

# *The* CHARIOTEER

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SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

## NIKOS GATSOS

### AMORGOS AND OTHER POEMS

Translated by Marjorie Chambers, David Connolly  
C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Kařka

Selected Songs from

### BLOW BREEZE BLOW ME, DON'T ABATE UNTIL

Translated by C. Capri-Karka, David Connolly  
Ilona Karka, George Pilitsis and Margaret Polis

### A SELECTION OF ESSAYS ON NIKOS GATSOS

By E. Aranitsis, A. Argyriou, O. Elytis, D. Karamvalis  
A. Karandonis, K. Koun and T. Lignadis

Translated by Apostolos Athanassakis, C. Capri-Karka  
David Connolly, Myrto Kapri, Ilona Karka and Margaret Polis

### LEND SILKEN THREADS TO THE WIND

Posthumously published poems

Introduced by Eugene Aranitsis  
Translated by Marjorie Chambers

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL .....	9
BY C. CAPRI-KARKA	
POEMS BY NIKOS GATSOS	
AMORGOS .....	29
<i>translated by</i> MARJORIE CHAMBERS	
ELEGY .....	53
<i>translated by</i> DAVID CONNOLLY	
DEATH AND THE KNIGHT (1513) .....	55
<i>translated by</i> C. CAPRI-KARKA	
SONG OF OLD TIMES .....	59
<i>translated by</i> C. CAPRI-KARKA AND ILONA KARKA	
Selected Songs from BLOW BREEZE BLOW ME, DON'T ABATE UNTIL .....	63
<i>translated by</i> C. CAPRI-KARKA, DAVID CONNOLLY, ILONA KARKA, GEORGE PILITSIS AND MARGARET POLIS	
The Myrtle Tree .....	63
A Holy Virgin .....	65
The Train's Left .....	67
Song of Kalymnos .....	69
The Siren's Song .....	71
Paper Moon .....	73
One Sunday in March .....	75
Dreams of Smoke .....	77
Love Deep in the Heart .....	79
En Sirio Hay Ninos .....	81
Four Young Men .....	83
Madwoman of the Moon .....	87

Bring Me the Sea .....	89
I Sprinkled You With Rosewater .....	91
Make the Sun Your Boundary .....	93
Holy Mother of the Skies .....	95
Better Days for Us .....	97
You Were A Child Like Christ .....	99
On the Lower Road .....	101
Holy Friday .....	103
The Time Has Come, The Time Has Come .....	105
The Black Sun .....	107
The Arena .....	109
Anonymon .....	111
We Who Have Remained .....	113
The Drunken Boat .....	115
Tsamikos .....	119
Melancholy March .....	121
The North Star .....	123
Persephone's Nightmare .....	125
The Sibyl's Oracles .....	127
On Bitterness' Barren Isles .....	129
The Net .....	131
The Bus Station .....	133
Hail and Farewell Venice .....	137
Rain Is Falling .....	139
The Eleventh Commandment .....	141
Give Me An Identity Card .....	145
Behind Black Iron Bars .....	147
This Land .....	149
A Language A Country .....	151
The First and the Second .....	153
The Dance of the Dogs .....	155
Epilogue .....	159
Holy Monday .....	161

Holy Tuesday .....	163
Holy Wednesday .....	165
Holy Thursday .....	167
Holy Friday .....	169
Holy Saturday .....	171
Gloria Aeterna .....	173
Mani Evensong .....	175

## A SELECTION OF ESSAYS ON NIKOS GATSOS

A GREAT POEM (Only One) .....	178
BY EUGENE ARANITSIS	
<i>translated by</i> MARGARET POLIS	
NIKOS GATSOS' AMORGOS .....	182
BY ALEXANDROS ARGYRIOU	
<i>Translated by</i> C. CAPRI-KARKA	
NIKOS GATSOS AND SURREALISM .....	188
BY ALEXANDROS ARGYRIOU	
<i>translated by</i> C. CAPRI-KARKA	
ONE-FINGER MELODIES FOR NIKOS GATSOS .....	193
BY ODYSSEUS ELYTIS	
<i>translated by</i> DAVID CONNOLLY	
THE CASE OF NIKOS GATSOS .....	202
BY DIMITRIS I. KARAMVALIS	
<i>translated by</i> ILONA KARKA	
From CONTEMPORARY GREEK POETRY .....	210
BY ANDREAS KARANDONIS	
<i>translated by</i> C. CAPRI-KARKA	
From INTRODUCTION TO	
D.I. ANTONIOU AND NIKOS GATSOS .....	221
BY ANDREAS KARANDONIS	
<i>translated by</i> MYRTO KAPRI	

# THE CREATIVE SEEDS OF THE SPOKEN WORD ..... 227

BY KAROLOS KOUN

*translated by* APOSTOLOS ATHANASSAKIS

# A PROPOSAL FOR AN ANALYSIS ..... 231

BY TASOS LIGNADIS

*translated by* C. CAPRI-KARKA

# LEND SILKEN THREADS TO THE WIND

Posthumously published poems introduced

by EUGENE ARANITSIS

*Introduction translated by* C. CAPRI-KARKA ..... 255

*Poems translated by* MARJORIE CHAMBERS ..... 259

(The first lines are used when the poems have no title)

SPANISH RHAPSODY ..... 259

To bring you herbs and myrrh ..... 261

What can you say? Virgins stoop ..... 261

TAKE YOUR RING ..... 263

Beat tambourines on the slopes. In this gorge ..... 265

Patient horses wait in the courtyard ..... 265

ORANGETREE OF AEGINA ..... 267

Blood, blood, blood ..... 269

Down in the white sea ..... 269

Because I took you ..... 271

A SUMMER NIGHT ..... 273

Ah, what a withered meadow! ..... 275

A ruined bell-tower ..... 275

---

NIKOS GATSOS—SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY .....	276
<i>compiled by</i> DAVID CONNOLLY	
Manos Hadjidakis .....	276
Christodoulos Halaris .....	279
Yorgos Hatzinasios .....	279
Loukianos Kilaidonis .....	280
Dimos Moutsis .....	280
Mikis Theodorakis .....	281
Stavros Xarhakos .....	281
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE .....	283
CONTRIBUTORS .....	284



## EDITORIAL

This issue of *The CHARIOTEER* is dedicated to Nikos Gatsos, a very sensitive and original poet of contemporary Greece. As has been pointed out in most reviews, articles, essays, etc. about him, Gatsos is considered a very important and influential poet, in spite of the fact that he published only one long poem, *Amorgos*, and a few shorter ones added to subsequent editions of *Amorgos*, or published in journals, and then stopped writing poetry. His other work included a number of critical essays and his superb translations—real recreations—of plays by Lorca, O'Neil, Tennessee Williams, Strindberg, Genet and others.

It was also known that he had written the lyrics for a large number of songs, many of which are exquisite poetry. These songs, set to music by famous composers such as Hadjidakis, Theodorakis, Xarhakos and others, had become very popular all over Greece. With a few exceptions, these lyrics had not appeared in print, and both their number and literary value had not been fully appreciated. This changed with the publication, a few months after the poet's death in 1992, of a large collection of his songs under the title Φύσα αεράκι φύσα με μη χαμηλώνεις ίσαμε (*Blow Breeze Blow Me, Don't Abate Until*). The collection includes the lyrics of most, but not all, of his songs and several more never set to music. The 166 songs/poems were selected by the poet himself and organized into groups, each with a general title. The publication of this volume is certain to heighten, even further, the appreciation of Gatsos by critics and the general public.

\* \* \*

This issue starts with a presentation of Gatsos' main poetic creation, *Amorgos*, both in Greek and in translation. There is something unique about this poem. It is lyrical, ambiguous and challenging concealing a magic quality. In this poem the world of dreams and fantasy that springs from the unconscious mind of the poet, with its symbolic suggestiveness, blends with elements of the folk song in a rare amalgam. Although a number of translations have appeared in various journals, anthologies,

etc., the translation in this issue is a new one, by Marjorie Chambers. We then include new translations of Gatsos' three other major poems, "Elegy," "Death and the Knight" and "Song of Old Times."

This is followed by a selection of fifty-three songs from the book mentioned above, translated by David Connolly, Ilona Karka, George Pilitsis, Margaret Polis and myself. Since songs, like all poems with rhyme, are difficult to appreciate in translation—especially, in this case, without the powerful effect of the music—the reader with some knowledge of Greek can read the originals, which are also included. A brief discussion of most of the songs selected is presented below.

\* \* \*

There are several recurring themes one can see in Gatsos' songs: the struggle against evil; injustice in the world; the need for sacrifice by some people for the sake of others; the sorrow of the Greek who is forced to go into exile. Also, a main theme is love, which, except for some rare moments of happiness, is the source of suffering. It is often unrequited, or leads to the torment of betrayal or the despair of abandonment, but it can also sometimes become a self-annihilating passion. Although the main characteristic of this love is intensity of emotion, one can discern through various songs contradictory feelings: at times a sad nostalgia and dreaming of the person from whom the protagonist is separated, but on other occasions the overwhelming feeling that love, like a dream, fades away, especially in songs such as "Autumnal Evening," which was not included in the collection.

Another very important recurring theme in Gatsos' songs is the expression of his feelings toward Greece. On the one hand he sees Greece at these difficult times as threatened and vulnerable to invasion by neighbors; he fears that lack of responsibility and deterioration of certain values have led to corruption; he also becomes very critical of the people who govern the country. He warns the Greeks of a crisis and an impending disaster. On the other hand, we see in other songs that the poet has a vision for Greece. In the first song of the collection



he depicts Greece as traveling<sup>1</sup> ("With Greece as captain / a frigate sails to Egypt") and, according to the critic D. Karamvalis, spreading her civilization everywhere. In the "Songs According to Markos" he asserts that the root of the Greek tradition is "divine." There are songs in this group that can be seen as an indirect appeal to the Greeks to return to the spiritual wealth of their race, to classical Greek values.

The title of the first group of songs is "Paper Moon." In the first of them, "Myrtle," the smile of a girl of that name standing by the window changes to tears, when the protagonist asks her if there is any hope of building again a "nest / for all love's birds." This suggests that the loss of love is irrevocable. The song conveys the deep melancholy of a shattered happiness. The second song of this group, "A Holy Virgin," is about a love so strong that it is expressed in terms of religious worship. The three following songs, "The Train's Left," "The Song of Kalymnos" and "The Siren's Song," have the same theme, the separation of the protagonist from the person he loves and his promise to wait until the day of return.

The last song in this group, "Paper Moon," conveys the feeling of emptiness the protagonist experiences when he is denied the love of a person who is his whole life. The images of a moon made of paper and a seashore that is unreal reflect the bleak atmosphere of a world deprived of this love. The title of this song is also the title of the whole group, since most of the songs express the same situation of unrequited love.

The group "Word Plays" is a series of songs in which all of the themes, even poverty or love, are treated lightly, with word plays and even some double entendres. The one poem translated from this group, "One Sunday in March," is about the separation of two people and the appeal of one of them to unite again with the person he loves.

The song "Dreams of Smoke" of the group with the same

<sup>1</sup>Cavafy and Seferis also use this metaphor of cities or countries travelling: Cavafy in "The City" ("the city will always pursue you") and in "The God Abandons Antony" ("say goodbye to her, to Alexandria who is leaving"); Seferis in "In the Manner of G.S." ("Meanwhile Greece goes on travelling").

title underlines again, as do many others, the poet's belief that the loss of love makes life empty of all meaning. He regrets the rapid loss of youth ("youth flowed by like a river"). The very difficult years that followed the loss make both people feel defeated. The image that depicts the destruction of love, "I was a reed in the wind / you a willow in the storm," conveys how devastating the circumstances of this separation were. Also, the words he uses "love became dust / the dream went up in smoke," suggest how poignant, how overwhelming his sorrow is. The entire group entitled "Dreams of Smoke" includes songs which present love as an enigma. The song "Love Deep in the Heart" suggests that one should not try to find the truth about love, as it can become destructive.

The group "Folk Songs and Fairytales"<sup>2</sup> deals not only with personal but also with general subjects, from the Earth to Greece and its heroes. In "En Sirio Hay Ninos" (There Are Children in the Star Sirius) the Earth is seen as "the disease and wound of the universe," but the dream of changing all this never dies: there are always those who sing songs and write verses or slogans on the walls. The "Madwoman of the Moon" symbolizes Greece and the endless sacrifices of her people. In the eyes of strangers, in the eyes of the "demons of the world" and the "birds of night," Greece seems like a madwoman, and the deaths of her children seem senseless, but she derives strength from her tradition. Another poem related to these sacrifices is "Four Young Men." Several more hints are included in the rest of the poems of this group.

The group "Holy Mother of the Skies" is a series of sad lyrical songs about young men who were imprisoned and executed and others who died or disappeared. The song "Bring Me the Sea" is a lament with a very nostalgic quality. The protagonist feels the need to sing and pray to the sea and sleep in its bosom, joining his loves that have faded away and will never return.

<sup>2</sup>The Greek word *Gatsos* uses "Παραλογές," refers to a particular form of folk song characterized by narrative style and an imaginary story line.

My long-dead loves  
will never return  
lay me in its bosom  
and let me sleep.

The nostalgia in this song is mixed with a strange weariness that comes with a sense of irrevocable loss.

In "I Sprinkled You with Rosewater" the poet refers to a person who has died. His suffering becomes such an unbearable feeling of desolation, such a deep wound that he expresses himself in a solipsistic way with lines charged with deep emotion, such as

I sprinkled you with rosewater  
you sprinkled me with poison.

The song ends with a desperate invocation to the dead person to find some way to return for a while from the journey of death

take with you a willow branch  
a root of rosemary  
become the dew of moonlit nights  
and settle in the midnight hours  
on your own parched leafy yard.

In the song "Make the Sun your Boundary," in his desire to bring back his dead friend, the protagonist urges him to befriend death, personified by Charon,<sup>3</sup> and, riding on his horse, come back in the form of moon drops.

The song "Holy Mother of the Skies," whose title is the title of the whole group, is very lyrical. The protagonist expresses with tenderness his love for a person who has died but also his grief for a kind of enigmatic renunciation of this earth on the part of his friend in his search for the "fount of dreams."

The song "Better Days for Us" creates an atmosphere of melancholy and sadness. It reveals the frustration of a difficult life, although the reasons are rather vague. It is possible that

<sup>3</sup>Ferryman of the dead in Hades.

the lines "bitter summers / near you I came to know" refer to Greece. It conveys the psychology of a person distressed with his life; the image "dead doves filled the dawn sky" suggests an atmosphere of doom. While the first stanza expresses the misery and the difficulties of a person who cannot live in his country and is about to go into exile, the second stanza is probably addressed to a woman, and the protagonist tries to draw her out of her overwhelming despair with his promise to return. The song ends with a complete change of mood, a note of stoicism and an optimistic hope that "better days will come for [them]." This song became very popular in Greece.

"Now and Forever" is a group of songs the title and the meaning of which become more clear when considered in the context of Gatsos' unfinished but very crucial poem "Μανιάτικος Έσπερινός" ("Mani Evensong"). In that poem he expresses epigrammatically in one stanza<sup>4</sup> the meaning of the words "Now and Forever" (from the religious expression "νῦν καὶ ἀεί"), when he says that there will always be (now and forever) those who sacrifice themselves to save others.

This sacrifice is the theme of the song "On the Lower Road," which mentions historical figures like Rigas, Aetos, Digenis and from centuries back, mythical figures like Adonis and Linus but also Christ. Tasos Lignadis, in his book on Gatsos (*A Double Visit to an Era and a Poet*), writes extensively and with particular sensitivity about this subject, which appears in many songs, the "brave young man who becomes a martyr for a faith and acquires symbolic characteristics in the name or in the meaning of Christ."

"Holy Friday," the day Christ was crucified, is the title of two different songs by Gatsos; one is part of the group "Days of the Epitaph" and the other is in the group "Now and Forever." The song in this last group most probably refers also to the holy week in April 1941, when Greece was occupied by the Germans in World War II. The poet uses the jackal as a symbol of war in this and also in other songs. Here he

<sup>4</sup>Always in this world  
Good Friday will come round  
and someone will be crucified  
so others might be saved.

depicts the atmosphere of the deserted villages after the young men left to fight for freedom.

The song "The Time Has Come, the Time Has Come" suggests that those who suffered most during the war, the most desperate and the most abandoned people, are those who will rebuild this earth. In "Black Sun" this ominous symbol is used in a lament for those who lost their lives defending their country. The last two lines of each stanza are variations on a theme reminiscent of folk songs. The song "Arena" is an admonition to the brave to fight for justice and for a better world in the arena of life. It is in this fight for justice that the poet sees the ultimate truth for the Greek, the essence of human existence:

And if in the world's din  
you see blood singing out  
take life as your arena  
and fight like a lion.

Then your Hell will fill  
with flowers of Paradise.

As the title suggests, the song "Anonymon" is written for a person whose name is not revealed. The protagonist's love is expressed as a kind of worship, but the pain for this person's death is intensified by a more desperate feeling, as he recalls that, even before death separated them, another kind of separation had taken place that tragically poisoned their relationship. The lines

drop by drop, how did the lead  
enter the heart's holy vein to part us

are among the most moving in Gatsos' poetry.

The song "Those of Us Who Remained" is imbued from beginning to end with a sense of optimism. It is about the responsibility of the Greeks who survived the war to honor the dead, "dance in their memory" and make a new start, turning the

land into a shrine, "a cradle for the unborn children" of future generations.

"The Drunken Boat," included in the group "Immortality," refers, as the title suggests, to the poem by Arthur Rimbaud, to whom Gatsos addresses himself. It is a crucial poem because it implies a certain degree of identification with the French symbolist poet and his struggle against the world of evil, which is one of the most important themes in Gatsos' poetry.

"Tsamikos," the title of a song in the same group, "Immortality," is a traditional Greek folk dance. It is symbolic here of the struggle of the Greeks through the centuries to preserve their land from invaders. A number of heroes are mentioned, such as Nikiforos, Digenis and Nikitaras, from various periods in Greek history. Gatsos writes with a unique emotion about these Greek heroic figures that have God as their judge and are blessed by Christ.

Theirs is only a handful of earth  
but you, my Christ, have blessed them  
to save this tiny piece of land  
from the jackal and the bear—  
look how Nikitaras dances  
and the lute becomes a nightingale.

It is not accidental that this song was included in the group "Immortality": by sacrificing themselves the Greeks preserved tradition and ensured the immortality of the nation.

Another song in the group "Immortality" is the "Melancholy March." It is a rather pessimistic account of the state of the world, in which the poet, looking in retrospect at the history of humankind, concludes that Earth is a hell where victory for some is defeat and betrayal for others. He wonders with sadness "who remembers the poor" in this savage struggle and "where is the hand of God / to burn the killer and the thief," thus expressing a doubt about divine intervention. He knows that only if people fight evil and not each other, can a new world be built. This doubt in this song is different from what we see in "Holy Week" and in songs like "The Dance of the

Dogs" and "Better Days for Us," where the poet does not give up hope.

Two songs from the group "Absurd Songs" have been translated: "The Nightmare of Persephone" and "Sibyl's Oracles." In the first the poet deplores the metamorphosis of the Earth, Greece and, more particularly, Eleysis, the site of the ancient mysteries, because of industrialization and pollution of the environment. The contrast he portrays between the past harmony of nature, with its transparent sea and its flowers on the one hand, and the labyrinths of concrete and the death of the birds on the other, reveals a nostalgia for the beauty of a world that tends to disappear. The suggestion to Persephone to stay in the underworld because Earth, compared with Hades, is no Paradise, emphasizes the absurdity of the situation that modern man has created for himself.

In the other song in this group, "Sibyl's Oracles" the prophetess, after painting a bleak picture of a world from which humanity and love are absent, insists in her vision that, in spite of all adversities, love and humanity will always survive. By including this song in the group "Absurd Songs" the poet may be suggesting the absurdity of projecting a dream in a cruel world. The theme of this song is similar to that of "En Sirio Hay Ninos" of the previous group, "Folk Songs and Fairytales."

Most of the songs of the group entitled "Rebetiko" convey a sense of pessimism, with only a few offering a ray of hope. The song "Mother Greece," for instance (not included in the translations), expresses bitterness toward Greece, who does not seem to care for her children that are forced into exile, while she deludes herself and everyone else, resting on the laurels of her past. Songs like "I Am Burning" and "Tear After Tear" convey a kind of resignation and fatalism which we also see in "Do not Blame Me." There are, however, in the same group, songs with a different attitude, such as "In Amfiali," which deals with the sad consequences of drug addiction, and the songs "On Bitterness' Barren Isles," "The Net" and "The Bus Station," which were selected for translation. In "On Bitterness' Barren Isles" the protagonist considers the idea of escaping from the vicious circle of a destructive love. The title of the song symbolizes the psy-

chological imprisonment and isolation of the protagonist in a world that he wants to set on fire and burn because it "left [him] to rot away." This urge is a kind of reaction to a destructive situation related to love. It conveys the despair caused by a betrayal which is the essence of the whole song.

In "The Net" there is a kind of warning about the dangers lurking everywhere in man's life. The net, as the poet mentions, has "some awesome names / written in a book with seven seals / some call it the wiles of hell / and others the first spring's love." What is implied here is the ominous world of evil and its traps in which man can become caught. An analogous imagery of net and trapping appears in several of Seferis' poems, such as "An Old Man on the River Bank,"<sup>5</sup> "Fog," "Ayianapa I," "Euripides the Athenian" and *Three Secret Poems* ("Summer Solstice," Poem 4).

While "The Net" represents a warning, the "Eleventh Commandment" refers to a violation already committed and raises, in the first stanza, the theme of responsibility:

Glance silently  
at this world of sin  
and see the earth is burning  
and with your hand upon your heart  
if you are not touched by the flame  
try to find who is to blame.

In the second stanza, however, the protagonist concludes that the reason for his suffering is that he did not respect an "eleventh commandment," which is not specified:

Like a lowly humble bird  
that never knew the sky  
and wanders on the earth  
you didn't have enough respect  
for the eleventh commandment  
and so you suffer still.

<sup>5</sup>"Not like us . . . caught in the gaudy nets of a life that was right and turned to dust and sank into the sand . . ." (transl. by Rex Warner)



Here the blame for suffering is attributed explicitly to man himself, something we also see in several of Seferis' poems.<sup>6</sup> There is, however, a different attitude in an earlier song of Gatsos, "Rain is Falling." In this song the protagonist defies the Gods by encouraging another person to walk without fear in the darkness "that hides a secret"—possibly a hint of an erotic temptation—even if the Gods do not want it.<sup>7</sup> An inference could be drawn from the sequence in which the two songs are placed in the group. One might assume that there is a continuity of thought from one song to the other and that the defiance of the gods in "Rain is Falling" is retracted in "The Eleventh Commandment" that follows. Reinforcing this idea is the fact that the title of the song "The Eleventh Commandment" is also the title of the whole group, which suggests that this is a significant and crucial poem that carries more weight.

As mentioned before, Gatsos' attitude toward Greece is complex. Sometimes he is angry, as already discussed in connection with "Mother Greece" in the group "Rebetiko" and as we see in some of the songs of the group "Songs According to Markos,"<sup>8</sup> like the "Dumpy Old Lady" and "Will the Defendant Rise," where he expresses his indignation at the present state of affairs. On the other hand, the poet acknowledges that Greece suffered terrible injustices in the past and was often

<sup>6</sup>Wounded by my own soil  
Tortured by my own garment  
Condemned by my own gods,  
These stones.

("Mycenae" transl. by Rex Warner)

<sup>7</sup>Seferis, too, exhibits a different attitude in some earlier poems such as *Mythistorema* 16, where the suffering is attributed to the will of gods.

The knees fail easily when the gods will have it so.  
No one is able to escape; no strength will do it, you cannot  
Escape the sea which cradled you.

(transl. by Rex Warner)

<sup>8</sup>Although the title of this group, especially in the puristic Greek of the original, "Τὰ κατὰ Μάρκον," alludes to the Gospel according to Mark, the songs were actually inspired by Markos Vamvakaris, a popular composer of folk songs, as has been pointed out by Stavros Xarhakos, who wrote the music for these lyrics.

victimized by the great powers, as he implies in the song "Sam, Johnny and Ivan" in the group "Satires." In some songs of the group "Songs According to Markos," such as "Give me an Identity Card," "This Land" and "A Language, a Country," the poet does not hide the pride he takes in being Greek: "the root which is sustaining me / is from the tree of God"; and he reveals a tremendous feeling for his homeland.

"Give Me an Identity Card" is about the Greek whose country, with a history spanning thousands of years, has survived continuous wars against several invaders and has suffered endless sacrifices. He feels that all these past and present hardships and bitter struggles for survival have left him in such a state that he has almost forgotten his identity, in other words his origin, his great ancestors and their values. Thus the title of the poem, "Give Me an Identity Card" involves a subtle irony.

The root which is sustaining me  
is from the tree of God.  
Give me an identity card  
so that I may remember who I am.

In the first stanza of "This Land" Greece is portrayed as a land of myth and color and also of great tradition. In the second stanza, however, the imagery changes and Greece appears as a garden with crying orphan children who await their lost mother before a closed door. This image can be considered an allusion to Greece's vulnerability because of her long history of wars, deprivation and agony. Her crucial geographical position makes her always a victim. The third stanza concludes on a note of affirmation, expressing the hope that a day will come when there will be a justification for this land.

The song "A Language, a Country" underlines the value of the language of the Greek and of his birthplace that gives him a sense of belonging. It also refers to his "longing" (κρημὸς) for a more just and humane world which is at the root of the Greek tradition.

"The First and the Second," of the same group, "Songs According to Markos," is written from a similar perspective,

Gatsos' conviction that Greece is the cradle of Democracy and Freedom. It is an account of life in Greece in comparison with some other countries. The poet thinks that Greece has her own set of principles based on justice and integrity. He expresses, if not bitterness, a complaint: he wonders why those countries which make compromises and play political games, which "bow again to tyrants and traitors" always come first while the Greeks, who believe in freedom, come second. By the very moving image of the scarce rain in Greece being "angels' tears," the poet may be implying that the angels weep for the ordeals of Greece in her tragic struggle for survival throughout her long history.

"The Dance of the Dogs" in the group "Reflections" is an allegory about people who suffer continuous injustices. Although these people are victimized and tortured and have no hope of finding justice, the poet reiterates a note of optimism: in the midst of life's adversities he feels that an invisible "hand inscribes inside of [him]: / somewhere there is God."

In his brief song "Epilogue" the poet expresses in an epigrammatic way the pessimistic view that life, "the gloomy mother," is "a teacher of suffering." It should be noted, though, that in the previously mentioned poem "The Eleventh Commandment," Gatsos suggests that man himself is partly responsible for his suffering. This awareness could help one avoid some of the pain in the future. This comes close to the Aeschylean idea of the significance of suffering: wisdom comes by suffering.<sup>9</sup>

The "Song of Old Times,"<sup>10</sup> is dedicated to the poet George Seferis, with whom Gatsos felt a special affinity; Seferis also considered Gatsos a very fine poet and a friend. He addresses

<sup>9</sup>Ζῆνα δέ . . .

τὸν φρονεῖν θροτοὺς δδῶ-

σαντα, τὸν πάθει μάθος

θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.

στάζει δ' ἐν θ' ὕπνῳ πρὸ καρδίας

μνησιπῆμων πόνος καὶ παρ'

ἄκοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν

\*Αγαμέμνων, 173-181

Zeus, who leadeth mortals the way  
of understanding, Zeus, who hath  
established as a fixed ordinance  
that "wisdom cometh by suffering."  
But even as trouble, bringing  
memory of pain, droppeth o'er the  
mind in sleep, so to men in their  
despite cometh wisdom.

*Agamemnon*, 173-181

<sup>10</sup>This poem was included in the collection of songs but first appeared in 1963 in the journal *Tachydromos*.

Seferis in this poem using allusions, images and references to the Nobel laureate's work. The poem refers to the process of poetic creation and Seferis' great contribution to it. In the beginning of the poem the turbulent times we live in are presented as the world's dark river. After depicting a dry, barren landscape conveying a sense of sterility, both actual and symbolic, the poet praises Seferis for having "carved a fountain," bringing some life-giving dew with his poetry. The reference to resurrection as "long in coming" may be seen as a response to Seferis' hope and prediction that "the great agony of the present moment must lead to a great day of resurrection" that will abolish violence.<sup>11</sup> Near the end of the poem the lines suggesting that Seferis "bring to life again a spring / that awaits in [his] own rock" are probably an allusion to Hippocrene, the fountain of poetic inspiration that was reputed to have burst forth when the ground was struck by the hoof of the winged horse Pegasus.

The six songs of the Holy Week sequence, "Days of the Epitaph," are a tribute to Christ. The poet feels that Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate manifestation of God's love for people. All six songs are interspersed with frequent quotations, sometimes slightly modified, from the Bible and other religious texts, such as "He came upon this earth to bear witness to the truth" or "He is the life, the light and the peace of the world," expressing the poet's conviction that Christ is the only hope for mankind.

In "Holy Monday" the poet uses quotations from the New Testament and the Holy Monday mass to profess his belief that the coming one is "the Alpha and the Omega" (Revelation 1:8), "the architect of the infinite, the shepherd of the stars." Christ,

<sup>11</sup>In his essay "Makriannis," written near the end of the Second World War, Seferis writes: "[...] the great agony of the present moment must lead to a great day of resurrection [...]. This resurrection cannot but be a resurrection of the life of man, in its most serious sense. As such it must put an end to the atrocities, the gagging, the prisons, the hypocrisies. It must be so; otherwise, alas, all that we live through today will have been lived through in vain. It must be so; otherwise the world will sink into a state of living death." ("Makriannis," *On the Greek Style*, transl. by Rex Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos.)

anticipating his death, asks his mother to wait for him near the well of the abyss, by the gates of heaven.

"Holy Tuesday" is a very crucial song. The poet again uses quotations from the Revelation<sup>12</sup> and the poem of the nun Kasiani which is part of the Holy Tuesday mass<sup>13</sup> and presents an antithesis between Christ and those who spoiled love ("you, a lamb for slaughter / and we, the rams of sin"). Thus he reveals the dark side of love. While in many of his songs love is unrequited, here he sheds a different light on the subject of love and sensual pleasure. The song, though, ends on a note of affirmation, the words of Christ "I have come as a light into the world, so that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."

In "Holy Wednesday" the poet again uses imagery and quotations from the Revelation and more specifically from the part that presents the conflict between the celestial forces and the demons and the defeat of the evil spirits. The song starts with the appearance of the demons emerging from mountain caves and, after a hint of the impending abolition of death in the first stanza, it proceeds with the description of a "sea of glass like crystal" which in the Revelation is before the throne of God (4:6). Then the poet points out that the time to honor the saviors has come and recalls Saint Paul's message of Love (Corinthians 13:13): "Faith, Hope, Love. These three. Love the greatest of all." Although the angels in the Revelation destroyed the forces of evil, the poet sees on earth the wounds still open and wonders

When will the sun light the fires  
to burn Herod's palace  
so that the flower of evil become a pomegranate?

This image of the burning sun is again an allusion to the Revelation: "the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and

<sup>12</sup>"The kings indulged in fornication and the people of the earth became intoxicated with the wine of fornication" (17:2).

<sup>13</sup>"Gloomy and moonless is the desire of sin" (Syn. 334). References to quotations from the Holy Mass are given as page numbers of 'Ιερά Σύνοψις (Athens: Astir Editions, 1993), abbreviated as Syn.

power was given to him to scorch men with fire" (16:8). Gatsos chooses as a personification of evil Herod, the king of Judaea, who committed one of the most abominable acts in human history, the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem.<sup>14</sup> The song ends with another quotation from Saint Paul (Philippians 2:14,15), an admonition to become "blameless and harmless in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation," implying that on earth the struggle against evil is not over.

In "Holy Thursday," the day of Christ's death, the poet again uses quotations from the Bible<sup>15</sup> and the Holy mass. He starts with a note of praise, "His works are true and His ways straight"<sup>16</sup> and continues with another quotation which points out that Christ's crucifixion made it possible for the children of Adam to return to Paradise from which he was expelled.<sup>17</sup> The poet expresses the hope that all people on earth will be born again. The song ends with the most important among the quotations, in which Christ personifies peace: "He is the life, the light and the peace of the world."

"Holy Friday" is the day of the epitaph and of the expression of deep sorrow. The quotations the poet uses in his song of that title are from the Holy Thursday mass,<sup>18</sup> Holy Friday mass<sup>19</sup> and the Revelation.<sup>20</sup> He addresses Christ as "the first among the first" and "the greatest of the great" and he offers lilies of the Spring, laying them on the cross. The poet sees the day of Christ's burial as the day that "Hades opened up" and "Calvary became a bridge" between Hades and Earth.

"Holy Saturday" refers to another day of mourning for the death of Christ. In his song, the poet conveys this feeling of mourning by creating an atmosphere of sterility where the doves

<sup>14</sup>Herod, fearing the prophecy that one of the children born in Bethlehem, Jesus, would become king of Judaea, ordered the slaughter of all the infants of the city.

<sup>15</sup>John 18:37.

<sup>16</sup>Holy Saturday mass, Syn. 545.

<sup>17</sup>Holy Thursday mass, Syn. 399.

<sup>18</sup>"Worthy is He who suspended the earth on the waters"

"Worthy is He who adorned the firmament with clouds" (Syn. 396).

<sup>19</sup>"Worthy is He who painted the earth with flowers" (Syn. 514).

<sup>20</sup>"Worthy is the sacrificed lamb" (Revelation 5:12).

fly slowly over thirsty gardens and fields. The song starts with the word "Remember" and then the poet returns to it using Christ's own words, as quoted by Saint Paul, only changed from the first to the second person, to appeal to Him not to forget his children: "Remember the children God gave You."<sup>21</sup> In the second stanza, three children alone by the seashore, as if neglected, symbolize those in need of help. He pleads for an end to the storm and a return of the sun and professes his faith in Christ using again His own words changed to the second person: "The words that You spoke to us are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63) and "For You are the truth, the life and the resurrection" (John 11:25).

The six songs of the Holy Week sequence are not followed, as one would have expected, by "Easter Sunday," the day of Resurrection. In fact, in another of his poems mentioned before, "Song of Old Times," Gatsos writes that "Resurrection will be long in coming," meaning a symbolic resurrection with people themselves bringing peace to the earth. Instead, what follows after "Holy Saturday" is "Gloria Aeterna." In this song Gatsos, after a retrospective look at the past, referring to the Greek and Roman civilizations that have almost disappeared and to the chaos of Babylon, mentions the enmity among people and portrays the world in dark colors. Thus he implies that the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ did not much change the face of the earth, as it should have, and did not abolish hatred and discord among men. However, the poet ends the song by professing his own faith. He addresses God and he wants to use God's stars "to light [His] eternal glory / with rays of light."

As mentioned before, the theme of "Mani Evensong" is the sacrifice of certain people in order to save the rest. It is an unfinished poem but it is clear, especially from the reference to the necessity of sacrifice, that it is about the sorrow of a mother who has lost both her sons in the struggle for freedom.

<sup>21</sup>"Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Hebrews 2:13). In this epistle Saint Paul explains that Christ was made "a little lower than the angels," in order to be closer to men and experience their suffering before He could save them. Christ calls them "brothers" and similarly the poet in "Holy Friday" addresses Him as his "blessed friend."

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Another posthumous small volume of Gatsos' work was published very recently under the title Δάνεισε τὰ μετόξιο στὸν ἄνεμο (*Lend Silken Threads to the Wind*). The thirteen poems in this volume were selected from the poet's manuscripts by Eugene Aranitsis, who also wrote a brief introduction. These early poems, written before *Amorgos*, are not very different from it in style and mood; they could be considered the seeds of *Amorgos*, its "forerunners," as Aranitsis writes. One can discern in them a dream-like quality but also a haunting mood of despair, mixed with the longing of love:

Because I took you  
 From your dark lair and brought you up to the clouds  
 To see golden eagles in their eyries and dancers on threshing floors  
 To see crosses in lonely chapels and stars on the roofs of trees  
 To see a thoughtful love on the balconies of the moon  
 And then with your tear and your smile  
 To gaze on me as in a dream and take my hand

or, in another poem

A ruined bell-tower  
 Shows the road of fire to the shipwrecked  
 It tells the fate of reptiles to the dead  
 Perhaps the sea will change but spring does not change  
 Perhaps the clouds will dissolve but your memory will  
     not dissolve.

The entire collection, translated by Marjorie Chambers, is presented here. The original Greek texts and a translation by myself of the Introduction are also included.

Also presented in this issue are a number of critical essays and articles selected from the many that have been written about Gatsos' work in general and *Amorgos* in particular. It should be noted that the publication of *Amorgos* in 1943 was met in the beginning with hostility and irony on the part of most critics of the time, who were not ready to appreciate the avant garde poetry that it represented. Only later, and gradually,



did new critics, more familiar with the techniques of modern poetry, recognize its great value, and they were fascinated with its originality. The authors of the essays selected for translation are (in alphabetical order): Eugene Aranitsis, Alexandros Argyriou, the Nobel Prize winner Odysseus Elytis, Dimitris Karamvalis, Andreas Karandonis, Karolos Kuhn and Tasos Lignadis. The translations are by Apostolos Athanassakis, David Connolly, Myrto Kapri, Ilona Karka, Margaret Polis and myself. The Greek original of Elytis' article is also included.

The most extensive analysis of *Amorgos* can be found in Lignadis' essay "A Proposal for an Analysis" (a chapter from his book *A Double Visit to an Era and a Poet: A Book on Nikos Gatsos*). It is a comprehensive effort to guide the reader through the intricacies of the poem. Of course, it is but one of the possible interpretations and it has its own limitations. Gatsos' complex poetry can be read in many different ways and some other views are offered in the other essays presented in this issue. Although these essays are very valuable and shed some light on various aspects of the poem, there are still ambiguities that need further clarification.

Finally, a discography of Gatsos' songs, compiled by David Connolly, is also included for the benefit of those who would like to have a better acquaintance with this aspect of the poet's work.

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*The CHARLOTEER* wishes to express its sincere thanks to Mrs. Agatha Dimitrouka, executor of the poet's literary estate, who has been of great help in the preparation of this issue. She provided us with several critical essays and other material and gave us permission to reproduce the poet's works in this volume.

C. CAPRI-KARKA  
*Editor*

# ΑΜΟΡΓΟΣ

Κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ  
καὶ ὠτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων.

ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΤΟΣ

Μὲ τὴν πατρίδα τους δεμένη στὰ πανιά καὶ τὰ κουπιά στὸν  
ἄνεμο κρεμασμένα  
Οἱ ναυαγοὶ κοιμήθηκαν ἡμεροὶ σὰν ἀγρίμια νεκρὰ μέσα στῶν  
σφουγγαριῶν τὰ σεντόνια  
Ἄλλὰ τὰ μάτια τῶν φυκιῶν εἶναι στραμένα στὴ θάλασσα  
Μήπως τοὺς ξαναφέρει ὁ νοτιάς μὲ τὰ φρεσκοθαμένα λατίνια  
Κι ἓνας χαμένος ἐλέφαντας ἀξίζει πάντοτε πιὸ πολὺ ἀπὸ δυὸ  
στήθια κοριτσιοῦ ποὺ σαλεύουν  
Μόνο ν' ἀνάψουνε στὰ θουνὰ οἱ στέγες τῶν ἐρημοκκλησιῶν  
μὲ τὸ μεράκι τοῦ ἀποσπερίτη  
Νὰ κυματίσουνε τὰ πουλιὰ στῆς λεμονιάς τὰ κατάρτια  
Μὲ τῆς καινούργιας περπατησιᾶς τὸ σταθερὸ ἄσπρο φύσημα  
Καὶ τότε θά 'ρθουν ἀέρηδες σώματα κύκνων ποὺ μείνανε  
ἄσπιλοι τρυφεροὶ καὶ ἀκίνητοι  
Μὲς στοὺς ὁδοστρωτήρες τῶν μαγαζιῶν μέσα στῶν  
λαχανόκηπων τοὺς κυκλῶνες  
Ὅταν τὰ μάτια τῶν γυναικῶν γίναν κάρθουνα κι ἔσπασαν οἱ  
καρδιὲς τῶν καστανάδων  
Ὅταν ὁ θερισμὸς ἐσταμάτησε κι ἄρχισαν οἱ ἐλπίδες τῶν  
γρύλων.

Γι' αὐτὸ λοιπὸν κι ἐσεῖς παλληκάρια μου μὲ τὸ κρασί τὰ  
φιλιὰ καὶ τὰ φύλλα στὸ στόμα σας  
Θέλω νὰ θγεῖτε γυμνοὶ στὰ ποτάμια  
Νὰ τραγουδηστε τὴ Μπαρμπαριά ὅπως ὁ ξυλουργὸς κυνηγáει  
τοὺς σκίνους  
Ὅπως περνáει ἡ ὄχεντρα μὲς ἀπ' τὰ περιθόλια τῶν  
κριθαριῶν  
Μὲ τὰ περήφανα μάτια τῆς ὀργισμένα  
Κι ὅπως οἱ ἀστραπὲς ἀλωνίζουν τὰ νιάτα.

## AMORGOS

BY NIKOS GATSOS

*translated by Marjorie Chambers*

*Bad witnesses are eyes and ears to men, if they  
have souls that understand not their language.*

HERACLITUS

Their country lashed to the sails and the oars  
    hanging in the wind  
The shipwrecked slept calm as dead wild beasts on  
    a bedding of sponge  
But seaweed eyes are turned to the sea  
Lest the south wind with fresh dyed lateen  
    carry them back  
And a lost elephant is always worth much more  
    than the trembling breasts of a girl  
Only let the roofs of lonely mountain chapels light up  
    with the yearning of the evening star  
Let birds flutter in the masts of the lemon tree  
With the steady white breath of new fledged motion  
Then will come winds the bodies of swans that stayed  
    immaculate tender and still  
Among steam-rolling shops and cyclonic vegetable gardens  
When women's eyes became coals and the hearts of  
    chestnut sellers broke  
When the harvest stopped and the hopes of crickets began.

Therefore you young men with wine kisses  
    and leaves in your mouths  
I want you to go out naked into rivers  
And sing Barbary as the woodsman hunts for the lentisk  
As the adder passes through barley fields  
With its proud and angry eyes  
And as the lightning threshes youth.

Καὶ μὴ γελᾶς καὶ μὴν κλαῖς καὶ μὴ χαίρεσαι  
 Μὴ σφίγγεις ἄδικα τὰ παπούτσια σου σὰ νὰ φυτεύεις  
 πλατάνια

Μὴ γίνεσαι ΠΕΠΡΩΜΕΝΟΝ

Γιατὶ δὲν εἶναι ὁ σταυραητὸς ἓνα κλεισμένο συρτάρι  
 Δὲν εἶναι δάκρυ κορομηλιάς οὔτε χαμόγελο νούφαρου  
 Οὔτε φανέλα περιστεριοῦ καὶ μαντολίνο Σουλτάνου  
 Οὔτε μεταξωτὴ φορεσιά γιὰ τὸ κεφάλι τῆς φάλαινας.  
 Εἶναι πριόνι θαλασσινὸ πὺ πετσοκόβει τοὺς γλάρους  
 Εἶναι προσκέφαλο μαραγκοῦ εἶναι ρολοὶ ζητιάνου  
 Εἶναι φωτιά σ' ἓνα γύφτικο πὺ κοροϊδεύει τὶς παπαδιές καὶ  
 νανουρίζει τὰ κρίνα

Εἶναι τῶν Τούρκων συμπεθεριὸ τῶν Αὐστραλῶν πανηγύρι  
 Εἶναι λημέρι τῶν Οὐγγρων

Ποὺ τὸ χινόπωρο οἱ φουντουκιές πᾶνε κρυφὰ κι  
 ἀνταμώνονται

Βλέπουν τοὺς φρόνιμους πελαργοὺς νὰ θάφουν μαῦρα τ' αὐγά  
 τους

Καὶ τότε κλαῖνε κι αὐτὲς

Καῖνε τὰ νυχτικά τους καὶ φοροῦν τό μισοφόρι τῆς πάπιας  
 Στρώνουν ἀστέρια καταγῆς γιὰ νὰ πατήσουν οἱ βασιλιάδες  
 Μὲ τ' ἀσημένια τους χαῖμαλιά μὲ τὴν κορώνα καὶ τὴν πορφύρα  
 Σκορπᾶνε δεντρολίβανο στὶς θραγιές

Γιὰ νὰ περάσουν οἱ ποντικοὶ νὰ πᾶνε σ' ἄλλο κελλάρι  
 Νὰ μποῦνε σ' ἄλλες ἐκκλησιές νὰ φᾶν τὶς Ἀγίες Τράπεζες  
 Κι οἱ κουκουβάγιες παιδιὰ μου

Οἱ κουκουβάγιες οὐρλιάζουνε

Κι οἱ πεθαμένες καλογριές σηκώνονται νὰ χορέψουν  
 Μὲ ντέφια τούμπανα καὶ θιολιά μὲ πίπιζες καὶ λαγοῦτα  
 Μὲ φλάμπουρα καὶ μὲ θυμιατὰ μὲ βότανα καὶ μαγνάδια  
 Μὲ τῆς ἀρκούδας τὸ θρακὶ στὴν παγωμένη κοιλάδα  
 Τρῶνε τὰ μανιτάρια τῶν κουναβιῶν

And do not laugh do not cry do not rejoice  
Do not vainly tighten your boots as if you were  
planting plane trees  
Do not become FATE  
Because the golden eagle is not a closed drawer  
It is not a tear from the plum tree nor a smile  
from the water-lily  
Neither is it the dove's shirt nor the Sultan's mandoline  
Nor silk attire for the head of the whale  
It is a saw from the sea that cuts seagulls to pieces  
It is a carpenter's pillow a beggar's clock  
It is fire in a blacksmith's that scoffs at priests' wives  
and lulls the lilies to sleep  
It is the match-making of Turks and the Australians'  
feast-day  
It is the lair of Hungarians  
Where in the autumn the hazel nut trees go secretly  
meeting together  
They see the wise storks dyeing their eggs black  
And they too weep  
They burn their nightgowns and put on the duck's  
petticoat  
Spreading stars on the earth for kings to walk upon  
With their silver amulets the crown and the purple  
They scatter rosemary on the flower beds  
For mice to go to another pantry  
To go into other churches to eat the Lord's Table  
And the owls my children  
The owls howl  
And dead nuns rise to dance  
With tambourines drums and fiddles with pipes and lutes  
With pennons and with herbal censers and veils  
Wearing bears' trousers they eat the ferrets' mushrooms  
in the frozen valley

Παίζουν κορώνα-γράμματα τὸ δαχτυλίδι τ' Ἀη-Γιαννιοῦ καὶ  
 τὰ φλουριά τοῦ Ἀράπη  
 Περιγελᾶνε τὶς μάγισσες  
 Κόβουν τὰ γένια ἐνὸς παπᾶ μὲ τοῦ Κολοκοτρῶνη τὸ γιαταγάνι  
 Λούζονται μὲς στὴν ἄχνη τοῦ λιθανιοῦ  
 Κι ὕστερα ψέλνοντας ἄργα μπαίνουν ξανά στὴ γῇ καὶ  
 σωπαίνουν  
 Ὅπως σωπαίνουν τὰ κύματα ὅπως ὁ κοῦκος τὴ χαραυγὴ  
 ὅπως ὁ λύχνος τὸ θράδυ.

Ἔτσι σ' ἓνα πιθάρι θαθὺ τὸ σταφύλι ξεραίνεται καὶ στὸ  
 καμπαναριὸ μιᾶς συκιᾶς κιτρινίζει τὸ μῆλο  
 Ἔτσι μὲ μιὰ γραβάτα φανταχτερὴ  
 Στὴν τέντα τῆς κληματαριᾶς τὸ καλοκαίρι ἀνασαίνει  
 Ἔτσι κοιμᾶται ὀλόγυμνη μέσα στὶς ἄσπρες κερασιές μιὰ  
 τρυφερὴ μου ἀγάπη  
 Ἐνα κορίτσι ἀμάραντο σὰ μυγδαλιᾶς κλωνάρι  
 Μὲ τὸ κεφάλι στὸν ἀγκῶνα τῆς γερτὸ καὶ τὴν παλάμη πάνω  
 στὸ φλουρί τῆς  
 Πάνω στὴν πρωινὴ του θαλπωρὴ ὅταν σιγὰ-σιγὰ σὰν τὸν  
 κλέφτη  
 Ἀπὸ τὸ παραθύρι τῆς ἀνοιξῆς μπαίνει ὁ αὐγερινὸς νὰ τὴν  
 ξυπνήσει!

They play heads or tails with the ring of Saint John  
and the gold coins of the Blackamoor  
They laugh at witches  
They cut a priest's beard with the yataghan of Kolokotrónis  
They bathe in the vapour from the incense  
And then chanting slowly go into the earth again  
and are silent  
As waves are silent as the cuckoo at dawn  
as the oil lamp in the evening.

And so in a deep jar the grape dries  
In the belfry of a fig tree the apple ripens  
So with a gaudy necktie  
Summer breathes under the tent of the vine  
And a tender love of mine sleeps naked  
among the white cherry trees  
A girl unfading as the bough of an almond tree  
Her head on her raised elbow and her palm on  
her gold coin  
On its morning warmth when quiet as a thief  
The dawn star comes through the window of spring  
to wake her!

## 2

Λένε πὼς τρέμουν τὰ θουνὰ καὶ πὼς θυμώνουν τὰ ἔλατα  
 Ὅταν ἡ νύχτα ροκανάει τὶς πρόκες τῶν κεραμιδιῶν νὰ μποῦν  
     οἱ καλικάντζαροι μέσα  
 Ὅταν ρουφάει ἡ κόλαση τὸν ἀφρισμένο μόχθο τῶν χειμάρρων  
 Ἦ ὅταν ἡ χωρίστρα τῆς πιπεριᾶς γίνεται τοῦ θοριᾶ κλωτσο-  
     σκούφι.

Μόνο τὰ θόδια τῶν Ἀχαιῶν μὲς στὰ παχιά λιθάδια τῆς  
     Θεσσαλίας  
 Βόσκουν ἀκμαῖα καὶ δυνατὰ μὲ τὸν αἰώνιο ἥλιο ποὺ τὰ  
     κοιτάζει  
 Τρῶνε χορτάρι πράσινο φύλλα τῆς λεύκας σέλινα πίνουνε  
     καθαρὸ νερὸ μὲς στ' αὐλάκια  
 Μυρίζουν τὸν ἰδρώτα τῆς γῆς κι ὕστερα πέφτουνε θαρῖα  
     κάτω ἀπ' τὸν ἴσκιο τῆς ἱτιᾶς νὰ κοιμηθοῦνε.

Πετᾶτε τοὺς νεκροὺς εἰπ' ὁ Ἡράκλειτος κι εἶδε τὸν οὐρανὸ νὰ  
     χλωμιάζει  
 Κι εἶδε στῇ λάσπη δυὸ μικρὰ κυκλάμινα νὰ φιλιοῦνται  
 Κι ἔπese νὰ φιλήσει κι αὐτὸς τὸ πεθαμένο σῶμα του μὲς στὸ  
     φιλόξενο χῶμα  
 Ὅπως ὁ λύκος κατεβαίνει ἀπ' τοὺς δρυμοὺς νὰ δεῖ τὸ ψόφιο  
     σκυλὶ καὶ νὰ κλάψει.



2

They say that the mountains shake and the fir trees  
are angry  
When nights gnaws at the nails on the slates to let  
the goblins in  
When hell sucks in the frothing toil of the torrents  
Or when the hairline on the pepper tree is pummelled  
by the north wind.

Only the oxen of the Achaians in the lush pastures  
of Thessaly  
Graze sturdy and strong the eternal sun gazing  
upon them  
They eat green grass poplar leaves celery they drink  
clear water in the dykes  
They sniff the earth's sweat and then fall heavily  
under the shade of the willow to sleep.

Cast away the dead said Heráclitus and he saw heaven  
blench  
He saw in the mud two small cyclamen kissing  
And he too fell down to kiss his dead body  
in the hospitable earth  
As the wolf comes down from the forests to see the dead dog  
and to bewail

Τί νά μοῦ κάμει ἡ σταλαγματιά ποῦ λάμπει στοῦ μέτωπό σου;  
 Τὸ ξέρω πάνω στὰ χεῖλιά σου ἔγραψε ὁ κεραυνὸς τ' ὄνομά του  
 Τὸ ξέρω μέσα στὰ μάτια σου ἔχτισε ἕνας ἀητὸς τῇ φωλιά του  
 Μὰ ἐδῶ στὴν ὄχτη τὴν ὑγρὴ μόνο ἕνας δρόμος ὑπάρχει  
 Μόνο ἕνας δρόμος ἀπατηλὸς καὶ πρέπει νὰ τὸν περάσεις  
 Πρέπει στοῦ αἵμα νὰ θουτηχτεῖς πρὶν ὁ καιρὸς σὲ προφτάσει  
 Καὶ νὰ διαθεῖς ἀντίπερα νὰ ξαναβρεῖς τοὺς συντρόφους σου  
 Ἄνθη πουλιά ἐλάφια

Νὰ βρεῖς μιὰν ἄλλη θάλασσα μιὰν ἄλλη ἀπαλοσύνη  
 Νὰ πιάσεις ἀπὸ τὰ λουριά τοῦ Ἀχιλλέα τ' ἄλογα  
 Ἄντὶ νὰ κάθῃσαι θουβὴ τὸν ποταμὸ νὰ μαλώνεις  
 Τὸν ποταμὸ νὰ λιθοβολεῖς ὅπως ἡ μάνα τοῦ Κίττου.  
 Γιατὶ κι ἐσύ θὰ ἔχεις χαθεῖ κι ἡ ὁμορφιά σου θὰ ἔχει γεράσει.  
 Μέσα στοὺς κλώνους μιᾶς λυγαριᾶς βλέπω τὸ παιδικό σου  
 πουκάμισο νὰ στεγνώνει

Πάρ' το σημαία τῆς ζωῆς νὰ σαβανώσεις τὸ θάνατο  
 Κι ἄς μὴ λυγίσει ἡ καρδιά σου  
 Κι ἄς μὴν κυλήσει τὸ δάκρυ σου πάνω στὴν ἀδυσώπητη τούτη  
 γῆ

Ὅπως ἐκύλησε μιὰ φορὰ στὴν παγωμένη ἐρημιὰ τὸ δάκρυ  
 τοῦ πιγκουίνου

Δὲν ὠφελεῖ τὸ παράπονο

Ἰδία παντοῦ θὰ ἔναι ἡ ζωὴ μὲ τὸ σουραῦλι τῶν φιδιῶν στὴ  
 χώρα τῶν φαντασμάτων

Μὲ τὸ τραγοῦδι τῶν ληστῶν στὰ δάση τῶν ἀρωμάτων

Μὲ τὸ μαχαίρι ἐνὸς καημοῦ στὰ μάγουλα τῆς ἐλπίδας

Μὲ τὸ μαράζι μιᾶς ἀνοιξῆς στὰ φυλλοκάρδια τοῦ γκιῶνη

Φτάνει ἕνα ἀλέτρι νὰ βρεθεῖ κι ἕνα δρεπάνι κοφτερὸ σ' ἕνα  
 χαρούμενο χέρι

Φτάνει ν' ἀνθίσει μόνο

Λίγο σιτάρι γιὰ τὶς γιορτὲς λίγο κρασί γιὰ τὴ θύμηση λίγο  
 νερὸ γιὰ τὴ σκόνῃ...

What use to me is the drop shining on your brow?  
I know the thunderbolt wrote its name on your lips  
I know an eagle built its nest in your eyes  
But here on this watery bank there is one road only  
One deceiving road only and you must cross it  
You must plunge into blood before time overtakes you  
And go across to the other side to find your companions  
again

Flowers birds deer  
To find another sea another gentleness  
To seize Achilles' horses by the reins  
Rather than sit mutely rebuking the river  
Stoning the river as did Kítsos'<sup>1</sup> mother  
Because you too will have been lost and your beauty will have  
aged

In the branches of an ozier I see  
your childhood shirt drying  
Take it, a flag of life to shroud death  
And may your heart not be bowed  
And may your tear not flow on this implacable earth  
As the tear of the penguin flowed once  
on the frozen waste

Complaining does not serve.  
Life will be the same everywhere with the serpents' flute  
in the land of ghosts  
With the song of brigands in fragrant woods  
With the knife of suffering in the face of hope  
With spring pining deep in the screech owl's heart  
It is enough for a plough to be found and a sharp  
sickle in a blithe hand  
It is enough for only a little wheat  
To ripen for feasts a little wine for memory a little water  
for the dust . . .

<sup>1</sup>In the Kléftiko Traghoúdhí "Tu Kítsu" Kítsos' mother, unable to cross to the other side of the river where her son and his fellow brigands are assembled, throws stones at the water in frustration.

## 3

Στοῦ πικραμένου τὴν αὐλὴ ἥλιος δὲν ἀνατέλλει  
Μόνο σκουλήκια θγαίνουνε νὰ κοροϊδέψουν τ' ἄστρα  
Μόνο φυτρώνουν ἄλογα στὶς μυρμηγκοφωλιές  
Καὶ νυχτερίδες τρῶν πουλιά καὶ κατουρᾶνε σπέρμα.

Στοῦ πικραμένου τὴν αὐλὴ δὲ βασιλεύει ἡ νύχτα  
Μόνο ξερνᾶν οἱ φυλλωσιές ἓνα ποτάμι δάκρυα  
Ὅταν περνάει ὁ διάβολος νὰ καθαλήσει τὰ σκυλιά  
Καὶ τὰ κοράκια κολυμπᾶν σ' ἓνα πηγάδι μ' αἷμα.

Στοῦ πικραμένου τὴν αὐλὴ τὸ μάτι ἔχει στερέψει  
Ἔχει παγώσει τὸ μυαλὸ κι ἔχει ἡ καρδιὰ πετρώσει  
Κρέμονται σάρκες βατραχιῶν στὰ δόντια τῆς ἀράχνης  
Σκούζουν ἀκρίδες νηστικές σὲ θρυκολάκων πόδια.

Στοῦ πικραμένου τὴν αὐλὴ θγαίνει χορτάρι μαῦρο  
Μόνο ἓνα θράδυ τοῦ Μαγιοῦ πέρασε ἓνας ἀγέρας  
Ἔνα περπάτημα ἐλαφρὺ σὰ σκίρτημα τοῦ κάμπου  
Ἔνα φιλὶ τῆς θάλασσας τῆς ἀφροστολισμένης.

Κι ἂν θὰ διψάσεις γιὰ νερὸ θὰ στίψουμε ἓνα σύννεφο  
Κι ἂν θὰ πεινάσεις γιὰ ψωμὶ θὰ σφάξουμε ἓνα ἀηδόνι  
Μόνο καρτέρει μιὰ στιγμή ν' ἀνοίξει ὁ πικραπήγανος  
Ν' ἀστράψει ὁ μαῦρος οὐρανὸς νὰ λουλουδίσει ὁ φλόμος.

Μὰ εἶταν ἀγέρας κι ἔφυγε κορυδαλλὸς κι ἐχάθη  
Εἶταν τοῦ Μάη τὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ φεγγαριοῦ ἡ ἀσπράδα  
Ἔνα περπάτημα ἐλαφρὺ σὰ σκίρτημα τοῦ κάμπου.  
Ἔνα φιλὶ τῆς θάλασσας τῆς ἀφροστολισμένης.

3

In the yards of the afflicted the sun does not rise  
Only worms come up to mock the stars  
Only horses thrive on ant heaps  
And bats eat birds and piss semen.

In the yards of the afflicted night does not fade  
Only the leaves vomit a river of tears  
When the devil comes in to mount the dogs  
And ravens swim in a well of blood.

In the yards of the afflicted the eye has run dry  
The brain has frozen the heart has petrified  
The flesh of frogs hangs in the spider's teeth  
Hungry locusts scream at vampire feet.

In the yards of the afflicted black grass grows  
Only one May evening a wind passed  
A light tread like the frisking plain  
A kiss from the foam-decked sea.

And if you thirst for water we will squeeze a cloud  
And if you hunger for bread we will slaughter a nightingale  
Only be patient a moment for the healing rue to open  
For the black sky to glow for the mullein to flower.

But it was a wind that has gone, a lark that has flown  
It was the face of May the white of the moon  
A light tread like the frisking plain  
A kiss from the foam-decked sea.

## 4

Ξύπνησε γάργαρο νερό από τη ρίζα του πεύκου να θρείς  
 τὰ μάτια τῶν σπουργιτιῶν καὶ νὰ τὰ ζωντανέψεις ποτίζοντας  
 τὸ χῶμα μὲ μυρωδιὰ βασιλικοῦ καὶ μὲ σφυρίγματα σαύρας.  
 Τὸ ξέρω εἶσαι μιὰ φλέβα γυμνὴ κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ φοβερό θλέμμα  
 τοῦ ἀνέμου εἶσαι μιὰ σπῖθα βουβὴ μέσα στὸ λαμπερὸ πλῆθος  
 τῶν ἄστρων. Δὲ σὲ προσέχει κανεὶς κανεὶς δὲ σταματᾷ ν'  
 ἀκούσει τὴν ἀνάσα σου μὰ σὺ μὲ τὸ θαρὺ σου περπάτημα  
 μὲς στὴν ἀγέρωχη φύση θὰ φτάσεις μιὰ μέρα στὰ φύλλα τῆς  
 θερυκοκιᾶς θ' ἀνέβεις στὰ λυγερά κορμιὰ τῶν μικρῶν σπάρ-  
 των καὶ θὰ κυλήσεις ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια μιᾶς ἀγαπητικιᾶς σὰν  
 ἐφηβικὸ φεγγάρι. Ὑπάρχει μιὰ πέτρα ἀθάνατη ποὺ κάποτε  
 περαστικὸς ἕνας ἀνθρώπινος ἄγγελος ἔγραψε τ' ὄνομά του  
 ἐπάνω της κι ἕνα τραγούδι ποὺ δὲν τὸ ξέρει ἀκόμα κανεὶς  
 οὔτε τὰ πιὸ τρελὰ παιδιὰ οὔτε τὰ πιὸ σοφὰ τ' ἀηδόνια. Εἶναι  
 κλεισμένη τώρα σὲ μιὰ σπηλιὰ τοῦ βουνοῦ Ντέθι μέσα στὶς  
 λαγκαδιές καὶ στὰ φαράγγια τῆς πατρικῆς μου γῆς μὰ ὅταν  
 ἀνοίξει κάποτε καὶ τιναχτεῖ ἐνάντια στὴ φθορὰ καὶ στὸ χρόνο  
 αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγγελικὸ τραγούδι θὰ πάψει ξαφνικά ἢ θροχὴ καὶ  
 θὰ στεγνώσουν οἱ λάσπες τὰ χιόνια θὰ λυώσουν στὰ βουνὰ  
 θὰ κελαηδήσει ὁ ἄνεμος τὰ χελιδόνια θ' ἀναστηθοῦν οἱ λυ-  
 γαριές θὰ ριγῇσουν κι οἱ ἄνθρωποι μὲ τὰ κρῦα μάτια καὶ  
 τὰ χλωμὰ πρόσωπα ὅταν ἀκούσουν τίς καμπάνες νὰ χτυπᾶν  
 μέσα στὰ ραγισμένα καμπαναριὰ μοναχές τους θὰ θροῦν  
 καπέλα γιορτινὰ νὰ φορέσουν καὶ φιόγκους φανταχτεροὺς  
 νὰ δέσουν στὰ παπούτσιά τους. Γιατὶ τότε κανεὶς δὲ θ' ἀστει-  
 εῖται πιὰ τὸ αἷμα τῶν ρυακιῶν θὰ ξεχειλίσαι τὰ ζῶα θὰ  
 κόψουν τὰ χαλινάρια τους στὰ παχινὰ τὸ χόρτο θὰ πρασι-  
 νίσαι στοὺς στάβλους στὰ κεραμίδια θὰ πεταχτοῦν ὁλόχλω-  
 ρες παπαροῦνες καὶ μᾶηδες καὶ σ' ὅλα τὰ σταυροδρόμια θ'  
 ἀνάψουν κόκκινες φωτιές τὰ μεσάνυχτα. Τότε θὰ ῥθοῦν σιγά-

## 4

Clear running water awake from the pine tree root that you might find the eyes of sparrows and revive them watering the earth with the scent of basil and the whistling of the lizard. I know you are a naked vein beneath the wind's fearful gaze a mute spark amid the shining crowd of stars. No one sees you no one stops to listen to your breath but you with heavy tread through proud nature will one day reach the leaves of the apricot tree will climb on the supple body of the young broom bush and roll from the eyes of a lover like an adolescent moon. There is an immortal stone that a passing human angel once wrote his name upon and a song that no one yet knows neither the wildest children nor the wisest nightingales. The stone is now closed up in a cave on Mount Devi in the valleys and ravines of my native land but when the cave opens sometime and this angelic song leaps forth against decay and time the rain will suddenly stop and the mud will dry the snow will melt in the mountains the wind will sing the swallows will come to life again the oziers will quiver and when the people with cold eyes and pale faces hear the bells ringing by themselves in the cracked bell towers they will find festive hats to wear and proud tassels to tie on their shoes. Because then no one will jest any more the blood in the streams will overflow animals will break their bridles in the stalls the hay will turn green in the stables and fresh poppies and mayflowers will spring up on roof tiles and at all the crossroads they will light red fires at midnight. Then timid girls will quietly come to throw their

σιγά τὰ φοβισμένα κορίτσια γιὰ νὰ πετάξουν τὸ τελευταῖο τοὺς ροῦχο στὴ φωτιά κι ὁλόγυμνα θὰ χορέψουν τριγύρω τῆς ὅπως τὴν ἐποχὴ ἀκριβῶς ποὺ εἴμασταν κι ἐμεῖς νέοι κι ἄνοιγε ἕνα παράθυρο τὴν αὐγὴ γιὰ νὰ φυτρώσει στὸ στήθος τοὺς ἕνα φλογάτο γαρύφαλο. Παιδιά ἴσως ἡ μνήμη τῶν προγόνων νὰ εἶναι θαυύτερη παρηγοριά καὶ πιὸ πολὺτιμη συντροφιά ἀπὸ μιὰ χούφτα ροδόσταμο καὶ τὸ μεθύσι τῆς ὁμορφιάς τίποτε διαφορετικὸ ἀπὸ τὴν κοιμισμένη τριανταφυλλιά τοῦ Εὐρώτα. Καληνύχτα λοιπὸν βλέπω σωροὺς πεφτάστερα νὰ σᾶς λικνίζουν τὰ ὄνειρα μὰ ἐγὼ κρατῶ στὰ δάχτυλά μου τὴ μουσικὴ γιὰ μιὰ καλύτερη μέρα. Οἱ ταξιδιώτες τῶν Ἰνδιῶν ξέρουνε περισσότερα νὰ σᾶς ποῦν ἀπ' τοὺς Βυζαντινοὺς χρονογράφους.

## 5

- Ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὸν ροῦν τῆς μυστηριώδους ζωῆς του  
 Κατέλιπεν εἰς τοὺς ἀπογόνους του δείγματα πολλαπλᾶ καὶ  
 ἀντάξια τῆς ἀθανάτου καταγωγῆς του  
 Ὅπως ἐπίσης κατέλιπεν ἵχνη τῶν ἐρειπίων τοῦ λυκαυγοῦς  
 χιονοστιβάδας οὐρανίων ἐρπετῶν χαρταετοὺς ἀδάμαν-  
 τας καὶ θλέμματα ὑακίνθων  
 Ἐν μέσῳ ἀναστεναγμῶν δακρῶν πείνης οἰμωγῶν καὶ τέφρας  
 ὑπογείων φρεάτων.



last garment into the fire and they will dance naked around it exactly like the time we too were young and a window open at dawn so that in their breasts a flaming carnation would sprout. Perhaps children remembrance of ancestors is a deeper solace and more precious company than a handful of rosewater and the intoxication of beauty no different from the sleeping rosebush of the Evrotas. Goodnight then I see a host of falling stars rocking your dream but I hold in my fingers the music for a better day. Travellers from India can tell you more than all the Byzantine Chroniclers.

## 5

During the course of his mysterious life man  
Has bequeathed to his descendants multifarious and  
worthy tokens of his immortal lineage  
As he has also bequeathed traces of ruins of dawn  
avalanches of celestial reptiles as well as  
kites, diamonds, and glances of hyacinths  
In the midst of sighs tears hunger lamentation  
and the ashes of underground wells.

## 6

Πόσο πολύ σέ ἀγάπησα ἐγὼ μονάχα τὸ ξέρω  
 Ἐγὼ ποὺ κάποτε σ' ἄγγιξα μὲ τὰ μάτια τῆς πούλιας  
 Καὶ μὲ τὴ χαίτη τοῦ φεγγαριοῦ σ' ἀγκάλιασα καὶ χορέψαμε  
     μὲς στοὺς καλοκαιριάτικους κάμπους  
 Πάνω στὴ θερισμένη καλαμιὰ καὶ φάγαμε μαζὶ τὸ κομένο  
     τριφύλλι  
 Μαύρη μεγάλη θάλασσα μὲ τόσα θότσαλα τριγύρω στὸ λαιμὸ  
     τόσα χρωματιστὰ πετράδια στὰ μαλλιά σου.

Ἐνα καράβι μπαίνει στὸ γιαλὸ ἓνα μαγγανοπήγαδο σκου-  
     ριασμένο βογγάει  
 Μιὰ τούφα γαλανὸς καπνὸς μὲς στὸ τριανταφυλλὶ τοῦ  
     ὀρίζοντα  
 Ἴδιος μὲ τὴ φτερούγα τοῦ γερανοῦ ποὺ σπαράζει  
 Στρατιᾶς χελιδονιῶν περιμένουνε νὰ ποῦν στοὺς ἀντρειωμέ-  
     νους τὸ καλωσόρισες  
 Μπράτσα σηκώνονται γυμνά μὲ χαραγμένες ἄγκυρες στὴ μα-  
     σχάλη  
 Μπερδεύονται κραυγὲς παιδιῶν μὲ τὸ κελάδημα τοῦ που-  
     νέντε  
 Μέλισσες μπαينوθαίνουνε μὲς στὰ ρουθούνια τῶν ἀγελάδων  
 Μαντήλια καλαματιανὰ κυματίζουνε  
 Καὶ μιὰ καμπάνα μακρινὴ θάφει τὸν οὐρανὸ μὲ λουλάκι  
 Σὰν τὴ φωνὴ κάποιου σήμαντρου ποὺ ταξιδεύει μέσα στ'  
     ἀστέρια  
 Τόσους αἰῶνες φευγάτο  
 Ἀπὸ τῶν Γόθων τὴν ψυχὴ κι ἀπὸ τοὺς τρούλλους τῆς Βαλτι-  
     μόρης  
 Κι ἀπ' τὴ χαμένη Ἀγιά-Σοφιά τὸ μέγα μοναστήρι.  
 Μὰ πάνω στ' ἀψηλὰ βουνὰ ποιοὶ νὰ ἴναι αὐτοὶ ποὺ κοιτᾶνε  
 Μὲ τὴν ἀκύμαντὴ ματιὰ καὶ τὸ γαλήνιο πρόσωπο;  
 Ποιᾶς πυρκαγιᾶς νὰ ἴναι ἀντίλαλος αὐτὸς ὁ κουρνιαχτὸς στὸν  
     ἀγέρα;

6

How very much I loved you I alone know  
I who once touched you with the eyes of the Pleiades  
And with the mane of the moon I embraced you and we danced  
on the summer plains  
On the gathered reeds and we ate together the cut clover  
Great black sea with so many pebbles round your neck  
so many coloured gems in your hair.

A ship comes into shore a rusty wheel-well  
groans  
A plume of blue smoke on the rosy horizon  
Like the rending wing of the crane  
Armies of swallows wait to say their welcome to the brave  
Arms rise naked tattooed with anchors  
Children's cries mingle with the west wind singing  
Bees go in and out of cows' nostrils  
Kalamatan kerchiefs wave  
And a distant bell dyes the sky blue  
Like the sound of a church bell travelling in the stars  
So many centuries gone  
From the soul of the Goths and from the domes of  
Baltimore  
And from the great monastery of lost Saint Sophia.  
But who are these on the high mountain gazing  
With calm eye and serene countenance?  
This dust in the air is the echo of what conflagration?

Μήνα ὁ Καλύθας πολεμάει μήνα ὁ Λεβεντογιάννης;  
 Μήπως ἀμάχη ἐπιάσανεν οἱ Γερμανοὶ μὲ τοὺς Μανιάτες;  
 Οὐδ' ὁ Καλύθας πολεμάει κι οὐδ' ὁ Λεβεντογιάννης  
 Οὔτε κι ἀμάχη ἐπιάσανεν οἱ Γερμανοὶ μὲ τοὺς Μανιάτες.  
 Πύργοι φυλᾶνε σιωπηλοὶ μιὰ στοιχειωμένη πριγκίπισσα  
 Κορφές κυπαρισσιῶν συντροφεύουνε μιὰ πεθαμένη ἀνεμῶνη  
 Τσοπαναρέοι ἀτάραχοι μ' ἓνα καλάμι φλαμουριάς λένε τὸ  
     πρωινό τους τραγούδι  
 Ἕνας ἀνόητος κυνηγὸς ρίχνει μιὰ ντουφεκιὰ στὰ τρυγόνια  
 Κι ἓνας παλιὸς ἀνεμόμυλος λησμονημένος ἀπ' ὅλους  
 Μὲ μιὰ θελόνα δελφινιοῦ ράθει τὰ σάπια του πανιὰ  
     μοναχὸς του  
 Καὶ κατεβαίνει ἀπ' τὶς πλαγιές μὲ τὸν καράγιαλη πρίμα  
 Ὅπως κατέβαινε ὁ Ἄδωνις στὰ μονοπάτια τοῦ Χελμοῦ νὰ  
     πεῖ μιὰ καλησπέρα τῆς Γκόλφως.

Χρόνια καὶ χρόνια πάλεψα μὲ τὸ μελάνι καὶ τὸ σφυρὶ βασι-  
     νισμένη καρδιά μου  
 Μὲ τὸ χρυσάφι καὶ τὴ φωτιά γιὰ νὰ σοῦ κάμω ἓνα κέντημα  
 Ἕνα ζουμπούλι πορτοκαλιάς  
 Μιὰν ἀνθισμένη κυδωνιά νὰ σὲ παρηγορήσω  
 Ἐγὼ ποὺ κάποτε σ' ἄγγιξα μὲ τὰ μάτια τῆς πούλιας  
 Καὶ μὲ τὴ χαίτη τοῦ φεγγαριοῦ σ' ἀγκάλιασα καὶ χορέψαμε  
     μὲς στοὺς καλοκαιριάτικους κάμπους  
 Πάνω στὴ θερισμένη καλαμιὰ καὶ φάγαμε μαζὶ τὸ κομένο  
     τριφύλλι  
 Μαύρη μεγάλη μοναξιά μὲ τόσα θότσαλα τριγύρω στὸ λαιμὸ  
     τόσα χρωματιστὰ πετράδια στὰ μαλλιά σου.

Is it Kalyvas<sup>2</sup> fighting or Levendoyánnis?  
Have the Germans joined battle with the Maniátes?  
Neither Kalyvas is fighting nor Levendoyánnis  
Nor have the Germans joined battle with the Maniátes.  
Silent towers guard a phantom princess  
Cypress tops befriend a dead anemone  
Peaceful shepherds sing their morning song  
    with a lime-tree reed  
A foolish hunter fires a shot at turtle doves  
And an old forgotten windmill  
With a dolphin's needle mends its rotting sails  
And comes down from the slopes with a favouring north-west  
    wind  
As Adonis descended the foothpaths of Khelmós to say  
    good evening to Gólfo.<sup>3</sup>

My tormented heart year after year I strove with  
    ink and hammer  
With fire and gold to make you an embroidery  
A hyacinth from the orange tree  
A flowering quince tree to console you  
I who once touched you with the eyes of the Pleiades  
And with the mane of the moon I embraced you and we danced  
    on the summer plains  
On the gathered reeds and we ate together the cut clover.  
Vast black solitude with so many pebbles round your neck  
    so many coloured gems in your hair.

<sup>2</sup>Kalyvas and Levendoyánnis (properly called Bakoyánnis) were chieftains who fought for Greek independence. Referred to in the *Istorikó Traghoúdi*, "Tu Dhiáku" (24 April 1821).

<sup>3</sup>The heroine of a popular play written in 1894 by Spyros Peresiádes; Gólfo, a shepherdess, goes insane when abandoned by her lover.



DRAWING 1

This and the following three pages are reproductions in black and white of four drawings by the painter N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas which were included in the third edition of *Amorgos* (Athens: Ikaros, 1969). Drawing 1 belongs to Part One of the poem, Drawing 2 to Part Two, Drawing 3 to Part Three and Drawing 4 to Part Four. Here they all appear together for technical reasons, due to the bilingual presentation.



DRAWING 2



DRAWING 3





DRAWING 4

## ΕΛΕΓΕΙΟ

Στὴ φωτιά τοῦ ματιοῦ σου θὰ χαμογέλασε κάποτε ὁ Θεός  
Θά 'κλεισε τὴν καρδιά της ἡ ἀνοιξη σὰ μιᾶς ἀρχαίας  
ἀκρογιαλιᾶς μαργαριτάρι.  
Τώρα καθὼς κοιμᾶσαι λαμπερὸς  
Στοὺς παγωμένους κάμπους ποὺ οἱ ἀγράμπελες  
Γίναν θαλασσωμένα φτερά μαρμάρινα περιστέρια  
Βουθά παιδιὰ τῆς ἀπαντοχῆς—  
"Ἦθελαν νὰ ῥθεις μιὰ βραδιά σὰ θουρκωμένο σύννεφο  
"Αχνη τῆς πέτρας πάχνη τῆς ἐλιᾶς  
Γιατὶ στὸ ἀγνό σου μέτωπο  
Κάποτε θὰ ἔλεπα κι ἐγὼ  
Τὸ χιόνι τῶν προβάτων καὶ τῶν κρίνων  
Μὰ πέρασες ἀπ' τὴ ζωὴ σὰν ἓνα δάκρυ τῆς θάλασσας  
Σὰ λαμπηδόνα καλοκαιριοῦ καὶ στερνοβρόχι τοῦ Μάη  
Κι ἄς εἴσουν μιὰ φορὰ κι ἐσὺ ἓνα γεράνιο κύμα της  
"Ἐνα πικρὸ θότσαλό της  
"Ἐνα μικρὸ χελιδόνι της σ' ἓνα πανέρημο δάσος  
Χωρὶς καμπάνα τὴ χαραυγὴ χωρὶς λυχνάρι τὸ ἀπόβραδο  
Μὲ τὴ ζεστή σου καρδιά γυρισμένη στὰ ξένα  
Στὰ χαλασμένα δόντια τῆς ἄλλης ἀκρογιαλιᾶς  
Στὰ γκρεμισμένα νησιὰ τῆς ἀγριοκερασιᾶς καὶ τῆς φώκιας.

ELEGY\*

In your eye's fire God must once have smiled  
Spring have sealed its heart like an ancient shoreline's pearl.  
Now as you sleep resplendent  
In frozen plains their clematis become  
Embalmed wings marble doves  
Mute offspring of expectation—  
Would you could come one night like a grey cloud  
The rock's fine spray the olive-tree's frost  
For on your chaste brow  
I too would someday see  
The snow of lambs and lilies  
But you passed from life like a teardrop of sea  
Like the radiance of summer and the last rains of May  
Though you too were once one of its cerulean waves  
One of its bitter pebbles  
One of its tiny swallows in a desolate wood  
Without bells at dawn without lamp at dusk  
With your warm heart turned to foreign parts  
To the decaying teeth of another shore  
To the crumbling isles of wild cherry and seal.

*translated by David Connolly*

\*First published in the journal *Philologika Chronika*, issue 38-40, February-March 1946.

## Ο ΙΠΠΟΤΗΣ ΚΙ Ο ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ (1513)

Dürer zum Gedächtnis

Καθώς σὲ βλέπω ἀκίνητο  
Μὲ τοῦ Ἀκρίτα τ' ἄλλογο καὶ τὸ κοντάρι τοῦ Ἀη-Γιωργίου  
    νὰ ταξιδεύεις στὰ χρόνια  
Μπορῶ νὰ θάλω κοντά σου  
Σ' αὐτὲς τὶς σκοτεινὲς μορφές πού θὰ σὲ παραστέκουν  
    αἰώνια  
"Ὡσπου μιὰ μέρα νὰ σθυστεῖς κι ἐσύ παντοτεινὰ μαζί τους  
"Ὡσπου νὰ γίνεις πάλι μιὰ φωτιά μὲς στὴ μεγάλη Τύχη  
    πού σὲ γέννησε  
Μπορῶ νὰ θάλω κοντά σου  
Μιὰ νεραντζιά στοῦ φεγγαριοῦ τοὺς χιονισμένους κάμπους  
Καὶ τὸ μαγνάδι μιᾶς θραδιᾶς νὰ ξεδιπλώσω μπροστά σου  
Μὲ τὸν Ἀντάρη κόκκινο νὰ τραγουδάει τὰ νιάτα  
Μὲ τὸ Ποτάμι τ' Οὐρανοῦ νὰ χύνεται στὸν Αὐγουστο  
Καὶ μὲ τ' Ἀστέρι τοῦ Βοριᾶ νὰ κλαίει καὶ νὰ παγώνει—  
Μπορῶ νὰ θάλω λιθάδια  
Νερά πού κάποτε πότισαν τὰ κρίνα τῆς Γερμανίας  
Κι αὐτὰ τὰ σίδερα πού φορεῖς μπορῶ νὰ σοῦ τὰ στολίσω  
Μ' ἓνα κλωνὶ βασιλικὸ κι ἓνα ματσάκι δυόσμο  
Μὲ τοῦ Πλαπούτα τ' ἄρματα καὶ τοῦ Νικηταρᾶ τὶς πάλες.  
Μὰ ἐγὼ πού εἶδα τοὺς ἀπογόνους σου σὰν πουλιὰ  
Νὰ σκίζουν μιὰν ἀνοιξιάτικη αὐγὴ τὸν οὐρανὸ τῆς πατρίδας  
    μου  
Κι εἶδα τὰ κυπαρίσσια τοῦ Μοριᾶ νὰ σωπαίνουν  
Ἐκεῖ στὸν κάμπο τοῦ Ἀναπλιοῦ  
Μπροστά στὴν πρόθυμη ἀγκαλιὰ τοῦ πληγωμένου πελάγου  
"Ὅπου οἱ αἰῶνες πάλευαν μὲ τοὺς σταυροὺς τῆς  
    παλληκαριᾶς  
Θὰ θάλω τώρα κοντά σου  
Τὰ πικραμένα μάτια ἑνὸς παιδιοῦ  
Καὶ τὰ κλεισμένα βλέφαρα  
Μέσα στὴ λάσπη καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῆς Ὁλλανδίας.

**DEATH AND THE KNIGHT (1513)**

Dürer zum Gedächtnis

As I behold you motionless  
With the steed of Akritas and the lance of Saint George  
traveling through the ages  
I could place next to you  
By these dark forms that will always accompany you  
Until one day you too fade away with them forever  
Until you become again a fire in the great Chance that created you,  
I could place next to you  
a bitter-orange tree in the snowcovered plains of the moon  
And I could unfold before you the veil of an evening  
With Antares,\* all red, singing of youth  
With the River of Heavens pouring into August  
With the North Star crying and freezing  
I could place green meadows  
Streams that once watered the lilies of Germany  
And I could adorn this iron armor you wear  
With a sprig of basil and a bunch of spearmint  
With the arms of Plapoutas and the sabres of Nikitaras.  
But I who have seen your descendants tear like birds  
The sky of my country on a spring dawn  
And have seen the cypress trees of Moreas grow silent  
There on the plain of Anapli  
Before the eager bosom of the wounded sea  
Where the centuries struggled with the crosses of bravery  
I will now place next to you  
The embittered eyes of a child  
And the closed eyelids  
In the mud and blood of Holland.

\*The star Antares is at the center of the constellation Scorpio. Here it brings overtones of a warrior's aggressiveness.

Αὐτὸς ὁ μαῦρος τόπος  
Θὰ πρασινίσει κάποτε.  
Τὸ σιδερένιο χέρι τοῦ Γκέτς θ' ἀναποδογυρίσει τ' ἀμάξια  
Θὰ τὰ φορτώσει θημωνιές ἀπὸ κριθάρι καὶ σίκαλη  
Καὶ μὲς στοὺς σκοτεινοὺς δρυμοὺς μὲ τὶς νεκρὲς ἀγάπες  
Ἐκεῖ ποὺ πέτρωσε ὁ καιρὸς ἓνα παρθένο φύλλο  
Στὰ στήθια ποὺ σιγότερμε μιὰ δακρυσμένη τριανταφυλλιά  
Θὰ λάμπει ἓνα ἄστρο σιωπηλὸ σὰν ἀνοιξιάτικη μαργαρίτα.

Μὰ ἐσὺ θὰ μένεις ἀκίνητος  
Μὲ τοῦ Ἀκρίτα τ' ἄλογο καὶ τὸ κοντάρι τοῦ Ἀη-Γιωργιοῦ  
    θὰ ταξιδεύεις στὰ χρόνια  
Ἕνας ἀνήσυχος κυνηγὸς ἀπ' τὴ γενιὰ τῶν ἡρώων  
Μ' αὐτὲς τὶς σκοτεινὲς μορφὲς ποὺ θὰ σὲ παραστέκουν  
    αἰώνια  
"Ὡσπου μιὰ μέρα νὰ σθυστεῖς κι ἐσὺ παντοτεινὰ μαζί τους  
"Ὡσπου νὰ γίνεις πάλι μιὰ φωτιά μὲς στὴ μεγάλη Τύχη  
    ποὺ σὲ γέννησε  
"Ὡσπου καὶ πάλι στὶς σπηλιὲς τῶν ποταμιῶν ν' ἀντηχήσουν  
Βαριά σφυριὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς  
"Ὅχι γιὰ δαχτυλίδια καὶ σπαθιά  
Ἀλλὰ γιὰ κλαδευτήρια κι ἀλέτρια.

This black land  
Will one day turn green  
The iron hand of Götz will overturn the carts  
It will load them with stacks of barley and rye  
And in the dark forests with the dead loves  
Where time has turned a virgin leaf to stone  
On the breasts where a tearful rosebush trembled  
A silent star will shine like a spring daisy.

But you will remain motionless  
With the steed of Akritas and the lance of Saint George  
    you will travel through the ages  
With these dark forms that will always accompany you  
Until one day you too fade away with them forever  
Until you become again a fire in the great Chance that created you  
Until in the river caverns the heavy hammers of patience  
Resound again  
Not for rings and swords  
But for pruning tools and ploughs.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka*

## ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΛΙΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΟΥ

Γιὰ τὸν Γιώργο Σεφέρη

Ἐλλάζουν οἱ καιροὶ περνᾶν τὰ χρόνια  
τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ποτάμι εἶναι θολὸ  
μὰ ἐγὼ θὰ βγῶ στοῦ ὄνείρου τὰ μπαλκόνια  
γιὰ νὰ σὲ ἰδῶ σκυμμένο στὸν πηλὸ  
καράβια νὰ κεντᾶς καὶ χελιδόνια.

Τὸ πέλαγο πικρὸ κι ἡ γῆ μας λίγη  
καὶ τὸ νερὸ στὰ σύννεφα ἄκριθὸ  
τὸ κυπαρίσσι ἡ γύμνια τὸ τυλίγει  
τὸ χόρτο καίει τὴ στάχτη του βουθὸ  
κι ἀτέλειωτο τοῦ ἡλίου τὸ κυνήγι.

Κι ἦρθες ἐσὺ καὶ σκάλισες μιὰ κρήνη  
γιὰ τὸν παλιὸ τοῦ πόντου ναυαγὸ  
ποὺ χάθηκε μὰ ἡ μνήμη του ἔχει μείνει  
κοχὺλι λαμπερὸ στὴν Ἀμοργὸ  
καὶ θότσαλο ἄρμυρὸ στὴ Σαντορίνη.

Κι ἀπ' τὴ δροσιὰ ποὺ σάλεψε στὴ φτέρη  
πῆρα κι ἐγὼ τὸ δάκρυ μιᾶς ροδιᾶς  
γιὰ νὰ μπορῶ σὲ τοῦτο τὸ δεφτέρι  
καημοὺς νὰ συλλαβίζω τῆς καρδιᾶς  
μὲ τοῦ παραμυθιοῦ τὸ πρῶτο ἀστέρι.

Μὰ τώρα ποὺ ἡ Μεγάλη φτάνει Τρίτη  
κι Ἀνάσταση θ' ἀργήσῃ νὰ φανεῖ  
θέλω νὰ πᾶς στὴ Μάνη καὶ στὴν Κρήτη  
μὲ συντροφιά σου ἐκεῖ παντοτινὴ  
τὸ λύκο τὸν ἀητὸ καὶ τὸν ἀστρίτη.



## SONG OF OLD TIMES

*To George Seferis*

Times change, years go by  
the world's river is dark  
but I'll go out on the balcony of a dream  
to see you bent over your clay  
embroidering swallows and ships.

Our sea is bitter and our land is small  
and the water in the clouds is precious  
the cypress tree is wrapped in bareness  
the grass silently burns its ashes  
and the sun's hunt never ends.

And you came by and carved a fountain  
for the shipwrecked old sailor of the sea  
who vanished but his memory remained  
a glowing shell on the isle of Amorgos  
and a salty pebble in Santorin.

And from the dew that stirred among the ferns  
I, too, have taken a pomegranate's tear  
that in this notebook I could  
spell out the sorrows of a heart  
with the first fairytale star.

But now that Holy Tuesday is drawing near  
and Resurrection will be long in coming  
I want you to go to Mani and to Crete  
and there to have forever as companions  
the wolf the eagle and the asp.

Κι ἅμα θὰ ἰδεῖς κρυφὰ στὸ μέτωπό σου  
νὰ λάμπει μ' ἀπαλή μαρμαρυγὴ  
τ' ἄλλοτινὸ πεφτάστερο σηκώσου  
νὰ ζωντανέψεις πάλι μιὰ πηγὴ  
ποὺ καρτερεῖ στὸ θρόαχο τὸ δικό σου.

.....

Ἀλλάζουν οἱ καιροὶ περνᾶν τὰ χρόνια  
τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ποτάμι εἶναι θολό  
μὰ ἐγὼ θὰ βγῶ στοῦ ὀνείρου τὰ μπαλκόνια  
γιά νὰ σέ ἰδῶ σκυμμένο στὸν πηλὸ  
καράβια νὰ κεντᾷ καὶ χελιδόνια.

And when you see the falling star  
of old times shine secretly  
on your forehead with a soft glow  
rise up and bring to life again a spring  
that awaits on your own rock.

.....

Times change, years go by  
the world's river is dark  
but I'll go out on the balcony of a dream  
to see you bent over your clay  
embroidering swallows and ships.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙΑ ΑΠΟ ΤΗ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΗ**ΦΥΣΑ ΑΕΡΑΚΙ ΦΥΣΑ ΜΕ,  
ΜΗ ΧΑΜΗΛΩΝΕΙΣ ΙΣΑΜΕ****Η ΜΥΡΤΙΑ**

Είχα μιὰ θάλασσα στὸ νοῦ  
κι ἓνα περβόλι τ' οὐρανοῦ  
τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἄνοιγα πανιὰ  
γιὰ τὴν ἀπάνω γειτονιά.

Στὰ παραθύρια τὰ πλατιὰ  
χαμογελοῦσε μιὰ μυρτιὰ  
κουράστηκα νὰ περπατῶ  
καὶ τὴ ρωτῶ καὶ τὴ ρωτῶ.

Πέσ' μου μυρτιὰ νὰ σὲ χαρῶ  
ποῦ θά 'θρῶ χῶμα καὶ νερὸ  
νὰ ξαναχτίσω μιὰ φωλιά  
γιὰ τῆς ἀγάπης τὰ πουλιά.

Στὰ παραθύρια τὰ πλατιὰ  
εἶδα καὶ δάκρυσε ἡ μυρτιὰ  
τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἄνοιγα πανιὰ  
γιὰ τὴν ἀπάνω γειτονιά.

SELECTED SONGS FROM

**BLOW BREEZE BLOW ME,  
DON'T ABATE UNTIL**

**THE MYRTLE TREE**

I'd a sea on my mind  
and a garden of sky  
as I set my sails  
for regions above.

At the wide windows  
a myrtle tree smiled  
and weary of walking  
I asked it and asked.

Good myrtle tell me where  
I'll find earth and water  
to build again a nest  
for all love's birds.

At the wide windows  
the myrtle tree wept  
as I set my sails  
for regions above.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΜΙΑ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ**

Μιά Παναγιά  
μιάν αγάπη μου ἔχω κλείσει  
σ' ἔρημοκκλήσι  
ἀλαργινό.  
Κάθε βραδιά  
τῆς καρδιᾶς τὴν πόρτα ἀνοίγω  
κοιτάζω λίγο  
καὶ προσκυνῶ.

Πότε θά 'ρθεῖ πότε θά 'ρθεῖ  
τὸ καλοκαίρι  
πότε τ' ἀστέρι  
θ' ἀναστηθεῖ  
νὰ σοῦ φορέσω στὰ μαλλιά  
χρυσὸ στεφάνι  
σὰν πυροφάνι  
σ' ἀκρογιαλιά.

Μιά Παναγιά  
μιάν αγάπη μου ἔχω κλείσει  
σ' ἔρημοκκλήσι  
ἀλαργινό.  
Κάθε βραδιά  
τῆς καρδιᾶς τὴν πόρτα ἀνοίγω  
δακρύζω λίγο  
καὶ προσκυνῶ.

## A HOLY VIRGIN

A Holy Virgin  
a love I've sealed  
in a lonely chapel  
faraway.  
Every evening  
I open my heart's door  
gaze awhile  
and venerate.

When, tell me when  
will summer come  
when will the star  
rise up again  
so I may set upon your hair  
a crown of gold  
like the light of a lamp  
on the seashore.

A Holy Virgin  
a love I've sealed  
in a lonely chapel  
faraway.  
Every evening  
I open my heart's door  
weep awhile  
and venerate.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΕΦΥΓΕ ΤΟ ΤΡΑΙΝΟ

Σβήνει τ' άστέρι τοῦ βοριά  
στήν άνηφοριά  
κι ένα ποτάμι φωτεινό  
κυλάει στόν οὐρανό.

Κοιμούνται άκόμα τά παιδιά  
κάτω άπ' τή ροδιά  
καί μ' ένα δάκρυ μου θολό  
τά μάτια τους φιλω.

Πάει έφυγε τὸ τραίνο  
έφυγες κι έσύ  
σταλαγματιά χρυσή  
σταλαγματιά χρυσή.  
Πάει χάθηκε τὸ τραίνο  
χάθηκες κι έσύ  
σέ γαλανό νησί  
σέ γαλανό νησί.

Πήρες άπ' τὸ καλοκαίρι  
στὸ μικρό σου χέρι  
τὸ χαμηλό τ' άστέρι  
καί πήγες σ' άλλη γῆ.  
Μ' όνειρα κι έγὼ πηγαίνω  
νά σέ περιμένω  
νερό σταματημένο  
σέ δροσερή πηγῆ.

Πάει έφυγε τὸ τραίνο  
έφυγες κι έσύ.



### THE TRAIN'S LEFT

The North Star fades  
climbing high  
and a river of light  
flows through the sky.

The children sleeping still  
beneath a pomegranate tree  
and with a misty tear  
I kiss their closed eyes.

The train's left  
you've left too  
droplet of gold  
droplet of gold.  
The train's gone  
you've gone too  
to an isle of blue  
to an isle of blue.

You took from summer  
in your tiny hand  
the lowest star  
and went to another land.  
I'm going too with dreams  
to wait for you  
still water  
in a cool spring.

The train's left  
you've left too.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΚΑΛΥΜΝΙΩΤΙΚΟ

Τώρα πού πᾶς στήν ξενιτιά  
πουλί θά γίνω τοῦ νοτιᾶ  
γρήγορα νά σ' ἀνταμώσω  
γιά νά σοῦ φέρω τὸ σταυρὸ  
πού μοῦ παράγγειλες νά βρῶ  
δαχτυλίδι νά σοῦ δώσω.

Ἄντρα κι ἀφέντη μου ἔχε γειὰ  
νά ἔναι μαζί σου ἡ Παναγιά—  
κι ἅμα ῥθεῖ τὸ καλοκαίρι  
θά ἔχω κρεμάσει φυλαχτὸ  
στό παραθύρι τ' ἀνοιχτὸ  
τὴν καρδιά μου σὰν ἀστέρι.

Εἴσουν κυπαρίσσι  
στήν αὐλή  
ἀγαπημένο.  
Ποιὸς θά μοῦ χαρίσει  
τὸ φιλι πού περιμένω.  
Στ' ὄμορφο ἀκρογιάλι  
καρτερῶ νά μοῦ ῥθεῖς πάλι  
σὰ μικρὸ χαρούμενο πουλί.

### SONG OF KALYMNOS

Now you're off to foreign lands  
I'll become a bird of the South  
to come before you quickly  
bringing you the cross  
you asked me to find  
and the ring I have to give you.

Farewell husband and master  
may the Virgin go with you—  
and when summer comes  
as a charm I'll have hung  
my heart like a star  
at the open window.

You were a cypress  
by the house  
and cherished.  
Who will give me now  
the kiss that I await.  
On the lovely seashore  
I long for your return  
like a tiny joyous bird.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΤΟ ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΕΙΡΗΝΑΣ**

Μὲ τ' ἄσπρο μου μαντήλι  
θὰ σ' ἀποχαιρετήσω  
καὶ γιὰ νὰ μοῦ ῥθεις πίσω  
στήν ἐκκλησιὰ θὰ μπῶ.

Θ' ἀνάψω τὸ καντήλι  
καὶ τὸ κερί θὰ σθήσω  
τὰ μάτια μου θὰ κλείσω  
καὶ θὰ σ' ὀνειρευτῶ.

Εἶχα τὰ δυό σου χεῖλη  
μὲ τὰ δικά μου ταίρι  
τοῦ γυρισμοῦ τ' ἀστέρι  
μὴν παίρνεις ἀπὸ δῶ.

Σοῦ χάρισα κοχύλι  
νὰ τὸ κρατᾷς στὸ χέρι  
ὥς τ' ἄλλο καλοκαίρι  
ποὺ θὰ σέ ξαναδῶ.

Γιατί ᾽σαι λυπημένο  
καὶ δὲ μιλάς κι ἐσύ  
πουλὶ ταξιδεμένο  
σὲ μακρινὸ νησί;

### THE SIREN'S SONG

With my white kerchief  
I'll bid you farewell  
and so you'll return  
I'll go off to church.

I'll light the oil lamp  
blow out the candle  
I'll close my eyes  
and dream of you.

I had your two lips  
matched with my own  
don't take from here  
homecoming's star.

I gave you a conch  
to hold in your hand  
till next year's summer  
when I'll see you again.

Why are you so sad  
you too don't speak  
bird on a journey  
to a distant isle?

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΧΑΡΤΙΝΟ ΤΟ ΦΕΓΓΑΡΑΚΙ**

Θά φέρει ἡ θάλασσα πουλιὰ  
κι ἄστρα χρυσὰ τ' ἀγέρι  
νά σοῦ χαϊδεύουν τὰ μαλλιά  
νά σοῦ φιλοῦν τὸ χέρι.

Χάρτινο τὸ φεγγαράκι  
ψεύτικη ἡ ἀκρογιαλιά  
ἂν μὲ πίστευες λιγάκι  
θά 'ταν ὅλα ἀληθινά.

Δίχως τὴ δική σου ἀγάπη  
γρήγορα περνάει ὁ καιρὸς  
δίχως τὴ δική σου ἀγάπη  
εἶν' ὁ κόσμος πρὶ μικρός.

Χάρτινο τὸ φεγγαράκι  
ψεύτικη ἡ ἀκρογιαλιά  
ἂν μὲ πίστευες λιγάκι  
θά 'ταν ὅλα ἀληθινά.

### PAPER MOON

The sea will bring birds  
and the wind stars of gold  
to lovingly caress your hair  
to gently kiss your hand.

A moon made of paper  
a seashore that's unreal  
if you believed me a little  
it would all come true.

Without your special love  
time passes all too fast  
without your special love  
the world is so much smaller.

A moon made of paper  
a seashore that's unreal  
if you believed me a little  
it would all come true.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΜΙΑ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΜΑΡΤΗ

Μιά Κυριακή τοῦ Μάρτη  
καὶ μιὰ Σαρακοστή  
ἔσύ 'σουν στὸ κατάρτι  
κι ἐγὼ στήν κουπαστή.

Κρατούσαμε τὸ δάκρυ  
στά ματοτσίνορα  
γιὰ μᾶς δὲν εἶχαν ἄκρη  
τῆς γῆς τὰ σύνορα.

Μιά Κυριακή τοῦ Μάρτη  
καὶ μιὰ Σαρακοστή  
κρεμάσαμε στὸ χάρτη  
μιὰ κόκκινη κλωστή.

Καὶ δίπλα στὸ τιμόνι  
ἔταν γυρίσαμε  
τὸ πρῶτο χελιδόνι  
καλωσορίσαμε.

Δὲ σοῦ 'στείλα τὸ μῆλο  
καὶ σ' ἔχασα ἀπὸ φίλο  
μὰ μ' ἓνα πορτοκάλι  
θὰ σὲ κερδίσω πάλι.

Φίλα με τῆς καρδιᾶς μου καρaboκύρη  
νὰ ξαναπιῶ τὸν ἥλιο σ' ἓνα ποτήρι.



## ONE SUNDAY IN MARCH

One Sunday in March  
and during Lent  
you were on the mast  
and I on the ship's deck.

We kept the tears  
on our eyelashes  
for us the earth's boundaries  
had no end.

One Sunday in March  
and during Lent  
we hung on the map  
a piece of red thread.

And when we returned  
we welcomed  
the first swallow  
by the helm.

I didn't send you an apple  
and so I lost you as a friend  
but now with an orange  
I'll win you back again.

Captain of my heart, kiss me  
so that I may drink the sun  
from a glass again.

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΤΟ ΟΝΕΙΡΟ ΚΑΠΝΟΣ

Ἔσπειρα στὸν κῆπο σου χορτάρι  
νά ῥχονται τὸ βράδυ τὰ πουλιά—  
πές μου ποῖο φεγγάρι σ' ἔχει πάρει  
κι ἄδειασε τοῦ κόσμου ἡ ἀγκαλιά.

Στῆς νύχτας τὸ μπαλκόνι  
παγώνει ὁ οὐρανὸς  
εἶναι ἡ ἀγάπη σκόνη  
καὶ τ' ὄνειρο καπνός.

Κύλησαν τὰ νιάτα σὰν ποτάμι  
ἔγινε ὁ καιρὸς ἀνηφοριά—  
εἴμouna στὸν ἄνεμο καλάμι  
εἴsouna στὴ μπόρα λυγαριά.

Στῆς νύχτας τὸ μπαλκόνι  
παγώνει ὁ οὐρανὸς  
εἶναι ἡ ἀγάπη σκόνη  
καὶ τ' ὄνειρο καπνός.

### DREAMS OF SMOKE

I sowed seeds in your garden  
so birds would come at night—  
which moon has taken you, tell me  
and emptied the world's embrace.

On the balcony of night  
the sky turns to ice  
love becomes dust  
dreams a wisp of smoke.

Youth flowed by like a river  
time proved an uphill climb—  
I was a reed in the wind  
you a willow in the storm.

On the balcony of night  
the sky turns to ice  
love becomes dust  
dreams a wisp of smoke.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΑΓΑΠΗ ΜΕΣΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΑΡΔΙΑ

Ένα δειλινό  
μές στ' ακροθαλάσσι  
σάν τόν ναυαγό  
ἦρθα κι ἐγώ.  
ἦρθα κι ἐγώ.

Μοῦ ἴδωσες νερό  
σ' ἀσημένιο τάσι  
γιὰ νὰ δροσιστῶ  
σ' εὐχαριστῶ  
σ' εὐχαριστῶ.

Ἀγάπη μέσα στήν καρδιά  
φουρτουνιασμένη λαγκαδιά  
κάποια θραδιά πλημμύριες  
καί μᾶς ξεκλήριες.

Πάψε νὰ ζητᾷς  
ὅλη τήν ἀλήθεια  
τ' εἶν' ὁ ἔρωτας  
μὴ μέ ρωτᾷς  
μὴ μέ ρωτᾷς.

Ψάξε νὰ τῇ θρεῖς  
μές στὰ παραμύθια  
τώρα δέν μπορεῖς  
εἶναι νωρίς.  
εἶναι νωρίς.

Ἀγάπη μέσα στήν καρδιά  
φουρτουνιασμένη λαγκαδιά  
κάποια θραδιά πλημμύριες  
καί μᾶς ξεκλήριες.

## LOVE DEEP IN THE HEART

One afternoon  
at the seashore  
as if shipwrecked  
I arrived  
I arrived.

You gave me water  
in a silver cup  
to cool myself  
I thank you  
I thank you.

Love deep in the heart  
like a stormy ravine  
one evening  
you overflowed  
destroying us.

Stop searching  
for the whole truth  
what love is  
ask me not  
ask me not.

Look for it  
in the fairytales  
now you cannot  
it's too early  
it's too early.

Love deep in the heart  
like a stormy ravine  
one evening  
you overflowed  
destroying us.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

## EN SIRIO HAY NINOS

Στὸ Σείριο ὑπάρχουνε παιδιὰ  
ποτὲ δὲ θάλαν ἔγνοια στὴν καρδιά  
δὲν εἶδανε πολέμους καὶ θανάτους  
καὶ πάνω ἀπ' τὴ γαλάζια τους ποδιά  
φορᾶν τὶς Κυριακὲς τὰ γιορτινὰ τους.

Τὶς νύχτες ποὺ κοιτᾶν τὸν οὐρανὸ  
ἐν' ἄστρο σὰ φτερὸ θαλασσινὸ  
παράξενά παιδεύει τὸ μυαλό τους  
τοὺς φαίνεται καράβι μακρινὸ  
καὶ πᾶνε καὶ ρωτᾶν τὸ δάσκαλό τους.

Αὐτὴ τοὺς λέει παιδιὰ μου εἶναι ἡ γῆ  
τοῦ σύμπαντος ἀρρώστια καὶ πληγὴ:  
ἐκεῖ τραγούδια λένε γράφουν στίχους  
κι ἀκούραστοι τοῦ ὀνείρου κυνηγοὶ  
κεντᾶνε μὲ συνθήματα τοὺς τοίχους.

Στὸ Σείριο δακρύσαν τὰ παιδιὰ  
καὶ θάλαν ἀπὸ κείνη τὴ βραδιά  
μιὰν ἔγνοια στὴ μικρούλα τους καρδιά.

## EN SIRIO HAY NINOS

There are children on the star Sirius  
who have never had a worry in their hearts  
they have never seen war or death.  
On Sundays, over their blue school uniforms  
they wear their festive clothes.

At night, when they look at the sky  
a star like a feather from the sea  
strangely troubles their minds  
it seems like a distant ship  
and they go and ask their teacher.

That, he says, my children is the Earth  
the disease and wound of the universe  
there people sing songs, write verses  
and tirelessly chasing a dream,  
they cover the walls with slogans.

In Sirius the children shed tears  
and ever since that night  
a worry has entered their little hearts.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

**ΕΪΤΑΝ ΤΕΣΣΕΡΑ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ**

Εΐταν τέσσερα παιδιά  
γειά σου γέρο τοῦ Μοριᾶ  
σὰν ἀγρίμι πάλευες  
κι ὄλο τὰ δασκάλευες.

Χελιδόνια καὶ σπαθιά  
στὶς καρδιές τους ἄρμαθιά  
πάνω στὴν Καρύταινα  
μὲ τὸν ἥλιο γείτονα.

Εΐταν τέσσερα παιδιά  
γειά σου γέρο τοῦ Μοριᾶ  
σπίτι δὲν τὰ χώραγε  
κι ὁ καιρὸς προχώραγε.

Χρόνια μαῦρα καὶ πικρὰ  
στά βουνὰ τὰ φαλακρά  
κι ἔτρεχαν τὰ αἵματα  
μέσ' στὰ κλεισορέματα.

Κι ὅταν ἔφτασε ἡ Λαμπρὴ  
στολιστῆκαν σὰ γαμπροὶ  
πίσω τους κι ὁ θάνατος  
καθαλάρης φτερωτός.

Εΐταν τέσσερα παιδιά  
γειά σου γέρο τοῦ Μοριᾶ  
τόπος δὲν τὰ κράταγε  
κι ὁ καιρὸς περπάταγε.

Στράτα στράτα καὶ στρατὶ  
ἔτσι γράφει τὸ χαρτὶ  
πάνω ἀπὸ τ' ἀνάθεμα  
σπείρανε χρυσάνθεμα.



## FOUR YOUNG MEN

There were four young men  
greetings to you old man of Moreas  
you fought like a wild animal  
coaching them endlessly.

Swallows and swords  
in a string over their hearts  
on the heights of Karytena  
with the sun for company.

There were four young men  
greetings to you old man of Moreas  
no house was big enough for them  
and time was marching on.

Dark and bitter years  
on the bare mountains  
blood was being shed  
in streams and glens.

When Easter came  
they'd dress up like bridegrooms  
and death would follow them  
like a winged rider behind them.

There were four young men  
greetings to you old man of Moreas  
no place would hold them on  
and time was marching on.

Path after path  
that's how it's written  
over the curse  
they would plant chrysanthemums

Μὰ σὰν ἄστραψε στή γῇ  
τῶν καιρῶν ἡ προσταγή  
πέσαν τὰ κακόμοιρα  
σὰν κυπαρισσόμηλα.

Εἶταν τέσσερα παιδιά  
πέσ' μας γέρο τοῦ Μοριᾶ  
πέσ' μας ἄν τὰ γνώρισες  
κι ἄν τὰ παρηγόρησες.

But when the command  
came on the land like lightning  
the poor lads dropped  
like cypress cones.

There were four young men  
tell us old man of Moreas  
tell us if you met them  
and if you comforted them.

*translated by George Pilitsis*

### Η ΤΡΕΛΗ ΤΟΥ ΦΕΓΓΑΡΙΟΥ

Ψηλά στοῦ Διγενῆ τ' ἁλώνια  
τίς νύχτες τοῦ καλοκαιριοῦ  
τοῦ κάτω κόσμου τὰ τελώνια  
μέ λέν τρελή τοῦ φεγγαριοῦ.

Μὰ ἐγὼ χρυσόβουλο κρατάω  
ἀπὸ καιροῦς θυζαντινοῦς  
καὶ τ' ἄγρια βάρη πού κοιτάω  
δὲν τὰ χωράει ἀνθρώπου νοῦς.

Ψηλά στοῦ Διγενῆ τὰ κάστρα  
στον τάφο τοῦ παληκαριοῦ  
τὰ νυχτοπούλια κάτω ἀπ' τ' ἄστρα  
μέ λέν τρελή τοῦ φεγγαριοῦ.

Μὰ ἐγὼ χρυσόβουλο κρατάω  
ἀπὸ καιροῦς θυζαντινοῦς  
καὶ τ' ἄγρια βάρη πού κοιτάω  
δὲν τὰ χωράει ἀνθρώπου νοῦς.

## MADWOMAN OF THE MOON

High on Digenis' threshing floors  
on long hot summer nights  
demons of the lower world  
call me madwoman of the moon.

Yet I hold a golden bull  
from Byzantium long ago  
and the wild depths I spy  
are beyond all human ken.

High in Digenis' castles  
on the tomb of the fearless lad  
birds of night beneath the stars  
call me madwoman of the moon.

Yet I hold a golden bull  
from Byzantium long ago  
and the wild depths I spy  
are beyond all human ken.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΦΕΡΤΕ ΜΟΥ ΤΗ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ**

Φέρτε μου τη θάλασσα  
νά την προσκυνήσω  
φέρτε μου τη θάλασσα  
νά προσευχηθῶ.

Ἔθρεψα τὰ σπλάχνα σου  
κύμα πελαγίσιο  
μὲ χιλιάδες μνήματα  
μέσα στὸ βυθό.

Φέρτε μου τη θάλασσα  
νά την τραγουδήσω  
φέρτε μου τὸν ἥλιο της  
γιά νά ζεσταθῶ.

Οἱ νεκρὲς ἀγάπες μου  
δὲν θὰ ῥθοῦνε πίσω  
βάλτε με στὸν κόρφο της  
ν' ἀποκοιμηθῶ.

Φέρτε μου τη θάλασσα  
νά την προσκυνήσω  
φέρτε μου τη θάλασσα  
νά προσευχηθῶ.

### BRING ME THE SEA

Bring me the sea  
to kneel before  
bring me the sea  
and let me pray.

I nourished your bowels  
great ocean wave  
with countless graves  
beneath the deep sea.

Bring me the sea  
to sing of it  
bring me its sun  
to give me warmth.

My long-dead loves  
will never return  
lay me in its bosom  
and let me sleep.

Bring me the sea  
to kneel before  
bring me the sea  
and let me pray.

*translated by David Connolly*

### ΣΕ ΠΟΤΙΣΑ ΡΟΔΟΣΤΑΜΟ

Στὸν ἄλλο κόσμον ποὺ θὰ πᾶς  
κοίτα μὴ γίνεις σύννεφο  
κι ἄστρο πικρὸ τῆς χαρραυγῆς  
καὶ σὲ γνωρίσει ἡ μάνα σου  
ποὺ καρτερεῖ στὴν πόρτα.

Σὲ πότισα ροδόσταμον  
μὲ πότισες φαρμάκι  
τῆς παγωνιᾶς ἀητόπουλο  
τῆς ἐρημιᾶς γεράκι.

Μαχαίρι σοῦ ἴδωσα χρυσὸ  
καὶ τ' ἀσημένιο τάσι μου  
νὰ πιεῖς νερὸ τῆς λησμονιᾶς  
καὶ νὰ χαράξεις ἄλιωτο  
στὴν πέτρα τ' ὄνομά σου.

Σὲ πότισα ροδόσταμον  
μὲ πότισες φαρμάκι  
τῆς παγωνιᾶς ἀητόπουλο  
τῆς ἐρημιᾶς γεράκι.

Πάρε μιὰ θέργα λυγαριά  
μιὰ ρίζα δεντρολίβανο  
καὶ γίνε φεγγαροδροσιὰ  
νὰ πέσεις τὰ μεσάνυχτα  
στὴ διψασμένη αὐλή σου.

Σὲ πότισα ροδόσταμον  
μὲ πότισες φαρμάκι  
τῆς παγωνιᾶς ἀητόπουλο  
τῆς ἐρημιᾶς γεράκι.



## I SPRINKLED YOU WITH ROSEWATER

In the other world you're going  
see you don't become a cloud  
or a bitter star of dawn  
to be seen by your mother  
who's waiting at the door.

I sprinkled you with rosewater  
you sprinkled me with poison  
eaglet of the bitter cold  
hawk of the wilderness.

I gave you a knife of gold  
and my silver goblet too  
to drink from Lethe's waters  
and carve your name  
imperishable in stone.

I sprinkled you with rosewater  
you sprinkled me with poison  
eaglet of the bitter cold  
hawk of the wilderness.

Take with you a willow branch  
a root of rosemary  
become the dew of moonlit nights  
and settle in the midnight hours  
on your own parched leafy yard.

I sprinkled you with rosewater  
you sprinkled me with poison  
eaglet of the bitter cold  
hawk of the wilderness.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΒΑΛΕ ΤΟΝ ΗΛΙΟ ΣΥΝΟΡΟ**

Ἐκεῖ ποῦ πᾶς  
ἄγóri πικραμένο  
θάλε τὸν ἥλιο σύνορο  
κι ὅταν χαθεῖ  
τὰ μάτια σου ἄνοιχτα  
καὶ τὰ μεσάνυχτα  
χτύπα τὴν πόρτα τὴν κλειστή.

Ἐκεῖ ποῦ πᾶς  
ἄγóri πικραμένο  
κάμε τὸ Χάρο φίλο σου  
καὶ στ' ἄλογο καθάλα  
σκίσε θουνά  
κι ἔλα ξανά  
σὰ φεγγαριοῦ ψιχάλα.

## MAKE THE SUN YOUR BOUNDARY

In the place you're going  
embittered boy  
make the sun your boundary  
and when it fades away  
open up your eyes  
and knock on the closed door  
at midnight.

In the place you're going  
embittered boy  
make death your friend  
and riding on the horse  
cross mountains  
and come back again  
like a sprinkle of moon drops.

*translated by George Pilitsis*

**Η ΠΛΑΤΥΤΕΡΑ ΤΩΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΩΝ**

Ἐγὼ σ' ἀνάστησα μὲ χῶμα καὶ νερὸ  
χελιδονάκι νά 'σαι μὰ κι ἀγρίμι  
νά σ' ἔχω ἀλφαθητάρι στὸν καιρὸ  
κι ἀνέσπερο καντήλι μές στή μνήμη.

Μὰ ἐσὺ γυρεύοντας τοῦ ὀνείρου τὴν πηγὴ  
κοντὰ στῶν οὐρανῶν τὴν Πλατυτέρα  
βρῆκες φτερὰ κι ἀρνήθηκες τὴ γῇ  
τὴ σκοτεινὴ τὴν πρώτη μας μητέρα.

## HOLY MOTHER OF THE SKIES

I raised you with earth and water  
to be a swallow and wild beast too  
so I might have you an ABC forever  
and a never-fading lamp in memory.

Yet searching for the fount of dreams  
beside the Holy Mother of the skies  
you found wings and renounced the earth  
our dark and primal mother.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΑΣΠΡΗ ΜΕΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΓΙΑ ΜΑΣ**

Θά ποτίσω  
μ' ένα δάκρυ μου άρμυρό  
τόν καιρό  
πικρά  
καλοκαίρια  
έμαθα κοντά σου νά περνῶ  
νεκρά  
περιστέρια  
γέμισε ή αύγή τόν ούρανό.

Θά γυρίσω  
λυπημένη Παναγιά  
έχε γειά  
μήν κλαῖς  
τό μαράζι  
μάθε φυλαχτό νά μήν κρεμάς  
νά λές  
δέν πειράζει  
θά 'ρθει άσπρη μέρα και για μάς.

## BETTER DAYS FOR US

I'll water  
time  
with a salt tear  
bitter  
summers  
near you I came to know  
dead  
doves  
filled the dawn sky.

I'll return  
farewell  
sad Holy Virgin  
don't weep  
or wear heartache  
like a lucky charm  
just say  
never mind  
better days will come for us.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΕΙΣΟΥΝ ΠΑΙΔΙ ΣΑΝ ΤΟ ΧΡΙΣΤΟ

Ἐμπαινες κι ἔλαμπε τὸ σπίτι  
σάν τὸ τριφύλλι τ' ἀνοιχτό  
κι εἶχες τὸ φῶς τοῦ Ἀποσπερίτη  
στ' ἅγια σου μάτια φυλαχτό.

Ἄφηνες πάνω στὸ τραπέζι  
γάλα καὶ μέλι καὶ ψωμί  
κι ἔβλεπα τ' ὄνειρο νὰ παίζει  
στὸ πελαγίσιο σου κορμί.

Κύμα καὶ θότσαλο κι ἄρμύρα  
καὶ καλοκαίρι μου ζεστό  
οὔτ' ἓνα δάκρυ σου δέν πῆρα  
στὴν παγωνιά γιὰ νὰ λουστώ.

Σ' εὐχαριστῶ σ' εὐχαριστῶ  
εἴσουν παιδί σάν τὸ Χριστό.



## YOU WERE A CHILD LIKE CHRIST

You entered and the house shone  
like the open leaves of clover  
and you had the Hesperus' light  
enclosed in your saintly eyes.

On the table you left behind  
bread and milk and honey  
and I watched the dream playing  
in your pelagian body.

Wave and pebble and salt spray  
and hot summer days that were mine  
not one of your tears did I take  
to bathe in the bitter cold.

Thankyou again thankyou  
you were a child like Christ.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΣΤΟΝ ΚΑΤΩ ΔΡΟΜΟ**

Στὸν κάτω δρόμο  
τώρα ποὺ νυχτώνει  
τὸ χελιδόνι  
διπλώνει τὰ φτερά.  
Στὸν κάτω δρόμο  
βγήκαν οἱ γειτόνοι  
σ' ἓνα μπαλκόνι  
νὰ δοῦν τὴ συμφορά.

Φέραν τὸ Ρήγα τὸν Ἀητὸ τὸ Διγενή  
κι εἶταν ἡ ὄψη του χλωμὴ σὰν τὸ πανί.

Στὸν κάτω δρόμο  
τώρα ποὺ βραδιάζει  
πέφτει τ' ἀγιάζι  
στοῦ κήπου τὰ κλαδιά.  
Στὸν κάτω δρόμο  
πίσω ἀπ' τὸ περβάζι  
κάποιος οὐρλιάζει  
καὶ σκίζεται ἡ καρδιά.

Φέραν τὸν Ἀδωνι τὸ Λίνο τὸ Χριστὸ  
κι εἶταν ἀκόμα τὸ κορμάκι του ζεστό.

## ON THE LOWER ROAD

On the lower road  
now as night falls  
the tiny swallow  
folds its wings.

On the lower road  
neighbours appear  
on balconies  
to see the tragedy.

They brought Rigas the Eagle Digenis  
and his face was pale like a sheet.

On the lower road  
now as evening falls  
hoarfrost covers  
the garden's branches.

On the lower road  
behind the windowframe  
someone screams out  
rending the heart.

They brought Adonis Linus Christ  
and his fair body was still warm.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ

Στὸ περιβολάκι  
μπρὸς στὴν ἐκκλησιά  
ἔμοιαζες πουλάκι  
σ' ἄγρια φυλλωσιά.  
Δυόσμο κι ἁγιοκέρι  
κράταγες στὸ χέρι  
κι ἔλεγες: «Ραββὶ  
σῶσε μας καὶ πάλι!».  
Εἶτανε Μεγάλη  
Παρασκευή.

Νύχτες κι ἄλλες νύχτες  
γύρισε ἡ χρονιά  
τοῦ πολέμου οἱ δείχτες  
σήμαναν ἐννιά.  
Κι εἶδαμε νὰ θγαίνει  
μ' ὄψη κολασμένη  
μέσ' ἀπ' τὸ κλουβὶ  
τὸ φριχτὸ τσακάλι.  
Εἶτανε Μεγάλη  
Παρασκευή.

Τὰ παιδιὰ φευγάτα  
ἔρμα τὰ χωριά  
πάλευαν τὰ νιάτα  
γιὰ τὴ λευτεριά.  
Κι ὅταν ἦρθα λίγο  
νὰ σὲ δῶ πρὶν φύγω  
ἐκλαιγες θουθὴ  
μὲ σκυφτὸ κεφάλι.  
Εἶτανε Μεγάλη  
Παρασκευή.

## HOLY FRIDAY

In the little garden  
before the church  
you looked like a tiny bird  
in wild foliage.  
Holding in your hand  
spearmint and a holy candle  
you were saying "Lord  
save us again."  
It was Holy  
Friday.

The year unfolded  
night after night  
the clock of war  
struck nine.  
We saw the horrible jackal  
come out of the cage  
with a fierce look.  
It was Holy  
Friday.

The young men gone  
the villages deserted  
the young were fighting  
for freedom.  
Before leaving  
I came to see you  
you were silently weeping  
bowing your head.  
It was Holy  
Friday.

*translated by Margaret Polis*



## THE TIME HAS COME, THE TIME HAS COME

You who had worry as your pillow  
and as your mattress a life of loneliness  
you who wouldn't raise your head for years  
and never felt kindness from anyone...

The time has come, the time has come  
  over the wound of the world  
The time has come, the time has come  
  to start rebuilding this earth.

You my brothers who never uttered a word  
and never saw a feast's daylight in your home  
you whose insides were flooded with sorrow  
and who were seen by others as blank sheets...

The time has come, the time has come  
  over the wound of the world  
The time has come, the time has come  
  to start rebuilding this earth.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

### Ο ΜΑΥΡΟΣ ΗΛΙΟΣ

Μαῦρος ὁ ἥλιος σήμερα  
κι ἡ ξαστεριά μιὰ χίμαιρα  
μὰ θρῆκα θράχο καὶ γιαλὸ  
στὸν κόσμον τὸν ἀμαρτωλὸ  
κι ἔριξα τὰ κρίματα  
σὲ σαράντα κύματα.

Ἄμοιρο ἀδέρφι σοῦ ἔφερα  
τῆς λευτεριᾶς τὰ νούφαρα  
καὶ μὲ τὴν πίκρα στὴ ματιὰ  
μάζεψα τ' ἅγια σου σκουτιὰ  
κι ἔπλυνα τὰ αἵματα  
σὲ σαράντα ρέματα.

Μαῦρος ὁ ἥλιος σήμερα  
κι εἶναι θαριὰ τὰ σήμαντρα  
μὰ ἐγὼ στοῦ πόνου τὴν πλαγιὰ  
προσκύνησα τὴν Παναγιὰ  
κι ἔκλαψα τὰ θύματα  
σὲ σαράντα μνήματα.



**THE BLACK SUN**

The sun is black today  
and fair skies a chimera  
yet I found rock and shore  
in this sinful world  
and hurled the wrongs  
into forty waves.

Poor brother I brought you  
freedom's water-lilies  
and with a bitter gaze  
I gathered your holy clothes  
and washed away the blood  
in forty streams.

The sun is black today  
and church bells toll  
yet on suffering's slopes  
I knelt before the Virgin  
and wept for the victims  
beside forty graves.

*translated by David Connolly*

## Η ΛΙΟΣΤΡΑ

Ἡ πέτρα πίνει τὸ νερὸ  
καὶ τὸ νερὸ τὴν πέτρα  
μὰ ἐσὺ στὸ δύσκολο καιρὸ  
τὸ ριζικὸ σου μέτρα.

Κι ἂν δεῖς σέ γῆ καὶ σ' οὐρανὸ  
νὰ πνίγεται τὸ δίκιο  
κάμε κριτὴ παντοτινὸ  
τὸ χέρι σου τ' ἀντρίκιο.

Τότε θὰ βγοῦν στὸν Ἄδη σου  
λουλούδια τοῦ Παράδεισου.

Ο ἥλιος πίνει τὴ φωτιά  
καὶ ἡ φωτιά τὸν ἥλιο  
μὰ ἐσὺ μ' ἀητίσια τὴ ματιά  
κάμε τὴ γῆ βασίλειο.

Κι ἂν δεῖς στοῦ κόσμου τὴ βουή  
νὰ τραγουδάει τὸ αἷμα  
πάρε γιὰ λιόστρα τὴ ζωὴ  
καὶ σὰ θεριὸ πολέμα.

Τότε θὰ βγοῦν στὸν Ἄδη σου  
λουλούδια τοῦ Παράδεισου.

## THE ARENA

The rock drinks water  
and water the rock  
but in difficult times  
consider your lot.

And if in earth and heaven  
you see justice stifled  
make an eternal judge  
of your good brave arm.

Then your Hell will fill  
with flowers of Paradise.

The sun drinks fire  
and fire the sun  
but with an eagle's gaze  
make the earth your realm.

And if in the world's din  
you see blood singing out  
take life as your arena  
and fight like a lion.

Then your Hell will fill  
with flowers of Paradise.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΑΝΩΝΥΜΟΝ

Στὴν ἀκροθαλασσιᾶ  
θὰ χτίσω ἐκκλησιᾶ  
καὶ πρὶν εἰκόνισμα σοῦ στήσω  
θὰ ῥθῶ μὲ τὴ δροσιᾶ  
στὴν πόρτα σου  
τὰ δάκρυα μου ν' ἀφήσω.

Στάλα στάλα τὸ μολύβι πῶς ἐχώρεσε  
στῆς καρδιᾶς τὴν ἅγια φλέβα καὶ μᾶς χώρισε;

Κοιμήσου βασιλιᾶ  
στῆς γῆς τὴν ἀγκαλιᾶ  
καὶ πρὶν σημάνει τὸ ρολοὶ  
θ' ἀνέβω τὰ σκαλιᾶ  
στὴν πόρτα σου  
νὰ πιάσω μοιρολόι.

Στάλα στάλα τὸ μολύβι πῶς ἐχώρεσε  
στῆς καρδιᾶς τὴν ἅγια φλέβα καὶ μᾶς χώρισε;

## ANONYMON

I will build a church  
at the seashore  
and before hanging an icon of you  
I will come with the morning dew  
to leave my tears  
at your door.

Drop by drop, how did the lead  
enter the heart's holy vein to part us?

Sleep well, my king  
at the bosom of the earth  
and before the clock strikes  
I will climb the stairs  
to sing a dirge  
at your door.

Drop by drop, how did the lead  
enter the heart's holy vein to part us?

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

**ΕΜΕΙΣ ΠΟΥ ΜΕΙΝΑΜΕ**

Ἐμεῖς ποὺ μέيناμε στὸ χῶμα τὸ σκληρὸ  
γιὰ τοὺς νεκροὺς θ' ἀνάψουμε λιθάνι  
κι ὅταν χαθεῖ μακριὰ τὸ καραθάνι  
τοῦ Χάρου τοῦ μεγάλου πεχλιθάνη  
στὴ μνήμη τους θὰ στήσουμε χορό.

Ἐμεῖς ποὺ μέيناμε θὰ τρῶμε τὸ πρωὶ  
μιὰ φέτα ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου τὸ καρθέλι  
μέλι χρυσὸ σ' ἀτρύγητο κουθέλι  
καὶ δίχως πιὰ τοῦ φόβου τὸ τριθέλι  
μπροστὰ θὰ προχωρᾶμε στὴ ζωή.

Ἐμεῖς ποὺ μέيناμε θὰ θυγῶμε μιὰ θραδιά  
στὴν ἐρημιὰ νὰ σπείρουμε χορτάρι  
καὶ πρὶν γιὰ πάντα ἢ νύχτα νὰ μᾶς πάρει  
θὰ κάνουμε τὴ γῇ προσκυνητάρι  
καὶ κούνια γιὰ τ' ἀγέννητα παιδιά.

## WE WHO HAVE REMAINED

We who have remained on this harsh soil  
will burn incense for the dead  
and when the caravan of the great  
swashbuckler Death disappears in the distance  
we'll set up a dance in their memory.

We who have remained will have  
a slice of the sun's bread in the morning and  
golden honey from unharvested honeycombs  
and with no more fear  
we'll move on in life.

We who have remained will go out  
at night to sow grass seeds in the wasteland  
and before night takes us for ever  
we'll turn this land into a shrine  
a cradle for the unborn children.

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΤΟ ΜΕΘΥΣΜΕΝΟ ΚΑΡΑΒΙ

Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπῶ  
ἀπόψε θὰ μπῶ  
στὸ μαῦρο μεθυσμένο σου καράβι  
μακριὰ ν' ἀνοιχτῶ  
σὲ κύκλο φριχτὸ  
ποὺ ὁ κόσμος δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ καταλάβει.

Ἀγγέλου γιασεμιὰ  
σκόρπισες μέσα στὴ βρωμιὰ  
κληρονομιὰ  
γιά μᾶς  
κι ἔσὺ παντοτινὰ  
σὲ σταυροδρόμια σκοτεινὰ  
τὸ σατανὰ  
πολεμᾶς.

Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπῶ  
ἀπόψε θὰ μπῶ  
στὸ μαῦρο μεθυσμένο σου καράβι  
μακριὰ ν' ἀνοιχτῶ  
σὲ κύκλο φριχτὸ  
ποὺ ὁ κόσμος δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ καταλάβει.

Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπῶ  
τὸ βράδυ θαμπὸ  
κι ἡ πόρτα τοῦ παράδεισου κλεισμένη  
κατάρρα κι ὀργή  
μοιράζουν τὴ γῆ  
καὶ χέρι-χέρι πᾶν οἱ κολασμένοι.



## THE DRUNKEN BOAT

Arthur Rimbaud  
tonight I'll come aboard  
your black drunken boat  
and I'll sail far away  
to a horrible circle  
that people do not understand.

Angelic jasmine  
you've scattered in the dirt  
a heritage  
for us  
and you at dark crossroads  
forever  
fight  
with Satan.

Arthur Rimbaud  
tonight I'll come aboard  
your black drunken boat  
and I'll sail far away  
to a horrible circle  
that people do not understand.

Arthur Rimbaud  
dim is the night  
and closed is the gate of heaven  
wrath and fury  
divide the earth  
and the damned walk hand-in-hand.

Ἄγγελου γιασεμιά  
σκόρπισες μέσα στή θρωμιά  
κληρονομιά  
γιά μᾶς  
κι ἐσύ παντοτινά  
σέ σταυροδρόμια σκοτεινά  
τὸ σατανά  
πολεμᾶς.

Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπώ  
τὸ θράδυ θαμπό  
κι ἡ πόρτα τοῦ παράδεισου κλεισμένη  
κατάρρα κι ὄργη  
μοιράζουν τὴ γῆ  
καὶ χέρι-χέρι πᾶν οἱ κολασμένοι.

Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπώ  
Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπώ  
θὰ μπῶ στὸ μεθυσμένο σου καράβι  
Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπώ  
Ἄρθοῦρε Ρεμπώ  
νὰ δῶ ποιά σπίθα σώθηκε κι ἀνάθει.

Angelic jasmine  
you've scattered in the dirt  
a heritage  
for us  
and you at dark crossroads  
forever  
fight  
with Satan.

Arthur Rimbaud  
dim is the night  
and closed is the gate of heaven  
wrath and fury  
divide the earth  
and the damned walk hand-in-hand.

Arthur Rimbaud  
Arthur Rimbaud  
I'll come aboard your drunken boat  
Arthur Rimbaud  
Arthur Rimbaud  
to see which spark survived still burning.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

## ΤΣΑΜΙΚΟΣ

Στά κακοτράχαλα τὰ θουνά  
μέ τὸ σουραύλι καὶ τὸ ζουρνά  
πάνω στὴν πέτρα τὴν ἁγιασμένη  
χορεύουν τώρα τρεῖς ἀντρειωμένοι—  
ὁ Νικηφόρος κι ὁ Διγενής  
κι ὁ γιὸς τῆς ᾽Αννας τῆς Κομνηνῆς.

Δικὴ τους εἶναι μιὰ χούφτα γῆς  
μὰ ἐσὺ Χριστέ μου τοὺς εὐλογεῖς  
γιὰ νὰ γλυτώσουν αὐτὴ τὴ φλούδα  
ἅπ' τὸ τσακάλι καὶ τὴν ἀρκούδα—  
δὲς πῶς χορεύει ὁ Νικηταρᾶς  
κι ἀηδόνι γίνεται ὁ ταμπουράς.

Ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑπείρο στὸ Μοριά  
κι ἅπ' τὸ σκοτάδι στὴ λευτεριά  
τὸ πανηγύρι κρατάει χρόνια  
στὰ μαρμαρένια τοῦ Χάρου ἀλώνια—  
κριτῆς κι ἀφέντης εἶν' ὁ Θεὸς  
καὶ δραγουμάνος τοῦ ὁ λαός.

TSAMIKOS<sup>1</sup>

Up on the rough mountains  
with a flute and a clarinet  
upon the sacred rock  
three brave men dance  
Nikiforos and Digenis<sup>2</sup>  
and the son of Anna the Komnini.<sup>3</sup>

Theirs is only a handful of earth  
but you, my Christ have blessed them  
to save this tiny piece of land  
from the jackal and the bear—  
look how Nikitaras<sup>4</sup> dances  
and the lute becomes a nightingale.

From up in Epirus down to Moreas  
and from darkness into freedom  
the festivities go on for years  
on death's marble threshing floors  
judge and master is the Lord  
and the people his dragoman.<sup>5</sup>

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

<sup>1</sup>Tsamikos: A folk dance, performed usually by men and expressing a sense of bravery.

<sup>2</sup>Nikiforos (Fokas): One of the greatest Emperors of Byzantium (963-969 A.D.); he secured the borders of the empire, especially of Asia Minor against Arab invasions and recaptured Cyprus and Crete.

Digenis (Akritas): the Akrites (from the word ἄκρη=border) were special troops charged with the crucial role of guarding the borders of the Byzantine Empire; Digenis was a legendary frontiersman of extraordinary strength and courage, a hero of hundreds of folk songs.

<sup>3</sup>Anna Komnini: daughter of Byzantine Emperor Alexios the 1st Komnenos (1081-1118 A.D.).

<sup>4</sup>Nikitaras: hero of the Greek War of Independence.

<sup>5</sup>Dragoman: interpreter.

## ΜΕΛΑΓΧΟΛΙΚΟ ΕΜΒΑΤΗΡΙΟ

Ξέσπασε μπόρα κι εΐτανε πρωί  
στή γῇ τὴν κολασμένη  
ἄλλοι στὰ χέρια πῆραν τὴ ζωὴ  
κι ἄλλοι ἔναι προδομένοι.

Τὶ μᾶς ἔμεινε Νικήτα  
γύρνα πίσω σου καὶ κοίτα  
χιλιάδες χρόνια πάνω στὸν τροχὸ  
ποιὸς θυμᾶται πές μου τὸ φτωχό.  
Τὶ μᾶς ἔμεινε Λευτέρη  
ποῦ ἔναι τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ χέρι  
νὰ κάψει τὸ φονιὰ καὶ τὸ ληστή  
καὶ καινούργιος κόσμος νὰ χτιστεῖ.

Ἔπαψε πιά τ' ἀηδόνι νὰ λαλεῖ  
στῆς λεμονιάς τὰ φύλλα  
ἄλλοι τὴ στράτα πῆραν τὴν καλὴ  
κι ἄλλοι τὴν κατρακύλα.

Τὶ μᾶς ἔμεινε Νικήτα  
γύρνα πίσω σου καὶ κοίτα  
χιλιάδες χρόνια πάνω στὸν τροχὸ  
ποιὸς θυμᾶται πές μου τὸ φτωχό.  
Τί μᾶς ἔμεινε Λευτέρη  
ποῦ ἔναι τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ χέρι  
νὰ κάψει τὸ φονιὰ καὶ τὸ ληστή  
καὶ καινούργιος κόσμος νὰ χτιστεῖ.

## MELANCHOLY MARCH

A storm broke out in the morning  
on this hellish earth  
some took life in their hands  
while others were betrayed.

What's left for us Nikita\*  
turn round and take a look  
thousands of years on the torture wheel  
tell me who remembers the poor.  
What's left for us Lefteri  
where is the hand of God  
to burn the killer and the thief  
and let a new world be built.

The nightingale stopped singing  
in the leaves of the lemon-tree  
some took the right path  
while others tumbled down.

What's left for us Nikita  
turn round and take a look  
thousands of years on the torture wheel  
tell me who remembers the poor.  
What's left for us Lefteri  
where is the hand of God  
to burn the killer and the thief  
and let a new world be built.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

\*Two names the poet uses here, "Nikitas" and "Lefteris" have symbolic connotations: Nikitas (νίκη=victory) suggests a winner who has no consideration for the poor, while Lefteris (ἐλευθερία=freedom) is someone who struggles to free the oppressed.

## ΤΟ ΑΣΤΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΒΟΡΙΑ

Τ' ἀστέρι τοῦ βοριᾶ  
θὰ φέρει ξαστεριά  
μὰ πρὶν φανεῖ μέσ' ἀπ' τὸ πέλαγο πανὶ  
θὰ γίνω κύμα καὶ φωτιά  
νὰ σ' ἀγκαλιάσω ξενιτιά.  
Κι ἐσὺ χαμένη μου πατρίδα μακρινή  
θὰ μείνεις χάδι καὶ πληγὴ  
σὰν ξημερώσει σ' ἄλλη γῆ.

Τώρα πετῶ γιὰ τῆς ζωῆς τὸ πανηγύρι  
τώρα πετῶ γιὰ τῆς χαρᾶς μου τὴ γιορτῇ.

Φεγγάρια μου παλιά  
καινούργια μου πουλιά  
διώχτε τὸν ἥλιο καὶ τὴ μέρα ἀπ' τὸ θουνὸ  
γιὰ νὰ με δεῖτε νὰ περνῶ  
σὰν ἀστραπὴ στὸν οὐρανό.



## THE NORTH STAR

The North Star  
will bring fair skies  
but before a sail is seen on the seas  
I'll become water and fire  
to embrace you foreign lands.  
And distant homeland left behind  
you'll always be caress and wound  
when day breaks on another shore.

Now I am bound for life's celebration  
now I am bound for my festival of joy.

My bygone moons  
my new-found birds  
chase from the mountain sun and day  
and you'll see me pass by  
like lightning in the sky.

*translated by David Connolly*

### Ο ΕΦΙΑΛΤΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΕΡΣΕΦΟΝΗΣ

Ἐκεῖ πού φύτρωνε φλισκούνι κι ἄγρια μέντα  
κι ἔβγαζε ἡ γῆ τὸ πρῶτο της κυκλάμινο  
τώρα χωριάτες παζαρεύουν τὰ τσιμέντα  
καὶ τὰ πουλιὰ πέφτουν νεκρὰ στὴν ὑψικάμινο.

Ἐκεῖ πού σμίγανε τὰ χέρια τους οἱ μύστες  
εὐλαθικὰ πρὶν μποῦν στὸ τελεστήριο  
τώρα πετᾶνε τ' ἀποτσιγάρα οἱ τουρίστες  
καὶ τὸ καινούργιο πᾶν νὰ δοῦν διωλιστήριο.

Ἐκεῖ πού ἡ θάλασσα γινόταν εὐλογία  
κι εἶταν εὐχὴ τοῦ κάμπου τὰ θελάσματα  
τώρα καμιόνια κουβαλᾶν στὰ ναυπηγεῖα  
ἄδεια κορμιὰ σιδερικὰ παιδιὰ κι ἐλάσματα.

Κοιμήσου Περσεφόνη  
στὴν ἀγκαλιὰ τῆς γῆς  
στοῦ κόσμου τὸ μπαλκόνι  
ποτέ μὴν ξαναθγεῖς.

### PERSEPHONE'S NIGHTMARE

Where pennyroyal and wild mint once grew  
and the earth pushed up its first cyclamen  
now peasants argue prices for cement  
and birds fall dead into the furnace.

Where once initiates joined hands  
in piety before entering the telesterion  
now tourists throw their cigarette butts  
and go to view the new refinery.

Where the sea was once a blessing  
and the bleating a welcome in the plain  
now in the dockyards lorries carry  
hollow bodies scrap kids and metal sheets.

Sleep Persephone sleep  
in the earth's embrace  
on the world's balcony  
never come out again.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΧΡΗΣΜΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΙΒΥΛΛΑΣ

Ἀπ' τῆς μάνας μου τῇ μήτρα  
ἔχω μάθει ν' ἀγρυπνῶ  
καίω θειάφι μέσ στὴ χύτρα  
καὶ διαθάζω τὸν καπνό.

Τὴν πιστὴ μου κουκουβάγια  
κάθε νύχτα τῇ ρωτῶ  
καὶ μασώντας ἅγια θάγια  
σ' ἄλλα σύνορα πετῶ.

Τὸ παλιό μου τὸ κιτάπι  
ἔχει ξεθωριάσει πιὰ  
ποιὸς θυμᾶται τὴν ἀγάπη  
ποιὸς πιστεύει σ' ἀνθρωπιὰ.

Μὰ ἡ ἀγάπη  
θὰ ξαναζήσει πάλι μὲ τὸν πόνο της  
τὸ γκρέμισμά της πάλι θ' ἀντικρίσει  
θὰ δεῖ νὰ χάνονται ὅλα, κι ὅμως πάντα  
μὲ τὸ σκοτάδι μπρὸς σκοτάδι πίσω της  
πάντα καὶ πάλι πάντα καὶ ξανὰ  
πάντα θὰ ζεῖ καὶ πάντα θὰ ἔναι ἀγάπη.

### THE SIBYL'S ORACLES

From my mother's womb  
I've learned to stay awake  
I burn sulphur in the pot  
and read the smoke and fumes.

My true and faithful owl  
I question every night  
and chewing sacred bay-leaves  
I fly to other shores.

My good and oldest book  
has faded now with use  
who ever thinks of love  
who believes in kindness.

Yet love  
will live again with all its pain  
again face its destruction  
will see all lost, yet always  
with darkness before darkness behind  
always and always again once more  
will always live and always be love.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΣΤΗΣ ΠΙΚΡΑΣ ΤΑ ΞΕΡΟΝΗΣΑ**

Ποῦ νά 'βρω τέσσερα σπαθιά  
καί μιὰ λαμπάδα στή γροθιά  
φωτιά νά θάλω σήμερα  
καί νά τόν κάψω σίγουρα  
τόν κόσμο αὐτόν πού ἀγάπησα  
καί μ' ἄφησε καί σάπισα.

Στῆς πίκρας τὰ ξερόνησα  
τὸ δάκρυ μου κοινώνησα  
καί στῆς ζωῆς τῇ φυλακῇ  
πού δέν ὑπάρχει Κυριακῇ  
ποτέ μου δέ λησμόνησα  
τῇ μοναξιᾷ τῇ φόνισσα.

Κι ἐσὺ πού ἦρθες μιὰ θραδιά  
νά μοῦ ζεστάνεις τὴν καρδιά  
μὲ πέταξες ἀλίμονο  
σὸ μαῦρο καταχείμωνο  
μὲ πρόδωσες καί μ' ἔφτυσες  
εἴσουν χαρὰ καί ξέφτισες.

Ποῦ νά 'βρω τέσσερα κεριά  
καί στην ψυχῇ μου σιγουριά  
φωτιά νά θάλω γρήγορα  
καί νά τόν κάψω σήμερα  
τόν κόσμο αὐτόν πού ἀγάπησα  
καί μ' ἄφησε καί σάπισα.

## ON BITTERNESS' BARREN ISLES

Where will I find five swords  
and blazing torch in hand  
to set fire this same day  
and burn for certain  
a world I dearly loved  
that left me to rot away.

On bitterness' barren isles  
I came to taste my tears  
and in life's prison  
where no Sundays exist  
I never in my life forgot  
that killer loneliness.

And you who came one night  
to warm for me my heart  
alas you flung me out  
into the dark midwinter  
you betrayed and spat on me  
joy you were turned sour.

Where will I find four candles  
and certainty in my soul  
to set fire straightaway  
and burn this same day  
a world I dearly loved  
that left me to rot away.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΤΟ ΔΙΧΤΥ

Κάθε φορά που άνοίγεις δρόμο στη ζωή  
μην περιμένεις να σε θρεΐ το μεσονύχτι  
έχε τα μάτια σου άνοιχτά βράδυ-πρωΐ  
γιατί μπροστά σου πάντα άπλώνεται ένα δίχτυ.

“Αν κάποτε στά βρόχια του πιαστεΐς  
κανείς δε θά μπορέσει να σε θγάλει  
μονάχος θρές την άκρη της κλωστής  
κι αν είσαι τυχερός ξεκίνα πάλι.

Αυτό το δίχτυ έχει όνόματα βαριά  
πού ’ναι γραμμένα σ’ έφτασφράγιστο κιτάπι  
άλλοι το λέν του κάτω κόσμου πονηριά  
κι άλλοι το λέν της πρώτης άνοιξης άγάπη.

“Αν κάποτε στά βρόχια του πιαστεΐς  
κανείς δε θά μπορέσει να σε θγάλει  
μονάχος θρές την άκρη της κλωστής  
κι αν είσαι τυχερός ξεκίνα πάλι.



## THE NET

Each time you cut a path in life  
don't wait for darkness to find you  
keep your eyes open day and night  
there's always a net waiting for you.

If you ever get caught in its snare  
there's no one can set you free  
alone find the ends of the thread  
and if you're lucky start out again.

This net has some awesome names  
written in a book with seven seals  
some call it the wiles of hell  
and others the first spring's love.

If you ever get caught in its snare  
there's no one can set you free  
alone find the ends of the thread  
and if you're lucky start out again.

*translated by David Connolly*

## ΤΟ ΠΡΑΚΤΟΡΕΙΟ

Τὸ πρακτορεῖο  
θολὸ καὶ κρύο  
κάποιοι μιλάνε γιὰ παράξενες βροχὲς  
καὶ τὸ ταξίδι  
σὰν ἄγριο φίδι  
γεμίζει φόβο τὶς ἀδύνατες ψυχές.

Ἀπόψε μοιάζουμε κι οἱ δύο  
πιὸ πίσω ἢ γὼ κι ἐσὺ μπροστὰ  
σὰ βραδινὸ λεωφορεῖο  
πού ἔχει τὰ φῶτα τοῦ σθηστά.

Γιὰ μᾶς ὁ κόσμος δὲν τελειώνει  
γιὰ μᾶς ὁ κόσμος ἀρχινᾷ  
μὰ τῆς καρδιᾶς τὸ μαῦρο χιόνι  
δὲ θὰ μᾶς θγάλει πουθενά.

Τὸ πρακτορεῖο  
θολὸ καὶ κρύο  
κάποιοι μιλάνε γιὰ παράξενες βροχὲς  
καὶ τὸ ταξίδι  
σὰν ἄγριο φίδι  
γεμίζει φόβο τὶς ἀδύνατες ψυχές.

Ἄντρα καὶ γείτονα καὶ φίλε  
στὴ φτώχεια καὶ στὴν προσφυγιά  
μιὰ παγωμένη σπίθα στεῖλε  
νὰ σοῦ τὴν κάνω πυρκαγιά.

## THE BUS STATION

The bus station  
blurry and cold  
some people talk of strange rains  
and the long voyage  
like a wild snake  
fills weak souls with fear.

Tonight we both resemble  
—I behind and you in front—  
a bus at night  
with its headlights dark.

For us the world is not ending  
for us the world will now start  
but leading us to nowhere  
is the black snow of my heart.

The bus station  
blurry and cold  
some people talk of strange rains  
and the long voyage  
like a wild snake  
fills weak souls with fear.

My man, my neighbor, my friend  
in poverty and in exile  
send me a tiny frozen spark  
and I will turn it to a fire.

Κι ἄν δὲν καεῖς ἔλα κατόπι  
ποῦ δὲ θὰ μένει πιά κανεῖς  
γιά νὰ γινοῦμε πάλι ἄνθρωποι  
στὸν κῆπο τῆς Γεθσημανῆς.

Τὸ πρακτορεῖο  
θολὸ καὶ κρύο  
κάποιοι μιλάνε γιὰ παράξενες ἑροχῆς  
καὶ τὸ ταξίδι  
σὰν ἄγριο φίδι  
γεμίζει φόβο τὶς ἀδύνατες ψυχές.

And if you do not burn, come later to me  
when no one else remains  
so we may turn back into humans  
in the garden of Gethsemane.

The bus station  
blurry and cold  
some people talk of strange rains  
and the long voyage  
like a wild snake  
fills weak souls with fear.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

**ΓΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ ΧΑΡΑ ΣΟΥ ΒΕΝΕΤΙΑ**

Γειά σου χαρά σου Βενετιά  
πήρα τούς δρόμους τοῦ νοτιᾶ  
κι ἀπ' τὸ κατάρτι τὸ ψηλὸ  
τὸν ἄνεμο παρακαλῶ.

Φύσα ἀεράκι φύσα με  
μὴ χαμηλώνεις ἴσαμε  
νὰ δῶ γαλάζια ἐκκλησιὰ  
Τσιρίγο καὶ Μονεβασιά.

Γειά σου χαρά σου Βενετιά  
βγῆκα σὲ θάλασσα πλατιά  
καὶ τραγουδῶ στὴν κουπαστή  
σ' ὅλον τὸν κόσμον ν' ἀκουστεῖ.

Φύσα ἀεράκι φύσα με  
μὴ χαμηλώνεις ἴσαμε  
νὰ δῶ στὴν Κρήτη μιὰ κορφὴ  
πὸ ἔχω μανούλα κι ἀδερφή.

## HAIL AND FAREWELL VENICE

Hail and farewell Venice  
I'm on my way South  
and from the tall mast  
I implore the wind.

Blow breeze blow me  
don't abate until  
I see an azure church  
Tsirigo and Monemvasia.

Hail and Farewell Venice  
I'm out in open seas  
singing at the rail  
for all the world to hear.

Blow breeze blow me  
don't abate until  
I see the peaks of Crete  
my mother and sister there.

*translated by David Connolly*

**ΠΕΦΤΕΙ ΒΡΟΧΗ**

Πέφτει βροχή  
στο πρόσωπό μου πέφτει  
πέφτει βροχή  
στοῦ κόσμου τὸν καθρέφτη.

Πέφτει βροχή  
σ' ἀνατολή καὶ δύση  
πέφτει βροχή  
κι ὁ ἥλιος ἔχει σθήσει.

Πέφτει βροχή  
ὁ οὐρανὸς μολύβι  
πέφτει βροχή  
κι ἡ νύχτα κάτι κρύβει.

Πέφτει βροχή  
τὴν ὥρα ποὺ σοῦ γράφω  
πέφτει βροχή  
καὶ στοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸν τάφο.

Ἔθγα στὸ σκοτάδι καὶ περπάτα  
κι ἄς μὴ θέλουν οἱ θεοὶ  
ἔχεις ἥλιο τὰ ζεστά σου νιάτα  
ἔχεις ἥλιο τὴ ζωή.



## RAIN IS FALLING

Rain is falling  
falling on my face  
rain is falling  
on the mirror of the world.

Rain is falling  
in the East and the West  
rain is falling  
and the sun is lost.

Rain is falling  
the sky is dark as lead  
rain is falling  
and the night hides a secret.

Rain is falling  
as I am writing to you  
rain is falling  
on the tomb of Christ too.

Go out and walk in the dark  
though the gods do not will it  
for sun you have your warm youth  
for sun you have your life.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

## Η ΕΝΔΕΚΑΤΗ ΕΝΤΟΛΗ

Ρίξε' ένα βλέμμα σιωπηλὸ  
στὸν κόσμον τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸ  
καὶ δὲς ἢ γῇ πῶς καίει.  
Καὶ μὲ τὸ χέρι στὴν καρδιά  
ἂν δὲν σ' ἀγγίξει ἡ πυρκαγιά  
ψάξε νὰ θρεῖς ποιὸς φταίει.

Σὰ χαμπούλι ταπεινὸ  
ποὺ δὲν ἐγνώρισε οὐρανὸ  
καὶ περπατάει στὸ χῶμα  
τὴν ἐνδεκάτη ἐντολὴ  
δὲν τὴ σεβάστηκες πολὺ  
γι' αὐτὸ πονᾷς ἀκόμα.

Εἶναι καινούργια καὶ παλιά  
σὰν τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν ἀντηλιά  
σὰν τῆς καρδιάς τὰ θάθη.  
Μὰ μέσ' στοῦ κόσμου τὴ φωτιά  
ποὺ μπερδευτήκαν τὰ χαρτιά  
κανεῖς δὲ θὰ τὴ μάθει.

Τράβα νὰ θρεῖς τὸ Μωυσῆ  
καὶ ξαναρώτα τον κι ἐσὺ  
μήπως αὐτὸς τὴν ξέρει  
τὴν ἐνδεκάτη ἐντολὴ  
πού 'ν' ὀλοκάθαρο γυαλί  
καὶ κοφτερὸ μαχαίρι.

## THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Glance silently  
at this world of sin  
and see the earth is burning  
and with your hand upon your heart  
if you are not touched by the flame  
try to find who is to blame.

Like a lowly humble bird  
that never knew the sky  
and wanders on the earth  
you didn't have enough respect  
for the eleventh commandment  
and so you suffer still.

It is new and it is old  
like the reflection of the soul  
like the bottom of the heart.  
But in the fire of the world  
where all the papers were confused  
no one will ever know it.

Go off to find Moses  
and ask for yourself  
if he may happen to know it  
this eleventh commandment  
which is as transparent as glass  
and sharp as a knife.

Στὴν παγωμένη σου ἔρημιᾷ  
τὸ γέλιο γίνεται ζημιᾷ  
κι ἡ ὁμορφιὰ σκοτάδι.  
Ἔτσι εἶναι φίλε μου ἡ ζωὴ  
φέρει τὸν ἥλιο τὸ πρωὶ  
τὴν καταχνιά τὸ βράδυ.

Κάνε λοιπὸν ὑπομονή  
τώρα ποὺ φῶς δὲ θὰ φανεῖ  
κι οὔτε θὰ ῥθεῖ καράβι.  
Τὴν ἐνδεκάτη ἐντολὴ  
τὴν ξέρουν μόνο οἱ τρελοὶ  
κι ὅλοι τῆς γῆς οἱ σκλάβοι.

In your icy loneliness  
laughter turns into loss  
and beauty into darkness.  
This is how life is my friend  
it brings sunshine at dawn  
and mist at night.

Be patient, then,  
now that neither light will shine  
nor is a ship arriving.  
The eleventh commandment  
is known only to madmen  
and all the slaves of this earth.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

**ΔΟΣΤΕ ΜΟΥ ΜΙΑ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑ**

Δέν ἔχω σπίτι κι ὄνομα  
καὶ κώδικες καὶ νόμους  
αἰῶνες τώρα περπατῶ  
σὲ στοιχειωμένους δρόμους.

Τὴν πίκρα ἔχω μάνα μου  
γυναῖκα τὴν ἀνάγκη  
στὰ χῶματα ποὺ χόρεψαν  
Ἄγαρηνοὶ καὶ Φράγκοι.

Εἶν' ἀπ' τὸ δέντρο τοῦ Θεοῦ  
ἡ ρίζα ποὺ κρατεῖ με.  
Δόστε μου μιὰ ταυτότητα  
νὰ θυμηθῶ ποῖός εἰμαι.

## GIVE ME AN IDENTITY CARD

I have no name and no home  
no laws and no codes  
for centuries I roam  
over haunted roads.

I have bitterness as my mother  
and necessity as my wife  
on this ground on which  
Turks and Franks once danced.

The root which is sustaining me  
is from the tree of God.  
Give me an identity card  
so that I may remember who I am.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

**ΠΙΣΩ ΑΠΟ ΜΑΥΡΑ ΣΙΔΕΡΑ**

Ἀγέρηδες χτυπήσανε  
τὶς φαγωμένες πόρτες  
κι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ ἀγαπήσανε  
μονάχοι κόβουν βόλτες  
πίσω ἀπὸ μαῦρα σίδερα  
ποὺ σιγοβράζουν σήμερα.

Ἄλι ἄλι καὶ τρισαλί  
Ἑλλάδα μάννα μου τρελή  
φέρε μου ἀπόψε στὸ κελὶ  
καπνὸ φυτίλι καὶ ρακὶ  
καὶ δυναμίτη παρακεῖ  
νὰ γίνει στάχτη ἢ φυλακὴ.

Ἀγάπη ὅσοι σὲ πίστεψαν  
κακὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τους  
μὰ κι ὅσους δὲ σὲ πίστεψαν  
ἀπ' τὰ δεσμά τους λύσ' τους  
νὰ ξαναβροῦν τὸ δρόμο τους  
μὲ τὸ μηδὲν γιὰ νόμο τους.



**BEHIND BLACK IRON BARS**

The winds keep pounding  
upon decaying doors  
and those who have loved  
pace back and forth, alone  
behind black iron bars  
that are boiling hot today.

Alas, alas and alas again  
my crazy mother Greece  
bring me tonight to my cell  
tobacco, fuses and raki  
and a stick of dynamite  
to turn this jail to ashes.

Love, those who believed in you  
only themselves have hurt  
but even those who didn't believe  
release them from their bonds  
to find their own path again  
with zero as their law.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

## ΤΟΥΤΟΣ Ο ΤΟΠΟΣ

Τοῦτος ὁ τόπος εἶν' ἕνας μῦθος  
ἀπὸ χρῶμα καὶ φῶς  
ἕνας μῦθος κρυφὸς  
μὲ τὸν κόσμον τοῦ ἡλίου δεμένος.  
Κάθ' αὐγὴ ξεκινᾷ  
ν' ἀνταμώσει ξανὰ  
τὸ δικό του ἀθάνατο γένος.

Τοῦτος ὁ τόπος εἶν' ἕνας κῆπος  
μὲ κλαμένα παιδιὰ  
στὴ γαλάζια ποδιὰ  
κάποιας μάνας γιὰ πάντα χαμένης  
ποὺ συντρόφοι ὀρφανοὶ  
καρτεροῦν νὰ φανεῖ  
στὸ κατώφλι μιᾶς πόρτας κλεισμένης.

Τοῦτος ὁ τόπος εἶν' ἕνας θράχος  
σὰ σπαθὶ κοφτερὸς  
ποὺ σοφὸς ὁ καιρὸς  
θὰ τὸν κάνει τραγούδι μιὰ μέρα  
καὶ θὰ ῥθοῦν ἐποχὲς  
ποὺ οἱ φτωχὲς μας ψυχὲς  
τὸ σκοπὸ του θ' ἀκοῦν στὸν ἀγέρα.

**THIS LAND**

This land is a myth  
of color and light  
a secret myth  
bound to the world of the sun.  
Each dawn it sets out  
to rejoin  
its own immortal race.

This land is a garden  
with crying children  
on the blue apron  
of a mother forever lost  
whose desolate companions  
await her appearance  
before a door which is closed.

This land is a rock  
as sharp as a sword  
which the wisdom of time  
will turn into song someday  
and the time will come  
when our poor souls  
will hear its tune in the air.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

## ΜΙΑ ΓΛΩΣΣΑ ΜΙΑ ΠΑΤΡΙΔΑ

Μιά χούφτα εἶν' ὁ ἄνθρωπος  
ἀπὸ στιφὸ προζύμι  
γεννιέται σὰν ἀρχάγγελος  
πεθαίνει σὰν ἀγρίμι.

Τοῦ μένει μόνο στὴ ζωῇ  
μιὰ γλώσσα μιὰ πατρίδα  
ἡ πρώτη του παρηγοριά  
καὶ ἡ στερνὴ του ἐλπίδα.

“Ὅλο τὸ βιὸς κι ἡ προῖκα του  
ἕνας καημὸς στὰ στήθια  
κι ὁ τόπος ποὺ τὸν γέννησε  
ἡ δυνατὴ του ἀλήθεια.

Γιὰ ιδέστε κεῖνο τὸ παιδί  
μὲ τὰ γερά του χέρια  
πῶς ὁδηγεῖ τ' ἀδέρφια του  
ν' ἀνέβουν ὡς τ' ἀστέρια.

Κι ἀπ' τὰ βουνὰ τῆς Ρούμελης  
καὶ τὰ νησιὰ τοῦ νότου  
ἕνας πανάρχαιος παποῦς  
κοιτάει τὸν ἐγγονό του.

## A LANGUAGE A COUNTRY

Man is a handful  
of bitter dough  
born an archangel  
he dies a wild beast.

The only thing he's left in life  
a language and a country  
his first consolation  
and his final hope.

All of his fortune and his wealth  
a longing in his bosom  
and the land where he was born  
the only truth that counts.

Look at this young man  
with his strong hands  
how does he lead his brothers  
climbing to the stars.

And from the mounts of Roumeli  
to the islands of the South  
an ancient grandfather  
is looking at his grandson.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

## ΟΙ ΠΡΩΤΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΙ

Στὸ χῶμα τοῦτο τὸ σκληρὸ  
πού 'ναι ἡ θροχὴ ἀγγέλων δάκρυ  
ποτὲ δὲν εἶχαμε νερὸ  
κι ἀλαφιασμένοι σὲ μιὰν ἄκρη  
ἀρχίζαμε μονομαχία  
μὲ τὰ στοιχεῖά καὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα.

Ἔτσι περπάταγε ἡ ζωὴ  
πότε στραβὰ καὶ πότε ἴσια  
μέσ' ἀπ' τοῦ κόσμου τῇ βουῇ  
νὰ πάει γραμμὴ γιὰ τὰ Ἥλύσια  
μ' αἷμα ραντίζοντας καὶ σκόνῃ  
τὸ παθιασμένο τῆς βαγόνι.

Θέ μου γιατί γιατί γιατί  
κεῖνοι πού σκύβουν τὸ κεφάλι  
καὶ τεμενάδες κάνουν πάλι  
στὸν τύραννο καὶ στὸν προδότη  
Θέ μου γιατί γιατί γιατί  
νὰ ῥχονται κεῖνοι πάντα πρῶτοι  
κι ἐμεῖς οἱ ἄγνοὶ κι ἐλεύτεροι  
νὰ ῥμαστε πάντα δεύτεροι;

## THE FIRST AND THE SECOND

On this harsh land  
where rain is angels' tears  
we never had enough water  
and standing aside in panic  
we began a duel  
with the elements and ghosts.

So life marches on  
in the hustle and bustle of the world  
sometimes on the wrong path  
and sometimes on the right  
headed straight to Elysia  
sprinkling its impassionate carriage  
with blood and dust.

Why, why, why, my Lord  
those who hang down their head  
and bow again  
to tyrants and traitors  
why, why, why, my Lord  
should they always come first  
and we the innocent and free  
should always be second?

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## Ο ΧΟΡΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΣΚΥΛΩΝ

Πέντε σκύλοι πεινασμένοι  
μιά ζωή θασανισμένοι  
μέσα σέ θρισιές καί γιούχα  
βάλανε καινούργια ρούχα  
καί μέ γιορτινή φορεσιά  
βγήκανε νά πάνε βόλτα  
στοῦ παράδεισου τήν πόρτα  
πίσω ἀπ' τήν παλιά ἐκκλησιά.

Μέσα στή ζωή ποτέ  
μὴ ζητᾷς νά θρεῖς  
ποιός εἶν' ὁ δικαστής.  
Νά περπατᾷς  
καί πάντα νά κοιτᾷς  
ποῦ θά πᾶς νά κρυφτεῖς.

Μές στήν ἐρημιᾷ τοῦ κόσμου  
ἓνα χέρι γράφει ἐντός μου:  
κάπου ὑπάρχει Θεός.

Πέντε πεινασμένοι σκύλοι  
στοῦ παράδεισου τήν πύλη  
περιμέναν ἀπ' τοὺς πρώτους  
γιὰ νά στήσουν τὸ χορὸ τους.  
Μά προτοῦ ἡ αὐγὴ χαράξει  
στ' οὐρανοῦ τήν ἅγια τάξη  
χωροφύλακες ἀγγέλοι  
τοὺς κρεμάσαν στὸ τσιγκέλι.



## THE DANCE OF THE DOGS

Five hungry dogs  
in a life full of torment  
amidst insults and boos  
put on new garments  
and in festive clothes  
went out for a walk  
by the gates of paradise  
behind the old church.

In life never  
ask to find  
who's the judge.  
As you walk along  
always look for  
a place to hide.

In the loneliness of the world  
a hand inscribes inside of me:  
somewhere there is God.

Five hungry dogs  
waited among the first  
to start their dance  
by the gates of paradise.  
But before the crack of dawn  
angel policemen  
hung them high on hooks  
in heaven's holy order.

Μέσα στή ζωὴ ποτὲ  
μὴ ζητᾷς νὰ θρεῖς  
ποιὸς εἶν' ὁ δικαστής.  
Νὰ περπατᾷς  
καὶ πάντα νὰ κοιτᾷς  
ποῦ θὰ πᾶς νὰ κρυφτεῖς.

Φίλοι σκύλοι μου μὴν κλαῖτε  
μὲς στή συμφορὰ νὰ λέτε:  
κάπου ὑπάρχει Θεός.

In life never  
ask to find  
who's the judge.  
As you walk along  
always look for  
a place to hide.

Dogs, my friends, don't cry  
in your misery keep saying:  
somewhere there is God.

*translated by George Pilitsis*

**ΕΠΙΛΟΓΟΣ**

Κυρά ζωή σκοτεινή μητέρα  
ἄχ δὲ μᾶς πῆγες παραπέρα.  
Κυρά ζωή τοῦ καημοῦ δασκάλα  
σβήνεις τὸ ἓνα ἔρχονται ἄλλα.

## EPILOGUE

Lady life gloomy mother  
ah, you haven't moved us any farther.  
Lady life teacher of suffering  
when one sorrow goes, others follow.

*translated by George Pilitsis*

**ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ**

Ὁ ὦν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

Τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠμέγα.

Περίμενέ με μάνα μου περίμενέ με ἀκόμα  
ὥσπου νὰ φτάσει ἡ ἀνοιξη στὸ παγωμένο χῶμα.

Ὁ γεωμέτρης τοῦ ἀχανοῦς.

Ὁ ποιμὴν τῶν ἀστέρων.

Περίμενέ με μάνα μου σὰν τὸ πουλὶ τοῦ νότου  
ποὺ σμίγει μάτι καὶ φτερό νὰ θρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸ του.

Ὁ κυβερνήτης τῶν Ἀριθμῶν.

Ὁ δαμαστής τῶν Σημείων.

Περίμενέ με μάνα μου κάποια Παρασκευὴ σου  
στήν πύλη τοῦ παράδεισου στὸ φρέαρ τῆς ἀθύσσου.

Ἐγγύς. Ἐγγύτατος ὁ καιρὸς.

Ὁ ὦν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

## HOLY MONDAY

*The One who is and who was and who is to come.  
The Alpha and the Omega.*

Wait for me mother, wait for me  
until Spring arrives in the frozen land.

*The architect of the infinite.  
The shepherd of the stars.*

Wait for me mother like the bird of the south  
that alines sight and wing to find its heaven.

*The ruler of Numbers.  
The tamer of Signs.*

Wait for me mother on a Friday  
by the gates of heaven by the well of the abyss.

*Near. The time is very near.  
The One who is and who was and who is to come.*

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΡΙΤΗ

Ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας  
ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν.

Κάτω ἀπ' τὰ λάθαρα τῆς Ρώμης  
στὴν τέντα τῆς Μαγδαληνῆς  
ἐσὺ πατέρας τῆς συγγνώμης  
κι ἐμεῖς παιδιὰ τῆς ἡδονῆς.

Ζοφώδης καὶ ἀσέλγηνος ὁ ἔρως τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

Βραχνὴ ἀκούστηκε ἡ κραυγὴ  
στὰ καπηλειὰ τῆς πολιτείας  
ἐσὺ ἁμνίον γιὰ σφαγὴ  
κι ἐμεῖς κριοὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

Τὸ πολύτιμον μύρον ἡ πόρνη ἔμιξε μετὰ δακρύων καὶ ἐξέχεεν  
εἰς τοὺς ἀχράντους πόδας σου.

Δὲ σὲ πτοήσαν οἱ Πιλάτοι  
οὔτ' ὁ καιρὸς ποὺ εἶν' ἐγγὺς  
ἐσὺ στῶν οὐρανῶν τὰ πλάτη  
κι ἐμεῖς παρείσακτοι τῆς γῆς.

Ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλήλυθα, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς  
ἐμὲ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ μὴ μείνη.



## HOLY TUESDAY

*The kings indulged in fornication and the people of the earth became intoxicated with the wine of fornication.*

Under the banners of Rome  
in Magdalene's tent  
you, the father of forgiveness  
and we, the children of pleasure.

*Gloomy and moonless is the desire of sin.*

A hoarse cry was heard  
in the city's taverns  
you, a lamb for slaughter  
and we, the rams of sin.

*The harlot mixed the precious myrrh with her tears  
and poured it out on your sacred feet.*

The Pilates didn't frighten you  
nor did time that's at hand  
you, in broad heaven  
and we, the intruders of the earth.

*I have come as a light into the world, so that whoever  
believes in Me should not abide in darkness.*

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ

Ἐκ τῶν σπηλαίων τοῦ ὄρους ἐξῆλθον οἱ δαίμονες.

Τετάρτη τῶν τεφρῶν καὶ τῶν παθῶν  
ὁ θάνατος δὲν ἔχει παρελθόν.  
Τετάρτη τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων  
ὁ θάνατος δὲν ἔχει οὔτε μέλλον.

Ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ.

Τοῦ σύμπαντος ἤχεϊ τὸ ἐκκρεμές  
ξυπνήστε ν' ἀποδώσουμε τιμές.  
Φανήκαν οἱ οὐράνιοι στρατηλάτες  
σὰ σκοτεινοῦ Ρουθίκωνα Γαλάτες.

Πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη. Τὰ τρία ταῦτα. Μελίτων δὲ  
τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.

Τῆς γῆς ἀναθαρρήσαν οἱ πληγές.  
Πότε θ' ἀνάψει ὁ ἥλιος πυρκαγιές  
νὰ κάψουν τὸ παλάτι τοῦ Ἡρώδη  
καὶ τ' ἄνθος τοῦ κακοῦ νὰ γίνει ρόδι;

Πάντα ποιεῖτε ἵνα γένησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι  
μέσον γενεᾶς σχολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης.

**HOLY WEDNESDAY**

*From the caves of the mountain came out the demons.*

Wednesday of ashes and suffering  
death has no past.

Wednesday of the souls and angels  
death has also no future.

*A sea of glass like crystal.*

The pendulum of the universe strikes  
wake up so that we may render honors.  
The heavenly commanders have appeared  
like the Gauls of dark Rubicon.

*Faith, hope, love. These three. Love, the greatest  
of all.*

The earth's wounds took courage.  
When will the sun light the fires  
to burn Herod's palace  
so that the flower of evil become a pomegranate?

*Do all these things so that you may become blameless  
and harmless in the midst of a corrupt and perverse  
generation.*

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΕΜΠΤΗ

Τὰ ἔργα του ἀληθινὰ καὶ αἱ ὁδοὶ του εὐθεταί.

Αὐτὸς ποὺ κρέμασε τὸν ἥλιο  
 στὸ μεσοδόκι τ' οὐρανοῦ  
 κρέμεται σήμερα σὲ ξύλο—  
 Ὡς Κύριε γενοῦ!  
 Καὶ στ' ἀσπαλάθια τῆς ἐρήμου  
 μιὰ μάννα φώναξε: «παιδί μου»!

Διὰ ξύλου τὰ τέκνα τοῦ Ἀδάμ Παραδείσου γεγόνασιν  
 ἄποικοι.

Μὲ τοῦ Ἀπριλιοῦ τ' ἀρχαῖα μάγια  
 μὲ τῶν δαιμόνων τὸ φιλὶ  
 μπῆκε στὸ σπίτι κουκουβάγια  
 μπῆκε κοράκι στὴν αὐλή.  
 Κι ὅλα τ' ἀγρίμια στὸ λαγκάδι  
 πῆραν τὸ δρόμο γιὰ τὸν Ἀδη.

Ἐλήλυθε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

Θὰ ξανασπείρει καλοκαίρια  
 στὴν ἄγρια παγωνιά τοῦ νοῦ  
 αὐτὸς ποὺ κάρφωσε τ' ἀστέρια  
 στὴν ἄγια σκέπη τ' οὐρανοῦ.  
 Κι ἐγὼ κι ἐσὺ κι ἐμεῖς κι οἱ ἄλλοι  
 θὰ γεννηθοῦμε τότε πάλι.

Οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ ζωὴ καὶ τὸ φῶς καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ κόσμου.

## HOLY THURSDAY

*His works are true and His ways straight.*

He who suspended the sun  
in the hatch beam of heaven  
is hung today upon a tree—  
Lord be merciful!  
And in the furzes of the desert  
a mother cried out: "my son"!

*By way of the Tree the children of Adam became the  
settlers of Paradise.*

With April's ancient charms  
with the demons' kiss  
an owl came into the house  
and a crow into the yard.  
And all the wild beasts in the ravine  
took off to Hades.

*He came upon this earth to bear witness to the truth.*

He who nailed the stars  
on heaven's holy dome  
again will sow summers  
in the mind's bitter cold.  
Then you and I, we and the rest  
will be born again.

*He is the life, the light and the peace of the world.*

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ

Ἄξιος ὁ τὴν γῆν κρεμάσας ἐν ὕδασιν.

Βαριά τὰ θήματά μου σέρνω  
 στὸ φῶς τῆς μέρας τὸ θαμπὸ  
 κρίνα τῆς ἀνοιξῆς σοῦ φέρνω  
 καὶ στὸ σταυρό σου τ' ἀκουμπῶ—  
 φίλε δακρυοπότιστε  
 τῶν πρωτίστων πρώτιστε  
 τῶν πρωτίστων πρώτιστε.

Ἄξιος ὁ νεφέλαις κοσμήσας τὸ στερέωμα.

Ἀρρωστος κύλησε ὁ αἰώνας  
 κι ὁ ἥλιος βγαίνει μισερὸς  
 σὰν τὸ φτερό τῆς χελιδόνας  
 ποὺ τὸ σακάτεψε ὁ καιρὸς—  
 φίλε τρισμακάριστε  
 τῶν ἀρίστων ἄριστε  
 τῶν ἀρίστων ἄριστε.

Ἄξιος ὁ τὴν γῆν ζωγραφήσας τοῖς ἄνθεσιν.

Σήμερα ὁ Ἄδης ἠνεώχθη  
 γεφύρι ἐγίνη ὁ Γολγοθᾶς  
 καὶ στοῦ θανάτου ἐσὺ τὴν ὄχθη  
 ἄφατο δρόμο ἀκολουθᾶς—  
 ἐγγίστε κι ἀνέγγιστε  
 τῶν μεγίστων μέγιστε  
 τῶν μεγίστων μέγιστε.

Ἄξιον ἐστὶ τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον.

**HOLY FRIDAY**

*Worthy is He who suspended the earth on the waters.*

I trudge along  
in the dim light of the day  
I bring you Spring lilies  
and lay them on your cross—  
tear-drenched friend  
first among the first and foremost  
first among the first and foremost.

*Worthy is He who adorned the firmament with clouds.*

Time rolled away ailing  
and the sun comes out crippled  
like the swallow's wing  
that time has maimed—  
most blessed friend  
best of the best  
best of the best.

*Worthy is He who painted the earth with flowers.*

Today Hades opened up  
Calvary became a bridge  
and on the banks of death  
you follow a nameless path—  
You, the near by and the far away  
greatest of the great  
greatest of the great

*Worthy is the sacrificed lamb.*

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## ΜΕΓΑ ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟΝ

Μέμνησο!

Ὅλα στερέψαν σιγὰ σιγὰ.  
Τὰ περιστέρια πετοῦν ἄργα  
σὲ λίμνες ἄνυδρες θάλτους ὑγροῦς  
σὲ διψασμένους κήπους κι ἄγρους.

Μέμνησο τῶν παιδίων ἃ σοὶ ἔδωκεν ὁ Θεός.

Πίσω ἀπ' τοὺς λόφους τοὺς χαμηλοὺς  
μὲ τοὺς προφήτες καὶ τοὺς τρελοὺς  
στέκουν παρήμερα τρία παιδιὰ  
σὰ γλαροπούλια στὴν ἀμμουδιά.

Τὰ ρήματα ἃ λελάληκας ἡμῖν πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωὴ ἐστιν.

Μὲς στῶν καιρῶν τὴν ἀνημποριά  
διῶξε τὸ γρέγο καὶ τὸ βοριά  
καὶ ξαναγύρισε ἥλιε στὴ γῇ  
μὲ τοῦ θριάμβου σου τὴν κραυγὴ.

Ὅτι σὺ εἶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις.  
Ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.



## HOLY SATURDAY

*Remember!*

Little by little everything ran dry.  
The doves fly slow  
over dried up lakes and wet marshes  
over thirsty gardens and fields.

*Remember the children God gave you.*

Behind low hills  
among prophets and insane men  
three children stand aside  
like seagulls on the sand.

*The words that You spoke to us are spirit, and they are life.*

Sun, in these ailing times  
chase away the north and the north-eastern wind  
and return to earth  
with the cry of your triumph.

*For You are the truth, the life and the resurrection.  
The One who is and who was, and who is to come.*

*translated by George Pilitsis*

## GLORIA AETERNA

Ὅπου κι ἂν πᾶμε  
μνη̃μες κρατᾶμε  
Ἀθήνα καὶ Ρώμη  
σὲ ψάχνουμε ἀκόμη.  
Ἄσπρες κολόνες  
μαῦροι αἰῶνες  
ἀσήκωτοι χρόνοι  
στὸν κόσμο ποὺ βρεθήκαμε μόνοι.

Μίση πατρίες  
πέφτουν οἱ Τροῖες  
κι ἐσὺ Βαθυλώνα  
μιὰ κούφια σταγόνα.  
Ὅλα περνᾶνε  
πές μου ποῦ πᾶνε  
ἡ κόλαση ἄδεια  
καὶ γύρω μας φυτρώνουν σκοτάδια.

Νόμος ὁ νόμος  
τρόμος ὁ τρόμος  
καὶ ποιός θὰ ταράξει  
τοῦ κόσμου τὴν τάξη.  
Θέ μου Σωτῆρα  
τ' ἄστρα σου πῆρα  
ν' ἀνάψω τὰ τόξα  
ποὺ δείχνουν τὴν αἰώνια σου δόξα.

**GLORIA AETERNA**

Wherever we go  
we carry memories  
Athens and Rome  
we're searching for you still.  
White columns  
black centuries  
unbearable years  
in a world where we found ourselves alone.

Hatred, discord  
Troys fall  
and you Babylon  
a hollow drop.  
Everything passes by  
tell me where they're going  
hell is empty  
and around us darkness is growing.

The law is the law  
terror is terror  
and who can change  
the world order.  
My God, my Savior  
I took your stars  
to light your eternal glory  
with rays of light.

*translated by C. Capri-Karka and Ilona Karka*

### ΜΑΝΙΑΤΙΚΟΣ ΕΣΠΕΡΙΝΟΣ

Στὸ θράχο στὴ Μονεμβασιά  
μπήκα κι ἐγὼ στὴν ἐκκλησιά  
ν' ἀνασπαστῶ τὴ χάρη της  
κι ἦρθαν στὸ νοῦ μου τὰ παλιά  
σὰ φίδι στὴν ἀητοφωλιά  
σὰν κάφτρα στὸ λυχνάρι της.

.....

Πάντα στὸν κόσμο θὰ ῥχεται  
Παρασκευὴ Μεγάλῃ  
καὶ κάποιος θὰ σταυρώνεται  
γιὰ νὰ σωθοῦν οἱ ἄλλοι.

Ἀνήμερα τῆς Παναγιᾶς  
ὁ Κωσταντῆς κι ὁ Πανουργιάς  
κι ἡ μάνα τους ἡ Νίκαινα  
ποὺ μὲ τὸ πὲς καὶ πὲς καὶ πὲς  
μέσα σὲ μπόρες κι ἀστραπὲς  
τ' ἀνάστησε σὰ λύκαινα.

.....

Θέλω νὰ πᾶς ἀποσπεροῦ  
στὸ μοναστήρι τοῦ Δηροῦ  
ποὺ ψέλνει ὁ Παπανέστης  
κι ἂν σὲ ρωτήσῃ ἡ παπαδιά  
κλάψε γιὰ τ' ἄμοιρα παιδιὰ  
καὶ τὴν ἀλήθεια πὲς της.

.....

Ἄπ' τὸ στενὸ τοῦ Πασσαβᾶ

.....

Τοῦ κάτω κόσμου ὁ βασιλὲς.

.....

## MANI EVENSONG

On the rock of Monemvasia  
I too went into the chapel  
to pay worship to its grace  
and things long past came to mind  
like a snake to an eagle's nest  
like a snuffer to its candle.  
.....

Always in this world  
Good Friday will come round  
and someone will be crucified  
so others might be saved.

On the Holy Virgin's Day  
Constantes and Panourgias  
and Nicaina their mother  
who by saying and saying and saying again  
amid storms and lightning flashes  
like a she-wolf raised them up.  
.....

I want you to go at eventide  
to the monastery at Deros  
where Papanestes is cantor  
and if the priest's wife asks  
weep for the luckless children  
and tell her the truth outright.  
.....

From the straits of Pasavas  
.....

King of the nether world.  
.....

Οἱ φοβεροὶ Νικλιάνοι.

.....

.....

Καὶ μὲ σπαθὶ δαμασκηνὸ  
κόβω στὰ δυὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ  
νὰ ᾿χει διπλὸ παράδεισο  
τὸν ἕναν γιὰ τὸν Κωσταντὴ  
ταμένο στήν Ὑπαπαντὴ  
τὸν ἄλλο γιὰ τ' ἀδέρφι του  
τὸν πιὸ μικρὸ τὸν Πανουργιὰ  
πού ᾿γινε σκόνη καὶ σκουριὰ  
πάνω στὴ γῆ τὴ στέρφη του.

.....

Πάντα στὸν κόσμον θὰ ᾿ρχεται  
Παρασκευὴ Μεγάλῃ  
καὶ κάποιος θὰ σταυρώνεται  
γιὰ νὰ σωθοῦν οἱ ἄλλοι.

The terrible Nikliani<sup>1</sup>  
.....  
.....

And with a damascene sword  
I cut the heavens in twain  
that there may be a double paradise  
one for Constantes  
pledged to the church of Hypapante<sup>2</sup>  
the other for his brother  
the younger one Panourgias  
who became ashes and rust  
on his barren earth.  
.....

Always in this world  
Good Friday will come round  
and someone will be crucified  
so others might be saved.

*translated by David Connolly*

<sup>1</sup>Nikliani (Νικλιάνοι), one of the two distinct social classes in Mani. They were the members of large, old and powerful families with a history of service to the country. In contrast, the Fameyi (Φαμέγιοι) were mostly immigrants, less powerful and less significant.

<sup>2</sup>A church named after the feast celebrating the presentation of the Virgin Mary with Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem forty days after His birth.

## A GREAT POEM

(Only one)

*Eleftherotypia*, August 29, 1990

BY EUGENE ARANITSIS

*translated by Margaret Polis*

The sixth edition of Nikos Gatsos' *Amorgos* will be published in a few days by Ikaros Publishing, and today might be an appropriate time to take another look at this work, in view of the difficulties of the intervening decades. There is reason to wonder why, until now, so little criticism has been written about Gatsos. The most significant works of Greek literature (the *Third Wedding* is another example) create a love-hate relationship with criticism; they lure it in a silent, almost hypodermic way, and at the end their legend becomes a presumption that we are not going to deal officially with them, as if their value is something so self-evident that one has nothing interesting to add. We may be sure that a book slightly more significant than anything the intellectual capacity of the critics can handle would be met with puzzlement.

Until today, Gatsos has written only one work, which, beyond its unquestionable value, has inherited an ever growing fame for bearing the signature of someone who had a deep understanding of poetry but abandoned it in his youth, just like Rimbaud. Why such a man would stop writing is a very exciting subject; it excites the imagination of the literary public, which always senses here a mystery, some distortion in the relation between talent and career, a tendency toward arrogance and self-destruction. Finally, the fact that a mature man abandons his art, although knowing that his talent is not at all negligible, constitutes (and rightly so) the source of the common belief that *he has already said it all* or at least thought so.

It is logical! On the other hand, for some reason that cannot be easily analyzed, the meaning of a work and its position in a national literature are related to the stance of a writer with



respect to the fundamental questions of life; Cavafy proved this when he imposed himself upon the establishment by simply making others discover him. Gatsos suggested that we should forget him. As he did not write anything else, it was as if with *Amorgos* he indirectly expressed the notion about the nature of a work of art that its core contains a seed of death. There is always a hint of wisdom in the admission that all things have a limit and therefore an end.

As the years went by, Gatsos must have felt the melancholy of the undefined impulses of a talent that remained unused; he must have felt, moreover, that poetry was not simply a legitimately established Order of Logos, but a song that the wind brings in through the window, and thus such a blessing could possibly never be granted again. That is all! And perhaps it is even more simple. If people asked me why Gatsos stopped writing and publishing poems, I would dare to suggest that most probably he grew tired of looking for the answer to the question which creates poetry. He was extremely logical (in other words, given the standards of our times, extremely pessimistic) and thus he could not believe that there was still something more to be said in the modes of expression known at this time.

Perhaps he continued to write within himself; I do not know. Another answer I could possibly give (but this nobody would easily accept) is that Gatsos has an extremely sharp and critical mind, and very often this kind of gift becomes a rampart of stubbornness precluding the possibility of abandoning oneself to the mercy of inspiration and to the almost adolescent peculiarities demanded by art. Good poetry often teaches people the idea that it itself constitutes a lie. Gatsos rather lacked a child-like element, the willingness to adopt the irrationalities of the poet in a sufficiently naive and spontaneous manner. Had he not lacked the tendency to be sufficiently misled to perceive poetry as something eternal and self-consistent, he could have continued.

Thus *Amorgos*, like very few contemporary works, contains a clear hint about the possibilities of the whole creative spectrum of a writer's stance, from the possibility of writing the best that can be written to the decision not to write any more. After that, the songs set to music were for Gatsos an intentional parody of the poems he never wrote, their ghosts, the delayed echo of a

lyrical form of fairytale. Of all Greek poets, Gatsos is the one who enjoyed himself the most with the uneasiness or the boredom caused by so-called serious subjects; above all he played ambiguous games with the belief in himself. He must have been born with an innate distrust for the image we all have; he knew from the outset that the image does not reflect anything of a man's conscience, his own included. This is the reason for his haste to get away from literary activity, something equivalent to denouncing it as an inadequate source of pleasure. He is perhaps a man more dependent on the real characteristics of life than he would be, were he to continue living as a poet.

What remains, of course, is the question of the pure literary value of *Amorgos*, the problem of its interpretation. The magnetic power this poem exercises is due to its conscious sobriety. There is no trace of drama, awe or preaching in *Amorgos*. Gatsos is the only Greek poet who did not try, even for a moment, to save the world with prayers. In *Amorgos* the world is what it appears to be—made neither for joy nor for sorrow—just open to man's tendency to capture images. It is man's fate to be victorious and defeated at the same time; man is one more being among all the others and he can fight without losing the serenity of the cycle of the seasons.

This innate distance from all poetic ideology (which is a gift for Gatsos whereas for others who tried it, it proved to be a disadvantage) makes the verses of *Amorgos* animated by an invisible spiritual grace lighter than a breath; around the words there is a sense that nothing in the world is so very evil or minute as to be the object of Ethics or Psychology. The world is the primary reflection of all events that comprise us whether we understand them or not. For Gatsos, the law that governs the relationships between things is the music that emanates from them.

As for the form of *Amorgos*, it must have started as a literary experiment. Flowing slowly in its veins is the blood of many poets, with a constant alternation of temperatures, of styles and of a blend of dead and living voices, which creates the right conditions for small but discernible psychological vibrations. We have here a literary paradox: *Amorgos*, a poem with an exceptional unity all its own, constitutes at the same time a

summary of the history of modern poetry. Its development starts with echoes of the fifteen-syllable verse which is a natural disposition of the Greek language, but this is immediately followed by pages about the mystery of nature in the style of Elytis' *Orientalisms*, and even by pages whose purpose is elegance of expression and which are darkened by the mist of Embirikos' puristic language. A less skillful poet would have slipped, before realizing it, into imitations. Gatsos has shown that poetry has unity, that all styles are possible and that the meaning remains the same but the form can be free within a variety of evolutionary stages.

For all these reasons and a few more, *Amorgos* is a poem that people will always read. I cannot say whether it is a perfect work; it is, however, a work that includes some of the secret of perfection and along with it the secret of the silence that followed it.

I admit that these thoughts may seem fragmentary and arbitrary, but I am afraid that there is no other way to approach such a text.

## NIKOS GATSOS' *AMORGOS*

*Tachydromos*, January 1, 1965

BY ALEXANDROS ARGYRIOU

translated by C. Capri-Karka

For twenty years now, the poet Nikos Gatsos has not published any original literary work. For this reason, he is better known today for his translations of significant works of foreign literature, the foremost being, perhaps, his translation of Lorca's *Blood Wedding*. He is also known today to a more general public as the writer of the lyrics of songs set to music by Hadjidakis and Theodorakis. But this is an incomplete picture, to say the least, of a man whose contribution to the development of our modern poetic expression has been so positive, especially if we take into consideration the fact that his rather small output of work influenced later poets so much that, for a certain period, poems were written in his manner, even though he himself, I suppose, viewed his imitators with justifiable displeasure.

His single poetic collection was *Amorgos*, which was reprinted last year and was published for the first time in December 1943. After this publication, we have one more poem with the title "Death and the Knight" in the journal *Philologika Khronika* (it is included in Heraklis Apostolidis' *Anthology*). There were also a few youthful verses published mainly in *Nea Estia* (1931, 1932), but I doubt if the poet would want them numbered among his achievements.

I believe that it is worth emphasizing an answer given by Nikos Gatsos to a survey conducted by the journal *Kalitekhnikia Nea* (1944) on "Contemporary Poetic Movements," because in it he showed exactly how he perceived, at an early stage, the poetic phenomenon as an intellectual process outside of ideas and preconceived notions, even if disinterested.

Gatsos was thirty two years old when he wrote *Amorgos*; in other words, he was at the beginning of his mature years. Thus the poem was not a youthful work but a mature product

of a conscious effort by a man well versed in the secrets of poetic language.

Odysseus Elytis, who wrote a few words about *Amorgos* one month after its publication, noted that the poem was written according to the poetic principles of Breton and the philosophical theories of Edmund Husserl, as expressed in his book *Ideas of Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*. He added that an understanding of the book did not require any knowledge of these theories—at least a free understanding of it. Today, it seems difficult to state categorically that *Amorgos* is written "following the recipe" of the philosophical school of Husserl or his followers that led to existentialism. It would be more logical and more consistent with the facts to say that Gatsos was respectfully following the doctrines of Breton, which were so vague that they could easily include both phenomenology and psychoanalysis—*o altra cosa*—so that they could be obeyed by a basically free poetic mind. One way or another, in poetry ideas always come after they have lost their cold rigidity. They are not even ideas. They are what we call: attitude toward life.

Looking today, twenty years later, at a poetic work, you are necessarily influenced by the new criteria that have emerged, as the poetic style has evolved in the mean time. If this seems at first unfair, namely to judge something that belongs to another climate in a way that does not correspond to it, it is also right in the sense that this is the way in which one can determine whether a work survives beyond its time. There is in intellectual phenomena a different kind of justice, if we consider that the works of art of the past that contributed significantly to the opening of the horizons of an era can be comprehended later on only historically, and we cannot communicate with the emotions of their creator.

The blending of the folk song with surrealism attempted by Nikos Gatsos already had a precedent, the similar efforts of George Sarandaris. But this poet, whose premature death was due to the hardships of the Albanian war, was less successful poetically in applying this idea. Instead, Nikos Gatsos, with a verse basically stark, free of sentimental overtones, finely blended the austerity of the folk song with surrealist symbolism.

*Amorgos* consists of six poems (one in prose form). If we

consider the whole book as a single poem, for there are no titles for the individual parts, we must perceive it as written as if it were a kind of musical symphony, since the tones and the rhythms change from section to section. There is surely no central vision in the poem nor can one discern on a second level any framework. Such a thing would be, for example, an idea or an emotional state which could possibly be the result of a loss. Let us remember Seferis' *Mythistorema* in which, out of the vagueness, the fragmentation and the alternation of the tones, a sense of loss—some say the Asia Minor disaster—emerges as a central idea. For *Amorgos*, one could suggest another meaning of the synthetic poem, more fluid: the existence of two or three psychological situations which appear, withdraw and reappear. If I do not commit a serious violation by seeking to touch a morsel of bread, beyond the phenomenological display of words and images, I would make the following remark: already in the first part of the poem, the characteristics of Nikos Gatsos' poetic style make their appearance. A psychological state is developed, as the elements which constitute it are presented; one thing brings the next, one image leads to another similar or opposite image and a complete circle of a certain mood is created which is immediately destroyed, after a series of things, and then we reach a new psychological "stance." From these successive and antithetic elements a particular perception of things emerges. A picture made of small pebbles like a mosaic, where often the antithesis surprises giving us, as a result, a sense of greater breadth and depth. The synthesis which results from the variety and the continuous juxtapositions gives the poem the advantage of a variety of shades.

In the second section, the poem takes on the character of an interpretation of life and a stoical vision of it.

In the branches of an ozier I see your childhood shirt drying  
Take it, a flag of life to shroud death  
And may your heart not be bowed  
And may your tear not flow on this implacable earth  
As the tear of the penguin flowed once on the frozen waste.  
Complaining does not serve.

Life will be the same everywhere with the serpent's flute  
in the land of the ghosts  
With the song of brigands in fragrant woods  
With the knife of suffering in the face of hope  
With spring pinning deep in the screech owl's heart  
It is enough for a plough to be found and a sharp sickle  
in a blithe hand  
It is enough for only a little wheat  
To ripen for feasts a little wine for memory a little water  
for the dust.

From this brief passage, the reader can appreciate the stark style of the poet, and his superb imagination and see how, from this accumulation of images, an emotionally correct climate is created.

In the third part (six fifteen-syllable four-line stanzas) the horizon turns dark. A grief, due to a reason we never learn (and which thus becomes a grief deriving from many small everyday disasters), at this point characterizes the poem, which does not have any breath, any outlet. Especially with the repetition of the line "in the yards of the afflicted" the situation that is revealed takes on the acuteness of despair. The images are weighed down by the realization that an end has taken place. Nothing remains but the faint hope that "the black sky will glow." From all the colors that the sky assumes, the choice of "black" seems like its negation. What follows is the dissolution of the verse, its dismantling.

The next part is written in prose. At this point, the fluid poetic style appears as a quest for freedom, as a tendency toward the rejection of grief. It corresponds to the psychological tendency to seek consolation in the face of the inevitable. Hope, however, becomes here a stronger demand. It expresses itself with the voice that will come and "at all the crossroads they will light red fires at midnight." The poet holds in his fingers "the music for a better day." He has already offered us a way of perception. Because "travellers from India can tell you more than all the Byzantine chroniclers."

In the fifth section, wisdom and the interpretation of life become objects of derision by the use of an ironical tone that

is intensified by puristic language. By the use of high-sounding expressions, "the resonant banalities of that kind"\* are ridiculed.

The sixth and last part of the poem starts on an erotic note, passes through an intermediate heroic phase and ends up in a vaguely erotic climate again. This also constitutes the closing of the poem, but I do not believe that the end defines the character of the whole work. We do not need to assume that the whole poem consists of the—even esoterically presented—account of an erotic situation. It aims at much more. It has kept a distance from whatever cause produced it, it has covered an extended field where experiences took the form of a journey of the imagination among the things experienced; the memory was continuously opening to the outside and from this broadening there emerged a general vision of and an interaction with the phenomenon of life. *Amorgos* is a kind of answer of the poet to the question he seemed to pose to himself: what was his perception of the world. There is a word that fits his stance: dignity. This is what gives him the strength not to yield under the weight of a suffering which becomes grief but does not lead to surrender; which approaches a liberation without leading to resignation; which looks beyond resignation; which sees (beyond the end) the light of the event; which extracts from the matter its spirituality.

Personally I consider *Amorgos* a book that was destined to be followed by other works of Nikos Gatsos that would expand his poetic space and would make up a complete poetic life. For reasons that we do not know, the poet remained silent. It is a case analogous to that of Gryparis, who also published only one poetic collection and then worked exclusively as a translator. Perhaps he was afraid of repeating himself. I do not believe that this is the case with Gatsos. Particularly because his horizons were not limited, his tones were not repetitive. Yet, writing at an age that was aiming at the exclusive and the absolute (a strange compromise, one would say, by conventional logic) in order to differentiate its position from the past, he remained, with the conviction of the revolutionary, at the stage of prepara-

\*Translator's note "καὶ ἄλλα ἡχηρὰ παρόμοια," the ironic ending of Cavafy's "From the School of the Renowned Philosopher."



tion for another style, more intensely personal, more particular. And it is precisely the original form of this style that he gave us with *Amorgos*.

For this reason I think that *Amorgos* was a good book twenty years ago when it gave Modern Greek poetry tones that others had not provided, and revealed a poet with a great talent and an intense personality. The tendencies and inclinations of Nikos Gatsos' poetic art, although they did not find fertile ground for fruition, definitely had their positive sides.

## NIKOS GATSOS AND SURREALISM

One of five lectures on  
*Surrealism in Modern Greek Literature*  
December 1976

BY ALEXANDROS ARGYRIOU  
*translated by C. Capri-Karka*

When in 1943 *Amorgos* was added to the body of Greek surrealism, following—after a relatively long delay—the works of Embirikos, Randos, Elytis, and Engonopoulos, its writer was an unknown even to the most avid readers of poetry. No one, certainly, could remember the few youthful, colorless and traditional-style poems that Gatsos had published in magazines between 1931 and 1933. Nor could his studies or his aesthetic preferences be judged on the basis of the few pieces of criticism that were published in various journals during the same period. But even if someone chanced to remember Gatsos' youthful poems, he certainly could not connect them with the advanced surrealist style of *Amorgos*.

In retrospect, we learn that those early poems had been written by a student of literature at the University of Athens and that the unknown (until 1943) Gatsos was one of the unpublicized contributors to the journal *Νέα Γράμματα* [New Letters] (as Odysseus Elytis informs us<sup>1</sup>), although there, too,

<sup>1</sup>See *Open Papers*, p. 303. In the preceding and the following pages of the same essay, "The Chronicle of a Decade," many references are made by Elytis to Gatsos.

Seferis also knew him, since 1936 at least. I quote the following passage from *Days, D, 1941-1944*, the entry in Seferis' diary for October 26, 1941. (Within the generally gloomy climate of these pages, it is good to see something humorous, since it also constitutes another kind of "reading" and "interpretation" of a poem. I would remind the reader that Seferis' poem "In the Manner of G.S." begins with the line "Wherever I go, Greece keeps wounding me."):

One day, Nikos Gatsos was involved in a misunderstanding. In the winter of '36, he was returning home from a tavern. I was in Korytsa

his typical contribution is limited to a single short critical review.

A little later, a number of Lorca's works were published in the following order (starting from June 1944): a translation by Gatsos of one of Lorca's poems,<sup>2</sup> a study of his work by Elytis and a translation of one of his theatrical plays by George Sevastikoglou. Of course, eleven years earlier, Nikos Kazantzakis had translated a few contemporary Spanish poets, including Lorca.<sup>3</sup> I think, however, that it was only in 1944 that Lorca can be considered to have entered the Greek literary scene, as translations of his works then became numerous, indicating that the approach to his work is not accidental and individual but a conscious and collective act.

I do not know who should be considered to have discovered Lorca (discovered is used here in the meaning Seferis

and I had sent to him in Athens a manuscript of the poem "In the Manner of G.S." Unfortunately—although very innocent, he sometimes looked quite grim—he was arrested and taken to the police station. He was searched. In his pocket they found the manuscript.

"Hey, what did Greece do to you that keeps wounding you? You are a communist, aren't you?"

"But, officer, I didn't write this. It was written by Mr. Seferis who is a consul."

"A consul? This is the kind of consul we have? No wonder we are going from bad to worse."

Fortunately they also found in his pockets some other writings in the same style, and this disarmed the guardians of our peace:

"We'll let you go," they told him when they had read them, "because you are stupid."

<sup>2</sup>*Philologica Chronika*, vol. 6-7, June 1944, pp. 325-328.

Note added in 1982. I found out, at a somewhat late stage, that almost at the same time, Kleitos Kyrou had translated a section from the *Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias*, under the title "Departed Soul" in the Thessaloniki journal *Xekinima*, vol. 9-10, July-August 1944, p. 183. The entire poem, translated by Kleitos Kyrou, was published in the first (and only) issue of the journal *Phoenikas*, July 1947, with the note "Fall of 1946, Thessaloniki." Also, in collaboration with Manolis Anagnostakis, Kleitos Kyrou translated the *Two Odes of F. G. Lorca*, published in 1948.

<sup>3</sup>Mitsos Papanikolaou also translated the *Little Viennese Waltz* and published it in *Neoellinika Grammata*, September 21, 1940, with a very short informative comment on Lorca. It was republished in: Mitsos Papanikolaou, *Translations*, Tasos Korfis (ed.), Diagonios Editions, 1968.

uses when he writes that it was George Theotokas who "discovered Syngrou Avenue"). Formally Gatsos comes first in the second and main phase; but the differences in time are very small (as is our country, to quote Seferis). The fact is, however, that Gatsos' translation of the *Nocturnal Song* (*Romance Sonambulo*) was really a re-creation. Similarly, his subsequent translations of Lorca's theatrical plays demonstrated the highly sensitive way in which Gatsos was able to approach the foreign text and transfer its vibrancy to another language.

After all that (and because of it), one has the right to ask oneself (with good intention or with slyness) whether the principles of *Amorgos* led to the love of Lorca or whether Lorca led to the writing of *Amorgos*. According to my estimation, there are analogies such as the appreciation of the folk tradition, but I do not find any affinities between the poetic styles of Lorca and Gatsos.

If we believe Elytis' writing in 1943, *Amorgos* is a poem "written according to the poetic principles of the school of André Breton and the philosophical theories of Husserl [...]. However, it has the great advantage that it does not require any knowledge of these theories, at least for a free understanding." Andreas Karandonis writes at about the same time: "With the awesome *Amorgos* of Gatsos, whose imagery somewhat unusually combines serious imagination with fire-tested spirituality, contemporary Greek poetry, acquiring the linguistic breath that it was lacking, is colored in a fascinating way with the inspiring and familiar hues of the living poetic tradition."

If, however, Elytis and Karandonis express themselves in this manner because they are fellow travellers of Gatsos, an older writer, Takis Papatzonis, confesses that with *Amorgos* he experienced "the Great Unexpected."

After *Amorgos*, Gatsos published two more short poems in two magazines and two decades later, specifically in *Tachydromos* (November 2, 1963), he published in metric verse the poem "Song of Old Times," dedicated "to George Seferis" which was supposed to be included (but arrived too late) in the special volume dedicated to the poet on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the *Turning Point*, one year before he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

Apart from his small poetic and his big translation output (I compare them in terms of volume), Nikos Gatsos also published two theoretical essays: an article answering the survey taken by the journal *Kallitechnika Nea*, in which he supported with particular acuteness the autonomy of the artistic phenomenon, and another in *Elefthera Grammata* about Paul Valéry.

Yet, it is incredible how much his work, though small in volume, has influenced a significant number of younger poets, and not only of the second and third rank. I do not think that the reason Gatsos' poetry had so much appeal was due as much to the blending of surrealism with the tones of the folk song as to the fact that, in the final analysis, his style, through the surrealist excesses of expression, while preserving a logic that obeyed an emotional restraint, conveyed warm human tones. If one takes into account the particular time that the poem was published (the penultimate year of the German occupation) with a resistance movement on the rise (and with the Nazis and their Greek collaborators in competition for executions), one can understand why the "heroic and funereal" element of the poem seemed—probably regardless of Gatsos' intentions and his aesthetic theories—to represent and convey the spirit of the times.

Such an extension could perhaps be considered as attempting a false interpretation of the poem; however, perhaps even when a work of art is written against the current of its time, it may ultimately not be able to avoid expressing it, because the sensitive antennae of a poet capture even that which he himself does not intend to receive. Besides, a poetic work is basically a text that has an existence independent of its creator and contains as many possible readings as it itself permits and legitimizes.

# ΣΚΟΠΟΙ ΣΤΟ ΕΝΑ ΔΑΧΤΥΛΟ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΝΙΚΟ ΓΚΑΤΣΟ

ΟΔΥΣΣΕΑΣ ΕΛΥΤΗΣ

“Όπως και νά τὸ δοκιμάσεις, ὁ Νίκος Γκάτσος δὲν πιάνεται μὲ τίποτε. Εἶναι συνεχῶς παρὼν χωρὶς νά τὸν ἀπασχολεῖ διόλου τὸ παρόν, καί, μὲ μιὰν ἐλαφρότατα δαιμονική, μαγνητική δύναμη, ἐξακολουθεῖ νά ἐπηρεάζει ὅλα τὰ σωματίδια ποὺ κινοῦνται μέσα στὴ σφαῖρα τῆς ἐλληνικῆς πνευματικῆς ζωῆς. Τὸ ἰδιότυπο σχῆμα ποὺ πῆρε ἀπὸ μιᾶς ἀρχῆς καὶ ποὺ τὸ διατηρεῖ μὲ ἀξιοθαύμαστη συνέπεια ὡς τὶς μέρες μας τοῦ ἐπιτρέπει νά ἀσκεῖ τὴν ποίηση λιγότερο μὲ λόγια καὶ περισσότερο μὲ μιὰ πειθῶ μαγικὴ ποὺ ἀλλοιώνει τὴ γύρω του πραγματικότητα, ὅπως ἐκεῖνος ὁ μυστηριώδης Jacques Vaché, ὅπου ἐκκολάφθηκε γιὰ κάμποσο διάστημα τὸ αὐγὸ τῆς μοντέρνας ποίησης ἕως ὅτου τὸ σπάσουν καὶ τὸ ἀνοίξουν ὁ André Breton καὶ οἱ φίλοι του.

Ἀκόμη καὶ στὴν ἱστορία τῆς λογοτεχνίας μας δυσκολεύεται, πιστεύω, νά ἐνταχθεῖ ὁ Νίκος Γκάτσος. Τὴ συνοψίζει ὅλη, ἀπὸ τὸ πολὺ νά τὴν ἔχει ἀφομοιώσει, πάντοτε ὅμως περισσεύει κατὰ τι. Κεῖνο τὸ λίγο τῆς ὑπεροχῆς ποὺ μᾶς ἐνοχλεῖ, ὅπως ὁ ἀθλητὴς ποὺ ἀφήνει νά τὸν νικήσουμε, ὄχι γι’ ἄλλο λόγο ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ ἀπλὴ γενναιοδωρία. Κυριολεκτικὰ καὶ μεταφορικὰ ἰδοὺ: αὐτὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ κυριώτερό του γνῶρισμα. Νά πετάει ἀπὸ τὸ παράθυρο (ἔτσι, γιὰ τὴ χαρὰ τῆς ἀφιλόκερδης χειρονομίας) προσόντα ποὺ ἄλλοι θὰ τὰ ἔβαζαν στὸν τόκο γιὰ νά εἰσπράττουν σ’ ὅλη τους τὴ ζωὴ. Ὅμως ἐκεῖνος τὴ ζωὴ δὲν μπόρεσε ποτέ του νά τὴ δεῖ παρὰ σὰν ἓνα παιχνίδι. Τραγικὸ ἴσως παιχνίδι καὶ μάταιο, ἀλλὰ παιχνίδι. Κι ἐξακολουθεῖ νά ποντάρει, μὲ τὴ βεβαιότητα ὅτι θὰ χάσει (κι ἂς διαθέτει τοὺς τέσσερις ἄσους), ἀποβλέποντας σὲ μιὰν ἄλλου εἴδους ἱκανοποίηση: νά προκαλεῖ τὴν τύχη ὄχι μόνο στὸ συνδυασμὸ τῶν λέξεων ἀλλὰ καὶ στὸ συνδυασμὸ τῶν ψυχικῶν καταστάσεων ποὺ

# ONE-FINGER MELODIES FOR NIKOS GATSOS<sup>1</sup>

BY ODYSSEUS ELYTIS

*translated by David Connolly*

However you might try, Nikos Gatsos simply won't be pinned down. He is always present without being at all concerned about the present, and with a slightly demonic magnetic force, he continues to exert an influence over all the particles that move within the sphere of Greek cultural life. The distinctive shape he took and which he has maintained with admirable consistency right up to the present enables him to practise poetry not so much with words but rather with a magical persuasiveness that alters the reality around him, just as with that mysterious Jacques Vaché, in whom the egg of modern poetry incubated for a lengthy period before it was cracked open by André Breton and friends.

Even in the history of Greek literature it's hard to know just where to place Nikos Gatsos. He epitomizes it in its entirety, through having so absorbed it, yet there is always something more. It is that little superiority that bothers us, like the athlete that lets us beat him, for no other reason than out of sheer generosity. Literally and metaphorically, take note: for this is his main characteristic. He throws out of the window (just like that, for the joy of the unselfish gesture) talents that others would invest and live on the interest for the rest of their lives. Yet he has never been able to see life as anything but a game: a tragic game, perhaps, and pointless, but still a game. And he goes on gambling with the certainty that he will lose (even though he holds all the aces), aiming at a different form of satisfaction: *to chance his luck* not only in the combination of words but also in the combination of emotional states that un-

<sup>1</sup>"Skopi sto ena daktylo yia ton Niko Gatso" in *En Lefko* (Carte Blanche), Athens, Ikaros 1992, pp. 295-301. First published in *I Lexi* 52, Feb. 1986, pp. 92-96.

διαδραματίζονται σ' ένα δεύτερο ή τρίτο επίπεδο και παραμένουν έσσει άθέατες από τους άλλους.

Η κρυπτικότητα του είναι συνάμα παγίδα και άμυνα. "Ωσου να καταλάβει κανείς—δοκιμάζοντας να τον πλησιάσει θαθύτερα—ότι πήρε λανθασμένο δρόμο, μετατρέπεται κιόλας σ' έναν αίχμάλωτο. Τέτοιοι αίχμάλωτοί του είμαστε όλοι μας κάτω από το φώς της μεγάλης, της τρομακτικής αντίληψης που διαθέτει. Και αυτή, άποτελεί το δεύτερο χαρακτηριστικό του γνώρισμα. Έπειδή το μειονέκτημά του—άν θέλει κανείς να το βλέπει έτσι—άπέναντι σ' έμάς που γράψαμε πέντε ή δέκα βιβλία δέν είναι ότι εκείνος έγραψε μόνον ένα ή δύο· είναι ότι δέν είχε τη δική μας «δύναμη αύταπάτης» να γράψει περισσότερα. Η μεγάλη αντίληψη, με το να φωτίζει τόσο άπλετα το όπτικό του πεδίο, καθιστά ίσα-ίσα και πιο εύκρινη τά όρια που δέ γίνεται ποτέ του να περάσει ό άνθρωπος. Και ό Παράδεισος του ποιητή, που άποτελείται από καίριες αλήθειες και τελειότητες, φεύ, κείται πέραν. Αυτόν τον Παράδεισο ξεκινήσαμε να κατακτήσουμε κάποτε.

Τά χρόνια εκείνα ή Αθήνα δέν είχε νερό μήτε δωρεάν παιδεία. Είχε όμως μία Φωκίωνος Νέγρη σέ πρωτόγονη κατάσταση, με πολλούς ήχους νερών και πολλές κρυφές πρασινάδες. Έκει κάπου, λίγο μετά τά μεσάνυχτα, μπορούσες να συναντήσεις τον Νίκο Γκάτσο και να βολτάρεις μαζί του, συζητώντας για ποίηση, ως το πρωί. Πού βέβαια, εάν ήταν Σάββατο, εκείνος θρискότανε κιόλας στη Δευτέρα. Τόσο άνεξήγητα πανέτοιμος μάς είχε φτάσει στα δεκαοχτώ του από την Άσέα της Άρκαδίας. Με πλήρη έξάρτηση: με τούς Έλιοτ και τούς Λόρκα, τούς Κάφκα και τούς Σάρτρ. Χώρια βέβαια τη δημοτική παράδοση, πού, αυτή, κυκλοφορούσε στο αίμα του και άναπηδούσε πίσω από κάθε του κρίση, κάθε του αντίδραση, άρκει να πατούσες το κουμπι στην κατάλληλη στιγμή. Τό τί μυριάδες τσιγάρα και καφέδες καταναλώθηκαν άργότερα, λίγο πιο πάνω, στο τέρμα της οδοϋ Σπετσών όπου θρискότανε το μικρό του σπιτί, τό τί όλονυχτιές έξαντλητικές διαδέχονταν ή μία την άλλη στα χρόνια της 4ης Αυγούστου ή της Γερμανικής Κατοχής



fold on a second or third level and remain forever concealed from the others.

His tendency to concealment is at once a trap and a form of defence. By the time you realise—in trying to approach him on a deeper level—that you're on the wrong track, you've already become a captive. We are, all of us, captives in the light of the great, *the terrifying perception* that he possesses. And this is his second characteristic feature. For his disadvantage—if that's how you want to see it—in comparison with those of us who have written five or ten works is not that he has only written one or two: it's that he didn't have our "capacity for self-delusion" to write more. His great perception, illuminating as it does so vividly his visual field, renders even more discernible the limits that man must never go beyond. And the poet's Paradise, consisting of pointed truths and perfections, alas, *lies beyond*. This is the Paradise that we once set out to attain.

During those years, Athens had neither water nor free education. Yet it had a Fokionos Negri Street in an unspoilt state with numerous sounds of water and numerous hidden areas of greenery. It was there, a little after midnight, that you could meet Nikos Gatsos and stroll with him, talking about poetry, until the morning. Needless to say that if it was Saturday, he was already into Monday. He had come to us, eighteen years old from Asea in Arcadia, so inexplicably ready: fully equipped, with Eliot and Lorca, Kafka and Sartre. And this is not to mention, of course, the folk tradition, which flowed in his blood and throbbed behind his every judgement, his every reaction, provided that you pressed the button at the right moment. It's impossible to recount the limitless number of cigarettes and cups of coffee consumed later, a little further on, at the end of Spetson Street where he had his small apartment, or how many exhausting all-night discussions took place, one after the other, during the years of the 4th of August Dictatorship and the German

ἢ τοῦ Ἐμφυλίου, μὲ συνεχῇ ἀνεβοκατεβάσματα Σολωμῶν καὶ Καθάφηδων, Βαλερύδων καὶ Ἐλουάρδων, δὲν περιγράφεται. Ἴσως, χωρὶς τὸ μπουλουκι ἐκεῖνο τῶν ἐνθουσιῶντων νέων, ποὺ τὸ πάθος τους γιὰ τὰ ποιήματα, ὥστόσο, τὸ μετρούσανε στὴν πλάστιγγα τῶν χρυσοχόων κι ὄχι καθόλου τῶν πολιτικῶν σκοπιμοτήτων, τὸ μοντέρνο ποιητικὸ κίνημα νὰ μὴν εἶχε πάρει ποτὲ τίς προεκτάσεις ποὺ γνωρίζουμε καὶ νὰ μὴν εἶχε κρυφὰ συνδεθεῖ μὲ τίς ὑπόγειες φλέβες ποὺ διατρέχανε τὴν παράδοση καὶ ποὺ ἀνεβάζανε στὴν ἐπιφάνεια εἰκόνες τοῦ ὁμαδικοῦ ὑποσυνειδήτου, μοραίτικες, νησιώτικες, μακεδονικές, κάτι ἄγνωστο στοὺς ἄλλοδαπούς συναδέλφους μὲ τίς ὁμοιόμορφες—μόλις πέντε ἢ ἕξι αἰώνων—μορφές πνευματικῆς κληρονομίας ποὺ διαθέτανε.

Πρέπει, φαίνεται, νὰ κρατᾷς τὴν ποίηση σὲ ἀπόσταση, ἂν θές νὰ τὴ βλέπεις νὰ ῥχεται ἀπὸ μόνου της κοντὰ σου, ὅπως οἱ γάτες ἢ ὅπως οἱ γυναῖκες. Τὰ «φιλολογικὰ ζῶα» βέβαια, ἐκεῖνα, θουτᾷν μὲ τὰ μοῦτρα καὶ δὲν παύουν νὰ γλείφονται. Εἶναι ὅμως ἀμφίβολο ἐὰν ἕνας χημικὸς θ' ἀνακάλυπτε ποτὲ στὴ σιελό τους τὸν θεῖο ἰό. Ἡ ἀλήθεια (ἢ πραγματικότητα;) θρίσκεται πάντοτε παραδίπλα στὸ νόημα, ὅπως ἡ μαγεία παραδίπλα στὸ ἐκάστοτε γραπτὸ ποὺ τὴν ἐκφράζει.

Κάπου ἐκεῖ κοντά, σ' ἕναν τέτοιον τρόπο ἀντίληψης (ποὺ ἢ τὸν ὑποψιάζεσαι, καὶ τότε θγάνεις, ἀκόμη κι ἀπὸ μπλὲ μὲ κίτρινο, τὸ πράσινο ποὺ σοῦ χρειάζεται, ἢ ἀλλιῶς μένεις διὰ παντὸς ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸ παιχνίδι) συναντηθήκαμε πρὶν ἀπὸ μισὸν περίπου αἰῶνα μὲ τὸν Νίκο Γκάτσο.

Τὰ χρώματα ἴσαμε σήμερα δὲν ξεβάψανε.

Κοντὰ στὸ μόχθο του γιὰ τὸν ἐπιούσιο, εἶναι περίεργο ἀλλὰ κάποτε ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐπιμένει νὰ μοχθεῖ καὶ γιὰ κάτι ἐπὶ πλεόν ἀκόμη. Ὅσο μάλιστα λιγώτερο ἀπαραίτητος μοιάζει ὁ λόγος ποὺ τὸν ὠθεῖ τόσο πιὸ ἀκατανόητο θρίσκουμε τὸ φαινόμενο. Καὶ ἂς εἶναι αὐτό, ἴσως, τὸ μοναδικὸ γνῶρισμα τῆς εὐγένειας του.

Ἐχω δεῖ τὸν Νίκο Γκάτσο νὰ ἐξαναγκάζει σὲ ἀναβολὴ πρεμιέρες καὶ νὰ ξημερώνεται γιὰ μιὰ λέξη. Ὅχι κὰν λέξη σὲ ποιητικὸ κείμενο· σὲ ἀπλὸ θεατρικὸ διάλογο, προορι-

Occupation and the Civil War, with a continual stream of exponents of Solomos, Cavafy, Valery and Eluard. Perhaps, without that band of impassioned young men, who measured their passion for poetry in the goldsmith's scales and not those of political expediency, the modern poetry movement would never have grown to the extent that we know and never have secretly become linked with the underground veins running through tradition and which brought to the surface images of the collective unconscious, Peloponnesian, Aegean, Macedonian, unknown to foreign colleagues with the uniform types of cultural heritage—only five or six centuries old—that they possessed.

It seems that you have to keep poetry at a distance if you want to see it coming towards you of its own accord, like cats or like women. Of course, those "literary animals" dive in head first and can't stop licking their lips. Yet it is doubtful if a chemist would ever discover the divine bug in their saliva. The truth (or the reality?) is always to be found at a distance from the meaning, just as the magic is always to be found at a distance from each written text that expresses it.

Somewhere there, in just such a way of thinking (which you either suspect, and then you are able to produce, even from blue and yellow, the green you require, or otherwise you remain forever outside the game), Nikos Gatsos and I met some half a century ago.

Until today, the colours haven't faded.

Apart from the toil for his daily bread, there are times, strangely enough, when man insists on toiling for something more. The less necessary the reason seems to be that motivates him, the more incomprehensible we find this phenomenon. Yet this is, perhaps, the sole characteristic feature of his noble nature.

I've seen Nikos Gatsos cause theatre premieres to be postponed and sit up all night for the sake of one word; not even a word in a poem, but in a simple theatrical dialogue, destined

σμένον νὰ διαρκέσει μερικὰ δευτερόλεπτα. Τί μπορεῖ νὰ σημαίνει μιὰ τέτοιου εἶδους ἐπιμονή; Εὐσυνειδησία; Σχολαστικότητα; Αἴσθηση εὐθύνης; Μανία τῆς τελειότητας;

Ἐρευνήσετε στὰ ἐδάφη τοῦ Διονυσίου Σολωμοῦ γιὰ νὰ βρεῖτε τὸ μυστικό. Καὶ νὰ ἐξηγήσετε τὴν ὀλιγογραφία του.

Προσωπικά, ἔχω καταλήξει ἀπὸ καιρὸ στὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει ταλέντο ποιητικό· ὑπάρχει ἀπλῶς «ὀρθὴ αἴσθηση τοῦ ποιητικοῦ». Δὲν ὑπάρχει γνώση τῆς γλώσσας· ὑπάρχει «ὀρθὴ αἴσθηση τῆς γλώσσας». Καὶ λοιπόν, νὰ κρίνουμε τὸν Νίκο Γκάτσο ἀπὸ τὴν Ἄμωργο καὶ τίς μεταφράσεις του; Ὡστόσο, ἂν ἓνας μάγος μπορούσε νὰ μεταφυτεύσει σ' ὅλους τοὺς σύγχρονους «Ἕλληνες τί «στέκει» καὶ τί «δὲ στέκει», ὅπως θγαίνει ἀπὸ τὴ μικρὴ ἐκείνη ποιητικὴ συλλογὴ, καθὼς καὶ τὸ τί περνάει καὶ τί δὲν περνάει ἀπὸ τὴ γλώσσα μας, ὅπως θγαίνει ἀπὸ τὰ ποιητικὰ ἔργα ποὺ μεταγλώττισε, θὰ βλέπαμε ποιά καὶ πόση μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι ἡ συνεισφορά του. Ἄλλ' ἐμεῖς τὴ δημοτικὴ γλώσσα καὶ τὴν παράδοση τίς ἐκμάθαμε. Σιγὰ-σιγὰ καὶ μὲ πολὺν κόπο. Ἐκεῖνος τίς θρῆκε μέσα του, ἔτοιμες, μαζὶ μὲ τὰ τραγούδια τῶν προγόνων του, τίς ἀφομοίωσε μαζὶ μὲ «τὸ γάλα τῆς μητρός του», ποὺ θὰ ἔλεγε ὁ Σολωμός. Ἀκόμη καὶ στοὺς στίχους ποὺ γιὰ βιοποριστικούς λόγους ἔγραψε (ἀλλὰ καὶ γιατί προτιμότερη βρίσκει τὴν ταπεινὴ τέχνη ποὺ λειτουργεῖ παρὰ τὴν ὕψηλὴ ποὺ σκονίζεται στὰ ράφια), οἱ ἄρετές του περνᾶνε, τίς περισσότερες φορές, σχεδὸν ἀτόφιε, μείον τὴ διαφορετικὴ κλίμακα. Καὶ θὰ μοῦ ἐπιτραπῇ νὰ ὑποστηρίξω πῶς μερικοὶ στίχοι ἀπ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἔγραψε γιὰ τὴ Μυθολογία τοῦ Μάνου Χατζιδάκι, γιὰ τοὺς Δροσουλίτες τοῦ Χριστόδουλου Χάλαρη καί, τώρα τελευταῖα, γιὰ τὸ Ρεμπέτικο τοῦ Σταύρου Ξαρχάκου, ξεπερνοῦν κατὰ πολὺ μερικὰ μεγαλεπήβολα σύγχρονα ποιητικὰ μας ἔργα καὶ διδάσκουν τί πάει νὰ πεῖ ἀρρενωπότητα τῆς δημοτικῆς παράδοσης, ὀργανικὴ λειτουργία τῆς ὁμοιοκαταληξίας, ἦθος τῆς ἐλληνικῆς.

Ὅταν δὲν μετρᾷς μὲ κουκιά, οἱ ἀναλογίες τοῦ κόσμου παρουσιάζονται διαφορετικές, ἂν ὄχι—φαινομενικὰ τουλάχιστον—

to last a few seconds. What does such a form of perseverance mean? Conscientiousness? Fastidiousness? Sense of responsibility? Mania for perfection?

Examine the work of Dionysios Solomos if you want to discover the secret. And if you want to explain his small output.

Personally, I've come to the conclusion for some time now that there is no such thing as poetic talent; there is simply "a right sense of the poetical." There is no such thing as knowledge of language; there is "a right sense of language." So, can we judge Nikos Gatsos from *Amorgos* and his translations? And yet, if some sorcerer could implant in all modern Greeks a sense of what "can be said" and what "can't be said," as appears from this small poetic work, together with what can pass and can't pass into the Greek language, as appears from the poetic works that he has translated, we would see what and how great his contribution actually is. While we had to *learn* the demotic language and tradition, slowly and at great pains, he discovered it ready within him, together with the songs of his ancestors; he assimilated it together with "his mother's milk" as Solomos would say. Even in the lyrics that he wrote in order to earn a living (but also because he prefers the humble art that functions to the high art that gathers dust on the shelves), his virtues appear, more often than not, virtually intact, allowing for the difference in scale. And allow me to say that some of the lyrics he wrote for *Mythologia* with music by Manos Hadjidakis, or for *Drosoulites* with music by Christodoulos Halaris and, more recently, for *Rebetiko* with music by Stavros Xarhakos easily surpass some of our more grandiose modern poetic works and go to show what is meant by the virility of the folk tradition, the organic function of rhyme, the ethos of the Greek language.

When you don't count in terms of beans, the analogies of the world appear different, if not—ostensibly at least—turned

χιστον—ἀναποδογυρισμένες. Ὁ ἐξοικειωμένος μὲ τ' ἄπιαστα δὲν ἀπορεῖ. Προϋποθέτει φυσιολογικὴ μιὰ πραγματικότητα ὅπως αὐτή, κι ἐπάνω της κινεῖται μὲ ἄνεση. Αὐτὸ κάνει, ἐδῶ καὶ χρόνια, ὁ Νίκος Γκάτσο, ποὺ δὲν προσπάθησε ποτέ του νὰ διορθωθεῖ, θέλω νὰ πῶ ν' ἀπαλείψει ἀκατανόητες λογικὰ συνήθειες ἢ ἔξεις, γιὰ νὰ εὐθυγραμμισθεῖ μὲ ὅ,τι ἀποτελεῖ τὴν «κοινὴ ἀντίληψη». Κι εὐτυχῶς. Ἐκατομμύρια ἰδιοφυῶν ἀνθρώπων χάνουν τὴν ταυτότητά τους «καθ' ὁδόν». Γιατί; Νὰ μὴν κακοχαρακτηρισθεῖς ἀπὸ τοὺς κουτούς, ἀξίζει τόσο ποὺ νὰ καταθέτετε στὰ πόδια τους τὴν εὐφυΐα σου; Κι ὕστερα, ποιά εὐφυΐα; Ἐδῶ μιλάμε γιὰ τὴν ποιητικὴ· ποὺ τρέπει σὲ φυγὴ τὸ σύνολο τῶν ἀστῶν κι ἓνα μέρος τῶν ἐπαναστατῶν, ποὺ ὅλα τὰ ἔκψαν μείον τὸν καθωσπρεπισμό, κι ἄς νομίζουν ὅτι τὸν ἀπέβαλαν μαζί μὲ τὴν πανάθλια γραβάτα τους.

Ὁ τρόπος νὰ μιᾶς γιὰ τὸ παρελθὸν χωρὶς νὰ γίνεσαι ὑποπτος νοσταλγίας δὲν ἔχει θρεθεῖ ἀκόμη. Ὡστόσο, εἶναι ἄλλο πρᾶγμα νὰ φορτώνεσαι τὸ χρόνο καὶ νὰ τὸν μεταρρῆς μαζί μὲ τὶς ρυτίδες σου καὶ ἄλλο νὰ κυκλοφορεῖς μέσα του πίσω-μπρός, μὲ τὴν εὐκολία ποὺ μόνον ἡ ποίηση ἐπιτρέπει.

Ἄν ἐξακολουθοῦμε νὰ παραμένουμε ζωντανοί, πιστεύω, εἶναι χάρη στὴν αὐταξία ὀρισμένων στιγμῶν ποὺ ὑποσυνείδητα ἐπιλέγουμε κι ἐπανασυνδέουμε, δημιουργώντας μιὰ δεύτερη ροή, ὅπου ἡ φθορὰ δὲν προχωρεῖ καὶ οἱ πέτρες δὲν μαλλιάζουν. Ἀπ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἄποψη, ἐπιστρέφω τὶς ρυτίδες μου καὶ κρατῶ τὴν ψυχὴ μου στὴν ἄκρη κάποιου στίχου ἢ μιᾶς μελωδίας ἢ ἐνὸς φωτεινοῦ κοριτσιίστικου χαμόγελου.

Μὲ τὸν Νίκο Γκάτσο συνδέθηκα καὶ συμπορεύτηκα, ἐπειδὴ κι ἐκεῖνος, πίσω ἀπὸ τὰ χαμόγελα καὶ τὶς μελωδίες, εἶχε ἀκούσει τὴ φωνὴ ποὺ κηρύττει καὶ στὶς παραμονὲς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ πάνω ἀπὸ τὶς καταιγίδες.

upside down. Whoever is familiar with what is elusive is not surprised. He considers such a reality to be natural and moves in it with ease. For years now, Nikos Gatsos has been doing just this. He has never tried to correct himself, by which I mean to get rid of logically incomprehensible habits or practices in order to bring himself into line with what constitutes the "common view." And fortunately so. Millions of men of genius lose their identity "en route." Why? To avoid being characterized unfavourably by the ignorant, is it worth laying your genius at their feet? And after all, what kind of genius? Here, we're talking about poetic genius, which puts to flight the whole of the middle classes and also a section of the revolutionaries, who have burned everything but their priggishness, even if they think that they've discarded it together with their wretched ties.

A way of talking about the past without becoming suspected of nostalgia has still not been found. Nevertheless, it's one thing to burden yourself with time and carry it about together with your wrinkles and another to move back and forth within it with the ease that only poetry can provide.

If we continue to remain alive, it is, I believe, by virtue of arranging certain moments that we subconsciously select and reconnect, thereby creating a second current, where decay doesn't progress and stones gather no moss. From this point of view, I return my wrinkles and keep my soul at the end of a line of verse or of a melody or of a girl's bright smile.

I associated myself and journeyed together with Nikos Gatsos, because, behind the smiles and the melodies, he too had heard the voice that proclaims on the eve of death and above the storm.

## THE CASE OF NIKOS GATSOS

BY DIMITRIS I. KARAMVALIS

*translated by Ilona Karka*

The case of Nikos Gatsos is certainly an exception in the area of Greek poetry, since the poet, being the writer of a single poetic collection (*Amorgos*, Athens, 1943), has succeeded, even up to today, in influencing so many poets and, at the same time, in breaking down the boundaries and dispelling the differences that existed between poetry and the writing of lyrics. In writing the lyrics for songs (which were set to music by famous composers, including Manos Hadjidakis), he did not depart at all from the rules of poetry, since these verses transcend time, but they are also moving and they express the poetic ethos and, more generally, a stand toward life.

*Amorgos*, published in the unpropitious years of the German occupation, contains in condensed form the course of man's life, particularly that of a Greek, who, being enslaved, is seeking a compass, something to hold on to, a new code; and Gatsos, profoundly influenced by our folk song, which he reshapes and enriches with new elements and experiences, presents a condensed work, which he could have expanded into several books of poetry, analyzing each element. Yet, he prefers to condense and to overwhelm the reader with successive waves of boats, bells, summer fields, "serpents' flutes," "hopes of crickets" and a multitude of poetic images, an alternation of colors and shades, feelings and emotions. At any rate, the lyric-writer Gatsos has his orientation in *Amorgos*, just as the later work of Elytis has the roots of its thematic material in *Orientations* (1939).

But are not his excellent translations, such as his translation of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, also poetry (actually poetry twice over)?

*Amorgos* was published at a difficult historical turning-point for Greece and for the whole world, when man and his



age-old values were tested. Gatsos, taking several elements from surrealism, succeeds in putting them into the melting pot of the Greek folk song and in creating an entirely different and distinctive blend. He thus constitutes one of the exceptions to what usually happens, particularly in Greece, where every foreign movement and style is assimilated without being elaborated upon; the result, of course, is something entirely inaccessible and impersonal, a work without the spark, the spirit and the passion of its creator. These three element-words, characteristic manifestations of Greekness, which are absent from the dictionaries of other languages—"τὸ μερόκι," "τὸ φιλότιμο" and "τὸ κέφι"—are keys for Gatsos, who found his own way in his effort to express his lyricism in a manner different from those existing until then.

The poetry of Nikos Gatsos conveys a brave attitude and a courageous way of facing life in spite of its many adversities. Although he suffers and grieves over the hardships of life it is here precisely that his skill lies: his poetry is human, like the poetry of the folk song, in contrast to the superhuman and overpowering element of the "akritic" epics. Somebody once said: "Poetry is painting with words." This is exactly the poetry of Nikos Gatsos, in which numerous images with the most lively colors and landscapes are displayed before the eyes of the reader and are so lively and so vivid that no great effort is needed to grasp them:

And so in a deep jar the grape dries  
In the belfry of a fig tree the apple ripens  
So with a gaudy necktie  
Summer breathes under the tent of the vine.

But messages of freedom for enslaved Greece are also numerous in this poetic collection, in which the poet cries out "Do not become FATE," in other words do not remain passively indifferent but turn your eyes toward the sea, which means toward the struggle for freedom and justice

But seaweed eyes are turned to the sea.

Manos Hadjidakis, on the occasion of the recent award given to the poet by the municipality of Athens, said: "A book of twenty pages which, however, could be made to contain an astonishing poetic transcription of our modern Greek history unique in dramatic lyricism and close adherence to the living tradition of our country." These words are absolutely correct: an original, landmark-book, which really has so much to say. Gatsos, using names and characteristic events of Greek history (we should recall here that the book has as a frontispiece the words of Heraclitus "Bad witnesses are eyes and ears to men if they have barbarian souls") concludes his *Amorgos* by urging the children to return to the roots of history and to be baptized in the spring water of Greek civilization:

Perhaps children remembrance of ancestors is a deeper solace and more precious company than a handful of rosewater and the intoxication of beauty no different from the sleeping rosebush of the Evrotas.

The whole poem is divided into six parts, which, at the same time, are to be understood as a unified text. We should also note that it has certainly been influenced by the whole climate and poetic atmosphere of Lorca. Gatsos' poetry is evocative. It makes you feel reborn again, it purifies you through "a river of tears." For this reason it is true poetry which includes the element of pain, even if "In the yards of the afflicted black grass grows," because in the end there will come the reward and justification from nature itself: "a kiss from the foam-decked sea."

Many poets imitated him, some copied him. However, they could not convey the outburst of emotion of *Amorgos*, the lyricism, the sensitivity, the revelation of poetry itself. Forty-five whole years have passed and yet Nikos Gatsos' poetry succeeds in transcending its time and in being loved by two generations; and it is certain that it will continue to do so, since genuine lyricism and clarity know no time limits.

The erotic element exists in *Amorgos* without high-sounding words or extremes, preserving in its simplicity all of its greatness and beauty and taking elements of nature, such as

the moon with the deeply romantic disposition and musing it evokes, and the explosion of the volcano, the celebration and apotheosis of life during the summer:

How very much I loved you I alone know  
I who once touched you with the eyes of the Pleiades  
And with the mane of the moon I embraced you and we  
danced on the summer plains . . .

There are also specific references to the Germans, the oppressors of the country. Gatsos does not hesitate to tell the truth, using the style and manner of the folk song:

This dust in the air is the echo of what conflagration?  
Is it Kalyvas fighting or is Levendoyiannis?  
Have the Germans joined battle with the Maniates?

As mentioned before, the poem is divided into various units. Thus, in the first part of *Amorgos* the poet talks to us about the shipwrecked sailors who "slept calm as dead wild beasts" and he may be referring here to the enslaved Greeks who are suffering under the German yoke; but he also conveys the message of rising up against tyranny with the words "let birds flutter in the masts of the lemon tree" (here the lemon tree becomes a symbol of freedom). In the second paragraph of the same section there is a reference to "the yataghan of Kolokotronis" and to "banners," as well as to the brave young men who are called upon to fight and not to compromise:

Do not become FATE  
Because the golden eagle is not a closed drawer.

In the second part the climate becomes erotic with intense outbursts of a rather surrealistic nature, as well as an appeal to a young woman to take her "childhood shirt" and make it "a flag of life to shroud death." Here this may again mean Greece itself, personified by the beautiful young woman, because here again there is a message for an uprising and a

rebirth: "it is enough for a plough to be found and a sharp sickle."

The third part consists of six four-line stanzas written in fifteen-syllable verses (another influence of the folk song on Gatsos) where from within "the yards of the afflicted" we observe the union of nature and soul, since "night does not fade" and "black grass grows" and "the eye has run dry" and the burden now falls on "the leaves" that "vomit a river of tears" (how intensely lyrical is this line with its surrealistic overtones). Yet, in spite of the heavy and quite pessimistic atmosphere, there is an anticipation of lightning in the black sky:

Only be patient a moment for the healing rue to open  
For the black sky to glow for the mullein to flower.

In the last line we see the intense influence of Solomos.

The third part of this composite poem closes with a disappointment: "it was a wind that has gone a lark that has flown."

In the fourth part of *Amorgos* the style changes, as we now have a lyrical prose style, something like a prose-song. The great role of Greece in the universal firmament is stressed, as one is presented with the symbol of an "immortal stone that a passing human angel once wrote his name upon." It ends by reminding the young of the formidable obligation and heritage of the Greek nation:

Perhaps children remembrance of ancestors is a deeper  
solace and more precious company than a handful of  
rosewater and the intoxication of beauty no different  
from the sleeping rosebush of the Evrotas.

We also encounter similar hints in the poetic work of George Sarandaris, expressed, however, in a more lyrical manner and in a different (perhaps romantic) dimension related actually to that of Andreas Kalvos, something that Sarandaris himself has admitted.

In the fifth part (the part with the fewest lines in this poetic sequence) the character of the work changes and becomes more aphoristic, as the language also changes to puristic. This language has been used widely, as is well known, by the surrealists in an intensely ironic mood. Let us remember, for instance, the definition of poetry according to Andreas Embirikos: "Poetry is the development of a shining bicycle." This part is about the formulation of some thoughts as a kind of account of the nature and purpose of life, something like an intentional interlude, like a parenthesis.

In the sixth and last part the poet uses deeply erotic expressions while at the same time making references to history, writing about the "lost Saint Sophia," about the brave young men, about "Kalyvas and Levendoyiannis," wondering whether they are fighting. He ends addressing Greece itself, which takes the form of "a flowering quince tree" or "a hyacinth from an orange tree" and for which he "strove, year after year with ink and hammer," so as to be able to convey something of its brightness; and which, as the poem is being written (1943), is "a vast black sea with so many pebbles round your neck so many coloured gems in your hair."

In his *Open Papers* (Ikaros, Athens, 1982), Elytis was to say about *Amorgos*: "It was a nail in the eyes of the rationalists whose fate seems to be to ignore the direct communication of beauty with the moral world." A little further on he reveals to us that "Nikos Gatsos had never lived on an island when he gave his poetic work the title *Amorgos*" (pp. 289 and 291).

We must note that *Amorgos* met with a lot of animosity and passionate opposition from the critics of the time, something which, for that matter, always happens with great works of art, the original ones, the ones that advance art, that stir the stagnant waters and, of course, the works of the surrealists that incite a rebellion in life. The poetic coordinates of this poem are within the views and the whole climate of the French surrealist André Breton. However, one can also find in the poem other ideas of related tendencies. Moreover, it succeeds (and this is a significant achievement for the Greek space) in reinforcing the position that the lyrical vibrations of poetry do not occur only in rhyme; free verse, when well worked out,

can convey a musical sensitivity of the same degree and even express much more, because it is not confined by the number of syllables and external resonance.

With his *Amorgos*, Nikos Gatsos tried to present his own view about life and about man, at a time when he had certainly not yet been integrated as a poet and as a man, since he wrote it when he was only thirty-two years old, with the fervor and liveliness of a young intellectual anguished about the future of his country and the whole world (hence *Amorgos* conveys messages with a universal character and mission); yet, it does not have the maturity of the work of a writer with a few decades behind him. Also, it presents a logical inconsistency and a break in continuity from one part to another; however, from another point of view, this may be an advantage in the work. Anyway, one can discern the same quality and clarity of his poetry in the lyrics of the songs that were set to music.

These verses, intensely erotic, express the longings and desires of simple people; they have popularity but not populism. They express the people as a whole, but not the masses. And the people, with their infallible instinct and judgement, loved and sang the lyrics of Nikos Gatsos, who, being a master of the secrets of poetry, rendered simple events with lyrical shades, giving them a meaning that transcends time. The appeal to the beloved not to delay going to the prearranged meeting ("do not be late to appear in the sky my flower / my golden little angel"); the heartbreaking rejection of the feelings of the other ("Don't knock on my door at midnight / don't talk to me, I can't hear you / If you love me / don't come back / let me keep pain as my companion"); the song for the "tearful, sorrowful eyes" and the suggestion that "without love and pain nobody can live"; the very lyrical "A Holy Virgin" ("A Holy Virgin / a love I've sealed / in a lonely chapel / far away") of which Odysseus Elytis has written in his "Young Sailor" that it is his favorite song; the hymn to Athens (the old one of the 50s to 60s, of course) which he calls "joy of the earth and of the dawn / little blue lily"; Greece itself that travels ("With Greece as its skipper / a frigate sails to Misiri") spreading its civilization everywhere (the meaning of the ship is meta-

phorical); the famous song about the moon ("A moon made of paper / a seashore that's unreal / if you believed in me a little / it would all come true") with the masterful blending of poetry and music by Manos Hadjidakis; the very lyrical "Elf" ("Now I'll light a fire / in the cypresses of the North / and in the highest peak / I'll have you like a mother and a sister"); the song "If you thirst for water" ("It was the face of May, the white of the moon / a light tread like a frisking of the plain"); the last two lines also appear in *Amorgos* (the only change is that the word "was" becomes "a"), as well as the two preceding lines: "and if you thirst for water we will squeeze a cloud / and if you hunger for bread we will slaughter a nightingale."

The third edition of *Amorgos*, published in 1969, also includes the "Elegy" (1946) and "Death and the Knight" (one year later), as well as his last poem, written in 1963, with the title "Song of Old Times," which is dedicated to George Seferis, perhaps on the occasion of the awarding of the Nobel Prize to the Greek poet. It is also appropriate to quote the opinion of D. Daskalopoulos (Papyrus-Larousse-Britannica, Vol. 17, p. 452):

We can say that *Amorgos* closes and completes the first cycle of the Greek surrealism which had started with Nikitas Randos, the early Elytis, Embirikos and Engonopoulos. Also, of course, we should emphasize that the integrity of the poet is well known and characterizes him as a poet, as well as a man; moreover, we know how difficult this harmonious coexistence becomes in our days.

The poetry of Nikos Gatsos, to conclude our wandering in this enchanting world, is "the sound of a church bell travelling in the stars / So many centuries gone / From the soul of the Goths and from the domes of Baltimore / And from the great monastery of lost Saint Sophia."

## From *CONTEMPORARY GREEK POETRY*\*

BY ANDREAS KARANDONIS

*translated by C. Capri-Karka*

The circle of poets who identified their personality and their poetic methodology, wholly or partly, with surrealism, spontaneous writing and the particular aesthetic atmosphere which every spontaneous writing creates, is completed with the unexpected and somewhat delayed appearance of a "ready-made poet," Nikos Gatsos. The poets we have commented on all follow a course divided into phases. The literary course of Gatsos is summed up in a single episode, that of the poetic collection *Amorgos*. Published in 1943, during one of the darkest hours of slavery, it literally surprised "well informed" poetic circles and exercised an instant influence on the young people who were at that time trying their hand at the new styles and who wanted to express the tragic atmosphere of the German occupation along with a spirit of heroism and resistance. In these circles, *Amorgos* was read, commented upon, circulated, scrutinized, idealized and misunderstood, perhaps as no other modern poem. So much so that a young philosopher wrote a study—never published, as far as we know—trying to provide a logical explanation, word by word and image by image, of a text emerging directly from the subconscious. This fact and other similar ones demonstrate that this text had an exceptional poetic form and an intense and genuine poetic quality. Usually the poetry that reaches us is the magic trap that captivates our thought and forces it to seek patterns and forms of interpretation.

Behind the episode of *Amorgos*, let us look for a strange kind of story: in this poem, Gatsos is the harvester of rich crops who knew himself neither whether he had planted them, nor when or where he had planted them. Yet, the ground that

\*This essay is part of the author's book *Introduction to Modern Poetry—Contemporary Greek Poetry* (D. N. Papadimas Editions, Athens, 1978). It first appeared in 1958.



received this mysterious seed was his deepest literary self, a subterranean and porous self, perhaps the richest subconscious, from the linguistic point of view, among the poets we are discussing. He was the "unknown Gatsos"—in other words *Amorgos*—an original poetic and intellectual idiosyncrasy that happened to have, from the very beginning, deep Greek roots, country, rural, demotic roots. Born in the countryside around Tripolis, he spent his school, adolescent, and university years in a "magic communion," one would say, with Greek poetry, the folk song, Solomos, Palamas, Sikelianos—with the whole demotic culture. Introverted in character, silent, outwardly almost still and impassive, he was gathering, treasuring and reflecting more than expressing himself. He was a blend of some definite but at the same time vague promises and possibilities. His inner restlessness led him to foreign literatures, which he assimilated thoroughly, hellenizing them within himself. With his lively instinct reinforced by the presence and the company of Seferis and Elytis, Embirikos and Engonopoulos, he also approached modern poetry, but in his own way, in other words, without the dogmas and without the fanaticism of the newly converted. He was very well aware, not only in theory but also in practice, of the "verse," the verse of Palamas, let us say, but he understood that this manner, as a method of poetic creation, had run its course. Thus he found himself walking the streets of modern art. If this did not happen earlier, if Gatsos was the last, chronologically speaking, of the group, it is because he was probably prevented by some natural but very deliberate distrust of everything, or, perhaps, by some lack of will, or even by an awareness of the futility of publishing or writing verses. He lived poetry deeply and organically but he was not conscious of the need or the ambition to write poetry himself, to create it, until his "conversion" to spontaneous writing liberated him from all adversities and restrictions and revealed him to us as he appeared in *Amorgos*. Here is one more case where the influence of surrealism had beneficial effects, and for such instances, as well as many other reasons, we should be indebted to André Breton and his aphorisms.

From the point of view of our poetry, was it chance or necessity that made *Amorgos* emerge from within the self-

ignoring Gatsos? We believe it was both, since in our life, the good works of chance we register, in retrospect, as necessities. Therefore it was primarily chance, because in reality Gatsos wrote it "accidentally," in one night, taking up the magic wand of surrealism, perhaps out of curiosity, perhaps in order to have fun. With this wand he randomly struck his fertile and pregnant entrails, his inner, porous self. And out of his old silence, a rich phrasal and linguistic rhythm sprang up, a warm and almost mystical material of hidden lyricism was put together in new images; a new sound deep in tone, we would say, was heard in the concert of the crystalline sounds of Elytis and Embirikos and the disrupting hammerings of Engonopoulos' Zef:

Cast away the dead said Heráclitus and he saw heaven  
    blench

He saw in the mud two small cyclamen kissing  
And he too fell down to kiss his dead body  
    in the hospitable earth

As the wolf comes down from the forests to see the dead dog  
    and to bewail

What use to me is the drop shining on your brow?  
I know the thunderbolt wrote its name on your lips  
I know an eagle built its nest in your eyes

But here on this watery bank there is one road only  
One deceiving road only and you must cross it  
You must plunge into blood before time overtakes you  
And go across to the other side to find your companions  
    again

Flowers birds deer

To find another sea another gentleness

To seize Achilles' horses by the reins

Rather than sit mutely rebuking the river

Stoning the river as did Kitsos' mother

Because you too will have been lost and your beauty will have  
    aged

In the branches of an ozier I see  
    your childhood shirt drying

Take it, a flag of life to shroud death  
And may your heart not be bowed  
And may your tear not flow on this implacable earth  
As the tear of the penguin flowed once  
    on the frozen waste  
Complaining does not serve.  
Life will be the same everywhere with the serpents' flute  
    in the land of ghosts  
With the song of brigands in fragrant woods  
With the knife of suffering in the face of hope  
With spring pining deep in the screech owl's heart  
It is enough for a plough to be found and a sharp  
    sickle in a blithe hand  
It is enough for only a little wheat  
To ripen for feasts a little wine for memory a little water  
    for the dust.

From this passage, as well as from the text as a whole, it is obvious that *Amorgos*, although "accidental," nevertheless met a literary, an aesthetic need in the area of modern poetry: the need to enrich and to reestablish "demoticism" devoid of the linguistic excesses of ritualistic lyricism and adjusted to the natural tone and manner of demotic speech, yet retaining the freshness, the greenness and the subtle waving of the language of our folk songs. Seferis, too, was aiming at a "natural demotic" and he was the first to achieve it in the manner we know, but Gatsos, in a way, supplements him, or rather covers an aspect that remained extraneous to Seferis' aims: the aspect of the, as it were, "juicy" linguistic style. Seferis did not want to use this "juicy" style at all, because, reacting to traditional linguistic excesses, he pursued an absolute, an ideal, a tyrannical simplicity, which of necessity will also be linguistic:

I want no more than to speak simply, to be granted that grace  
because we've loaded even our songs with so much music  
    that they are slowly sinking  
and we've decorated our art so much that its features  
    have been eaten away by gold.

Naturally, Gatsos did not restore the heavy gold to the face of poetry, but there come moments when one feels the need for some linguistic coolness, for that downy softness of words which caress us or run inside us like drops of water. We have acquired this habit from the folk song, from Kornaros, from Solomos, from the better Palamas and Sikelianos. We acquired it and continued it also from Seferis' *Turning Point*. Gatsos gave it back to us clarified. This means that we should not lose it again for any reason. What we call "a sense of the language"—meaning, of course, our language—is inseparable from a sense of poetry. There is also, certainly, the sense of the bilingual (puristic and demotic) poetics of Cavafy. This, however, did not help anybody but Cavafy himself. Whoever imitated it lost his voice to Cavafy. Seferis, who was a professed and careful student of Cavafy, sensed this and did not, even for a moment, let his voice assume the manner of Cavafian bilingualism. On the contrary, he realized that his duty was to help our linguistic tradition rediscover more natural and more viable ways of expression. Seferis' example was completed and enriched by Gatsos, who gave it vivid shades of a "lyrical demotic" language with unified, clear, popular aesthetics. In general, the demotic language and the linguistic purity of Seferis and also of Gatsos meet the highest standards of our contemporary demotic language.

However, this is not the only reason why *Amorgos* fascinated and directly influenced younger writers. In this poem, the demotic element is not only verbal and linguistic. It reaches deeper into Greek life. It comes from roots and instincts which, once stirred up within ourselves, awaken the fascinating "intoxication of the race." Within the atmosphere of the surrealistic, even if artificial, dream, Gatsos recreated in a mystical way unexpected images from the world of our folk tradition and adjusted them to the psychological climate of the German occupation, perhaps not intentionally or even voluntarily but just suggestively. Kítsos' mother who "throws stones at the river" became a slogan for the young, and especially for the poets of the "resistance," who wanted to express in modern imagery and free rhythms the struggle of the people against the oppressors. But the line about Kítsos is completed in a

wonderful manner by the following passage, one of the most successful and most poetic in *Amorgos*. We observe here with what deep poetic instinct tradition emerges like a living spectre. Carrying behind it images from ancient times, it stops for a moment beside the Germans of 1943 and, blending with everything it touches, revives and imprints upon us a Greek landscape lost in an immensely deep and vast aesthetic dream.

But who are these on the high mountain gazing  
With calm eye and serene countenance?  
This dust in the air is the echo of what conflagration?  
Is it Kalyvas fighting or Levendoyánnis?  
Have the Germans joined battle with the Maniátes?  
Neither Kalyvas is fighting nor Levendoyánnis  
Nor have the Germans joined battle with the Maniátes.  
Silent towers guard a phantom princess  
Cypress tops befriend a dead anemone  
Peaceful shepherds sing their morning song  
    with a lime-tree reed  
A foolish hunter fires a shot at turtle doves  
And an old forgotten windmill  
With a dolphin's needle mends its rotting sails  
And comes down from the slopes with a favouring north-west  
    wind  
As Adonis descended the footpaths of Khelmós to say  
    good evening to Gólfo.

There is only a hint of the resistance, given with the "battle" between the Germans and the Maniátes. This "battle" is but one episode, one moment, in the absolute and permanent span of life and nature. But this span, this relation of life and nature, we live here visually and mythically—we would say like a fairytale—and not at all conventionally. The spontaneous writing frees us from the necessity of seeing a windmill in the evening as we would see it in a picture, as we see it at every moment. We see it, in a way, as in fairytales—as Don Quixote would see it, as defined in a moment of great inventiveness by the modifying imagination of the surrealist Gatsos. It becomes a mystical being who mends his rotting sails with a dolphin's

needle, prepares himself for a timid love, comes down the slope with a favoring wind "to say good evening to Gólfo." This moment is one of the most evocative and most Greek in our modern poetry. It also shows the third element through which *Amorgos* exerted its fascination. It is its genuine "modern element," the magic world that appears here and there in the manner of Greek fairytales, presented in the style of Disney. How do we gladly accept this microcosm of Disney as well as all the forms of objects and beings he presents us with, as they function outside the laws of physics and of necessity, completely free to be whatever they want at any moment, free from any consequence? Isn't this, actually, the innermost desire of man, the real essence of freedom? Only in this way can we feel the poetry and the meaning of images like these:

Because the golden eagle is not a closed drawer  
It is not a tear from the plum tree nor a smile  
from the water-lily  
Neither is it the dove's shirt nor the Sultan's mandoline  
Nor silk attire for the head of the whale  
It is a saw from the sea that cuts seagulls to pieces  
It is a carpenter's pillow a beggar's clock  
It is fire in a blacksmith's that scoffs at priests' wives  
and lulls the lilies to sleep  
It is the match-making of Turks and the Australians'  
feast-day  
It is the lair of Hungarians  
Where in the autumn the hazel nut trees go secretly  
meeting together  
They see the wise storks dyeing their eggs black  
And they too weep  
They burn their nightgowns and put on the duck's  
petticoat  
Spreading stars on the earth for kings to walk upon  
With their silver amulets the crown and the purple  
They scatter rosemary on the flower beds  
For mice to go to another pantry  
To go into other churches to eat the Lord's Table  
And the owls my children

The owls howl  
And dead nuns rise to dance  
With tambourines drums and fiddles with pipes and lutes  
With pennons and with herbal censers and veils  
Wearing bears' trousers they eat the ferrets' mushrooms  
in the frozen valley  
They play heads or tails with the ring of Saint John  
and the gold coins of the Blackamoor  
They laugh at witches  
They cut a priest's beard with the yataghan of Kolokotronis  
They bathe in the vapour from the incense  
And then chanting slowly go into the earth again  
and are silent  
As waves are silent as the cuckoo at dawn  
as the oil lamp in the evening.

We observe that all this movement, all this ultralogical, kinetic and fairytale-like group of beings and objects of our folklore, after a host of alternations and oddities, returns to a vacuum, to zero, to silence, and is lost beneath the earth; as happens in dreams, in fairytales, where the magic suddenly vanishes. This is one of the permanent characteristics of *Amorgos*, a characteristic not so obvious, yet real. Thus this modern poem goes even deeper into our poetry and our tradition. It takes something from the sad and dark mood of the netherworld as conceived by the folk imagination, originating in Homer. Deep inside the poem a dirge is heard, to which Gatsos gives a form that strictly follows the rules of the folk style, permeated by a metaphysical feeling.

In the yards of the afflicted the sun does not rise  
Only worms come up to mock the stars  
Only horses thrive on ant heaps  
And bats eat birds and piss semen.

In the yards of the afflicted night does not fade  
Only the leaves vomit a river of tears  
When the devil comes in to mount the dogs  
And ravens swim in a well of blood.

In the yards of the afflicted the eye has run dry  
The brain has frozen the heart has petrified  
The flesh of frogs hangs in the spider's teeth  
Hungry locusts scream at vampire feet.

In the yards of the afflicted black grass grows  
Only one May evening a wind passed  
A light tread like the frisking plain  
A kiss from the foam-decked sea.

And if you thirst for water we will squeeze a cloud  
And if you hunger for bread we will slaughter a nightingale  
Only be patient a moment for the healing rue to open  
For the black sky to glow for the mullein to flower.

But it was a wind that has gone, a lark that has flown  
It was the face of May the white of the moon  
A light tread like the frisking plain  
A kiss from the foam-decked sea.

*Amorgos* is not only, at some level, a poem of death and spectral life. It is also a poem of love. Thus it finally becomes a modern version of romanticism of the best quality. These most genuinely moving lines—lines of love, to use a colloquial expression—spring from the same deep centers of the subconscious. But this love, an unconfessed secret of the soul, appears unwilling to be expressed with that unequivocal psychology of publicity that characterized the old-style romanticism. It is a love that wants to remain hidden, shrouded in mist, sometimes appearing and sometimes vanishing or becoming something else, a dream, sea, loneliness. The fascination and dream-like lyricism of *Amorgos* is largely due to these repeating and successive alternations that coexist so harmoniously and become a rhythm and a language and an original image, a creation of an imagery adorned with folk colors.

How very much I loved you I alone know  
I who once touched you with the eyes of the Pleiades



And with the mane of the moon I embraced you and we danced  
on the summer plains  
On the gathered reeds and we ate together the cut clover  
Great black sea with so many pebbles round your neck  
so many coloured gems in your hair.

This emotion may be the power that changes the poet's natural melancholy mood and drives him toward an optimistic dream, a reconciliatory dream that unexpectedly connects Saint Sophia with the domes of Baltimore.

A ship comes into shore a rusty wheel-well  
groans  
A plume of blue smoke on the rosy horizon  
Like the rending wing of the crane  
Armies of swallows wait to say their welcome to the brave  
Arms rise naked tattooed with anchors  
Children's cries mingle with the west wind singing  
Bees go in and out of cows' nostrils  
Kalamatan kerchiefs wave  
And a distant bell dyes the sky blue  
Like the sound of a church bell travelling in the stars  
So many centuries gone  
From the soul of the Goths and from the domes of  
Baltimore  
And from the great monastery of lost Saint Sophia.

As we read these lines, our mind is led to the idea that poetry may be this sound of the "church bell" that travels eternally among the stars; a composite, collective sound which brings together notes from the domes of Baltimore and the bells of Saint Sophia. The world is a vast vision composed, however, of specific and immovable images and styles, such as, for example, the Gothic and the Byzantine. The poet brings together these scattered elements of the vision and makes them into a vision of his own—like the one that Gatsos gave us with *Amorgos*. And the new elements that he brought together, in order to influence us as much as he did, were several and significant. Only he himself was not impressed by his work

and did not continue it, although he gave us the following beautiful promise: "Goodnight then; I see a host of falling stars rocking your dreams but I hold in my fingers the music for a better day." Let us remain with the music of *Amorgos* and the hope of a better day.

## From *INTRODUCTION TO D.I. ANTONIOU AND NIKOS GATSOS\**

BY ANDREAS KARANDONIS

*translated by Myrto Kapri*

I am really sorry because my health did not permit me tonight to be among you and to communicate directly with the new poetic audience of our time. We, the so-called "old ones," have more to learn from you than to teach you. I would like you to believe that my sorrow is true and the obstacle real. I am also sorry because the words that I want to tell you from this podium about the two poets, Demetrios Antoniou and Nikos Gatsos, are related not only with the two poets whom I consider remarkable—as, I believe, several others do—but also because, although so different from each other, they belong to the generation that, as most of you recognize, was connected with the radical change in poetry, from traditional to modern or contemporary or innovative, as it is often characterized lately by new philologists and critics. [ . . . ]

Nikos Gatsos did not become known and was not established as a poet but from one and only poem of about twenty pages, *Amorgos*. An austere and pedantic historian of our literature could characterize [him] as an occasional or amateur poet. But we can oppose this possible characterization with a very effective antidote. It is given to us by one of the most beautiful and essential lines of the poet Antoniou, who tells us that

*In our land precious things occupy so little space . . .*

Besides, the rule is known which tells us that quality counts more than quantity unless, of course, if the quantity has also quality. In our poetic tradition the examples are not few: Solomos, Kalvos, Cavafy, Porfyra, Gryparis, Kariotakis. But also the generation of the 30s could not be considered as a model of

\*This Introduction was read by Th. Niarchos in November 1980, at the theater "Erevna," as part of the series "Presentations of Contemporary Greek Poets." Only the part referring to Nikos Gatsos is translated here.

prolific poets, as is the case of those who followed them. Seferis once confessed to me that he writes three hundred lines and keeps only ten. And it is strange to observe that a genuine, a rather original poet influences others more when he is non-prolific rather than prolific: one and only clear-cut gesture pointing firmly toward a new direction is sometimes enough to cause a revolution or to create what in older times was called "a school of poetry."

Exceptionally, then, and almost dangerously non-prolific the two poets we are discussing. And now you may ask: "O key. But did they influence the later poets, did they start a revolution, did they create 'a poetic school'?" On this question, what we can say is this: We are used to divide and rank the poets into various categories, classes, groups, schools, etc. and very often—and also superficially—to think that we uncover their secrets or we evaluate them, if we attribute to them one of the standardized and sterile terms of the traditional poetic aesthetics: romantic, classical, neoclassical, symbolist, Parnassian, neosymbolist and so on.

This habit is a very long tradition in criticism that fortunately, I think, begins to deteriorate these last years but with the danger of being succeeded by another analogous situation, if we note how often terms like "structure," "construction," "structuralism" and other similar ones are used, originating from the contemporary philosophical, scientific and psychological pursuits in the field of general philology. However, in spite of our distrust of these divisions and similar classifications, we also cannot avoid something like this tonight. For a long time, we have considered that, apart from the established divisions and classifications, we can use yet another one that permits us to divide the poets into two very general categories: those who discover new methods of writing and those who touch us with what they offer us, just as we secretly slip a gift or an aid in the pocket of a friend.

These poets are so personal, so "self-grown" that without violating the well-known axiom that "there is no parthenogenesis in art" you think that they neither have distinct ancestors nor leave descendants and successors. They intrude between the other classes like a beautiful and harmonious dissonance. It is in this category that Demetrios Antoniou belongs. His ancestor is poetry itself, the general climate within which he was spontaneously

born is what we call "a non-traditional writing." [...]

And now it is time to turn to the other poet of this evening, Nikos Gatsos. This strange man, as soon as he was proclaimed a poet—actually overnight—abandoned poetry or rather used his success in order to become an excellent translator and then a very prolific writer of lyrics for light songs identified with the glorious music of Hadjidakis, Theodorakis and then a large number of their followers. His one and only poem, the most surrealistic *Amorgos*, created an unexpected "situation" in the poetry of his time and influenced, as very few others did, not only the surrealistic evolution of our poetry but also the so-called "modern poetry" in its entirety.

I don't know how you, the young people, see Gatsos as a poet. If, however, you take a look at the literary chronicles of 1944, the year *Amorgos* was published, you will discover with surprise that very rarely has the first appearance of a young poet generated so much excitement, so much astonishment, even so much admiration. Of course, Elytis had already preceded him by several years, beginning in 1935. We have to emphasize, in particular, that without Elytis, there would not have been a poet named Gatsos, or at least *Amorgos*, the poem that made Gatsos instantly a poet, would have never been created or seen the light.

How did this happen? Nikos Gatsos had been dedicated to poetry since his youth, almost since his childhood. Formally he was studying literature at the University, but basically he was moved very deeply by poetry. When we first met, in the courtyard of the old building of the School of Philosophy, in 1932, I saw with pleasure that this student had a deep knowledge of modern Greek literature and knew and admired Palamas' poetry as few others did. At the same time, he was interested in everything new that was dawning in our poetry. He was fascinated with Seferis' "Erotikos Logos." When, after 1935, he became acquainted with Elytis, they were bound together by a close friendship. Elytis introduced him to the new European poetry, extending to Greece through surrealism, represented formally, dogmatically and fanatically by Andreas Embirikos. On the other hand, Gatsos, with his taciturnity, his strict verbal criticism—full of hesitations and reservations

about everything—influenced the flexible, insular sensitivity of Elytis. Gatsos thus acquired, or already had as a natural gift, something he has maintained until now: the ability to be at the same time an overt teacher and a secret disciple. *Amorgos* is due to this quality of his. It was born by the striking together of two pebbles: Gatsos himself and Elytis. The writing of the poem started one evening at Gatsos' house, in the presence of Elytis, as a "game of surrealistic imitation," and ended in the revelation of a new and talented "modern poet." When the poem was completed, it was read in circles of friends and all of them found it to be a masterpiece. A legend was created that caused Kimon Theodoropoulos, at that time director of the publishing company "Aetos," to publish it immediately. As soon as *Amorgos* was published, it is hard to describe what admiring comments were written in the journals of that time. The first to come out in support of it was Papatzonis, who until then had been the philosophical opponent of surrealism. Many others followed.

What is most important, however, is the influence he started to exercise on the new poets. This influence can be divided into two elements. The first is the magic that a perfect linguistic articulation of a poem exercises on everyone of us. Since a very young age, Gatsos had the demotic language perfectly articulated within him and he expressed it with a vigor and a force that elevated our language to an aesthetic level. Long before writing *Amorgos*, he had published in *Nea Estia* traditional poems of enviable linguistic and metrical perfection. Later, the surrealistic freedom gave him the opportunity to expand linguistically without at all betraying the wonderful measure of linguistic sense whose unsurpassable model is the folk song. The second element that influenced the young poets is the fact that Gatsos, having absorbed the whole of Moreas,\* transferred its heroic spirit and its linguistic sense to the surrealistic composition of *Amorgos*. This transfer, summarized in the folk song-like verse "Have the Germans joined battle with the Maniates?" was a new way of expressing in modern form

\*Moreas (Μωριός), popular name for the Peloponnese.

the spirit of the Resistance to the German occupation, so timely, fervent and still "active" in 1944.

This degree of blending was sufficient to make us consider as very logical one of the surrealistic creations most devoid of logical coherence. However, in *Amorgos* we also discern other remarkable elements. An authentic folksiness that we do not observe either in Seferis or in Elytis; evocative hints of prosocratic philosophy; a spirit of prophetic vision concerning the realization of a future reconciliation of all tragic contradictions of today's life. Then, at last, without any obstacles will "bees go in and out of cows' nostrils." And in the depths of the poem, a repressed erotic substratum, this "green star" to which the poem is dedicated and which is, here too, the secret receiver of *Amorgos*, about which we have spoken before in connection with the poet D.I. Antoniou.

It was natural that all these things fascinated the intellectuals as well as the poetic audience of the time—so much so that the serious historian Alekos Despotopoulos, brother of the philosopher Constantine Despotopoulos, wrote an extensive study, analyzing it word by word, as if it were the most logically composed poem in the world. Unfortunately, this study remained unpublished. However, he read it to us, and he succeeded in convincing us. This success of *Amorgos* fascinated all of us except the poet himself. Instead of continuing, as every other poet would have done, he wrote only one more poem consisting of a few verses about Dürer's "The Knight, Death and the Devil" and, in 1963, a lyrical encomium in traditional form, dedicated to Seferis when he was awarded the Nobel Prize. His main production has been mainly the writing of lyrics for bouzouki music. But even in this area, Gatsos was an innovator, creating a whole school. He blended into light verses written in an old-fashioned sentimental form some absurd surrealistic elements, combined with the most unexpected rhymes. Innumerable poets have imitated him—even Elytis in the collection *The Ro of Eros*—but nobody has surpassed him. At any rate, the case of Gatsos remains a problem.

This, in a few words, is the poetic story of Nikos Gatsos. Now, nothing else remains for you but the experiment of ap-

proaching this only child of Gatsos (in terms of poetry). Whatever the result might be, it will not be possible to erase from our literary chronicles the fact that this text, even if considered as one of the most paradoxical games and spontaneous farces of surrealism, has written a chapter in the history of our modern poetry.



## THE CREATIVE SEEDS OF THE SPOKEN WORD\*

BY KAROLOS KOUN

translated by Apostolos Athanassakis

It was during the Occupation that I first heard any mention of Nikos Gatsos' opinion carrying weight when it came to matters of literature and the theater. I think his great reputation began with his translation of *Blood Wedding*. *Amorgos* arrived later. Everyone realized that his translation of *Blood Wedding* was exceptional—I was enthusiastic about it—and we all agreed in our discussions that we should stage this play, but I had not met Gatsos himself yet. His translation of *Blood Wedding* had filled us with excitement because its directness and level of poetic achievement had a purity that did not have the ring of translation; it had so much integrity and creativity. In the beginning we did not see much of each other, but as time went on we met more frequently. We spent more time together not only because he knew so much and his opinion carried so much weight—and to all this one should add the sharpness of his mind and his charm—but also because we had to discuss the repertory of the *Theatro Technis*. Gatsos was one of my indispensable advisers, and I always asked for his opinion on every sensitive issue. It became such a habit to discuss everything that I would not stage a play, if I did not examine with him its possible repercussions and the usefulness of staging it. We met almost every evening at various hangouts—we are talking now about a time much later than the Occupation—of which the most important, during summers, was the one at Phokionos Negri Street. There was another spot, on Patision Street, a tiny little place—a pastry shop. If I am not mistaken—which has now disappeared. We met at my home, too, where he would come evenings from time to time, and we would stay late talking with two-three other peo-

\*From *I Lexi* [The Word], 52, February 1986. Karolos Koun, the director, for many years, of the *Theatro Technis* [Art Theater] in Athens is considered as one of the most distinguished theater directors and teachers of contemporary Greece.

ple. Whether at my home, or at different spots, alone or in the company of a group of writers, I remember how beautiful these times were, just as we would talk about different problems. This is something one cannot experience in our times—I mean these discussions outdoors. Perhaps, others do not feel this way, but I just don't see this kind of thing any more. There was also—much later—*Piccadilly* where I would go to find him when I needed him. He would go there at lunch time every day. However, I recall the old times, when we met evenings, as more edifying. Later we lost touch, and I was left with Nikos' memory and with the seriousness of his intellect in my thought. It was this seriousness that cleared up many things inside me, especially with regard to literature and the theater, and made me see them through a different prism. He possessed not only intuition, but also knowledge and clearly defined opinions on what is good theater, opinions that have had a great influence on me.

This is what I think happened with Gatsos: *Amorgos* was so impressive as to set limits for him. He did not dare publish something else. It was from that time on that we discussed the possibility that the great success of *Amorgos* became the reason why he did not publish another original poetic work. Certainly, lines of poetry came to his mind again. But Gatsos was a perfectionist. He wanted perfection for what he did. So, since he would not want to publish anything other than what he felt would take him beyond *Amorgos*, *Amorgos* became an obstacle. The absence of what we expected sends us into guessing games. We always suspected that his desk drawers concealed something not yet known to us, and we always waited to see what else he was working on after *Amorgos*. Personally, I had the feeling that he had something in the works. He is so secretive in what he does, and so creative at the same time, that one suspects, always, that he has put the finishing touches to something. It is quite possible that thinking about things is enough for him, and that the thoughts themselves, even in their abundance, do not compel him to write them down. I am fully aware that, despite all he knew, he did not do literary theory. He was interested only in what was creative in relation to poetry. I do not think he would ever care to write an essay. Besides his mind

would not help him do something like that, because it is a mind that prefers to spend its energies in talking and not in writing critical essays. He likes to engage in thought that keeps its distance from the written expression. He wanted poetry only to be expressed this way. He preferred to talk about his beliefs in a random fashion. Contrary to what we tend to think, I understand now that oral expression is not lost; it stays. Nikos Gatsos' mark on me has remained indelible all these years. I always try to keep to his guidelines, to what he stood for, things that, in my opinion, would not have stayed with me, if I had read them. I now understand how clever his tricks were. He wanted to keep his thoughts within our talks and he wanted them channeled through talking. We forget, sometimes, that the ancients, including Socrates and so many other philosophers and intellectuals, communicated their thoughts through oral discourse. Our get-togethers were symposiastic. People simply gathered for the purpose of discussing things.

I feel happy to have been part of such a stage in my development. Even if our discussions were not written down, the seeds that were planted have enriched my life. Talk penetrates us in strange ways and creates a climate that the written word cannot create, even if the written word rewards us with glittering and monumental landmarks. It is possible that laziness can be the cause of not writing, but I am sure that laziness is not in the mind. Quite the contrary, the mind wants something warm and alive in order to channel and to be channeled. Laziness is created by the hand and by the absence of a living person. I understand this, because many people urge me to write down the things I talk about when I teach during our rehearsals, but I find this hard. I can write about very few things, when I concentrate for the purpose of writing. I want to have in front of me the objects into which whatever I say will be channeled. It is the object that stimulates me. When this give and take is not there, when the objects are not there, my hand has a hard time recording things. But even so, nothing is lost. Spending time together with Nikos Gatsos and discussing things with him has not left me only with a general impression, which in itself is very important, but also with concrete thoughts. He used to say, for example, that "in a play persons should follow the dic-

tates of fate and of tragic forces and not those of their own will." The influence of Nikos Gatsos on me was decisive. This is why it has been enduring and not passing. Even now Gatsos exists in me.

## A PROPOSAL FOR AN ANALYSIS\*

BY TASOS LIGNADIS

*translated by C. Capri-Karka*

*Amorgos* is a difficult and cryptic poem. I worked hard to analyze it in order to become familiar with it, not only as an aesthetical work but also as an asset. I divided the poem according to my own assessment into six parts. I suggest a title for each part and attempt an analysis and a commentary on its form and its content. This entire process represents a personal recording of my own encounter with it. This is the way I approached the poem and the way I looked at it. I don't know if I will help the reader. What I do know is that I have been an inhabitant of *Amorgos*.

### PART ONE

#### TITLE: NATIVE LANDSCAPE PRESENTED WITH AN INTRODUCTORY EPIC PICTURE OF THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

I call it an epic because the opening picture suggests a homeric origin (*Their country lashed to their sails and the oars hanging in the wind*). The landscape of the Odyssean journey becomes a region of death. The day of return, "νόστιμον ἦμαρ," is identified with an abstract symbolic liberation. And I say—I want to believe—that it is identified with the liberation

\*This essay is a chapter from Tasos Lignadis' book *A Double Visit to an Era and a Poet: A Book on Nikos Gatsos* (Gnosi Editions, Athens, 1983).

In each section of the original Greek text, the analysis ("Reading") is accompanied by "Comments" which deal mostly with meter, rhythm, internal rhymes, alliterations and other such effects which are not possible to translate. Therefore the Comments were not included in the translation, except for a few segments that could be rendered in English without losing their meaning.

of the country. The spontaneous writing extracts the repressed nightmare from the subconscious, disguising it as a shipwreck awaiting salvation. And this always takes place in two phases that coexist in parallel and crosswise. These two phases that always alternate in *Amorgos* are the landscape of death and the landscape of love that succeed one another. As for the rest, Part One is divided into the verse structures of four long paragraphs.

### THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF PART ONE

Their country lashed to the sails and the oars  
    hanging in the wind  
The shipwrecked slept calm as dead wild beasts on  
    a bedding of sponge  
But seaweed eyes are turned to the sea  
Lest the south wind with fresh dyed lateen  
    carry them back  
And a lost elephant is always worth much more  
    than the trembling breasts of a girl  
Only let the roofs of lonely mountain chapels light up  
    with the yearning of the evening star  
Let birds flutter in the masts of the lemon tree  
With the steady white breath of new fledged motion  
Then will come winds the bodies of swans that stayed  
    immaculate tender and still  
Among steam-rolling shops and cyclonic vegetable  
    gardens  
When women's eyes became coals and the hearts of  
    chestnut sellers broke  
When the harvest stopped and the hopes of crickets began.

### READING

In the first paragraph the series of images (and by the surrealistic code: the series of "thoughts") is for the most part disconnected. The sequence and the alternation take place by

thematic and semantic leaps. The only connection must be sought in the association of ideas, or one could even establish an intermittent flow of relations. In this early part, the poet, as if stating his identity, appears as a genuine surrealist. This diagnosis is enhanced by the intentional disruption of the syntax and the inconsistency in the function of the verb tenses: the past is identified with the future, the aorist with the future tense (*Then will come winds . . . when women's eyes became coals . . . when the harvest stopped*).

This enigmatic image I think I can decipher by extracting the following meaning: landscape of death, with its scenery in arrest, anticipating something erotic, like another twitch, a movement, a metaphorical resurrection. Everything is anticipating something wonderful beyond the tangible (*the trembling breasts of a girl*); it is anticipating it from the south wind, expecting the mountains to become full of life, a spring to come bringing with it creatures of beauty and freedom, in that "zero" time of joy when time past and time present overlap.

[I think that memory connects this piece with Seferis' poem "In the Manner of G.S.":

... and if we see "the Aegean flower with corpses"\*  
it will be with those who tried to catch the big ship by swimming  
after it . . .

In Gatsos' poem "Song of Old Times," dedicated to Seferis, I read:

... And then you came and carved a fountain  
for the shipwrecked old sailor of the sea  
who vanished but his memory remained  
a glowing shell in the isle of Amorgos.

In Seferis' *Mythistorema* (Poem 4, with the subtitle "Argonauts") we read:

Their souls became one with the oars and the oarlocks  
with the solemn face of the prow  
with the rudder's wake  
with the water that shattered their image.  
The companions died in turn,  
with lowered eyes. Their oars  
mark the place where they sleep on the shore.

\*Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 659.

With respect to this passage, Seferis refers to the *Odyssey*, XI:75-78:\*

And heap up a mound for me on the shore  
of the gray sea, in memory of an unhappy man,  
that men yet to be may learn of me. Fulfil  
this my prayer, and fix upon the mound my oar wherewith  
I rowed in life when I was among my comrades.

A similar image in *Thrush*, "The Wreck 'Thrush:' "

I heard the voice  
as I was gazing at the sea trying to make out  
a ship they'd sunk there years ago;  
it was called "Thrush," a small wreck;

and further down:

naked bodies plunging into black light  
with a coin between the teeth, swimming still,  
while the sun with golden needles sews  
sails and wet wood and colors of the sea.

See also the related "The Leaf of the Poplar" from *Logbook I*:

It trembled so, the wind carried it away,  
it trembled so, how could the wind not carry it away  
in the distance  
a sea  
in the distance  
an island in the sun  
and hands grasping the oars  
dying the moment the port came into sight  
and eyes closed  
in sea anemones . . . ]

## THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF PART ONE

Therefore you young men with wine kisses  
and leaves in your mouths  
I want you to go out naked into rivers  
And sing Barbary as the woodsman hunts for  
the lentisk  
As the adder passes through barley fields  
With its proud and angry eyes  
And as the lightning threshes youth.

\*The words are those of the shade of Elpenor, youngest of Odysseus' companions.



## READING

In the second paragraph the style is simplified into an invocation and the meaning becomes easy to understand as it is divided into three similies. The appeal is addressed to some "young men," intoxicated (*with wine kisses and leaves in your mouths*), that resist the conqueror—poetically or in reality, it doesn't matter. The tone sounds to my ears like a battle-hymn. Here the connection of the images can easily be seen: An uprising of innocence is stated with nietzschean criteria of beauty and power.

## THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF PART ONE

And do not laugh do not cry do no rejoice  
Do not vainly tighten your boots as if you were  
    planting plane trees  
Do not become FATE  
Because the golden eagle is not a closed drawer  
It is not a tear from the plum tree nor a smile  
    from the water-lily  
Neither is it the dove's shirt nor the Sultan's mandoline  
Nor silk attire for the head of the whale  
It is a saw from the sea that cuts seagulls to pieces  
It is a carpenter's pillow a beggar's clock  
It is fire in a blacksmith's that scoffs at priests' wives  
    and lulls the lilies to sleep  
It is the match-making of Turks and the Australians'  
    feast-day  
It is the lair of Hungarians  
Where in the autumn the hazel nut trees go secretly  
    meeting together  
They see the wise storks dyeing their eggs black  
And they too weep  
They burn their nightgowns and put on the duck's  
    petticoat  
Spreading stars on the earth for kings to walk upon  
With their silver amulets the crown and the purple

They scatter rosemary on the flower beds  
For mice to go to another pantry  
To go into other churches to eat the Lord's Table  
And the owls my children  
And the owls howl  
And dead nuns rise to dance  
With tambourines drums and fiddles with pipes and lutes  
With pennons and with herbal censers and veils  
Wearing bears' trousers they eat the ferrets' mushrooms  
in the frozen valley  
They play heads or tails with the ring of Saint John  
and the gold coins of the Blackamoor  
They laugh at witches  
They cut a priest's beard with the yataghan of Kolokotrónis  
They bathe in the vapour from the incense  
And then chanting slowly go into the earth again  
and are silent  
As waves are silent as the cuckoo at dawn  
as the oil lamp in the evening.

### READING

The third paragraph of Part One is a reversal of the preceding one. The suggestive tone, with its negative and affirmative pairs, addresses itself to youth. The last word of the preceding paragraph is the word "youth." The sentence "*do not become FATE*" is in my view a key sentence. Submission to fate in a space and time where love and death manifest themselves as another form of freedom is not appropriate. Because the struggle (*the golden eagle*) is not an everyday sensation of laughter, of tears and of joy. It is not something soft and pleasant. It is harsh and nightmarish and is related to the dance of death. The acrimonious and the exquisite demanded by surrealism can be seen here as a rebellion within reality, in other words, within History.

We have to see the images of this paragraph in their self-sufficiency and self-existence in order to understand that they are parts of an intelligible relation that is not so much logical as syntactical, and indeed understandably metaphorical. "Heroes"

or subjects of these animated moving pictures are: the rebellious eagle, with his negative and affirmative definitions, who plays a leading part, both conceptually and syntactically; the hazel-nut trees that march toward the mystery of love; the mice which, as in the fairy-tale of the *Magic Flute*, commit sacrilege; the owls/ alarm sirens that wake up the dead nuns/bacchae; all these constitute the most robust and secret image of *Amorgos*, a frightening and magnificent image, one of the best in Greek poetry.

#### THE FOURTH PARAGRAPH OF PART ONE

And so in a deep jar the grape dries  
In the belfry of a fig tree the apple ripens  
So with a gaudy necktie  
Summer breathes under the tent of the vine  
And a tender love of mine sleeps naked  
    among the white cherry trees  
A girl unfading as the bough of an almond tree  
Her head on her raised elbow and her palm on  
    her gold coin  
On its morning warmth when quiet as a thief  
The dawn star comes through the window of spring  
    to wake her!

#### READING

The fourth paragraph closes Part One with a contrast that dispels the nightmare. The scenery becomes gentle and peaceful as it is set between spring and summer. The deadly climate that closes the preceding paragraph is followed in this one by the breath of a dream-like idyll in pleasant colors. The memory of love (*a girl unfading as the bough of an almond tree*), like the "distant rose" of Palamas, banishes the gloom of reality.

## PART TWO

## TITLE: MISSION

According to my assessment, Poetry struggles to retain something stable within the flow of things: the meaning of this flow. And this constitutes a form of *resistance*—either metaphorical or real—either within History or within the Conscience. The commitment to a duty of any kind is a requirement of existence. It is something erotic, the pleasures of which become perceptible only on the verge of death. The second part is divided into three paragraphs.

## THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF PART TWO

They say that the mountains shake and the fir trees  
are angry  
When night gnaws at the nails on the slates to let  
the goblins in  
When hell sucks in the frothing toil of the torrents  
Or when the hairline on the pepper tree is pummelled  
by the north wind.

## READING

In the first paragraph of Part Two I see the image as follows: The pure, inaccessible features of the peaks (*mountains—fir-trees*) become angry at the rude violence which threatens an order of innocence, poetic or real or historical (in other words of the German occupation). The meaning we should prefer is not particularly important. What is important here is that night, hell and winter *violate* a familiar landscape.

## THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF PART TWO

Only the oxen of the Achaians in the lush pastures  
of Thessaly  
Graze sturdy and strong the eternal sun gazing  
upon them  
They eat green grass poplar leaves celery they drink  
clear water in the dykes  
They sniff the earth's sweat and then fall  
Heavily under the shade of the willow to sleep.

## READING

In the second paragraph of Part Two an epic image that tries—I think—to suggest the endurance, the persistence of life, predominates. And this is frozen in time in a permanent symbol which represents the acme of the Greek Myth that is hinted at in the allegory of the Trojan expedition (*the oxen of the Achaians in the lush pastures of Thessaly graze...under the eternal sun...*).

## THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF PART TWO

Cast away the dead said Heraclitus and he saw heaven  
blench  
He saw in the mud two small cyclamen kissing  
And he too fell down to kiss his dead body  
in the hospitable earth  
As the wolf comes down from the forests to see the dead dog  
and to bewail  
What use to me is the drop shining on your brow?  
I know the thunderbolt wrote its name on your lips  
I know an eagle built its nest in your eyes  
But here on this watery bank there is one road only  
One deceiving road only and you must cross it  
You must plunge into blood before time overtakes you

And go across to the other side to find your companions  
     again  
 Flowers birds deer  
 To find another sea another gentleness  
 To seize Achilles' horses by the reins  
 Rather than sit mutely rebuking the river  
 Stoning the river as did Kítsos' mother  
 Because you too will have been lost and your beauty will have  
     aged  
 In the branches of an ozier I see  
     your childhood shirt drying  
 Take it, a flag of life to shroud death  
 And may your heart not be bowed  
 And may your tear not flow on this implacable earth  
 As the tear of the penguin flowed once  
     on the frozen waste  
 Complaining does not serve.  
 Life will be the same everywhere with the serpents' flute  
     in the land of ghosts  
 With the song of brigands in fragrant woods  
 With the knife of suffering in the face of hope  
 With spring pining deep in the screech owl's heart  
 It is enough for a plough to be found and a sharp  
     sickle in a blithe hand  
 It is enough for only a little wheat  
 To ripen for feasts a little wine for memory a little water  
     for the dust.

### READING

In the third paragraph of Part Two the line "*Cast away the dead said Heraclitus*" suggests obviously the bidirectional—purely Heraclitean—flux between existence and non-existence for us and between the alternating phenomena of life and death for Philosophy. I think that this line refers to Heraclitus' fragment: Νέκυες γὰρ κοπρίων ἐκθλητότεροι (The necessity to throw away the dead is more urgent than the disposal of dung). The obscure remainder of the first line "*and he saw heaven blench*" leads

me to cross-reference it—with some hesitation—with another very obscure Heraclitean fragment: Ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἄθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων θίον τεθνεῶτες (Immortal are mortals; mortal are immortals because one is living the other's death and dying the other's life).

Perhaps there is here a suggestive reference to Heraclitus' "biography." Even if it is a possible version of of fairy-tale and a legend, this doesn't mean that it doesn't remind us of something. According to the sources we have (Diogenes Laertius, Neanthis Kyzikinos and Suda), Heraclitus abandoned his privileges (he was descended from the royal family of the Androcleides) and went into the solitude of the mountains, disgusted with people. It is said that he was suffering from dropsy and he smeared his belly with ox dung and lay on the ground under the sun to let the fluid evaporate—but with no result. This is how he died. A hint emerges automatically from the poem.

Lying on the ground with the poultice of dung suggests the idea of "a dead body in the hospitable earth." If, in particular, we take into consideration the legend that he was torn to pieces by dogs (like Euripides), because they did not recognize him, covered as he was with dung, the idea of a potentially dead body is reinforced. Naturally, this obviously made-up testimony is based on Heraclitus' fragment No. 97: Κύνες γὰρ καταβαύζουσιν ὦν ἂν μὴ γιγνώσκωσι (Dogs also attack him they know not). Here, of course, the word "dog" opens up the possibility of a crucial association, I believe. The wolf that turns to see the dead dog is here a substitute for Heraclitus of the mountain wilds descending to see his corpse. The pairing: Heraclitus - corpse, wolf - dead dog is clear. Of course, Heraclitus denounced the perishability of matter (corpse + body) and accepted the spirit (wolf + light). Anyway, this Heraclitean solitude continues in the following lines as a landscape of spiritual adventure. The "*drop that shines on your forehead*" is a strong reminder of a later poetic image. I mean the poem dedicated to Seferis, "Song of Old Times"

And when you see the falling star  
of old times shine secretly  
on your forehead with a soft glow, rise up...

This shimmer is undoubtedly a creative rebellion of the spirit just as rebellion are also the conditions of solitude (of self-exile) that "test" the spirit. These conditions are: the mountain, the thunderbolt (that "rules all things") and the eagle. Again, these creatures lead me to a similar command from Heraclitus' self-exile in the poem mentioned above:

But now that Holy Tuesday is drawing near  
and Resurrection will be long in coming  
I want you to go to Mani and to Crete  
and there to have forever as companions  
the wolf the eagle and the asp.

Gatsos counsels Heraclitean behavior. *Resurrection* will be "discovered" only on the deceptive road which is the road of War, the father of the World.

This element "ἔρις," dispute, includes the element "ἔρως," love (corpse - they kiss). This "ἔρις" (dispute) of the pair immortal-mortal, with the blenching of the sky, is a preparation for the element "ἔρως" (love) which kisses the body of death. Here Alekos Despotopoulos' approach is similar. Also related is Seferis' image:

leaves of the palm tree in mud  
("Gymnopaïdia")

I suspect an association in Gatsos:

leaves of the palm tree—kiss\*

[For the use of the image "other sea" see also Seferis' poem "Raven":

... Those who travel watch the sail and the stars  
they hear the wind they hear the other sea beyond the wind  
near them like a closed shell]

A suggestion, then, for the "meaning": The knowledge of death is equivalent to a decision or a mandate for a mission

\*The effect of alliteration in the Greek: φύλλα φοινικιδᾶς - φιλιούνται is lost in translation.



in life. The "achievement" is needed in order to make clear the destiny of duty that man carries. There is only one road to initiation into worldly matters and one should travel along it steeped in blood. This sacrifice to duty is a characteristic feature, as it is very often manifested in poetry; see a surrealist parallel in Octavio Paz ("The River Bank"):

Life does not start without blood  
without the ashes of sacrifice  
the wheel of the days is not set in motion.

[Argyris Hionis has translated Paz in the journal *Tò Dévτρο* (The Tree), in 1982.]

Blood is a prerequisite (Heraclitus' Πόλεμος πάντων πατήρ [War is the father of all]) in order to "go across" to where all the pure creatures of freedom are to be found, *flowers, birds, deer* ("beauty, freedom, impetus," A. Despotopoulos comments), in order to be able to learn that duty has a nationality; *to seize Achilles' horses by the reins* (as Cavafy saw them cry for Patroclus in his poem by that name) instead of sitting down fatalistically, and "opening holes in the water,"\* like the legendary inconsolable mother of Kitsos. The "only solace" is not "to tell" and "to cry"\*\* but to feel that youth (*two small cyclamen kissing*) is the permanent adversary of death, viewed as Poetry, as Existence, as Commitment. The childhood shirt is the flag of resurrection that will "shroud death." And all these come with harshness—the Nietzschean harshness of the time—because tears and complaints do not help, since the world has always been like this with its contradictions, as is conveyed by the paragraph with the contrasting pairs in the last lines.

\*A common Greek expression implying a futile effort.

\*\*The words in quotation marks are from the fifth stanza of the Greek National Anthem, Dionysios Solomos' "Hymn to Liberty":

Unfortunate! The only solace  
left to you was to tell  
of past glories  
and recounting them to cry

## FROM THE COMMENTS ON PART TWO

*Cryptomnesia* (Κρυπτομνησία)\* *As the tear of the penguin flowed once on the frozen waste:* from the Disney cartoon in which a penguin's tear, flowing down a snow-covered slope, becomes an avalanche of destruction.

## PART THREE

## TITLE: NEKYIA\*\*

The title is Nekyia—again according to my approach—because it produces the image of a land of the dead, of a dark place that we could consider as an equivalent or a symbol of the specific scenery of the German occupation, a situation repressed into the poetic subconscious.

In the yards of the afflicted the sun does not rise  
Only worms come up to mock the stars  
Only horses thrive on ant heaps  
And bats eat birds and piss semen.

In the yards of the afflicted night does not fade  
Only the leaves vomit a river of tears  
When the devil comes in to mount the dogs  
And ravens swim in a well of blood.

In the yards of the afflicted the eye has run dry  
The brain has frozen the heart has petrified  
The flesh of frogs hangs in the spider's teeth  
Hungry locusts scream at vampire feet.

In the yards of the afflicted black grass grows  
Only one May evening a wind passed

\*The appearance in consciousness of memory images which are not recognized as such but which appear as original creations.

\*\*Magic ritual during which the spirits of the dead rose from Hades and were asked about the future.

A light tread like the frisking plain  
A kiss from the foam-decked sea.

And if you thirst for water we will squeeze a cloud  
And if you hunger for bread we will slaughter a nightingale  
Only be patient a moment for the healing rue to open  
For the black sky to glow for the mullein to flower.

But it was a wind that has gone, a lark that has flown  
It was the face of May the white of the moon  
A light tread like the frisking plain  
A kiss from the foam-decked sea.

### READING

Part Three imitates the form of the folk song. It is a typical song of Charon, a mourning song made up of six four-line stanzas. As far as I am concerned, "*the yards of the afflicted*" signifies slavery (a nightmarish dream). It is presented with a frightening "dantesque" description, the origin of which reminds us of the nightmarish landscapes of Edgar Allan Poe ("An infernal landscape" according to A. Despotopoulos). In the fourth stanza the despair of the description is interrupted by a contrast that brings some relief; a breeze of liberating feeling revitalizes the waste land. "*Only one May evening a wind passed,*" although it was only temporary, "*But it was a wind that has gone, a lark that has flown.*"

The use of the Genitive "τοῦ Μαγιοῦ" (of May) reminds us of Solomos' line "The day of May dawns." Further on, the form of the Genitive will change into "τοῦ Μάη":\* "*It was the face of May.*" We see also the same use of the phrase "a light tread" in Gatsos and in Seferis ("with gentle steps,"\*\* "Spring A.D." from *Logbook I*).

\*There are two forms for this Genitive in Modern Greek: τοῦ Μαγιοῦ and τοῦ Μάη both of which are translated in English as "of May."

\*\*Although translated differently by two translators, in Greek the phrase is the same: με περπάτημα ἐλαφρό.

The intentionally coarse line "*And bats eat birds and piss semen*" is used in order to introduce a repulsive element into this bleak landscape. In general, the school of Surrealism uses such expressions in order to achieve something that contrasts with the sweetening effects of lyricism and to prevent all possibility of flabbiness in the image and the rhythm.

In Part Three Gatsos' statement which is lyrical in nature—in terms of image, rhythm and evocative power—reaches its peak and becomes a valuable asset of our literature.

### FROM THE COMMENTS ON PART THREE

As far as the rhythm is concerned, this piece is an iambic fifteen-syllable form with very few metrical violations to avoid metrical monotony. It is composed in the style of the folk song and it is a song of Charon (Death) that follows in form and in content the pattern of mourning songs. (A series of "denials" in the structure, with an underlying note of despair.)

## PART FOUR

### TITLE: PROPHETIC

In Part Four the poem takes on the appearance of prose. As I approach it and understand it, I am inclined to call it Prophetic. The equivalent piece in Elytis' *Axion Esti* is a closely related parallel. I quote the text twice; the first time as a continuous text, as visualized in the composition (this being also an element of the surrealistic code), followed by the text as I divide it by slashes. I add the slashes in order to express its rhythm in terms of music, syntax and meaning. Instead of commas and periods, I use single and double slashes. The single slashes may serve the function of separating verses; the double ones help to separate paragraphs.

## TEXT WITHOUT SLASHES

(In order to avoid repetition, the reader is referred to p. 41 of this issue where the text appears without slashes.)

## TEXT WITH SLASHES

Clear running water awake from the pine tree root/that you might find the eyes of sparrows and revive them/watering the earth with the scent of basil and the whistling of the lizard. I know/you are a naked vein beneath the wind's fearful gaze/a mute spark amid the shining crowd of stars. No one sees you/no one stops to listen to your breath/but you with heavy tread through proud nature/will one day reach the leaves of the apricot tree/will climb on the supple body of the young broom bush/and roll from the eyes of a lover/like an adolescent moon.// There is an immortal stone/that a passing human angel/once/wrote his name upon/and a song that no one yet knows/neither the wildest children nor the wisest nightingales. The stone is now closed up in a cave on Mount Devi/in the valleys and ravines of my native land/but when the cave opens sometime and this angelic song leaps forth against decay and time/the rain will suddenly stop and the mud will dry/the snow will melt in the mountains/the wind will sing/the swallows will come to life again/the oziers will quiver/and when the people with cold eyes and pale faces/hear the bells ringing by themselves in the cracked bell towers/they will find festive hats to wear and proud tassels to tie on their shoes.// Because then no one will jest any more/the blood in the streams will overflow/animals will break their bridles in the stalls/the hay will turn green in the stables/and fresh poppies and mayflowers will spring up on roof tiles/and at all the crossroads they will light red fires at midnight. Then timid girls will quietly come/to throw their last garment into the fire/and they will dance naked around it/exactly like the time we too were young/and a window would open at dawn/so that in their breasts a flaming carnation would sprout.// Perhaps children/remembrance of ancestors is a deeper solace

and more precious company than a handful of rosewater/and the intoxication of beauty no different from the sleeping rosebush of the Evrotas. Goodnight then/I see a host of falling stars rocking your dreams/but I hold in my fingers the music for a better day. Travellers from India can tell you more than all the Byzantine Chroniclers.

## READING

I suggest to the reader the following approach to Part Four. The poetic persona invokes the "talking water" of life that flows through the veins of things imparting a certain fertility, no matter how humble and invisible it is. The appeal is made in the name of the landscape that has become a waste land. This water is the yearning itself, the desire, the love that pulses through the veins and writes its secret song in the remote hiding places of beauty. This secret inscription is carved on an immortal stone *now closed up in a cave on Mount Devi in the valleys and ravines of my native land*. It is the "real homeland" of the poet, his poetic, his spiritual homeland. Mount Devi is a mountain in India synonymous with the deities known as Deva, who are stellar beings.

[Deva: beings to whom God has given the power to rule the material world. These beings are innumerable and each one performs a service in the Universe. They are intermediate deities and cannot approach God. They give the people only temporary joys, since they possess limited powers. The worshippers of Deva, when "they are liberated," go to their place of worship, for example to the moon, the sun and, in our metaphor, to the country of poetic fruition (immortality); however, they need another spiritual process in order to enter the absolute world of Krishna. See SRI ISOPANISHAD.]

With Devi, the stellar origin of poetry and its power are manifested. This power is at present dormant but—the prophesy says—it will awake some day with all the similies you may want, such as freedom, poetry, or the sovereignty of beauty, and it will replace the illusory and deceptive with tangible reality. All this promise of a return to the Land of the "human angel" draws

its language and its worldly meaning from the power of tradition. In other words, from the well which safeguards it and which knows that memory is the other name of existence, the other cutting edge of freedom:

*Perhaps, children, remembrance of ancestors is a  
a deeper solace and more precious company...*

[Compare here the related lines that Andreas Embirikos was to write: "When man turns away from the texts and from tradition, he resembles a pillar of salt in the rain."]

This is *a deeper solace and more precious company*, and *the intoxication of beauty is no different from the sleeping rosebush of Evrotas*. This rosebush is perhaps the symbol of a Doric landscape and a "Doric romanticism." This rosebush of Evrotas I call Sparta. This return to a holy time, to the time of Myth, is well known to those who feel how wise it is to plunge into the "substance" of holiness. The poet is the one who holds in his fingers the musical instrument *for a better day*. Because it is Devi's stellar origin that offers the truth as a revelation (*travellers from India*) and not as the wisdom of History (*Byzantine chroniclers*). (I agree with the following passage from Despotopoulos' study: "The fully developed prose sentence, fashioned, however, into a poetic style, now easily encompasses, like an open plane, the beautiful successive images.")

## PART FIVE

### TITLE: X-RAY PICTURE

In this Part the formal style of the puristic language intrudes, suddenly self-mockingly pronouncing an aphorism about human existence.

During the course of his mysterious life man  
Has bequeathed to his descendants multifarious and  
worthy tokens of his immortal lineage

As he has also bequeathed traces of ruins of dawn  
 avalanches of celestial reptiles as well as  
 kites, diamonds, and glances of hyacinths  
 In the midst of sighs tears hunger lamentation  
 and the ashes of underground wells.

## READING

The theme of Part Five is how δεινός (terrible, wondrous\*) man is and how much suffering follows his every achievement and creation. As a parallel—if not an intentional borrowing—we could consider the stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* that starts with the famous line: Πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοῦδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει ("Many the wonders but nothing more strange than man"\*\*).

In this brief passage from *Amorgos* one can discern the bitter irony of futility and see clearly, as in an X-ray picture, the Promethean nature of man and also the Promethean hybris of his thinking. According to my approach again, the central meaning one can extract is the following: the immortality of origin (science - art) is juxtaposed with the everyday necessity of death (tears, hunger, ashes). It is not hard to understand that Part Five, written in an elaborate and highly polished puristic language, functions as a surprise and a negation of the rhythms of the folk song that preceded and the rhythms that will follow. In other words, the epical-lyrical tone and the succession of images is interrupted, in order to interpose the aphoristic element like a dull sound and a gray shade.

## FROM THE COMMENTS ON PART FIVE

School (Style): The whole section is a surrealistic reference to linguistic freedom. The reference to the linguistic magnetic fields of Embirikos and Engonopoulos is self-explanatory.

\*The Greek word δεινός can mean "terrible" or "wondrous" and sometimes a little of both, depending on the context.

\*\*See preceding footnote for the double meaning of the word δεινός which appears twice in this line.



## PART SIX

### TITLE: EROTIKOS LOGOS\*

The sixth and last part of *Amorgos* is a declaration of love for a person and for a native landscape. It is divided into three paragraphs, the first and third of which are a repetition of each other—with an imperceptible variation—and are addressed to the person, while the middle one celebrates the landscape.

### THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF PART SIX

How very much I loved you I alone know  
I who once touched you with the eyes of the Pleiades  
And with the mane of the moon I embraced you and we danced  
on the summer plains  
On gathered reeds and we ate together the cut clover  
Great black sea with so many pebbles round your neck  
so many coloured gems in your hair.

### READING

In the first paragraph of Part Six the first person—the poet—addresses himself to the “you” in an erotic whisper that is no different from a sigh: *How very much I loved you I alone know*. I see the romantic couple in a moonlit plain as if lightly sketched in the form of two horses (for example, like a line of Gounaropoulos\*\*) in order to convey naturally, as if by a leap, its vital beauty (*with the mane of the moon—and we ate together the cut clover*). Here in the first paragraph, the “you” of an assumed woman is defined as a dark and endless sea (*Great black sea*), in order to show clearly the great depth and elusiveness of the erotic idol. This “idol” was an almost obligatory motif for the surrealists (perhaps a legacy of romanticism). In the third para-

\*Love Song. George Seferis has written a poem with this title.

\*\*A contemporary Greek painter.

graph, this "you" woman will change definition and will—I would like to think—justify my approach.

## THE SECOND PARAGRAPH OF PART SIX

A ship comes into shore a rusty wheel-well  
     groans  
 A plume of blue smoke on the rosy horizon  
 Like the rending wing of the crane  
 Armies of swallows wait to say their welcome to the brave  
 Arms rise naked tattooed with anchors  
 Children's cries mingle with the west wind singing  
 Bees go in and out of cows' nostrils  
 Kalamatan kerchiefs wave  
 And a distant bell dyes the sky blue  
 Like the sound of a church bell travelling in the stars  
 So many centuries gone  
 From the soul of the Goths and from the domes of  
     Baltimore  
 And from the great monastery of lost Saint Sophia.  
 But who are these on the high mountain gazing  
 With calm eye and serene countenance?  
 This dust in the air is the echo of what conflagration?  
 Is it Kalyvas fighting or Levendoyánnis?  
 Have the Germans joined battle with the Maniátes?  
 Neither Kalyvas is fighting nor Levendoyánnis  
 Nor have the Germans joined battle with the Maniátes  
 Silent towers guard a phantom princess  
 Cypress tops befriend a dead anemone  
 Peaceful shepherds sing their morning song  
     with a lime-tree reed  
 A foolish hunter fires a shot at turtle doves  
 And an old forgotten windmill  
 With a dolphin's needle mends its rotting sails  
 And comes down from the slopes with a favouring north-west  
     wind  
 As Adonis descended the foothpaths of Khelmós to say  
     good evening to Gólfo.

## READING

In the second paragraph of Part Six one sees the idyll that was noted previously develop within the intended environment: in the definitely Greek landscape and its historic events that give it both its obvious and hidden physiognomy. This paragraph conveys this physiognomy. I see an image of the sea with clear indications of its national identity: the rusty wheel-well, the blue smoke, the Kalamatan kerchiefs, the bell that dyes the sky blue, the church of Saint Sophia and the shepherds with lime-wood pipes. And in this landscape, indirect signs of national liberation are scattered: the armies of swallows that will welcome the brave (Resistance, Spring, Freedom); the reference to the song of the klephts with the typical question and answer of the folk song about Kalyvas and Levendoyannis, the Germans and the Maniates. At this point, the association is concealing the metaphor and making it cryptic: the towers of Mani guard a phantom princess (a definite memory from the time of the occupation by the Franks and the *Chronicle of Moreas*). In my approach, I like to see her as having a disguised meaning (as a symbol) and I call her Freedom, this dead anemone of the homeland, in the eerie landscape of loneliness and desolation, as conveyed by the living windmill that, forgotten by all, sews his sails by himself and descends from the slopes with a favorable north-west wind, pretending to be Golfo's\* lover, Tasos, in the footpaths of Khelmos, identified with Adonis. And one adds automatically: like Adonis who was dying and being resurrected, like Christ, like a country. Thus, at this point that closes the second paragraph of Part Six, the scenery and the person become identical as parts of the idyll (windmill - Adonis - Golfo). This metaphor is the most comprehensive and the most significant in the whole of *Amorgos*.

## THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF PART SIX

My tormented heart year after year I strove with  
ink and hammer

\*The heroine of a popular play written in 1894 by Spyros Peresiades.

With fire and gold to make you an embroidery  
 A hyacinth from the orange tree  
 A flowering quince tree to console you  
 I who once touched you with the eyes of the Pleiades  
 And with the mane of the moon I embraced you and we danced  
     on the summer plains  
 On the gathered reeds and we ate together the cut clover.  
 Vast black solitude with so many pebbles round your neck  
     so many coloured gems in your hair.

### READING

In the third paragraph of Part Six the Erotikos Logos reaches a peak. Consolation of the soul, a gesture of love, art as a confession (ink and hammer). The words of the poetic persona are repeated, unchanged from the first stanza of this last part. Only the word "you" is no longer there. The sea is a word that is missing. It was drained out of *Amorgos* and also out of the world, out of the soul. The "you" remains only as a painful void, like "another death." Thus *Amorgos* ends with the bitter sound conveyed by the letter "μ" in Greek [m], like a dominant alliteration in the last line:

Μαύρη μεγάλη μοναξιά.  
 [Vast black solitude]

### FROM THE COMMENTS ON PART SIX

National Identity: The whole second paragraph is an indication of national identity. It is as if the poet places explanatory inscriptions in the landscape with Greek signs.

Rewriting: The church of Saint Sophia, "the great monastery" of the folk song. Is it Kalyvas fighting or Levendoyannis? . . . Neither Kalyvas . . . from the folk song. *In the footpaths of Khelmos to say good evening to Golfo*, according to the well-known lines of Peresiadis from his superb *Golfo*.

# LEND SILKEN THREADS TO THE WIND

## INTRODUCTION

BY EUGENE ARANITSIS

*translated by C. Capri-Karka*

When Gatsos passed away, he left behind the one and only poem of his life, dozens of songs we all loved, and his very life-as-a-poem, the scattered evidence of the fame of a man with remarkable literary talents which, however, he himself viewed with unusual modesty. His unyielding decision to maintain a disciplined and unremitting literary "silence," as it came to be characterized, was and is, one would assume, an enigma of a psychological order (to which, of course, until today, some almost convincing solutions have been proposed: perhaps what was responsible was his critical distancing of himself from things, the disappointing realization of an unattainable standard of originality and perfection, the natural tendency toward mental analysis rather than synthesis). This was not a pose or a device (the mistake of many who believed that Gatsos "was writing without publishing") no matter how much support it lent to the myth which was going to impart an aspect of preciousness to the invisible fruits of a private literature. The unpublished work that he left behind turned out to be very meagre indeed. It consists of the unfinished early draft of a theatrical play, some scattered notes and an envelope with a few completed or unfinished poems which preceded *Amorgos* and which are, in a way, its forerunners. The envelope bears the title "Material in Motion" in the poet's own handwriting. Its content, fifty handwritten pages, many of which are variations on the same motif, reflects the efforts of a man searching for the tone of his voice in an area, in a subject matter, that has already been given to him and has already been registered in his poetic cell: it is the climate of the folk song, the folk tale, a pleasurable thrill at the fairy's touch. The whole spectrum of the introverted, unrequited love for a "night full of spells" and for the sibyllic

dirges that are transformed into songs of harvest causes a distinct ripple in these literary beginnings.

Several more aspects of the poetic idiosyncrasy of Gatsos are confirmed by these early poems: The instinctive preference for the iamb, the shadow of which is continuously discerned while it itself swerves and shatters. Also his strong persistence in that "aesthetically" risky resonance of a mediterranean pastoral imagination in a verse decidedly attuned to surrealism. Finally, the strange note of springtime mourning, the invocation of the ghosts of an uninhabited land where the hints of death and love are touched upon in the depths of a very characteristic lyrical density. From the

*withered roses clocks stopped  
a big ox is hanging in the jasmins*

*or*

*To see crosses in lonely chapels and stars on the roofs of trees  
to see a thoughtful love on the balconies of the moon*

to *Amorgos*, no revelation intervenes in the use of the language or the style, no unexpected conversion: we could hardly call these verses youthful writing, although we know, of course, that the "value" or, more correctly, the meaning of *Amorgos* is related to the weight of a global vision, to skill in the development of a "fugue," the musical transition through successive phases of the Greek poetic tradition. At any rate, the poems included in this edition, although "not enough" to shed ample light on the secret of the unusual artistic course of Gatsos, "contribute" in defining the terms of this secret: the reader who knew Gatsos in depth will probably find here the beginnings of an art clearly atmospheric, very familiar and no less inexplicable, as far as its origins are concerned, than its sudden decline.

Among the texts left behind there was also some evidence of a rather moving gesture: it was the "exercise" of copying some stanzas from the poems that Vizyinos had written while in a psychiatric hospital. Copying means going deep into and at the same time capturing the spirit. I think that Gatsos wished

subconsciously to touch that chord of madness which the poetry of his time had turned toward the pursuit of the sacred, of the night, of chimera. How can you walk in the crossroads of maturity and oblivion, if not by copying the lines of someone who has done it? These few scribbles, permeated by a genuine tenderness for Vizyinos, are the fingerprints of a poet who in his youth was a mature, aged man, in the same way as he remained until his death a child.

There are not many technical details in need of clarification. The line "wearing a ribbon round your neck/to greet the cranes" is also included in the poem "Because I took you" as well as in "Take Your Ring"; the latter, dedicated to the memory of Maria Nomikos, is an early form of "Elegy" (*Amorgos*, pp. 34-35); I included it here since the differences of the two "versions" are quite significant, so that the two texts are independent compositions rather than one being an early draft of the other. In both there exists again the experience of mourning, the lament that is so intensely present in Gatsos' work. The second poem, chronologically, seems to reflect a voice more clear and balanced, more mature. From the first, what remains is the exaggeration, the element of a more passionate appeal, the interplay of names. The title of the "collection" is borrowed from the poem "What can you say? Virgins stoop"; the initial thought to maintain the provisional title "Material in Motion" seemed to me pseudo-original (or pedantic).

The executor of the poet's literary estate, Agatha Dimitrouka, was kind enough to assign to me this material in order to unravel, according to my best judgment (and who knows if I have this right), a thread through the maze of variations and notes. I returned it to her in the present form, selecting those pages that seemed to me more integrated with respect to the alternative solutions which the poet suggested to himself. It is understood that this delicate work could be considered effective only after the preparation of a literary edition which would include the entirety of Gatsos' work in progress; but this is certainly not my responsibility. For the time being, what one can offer is a taste of sweetness and sadness, a trill, a flash or an unfinished musical score.

# ΔΑΝΕΙΣΕ ΤΑ ΜΕΤΑΞΙΑ ΣΤΟΝ ΑΝΕΜΟ

Κι ἀπὸ τότε πού θρηγῶ  
τὸ ξανθὸ καὶ γαλανὸ  
καὶ οὐράνιο φῶς μου,  
μετεβλήθη ἐντός μου  
καὶ ὁ ρυθμὸς τοῦ κόσμου.

Γ. ΒΙΖΥΗΝΟΣ

## ΙΣΠΑΝΙΚΗ ΡΑΨΩΔΙΑ

Στὴ μνήμη τοῦ Ραβέλ

Δέντρα γυμνά. Δέντρα γυμνά.  
Πέτρινοι κάμποι. Βουβὰ χωριά.  
Μ' ἀμπέλια καὶ καμπαναριά  
Τὴν ἐρημιὰ θὰ κεντήσω.  
Δέντρα γυμνά. Δέντρα γυμνά.  
Κίτρινο χῶμα. Θαμπὰ βουνά.  
Μαλάχα καὶ Μονεβασιά.  
Φέρτε κρασί νὰ μεθύσω.  
Δέντρα γυμνά. Δέντρα γυμνά.  
Κάποτε σ' ἓναν ποταμὸ δυὸ λυγαριὲς ἀναστηθῆκαν  
Παιδὶ πού κλαίει ἀπὸ χαρὰ θαλασσωμένο στὶς ρίζες.  
Βάλε τ' αὐτί σου στὴ γῇ  
Ν' ἀκούσεις καθαρά τὴν ἀνάσα του  
Ὅπως ἀκούει ὁ γλᾶρος  
Ὅταν κοιμᾶται στὴν ἀμμουδιά  
Τὸ μοιρολόι τῆς θάλασσας.

Δέντρα γυμνά. Δέντρα γυμνά.  
Κάποτε σ' ἓναν οὐρανὸ δυὸ περιστέρια πετάξανε  
Μαῦροι λιγνοὶ καθαλάρηδες κρατήσαν μιὰ στιγμή τ' ἄλογά  
τους  
Τρέμουν τὰ χαλινάρια στὰ χέρια τους κι οἱ ἄραποσυκιὲς τοὺς  
κοιτᾶνε.  
Σύννεφα τρομαγμένα συνάζονται μακριά.



## LEND SILKEN THREADS TO THE WIND

*translated by Marjorie Chambers*

*Since I have been mourning  
my golden and blue  
and heavenly light  
the rhythm of the world  
has changed within me.*

G. VIZYINOS

## SPANISH RHAPSODY

*In memory of Ravel*

Bare trees. Bare trees.  
Plains of stone. Mute villages.  
I will embroider the wilderness  
with vineyards and bell-towers.  
Bare trees. Bare trees.  
Yellow earth. Dim mountains.  
Málaga and Monemvasiá  
Bring wine to inspire me.  
Bare trees. Bare trees.  
Once at a river two willows sprang  
A child crying for joy embalmed in the roots.  
Put your ear to the earth.  
And hear clearly its breathing  
As the seagull hears  
When it sleeps on the sand  
The lament of the sea.

Bare trees. Bare trees.  
Once in a sky two doves flew  
Lean black horsemen held their steeds for a moment.  
The reins tremble in their hands, the Arabian fig trees gaze at  
them.  
Frightened clouds gather in the distance.

Γιὰ νὰ σοῦ φέρω θότανα καὶ μύρα  
στολίδια τῆς καρδιᾶς ποὺ θὰ φυτέψεις  
στὴν παγωνιά τῆς κουρασμένης σκέψης  
στῆς δακρυσμένης πίκρας τὴν ἀρμύρα,

μονάχος μιὰ βραδιὰ πῆρα τὸ δρόμο  
ποὺ φέρνει στὶς πλαγιές τὶς ἀνθισμένες.

.....



Τί μπορεῖς νὰ πεῖς; γέρνουν οἱ παρθένες  
Χωρὶς ν' ἀλλάζουν τὰ χρώματα τῆς πορτοκαλιᾶς τὸ χειμῶνα  
Χωρὶς ν' ἀφήνουν τὴ στάχτη τους τ' ἀστέρια ποὺ θυθίζονται  
στὸ βοριά

Ἀκίνητα δακρυσμένα κι ἀμέτρητα.

Τί μπορεῖς νὰ δώσεις; πάρε τὴ σειρὰ

Δάνεισε τὰ μετὰξια στὸν ἄνεμο κι ἂν θὰ σκεπάσει τὴ θάλασσα  
γαλήνεψε τὴν ψυχὴ σου

Δὲν ἔπεσαν οἱ ἀστραπὲς μὲς στὰ ξερὰ φύλλα τὴν ἀνοιξη

Δὲν κύλησαν οἱ ἀνεμῶνες μέσα στὰ πόδια τῶν γυναικῶν χωρὶς  
ἔλεος

Γιατὶ κι ἐδῶ καὶ στὶς λευκὲς ἦρθε ἡ δροσιὰ σὰν κυνηγημένο  
πουλὶ καὶ δὲν πρόφτασε

Νὰ ψιθυρίσει τὴν προσευχή της.

To bring you herbs and myrrh  
Jewels of the heart that you will plant  
in the frost of wearied thought  
in the salt of tearful bitterness,

alone I took the road one evening  
that leads to the flowering slopes  
.....



What can you say? Virgins stoop  
And the colours of the orange tree do not change in winter  
And the stars that sink in the north motionless  
Tearful numberless do not shed their ashes.  
What can you give? Take your turn  
Lend silken threads to the wind and if it covers the sea calm  
    your soul  
The lightning did not fall on the dry leaves in spring  
Anemones did not roll under the feet of women  
    without mercy  
Even here in the poplars the dew came like a  
    hunted bird and had not time  
To whisper her prayer.

## ΠΑΡΕ ΤΟ ΔΑΧΤΥΛΙΔΙ ΣΟΥ

Στή μνήμη της Μαρίας Νομικοῦ

Στή φωτιά τοῦ ματιοῦ σου θά χαμογέλασε κάποτε ὁ Θεός  
 Θά 'κλείσει τὴν καρδιά της ἡ ἀνοιξη σὰν μιᾶς ἀρχαίας  
 ἀκρογιαλιάς μαργαριτάρι.

Τώρα καθὼς κοιμᾶσαι λαμπερὴ  
 Στὶς ἀμμουδιὲς τῶν ἀστεριῶν κι εἶσαι ἓνα δάκρυ τῆς Πούλιας  
 Κι εἶσαι ἓνα θότσαλο πικρὸ  
 Στὴν ἀγκαλιά τῆς Κελαινῶς καὶ τῆς Μάγας.

Πάρε τὸ δαχτυλίδι σου  
 Πάρε τ' ἀσῆμι τῶν λιθαριῶν νὰ θάψεις τὸ μέτωπό σου  
 Κι ἔλα κοντά μου νὰ κοιμηθεῖς  
 Νὰ θυσιστεῖς παντοτεινὰ σ' ἐν' ἀνοιξιάτικο πέλαγο  
 Μιὰ νύχτα τοῦ καλοκαιριοῦ ποὺ θά γυρεύω τὰ μάτια σου  
 Χαμένα στὶς ἀκρογιαλιὲς κάποιου χλωμοῦ Γαλαξία.

Ἔθγα σὰν ἥλιος τ' ἀπριλιοῦ στὸ παραθύρι τ' ὀνείρου  
 Μὲ τὴν κορδέλα τοῦ λαιμοῦ  
 Νὰ χαιρετήσεις τοὺς γερανοὺς ποὺ ταξιδεύουν στὰ ξένα  
 Νὰ κλείσεις ἓνα τριαντάφυλλο καθὼς κοιμίζονται ἓνα παιδί τὰ  
 περιστέρια

Κάτω ἀπ' τὰ φύλλα τῶν ἀμπελιῶν σὲ μιὰ πλαγιά τοῦ Ἀσπρο-  
 πόταμου

Στὴν ἀγκαλιά τῶν πλατανιῶν σὲ μιὰ σπηλιά τοῦ Εὐρώτα.

Ἦταν γιὰ σένα ἡ ζωὴ σὰν ἓνα δάκρυ τῆς θάλασσας  
 Σὰν μιὰ φωτιά τοῦ καλοκαιριοῦ κι ἓνα μαντήλι τοῦ Μάη  
 Ἔτσι ὅπως ἤσουν κι ἐσύ ἓνα γεράνιο κύμα της  
 Ἔνα πικρὸ θότσαλό της  
 Ἔνα μικρὸ χελιδόνι της ποὺ τριγυρνοῦσε στὰ δάση  
 Χωρὶς φωτιά γιὰ τὴ χαραυγὴ χωρὶς ἀστέρια τὴν ἀνοιξη  
 Μὲ τὴ ζεστή σου καρδιά γυρισμένη στὰ ξένα  
 Στὰ χαλασμένα δόντια τῆς ἄλλης ἀκρογιαλιάς  
 Στὰ πεθαμένα παιδιὰ τῆς ἀγριοκερασιᾶς καὶ τῆς φώκιας.

## TAKE YOUR RING

*To the memory of Maria Nomikou*

God will have smiled once at the fire in your eye  
Spring will have closed her heart like a pearl  
    on an ancient shore.  
Now as you sleep shining  
On the sands of the stars, a tear of the Pleiades  
A sharp pebble  
In the arms of Celaeno and Maia.\*  
Take your ring  
Take silver from the meadows to paint your brow  
And come to me and sleep  
Sinking eternally into a springlike sea  
On a summer night when I will seek your eyes  
Lost on the shores of some pale Galaxy.  
Come like an April sun to the window of my dreams  
Wearing a ribbon round your neck  
To greet the cranes travelling to strange lands  
To close a rose as the doves lull a child to sleep  
Beneath the leaves in the vineyards on a slope  
    of the White River  
In the arms of plane trees at a cave of the Evrotas.

For you life was like a tear from the sea  
Like a summer fire and a kerchief of May  
As you too were a deep blue wave of hers  
A bitter pebble of hers  
A little swallow of hers roaming the woods  
Without fire for the dawn without stars in spring  
Your warm heart turned toward strange lands  
To the broken teeth of the other shore  
To the dead children of the wild cherry tree  
    and the seal.

\*Two of the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione. According to mythology, the hunter Orion fell in love with them and pursued them through the woods until Zeus, in order to save them, transformed them into stars, forming the constellation of the Pleiades.

Χτυπήστε ντέφια στίς πλαγιές. Μέσα σ' αὐτὴ τὴ λαγκαδιὰ  
 Κοντὰ στίς πικραμυγδαλιές ὁ Φεδερίκο κοιμᾶται.  
 Ἔχει τ' ἀστέρια μάτια τοῦ τὴν ἄβυσσο ψυχὴ τοῦ.  
 Πές στ' ἄλογα νὰ σταματήσουν  
 Πές νὰ μὴν τρέχουν τὰ παιδιὰ  
 Πές στὰ ποτάμια νὰ σωπάσουν  
 Μὴν τοῦ θουρκώνουν τὴν καρδιά.



Κι ἄλογα καρτεροῦνε στὴν αὐλή.  
 Ποιὸς θὰ τοὺς πεῖ γιὰ πράσινα ποτάμια  
 Καὶ ποιὸς θὰ τὰ σελώσει τὴν αὐγή;

Ἐκεῖνος ποὺ τ' ἀγάπησε ...

.....  
 .....

Κι ἀπὸ νεκροὺς αἰῶνες φεγγαριοῦ

.....

Beat tambourines on the slopes. In this gorge  
Near the bitter almond trees Federico sleeps  
His eyes starry his soul an abyss.  
Tell the horses to stop  
Tell the children not to run  
Tell the rivers to be silent  
Lest they grieve his heart.



Patient horses wait in the courtyard.  
Who will tell them of green rivers  
And who will saddle them at dawn?

He who loved them....

.....

.....

Dead centuries of the moon since

.....

## ΠΟΡΤΟΚΑΛΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΙΓΙΝΑΣ

Ἐπὸ τὸ φῶς τῆς ἀμμουδιᾶς στὰ μάτια σου  
 Ἐνα φτερὸ τὸν ἴσκιο του μαζεύει  
 Ἐνας καιρὸς μὲ τὸ νοτιά παλεύει.

Τάχα ποιοῦ χέρι θὰ σοῦ θάλει  
 Μιὰ χούφτα χῶμα τοῦ Μοριᾶ;  
 Μάνα μικρούλα πορτοκαλιά  
 Ρίξε στὴ γῇ σου τὸ πορτοκάλι

.....  
 ..... ἀγκαλιά  
 Ἀγάπη, θάλασσα πλατιά.



## ORANGETREE OF AEGINA

From the light of the golden beach in your eyes  
A wing gathers its shade  
A wind strives with the south wind.

I wonder what hand will put on you  
A handful of soil from the Morea?  
Little mother orange tree  
Throw the orange to your earth  
.....  
..... an embrace  
Love, the broad sea.

Αἷμα, αἷμα, αἷμα,  
Θέληση σίδερο καπνὸς  
Ἡλικία τῶν ρόδων σταματημένα ρολόγια  
Ἕνα μεγάλο βόδι κρέμεται στὰ γιασεμιά.



Κάτω στὴν ἄσπρη θάλασσα  
Θὰ κοιμηθῶ τὸν ὕπνο τῶν παιδιῶν  
Ἡ θέργα τῆς μηλιᾶς ποὺ πέρσι φύτεψα  
Πορτοκαλιά θὰ γίνεῖ στὰ μαλλιά σου  
Μόνο μὴν πεῖς στὸν ἴσκιο σου νὰ ῥθεῖ

Blood, blood, blood,  
Will iron smoke  
Roses withered clocks stopped  
A big ox hangs among the jasmine.



Down in the white sea  
I shall sleep the sleep of children  
The stake of an apple tree I planted last year  
Will be orange blossom in your hair  
Only do not tell your shadow to come.

Γιατί σέ πήρα κοντά μου

Ἐπὶ τῇ σκοτεινῇ σου φωλιά νά σ' ἀνεβάσω στὰ σύννεφα  
Νά δεῖς λημέρια μέ σταυραητοὺς κι ἁλώνια μέ χορευτάδες  
Νά δεῖς σταυροὺς σ' ἔρημοκκλησιῆς κι ἀστέρια σέ στέγες  
    δέντρων

Νά δεῖς μιὰ ἀγάπη στοχαστική στοῦ φεγγαριοῦ τὰ μπαλκόνια  
Κι ὕστερα μέ τὸ δάκρυ σου καὶ τὸ χαμόγελό σου

Νά μέ κοιτάξεις σάν ὄνειρο καὶ νά μοῦ πιᾶσεις τὸ χέρι  
Μὲ τὴν κορδέλα τοῦ λαιμοῦ νά χαιρετήσεις τοὺς γερανούς  
Μὲ τὰ γαλάζια μάτια σου νά χρωματίσεις τὸν οὐρανὸ  
Μὲ τὰ ξανθὰ σου τὰ μαλλιά ν' ἀναγελάσεις τὸν ἥλιο  
Μὲ τ' ἀνοιχτὰ τὰ στήθια σου νά κοροϊδέψεις τὰ κρίνα  
Μὲ τὸ γαλάζιο τῶν ματιῶν νά προκαλέσεις τὸν οὐρανό.

Because I took you  
From your dark hair and brought you up to the clouds  
To see golden eagles in their eyries and dancers on  
    threshing floors  
To see crosses in lonely chapels and stars on  
    the roofs of trees  
To see a thoughtful love on the balconies of the moon  
And then with your tear and your smile  
To gaze on me as in a dream and take my hand  
With the ribbon round your neck to greet the cranes  
With your blue eyes to colour the sky  
With your blond hair to mock the sun  
With your naked breasts to laugh at the lilies  
With the blue of your eyes to challenge the sky.

**ΜΙΑ ΝΥΧΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΛΟΚΑΙΡΙΟΥ**

Στὸν Ἀντρέα Ἐμπειρίκο

Μερόπη κλείνω τὰ μάτια μου νὰ θυμηθῶ τὸ χῶμα ποὺ ρούφηξε  
τὸ αἷμα τῶν σκοτωμένων πουλιῶν στὰ σπλάχνα του κι ἔγινε  
κάπου μιὰ φωτιά ἕνας καπνὸς κι ἕνα σίδερο πέρα ἀπ' τὴ σκόνη  
τῶν ποταμιῶν ποὺ οἱ λυγαριές τραγουδᾶνε. Πάνω στὰ βρα-  
δυνὰ θουνὰ ἀναβοσβύνει ἕνα ἄστρο θέλει ν' ἀρχίσει τὸ χορὸ  
τῶν ἀηδονιῶν καὶ τῶν γρύλλων.

## A SUMMER NIGHT

*To Andreas Embiricos*

Merope I close my eyes to remember the earth that absorbed the blood of slaughtered birds in its entrails and became somewhere fire smoke and iron beyond the dust of rivers where the willows sing. On the evening mountains a star sparkles wanting to start the chorus of the swallows and the crickets.

Ἄχ, τί λιθάδι μαραμένο!  
Πόρτα κλειστή γιὰ τὴν ὁμορφιά!  
Γυρεύω ἓνα παιδί  
τὴν πίκρα μου νὰ γιάνει  
μὲ ντάλιες κοιμισμένου φεγγαριοῦ.



Μιά χαλασμένη καμπάνα  
Δείχνει τὸ δρόμο τῆς φωτιᾶς στοὺς ναυαγοὺς  
Λέει τῇ μοίρα τῶν ἔρπετῶν στοὺς πεθαμένους  
Ἴσως ν' ἀλλάξει ἡ θάλασσα μὰ ἡ ἄνοιξη δὲν ἀλλάζει  
Ἴσως νὰ λιώσουν τὰ σύννεφα μὰ ἡ μνήμη σου δὲ θὰ λιώσει  
Ἴσως νὰ κλάψουν οἱ ἥρωες μὰ τὸ σμαράγδι δὲν κλαίει  
Δὲν ξελογιάζεται ὁ χαλκὸς μὲ δυὸ σταφύλια.





## NIKOS GATSOS— SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY

*compiled by David Connolly*

A collection of lyrics by Nikos Gatsos is to be found in: Nikos Gatsos, *Fysa aeraki fysa me, min hamiloneis isame* (Blow breeze blow me, don't abate until), Athens, Ikaros 1992. The discography below includes most of the songs in this collection and a number which are not. The records are listed in alphabetical order according to the composer's name and in chronological order under each composer. Individual songs are listed in the order they appear on the record. An asterisk indicates that the English translation is taken from the record sleeve. All other translations are my own (DC).

### MANOS HADJIDAKIS

*Ellas i chora ton oniron* (Greece the land of dreams), FONTANA 1960.

"Itan tou Mai to prosopo" (The face of May) From the poem "Amorgos"

"San sfyrixeis treis fores" (When you whistle three times)

"Athina" (Athens)

"To pelago einai vathi" (The sea is deep)

"Kalymniotiko" (Song of Kalymnos)

*Odos oniron* (Street of dreams),\* COLUMBIA 1962.

"Efyge to traino" (The train's left)

"America America", WARNER BROS. 1963.

"T" asteri tou vorria" (The North Star)

*Mythologia* (Mythology), COLUMBIA 1969.

"Treis kopeles ap' ti Thiva" (Three girls from Thebes)

"O Robinson sti Mykono" (Robinson in Mykonos)

"O Irlandos ke o Ioudaios" (The Irishman and the Jew)

"Ta kalotaxida poulia" (The journeying birds)

"Orestis" (Orestes)

"Aeriko" (Fairy)

- "Me tin Ellada karavokyri" (With Greece as captain)
- "O Tzonis o boyas" (Johnny the executioner)
- "Isoun pedi san ton Christo" (You were a child like Christ)
- "Enas evaisthitos listis" (A sensitive robber)
- "Nychterines eidiseis" (Evening news)
- "Lamento" (Lament)

*Epistrofi* (Return), COLUMBIA 1970.

- "I pikra simera" (Today's sorrow) \*
- "Milise mou" (Speak to me) \*
- "Ti na yinetai o kyr Fotis" (What about old Fotis) \*
- "I kolasmeni" (The damned ones) \*
- "O Timonieris" (The helmsman) \*
- "To Despinaki" (Despinaki) \*
- "Helidoni se klouvi" (Swallow in a cage) \*
- "Fildisenio karavaki" (Little ivory boat) \*
- "Stis zois ti strata" (Down life's pathway) \*
- "Se pelagisio mnima" (On a sea grave) \*
- "Damon ke Fidias" (Damon and Findias) \*

*Tis gis to chryssafi* (Gold of the earth), \* COLUMBIA 1971.

- "Kykladitiko" (Cycladic) \*
- "To paramythi" (The tale) \*
- "Agapi mesa stin kardia" (An affair of the heart) \*
- "Bora einai tha perasei" (The storm will pass over) \*
- "Aspro peristeri" (White dove) \*
- "I mikri Rallou" (Little Rallou) \*
- "Hasapiko saranda" (Hassapiko 40) \*
- "Apopse fthinoporiase" (Autumnal evening) \*
- "Stou ouranou tin akri" (The sky's limit) \*
- "Stou iliou to aloni" (Chaff in the sun) \*
- "Protominia" (First of the month) \*
- "Agapo mia karderina" (I love the goldfinch) \*

*Proti ektelesi* (First performance), \* COLUMBIA 1973.

- "Kame ton pono sou hara" (Turn your pain to joy)
- "Mia Panaghia" (A Holy Virgin)
- "Thalassopoulia" (Seabirds)

*Ta paralogia* (Absurd songs), NOTOS 1976.

- "O ephialtis tis Persephonis" (Persephone's nightmare)
- "To alogo tou Omer Vryoni" (Omer Vryoni's horse)
- "I Magda" (Magda)
- "O amnos tou Theou" (The lamb of God)

"Cundu luna vini"

"Chrismi tis Sivylas" (The Sibyl's oracles)

"O ippotis ke o thanatos" (From the poem "Death and the knight")

"I prosefchi tis parthenou (The virgin's prayer)

"Elladographia" (Greecescape)

*Athanassia*, COLUMBIA 1976.

"O Yannis o fonias" (Johnny the killer) \*

"Kita me sta matia" (Look me in the eyes) \*

"O Pandelis" (Mr Pantelis) \*

"To methysmeno karavi" (The drunken boat) \*

"Athanassia" (Eternity herself) \*

"I meres einai ponires" (The times are tricky) \*

"Tsamikos" (Tsamikos) \*

"Paraxeni protomayia" (Strange Mayday) \*

"Ena spirto sto trapezi" (A match on the table) \*

"Mia fora ki' enan kairo" (Once upon a time) \*

"Melancholiko emvativrio" (Melancholy march) \*

*Pornografia* (Pornography), MINOS 1982.

"I Panaghia ton Patission" (Our Lady of Patissia)

"Ela se mena" (Come to me)

*30 spanies ermineies 1955-1965* (30 rare recordings), COLUMBIA 1983.

"Athina" (Athens)

"To tragoudi tis seirinas" (The siren's song)

"T' asteri tou vorria" (The North Star)

"Kourasmeno pallikari" (Tired lad)

"Sto Lavrio yinetai horos" (There's a dance at Lavrion)

"Enas evaisthitos listis" (A sensitive robber)

"O Tzonis o boyas" (Johnny the executioner)

"Isoun pedi san ton Christo" (You were a child like Christ)

"Paei o kairos . . . (The time's gone . . .)

*Memed yeraki mou* (Memed my little hawk), NOTOS 1984. ,

"Memed agapi mou" (Memed my love)

*I mythi mias gynaikas* (A woman's myths), PHILIPS 1988.

"I thysia tis Antigonis" (Antigone's sacrifice)

"Eipa epi gis eirini" (I said peace on earth)

"Taormina"

"Me lene Theodora" (My name's Theodora)

"Pote pethainei o erotas" (When does love die)

"O stavros" (The cross)

- "I polka ton Evraion tis Pragas" (Polka of the Prague Jews)  
"Mavros tavros bike sto horo" (A black bull entered the dance)  
"Ta loyia pou perimena" (The words I was waiting for)  
"Stou Neilou t'ammohorafa" (In the sands of the Nile)  
"Kravges yia enos Angelou mnemi" (Cries for an Angel's memory)

*Antikatoptrismi* (Reflections), \* SIRIOS 1993.

- "To tragoudi tis hamenis kyriakis" (The song of a missed sunday) \*  
"Pou to pigan to pedi" (Where has the boy been taken away) \*  
"Pes mou t' onoma sou" (Tell me your name) \*  
"O horos ton skylon" (The dance of the dogs) \*  
"O kosmos sou na eimai ego" (I am to be your world) \*  
"Kemal"  
"Treis apandiseis" (Three answers) \*  
"To tragoudi tou dromou" (The song of the street) \*  
"I prosefchi tou akrovati" (The acrobat's prayer) \*  
"Peribanoo"

## CHRISTODOULOS HALARIS

*Drossoulites* (Daybreak riders), \* COLUMBIA 1975.

- "O drossoulitis" (Daybreak rider) \*  
"Tou rizikari" (Bonfire night) \*  
"O Mavrailis" (When Mavraelis comes) \*  
"Kato sta tripotama" (The joining of three rivers) \*  
"To tragoudi tou Leidinou" (The song of Leidinos) \*  
"Mana mou mana" (Mother o mother) \*  
"Mia Komnini" (A Comnene girl) \*  
"Madrigali" (Madrigal) \*  
"O Zapheiris" (Lament for Zapheiris) \*  
"Ta flouria" (Florins) \*

## YORGOS HATZINASSIOS

*I endekati endoli* (The eleventh commandment), PHILIPS 1985.

- "Pefti vrochi" (The rain's falling)  
"I endekati endoli" (The eleventh commandment)  
"Allelouia" (Hallelujah)  
"Ilie pou hathikes" (Sun that has gone)  
"Pyrrichios" (Pyrrhic dance)  
"Mia thesi ston ilio" (A place in the sun)  
"To pedi me to tambourlo" (The boy with the drum)  
"Makria sto Katmandu" (Far away in Katmandu)

"Yarem yarem"

"O taxidiotis tou oneirou" (Dream traveller)

"Tis haras aderfi" (Brother in joy)

"Mikro mou alphavitari" (My little alphabet)

## LOUKIANOS KILAIIDONIS

*I kokkini klosti* (The scarlet thread) \* HIS MASTER'S VOICE 1972.

"To spiti mou" (My old home) \*

"Irthate san kymata" (Like waves you come) \*

"Mia kyriaki tou Marti" (One sunday in March) \*

"Mikri Zakynthinia" (The girl from Zante) \*

"Nychtothika stin porta sou" (Nighfall at your door) \*

"Mila Katerina" (Say something Katerina) \*

"Mia Kefalonitissa" (Kefalonitissa) \*

"Kalokairia ke vroches" (Summers and showers) \*

"Me garyfallo sto peto" (Carnation in your buttonhole) \*

"Gremos ke vrachos" (Cliff and rock) \*

"Dekapende tou alonari" (July fifteenth) \*

"Kathe chrono—kathe chrono" (Year after year) \*

"Psalmos (Psalm) \*

## DIMOS MOUTSIS

*Synikismos A* (Neighbourhood 1), PHONOGRAM 1972.

"Kapia nychta" (One night) \*

*Proti eklelesi* (First performance) \*, COLUMBIA 1973.

"Pireotissa" (Girl from Piraeus)

"Rina Katerina" (Katerina)

"Ichame periphaneia" (We were proud)

"Pharmaki ta geramata" (Bitter old age)

"Vrechi o Theos" (God is raining)

"Avrio pali" (Again tomorrow)

"S'evlepa sta matia" (I looked in your eyes)

"Kapio traino" (A train)

*To dromologio* (The itinerary), COLUMBIA 1979.

"San ton Tse Gevara" (Like Che Guevara)

"Otan gyrisoun" (When they return)

"I Assimina" (Assimina)

"Treis Amerikani" (Three Americans)

"Sto Agionoros" (To Mount Athos)

"Pios echei dakrya na mou dosei" (Who has tears to give me)

"1922"

"Makryni tis agapis ora" (Distant time of love)

"Tragoudi tou fylakismenou" (Prisoner's song)

"I rhetores" (The orators)

"Ellada—Ellada" (Greece—Greece)

## MIKIS THEODORAKIS

*Thalassina fengaria* (Marine moons), COLUMBIA 1974.

"Tha rixo petra sti zoi" (I'll fight life's challenge)\*

"Kimisou pallikari" (Sleep forever young man)\*

"Ferte mou ti thalassa" (Give me the sea)\*

"Nychta dichos akri" (Boundless night)\*

"To panegyri ton astron" (The celebration of the stars)\*

"Simera evradyase noris" (Night falls early)\*

"T' oniro kapnos" (The dream went up in smoke)\*

"Stou kosmou tin aniforia" (Life's steep road)\*

"To ekkremes" (The pendulum)\*

"Strata ti strata" (The pathway)\*

"Matomeno fengari" (Bleeding moon)\*

*Archipelagos* (Archipelago), COLUMBIA 1976.

"I myrtia" (The myrtle tree)

"Se potisa rodostamo" (I sprinkled you with rosewater)

## STAVROS XARHAKOS

*Ena mesimeri* (At noon),\* COLUMBIA 1973.

"Matia yourkomena" (Brimming eyes)\*

"Stou Othona ta chronia" (In the days of King Otto)\*

"Aspri mera ke yia mas" (Better days for us too)\*

"O Lefteris" (Lefteris)\*

"Me ti kardia ton kosmo n'arnitho" (How can I deny the world)\*

"I nychta" (The night)\*

*Nyn ke aei* (Now and forever),\* COLUMBIA 1974.

"Nyn ke aei" (Now and forever)\*

"Ston kato dromo" (On the low road)\*

"Ta dokana" (The traps)\*

"Megali Paraskevi" (Good Friday)\*

"Irthe o kairos" (The time has come)\*

"O mavros ilios" (The black sun)\*

"I liotra" (The arena)\*

"O drakos" (The dragon)\*

"Anonymon" (Anonymon)\*

"Emeis pou meiname" (We who have remained)\*

*Nikos Xylouris syllogi* (Nikos Xylouris Collection), COLUMBIA 1974.

"Barba Yanni Makriyanni" (Old Yannis Makriyannis)

"Yeia sou hara sou Venetia" (Hail and farewell Venice)

"I kori tou Pasa" (The Pasha's daughter)

"Palikari sta Sfakia" (Brave lad of Sfakia)

*I symfonia tis Yaltas* (The Yalta agreement),\* COLUMBIA 1976.

"O Sam o Tzonni ki' o Ivan" (Sam and Johnny and Ivan)\*

"Agapi agapi" (Love my love)\*

*Rebetiko*, CBS 1983

"Mana mou Ellas" (Mother Greece)

"Stis pikras ta xeronissa" (On bitterness' barren isles)

"Kaigomai kaigomai" (I'm burning I'm burning)

"Bournovalia"

"Emena loyia mi mou les" (Watch your words with me)

"Stin Amphiali" (In Amphiali)

"To dichti" (The net)

"Sti Salamina" (In Salamis)

"To praktoreio" (The station)

*Ta kata Markon* (Songs according to Markos), MINOS 1991.

"O horos ton Kykladon" (Dance of the Cyclades)

"I astrologoi" (The astrologers)

"Doste mou mia taftotita" (Give me an identity card)

"I prota ke i defteri" (Those that come first and second)

"Ta gerontia" (The old men)

"Mia glossa mia patrida" (A language a country)

"Piso apo mavra sidera" (Behind black bars)

"I hondroballou" (Dumpy old woman)

"Tautos o topos" (This land)

"Gramma ston Marko Vamvakari" (Letter to Markos Vamvakaris)

*Agapi ein' i zoi* (Life is love), PHILIPS 1994.

"Konda sto Sikouana" (By the Seine)

"Dakrya tou fthinoporou" (Autumn tears)

"Anthropakia tou solina" (Test-tube people)

"To mavro aloni" (The black threshing-floor)

"Agapi ein' i zoi" (Life is love)

"Pilioritiki Madonna" (Madonna of Pelion)



## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nikos Gatsos was born in 1914 in Aséa, Arcadia. When he was sixteen, his family moved to Athens, where he completed his high-school education. He then attended the University of Athens, where he studied Literature, Philosophy and History. In 1935 he went to Paris and Southern France where he lived for some time.

His reputation as a poet was established in 1943 with the publication of his long poem *Amorgos*, a unique achievement which influenced subsequent generations of poets.

In his youth he was a regular contributor to literary journals. Later he worked for several years as a writer-director of radio-plays for the National Greek Broadcasting System.

Gatsos was well-versed in English, French and Spanish and translated poetry and theatrical plays by Lorka, Tennessee Williams, O'Neil, Strindberg, MacLeish, Lope de Vega and Genet. His superb translations were used in performances of the National Greek Theater and the Art Theater of Karolos Koun.

After *Amorgos*, Gatsos stopped writing poetry for unknown reasons. Instead he wrote the lyrics for several songs set to music by famous composers such as Hadjidakis, Theodorakis and Xarhakos, many of which are very fine poetry. His songs elevated the quality of song writing in Greece and became very popular all over the country.

He was a member of the Greek Playwrights' Guild. In 1986 he was named "Honorary Citizen" of Athens and 1991 he was elected Corresponding Member of the Royal Academy of Letters of Barcelona, Spain.

Gatsos' works have been translated in English, French, Italian, German and Danish.

Nikos Gatsos spent most of his life (1930-1989) in Kypseli, Athens. In 1989, he moved to Kifissia because of his health and he passed away on May 2, 1992.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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CARMEN CAPRI-KARKA, the editor of *The CHARIOTEER*, is a Professor of Foreign Languages at New York University. She has published four collections of poems, *Ebb and Flow*, *The Age of Antipoetry*, *O Kaimos tis Romiosynis* and *My Mother, Peace*, and two books of criticism, *Love and the Symbolic Journey in the Poetry of Cavafy, Eliot and Seferis* and *War in the Poetry of George Seferis*, published by PELLA. She has translated, among others, works by Yannis Ritsos, Titos Patrikios, Olga Votsi, Nikiforos Vrettakos and George Seferis.

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DAVID CONNOLLY has lived and worked in Greece since 1979. He was for several years Head of Translation at the British Council in Athens and now lectures in Literary Translation at the Ionian University in Corfu. He has written on various aspects of translation theory and has translated major twentieth-century Greek authors including Angelos Terzakis, Nikiforos Vrettakos, Odysseus Elytis and Kiki Dimoula. His most recent publications are: *Odysseus Elytis. The Oxopectra Elegies* (Harwood Academic Press, 1996) and *Kiki Dimoula. Lethe's Adolescence* (Nostos Books, 1996).

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GEORGE PILITSIS is an Associate Professor of Classic and Modern Greek at the Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He is the co-translator of *The New Oresteia of Yannis Ritsos* and translator of Regina Pagoulatou's *The Nepenthes*, both books published by PELLA.

MARGARET ROBERTS POLIS is a retired United Nations translator. Her literary translations have appeared in *Translation, Zone, Prism International, New Observations* and other publications.

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