria, in a Greek political refugee family. His first publications are in newspapers and magazines in Bulgaria, where he has also been awarded literary prizes. Since 1980, he lives in Greece. He has published four novels, two short stories collections and four theatrical plays in Greek. Some of his plays have been staged by the Municipal Theatrical Company of Komotini (Greece) and in Bulgaria. He has been a permanent contributor to the *Mandragoras* literary magazine, while he has also been contributing short stories and translations to literary magazines. Some of his books have been nominated for the Prizes of the literacy magazine *Diavazo*. He is a doctor and works at the General Hospital of Komotini. The short story "Hot dog" belongs to the collection *Photo Veritas* (Metaichmio Publishing House, 2003).

Yiorgos CHOULIARAS

is a prize-winning poet, essayist, and author of the alphabetical novel *Dictionary of Memories* whose poetry in English translation has been published and reviewed in major literary periodicals – including *Agenda*, *Grand Street*, *Harvard Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *The Iowa Review* and *World Literature Today* – and in international anthologies such as *New European Poets*. His work has also been translated into Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Turkish, and other languages. He is the author of six volumes of poetry in Greek, including *Roads of Ink*, and of numerous essays on literature and cultural history, in English as well as Greek, while poets he has translated include Wallace Stevens. He was a co-founder of the influential Greek literary reviews *Tram* and *Chartis* and an editor of literary and scholarly publications in the United States. He has served on the Board of the Hellenic Authors' Society, the Poets Circle, the Ottawa International Writers Festival, and the Modern Greek Studies Association. Born in Thessaloniki and educated at Reed College and at The Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, he studied and

worked in Oregon, New York City, Ottawa, Boston, Washington D.C., and Dublin, before returning to Athens

Dimitra CHRISTODOULOU

was born in Athens in 1953. She studied Law and Greek Literature in Athens University. She has published eleven books of poetry, one book of prose and one book of translated ancient Greek lyric poetry. In 2008 she was awarded the Greek National Prize of Poetry.

Yorgos CHRONAS

was born in Piraeus on 17th October, 1948. Since 1973, when he made his first appearance on the literary scene, he has published twenty books (poetry, prose, theatre). In 1979 he started working for the Greek Radio. Since 1981 he has been publishing the magazine *Odos Panos* and *Sigaretta Editions*. To date, 450 books have been published and 159 issues of the magazine. His poems and prose work have been translated into various languages. One hundred of his poems and lyrics have been set to music by Greek composers. From March 2009 to December 2011, he was editor of the *Eleftherotypia* newspaper art and literature supplement, published every Saturday. In 2011, he was awarded the Cavafy Prize in Cairo and Alexandria. In February, 2013, the Piraeus Municipality honoured him for his contribution to Piraeus letters.

David CONNOLLY

(Sheffield, UK, 1955) is an English-born translator of Greek literature and Professor of Translation Theory. Of Irish descent, has been living in Greece since 1979, and obtained Greek citizenship in 1998. Studied Ancient Greek at the University of Lancaster (1974-77), Medieval and Modern Greek Literature at Trinity College, Oxford (1977-79) and received his Ph.D. from the University of East Anglia (1997). Head of Translation at the British Council, Athens (1991-1994), has also taught translation at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels at Greek universities (The Ionian University 1991-1997, The University of Athens 1999-2000), and is currently Professor of Translation Theory at the University of Thessaloniki. Has also held honorary academic posts at the Universities of Birmingham, Princeton and Oxford. Has authored numerous papers and articles on translation theory, and has participated in several collective volumes on translation and literature. His literary translations comprise a wide-ranging oeuvre of both prose and poetry by major writers of the 19th and 20th centuries as well as work of contemporary authors, such as Cavafy, Elytis, Engonopoulos, Vrettakos, Terzakis, Papadiamantis, Dimoula, Galanaki, Matesis, Kondos, Veltsos, Yatromanolakis, Vlavianos, Hatzopoulos, Stamatis. His translations have received awards in the UK (The Yeats Club 1989), the US (The Elizabeth Constantinides Prize, 1996) and Greece (The Hellenic Society of Translators of Literature, 1999). In 2008 he was awarded the Greek State Literary Translation Prize, for the translation of a selection of poems by Nikos Engonopoulos, entitled *The Beauty of a Greek*.

Veroniki DALAKOURA

born in 1952, is a poet whose work shows the influence of surrealism. She published her first book, *Poiisi '67-'72* (Poetry 1967-1972), at the age of twenty, then a second volume, *I Parakmi*

tou Erotá (The Decline of Eros) at twenty-four. Her books often combine poems, prose poems, and longer narratives in provocative ways. These volumes include *O Hypnos (Sleep, 1982)*, *To Páhnidi tou Telous (The Game of the End, 1988)*, *Meres idonis (Days of Lust, 1990)*, *Agria angeliki photia (Wild Seraphic Fire, 1997)*, *O pinakas tou Hodler (Hodler's Painting, 2001)* and *Carnivalist* (Kedros 2011). Her most recent collection of verse is *26 Poimata (26 Poems, 2004)*. Dalakoura's work often develops themes related to eroticism and spirituality. She is also a noted translator of French literature. John Taylor's essay about Dalakoura, "Eros and Other Spiritual Adventures," is comprised in his book *Into the Heart of European Poetry* (Transaction, 2008). John Taylor's translations of her poems have appeared in several magazines and anthologies.

Zefi DARAKI

(Athens, 1939) is a poet of the "Second Post-War Generation". She worked as a secretary at the Doxiadis School of Ecistics (1959-64), and subsequently as a librarian at the Municipal Library of Athens from 1964 to 1984 (dismissed in 1967 by the dictatorship and reinstated in 1974 after its fall). Her first collection of poems, entitled *Blockage*, appeared in 1970. Since then she has published twenty-five books of poetry including *Garden of Burns* (1973), *Eclipse* (1974), *Archangel Mirror* (1976), *The Wind and the Clocks* (1977) *Midnight Wolf* (1978), *Indefinite Events* (1980), *The Lonely Phantom of Lena Olem-Thaleia* (1982), *The Hanging Woman* (1984), *Eugene and Isabella* (1986), *The Sacred Void* (1988), *Ungrateful me: I fell asleep* (1992), *Sorrow Burns our Shadows* (1995), *Like words* (1998), *A Body without Passport Key* (2000), *The Motionless in Pain* (2002), *Time Opposite* (2006), *Naming you Means Losing you* (2008), *Lay Waste* (2012), *The Cave with the Firecrackers* (2014). Two volumes of selected verse appeared in 1999 and 2004, while her collected poems were published in 2008. She also authored two works of prose entitled *Martha Solger* (1985) and *The Dreameress* (1990). Her poems have been translated into English, French, Spanish, German and Bulgarian.

Nikos DAVVETAS

(Athens, 1960) is an author, poet and literary critic who first appeared in the world of letters 1981 through his contributions to the Thessaloniki journal *Diagonios*. Since 1983 he has published six poetry collections (including the *Secret Burial of Eleonora Tilseni, 1988* and *15 October 1960, 2002*), a collection of short stories (*In One Breath, 2002*) and four novels (including *The prey, 2002, The Painter of Nikos Beloyannis, 2013*). His collection of poems entitled *Van Gogh's Yellow Darkness* (1995) has been translated into English and Spanish. In 2003 a selection of his poetry was published in the UK, translated by Thom Nairn. Selections from his work, both prose and poems, have been translated into most major European languages. In 2010 he was awarded the Prize for the Novel by the Kostas and Eleni Ouranis Foundation of the Academy of Athens for his novel *The Jewish Bride*. He has published texts in the journals *Partisan Review, Agenda, Waves, Modern Poetry in Translation* and *Erythia*. His book reviews, published in the journals *Tetarto* and *Entefktirio* and newspapers *Typos tis Kyriakis* and *To Vima* are included in a volume entitled *Literature under criticism* (to be published).

Marisa DE CASTRO

was born in Athens. Between 1973 and 1982 she lived in Paris where she studied Education and Literature for Children and Adolescents at The Sorbonne. Since her return to Greece she has been teaching History and Literature to primary school children. She has written several children's books on History and Art and has translated children's fiction. Since 1998 she has written critical articles on children and adolescent books for the daily newspapers *To Vima*, *Ta Nea*, the book review *Diavazo* and the e-review on books *O Anagnostis*. In 2006, *Short Stories of the Archaeological Museum* (in Greek, published by Kastor) that she co-authored with Panos Valavanis won the National Book Award for Non-fiction. In 2012, *Walking on the roads of Byzantium* (in Greek, published by Metaixmio) won the Greek section of IBBY Book Award for Non-fiction.

Alexandra DELIGIORGI

born in Thessaloniki, studied philosophy and Sociology and has been Professor of Philosophy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has been awarded the national prize for essay in 1998 with her book *Anoston Emar*, and "Nikos Themelis Prize" for her novel *Tender Companion* in 2012. She has published *Androgys*, a roman (1980); *The Voices*, short stories (1982); *Golden Moon*, novel (1986); *Stories of a minimal age* (1991); *Women or Dark_Matter*, novel (2004); *One's own Life*, short stories (2008) and *Homeless*, novel (2014). Her literary work was approached in a PhD thesis done and published in German (M. Prinzing *Mythen, Metaphoren und Metamorphosen*, ed. Verlag, J.B. Metzler, 1997). Some of her literary texts have been translated for German and Dutch anthologies of Greek Literature and one of her novels was translated into Spanish.

Angelos DELIVORRIAS

(Athens, 1937) is a writer and archaeologist with a distinguished career as a museum director. Commenced his studies at the University of Thessaloniki in 1956, and graduated from the University of Athens. Began postgraduate studies at the University of Freiburg in 1964, and in 1965 joined the Greek Archaeological Service, serving as Curator of Antiquities in Patras and Sparta. After winning the A.V. Humboldt Stiftung Scholarship in 1969, conducted doctoral research at the University of Tübingen. Following completion of his PhD thesis in 1972, continued post-doctoral studies at the Sorbonne and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris. From 1973 to 2014 served as Director of the Benaki Museum. Steered its reorganization and the total refurbishment and extension of the museum original building, as well as the construction of new facilities. In 1992, elected Professor of Greek Art at the University of Athens. Has authored numerous books on art and archaeology including *The Parthenon Frieze* (2004), *Greece at the Benaki Museum* (2004), *Parerga* (2003) *A Guide to the Benaki Museum*, (2000), *Greek Traditional Jewelry*, (1980), while he has also participated in a large number of collective volumes, mostly on the subject of modern Greek art. In 1996 he was awarded the title International Man of the Year 1995-1996 by the International Biographical Center, in 1999 the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres Medal by the French government and in 2000 the Commander of the Order of the Phoenix Insignia by the President of the Hellenic Republic.

Gerasimos DENDRINOS

was born in 1955. He studied literature at the University of Athens (department of classical studies). He has published the following literary works: *Ena paketo "Aroma"*, First edition Roptron, Athens, 1992 – a collection of short stories, (improved edition, Kedros, Athens, 1995); *Chairetismata apo to noto*, Odysseas, Athens, 1994 – a novel; *Matias del Rios – Emerologia*, Odysseas, Athens, 1995, a mock-diary; *Aperantes synoikies*, Kedros, a novel, Athens 2002; *Alkis*, a novel, Metaichmio, Athens 2003; *Fragi eiserchomenon kliseon*, a novel, Metaichmio, Athens 2006. He often keeps himself busy with Latin and Byzantine literature, and also with painting, especially collage. From 1988-1994 he was a permanent contributor to the Piraeus literary magazine *To Paramilito*, where, in many issues, he published poems and prose as well as translations of texts from Latin classics.

Sotiris DIMITRIOU

(Povla, Thesprotia 1955) is a poet, novelist and short-story writer. Lives and works in Athens. His first book, a collection of poems entitled *Psilaphiseis* (Gropings) was published in 1985, followed by two volumes of short stories, *Dialith'im Christaki* (1989), *A Child from Thessalonica* (1989), and a novel *So that I can clearly hear your name*, 1993. Subsequent works include *The vein in the neck* short stories, (1993), *The Lingering of Goodness*, short stories, (2001), *God is telling them*, novel (2002), *The fruit tress of Athens*, narrative (2005), *Like scarce water*, short-stories (2008), *The weights of the face*, short-stories (2009) *The silence of parched grass*, novella (2011), *The button and the dress*, short stories (2012), *Near the belly*, novella (2014). He has been awarded the Short Story Award, 1987, of the Athens daily newspaper *Ta Nea*, the Short Story Award, of the Literary Magazine *Diavazo* twice, for his books *The vein in the neck* (1999) and *The Lingering of Goodness* (2002), and the Award of the Ouranis Foundation of the Athens Academy (2013), while his novel *So that I can clearly hear your name* was shortlisted for the Aristeion European Award for Literature. His worked has been translated into English, *Woof, Woof Dear Lord and other stories*. [tr. by]: Leo Marshall (1995), *May Your Name Be Blessed*. [tr. by]: Leo Marshall (2000). German *Lass es dir gut gehen*. [tr. by]: Birgit Hildebrand (1998), and Dutch "Het ga je goed, Dimitris" [tr. by]: Hero Hokwerda (2000).

Kiki DIMOULA

(Athens, 1931) is a poet and a Member of the Athens Academy. She worked as a clerk for the Bank of Greece from 1929 to 1974. Her first publication was a collection of poems (*Poems*, 1952) which she soon withdrew from circulation. She married the poet Athos Dimoulas in 1954, and together they had two children. She has published fourteen poetry collections (*Erebus*, 1956/1990; *In absentia*, 1958/1990; *On the trail*, 1963/1989; *The Little of the World*, 1971/1983/1990; *My last body*, 1981/1989; *Farewell Never*, 1988; *Lethe's Adolescence*, 1994; *One Minute's Together*, 1998; *Departure's Sound*, 2001; *Greenhouse Grass*, 2005; *Moved Next Door*, 2997; *Meeting*, 2007; *I Passed*, 2010; *Finder's Fee*, 2010). The Seven first collections have been published in one volume (1996, sixth edition 2005). Selections from her work have been translated into French, English, German, Spanish, Italian and Swedish. She has been awarded the Greek State Poetry Prize twice (1971, 1988), as well as the Ouranis Foundation Prize (1994) and the "Distinction of Excellence for Literature" of the Academy of Athens

(2001). In 2002 she was elected to the Academy of Athens, and in 2009 she was awarded the European Prize for Literature. In 2010 she was presented with the Grand Prize for Literature of the Greek State for the entirety of her work.

Philip DRACODAIIDIS

born in 1940, completed Sociology, History and Comparative Literature Studies in France (Sorbonne and Montpellier University for his Ph.D.). He had management positions in advertising agencies, multinational companies and business consulting societies. He specialized in Cultural Management and he is working as international expert in cultural strategy, training, protection, valorization of cultural material heritage. He published novels, collections of short stories and essays. Considering that most of his writings were of low value, he rejected them and spent years re-writing those that could be improved. All of them remain unpublished. He translated Montaigne *Essays*, Rabelais *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, Gracian *Oraculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia* and *El Hiroe*, Pessoa *O guardador de Rebanhos*, Rulfo *El Llano en llamas*. He is Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France) and de la Orden de Isabel la Católica (Spain).

For details, see www.philipdracodaidis.gr

Maria EFSTATHIADI

writer and translator, was born in Athens, in 1949. She lives between Paris and Athens. She is the author of works of innovative fiction and a playwright (*Violators*, 1988; *The unseen which gazes at you*, 1993; *Gloves with hands*, 1996; *When the roads*, 1998; *An angel in my way*, 2000; *Almost...a melodrama*, 2002, *Desobediance*, 2003; *Cut*, 2004; *The frozen garden*, 2006; *The red hotel*, 2008; *The revenants*, 2009; *Demon*, 2010, *Textilen*, 2011; *Privatopia*, 2013). Many texts of hers appeared in literary reviews and collected works. Some of her writings have been translated in foreign languages. She has translated into Greek texts of Marivaux, E. Satie, P. Klossowski, H. Claus, H. Michaux, N. Sarraute, A. Robbe-Grillet, J. Genet, S. Mallarme, N. Rodriguez, F. Melquirot, R. Jauffret, C. Frechette, K. Kwahule, E. Cormann etc.

Giannis EFSTATHIADIS

(Athens, 1946) is a poet and short story writer. He has also written on music and, with the pen-name *Apikios*, gastronomy. Studied Economic and Political Sciences at Athens University. Has worked since 1966 in advertising, after a brief involvement with journalism. Taught Communication Theory at the Panteion University, Athens, and participated in numerous conferences. For several years was a columnist in newspapers and magazines. He has also worked as a television programme and documentary producer and as a music programme producer for the National Radio (Third Programme). His writings include: *The love of "E"*, novella (1993), *Chronograffiti*, features (1995), *Ark*, poetry (1998), *Tragicomedia*, Opera, 1999, *Gastronomy Handbook* 2000, *With a full mouth*, short stories (2002), *Verses* (2004), *Poems 1975-1998* (2004), *A Room everywhere*, short stories (2005) *The second book of Counterpoint*, essays on music (2006) *Written kisses* short prose (2007), *Porcelain* short stories (2008), *Mirror*, short prose (2010), *Personality cults*, literary essays (2012), *Men made of words* short stories (2012) *Johann Sebastian Bar*, verse on viands, wines and spirits (2012), *A Hundred* short stories

(2013), *The third book of Counterpoint* essays on music(2014). In 2012 he was awarded the Ouranis Prize of the Athens Academy, for the entirety of his critical work (essays on music and literature).

Neni EFTHIMIADI

(Athens 1946-2008) was a novelist. She studied law at the University of Thessaloniki, and worked as a lawyer in Athens. As of 1973 she was devoted herself to writing. She published nine novels, while she also participated in collective volumes with shorter prose. A large number of short stories, essays and articles were published in the daily press and literary journals. She translated essays from French and English, as well as poems by William Meredith. As of 1992 she was a member of the Governing Board of the Panhellenic Cultural Association, with the responsibilities to organise literary events, and to represent the Association at conferences both in Greece and abroad. Several of her works have been “set-books” for study in university courses, and have been discussed in conferences and literary criticism books. Her first novel *You and I look alike somewhat*, appeared in 1973 but was withdrawn from circulation by the author. Her subsequent work includes *The Garden with the Statues* (1975), *The Flare* (1978), *Soundless Days* (1983), *The Colour of the Future* (1988), *Tender Death* (1990), *The Citizens of Silence* (1993), *The City of Seagulls* (1997), *The Fortune-hunters* (2000), *Three Days and a Dead Man* (2005), *I and Magellan* (2005), *The Son of Billy Blue* (2007).

Lily EXARCHOPOULOU

is a prose writer, poet, literary critic and translator. She is a member of the Executive Board of TSWTC. She has published poetry *Alien Intoxication*, 2003 and three novels: *Sophia's Story*, 1995, (an adaptation of the novel was staged in theatre “Politeia”), *Present but Missing*, 2001, and *A Love like Corfu*, 2005 (short-listed for the Athens Prize for Literature). Her short stories have been published in various anthologies. She has translated into Greek works of famous authors (Said, Lawrence, Darrel, Berger, et.al.) and she has taught Ancient History, History of European Literature, Greek and English in higher education institutes and the Greek Open University.

Michel FAIS

works as a literary critic and creative writing tutor. He has published novels, short story collections (National Short Story Award, 2000), and essays. His books have been translated in English, French, German, Spanish, and Romanian. Works of his have been enacted in theatrical plays or turned into films. He also practices photography.

Evgenia FAKINO

(Alexandria, Egypt, 1945) is a novelist and children-book writer. Brought up in Athens, where she studied graphic design and trained as an archeological tour-guide. Worked for a few years as a graphic designer for various Athens magazines. In 1976 she wrote and produced the puppet-theatre children's play *Denekedoupoli* (Shanty-Town) with a set made of found objects and assorted scrap materials, which has enjoyed great success. Until 1990 she wrote 17 children's books with a total circulation of over 300,000 copies, including *In Kurdistan* (1978), *Wake up Denekedoupoli!* (1979), *The Long Voyage of Melenios* (1979), *Monsieur*

Ultramer (1980), *The Four Seasons*(1986). Her first novel, *Astradeni*, was published in 1982 and ran into several editions, as were most of her subsequent books including *The Seventh Garment* (1983), *The Great Green* (1983), *Cat with Petals* (1990), *Sugar on the Edge* (1991), *Merope was the Pretext* (1994), *A Hundred Roads and One Night* (1997), *Bind Man's Buff* (2000), *Who Killed Moby Dick?* (2001), *Love, Summer, War* (2003), *The Orleans Method* (2005), *Garden Aspirations* [short-story collection] (2007), *Odysseus and Blues* (2010), *The Train in the Clouds* (2011), *Vagrant Reapers* (2013). Her work has been translated into several European languages (English, German, Russian, Hungarian, Durcg, Danish, French and Italian). In 2005 she was awarded with the Reader's Prize of the National Book Centre, and in 2008 the Greeks State Short-Story Prize.

Andonis FOSTIERIS

was born in Athens in 1953. He studied Law in Athens and History of Law in Paris. From 1971 to 2013 he published the following books of poetry: *The Great Journey; Inner Spaces or the Twenties; Dark Eros; Poetry within Poetry; The Devil Sung in Tune; The D 'n A of Death; Thought Belongs to Mourning; Precious Oblivion; Poetry 1975-2010; Landscapes of Nothing*. Sixteen translations of his books have been published abroad by esteemed publishing houses (England, France, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Serbia, U.S.A. and Argentina). He was editor-in-chief of the journal *The New Poetry* (1974-1976), co-editor of the annual publication *Poetry* (1975-1981) and the literary journal *I Lexi (The Word)* (1981-2010). He was awarded the International Cavafy award (1993), the Vrettakos award of the Municipality of Athens (1998), the Greek State Poetry Award (2004), the *Diavazo* journal poetry award (2004) and, for the sum of his work, the Ouranis Foundation Poetry Award of the Academy of Athens (2010).

Miltos FRANGOPOULOS

was born in Athens, in 1951. He studied Art History and Theory at London and Essex Universities, UK. He is currently Deputy Director of Studies at the Vakalo Art and Design College, Athens, and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Derby UK. He has been active since 1982 as a translator and writer. Authored two novels (*The Stone* 1986; *Port Bou* 1996) and a collection of essays on translation (*The Translator's Workshop* 2004, short-listed for the state prize for the essay). He has also written extensively on art, cultural issues and semiotics both in Greece and abroad. His published translations include Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Khlebnikov's *Zaum-Futurists Manifestos*, a selection of translated romantic poetry entitled *Unknown Languages*. He recently published a chronicle based on family correspondence in the early 1920s entitled *Perfer et Obdura* (endure and harden).

Antia FRANTZI

(Athens, 1945) is a poet and literary critic. In 1982 she obtained her doctorate in Philology at the University Paris IV Sorbonne. Since 1985 she has been teaching Modern Greek literature at the department of Philology, Aristoteleion University of Thessaloniki and she is an associate professor of philology since 1995. From 1975 to 2008 she was permanent collaborator of *Anti* magazine. She has published seven poetry collections including *The*

Adventure of a description (1978), *Conversion of Materials* (1982), *Transcription of Diary* (1984), *Almost an enigma, Yakinthos* (1987), *Wreath* (1993), *Ritual on the wave* (2002), *Fleetingly* (2010), *Sticharion* (2014). Her critical work includes *So and Otherwise; Anagnostakis, Engonopoulos, Kahtitsis, Hatzis, Polytipto* (1988), *Metamorphosis of Love. Communion Gift to Matsi Hatzilarou* (1989), *It remained poetry; Eleni Vakalo* (2005). She has edited three philological editions: *Mismaya. Anthology of Phanariote Poetry* (1993), *Pages from a Diary, Edward Everett's travel in Greece, 1819, (from an unpublished manuscript of 1819)* (1996), *Karagatsis: Travelling in the world (selection of travel literature printed in newspapers from 1938 to 1952)* (2002). She has also written a children's book entitled *The sea-urchin-fox* (1985).

Rea GALANAKI

was born at Heraklion, Crete and had studied Archeology and History at Athens. Well known as novelist after her six novels, she has also published short stories, essays and poems. Rhea Galanaki has touched subjects as the double identities, the division between two countries, the impossibility of nostos, the meaning of nationality or feminity, of History itself. In the past, related to these subjects, the reappearance of racism in Greece and contemporary social changes. Her novels have been translated in 15 languages. Awards: the Greek State Prize (twice), the Academy Prize, the N. Kazantzakis Prize, among others. Her first novels, *The life of Ismail Ferik Pasha*, was the first Greek novel ever included at Unesco's *Collection of Representative Works* (1994). As script consultant, she had signed with Theo Angelopoulos (Jan. 2012) his last and unfinished film.

George GAVALAS

was born in Athens in 1922 and he is self-educated. The first poem he published was "Waiting for the Gods" in *Free Letters* magazine in 8/2/1946. He has contributed poems to many magazines and newspapers. His books are: *Zografies apo to makrino dasos (Pictures from the remote wood)*, Logotehnikhi Gonia 1949; *Themata gia piisi (Subjects for poetry)*, Kedros 1975; *Mnimes mias afisas (A Poster's Memories)*, Sokolis 1991; and *Episodia peza (Prosaic Events)*, Sokolis 1991. His work is included in various anthologies of Greek poetry. He has been translated into Spanish, in Portuguese, German, Russian and French. Some of his poems have been presented on Greek national television during the Day of Poetry as well as in Brussels the same day. He has been honored by the State for his contribution to Greek literature.

Christakis GEORGIU

(Limassol, Cyprus, 1929) is a Cypriot novelist, short story writer and essayist. He studied English, History and Greek at Queen Mary's College, London. After schooling in Cyprus he worked as a journalist for three years before attending college. For Twenty-five years he worked as head of the history department at the English School in Nicosia. During that same period he served as a member of the Administrative Council of the State Theatre of Cyprus. He served as a member of the Board of Governors of Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation and Chair of the Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute. He has contributed to numerous newspapers and magazines, and his short stories and essays have been translated

into English, German, Chinese, French, Hungarian and Russian. He published two collections of short stories *Parallels* (1965) and *Cracks* (1970), the play *Monks* (1978), and three novels *Hours-1950* (1980), *Archipelago Twenty years in Labour* (1981), which was translated into English by author and published in England (1997), and *Archipelago-The Trap* (2002).

George GOTIS

was born in Andravida of Ilia in 1995. He studied in the Dentistry House of the University of Athens and works as a dentist in Athens. The following poetry collections have been published by the Stigmi Editions: *Orthrou Batheos* (1988), *Fusiki Istoría* (1991), *Krymmeni Eikona* (1999), *Chronografia* (2007), *Dichos Charti* (2011). In 2008 he won the journal's *Diavazo* award for his collection *Chronografia*. Apart from his poetry collections he has also written a novel called *More Veneto* (Stigmi 2003), two essays: *Georgios Bizyinos, Moscov Selim* (2002), {Foinikas (Addendum)}", *Alexandrou Moraitidou, Agion Oros* (2006), {Foinikas (Addendum)} and has participated in the writing of *Anthology of Writers of Ilia* (1981) {Morfotiki Enosi Lechainon, Andreas Karkavitsas}". Moreover he has published several other poems and essays in various journals and newspapers.

Stathis GOURGOURIS

was born in Hollywood in 1958 and grew up in Athens. He has published four volumes of poetry, one in English (*Myrtle Trenches*, 1985) and three in Greek: *Πτώσεις* [*Falls*] (1988); *Αυτοχθονίες* [*Identicide*] (1993); *Εισαγωγή στη Φυσική* [*Introduction to Physics*] (2005). He has translated in English the poetry of Yiannis Patilis and Argyris Chionis and in Greek the poetry of Carolyn Forché, Heiner Müller, and James Merrill. His own English translations of his poetry have appeared in numerous poetry journals (print and electronic) and anthologies. His work, written in Greek or English, has also been translated into French, Italian, Serbian, Turkish, and Hebrew. He has also written three theoretical books: *Dream Nation* (1996); *Does Literature Think?* (2003); *Lessons in Secular Criticism* (2013); an edited volume of essays on *Freud and Fundamentalism* (2009), and nearly 100 articles in books, journals, and electronic media. He teaches comparative literature and society at Columbia University.

Takis GRAMMENOS

was born in Thessaloniki in 1947. He worked in the Ministry of Culture's Archaeological Service (serving in Thessaloniki, Kavala, and Larisa) from 1973 to 2006. He holds a doctorate in prehistoric archaeology, and is the author of numerous monographs and articles. His last major project was the permanent re-exhibition of the renovated Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. Since the 1980s he has published poetry in many magazines and journals, four poetry collections (Ypsilon Editions), essays, criticism, and public lectures (*Anadromi*, University Studio Press, Thessaloniki 2000), and *Varia* (*Pages for a Journal*, Altinzis, Thessaloniki 2002).

Nikos GRIGORIADIS

(Koryfi, Kilkis 1931-Thessaloniki 2012) was a Greek poet. Studied classical literature at the University of Thessaloniki and worked as a high school-teacher and consultant in public

education. He also founded and managed a publishing company, *Kodikas*, based in Thessaloniki and specializing in educational texts. His literary oeuvre comprises fourteen books of poetry, including *The depths of the Lecythus* (1963), *Sampling I* (1981), *The Garden and the Gate* (1982), *Weights and Measures* (1983), *The absence and the Speech* (1985), *Shadows* (1987), *The Unseen inside us* (1988), *Boustrophedon; the constitution of life* (under the alias Nicholas Talman – 1988), *Flora Mirabilis; the jar and the lantern* (1992), *Black Shores* (1994), *Sampling II* (1996), *The Photograph together with the Last Note* (1998), *Anabasis (Ascension)* (2002), *And Crooked Rimes* (2006). His collected works (1963-2005) were published in one volume entitled *Poems* in 2007. He also authored the three-volume critical study “Creative Writing, its art and technique” (1979), and a collection of essays *readings of Literary texts* (1992).

Thodoros GRIGORIADIS

(Palaiohori, Kavala) is a novelist and short story-writer. Studied English at the University of Thessaloniki. Teaches foreign languages in secondary education. He first appeared in the world of Greek letters with his novel *Hidden People* in 1990. Then came his short story collection *The Ancient Phallus* (1991) and the novels *The Sailor* (1993), and *The Dancer in the Olive Grove* (1996), *The Waters of the Peninsula* (1998), *The Rag-Doll* [“To Partali”] (2001), *Beyond the Body* (2003), *Alouza, one thousand and one lovers* (2005), *Maps* (2007), *Second Birth* (2009), *The Wrestlers and the Dervish* (2010), *Elli’s Secret* (2012). From 1999 to 2003 he organized a series of literature seminars at the Public Library of the city of Serres. In 2003 his novel *Partali* was translated into French and published in France as *La loque* (“The Human Wreck”). Two of his novels (*Partali*, and *Second Birth*, were adapted for the theatre and staged as monologues at the Athens Festival in 2011 and 2009 respectively. He was shortlisted for the *Diavazo* Journal Book prize (2007), the Athens Prize for Literature, the Several of his short stories have been translated into English and Dutch. His novel *Alouza, one thousand and one lovers* has been translated into Arabic and is to be published in Egypt.

Ilias GRIS

was born in 1952 and grew up in Krestena, Olympia. He studied Economics and from 1975 he practiced journalism in various media. He has published: *Devastated State*, 1980 1984; *In Bridges of the World*, 1982; *Hostile Landscape*, 1983, 1985, 1990; *Torpor World*, 1987 1990; *Ephesus of the Horses* 1993, 2012; *Alfeios Ancestor*, 2005. He has also published literature: *The Bitter People*, 1980, 1983; *The Eye of the Asylum*, 1990⁽²⁾, 1998; *Male Desert*, 1996⁽²⁾. He edited a tribute volume: *Takis Sinopoulos, Dweller Now of the Eternal, Authenticated*, 1996. He issued also the anthologies: *The Ink Shouts; November 17th*; 1973 *In Literature*, 2003; *The Ancient Country of Poems*, Modern Greek poets on ancient Greece, 2004; *The 1821 in Greek Poetry*, 2011; *Papdiamantis with the Eyes of Younger Literary People*, 2011. He has been translated into English, Bulgarian, Italian, Russian, German, Persian, Spanish, French. Part of his poetry has been included in anthologies and has been translated into English, Bulgarian, Italian, Russian, German, Persian, Spanish, and French. He is a member of the Journalists Union of Athens’ Daily Newspapers (ESIEA) and Poets’ Circle. He was a member of the Committee of Scenarios e.r.t. (1993-1995) and of the Committee of State Prizes Literature of Cyprus (2003-2005).

Natasha HADJIDAKI

was born 1946 in Crete. She has studied Journalism in Athens and English Literature in London. She lived in England for five years. She has worked as an editor and critic and has contributed to literary and cultural magazines, as well as for the Public Radio. She has participated in many international poetry festivals in Britain, France, Italy and Spain. Since 1971 she has published four books of poetry, two novels and one collection of short stories. She lives in Athens.

Thanassis HATZOPOULOS

(Aliveri, 1961) is a poet, translator and essayist. Living in Athens since 1978, he studied Medicine and specialized in child psychiatry. He is a psychoanalyst and a member of the Societe de Psychanalyse Freudienne (Paris). His poetical work includes *With my Own Body* (1986), *Passages I* (1987) *The Dormition* (1988), *The Unlight* (1990), *From the Dawn of Dew* (1991, 1999), *Dead by Kin* (1994), *Fate in the Sun* (1996), *As if present* (1997), *Writings on the Rose* (an outline of a poetics) (1997), *Canon* (1998) *Cell* (2000), *Anagrams in silence* (2002), *Cross-bred and bi-flowering* (2003) *A place in the sun* (2004), *Small wooden Box* (2004), *No human's land* (2005), *Digits and Tesserae* (2006), *Passage* (2007), *Metope* (2007), *Facing the soil* (2012), *The Forgotten* (2014). He has translated literature from the English and French, including Tournier, *The hoopoe*, *The Fetishist*, Jaccottet, *Airs*, E.M. Cioran, *The bad Creator*, Chateaubriand, Rene, Valery: *The crisis of the spirit*, Virginia Woolfe, *Orlando* (adaptation for the theatre), Paul Claudel, *A hundred phrases for fans*. He has also translated works on psychoanalysis, most notably two books by Winnicott and a study on Melanie Klein. He has written extensively on literature in journals and newspapers, and has translated essays of literary criticism from both French and English. He has compiled two Anthologies with selections from the Work of Seferis and Karyotakis. His work has been translated in several languages (including English, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Swedish, Lebanese, Slovenian, Bulgarian). In 2013 he was awarded the Petros Haris prize of the Academy of Athens for the entirety of his work.

Lia HATZOPOULOU-KARAVIA

(Athens, 1932) is a poet, short story and children's book writer. She studied theatre and English literature at Athens and obtained her doctorate in comparative literature at the Sorbonne (Paris). She was also awarded an honorary doctorate by the World Academy of Arts and Culture. She is President of the International Playwrights' Forum of the I.T.I. and President of the Jury for its International Competitions. She is President in Greece of the European Institute for Theatre Research, and a founding member of the Maison Internationale de la Poesie (Belgium). Her poetry collections include *Designs on Water* (1956), *Gradations* (1957), *Two Phases of Iron* (1960), *The Children of Estreda Nada* (1961), *The Fruit of the Bitter Tree* 1963, *Harvest 1956-1963*, (1963), *The Signal* (1973), *To Antigone* (1975), *The Banner and the Signal* (1976), *30 Poems of Life and Death* (1981), *After 30* (2006), *Fifty* (Poems 1956-2006) (2006), *Poemes – Poemas*, (2009) *Poems – Gedichte*, (2009). Her prose work comprise a series of children's and young readers' books, including inter alia introductions to Greek painters and presentations of social issues, and the novels *Summer* (1959), *The Wild River* (1963) *Kouros* (1965), *The silent*

piano keys (1969), *Hypermnnesia* (1979). She has also written a large number of plays, several addressed to younger audiences based on stories and characters developed in her prose, while six television series have been based on her books. A large number of her works, including her children's books, have been translated in many languages. She was awarded the Menelaos Loudemis Prize, by the Association of Greek Writers, for the novel (1980), the M. Averof Prize for Books for the Young (1981) the Prize of the Women's Literary Association for the theatre (1986) the National Prize for plays for the young (1988, 1990), National Theatrical Play Prize (1991).

Stratis HAVIARAS

(Nea Kios, 1935) is a Greek-born poet, translator and teacher. His first poetry collections were published in Greece, including *The Lady with the Compass* (1963), *Berlin* (1965), *the Night of the Stilt-Walker* (1967), *Necrophany* (1972). He emigrated to the United States, where he received an MFA degree in creative writing. He held a number of positions at Harvard University, notably that of editor of the *Harvard Review*, as well as teaching creative writing during the summer program. In English he has published a poetry collection, *Crossing the river twice* (1976), and a two novels, *When the Tree Sings* (1979) and *The Heroic Age* (1984). In 2004 he published his translation into English of Cavafy's poems (*C.P. Cavafy: The Canon* – 2004). In 2007 he published the novel *Purple and Black Thread*, written in English and translated into Greek by Rena Chatchout. His latest novel *Achna* was published in 2014. He is a member of the American Authors League, PEN New England, the Modern Greek Studies Association, and the Greek Authors Society. He also coordinated the writing workshops of The National Book Centre in Athens, Greece From 2002 until its closure in 2014.

Argyris HIONIS

(Athens 1943 - Throfari, Corinth, 2011), was a poet, prose writer and translator. He lived for twenty years abroad in Northern Europe (Amsterdam, Brussels), working from 1983 to 1992 as a translator for the Council of Europe. He then opted for a life on a farm in rural Corinthia, devoting his time to agriculture and poetry. He had first appeared in the world of letters in 1996, with his collection *Attempts to Light*. Seven years later followed the publication of *Patterns of Absence* (1973), whose English and Dutch versions had appeared in 1971 in Amsterdam. His other poetry volumes include: *Metamorphoses* (1974), also translated into Dutch, *The Marks of the CrossI* (1978), *Like a Blind-man before the mirror* (1986), *Wordscapes* (1983), *Innerscapes*(1991), *Motionless Runner* (1986) *Ideograms* (1997), *When silence sang* (2000), *In the basement* (2004), *What I describe describes me* (2010). A volume of his collected poems from 1966 to 2000 was published in 2006. In 1981 he began writing prose, including also stories addressed to younger audiences. He translated major writers from several languages such as Octavio Paz, Jane Austen, Russell Edson, Roberto Juarroz, Henri Michaud. He died of a heart attack on Christmas day 2011.

Dimitris HOULIARAKIS

(Athens, 1957) is a poet, essayist and translator. He studied Social Sciences and Journalism at the University of Warsaw, and followed seminars in film direction at the Lodz Film School in

Poland. He worked as a journalist for Athens daily newspapers and magazines (1977-1999), Since 2000 he has been an editor with the Book Supplement of the *Sunday Vima* newspaper. He has published several poetry collections including *In Praise of Teats and Beaks* (1983), *The Black metals of desire* (1985), *Superga is awaiting* (1987), *The Relic of Days* (1994), *Life Enclosed* (2002), *Unapologised at the playground swings* (2013) and has translated major writers from English, Polish and Swedish such as Bruno Schulz, Julius Slowacki, Wislawa Szymborksa, Zbigniew Herbert, Gunnar Ekelöf, James Joyce, W.H.Auden, and Eugene O'Neil. He has also published a translation of the *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu. In 2002 and 2003 he received two awards for his poetry collection *Life Enclosed*, namely the Prize sponsored by the literary magazine *Diavazo*, and the Lampros Porfyras Prize of the Academy of Athens.

Elena HOUZOURI

was born in Thessaloniki and has lived in Athens since 10 years old. She has published poems, novels, and essays. Her novel *Skotinos Vardaris* [*Dark Vardar*] was translated in Bulgarian, Serbian and Turkish and the novel *Twice innocent* in Germany. She worked as a journalist for many years.

Katerina ILIOPOULOU

is a poet and translator who has published three books of poetry (the most recent is titled *The book of the soil*, 2011). She is also the author of several essays and reviews on poetry. In her work she proposes poetry as a strategy for life, addressing issues of identity, perception and myth both in the personal and the collective field of experience. Her translations into Greek include the work of, Sylvia Plath (*Ariel, the restored edition*), Mina Loy, Robert Hass and Ted Hughes. Katerina Iliopoulou has participated in a number of international writing and translation programs, festivals and Biennials. She is co-editor of *greekpoetrynow.com* and director of *ΦPMK (pharmakon)*, a biannual journal in print, on poetry, poetics and visual arts. Her poetry has been translated and published in literary reviews, journals and anthologies in several languages. Her web page is www.iliopoulou.wordpress.com

Klitos IOANNIDES

was born in Moutoullas, Cyprus, in 1944. He graduated from Pedhoulas Gymnasium and the Cyprus Pedagogical Academy and worked as a teacher for two years (1965-1967). From 1967 to 1974 he studied Philosophy, Religious Studies and Social Sciences in Paris. In 1973 he received his PhD from the University of Sorbonne. He worked as a researcher and professor in Paris and Athens (1973-1976) and he has been a researcher at the Cyprus Research Centre from 1977 to 1999. Since 1988 he has been scientific collaborator at the Holy Monastery of Kykkos. From 2002 to 2013, he has been professor of Philosophy at the Frederick University, Nicosia and professor of Philosophy and Aesthetics at the Cyprus Technological University (TEPAK).

Panos IOANNIDES

(Famagusta, Cyprus, 1935) is a Cypriot novelist and playwright. He studied communication theory and sociology, in the United States and in Canada. From 1953 to 1955, he worked as a journalist in various Cyprus newspapers until his employment at the Cyprus Broadcasting

Corporation in 1955. At CyBC he served in several executive positions in both the radio and television departments until his retirement in 1995. He served as Chairman of the Cyprus Theatre Organization Repertory Committee as well as a member of the National Literature Awarding Committee. For years he was President of the Cyprus PEN Center. His wide-ranging oeuvre consists mostly of novels, short-stories, and plays, but it includes also poems and scripts for television and the cinema. His prose writings include: *In Ethereal Cyprus* (1964), *Cyprus Epics* (1968), *Kronaka*, Volumes I & II, (1970, 1972), *Census* (1973), *The Unseen Aspect* (1979), *Three Parables By Nicolaos Keys*, *Journalist* (1989), *The Unbearable Patriotism of P.F.K.* (1990), *Sailing*, Volumes I & II (1992), *Devas* (2006), *America '62: De Profundis* (2007), *Koazinos* (2012). His most important plays are: *Pygmalion and Galatia* (1973), *You, who died for the light* (2004), *Onesilus* (1981), *Fotinos* (2000), *Memorial Service* (2002), *Leontios and Smyrna* (2005). Several of his works have been translated and published in English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Hungarian, Polish, Serbo-Croat, Turkish, Bulgarian, Swedish, Rumanian, and other languages. He was awarded four national prizes for literature. In 1992 he was awarded the "Theodosios Pierides and Tefkros Anthias" life achievement prize.

Alexandros ISSARIS

(Serres, 1941) is a poet, prose writer and translator. Studied Architecture at the Universities of Graz (Austria) and Thessaloniki. From 1962 to 1978 lived in Thessaloniki, and has since settled in Athens. Is also creatively active as a painter, a graphic designer and photographer. For eight years he was responsible for the Greek edition of the *Ausblicke* magazine. His poetical work includes the collections *Friends of the Sea Club – The Rope-dancer* (1976), *The Side effects of silence* (1984), *The Tristans*, (1992), *I will return luminous* (2000). His collected poems (1967-2011) were published in 2013 under the title *I, a stranger*. His prose writings include inter alia the short story collections *Between the Music* (1999), and *Winckelman or the destiny* (2010), the prose narratives *Pillow with lemon-tree leaves* (2012) and *Under so many eyelids*, *Notes on Rilke* (2007). In 1994 he published a book of paintings and texts entitled *Man and the riddle*. He has also published two photo albums (1998, 2003) and numerous translations of major works of literature by authors such as Max Frisch, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard, Arthur Schnitzler, Klaus Mann, A. Tarkovsky, Elias Canetti, as well as opera libretti and oratorios including Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Haydn's *Creation*, Mahler's *The Song of the Earth*, Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Bach's *The Passion According to St. Matthew*. He has been awarded the Maria Ralli Prize (1977) for his first collection of poetry and the State Prize for Translation, for his rendition of Thomas Bernhard's *Beton* (1997).

Victor IVANOVICI

(Tulcea, Romania, 1947) is a Romanian-born Greek and multi-language essayist and translator. Born of a Greek mother and a father with roots in the multiethnic and multicultural area of Bukovina. Educated at the Greek Lyceum of Bucharest and the University of Bucharest, School of Romance, Classic and Oriental Languages (1966-71). Continued with postgraduate studies at the University of Malaga, Spain (1987) and obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Cluj, Romania (1993). Between 1971-84 taught Spanish and

Latin American Literature at the University of Bucharest. In 1985, for political reasons, he was forced to leave Romania, and has since lived and worked in Greece. He currently teaches University of Athens Postgraduate Translation and Translation Studies Programme. Writes his essays in Greek, Romanian, Spanish and French. Translates from Greek, Romanian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Catalan, Italian and English, into Greek, Romanian and Spanish. His collections of essays include *Modern Greek Triptych: Cavafy, Seferis, Sikelianos* (in Greek) (1979), *Form and Opening* (in Romanian), Bucharest, (1980), *Surrealism and "Surrealisms": Greece, Romania, Spanish Speaking Countries* (in Greek), (1997) (and in Romanian, Timisoara, 1997). *The World of the New Spanish-American Novel. An Introduction* (in Spanish), Quito, Ecuador (1998). *Spanish-American Literature*, (in Greek) (1999). *Zigzag Bearings* (in Romanian), Bucharest, (2000), *Translatology* (in Greek) (2004). Has participated in several collective volumes of criticism, and has translated, among others, Odysseas Elytis (into Romanian and Spanish); Octavio Paz (into Greek and Romanian); Paul Celan –the Romanian poems– (into Greek and Spanish); as well as the great Romanian poets Gellu Naum (into Greek and Spanish) and Nichita Stanescu (into Greek). He has received Award of the Romanian Writers Union, for criticism in 1981 and for translation in 1991. He has also been awarded the Spanish medal of the Orden del Merito Civil, for his research.

Roula KAKLAMANAKI

(Piraeus 1935 – Athens 2013) was a poet, novelist and essayist. Studied law at the University of Athens. Worked as a lawyer, court secretary, and judge. She was elected twice as a Member of Parliament (1981-1989) with the socialist PASOK party, and served undersecretary of State for Social Security (1981-1986) and Education (1988). She authored eight poetry books, six novels, as well as essays, biographies, and numerous articles in newspapers and magazines. Her work includes the poetry collections *Today* (1973), *Steps in the other city* (1975), *Monument of an Unknown* (1977), *Poems* (1967-1977) (1983), *The statue's dilemma* (1987), *The flight never made* (1994), *Moments before, moments after* (1999), *Jack the ripper – hand to hand with memory* (2003); the prose writings – novels and stories – *An abortion at the criminal court* (1987), *Retrospective death* (1993), *Writings of innocence* (2000), *The marriage of Rosalia* (2000), *Bitten apple* (2001), *Let's love each other, cherry blossom* (2003), *On the waves of the Danube* (2012), and the studies *On the independence of Justice* (1975), *The status of Greek women within the family, society and the state* (1984), *Yannis Ritsos, a biography* (1999), *Andreas Papandreou, a biography* (2000), *Justice – Myth and reality* (1997), *Women yesterday and today* (2007), *The vulnerable body of justice* (2010), *From word to word* (2010). She was the editor of the magazine *Hellenic Quarterly*.

Dimitris KALOKYRIS

(Rethymno, Crete, 1948) studied modern Greek Literature. In Thessaloniki, he founded and edited the literary magazine *Tram* (1971-1978), and in Athens he was publisher of the literary and art magazine *Chartis* (*Map*, 1982-1987). He was also chief editor and artistic director of the cultural magazine *To Tetarto* (*The Fourth*, 1985-1987). Has worked in the field of graphic arts, designing book covers and posters, and illustrating children's books. A writer with a wide-ranging oeuvre in various genres, has published novels, short stories, prose texts,

essays and poetry. His collections of poems include *The Afternoon* (1969), *The Bird and Other Wild Beasts* (1972), *The Coin or The Parable of the Moon* (1973), *The Fictitious Funnels* (1977) *The Suspended Body* (1980), *The Wharf* (1985), *The Evil Wind* (1988), *Colours of the Wet Animal* (1990), *The Argonaut Expedition* (1996), *Gold dust in Magellan's Beard; An Introduction to the poetry of Nikos Kavvadias* (2004), *Fuselage* (2004), *Book of Melanthia* (2006), *Isavron Street* (2015). His prose work includes *Miscellaneous Story* (short texts, 1991), *Beth — A File for Borges* (1992), *Photo-Romance* (Arguments, 1993), *The Discovery of Homeric* (Short-stories, 1995), *Ur-China* (A post-book, 1996), *The elixir of their voices* (novel, 1998), *The Numbers Museum* (Short-stories, 2001), *Sailing to Lucifer* (essays, 2001), *The hand of the flag-bearer* (novel, 2006), *With Colour or Without* (essay, 2011), *The Tools of Captaincy* (essay, 2013) *Parasangae*, vol. I (short texts, 2014). He has translated and illustrated Lucian's *Verae Historiae*, poems by J. Prevert, theatrical works by Garcia Lorca and poetry and prose by Jorge Luis Borges. In 1996 and 2001 he was awarded the State Short-Story Prize as well as the Ouranis Prize of the Athens Academy for his entire work.

Tassos KALOUTSAS

born in 1948, lives in his birthplace, Thessaloniki. His output comprises the books, *The Windfall and Other Stories* (1987-1997); *The Club and Other Stories* (1990); *The New Car* (short stories, 1995); *The Song of the Sirens*, (short stories, 2000, State Prize and the *Diavazo* journal Short Story Prize); *Her Greatest Day* (short stories, 2010, Petros Charis Foundation prize of the Academy of Athens). His stories have been translated into English, Dutch, Italian, French, and German.

Ismene KAPANDAIIS

born in Athens in 1939, is a writer and a translator. She is married to Vassos Kapandais. Her published works are: *Seven Times the Ring*, Hestia 1989, novel, which has been translated into English and taught in the Modern Greek Studies Department of McGill University, Canada. It has also been translated in Bulgarian. *Of Epirots and Turks*, Hestia 1990, novel, which was awarded the Ouranis Prize by the Athens Academy. It has been translated into Serbian. *The Story of Iole*, Hestia 1992, novel; *Pou Pia Kairos (No Time Left)*, Hestia, 1996, novel; *The Secret School*, Potamos, 1997, for children; *Ionia – The Greeks in Asia Minor*, Adam Editions 1997, bilingual album; *Churches in Constantinople*, Kastaniotis 1999, bilingual album; *Floria of the Waters*, Kastaniotis 1999, novel, translated by Rick M. Newton, winner of the 2002 Elisabeth Constantinides Memorial Translation Prize, of Modern Greek Studies Association of America and Canada. *The Salt of the Earth*, Kastaniotis 2002, novel; *We, we have Us*, Kastaniotis, 2007, novel, which has been translated into Italian; *Eight Times the Ring*, Kastaniotis, 2008, novel; *Cynical Story*, Kastaniotis, 2008, novel; *A View on Life*, Kastaniotis 2009, novel; *Sicilian Vespers*, Kastaniotis 2013, novel. Translations: *The Birds of the Innocent Wood*, by Deirdre Madden, Hatzinikoli 2003, novel; *Champ Fleury*, by Geofroy Tory, Royal Printer of Francis A' of France, Kotinos, Athens, 2005; Study: *October, Eight O' Clock*, by Norman Manea, Kastaniotis 2011, novel; *Matilda*, by Mary Shelley, Nefeli 2013, novel; *My Family and Other Animals*, by Gerald Durrell, novel, to be published by Kastaniotis.

Tassos KAPERAROS

was born in Mani in 1958. He studied Law. He lives and works as a journalist in Athens.

Tasoula KARAGEORGIU

was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1954. Since 1981 she has worked as a state school teacher of Greek (and as a school advisor since 2007). She has published six poetry books: *Fragmentum Arithmos 53* (1986), *To Adrahti pou Matonei* (1989), *Diaspora* (1994), *Poiitiki Technologia* (1998), *To Metro* (2004), *I Helona tou Kerameikou* (2011), a book with lyrical narratives: *Paramythoi* (1996), a collection of scholarly articles: *Stin Aithousa tis Poiisis* (2001), a translation of Sappho's selected excerpts: *Sappho*, translation – comments (2009) and a translation of the ancient poet Erinna's saved poems: *Ilakati –Sparagmata kai Epigrammata–* (2013). For the collection *To Metro* (2004) she received the G. Athana award of the Athens Academy. She holds a PhD on philology. Since 2007 she has taught Modern Greek Poetry in the Poetry Lab of Takis Sinopoulos Foundation. She is married and mother of two children.

Vasilis P. KARAGIANNIS

is was born on 20 August 1953 in Lefkopigi (Kozani). He is a poet, prose writer, chronicler, and former director (1996-2003) of the Municipal Library of Kozani as well as of the Institute of Book and Reading (established in 1995). A lawyer by profession, he has also been chief editor of the literary Journal *Paremvasi* since 1984. In his capacity as library and IN.B.R. director, between 1996-2003, he edited approximately one hundred books, while he has published eighteen books of his own and has been anthologized in a number of Greek Writers' volumes. His short-story collection titled *Colours of Nostalgia* (2008, Gavriilidis editions) was shortlisted for the 2008 literature awards granted by the literary journal *Diavazo*. His most recent publications include two short story collections titled *Vague Eros* (2011, Gavriilidis editions) and *Scalene Triangle Sins* (2013, Gavriilidis editions).

Dionyssis KARATZAS

was born in 1950 in Patras, where he lives and worked as a teacher of Greek language and literature. His first poetry collection, *Dawn on Earth*, was published in 1972. After that, he wrote twelve more collections. The collection *From the Half Window* (publ. Metaichmio, Athens, 2006) was awarded in 2006 the Athens Academy Award. His last collection is *Without here* (publ. To Dondi, Patras, 2011). His poems have been translated in many European languages and many of them have been composed by Mikis Theodorakis, Ilias Andriopoulos, Giorgos Andreou, Giannis Gerogiannis, etc.

Vassilis KARAVITIS

(Nea Orestiada, 1934) is a poet and translator. He grew up in Piraeus and subsequently moved to Athens, where he studied Law and worked as a lawyer for many years. He has published nine volumes of poetry and has translated several major Polish writers (among others Herbert, Milosz, Rozevicz, Szymborska). He was a regular contributor to the Thessaloniki literary Journal *Diagonios*. His work includes the collections: *The contact game* (1973), *Formulas for an Unknown Life* (1982), *In praise of Sloth, or why we are the laughing stock*

(1985), *Sorrowmania* (1989), *Benign Darkness* (1997), *Of the Face* (2003), *Life in aporia* (2005), *Lingering Echo* (2014), and the anthology *Poetry 2004-2006*, Kedros publishers (2006).

Olympia KARAYORGA

(Alexandria, Egypt 1934) is an Egyptian-born poet, literary critic, translator and actress. Studied Sociology at the American University of Cairo, and Creative Writing, English and American Literature at Stanford University, USA. On returning to Greece she attended the Christos Vahliotis School of Drama. Her first poetry collection was *Thousands of Faces of Chance* (1961), followed by the *Loudspeakers* (1965), *The Big Wave* (1974), and *Who* (1985). Overall, she has published seven collections of poems, which were brought together in one volume in 2012 under the title *In a Golden Light; 1960-2010*. She has translated works by Federico Garcia Lorca, DH Lawrence, Albert Camus, Oscar Wilde, and Euripides (*Bacchanals* and *Trojan Women*). She authored the critical studies *Virginia Wolf; a Great Unknown*, *Nijinsky*, and *Giorgos Sarantaris, the Future One*. She has also published texts of personal experience *Egypt, Home of my Heart*, *Olympia's Leros Island*, and *Egypt-Mansoura and our Greek life there*. In 2010 she was awarded the Prize for Lyric Poetry by the Academy of Athens. As an actress she has participated in the theatre production of Genet's *Maids* (dir. K. Thomadaki), and in the feature films *Wandering* (dit. Ch. Christophis), *The Light of Day* (dir. T. Spetsiotis) and *The Bridegroom* (dir. A. Kyriakides) for which she won the best female actor prize. She currently lives on the island of Leros at her ancestral home.

Ioanna KARISTIANI

(Chania, Crete, 1952) is a novelist. She attended Law School at the University of Athens. She has worked as a cartoonist for leading Athens dailies as well as weekly and monthly magazines for a number of years. Her first publication was a collection of short stories entitled *Ms. Katakis* (1995) followed by her first novel *Mikra Anglia* (Little England) which was awarded the Greek National Fiction Award (1998) and was nominated for the *Aristeion* Prize and the literary award "Balkanika". It has been translated into German, Italian, Bulgarian, French and Spanish. Her next novel *Koustoumi sto homa* (Suit in the Earth) was published in 2000. It was awarded the Prize of the Academy of Athens and the Fiction Prize of the literary magazine "Diavazo". It was translated into German and French. In 2004 her script for the feature film *Nyfes* (Wives) by Pantelis Voulgaris was published in book form. Her more recent work includes *The Saint of Loneliness* (2003), *Swell* (2006), *The Sacks* (2010), *Weather: Thoughtful* (2011). She also authored the script of the film *Mikra Anglia* (2014) which was based on her novel of the same name.

Takis KARVELIS

(Aitoliko, 1925) is a poet and literary critic. Studied Greek literature at the University of Athens, and worked in secondary education (1952-1984) as a teacher, Headmaster, General Inspector and Consultant. Member of the editing board of the literary journals *Endochora* and *Dokimasia* published in Jannina; of the committee responsible for the compilation of the Greek literature textbooks for all high school classes; and of the editing board of the eight-volume *Prose Anthology of the Interwar and Postwar Periods*. His poetry publications

include *Semata* (Signals) (1956), *Testimony* (1966), *Metaphasis* (1972), *Graphe Paranomon* (Unlawful Proposals) (1977), *Moon Crescent Memory* (1983), *It's not last year's weather* (1984), *Change of Scenery* (1991), *The Pomes of little Rezenta* (1995), *In the Abyss of Oblivion* (2002), *To Unsung Heroes* (2014). He published the critical studies *Contemporary Poetry; Theory and Practice* (1983), *Second Reading Vols I, II, III* (1984, 1991, 2002), *The literary generation of the 1880s* (2003), and *Konstantinos Hatzopoulos, the pioneer* (1998) for which he was awarded the State Prize for Literary Criticism (1999). He also translated into Modern Greek Lucian's *Lucius or the Ass*, and the *Treatises and Homilies* of St. John Chrysostom.

Nikos KASDAGLIS

(Kos, 1928 – Rhodes, 2009) was a novelist and short-story writer. Worked for the Agricultural Bank of Greece (1948-1982). A writer of the so-called first postwar generation, he authored seven novels, five collections of short stories and two chronicles. He first appeared in the world of letters in 1952 with the collection of short stories entitled *Squalls*. His first novel *The Cogs of the Millstone* (1955) was awarded the Greek Novel National Prize. Then followed *Shorn Heads*, novel 1959; *I Am the Lord Thy God*, novel (1961) ; *Thirst*, novel 1970; *Mythology*, short stories 1977; *Maria Exploring the Metropolis of the Waters* 1982, novel; *The Bowstring*, novel, 1985; *The Lair*, short story 1987; *The Swamp*, chronicles 1988; *The Merciful*, short stories 1991; *Mount Ararat Flares up*, chronicles 1994; *Allah Acbar*, short stories 1998; *Baleful, the Blood of the Dead*, trilogy 1999. In 2006 a selection of his stories on the theme of violence was published under the title *Coercion*. Two of his short stories (*The Sponge Diver and Earth and Water*) and his novel *Shorn Heads* have been adapted for the cinema. *Shorn Heads* has also been translated into Slovenian (1963) and Hebrew (2001), while *Maria Exploring the Metropolis of the Waters* has been rendered into English (2014). He contributed articles to several literary journals and daily newspapers, and participated in the collective volume entitled *Eighteen Texts* (1970) in defiance of the military junta then ruling Greece. He also translated Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1989) and Jean Starakis' *Dans les prisons des Colonels* (1974).

Angela KASTRINAKI

is a prose writer and Professor of Modern Greek literature at the University of Crete. She was born in Athens in 1961. She has published 4 collections of short stories, a volume of autobiographical essays and a novel, *Love in the Age of Irony* (2008). Her stories focus on the relations between the sexes, friendship and the difficult family bonds, as well as on the issue of infidelity in modern society. She has won the "Abdi Ipekci" Peace and Friendship Award (Greek-Turkish relations) and the State Essay Award for her study *Literature in the tumultuous decade of 1940-1950*. Stories of hers have been translated into several European languages.

Nikos KATSALIDAS

was born in Ano Lesinita of Theologos, Agioi Saranda. He lives in Athens. He read Literature in Tirana and is a poet, prose writer, essayist and translator. He is a member and honorary member of literary unions and organizations. He has worked as a professor of Literature and as a literary editor for the National Greek Minority Press after the

Dictatorship. A fair sample of his poems is included in various world anthologies. He has translated thirty Greek poets and writers in Albanian and is one of the founders of the Organization of the National Greek Minority "Omonoia". He has served as a Minister for Human Rights in Albania during 2001-2002, and as Cultural Counselor of the Albanian Embassy in Athens during 2004-2008. He was awarded the highest distinction of Letters "Great Artist" by the President of Albania in 2012.

Rina KATSELLI

(or Catselli), was born in Keryneia (1938). She lived there until the Turkish invasion in Cyprus (1974), when she was displaced to the non occupied part of the island along with almost all the other Greek Cypriots. Immediately after the Turkish invasion, she fled with her family to Limassol as a refugee and, later on (1978), to Nicosia. Rina Katselli is a writer. Her literary work (novels, biographies and plays mainly), deals with Cyprus history, tradition and customs. In 2010 she was honored with the Prize for Excellence in Letters, Arts and Sciences of the Republic of Cyprus.

Kostas KAVANOZIS

was born in Komotini in 1967. He teaches Greek language and literature in junior high and high school. His published titles include *Pork with Cabbage* (short stories, Kedros Publishers, 2004), *Of this World* (novel, Kedros Publishers, 2009) and *The full light of the moons* (short stories, Patakis Publishers, 2001), which was short-listed for the 2012 *Diavazo* literary award and also for the 2012 Greek State literary award. He also publishes in newspapers and magazines and writes for the theatre.

Nikos A. KAVADIAS

(Corfu 1938 - Athens 2012) was a novelist and short-story writer. Studied medicine at the University of Thessaloniki, and specialized in Pathology. Worked as a military doctor until 1984, and as a private practitioner thereafter. From 1981 he edited the *Armed Forces Medical Review*. His first literary publication was a short story entitled *Hpe* in the periodical "Nees Tomes" in 1985. His first book, a novella, was, *The First Day*, was published in 1988, followed by the novels *Daphne* (1990), *Fear and Hope* (1991), *Flight* (1996), *Triestina* (2004), *I will be phoning you* (2004). In 1998 he published a collection of short stories (*The ghost in the planting and other stories*). He also contributed regularly articles, reviews and essays in the literary periodicals *Anakyklisi*, *Chartis* and *Porfyras*.

Ilias KEFALAS

was born in 1951 in the village Miligos, the Prefecture of Trvkala. He read political sciences at the University of Athens, where he lived from 1969 to 1992. Nowadays he is back home, cultivating poetry and observing nature that insists on its perpetual flourishing. He collaborates with literary and art magazines in his capacity of critic. He has a column in the magazine *Frear* where he publishes critical assessments of individuals and texts of

contemporary Greek literature. In the past, he was a critic for the magazines *Tomes*, *Nees Tomes*, *Diavazo*, *Odos Panos* and *Nea Efthyni*, where he published over one thousand reviews. To date, he has published twenty-five books, of which ten are poetry, four prose, five essays, five for children and one poetry anthology. His poems have been translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian and Polish.

Maria KENTROU-AGATHOPOULOU

was born in 1930, in Thessaloniki, where she lives. She has published thirteen books of poems, an autobiographical novel, four books of short stories and one book of essays. Her poems have been translated into nine European languages and her short stories appear in German anthologies. She is a member of the Authors' Association in Thessaloniki and of the Hellenic Authors' Society. She was awarded the Nikiforos Vrettakos prize (1994) for her collection of poems *The dark duration of days* (1993) and the Academy of Athens – Petros Haris Foundation prize (2003) for her collection of short stories *The Abandonment* (2002).

Panagiotis KERASIDIS

was born in Patras (1955). He studied law in Athens where he lives now. He has written six poetry books.

Yannis KESARIDIS

was born in Veria in 1959. He studied Political and Economic Sciences, Theatre and Greek Literature. He has worked – as an actor, director and playwright – for the State Theatre of Northern Greece, the Municipal-Regional Theatre of Veria, the “Techne” Experimental Theatre, the Municipal-Regional Theatre of Serres, State TV and private radio. He is also a member of the working group for the National Book Centre’s “Reading Clubs” Programme. He first appeared in Greek Letters in March 1996 with the short story “Dirty Dress”. Since then, he has published three collections of short stories: *Chronicle of a Premiere* (Exandas 1997), *Encounters and Guilt* (Kedros 2000) and *Misandra* (Kedros 2005), winner of the State Literature Prize. He was shortlisted for the State Literature Prize and the *Diavazo* Literature Prize) A number of his stories have been translated into German, Georgian and English.

Natasha KESMETI

short story writer, essayist, poet, translator was born in Athens (1947). She studied Law and English Literature. Her most recent book is a collection of short stories and contemplations titled *Voices in Exile* (Armos editions, Athens, 2013). She translated into Greek essays and short stories by British and American authors.

Yannis KIOURTSAKIS

born in Athens in 1941, is a novelist and essayist. His fictional trilogy *To ídrio kai to állo* [*The Same and the Other*] is based on his own and his family’s experiences, and moves from there to encompass Greek and European history in the 20th century, the difficult relationship between Greek society and European modernity, and the current universal crisis of civilization. Similarly, his non-fiction work on oral popular culture, Greek shadow theatre and carnival leads into more general reflections on cultural creation. The common core of

this work in progress is the Other – individual and collective – as a foundation of the psyche of each one of us.

Nena KOKKINAKI

a writer, philologist, and book critic, (1951-) was born and raised in Athens. She holds a degree in Classical Philology from the University of Athens and a post graduate degree from the Sorbonne (Paris IV) focused in 20th century Greek literature. A classical scholar, she taught Classics and Modern Greek, served as School Advisor at the Greek Ministry of Education, Advisor to the Greek Embassy in Paris, and taught Modern Greek Literature courses at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles. Her first literary work appeared in 1993 with the short story *The Paper Woman* (Domos). Ever since, she has published novels (*The Man of the Closed Door*, 1996, Domos; *Birthday Present*, 1997, Patakis; *What a Pity to be the Wife*, 1999, Angyra); short stories, (*The Ghost Lover*, 2000, Angyra), and novels for young adults (*Natalia*; *Margarita*; Patakis; *Would you lent me a story please?*; *Zoitsa Hestia*; *Yet ... The Earth sleeps at Night*, Patakis, *A Little White Lie*, Kastaniotis. Nena Kokkinaki received the National Award for her book *Penelope Delta; her life like a fairy tale* (Angyra, 2008). Her most recent novels are: *Beauty salon* (Patakis, 2010) and *The Parisian Ambassador* (Patakis, 2013).

Dimitris KOKORIS

was born in Piraeus (1963). He has been awarded with a Ph. D. in Modern Greek Philology by the University of Ioannina. He teaches as assistant professor at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki. He participated in many conferences, presenting his work. He has published books, articles and book reviews. His books are mainly concerned with the relation of the Greek left party with literature during the period between the two world wars (1999), the poems of Yiannis Ritsos (2003, 2009), the literary production of Dinos Christianopoulos (2003, 2011), the poetic rythme (2006), the literary translation (2007) and the literary production of Yiorgos Ioannou (2013).

Dimitra KOLLIAKOU

was born in Athens in 1968. She is a graduate of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Edinburgh. She taught linguistics and creative writing at Newcastle University (1995-2010) and has since been teaching at the University of Paris Diderot (Paris VII). She has extensively worked on issues of Modern Greek syntax and semantics from a descriptive and a theoretical perspective. She has published three novels and a collection of concentric novellas and has been awarded the Jim Wilson Prize for first time author by the old National Book Centre of Greece (EKEBI), the Athens Prize for Literature and the Academy of Athens (Petros Charis Foundation) award. She is married to the linguist Jonathan Ginzburg and they have two daughters.

Lila KONOMARA

a writer and a translator, studied contemporary literature in Paris and worked at the French Institute of Athens. She has translated works of R.L. Stevenson, E. Hemingway, A. Gide, and G. Simenon. She is co-editor of the literary website *oanagnostis.gr*. Articles and short stories of hers are regularly published in newspapers and literary magazines. Works: *Macao* (novellas,

2002); *Four Seasons – detail* (novel, 2004); *At 11.11' sharp!* (Children's novel, 2005); *The Representation* (novel, 2009); *The Dinner* (novel, 2012). Macao was awarded the *Diavazo* Award for Fiction. Konomara's works cover subjects as the complexities of language, the quest of identity and the multiple aspects of reality. She is noted for her dense literary writing and the use of fragmented speech, multifocused narration, as well as the adoption of an allegorical interpretation through the use of imaginative elements.

Manos KONTOLEON

(Athens, 1946) is a novelist, literary critic and children's book writer. Studied Physics at the University of Athens. His first appearance in the world of letters was in 1969 in an anthology of young prose writers, and ten years later he published his first book, a children's story. A prolific writer, active in most *genres* of prose, is also a regular contributor to journals and newspapers, where he publishes reviews and literary texts. His published novels include *One plus one equal whatever you want* (with Titina Danelli) (1988), *Narrative* (1981), *With info from personal interviews* (1984), *"The lights!" he said* (1986), *I have decided to kill Ermolaos* (1989), *Story of a Eunuch* (2001), *Love Education* (2003), *Atkinson's Lavender* (2009), *Powerless Angel* (2010). He has also published four collections of short stories *And the ironing board sliced the television set in half* (1982), *Love stories of a childhood* (1992), *In the margins* (2000), *Almost Love* (2006), over twenty children's books, among which the prize-winning *Mask on the Moon* (1997), and ten for adolescent readers. He has authored the critical study *Views on children's literature* (1988), and has translated numerous children's books including inter alia works by Hans Christian Andersen, Rudyard Kipling, Lewis Carroll, and a series of books by Max Velthuijs and Cressida Cowell. He has been awarded the State Prize for the Novel for Young Readers (1998), has received Commendations by the Hellenic Authors' Society (1979, 1982), the Award of Greek Children's Book Circle (1987) as well as an Honorary Mention and was selected in the Honours List of the International Board on Books for Young People (1992). His work has been translated into French and English, and published in France and the USA.

Yiannis KONTOS

(Aigion, Greece 1943 – Athens, 2015) was a poet. Studied economics and worked for an insurance company. From 1971-1976 he set up and managed a successful bookshop (together with Th. Niarchos) before moving to Kedros publishers, where he worked for over 35 years as a reader. During this time, he also had his own radio programmed on one of the national networks, was a regular contributor with articles on literature, art and theatre to newspapers and magazines, and taught literature in the Kostas Kazakos Drama School. He published his first collection of poetry, *Circular Route*, in 1970 and has subsequently published a further twelve collections: *The Chronometer* (1972); *The Unforeseen* (1975); *Photocopies* (1977); *In the Dialect of the Desert* (1980); *The Bones* (1982); *By an Anonymous Monk* (1985); *Gratuitous Darkness* (1989); *At the Turn of Day* (1992); *Absurd Athlete* (1997); *The Moon's Hypotenuse* (2002); *Seconds of Fear* (2006), *Electrified City* (2008); *The Level of the Body*. The corpus of his poetical work was published in 2013 (*Poems 1970-2010*), while two volumes of selected poems entitled *When a Drum is Heard over the City* (1992) and *Pins in the Clouds* were published in 1992 and 1999. In addition he has published two volume of essays, *The Noble Metals* (1994), *Secret*

Landscapes (2014), a collection of short prose, *Lethal Professions* (2014), and several books for children, *Aristeides, the Little Hippopotamus* (2001). His work has been translated into several European languages. He was awarded the State Prize for Poetry in 1998 and the Ouranis Foundation prize of the Academy of Athens in 2009.

Takis KOUFOPOULOS

(Athens, 1927) is a prose writer and translator. Studied Civil Engineering at the National Technical University of Athens. Worked at the Ministry of Public Works from 1953 to 1967, when he resigned in protest at the *coup d'état* that brought the military dictatorship to power. Since then worked as a free-lance professional and set up a laboratory for Research and Quality Control of Building Materials, which was instrumental in the development of the first ready concrete mix production plant in Greece. His first short story collection, *Small Contemporary Stories*, appeared in 1959, followed by *The Street* (1963), *Pathea* (1970), *Aspects* (1973), *Apology* (1980), *Mada* (1987), *Dichtha* (1996), *Slittings* (1999), *Aspects* (expanded edition 2000). In 1970 he participated in the collective volume *Eighteen Texts*, published in defiance of the dictatorship (1967-1974). He has translated T.S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday and other Poems* (1964), and texts from the Ancient Greek including *Clement of Alexandria The Stromata Book V* (1999), and Parmenides *The Poem* (2001). He has also authored the essays *The Obscure Notes on Heraclitus* (1991), and *Language And Writing* (2001), and compiled word-indices for several major writers and texts of the history of Greek letters, such as the Word-Index of the New Testament (1995), of Solomos' Poems (1995), of Cavafy's Poems (1997), of Homer's Epics (2000), of Herodotus (2001), of Thucydides (2002) and an Inverse Homeric Lexicon (2002).

Vassilis KOUGEAS

was born in Athens (1952). He studied Law in Thessaloniki and in Brussels, did his post graduate degree in History at Paris [Pantheon – Sorbonne] and Ph.D. in Public Law [Athens]. He is currently employed as a professor at Panteion University of Athens. He is a member of the Hellenic Authors' Society since 1986 and member of the Circle of Poets. His poetry has been translated into French, Romanian and English. The following collections of his poems are published: *Years Are Burning*, ed. Poreia 1983; *Sleep, General Rehearsal*, ed. Ypsilon 1985; *Ever Fewer*, ed. Kedros 1992, *Years Are Burning*, collected poems 1975-1985, ed. Ypsilon 1994; *Of the Erstwhile Inhabited*, edit. Ypsilon 1997; *Jadis Habite*, ed. Harmattan 2003; *With Green Copper Lips and*, ed. Ypsilon 2009; *The Restless Depth of Field*, ed. Ypsilon 2013.

Menis KOUMANTAREAS

(Athens, 1931-2014) was a novelist, short story writer and translator, a prominent figure among the 'second postwar generation' of prose-writers. Worked for insurance and shipping firms until 1981. In 1961 he commenced writing for the weekly magazine *Tahydromos* and in 1962 he made his first appearance in literature with his collection of short stories *Pinball Machines*. His second collection *The Sailing* was awarded the State Prize for the Short story (1967) but upon the advent of the military dictatorship in that year was condemned as obscene and banned. He participated in the collective volume *Eighteen Texts* (1980) that was published in defiance of the dictatorship, while in 1972 was an invitee of the DAAD

programme in West Berlin. As of 1982 he devoted himself exclusively to writing and translation. His extensive oeuvre includes *The Burnt Ones* (1972), *Glass Factory* (1975), *Koula* (1978), *The Barber Shop* (1979), *Seraphim and Cherubim* (1981), *The Handsome Lieutenant* (1982), *Vest No 9* (1986), *The Wandering Trumpeter* (1989), *The Harp Gang* (1993), *I remember Maria* (1994), *Their Scent Makes me Weep* (1996), *The Day is for Writing and the Night is for the Body* (1999), *Twice a Greek* (2001), *Noah* (2003), *The Woamn that Flies* (2006), *The Show is for the Greeks* (2008), *At a Barracks on the Edge of Nowhere* (2009), *Forgotten Garrison* (2010), *The Foxes of Gosport* (2011), *Death in Valparaiso* (2013), *The Treasure of Time* (2014). Several of his writings have been translated into thirteen languages. He also translated works by major writers including among others Faulkner, Carroll, Buchner, Melville Hemingway, Poe and Fitzgerald. He was awarded the State Prizes for the Short Story (1967), for the Novel (1976, 2002), and the Ouranis Foundation prize of the Athens Academy for the entirety of his work (2008).

Zeta KOUNTOURI

was born in Athens. She worked as a lawyer and an assistant lecturer at the Athens University of Economics and Business. She also taught creative writing at the same University workshop between 2007 and 2009. Some of her stories have been published in Greece and abroad (Spain and Italy). The collections of her stories *The Premiere* and *I Saw You* have been published by Hestia edit. (1992 and 1995 respectively), *The Ravishing Life* (2007) by Kedros edit., while she also participated with five other women writers in the creation of a collective volume under the title *Woman's Sensation – Life's Approaches* (2000) published by Kastaniotis edit. Kedros edit. also published her novels *The Outsider* (2005), *Cracks within the Silence* (2001), and *Deadline* (2013).

Maria KOURSI

was born in Athens and studied Political Science. She is a books editor. She has written ten poetry books.

Demosthenes KOURTOVIK

(Athens, 1948) is a novelist, literary critic and translator. Studied biology in Athens and Stuttgart (Germany), and physical anthropology in Wroclaw (Poland), where he obtained his doctoral degree with a dissertation on the evolution of human sexuality. Taught history of sexuality, sexuality in art and comparative psychology at the University of Crete. Has worked for many years as a translator and has translated over 70 books from 8 foreign languages. Since 1996 works mainly as a literary critic for the major daily "Ta Nea". Has also been active in the theatre as a playwright, director and actor, as well as in the cinema as a film reviewer. His novels include *Exile at Home* (1991), *The Dust of the Galaxy* (1991), *Anti-lexicon of Modern Greek Chrestomathy* (1994), *Postwar Greek Writers* (1995) *Consumatun est* (It is finished) (1996), *The Greek Autumn of Eva-Anita Bengston* (1997), *Extra Time* (1999), *The Nostalgia of Dragons* (2000), *The view beyond the backyard* (2002), *A Greek Hangover* (2005), *The other Path* (2007), *What Dare the Barbarians Claim* (2008), *The Rice-and-Cabbage of the Cross* (2012), *The Nostalgia of Reality* (2015). He has also authored *The evolution of Human Sexuality*

(1994), *Comparative Psychology* (1998). Several of his novels have been translated into French, German, Swedish, Danish and Romanian. His translations (from English, German, French, Finnish, Swedish, Dutch, Norwegian and Italian) include works by major authors including, among others, Goethe, D. Defoe, Lord Byron, G. Leopardi, E. A. Poe, J. Verne, B. Brecht, W. Benjamin, K. Capek, Tankred Dorst, Wolf Biermann, Erich Fried, Veijo Meri, Eeva Kilpi, Jens Bjorneboe, Julian Barnes, Peter Hoeg.

Panayotis KOUSATHANAS

is a poet, writer and essayist. He was born in Mykonos in 1945, Cyclades, where he lives. He studied English and Greek Literature at the University of Athens, and worked as teacher in secondary education for twenty years. He has published a total of twenty-six books including collections of poetry, short stories, texts on the culture and history of his birthplace and translations of English poetry. His first book *Dream Pastiche* (poems, 1980) was awarded the Maria P. Ralli Prize, his *Ravings I, Texts on the Culture and History of Mykonos* (Indiktos Editions 2002) the Greek State Prize for Chronicle-Testimony, and his *Odd Tales Ending with a Question-mark* (Indiktos Editions 2009) the Greek State Prize for Short Story. Among his most recent books are: *Remarkable Meetings* (a collection of short stories), and *The Poems* (with an English translation of the poem *The-Will-o'-the-wisp* by David Connolly), both edited by Indiktos Editions 2011. At present, he is working on a novel, a revised edition of *A Handy Dictionary of the Mykonian Idiom* and six more volumes of *Ravings* (III-VIII).

Chloe KOUTSOUBELLI

was born in Thessaloniki, in 1962. She studied law and worked for eighteen years in a bank. She has published seven collections of poems, a novel, a play and two e-books combining poems with photographs. Her collections of poems are: *Silent Relationships*, Egnatia Publishers 1984; *Night is a Whale*, Loxias Publishers 1990; *The Departure of Lady K*, Nea Poreia Publishers 2004; *The Lake, the Garden, and the Loss*, Nea Poreia 2006; *The Fox and the Red Dance*, Gavrielidis 2009; *In the Ancient World it Gets Dark Early*”, Gavrielidis 2012; *Clinically Absent*, Gavrielidis 2014. Her novel: *Whispering*, Paratiritis 2002; and a play: *Orpheus in the Bar*, Parodos 2005. Her e-books (a combination of poetry and photographs): 1. *Circulation is forbidden*. 2. *The Secret Life of Poems*. Her poems and short stories have appeared in various literary magazines.

Stathis KOUTSOUNIS

was born in 1959 in Nea Figalia, Olympia. He studied Law, Literature, and Classical Music. He lives and works in Athens. He has published the poetry collections: *Etudes for Voice and Poetry* (1987); *Blood harvest* (1991); *Variations of black* (1998); *The terrorism of beauty* (2004); *Insects in intensive care* (2008); and *Snapshots of the body* (2014). His writings also include short stories, critical essays, literary studies, and book reviews. Poems of his have been collected in anthologies and have been translated into English, French, German, Spanish, and Persian.

Achilleas KYRIAKIDIS

born in Cairo (Egypt), in 1946 is a prose writer (seven short stories' collections, two novellas and three collections of essays on literature and cinema), translator (has translated more than

ninety works of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Raymond Queneau, Georges Perec, Luis Sepulveda, Ernest Hemingway et al.), scriptwriter of three Greek feature films (*A Time to Kill*, *Starry Dome*, *Paradise Is a Personal Matter*) and writer-director of eleven short films, awarded both home and abroad. Recipient of the 2004 Best Short Stories' Collection National Award for his book *Artificial Respirations*; of the 2007 Best Translation National Award for his translation of Jorge Luis Borges' *Collected Prose*; of the 2007 Cavafy International Prize for his translation of Alaa Al-Asouani's *The Yacubian Building*; and of the 2009 Best Translation of Novel Written in French for his translation of Patrick Modiano's *In the Caf  of Lost Youth*. His latest book is the novella *360* (2013); his latest short film, *Properties of 2* (2012).

Maria KYRTZAKI

is a poet. Born in Kavala, she Studied Medieval and Modern Greek Literature at the University of Thessaloniki. Has worked for numerous publishing houses in Athens as a book and series editor. She was part of the team created in 1977 by Manos Hatzidakis at the Greek Radio Third Programme, where she continued to work as a producer of radio programs in subjects concerning mainly literature and philosophy. She also teaches language at the *Empros Theatre* drama school. Her first collection of poems *Silent screams* was published in Kavala in 1966. Her subsequent works, published in Athens, include *The Words* (1973), *The Circle* (1976), *The Woman with the flock* (1982), *Summary for the Night* (1986), *Daylight Night* (1989), *Crossroad* (1992), *Black Sea* (2000), *Dim and Fading* (2002). In 2005 a volume of her collected poems from 1973 to 2002 was published under the title *In the middle of the asphalt* (2005). She has been awarded the Sotirios Matragas Prize of the Academy of Athens (2003). Her text *Typho* was presented as a multimedia performance (1997) and her translation of Steven Berkoff's play *Greek* was staged at *Empros Theatre* (1993), while several of her poems have been set to music by composers George Kouroupos (1991) and Vassilis Riziotis (1992). Her poetry has been translated in English, German, Swedish and Italian.

Eleni LADIA

was born in Athens on August the thirteenth 1945. She studied Archaeology and Theology at the University of Athens. The renowned author has published novels, short stories and essays. Her articles and studies have appeared in both magazines and newspapers. Her short stories have been translated into English, French, and Hebrew. The novel *X, the Lion Faced* has been translated into Serbian. *The Grace* and *The Woman with a Ship on her Head* have been translated into Romanian. She has received the following awards: 2nd State prize for *Copper Sleep* in 1981; the Academy of Athens Ouranis foundation for *Horography* 1991; the same book was also a candidate for the European prize of 1992; State prize for *The Woman with the Ship on her Head* in 2007. Her best known works include: *The Copper Sleep* (short stories); *Thetia* (novel); *Persephone's Groves* (novel); *The Grace* (novel); *Frederic and Ioannis* (nouvelle); *The Fragmentary Relationship* (novel). She has translated: *Orphic Hymns* (translation from Ancient Greek, introduction and comments, with the collaboration of D.P. Papaditsas) in 1984 and *Homeric Hymns* (translation from Ancient Greek, introduction and comments, with the collaboration of D.P. Papaditsas) in 1985.

Maria LAGOURELI

was born in Athens, where she studied journalism. She participated in theater workshops of Grotowski Theater under the direction of the famous director Sislack. She also attended seminars for TV production, interview, and screenplaywriting at Columbia University of Illinois USA. Since 1974, her poetry has been published in literary magazines anthologies and has been translated in English Polish, and French .She has worked partly as reporter and f for a long time in Olympic Airways public relations. Her books are: *Apsinthis*, 1974; *Out of sun and house*, 1975; *Kirki and Krikoi*, 1977; *Transit Launch*, 1978; *Horses*, Egokeros 1980; *The burned film*, Iridanos 1983; *The Damaged ones*, Iridanos 1986; *The man with the raincoat*, Govostis 1993; *Dousing the embers*, Kastaniotis 2005. She has also edited collection of prose in 1978 under the title *Transit Lounge*.

Maria LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

has written more than twenty novels as well as poetry, theatrical plays and essays. Some of her novels are set in the byzantine period and some are based on contemporary life. Her theatrical plays have been performed in Greece and abroad. A volume with plays and poetry is being published by Guernica, Canada. Books of hers have been translated and published into French, Swedish (Bonniers Publications) and English, and have been taught at Universities in Greece and abroad. Five doctoral theses have been done on her books at the Universities of Athens, Patras and Bari Italy. She is a graduate of the Panteion University of Athens and the Sorbonne, Paris and a fellow of the French Government. While in Paris, she met Samuel Beckett, with whom she corresponded for many years. She became his translator and reviewer of his plays and published a book of essays about him. Numerous literary reviews of hers have appeared in major newspapers and magazines. She was honored by the Academy of Athens and other literary societies.

Nikos LAZARIS

was born in 1947 in Piraeus, but grew up in Likovrissi (Athens), where he still lives. He studied Journalism and Cinematography. He worked as a journalist in Athenian newspapers and magazines and as a copywriter and creative director for large advertising agencies. In addition, he served as Art Director at the Cultural Center of Municipality of Likovrissi and as Director of the "Takis Sinopoulos" Foundation of Modern Greek Poetry. He is the author of seven books of poetry and one book of critical essays. He also cooperated with literary magazines *Arts and Letters* and *Planodion* as a literary critic. From March 2002 to December 2012, he held the column of literary criticism of *Nea Hestia* magazine.

Cleopatra LYMPERI

was born in Chalcis in 1953. She studied Music (Greek Conservatory) and Fine Arts (Athens School) and has independently studied *Philosophy*. She writes poetry, prose, essays, book reviews and translates from the English language. She had published poetry collections: *The Rider Death* (1990); *Sort Philharmonic* (1993); *His New Year's Day* (1997); *The Verb To Hunger* (2001); *The Music Of Spheres* (2007). She has also published the historical-folklore essay *Neighborhoods Of Chalcis* (1989), the narrative *Flower* (2003) and the poetry diaries *Seven year*

old girl (2011). She has translated: *Three Conversations* – Allen Ginsberg’s interview (2001; *Deaths For The Ladies (and other disasters)* – Norman Mailer’s poems (2008); poems by Sylvia Plath, Ann Sexton, Ezra Pound, Emily Dickinson, Roman Kissiov, Danica Vukicevic, Bengalian Poets (Poeticanet.gr), Becir Vukovic, Andrija Radulovic, Armando Romero, etc. She has worked as a book-reviewer for the newspaper *Eleutherotypia*.

Christoforos LIONTAKIS

(Heraclion, Crete, 1945) is a poet and translator. Studied law at the University of Athens and attended courses in philosophy of law at the University of Paris. His first collection of poems *The End of the Landscape* was published in 1973 followed by the collections *Transference* (1976), *Underground Garage* (1978), *Minotaur Relocates* 1982, *Rose Garden with Gendarmes*, (1988), *With the Light* (1999), *An Athenian Smile* (2009), *Wandering’s End* (2010), *Persistent Images* (2012). His collected essays were published in 1993 under the title *Night Gymnasium*. He has been awarded the Greek National Poetry Award (1999), and the poetry prize of the literary journal *Diavazo* (2000). The French Ministry of Culture has honoured him with the Knighthood of the Arts and Letters and the municipality of Heraklion, Crete, has awarded him with the Nikos Kazantzakis Literary Prize. His poems have been translated into French, German, Italian and English and have been set to music by composer Thanos Mikroutsikos. He has translated works by French poets and authors, Stendhal, Valery, Apollinaire, Perse, Ponge, Bonefoy, Camus and Genet, et al and has translated, compiled and edited an anthology of French poetry, titled, *From Baudelaire to the Present*. He has also selected and edited a collection of short stories by Alexandros Papadiamantis.

Themis LIVERIADIS

(poetry, short stories) was born in Thessaloniki (1940), but lives in Athens since 1998. He studied Law & Industrial Costing. Career: 1965-1978 shareholder of «Elvifan», auto accessories industry; 1980-1996: owner of restaurant «Rayias»; 1996-1997: at the organization “Thessaloniki, cultural capitol of Europe 1997”; 1998-2004 : cultural advisor to the Ministry of Defense & to the National Tourism Organization. He is a contributor to several newspapers & magazines. Cultural activities: 1962, first appearance in Literature: awarded a first prize for poetry (critic committee : Vrettakos, Elytis, Ritsos); 1972, during dictatorship, he was been under trial for his prose “The dream”, published at the literary review *Tram*; 2000: Publishers’ Union awarded him with an honorary distinction for his contribution to Letters; 2001: among 14 poets representing Greek Poetry in Paris; Edited works : nine books (five of poetry). Web-page : www.liveriadis.gr

Vakis LOIZIDES

was born in Nicosia (Cyprus) in 1965. He studied Economics and Tourism in Athens and the U.K. He published 8 collections of poetry: *Poetry and Collage*, 1995; *Mechanically Handmade*, 1999; *Moving monuments*, 2002; *In Rush Hour*, 2005; *Twig Breaking*, 2007; *The Elementary*, 2009; *The Angel and the Sculptor*, 2011; and *Göteborg*, 2014. He is the editor of the Anthology of young Cypriot poets *Cyprus after '90*. He also publishes essays for art and poetry in art and

literature magazines in Greece and Cyprus. His poems have been translated in many European languages. His art works have been presented in three solo exhibitions in Nicosia.

Eftichia-Alexandra LOUKIDOU

was born in Munich and is of Constantinopolitan descent. She lives in Thessaloniki where she studied at the Faculty of Philosophy. She published the following collections of poetry: *Sad daisies*, (Egnatia 1986); *The triptych of shimmer* (1993); *Momentous homecoming*, (Armos 1999); *Let's Blossom till nothing*, (Kastaniotis 2004), *Basement level one*, (Kastaniotis 2008, 2nd ed. 2009), *The dessert*, (Kedros 2012, 2nd & 3rd ed. 2013. Shortlisted for the National Literary Award) and the study: *Face stitching. A visit to Orestis's Alexakis poetry* (Neos Astrolavos /Efthini 2012). She is Secretary of the Writers' Society in Thessaloniki.

Giorgis MANOUSSAKIS

(Chania, Crete, 1933 – 2008) was a poet and prose writer. Studied at the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens and worked for 26 years as a teacher in Secondary Education. His first publication was a short story in the Athens Journal *Pnevamtiki Zoi* (Cultural Life) in 1952. He published poetry collections including *Soliloquies* (1967), *The Body of Silence* (1970), *Triglyph* (1976), *Bird Taxidermist* (1978), *Spaces for Breath* (1988), *Men and Shadows* (1995), *At the Promontory of Existence* (2003), *Broken Statues and Bitter-weeds* (2005), His collected poems (1967-2007) were published posthumously in 2013. His other books are the study *Crete in the literary works of Prevelakis* (1968), the travel book *A Journey in Sfakia* (1980), a collection of short prose *A scull thrust through the railing* (1999), the longer narrative *When the sole of our feet matched the ground* (2000) and the novel *The Volunteer* (2008). He was awarded the Nikos Kazantzakis prize sponsored by the City of Heraklion, in 1977, and the State prize for the Essay/Testimony in 1981. Several of his poems have been translated into English, French, German, Dutch, Russian, Polish, Romanian and Spanish.

Argiro MANDOGLOU

has studied English and Philosophy at University of North London, England and has worked as a literary critic on Athens newspaper *Eleftherotypia* for ten years (2000- 2010). She has, also, published numerous articles on literature and culture. She is the author of five books of fiction books and two books of poetry. Her latest book *White Revenge* was shortlisted for the *Anagnostis* Literary Prize, one of the most distinguished prizes in Greece. She has translated a number of novels including writers as Henry James and Virginia Woolf. She's currently working as a translator for different publishing houses in Greece. She has been a member of the Committee for the National Translation Prize for the years (2001-2004) and (2008-2012) and has taught creative writing at National Book's Centre. Her novel *All on Zero* has been translated into English by Don Nielsen and has been published as an e-book by Paperpublishing publications.

Niki MARAGOU

(Limassol, Cyprus 1948 – Fayum, Egypt, 2013) was a Cypriot poet, novelist and story writer. Studied sociology in West Berlin from 1965-70. Worked for ten years as a dramaturge at the State Theatre of Cyprus. Since 1980 has been directing the Kochlias Bookshop in Nicosia. She

has published books of prose, poetry and children's fairy tales. Her poetry collections include *From the garden*, (Athens 1981), State commendation for poetry, *Beginning of Indiction* (Nicosia, 1987), State prize for poetry, *Selections from the Divan*, (Nicosia 2001), *Divan*, (collected poems, Athens 2005), Academy of Athens Prize for poetry 2006; the novels *Is the panther alive?* (Athens 1998), State prize for prose *Doctor from Vienna*, (Athens 2003), *Yezoul* (Athens 2012); the short story collection *A layer of san*, (Athens 1990), State prize for prose; and the *Fairytales of Cyprus* (Athens 1994), *Seven Tales from Cyprus* (2003), *The Cobbler and the King* (Athens 2005), *The boy and the goblet* (Athens 2006) *Nicosienses* with photographer Arunas Baltenas, (Vilnius, Lithuania, 2006). Her collected poems from 2002-2013 were published posthumously in 2013 under the title *For a Faint Idea*. Her work has been translated in several languages. She was also an accomplished painter with an international career.

Aris MARANGOPOULOS

(b. Athens 1948) is a prose writer, literary critic and translator. He studied History and Archeology at the University of Athens, History of Art and Archeology at the University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. Most of his prose refers to a contemporary social context, presented through well-known historic attempts of civil disobedience against state arbitrariness. In seeming contrast to that realist predilection his style, though, should not be defined as realistic. He clearly stands for an elective modernist style which in some books even takes the form of a *poème en prose*. He is considered an authority on James Joyce (three books on the subject). He has authored more than ten fiction books, four albums with stories based on photo archives and critical essays. More bibliography etc. about him as follows:

Personal site: <http://www.arisgrandman.com> Personal blog: www.arisgrandman.blogspot.com
Publisher's page: <http://www.toposbooks.gr>
Linkedin: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/aris-maragkopoulos/31/41a/460>
Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aris_Marangopoulos
Facebook: 1. www.facebook.com/amaragkopoulos
2. <https://www.facebook.com/TheSlapTree>
3. <https://www.facebook.com/ObsessionWithSpring>

Eleni MARINAKI

was born in Chania where she also lives. She studied graphic design and painting in Athens where she worked for several years. She has published seven poetry books. She has also written the introductions and poetic commentary in two photography albums. In 2006, *Mneme Theatre Company* presented a theatre performance based on her poetry in Kydonia Theatre, Chania. The performance was directed by Michalis Virvidakis. Her poetry appears in literary magazines, newspapers and is cited in different websites.

Prodromos H. MARKOGLOU

was born in Kavala in 1935. His parents were Greek refugees from Kapodokia (Asia Minor) and from the Black Sea (Pondos). In 1944 he was injured by a German hand-grenade. He was educated in the "School of Economics and Commercial Studies" in Athens. He worked in various private enterprises. He has been living in Thessaloniki since 1971. In 1962 his first collection of poems *Confined* was published. He writes poetry, prose, short stories and short essays. In 1998 he was awarded the National Prize for his novel *Fragments* and in 2004 with the Athens Academy prize for his short stories *Escape from his destiny*. His latest book is a collection of short stories *Clouds travel at night* published in 2011.

Thanasis MARKOPOULOS

was born in 1951 in Kranidia, Kozani. He studied Greek Language and Literature in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where he also completed his Master and PHD. His special interests focus on poetry and criticism. Poetry: *Escape Attempt 1975-1981* (1982); *Our correspondent's* (1985); *Body model* (1988); *Open vein* (1991); *The gun of silence* (1996); *Fatigue test* (2002); *Short breaths* (2010). Studies – Essays: *The drama characters in Marios Hakkas's prose* (1995); *Nikos Alexis Aslanoglou's bibliography 1948-1996* (1996); *Brief glances. Anagnostakis. Kyrou. Thasitis. Christianopoulos. Aslanoglou. Meskos. Evanghelou. Markoglou* (2003); *Anestis Evanghelou. The poet. The prose writer. The critic* (2006); *The poet and the poem. Karyotakis. Sahtouris. Kentrou-Agathopoulou. Dimoula. Christianopoulos. Markoglou. Ganas. Fostieris* (2010); *A bird on the asphalt. Nikos Alexis Aslanoglou's poetry and poetics* (2013).

Yorgos MARKOPOULOS

was born in Messini in 1951 and he lives in Athens since 1965. He studied economics. He has published seven collections of poetry, a collection of prose, two volumes of his writings for the work of other poets, two monographs (one on the theme of football in Greek poetry and another one on the work of Tassos Livaditis). In 1996 he was awarded the "Cavafy Prize" in Alexandria, Egypt and in 1999 the State Prize for Poetry for his collection *Do not cover the river* (Kedros 1998). A selection of his work was also translated by Michel Volkovitch in French and published under the title *Ne recouvre pas la riviere* (Desmos / Cahiers grecs, Paris 2000). In 2011 he was awarded the National Prize for Poetry for his collection *Hidden Hunter* and, in the same year he was honored with the Award of the Academy of Athens by the Foundation of Kostas and Eleni Ourani for his life's work.

Jenny MASTORAKI

was born in Athens, 1949. B.A. in Byzantine and Medieval Literature (University of Athens). She has published four books of poetry, translated in all major European languages (*Tolls*, 1972, *Kin*, 1978, *Tales of the Deep*, 1983, *With a Crown of Light*, 1989), and numerous translations from English, German, Italian and Spanish (among others, J.D. Salinger, Carson McCullers, C.S. Lewis, Lewis Carroll, Heinrich Böll, Harold Pinter, Elias Canetti, Heinrich von Kleist, Carlo Goldoni, Federico García Lorca, Sarah Kane, Howard Barker). She has received three awards for her translations: by the Columbia University Translation Center

(The Thornton Niven Wilder Prize, 1989); by the International Board on Books for Young People (1991); by the Theatrical Museum of Greece (2011).

Pavlos MATESSIS

(Divri, Arcadia, 1933 – Athens 2013) was a playwright, novelist and translator. Studied acting at the Vachliotis Drama School. He also studied music and foreign languages. Worked as bank clerk but left banking to devote himself to the theatre and literature. He appeared as an actor in the late 50s, and taught acting at the Stavrakos Cinema School in Athens (1963-64). He served as an assistant dramaturge at the Greek National Theatre (1971-73). He also wrote and directed two television series (1974-76) and wrote scripts for Floor Shows. He made his literary debut in 1967 with his play *The Ceremony* (performed by the Nea Ionia theatre in 1967 and the National Theatre in 1969). Eleven of his 13 plays have been performed, principally by the National Theatre, including among others *The Ghost of Mr. Ramon Navarro* and *To Eleusis*. His play *Guardian Angel for Hire* has been performed in Athens and Belgrade. His prose work includes the novels: *Venus* (1986), *The Daughter* (The Dog's Mother) (1990), *The Ancient of Days* (1994), *Always Well* (2002), *Dark Guide* (2002), *Myrtos* (2004), *Aldebaran* (2007), *Graffito* (2009), and the short-story collection *Sylvan Substance* (2000) and a volume of *Essays* (2006). His work has been translated into many languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Serbian-Croat, Turkish and Hebrew). He has won several awards for his work, among them the 1966 State Theatre Award for *The Ceremony*, the Grand Critics' Theatre Prize in 2002, and the 2002 Giuseppe Acerbi Literary Prize for his novel *The Dog's Mother*. He has translated many writers into Greek including Ben Jonson, Harold Pinter, Fernando Arrabal, Antonin Artaud, Beaumarchais, Shakespeare and William Faulkner, as well eight plays of Aristophanes from Ancient into Modern Greek.

Lia MEGALOU-SEFERIADI

was born in Thessaloniki in 1945. She came to live in Athens in 1965. She made her first appearance as a writer in the well-known magazine *Epoches* in 1966 with the short story "Eleven letters and a post-scriptum". She published her first book in 1972, a selection of poems under the title *The Fugitive on the Tree*. Since then she has published sixteen more books, most of which are novels. Her work, both in prose and in verse, has been translated into several languages. She was awarded the first prize for her fairy-tales *The little ones* and the first Ipektsi prize for her novel *Like Silk*.

Marios MICHAELIDES

was born in Cyprus and he lives in Athens. He graduated from the Kapodistrian University of Athens, School of Philosophy. He continued his studies in the University of Arkansas in the USA, where he obtained his MA in Education. He has been working as a teacher of Greek at Doukas School. He is a poet and novelist. Three of his works, the poetic collection *Alibi are the words* (Metaixmio 2003), the novel *The bone keeper* (Metaixmio 2007), and *The interrogator* (novel, by Gavriilides 2012) were awarded the National Prize by the Ministry of Culture and Education of Cyprus. He is a member of the Hellenic Authors' Society.

Amanda MICHALOPOULOU

has studied French Literature in Athens University and has worked for many years as a columnist for Greek newspapers. She has published novels, short story collections and children books. She has received the Revmata Award for her story «Life is colourful outside» (1994), the Diavazo Award for her novel *Jantes, Wishbone Memories* (1996) and the Academy of Athens Prize for her collection of stories *Bright day* (2013). The American translation of her book *I'd Like* won the International Literature Prize by National Endowment for the Arts, USA. This book was also nominated as “Best Book in Translation” (University of Rochester) and was awarded the Liberis Liber Prize of the Independent Catalan publishers. Her novels, stories and essays have been translated in twelve languages. Her most recent book in translation is the novel *Why I killed my best friend*, published by Open Letter, USA.

Zdravka MIHAYLOVA

was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, graduated in Journalism and Mass Media from the University of Sofia. She specialized in Modern Greek literature with prof. Nasos Vayenas and worked as a journalist at the state-owned Bulgarian Radio. She is contributing to various publications with articles of cultural journalism and literary reviews, has participated in international conferences on literature, language, culture. She had three postings at the Bulgarian embassy in Athens. She has translated from Greek into Bulgarian thirty five books of prose, poetry, short stories, essays and modern drama, and several ones from Bulgarian into Greek. She is a member of the Association of Bulgarian Authors, foreign member of the Hellenic Authors' Society (Athens), member of the Journalists' Union of Bulgaria, and of the Society of Modern Greek Studies (Bulgaria). State Award of Greece (2010) for the poetry anthology *Scripts of the All-seeing One* by Yannis Ritsos, and the Rigas Velestinlis Award (2005) for best translation into Greek of a Balkan literary work for *Andreas Embeirikos: poet surrealist, psychoanalyst and photographer*.

Christoforos MILIONIS

(Peristeri, Pogoni Ioannina, 1932) is a novelist and short-story writer. Studied classics at the University of Thessaloniki, and has taught in secondary education in Greece and Cyprus. Since 1970, he has been living in Athens. A classical philologist and literary critic as well as prolific writer of fiction, has worked on prominent newspapers and literary journals. In addition to several volumes of critical essays, he has published the novellas *Acroceraunia* (1976), *The Motel* (2005); the novels *Western District* (1980) and *Sylvester* (1987); and the collections of short stories *Dissonance* (1961), *The Centaur's Shirt* (1971), *Tales of Trial* (1978), *Kalamas and Acheron* (1985), *Lift Operator* (1993), *The Ghosts of York* (1999), *A Lost Taste* (1999), *Photogenic* (2001), *Measured Words* (2004), *The Bitter Sweet* (2008). In 1986 he won the First National Short Fiction Prize for his collection of short stories, *Kalamas and Acheron*; in 2000 he received the literary journal *Diavazo* prize for fiction for his collection *The Ghosts of York*; and in 2008 he was awarded the Ouranis Foundation Prize of the Athens Academy for his novella *The Motel*. His books have been translated into Russian, German, and Italian. His short stories have appeared in anthologies and journals in Russian, Italian, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Hungarian, English, Spanish and Albanian.

Amy MIMS

is of Irish origin, but Greek citizen, as of 1986. She studied Ancient Greek Literature and History at Harvard; Byzantine Studies at Oxford; English translations for three books of Kazantzakis; for Ritsos' 1000-page autobiographical Work, entitled *Iconostasis of Anonymous Saints*, and several long poems; also for 20 theatrical works by contemporary Greek playwrights. Original works by Amy include her early poems entitled *The Book of Amy*; three books dedicated to Cyprus (two with Ritsos' stones, as well as two other books, with Ritsos' "covers"); a collection of satirical prose-poems with "illustrations" by Hieronymus Bosch; and a collector's edition of her anthologized poems. Her prose works include an 800- page "Greek Trilogy" and a bi-lingual edition of 27 "essays" concerning Ritsos' *Iconostasis*. In the 1960s, with Minos Argyrakis and Tsarouhis, Manos Hadjidakis and Barba-Sotiris Spatharis, Amy made a miniature avant-garde theatre near the Acropolis and in the 1990s worked closely with Danae Stratigopoulou, until Danae's death in 2009.

Dimitris MINGAS

was born in 1951 and lives in Thessaloniki. He has written poems, short stories and novels: *You get to hold a person by touching the sea* (collection of poems), Entefktirion 1995; *Of the Departed* (short stories collection), Polis 1999; *It rarely snows on the islands* (novel), Polis 2001, also translated in Italian: *Sulle isole non nevica mai*, Grocetti Editore 2004. *About Salonika alone...* (short stories collection), Metaichmio 2003; *Not playing for real* (novel), Metaichmio 2005, also translated in Serbian: *Samo smo se igrali!* Geopoetika, 2006. *Telemachus' Odyssey* (novel), Metaichmio 2007. Also translated in Serbian: *Телемахова одуцеја*, Geopoetika 2009. And *Floating islands* (novel), Metaichmio 2012. In 2000 he won the *Diavazo* magazine's best newcomer award for his collection of short stories *Of the Departed*. His short story "Black Storm" (*Of the departed*) was adapted into a short film. Short stories of his have been translated into English, French and Italian.

Michail MITRAS

was born 1944 in Volos. He is a poet and prose writer specializing in experimental forms including concrete/visual poetry and fragmentary narration. He has published 9 books and participated in group exhibitions of visual poetry in his country and abroad. Part of his poetry has been translated in English and French. He also contributed in various literary-art magazines and produced cultural programs for the Public Radio. He lives in Athens.

Kostoula MITROPOULOU

(Piraeus, 1933 – Athens, 2004) was a novelist, short-story writer. Studied law at Athens. Her work comprises a total of 46 titles published (21 novels, 12 collections of short stories, 3 novellas, a chronicle, 8 plays and a selection of her articles published in the daily newspaper *Ethnos* where she had her own column for twelve years). During the dictatorship (1967-75) she signed the "Manifesto of the 18 Writers" and "fell silent" along with others. Her works form part of the curriculum at the Greek universities and at universities in Europe, the United States, Australia and Sicily. Studies of her books and plays have also been published. She won the "Prose Award of the Twelve" for *Faces and Figures* in 1963, the Award for Best

Play and Performance for *Four Wildernesses* in 1977, the First State Prose Award for *Blow-Up* in 1984 and a European Script Fund award for her script entitled *The Old Curiosity Shop on Tsimiski Street* in 1989. The international character of her writing brought her close to new trends in Europe and Latin America where her books and plays have been translated. Her works in translation include *The Three-day chronicle*, 1974 (German, Italian, Dutch); *Marginal life*, 1980 (German, Dutch); *Music for a departure*, 1980, play (Italian, French, German); *Truck*, 1985 (French, Italian); *Six roles for soloists*, 1986, play (French, Italian, Spanish); *The last performance*, 1984, play (staged in Australia); *The novel of the night* (1995); *Oscar*, 1982, (German); *The risk* (French); *The photograph in the railway station is you*, 1991 (Italian); *Spitting blood and saying you ate cherries*, 1998 (Italian). She translated works by V. Woolf, M. Duras, A. Wesker, and A. Moravia. She also wrote song lyrics for Composers Manos Loizos, Lucianos Kilaidonis, Nikos Danikas, Christos Nikolopoulos and others.

Klaira MITSOTAKI

was born in 1949 in Heraklion, Crete. Having studied the classics and medieval anthropology, she pursued her interest in theory, theatre and history mainly through her translation work, while also engaged in prose and essay-writing. *Princess Tito and I*, was first published in 1990 followed by *Medallions*, *Emma Bovary Beyond the Squareness of Words*, *Flora Mirabilis* and *Soreites*. Her translations include works by Diderot, Zola, Saint-John Perse, Valery, Michelet, Braudel.

Andreas MITSOU

has published 14 books of prose, 5 novels, 8 short stories and a theatrical play. He was awarded the First Novel Prize by the State, the First Prize of Letters by the Athens Academy, as well as the Readers' Award.

Michalis MODINOS

geographer and environmental engineer, was born in Athens in 1950. He has been the founding editor of the journal *New Ecology* for two decades. He is the author of a number of books on environmental and development issues including: *Developmental Myths in the Tropics* (1986); *From Eden to Purgatory* (1988); *Topographies* (1990); *Where is the World Heading to?* (1992); *The Development Game* (1993); *The Archaeology of Development: green perspectives* (1996); *The Eco-geography of the Mediterranean* (2001); *The Pathways to Sustainable Development* (2003); *Globalization and the Environment* (2004). He has published the novels *Golden Coast* (2005); *The Great Abbai* (2007); *Homecoming* (2009); *The Raft* (2011); *Wild West: a love story* (2013), and *Last exit: Stymphalia* (2014) having won several prizes and distinctions.

Sophia NIKOLAIDOU

studied Classics (at undergraduate and postgraduate level), and holds a PhD in the use of information and communication technology for the teaching of literature. She has taught creative writing for the postgraduate program at the University of Western Macedonia (from its introduction in 2008 until 2013), at the Book Workshop of the National Book Centre (from 2010 until 2012), and has given many seminars for both state and private institutions. She has also taught literature at the Higher School of Drama of the State Theatre of Northern Greece

(from 2001 until 2004). Since 1992 she has taught Greek language and literature at Greek state secondary schools. She has published four novels, two collections of short stories, studies on the use of information and communication technology in education. She has also translated ancient Greek drama into Modern Greek. Since 2001 she has been a regular contributor to the Greek national daily newspaper *Ta Nea*, reviewing foreign literary fiction.

Iro NIKOPOULOU

was born in Athens and is a creative artist and writer. She has studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts and has done many exhibitions in Greece and abroad. Since 1986 she has published eight books of poetry and prose. She is cooperating with newspapers and literary magazines. Her works have been translated into English, Russian, Turkish and Croatian. She has participated in four international poetry festivals: Izmir, (2008), Thessaloniki (2013), Athens (2013), Croatia (2015). Since 2003 publishes prose and deals particularly with the short story. Since 2010 is co-managing with John Patilis a blog for the little short story *Bonzai Stories*, with whom they created the *Bonzai Anthology* '14. <http://ironikopoulou.gr/>

Elena NOUSSIA

was born 1947 in Thessalonica. She studied Greek Philology and Psychology in Greece, Germany and Swiss. She is a poet, a short story writer, an essayist and a translator of German literature (Trakl, Hölderlin, Celan, Hofmannstahl etc.). She has taught literary translation at the Postgraduate Studies at the University of Athens and she is a regular contributor to literary journals. Poetry collections: *Poetical approaches*, 1979; *Completed era*, 1983; *Unhurried moment on the stairs*, 1990; *Hollow moon*, 1994. Short stories: *The theatre of rags and other stories*, 2000; *Crescendo*, 2004; *Camouflage*, 2008; *I wish there were other places*, 2012.

Pavlina PAMPOUDI

was born in Athens. She graduated from the Philosophical School of the University of Athens. She also attended courses in Mathematics and painting. She has published 15 collections of poetry, 2 novels, 3 collections of short stories, and over 40 books for children - to date. She has also translated works by A.A. Milne, L. Carroll, Charles Dickens, T.S Eliot and others. Her own works include a number of songs, 2 solo painting exhibitions and some series for radio and TV. She has worked as a copywriter in Advertising. She is now working as an editor in a publishing house.

Giorgos PANAGIOTOU

(Tsangarada, Magnesia 1943) is a poet, translator and journalist. Studied Literature and Economic and Political Sciences at the University of Thessaloniki, and completed graduate studies in Sociolinguistics and Library and Information Sciences. He has worked as a journalist, archivist at the Lambrakis Press Group, and a compiler of bibliographies on the theatre and political diaries. From 1976 to 1987 he published the newsletter *Parliamentary Chronicles*, was the coordinator for documentation center "Greek Archive". He has written extensively on history, literature, theatre and the cinema, and has published several poetry

collections, including among others: *Kekragarion* (early Christian chant) *Poems 1962-1971* (1972), *Though we be Liberals* (1979), *Body High Sea* (1999). His critical studies include *Performances of Ancient Greek Drama at Volos* (1971), *Modern Greek Theatre* (1971), *Contribution to the bibliography on Thessaly* (1973), *The Press in Volos* (1979), *Parliamentary Issues in Euboea* (1982), *On Cretan Literature* (1986), *The difficulties of a documentation adventure, the Greek Historical and Literary Archive* (1992), *The daily newspaper "To Vima" 1960-194* (2003), *The weekly magazine "O Tahydromos" 1954-58* (2005). He has translated Sylvia Plath and an Anthology of 34 English poets since the 1950s.

Alexis PANSELINOS

Born in Athens, 1943, to lawyers Assimakis Panselinos, a writer and a poet, and Efi Panselinos, also a novelist and a poet, Alexis Panselinos read Law in the Athens University Law School, specialized in shipping law and worked as a lawyer until 1997. He lives in Athens, he has a son from his first wife who died in 2008 and is now married to novelist Lucy Dervis. In 1982 we published his first book (*Stories with dogs*) and in 1985/6 his first novel (*The Great Procession*) which won a State Novel Prize. In 1997 his novel *Zaide or The camel in the snow* was the Greek candidate for the European Prize of Literature. Several of his books (*The Great Procession*, *Zaide or The camel in the snow* and the novella *Betsy lost* from the collection *Stories with dogs*) have been translated in French, German, Italian and English. Alexis Panselinos has also translated from English John Barth's *The sot-weed factor* and from German Eduard Moericke's *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag*. His Books: *Stories with dogs* (4 novellas) 1982; *The Great Procession* (novel) 1985/2012 (Greek State Novel Prize, also by *Les Editions du Griot*, transl. Henri Tonnet, by *Crocetti Editore*, transl. Massimo Cazzulo); *Ballet nights* (novel) 1991; *Essays in flight* (essays) 1993; *Zaide or The camel in the snow* (novel) 1996/2011 (also by *Gallimard*, transl. Henri Tonner, and by *Berlin Verlag*, transl. Theo Votsos); *The Lame Angel* (novel) 2002; *Four Greek Murders* (short-stories) 2004; *One word, a thousand pictures* (autobiography in art) 2004; *The dark graffiti* (novel) 2011 (*Diavazo* magazine Novel Prize)

Athena PAPADAKI

was born in Athens. She studied Political Science and works as a journalist. She is a member of the Hellenic Authors Society and the Journalist's Union, ESEA. Has participated in several international poetry festivals and has had her poems included in many different anthologies. Her work has been translated into various European languages. Her published books are: Collections of poetry: *Archangel of Concrete*. Mavridis. 1974; *Holy Ewe Lamb – Madonna of the Pressure Cooker*. Egnatia. 1980. Kastaniotis. 1983; *Earth Once Again*. Yakinthos. 1986. Kastaniotis. 1995; *Palest Up To White*. Kastaniotis. 1989; *Lioness in the Window*. Kastaniotis. 1992; *Sentinel of the Skies*. Kastaniotis. 1995; *In the Realm of the Balcony*. Kastaniotis. 1998; *Death and the Maiden*. Kastaniotis. 2001; *Toward the Unknown*. Kastaniotis. 2005; *By Lamplight and with Wolves*. Neda. 2010 (Award - Academy of Athens); *See the Miracle*. 2012. (Published privately). Prose: *Leaves of Eats*. Kastaniotis. 2004; *In Other Words*. Roes. 2007. An anthology: *Sophia Mavroeidi-Papadaki. Bold and Lyric*. Hermes. 1998. Childrens' books: *The Oil Can*.

Kastaniotis. 1079; *The Flying Garden*. Kedros. 1980, Patakis. 1998; *The Sun Feels Cold*. A.S.E. 1982. Patakis. 1998; A two volume work of fairy tales from Europe and Asia. Kastaniotis. 1982; *Our Tales*. A radio programme where children create their own tales. Gutenberg. 1988; *15 Stories and a Question*. A.S.E. 1991. Translated works: *Poemes*. Greek/French. Trans. Michel Volkovitch. Desmos; *Cahiers Grecs*, Paris 2000; *Pale Almost White*. Trans. Thom Nairn and D. Zervanou, Dionysia Press, Edinburgh. 2001; *Sleepless in the Skies*. Trans. T. Nairn, D. Zervanou, Dionysia Press, Edinburgh. 2001; *Earth and Again*. Trans. T. Nairn, D. Zervanou, Dionysia Press, Edinburgh. 2001; *The Royal Town of the Balcony*. Trs. T. Nairn, D. Zervanou, Dionysia Press, Edinburgh. 2001 ; *Poemes Choisies*. Grecque/Francais. Trans. M. Volkovitch. Printemps des Poetes. Lyon. 2013.

Maria PAPANIMITRIOU

(Thessaloniki, 1940) is a Greek novelist. Studied at the Institut d' Etudes Thibtrales of the Sorbonne in Paris. Lived abroad for several years (Brazil, France). Was active in the feminist movement. She authored seven works of prose (novels and novellas) including *Labyrinth* (1966), *The knife* (1978), *The Cave* (1983), *Peace* (1986), *Absinth the Bitter* (1996), *A Quiet Murder* (2004), *Dance of the Equator* (2014). She has translated J.P. Sartre's *What is Literature?* (1971). Her novel *Labyrinth* was translated into French as *Le Grilles* and published in France in 1969.

Yannis H. PAPPAS

was born in 1962 in Arta. He has attended, for 2 years, literature lessons in Italian University of Bari. He is a graduate of the school of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina (Epirus). He has translated many poems of Italian poets Pavese, Montale, Ungaretti into Greek. He has published two books of poetry the first named *Priceless Nothing* while the second is called *To the Edge of the Dream* (editions Metaichmio, Athens). He is director of the e-magazine of literature www.diapolitismos.net

Stratis PASCHALIS

(Athens, 1958) is a Greek poet and translator. His first appearance in the late 70s with volume of "pure poetry" (*Anactoria*, 1977) went against the grain of intense politicization and prosaic approaches of the time. He has since published another nine poetry collections, most notably *Excavation* (1984), *Cherry-trees in darkness* (1991), *Blossoms of the Water* (1994), *Michael*, an extended poem (1996), *Comedy* (1998), *Looking at the Forests* (2002), *Season in Paradise* (2008), *The Icons* (2013). In 2002 he published a volume of his, until then, collected poems under the title *Verse by someone else: Poems 1977-2002*. He has also translated works by major poets, mostly French, including among others Baudelaire and Rimbaud, as well as plays by Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille, Rostand. He has authored one novel (*The man on the bus*, 2006), and has edited anthologies from the oeuvre of Karagatsis and Papdiamantis. He has received several awards including the Maria Ralli Newcomer Award for Poetry (1977), the Ouranis Foundation Prize of the Academy of Athens (1994), and the Poetry prize sponsored by the literary journal *Diavazo* (1998, 2008), and the State Prize for the Literary Translation (1998).

Sotirios PASTAKAS

(poet, translator, essayist, and agitator) was born in 1954 in Larissa, where he resides. He studied Medicine in Rome. For 30 years he has worked as a psychiatrist in Athens. In 2004 he founded the electronic review of poetic art *Poien* and in 2013 *Thraka* magazine. He has published translations of Italian poetry, essays, and 12 poetry collections. His last book called *Trilogia (Good-for-Nothing Body, Food line, Flow of Raki)* was published by Parousia Publications in 2012. In 2013 he envisioned and organised the first Panthessalian Poetry Festival. He has been translated in 8 languages and has read his poems in several international poetry festivals (San Francisco, Sarajevo, Izmir, Roma, Napoli, Siena, Cairo, Istanbul, etc.)

Yiannis PATILIS

(Athens, 1947) is a poet, editor, and publisher of *Planodion* (1986-2012), a journal of literature and the politics of culture. He published eight volumes of poetry and two volumes of collected poems. Many of his poems are translated into various languages, notably English: *Camel of Darkness. Selected Poems* (1970-1990), translated from the Greek by Stathis Gourgouris (*Quarterly Review of Literature*, Princeton 1997). See more in WI Ki: [Yiannis Patilis](#) & [Planodion](#).

Titos PATRIKIOS

was born in Athens in 1928. He took part in the anti-nazi resistance (1942-1944). A month before the liberation of Greece (September 1944) he risked to be executed by Nazi collaborators. At that time (in 1943) he published his first poem. Patrikios experienced the consequences of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and was confined in concentration camps in the islands of Makronissos and Ayios Efstratios (1951-1954). He studied Law at the University of Athens and philosophy and sociology at Sorbonne and the Etudes Ecole des Hautes in Paris, and worked as a consultant for UNESCO (Paris) and FAO (Rome). He has translated many works of poetry, prose and philosophy. One of the most prominent poets of the First Post-war Generation, Patrikios has published eighteen books of poetry, four of prose, four of sociology and many essays. His poems have been published in many European, American and Arab reviews and anthologies. Five selections of his poems have been translated and published in France, Germany, Albania, Serbia and the USA. In 1994 he was awarded with the Great Greek National Prize and in 2008 with the Athens Academy prize for his life achievement in literature.

Dimitris PETSETIDIS

was born in Sparta (1940). He studied mathematics in Athens' University and has worked in private education. He has published eight collections of short stories: *Twelve on a Dime*, To Dentro 1986/Nefeli 1999; *The Game*, Nefeli 1991; *Epilogue in the Snow*, Nefeli, 1993; *Sabates Lives*, Nefeli 1998; *Tropic of Leo*, Nefeli 2001; *Away Ground*, Patakis 2003; *Rabies Foxes*, Kedros 2007; *At Home*, Metaixmio 2012.

Gina POLITI

(Athens, 1930) is a literary critic and translator. Studied English literature at Columbia University, New York. Obtained her Ph.D from the University of Cambridge (UK) where she went on to teach at Churchill and Girton Colleges (1973-1980). Currently professor emeritus of literature at the University of Thessaloniki, where she taught from 1980 until her retirement in 1997. She has written extensively on English, Greek and Comparative Literature and her work has been published in Greece and abroad. *The Novel and its Presuppositions: Changes in the Conceptual Structure of Novels in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (1976) (included in the Bibliography required for the State examinations for the Aggregation in France). *Critical Notes*, Collected articles (1979), *Conversing with Texts*, Collected Essays (1996), *May you be well! Staging the Ephemeral*, (1997). *The Indefinable Scene.*, Collected Essays (2001). *Essays on the Historical Novel* (2004). *On Passion, Sin, the Gaze and other matters* (2006). *Revisiting English Literature* (2008), *Statements, counter-statements and satires* (2009), *The test of reading* (2010), *The eternal nests of return in the poetry of Elytis* (2013), *The power/resistance dialectics in literature* (2015). In 1998 she received the "Award of University Teaching and Research Excellence" by the National Research Centre of Greece. She was also awarded the Prize for the Essay sponsored by the literary journal *Diavazo* (2007), and the Hellenic Authors' Society's "Dido Sotiriou Prize" 2011.

Marios PONTIKAS

was born in 1942. He graduated from Athens University of Economics and Business. He has long worked in the advertising industry as text writer -creative assistant. His plays have been staged at Karolos Koun Technis Theatre, The National Theatre of Greece and in many other theatre halls. He has published two collections with fiction works *Fugitive from Elderly People's Home* and *Keyhole and other Stories*. In 2004 his play *Laios Mudrerers and the Crows* (an attempt of re-reading Oedipus myth and the so-named Sophocles work) participated in the International Meeting on Ancient Greek Drama at Delphi European Cultural Centre of Delphi. In August 2011 he and director Th. Terzopoulos presented extracts from his new play *Neighing* at a staged reading in the 3rd International Meeting on Ancient Drama in Sikyona.

Lefteris POULIOS

(Athens, 1944) is a poet. His first poem was published in 1961 in the daily newspaper *Avgi* in 1961. His first volume of poems entitled *Poetry* appeared in 1969, followed by *Poetry 2* (1973), *Poetry 1, 2* (1975) *The nude orator* (1977), *The Allegorical School* (1978), *Collected Poems 1969-1978* (1982), *Anti* (1983), *The Inessential* (1988) *Instead of Silence* (1993), *The next-door room* (1998), *Mosaic* (2001), *Syllables for the wind* (2003), *The Theorem* (2005), *The secret collection* (2008). He contributed to the anti-dictatorship collective volumes *New Texts* (1971), *Six Poets* (1971), and *Testimony '73* (1973), and later to the journals *Akti*, *Ausblicke*, *Tram*, *Chroniko*. His work has been translated into English, Italian, Russian, French and Czech and many of his poems have been published in Greek and foreign magazines and anthologies.

Manolis PRATIKAKIS

was born in Myrtos (village of Libyan Sea). He is neurologist psychiatrist, doctor of the University of Athens and Director of the Psychiatric Clinic of “ Erythros Stayros”. He has written 17 collections of poetry, 2 books with short stories and novellas, 2 screenplays for feature films, essays and reviews. His works have been translated into the principal European languages (6 of them independently) as well as in Romanian, Bulgarian, Slovak, Persian, etc. In 1999 he represented Greece in the European excellence in Literature with his book the *Koimisi of Domenikoy* (for this reason it was translated in English, French and Spanish). In 2003 he received the State Award for poetry for his work *The Water*. In 2008 the Pangkritia Union of scientists voted him as the most important intellectual of the Prefecture of Lasithi. The 2012 took the prize from the Academy of Athens for the entire project. The composer Yannis Markopoulos composed a symphonic work based on his poetry and the composers Kostas Stefanou, Chara Palaiologou and Paul Daskalakis have also composed music and a series of traditional songs.

Haris PSARRAS

was born in Athens, in 1982. He studied law at the University of Athens and the University of Oxford. He holds a PhD in Philosophy of Law from the University of Edinburgh Law School. He is Teaching Fellow in Legal Theory at the University of Edinburgh. Psarras has published four books of poetry as well as essays and poetry translations. His poetry has been translated into English, French, German and Romanian.

Dimitris RAFTOPOULOS

born in 1924, has worked as a journalist since 1944. Co-founder of the journal *Epitheorisi Technis*, he concentrated on essay writing and literary criticism. Self-exiled in Paris during the dictatorship (1967-1974), he worked for the *Dictionnaire de Noms Propres «Le Robert»* contributing entries on Greek history and civilization. Returning to Greece in 1975, he directed the journal *Eridanos*. Book titles include: *Ideas and Works*, 1965; *Art and Power*, 1985; *Critical Literature*, 1986; *Punctuation*, 1987; *Aris Alexandrou: The exiled*, 1996; *Art Review and its People*, 2006; *Civil War and Literature*, 2012. Honours include: The Botsis Foundation for the Promotion of Journalism Award, 1989; The Hellenic Authors' Society award, 2008; Honorary Doctorate from the Aristotelian University, 2008; The State's Essay Award, 2012; The State's Grand Prize for his contribution to Greek letters, 2013. He is a founding member of the Greek Journalists' Union.

Stelios RAMFOS

(Athens, 1939) is a philosopher, academic and essayist. Studied Law at the University of Athens and Philosophy at Vincennes Univeristy in Paris where he taught from 1969 to 1974. He returned and permanently stteled in Athens in 1974. He has written extensively on Marxism, Greek culture, the inter-relationships between contemporary cultural production and Greek-orthodox tradition. He has contributed to numerous journals including, among others, *Efthyni*, *Erourem*, *Indictus*. He has taught on philosophy and cultural issues at several cultural foundations. His works include *Nostos* (1987), *Supra-celestial Space* (1975), *The palinode*

of *Papadiamantis* (1976), *Melete Thanatou* (Study of Death) (1980), *The polity of the New Theologian* (1981), *Kyriakodromion; Language-Education-Tradition* (1980), *Greek Education* (1982), *God's Letters* (1983), *The Doubt of Thomas* (1983), *The Testimony and the Letter – Reviewing Marx and Viewing Castoriadis* (1984), *Language and Tradition* (1984), *Single tone Music* (1986), *Stasima and Exodos* (1988), *Philosophic and Divine Eros* (1989), *Joyful Light of the World* (1990), *Mimesis versus Form – on Aristotle's Poetics, I,II* (1992-1993), *Mythology of the Gaze* (1994), *Poetic Philosophy* (1991), *Chronicle of a New Time* (1996) *Enigma and Fate*(1997), *The Tremors of Summer Happiness*(1999), *Greeks and Taliban* (2001), *Story at the Cutting-Edge of Time* (2000), *Envy, Dread, War* (2003), *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (2003), *Solitary Blues* (2007), *Time Out* (2012).

Irene RINIOTI

was born in 1964 in Athens. She studied in the Department of Greek Culture Studies at the School of Humanities of the Open Hellenic University. As an actor she is a member of the Hellenic Authors' Society and, , of the Greek Centre of the International Theatre Institute. She has published the poetry collections: *Night Confession* (1986, 1988); *Of Winds and Storms* (1988); *Scarlet Century* (1990); *Exiled Light* (1995, 1996) Lotus editions; *The Star Mistress* (1997) To Rodakio editions; *The Inebriation of Myths* (2000), To Rodakio; *The Blossoming of Silence* (2008) Agra editions; *Vertigo* (2011) Agra. Her poetry has been translated to English and set to music by Thanos Mikroutsikos and Manos Avarakis.

George ROUVALIS

was born in Athens, on 1949. He lived several years in Europe and Latin America. He has published in Greek a novel, four poetry books, two with short stories, three of local history and several translations from Spanish and Portuguese, both of poetry and prose. He teaches Latin American History and Literature at the University of Athens. He is Secretary General of the Society of Greek Hispanists. He is also a member of the Poets' Circle.

Liana SAKELLIU

born in Athens, studied English at the University of Athens (B.A.), Edinburgh (Grad Diploma), Essex (M.A.), and The Pennsylvania State University (Ph.D.). She is Professor in English at The University of Athens where she teaches Creative Writing and American Literature. Her poems, scholarly articles, book reviews, and translations have been published in Greece and the U.S.A. She received the Fulbright Award for the Arts in 1992, the Fulbright Award for Scholarship in 2000, the Stanley J. Seeger Research Fellowship in 2001, the British Council Grant for Travel to attend Poetry Festivals and seminars; the U.S.I.S. Scholarship for Participation in Conferences, The Academy of American Poets' Award for University Students, 1985, the West Dean Poet in Residence Grant in 2009, and the Writer in Residence Grant from The University of Coimbra and The Municipality of Monsanto (2011). She has been a Visiting Fellow at The University of California, Berkeley and Davis (1992); Northwestern University, Evanston (2000); Princeton University (2001); The University of Coimbra, and The Municipality of Monsanto, Portugal (2011 and 2013). Since 2013 she was appointed Chair of the Department of English, the University of Athens. Her publications

include 16 books. Her current research projects focus on modern and contemporary poetry, creative writing and media narratives.

Zoe SAMARA

was born in Karpathos and lives in Thessaloniki. She is Professor Emerita of Theory of Literature at Aristotle University and President of Writers' Society of Thessaloniki. She studied at Columbia University and taught there while writing her Ph.D. dissertation. Her sponsor was the well-known poet Michael Riffaterre. She was invited to teach at several European universities, received many distinctions, for instance she is Officier de l'Ordre national du Mérite of the French Government and Honorary Doctor of the University of Athens. She has published scholarly books in Greek, French, and English on theory of literature and the theatre, four collections of poetry: *For Maria*, *Days of Dryness*, *The Passage of Eurydice*, *And the West is far away*, and translated French plays for the Greek stage. She is the mother of Margaritis Samaras, a specialist in the field of teaching economics through literature and the arts.

Christos SAMOUILIDES

was born in 1927 in Kilkis. During the occupation, he took part in the National Resistance, having joined the EPON resistance group. He finished High School in 1946 and he was admitted to the Faculty of Philosophy in Thessaloniki. In 1955 he was hired in the Melpomene Merlier Centre for Asia Minor Studies and he worked there until 1970. He worked for 9 years in secondary education as Greek philology teacher. In 1980 he obtained his doctorate degree from the University of Ioannina. He is a member of the Greek Theatre Writers Society and the Pan-Hellenic Union of fighters of the National Resistance, the Pan-Hellenic Prisoners' Union of Makronisos. He published 9 poetry collections, 16 novels, 7 of which were awarded; 3 received national awards and one won the Academy of Athens Award; 17 theatre plays and 9 scientific essays.

Sotiris SARAKIS

(born in Ampelia, Agrinion, 1949) studied Political Science and spent his career working as a civil servant. He has published seven collections of poems. His first book, *To Deras (The Fleece, 1994)* consists of poems that were written between 1971 and 1985. His latest collection, *Nychterina Dromologia (Night-time Journeys)* was published in 2010. Sarakis' first three collections of poems were compiled into a single publication, *Dokimasies kai dokimes (Of Trials and Testings)* in 2011. His poems were also published in literary journals, poetry anthologies and literary web-pages. His poetry has been translated into English, French, Italian, Bulgarian and Turkish.

Sakis SEREFAS

(Thessaloniki, 1960), is poet, novelist and children's story writer. Studied Medieval and Modern Greek Literature at the University of Thessaloniki. In 2000 he received a Fulbright scholarship and pursued studies at the University of Columbia (Department of Classics) in New York. Has published over 50 books of poetry, prose, theatre plays, studies, translations and anthologies, as well as film scripts. His collections of poetry include *Legend for a*

Photograph (1983); *She who Revels in the Night* (1985); *Out of Nothing* (1994); *Into a Foreign Tongue Goes our Grief* (2000); *It May Be Nervous* (2003); *First the Chicken Died* (2007); *Yannis Maria Henrix* (2013) and he has also authored the novels *The House is Playing Host* (1996); *So Young a Dental Technician* (Stories about Death) (2001); *Mission to Earth* (2003); *Vain with a View* (2004) and *I am going to be a Disease* (2006). He has written 13 plays which have been staged in Athens and other cities in Greece as well as at the Tristan Bates Theatre in London. His more recent works are *Mam* (2006); *Melted Butter* (2007); *Stupidity Seminar* (2008); *The Road will take you* (2009); *Mission to Planet Earth* (2009) and *A Dinosaur on my Balcony* (2010). He has been awarded the "Karolos Koun Theatre Prize" (2007), and the Ministry of Culture Theatre Prize (2007), and the Children's Education Book State Prize (2008), while his *The Road will Take you* was included in the European Theatre Convention (ETC) list of 120 best contemporary European plays (2010). Two of his books, studies on the city of Thessaloniki, have been translated into French and English.

Aris SFAKIANAKIS

(Heraclion, Crete, 1958) is a novelist, short-story writer and translator. He studied Law at the University of Athens. His first book, *When it Rains and You are Wearing "College" Shoes* a collection of short stories, appeared in 1981, followed by the novels *The Strange Habits of the Morphis Family* (1984), *Horror Vacui* (The terror of the void) (1990), and the short stories *The Chinese Restaurant Disease* (1990). In 1998 *You didn't know, and you didn't ask!*, (You had it coming) was published, which was the first part of a planned trilogy, continued by *Baby Sitting* (2002). Then came the play *Persian Kiss* (2004), the travel-book *Metropolises-Stories-Paradises* (2006) and the short stories *Midnight in the Garden*. His most recent novels are *Loneliness doesn't suit you* (2008), *Keep away from it* (2011), and *Married Women* (2013). He has translated numerous works of major French and English authors, including among others Cocteau, Apollinaire, Poe, H.G. Wells, Chesterton, Steinbeck, Melville, Saki, Doris Lessing, Paul Auster and Jack London.

Aloi SIDERI

(Lixouri, Cephalonia, 1929 – Athens 2004) was a poet and translator. Studied History-Archaeology and English Literature at the University of Athens. From 1955 to 1985 taught literature and history at secondary education schools. She published five poetry collections *Stretcher* (1974), *Until death* (1978), *Full of days* (1980), *Aspects of dreams* (1984), *The cat's dream* (1990), *The most frightening* (1999); one collection of short stories, *Chang* (1990), a collection of feuilletons, *The lady with the cat* (1990), and several volumes of essays and studies on Greek literature, ancient, byzantine and modern. Has written extensively on literature in journals and the daily press and edited numerous collective volumes and conference proceedings. She devoted a large part of her writing to translation both from the Greek of earlier periods and from foreign languages including English, French, Italian and Latin. Her long list of translations includes works of major authors including among others Homer, Herodotus, Xenophon, Aristotle, Lucian, Heliodorus, Procopius, Pliny, Michael Psellus, Anna Komnene, Swift, Casanova, Stendhal, W. Scott, H.C. Andersen, T. Capote, N. Savarese,. Her poetry has

been translated into Italian (Poesie tr. Guido Guerrini, 1995). From 1994-1997 she served on the Governing Board of the Hellenic Authors' Society.

Angeliki SIDIRA

was born in 1938. She worked in the National Bank of Greece and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is a volunteer of Social Care in the Greek Red Cross. Her poems have been translated into French, German, English, Turkish, and Bulgarian and have been included in well-known anthologies and published in newspapers and literary magazines. She is a member of Greek Authors Society. Reviews of her work have been published in newspapers and literary magazine. In 2010 she represented Greece in the National Festival of Poetry of Istanbul, Turkey. She has published eleven poetry collections. Her most recent collection *Unexpectedly Near* was published by Neos Astrolavos/Efthini, 2013. She has translated poems of the American poet Emily Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson's poems*, ed. Hermias, 1996. She has also published the attestation *A Sense of Woman*, ed. Kastaniotis, 2000, along with other 5 women writers.

Dinos SIOTIS

was born in Tinos, in 1944 and studied Law at Athens University and Creative Writing at San Francisco State University. A poet, novelist, literary critic and publisher, he lived in California, Ontario, New York and Boston for 27 years where he edited and published twelve literary and/or political magazines in English and Greek. He has published twenty five books of poetry and fiction in English, French and Greek. His poems have been translated into ten languages. In 2007 he received in Athens the State Prize for Poetry for his book *Autobiography of a Target*. Today he edits two literary magazines, *(de)kata* and *Poetix*, is the director of the Tinos International Literary Festival, president of Poets Circle in Greece and in charge of Global Communication for World Poetry Movement.

Thomas SKASSIS

(Athens, 1953) is a novelist, short story writer, literary critic and translator. Studied Law at the University of Athens and obtained a postgraduate degree from the University College of London. Worked as an attorney for twenty years and has been writing book reviews for major Athens newspapers and literary journals. He has published: *Collector of Cuttings*, short stories (1986); *The Embalmed Cat*, novella (1988); *Greek Crossword*, novel (2000 - short-listed for the Greek National Prize of Literature 2001); *The Clock of Shadows*, novel (2004). His translations from English and French include works by Salman Rushdie, Julian Barnes, J.L. Borges, Don DeLillo, Andrew O' Hagan, Graham Swift, Montesquieu, Henri Troyat, Claude Simon, Francois Salvaing . J-M. Laclavetine M. Winckler and others. He has been awarded the State Translation Prize (2004) for his rendition of Claude Simon's *le Tram*.

Maria SKIADARESI

was born in Athens in 1956 where she studied history and archaeology. She started writing in 1994 and she has since published novels, short stories, novellas, books for children and historical studies. She is a regular contributor to magazines and newspapers. Her works so

far are: *Atropos (The life and death of Venetia Daponte)*, novel, Patakis 1996; *And it Can Raise the Dead* (novella, Patakis 1997); *Rigas Velestinlis* (His Works, Metaichmio 1998); *Yellow Time* (novellas, Patakis 1999); *With the Moon on my Trail* (novel, Kastaniotis 2003); *We Do Like the Infidels Do* (short stories, Kastaniotis 2005); *Chalkino Genos* (Brazen Breed) (novel, Patakis 2013). Books for children: *Good Morning-Goodnight* (Delfini 1994, Patakis 1999); *Constantinos Kanaris* (Ammos 1997); *Whitebeard's Treasure* (Patakis 1997); *YILAN, The Princess of Snakes* (Fantasia 2004); *Just Before the End* (Portraits series – Patakis 2007); *Years of Fire* (Portraits series – Patakis 2007); *The Prince* (Portraits series – Patakis 2009).

Antonis SKIATHAS

was born in Athens in 1960. He moved to Patras in the early 1980s and studied Chemical Engineering. Nowadays he lives and works in Patras. He founded the literary journal *Ελίτροχος*. He was a member of the Network of European Capitals of Culture and President of the Cultural Organization of the Municipality of Patras. He directs the Historical Archive A. & E. Skiathas. Antonis Skiathas has published collections of poetry: *Border Cemetery* (1983); *The horse of the waves* (1990); *Summer windsock* (1993); *A wayfarer's fantasies* (1996); *Ave Saeculo* (2002); *Traces of people* (2006); *Synopsis* (2006); *The Philoxenos city* (2010); *Eugenva* (2014). His articles and essays on poetry and history have been published in journals and newspapers. The collection *Ave Saeculo* published in 2002 in a limited edition of two hundred and seventeen copies of the publications *Cheirokvnito*, with engravings of Yannis Stefanakis. His poems have been included in anthologies and have been translated into English, Albanian, Bulgarian, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Serbian, Swedish and Russian.

Klety SOTIRIADOU

poet, prose writer, script writer, and translator, was born in Thessaloniki and lives in Athens. She has a B.A. diploma in English Literature and an M.A. degree in the Theory and Practice of Literary Translation, School of Comparative Studies, Essex, England. She studied Script Writing in L.A. USA with Syd Field. She has taught Literature at *Deree College* (1987-1990), Translation workshops (Spanish) at EKEMEL (2004, 2009), and Translation workshops at the post-graduate program of the Kapodistrian University of Athens (2004-2007). She has published three poetry collections, two short story collections, (one with five other women writers), and one novel. Her poetry collection *On Board – A Bordo*, was translated into Spanish and published in Bogota, Colombia, 1984, in a bilingual edition by *Tercer Mundo Editores*. Her translations into Greek of numerous poets have appeared in literary magazines. She has translated twenty books of Nobel writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, (1974-2014) and more than fifty books of the following writers, which were published in Greece: Sylvia Plath, William Burroughs, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Isabel Allende, Juan Jose Saer, Christopher Hutchins, David Sanchez Juliao, Haniel Long, Laura Esquivel, Luis Landero, Angeles Mastreta, etc.

Ersi SOTIROPOULOS

is the author of thirteen books of fiction and a volume of poetry. Her work has been translated into many languages, and has been awarded the National Prize for best novel, the

Book critic's award, the Athens Academy Prize. Recently (2012) she got the National Award for the best collection of short stories. She lives in Athens.

Mimis SOULIOTIS

(Athens, 1949 – Florina 2012) was a poet and literary critic. Studied Greek Literature at the Aristoteleian University of Thessaloniki, obtained a M.Sc. Degree in Byzantine Literature at Eotvos Lorand University of Budapest and his Ph.D. in Greek Literature at Ioannina University. Settled in Northern Greece and taught literature at the Aristoteleian University, City of Florina campus. He also taught as guest lecturer at the University of Lund (1981-82), at the Eotvos Lorand University of Budapest, and as guest professor at the University of Cyprus. His poetry collections include: *Vathia Epiphania* (=Deep Surface,1992) *Avga Mataia* (=Vain Eggs, 1998), *Peri Poiitikis* (=About Poetics, 1999), *Ygra* (= Liquids, 2000), *Ilios stin Scotia* (=Sun in the Darkness, 2001), *Palies Ilikies* (=Old ages, 2002), and *Athenethen* (=from Athens, 2014). His other books include the essay collections *58 Comments on Cavafy* (1991), *An Alphabet of poetics* (1995), *Analects* (2000), the books on essay writing for school students *Childish* (2000), *Can you leave me fifty drachmas for cigarettes?*, the travel verse book *Cyprus Indeed* (2011) and, posthumously, the collection of political writings *The Insolence of the Innocent* (2013). Several of his poems are included in Greek and foreign anthologies.

Antonis SOUROUNIS

(Thessaloniki, 1942) is a novelist and short story writer. On completing his secondary education moved to W. Germany, where all his family had immigrated. After a few semesters at German and Austrian Universities he discontinued his studies and began travelling taking up a variety of jobs from bank clerk to merchant sailor and from hotel bellboy to professional roulette player. His first book, a short-story collection entitled *A boy laughs and weeps* appeared in 1969. His first novel, *The Fellow Players* was published in 1977, followed by *The Frankfurt Day and Nights* (1982), *The first die last* (1989), *Easter in the Village* (1991), *The Dance of Roses* (1995), *Gus the Gangster* 2000) and *The Path to the Sea* (2006). His other works include the short story collections *The Drums of the Belly and of War* (1983), *For the Attention of Litsa* (1992), *Sunday Tales* (2002); the prose narratives *Half-a-century Man* (1996), *Nights with tail ends* (2010); and the fairytale for young and old *The walking-stick* (2007). His work has been translated into several languages (French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew, Turkish, and Croatian). In 1995 he was awarded the Greek State Prize for the Novel for *The Dance of Roses*.

Dimitris I. SOURVINOS

(Paxoi 1924 – Athens 2008) was a poet. Completed his secondary education at the Corfu Lyceum, and enrolled at the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens. He studied music with the composer M. Kalomoiris and also took mathematics classes. Subsequently completed a photography course and became a member of the Greek Photographers' Society. In 1953 returned to Corfu where he settled permanently engaging professionally with mathematics as well as photography distinguishing himself at various exhibitions. He first published poetry, a collection entitled *Oleander Branch*, in 1984 in the Corfu literary journal

“Porfyras”, followed by the volumes *Burial Urn* (1985), *All night long* (1987), *Post Cenam* (1990), *Prayerbook for a vigil* (1993), *Resonances in Oblique Light* (2004). His work has been translated in English, Italian and Czech). In 1986 he received the Poetry Award of the Municipality of Athens.

Alexis STAMATIS

is a novelist and playwright born in Athens. He studied Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens and received graduate degrees in Architecture and Cinematography in London. He is the author of eleven and six books of poetry; his work has been published in nine countries (US, UK, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Bulgaria and Serbia). His novel *American Fugue* (Kastaniotis 2006) was awarded an International Literature Award from the US National Endowment for the Arts published this year in the US. Six of his plays have been staged in central theaters in Athens and London. His latest novel is *Chameleons* (Kastaniotis 2011). Alexis Stamatis has represented Greece at several international book fairs and literary seminars, including the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, which he attended through a Fulbright Foundation Artists and Art-Scholars Award.

Kostas STERYOPOULOS

poet, prose writer, literary critic and university professor, was born in Athens 1926. He received his degree in Greek Literature from the University of Athens and his doctorate from the University of Salonica. Kostas Steryopoulos is a founding member and now Honorary President of the “Greek Society of General and Comparative Literature” has participated in many Greek and International Conferences. He has published ten collections of poetry, collected now in three volumes, two collections of short stories, a novel and eight volumes of critical and literary essays. He has been honoured three times with the State Award (1961, 1993, 1974). He also received two Athens Academy prizes (1997, 2002) and the Great State Prize for his whole work (2004). His poems have been translated into many foreign languages.

Angeliki STRATIGOPOULOU

was born in Piraeus in 1948. She lives and works in Athens. She has studied literature at the Free Studies Workshops and at Christiana Lambrinidi’s Centre of Creative Writing for twelve years. She worked at the National Book Centre and the Book Arcade as manager. She is the elected General Secretary of the Hellenic Authors Society’s board. Her published books are: *I Will Not Ask Daddy Again*, Melani editions 2006, and *Annunciation*, Kastaniotis editions, 2009.

Phaedon TAMVAKAKIS

was born in Alexandria in 1960. He lives and works in Athens. He writes prose, novels, short stories and novelettes, and translates English authors, most of John Fowles' fiction, F. Scott Fitzgerald and others. He has won the award for best novel in 1998 by the literary journal *Diavazo*, for *The Shipwrecks of Pasiphae*.

Nikos THEMELIS

(Athens, 1947 – 2011) was a novelist and a lawyer with a distinguished career in public administration. Studied Law at the University of Thessaloniki, and pursued postgraduate studies in European Affairs in Germany. He worked at the Agricultural Bank, the Ministry of National Economy and in the Legal Service of the Council of Ministers in Brussels. As of 1981 he became a close adviser to the then Minister of Agriculture and later Prime Minister of Greece Kostas Simitis, and served at the Prime Minister's office from 1996 to 2004. He appeared in the world of letters in 1998 with his first of eight widely read novels entitled *The Quest* (1998), followed by *The Upheaval* (2000), *The Gleam* (2003), *For a Little Companionship* (2005) *One Life Two Lives* (2007), *The Truths of Others* (2008) *Symphony of Dreams* (2010), and, posthumously, *The Departure* (2014). In 2001 he was awarded the State Prize for Best Novel as well as the Prize of the literary review *Diavazo* for *The Upheaval*. In 2009 he received the Yannis Kranidiotis Creativity Award in Nicosia Cyprus. His work has been translated into English, Italian, German, Serbian, Turkish and Romanian

Giorgos THEOCHARIS

was born in Desfina, Fokida in December 1951. He worked as a mechanical maintenance technician and retired from the aluminum production plant in Aspra Spitia, Paralia Distomou, Boeotia, where he currently lives. He published four poetry collections as well as the historical research book *Distomo, June 10, 1944 – The Holocaust* (Sigxroni Ekfrasi 2010) which was honoured with the National Chronicle/Witness Award 2011. He runs the literary magazine *Emvolimon*, published in Aspra Spitia, Boeotia since 1988 and participates in the editorial website Book Press. He also publishes essay notes and literary reviews.

Nassos THEOFILOU

(Mytilene 1940-2004) was a novelist and short story writer. His first literary work was the novella *Erimopolis* (Barren City), a private publication produced on a stencil duplicator in 1971, published in printed form in 1977. There followed the short story collection *Submerging Aphrodite* (1978), and *The Astrologer's Tales* (1980), the novellas *Social Class Etiquette* (1990), *At the Speed of Age* (1991), the collection of child-like compositions *What I am going to be when I grow up* (1999), and the novel *The adored Apothecaries* (2003). In 1997 he wrote the libretto for the Opera by composer Nikos Mamangakis *The Opera of Shadows*, which was published in book form in 2000. He also wrote a biography of the expressionist painter Giorgos Bouzianis for children (*The Fifth Season – Bouzianis*, 1979).

Despina TOMAZANI

studied history of Theater and Cinema at Stockholm University; Dance and pantomime at the Academy of Ballet in Stockholm; acting at the National drama school of Athens. She played in the Greek and the French theater as well as in Swedish, American and French pictures. She collaborated with directors as Bengt Lagerqvist, Johan Bergiestrole, Rogu Vadim, Tajeb Louichi and many others. In Greece she worked with Nikos Papatakis, Nikos Nikolaides, George Panousopoulos, Cristoff Cristofes, Antonis Kokkinos. In most of the productions she played the leading part of the play or movie. She was awarded with first

prize for her interpretation in the film *The Shadow of the Earth*, a French production in the first festival of the Mediterranean countries in Bastia of Corsica. She founded two theater companies and directed plays in the theater. As a writer she wrote five novels, three plays and two collections of poetry. Most of them are translated in French, Italian and German.

Eurydice TRICHON-MILSANI

doctor in Art History, was born in Athens and lives in Paris. Art critic, writer, translator, she has published catalogues (Au Muse d' Art modern, Nelly's, Hermann Blaut, *Les mers de Costas Tsoclis*, etc.), poems (*24 poemes pour L; Regards meurtriers; Le peintre du paysage; To tetradio; Dix poemes pour un theme peint; Trois odes pour un chat; etc.*) short stories (*Montevideo; Passions diagonales*), novels (*Peripatos sti Solonos; Charles et moi; Eikositesera Iliovassilemata sti Thasso; To portraito tis Hedy Diener; Kallitechniki Skevorita; O Nomos tou Solomontos*) and numerous plays.

Sotiris TRIVIZAS

was born in Corfu (1960). He studied Greek Literature and Journalism in Thessaloniki. He has written poems and essays and he has translated Italian poets and writers. He is a member of the *Porfiras* literary magazine editorial board.

Niki TROULLINO

was born in 1953 in Chania on the island of Crete. She studied law at Athens University during the early 1970's when Greece was ruled by a dictatorship. She has been living in Heraklion since 1979, and these days she is involved with agro-tourism. Works: The first short story of her 1995 collection was *A pencil on the night table*. There followed collections *Maral as Maria* (*Diavazo* magazine short list), and *And the wind blew southward...* Kedros editions published her novel *With a crate of beers* in 2009; *Traveling notes* published by Nikos Kazantzakis Museum; and the last one, *The last summer of innocence* by Hestia, 2014.

Fotini TSALIKOGLOU

born in Athens, Greece, studied Psychology at the University of Geneva under Jean Piaget, and went on to specialize in Clinical Psychology. She is currently Professor of Psychology at Panteion University in Athens. The author of many scholarly works such as *Schizophrenia and Murder: Searching for the lost paradise; The myth of the dangerous mentally ill; Mythologies of Violence and Oppression; Psychology of everyday life*. With a personal discourse that carries the reader at the crossroads of science and art, Tsalikoglou's novels probe into the internal, agonizing conflicts and dilemmas of human existence. Her literary work include the novels *I dreamed I was well; Eros pharmakopoios; All of the world's Yes; I, Martha Freud* (translated in Turkish); *Anthi's Alkaiou daughter* (translated into German, under the title *The Secrets of a daughter*); *8 hours 35 minutes* published in Germany, Italy, U.K and U.S.A

Vassilis TSIAMBOUSSIS

(Drama 1953) is a novelist and short story writer. Studied Civil Engineering at the University of Thessaloniki. Lives and Works in Drama, NE Greece. He has published the short story

collections *Scooter and Other Provincial Stories* (1988), *Cherub Hymns on the Roof-tiles* (1996), *Sweet Bonora* (2000), *Let life love you* (2004), *Salto Mortale* (2011) and the novels *Away on Duty* (1993) and *The Blue Cow* (2013). He directed the literary review *Diodos 66100*. He also edited the almanacs on the football clubs of the city of Drama Doxa (1918-1965) and Elpis (1922-1969). He was awarded the Petros Haris Prize of the Academy of Athens in 2004. Several of his stories have been translated into French, English, German and Albanian.

Makis TSITAS

was born in Giannitsa in 1971. He holds a degree in Journalism and has collaborated with radio stations in Thessaloniki. Since 1974 he has been living in Athens, working in the publishing sector. He was editor-in-chief of the periodical *Periplous* (1994-2005) and co-publisher of the periodical *Index* (2006-2011). He is currently director of the electronic periodical on books and culture diastixo.gr. He is the author of literary texts (short stories, plays, poems) included in anthologies and published in periodicals and newspapers in Greece and abroad. His one-act plays *In the Square* and *Television* were performed in the "Theatre of the Times", directed by Ersi Vasilikioti. Short stories by him have been translated into German, Spanish, English, Modern Hebrew, Swedish and Finnish. He has published a collection of short stories (*Patty from Petroula*, Kastaniotis 1996), fifteen children's books and the novel *God is my witness* (Kichli 2013), for which he was awarded the European Union Prize for Literature in 2014.

Yiannis TZANETAKIS

was born in 1956 in Kalamata. Nineteen years later he went to Athens to study Economic and Political Sciences. Since 1989 he has been working as a chief editor in the public sector. He is the author of eight poetry books.

Thanassis TZOULIS

(Mavronoros, Ioannina, 1932 – Athens 2010) was a poet, literary critic and academic. Studied pedagogy at Ioannina and Athens, and later, for a period of about ten years, studied psychology, psychopathology and psychoanalytic approaches to art in France (Universite' d' Aix-en-Provence). In 1979 he was awarded a PhD in psychology in which he explored Kafka's writings from a psychoanalytic perspective. For fifteen years he served in elementary schools of the Greek inland. In 1980 he became professor and later head of the Zarifeios Pedagogic Academy in Alexandroupolis. In 1988 he was elected Professor of psychoanalytic psychology at the University of Thrace. He was a member of the publishing team of the magazine *Endohora* in Ioannina as well as founder and manager of the magazine *Exopolis* in Alexandroupolis. His poetical work includes the collections *Vertebrae* (1961), *Isthmus* (1975), *Rhinoceri* (1975), *The Afternoon of Frankincense* (1977), *Amphibia* (1980), *Adam's Tongue* (1982), *When God unto the body cometh in greatness* (1990), *And in Matrimony of Hebrus the River* (1996). He also authored studies on psychoanalysis and literature including *Approche psychopathologique de Kafka* (1976), *L'écriture de Kafka et la demande interdite*, Aix-en-Provence (1979), both written in French and published in France, *Studies in Psychoanalysis* (1992),

Psychoanalysis and Literature (1993). His poetry collection *Isthmus* was translated into French (*Isthme*, 1988). Several of his poems have also been translated into English and Swedish.

Nanos VALAORITIS

(Lausanne, Switzerland 1921) is a poet and translator. Studied Law at Athens, London and the Sorbonne. He lived in London from 1944 to 1953 where he translated Seferis, Elytis, Empeirikos, Engonopoulos and Gatsos into English and was acquainted with T.S. Eliot and his circle. He moved to Paris (1954-60) where he met Breton and the Surrealists. Returning to Greece he edited the avant-garde review *Pali* (Again) (1963-66). In 1969 he translated Greek poetry into French (published in the journal "Lettres Nouvelles"). He left Greece after the coup d'etat of 1967, and from 1968 to 1993 taught comparative literature and creative writing at the San Francisco State University. Back in Greece he co-edited the literary review *Syntelesia* (End of the World) from 1989 to 1995 and as of 2004 *Nea Syntelesia*. His extensive body of work includes books of poetry, short stories, novels, essays, translations, and anthologies. His poetry comprises *The Punishment of the Magi* (1947), *Central Arcade* (1958), *Terre de Diamant* (1958), *Hired Hieroglyphs* 1970, *Diplomatic Relations* (1971), *Anonymous Poem of Foteinos Saintjohn* (1977), *Nest if Germs* (1977), *The Hero of Randomness* (1979), *Flash Bloom* (1980), *The Fluffy Confession* (1982), *Some Women* (1983) *The Diamond Pacifier* (1981), *Poems I* (1983), *At the End of the Day* (1984), *The Colour Pen* (1986), *Poems II* (1987), *Unideograms* (1996), *Sun, the Executioner of a Green Thought* (1996), *Allegoric Cassandra* (1998), *The Descent of M*, (2002) *An alphabet for the deaf and mute* (2003) *Homeless the Great* (2005), *Mail box of undelivered letters* (2010), *Flowers of the Greenhouse* (2010), *Anointings*, (2011), *Vanilla Coloured sky*, (2011) *Bitter Carnival* (2013); the short story collections *The Traitor of the Written Words* (1980), *Xerxes' Treasure* (1984), *The Murder* (1984) *The Talking Ape or Paramythologia* (1986), *My Afterlife Guaranteed* (1990), *Paramythologia* (1996), *God's Dog* (1998), *Do you know Elpinice?* (2005); the novels *Rising from the Bones* (1982), *The broken hands of Venus de Milo* (2002), *Zeus*, (2009); and the collections of essays *Andreas Empeirikos* (1989), *For a Theory of Writing; texts on Surrealism* (1990), *Modernism, Avant Garde, and "Pali"* (1997), *Aristotelis Valaoritis, A Romantic* (1998), *Homer and the alphabet*, (2010), *Either too much or too little* (2013). He was awarded the State prize for Poetry (1982), the State Prize for the Chronicle (1998), the National Poetry Association prize (USA, 1996), and the Ouranis Foundation Prize of the Academy of Athens for his poetical oeuvre. In 2009 he received the Grand State Prize for the entirety of his work, and was also decorated with the Golden Cross of the Order of Honour of the Greek State. His work has been widely translated into English and French.

Thanassis VALTINOS

was born in Kastri, Kynouria in 1932. He studied cinema in Athens. His publications include novels, short stories and movie scripts. Karolos Koun's Art Theater performed Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Medea*, as well as Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in Thanassis Valtinos' translations from the Ancient into Modern Greek. His books have been translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Albanian, Swedish, Bulgarian and Turkish. Distinctions: 1984: First prize for Best Movie Script - Cannes Film Festival; 1990: National Prize for best Novel; 2001: International Cavafy Prize; 2002: Petros Haris Foundation award - Academy of

Athens; 2003: Golden Cross of the Legion of Honor - Hellenic Democracy; 2011: Distinguished Merit in Letters by the Greek State; He is a member of the Academy of Athens and of *Academia Scientiarum et Artium Europaea*.

Yannis VARVERIS

(Athens 1955-2011) was a poet, translator and theatre critic. Studied law at the University of Athens. He published eleven poetry collections, translated works by Aristophanes, Menander, Moliere, Marivaux, Whitman, Cendrars, Prevert, Mrozek, Carrington, Ferre, Brassens, and he co-edited an anthology on death. As of 1976 he wrote theatre reviews for various journals and newspapers, which were brought together in a six volume publication over a period from 1985 to 2010. His poetical oeuvre includes *In imagination and reason* (1975), *The beak* (1984), *Invalids of War* (1978), *Death is settling* (1986), *Depth-charge Piano* (1991), *Mister Fogg* (1993), *Annulled Miracle* (1996), *Poems 1975-1996* (2000), *In foreign lands and tongues* (2001), *Wasted Money* (2005), *Man alone* (2009), *Of deep old age* (2011). He also published a collection of essays on literature entitled *Lifeboat* (1999). He was awarded the State Prize for the Literary Essay (1996), the Cavafy Prize for Poetry (2001), the Poetry Prize of the Literary review "Diavazo" (2002), and the Petros Haris Prize of the Academy of Athens for his entire poetical oeuvre. His translations into Modern Greek of Attic and New Comedy were performed at Epidaurus and other theatres. Several of his poems have been translated and included in English, French, Italian, German, Spanish and Romanian anthologies.

Vassilis VASSILIKOS

(Kavala, 1934) is a novelist, screenwriter and diplomat. Studied at the University of Thessaloniki Law School (1952-56) and at the Drama School at Yale University and S.R.T. School of Radio Television, New York (1959-1960). A most prolific writer with an extensive corpus of over 100 books, and active in Greek cultural life, has worked as a journalist since 1962, served as Deputy General Director of the Greek National Television (ERT) in charge of the Programme from 1981 to 1985, has been elected twice as a municipal councillor for the City of Athens, hosted the television literary programme "Axion Esti" for 20 years and has been Greece's ambassador to UNESCO since 1996. His books have been translated into over twenty languages. His literary debut was in 1949 with *The Silos*, a novel on the Bulgarian occupation of Kavala during World War II. In 1962 he was awarded the Prize of "the Jury of the Twelve" for the Novel for his trilogy *The Plant, the Well, the Angel*. In 1966 he published *Z* (full title: *Z; an imaginary documentary of a crime*), which became an international best-seller and the basis for the award winning film by director Costa Gavras (1969), with a political message and a strong statement against the dictatorship that held to power in Greece from 1967 to 1974. His other novels include, among others, *The photographs* (1964), *The Speargun* (1971), *A few things I know about Glafkos Thrassakis* (a trilogy 1974, 1975 1976), *The Coroner* (1976), *The Terrible Month of August* (1979), *The Bracelet* (1980), *The Lotus Eaters* (1981) *And Dreams are Dreams* (1995), *Brushwood of Love* (1997), *Crime in Copenhagen* (2004). He has also translated works by Andre Gide, James Merill, Regis Debray, and Balzac. His work has been translated into 33 languages. He has received numerous national international awards and

honours, including the Mediterraneo Prize (1970), and is an honorary doctor of the University of Patras and a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Yiorgos VEIS

was born in Athens. He studied Law at the University of Athens and International Affairs at the Columbia University of New York. Member of the Athens Bar Association. Career diplomat since 1980. Grand Commander of the Greek Order of the Phoenix. Current post: Ambassador in Indonesia. Selections from his work have appeared in translation in Romania, Australia, Mexico, China, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Indonesia, and the USA. He has translated Jorge Luis Borges, Calway Kinnell, John Luther Long and Raymond Chandler. He published, among others, twelve collections of poems. He regularly writes reviews and critical articles on poetry. His memoirs *Asia, Asia (Chinese and other observations)* won a National Book award (2000). His ninth collection of poems, titled *Details of world*, won an Academy of Athens award (2008). His memoirs *From Tokyo to Khartoum* won a National Book award (2010).

Thanassis VENETIS

(Domokos, 1936 – Athens 2014) is a poet and literary critic. He is a graduate of the Athens Law School and the Panteion University. His first poetry collection appeared *With Loaded Dice* in 1976. His other books of poems include *He Stands By* (1981) *Spider Webs* (1984), *The Masks* (1985), *Mainly With Light* (1989), *Luminous Billboard* (1990), *A Rascal's Gadgets* (1993), *VOL 43%* (1994), *As if Present* (1997), *Revisiting the Future* (2001), *Endearing things* (2003), *Ambushed by the Miracle* (2008). He has published poems and literary reviews in several journals. He was also a contributor to one of the first Electronic literary magazines in Greece entitled *Diapolitismos*.

Iossif VENTURA

born in the Canea (Crete) lives and works in Athens. He directs the electronic poetry magazine "*Poeticanet*" (www.poeticanet.gr www.poeticanet.com). He is member of the international committee of the Poetry Festival *Voix Vives de Mediteranee*, Sete, France. His poems have been translated in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew and Serbian. An anthology of his poems selected and translated by the Israeli poet Rami Saari was published by Carmel Publishers, Jerusalem. A book with his poems is forthcoming from Red Heifer Press. He has translated poems of the Jewish poets of the Middle Ages and of the Troubadours of the 12th century.

Anastassis VISTONITIS

was born in Komotini, in 1952. He studied Political Sciences and Economics in Athens. From 1983 to 1988 he lived in the U.S.A. and traveled extensively in Europe, North America, Africa, Australia and Asia. From 1996 to 2001 he was a member of the board of the *E.W.C. (The Federation of European Writers)* and from 2003 to 2008 he was its Vice-president. In addition to poems, essays, book reviews, travelogues and articles contributed to many leading quarterlies and newspapers in Greece and abroad Anastassis Vistonitis has

published eleven books of poetry, four volumes of essays, four travelogues, a book of short stories and a book of translations of the Chinese poet Li Ho. He was the General Editor of the candidature file of Athens for the Olympic Games of 2004. Anastassis Vistonitis' writings have been translated into twenty languages. He writes for the leading Greek newspaper *To Vima* and lives in Athens.

Haris VLAVIANOS

was born in Rome in 1957. He studied Economics and Philosophy at the University of Bristol and History and International Relations at the University of Oxford. His doctoral thesis entitled, *Greece 1941-1949: From Resistance to Civil War* was published by Macmillan (1992). He has published eleven collections of poetry, including *Vacation in Reality* (2009), which won the *Diavazo* Poetry Prize and *Sonnets of Despair* (2011) which was short-listed for the National Poetry Prize. He has also published three books of essays and has translated in book form the works of major European and American writers such as: Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, E. E. Cummings, John Ashbery, Anne Carson, Michael Longley, William Blake, Zbigniew Herbert and Fernando Pessoa. His books have been translated in numerous languages (English, German, French, Dutch, Italian, Swedish, etc.) and many of his poems have appeared in European and American journals and anthologies. He is the editor of the influential literary journal *Poetics*.

Spyros L. VRETTOS

was born on 1960, in the island of Lefkas. He studied law in Athens. He currently lives and works as a lawyer in Patras. He is a member of the Hellenic Authors Society. He has published nine poetry collections and two studies. His last work is *Ta dedomena* (Gavrielides 2012). His first five books have been translated in English by Philip Ramb (*Collected Poems*, Shoestring Press, 2000). An anthology of his poems was published in Italy translated by Massimo Cazzulo (*Il postscriptum della storia*, Atelier 2005). Poems of Spyros Vrettos have been included in foreign anthologies and magazines (Italy, France, England, Sweden, Serbia, U.S.A.), in the tome *Patras' poets in European languages* (Polyedro 2006) and the tome *Antologia di lirici greci* (Simone 2009, edited by Massimo Cazzulo).

Giorgos XENARIOS

was born in Athens in 1959. He studied law. He is a writer, literary critic, and a creative writing teacher. His books are: *The Fall of Constantine*, Kastaniotis Publ., 1990; *The Twins*, Kastaniotis Publ., 1994; *Sculpting light*, Kastaniotis Publ., 2001 (shortlisted for the "Diavazo" award); *At the Edge of the World*, Kedros Publ. 2011 (shortlisted for the "Diavazo" award, as well for the National Novel Prize). He has translated over 18 titles from French literature, two of which were shortlisted for the EKEMEL Translation Prize (2005, 2010). He has collaborated as critic for more than 10 years with the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* and for 8 years with the literary review *Diavazo*. He is also a columnist in the magazine (2007-2010). His articles, comments, and reviews have been published in all the main newspapers, literary magazines, etc. He teaches Creative Writing at seminars (since 2004) and at the University of Western Macedonia (since 2011). He has been General Secretary of the Greek Author's

Society (2007-2010); a member of the Balkanika Literary Prize Jury, representing Greece (2012), and a member of the National Literature Prize Committee (2013-2014)

Christos YANNARAS

was born in Athens, in 1935. He is professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Cultural Diplomacy at the *Panteion* University of Athens, Hellas. PhD at the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Sorbonne, Paris, France; PhD at the Faculty of Theology, Aristotle University, Thessalonica, Greece; Former Research Scholar of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, Bonn, Germany. Dr Honoris Causa: Faculty of Theology – University of Beograd, St. Vladimir's Seminary – New York; Holy Cross Hellenic College – Boston Massachusetts. He is professor at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens, Hellas, and a Visiting Professor: at the Catholic University of Paris; at the Russian Institute of Theology in Paris; at the Faculty of Theology, University of Geneva; at the Faculty of Theology, University of Lausanne; at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Crete. He is an elected member of the Académie Internationale des Sciences Humaines, Brussels. He is also a Feuilletons' writer at the Athenian newspapers *To Vima* (1972-1989) and *I Kathimerini* (1994 - today).

Eleni ZACHAROPOULOU

was born in Tropea – Gortinia – Arcadia. She studied at the Pedagogical Academy of Tripoli. She is a poet and an essay writer. She was awarded the "Matraga" Award of the Academy of Athens in 2005 for her poetry collection *Weaving Wind* (2004). Her works are: *Leaving the Lull*, Poems 1994; *The Decoration of Dim. Zade*, Critical Essay, 1995; *Punctuation Marks*, Poems 1996-97; *Mutual Transfer*, Poems 2007; *The Existential N.D Karouzos*, Critical Essay 2000, 2009; *Weaving Wind*, Poems; *On the Other Side of the Horizon*, Narrative, 2006. *Time Returns*, Poems, 2009; *Reflections and Essays on Texts*, 2009; Reflections and Essays on "Ode to the Teammate" by Georgios Georgousis", 2013. Her poetry translations: *Izbire* 2009. Korazd Kocijančič. *Weaving Wind*. Y. Goumas. From *Leaving the Lull*. Magazine *Lichnos*, 2000, 2002, 2003. From *Reflections and Essays on Texts* 2009, *Lichnos*. From *Leaving the Lull*. *Poeti Greci-Contemporanei*.

George ZARKADAKIS

was born in Athens in 1964. He has studied systems engineering in England and the US, where he obtained his PhD in Artificial Intelligence. He has worked as a business consultant and as a science and travel editor. He has been the Editor-in-Chief of Focus, the top-selling monthly popular science magazine in Greece, and the screenwriter of "Eureka!" the top science program on Greek TV. He has published five novels in Greece, Spain and Italy, collection of poems and short stories, a popular science book on consciousness, and has written several plays. In 2010 he migrated to London where he lives and works as an entrepreneur and writer. His blog is www.georgezarkadakis.com

Yannis ZARKADIS

was born in Perdika (Thesprotia), in 1957. He is a graduate of Chemistry, PhD, Medical School, University of Patras, Greece and a professor of Molecular Biology at the Medical

School, University of Patras. His first poems were published in the journal *Planodion* (1987). His works are: *Acherousia Memory*, *Planodion* (1991); *Deep Animal*, *Asynecheia*(1996); *Sarcofagos*, *Planodion* (2002); *The Wolf and other Antibodies*, *Typothyto* "Lalon Water" (2009).

Katerina ZAROKOSTA

(Athens, 1950) is a novelist and short story writer. Studied French Literature at the University of Athens and Social Psychology at the *Ecole Pratique* in Paris. Since 1979 has worked as a writer, journalist and script writer for Radio and Television. Has also taught French and Greek in international higher education courses. She has contributed literary reviews to various journals and newspapers. Her work includes the novel for children entitled *As Long as Cats Exist* (1983); the short story collections *Le Cadeau* (1986), *The Midday Sun* (2004), *Mother and Daughter*, a dual language publication with the stories translated into German by Agne Zinonos-Koehler under the title *In der Sonne des Mittags* (2004), *Of Love and Fortune* (2009); and the novels *Tomek and the Fortune-Teller* (1992), *A Pure Touch* (1996), *A Glimpse of Heaven* (2000). She has also written short stories and articles that have been published in Greek, French and Greek-American magazines. She has translated into Modern Greek *Le coup de grace* by Marguerite Yourcenar and *Drencula* by Boris Vian.

Zyranna ZATELI

(Thessaloniki, 1951) is a novelist. Studied theatre and worked for a time as an actress, as well as for the radio, before devoting herself exclusively to writing. She has published, so far, the following books: *Last Year's Fiancee* (short stories 1984), *In the Wilderness Gracefully* (short stories 1986), *And with the Light of the Wolf they Return* (novel 1993), *Death Came Last* (novel 2001; first part of the Trilogy entitled *Under the Strange Name Ramanthis Erevous*), *Passion a Thousand Times Over* (novel 2009; second part of the trilogy); *A Thrill at the Temple of the Head* (2011). She has one the State Prize for the Novel twice (1994 and 2002). In 2010 she was awarded the Petros Haris Foundation Prize of the Academy of Athens for her entire oeuvre. Her novel *With the light of the Wolf they Return* has been translated into German, Dutch, Lithuanian, Italian and French. Her short stories have been translated and published in anthologies in English, French, German and Italian.

Alki ZEI

(Athens, 1925) is a novelist and children's book writer. Studied philosophy at the University of Athens, drama at the Athens Conservatory and script-writing at Moscow Cinema Institute, where she lived for eight years as a political refugee following the Greek Civil War. Returned with her family in 1964 and was forced to leave again, this time for Paris, in 1967 with the advent of the dictatorship, before returning to settle permanently after its fall. A prolific and widely read author, has written mostly for young audiences but with a wider appeal across age boundaries. Her work includes *Wildcat under glass* [novel] (1963), *Petros' war* [novel] (1971), *Uncle Platon* [novel] (1975), *Boots and pumps* [short stories] (1975), *The sound of the dragon's feet* [novel] (1977), *April Sunday* [novelette] (1978), *Hannibal's shoes* [novelette] (1979), *Achilles' fiancee* [novel] (1987), *Leoni* [Leoni] (included in a collection of short stories entitled: 17 distinguished stories, 1987), *Cat talk* (included in a Unicef collection

of short stories, 1990), *Theatre for children* (1992), *Spanish shoes* (included in a collection of 9 authors' short stories entitled: *Nine short stories of political imagination*, 1993), *The purple umbrella* [novel] (1995), *Young voice* [short stories] (1996), *Alice in marbleland* [picture book] (1997), *The twelfth grandmother and more...* [short stories] (2000), *Constantina and her spider webs* [novel] (2002), *The Lying Grandfather* [audio stories] (2007), *Writing with an Old School-Pencil* [novel] (2013). She has translated into Greek Kosterina, Panova, Nekrassov and Aitmatov from Russian, Gianni Rodari from Italian and E. Morris, M. De Vasconcellos and M. Grippi from French. She has been awarded the Mildred Batchelder Prize (U.S.A., 1968, 1974, 1976) for the best book in translation for children, State Prize for Children's Literature for her book *Theatre for children* (1992), Giuseppe Acerbi Prize (Castel Goffredo, Italy) for *Achilles' Fiancee* (2002), Best Greek Teenage Book prize for *Constantina and her spiders* (2003). Her work has been translated in numerous languages including English, French, Italian, Japanese, Finnish, Danish, Hungarian, German, Spanish, Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Swedish, Estonian, Basque, Norwegian and Armenian.