

# *The* CHARIOTEER

AN ANNUAL REVIEW OF MODERN GREEK CULTURE

NUMBERS 39/40

2000-2002

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SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

MYSTIKO PERASMA

BY MARIA LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

INTRODUCTION BY APOSTOLOS ATHANASSAKIS

ROMANTIC POETRY IN GREECE

BY SONIA ILINSKAYA

SELECTIONS FROM "THE POETRY OF GREECE"

BY DISKIN CLAY

PHILANDERING ODYSSEUS?

BY PHANIS J. KAKRIDIS

A POETIC DIALOGUE BETWEEN TRADITIONS:  
FOLK ART AND CHRISTIANITY

BY YIANNIS MOTSIOS

MOIROLOGIA

COLLECTED BY YIANNIS MOTSIOS

KEROWOS

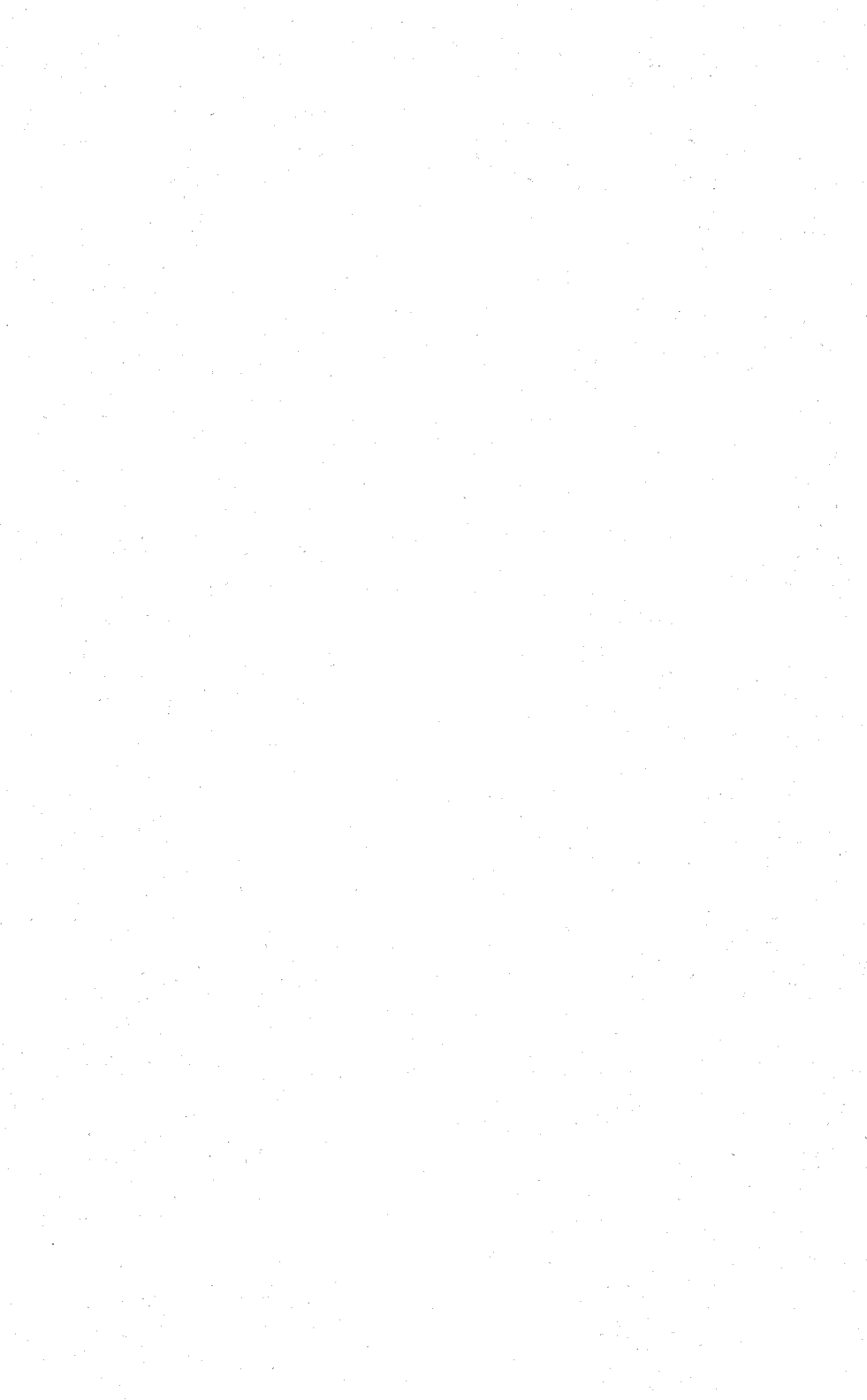
BY P.A. SINOPOULOS

PROLOGUE BY JOHN CHADWICK

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# *The* CHARIOTEER

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Formerly published by PARNASSOS Greek Cultural Society of New York

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## A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

*The Charioteer* began as a journal dedicated to the diffusion of Modern Greek literature and culture in the English speaking world. During its first forty years, the journal focused on bringing numerous Greek authors, poets and artists to a wide audience by publishing selections from their writings in English translation along with scholarly articles on Modern Greek literature and culture. Founded by Parnasos Greek Cultural Society of New York in 1959, *The Charioteer* quickly established itself as an important contributor to the study of Modern Greek culture in the Western hemisphere. During these years some issues were devoted exclusively to one literary figure, others contained translations and critical articles on the works of several authors and artists.

The first three issues were edited by Kimon Friar and presented a variety of Greek authors from Homer and Aeschylus to modern poetry and prose.

Issue 1 included excerpts from *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* by Nikos Kazantzakis, excerpts from *Nikos Kazantzakis and His Odyssey* by Pantelis Prevelakis, small anthologies of Angelos Sikelianos, Yannis Moralis, Stratis Myrivilis; also essays and poetry by Aeschylus, Nikiphoros Vrettakos, Alexis Minotis and others.

Issue 2 included seven poems on Greek themes by Salvatore Quasimodo, *The Exiles* by Kay Cicellis, *To Argos* by Lawrence Durrell, small anthologies of Elias Venezis, Odysseus Elytis and the works of Ghika. Also essays and art by Edward Roditi, Apostolos Sahinis, Petros Markakis and others.

Issue 3 included a preface to *Pope Joan* by Lawrence Durrell, excerpts from *Pope Joan* by Emmanuel Royidis, small anthologies of Michael Tombros, I.M. Panayotopoulos, Takis Papatzonis, excerpts from the Oedipus plays by Sophocles, fiction and essays by Minas Dimakis, K. Ghikas, Zaharias Papantoniou, Evangelos Papanoutsos and others, Also satire by Minos Argytakis.

After the third issue Kimon Friar moved to Greece but he continued to contribute essays and translations to *The Charioteer*. Starting with Issue 4, Andonis Decavalles and Despoina Spanos became executive editors of *The Charioteer* and continued for twenty-one years—1962-

1983, issues 4 to 25—to present a great number of Greek writers, poets and artists along with critical essays.

Issue 4 included excerpts from two novels and a play by Angelos Terzakis, seven short stories by six pioneers: Kondylakis, Karkavitsas, Psycharis, Papadiamantis, Vikelas and Mora\_tidis; and an essay, “Modern Greek Prose,” by Andonis Decavalles; also paintings by Spyros Vassiliou.

Issue 5 included excerpts from two novels, *Argo* and *Leonis*, and a play, *Alciviades*, by G. Theotokas, essays and art by Photis Kontoglou and Greek Demotic Love Songs.

Issue 6 included three poems by Nobel Prize winner George Seferis, excerpts from three novels by Thanasis Petsalis, *Philoctetes—A Modern Version* by David Posner and paintings by Gounaropoulos.

The double issue 7/8 was dedicated to Cyprus, its poetry, prose and art from ancient times to the present.

Issue 9 included poems by George Seferis, introduced by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, excerpts from *Smugglers of the Aegean* by Y. Manglis, short stories by Alciviades Yiannopoulos and Galatea Saranti and the sculpture of Christos Capralos.

Issue 10 included thirteen Poets of Salonica, the art of Yannis Spyropoulos and “Cavafy’s *Ars Poetica*.”

The double issue 11/12 included an anthology of Cosmas Politis, selections from *Eroica*, *At Hadzifrangos* and short stories; also the sculpture of Ikaris and critical essays.

Issue 13 was dedicated to Antonis Samarakis. It included selections from the novel *Danger Signal* and seven short stories along with critical commentaries.

Issue 14 included a nouvelle by Ange Vlachos, *Hours of Life*, a short story by Andreas Karkavitsas and selections from nine poets; also woodcuts by Achilles Droungas.

Issue 15 was dedicated to Kimon Friar and included his translations of eighteen poets of two decades (40s and 50s), an essay by Andonis Decavalles “Kimon Friar as Translator,” a short story by Triandafillos Pittas and “The Sculpture of Natalia Melas” by Kimon Friar.

The double issue 16/17 was dedicated to Pandelis Prevelakis, three poems, a nouvelle: *The Angel in the Well*, and a play *The Hand of the Slain*; also the art of Yannis Kefallinos.



Issue 18 included a poem "Ursa Minor" by Takis Papatsonis, a short story "The Last Visit" by Spiros Plaskovitis and the sculpture of Michael Lekakis along with an essay on his work by Despoina Spanos.

Issue 19 included an essay by Morton P. Levitt "Odysseus Elytis and Modern Greek Poetry," two poems of Odysseus Elytis, a Greek Shadow Puppet Play: *The Seven Beasts and Karangiozis*, an essay by Georgios-Alexandros Mangakis, short stories by George Ioannou and George Theotokas; also the art of George Constant.

Issue 20 was an anthology of new poets. It also included an essay by Andonis Decavalles, "Modernity: The Third Stage, The New Poets."

Issue 21 included a selection of poems by Yannis Ritsos introduced by Edmund Keeley; a novel, *Shaved Heads* by Nikos Kasdaglis and an essay "Nikos Kasdaglis and the Regimented State" by Thomas Doulis; also sculpture by Klearchos Loukopoulos.

The double issue 22/23 was dedicated to Nikos Kazantzakis. It included a lecture, "Kazantzakis: Life and Works by Pantelis Prevelakis"; excerpts from *The Saviors of Gods: Spiritual Exercises*; also two essays by George Manousakis and Kostas Michailidhis.

The double issue 24/25 was dedicated to Odysseus Elytis. It included excerpts from the poem *Maria Nefeli* and essays by Andonis Decavalles, Edmund Keeley and Odysseus Elytis; an interview with Yiannis Tsarouhis; also Dionysios Solomos' "The Woman of Zakynthos."

After issue 25, the publishing of *The Charioteer* was transferred from Parnassos Greek Cultural Society of New York to Pella Publishing Company under Leandros Papathanasiou.

Special issue 26 was guest edited by George Valamvanos and presented an anthology of Modern Greek one-act plays. It included two plays *He and His Pants* and *The Woman and the Wrong Man* by Iakovos Kambanellis, *The City*, a trilogy of one-act plays by Loula Anagnostakis, *Backgammon* by Dimitris Kehaides, and a play *The Match* and Three Dramatic Monologues by George Maniotis.

Starting with issue 27, C. Capri-Karka became the editor of *The Charioteer* and continued for fourteen years—1985-1999, issues 27 to 38—to present Greek writers, poets and artists. All these issues included editorials by C. Capri-Karka that were in essence introductions and commentaries on the writers presented.

Issue 27 was a double issue dedicated to the poet George Seferis. It

included two poems "Argo" and "The Last Chorus," the essay "All Things Are Full of Gods," his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, excerpts from the novel *Six Nights on the Acropolis* and from the poet's journal *Days* "B" and critical commentaries by Alexandros Argyriou, Costas G. Papageorgiou, John Rexine and C. Capri-Karka.

Issue 28 was dedicated to three writers: General Makriyannis (Excerpts from his *Memoirs*); the poet Titos Patrikios, thirty-four poems from the collections *Poems 1: 1948-1954*, *Apprenticeship*, *Optional Stop*, and an essay by D.N. Maronitis; also George Ioannou, ten short stories from *Out of Self Respect*.

Issue 29/30 was a double issue dedicated to Yannis Ritsos. It included translations of an extensive selection (eighty-two poems) from his work: *My Sister's Song* (with an introduction by Marjorie Chambers), *The March of the Ocean*, *Romiosini*, from *Testimonies A*, from *Testimonies B*, *Eighteen Short Songs of the Bitter Motherland*, *The Annihilation of Melos* (with an introduction by Rick M. Newton), from *The Doorman's Booth* (with an introduction by C. Capri-Karka), *The Body and the Blood* and a selection of short poems; also essays by Peter Bien and William Spanos.

The double issue 31/32 was dedicated to three poets, George Vafopoulos, Olga Votsi and Spyros Milas. For Vafopoulos twenty-three poems selected from *The Offering*, *The Songs of Resurrection*, *The Floor*, *The Big Night and the Window* and others; also two essays by Th. Papaathanasopoulos. For Votsi an introduction by C. Capri-Karka, a selection of forty-nine poems from *Bare Soles*, *The Other Knowledge*, *The Clay Form*, *The Platform* and others; also a selection of critical commentaries by E. Moschos, G. Kotsiras and others. For Milas twenty-seven poems selected from *Twenty-Eight Poets* (1980), *Fiery Voices*, *Echoes*, *With the Cross* and others; and a selection of critical commentaries by M. Avgeris, Th. Cornaros and others; also a presentation of the painter Sotiris Sorogas.

The double issue 33/34 was dedicated to the poet Nikiforos Vretakos and included one hundred thirteen poems from *The Philosophy of Flowers*, *Liturgy Under the Acropolis*, *Chorus*, *Selections from Collected Poems Vol.1 and Vol.2*, *Protest*, *The Distinguished Planet*, *Sun Lamp*, *Gift in Abeyance* and *Encounter with the Sea*. Two interviews with the poet, an essay by Elli Alexiou and some critical commentaries by A. Argyriou,

S. Geranis, K. Haralambidis, Titos Patrikios and Vincenzo Rotolo.

Issue 35 included a translation of an essay "Delphi" by George Seferis, a translation of an essay "Palimpsest of Homer," by Zisimos Lorentzatos, "Mourning Songs of Greek Women" and a short story "Silence" by A. Terzakis; also a presentation of the painter Despo Mangoni.

Issue 36 was dedicated to the poet Nikos Gatsos. It included translations of sixty-nine poems *Amorgos*, selected songs from the volume *Blow Breeze Blow Me, Don't Abate Until* and the posthumously published poems *Lend Silken Threads to the Wind* introduced by E. Aranitsis; a selection of essays by A. Argyriou, E. Aranitsis, O. Elytis and others; also a selective discography of Gatsos' songs compiled by David Connolly.

The double issue 37/38 was dedicated to the poet Miltos Sahtouris and included translations of ninety-five poems selected from his collections *The Forgotten Woman*, *Ballads*, *With Face to the Wall*, *When I Speak to You*, *The Phantoms or Joy on the Other Street*, *The Stroll*, *The Stigmata*, *The Seal or the Eighth Moon*, *The Apparatus*, *Color Wounds*, *Ectoplasms*, *Sinking* and *Since Then*; also two critical commentaries by Alexandros Argyriou.

In 1994 *The Charioteer* received a special award from the Greek Association of Literature Translators (Athens) in recognition of its contribution to the promotion of Modern Greek literature in the English speaking world.

*The Charioteer* is publishing its next issue, Nos. 39/40 (2000-2002), under the aegis of the Argyropoulos Chair in Hellenic Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Under the direction of editor Apostolos N. Athanassakis and associate editor Theony Condos, *The Charioteer* will continue its original mission of bringing Modern Greek literature and culture to the English-speaking world. It will also expand that mission by including Greek literature and culture from all periods of Greek history. We will publish one issue each year and will include translations of Greek texts, literary and cultural as well as scholarly. The journal will host critical studies written in English as well as presentations of artists and authors from Greece and the Diaspora, along with an occasional book review. By casting the net of its aspirations widely, *The Charioteer* hopes to be a forum for Hellenism everywhere.

Η

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑ ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΕΩΝ ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑΣ

ἀπονέμει τὸ περιοδικὸν :

THE CHARIOTEER Η.Π.Α.

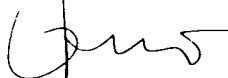
ΤΙΜΗΤΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΚΡΙΣΗ Η.Π.Α.

Για τὴ συμβολήν τῃ διάδοσιν τῆς νεοελληνικῆς λογοτεχνίας  
τῇν ἀμερικῇ καὶ γενικότερα τὸν ἀγγλόφωνο κόσμον.

Ἀθήνα 26 Ἰανουαρίου 1994

ὁ Πρόεδρος

ὁ Γενικὸς Γραμματεὺς





ΒΑΣΙΛΗΣ ΒΙΤΣΑΞΗΣ

ΚΩΣΤΑΣ ΑΣΗΜΑΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ



# MYSTIC PASSAGE

BY MARIA LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

*Introduction by Apostolos Athanassakis*

Readers of Hellenic poetry will be taken to new unfamiliar groves of painful delight, new meadows of ecstatic liminality by the intense, at times unbridled lyricism of Maria Lampadaridou-Pothou's poetry. The title of the present collection, *Mystic Passage*, may, to some people at least, conjure up images of the contemplative, the serenely transcendent. This poetess, however, is made of unremitting action. Even when she weeps, she must dance, and dance her way to God.

Winter will find me naked  
In a dilapidated room  
With time welling up through the holes of the floors  
Winter will find me stirring the ashes of my poetry  
(#1)

Who is speaking? Is it the poet meditating on death? Is the voice that of a pagan, an Old Testament prophet, a Christian, a woman of our time? All of these, it seems, all of these in one. This quality of oneness is pervasive, not only because all things are connected, but also because they are there for all. I, poetry, and the self are all one. Thus even when the self appears it is almost without failure in a communal, sacrificial context:

I raise my poetry before  
Garment stained with blood  
I burn it to warm myself.

Maria Lampadaridou-Pothou's world is not one of the spirit, not in the English sense of the word. For her it is her soul that struggles to "loose the bonds" (#2), a soul that is always rooted in the earth, even after it goes beyond the "mystic passage." This is a soul that smells and seeks freedom from a body that carries with it the "odor of birth-blood."

The boundless void, the sky, the frigid stars, the night that "riddles" the soul and even Chaos all share an odor that is in no way immaterial or metaphysical. The passage to the other time is to take place in the presence of the firmament and begins with the descent to the depths where the shades of the dead dwell. The cosmic reality of our poetess is full of abysses, fissures, cracks. The passage to it is paved with the ubiquitous drops of blood, the vengeful hyacinths, the many moist flames. It is as though through the fire of passion a woman is reborn through her own womb. All of her is reborn when she gives birth, and this wondrous event is a veritable blueprint of the rebirth of her soul:

I bend over and look at myself  
A flower of the abysmal night  
To pass my body through to the other time (#3)

The pervasive sensuality of the poems of the *Mystic Passage* is distinctly feminine. The flame that appears in so many of her verses is now that of love, but now again that of the Resurrection of the candle-lit services of the Church, the Orthodox Church in whose mysticism and liturgical practices the poetess is steeped. To say that she is religious is to suggest that there is some objectivity to her poetry, that she and her sacred reality are connected by habit or convention.

I am the mother of the Crucifixion, I  
And my eyes, full of blood  
Seek the light . . . (#6)

Icons, candles, incense, visions from Revelation, crosses, angels, saints are not comforting accessories but part of the very essence of life. Yet, this does not prevent her from hearing the footsteps of Homer, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras. Ancient and modern, pagan and Christian blend creatively to produce the ontological spasm that precedes the leap into the mystic passage. The odor of all things great and small, their sweaty and tearful existence, gives Maria Lampadaridou-Pothou no sleep. Thus, in "Eighth Passage" the odor of memory turns her lyrical strains into an epic lament over the loss of Ionia, her father's and hence her own true fatherland. Yet, in her poetry, all grief must flower into joy, ecstatic joy. The same theme, now in the "Eleventh Passage," has a grandly

epinician tone, becomes an irrepressible affirmation:

From the Propontis my days have traveled  
Full of princely islands and the gold of tombs  
From there I come like a white wave  
Upright on the winds  
With a breath of the deep and silent time

There is a space within this poetess that is as large as the space without. Homer's lyre, Sappho's deathless words, the terse and cryptic utterances of the great pre-Socratic philosophers, the hum of vesperal devotions, and the bells of Hagia Sophia are all deep within her. So then hers is a polyphonic tribute to a tradition that, being neither archival nor academic, is life itself pulsating through her veins, blood of birth, odor of memory.

Maria Lampadaridou-Pothou is a prolific writer of plays, novels, and essays. Two of her ambitious critical essays, one on Odysseas Elytis and the other one on Samuel Becket have received wide acclaim in Greece. She knew both Nobel Prize laureates, especially Becket, and was greatly influenced by their work. Her poetry spills abundantly into her prose work. Poetry is the force that moves and nurtures her at all times. Lemnos, the beautiful island where she was born and grew up, has stamped her life, filled it with creative tension. "This place where I came to know suffering is in everything I do. The moment I feel its absence I seek it as one seeks his soul" she told me when I met her in September 1996. She was finishing her monumental historical novel on the fall of Constantinople. I later found out that the Greek title of the novel would be *They Took the City, They Took Her*.<sup>1</sup> I knew then I was in the presence of a great Greek woman, a woman of Greek letters, one whose memory burns love and death to rise from the ashes like the Phoenix bird of myth immemorial.

<sup>1</sup>The novel has been published in English translation as *Byzantium: The Fall* (Athens: Terzo Books, 2001)

## ΜΥΣΤΙΚΟ ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ

Μαρία Λαμπαδαρίδου-Πόθου

### ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΠΡΩΤΟ

#### Η Αγωνία της Ύλης

Ο χειμώνας θα με βρει γυμνή  
Σ' ένα ερειπωμένο δωμάτιο  
Με το χρόνο ν' αναβλύζει από τα τρύπια πατώματα  
Ο χειμώνας θα με βρει να σκαλίζω τη στάχτη από  
την ποιησή μου  
Μιά φούχτα λέξεις όπως άστρο ή αίμα  
Όπως οδοιπορώ ή όρκος—όπως  
“Αι ψυχαί οσμώνται”  
Τις καίω να ζεσταθώ.

\*

Ο χειμώνας θα με βρεί ξυπόλητη να οδοιπορώ  
Άνω και κάτω την άβυσσο μία  
Το χώμα μαλακό βυθίζομαι  
Λάσπη από άστρα παλιά  
Θα περάσω, λέω  
Στα χέρια μου κλώνοι του γαλάζιου  
Και το δέντρο ιερουργεί το ασήμι της ερημιάς  
Οσμή του απέραντου κενού  
Η πονεμένη μου ύλη που κατοίκησα

Ορθώνω την ποιησή μου ενάντια  
“Ιμάτιον ρεραντισμένον αίματι”  
Το καίω να ζεσταθώ.

\*



## MYSTIC PASSAGE

BY MARIA LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

*Translated by Theony Condos*

### FIRST PASSAGE The Agony of Matter

Winter will find me naked  
In a dilapidated room  
With time welling up through the holes of the  
floors  
Winter will find me stirring the ashes of my poetry  
A handful of words—like *star* or *blood*  
Like *I wander* or *oath*—like  
*Souls can smell*—  
I burn them to warm myself.

\*

Winter will find me barefoot wandering  
Up and down the one and only abyss  
The soil is soft I sink into it  
Mud from ancient stars  
“I will get through,” I say  
Branches of the azure in my hands  
And the tree officiates over the silver of the desert  
Odor of the boundless void  
My pained matter that I inhabited.

I raise my poetry before  
*Garment stained with blood*  
I burn it to warm myself.

\*

Και βρέχει βρέχει στο σπαραγμένο μου δωμάτιο  
Το "ως πυρός ανταμοιβή" αιωρούμενο  
Βρέχει πανσέληνο και αίμα παλιό  
Κρύσταλλοι φορτισμένοι τους αιώνες μου

Γέρνω να κοιταχτώ στην πιά  
Στην πιά βαθιά πηγή από κρύσταλλο ρηγματωμένο  
'Απορο και λυπητερό το προσωπό μου  
Και βρέχει βρέχει ερημιές ασημένιες πάνω στο εικόνισμα  
Μιά οσμή από ρίγημα νύχτας το σώμα μου  
Κι ο αρχάγγελος ορθός πάνω στο παράθυρο  
Λυγίζει ερωτικά μιά καμπύλη από Θεό και Σύμπαν

Περιβάλλομαι το απέραντο γαλάζιο  
Να πορευτώ.

\*

Ο χειμώνας θα με βρεί ονειρευόμενη  
Ένα ρόδο φυτρωμένο πάνω στη θύελλα  
Με τον παράδεισο να μετατοπίζεται σαν παραίσθηση  
Κι ο χρόνος προφητικός ακόμα  
Ν'απελευθερώνει από τη σάρκα μου τ'αστέρια

Ο χειμώνας θα με βρεί στην έρημο  
Να βαδίζω σαν αποκάλυψη  
Κι ο Αιώνας ή Ερειπιώνας να λιώνει όπως  
Κερί αρωματισμένο  
Με τις εφτά φλόγες αναμμένες στο κορμί μου  
Τοπία αναδυόμενου λευκού  
Μ'ένα άρωμα καμένης πευκοβελόνας για τη  
γνωριμία  
Ένα ρόδο που προσεύχεται ξεχασμένο  
Στην άκρη της θύελλας

Δεν περπατώ πιά  
Βυθίζομαι σαν όνειρο προφητικό.

And it rains and rains in my tattered room  
Which sways *a reward for fire*  
It rains full moon and ancient blood  
Crystals laden with my centuries.

I bend over to look at myself in the most,  
In the most deep well of cracked crystal  
My face perplexed and mournful  
And it rains and rains silver deserts on the sacred  
icon  
My body is an odor of night's shudder  
And the archangel standing in the window  
Fashions a sensuous curve from God and Universe  
I wrap myself in the boundless azure  
To pass through.

\*

Winter will find me dreaming  
A rose sprouted on the storm  
With paradise shifting like a mirage  
and Time still prophetic  
liberating the stars from my flesh.

Winter will find me in the desert  
Marching like a revelation  
And Age, the Exterminator, melts like  
A scented candle  
With the seven flames kindled in my body  
Sites of nascent whiteness  
With a fragrance of burnt pine-needle for  
recognition  
A rose that prays forgotten  
At the edge of the storm

I walk no longer  
I sink down like a prophetic dream.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟ Η Αγωνία της Μνήμης

Λύνω έναν έναν τους δεσμούς  
Τ' όνειρο θα ξεριζωθεί τελευταίο  
Τ' όνειρο τ' όνειρο με παιδεύει—αρμοί  
Που τρίζουν στα τρίςβαθα χαμένο γαλάζιο  
Το σώμα μου  
Οσμή ουρανού και παγωμένου άστρου  
Χάνεται στις χιλιετίες μου από ρέον  
Όνειρο παγανικό

Δεν έχω λύσει ακόμα όλους τους δεσμούς  
Νύχτες του σεληνόφωτου όρκοι ημερολόγια και αντίο  
Η γη με αποβάλλει ξένο σωμα  
Θα εκδικηθώ, λέω, με όπλο μου τη διαφάνεια  
Θα περάσω σαν λάμψη κρύσταλλου επωασμένου  
έξω απ' τον καιρό  
Θα περάσω σαν το ασήμι της ερημιάς  
Που ξεγελά το σκοτάδι  
Κρατώντας στα χέρια μου το σημάδι  
Οσμή από αίμα της γέννας.

\*

Τ' όνειρο θα ξεριζωθεί τελευταίο ή εγώ  
Εγώ  
Κάποιο χέρι θα με ξεριζώσει απ' τ' όνειρο  
Όπως λουλούδι που το πάτησε ο Καιρός  
Τι ονειρεύτηκα; Τι ονειρεύτηκα;  
Δεν θα θυμώμαι πιά.

\*

Το σπίτι μου ακατοίκητο μονάχα η μνήμη  
Στους ετοιμόρροπους τοίχους  
Ακούω τις βαριές πατημασιές του—κάτι

SECOND PASSAGE  
The Agony of Memory

One by one, I loose the bonds  
The dream will be the last to be uprooted  
The dream the dream torments me—joints  
That groan lost azure in the deepest depths  
My body  
The odor of sky and of frigid star  
Is lost in my millennia of a flowing  
Pagan dream.

I have not yet loosed all the bonds  
Moonlit nights oaths diaries and farewell  
The earth rejects me, a foreign body  
I will avenge myself, I say, with lucidity my weapon  
I will pass beyond time like the flash of incubated  
crystal  
I will pass like the silver of the desert  
That outwits the darkness  
Holding in my hands the mark:  
Odor of birth-blood.

\*

The dream will be uprooted last or I  
I  
Some hand will uproot me from the dream  
Like a flower trodden by Time  
What did I dream? What did I dream?  
I will no longer remember

\*

My house is uninhabited  
Only memory remains among the crumbling walls  
I hear its heavy footsteps—something

Σαν κλάμα στο σκοτάδι  
Το φορώ κατάσαρκα με την πρώτη μου άβυσσο  
Άνθος που λευκάνθηκε από τα δακρυά μου  
Κι ο θάνατος φορτωμένος παραδείσους  
Ένα παράθυρο ξεχασμένο στη νύχτα  
Να φέγγει την άλλη ζωή

Ο θάνατος ελκτικός  
αναριχώμενος το σώμα μου  
Μετατοπίζει τα όρια

Είμαι η μνήμη καιόμενη που κυλά προς τη Λάμψη  
Την ύλη που μου δόθηκε δεν την ορίζω πια  
Την κάνω ποίημα  
Να περάσω.

\*

Η ψυχή μου ολοένα πιο ξένη  
Περιελιγμένη την άβυσσο  
Την αναγνωρίζω από την  
Όσμή της νύχτας που την διαπέρασε σαν οξείδωση  
Μιά λουρίδα γαλάζιου  
Διάτρητη από τον ύπνο μου  
Έμεινα μόνη  
Με την Ψυχή μου κατακόρυφη  
Ν' αποχαιρετά το παλιό μουράγιο

Ξεπλένω με δάκρυα το χρόνο από το σχήμα της  
Ξεπλένω με το αίμα μου την άβυσσο απ' τις ρωγμές  
της  
Να την πάρω μαζί μου.

Like a cry in the dark  
I wear it next to my skin with my first abyss  
A flower whitened by my tears  
And death laden with paradises  
A window forgotten in the night  
Illuminating the other life.  
Death twisting  
Climbing up my body  
Displaces the boundaries

I am the burning memory that flows toward the  
Light  
I no longer own the matter given me  
I turn it into a poem  
To pass through.

\*

My soul ever more alien  
Embraced by the abyss  
I recognize it by the  
Odor of night that riddled it like rust  
A strip of azure  
Pierced through by my sleep  
I am left alone  
With my soul erect  
Bidding farewell to the old mooring

With tears I rinse time off the form of my Soul  
With my blood I rinse the abyss off its fissures  
To take it with me.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΤΡΙΤΟ Η Αγωνία της Φωτιάς

Μόνη η πανσέληνος λευκή σαν πρόρα  
 Φέγγει τους ξεχασμένους παραδείσους  
 Ω Γαία ανεξερεύνητων βυθών  
 Με το μυροβόλο σου δέντρο και την πέτρα του  
     μαργαριταριού  
 Συλλάψεις όλα στο ρόδο της ρωγμής  
 Ρόδο της κοσμικής μου νύχτας  
 Ο μίσχος ο αναδύομενος από αβύσσους πολλές  
 Ορθρίζει και ευωδία  
 Επαληθεύει την παραισθητική μου νύχτα  
 Να διασκελώ τις διαστάσεις  
 Μόνη  
 Σαν νόμος ή σαν αναλογία του βυθού  
 Πέλαγος της αγνωσίας μου  
 Η αθωότητα.

\*

Όρθια Ψυχή  
 Και στο βάθος Νέκυες με περιμένουν  
 Γυμνή σαν λάμψη που λυγίζει στη ριπή του αγνώστου  
 Κι η σιωπή των αιώνων μου  
 Βαθαίνει το πέρασμα

Γέρνω και πονώ  
 Να βρώ την άλλη Διάσταση  
 Ν' ακουμπήσω στο φώς  
 Γέρνω και κοιτάζομαι  
 Άνθος της άβυσσος νύχτας  
 Να περάσω το σώμα μου στον άλλον Καιρό

Να περάσω σαν όραση της πονεμένης ύλης που με  
     περιέχει  
 Σε τούτη την Κάθοδο πριν  
 Πριν από  
 Ο χρόνος άπορος—



### THIRD PASSAGE

#### The Agony of Fire

Alone the white full moon like a prow  
Illumines the forgotten paradises  
O Earth of unexplorable depths  
With your fragrant tree and rock of pearl  
*All captured* in the rose of the fissure  
Rose of my cosmic night  
The stalk arising from many abysses  
Dawns and fragrance  
Validates my hallucinatory night  
To step over the distances  
Alone  
Like a law or an analogy of the deep,  
Ocean of my unknowing,  
Innocence

\*

Soul erect  
And in the depth spirits of the dead await me  
Naked like a flash that bends over the twinkling of  
the unknown  
And the silence of my centuries  
Deepens the passage

I bend over and feel pain  
To find the other dimension  
To lean upon the light  
I bend over and look at myself  
A flower of the abysmal night  
To pass my body through to the other Time

To pass through like a vision of the pained matter  
that contains me  
In this Descent before  
Before  
Time is impassable

\*

Άπορος και λυπητερός  
Μόνη εγώ η ρωγμή του.

\*

Από πού, λέω, από πού θα περάσω  
Ποια μόρια της ύλης θα διασταλούν  
Να χωρέσει η μνήμη  
Σταλαγματιές από αίμα τα σημάδια μου  
Να τα πάρω μαζί μου.

\*

Από πού, λέω, αν  
Αν το χέρι σου βέβηλο αφανίσει το πέρασμα  
Και μείνω απ' έξω  
Περιπλανώμενη αέναα  
Πάνω στη χαίτη των έρημων κυμάτων

Όχι, δεν  
Η λαθεμένη κίνηση είναι απόσταση δακτύλων  
Πάνω στα κουμπιά  
Θα σ' εκδικηθεί ο υάκινθος

Πάνω στην υγρή φλόγα  
Τη διαχεόμενη  
Οι πατημασιές μου θα χαράξουν  
Τις ωδίνες της μνήμης  
ΟΧΙ, δεν  
ΔΕΝ, λέω

“Ως πυρός τροπαί” θα σ' εκδικηθούν  
Οι αιώνες του ζόφου μου  
Θα σε δικάσουν αμείλικτα τα μελλούμενα άνθη  
Κόμβοι αίματος οι πατημασιές μου  
Στή φλεγόμενη άβυσσο  
Άβυσσοι αίμα το χέρι μου  
Κι η φωνή μου στεντόρια  
Θα συμμαχήσει με τον υάκινθο  
Της Κρίσης.

\*

Impassable and mournful  
I alone am its fissure.

\*

"Where," I say, "where will I pass through  
What particles of matter will dilate  
To make room for memory"  
Drops of blood my marks  
To take with me.

\*

"Where," I say, "if  
If your sullied hand erases the passage  
And I remain outside  
wandering forever  
Upon the mane of the desolate waves"

No, not  
The mistaken move is distance of fingers  
Upon buttons  
The hyacinth will take its revenge on you

Upon the moist flame  
Which pours forth  
My footsteps will etch  
The pangs of memory  
NO, not  
NOT, I say

"As flares of fire" they will take their revenge on you  
the centuries of my darkness  
The flowers that will bloom will judge you implacably  
Knots of blood my footsteps  
Upon the flaming abyss  
Abysses of blood my hand  
And my voice stentorian  
Will ally itself with the hyacinth  
Of Judgement.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΟ

Το παιδάκι που έφυγε  
Η Αγωνία του Αίματος

“Ένα όνειρο όρθιο  
πάνω στην άβυσσο”

\*

Είπες θα 'ρθείς  
Μπορεί με τα φύλλα του φθινοπώρου ή τη βροχή  
Μπορεί με τον ήχο του μαχαιριού πάνω στην καρδιά  
Με το ρίγος που αφήνει ο τρόμος στη σάρκα  
Εσύ ξέρεις τα μυστικά περάσματα

Θα 'ρθείς  
Να μου δείξεις το δρόμο  
Σάρκα από τη σάρκα μου κάποτε  
Αίμα από το πικρό μου αίμα  
Κρατάς τ' αχνάρια από το μυστικό σου πέρασμα μέσα μου  
Σηματωροί  
Για την έωλη νύχτα.

\*

Τώρα που ο κύκλος κλείνει γύρω μου  
Και σκοτεινιάζει  
Τώρα που ο χρόνος  
Παγιδεμένος στη σάρκα μου  
Φέγγει τα σύνορα  
Εσύ έρχεσαι από το μυστικό σου πέρασμα  
Μονάχο  
Μυρουδιά από αίμα η μνήμη σου πάνω στο σώμα μου  
Και τα χέρια μου  
Περιελιγμένα τη φλόγα που έκαψε  
Το προσωπό σου  
Τα χέρια μου φορτωμένα αφαιρέσεις  
Σ' αναζητούν  
Ρόδο του αίματος  
Και της Νύχτας.

\*

FOURTH PASSAGE  
The Little Child that Went Away  
The Agony of Blood

"A dream erect  
Upon the abyss."

\*

You said you will come  
Perhaps with the autumn leaves or the rain  
Perhaps with the sound of the knife on the heart  
With the shudder that terror leaves on the flesh  
You know the mystic passages

You will come  
To show me the way  
Flesh from my flesh once  
Blood from my bitter blood  
You keep the traces from your mystic passage within me  
Signal bearers  
For the dawning night.

\*

Now that the circle is closing around me  
And it grows dark  
Now that time  
Trapped in my flesh  
Illuminates the frontiers  
You come from your mystic passage  
Alone  
Your memory the smell of blood on my body  
And my hands  
Wound around the flame that burned  
Your face  
My hands laden with absences  
Seek you  
Rose of blood  
And of Night.

\*

Έρχεσαι σαν χρησμός του Αγνώστου  
Διαστέλλοντας τα μόρια της ύλης  
Να περάσω.

\*

Να περάσω στην άλλη Διάσταση  
Στον άλλο Καιρό  
Να μπορώ να σ'αγγίζω πέρα  
Από τον φθαρτό μου λόγο πέρα  
Από τα πέτρινα δάκρυα  
Οσμή της Ψυχής  
Που διαισθάνεται το αίμα.

\*

Διαστέλλοντας τα μόρια της ύλης  
Μου ανοίγεις ένα δρόμο από φώς  
Να σε βρω  
Στον απάνω κόσμο σου.

\*

“Έφηγες  
Κι η ψυχή μου πλάτυνε  
Μέσα στο άπειρο”, είπα  
Μα τότε δεν ήξερα—τότε ακόμα  
Τι σημαίνει ν' απομαγνητίζεις τη σιωπή  
Το μέσα διάστημα  
Να μεταλλάξεις το σώμα σου σε όραση  
Δεν ήξερα δεν ήξερα τι έκρυβαν  
οι βυθοί που κουβαλούσα στα εφήμερα τοπία μου  
Και τώρα εκεί  
Το σώμα μου από ίασπι και σάρδιο  
Κατασταλάζω σαν ήχος του βυθού  
Δίχως κραυγή πιά  
Ένα σκεύος λάμπουσα ψυχή.

\*

“Σ' ευχαριστώ που σ' αγάπησα  
Μέσα στο θάνατο”, είπα  
Μα τότε δεν ήξερα  
Δεν ήξερα, παιδάκι,  
Πως αυτός ο έρωσ  
Έκανε ν' ανθίσει η άβυσσος

You come like an oracle of the Unknown  
Dilating the particles of matter  
For me to pass through.

\*

To pass through to the other Dimension  
To the other Time  
To be able to touch you beyond  
My perishable words beyond  
The stony tears  
Fragrance of the Soul  
That the blood intuit.

\*

Dilating the particles of matter  
You open for me a path of light  
To find you  
In your upper world.

\*

"You went away  
And my soul broadened  
In the infinite," I said  
But I did not know then—then yet  
What it means to demagnetize silence  
The inner space  
To change your body into vision  
I did not know, did not know what was hidden  
In the depths I carried to my ephemeral landscapes  
And now there  
My body of jasper and sard  
I settle like an echo of the deep  
With sound no longer  
A vessel of shining soul.

\*

"Thank you that I loved you  
in death," I said  
But I did not know then  
Did not know, little child,  
That this love  
Made the abyss to flower

Κι η ψυχή μου “εξεχύθη εντός μου”  
Να ευαγγελίσει την έρημο  
Την ώρα που το κλάμα σου  
Ράγιζε τα σύμπαντα  
Τρυφερό αστέρι

Κι εγώ ζητούσα λουλούδι για το χωρισμό  
Ζητιάνευα τη νύχτα  
Να μου φέρει πίσω την κραυγή  
Κι έστηνα ξύλινο σταυρό  
Στη ρίζα του κόσμου.

\*

Θαμπό γυαλί αναμεσά μας ο άλλος καιρός  
Και δεν ορίζω τη μοίρα  
Και δεν ορίζω τους καιρούς που σε τύλιξαν  
Στους απάνω δρόμους σου.

\*

“Δεν σου γράφω με λόγια φθαρτά”, είπα  
Μα κομμάτι κομμάτι σπάζω την αιωνιότητα  
Να σου στείλω σημάδι  
Κομμάτι κομμάτι σπάζω την ψυχή μου  
Ν’ ανοίξω το δρόμο

Δεν σου γράφω με λέξεις που καίγονται  
στην πρώτη φλόγα  
Μα κομμάτι κομμάτι σπάζω το θάνατο  
Να περάσω.



And my soul was *emptied within me*  
To evangelize the desert  
At the hour when your cry  
Rent the universe,  
Tender star.

And I was seeking a flower for the parting  
I was begging the night  
To bring me back my cry  
And raising a wooden cross  
At the root of the world.

\*

A dull glass between us the other time  
And I cannot master fate  
And I cannot master the ages that entwined you  
In your upper paths.

\*

"I do not write you with perishable words," I said  
But piece by piece I fracture eternity  
To send you a sign  
Piece by piece I fracture my soul  
To open the way

I do not write you with letters that are consumed  
In the first flame  
But piece by piece I fracture death  
To pass through.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΠΕΜΠΤΟ

## Η Αγωνία της Λάμψης

Ιδού εγώ

Κι εσύ κρυμμένος στα πράγματα

Στο κόκκινο της ανεμώνας ή στον ήχο του βυθού

Σταματώ στη μέση του ονείρου και

Σ' αφουγκράζομαι—ύστερα

Τινάζω από το σώμα μου τον ύπνο και σ' αναζητώ

Κρύσταλλοι του Ασύλληπτου

Και το σώμα μου γίνεται κραυγή

Ρόδο γυμνό της ερήμου

Γίνομαι ρόδο απόλυτο

Ευωδία του αγνώστου

Να σ' αγγίσω.

\*

Να σε περιέχω

Ποιότητα του πονεμένου μου άστρου

Απόκρημνη σαν την αλήθεια σου

Να γίνω θρύψαλο της Λάμψης σου

Κι ύστερα να κυλιστώ θριαμβικά

Σαν νερό μιλητικό του παραδείσου

Ένας κόμπος αίμα είμαι που εξαγνίστηκε

Από τον κωκυτό

Ένας κόμπος ψυχή

Που ανατείνεται προς τη Λάμψη

Ιδού εγώ

Κι εσύ κρυμμένος στη θυσία μου

Πληρώνεις με σιωπή

Το σπαραγμό του Αδύνατου

Πληρώνεις με πικρούς σταυρούς την ποιησή μου.

\*

FIFTH PASSAGE  
The Agony of Brilliance

Here am I  
And you hidden in things  
In the red of the anemone or the sound of the deep  
I stop in the midst of the dream and  
I listen to you—then  
Shake sleep from my body and seek you  
Crystals of the Incomprehensible  
And my body becomes a cry  
A naked rose of the desert

I become an absolute rose  
Aroma of the unknown  
To touch you.

\*

To contain you  
Quality of my ailing star  
Precipitous like your truth  
To become a sliver of your Brilliance  
And then to roll over triumphantly  
Like whispering water of paradise

I am a knot of blood that has been purified  
By the wailing  
A knot of soul  
That stretches toward the Brilliance

Here am I  
And you hidden in my sacrifice  
You pay with silence  
The rending of the Impossible  
You pay for my poetry with bitter crosses.

\*

Στο τεφρό δωμάτιο  
Που ολοένα μετατοπίζεται—ξεκολλώντας  
Τα μέλη μου απ' το γαλάζιο  
Περιφέρομαι  
Σαν τη γυμνότητα του παγωμένου άστρου  
Να βρω μιά νηχώ  
Από τους άγνωστους κόσμους που κατοίκησαν το  
    σώμα μου  
Να γίνω κρύπτη μυστική του ρόδου  
Που υπήρξες για μένα—και στα σπλάχνα μου  
Οι χρησμοί κυοφορούν παραδείσους

Ιδού εγώ  
Μικρές άσπρες φλόγες η ψυχή μου  
Αναμμένη ολόκληρη  
Φεγγοβολά σαν Ανάσταση  
Και ουρανοί φυτρώνουν στους ώμους μου  
Να περάσεις

Μα εσύ κρυμμένος στα δακρυά μου  
Ηλιορροείς τον Απρίλιο των ερώτων  
Κι η αλήθεια σου φως κεκρυμμένο  
Στην άβυσσο—πώς να σε βρώ;

\*

Ακούω τα πατηματά σου στον κήπο  
Ασημένιο ρίγος στα νερά  
Κι ακουμπώ τα μάτια στη ρωγμή:  
Μιά σειρά φωτοστέφανα ξερά  
Από κεφάλια Αγίων που χορτάρισαν  
Και μύρισε πάλι πρωτοβρόχι  
Μα εσύ πουθενά  
Γλιστράς σαν τη δρόσο πάνω στον ανθό  
Κι αφήνεις στα μάτια μου  
Καιόμενο το σχήμα της Λάμψης.

In the ashen room  
That continuously moves—unfastening  
My members from the azure  
I wander  
Like the nakedness of the frozen star  
To find an echo  
Of the unknown universes that inhabited my body  
To become a secret crypt of the rose  
That you were for me—and in my flesh  
The oracles breed paradises

Here am I  
My soul small white flames  
entirely aflame  
Radiates like a Resurrection  
And skies sprout upon my shoulders  
For you to pass through

But you, hidden in my tears  
radiate the April of loves  
And your truth is a hidden light  
On the abyss—how to find you?

\*

I hear your footsteps in the garden  
A silver tremor on the waters  
And I gaze at the fissure:  
A row of dry halos  
From the heads of Saints who have grown grassy  
And it smells of first-rain again

But you are nowhere  
You slide like dew off the flower  
And leave in my eyes  
Burning, the form of Brilliance.

\*

Όχι ξανά ο χρησμός σου ο δίκωπος  
Ματώνει στάλες σημάδια να σε βρω  
Μα δεν είσαι  
Κι η καρδιά μου μοιράμενη το αδύνατο  
Τυλίγεται τις αφαιρέσεις  
Ν' ανοίξει πόρο στο Άδηλο  
Πόρο στη Λάμψη την εγκαυστική  
"οτέη εκυβέρνησε πάντα".

\*

Not again your two-edged oracle  
Bloodied drops, markings to find you  
But you are not  
And my heart, allotted the impossible,  
Wraps itself in the separations  
To open a way to the Uncertain  
A way to the burning Brilliance  
*Which governs all.*

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΕΚΤΟ

### Η Αγωνία της Διαφάνειας

Και κορμάτια ο χρόνος πέφτει από πάνω μου  
Ξεκollώντας τη σάρκα  
Αρωματισμένη κάποτε

Ο ύπνος μου γεμάτος ρωγμές  
Σαν παλιωμένο ρούχο  
Φεγγίζει τα όνειρα  
Κι όλο με σπρώχνει κατά τη μέσα μεριά—όπου  
Σαλεύει συμπαγής η σιωπή  
Άβυθος  
Φοβάμαι, λεω  
Ακουμπώ τα μάτια ολάνοιχτα  
“Ζών δε άπτεται τεθνεώτος”, είπε, “εύδων”.

\*

Δεν μπορώ πιά να κρυφτώ μέσα στον ύπνο  
Φεγγίζω ολόκληρη  
Και τα ονειρά μου ρέουν από τη σάρκα  
Γεμάτα απαλλοτριωμένους παραδείσους  
Φεγγίζω  
Σαν παλιός χρόνος  
Φαγωμένος από τα δακρυά μου—μιά  
Μεγάλη Παρασκευή  
Όταν αποκαθήλωναν την ψυχή μου  
Κι η νύχτα χάραξε  
Ένα ρόδο μοναχικό  
Σαν το παιδί που έφυγε  
Γυμνό  
Στον απάνω κόσμο του  
Και το σώμα μου γέμισε άστρα.

\*



SIXTH PASSAGE  
The Agony of Transparency

And time falls off me in pieces  
Unfastening the flesh  
Perfumed once

My sleep full of fissures  
Like old clothes  
Illuminates the dreams  
And pushes me continually toward the inner side—  
where  
Silence, solid,  
Stirs, bottomless  
I am afraid, I say  
I fix my eyes wide-open  
*In sleep, a living man is in contact with the dead, he said*

\*

I can no longer hide in sleep  
I am transparent  
And my dreams flow from the flesh  
Full of expropriated paradises  
I shine  
Like used time  
Eroded by my tears—one  
Good Friday  
As they were taking my soul down from the Cross  
And night broke  
A solitary rose  
Like the child that went away  
Naked  
To its upper world  
And my body filled with stars.

\*

Μιά Μεγάλη Παρασκευή  
Είδα φως να ρέει απ' την πληγή  
Και το γυμνό παιδί πάνω στο σταυρό  
Να ευαγγελίζει τον κόσμο

Είμαι η μάνα της Σταύρωσης εγώ  
Και τα μάτια μου γεμάτα αίμα  
Ψάχνουν το φως

Είμαι η μάνα του πικρού χωρισμού  
Και τα χέρια μου πληγές  
Φέγγουν όλα τα μυστικά περάσματα  
Να σε βρω  
Στον απάνω κόσμο σου.

\*

Μιά Μεγάλη Παρασκευή  
Κοιμήθηκα πάνω στο Σταυρό  
Κι ο ύπνος μου γέμισε ουρανούς  
Καθλωμένους  
Το αίμα μου ρέει γαλάζιους κρίνους από τότε  
Κι η άβυσσος φωλιασμένη στην πληγή  
Απελευθερώνει το μύρο  
Η άβυσσος συμπαγής  
Σαν ήλεκτρο παγανικό  
Λύνει τη λάμψη  
Να ελευθερώσει τ'α σπλάχνα μου.

\*

Είδα το αίμα να ρέει στους δρόμους  
Παρασέρνοντας τα παιδικά μάτια  
Στάθηκα καταμεσής στο πλήθος  
Έρημο  
Τα χέρια μου κηδεύονταν ακόμα  
Και μιά οσμή χάους κάλυπτε  
Το αρωματισμένο σώμα.

Μεγάλη Παρασκευή, 1988

One Good Friday  
I saw light flowing from the wound  
And the naked child upon the Cross  
Evangelizing the world

I am the mother of the Crucifixion, I  
And my eyes, full of blood,  
Seek the light

I am the mother of the bitter parting  
And my hands, wounds,  
Illuminate all the mystic passages  
That I may find you  
In your upper world

\*

One Good Friday  
I slept upon the Cross  
And my sleep filled with heavens  
Immobilized  
My blood flows azure lilies since then  
And the abyss nestled in the wound  
Liberates the myrrh  
The abyss solid  
Like pagan amber  
Dissolves the brilliance  
To liberate my flesh

\*

I saw the blood flow in the streets  
Sweeping away the child's eyes  
I stood amidst the crowd  
A desert  
My hands still being interred  
And a smell of Chaos covered  
The perfumed corpse.

Good Friday, 1988

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΕΒΔΟΜΟ Η Αγωνία του Χρησμού

Λυμένη από τη σάρκα μου  
Βαδίζω  
Στον έναστρο ύπνο μου  
Και δέν φοβάμαι την πληγή  
Την κάνω πόρο από φως  
Να περάσω

Και γέρνω σαν άνθος που το άγγιξε  
Η αστραπή  
“Αγέλαστα φθεγγομένη”

Η ζωή μου πέφτει σταγόνες πλατιές  
Εγκαυστικές  
Είμαι ένα υλικό απόκρημνο  
Ρηγματωμένο  
Και φέγγουν οι χρησμοί πάνω σ’ αρχαία λιθάρια  
καθώς  
Τα λευκαίνει το εφτά της αβύσσου.

\*

Και περιφέρομαι έναστρο  
Με τα μάτια κυλισμένα στην αρχαία γη  
Εκεί όπου υπήρξα Σίβυλλα  
Μασώντας δάφνη και αγριόριζες  
Και μαγεμένος ο Αριθμός να τρώει  
Το προσωπό μου το πέτρινο  
Περιφέρομαι ανάλαφρη σαν ροή του Σύμπαντος  
Να ξεκολλήσω την πέτρα των χρησμών  
Να περάσω.

\*

Έστρωσα τ’ άστρα καταγής  
Και κοιμήθηκα  
Κι ο ύπνος μου πέφτει στάλες πλατιές  
Εγκαυστικές  
Πάνω στις μέρες μου  
Ηχητικά περάσματα του αγνώστου

SEVENTH PASSAGE  
The Agony of Prophecy

Loosed from my flesh  
I tread  
In my star-studded sleep  
And have no fear of the wound  
I make it into a passage of light  
To pass through

And I bend like a flower touched by  
The lightning  
*speaking mirthlessly*

My life falls, broad drops  
Burning  
I am a stuff  
Precipitous  
Cracked  
And the oracles shine on the ancient stones as  
The seven of the abyss bleaches them.

\*

And I go about star-studded  
With eyes dredged in the ancient earth  
Where I was Sibyl  
Chewing laurel and wild roots  
And the Number, enchanted, consumes  
My stony face  
I go about ethereal like the flow of the Universe  
To detach the rock of oracles  
To pass through.

\*

I laid the stars down  
And slept  
And my sleep falls, broad drops  
Burning  
Upon my days  
Echoing passings of the unknown

Δεν έχω γη να σταθώ  
Τα πόδια μου βουλιάζουν στο γαλάζιο  
Ανάστροφο

Ακουμπώ στη φτερούγα του αγγέλου μου  
Κι αφουγκράζομαι  
Κάποιοι συσκευάζουν τις μέρες μου  
Να τις πάρω μαζί μου  
Αποσυμβολισμένες  
Ένα πακέτο ελαφρύ  
Σαν το αρνητικό της ψυχής μου  
Εμφανισμένης σε άπλετο φως!

\*

Η σάρκα μου ευωδιάζει φθινόπωρο μυριστικό  
Ψάχνω ν' αποκρυπτογραφήσω τον καιρό  
Με το προσωπό μου ν' αναβλύζει ολοένα  
Σαν χρησμός που ρέει στο ιερό Τρία  
Από ρωγμές αθέατες

Αφουγκράζομαι μία μία τις λέξεις που έμαθα  
Ν' αποσυμβολίσω το σώμα μου  
Οσμή από κήπο που ερήμωσε  
Κι ο παράδεισος πέρασε παλιά  
Σαν μουσική του Αριθμού που υπήρξα  
Κωδικός μαγικός  
Και δεν ορίζω τους δρόμους του Αρχάγγελου.

\*

Το σώμα μου μυρίζει καμένο χρόνο  
Ένα τοπίο που λευκάνθηκε από τα δάκρυα  
Καθημαγμένο  
Το ακουμπώ προσεχτικά—ύστερα  
Αλείφω με λάδι τις πληγές που επιπλέουν σαν άστρα  
Να το κάνω προσευχή (που εξουσιάζει το Χρησμό)  
Να περάσω.

I have no earth to stand on  
My feet sink into the azure  
Reversed

I lean against the wing of my angel  
And listen  
Someone is packing my days  
To take them with me  
Emptied of symbols  
A light package  
Like the negative of my soul  
Developed in abundant light!

\*

My flesh is redolent with fragrant autumn  
I seek to decipher time  
My visage welling up ever  
Like an oracular response that flows to the sacred Three  
From fissures unseen

I listen one by one to the words I learned  
To desymbolize my body  
Waft of a deserted garden  
And paradise passed by of old  
Like music of the Number that I was  
A magical code  
And I do not own the paths of the Archangel.

\*

My body smells of burnt time  
A landscape whitened by tears  
Bloodstained  
I lay it down carefully—later  
I anoint with oil the wounds that float like stars  
To transform it into prayer (which defeats the oracle)  
To pass through.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΟΓΔΟΟ Της Μικρασίας

Εσένα σε κρατώ ψηλά  
Εκεί που η λάμψη ρέει αναλλοίωτη  
Αίμα θυσίας, σε είπα  
Πατρίδα από ίασπι και μύρο  
Από νύχτα θρήνου

Από τούτη τη λάμψη του χρόνου σου  
Από τούτο το αίμα της θυσίας  
Γεννήθηκα.

\*

Πατρίδα από μάργαρο ανθισμένο της προσευχής  
Με τις πατημασιές του Ομήρου  
Στις ασημένιες αμμουδιές σου  
Και τα χειρόγραφα του Ηράκλειτου  
Στην εκκλησία σου  
Είσαι η ιστορία μου εσύ  
Γραμμένη από τους κόμβους του αίματος  
Που στάλαξαν απάνω σου  
Οι αιώνες μου

Πατρίδα ανεξερεύνητης αρχής  
Μύηση αρχετυπική του προσώπου μου  
Σε κουβαλώ αναδυόμενη στα εφήμερα τοπία μου  
Ν' απομαγνητίζεις την κραυγή  
Να ορθρίζεις αίμα  
Πατρίδα του αίματος εσύ και του Ήλιου  
Κύλησες στο δικό μου καιρό  
Εκεί όπου παλιρροεί καθημαγμένη η μνήμη  
Και ρόδο η άβυσσος βλάστησε εντός μου  
Τα σπλάχνα μου  
Αναδυόμενη η ζωή μου  
Από τα χρώματα που κοιμούνται  
Στη ρίζα μου



EIGHTH PASSAGE  
Of Asia Minor

*To my Ionian Father*

I hold thee high  
Where the glow flows unchanging  
Sacrificial blood, I called thee  
Homeland of jasper and myrrh  
Of a night of weeping

From this glow of thy age  
From this sacrificial blood  
Was I born.

\*

Homeland of a flowering pearl of prayer  
With the footsteps of Homer  
On thy silver sands  
And the manuscripts of Heraclitus  
In thy chapel  
Thou art my history  
Written from the knots of blood  
That fell upon thee drop by drop  
From my centuries

Homeland of unexplored beginnings  
Archetypal initiation of my visage  
I carry thee with me rising up in my ephemeral landscapes  
To demagnetize the cry  
Raising blood  
Homeland of blood and of Helios  
Thou, rolled into my own time  
Where memory, bloodstained, ebbs  
And the abyss blossomed within me, a rose,  
My flesh  
My life rising up  
From the earth that slumbers  
At my root.

Από τούτη την πληγή της μνήμης  
Από τούτη την παλιρροή  
Γεννήθηκα.

\*

Πατρίδα που χώρεσες σ' ένα εικόνισμα  
Ποτέ χαμένη  
Αλύτρωτη μόνο  
Αλύτρωτη ακόμα  
Σε βρίσκω κάτω από την εφημεροτητά μου  
Γεμάτη ρωγμές που σκίζουν τον ύπνο μου  
Ν' αναβλύσει το αίμα

Επιστρέφω στις δικές σου πηγές  
Γη της ταυτοτητάς μου στον κόσμο  
Γη του προσώπου μου που άνθισες  
Όραση μνητική  
Ιωνικός ήλιος ρέει στις φλέβες μου  
Κι ελευθερώνει από τα σπλάχνα μου  
Τα λόγια

Από τούτη τη ρωγμή του χρόνου  
Από τούτη την ιωνική αλήθεια  
Γεννήθηκα  
Γι' αυτό τα μάτια μου είναι γεμάτα  
Παράδεισους αλλοτινούς.

\*

Πατήματα του Αναξαγόρα ή του πάππου μου  
Στις αμμουδιές σου  
Πλάι στα ερημικά των ξένιων θεών  
Δεν εκπατρίζεται το πνεύμα, είπα  
Δεν εξορίζεται η ψυχή  
Σε κατοικώ αιώνες τώρα  
Περιπλανώμενη η ψυχή μου τρεις  
Χιλιάδες χρόνια  
Τυλιγμένη αβύσσους λευκές  
Με φωνές πράσινου μετάλλου και αίμα ρίζας

From this wound of memory  
From this ebbing  
Was I born

\*

Homeland contained in an icon  
Never lost  
Only undelivered  
Undelivered still  
I find thee beneath my mortality  
Full of fissures that rend my sleep  
To let the blood flow

I return to thy sources  
Land of my identity on earth  
Land of my visage that blossomed with  
An initiatory vision  
Ionic sun flows in my veins  
And frees the words from my flesh

From this fissure of time  
Out of this Ionic truth  
Was I born  
That is why my eyes brim with  
Paradises of times gone by.

\*

Footsteps of Anaxagoras or of my grandsire  
On thy sands  
Beside the deserted footsteps of the hospitable gods  
The spirit cannot be expatriated, I said  
The soul cannot be exiled  
I inhabit thee centuries now  
My soul a wanderer three  
Millennia  
Wrapped in white abyss  
With voices of green metal and root-blood

Υδάτινος ο χρόνος της παλιρροής μου  
Σε κατοικώ  
Και σε κρεμώ στη σκέψη μου  
Πάλλευκη εκκλησιά  
Να φέγγεις τη νύχτα του κόσμου  
Μόνη εσύ  
Να ευωδιάζεις θυμίαμα αγρυπνίας  
Μνήμη καμένου τριαντάφυλλου  
Από τούτη την ευωδία την πάλλευκη  
Από τούτη την οσμή της μνήμης  
Γεννήθηκα  
Γι' αυτό κρατώ στο αίμα μου  
Τ' αχνάρια των μεγάλων δρόμων.

\*

Εσένα σε κρατώ ψηλά  
Ποτέ δεν θα λυθώ απ' τη γή σου  
Είσαι το τελευταίο μου πέρασμα  
Η τελευταία κοσμική μου αλήθεια  
Φορτισμένη τους αιώνες μου εσύ  
Κύματα του ιωνικού Λόγου  
Πού σπάζουν παλιρροϊκά στην ψυχή μου  
Καιροί καταργημένοι από τη φλόγα  
Έτσι βαδίζω αποκαλυπτόμενη  
Ενα ρόδο φυτρωμένο  
Στη ραγισματιά του χρόνου σου  
Να βρώ τους μυστικούς σου δρόμους  
Να βρώ τή μεγάλη έξοδο  
Να σ' αγγίξω

Γιατί από τούτη την πύλη τη δοξαστική  
Από τούτη την Αποκάλυψη  
Μαζί θα περάσω

\*

Watery the time of my ebbing  
I inhabit thee,  
suspend thee on my thoughts  
Pure white chapel  
Illuminating the night of the world  
Thou alone  
Exuding incense of sleeplessness  
Memory of burnt rose  
From this pure white fragrance  
From this odor of memory  
Was I born  
That is why I keep in my blood  
Traces of the great roads

\*

I hold thee high  
Never will I break free from thy earth  
Thou art my final passage  
My final cosmic truth  
Thou, laden with my centuries  
Waves of the Ionic Logos  
That ebb as they break on my soul  
Ages abolished by the flame  
Thus I walk revealing myself  
A rose growing  
In a fissure of thy time  
To find thy secret ways  
To find the great exit  
To touch thee

Because through this glorious gateway  
Through this Apocalypse  
I will pass through with thee

\*

Ιδού η έρημος  
Διαμελισμένη κάτω από τους αιώνες μου  
Με τή γη σου ν' αναβλύζει  
Από το αίμα της Σταύρωσης  
Ιδού η έρημος φλεγόμενη  
Ανάβει τον ουρανό στις εκκλησιές

Ιδού, η ουαί η τρίτη έρχεται ταχύ  
Και ο πρώτος άγγελος εσάλπισε  
Και εγένετο χάλαζα και πυρ μεμιγμένα εν αίματι

Ακούω τη φωνή και σάλπισμα  
Όρθια πάνω στη γη σου  
Περιμένω τον άγγελο τον τρίτο  
Τον μέλλοντα  
Να σαλπίζει

Από τούτη την κλαγγή των δακρύων  
Από τούτο το μελλούμενο σάλπισμα  
Γεννήθηκα  
Γι' αυτό στο αίμα μου ρέει  
Η νύχτα η σταυρική.

\*

Ο χρόνος σου ο ιωνικός αναρριγεί εντός μου  
Στρώματα ύπαρξης κάτω απ' την υπαρξή μου  
Ακούω τα κουπιά στις όχθες του ύπνου μου  
Τις βάρκες που απορφάνιζαν τα σπιτικά σου  
Κι εσύ ν' απλώνεις τα πέτρινα χέρια σου  
Γη μέσα στη γη τους  
Ρίγος σκοτεινό στις φλέβες μου

Ιδού ο χρόνος ο πεπληρωμένος  
Αιωρείται ανάμεσα στο αίμα και στους οιωνούς  
Λευκαίνοντας τις εκκλησιές για την Ανάσταση

Behold the desert  
Dismembered beneath my centuries  
With thy earth welling up  
From the blood of the Crucifixion  
Behold the flaming desert  
It lights the sky to the chapels

Behold the third Woe comes swiftly  
And the first angel has sounded the trumpet  
And there was hail and flame mixed with blood

I hear the voice and the trumpet call  
Erect on thy earth  
I await the third angel  
Destined  
To sound the trumpet

From this din of tears  
From this trumpet-call about to be  
Was I born  
That is why in my blood flows  
The night of the Cross

\*

My Ionic age shudders within me  
Layers of existence beneath my existence  
I hear the oars on the banks of my sleep  
The rowboats that orphaned thy households  
And thou, spreading thy stony hands  
Earth in their earth  
A dark shudder in my veins

Behold the fulfilled time  
Wavers between blood and omens  
Whitening the chapels for the Resurrection

Ο χρόνος ο πεπληρωμένος  
Αστράφτει δισκοπότηρα ασημένια  
Και μία μία οι φωνές ξυπνούν  
Των κεκοιμημένων  
Να ψάλουν το "Δευτε λάβετε . . ."

Από τούτη τη βουή που ξυπνά  
Από τούτους τους οiwονούς που λευκαίνουν  
Γεννήθηκα  
Γι' αυτό κρατώ στο αίμα μου  
Όλους τους τριγμούς της γης σου  
Κι όλους τους βόγκους που σε στοίχειωσαν

Για να θυμάμαι τη μέρα  
Τη Μία  
Που θα 'ρθεί.

\*

Εσένα σε κρατώ ψηλά  
Πλαί στα Άγια των Αγίων  
Δεν θα λυθώ ποτέ απ' τη γη σου  
Σάρκα καιόμενη που ζητά την αλήθεια της  
Ζητά τη λάμψη της αστραπής  
Που καίει  
Και λυτρώνει  
Σήμαντρο της Αγια-Σοφιάς  
Κομμάτι κομμάτι να λύσεις τη σιωπή  
Και ξανά την Ανάσταση να ηχήσουν  
Οι καιροί νέοι  
Μιά γαλάζια δόξα να βλαστήσει  
Πάνω στο θρήνο των ερειπίων  
Από τούτη τη μελλούμενη δόξα σου  
Από τούτη τη λάμψη της αστραπής  
Γεννήθηκα  
Γι' αυτό κι η φωνή μου  
Λυμένο σήμαντρο  
Που κλαίει ακόμα.

Μάιος, 1988



The fulfilled time  
Flashes silver chalices  
And one by one, the voices  
Of the departed waken  
To chant "Come receive . . ."

From this roar that wakens  
From the omens that whiten  
was I born  
That is why I keep in my blood  
All the creaking of thy earth  
And all the sighs that have haunted thee

To remember the day  
the One  
that is coming

\*

I hold thee high  
Beside the Holy of Holies  
Never will I break free from thy earth  
Smoldering flesh that seeks its truth  
Seeks the flash of the lightning bolt  
That burns  
And redeems  
Bell of Hagia Sophia  
Bit by bit may thou break the silence  
And once more may the new ages sound the  
Resurrection  
May an azure glory sprout  
Upon the lamentation of the ruins

From this glory of thine that will come  
From this flash of the lightning bolt  
was I born  
That is why my voice, too,  
Is an untethered bell  
Ever weeping.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΕΝΑΤΟ

### Οι Τρείς Ίριδες

Γεννήθηκα με τρείς ίριδες—είπε  
Τρείς ίριδες στο κάθε μου μάτι  
Μιά πάνω στην άλλη  
Μπήκε πολύς ουρανός  
Ντουμάνιασε το γαλάζιο  
Κι οι άγγελοι καθίσανε δεξιά  
Μεταλλάζοντας την όραση σε εικονοστάσι.

Τώρα κοιτάζω τον κόσμο και ξέρω  
Πως πίσω απ' τον παράδεισο υπάρχει  
Η παιδική μου ηλικία γεμάτη αστέρια  
Ξεχασμένα στο σώμα μου  
Και μία φλέβα νερό μιλητικό που κυλά  
Το άλλο τοπίο  
Με τα δακρυσμένα μάτια της Παναγίας  
Και τις τρείς ασημένιες ερημιές  
Μιά πάνω στην άλλη

Τώρα κοιτάζω τον ουρανό και ξέρω πως  
Είναι τοπίο της χαμένης Ίριδας ξέρω πως  
Εκεί τριγυρνά ονειρευόμενη  
Να βρώ τον πρώτο παράδεισο—πριν  
Απ' τη θυσία  
Να βρω το πρώτο μου Πέρασμα—οταν  
Η μητέρα μού έδωσε ένα τριαντάφυλλο αίμα  
Μη χαθώ.

NINTH PASSAGE  
The Three Irises

I was born with three irises, she said,  
Three irises in each eye  
One atop the other  
Stretches of sky entered  
The air thickened with azure  
And the angels sat to the right  
Transforming the vision into a shrine.

Now I look at the world and know  
That behind Paradise there is  
My childhood full of stars  
Forgotten on my body  
And a vein of whispering water that flows  
The other landscape  
With the tearful eyes of the Virgin  
And the three silver deserts  
One upon the other.

I look now at the sky and know that  
It is the site of my lost Iris I know that  
There I wander dreaming  
To find the first paradise—before  
The sacrifice  
To find my first Passage—when  
My mother gave me a rose of blood  
Lest I lose my way.

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΔΕΚΑΤΟ

## Τα Όνειρα

Πάντα στο ίδιο σημείο  
Το σπίτι να κρέμεται στο κενό  
Με τα παράθυρα ανοιχτά στην πανσέληνο  
Κι εγώ ν' αδειάζω το χρόνο μ' ένα παλιό κουβά της  
Κατοχής

"Πώς βρέθηκα;" λέω,  
"Θα πέσω . . ." και φοβάμαι.

Κάτω η νύχτα άβυσση  
Με ασημίες πατημασιές—σαν  
Κάποιος να πέρασε λίγο πριν  
Και στις όχθες φεγγάρι ξερό—αιώνες  
Στοιβαγμένο πάνω στις ερημιές

Κοιτάζω τα πρόσωπα που ρέουν από τις χαραμάδες  
του τοίχου  
Σε άσπρο και μάυρο της απουσίας  
Σαν το αρνητικό της ύλης  
Ξένα  
Και υπάρχουν σ' έναν άλλο καιρό  
Μιά άγνωστη απόσταση αναμεσά μας  
Και δεν έχω φωνή ούτε κίνηση  
"Όνειρο θά είναι"  
Κι ο πατέρας μέσα στον καθρέφτη  
Χαμογελά ακίνητος  
Απλώνω τα χέρια να τον αγγίξω  
Το λευκό πουκάμισο άδειο  
"Έφυγες", λέω, και στα χέρια μου  
Η απουσία πονά ακόμα—καθώς  
Το τοπίο άρχισε να λιώνει κι από μέσα του  
Έβγαينه η ζωή μου  
Κομμάτια πονεμένα  
Με μιάν οσμή καμένης Ψυχής.

TENTH PASSAGE  
The Dreams

Always at the same point  
The house hanging in the void  
With the windows open to the full moon  
And I emptying time with an old bucket from the  
Occupation  
“How did I get here?” I say,  
“I’ll fall . . . ” and I am afraid.

Below the night abysmal  
With silver footsteps—as if  
Someone passed by not long ago  
And on the banks a dry moon—  
Piled on top of the deserts for centuries

I look at the faces flowing from the cracks of the  
wall  
In the white and black of absence  
Like the negative of matter  
Alien  
And they exist in another time  
An unknown distance between us  
And I have no voice or movement  
“It must be a dream”  
And Father in the mirror  
Smiles unmoving

I stretch out my arms to touch him  
The white shirt is empty  
“You are gone,” I say, and in my arms  
The absence pains still—as  
The place started to melt even within him  
My life came out  
Painful pieces  
With an odor of burnt Soul.

\*

Θα ήταν εφτά  
Εφτά φορές ο Απρίλης  
Την ίδια νύχτα

Ένα πέτρινο άνθος απλωμένο σε κήπο κρεμαστό  
Κι εγώ ν' ανεβαίνω κάτι παλιά σκαλοπάτια  
Μιά αίσθηση από βεβαιότητα πως είναι εκεί  
Τεντώνω το κεφάλι να δω—αίμα  
Από το αίμα μου κάποτε  
Τα σκαλοπάτια γλιστρούν  
“Θα πέσω”, λέω, και κρατιέμαι απ’ το γαλάζιο  
Αναριχώμενο  
Μα ο κήπος μετατοπίζεται όπως στο όνειρο  
Και ξαφνικά μιά λίμνη που την διαπερνούν  
Σκιές λευκές  
Κι εγώ είμαι ήχος του βυθού  
Και βουλιάζω ήσυχα σαν να κοιμάμαι  
Με το εφτά της αβύσσου χαραγμένο σαν πηγή στα  
μάτια μου  
Και μιά αίσθηση παρουσίας επίμονης  
“Εδώ είναι”, λεω, “εδώ”  
Σαν να έγινε κι ο θάνατος ήχος του βυθού  
Σε μιά ίδια παράλληλο με το όνειρο  
Και μιά λάμψη δυνατή  
Παρασέρνει το χρόνο  
Να φανεί μιά λουρίδα Παράδεισος  
Μα δεν  
“Πού εδώ;”

Και τα μάτια μου πονούν απ’ το σημάδι.

\*

Το δωμάτιο άδειο  
Σαν να πέρασε νεκρός λίγο πριν και—  
Μυρίζει Παράδεισος  
Κάθομαι σταυροπόδι κι αφουγκράζομαι

\*

He would have been seven  
Seven times April  
In the same night  
A stone flower stretched out in a hanging garden  
And I climbing some old stairs  
A feeling of certainty that he is there  
I crane my neck to see—blood  
From my blood once  
The stairs are slippery  
“I will fall,” I say, and hold on to the azure  
Climbing  
But the garden shifts as in a dream  
And suddenly a lake that is crossed  
By white shadows  
And I am an echo of the deep  
And sink quietly as if asleep  
With the seven of the abyss engraved like a wound  
on my eyes

And a sense of persistent presence  
“It’s here,” I say, “here”  
As if death became an echo of the deep  
On the same parallel as the dream  
And a powerful brightness  
Sweeps time along  
To reveal a band of Paradise  
But not  
“Where here?”

And my eyes ache from the mark.

\*

The room is empty  
As if a corpse passed by not long before and—  
It smells of Paradise  
I sit cross-legged and listen

Ο ύπνος μου πάλιωσε γεμάτος ρωγμές  
 Και μπορώ να παρακολουθώ τις κινήσεις στο  
 διπλανό χώρο  
 Κάποιοι συσκευάζουν ένα κιβώτιο γυάλινο  
 Γεμάτο τις μέρες μου  
 Ακουμπώ τα μάτια να διακρίνω  
 “Είμαι εγώ”, λέω, “εγώ” και τρομάζω  
 Ένας σωρός από όνειρα σε λευκό χαρτί  
 Σαν έρημος τεμαχισμένη με τα χέρια μου  
 Ή σαν ηλιοτρόπια της νύχτας—που  
 Λευκάνθηκαν από το πέρασμα του αγγέλου  
 Και το αίμα να κυλά—παλιό αίμα  
 Πάνω στο γυαλί σαν δάκρυα  
 “Είμαι έτοιμη”, σκέφτομαι  
 “Συσκευασμένη και έτοιμη  
 Για τη μεταφορά”

Μιά αίσθηση από ύπνο που σπάζει  
 Σαν γυάλινο κιβώτιο  
 Και πέφτουν οι μέρες μου  
 Ελαφριές και έξαιμες  
 Λυγίζουν σαν ηλιοτρόπιο της μνήμης  
 Και δεν είμαι πιά

Το δωμάτιο μεταμορφώνεται σε οσμή νεκρού  
 Κι εγώ υπάρχω σαν  
 Αίσθηση από χαμένο Παράδεισο ή σαν  
 Το λευκό της αβύσσου.

\*

Δεν γνωρίζω το τοπίο  
 Δεν το είδα ποτέ κι ωστόσο δικό μου  
 Έχω ζήσει εδώ, λέω, και προσπαθώ να θυμηθώ  
 Ένας τοίχος από σπίτι κάποτε  
 Κι ο κήπος γεμάτος μυστηριώδη φυτά που με  
 κοιτάζουν



My sleep has grown old full of fissures  
And I am able to watch the movements in the next  
space

Some people are packaging a glass box  
Full of my days  
I strain to make it out  
"It is I," I say, "I" and shudder  
A pile of dreams in white paper  
Like a desert cut up by my hands  
Or like sunflowers of the night—that  
Were whitened by the passage of the angel  
And the blood flowing—ancient blood  
On the glass like tears  
"I am ready," I think  
"Packaged and ready  
For shipment"

A feeling of sleep breaking  
Like a glass box  
And my days fall  
Light and bloodless  
Bending like a sunflower of memory  
And I am no more

The room transforms itself into smell of corpse  
And I exist like  
A feeling from a lost Paradise or like  
The white of the abyss.

\*

I know not the place  
Have never seen it and yet it is mine  
I have lived here, I say, and try to remember  
A wall of a house once  
And the garden full of mysterious plants that gaze at  
me

Σε ποιόν καιρο;" αναρωτιέμαι  
Και χάνομαι πίσω απ' το χρόνο  
Γίνομαι αίσθηση από διάρκεια και πόνο χαμένο  
Μα δεν  
Και το τοπίο λιώνει σαν δάκρυα  
Με κείνη την οσμή της καμένης ψυχής.

Αύγουστος, 1988

"In what time?" I wonder  
And I am lost behind time  
I become a feeling of permanence and lost pain  
But not  
And the place melts like tears  
With that odor of burnt soul.

August, 1988

## ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΕΝΔΕΚΑΤΟ

## Της Θάλασσας

Από την Προποντίδα οι μέρες μου ταξιδεμένες  
Γεμάτες νησία πριγκιπικά και μάλαμα τύμβων  
Από κει έρχομαι σαν κύμα λευκό  
Όρθιο πάνω στους ανέμους  
Με μιάν οσμή βυθού και σιωπηλής ώρας  
Όταν η θάλασσα προφητική στις φλέβες μου  
Έβαφε θαλασσιά την ορασή μου  
Γι' αυτό ο κόσμος που βλέπω  
Ροή υδάτινη  
και κυλώ μαζί του  
Να φτάσω στην πρώτη πηγή  
Να ενωθώ με τη σταγόνα  
Που περιέχει το προσωπό μου να κοιμάται  
Κάτω από φλέβες καιρών άλλων.

\*

Λειασμένη σαν κοχύλι του βυθού  
Κουβαλώ τους αιώνες που με κοίμισαν στη σιωπή  
τους  
Όταν ακόμα η θάλασσα γεωμετρούσε τον κόσμο  
Και με το δαχτυλό του ο νιογέννητος θεός  
Ως νούς επελθών διεκόσμησεν  
Χάος

\*

Γι' αυτό σε βρίσκω κάτω απ' το σώμα μου  
Όταν σε περιείχα  
Μιά λέξη χαραγμένη από χέρι Μυκηναϊκό  
Πάνω στην πέτρα όπου κοιμήθηκα  
Αιώνες.

\*

ELEVENTH PASSAGE  
Of the Sea

From the Propontis my days have travelled  
Full of princely islands and the gold of tombs  
From there I come like a white wave  
Upright on the winds  
With a breath of the deep and silent time  
When the sea prophetic in my veins  
Dyed my vision sea-blue  
That is why the world I see is a  
Watery flow  
And I roll with it  
To reach the first source  
To be united with the water-drop  
That contains my visage sleeping  
Beneath the veins of other times.

\*

Smoothed like an ocean shell  
I carry the centuries whose silence lulled me to sleep  
When the sea still spanned the world  
And the newborn god, coming as Nous, with his  
finger  
*Brought order to*  
*Chaos*

\*

That is why I find you beneath my body  
When I encompassed you  
A word traced by a Mycenaean hand  
Upon the rock where I slept  
For centuries.

\*

Γέρνω πάνω στο σωρό από νύχτες άγνωστες  
Που ρέουν μια μέσα στην άλλη  
Σαν από θραύσματα ονείρων παλιών  
Κι αφουγκράζομαι τα τριξίματα  
Η ζωή μου να κυλά περιρρέουσα  
Ονειρευόμενη τα τοπία που υπήρξα  
Πριν από—  
Η μνήμη θυμάται όσα ξέχασε για πάντα

Κι όλο να σκάβω τα φθαρμένα όρια  
Ν' αναβλύσει η θάλασσα σκοτεινή  
Να μού φέρει απ' τούς βυθούς  
Την αλήθεια μου  
Ν' απορροφηθώ απ' το γαλάζιο υγρό  
Σαν το τελευταίο μου πέρασμα.

I bend over the pile of unknown nights  
That flow into one another  
As if from fragments of age-old dreams  
And listen to the creaking  
My life turning, flowing round  
Dreaming of the landscapes where I was  
Before . . .  
Memory remembers all it has forgotten forever

And I ever digging the frayed borders  
So that the dark sea may well up  
To bring me from the depths  
My truth  
So that I may be absorbed by the liquid azure  
My final passage.

**ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΔΩΔΕΚΑΤΟ**  
**Της Απουσίας**

Αν δεν υπάρχεις πως να σε περιέχω, είπα  
Τότε που το σώμα μου έγερνε από το βάρος σου  
Μα τώρα που ο χρόνος άδειασε τη σάρκα μου  
Και λιγοστεύει η απόσταση  
Ακούω να σαλεύει σαν άγριο ζωντανό η νύχτα  
Ένα κέλυφος διάτρητο και ρέει  
Η απουσία σου  
Σαν το λευκό του Αγγέλου που υπόσχεται  
Μιλητικούς παραδείσους.

\*

Μαζεύω τα πράγματα που θα πάρω μαζί μου  
Λίγο αίμα της γέννας  
Δύο στάλες Απρίλη από τα μάτια σου  
Κι ένα δισάκι φεγγάρι για το δρόμο

Μαζεύω τα υπάρχοντά μου—αποσκευές “άνευ αξίας”  
Ένα γυμνό τριαντάφυλλο να περιέχει την έρημο  
Και μυρουδιά από νύχτα που καίγεται  
Καταμεσίς του πελάγους  
Κι εκείνο το ποίημα που δεν έγραψα  
Γιατί δεν έχει λέξεις  
Είναι η ύστατη κατάργηση της Απουσίας.



TWELFTH PASSAGE  
Of Absence

If you do not exist how can I contain you, said I  
When my body strained under your weight  
But now that time has emptied my flesh  
And distance diminishes  
I hear the night stir like a wild animal  
A riddled shell and  
Your absence flows  
Like the whiteness of the Angel that promises  
Whispering paradises

\*

I gather up the things I will take with me  
Some birth-blood  
Two drops of April from your eyes  
And a knapsack of moon for the journey

I gather my belongings—baggage of “no value”  
A naked rose containing the desert  
And a fragrance of burning night  
In the midst of the sea  
And that poem unwritten  
Because it is wordless  
The ultimate banishment of Absence.

### ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΔΕΚΑΤΟ ΤΡΙΤΟ Οσμή Ναού

Το σώμα μου μεταμορφώνεται ολοένα  
Γεμάτο αγρυπνίες και θυμίαμα παλιό  
Μιά οσμή Ναού από χρόνο καταργημένο  
Σαν την οσμή της μνήμης που υπήρξα πριν  
Απ' την τελευταία μου Κάθοδο  
Σ' εκείνο το θείο ταξίδι που κοιμάται  
Αναλλοίωτο  
Μέσα στη σάρκα μου  
Κι ανοίγει την οδό  
Τη Μία  
Να περάσω.

\*

Το σώμα μου μεταμορφώνεται σε μυστικό  
παράθυρο  
Ακουμπώ τα μάτια στο τζάμι  
Και κοιτάζω τους Αγίους να περνούν  
Καβάλα στο άλογο  
Ακουμπούν πάνω στο φθαρμένο περβάζι  
Το δισάκι τους γεμάτο Θεό  
Και γεμίζουν τη νύχτα μου ρίγος.

THIRTEENTH PASSAGE  
Redolence of Sanctuary

My body ever changing  
Full of vigils and old incense  
A redolence of sanctuary from a banished time  
Like that of the memory I was before  
My last Descent  
On that divine journey that sleeps  
Unaltered  
Within my flesh  
And opens the way  
The One way  
To pass through.

\*

My body is transformed into a mystic window  
I gaze at the pane  
And watch the Saints pass  
Astride their mounts  
They brush the worn ledge  
Their knapsacks full of God  
And fill my night with shudders.

ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΔΕΚΑΤΟ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΟ  
Της Ύστατης Ώρας

Το σώμα μου γεμάτο ρωγμές  
Κι αναβλύζει η άβυσσος  
Δεν έχω πού να σταθώ  
Να λευκανθώ σαν άνθος του βυθού κι ύστερα  
Ν' αναταθώ γυμνή σαν κατακόρυφη φλόγα  
Να γίνω όραση δεητική  
Ν' απελευθερώσω το άστρο που κοιμάται  
Στην πλήγη μου.

\*

Το σώμα μου προφητικό  
Περιμένει την απόλυτη Νύχτα  
Ύστατος σπαραγμός του κοσμικού μου ενδύματος  
Στο σύνορο το μυστικό  
Η τελευταία μου ποίηση  
Διχως λέξεις  
Μιά μουσική μόνο που την άκουσα σ' άλλους καιρούς.

\*

Το σώμα μου ένας κήπος που μούλιασε  
Και βουλιάζει  
Θρύβεται μαλακό  
Μεταμορφούμενο  
Κατοικία ενός χρόνου αναπόδεικτου  
Κι η ψυχή μου λεπτή κι ολόρθη  
Σκαλίζω απάνω της σαν ασήμι το φως  
Να μού φέγγει το πέρασμα  
Σκαλίζω απάνω της το προσωπό μου  
Μη χαθώ.

\*

FOURTEENTH PASSAGE  
Of the Final Hour

My body full of fissures  
And the abyss welling up  
I have no place to stand  
To be whitened like a flower of the deep and then  
To be lifted up bare like a vertical flame  
To become a prayerful vision  
To liberate the star that sleeps  
In my wound.

\*

My body prophetic  
Awaits the absolute Night  
Ultimate rending of my cosmic garment  
At the mystic boundary  
My final poetry  
Without words  
Only a music that I heard in other times.

\*

My body a garden that is soaked  
And sinking  
Crumbles softly  
Transformed  
Domicile of an unprovable time  
And my soul fragile and upright  
I sculpt light upon it like silver  
To light my passage  
I sculpt upon it my visage  
Lest I lose my way.

\*

Θρύβομαι ολοένα να φτάσω στη Μία  
Διάσταση  
Να χωρέσω  
Πληγές τα μέλη μου πέφτουν  
Γεμάτα νύχτες ερωτικές και Ιουνίους  
Άρωμα από πευκοβέλονα του μεσημεριού

Πέφτει η ζωή μου σάρκα καιόμενη  
Διαστέλλοντας το φως  
Να περάσω.

I crumble ever to reach the One  
Dimension  
To fit into it  
My members fall, wounds  
Full of erotic nights and Junes  
Aroma of pine-needles at midday

My life falls, burning flesh  
Dilating the light for me  
To pass through.





## ROMANTIC POETRY IN GREECE: Some Proposals for a Revised Approach

BY SONIA ILINSKAYA-ALEXANDROPOULOU

A literary phenomenon can be approached in its typical fixed form, outside the historical process or the specific circumstances of its place and time. In the picture we draw, certain elements stand out: themes, motifs, and other stylistic elements that form an easily comprehensible common framework. If we approach Romantic Greek poetry using these methodological principles, then we identify it, as was the case for many years, with the Romantic School of Athens. It matches completely the representative works we have of Romantic poetry as it was being shaped in Western Europe at that time. Furthermore, the direct communication of the poets of the Athenian School with their well-known western models, as well as the influence the latter exerted on them, have been systematically recorded by literary researchers.

Yet any absolute formulation of a general rule inevitably becomes arguable. The untamed nature that is the trademark of Romanticism is not easily classified even within the various national frameworks, and much less so within the European landscape. As such, an investigation of historical problematics must take into consideration the time and place of the literary phenomenon's origin, the particular conditions of the country that defined its dynamics at the time, as well as the more extended cultural and historical context. It should also illuminate the specific through the general. A comparative glance, even in a superficial manner, at neighboring regions reveals some other common characteristics, which lead us to confirm a clearly differentiated historical typology in the evolution of Romanticism in the broader area of Southeastern Europe.

The common denominator for the area is its historical particularity: the centuries that these countries were under foreign occupation, which interrupted normal cultural process, the struggle for liberation followed by the persistent effort to make up for lost time, as well as the intermediate phases that led to specific "condensed" forms, of a "mixed but

legitimate kind." It is not simply a matter of revelations of national particularities that depart from the rule, but rather of an organic symbiosis, a kind of chemical union of two trends: the older, which was never totally completed, and as such could not be established as an accepted direction, and the aggressive new that had already dominated the Western European horizon.

In such cases the "pure" forms are by definition unthinkable and can only be the result of entirely imported products. Works of stature, however, appear and define a national culture in those instances where the national literature does not faithfully follow foreign models, and does not perceive them as pre-fabricated loans, but as a creative challenge, while it carefully listens to the country's historical pulse and considers the demands of its own course and progress. In Greece, Solomos and Kalvos laid the cornerstone of the country's modern culture. The Greek Revolution became for both writers a defining source of inspiration.

My essay focuses on the two aforementioned personalities. They both represent the dynamic cultural departure of modern Hellenism, are its original artistic projection into the unified terrain of European Romantic poetry, and belong to its particular southeastern region. Their commonalities and differences are indicative of the original and vanguard pursuits of this very important period of modern Greece. A comparative exploration of these two poets within the current of Romanticism, which both, with some variations, introduced to their homeland, may prove particularly fruitful.

\* \* \*

How do two young intellectuals, who have been educated in the west and have a westernized aesthetic approach, react to the torrential events of the Revolution, without the corresponding national tools, without the country itself having created a national cultural life, which was just then the objective of a few scattered efforts in the centers of the Greek Diaspora and in the Ionian islands? How do Solomos and Kalvos see themselves, between two worlds with such a striking difference in their historical development? How do they imagine their role and the course that they must follow?

The uprising of the Revolution functions as an extraordinary form

of mobilization for both Solomos and Kalvos. They see their pens as arms in the struggle, as a means of intellectual, and even of political, leadership (as happens, when the political life of a country is still in its formative stage and art is summoned to assume its own duties). They share the desire to speak and to be heard, to become the teachers of the nation, an element inherent in both the Age of Enlightenment and in revolutionary Romanticism alike. The urge to enlighten will be one of the main characteristics of Solomos' and Kalvos' revolutionary career, and will display a particularly settled, programmed form in Solomos. After completing the *Hymn to Liberty*, where the leading role the poet was assuming was mainly expressed in political pronouncements, Solomos wrote the *Dialogue*, a literary work with enlightening aims and structure. The poet's intellectual purpose in that work is inextricably woven with the struggle for liberation and ties the necessary dominance of the demotic language with a fertile and total development of all forms of national conscience. Solomos, more so than Kalvos, feels deeply not only for Hellenism's fate, but more specifically for his people, the common people, whom he understands and shares an affinity with in a more direct and familiar manner.

Solomos' and Kalvos' projection into the Romantic poetic milieu contains the originality of a spontaneous and indigenous move that involves a very high degree of conscience and profound searching. They are co-protagonists in the literary events of their period, along with their famous contemporaries, namely Byron, Pushkin, Mishkevitz, and others who revived within the framework of Romanticism its original revolutionary spirit.

Solomos' and Kalvos' relationship with the Revolution is so strong and comprehensive that their work will exclude many stereotypical elements found in contemporary Romantic, non-revolutionary poetry, as, for example, the thematic escape to exotic places or "the lost paradise" of the past. They both situate themselves within their national territory and in the present struggle, with an eye to the future. In their work the typical Romantic clash between the distinguished refined individual and his hostile environment will also be absent; the line separating such juxtapositions will be drawn by the Revolution. That will be the defining vertical section that pervades all thematic levels of their works. In that light, and within the general spirit of revolutionary Romanticism,

the double nature of the human world is divided into the ideal world of Liberty, and that which is opposite and inimical to Liberty.

Among the enemies of Liberty, both Solomos and Kalvos count not only the immediate antagonist of the Revolution, the Ottoman, but also the newer forms of tyranny represented by the Great Powers. Both poets are possessed by an anti-tyrannical passion, Kalvos exhibiting an unusually fanatical persistence and unrelenting social perception, unsurpassed perhaps in modern Greek poetry, until the appearance of Palamas' mature work.

The typical Romantic encounter of the past and the present attains in the thematic field of the Greek Revolution an idiomorphic trilateral structure: the glorious past of antiquity, the recent past of slavery, the present struggle. In the passing of time, the first and last phases are emphasized. Ancient Greece does not function as a Romantic "paradise lost," but as a point of reference, a model of fighting practices. Both Kalvos and Solomos recall the heroic figures of "the three hundred Spartans," and Kalvos addresses the "offspring of the Hellenes: the time of glory has come//of our glorious ancestors//let us follow the example."

In contrast to the Classical texts, the references to antiquity no longer represent abstract ideas and patterns, but age-old figures that still live in the nation's memory. Along with the symbols of antiquity, key words are evoked: liberty, valor, virtue, sword, flame—the "koine" language of liberal poetry of the age, which in the Greek poets' case attains the extraordinary immediacy of the fighting code.

The struggle of the present appears as a process of national rebirth, and the epic as well as the lyric structure responds to the creators' intention to narrate, to reflect, to praise. Solomos and Kalvos give free rein to the guiding flames—of the mind and of the heart—to compose works that combine Classical and Romantic elements. Solomos in the *Hymn* and Kalvos in the *Odes* turn to tried and true Classical forms, which, however, are pervaded by the Romantic flame of the heart. In the general parts—of retrospection, reflection, and edifying admonition, where enlightening tendencies are dominant—logical precision and clarity are favored, and the elevated poetic word adopts an edifying tone as well as Classical manner: rhetorical forms in abundance, paraphrases, personifications, metonymies.

Because of his use of archaic language, these elements are more

apparent and imposing in Kalvos. In both poets, however, explosive Romantic feeling ("overflowing of the heart," as Solomos used to call it) is sometimes expressed with an extreme effusiveness. In both Solomos and Kalvos the vibrant flow of the outside world's fascinating impressions is colored by passionate psychic participation. They speak in the first person, use an abundance of exclamations (let us recall, for example the first stanza of the *Hymn*) as well as questions, pile synonyms on one another, and emphasize dynamic verbs. To add to the intensity, they employ structural means—repetition as well as syntactic parallelism. One could say that it is not only—and sometimes not so much—the events themselves that are recorded, but their reception and their viability, which are axial elements of Romantic artistic perception. The same observation can be made about the description of landscape—the image and its verbal molding are formed with the cooperation of visual and emotional stimuli and sentiment plays the defining role.

The personal "I" in Kalvos is especially emphatic and underlines one of the most essential elements of Romantic art. Kalvos' poetic word is both a sermon and a confession that flows from the outset of his very first Ode, which is dedicated to Zakynthos, his "beloved country," the "awesome island." From the beginning of the Ode, we witness his absolute devotion to his particular homeland, to Hellenism, to the vision of Liberty; it is a demanding devotion, maximal, potent, and also utopian.

The unfolding of events and of thoughts takes place in an analytic multi-directional process, where the subject many times becomes the object of the study; in other words, it appears as both examiner and examinee. Interest lies also in the poet's reactions toward what he sees and what puzzles him. His personality, his inner world, his emotions, and his presentiments attain a more important meaning and, gradually, a more and more distinct tragic character. Little by little he allows us to enter into the depths of his conscience, the core of his rending, nerve-racked self-knowledge. It is one of the most original, dramatic moments of Greek Romanticism.

Whatever moves him surpasses his personal experiences and flows out of his ontological world, his existential anxieties. It is as if he hastens to catch in the atmosphere all that will come to the surface later and will gradually be developed by Solomos. However, the latter's psycho-

logical, ontologically-based introspection will move without Kalvos' psychotic intensity.

In retrospect, we can distinguish in Kalvos' *Odes* the signs that foretell the unavoidable collision of maximalist expectation with reality, of theory with history, and also the inescapable maximalist result—silence.

\* \* \*

Solomos also experienced the collision of the ideal with reality. He, however, was not driven to creative deadlock. The changes observed in the solitary course that he followed are generally indicative of the post-revolutionary phase of European Romanticism, and more specifically, of the historic as well as geographical region of our concern. Those changes represent a series of forward leaps that shortened a long course of development—long in comparison with other non-condensed rhythms.

In *Lambros*, Romantic introspection and moral questioning replaced the *Hymn's* heroic, fighting atmosphere. The Byronic model, however, of the isolated, Romantic hero was undermined by the Greek historical context: the Romantic demand for personal freedom eventually weakened alongside the liberating spirit of the collective whole and its particular moral values. The moral aspect of freedom also appeared in *The Woman of Zakynthos*, where the Romantic grotesque touches on real social situations and conflicts with impressive immediacy and acuity.

Satire was outlining a possible prospect of realistic grounding, but Solomos adopted the dominant tendency in the post-revolutionary Romantic period of philosophical elevation of the ideal. Already in *The Cretan*, which was being written while the final touches were put on *Lambros*, depiction of the dual nature of a character in the Byronic style was definitively removed from his art. In a parallel manner, the relationship between man and nature was about to acquire cosmogonic levels, along with the particularity of the national psyche, thus laying the cornerstone of the mythical model for *The Free Besieged*.

Heroic Messolonghi provides the poet with fertile soil for molding the myth in newly created history, in the still tangible reality that functioned as exemplum, and thus establishing new national principles. The

Specific, the Particular, is elevated to the General, and touches upon the Ideal. Indicative of this is the projection of the identical mindset of the collective hero, as well as the role of the narrator as bearer and spokesman for the national tradition in his work. Those elements as a whole represent a significant particularity in the general Romantic panorama, which is common to all nations that share a historical fate similar to that of Greece.

Solomos' subsequent and final step, in *Porphyras*, leads, in correspondence with the historical moment, from the national through the individual to the existential myth that preserves the charm of human greatness within personal, but exemplary, diachronic limits. The poem is a unique farewell to the arms taken up during the struggle for independence and reflects the deeply rooted sense of human heights achieved.

\* \* \*

Solomos and Kalvos—the crowning moments of Greek Romantic poetry and the most substantial exponents of the era's spirit—were not, like Byron and Pushkin, considered leaders or fellow travelers by their contemporaries in Greece or by the generations that followed. These two great poets won their rightful place in the history of modern Greek literature with re-appraisals that began towards the end of the 19th century, without any intermediate course of development that could have been beneficial both to the literary affairs of the country and to the shaping of Hellenism's new conscience. Solomos' absence can be considered especially harmful because he had, despite their fragmentary form, more solid proposals to make.

The Ionian School, which accepted and retained Solomos' influence and mastery of his art, functioned as a torchbearer that brought the flame to Greek soil when the latter was mature enough to receive it. Meanwhile, however, the time was past when Solomos' pursuits and teachings could have been matched with other Greek efforts to form a strong literary current that might have established the individual example as a general rule. The rediscovery of Kalvos and the brave recognition of Solomos must be credited, entirely in the first case and to a great extent in the second, to the next great innovator of modern Greek

poetry, Kostis Palamas. Among the contributions of his generation, that of the 1880s, it must be counted that he assumed the responsibility of bringing the subject of national Rebirth to completion. Nevertheless, many decades would pass before Solomos' work began to be internalized as the threshold of modern Greece's poetic tradition and his influence exerted on subsequent generations.



# THE POETRY OF GREECE<sup>1</sup>

## Eros, Ge, Thalassa, Aither, Neikos

TRANSLATED BY DISKIN CLAY

### EROS

Hesiod, *Theogony* 116-122

Now in the beginning a great gap appeared; and then  
Earth stretched out with her face to the sky, the eternal  
    foundation  
Of the gods who dwell high on Mt. Olympus.  
And Eros appeared, the most beautiful among the gods  
    immortal,  
Who unstrings the limbs, and overwhelms the mind and  
    good sense  
Of all gods and of all human beings.

Parmenides, *On Nature*

She fashioned love as the very first of all the gods . . .

Valentius, Hymn

### Summer

I can see all that spirit suspends in the air.  
I conceive of all things buoyant upon the spirit.  
I can see, conceive, body suspended from the soul.  
I see, conceive, soul as the extension of air,

<sup>1</sup>The following poems are from a growing collection of translations that will make up *The Poetry of Greece*.

Of air suspended from the burning blue sky,  
From the depths a harvest  
And a child born from the womb.

Archilochus of Paros, The Seduction

[A girl is speaking to the poet narrator]  
“ . . . holding yourself back. Yet, you will be as bold.  
But if your passion drives you and you are so eager,  
There is a girl in our house who is now ripe with desire.  
She is pretty, tender, and still a virgin. I do not think  
That anyone can find fault with her looks. This is the girl  
For you to make ‘your own’.”

[The poet narrator responds]  
This was her response, and this was my reply.  
“Your mother was Amphimedo, a fine lady, and a sensible  
woman.  
Now the earth holds her in its loamy embrace.  
The Goddess of Love offers many gifts to men in their  
youth.  
But she reserves the “divine gift.” A man can be content  
with one of these.  
When we are all alone and when dusk begins to fall,  
We can reflect on all this, you and I, with the Goddess.  
I will do what you say. I am under your control.  
But here, beneath the copping stones of the city wall and  
the wide gates,  
Do not be so difficult, my love. I will set our course  
Away from the city towards the orchards and deep grass.  
But you can be sure of this. Some other man can have your  
Neoboule.  
She is beyond her prime, and wilted and fallen is the flower  
Of her youth. Gone is the charm that she once possessed.  
She cannot be sated. That mad woman shows all the signs  
of womanhood,

But no sign of maidenhood. The crows can pluck her fruits.  
Keep her away from me. I would never choose this fate:  
To have a woman like her as my wife  
To become the butt of my neighbors' jokes.  
No, you are the woman I want and I want you badly.  
You are not faithless, a cheat, and a schemer.  
She is the one who is quick to move and makes many  
"hers."

But I will not behave like the bitch of the proverb and be  
carried off  
In first heat. 'First heat bears pups blind and ill begotten'."

This is what I said to her. I took the girl in my arms  
And brought her down to the ground in a bed of flowers.  
I covered her with my great soft cloak,  
And I held her neck in the crook of my arm.  
Timid and fearful she trembled, like a fawn.  
I began to caress her breasts gently.  
I touched her young flesh that had the feel of a woman,  
And, as I fondled her young body,  
I let loose my strength, just touching her tawny . . ."

George Seferis, "Denial"

In a hidden cove  
White as a dove's wing  
We grew thirsty at midday,  
But the water was bitter.

Upon the yellow sand  
We wrote her name.  
Fresh blew the wind from the sea,  
And the lines vanished with the sand

With what passion we lived our lives.  
How intense we were, in our longing and pain

How wrong!  
And we found ourselves changed.

George Seferis, "The King of Asine"

"And Asine . . ."

Asine, summer '38—Athens, January '40

We explored the fortifications all morning,  
Beginning with the skirt of shade where the sea,  
Dull and green,—the breast of a slaughtered peacock—  
Absorbed us like seamless time.  
From the heights the veins of the rock descended  
Twisted tendrils of vine sprouting in many branchings,  
quickenings  
To the caress of water. They are like the eye  
As it traces them, attempting to escape  
The exhaustion of swaying back and forth,  
Spending its energy as it searches.

There in the light of the sun stretches an open shore in the  
distance,  
And on the great walls light bursts in diamond fragments.  
No living creature.           The wood doves flurry away.  
And the King of Asine, whom we have been seeking for two  
years now  
Unknown, forgotten by all and even by Homer.  
Only a single word in the *Iliad* and this disputed  
Hurled here, like the gold death mask.  
You touched this mask. Do you recall? Its sound  
An echo silenced by the sun.  
This is the great pithos buried in the earth.  
This is the sound of the sea lapping under our oars.  
The King of Asine           A void beneath his mask  
He is always with us       always with us.  
And Asine

And Asine  
And his sons                      statues  
And his longings the ruffling silk of birds' wings  
And the breeze extends as far as his thought can reach  
To reach his boats tethered in the invisible harbor  
Beneath the mask                      a void.

Behind his great eyes, his downturned lips  
The locks of hair  
Reliefs under the silver lid of our being  
A trace that travels like a fish  
In the sea of peace in the morning's calm.

You see it:  
A void that surrounds us  
And the bird that took wing last summer  
    Fluttering with a broken wing.  
The tent of life  
A young woman who refused to play  
With the tooth of the dog days  
My shade that twitters as it seeks the world below.  
And the site, like a great platan leaf  
Swept along by the torrent of the sun,  
With its ancient monuments and contemporary grief.

And the poet makes his way slowly, gazing at the stones  
    and he asks.

## GE

Alcman

The ridges of the mountains are now asleep,  
As are the ravines below, and the promontories and gullies.  
At rest is every kind of beast the black earth sustains,  
The wildlife that inhabit the mountains and the race of  
bees.

At peace are the monstrous creatures of the purple sea,  
Asleep all the tribes of birds with their outstretched wings.

George Seferis, "Our Country is closed in"

Our country is closed in, all mountains  
Roofed by a low sky day and night.  
We have no rivers no wells no springs,  
We have only a few cisterns and even these are dry;  
They echo and we worship them.  
A dead, hollow sound answering our solitude  
Answering our love answering our solitude  
Answering our love answering our bodies.  
It seems strange to us that we were ever able to build  
Our houses, our boats, our sheep-pens.  
And our weddings with their fresh cut wreaths and rings  
Put riddles to our souls we cannot explain.  
Our children—how were they born? How did they grow  
strong?

Our country is closed in. The two black  
Symplegades close it in. on Sundays  
When we go down to our harbors for a breath of air  
We can see in the setting sun the embers  
Of the broken planks of trips which did not end.  
Bodies which no longer know how to love.

George Seferis, *Mythistorima* 10 1934  
In the Manner of G.S.

Wherever I travel Greece wounds me.

On Pelion under the chestnut trees the shirt of the  
Centaur  
Slipped through the branches wanting to wind itself  
About my body  
As I made my way up the slope even as the sea kept  
Behind me  
Its waters mounting like mercury in a thermometer  
To the point where we came upon the waters of the  
mountain.

Off Santorini we gazed over islands which had  
Sunk into the sea  
And heard a flute playing somewhere in the hollows of  
The lava.  
Suddenly an arrow shot from the horizon of a youth  
At sunset  
Fixed my hand to the boat's rail  
In a ray of light.  
At Mycene I struggled to lift the stones of giants  
And the treasures of the sons of Atreus  
And slept beside them at "La Belle Hélène",  
Menelaus' wife.  
They were gone only with the dawn. Cassandra cried  
Out to them,  
A crow hung about her black throat.  
At Spetses at Poros at Myconos  
The rhythmic "eyah! mola" of the boatmen  
Rasped on my nerves like a consumptive's cough.

What do they mean all those people  
Who say that they are in Athens or Peiraeus?  
One of them has just come in from Salamis

And asks another if  
"He comes from Omonoia"  
"Concord Square"  
"No," he answers, "actually I'm coming from Constitution",  
and with pleasure, "I saw Ianni there,  
He treated me to an ice-cream."  
And as they talk, Greece travels on,  
And we—we know nothing, we don't know  
None of us that we are sailors with no ship  
All of us, and we don't know how bitter a place the  
Harbor is  
When all the ships are out at sea.

Those who feel this bitterness we mock.

Strange—the people who say they are in Attica  
And are nowhere.  
They buy candied almonds for their weddings  
Use pomades to save their hair and have themselves  
Photographed  
The man I saw today seated for a photo  
Among pigeons and flowers  
Allowed the hand of the old photographer to smooth out  
The wrinkles  
That all the fowls of the heaven  
Had left on his face.

And as he sits there Greece travels on  
Never stopping  
And if we see the "Aegean flower with corpses"  
These are the bodies of those who tried to catch  
The big ship by swimming for her,  
Those who grew weary of waiting for ships  
That cannot leave port  
The *Elsie* The *Samothraki* The *Ambraciot*  
The whistles of the boats are booming now  
As dusk falls on Peiraeus



One after another they whistle  
But no windlass begins to turn  
No anchor chain glistens bathed in the last rays of the  
    setting sun.  
The captain stands like a statue in his gold and white.

Wherever I travel Greece wounds me;  
Curtains of mountains stretches of open sea  
Naked granite . . .  
The ship that sails here  
They call AG ONIA 937

George Seferis, "Upon the Yellow Thistles"

It was lovely at Sounion that Annunciation day  
Back with spring again  
Only a few green leaves about the rusted stones  
The red sod and the aspalathoi  
Showing their great thorns exposed and their yellow  
    flowers.  
Far off the ancient columns, the strings of a harp still  
    Reverberate

. . .

Calm.  
—What could have reminded me of him—Ardiaios?  
It must have been a word in Plato lost in the furrows of my  
Mind.  
The name of the yellow shrub that  
Hasn't changed since those times.  
That evening I found the passage:  
"They bound him hand and foot," it tells us,  
"They hurled him to the ground and beat him,  
"They dragged him aside and tore him to shreds  
Upon the spikes of the aspalathoi

And took him and threw him down into Tartarus, in  
tatters."

So it is that in the world below the Pamphylian  
Ardiaios paid for his crimes  
The wretched tyrant.

### THALASSA

Odysseas Elytis, *Prosanatolismi*

### THE AEGEAN

#### I

Love  
The open sea  
And the prow of the cresting waves  
And the gulls of its dreams  
At the foot of his highest mast the sailor's song  
Winnows in the breeze.

Love  
His song  
And the horizon of his journey and the echo of his longing  
for home  
By the rock washed by the waves the betrothed waits  
For a ship.

Love  
His ship  
And the log of his days of North Wind  
And the spar of his hope  
On the gentlest ripple of the sea an island sways  
Until he comes.

II

In the play of light the waters  
Tell the darkened straits  
With the brushing of their kisses  
That dawn lights  
The horizon.

And the wild doves make the walls  
Of their caves echo  
The blue awakening within the spring  
Of the day.  
The sun.

The master gives sail to the sea  
Hair to the wind's soft hands  
To rid himself of the care of his dream.  
The cool of day

In the wave shimmering in light  
Eyes kindle again  
Wherever Life is under sail  
Towards the uncharted.  
Life.

III

The rush of waves lips brushing their beloved sand . . .  
Love.

The gull gives to the horizon  
The blue of his freedom.  
Waves rush in recede  
Their foam echoes long in the conches' ear.

Who took the girl with the hair of gold  
The girl made of sunlight?

Riding the limpid breath of the West Wind  
Billows the sail of dreams.  
Far off  
Love murmurs its quiet promise  
The rush of the waves.

Constantine Cavafy, "Ithaca"

When you set out on the ship for Ithaca  
Pray for a long journey  
Rich in adventures, full of experience.  
Do not fear the Cyclops or Lastrygonians  
Or the anger of Poseidon,  
You will not find such dangers on your way  
If your thoughts stay high,  
And high feeling moves your body and soul.  
You will not meet the Lastrygonians nor the Cyclops  
Nor fierce Poseidon  
Unless you transport them within your soul,  
Unless your soul sets them in your path.

Pray for a long journey  
For many a summer's morning  
When—with what pleasure and joy—  
You will enter ports you have never seen before.  
Pray to stop at the markets of the Phoenicians  
And acquire the lovely things they sell,  
Nacre, coral, amber, ebony,  
And fragrant spices and perfumes of every kind.  
And buy perfumes, as many as you can.  
Pray to visit the cities of Egypt,  
To gain knowledge there, and learn from the wise.

Keep Ithaca forever before you in your mind,  
And let your goal be your arrival there,  
But by no means hurry on in your journey there.

Better that it stretch over many years,  
That you drop anchor there an older man,  
Wealthy from all you have gained on the way,  
With no hope that Ithaca will give you wealth.

Ithaca gave you your good voyage;  
Without her you would not have set out.  
There is nothing more she can give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not cheated you.  
As wise as you have become with all of your experience,  
You will have already understood  
The meaning of islands like Ithaca

#### AITHER

Angelos Sikelianos, "The Sun"

You stir not field of asphodel:  
Once at day break  
I lifted my face to the icy touch  
Of your limpid air  
And its promise was that, deep, deep  
Deep as the sea, cold and clear,  
The day will break forth.  
And there it broke, dropping gently  
Before my eyes, like a veil  
Without a rustle. And I lifted it.  
And my eyes knew  
The air of Attica.

Praxilla, "Hymn to Adonis"

Loveliest of what I leave  
Is the light of the sun,

Then the bright stars  
And the face of the moon  
And then I will miss  
Ripe figs  
And apples  
And pears.

Odysseas Elytis, *Aithries II*, "The Sun"

Pureblooded heaven  
Fingers carried by a stream  
Running deep through sleep.

In the green leaves of the laurel  
Naked lies the day.

Odysseas Elytis, "Drinking the Sun of Corinth"

Drinking the sun of Corinth  
Reading the marble  
Striding over vineyards seas  
Marking with my trident  
The glint of the fish I have  
    Vowed to spear  
I came upon the leaves where the psalm  
    Of the sun decants  
The living land where yearning rejoices  
To open.

I drink water pick fruit  
I thrust my hand into the tendrils of the wind  
The lemon trees water the pollen of summer-time  
The green birds tear my dreams  
And with a backward glance  
A glance sweeping round to where

The world is born anew  
And, at its beginning, stands full of beauty  
As measured by the heart.

Odysseas Elytis "Summer's Body"

The time is gone when the last rains were heard  
Pelting the ants and lizards  
Now heaven burns unbounded  
Fruits stain their mouths  
The earth cracks and slowly widens  
Open  
And next to the stream speaking syllable by syllable  
A huge plant looks the sun in the eye.

Who is the man who stretches out on the sands above  
Lying upon his back drawing in the silver-blue  
Smoke of the olive leaves  
The cicadas grow hot in his ears  
The ants toil in his breast  
Lizards rustle in the green of his arm pits  
And away from the seaweed of his feet streams back  
A wave stirred up by the little siren who sang:

Body of summer naked burning  
Eaten by oil and salt  
A fresh gust from the tresses of the osier  
The breath of basil atop the dark of his groin  
Filled with sea shells and pine needles  
Body, deep ship of the day!

The silent rains are coming on the bursts of hail  
The dry land is flayed by the nails of the snow  
Blackening in the depths of its wild waves  
The hilltops plunge into the swollen udders of the clouds  
And yet, behind all of this, you smile not caring

And once again you come to your deathless hour  
As the sun finds you once again upon the sands  
As within your naked body the heaven heals.

Alcaeus "Men Drinking in August"

Drown the cups in wine.  
The dog star has come round.  
The season oppresses us.  
Everything is parched in this heat.  
The bushes burn with the song of the cicada.  
Artichokes are now in flower.

Now our women ripen with lust.  
The men are dried husks.  
The dog star beats down  
On skull and knee.

Solon, from "Hymn to the Muses"

The Justice of Zeus

The wealth the gods give grows tall for a man  
    Waxing strong from root to flower.  
But that wealth men honor by violence, comes not  
    In due order, but compelled by the wrong we do  
It is dragged along, and swift comes the confusion of Ruin  
    Like a fire fresh kindled Ruin feeds on little,  
A spark at first, but ending in a blaze beyond bearing.  
    Mind then that violent deeds have short lives among  
    men,  
For Zeus sees all things and their end, and suddenly,  
    As a fresh spring wind scatters the clouds,  
When it has churned up the depths of the barren  
    And billowing sea, and has spread destruction



Over the face of the grain-giving earth,  
    And leveled all the new crops, and mounts to the  
        steep place  
Of the gods in heaven. It restores to the sky  
    Its pure bright light; and the burning of the sun  
Rains down upon the rich earth,  
    And is lovely, and the sky opens cloudless before  
        you.  
Such is the justice of Zeus.

Odysseas Elytis, "Orion" I

The world has come to terms with grief  
Lies fall from our lips in a shower of stars  
The night relieved  
Of confusion and care  
Takes on a new form within us  
And its new silence breaks forth  
An apocalypse  
  
We find our heads in the hands of the Lord.

Yannis Ritsos, "Night"

A tall eucalyptus under a broad moon  
A star trembles in the water  
The sky white and silver  
Stones, stones blistered up to the sky  
And below in the shallow waters  
A fish leaps  
Splashes, once twice,  
    Three times—  
Great, ecstatic orphan—freedom.

Homer, *Iliad* 8.542-565

So Hector spoke and when he had finished the Trojans  
applauded.

Some freed their sweating horses from their yokes

And they tethered them, each to his chariot.

Some led cattle from the city and strong sheep.

They moved quickly. They poured out wine that lulls the  
heart.

And brought grain from the store-rooms.

And they gathered great heaps of wood

And the winds carried the savor of smoke from the plain to  
the heavens.

And others stayed out throughout the night

Upon the "bridges" of war, breathing fierce pride,

And their watch fires burned beside them,

As when in the heaven stars with their far-darting light

Appear around the bright moon on a night

When no wind disturbs the bright blue of heaven,

And all the high peaks and ridges stand out,

And the woods, and brilliant silver wells up in the sky,  
unquenchable fire.

All the stars are visible, and the shepherd rejoices

Such was the number of the fires that could be seen

Before Troy, burning from the ships of the Achaeans

To the waters of the Xanthos. Fifty warriors sat

By the blaze of each fire in its brilliance.

And their horses stood eating white barley and grain,

Stationed by their chariots, waiting for the goddess

Of the dawn.

NEIKOS

Dionysios Solomos, "Psara"

Walking alone on the black  
Black ridge of Psara  
Glory looks upon the brave  
And on her head she wears a garland  
Plaited from the few blades of green  
Still growing on the desolate land.



## PHILANDERING ODYSSEUS?

BY PHANIS J. KAKRIDIS

It is certainly unfair for the husband of Penelope, whom she awaited faithfully for twenty years, to have been intimate with so many women. We must assert, however, that regardless of the number of women Odysseus met on his travels, he did not for a moment stop desiring and fighting for his return to Ithaca, to his home and wedded wife.

He had met her in Sparta, at the palace of Tyndareos, at the time when all the princes of his day had gathered to contend for Helen's hand. We read in Hesiod, "And from Ithaca the sacred might of Odysseus, Laertes' son, who knew many-fashioned wiles sought her to wife. He never sent gifts for the sake of the neat-ankled maid, for he knew in his heart that golden-haired Menelaus would win, since he was greatest of the Achaeans in possessions . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Helen did choose Menelaus, but Odysseus' voyage was not in vain, for he decided to marry her first cousin Penelope, daughter of Icarius. Nor was that task simple: to marry her he had to win a race, organized by her father for this purpose, and even when Odysseus came in first, Icarius did not wish to part with his daughter. We read in Pausanias that on the road from Sparta to Arcadia stood

"the image of Modesty . . . dedicated by Icarius, the following being the reason for making it. When Icarius gave Penelope in marriage to Odysseus, he tried to make Odysseus himself settle in Lacedaemon, but failing in the attempt, he next besought his daughter to remain behind, and when she was setting forth to Ithaca he followed the chariot, begging her to stay. Odysseus endured it for a time, but at last he bade Penelope either to accompany him willingly, or else, if she preferred her father, to go back to Lacedaemon. They say that she made no reply, but covered her face with a veil in reply to the question, so that Icarius, realizing that she wished to depart with Odysseus, let her go,

<sup>1</sup>*Catalogues of Women*, fragm. 198 M.-W., translated by H.G. Evelyn-White, LCL 1936.

and dedicated an image of Modesty; for Penelope, they say, had reached this point of the road when she veiled herself"<sup>2</sup>

Thus Odysseus and Penelope married and lived happily ever after in Ithaca, but not for long, for, within a year, and just after the birth of their first son, Telemachus, Odysseus was required to leave, to fight in Troy.

I am not sure whether it has been noted, but it is certainly no coincidence that in the entire *Iliad*, as in other epics describing the ten years of the Trojan War, Odysseus is not, like other heroes, associated with any women. Agamemnon keeps Chryseis in his tent, and at one point claims he prefers her to Klytemnestra, his wife;<sup>3</sup> Achilles keeps Briseis or Diomedes; Patroclus Iphigeneia; Ajax Tecmessa; even aged Nestor has the fair-tressed Hecamede. But we learn nothing about Odysseus.<sup>4</sup> Even after the fall of Troy, when the Achaeans share the spoils, Ajax takes Cassandra as his share, Neoptolemus takes Andromache . . . and Odysseus the elderly wife of Priam, Hecuba!

Matters change once the return voyage begins, when the warrior becomes a captain, and almost confirms what is always said of seamen, that they have a woman at every port.<sup>5</sup>

His first Homeric liaison is with a sorceress, Circe, who wanted to turn him into a pig, as she had already transformed his companions. Tutored by Hermes, Odysseus not only avoids the metamorphosis, but safely and willingly responds to her, under the circumstances' rather hasty and unusual, proposition: "let us two go up into my bed, that mingling in the bed of love we may come to trust one another."<sup>6</sup>

So he went up to the bed of Circe, and remained on the island for a year, until not he, but his comrades, reminded him that it was time to think of the home country. As Odysseus himself recounts: "I went up to the beautiful bed of Circe, and besought her by her knees; and the

<sup>2</sup>Pausanias *Description of Greece* 3,20,10-11, translated by W.H.S. Jones, LCL 1926.

<sup>3</sup>*Iliad* 1.113.

<sup>4</sup>Solely to cover the gap, *Scholia to Iliad* 1.138 associated Odysseus with Laodice, daughter of Cycnus.

<sup>5</sup>It seems that later authors are trying to substantiate exactly this, when they invent erotic liaisons of Odysseus, here with the single daughter of Cyclops, there with the latter's beloved sea-nymph Galatea, even with a daughter of the wind god Aeolus, Poly-mela.

<sup>6</sup>*Odyssey* 10.334-335, translated by A.T. Murray, LCL2 1995

goddess heard my voice, and I spoke, and addressed her with winged words: 'Circe, fulfill for me the promise which you gave to send me home . . . '»<sup>7</sup>

The next major stop was the idyllic island of Calypso, where he arrived alone, without a ship, and the fair-tressed goddess fell so hard for him that she kept him by her side for seven whole years.<sup>8</sup> She offered to marry him, and promised to make him immortal. In Athena's words, "it is [Calypso] that keeps back that unfortunate, sorrowing man; and continually with soft and wheedling words she beguiles him that he may forget Ithaca. But Odysseus, in his longing to see were it but the smoke leaping up from his own land, yearns to die."<sup>9</sup>

We learn more about this relationship later, when the gods order Calypso to free him, and she goes to him to announce their decision: "Him she found sitting on the shore, and his eyes were never dry of tears, and his sweet life was ebbing away, as he grieved for his return, for the nymph no longer pleased him. By night indeed he would sleep by her side perforce in the hollow cave, unwilling beside the willing nymph . . . "»<sup>10</sup> The passage is revealing about the entire relationship, but this does not stop Odysseus from following Calypso that same night, and for the last time "into the innermost recess of the hollow cave, where they took their joy of love, remaining by each other."

We will not stress the oft-discussed scene where the naked and battered Odysseus finds himself at Scheria, facing a gaggle of carefree girls. The speech he addresses to the princess is indicative of phenomenal psychological and rhetorical prowess. Compliments and subtle innuendoes find immediate response in Nausicaa, for it is not only her age that makes her think of her future wedding, but also the words of Athena, who in her morning dream prepared her for exactly this encounter. The goddess herself completes her work, when, after the bath Odysseus is offered, she beautifies him: "Athene . . . made him taller to look upon and stronger, and from his head she made the locks to flow in curls like hyacinth flowers."<sup>11</sup> No wonder Nausicaa is charmed, and in turn

<sup>7</sup>*Odyssey* 10.480-481

<sup>8</sup>*Odyssey* 7.259

<sup>9</sup>*Odyssey* 1.55-59

<sup>10</sup>*Odyssey* 5.151-155

<sup>11</sup>*Odyssey* 6.229-231

tempts the hero with her vague, but very legible insinuations. Later Alkinoos openly offers his daughter in marriage, but Odysseus refuses.

Free, and having overcome the last great temptation, Odysseus will finally reach his country, enter his palace in disguise, kill the suitors, and will appear, again with the aid of Athena, exquisite to Penelope. They have much to say, but the goddess takes care to lengthen the night, so that at the end, before dawn breaks, "they came in joy to the rite of their old-time bed."<sup>12</sup>

Whoever expects the erotic life of Odysseus to end in Penelope's bosom is mistaken. What follows is based on post-Homeric testimony, but we have already been told in the *Odyssey* that the hero will travel again.<sup>13</sup> To placate Poseidon, he must take an oar on his shoulder and search for the land where people do not know salt and sea, and think the oar to be a winnowing fan! Odysseus finds such a place in Trampyia, high in the mountains of Epirus. He makes the appropriate sacrifices – but does not return to his island immediately. We read in Apollodorus, who summarizes earlier traditions:

"Callidice, who was then queen of the Thesprotians, urged him to stay and offered him the kingdom; and she had by him a son Polypoites. And having married Callidice, he reigned over the Thesprotians, and defeated in battle the neighbouring peoples who attacked him. But when Callidice died he handed over the kingdom to his son and returned to Ithaca, and there he found Poliporthes, whom Penelope had borne to him."<sup>14</sup>

A different escapade, again in the land of Epirus, is attributed to Odysseus by Parthenius, who lived in the first century B.C., but ascribes the particular narrative to the lost tragedy of Sophocles, *Euryalus*: "Even after his wanderings were over and he had slain Penelope's wooers, he went to Epirus to consult an oracle and there seduced Euippe, the daughter of Tyrimmas, who had received him kindly and was entertaining him with great cordiality; the fruit of this union was Euryalus."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Odyssey* 23.296

<sup>13</sup>*Odyssey* 11.121ff.; Cf. 23.267ff.

<sup>14</sup>Apollodorus *Epitome* 7,34-35, translated by J.C. Frazer, LCL 1921

<sup>15</sup>*Love Romances* 3, translated by S. Gaselee, LCL 1916



Others appear to narrate similar stories, as Apollodorus further informs us that "there are some who say . . . that Ulysses went to Aetolia, to Thoas, son of Andraemon, married the daughter of Thoas, and leaving a son Leontophonus, whom he had by her, died in old age."<sup>16</sup>

This last fact is in disagreement with the older tradition, according to which Odysseus was unintentionally killed by Telegonus, the son Circe had given him. Speaking of sons, it is said that Odysseus fathered at least ten: Telemachus and Poliorthes (or Arkesilaus) by Penelope; Telegonus, Agrius, and Latinus, who ruled over the Tyrsenians, by Circe; Nausithous and Nausinous by Calypso; Polypoites by Callidice; Leontophron (or Doryklos) by Euippe; and Leontophonus by the daughter of Thoas. There are accounts of only one daughter, Cassiphone.

After all this we would not expect Odysseus to find peace even after his death. However, in the Elysian Fields, where the other heroes "bill-and-coo openly, in plain sight of everyone, without any discrimination, and think no shame of it at all," Odysseus appears to have found a permanent companion in Penelope. We write this with a smile, as the relevant information comes from Lucian (*A True Story*), who openly admits that he is not telling a word of truth. Among many other imaginary and unlikely tales, he narrates that he himself visited the Isle of the Blessed, and when the time had come for him to leave, "Odysseus came to me without the knowledge of Penelope and gave me a letter to carry to Ogygia Island, to Calypso." The messenger read the letter before delivering it, and this is what it said:

"Odysseus to Calypso, greetings. Soon after I built the raft and sailed away from you I was shipwrecked, and with the help of Leucothea managed to reach the land of the Phaeacians in safety. They sent me home, and there I found that my wife had a number of suitors who were living on the fat of the land at our house. I killed them all, and was afterwards slain by Telegonus, my son by Kirke. Now am on the Isle of the Blessed, thoroughly sorry to have given up my life with you and the immortality which you offered me. Therefore, if I get a chance, I shall run away and come to you."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>*Epitome* 7,40

<sup>17</sup>*A True Story* 2,35, translated by A.M. Harmon, LCL 1913.

We have collected the erotic adventures of Odysseus, but we would be unfair if we based any particular judgment on these. The elements of the mythic identity of Odysseus, as already presented in the Homeric, and to a much greater extent in the post-Homeric narrations, lack a common origin.

The initial nucleus was a prehellenic hero, a protagonist of sea adventures that involved encounters with Cyclopes, witches, giants, Sirens, and otherworldly creatures. We consider these adventures to compose the mythic expression of the experiences of the early seafarers who dared to sail off from the western ports (Pylos, Ithaca) into the Adriatic, and to approach Sicily and southern Italy.

Subsequently the daring mariner was identified with the main figure of a worldwide motif, known as the motif of the returning husband.<sup>18</sup> Obligated to abandon his home as a newlywed, the hero returns after many years, either to be recognized by his faithful wife, or to prevent a forced second marriage from taking place.

It remains for us to wonder how the prehellenic traveler of the West and the absent husband ended up fighting and conquering Troy in a war whose historical kernel we place in the late Bronze Age, by which time Indo-Europeans had long settled in Greece, and not in the early period before 2000 B.C., when the Odyssean myth was first formed.

Whatever the truth is, it was the Homeric treatment of Odysseus, containing some contradictions, which offered a basis for later ancient Greek writers to expand and exploit one or another trait of his. This phenomenon continued in Roman times, and continues to this day in world literature, where the versatile Odysseus remains one of the most beloved heroes, confirming his basic Homeric adjective, *polytropos*.

<sup>18</sup>On this see the dated but basic study by W. Splettstoesser, *Der heimkehrende Gatte und sein Weib in der Weltliteratur*, Berlin, 1898.

# A POETIC DIALOGUE BETWEEN TRADITIONS: Folk Art And Christianity (Priest and Church in Ritual Laments)

BY YIANNIS MOTSIOS

The classification of Greek ritual laments on the basis of thematic unity is no easy task. Although a single theme is more or less dominant in every text, folk poets do not treat that theme separately from other elements referring to life and death that relate directly or indirectly to religion, church, and priest. Often, however, the themes are multiple, and it is not always possible to determine persuasively and authoritatively which is the central theme, as the motifs or the variants and nuances of the theme or motif are even more numerous than the themes themselves. Distinguishing among all the above is further complicated by the fact that various themes and motifs are interrelated in such a way as to be riddled with strongly suggestive allusions and sequences of word- and verse-combinations that ultimately comprise a single, indivisible polyphonic and harmonically coherent unity that is at the same time conceptual and aesthetic.

## *The temple-church and popular perception in ritual lament*

I believe that the Greek populace has its own unique way of perceiving, behaving toward, and collaborating with the divine, with the church, with priests and with whatever the latter utilize in conducting the divine service. I refer not only to contemporary religious practice (Christian and Orthodox), but also to religious practice in ancient times.

A primary distinction with regard to the familiarity between man and God in folk poetry could arise from the differences between the principal dogmas of Christianity: Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and also from the differences between Orthodox and Catholic churches—e.g., with regard to construction, layout, usage, uniqueness of Gothic architecture—and finally from the differences between Orthodox and Catholic priests. I have the impression that Orthodoxy brought God and

the saints closer to the church, into an almost direct contact and relationship with the faithful. The two sides are no farther apart than a whispered monologue, which often is transformed into a mental dialogue expressed as a state of confession and prayer. From that perspective, the tiny chapels of village and town are especially characteristic. On a second level, that of communication between man and God, the saints, and especially the Virgin Mary, I am reminded of the similarities and differences between various Orthodox Christian nations. I am familiar with the church in Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia and Bulgaria—countries and churches that I came to know at first hand, with relative thoroughness, so that I am in a position to compare them.

It is difficult to imagine a verse like the following in the folk-poetry or folksongs of the above Orthodox nations outside Greece:

“He takes the angel as [his] godfather, and Saint George as [his] blood brother”<sup>1</sup>

Or even more so the verse

“I played host to my Angel, and stood Christ a drink”<sup>2</sup>

To the ear and soul of other nations the following verses would likely be taken as blasphemous, or at least heretical in terms of their religious feeling:

- (1) “Almighty God, it is a great sin/ for you to take away my father at such a [young] age”<sup>3</sup>
- (2) “If only God would work a miracle, and you could be resurrected, my son.”<sup>4</sup>
- (3) “My Saint Archangel, I am angry with you, for you have my little brother buried in your courtyard.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Yiannis Motsios, *To helleniko moirologi. Problemata hermeneias kai poietikes technes*. Vol. I. Kodikas, Athens, 1995.

<sup>2</sup>Agis Therios. *Ta tragoudia ton Hellenon*. II. Athens, 1952.

<sup>3</sup>Motsios, No. 276.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 284.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 353.

On the same "wave-length" are verses of ritual laments addressed by male lament singers to God:

"My God, Almighty One, I want to ask you,  
Why do you take youth away from human beings?

...

When God grants joy, He never gives me a thought,  
And when He distributes worries, He thinks first of me."<sup>6</sup>

In one of the best-known and most artistic ritual laments from Xeromeri, the female lament singer urges God, in the form of an order, not only to hear, but also to immediately realise her demand:

"A wind is blowing, I cannot hear, and [there is] a storm,  
I cannot see you,  
And a soft rain is falling, I cannot make you out clearly.  
My Lord, stop the wind and scatter the storm,  
For I heard a tiny voice from the upper world."<sup>7</sup>

I imagine that the Sabaoth of the Old Testament (not the Christ of the New Testament) would have struck such a believer with his thunder and lightning bolts and set her aflame in the eternal fire. The Greek people in their folk songs address God and the saints exactly as they would behave toward their fellow man: with respect and esteem, with love and devotion, but they also reproach God and the saints when they do not agree with acts that appear unjust and misguided.

In a few ritual laments one notes the phenomenon of disobedience by men to God's commands, delivered through the intermediary of the Angel or of Charon:

"—My children, God has sent me to take away your souls.  
—We will not give up our souls, for we are gallant young men."

The outcome of a struggle against Charon is, of course, obvious:

<sup>6</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 358.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 204.

"A slight disturbance, neither seen nor heard,  
 A slight mist came over the brave young men.  
 Their eyes closed, and they no longer saw the world."<sup>8</sup>  
 "—An angel has come, mother mine, and seeks  
 to take my soul from me.  
 —Don't give him your soul, my son,  
 for he will instantly destroy your body."<sup>9</sup>

The parallel invoking of God and Charon, the saints and Fate comprises one indicator of an admixture of religions, mythological situations and realms, and traditions in the perception and particularly in the psyche of the Greek folk. At issue is not a confusion of meanings and periods, but a conscious choice for purposes of preservation and ritual use of values out of historical memory, which is the dynamic part of philosophical, religious, moral, and social traditions that found their fullest and most vigorous artistic expression in verses of extraordinary beauty, strength, and emotive power. The traces of that tradition are lost to the Greeks in the depths of prehistoric millenia. When the invocation takes the form of a prayer for specific aid, the anonymous creators of folk poetry clearly distinguish the boundaries of religion and tradition by resorting to Christianity, which, in the course of its domination, naturally assimilated formulas and rituals of previous religions and beliefs:

"Address prayers to God, make vows of candles to the  
 saints,  
 for a light rain to fall, a slow drizzle,  
 so that the seams may come apart, and the silk fabric [of  
 the shroud] dissolve,  
 so that my eyes may open, and look upon the upper  
 world."<sup>10</sup>

A ritual lament and a folksong allude to the practice of making offerings and vows of gifts to saints. The first takes the form of a reprimand

<sup>8</sup>Markos Avgeris, et al. *He elleniki poiesi anthologemene*. Volume 3. Neoi Chronoi. Athens, 1959, p. 237.

<sup>9</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 228.

<sup>10</sup>Agis Theros, *Op. Cit.* No. 722.

toward the saint, who although he was "bribed," did not respond appropriately to the faithful, i.e., did not save the lives of their relatives:

"Saint Demetrios, my master,  
Didn't we ever offer you incense,  
Didn't we light candles to you,  
Didn't my Demetrios bring you  
Four hanging votive lamps of silver,  
A chandelier of gold  
And four candelabras?  
Why didn't you, too, lend your aid  
At the isle of Cerigo,  
When the ocean stormed  
And rose up in huge waves  
And drowned angelic bodies?"<sup>11</sup>

The folksong titled "Lampro" is longer and more complicated in plot. Two young people, a Christian Greek woman and a Muslim Turk, address successive prayers to Saint George. They ask for and receive the Saint's assistance. In the first instance, the young Greek woman takes refuge in the church of Saint George in order to escape from the infidel Turk, while in the second, the Turkish young man prays the Saint to show him the way to find Lampro. The Turkish youth is described in the folksong as "young and possessed," yet he approaches Saint George and makes the sign of the cross. Is he taking the first step toward becoming a Christian or pretending to do so, in order to deceive the Saint? However the basic element of the folksong lies elsewhere, namely, in displaying the ease with which the Saint receives the votive gifts from two diametrically opposed sides and accedes to the vows, whose quantity increases with each petition. In the case of the Turkish youth, the poem's narrator accuses the Saint of betrayal, and continues with an ironic declaration that he, in his turn, will promise votive gifts of greater value in order to receive (essentially to buy) the assistance of the Saint in personal affairs that he does not specify:

<sup>11</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 776.

“Forty-two Turkish youths were pursuing Lampro,  
And Lampro, out of fear and shame  
Went to Saint George and made the sign of the cross:  
—Saint George, my master, keep me from the hands of the  
Turks,  
And I will bring you liters of wax and liters of incense,  
And I will bring you oil in buffalo-hide bags.  
The marble cracked open and hid Lampro within.  
But a Turkish youth, young and possessed,  
Went to Saint George and made the sign of the cross:  
—Saint George, my master, show me where Lampro went,  
And I will bring you many pounds of wax and many  
pounds of incense  
And I will bring you oil in buffalo-hide bags.  
And in addition to those goods, I will give you my carriage.  
The marble cracked open and betrayed Lampro.  
—Saint George, my master, I didn’t know that you accept  
many votive gifts,  
I will bring you many pounds of wax, and a thousand  
pounds of incense,  
And I will build a hundred carriages to haul your oil.”<sup>12</sup>

We should note, however, that in the above example, we are dealing with a practice of folk poets, which consists of continual enlargement, usually triadic, of the aesthetic outcome. It was that practice, which in the end superseded any religious or moral necessity.

### *Representation of the priest in Greek ritual laments*

In the traditional funeral, the priest, through his words, chanting, and action during the funeral service, represents God. Utilizing the church bell, the priest sends a message to the female lament singers to conclude the secular, non-religious portion of the funeral. Soon the priest enters the house where the corpse is laid out for the ritual of leave-taking, and he immediately begins to perform his role. Of interest in this essay are

<sup>12</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 802.



the verses that the lament singers might address to a dead priest—in situations real or imaginary. First of all, for the faithful, the priest signifies church ritual related to celebrations great and small such as baptism, wedding, funeral, etc. He signifies the sharing of joy and sorrow and of circumstances both dramatic, such as illness, and tragic, such as death. He signifies elevated poetic expression, sublime (“celestial”) music, dramatized scenes of joy and sorrow, pain and auspicious perspective. He also signifies a particular philosophical view of life and death. In church, from the mouth of the priest and from the chanter, the believer will hear verses from anthems, hymns, and psalms:

“The Virgin today  
Gives birth to Him who transcends essence”<sup>13</sup>  
“Whither do you go, my child?  
Why do you now  
go on this swift journey?”<sup>14</sup>  
“How is it that my light is extinguished,  
How is it that my Son and my God  
Is nailed to a cross?”<sup>15</sup>  
“Today, He who suspended the earth upon the waters  
Is suspended upon a piece of wood.”<sup>16</sup>  
“O, light of my eyes,  
My dearest child,  
How are you now covered by a tomb?”<sup>17</sup>

Those present in the church will hear the verses incomparable in meaning, poetry, and depth:

“It is the Day of the Resurrection,  
Nations, let us be radiant.”  
...  
Come, let us drink of a new beverage,

<sup>13</sup>Markos Avgeris, *Op. Cit.* p. 205.

<sup>14</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 71.

<sup>15</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 72.

<sup>16</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 99.

<sup>17</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 205.

Which comes not forth, unnaturally, from barren rock  
But from the source of immortality."<sup>18</sup>

While in other moments and circumstances the priest leads the faithful into the depths of despair and impasse with the tragic verses:

"What part of life  
Remains beyond sorrow?

...

All things are more tenuous than a shadow,  
All things are more deceptive than dreams.

...

All those human attributes are vain,  
Which do not exist after death."<sup>19</sup>

...

"All is ashes, all is dust, all is a shadow."<sup>20</sup>

However, for the priest to become a source of inspiration for the anonymous poets, there must be added a strong human personality, which loves the faithful, which stands by them with compassion and caring, with understanding and with wise counsel. In order to compose the character of such a priest, folk poetry utilizes all its talent and the rich poetic experiences of its creators. Such priests have entered the verses of ritual laments, while the rest, who constitute the large majority, are described in the main body of folk poetry with dismissive intent, by means of humor, irony, and satire.

The eulogy, the ritual lament—which is itself a eulogy consisting of purely poetic, mostly lyric elements—never malign or rebuke the deceased, to the contrary, they praise him, extolling his virtues, citing examples of his moral life, and in the case of a priest, citing in addition his impeccable demeanor, goodness, correct conduct of his responsibilities, fulfillment of his social, and especially of his religious, duties.

In one of the most beautiful, that is, most moral and poetic, ritual laments, anonymous oral poetry expresses the ideal image of a priest.

<sup>18</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 219.

<sup>19</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 127.

<sup>20</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 128.

Just as Homer does not directly describe the physical beauty of Helen, but alludes to it only indirectly, through the impressions she arouses among the old men of Troy, so the creators of the following five fifteen-syllable verses complete the image of the good priest with elements from the reactions and reflections of third parties:

“My priest, when you were on your way to conduct a  
service,  
The street filled with roses and the church with angels.  
The saints admired you, and their icons blessed you  
And every little icon called out to you:  
—My priest, angel-like, my priest, golden celebrant.”<sup>21</sup>

The same is true in the second ritual lament, which is composed in octosyllabic verses and with a different rhythm and artistic level than the previous song:

“Come and weep for the priest,  
For he will never again perform a service!  
...  
Listen, uncle-priest,  
The Holy Table is weeping,  
The Bible is weeping  
The chalices are weeping,  
Which you raised above your head,  
The belfry, too, is weeping  
With all its bells.”<sup>22</sup>

It is difficult to say with certainty today, since there is no proof, whether the five-verse lament for a priest, cited above, is the original text, rather than the following six-verse folksong, which utilizes similar types of images. The specific verses at issue are:

<sup>21</sup>Agis Theros, *Op. Cit.* No. 759. Let me add that behind the praises and especially behind the beautiful verses I discern folk beliefs and recognition of the patriotic role played by the lower clergy during the centuries of Turkish occupation.

<sup>22</sup>Agis Theros, *Op. Cit.* No. 783.

"Lady, tall and slender, jaunty lady,  
 When you set out to go to church,  
 The road was filled with roses and the church with their  
     fragrance,  
 And the church-walls cracked from the intense fragrance.  
 Priests, deacons look at you; their reading is disrupted,  
 The chanters and their tone-setters forget their chants."<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the folksong there is a replacement of the central emphasis on the beauty of spirit and soul of the priest and on his devotion to his spiritual duty, by the physical beauty of the woman, which brought temptation to the servants of God, evoking psychic confusion and aesthetic disruption.

A second, and longer, folksong repeats the circumstances of the previous example, and also a similar approach to the poetic incarnation of theme and motifs. What appears here is the clear intent of the poets toward enlargement and elaboration of the theme:

"Easter has come, lovely Easter, and the [greeting] 'Christ is Risen'.

Young girls proudly wore a thousand different garments  
 And Ploumisti has put on her fancy robe.

People saw it and were dazzled; a priest saw it and was  
     tempted,

He chanted like a drunken man, and floundered in the  
     Gospels.

Then time came for the Gifts, then time came for  
     communion.

He gave and gave communion and ignored Ploumisti.

—Priest, give me, too, communion, with the other young  
     girls.

—Deny your master, and come, I will give you  
     communion.

—I will not deny my master, and I will come with you,

<sup>23</sup>Avgeris, p. 126. ("Tone-setter" [Greek *kanonarches*]: assistant to the chanter who melodically intones the hymns verse by verse before their musical performance.)

I eat the holy bread and it becomes a snake; I drink  
communion by the jug.  
When my master sings, the chanting passes me by."<sup>24</sup>

I note two of the most representative allusions to the personage of the priest in ritual laments that are clearly related to funeral-related practices or to imaginary circumstances in the land of the dead:

"Weep, mother mine, be not ashamed, and do not spare  
your eyes,  
before the censer strikes and the priests begin chanting,  
before he is carried away by four young men."<sup>25</sup>  
"Would that I had priests' stoles in a golden bundle

...

So that the priests would come to take their stoles"<sup>26</sup>

I end the lyric representation of the character of the priest in ritual laments with a text that primarily expresses the embarrassment, which often turns to personal exasperation before the inability of the priests to save a particular individual from death. The anger results in casting doubt on the divine, when the living—most probably relatives of the deceased—turn toward technology and science:

"Priests and confessors  
Remove your stoles,  
Throw away your censers  
For I will write a letter  
And send it to the rulers  
For a ship to come into the courtyard  
And for Yiorgo to board it.  
I'll send him to the West  
Where there is great scientific knowledge  
To embalm him

...

Disgust and dark opprobrium."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Theros, No. 823.

<sup>25</sup>Motsios, No. 249.

<sup>26</sup>Avgeris, p. 233.

<sup>27</sup>*Op. Cit.* pp. 239–240.

An observation regarding the creative process of producing artistic texts: anger and exasperation, as long as they do not obey the rules and deeper meaning of art, cannot produce the context that will give rise to a fruitful and lofty artistic creation. The nervousness that characterizes human behavior in the above verses at the very least bears witness to the impasse reached by the lamenters themselves. Such an impasse can only give rise to mediocrity in the sphere of art. Chronological distance from the immediate climate of anger is indispensable for the psychological equilibrium of the poet and the start of a more philosophical lyric synthesis.

The following couplet arose out of such a climate:

"Herbs can do nothing for the wounds of death,  
Nor can doctors cure, nor saints help."<sup>28</sup>

In those two fifteen-syllable verses, the poet succeeded in finding a balanced and fully thought-out lyric expression of pain and of the human drama, placing these on a base of realism, out of which arise verses worthy of observational depth and of objective reality.

*Church, sacred vessels, and divine liturgy in popular poetry*

In living memory, in the conscience, and even deeper—in the murky depths of the human subconscious—the priest is linked with the church, the church with the divine liturgy, with the light of candles large and small, with the passion of Christ and with Easter—with the eternal light of great and lofty poetry:

"Who will give me water  
And a spring of tears?"<sup>29</sup>

"How is it that You lie dead, You, the Life?  
How is it that you inhabit the tomb?"<sup>30</sup>

And the incomparable:

<sup>28</sup>Motsios, No. 296.

<sup>29</sup>Avgeris, p. 194.

<sup>30</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 186.

"Dance now  
And exult, O Zion;  
And Thou, pure  
Theotokos, rejoice  
In the resurrection of Thy child."<sup>31</sup>

All the above do not constitute a "museum" tradition, but a living and vital tradition that both instructs and entertains. That is why oral poetry, through the lament singer, puts verses into the mouth of the deceased, which express with disconcerting power and artistry their recollection of life and their ardent and uncontainable desire to return to their relatives and their home. Except that the recollection and desire are those of the living, expressing their strong desire not to lose this life and to enjoy it—even if the poets place those wishes in the mouth of the dead who have lost the gift of speech:

"Down in the cold and frozen depths of the earth,  
beautiful girls sing dirges and handsome lads weep.  
—Do you suppose that the sky and the upper world are still  
standing,  
that the dance-floors are still there, as they always were,  
that the churches hold services, and that priests chant?"<sup>32</sup>  
"Do you suppose that the churches and their golden icons  
still stand,  
and the looms, where housewives weave?"<sup>33</sup>

Similar questions preoccupy not only the dead, but also the living, especially the latter, regarding the realities of the "other" world, of which there is no human knowledge:

"Do you suppose that the same world exists in the dark  
earth,  
Are there churches where you can hold a service, or are  
there only worms?"<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 134.

<sup>32</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 219.

<sup>33</sup>*Theros*, No. 674.

<sup>34</sup>*Motsios*, No. 270.

While later on, after more than two-hundred fifty couplets, the lament singer returns to her subject and brings it to conclusion by providing responses that arise from experience and from popular philosophy:

"If the lower world were like the upper world,  
It would not bother me to die.  
[But] the lower world is inauspicious because there is no  
sunrise,  
Because the cock does not crow, the daylight does not  
come."<sup>35</sup>

The church as a place of meeting, of communication, of love and of human participation in the ritual is utilized in ritual laments as one of the strongest elements providing momentum and climax to the pain that arises from the absence of a beloved person. Let us not forget that emigrants, prisoners and soldiers in the Middle Ages, whose term of service might last for decades, were sent off with dirges, and with copious and bitter tears:

"Emigration, leave-taking, pain, and love  
These four were weighed on a golden scale,  
To see which would be the weightiest.  
Emigration was weightiest, the heaviest of all—  
For the mother takes leave of her son, and the son of his  
mother,  
And a husband and wife take leave of one another."<sup>36</sup>

The climax of sensation and of emotive power is achieved both within a lament itself and from one lament to the other, with the uncovering of new aspects of the desire for a return to earth, of new dimensions of the real world, which were particularly dear to the dead in those places where they lived and interacted with friends and relatives. It is as if the lament singer is striking the living with the verses of her lament in their most vulnerable spot: in the totality of the change that is caused by the absence of a beloved person, namely, the loss of habit, of the familiar and dear, even in the church itself:

<sup>35</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 298b.

<sup>36</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 72.



"Mother mine, go to church, and show manly courage,  
For you will see the children of others, the brides of others,  
And you will see my pew standing empty.  
Mother mine, take three small candles and three large ones,  
Light one before Christ, the second before the Virgin,  
And light the third one in the pew.  
And the pew spoke and said:  
—Let the prisons burn down, and let the prisoners come  
forth,  
And let my husband come forth out of the murderous  
darkness."<sup>37</sup>

In some ritual laments, the church replaces the cemetery, perhaps because the cemetery, as usual in villages, comprises a geographic continuity of the church on its eastern side.

"Here in this church, in this isolated part,  
young women sleep like lemon trees, and young men like  
cypress trees;  
Old men and women sleep like uprooted trees,  
And matrons sleep like broken doors."<sup>38</sup>

At the church ("at the church door") birds perch, which come from the lower world, and the living come to hear news of their own dead. It is at this spot that folk poetry portrays not only mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters as lament singers but the mother of Charon—for she, too, is a mother:

"Charon's mother sang ["a sad ritual lament"] at the church door."<sup>39</sup>

In a lament from Epirus, which is sung at the death of a father, the lament singer who represents the "sisters," "mothers," "wives whose husbands are alive," and "withered widows," begs the deceased:

<sup>37</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 97.

<sup>38</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 231.

<sup>39</sup>*Theros*, No. 687.

"To pass by the churches and the holy monasteries,  
To raise a screeching cry, so that the lower world can hear

With the intent that they receive a reply about where their dead are:

They are in the lower world, under the tombstone, in the  
earth,  
And they taste the dust, the bitterness of the tombstone."<sup>40</sup>

I cite three other couplets, which in one way or another allude to the church and to the sacred objects contained therein:

"Mother, hold services in the churches, and greet the  
neighbors,

But as for me, Charon found me at my love's door."<sup>41</sup>

"I inscribed your name on the Epitaphio,

It was hard work; it was for you to remain with your  
children."<sup>42</sup>

"And we left the neighborhood behind like a pillaged  
country,

Like a church without services, like a severed bitter-orange  
tree."<sup>43</sup>

The comparison in the last couplet is one of the most poetic and succinct, not only in laments, but in folksong, and also in poetry generally, both oral and written.

The church has been utilized by folk poets as the space of God, Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, where the priest conducts the service in the presence of the congregation. In describing the church artistically, folk poetry did not limit itself to the basic use of the space, but presented a few characteristic "details," which render the general image more specific, representative, multi-faceted, and realistic.

A separate chapter (or study) could be devoted to the presence and

<sup>40</sup>*Op. Cit.*No. 703.

<sup>41</sup>Avgeris, p. 240.

<sup>42</sup>Motsios, No. 342.

<sup>43</sup>Theros, No. 590.

liturgical role of ecclesiastical vessels in ritual lament. Often the placement of this artistically embodied detail in the text not only enriches it, but also succeeds in describing circumstances whose representation would have otherwise required tens and tens of verses.

Among the ecclesiastical vessels utilized by the lament singer (candelabra, votive lamp, chandelier, censer, paten, chalice, etc.) I select for citation only a few illustrations of the liturgical role of the cross in this type of poetry:

“Slowly, slowly [goes] the cross, and slowly [go] the priests,  
so that his relatives and friends all gather, so that he goes  
forth gracefully”<sup>44</sup>

where the image of the funeral procession is directly tied with the expression of the strong desire of the relatives for an unhurried and calm traditional sendoff of the deceased to the other world. In other ritual laments the symbolism of the cross in the mourning tradition is decoded and is rendered in a more or less direct manner and in poetic representation:

“Let me wear the ring, let me bear the weight of the  
pendant.  
And let me worship the cross, and take my oath.  
For a brother is a cross, and a husband is the crown,  
And the child is an innard; it is born of the body.”<sup>45</sup>  
“My cross of gold,  
Yes, my old man, you were golden; I forgot, yes, upon a  
chain,  
You will be attending the services in all the monasteries.”<sup>46</sup>  
“I had a rosebush in my yard, and a rose in the vase,  
And I had a golden cross in the window.  
But the rosebush withered, and the vase broke,  
And the golden cross that I had in the window was lost.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Avgeris, p. 245.

<sup>45</sup>Theros, No. 686.

<sup>46</sup>Motsios, No. 303.

<sup>47</sup>Theros, No. 785.

However, when the cross and its symbolism are extended to folk poetry in general, one notices a broader usage, which often results in the expression of subversive inclinations and behaviors, the passage from one circumstance to its opposite, while the two sides remain uncompromising. There are times when in the internal world of the lyric narrator, there arises a dramatic clash between reserve and hedonism, with an artistic expression of implacable eroticism.

"A nun, too, awakes inside her cell.  
She casts aside her robe and breaks her prayer-beads:  
'Go, crosses, to the churches, robes to the monasteries,  
And I will remain with my singer tonight,  
Who sang so beautifully and sadly."<sup>48</sup>

*The Paradise of the Old Testament and ritual lament*

At the level of dialogue between the Christian (or any other) religion and the ritual lament, references to the meaning of paradise take on a dimension not so much of conflict, but of differentiation. That is to say that folk poetry utilizes the word, but denudes it of all theological meaning and convention. The paradise of the priest and of the lament singer are different enough so that they appear as opposites:

"Last night, in my sleep, as I slept on my bed, I dreamed  
that  
I played host to my Angel and stood Christ a drink,  
And I was entreating Our Lady, the Virgin,  
To give me the keys, the keys to Paradise,  
So that I could go in to see who is there, and what is and  
isn't there.  
I found the wealthy lying in pitch darkness,  
I saw the poor lying in the sun, in sunny places,  
And I saw a wealthy gentleman howling and shouting,  
Asking for a drop of water, like a beggar."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Avgeris, p. 148.

<sup>49</sup>Theros, No. 668.

However, while in the above lament, the lyric narrative and the description of the hypothetical action occurs in a dream, in another text the lament singer utilizes more direct means of expressing situations that albeit remain in the metaphysical realm.

For the practitioners of every art there is an inviolable rule. When an author decides to utilize in his work circumstances and historical or mythological figures out of the past of whatever tradition or time, he is obliged to artistically integrate and harmonize those different eras, past or present, in such a way that the two live and breathe together, and that the one assists in illuminating deep and yet unrealized dimensions and voices in the other. In such cases the role of the past is tied to and collaborates with the role of the present, and each era focuses its light on the other to achieve a fuller discovery and deeper illumination with the objective of creative and fruitful dialogue.

Before responding to the question of what can be “integrated” and who is “dancing a *karçilama*” [a folk dance in which the partners face each other] (to cite the fortuitous expression of Kostis Palamas in connection with the “True Apology of Socrates” by Kostas Varnalis) in the case of ritual laments, I cite a text related to the previous quote:

“For twelve years I was in bondage to Charon,  
I asked neither for my portion, nor a wage,  
I asked only for the keys, the keys to Paradise,  
To open Paradise, to enter and to stroll about.  
To the right were the poor folk, in the sun, in sunny places;  
Holding tapers in their hands, and lighted candles.  
On the left side were the wealthy men, in pitch and tar,  
They hold sealed sacks full of florins in their hands.  
—Here, poor men, take our money and give us<sup>50</sup> your  
tapers,  
For in this place where we are, florins have no value.”<sup>51</sup>

Let us begin with the differences: the first is presented as a narrative about actions in a dream, the second as a “real” occurrence. In the first,

<sup>50</sup>I emend the word “*nomatoi*,” which is meaningless here in the verse with “*dom'te mas*” (= “*doste mas*”), which I heard in a lament of Grevena.

<sup>51</sup>Theros, No. 673.

the keys to Paradise are given to the poem's narrator by the Virgin, in the second by Charon. The differences between the two Paradises—the Paradise of Christian, Hebrew and Muslim religion, and the Paradise of the laments—are both significant and basic. The Paradise of the laments is a place of pitch and darkness for the wealthy, a barren place, since not "a drop of water" is to be found there and its inhabitants suffer from thirst. However, from the moment that the folk poets chose to utilize the word-place Paradise, it became impossible not to retain some elements, and by preference significant elements, from the religious tradition, from the language originally used in reference to an image or situation. What, then, did the folk poets retain? The sense of justice that necessarily pertains in the Paradise of religion: "Savior, who loves mankind, give rest to the soul of your servant among the perfectly just spirits, preserving it by your side in the eternal life."<sup>52</sup> The rest are found in Hell—the outer darkness. Now, if in the laments Paradise and Hell lie side by side (left and right), at a distance that allows poor and wealthy to talk with one another, the latter being in pitch and darkness, while the former are in the sunlight, that is totally different picture, and yet one that is not unrelated to ecclesiastical canons and to hagiography in particular. We need only bring to mind the paintings of El Greco such as "The Dormition of the Virgin," "The Worship of the Name of Jesus/Allegory of the Holy Alliance," and especially the "Triptych with the Second Coming" of Georgios Klodzas (16th century), where Paradise and Hell are framed, left and right, on the first of the four levels of the painting. Thus the two laments cited above are engaged in simultaneous dialogue with the literary (Byzantine and Christian) and with the folk traditions. The Paradise of the wealthy, in the lament, arises almost directly from the poetic artistry of folksong.

In one of those laments the lament singers inquire of the deceased what he found in the lower world during his first night there; dark colors predominate in the poetic construct of the response:

—"Tell us, describe to us, the lower world,  
Whom did you see, whom did you meet during this whole  
night?

<sup>52</sup>*Funeral Service*. Apostolic Mission of the Church of Greece. Athens, 1992. p. 13.

—I saw steps [leading to] the young, and steps to the old  
people,  
And I saw steps to the middle-aged, steps to the  
intellectuals,  
And steps to small children, with notebooks in their hands.  
I saw them and my hair stood on end, and my heart froze,  
I found them all to be in ruins, all of them broken.”<sup>53</sup>

I want however to note that folk poetry, in terms of its artistic method for representing life and death, the upper and lower world, even though it basically follows a model, draws pictures with mostly dark or in-between colors, and occasionally goes beyond the model, for example in describing scenes of horror and hopelessness (“they cook only with smoke and dine on darkness,” “there, is the great darkness, a huge prison,” “there, is a flood”) yet produced two unique laments describing the desire of the living for the good fortune of their dead, in which the theological tradition has decisive influence:

“I beseech you, Our Lady, and worship you, City,  
To give me the keys, to enter the garden.  
I asked for them on Friday, on Saturday I received them,  
On Sunday I opened [the gate] and entered.  
I see young women dancing, and young men singing,  
I see groups of young men playing at bowls.  
I see young women making the unmade beds,  
So that the young man who returns weary can lie down and  
sleep,  
On silken covers and resin-scented sheets.”<sup>54</sup>  
“Open, door, open door of Paradise,  
for the soul that set out wants to enter,  
to worship Christ and the Holy Trinity,  
and Our Lady the Virgin along with all the saints.”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>G. H. Hasiotou. *Sylloge ton kata ten Epeiron Demotikon Asmaton*. Athens, 1886 (1969), p. 181, No. 20.

<sup>54</sup>Theros, No. 736.

<sup>55</sup>*Op. Cit.* No 754.

If we bear in mind the fact that all popular perceptions in folk poetry are made whole only in the totality of their variations, apart from the poetic texts, and that in the case of the two laments cited above, there are no known variations, we must, it would seem, assume that those two texts constitute an exception to the general rule, that they were in all likelihood created recently and the lament singers refused to utilize them, leaving them outside the workshop of further variations. Also, we must not forget that poetic renderings bring forth more than one outcome and artistic expression on the same theme.

*The imaginary dialogue between lament singer and deceased*

The loss of life, the intense desire of the dead to return to the world that they have lost, have produced some of the most beautiful and moving verses in ritual laments:

"Why doesn't Charon plant a lemon tree, to teach him  
mercy<sup>56</sup>,

to let you come two or three times each year,  
at Easter, at Christmas, on the night of carnival,  
so that we are all together, to eat and drink.  
And the next morning, we would send you off."<sup>57</sup>

"I sit and wait for you, like Holy Thursday,  
[I wait] for you to come  
like Sunday's holy bread and the five blessed loaves of  
Easter."<sup>58</sup>

"Come on, come at Easter,  
And sweeten things grown bitter."<sup>59</sup>

"But you did not come at Christmas, nor on the  
Assumption,  
to put on clean clothes, to go to church."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Pun on the Greek words *lemonia* ("lemon tree") and *eleo* ("to show mercy").

<sup>57</sup>Motsios, No. 221.

<sup>58</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 315.

<sup>59</sup>Theros, No. 765.

<sup>60</sup>Motsios, No. 329.



The lament singer Eirene-Katerina Trianti from Archontochori Xeromerou mourned for her two children and her husband for over an hour at the village cemetery. She went from grave to grave and I tape-recorded her bitter songs. A relative of hers from the neighboring village of Papadato, Mrs. Eirene Kokkali, bent over her and said: "Aunt, get up. Let's go. You are tired. That is enough." Mrs. Trianti, without raising her head, continued with these verses:

"Get up, my child, let's go, let's go home,  
for Christmas is coming, my child, and Epiphany."<sup>61</sup>

In sending off the deceased, the lament singer inserted into her text the following verses, with the intent to be accommodating, so that the denizens of Hades would not rebel:

"Don't say that Easter is coming, that holy days are coming.  
Say, rather, that it snowed at Christmas and that it's raining  
at Easter."<sup>62</sup>  
"(And that on St. Thomas' Sunday, the rivers will rise)"<sup>63</sup>

while a dead man in the other world asks his mother in the upper world:

"Send me bay leaves on Palm Sunday, and a candle at  
Easter,  
And on Holy Saturday, send me my clothes,  
So that I can change and groom myself, and go to  
church."<sup>64</sup>

On Easter Monday, in the area of Grevena, at the end of the service, the women form a circle in the courtyard of the church, holding hands and moving in a circle with a slow rhythm. They sing the most common, and one of the most beautiful, ritual laments:

<sup>61</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 246.

<sup>62</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 12.

<sup>63</sup>Avgeris, p. 226.

<sup>64</sup>Theros, No. 721.

"Today, my Despo, it's Easter, today is a bright day,  
Brides and young men come out to dance,  
But you, my Despo, do not appear in the upper world,  
My Despo, your child cries for you."<sup>65</sup>

*Similes and metaphors; protection and unique transgression of the grave-site in ritual lament*

Many verses are comprised mostly of metaphors and a few common dialogues between the living and the dead. One or two remarks about transgression in traditional funerals and burials:

"Sleep, Frankish cup, and Greek sounding board,  
Censer of the Virgin, votive lamp of Hagia Sophia."<sup>66</sup>

This is one of the few couplets with four (one in each half-verse) metaphors that are particularly apt and representative, in spite of their dissimilarities. In another ritual lament, we find a symmetrical arrangement of simile and metaphor in two verses that do not constitute a couplet:

"who was tall like an angel, and lean like a cypress  
...  
who was the violin of the plains, the hanging votive lamp of  
the church."<sup>67</sup>

More common is the identification of the deceased with a church chandelier. We refer, of course, to the metaphors that arise only within the limits of the particular theme and not to the whole of ritual laments or of folksongs in Greece. I begin with a couplet begun by the widow of the deceased, Maria Talari from Archangelos in Rhodes, at the sound of the bell that was tolling mournfully:

<sup>65</sup>Motsios, No. 140.

<sup>66</sup>Theros, No. 619.

<sup>67</sup>Avgeris, p. 229.

"Black bells are tolling, the hills echo with the sound  
Because the chandelier is leaving, and they will come to see  
you."<sup>68</sup>

The same simile-metaphor has been utilized in many ritual laments. I cite two further examples:

"My mother is an older lady, but she has great worth,  
Like the chandelier that is in the church."<sup>69</sup>  
"And the golden chandelier fell down and was broken,  
And the noise was heard from East to West."<sup>70</sup>

The final couplet is taken from a lament sung at the hour of death.

The comparison of the scent of the child with sweet basil, and on a higher level with frankincense, refers to priests and to the censer:

"No plant can have the scent of a child,  
Neither small-leaved basil, nor marjoram,  
Only the frankincense that priests use,  
That they place in the censer on high holy days."<sup>71</sup>

It is difficult to say with certainty whether the comparison in this lament reacted in such a way as to be repeated in other laments, like the following:

"I will ask you a question,  
—What is it inside a woman  
which exudes the fragrance of basil,  
of cinnamon and clove?  
—Nothing exudes a fragrance,  
only the child circulates  
and exudes such a fragrance,  
that is stronger than basil."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Motsios, No. 304.

<sup>69</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 298.

<sup>70</sup>Avgeris, p. 234.

<sup>71</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 231.

<sup>72</sup>Theros, No. 784.

Another hypothesis is more likely: that the comparison passed from folksong, in very refined form, into the lament (rather than into oral poetry in general)—although that is not at all necessary. A successful poetic image, whatever its first source, could not help but be utilized in other types of poetry, thus broadening its poetic horizons with the increase of variety and wealth in its variations, where the oral tradition finds fertile ground for the preservation and broadening of aesthetic value in the original composition.

One is continually in awe at the vigorous flowering of artistic creativity in folk poetry when various places and situations are accommodated and function successfully within a tableau of four fifteen-syllable lines.

"A slender girl was spinning silk and gold.  
She spun it on the rugged mountains, and coiled it in the  
valleys,  
And she set up her loom right in front of the Virgin.  
The north wind carried away the loom, the breeze carried  
away the silk."<sup>73</sup>

At this point I would like to repeat a conclusion that I reached after considerable reflection upon comparing the Greek ritual laments with their counterparts among other Orthodox peoples in Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian and Bulgarian folk poetry. At the level of pure lyricism and poetic depth, the best Greek verses are incomparably and incontestably more accomplished than the best of their counterparts among the other peoples. I know very well that one must be cautious and fair in comparing the oral folk production of various peoples, as we are dealing with different histories, traditions, psychologies and totally different modes of expression. The rhythms of folk songs normally correspond to the dance tunes of each people and even of each region belonging to the same linguistic group. In its folk songs, each people expresses joy and sorrow, hopes and visions not so much about the future, but about contemporary life and society. The aim of the poets is to express all facets of daily life in the most poetic form possible, so that folk production can

<sup>73</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 770.

elicit a response, and also function aesthetically, evoking deep emotion in multiple ways.

The emphasis on the aesthetic value of Greek folk poetry should not be taken either as hyperbole or as nationalistic pride. The author of this essay considers nationalistic exaggeration and arrogance to be extremely dangerous and unscientific. What is of interest to me are good verses, which I consider to be mine in whatever language I find them. Literary certainty alone brought me to the above conclusion. Indeed, I believe that there is a scientific explanation for this phenomenon. Poetry has flowered in Greece—more so than any other type of art—without interruption, from Homer's day to ours. I do not know of any other literary tradition in the world, which could array as many significant poets of the twentieth century as Palamas and Cavafy, Sikelianos and Varnalis, Seferis and Ritsos, Elytis and Engonopoulos, Vrettakos, Anagnostakis, Sinopoulos and Leivaditis, to mention only the older poets. The Greek people brought forth so many significant poets because the nation itself is a great and unsurpassed poet. The proof lies in its own folk poetry.

I cite five verses from three different ritual laments, which express the undesirable effects of the deceased being buried away from his homeland and without the traditional funerary customs:

"But what have my eyes seen, what have my poor eyes seen,  
How they bury foreigners, how they take leave of them,  
Without incense and candles, without a priest and  
chanter."<sup>74</sup>

"They took and buried him like a dog in a ditch."<sup>75</sup>

"Without holy oil on his eyes, in a barren field."<sup>76</sup>

I single out the verse "without incense and candles, without a priest and chanter." I omit the plethora of verses that emphasize the indispensability of the ritual lament for the deceased, because all the poetic examples—and they are numerous—are from the laments themselves, and thus unnecessary. I note that the topic of this essay is different. Yet

<sup>74</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 544.

<sup>75</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 545.

<sup>76</sup>*Op. Cit.* No. 557.

in spite of that, I will violate, to a slight degree, the rule of essentiality and cite here only four verses, which I transcribed in Crete and Macedonia:

"It's bad for the sheep without a shepherd beside  
 them,  
 And it's bad for the deceased without ritual laments."<sup>77</sup>  
 "Pain brings noise and noise brings laments."<sup>78</sup>  
 "Smoke brings about tears, and the death-cloud brings  
 laments."<sup>79</sup>

The foregoing express not only the correct and indispensable role of the ritual lament, but also provide the basis for the flowering of the ritual lament for the dead.

I have left to the last a ritual lament whose seven verses incorporate the desire of the deceased to transgress custom with regard to the site of his burial:

"—But tell us, Synodinos, where do you want me to bury  
 you?  
 Do you want [to be buried] at [the church of] St. Isidore?  
 of St. Constantine?  
 Of St. Panteleimon, who is gracious to strangers?  
 —Neither at St. Isidore, nor at St. Constantine,  
 Nor at St. Panteleimon, who is gracious to strangers.  
 But where you come in and go out, on your plot of land,  
 Where your feet will tread on me, and your heart will  
 burn."<sup>80</sup>

Before proceeding to a brief discussion, I cite two verses of a lament that I heard in Grecia Salentina in Southern Italy, which recall the ending of the lament for Synodinos:

<sup>77</sup>Motsios, No. 293.

<sup>78</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 50.

<sup>79</sup>*Op. Cit.* (p. 50).

<sup>80</sup>Avgeris, p. 231.

"If I die, my master, bury me in your courtyard,  
Where your feet will tread on me, and your soul will feel  
pain."<sup>81</sup>

Let me emphasize that variations—quite a few of them—of this verse are found only in Grecia Salentina, as far as I know, while in Greece, to my knowledge, one finds only the seven-verse lament cited above.

What explanation can one give for something that could be taken as an expression of some form of unexpected rebellion against traditional burial? I do not think that is the case, even though the repeated pleas of the deceased to be buried "neither at St. Isidore," "nor at St. Constantine," "nor at St. Panteleimon, who is gracious to strangers," are too serious to be ignored. Personally, I would like to believe that there was a circumstance (either in the life or in the poetic imagination of the artist, most probably in both), which set in motion the machinery of the creative imagination for the first draft and then for the final form of the verses. The elaboration of the above couplet may even have taken centuries. The folk poetry of the Greeks of Southern Italy has ancient roots and was transported along with the waves of emigration from Western Greece to Salento and Calabria. The fact that variations are found only in the new homeland of Greek immigrants does not exclude the possibility that the human group that began the process of polishing those verses was forced to flee from its traditional homeland, taking with it the bearers of the further elaboration, leaving behind the completed couplet, which those who remained behind incorporated into the body of ritual laments and of their folksongs in general. The situation—whether real or imagined—functioned as exceptional and unique in its kind. The unique element, the entirely different and exceptional element, is pursued not only by folk poetry, but by literary poetry as well. The power and resonance of uniqueness, of surprise in terms of dimension and intensification of meaning continually drove the lament singers to search for that poetic form which could not only best express the meaning, but could also function artistically, evoking the most intense possi-

<sup>81</sup>Yiannis Motsios. *Ta moirologia tes Kato Italias (Grecia Salentina)*. Reprinted in *Dodone: Philology*, Vol. 26 (1997). Scientific Review of the Department of Philology of the School of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina, p. 180. *To helleniko moirologi*. Vol. 2. Kodikas. Athens, 2000.

ble emotion. That attempt is found in the ambitions of the women-poets:

"What lament can I sing, that will match your body,  
You of the proud youth, of the cypress-like body?"<sup>82</sup>  
"You, slender maiden, deserve nine lament singers;  
Three from Skopelos, three from Syros,  
And the rest from Psara, to round out the verses  
gracefully."<sup>83</sup>

It follows that only an intense passion, arising from "proud youth" and "cypress-like" bodies, from slender maidens and gallant young men, and, especially, a passion that can be counted among the great and rare exceptions, could give birth to those verses at a level of meaning and poetic elaboration. The tomb of such a dead man could be situated anywhere without its being construed by even the most fanatical traditionalist as a transgression of custom. The death of such an unusual passion (of a Romeo and Juliet) leaves all men blinded and speechless before the grandeur of the unrepeatabe and the unique.

### *Cultural division among the constituent parts of the funeral*

I want to say a few words about the female lament singers, about the women that I had the good fortune to get to know at close hand, at moments of unbearable pain, during the send-off of their loved ones to places from which there is no return. Those women number among the hundreds, from all parts of Greece, from Cyprus, Southern Italy, the region of Mariopolis in the Ukraine. The most beautiful and most significant thing that our country has to offer (I speak principally about my theme) is our women. These women are the creators and poets of the verses that comprise the ritual laments. The participation of men, at least in recent years, is decreasing. I shall restrict my remarks to the internal and cultural disjunction experienced by those women, which, however, instead of destroying them or rendering them psychologically

<sup>82</sup>Motsios. *To helleniko moirologi*. No. 190.

<sup>83</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 52.



poorer, broadened their horizons with problematics and situations that often belong in different worlds. Meanwhile, when we note similarities in the two principal traditions—popular and literary—we must consider it axiomatic that for the most part, the literary tradition borrows means and types of artistic expression from the folk tradition. The latter can incorporate into its own artistic storehouse whatever belongs to it by right from refined poetry: verses that are formed in accordance with the models and the rules of oral poetic artistry. With such verses, however, literary poets—whether named or anonymous—belong to the folk tradition: through their own voice they enrich literary poetry without identifying themselves with it. Artistic similarities of this type on the part of the literary poets normally follow, record, and express national sentiments and cultural movements, when the majority of the educated public, even part of the dominant groups and classes (economic, cultural and spiritual) lean toward the side of the popular majority in periods of uprisings, revolution and radical reassessments. At such times, that majority, through its activity and the plans that it formulates, rallies and thus defines the form and content of the particular moment in the course of history. When the nation is humming with life, with the vigor that characterizes such periods, we have forms of democratization of art, the products of which are very similar to and are interrelated organically and definitively with the totality of cultural and spiritual values, describing events as the poets saw them in the age of Digenis Akritas, in the revolution of 1821, and in the National Resistance, 1940-45.

The folk tradition existed before the birth of personal poetry. The artistic dimension of the literary, secular and religious (pagan and Christian) poetic tradition is based on what pre-existed, on what was effective, substantively and artistically. It was thus logical that poets—named and anonymous—would borrow ideas, meaning, sentiment, impressions, and also figures of speech (metaphors, similes, poetic images, allegories, symbolism, etc.) from oral poetic production, and adapt those elements into their own artistic system, and for their own ideological and aesthetic purposes.

The literary tradition, secular and religious, developed borrowings from folk poetry in the direction of individualizing the poetic motifs, linking them as solidly as possible with the place, time, and manner of death of the particular individual, on the one hand. On the other hand,

the two traditions, folk and literary, poeticize death, raising it to the spheres of purest poetry and pure ideas with references both to the natural world and to the metaphysical: the metaphysical world created conditions for the cultivation—often for the boundless and orgiastic explosion—of imagination.

No dialogue could take place with religious poetry during the time of the "imaginary lamentation," when the women were singing their painful songs-laments while engaged in their housework, in the fields, on their way to and from the mill, the neighboring village, the pastures, etc., when, in other words, there was a small or large temporal distance between the death of the loved one and the lament.

Those songs, especially the ones in which their poets treated themes tending toward the greatest possible despair and tragic impasse, the greatest detachment from nature and society, from the logical indications of real, and also inexplicable, undesirable or unjust situations, led to the metaphysical development of their themes: Christianity utilized that aspect of secular—literary and folk—poetry, imparting to it a purely religious color and essence.

In this case the question arises: if the above is accurate, (and indeed it is), how do we justify speaking of a "dialogue" that we define as "poetic?" Indeed, the female lament singer never carries on a direct dialogue with the priest. However, the two poetic traditions—literary and popular—carry on a dialogue and work together (each in its own interest) on many levels at once. The dialogue is usually initiated by the tradition that feels the need: the literary poetry of antiquity (secular and ecclesiastic-idolatrous) with the folk poetry of its age; the literary tradition (secular and religious from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries A.D.) with the literary tradition of antiquity, but also with the folk poetry of its time. That dialogue, however, from the perspective of literary poetry, aimed principally at borrowing elements from the folk tradition and eventually at the total incorporation of those elements into its own ideological and artistic system, with the advancement of its own particularities in terms of meaning, significance, poetic integration, and performance-transmission. These selections (especially in secular literary poetry) are not limited to the narrow confines of intent, but go beyond them continually, driving the poets (depending on the quantity and quality of the borrowings) toward the composition of verses that

may be very close to folk poetry, and may even be identical with it. In this type of dialogue even the folk poets can participate, but only in those verses of folk song whose creators adopt (consciously or unconsciously) the ideological and aesthetic perceptions of the anonymous community—the folk. Thus we come to the conclusion that we have to do with a poetic dialogue, when each of the participating subjects expresses itself poetically, utilizing other poetic systems as a basis. When, in other words, it says what it has to say, taking into account partly positively and partly negatively (usually rejecting the greater part and utilizing the smaller) from the other—parallel—poetic tradition. Thus, since the clergy could not escape the dialogue with the lament singers, the clergy transformed it into separate monologues: the priest drives his part—ideas and representative images—continually and methodically toward consolidation of the theology, toward neutralization or at least weakening of secular perceptions and poetic traditions of the folk.

Popular poetry has no need of such a tactic, or strategy, but when it resorts on rare occasions to the usage of religious toposes, formulas and symbols, it strips them of their theological content, equating them with its own toposes, formulas and symbols. At this point there could be a misunderstanding, namely that there is more or less an effort to construct impassable walls between the various traditions—ideological and aesthetic—something that would run contrary not only to the objective course of poetry, but also to the title of this essay. Self-imposed limits or rather mechanisms of self-fortification for the purpose of preserving and continuing the genre exist, and those limits determine the breadth, depth and duration (why not also the form?) of the dialogue: when someone transgresses the limits, he automatically loses his specific identity, joins the other “camp,” and adheres (temporarily or permanently) to different systems of ideas and poetic traditions. First of all, in that instance, we have to do with “secessions” and “desertions” and that topic with its particular problematics lies outside the scope of our interest in the current essay. Secondly, how are the words spoken by the lament singer before the appearance of the priest and before the beginning of the funeral and memorial ritual “tied” with the words to be spoken shortly by the representative of God? How indeed! However in this instance—and this is indeed the situation—the lament singer who rep-

resents and expresses the folk with its inherited perceptions about problems of life and death, is not, at least, a true Christian, while the priest who represents the clergy and expresses the theological perceptions of the church (previously of idolatry, now of Orthodox Christianity) is, at least, unrelated to the congregation, his flock. Is that reality? Yes and no.

At the hour of the lament, the lament singer is irreplaceable in the realms of popular conceptions of life and death—irreplaceable as if neither ancient idolatry, as organized religion, nor Christianity ever passed through the place in an attempt to win over souls. When, however, the priest appears and preaches his religious sermon, the lament singer (and the entire congregation with her) basically emerges from the realm of philosophical and aesthetic ideas that continue the tradition (from prehistoric times even) of the prescribed ritual, with the communal acceptance of those ideas, and enters with all the privileges and obligations of faith (her faith in Christianity is indisputable, sincere, profound and pure) into the realm of the Christian religion. She must have done precisely the same thing during the hegemony of polytheistic idolatry in antiquity, or of any other religion during the prehistoric period.

To what degree does she refuse the ideological and aesthetic touchstone of popular culture and beliefs? To what degree does she accept religious faith and worship and adhere to it? Here I want to make a distinction by examining two situations in which the artist (let us say, poet) is subjected to different influences. At the time when artistic products and goods are created, the individual artist is primarily (if not exclusively) a poet, and only to the slightest degree something else. K. Varnalis tells us that a poet fashions verses with his better, poetic, moral, deeply and completely human self. Human passions and weaknesses remain outside the boundaries of the poetic "workshop" and of creative results. At the time of recitation (hearing, watching) of an artistic creation (even his own), the poet is a reader (audience, observer) and practically nothing else. He is, of course, an educated, sophisticated, self-sufficient and (possibly) sensitive person (compared to others), who is more ready to receive and to "encode" the messages that are usually not found on the surface. That is not absolute, however: some other readers, non-poets, with greater and more systematic knowledge, cultivation, self-sufficiency and sensitivity can have more profound understanding of a poetic text than even its own creator. Very often poets

recite their poems unconvincingly, e.g., Palamas. The female lament singer at the time of the lament is primarily an artist, while at the moment of hearing (laments, or the words of the priest) she is a listener, a woman of the congregation.

What happens in the case of the priest? The same thing, but in reverse order: when the lament singer continues her lament, he participates, although indirectly, in the communal mourning, accepting popular perceptions. He grew up with those perceptions before becoming a priest, he knows the verses and the melodies of the laments of his region. I have heard priests reciting "spoken" laments, indeed two priests participated in "singing" the lament that I recorded in their villages. Some priests not only participate, but often officiate in the performance of laments or songs that express the same beliefs and are composed in the same way (by the same artistic means) as actual laments. What, then, is the conclusion? Greek men or women during the traditional funeral and the traditional memorial service—to cite only those expressions of personal and communal life—are preoccupied with and characterized by a more or less vertical internal disjunction and are (according to the circumstances) continuators and creators of two traditions: 1) the popular tradition with a history of tens of millennia, and 2) the religious (pagan, idolatrous, and Christian) tradition with an unverifiable continuity in the case of the first two, with a history of more than fifteen centuries in the case of the latter, and that to the degree that those individuals participate in the shaping and especially the preservation of those traditions. The roles are distinct, even though they are played by the same individuals. Similarly distinct are the messages and the methods through which they are realized. This disjunction does not constitute an expression of either poverty or of compromise and inconsistency, but precisely the opposite. It brings to light a psychological wealth in the acceptance of diametrically opposed situations, a sense of responsibility for the preservation and the cultivation of the entire tradition, which operates out of different sources, chronologies, and duration of voices and intensity. And it is precisely the various parts that constitute and harmonize the totality and the polyphony of folk faith and expression. The mosaic of those particularities is so wisely and organically "assembled" that it operates as a whole and in an exclusively systemic manner. No one—at least in its folk

base—is surprised or troubled by that disjunction, because it is the result of a developmental process over a long period, an unconscious (it is difficult to determine to what degree consciousness is operative) selection aimed at preservation of all the values of past and present time. It is, in addition, for the folk, an expression devoid of dogma, of unproductive narrow-mindedness and opposition toward the various parts of the same cultural heritage. In the folk conscience (or its subconscious), the Hagia Sophia assumes its exclusive place in the history of civilization and has no need to impose itself upon the ruins of the Parthenon and the Acropolis—a concept that was evoked by the fanatic beliefs and opportunism of certain ecclesiastical circles during the centuries of their “childhood” and immaturity.

The secular man who is not preoccupied with the passion for power (political and ecclesiastic) is proud of all the values created by anonymous or named human genius and talent, and considers all of those values to be his, as indeed they are. And as such, he takes care to hand them over to the next generation, for he knows well that

“This world that we inhabit belonged to others first,  
They handed it down to us, and others are awaiting it.”<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup>N. G. Politis. *Eklogai. Apo ta tragoudia tou Hellenikou laou*. Athens, 1914. No. 224.

# ABOUT THE COLLECTION OF FUNERAL LAMENTS IN THE REGION OF GREVENA

BY YIANNIS MOTSIOS

Collectors of funeral laments usually begin their recording activities with grandmother, mother, aunt, and the women of their village. I, too, followed that rule. My grandmother was dead; I asked my mother, then my aunt, then, one evening beside the lighted fireplace at the house of my cousin, Panayiotis Filiotis, I recorded the women of my village. "Why didn't you come to me?" asked my fellow villager, Arbara, who lived in Grevena, the next day. I went. When she began to sing, her eyes downcast and her face mournful, I could not believe my ears: in her unhurried, flowing, soft and mournful voice, I heard the lamentation of the entire popular threnodic tradition.

While she was still alive, but sensing the approach of the inevitable, Maria Bizoura sent for my aunt, Yiannoula Filioti, and said to her, "I will die any time now. You sing my funeral lament." Within a week, at her funeral, I placed the Walkman on her open casket. The words of the laments were the same as those that my aunt had sung at her house.

I was on my way from Ioannina to Grevena, when I heard funeral laments at the village cemetery of Kipourio. I approached the women who were singing, turned on my recorder and began to record. A new bride had died and her mother-in-law was lamenting bitterly, calling out her name, "Rosa," repeatedly. For one month, on a daily basis, I went from village to village, gathered together women and as many men as knew how to sing funeral laments and recorded the greatest poetic treasure of the Greeks – from Homer to this day. During the course of two decades<sup>1</sup>, I returned many times to my place of birth for the same purpose. Now and then I found myself recording the same lament a second time. Sometimes those included new verses, but usually the laments united 6 to 8 verses from laments well-known in that region. In your native place, they say, even the rocks help you. I cannot complain: I did

<sup>1</sup>Editor's note: Most of the laments included here were recorded during the past 20 years.

not encounter any problems of communication or understanding with the local people anywhere in Greece and Cyprus, in Southern Italy and in Bulgaria (for Bulgarian laments). As for the villages in the region of Grevena, I came with an introduction. They were waiting for me, and many of them I knew personally. My father, who died about thirty years ago, helped me even from his grave: "Vangelis' son?" and the closed doors opened automatically. As did the hearts. I must single out Panayio Hantava who gave me the largest number of funeral laments: 65. Most women do not usually remember more than 30, at most 40. Of course I visited Panayio Hantava many times. We lived 120 kilometers apart. She would telephone me: "Come, I remembered some more." I would go without a second thought. Sometimes I recorded what had already been recorded, without pointing it out to her. In 18 villages of the Grevena region I recorded 465 laments from 92 women and 7 men. Among them was the priest of the village of Monahiti, Dimitris Tsoyiannis. The oldest lamenter was 115 years old, the youngest 32. I recorded most of the laments in Kosmati (74), in my own village of Despotis (50), and in Tri-fylli (38). In the latter village I recorded the most beautiful musical forms of laments related to the texts not only of the two volumes already published, but also of the third volume that I am now preparing. They were sung by 12 women of the village.



# **FUNERAL LAMENTS**

COLLECTED BY YIANNIS MOTSIOS

**ΜΟΙΡΟΛΟΓΙΑ**

## ΜΟΙΡΟΛΟΓΙΑ<sup>1</sup>

Δεν είμαι Άνοιξη να 'ρθω, δεν είμαι Καλοκαίρι,  
 δεν είμαι και βασιλικός στην πόρτα να φυτρώσω,  
 για να περνάς κάθε πρωί να με κορφολογίζεις  
 και τα κορφολογήματα στον κόρφο σου να βάζεις  
 κι όταν σε παίρνει η μυρωδιά εμένα να θυμάσαι. (9)

Αυτού που κίνησες να πας στο ύστερο ταξίδι,  
 αν εύρεις νιους χαιρέτα τους και νιες κουβέντιασέ τες,  
 Κι αν εύρεις και μικρά παιδιά, γλυκά παρήγορ'σέ τα.  
 Μην κάνεις νιες να κλαίουνε και νιους ν'  
     αναστενάζουν,  
 Μην κάνεις και μικρά παιδιά να θυμηθούν τη  
     μάννα.  
 Μην πεις πως έρχεται Λαμπρή, πως έρχονται  
     γιορτάδες.  
 Πες του Χριστού πως χιόνιζε και τη Λαμπρή πως  
     βρέχει,  
 Πως δε θα βγουν τ'αντρόγυνα τα πολυαγαπημένα. (12)  
     (Καληράχη, Τσιάρα Αγγελική)

Πουλάκι είχα στο κλουβί και το 'χα ημερωμένο.  
 Το τάζα, το πότιζα μόσχο και καρυοφύλλι.  
 Κι από το μόσχο τον πολύ κι από το καρυοφύλλι,  
 ξεσκανταλίστ'κε το κλουβί κι έφυγε το πουλάκι.  
 Κι η μάννα πάεινε από κοντά με το κλουβί στο χέρι:  
 —Γύρνα, γύρνα πουλάκι μου κι έλα μες στο κλουβί  
     σου,

<sup>1</sup>Από τη συλλογή του Γιάννη Μότσιου *Το Ελληνικό Μοιρολόγι*. Οι αριθμοί εντός παρενθέσεων ανταποκρίνονται στην αρίθμηση της συλλογής.

FUNERAL LAMENTS<sup>2</sup>

If I could come like the Spring, or the Summer,  
If I could be a bush of basil sprouting at your door,  
Then you would pluck me as you passed by each morning  
And tuck the plucked leaves in your bosom  
And remember me in their fragrance. (9)

As you set out on this last journey,  
If you meet young men, greet them, and young women,  
    talk to them,  
And if you find small children, comfort them with  
    gentle words.  
Don't make young women weep and young men sigh,  
And don't make young children remember their  
    mothers.  
Don't say that Easter is coming, or holidays.  
Say that it snowed at Christmas, that it's raining at  
    Easter,  
And that loving couples will not go forth to walk. (12)  
(Kalirachi, Tsiara Angeliki)

I had a little bird in a cage, and tamed it.  
I fed it musk and clove and gave it water.  
But from too much musk and clove the cage came  
    unfastened, and the little bird fled.  
And the mother went after it, the cage in her hand:  
—Come back, come back little bird, come back to your  
    cage,

<sup>2</sup>See Yiannis Motsios, *To Elliniko Moirologi*. Numbers in parentheses at the end of each selection reflect the numbering of texts in the above collection.

θα σε ταΐζω ζάχαρη, θα σε ποτίζω μέλι.  
 —Δε θέλω εγώ τη ζάχαρη, δε θέλω εγώ το μέλι.  
 Θέλω την αρραβώνα μου να πάω ν' αρραβωνιάσω.  
 (17)

Τι στέκεστε, παιδάκια μου, σαν ξένοι, σα διαβάτες,  
 δε χύντε τα ματάκια σας σα σιγανή βροχούλα,  
 δεύτερο δεν με βλέπετε στο σπίτι σας να έρθω,  
 στο σπίτι σας, στο γιόμα σας, δείπνο για να δευπνήσω.  
 Για βάλτε και τον τράπεζο και κάτστε όλ' από γύρα,  
 τηράτε ποιος σας λείπεται ν-από τον τράπεζό σας.  
 -Ν-ο άντρας μας μάς λείπεται. (18)

Κάπου κίνησα να πάνω, τα παιδιά μου δεν μ' αφήνουν:  
 —Κάτσε, μάνα μ', 'κόμα φέτο, 'κόμα τούτ' το καλοκαίρι,  
 να χορτάσουμε κουβέντα, να χορτάσουμε ορμήνεια.  
 —Μάνα, σε κλαίνε τα πουλιά, σε κλαίν τα χελιδόνια,  
 —Γιατί με κλαίνε τα πουλιά, γιατί τα χελιδόνια;  
 Μένα με κλαίνε τα παιδιά με πόνο και με δάκρυ,  
 και με πολύ παράπονο. (20)  
 (Δεσπότης, Ευφροσύνη Μότσιου)

Μάνα μου, τα λουλούδια μου πυκνά να τα ποτίζεις—  
 να τα ποτίζεις με νερό, να μην τα μαραγκιάσεις.  
 Αφήνω γεια στ' αδέρφια μου, αδέρφια κι αζαδέρφια,  
 αφήνω και στη μάνα μου τρία γυαλιά φαρμάκι:  
 Το 'να να πίνει το πρωί, τ' άλλο το μεσημέρι,  
 το τρίτο το φαρμακερό όντας θα με θυμάται.  
 Σ' αφήνω γεια, μανούλα μου. (21)  
 (Αιμιλιανός)

Ακούς εσύ, βρε μαύρη γη, κι αραχνιασμένο χώμα;  
 Αυτήν τη νια που σ' ήστειλα να μην τηνε μαλώνεις,

I'll feed you sugar and give you honey to drink.  
—I don't want sugar, and I don't want honey.  
I only want my engagement ring, to go to my betrothal.  
(17)

—Why do you stand there, my children, like strangers,  
like passers-by?  
Why don't your eyes weep, like gentle rain?  
You will not see me come to your house again,  
To your house, to your midday meal, to your supper.  
Set the table and sit around it, all of you,  
Look to see who is missing from your table.  
The man of our house is missing. (18)

I set out to go somewhere, but my children won't let me:  
—Wait, mother mine, again this year, this summer,  
so we can have our fill of conversation, of advice.  
—Mother, the birds weep for you, the swallows weep.  
—Why do the birds, why do the swallows weep for me?  
My children weep for me with grief and tears  
And with much lamenting. (20)  
(Despotis, Efrosyne Motsiou)

Mother, water my flowers often—  
Give them water, don't let them wither.  
I am taking leave of my house and all my family,  
I am taking leave of my brothers and sisters, my siblings  
and my cousins,  
And I leave my mother three glasses of bitter grief:  
One to drink in the morning, the other at noon,  
and the third bitter one when she thinks of me.  
Farewell, my dearest mother. (21)  
(Emilianos)

Now listen to me, you black earth, and cobweb-covered  
dirt:  
Don't scold the young woman that I sent you,

βάλ' την να φάει, βάλ' την να πει, βάλ' την να  
 τραγουδήσει,  
 γιατί έχει πόνο στην καρδιά παράπονο μεγάλο·  
 δεν έχει μάνα κι αδερφή να πει τα βάσανά της,  
 κι αντάριασεν ο πόνος της που έχει στην καρδιά της.  
 (23)  
 (Κοσμάτι, Πανάγιω Χαντάβα)

N—ακούστε δω, παιδάκια μου, το τι σας παραγγέλλω:  
 —Όταν σας πάρει η φωτιά κι ο πόνος ο μεγάλος,  
 κινάτ' ελάτε μια βραδιά κι ένα Σαββάτο βράδυ:  
 βάλτε τα νύχια σας τοαπιά και τ'ς απαλάμες φκιάρια,  
 ρίξτε το χώμα σε μεριά, το σάβανο στην άκρη,  
 κι αν είμαι άσπρη κι έμορφη σκύψτε να με φιλήσετε,  
 κι αν είμαι μαύρη κι άραχνη πάλι να με σκεπάστε.  
 Σύρτε, παιδιά μ', στο σπίτι σας. (28)  
 (Δεσπότης, Ευφροσύνη Μότσιου)

T' ακούς, εσύ, Πανάγιω μου, το τι σε παραγγέλλω:  
 Σάββατο μέρα μη λουστείς, την Κυριακή ν' αλλάξεις,  
 και τη Δευτέρα το πρωί σ' αμπέλι μην πηγαίνεις,  
 γιατί κινώ και έρχομαι και βρίσκω κλειδωμένο.  
 Σκύβω φιλώ την κλειδωνιά και την γεμίζω δάκρυα,  
 και πίσω-πίσω γύρισα, πίσω στο σπίτι μ' πάνω. (29)  
 (Κοσμάτι, Πανάγιω Χαντάβα)

N—ακούτε σεις, παιδάκια μου, το τι σας παραγγέλλω:  
 Στην κόχη που καθόμουνα, στην κόχη που κοιμόμαν,  
 βιολιά να μη λαλήσετε, τραγούδια να μην πείτε,  
 όσο να κλείσω ξάμηνο, να πάρω κι απ' το χρόνο.  
 Δευτέρα μην κινήσετε σ' αμπέλι για να πάτε,  
 και πάρτε μήλο απ' τη μηλιά, σταφύλι 'πο το κλήμα.  
 Το μήλο είν' τα νιάτα μου και το σταφύλι η αντριά  
 μου,  
 το έρημο δαμάσκηνο είναι ο χωρισμός μας. (31)  
 (Αιμιλιανός, Αρετή Μπασνά, κουβεντιαστά)

Let her eat, give her drink, and let her sing,  
For she has a heavy heart, great sorrow.  
She has no mother or sister to share her troubles with  
And the pain in her heart has become like thick fog.

(23)

(Kosmati, Panagio Hantava)

Listen, my children, to my instructions:  
When you are beset by flames and great pain  
Come on an evening, on a Saturday evening  
Use your fingers as hoes, your hands as shovels.  
Throw the soil aside, and lay aside the shroud  
And if I am white and beautiful, bend down and kiss  
me,  
but if I am black and covered with cobwebs cover me  
up again.

Go back, my children, to your house. (28)

(Despotis, Efrosyne Motsiou)

Do you hear, Panagio, the message I am sending you?  
Don't wash your hair on Saturday, dress up on Sunday,  
And on Monday morning don't go to the vineyard,  
Because I'll come and find the place locked.  
I'll bend over and kiss the lock and cover it with tears,  
And I'll go back, back to my home up there. (29)

Now listen, my children, to my instruction:  
In that corner where I sat, the corner where I slept,  
Don't play music and don't sing,  
Until six months and more have passed.  
Don't set out for the vineyard on Monday, or  
Pick an apple from the apple-tree, or a grape from the  
vine.

The apple is my youth and the grape my courage,  
The lonely plum is our parting. (31)

(Emilianos, Areti Basna, spoken)

—Καλήμερά, παιδάκια μου. —Καλώς την τη  
μανούλα.

Τι καλημέρα θέλω εγώ, ν-εδώ στο μαύρο χώμα,  
Ν-εδώ το λένε μαύρη γη, κι αραχνιασμένο χώμα,  
ν-εδώ ραχνιάζ'ν οι έμορφες, ραχνιάζ'ν τα  
παλικάρια.

Με ράψαν τα ματάκια μου με τρεις λογιές μεταξύ,  
με πράσινο, με κόκκινο, με κιτρινογαλάζιο. (35)  
(Άγιος Γεώργιος)

Κόρη καλή καθότανε απάνω σ' άσπρη πέτρα  
και σε γυαλί γυαλίζονταν, τα κάλλη της τηρούσε  
—Κάλλη μ' έμορφα και φρύδια μου γραμμένα  
ποιος θα σας χαρεί και ποιος θα σας κερδέσει;  
Η πέτρα τ' άκουσε κι η γης αντιλοήθ'κε:  
—Εγώ θα σε χαρώ, εγώ θα σε κερδέσω. (36)

Ν-έναϊ πουλί μας έρχεται από τον Κάτω Κόσμο.  
Τρέχουν μανούλες το ρωτούν, γυναίκες το  
ξετάζουν:  
—Το τι καλό, πουλάκι μου, ν-από τον Κάτω Κόσμο;  
—Το τι καλό γυρεύετε ν-από τον Κάτω Κόσμο:  
Ν-εκεί χορός δεν γένεται, ν-ουδέ και πανηγύρι,  
ν-εκεί 'ν' ο σκότος ο πολύς, κατακλυσμός μεγάλος.  
Χάνουν οι μάνες τα παιδιά και τα παιδιά τις μάνες,  
χάνει κι μάνα τον ν-υγιό, το γιο το μοναχό της,  
ν-εκεί 'ν' ο σκότος ο πολύς. (44)  
(Κηπουριό)

Εψές προψές εδιάβαινα στις εκκλησιás τ' αλάνι  
κι άκουσα μια γερόντισσα βαριά ν' αναστενάξει.  
Μαύρα πουλιά την έκλουθαν κι άσπρα την  
τριγυρίζουν:  
—Φάτε πουλάκια μ', φάτε με απ' όλο το κορμί μου,



—Good day, my children. —Welcome, mother.  
What greeting do I need, here in the black earth.  
The name of this place is black earth, and cobweb-  
infested dirt,  
Here lovely girls and handsome youths are covered with  
cobwebs.  
They have sewn up my eyes with three kinds of silk,  
With green, with red, with yellowish-blue. (35)  
(Ayios Yeorgios)

A beautiful young girl was sitting on a white rock,  
Looking at herself in a mirror, gazing at her beauty  
—My lovely good looks and beautiful eyebrows  
Who will enjoy you, and who will claim you as prize?  
The tombstone heard her and the earth replied:  
I will enjoy you and I will claim you as prize. (36)

A bird is coming from the Lower World.  
Mothers run to ask, women to question it:  
—What good news do you bring, little bird, from the  
Lower World  
—What good news do you expect from the Lower World?  
There is no dancing there, and no festivity,  
There is heavy darkness, and a great flood.  
Mothers lose their children and children their mothers,  
And the mother loses her son, her only son,  
There is heavy darkness. (44)  
(Kipourio)

Yesterday, the day before, I was passing by the  
churchyard  
And heard an old woman sighing loudly.  
Black birds followed her and white birds flew about her:  
—Eat, little birds, eat my entire body,

τη γλώσσα μου ν' αφήσετε και το δεξί μου χέρι,  
 να γράψω μια ψιλή γραφή κι ένα κομμάτι γράμμα,  
 να στείλω στα παιδάκια μου που 'ναι μακριά στα ξένα,  
 να 'ρθουν να με γλυτώσουνε 'π' του Χάροντα τα χέρια.  
 Εψές προψές εδιάβηκα στην εκκλησιάς τ' αλάνι  
 και βλέπω δυο αλόγατα στα όμορφα ντυμένα.  
 Αυτά 'ταν τα παιδάκια μου . . . (48)

Δυο αδέρφια είχαν μια 'δερφή στον κόσμο  
 ξακουσμένη,  
 τη φθόνευε η γειτονιά, τη ζήλευεν η χώρα,  
 τη ζήλεψε κι ο Χάροντας και πάει να την πάρει.  
 —'Αφ' σε με, Χάρε μ', άφ' σε με, σήμερα μην με παίρνεις,  
 ταχιά Σαββάτο να λουστώ, την Κυριακή ν' αλλάξω  
 και τη Δευτέρα το πρωί θα έλθω μοναχή μου. (51)  
 (Δεσπότης, Θωμαή Πηγασιώτη)

Σ' όλον τον κόσμο ξαστεριά, σ' όλον τον κόσμο ήλιος,  
 και στου Γιωργάκη την αυλή καπνός κι αντάρα  
 βγαίνει.  
 Καπνός φέρνει τα κλήματα κι αντάρα μοιρολόγια.  
 Βάστα, καρδιά, βάστα, ψυχή, σα θέλεις, σα δε θέλεις,  
 τα δάκρυα, τα κλήματα κι αυτά τα μοιρολόγια,  
 το πως βαστούν και τάϊ βουνά τα χιόνια και τους  
 πάγους.  
 Βάστα και συ, γυναίκα μου, τα δάκρυα και το κλάμα.  
 (55)  
 (Τρικοκκιά)

Χάρος ήρθε και κόνεψε σ'ς μανούλας μ' το κεφάλι  
 —μωρ' μανούλα μου,  
 σ'ς μανούλας μ' το κεφάλι, πάν τα νιάτα μου.  
 Κι αυτή λουλούδια μάζωνε, το Χάρο να γελάσει  
 —μωρ' μανούλα μου,  
 το Χάρο να γελάσει, πάν τα νιάτα μου.  
 —Χάρε μ', δεν παίρνεις χρήματα, δεν παίρνεις κάλλια  
 γρόσια;

but leave my tongue and my right hand,  
so that I can write in a faint hand, write a piece of a  
letter,  
to send to my children who are far away in a foreign  
land,  
to come and rescue me from the hands of Charon.  
Yesterday, the day before, I passed by the churchyard,  
And I see two horses richly caparisoned.  
They were my children . . . (48)

Two brothers had a sister world-renowned,  
Envyed by the neighborhood, and the entire town was  
jealous of her,  
Charon, too, was jealous of her and went to take her.  
—Leave me, Charon, leave me, don't take me today,  
Soon, I will bathe on Saturday, and change on Sunday  
And on Monday morning, I will come on my own. (51)  
(Despotis, Thomaë Pigatsioti)

The sky is clear over all the world, everywhere the sun  
is shining,  
And in Yiorgaki's courtyard smoke and clamor rise up.  
Smoke brings tears and clamor brings laments.  
Heart, soul, whether you want to or not, endure  
The tears, the weeping, and the laments,  
Just as the mountains endure snow and ice.  
You, too, my wife, endure the tears and weeping. (55)  
(Trikokkia)

Charon came and perched on my mother's head  
—Ah, my dear mother,  
by my mother's head; my youth is gone.  
And she was picking flowers, to cheat Charon  
—Ah, my dear mother,  
To cheat Charon, my youth is gone.  
—Charon, won't you take money, won't you take  
piastres instead?

—Ν-εγώ δεν παίρνω χρήματα, δεν παίρνω κάλλια  
γρόσια.  
Ν-εμένα μ' έστειλε ο θεός να πάρω την ψυχή σου . . .  
—Δίχως αστένεια κι αρρωσιά το τι ψυχή γυρεύεις; (58)

—Μηλίτσα μ', που είσαι στο γκρεμό κι είσαι γιομάτη  
μήλα,  
τα μήλα σου λιμπεύουμαι και το γκρεμό  
φοβούμαι.  
—Σαν το φοβάσαι το γκρεμό, έλα 'π' το μονοπάτι.  
Το μονοπάτι μ' έβγαλε σ' ένα μικρό εκκλησάκι  
το εκκλησάκι ήταν παλιό, και τα μνημούρια νέα,  
κι ένα μνημούρι πάτησα απάνω στο κεφάλι.  
—Δεν ήμαν νιος καμιά φορά, δεν ήμαν παλικάρι  
ή μήπως δεν περπάτησα νύχτα χωρίς φεγγάρι;  
—Αν είσαι νιος, ας χαίρεσαι, παιδί κι ας  
καμαρώνεις,  
αν είσαι κάνας γέροντας ο χρόνος να μη σ' εύρει. (59)  
(Δεσπότης, Ευφροσύνη Μότσιου)

Μάνα και γιος εκάθονταν σ'ένα μαξιλαράκι,  
μάνα κρατούσε το κερί κι ο γιος τ'ς αναστενάζει.  
—Σβήσε, μανούλα μ', το κερί κι άναψε την καντήλα,  
και κράξε, μάνα μ', τον παπά να 'ρθει να μ'  
μεταλάβει.  
—Τι λες, τι λες, παιδάκι μου, τι λες, δικό μου ταίρι,  
παιδί μ', δε θέλεις το γιατρό να ρθει να σε γιατρέψει;  
—Μάνα μου μην ξοδεύεσαι, μη χάνεις και το βιο σου.  
Εγώ μανούλα μ', χάνομαι, με τους πολλούς θα πάνω.  
—Γιε μου, δε θέλεις το γιατρό, μον' θέλεις την καντήλα;  
Γιε μου, τη νυφ' από 'καμες το ποιος θα την φυλάξει;  
—Μάνα μ', ζουρλή, μάνα μ' κουτή, μάνα μ'  
ξεμυαλισμένη,

- I won't take money, won't take piastres instead.  
—God sent me to take your soul . . .  
—How can you seek a soul without illness or malady?  
(58)

- My little apple tree, at the edge of the precipice and  
laden with fruit,  
I long for your apples and fear the precipice.  
—If you fear the precipice, come by the footpath.  
The footpath brought me to a small chapel  
The chapel was old, and the graves were new,  
And I walked on the head of a grave.  
—Wasn't I young once, wasn't I a young man,  
Didn't I walk during a moonless night?  
—If you are young, may you enjoy your youth, if you  
are a child, wear a proud air,  
And if you are an old man, may you die before the New  
Year. (59)  
(Despotis, Efrosyni Motsiou)

- Mother and son were seated on a cushion,  
The mother held a candle and the son sighed.  
—Mother, put out the candle and light the votive lamp,  
and call the priest, mother, to come and give me  
communion.  
—What are you saying, what are you saying, my child,  
what are you saying, my soulmate,  
Don't you want the doctor, my son, to come and cure you?  
—Mother, don't go to the expense, don't waste your  
savings.  
I am disappearing, mother, going with the many.  
—My son, the woman you made your bride, who will  
look after her?  
—Mother mad and foolish, mother out of your mind,

δεν κλαίς, μάνα μ' τα νιάτα μου, δεν κλαις τη λεβεντιά  
μου,  
μόν' κλαις, μάνα μ', τη νύφη σου που παίρνει κι άλλον  
άντρα! (65)  
(Κοσμάτι, Πανάγιω Χαντάβα)

Λεβέντης ν-εροβόλησε 'πό μια ψηλή ραχούλα,  
είχε το φέσι του στραβά και τα μαλλιά κλουσμένα,  
έστριβε το μουστάκι του και ψιλοτραγουδούσε.  
Κι ο Χάρος τον αγνάντευε 'πό μια ψηλή ραχούλα.  
—Γεια σου χαρά σου, Χάροντα. —Καλώς τον, το  
λεβέντη.  
Λεβέντη μ', πούθεν έρχεσαι κι αμπούθε κατεβαίνεις;  
—Από το σπίτι μ' έρχομαι, στα πρόβατα πηγαίνω,  
πάω φαϊ στα πρόβατα, τσαρούχια στο τζιομπάνο. (70)

'Ασπρο σταφύλι τραγανό, κομμέν' από την Τρίτη,  
το ποιος το κόβει κόβεται, το ποιος το τρώει  
πεθαίνει,  
το ποια το βάν' στον κόρφο της, καμιά παιδιά δεν  
κάνει·  
να το 'βαζε κι η μάνα μου να μη είχε καμ' και μένα,  
σαν μ' έκανε, τι μ' ήθελνε, σαν μ' έχει, τι με θέλει,  
ν-εγώ στα ξένα βρίσκομαι, στα ξένα θα πεθάνω,  
ξένες μου πλέν'ν τα ρούχα μου, ξένες και τα λερά  
μου,  
τα πλένουν μια, τα πλένουν δυο, τα πλένουν τρεις και  
πέντε,  
κι από τις πέντε κι αμπροστά τα ρίχνουν στο σοκάκι.  
—Πάρε, ξέने μ', τα ρούχα σου, πάρε και τα λερά σου.  
Σύρε, ξέने μ', στο σπίτι σου, στα δόλια τα παιδιά σου,  
σύρε, ξέने μ', στη γ'ναίκα σου. (72)  
(Τριφύλλι)

You don't weep, mother, for my youth, don't weep for  
my manhood,

You only weep, mother, for your daughter in law, who  
can take another husband! (65)

(Kosmati, Panayio Hantava)

A handsome youth went down from a high ridge,  
His cap at a jaunty angle, his hair well-combed,  
He was twisting his mustache and humming a song.  
And Charon was watching him from a high ridge.  
—Good day to you, Charon. – Welcome, handsome  
youth.

My handsome youth, where do you come from?

—I come from my house; I'm going to the sheep,  
With food for the sheep and shoes for the shepherd. (70)

White, crisp grape, harvested on Tuesday,  
Whoever harvests it is laid low, whoever eats it dies,  
Any woman who places it on her bosom will not bear  
children.

Would that my mother had placed it on her bosom and  
not given me birth,

And once she gave me birth, what good was it, and now  
that she has me, what good is it?

I am in a foreign land; I will die in a foreign land.

Foreign women wash my clothes, foreign women wash  
my dirty linen,

They wash it once, they wash it twice, they wash it three  
and five times,

And after the fifth time, they throw it in the street.

Stranger, take your clothes, take your dirty linen.

Go home, stranger, to your poor children,

Go, stranger, to your wife. (72)

(Trifylli)

Ανάθεμα ποιος έλεγε τ' αδέρφια δεν πονιόνται,  
 τ' αδέρφια σκίζουν τα βουνά, κι οι αδερφές τους  
     κάμπους,  
 κι η μάνα σκίζ' τη θάλασσα όσο να τ' ανταμώσει.  
 Κι εκεί που πάει τ' ανταμωσε σ' ένα ξερό ποτάμι,  
 ποτές νερό δεν έφερνε, ποτές κατεβασμένο,  
 κι από τα δάκρυα τα πολλά, κι από τα μοιρολόγια  
 σαλαμαντρά κατέβασε και θελωσιά μεγάλη.  
 Φέρνει δεντρά, φέρνει κλαδιά, δέντρα ξερριζωμένα,  
 φέρνει και μια γλυκομηλιά με μήλα φορτωμένη,  
 κι απάνω στα κλωνάρια της δυο αδέρφι'  
     αγκαλιασμένα  
 κι ένας τον άλλο έλεγε, κι ένας τον άλλο λέει:  
 —Για πιάσ' καλά, 'δερφάκι μου, να μην ξεχωριστούμε.  
 Το λόγο δεν απόσωσε και λύθηκ' απ' το χέρι. (77)  
     (Τρικοκκιά)

Για νύχτωσε και βράδιασε πάεισιν και τούτ' η μέρα,  
 σύρτε, παιδιά μου, για ψωμί, ψωμί να φάμε βράδυ  
 για πάρτε και γλυκό κρασί 'π' το μέγα μαναστήρι,  
 να πλύνω τα λαβώματα που μ' έχουν λαβωμένο.  
 Πικρό, παιδί μ', το λάβωμα, πικρό φαρμακωμένο,  
 για πάρτε με και σύρτε με στη ράχ' στον Αϊνικόλα,  
 να 'χω τα δέντρα συντροφιά και τα πουλιά  
     κουβέντα,  
 κι απ' τη δεξιά μου τη μεριά ν' αφήσ'τε παραθύρι,  
 να κρούει ο ήλιος το πρωί κι εγώ να λάμπω μέσα,  
 να 'ρχονται τα παιδάκια μου να με καλημερούνε:  
 —Καλήμερά σ', πατέρα μου. —Καλώς τα τα παιδιά  
     μου.  
 Να με ρωτούνε πως περνάν, το πως περνώ στα ξένα.  
 Εδώ 'πό δυο δεν κάθονται, 'πό τρεις δεν κουβεντιάζουν.  
 (81)  
 (Κοσμάτι, Πανάγιω Χαντάβα)



Curses on him who said that siblings don't feel for one  
another.

Brothers will cross mountains and sisters will cross plains,  
And a mother will cross the ocean to meet them.  
And as she went, she met them at a dry river  
That never flowed, never flooded,  
But from the many tears and laments  
It brought down debris and a lot of mud.  
It brings down trees, branches, uprooted trees,  
And an apple tree loaded with apples.  
Its branches held two brothers in an embrace;  
One said to the other:  
—Hang on tight, my brother, lest we be separated.  
The words barely left his lips and his hand lost its grip.

(77)

(Trikokkia)

It's growing dark, night is here, this day, too, is gone.  
Go, my children to fetch bread, for our dinner.  
And get some sweet wine from the large monastery,  
To wash the wounds they have inflicted on me.  
My child, the wound is bitter and grievous.  
Take me to the ridge of St. Nicholas,  
Where I can have the trees for company and converse  
with the birds.  
And on my right side, leave a window, that  
The sun will strike in the morning and I will shine  
within [my grave],  
And let my children come to bid me good day:  
—Good morning to you, Father. —Welcome, my  
children.  
Let them ask as they pass by, how I am faring in the  
Lower World—  
Here where they don't sit down in twos, and don't  
converse in threes. (81)

(Kosmati, Panayio Hantava)

Με γέλασανε τάι πουλιά, της άνοιξης τ' αηδόνια,  
 με γέλασαν και μου 'πανε ποτές δεν θα πεθάνω.  
 Βάνω φκιάνω το σπίτι μου ψηλότερο 'πό τ' άλλα,  
 σαράντα δυο πατώματα, εξήντα παραθύρια,  
 στο παραθύρι κάθομαν, τους κάμπους αγναντεύω:  
 Βλέπω τους κάμπους πράσινους, τη μαύρη γης  
     γαλάζια,  
 βλέπω το Χάρο 'πο 'ρχεται καβάλα στ' άλογό του  
 και τ' άλογό του μαύριζε, γυάλιζε το σπαθί του.  
 —Χάρε μ', αν ήρθες για καλό, να στολιστώ ν' αλλάξω,  
 κι αν ήρθες, Χάρε μ', για κακό, ας είμαι κι ουδέ έτσι. (84)  
 (Τρικοκκιά)

Δεν το 'ξερα, ν-ο μαύρος μου, πότε θέλ' να πεθάνω,  
 να στείλω μεσ' στην Καστοριά να φέρω τους  
     μαστόρους,  
 να φκιάσουν το κιβούρι μου.  
 Κι εγώ διαβάτης να περνώ να τους καλημερίσω:  
 —Καλήμερά, μαστόρια μου. —Καλώς τον, το διαβάτη.  
 —Μαστόροι, τι δουλεύετε; Τίνος κιβούρι φκιάντε;  
 —Δικό σου 'ναι, Δημήτρη μου, δικό σου το κιβούρι.  
 —Φαρδύ πλατύ το κάνετε ίσια με το κορμί μου  
 και στη δεξιά μου τη μεριά αφήστε παραθύρι,  
 να λάμπ' ο ήλιος το πρωί, να λάμπ' το μεσημέρι,  
 να λάμπουν τα τσαπράζια μου και τα χρυσά κουμπιά  
     μου,  
 να μπαينوβγαίνουν τάι πουλιά, να κελαηδούν για  
     μένα. (86)  
 (Κηπουριό)

Αντρογυνίτσι κάθονταν σε πράσινο λιβάδι.  
 Λιανά-λιανά κουβέντιαζαν και μον' χαμογελούσαν:  
 —Το ποιος κατής, το ποιος κριτής, το ποιος θα μας  
     χωρίσει;  
 Κι ο Χάροντας τους άκουσε, κι αυτός απηλογήθ' κε:  
 —Εγώ κατής, εγώ κριτής, εγώ θα σας χωρίσω. (89)  
 (Ροδοχώρι, Δήμητρα Βλάχου)

The birds, the swallows of spring, deceived me,  
They deceived me and told me that I would never die.  
So I made my house taller than the others,  
Forty-two stories, sixty windows,  
I was sitting at the window, looking at the plains:  
I see the plains are all green, and the dark earth is blue.  
I see Charon coming astride his horse  
His horse was shiny black, and his sword glistened.  
—Charon, if you've come with good intent, let me  
change into my fine clothes,  
But if you've come for a bad purpose, take me as I am. (84)  
(Trikokkia)

I didn't know, poor soul, when I was to die,  
So that I could send to Kastoria for artisans  
To make my tomb.  
And I would pass by and bid them good day.  
—Good day, my artisans. —Good day to the passerby.  
—Artisans, what are you working on? Whose tomb are  
you building?  
—It's yours, Dimitri, it's your tomb.  
—Make it wide, to fit my body,  
And on my right side, leave a window  
So that the sun can shine in, morning and noon,  
So that my silver ornaments and my gold buttons will  
glisten,  
So that birds will fly in and out, to sing for me. (86)  
(Kypourio)

A husband and wife sat in a green meadow.  
They talked softly and smiled:  
—What dispenser of justice, what judge, can separate  
us?  
Charon overheard them, and replied:  
—I am the dispenser of justice, I am the judge, who will  
separate you. (89)  
(Rodohori, Dimitra Vlahou)

Εσείς βουνά της Καστοριάς, βουνά της Αλεβίτσας,  
τα χιόνια να μη λιώσετε ώσπου να 'ρθουν τα άλλα.  
Κι εσείς, κορίτσι' ανύπαντρα, φέτος μην παντρευτείτε,  
γιατί θα γίνει πόλεμος μες στη Μακεδονία.  
Θα κλάψουν μάνες για παιδιά και τα παιδιά για  
μάνες.  
Θα κλάψουν και σεβαστικές για τους σεβαστικούς  
τους. (91)  
(Άγιος Γεώργιος)

Βουλιόμαι μια, βουλιόμαι δυο, βουλιόμαι τρεις και  
πέντε,  
βουλιόμαι να ξενιτευτώ πολύ μακριά στα ξένα.  
Όσα βουνά κι αν έδιαβα, όλα τα παραγγέλνω:  
—Βουνά μ', να μη χιονίσετε, κάμποι, μην παχυνιστείτε  
όσο να πάω και να ρθω και πίσω να γυρίσω.  
Και πίσω-πίσω γύρισα, στο σπίτι μου να πάω,  
βρίσκω τα χιόνια στα βουνά, τα κρούσταλλα στους  
κάμπους,  
και πάλι πίσω γύρισα, πίσω στα ξένα πάω.  
Κάμνω τους ξένους αδερφούς και ξένες παραδέρφες  
κάμνω και μια μελαδερφή για να μου πλέν' τα ρούχα.  
Τα πλένει μια, τα πλένει δυο, τα πλένει τρεις και πέντε,  
κι από τις πέντε κι ύστερα, τα ρίχνει στο σοκάκι:  
—Πάρε, ξένη μ', τα ρούχα σου, πάρε και τα σκουτιά  
σου,  
και σύρε στη γυναίκα σου. (102)

—Μάνα με τους πολλούς τους γιούς, με τις πολλές τις  
κόρες,  
γιατί τ' αχείλι σ' δε γελάει, δε χαίρετ' η καρδιά σου;  
—Τι να γελάσ' τ' αχείλι μου και να χαρεί η καρδιά μου;  
Έχω τον γιο στην ξενιτιά και καρτερώ για να 'ρθει.  
—Σου φέρνω χαιρετίσματα πως είναι σκοτωμένος.  
—Εγώ, ν-η μαύρη μ', θλίβομαι σαν το παπί μαδιούμαι,  
σαν του κοράκου τα φτερά βαστώ τα λερωμένα.

You, mountains of Kastoria, mountains of Alevitsa,  
Do not let your snows melt until the next ones come.  
You, unmarried girls, do not marry this year,  
Because war will break out in Macedonia.  
Mothers will mourn their children and children their  
mothers,  
And good wives will mourn their good men. (91)  
(Ayios Yeorgios)

Once, twice, three and five times, I ponder,  
I ponder to go far away, to a foreign land.  
All the mountains I crossed, I commanded:  
—Mountains, do not snow; plains don't frost,  
Until I go and come back.  
And I came back, to go to my house,  
But I found snow on the mountains and ice crystals on  
the plains,  
And I turned back, returned again to a foreign land.  
I make foreigners my brothers, and foreign women my  
step-sisters,  
And I made a half-sister of the woman who washed my  
clothes.  
She washed them once, twice, three and five times,  
And then she threw them into the alley:  
—Stranger, take your clothes  
And go to your wife. (102)

—Mother, who has many sons, and who has many  
daughters,  
Why is there no smile on your lips, no gladness in your  
heart?  
—Why should my lips smile and my heart be glad?  
I have a son in foreign parts and await his homecoming.  
—I bring you the news that he has been killed.  
—Woe, I grieve and rend my breast, like a duck,  
And I hold his clothing, black like the crow's wings.

—Βάστα τα, μάνα μ', βάστα τα, ν-αυτά τα λερωμένα.  
(106)

Μένα μου το είπαν τάϊ πουλιά, το είπαν τα χελιδόνια,  
μ' είπαν ποτές δεν αρρωστώ, ποτές και δεν πεθαίνω.  
Ν-εγώ ημην παρανιούτσικος και πίστεψα ν-ο μαύρος.  
Ήρθε καιρός κι αρρώστησα βαριά για να πεθάνω:

—Θέλω ψωμί 'π' τον τόπο μου και μήλ' απ' τη μηλιά  
μου,

θέλω σταφύλ' π' την πυρουγλιά, τον πόνο μου να  
γειάνω.

Σαν τα 'κουσαν και τάϊ πουλιά, της άνοιξης τ'αηδόνια,  
μπαίνουν και βγαίνουν και λαλούν το τάχυ και το  
βράδι.

—Τι έχετε, πουλάκια μου, και μπαινοβγαίν'τε μέσα;

—Τι ζήλεψες, κυράτσα μου, εμένα το πουλάκι:

Εσύ τρώγεις γλυκό ψωμί κι εγώ τρώγω χορτάρι,  
εσύ πίνεις κρύο νερό κι εγώ πίνω απ' τη μπάρα. (110)  
(Κηπουριό)

Για τη νόφη, όταν φεύγει από το πατρικό της:

—Διώξεζ με, μάνα μ', διώξεζ με, θαρρείς θα πάω και θα  
ρθω,

θα κάνω χρόνους εκατό κι εξάμηνα διακόσια,  
θα σκάσουν τ' αχειλάκια σου ρωτιώντας τους  
διαβάτες.

Όσοι διαβάτες κι αν περνούν, όλους θα τους ρωτάεις:

—Μην είδατε την κόρη μου, δικιά μου δυχατέρα;

—Εχτές προχτές την είδαμε σ' ένα 'μορφο τραπέζι. (116)  
(Δεσπότης, Βάγια Αρμπάρα)

Μια Παρασκευή κι ενα Σαββάτο βράδυ,

μάννα μ' έδιωχνε ν-από τ' αρχοντικό μου.

Κι ο πατέρας μου κι αυτός φεύγα μου λέγει.

Φεύγω κλαίγοντας, φεύγω παραπονιόντας,

Hold on to them, mother, hold on to those black  
clothes. (106)

The birds, the swallows, told me,  
They told me I would never fall ill, would never die.  
I was very young, and – poor soul – I believed them.  
The time came when I fell deathly ill:  
—I want bread from my land and apples from my tree,  
I want grapes from the vine arbor, to ease my pain.  
When the birds heard me, the nightingales of spring,  
They flew in and out and chirped, morning and  
evening.  
—What is it, my little birds, that makes you fly in and  
out?  
—Why do you envy me, my lady, me the little bird?  
You eat sweet bread, and I eat grass,  
You drink cool water, and I drink from the trough.  
(110)  
(Kipourio)

For the bride, as she leaves her paternal home

—Send me away, mother, send me away; you think I'll  
go and come,  
I will be away a hundred years, two hundred half-centuries,  
Your lips will tire of asking passers-by.  
You will ask every passer-by that comes:  
—Did you see my daughter, my very own daughter?  
—We saw her yesterday, or the day before, at a beautiful  
dinner. (116)  
(Despotis, Vayia Arbara)

One Friday, one Saturday evening,  
My mother sent me away from my fine home.  
And my father, too, told me to leave.  
I leave crying, I leave with regret,

παίρνω ενα στρατί, καινούριο μονοπάτι,  
 βρίσκω ένα δεντρί ψηλό σαν κυπαρίσσι,  
 στέκω το ρωτώ, στέκω το κουβεντιάζω:  
 —Δέντρε μου ψηλέ, ψηλέ σαν κυπαρίσσι,  
 πού να βραδιαστώ και πού να μείνω βράδυ;  
 —Δω στη ρίζα μου να πέσεις να πλαγιάσεις,  
 κι όταν σηκωθείς, το νοίκι να πληρώσεις  
 δυο σταμνιά νερό. (127)

(Δασυλλιο)

Εσύ, γαμπρέ μου, κυρ-γαμπρέ,  
 την αρραβώνα που 'στείλες  
 της Γιάννα μ' δε της άρεσε.  
 —Πες της, μάνα μ', να καρτερεί,  
 ώσπου να πάω στο χρυσό κό,  
 να κόψω βέρα και σταυρό. (136)

(Γρεβενά, Θεοδώρα Χασιώτη)

Τριαντάφυλλο της Βενετιάς τι στέκεις μαραμένο;  
 Μήνα μακριά παντρεύεσαι, μήν' από χώρα βγαίνεις;  
 Δεν κλαίω πως παντρεύομαι κι ουδ' απ' τη χώρα βγαίνω,  
 μον' κλαίω πως χωρίζομαι απ' τη γλυκιά μου μάνα,  
 απ' τον καλό πατέρα μου κι από τις αδερφές μου. (137)

Κάτω στον Άγιο Θόδωρο, στον άγιο Κωνσταντίνο  
 πανηγυρίκι γίνεται, μεγάλο πανηγύρι.

Τρεις δίπλες είναι ο χορός και πέντε τα καγκέλια.

—Τοϊ ποιος τον σέρνει το χορό, τοϊ ποιός και τα  
 τραγούδια;

—Η Γιάννα μ' σέρνει το χορό, η Γιάννα μ' τα  
 τραγούδια,

κι η μάνα της τής έλεγε, κι η μάνα της τής λέει:

—Σιγά, μωρ' Γιάννα μ', το χορό, σιγά και τα τραγούδια,  
 να κατακάτ' ο κουρνιαχτός, να σηκωθεί η αντάρα,  
 να βρουν οι μάνες τα παιδιά και τα παιδιά τις μάνες.

(141)

(Γρεβενά, Θεοδώρα Χασιώτη)



I take a new road, a new path,  
I find a tree, tall like a cypress,  
I stop and ask it, stop to talk with it:  
—Oak tree, tall like a cypress,  
Where will I spend the night, where will I stay?  
—Lie down here at my foot,  
And when you get up, pay me a rent,  
Two jugs of water. (127)  
(Dasyllio)

You, bridegroom, mister bridegroom,  
The engagement ring you sent  
Does not please my Yianna.  
—Tell her, mother, to wait  
Until I go to the goldsmith,  
And have him make a wedding band and a cross. (136)  
(Grevena, Theodora Hasioti)

—Rose of Venice, why are you withered?  
Are you being married off far away, away from your country?  
—I am not crying because I am marrying, nor because I  
    leave my country,  
I cry because I will be separated from my sweet mother,  
From my good father and my sisters. (137)

Down at Agios Thodoros, at Agios Konstantinos  
A great festival is taking place.  
The dancers form a triple line, the circle of dancers is  
    five deep.  
—And who is leading the dance, and the singing?  
—My Yianna is leading the dance, and the singing,  
And her mother said to her:  
—Slow down the dance, my Yianna, and the singing,  
To let the dust, and the noise die down,  
So mothers can find their children, and children their  
    mothers. (141)  
(Grevena, Theodora Hasioti)

Σήμερα, Ντούλα μ', Πασχαλιά και το Χριστός Ανέστη.  
 Βγήκαν οι νύφες στο χορό, βγήκαν τα παλικάρια.  
 Και συ, Ντούλα μ', δε φαίνεσαι, καϋμένη Ντούλα  
 μου,  
 αίντ' απ' τη φυλακή να έρθεις.  
 Ντούλα μου, δεν αντρώνεσαι τις φυλακές ν'  
 ανοίξεις;  
 —Το πώς, μάνα μ', ν' αντρειωθώ τις φυλακές ν'  
 ανοίξω,  
 έχω τις μπράγγες στο λαιμό, τα σίδερα στα χέρια.  
 Σύρε, μάνα μ', στο βασιλιά και πέστον παρακάλια,  
 να μου χαρίσει την ζωή, να μου χαρίσ' τα νιάτα,  
 να πάρω δίπλα τ'αί βουνά, δίπλα τα κορφοβούνια,  
 να πάρω σκλάβους δικαστάς, να πάρω εισαγγελέα,  
 να μη δικάζουν ξάμηνα, να μη δικάζουν χρόνια. (143)  
 (Μέγαρο, Αγόρω Ζιάκα)

΄Αιντε, το τι κακό σας έκανα, κακές γειτόνισσες  
 και κλαίτ' από τ' εμένα.  
 Με ρίξατε στην φυλακή να κάνω τριάντα μέρες,  
 και σείς ν-αλησμονήσατε και κάνω τριάντα χρόνια.  
 Κι όταν με θυμηθήκατε να ρθείτε να με βγάλετε,  
 βρίσκ'τε τα φίδια με φτερά, οχιές με δυο κεφάλια.

Τα μήλα μες στα πιάτα  
 τα τρων οι παπαδιές,  
 και τα καλά παιδάκια τα τρων οι φυλακές. (144)  
 (Τριφύλλι)

Κείμετ', ο Τάσιος μ', κείμεται στον πλάταν' από κάτω,  
 με τα ποδάρια στο νερό πάλι νερό γυρεύει,  
 να ξεπλυθούν τα αίματα, να ξεπλυθούν τα λέσια:  
 —Μην έρθ' η μάνα μ' και με δει, πολύ τη βαλαντώνει.  
 (152)  
 (Κοσμάτι, Πανάγιω Χαντάβα)

Today, my Doula, it's Easter, time of "Christos Anesti."  
The brides have come out to dance, and the young men,  
too.

But you, my Doula, are nowhere to be seen, poor Doula,  
Come from the prison.

Doula, won't you gather up your strength to open the  
prison door?

—Mother, how can I open the prison door,  
I have irons on my neck and handcuffs on my hands.

Mother, go to the king, and beg him

To grant me my life, to grant me my youth.

And I'll cross the mountains and the peaks

To take judges and prosecutors captive,

So they will not give out verdicts of six months or of  
whole years. (143)

(Megaro, Agoro Ziaka)

Come, evil neighbors, what harm did I do you

That you weep?

You threw me in jail to serve thirty days,

But you forgot, and I spent thirty years.

And when you remembered me and came to get me out,

You found winged serpents and two-headed asps.

Apples on dishes

Are eaten by priests' wives

And good little children

Are consumed by jail. (144)

(Trifylli)

My Tasos is lying under the plane tree,

With his feet in the water, he still asks for water,

To wash away the blood, to wash away the rotten flesh:

Lest my mother come and see me, it will pain her. (152)

(Kosmati, Panagio Hantava)

Βαλαντωμένη μου καρδιά και πικραμέν' αχείλι,  
 βολές με κάνεις και γελώ, βολές με κάντ'ς και κλαίω,  
 βολές με ρίχνεις σ' αρρωστιά βαριά για να πεθάνω.  
 Δεν έχω κάναν να το πω και να το μολογήσω.  
 Για να το πω στη μάνα μου, εγώ μάνα δεν έχω.  
 Για να το πω στ' αδέρφια μου, τ' αδέρφια λεν τις  
     νύφες,  
 οι νύφες λεν τη γειτονιά κι η γειτονιά τη χώρα. (156)

Εψές πέρδικα ν-έσφαξα και σήμερα τρυγόνι  
 κι ένατσα και τ'ς μαγείρεψα σ' αρχοντικό τραπέζι,  
 κι ακάλεσα τους φίλους μου κι όλους τους συγγενείς  
     μου.  
 Όλοι κινήσαν κι έρχονται, όλοι με την αράδα.  
 Ένας ψηλός μελαχρινός δε φάνηκε να έρθει.  
 Είπαν πως είναι άρρωστος, βαριά για να πεθάνει.  
 Θέλει νερό 'π' τον τόπο του, σταφύλ' από το κλήμα  
 γυρεύει και δαμάσκηνο ν-από τη δαμασκ'νιά του.  
 Σαν το 'μαθαν τρεις όμορφες, τρία καλά κορίτσια,  
 η μια του πάει γλυκό κρασί κι άλλη αφράτο μήλο,  
 κι η τρίτη η μικρότερη του πάει μοσκοστάφ'λο.  
 —Σήκω, καλέ μ', να φας να πεις, σήκω να πας στο  
     σπίτι σ',  
 εδώ τους ξένους δεν τους κλαιν κι ουδέ τους  
     παραχώνουν,  
 τι 'ναι το χώμα ακριβό κι η γης αγορασμένη,  
 το έρημο το σάβανο ξαγορασμό δεν έχει,  
 γιατί το γνέθουν ορφανές και το υφαίνουν χήρες. (158)  
 (Κοσμάτι)

Κάτω στους κάμπους τους τρανούς, στα πράσινα  
     λιβάδια,  
 λύκος παιδάκι ν-άδραξε 'πο της μάνας τα χέρια.  
 Χίλιοι πεζοί τον κυνηγούν, χίλιοι καβαλαρία,  
 κι η μάνα 'ποχει το παιδί σιμά-κοντά τον έχει:  
 —Άφσεζ με, λύκε μ', το παιδί και πάρε το  
     μουλάρι.

My exhausted heart and bitter lips,  
Sometimes you make me laugh, and sometimes cry,  
Sometimes you make me deathly ill.  
I have no one to tell, no one to talk to.  
I would tell my mother, but I have none.  
If I tell my brothers, they will tell their wives,  
Their wives will tell the neighbors, and the neighbors  
will tell the whole country. (156)

Yesterday I killed a partridge and today a turtle-dove  
And I cooked them for a fancy table,  
And I invited my friends and all my relatives.  
They all came, all of them in their turn.  
A tall dark man did not appear.  
They said he was gravely ill, dying.  
He wants water from his homeland, grapes from the vine,  
And he is asking for a plum from his plum tree.  
When three pretty maidens heard this, three good girls,  
One of them brought him sweet wine, another a crisp  
apple,  
And the third, the youngest one, brought him sweet-  
smelling grapes.  
—Get up, my good man, eat and drink, get up and go home,  
for here they do not mourn for strangers, nor do they  
bury them,  
for the ground is dear and the earth is bought.  
The wretched shroud cannot be bought,  
Because it is carded by orphan girls and woven by  
widows. (158)  
(Kosmati)

Down on the open plains, on the green meadows,  
A wolf seized a little child out of his mother's arms.  
A thousand men chase him on foot, a thousand on  
horseback,  
And the child's mother approaches him:  
—Wolf, leave me my child and take the mule.

Και το παιδί 'ντιλοήθηκε 'πο του λύκου το στόμα:  
 —Γύρνα, μάνα μ', στο σπίτι σου, γύρνα, μάνα μου, πίσω,  
 ο λύκος από μ' άδραξε δεν ξάνα μ' απολνάει. (163)  
 (Καλόχι, Καλίνω Μήτσιου)

Πέρνα τα, βλάμη μ', πέρνα τα αυτά τα μονοπάτια,  
 τι άλλη φορά δεν τα περνάς, δεν τα καλοδιαβαίνεις.  
 —Και πού το ξέρεις, βλάμη μου, 'που δεν  
 ματαδιαβαίνω;  
 —Εφές είδα στον ύπνο μου, στον ύπνο που κοιμόμουν,  
 είδα τον ουρανό θολό και το φεγγάρι μαύρο,  
 είδα και σένα, βλάμη μου, στο αίμα βουτηγμένο,  
 κι εσύ, βλάμη μου, θα χαθείς, βλάμη μου, θα πεθάνεις.  
 (164)  
 (Σπήλαιο, Νικόλαος Μαλάμης)

Ο Κώστας κάνει τη χαρά, ο Κώστας κάνει γάμο.  
 Τρεις χρόνους ράβουν τα προικιά και τρεις το  
 πανωφόρι,  
 και τρεις που ετοιμάζονταν να πάει να πάρ' τη νύφη.  
 Βάζει τον άγγελο νουνό, τον Άγιο-Γιώργη μπράτ' μο.  
 Χίλιοι πασαίνουν αμπροστά και δυό χιλιάδες πίσω,  
 στη μέση πάει ο Κωνσταντής στο άλογο καβάλα,  
 και πάησαν και ξεπέξεψαν σε μια κρυοβρυσούλα.  
 Εκ' έκατσαν να φαν ψωμί να γλυκογιοματίσουν.  
 Πουλάκι πάει κι έκατσε στου Κωνσταντή τη σέλα  
 Δεν κελαηδούσε σαν πουλί, μηδέ σαν χελιδόνι,  
 μον' κελαηδούσε κι έλεγε μ' ανθρώπινη κουβέντα:  
 —Κώστα μου, μην ξοδιάζεσαι, μην χάνεις τα φλωριά  
 σου.  
 Εσύ, Κώστα μου, θα χαθείς, Κώστα μου, θα πεθάνεις.  
 —Πού ξέρ'ς εσύ, πουλάκι μου, που ξέρ'ς εσύ, πουλί μου;  
 —Εφές ήμαν στον ουρανό, ήμαν στη δωδεκάδα  
 και είδα πως σε ξέγραψαν. (165)  
 (Μηλιά)

And the child replied through the wolf's mouth:  
—Go home, mother, to your house, turn back, mother,  
For the wolf that seized me will not let me go. (163)  
(Kalóhi, Kalino Mitsiou)

—Take these paths, my blood brother, take them,  
For you will not tread on them again.  
—And how do you know, my blood brother, that I will  
not tread them again?  
—Yesterday, while I slept, I saw  
That the sky was dull and the moon was black,  
And I saw you, my blood brother, all bloody,  
You, my blood brother, will be lost; you, my blood  
brother, will die. (164)  
(Spilaio, Nikolaos Malamis)

Kostas is celebrating, Kostas is getting married.  
For three years they have been preparing the dowry and  
his wedding frock.  
And for three years he has been preparing to take a wife.  
He takes the angel as his godfather, and St. George as  
his groomsman.

A thousand men precede him and two thousand follow,  
And Kostas is in the middle, astride his horse.  
They stopped and dismounted near a cold spring;  
They sat to break bread and have a pleasant lunch.  
A little bird alighted on Kostas's saddle.  
It did not sing like a bird, or even a swallow,  
But spoke with a human voice:

—Kosta, don't go to great expense, don't spend your  
gold coins.

For you, Kosta, will be lost; my Kosta, you will die.

—And how do you know, my little bird, how do you  
know that?

—Yesterday, I was in heaven, I was with the twelve Apostles,  
And I saw that they crossed off your name. (165)  
(Miliá)

Μεσ' στον γυαλένιο τον οντά, στον κρουσταλλένιο  
 πύργο  
 εκεί κοιμάτ' ο Κωσταντάς με την καλή τ' αντάμα.  
 Εκεί του ήρθαν τα χαρτιά φαντάρως για να πάει,  
 και μπαινοβγαίν' η μάνα του κι αυτός αναστενάζει.  
 —Τι έχεις, Κώστα μου, και κλεις και βαριαναστενάζεις;  
 Μήναν η νύφ' δε σ' άρεσε, μήναν και τα προικιά της;  
 —Μάνα μ', η νύφη μας καλή, καλά και τα προικιά της,  
 μονάχα μ' ήρθαν τα χαρτιά φαντάρως για να πάγω.  
 (170)

Μας κλέψαν την Αρμένισσα μαζί με τον υγιό της.  
 Παίρνουν και σφάζουν το παιδί και στο σουβλί το  
 βάζουν,  
 και δίνουν στη μανούλα του να το κλωθογυρίζει  
 κι αυτή βάζει τα κλάματα βάζει τα μοιρολόγια:  
 —Ποια μάνα ψένει τον υγιό και τον κλωθογυρίζει;  
 παιδιά το πού 'ναι ο πρώτος σας, το πού είναι ο  
 καπετάνιος,  
 να του φιλήσω την ποδιά και το δεξί του χέρι  
 να μου χαρίσει τον υγιό κι άλλον υγιό δεν έχω; (172)  
 (Καληράχρη Τσιάρα Αγγελική)

Ο Γιάννης φίδι σκότωσε στη μεσ' από το δρόμο.  
 Ν-όσα φίδια κι αν τ' άκουσαν, πολύ τα κακοφάν' κε.  
 Μοσαφιρέ το έκαναν, μοσαφιρέ το κάμουν,  
 το πώς να τον φιδιάσουνε ν-αυτόν τον Κακο-Γιάννη.  
 Ν-αστρίτης γένετ' άλογο, σαπίτης καβαλ' κεύει,  
 κι αυτήν την παρδαλήν οχιά τη βάζουνε γκιορντάνι,  
 να παν να βρουν το Γιάννη. (176)  
 (Μοναχίτι)

Τι μοιρολόγι να σου πω να μοιάζει στο κορμί σου,  
 που 'χες νιάτα περήφανα, κορμί κυπαρισσένιο  
 και μ' το 'φαε η ξενιτιά, μου το 'φαγαν τα ξένα.  
 Π'ανάθεμα την ξενιτιά, τ'ν μαγγούφα τ'ν Αλβανία,



In the glass chamber, in the crystal tower,  
There Kostantas sleeps with his good wife.  
There he received the summons to be a soldier,  
His mother goes in and out and he is sighing.  
—What's wrong, my Kosta, that you weep and sigh?  
Is it that your bride does not please you, or her dowry?  
—Mother, our bride is pleasing, and her dowry is  
pleasing,  
It's just that the summons has come for me to be a  
soldier. (170)

They carried away the Armenian woman with her son.  
They slew the son and put him on the spit,  
And made his poor mother turn it slowly.  
And she started to weep, to lament:  
—What mother roasts her son and turns him slowly?  
My good fellows, where is your leader, where is your  
captain,  
That I may kiss his right hand,  
And ask him to give me the body of my son, for I have  
no other son. (172)  
(Kaliráhi, Tsiara Angeliki)

Yiannis killed a snake in the middle of the road.  
All the snakes who heard about it were outraged.  
They made a pact  
To do away with poor Yiannis.  
The asp becomes a horse, and another mounts it,  
And they make the many-colored viper the scout,  
And set out to look for Yiannis. (176)  
(Monahiti)

What lament can I utter that will be like your body,  
Your proud youth, your body like a cypress  
That foreign lands consumed.  
Cursed be foreign lands, and wretched Albania,

έκαψε μάνες στην καρδιά και τ'ς αδερφές στα  
σπλάχνα.

Δε μπορώ, η μαύρη μ', δε μπορώ, είμαι μπιζερισμένη,  
μπιζέρισα, βαρέθηκα το Χάρο τραγουδώντας. (190)

Καλώς ήρθαν τα σύγγεφα και φέρναν τον αέρα,  
φέρναν τον αδερφούλη μου μεσ' στα δικά μου χέρια,  
και κάθομαι και τον κοιτώ, σουσούμια δεν του φέρνω.  
Γλέπω κορμάκι ζάχαρη και νιάτα ζαχαράτα:

—Καλώς τονε, τον αδερφούλη μου, καλώς τον, καλώς  
ήρθες.

Για διάβα κάτσε στο κρεβάτ' σου για να μας μολοήσεις.

—Τι να σας πω, μανάδες κι αδερφές, πολύ θα σας  
πικραίνω.

Εδώ δεν είναι γνωριμιά, δεν είν' ανταμωσύνη,  
εδώ είναι οι νιοι τ'απίστομα κί' είναι χωρίς πλεξίδες,  
εδώ δειπνάν τον κουρνιαχτό και γεύονται το χόμα.

(192)

Αλλιώς κλαίνει τους γέροντες κι αλλιώς τα παλικάρια.

(198)

Στα μέρια που τοιμάστηκες κι είσαι γιορταλασμένος,  
ούτε παν' γύρι γίνεται, ούτε κανένas γάμος,  
κι εσύ τό'χεις να ταξιδεύ'ς σ'αγύριστο ταξίδι,  
κι εσύ θα καμ'ς χιλιόχρονο, θα κάμεις χίλια χρόνια.  
Κι όταν ανθίσ' η θάλασσα και γένει περιβόλι  
τότε θα περιμένουμε στο σπίτι για να έρθεις. (200)

Φυσάει αέρας δεν αϊκώ κι αντάρα δε σας βλέπω,  
ρίχνει και σιγαλή βροχή δε σας καλογνωρίζω.  
Πάψε, Κύργιε μ', τον άνεμο και σκόρπα την αντάρα,  
θεούλη μου,

κι άκουσα μια ψιλή φωνή ν-απ' τον απάνω κόσμο—  
μόρχεται σαν την ξαδέρφη μου, σαν την καλή μου  
νύφη. (204)

Which burned mothers' hearts and sisters' innards.  
I cannot, poor me, I cannot, I am worn out,  
I am worn out, I am weary of singing about Charon.  
(190)

Welcome to the clouds that brought the breeze,  
That brought my dear brother into my arms,  
And I sit and look at him, and cannot make him out by  
his features.  
I see a sweet body and youth at its sweetest:  
—Welcome, dear brother, welcome.  
Come sit on your bed and talk to us.  
—What can I tell you, mothers and sisters, I will make  
you sad.  
Here there are no friendships, there is no getting  
together,  
Here the young men face downward, and they are  
without tresses,  
Here they dine on dust and taste the earth. (192)

Laments for old men are different from laments for  
brave young lads. (198)

In those places you dressed up for in your holiday best,  
There is neither festival nor wedding.  
But you are minded to go on a voyage of no return,  
It will take you a millennium, a thousand years.  
When the sea blooms and becomes a garden,  
Then will we wait for you to come home. (200)

A wind is blowing and I can't hear; there is a storm and  
I can't see you,  
A soft rain is falling and I can't see you clearly.  
Lord, stop the wind and scatter the storm,  
For I heard a high-pitched voice—from the upper world—  
It sounds like my cousin, like my good sister-in-law.  
(204)

Εχτές προχτές που πέρναγα απ' το νεκροταφείο,  
 άκουσα μνήμα να βογγεί, μνήμα ν' αναστενάζει.  
 Κι εγώ, η μαύρη, σαν τάϊκουσα, στάθ' κα στο πάτημά  
 μου  
 και πάω και το ζύγωσα και το συχνορωτάω:  
 —Τι έχεις, μνήμα μ', και βογγείς, μνήμα κι  
 αναστενάζεις;  
 Μην είν' το χώμα σου βαρύ κι η πέτρα σου μεγάλη;  
 —Δεν είν το χώμα μου βαρύ κι η πέτρα μου μεγάλη.  
 Εμέ μου πόνεσε για το ντουινιά, για τον απάνω κόσμο.  
 Θέλω να ιδώ το σπίτι μου, να ιδώ τη φαμελιά μου.  
 (207)

Θέλ'τε, δέντρα μ', ανθίσετε, θέλετε μααραθείτε,  
 εγώ στον ίσκιο σας δεν κάθομαι μάηδε και στη δροσιά  
 σας,  
 μάηδε και στα κλωναράκια σας σακούλι δεν κρεμάω.  
 —Πες μας, παιδί μ', πότε θα 'ρθεις για να σε  
 καρτερούμε,  
 να 'χω την πόρτα μ' ανοιχτή και τη φωτιά 'ναμμένη. (209)

Δεν το 'μαθαν οι αδερφές, δεν τάϊκουσαν οι μάνες,  
 πόπεσ' η τοϊκ' απ' το κερί και κήκ' ο κάτω κόσμος.  
 Κήκκαν των μάνων τα παιδιά, των αδερφιών τ'  
 αδέρφια,  
 κήκκαν καλά αντρώνα κι ανύπαντρα κορίτσια,  
 εδώ θα καούν κι οι αδερφές και δε ματαγουρίζουν,  
 κήκκαν κορίτσ' ανύπαντρα με τ' άλωνα στεφάνια.  
 Πώς τα βαστάν οι αδερφές, τα νταϊναντάν οι μάνες,  
 δεν παίρνουν τ' άγριαϊ βουνά και τα βαθιά λαγγάδια,  
 να βρουν τα φίδια με φτερά, τ'ς οχιές με δυο κεφάλια,  
 που τρων των μάνων την καρδιά, των αδερφιών τα  
 σπλάχνα. (211)

Ν-εδώ σε τούτ' τη γειτονιά, ν-εδώ σε τούτ' το σπίτι,  
 εδώ ήταν βρύση με νερό κι ο δέντρος με τον ίσκιο.  
 Ήταν και μες στη γειτονιά καράβ' αρματωμένο.

Yesterday, or the day before, when I was passing by the  
cemetery,  
I heard a tomb that was moaning, a tomb that was  
sighing.  
And I, poor woman, when I heard it, stopped in my  
tracks,  
I approached and asked it repeatedly:  
—What is it, tomb, that makes you moan and sigh?  
Does the earth lie heavy on you, is the tombstone too  
big?  
—No, the earth is not heavy, nor my tombstone too big.  
I miss the world, the upper world.  
I want to see my house, to see my family. (207)

Trees, blossom if you will, or wither if you will,  
For I will not sit in your shade and coolness,  
Nor will I hang my sack on your branches.  
—Tell us, child, when you will come, so that we can  
expect you,  
have the door open, and the fire lighted. (209)

Sisters didn't know it, mothers didn't hear it,  
That a spark fell from the candle and burned the  
underworld.  
Mothers' children were burned, and sisters' brothers,  
Handsome lads and unmarried girls were burned,  
Here sisters too will burn and they will not return,  
Unmarried girls were burned with unreaped wreaths.  
How do the sisters bear it, how do mothers bear it?  
And not take to the wild mountains and the deep  
gorges,  
To seek out the winged serpents, the two-headed vipers,  
That eat mothers' hearts and sisters' innards. (211)

In this neighborhood, in this house,  
There was a spring with water and a shady oak tree.  
And there was a well-rigged ship in the neighborhood.

Τώρα ν-η βρύση στέρεψε κι ο δέντρος ξεριζώθ' κε  
κι ο πρώτος ο μηχανικός κι αυτός ο караβοκύρης  
πάει κι αυτός μας χάθηκε και δεν ξαναγυρίζει. (214)

Κάτω στου Χάρου την αυλή, στις Χάραινας τις  
βρύσες  
εκεί εχ' χίλιες λυγρές και μύρια παλικάρια,  
κι ένας τον άλλον έλεγε και φιλοτραγουδάνε.  
Τ' ακούει ο Χάρος και γελάει, η Χάρισσα και κλαίει,  
τ' ακούν και τα Χαρόπουλα και τους λιθοβολάνε.  
—Τι να 'ταν το τραγούδι τους, τι να 'ταν το τραγούδι;  
Και το τραγούδι τ'ς ήτανε για τον απάνω κόσμο.  
—Καλότ' χοι που είναι σε ντουριά, που είναι σ' απάνω  
κόσμο,  
τώρα που 'ρχόνται οι μέρες οι καλές που είναι όλ'  
αντάμα. (216)

Αυτού στον Άδη που θα πας κι αυτού π' θα  
ροβολήσεις,  
μη δεις τους μαύρους και σκιαχτείς τους άσχημους και  
φύγεις,  
μη δεις τους κουτσοκέφαλους κι  
αλλαξομουτσοδιάσεις.  
Δικοί μας είν' οι άσχημοι, δικοί μας είν' κι οι μαύροι,  
δικοί μας είν' κι οι κουτσοκέφαλοι και δεν  
παρηγοριόνται.  
Κοίτα μην κάμεις ξάμηνο, κοίτα μην κάμεις χρόνο  
γιατί το ξάμηνο είν' πολύ κι ο χρόνος είν' ποτάμι,  
κι εμείς θα περιμένουμε να ρθείτε όλ' αντάμα.  
—Έλα, κυρά μ', απ' τα βουνά και πάρ' τα παλικάρια,  
πάρε τον αδερφούλη μου, πολύ τον αναζητώ.  
Θα 'χω την πόρτα ανοιχτή και τη φωτιά 'ναμμένη,  
θα 'χω κι εγώ στον αδερφούλη μου τα ρούχα  
διπλωμένα,  
γιατί μου πάει ανάλλαγο και ματωκυλισμένο. Βλάση  
μου. (218)

But now the spring is dry and the tree uprooted,  
The first mate, the captain,  
He, too, is gone and will not return. (214)

Down in Charon's courtyard, at the spring of Charon's  
wife  
There are a thousand damsels and ten thousand young  
men,  
They talk among themselves and sing with high-pitched  
voices.  
Charon hears them and laughs, Charon's wife weeps,  
Charon's children hear them and throw stones.  
—What was it they were singing?  
Their song was about the upper world.  
—Fortunate are those who are among people, in the  
upper world,  
Now that the holidays approach and people are all  
together. (216)

When you go down to Hades,  
Don't be frightened of the blackened ones, and don't flee  
the ugly,  
And don't be aghast when you see the headless ones.  
The ugly belong to us, and the black ones, too,  
The headless ones are ours, too, and they cannot be  
comforted.  
Don't take six months, don't take a year  
Because six months is too long, and a year is like a river.  
We are waiting for you to come all together.  
—Come, my lady, from the mountains and bring along  
the young men,  
Bring my brother, I miss him greatly.  
I'll have the door open and a fire in the hearth,  
And I'll have a change of clothes for my brother,  
Because he's gone without a change of clothes, all  
bloody, my Vlassis. (218)

—Απόψε τα ματάκια σου τρεις δίπλες να τα κάνεις,  
 η μια να κ'τάει κατά τα βουνά κι η άλλη κατ' τους  
     κάμπους,  
 κι η τρίτη η καλύτερη στις εκκλησιάς την πόρτα —  
 κοίτα κανίσκι σόρχεται απ' τον απάνω κόσμο.  
 Αν είσαι δίπλα να σκωθείς κι αν είσ' ορθή να κάτσεις,  
 και πάρτο στα χεράκια σου και μέσ' στην αγκαλιά σου,  
 και πάρτο καταρώτατο και βαριοξέταζε το.  
 —Κανίσκι μ', ποιος σε τοίμασε, κανίσκι μ', ποιος σε  
     στέλνει;  
 Κι εγώ δεν έχω, η έρημη, παιδιά για να μου το  
     τοιμάσουν.  
 Μου τόστευαν τ' ανεψίδια μου και τα καλά μ'  
     αγγόνια. (219)

Ανάθεμα που φύτευε μηλιά στον κάτω κόσμο,  
 δε φύτευε μια λειμόνια να λειμονιότ' ο Χάρος,  
 για να τ'ζ αφήνει να 'ρχονται δυο τρεις φορές το  
     χρόνο,  
 σαν του Χριστού, σαν τη Λαμπρή, σαν τ'ζ Αποκριές το  
     βράδι  
 και τη Δευτέρα το πρωί ν-εμείς τους ξεκινάμε,  
 τους δένουμε στα μαντιλάκια τους τρία καλά του  
     κόσμου —  
 τον ήλιο και τον άνεμο και το λαμπρό φεγγάρι,  
 τον ήλιο για τους γεωργούς, τον άνεμο για τ'ς  
     διαβάτες,  
 και το φεγγάρι το λαμπρό για τους τζομπαναρέους,  
 για να σκαρίζουν πρόβατα και να σκαρίζουν γίδια.  
 (222)

Να πω κι ένα για την ξαδέρφη μου τη  
     φρεσκοπεθαμένη, μωρή Λενιώ.  
 —Λενιώ μ', να γένεις σύννεφο κι εϊγώ να γένω αντάρα,  
 κι έλα, Λενιώ μ', να σμίξουμε, τα ντέρτια μας να πούμε.  
 —Τα ντέρτια και τα βάσανα τα 'χουν οι πεθαμένοι  
 που γιοματίζουν κουρνιαχτό και δειλινιάζουν χόμα,



—Tonight turn your eyes three ways,  
Look first toward the mountains, and then the plains,  
and  
Thirdly, and best of all, look toward the door of the  
church –  
Look, there's a food offering coming for you from the  
upper world.  
If you are lying down stand up, and if you are standing,  
sit,  
And take it into your hands and arms.  
Question it thoroughly, and look at it closely.  
—Food-offering, who prepared you, and who sent you?  
For I, desolate one, have no children to prepare it for  
me.  
My nieces and nephews sent it to me, along with my  
good grandchildren. (219)

Cursed be he who planted an apple-tree in the  
underworld,  
Why didn't he plant a lemon-tree to elicit Charon's  
mercy,  
To let them come two or three times a year,  
At Christmas, at Easter, on the eve of Lent,  
And on Monday morning, we will send them off again,  
We'll tie three good things from the upper world into  
their handkerchiefs:  
The sun and the wind and the bright moon,  
The sun for the farmers, the wind for the travelers,  
And the bright moon for the shepherds,  
So they can rouse the sheep and goats. (222)

Let me sing a lament for my cousin who just died, Lenio.  
—Lenio, may you become a cloud, and may I become a  
storm,  
and may we meet, Lenio, to relate our sorrows.  
—Sorrows and suffering are for the dead,  
who breakfast on dust and sup on dirt,

κι άμα διψάνε για νερό πίν'νε τον ιδρωτά τους,  
κι από της πέτρας τον καημό κι από τον ιδρωτά τους,  
σκουριάσανε τα δόντια τους και πέσαν τα μαλλιά τους.  
πέφτουν τα κομποδάκτυλα, πέφτουν τα δαχτυλίδια.  
(225)

Πέρα σε κείνο το βουνό το κορφανταριασμένο,  
πόχ' ανταρούλα στην κορφή και καταχνιά στον πάτο,  
στον πάτο βόσκουν πρόβατα και στην κορφή τα γίδια,  
στην αποπίσω τη μεριά είναι μια κρύα βρύση,  
μαζώνονται οι πιστικοί κι όλα τα παλικάρια.  
Εκεί στένουν το μπαρμπεριό και στένουν το τραγούδι.  
—Τι να ήταν το τραγούδι τους, τι να ήταν ο νηχός τους;  
—Καλότ'χοι που 'ναι στο ντουινιά και στον απάνω  
κόσμο,  
γλεντάν οι νιοι τα νιάτα τους κι οι νιες τη λεβεντιά τους,  
γλεντάν τ' ανύπαντρα παιδιά στεφάνι κι αρρεβώνα.  
(248)

Μηδέ τη βέρα έχασες, μηδέ το δαχτυλίδι,  
μηδέ τ' ασημομάχαιρο να στείλεις να το πάρει.  
Χάνεις τη νύφ' απ' το χορό, γαμπρό απ' τον  
μπαρμπέρη.  
Κλάψε, μάνα μ', μη ντρέπεσαι και μάτια μη λυπάσαι,  
προτού βαρέσ' ο θυμιατός και ψάλλουν οι παπάδες,  
προτού τον παραλάβουνε τέσσερα παλικάρια. (249)

Πολλά καλά κάν'τς, Κύργιε μ', κι ένα καλό δεν κάνεις,  
δε στρώνεις στράτα στη θάλασσα, σκάλα στον κάτω  
κόσμο,  
να κατεβαίν' οι αδερφές, να ροβολάν οι μάνες,  
να ροβολάν κι οι χήρες οι παρανιές με τ'ς αλλαξιές στα  
χέρια,  
ν' αλλάξ'νε τους βαριάρρωστους, τους βαριοπληγωμένους,  
και να τους πλένουν τις πληγές που είναι λαβωμένοι.  
Οι μάνες να 'χ'ν τη ζάχαρη κι οι αδερφές το μέλι,

And if they thirst, drink their sweat,  
And from the sorrow of the rock and from their  
sweat,  
Their teeth rusted and they lost their hair.  
Their fingers fell off, and the rings, too. (225)

Over there on that mountain with the stormy peak,  
With the patch of fog on its peak and haze at its foot,  
Sheep graze at its foot and goats on its peak,  
Around its back side there is a cold spring,  
Where the hired hands and the young men gather.  
There they cut their hair, and take up singing.  
—What was their song, what was their melody?  
—Fortunate are they who are in the world and alive,  
young men rejoicing in their youth, and young women  
in their grace,  
unmarried youths rejoicing in wedding crowns and  
rings. (248)

You have not lost your wedding band, nor your ring,  
Nor the silver knife . . . .  
You are losing the bride from the dance, the bridegroom  
from the barber's,  
Weep, mother, feel no shame and do not spare your eyes,  
Before the incense is brought, before the priests chant,  
Before the four pallbearers take him. (249)

You have done many fine things, Lord, but you've left  
out one,  
You haven't created a road in the ocean and stairway to  
the lower world,  
For sisters to go down and mothers to descend,  
And young widows, to carry down a change of clothes,  
For the gravely ill and the mortally wounded.  
Mothers would bring sugar and sisters honey,

και να 'χ'ν και τον αμάραντο να μην τ'ς μαραίν' ο  
 Χαρος,  
 να μη μαραίνουντ' οι ξανθιές κι αυτές οι μαυρομάτες,  
 να μη χαλάν τα νιάτα τους, τα λυγερά κορμιά τους,  
 να μην πέφτουν τα μαλλάκια τους με τα μονά  
 στεφάνια. (254)

Μη με σκεπάζεις, ουρανό, μη με σκεπάζεις, χώμα,  
 τι 'μαι παιδί ανύπαντρο, παιδί της αρρεβώνας,  
 δεν πρόφτασα για να χαρώ ντουνιά κι απάνω  
 κόσμο,  
 δε χάρηκα τα νιάτα μου, στεφάνι κι αρρεβώνα. (260)

Καλώς ήρθαν τα σύννεφα και φέραν τον αέρα,  
 και φέρανε τον (την) . . . από τον Κάτω Κόσμο.  
 Για διάβα κάτσε στην κορφή λίγο να ξαποστάσεις.  
 Ήρθαν οι μάνες για να ιδούν κι οι αδερφές να μάθουν.  
 —Για πες μας  
 αν έχ' ο Χάρος γνωριμιά κι αν έχει σμιξοσύνη,  
 το πώς περνούν οι άρρωστοι κι αυτοί οι σκοτωμένοι,  
 αν έχ'ν οι νιοι τα νιάτα τους κι οι νιές την εμορφιά  
 τους.

Γριά: "και λέει αυτός τότενες":

—Σαν τι να λες, μωρ' μάνα μου, σαν τι σας βάν' ο νους  
 σας,  
 εμείς στις τρεις μαυρίζουμε, σ'ς σαράντα αραχνιάζ' με  
 κι απ' τις σαράντα και σιακεί χωρίζουμε στη μέση  
 και πάει χώρια το κορμί και χώρια το κεφάλι,  
 πέφτουν και τα σγουρά μαλλιά τριγύρω στο λαιμό  
 μου. (262)

Να 'χα μια πέτρα για καρδιά και μια φωνή καμπάνα.  
 (263)

And they would carry a twig of amaranth so that  
Charon would not wither them,  
Not wither the fair-haired ones, or the black-eyed ones,  
Not ruin their youthful looks and slender bodies,  
Not cause their hair to fall with the wedding crown.  
(254)

Do not cover me, sky, do not cover me, earth,  
For I am an unmarried youth, a youth betrothed,  
I have not yet known the joys of life and of the upper world,  
Have not yet known the joys of youth, betrothal and  
wedding crown. (260)

Welcome to the clouds that brought the wind,  
And brought . . . from the lower world.  
Come, sit on the hilltop and rest awhile.  
Mothers came to see and sisters to learn.  
—Tell us  
Whether one can get to know Charon and spend time  
with him,  
And how the ill fare and the slain,  
Whether lads retain their youth and young women their  
beauty.

*An old woman: "he then says:"*

—What are you saying, poor mother, what are you  
imagining,  
We turn black in three days, in forty days we gather cobwebs,  
And after forty days we come apart,  
And the body and head separate,  
And my curly hair falls about my neck. (262)

If only I had a heart of stone, and a voice like a bell.  
(263)



# SONGS OF KEROWOS

Who was a shepherd in Asiatia,

Messenia, In Mycenaean times

BY P.A. SINOPOULOS

# ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΕΡΟΓΟΥ

Ποὺ ἦταν βοσκὸς στὴν Ἀσιατία τῆς

Μεσσηνίας ἐπὶ μυκηναϊκῆς ἐποχῆς

## PROLOGUE

BY JOHN CHADWICK

Both science and art have the exploration of truth as their goal. The scientist who weighs, measures, calculates, and reaches a conclusion seeks the truth of the physical world, the laws relating to matter within the context of space and time. The artist, whether painter, sculptor, musician, poet or prose writer, also seeks the truth. But that truth is of a different order. It concerns the laws of the metaphysical world, which are not bounded by space and time. The contemporary tendency is to deride the idea of an eternal and immutable world remote from the clamor and intrusiveness of daily life. But every real artist knows that beyond external appearances, there is an inner nucleus that infuses life and meaning into the empty shell.

Although I am a scientist, since I consider linguistics to be a science, I would be unable, under any circumstances, to appraise what Mr. Sinopoulos has tried to present here with this extraordinary poem. I do not look at the poem as a scientist, but as one who loves the Greek language, which, whatever form it has taken through the centuries, emotionally transports those who understand it.

Nevertheless, even though I am a specialist, I must admit that I do not know exactly how that shepherd from Messenia pronounced his name, which was found written in Mycenaean script as Ke-ro-wo. Although, for purely scientific reasons I cannot believe the etymology proposed by Mr. Sinopoulos for this name, yet I have enough artistic understanding to know that, beyond the superficial pedantries, we agree thoroughly on a real, metaphysical truth. As a scientist, I do not believe that a certain Greek named Odysseus blinded a one-eyed, man-eating giant. I even wonder whether Stesichoros was not right when, in defiance of common belief, he refused to accept that Helen once went to Troy.

Οὐκ ἐστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος.

Certainly, from a scientific perspective, that belief cannot be supported. But the legends of the ancient Greeks are valuable to us as the sacred heritage of a very different truth. They arouse the world of our



emotions. Andromache, when she bids farewell to Hector on the walls of Troy, is not a Trojan princess of the 13th century B.C. But neither is she the product of Homer's fancy. She represents every woman who has sent her husband off to war, to fight, and if need be to die for her, defending his home, his city, his country, his god. That is the essence of poetry.

I have toiled hard for many years to extend the history of the Greek language, and thanks to the brilliant accomplishment of Michael Ventris, hope that I have succeeded in adding a page or two to that long and venerable history. But it takes a poet, and a Greek poet at that, to bring out of the scholars' dry texts the living truth, namely, that the language spoken by a shepherd in a remote region of the Peloponnese, 1200 years before the birth of Christ is, despite its differences, the same language as the Greek spoken today, and furthermore, to consider that truth not as a simple fact, but as an expression of the spiritual continuity of the Greek people. That is how I understand the verse *Ξεχύθηκε καμπανολάλημα τριαντατριών αιώνων* (a bell-peal was heard across thirty-three centuries.)

For that reason I welcome the effort of a man who has succeeded in taking the badly-written and incomplete notes of a Mycenaean clerk and transformed them, through a kind of spiritual alchemy, into the gold of poetry. Much still remains unknown about the origins of the Greek language. But a poetic truth has been conceived here, in the vision of an artist, and has been expressed for our benefit in a way that no scientist could ever achieve.

Athens, September 5, 1973

## ΤΡΑΓΟΥΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΕΡΟΓΟΥ

Ποὺ ἦταν βοσκὸς σὴν Ἀσιατίᾳ τῆς Μεσσηνίας ἐπὶ  
μυκηναϊκῆς ἐποχῆς

### ΜΥΚΗΝΑΪΚΗ ΩΔΗ

#### ΣΤΡΟΦΗ ΠΡΩΤΗ

Κέροφος ποιμὴν Ἀσιατίᾳ  
Ὅπὶ Θαλαμάταο τετρόποπι  
ὁρόμενος  
«Κέροφος Πυλόθεν»

Κέρογος λέγεται ὁ βοσκὸς  
ἐκεῖνος σὴν Ἀσιατίᾳ  
ποὺ βόσκει τοῦ  
Θαλαμάτα το κοπάδι  
ὁ Κέρογος ἀπὸ τὴν Πύλο.

#### ΣΤΡΟΦΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΗ

Ἴππιῳ αἰαιμένῳ ἔλεφάντει  
Ἀραρμοτμένῳ φοινικίῳ  
«Ἴππιῳ Πυλόθεν  
Κέροφος Πύλου»

Ἴππῆλατα δυὸ ἄρματα  
μὲ στρώση ἔλεφαντένια  
συναρμοσμένα, βαθυκόκκινα  
δυὸ ἄρματα ἀπ' τὴν Πύλο  
Ὁ Κέρογος σὴν Πύλο.

#### ΣΤΡΟΦΗ ΤΡΙΤΗ

Θρᾶνυς αἰαμένος ἔλεφαντείσις  
καράαφι λεφοντείσις  
«Θρᾶνυς Πυλόθεν  
Κέροφος Πύλου».

Θρονὶ γιὰ πόδια· ἡ στρώση  
του ἀπὸ ἔλεφαντοκόκκαλο  
τὸ σκάλισμά του λιονταρίσιες  
κεφαλῆς  
θρονὶ ἀπὸ τὴν Πύλο  
Ὁ Κέρογος σὴν Πύλο.

## SONGS OF KEROWOS<sup>1</sup>

### Who was a shepherd in Asiatia, Messenia, In Mycenaean times

BY P.A. SINOPOULOS

#### MYCENAEAN ODE

##### *First Strophe*

Kerowos<sup>2</sup> is the name  
Of that shepherd in Asiatia  
Who tends the flock of Thalamatas,  
Kerowos from Pylos.

##### *Second Strophe*

Two horse-drawn chariots  
Deep red  
Fitted with a layer of ivory  
Two chariots from Pylos  
Kerowos in Pylos.

##### *Third Strophe*

A foot-stool, ivory-topped,  
Decorated with lions' heads  
A foot-stool from Pylos  
Kerowos in Pylos.

<sup>1</sup>The Greek edition, *ΚΕΡΩΤΟΣ*, Athens, Εκδόσεις Δόμος 1986, includes a prologue by John Chadwick, a postscript by the author, and extensive notes. The prologue and selected notes are included here.

The word "Kerowos" comes from the first part of a Mycenaean tablet unearthed at Pylos and identified as "PYAe134." Other words in this poem come from the following tablets: PYAd676 and PYTa722.

The oldest written form of the Greek language was Linear B, also known as Mycenaean script. Scholars hypothesize that in about the 9th century B.C., the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet to their language, giving rise to the Greek alphabet in use today. The Mycenaean script is syllabic, that is, each symbol represents a syllable, while the Greek alphabet is phonetic, each symbol representing one sound.

<sup>2</sup>We know nothing about the etymology of the name, but a hypothesis may be a

## ΚΑΤΑΒΑΣΙΕΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ

Από ἀναβάσεως τοῦ ὀρθρου ἕως ἐξόδου τῶν ἀστρων—᾿Αγία Γραφή  
(Νεεμίας 4:15)

## Α΄

Καθὼς μὲς στήν πολυκοσμία τοῦ λεωφορείου  
Ἐδιάβαζα ἓνα νέο βιβλίο  
Γιὰ τὴ λαϊκὴ κι ἐντεχνη ποίηση τοῦ Εἰκοσιένα  
᾿Αξαφνα κάποιος κεραυνός!  
Ξεκλείδωτοι οἱ οὐρανοὶ  
Καὶ ἰδοὺ χαραγμένες πινακίδες . . .  
Χαραγμένες μὲ τὴν πρώτη ἑλληνικὴ γραφὴ  
Τὴ μυκηναϊκή.  
᾿Α! ᾿Η γραφὴ . . . πού ὅταν τὴ διάβασαν  
Οἱ πρῶτοι, ὁ Βέντρις μὲ τὸν Τοάντουικ  
Ξεχύθηκε καμπανολάλημα τριαντατριῶν αἰώνων.

## Β΄

Τότε  
ἔρχεται ἀγγέλλων φάος  
ὁ Κέρογος  
πλασμένος ἀπὸ μυκηναϊκὰ γραφτὰ

KATABASIES<sup>3</sup> OF THE HELLENES

"From daybreak until the appearance of the stars..." (Nehemiah 4:15)

## I

I was in the crowded bus  
 Reading a new book  
 About the popular and literary poetic production of the  
     Greek Revolution<sup>4</sup>  
 When suddenly lightning struck!  
 The heavens opened  
 And behold, inscribed tablets . . .  
 Inscribed with the first Hellenic script,  
 Mycenaean.  
 A! the script . . . when first it was read by Ventris and  
     Chadwick . . .  
 A bell-peal rang out across  
 Thirty-three centuries.

## II

Then,  
 Announcing the dawn,<sup>5</sup> came  
 Kerowos  
 Created out of Mycenaean writing

propos. In the *Palatine Anthology*, we find the adjective "κεροβόας" (=he who shouts or sounds like a horn; on a pipe made of horn." Further, the word "βοάω" comes from the same root as "γοάω." If it can be shown that the common root was "φο", then the word "Κέροφος" may be the Mycenaean form of the word "Κεροβόας."

<sup>3</sup>In ecclesiastical music, "katabasia" is the repetition of the "eirmos" (=the first hymn of each of the 9 odes of a canon) after completion of the hymns of each ode. After completion of the hymns, the chanters "came down" from their places to the center of the church, to chant, all together, the first hymn of the ode.

<sup>4</sup>Δ. Γιάκος, *Λαϊκή και έντεχνη ποίηση του Εικοσιέννα*.

<sup>5</sup>Homer, *Odyssey* 14.94

ὁ Κέρογος  
πάλι μὲ χρόνους, μὲ καιροὺς  
οὖν τὸ Μαρμαρωμένο Βασιλιὰ  
μετὰ ἀπὸ τριαντατρεῖς αἰῶνες.

## Γ

Ἔπειτα  
Ὁ Κέρογος ἐστάθηκε ἀπάνω στὴ σκηνὴ τοῦ κόσμου  
καὶ φώναξε:  
Μοῦσαι Πιερίδες, μεγαλώνυμοι, ἀγλαόφημοι  
Κέρογος ποιμὴν  
Ἔρχεται ἀγγέλλων φάος.  
Ἦλθ', ἦλθε χελιδὼν  
Νυκτερίδες μυχῶ ἄντρου θεοπεσίοιο  
Τρίζουσαι ποτέονται.

## Δ

Πανήγυριν νόμισόν τιν' εἶναι τὸν χρόνον.  
Μὴ μοι φθονήσῃτ', ἄνδρες οἱ θεώμενοι  
Φωτοδόχον λαμπάδα τοῖς ἐν σκότει φανεῖσαν

Kerowos

Once again, in the course of years and ages<sup>6</sup>

Like the Emperor turned to stone<sup>7</sup>

After thirty-three centuries.

### III

Afterward

Kerowos stood on the world-stage<sup>8</sup>

And shouted:

Muses of Pieria, glorious, renowned<sup>9</sup>

The shepherd Kerowos<sup>10</sup>

Comes announcing the dawn.<sup>11</sup>

The swallow has come, has come<sup>12</sup>

Bats in the recesses of the divine cave

Screech as they fly about.<sup>13</sup>

### IV

Consider time to be a kind of festival<sup>14</sup>

Do not begrudge me, you men who look upon<sup>15</sup>

The light-giving candle appearing to those in darkness<sup>16</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Folksong "Tis Ayia-Sofyas." The entire verse reads "Once again, in the course of years and ages, they will be yours once more."

<sup>7</sup>The legend about the Emperor turned to stone is widespread in the Greek world. The story is that when the Turks entered Constantinople, the Emperor went on horseback to drive them back. Thousands of Turks surrounded him and he struck many down with his sword. Then his horse was killed and he, too, fell. But as a Turkish soldier raised his sword to strike the Emperor, an angel of the Lord came and carried the Emperor away to a cave deep in the earth. There the Emperor remains, turned to stone. When God wills, the angel will go down into the earth and restore him to life.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Demokritos, "The world is a stage, life is the entrance; you come, you see, you go away."

<sup>9</sup>Orphic Hymns, 76.2.

<sup>10</sup>See Footnote 1, above.

<sup>11</sup>Homer, *Odyssey* 14.94.

<sup>12</sup>Folksong dating to the 7th (?) century B.C.

<sup>13</sup>Homer, *Odyssey* 24.6-7.

<sup>14</sup>Menander, *Agroikos* 8.

<sup>15</sup>Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 497.

<sup>16</sup>Romanos Melodos, *Akathist Hymn*, 246.

Ποίμναις τὰ πλεῖστα τοῦ βίου συνειπόμεν  
μετὰ λύχνου τοῦ ἄστρου.

## Ε'

Δέδυκε μὲν ἅ σελάνα  
Βράδιον δὲ Πανελλήνεσσι φαίνει.  
Παιᾶν' ἐφύμνουν σεμνὸν Ἕλληνες τότε  
Ὅρέων κορυφαί τε καὶ φάραγγες.

## ΣΤ'

Ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἔτος ἦλθε  
Ἦδειξεν ἀστήρ τὸν πρὸ ἡλίου Λόγον  
Τὸν πρὸ ἡλίου ἥλιον.  
Ἑλλάς ἐμή, νεότης τε φίλη  
Ἦκουε δὴ τὸν αἶνον  
Κιβωτὲ χρυσοθεῖσα τῷ πνεύματι  
Ἦνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

## Ζ'

Ἐν κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς  
Μαραίνεται ἡ καρδία μου, ὑπομονὴν δὲν ἔχω



Most of my life I tended flocks<sup>17</sup>  
With the star as beacon.<sup>18</sup>

## V

The moon has set<sup>19</sup>  
It shines sluggishly on the Greek race.<sup>20</sup>  
The Greeks chanted a solemn paean then<sup>21</sup>  
The crags and ravines.<sup>22</sup>

## VI

But when the year came<sup>23</sup>  
A star pointed to the Logos who was created before the  
sun<sup>24</sup>  
The sun that was created before the sun.<sup>25</sup>  
My Hellas, and my precious youth<sup>26</sup>  
Hear the praise<sup>27</sup>  
Ark gilded by the spirit<sup>28</sup>  
So that the Son of Man might be glorified.<sup>29</sup>

## VII

In the bowels of the earth<sup>30</sup>  
My heart withers, my patience is at its end<sup>31</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Sophocles, *Oedipous Tyrannos*, 1125

<sup>18</sup>Romanos Melodos, *Cantica* 1.14.9.

<sup>19</sup>Sappho, 6.1

<sup>20</sup>Hesiod, *Works and Days* 528.

<sup>21</sup>Aeschylus, *Persae* 393.

<sup>22</sup>Alkman, 89.1.

<sup>23</sup>Homer, *Odyssey* 1.16.

<sup>24</sup>John Damascene, *Canons* 1.11.

<sup>25</sup>Romanos Melodos, *Hymns* ΜΣΤ. 1.1

<sup>26</sup>Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epigrams* 8.80.1

<sup>27</sup>Kallimachos, *Hymns*.

<sup>28</sup>Akathist Hymn 278.

<sup>29</sup>The Gospel of John 12.23

<sup>30</sup>Cosmas of Maiouma, 13.18

<sup>31</sup>D.C. Hesseling and H. Pernot (edd.) *Erotopaignia*, p. 26.

Ὅτι νύξ μοι ὑπάρχει  
Ζοφώδης τε καὶ ἀσέληνος  
Καὶ μαργαρίτην ἐκζητῶν  
Διέρρηξα νῦν τὴν στολὴν μου τὴν πρώτην  
Ἦστραψεν ἡ Ἀνατολή, κί' ἐβρόντηξεν ἡ Δύση  
Κι ὁ κάτω κόσμος ἀνοιξε καὶ τρίζουν τὰ θεμέλια.

## Η'

Πῶς τυραννεῖται ὁ ἄνθρωπος  
Τὸ ἄνθος τὸ γλυκάζον  
Ὁ ὠραιότατος καὶ τῶν ὠραίων ὁ κτίστης  
Ὁ λύχνος ὁ ἀσβεστος.  
Τὸ θαῦμα σιωπῶ.

## Θ'

Ἦρθεν ἡ ὥρα κι ὁ καιρὸς κι ἡ μέρα ξημερώνει  
Μὲ τετρακόσια σήμαντρα κι ἐξηνταδυὸ καμπάνες  
Μὲ δυὸ φιλιὰ τῆς μάνας μου, μὲ φούχτα γῆ τῆς γῆς μου  
Καὶ τὴν Κοινὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Λαλιά.  
Ἄρμα φωτὸς ὁ ἥλιος.  
Λάμπουν τὰ χιόνια στὰ βουνὰ κι ὁ ἥλιος στὰ λαγκάδια

For night surrounds me  
 Pitch-dark and moonless<sup>32</sup>  
 And seeking a pearl<sup>33</sup>  
 I now rent my first raiment asunder.<sup>34</sup>  
 Lightning in the East, and thunder in the West<sup>35</sup>  
 The lower world gapes, and its foundations creak.<sup>36</sup>

## VIII

How mankind is oppressed  
 The sweet-smelling flower  
 The most beautiful of all and builder of beautiful things  
 The unwaning lamp  
 I am silent before the miracle.<sup>37</sup>

## IX

The season and the hour have come, the day dawns<sup>38</sup>  
 With the sound of four hundred sounding boards and  
     sixty-two bells<sup>39</sup>  
 With two kisses of my mother, and a handful of soil  
     from my land<sup>40</sup>  
 And the Common Greek Language.<sup>41</sup>  
 The sun is a chariot of light.<sup>42</sup>  
 The snows sparkle on the mountains and the sun shines  
     in the ravines<sup>43</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Kassiane, "Hymn for Holy Wednesday" 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns* 15.248

<sup>34</sup> Andrew of Crete, *Canons* 1.53.

<sup>35</sup> Vitzentzos Kornaros, *Erotokritos* 3.1557.

<sup>36</sup> Folksong "The Death of Digenis" 1.3

<sup>37</sup> José Grosdidier de Matons (ed.), *Romanos le Mélode* Vol. III 22.11.6; Vol. IV 42.6.3; Vol. III 21.4.3; Vol. II 14.8.9; Vol. III 24.21.6

<sup>38</sup> Vitzentzos Kornaros, *Erotokritos*, 3.1557

<sup>39</sup> Folksong "Tis Ayia-Sofyas" 3

<sup>40</sup> Dionysios Solomos, "O Porphyras" 5

<sup>41</sup> Constantine Cavafy "In 200 B.C."

<sup>42</sup> Grosdidier de Matons, *op. cit.* Vol. IV 32.7.1

<sup>43</sup> Folksong "Ton Kolokotroniaion" 1

Τὰ βράχια μὲ τὴ γνώση τῶν γονιῶν μας  
Καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀδερφοῦ μας ζωντανὸ στὸ χῶμα.

### ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟ ΜΥΚΗΝΑΪΚΟ

οἶκος α΄

ΚΕρογος  
Εἶναι τ' ὄνομα  
Τοῦ Μυκηναίου βοσκοῦ χάραγμα σὲ μιὰ πλῖθα  
Στὸ ἀνάχτορο τοῦ Νέστορα  
Τὸ ρημαγμένο  
ἀπ' τὸν καιρὸ τοῦ ἀνέμου  
Κι ἀπ' τὴν πυρκαγιὰ τοῦ καιροῦ.  
Μὰ ποιὸς νὰ ἦταν ὁ βοσκός  
Αὐτός, αὐτός  
Ὁ Κέρογος;

οἶκος β΄

ΡΟδοδά-  
χτυλη πρὶν ἢ αὐγή  
σκαρίσει στὴ σιωπῇ  
ἄρχιζα νὰ ρωτάω  
πλῖθες, σοφοὺς, συντρίμματα,  
μὰ πρὶν βλαστήσει  
εἶχε κίολας πλιθιάσει  
στὴ ρίζα τῆς ἡ ἀπάντησιν.  
Καὶ πάντα παραμόνευε  
Σὰν ἱσκιωμα  
Ὁ Κέρογος.

The crags with the wisdom of our fathers  
And the blood of our brother alive in the earth.<sup>44</sup>

MYCENAEAN KONTAKION<sup>45</sup>

*First Oikos*

KErowos  
Is the name  
Of the Mycenaean shepherd  
A carving on a tablet  
In the palace of Nestor  
Destroyed  
By the timeless wind  
And by the flame of time.  
But who might that shepherd have been  
That one, that  
Kerowos?

*Second Oikos*

ROsy-fingered the dawn  
Before it stirred amid the silence  
I began to ask  
Bricks, wise men, fragments,  
But before it sprouted  
The answer had already turned to brick  
At its root.  
And always, hovering  
Like a shadow,  
Kerowos.

<sup>44</sup>Yiorgos Seferis "Mythistorima" 17.

<sup>45</sup>A "kontakion" is a hymn pertaining to a particular saint and consisting of a proemium and several clusters of verses ("oikoi").

οἶκος γ'

Γόος μὲς  
Στῇ σιωπῇ βαρύς,  
Καθὼς ἐρώτησα  
Τὸ μόνο ποὺ μᾶς ἔχει  
Ἀπομείνει ἀπ' τὸν Κέρογο.  
Κι ὅμως δὲν ἦταν  
Γόος αὐτὸ καὶ θρῆνος,  
Μὰ ἓνας ἦχος ποὺ ἔβοσκε.  
Ὅπως κεράτινος αὐλὸς  
Τραγούδαγε  
Ο Κέρογος.

οἶκος δ'

Στὸν αὐλὸ  
τὸν κεράτινο  
ἔπειτα ἔριγνε  
ἀνάσα τὸν καημό του  
τοῦ Θαλαμάτα ὁ βοσκὸς  
κι ἔτρεμε ἡ πάχνη  
πέρα ἀπ' τὴν Καλαμάτα  
στὴν Ἀσιατίαν καὶ ρώταγαν:  
Μὰ ποιὸς νὰ ἦταν ὁ βοσκὸς  
αὐτός, αὐτός  
ὁ Κέρογος;

*Third Oikos*

Wounded cry  
In the silence  
When I asked about  
The only thing that  
Remains from Kerowos.  
And yet it was not  
A wounded cry or a lament  
But a sound that grazed.  
Like a pipe made of horn  
He sang,  
Kerowos.

*Fourth Verse*

Sorrow he breathed  
Into the pipe made of horn,  
The shepherd of Thalamatas  
And the frost shivered  
Far past Kalamata  
In Asiatia; and people asked:  
But who was he, that shepherd,  
That one, that  
Kerowos?

Translated by Theony Condos





## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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THEONY CONDOS was born in California and studied French and Classical Philology. She taught Greek and Latin at Wilson College and the University of California, Riverside, and has published translations of both Ancient and Modern Greek texts. She is currently teaching Modern Greek at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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THEOPHANES J. KAKRIDIS was born in Athens in 1933, and studied Classical Philology at the Universities of Thessaloniki, Mainz, and Tübingen, where he was Lecturer in Modern and Ancient Greek language (1959-64). In 1964 he was elected Professor of Classical Philology in the newly founded University of

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MARIA LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU is the author of 35 books of poetry, fiction, essays, plays, critical reviews, and short stories. Her work was honored by the Team of Twelve in 1966, and two of her novels received prizes from the Academy of Athens in 1987 and 1995, respectively. A native of Lemnos, she is a graduate of the Panteion University of Greece and of the Sorbonne. Her poetic work *Mystic Passage* has been published in French and Swedish translations. Selected poems from this work have appeared in English translation [Rhoda H. Kaufman, (ed.) *A Woman of Lemnos*, Toronto (Guernica), 2002.] The entire work appears here in English translation for the first time.

YIANNIS MOTSIOS was born in Despotis Grevenon. After completing high school in Greece he enrolled in the University of Tashkent, and graduated from the University of Kiev with distinction. He was subsequently admitted to the Institute of World Literature of the USSR Academy of Sciences, where he defended his doctoral dissertation on the works of Solomos. From 1962 to 1975 he was a researcher in Modern Greek Literature at the Institute of World Literature. From 1980 to 1986, he taught at the University of Crete. In 1986 he was appointed Lecturer in the School of Philology of the University of Ioannina. He has published in both Greek and Russian on Solomos, Palamas, Greek Romantic poetry, Greek Literature of the Resistance, Greek Funeral Laments, and Greek prose during the period 1600-1821. He has translated Kazantzakis, Solomos, and Palamas, among others, into Russian, and is also a published poet.

TAKIS SINOPOULOS is a poet, translator, and scholar. He holds degrees in political science and theology, and a multi-doctorate (sociology of work, sociology of the family, sociology of religion, Old Testament studies) from the University of Thessaloniki. His translations into Modern Greek include the Apocalypse of John, Romanos Melodos, and the Divine Liturgy of John Chrysostom. His research ranges from theory of the social sciences, the "social penalty" of the working woman and its measurement, the religious life of Greek prisoners, and the sociology of the Old Testament, to the qualitative dimension of work. From 1970 to 1995, he was a research scholar at the National Center for Social Research in Athens. He is currently working on an epic poem whose compass is not only Greece but the entire poetic tradition of Western civilization.



