

ALBANIA

Asdreni

The Flute

Oh flute, I worship you with faith and longing
For I was raised, the consort of your trill divine
 from the time I was a lad,
You poured dew into my soul,
At the height of my joy, my feelings merged
 in a tenderness rare.

With you I felt an unslaked sense
Of love for Albanian soil
 Which remains day after day in my dreams,
When your sounds, the treasures of the past,
Traverse my mind like a summer's breeze
 And with deep ecstasy.

When you speak to me and fill me,
Unending voices echo and swell
 In waves like a chorus of angels,
Companions of the peaks, streams and hills,
From your lips flit fairies
 As if from some majestic palace.

Like starlight and moonbeams in longing,
Sparkling on the surface of the lake,
 I quiver like a lover,
As your words, harbingers of a message
From the Earthly Beauty, with fair tones,
 offer us a breath of spring.

Like the season which begins to blossom,
Unfolding its wide wings within our bosom
 To give us strength and divine grace,
So do you lend the world a new face
 And create around us a joyous choir
When your notes traverse the scales.

With you does the shepherd climb to the mountain pastures
Moved by your magic melodies,
 Your every fire melts his heart,
With you do young lads take to the dance,
Thrilled by your sacred songs of love
 Welling anew within their breasts.

Like tender leaves quivering in the wind
Which in their rustling strike up a song
 In perfect harmony,
Whosoever hears your chant

Recalls forgotten memories
Like a symphony from the heavens.

The farmer bent behind his plough
Or scything ripened sheaves of grain
Knows not why he slaves,
Yet with you all his hardship dissolves
As his thirst abates when he scoops
And drinks the waters of mountain springs.

From ancient times our ancestors
Bore you in their belts, sabres brandished,
Singing their fiery songs
And spreading courage in the thick of battle,
Always were they rewarded for their toil,
As was the legendary Alexander.

With you did the goddess Minerva
While away the hours in delight,
Up on flashing Olympia
And the nymphs around her like tiny stars
In the rhythmic pacing of the dance
Teased jealous Bacchus.

Virgil, master and famed singer
Of ancient times, and Mozart -
With you, they built their sacred altars,
With you do nations dream,
Nourished on lofty ideals
From a healing source.

So many others have followed,
As new tokens of progress,
Which no one on earth can oppose,
To you, poets will always weave hymns,
For with your strength and courage, magic flute,
You soar above them all.

Naim Frasheri

Hope

I have great hope
In God
That he will not abandon
Albania thus,
But that she will shine forth
And break into blossom.

May the day dawn
That will bestow upon us
A great light,
Giving birth to:
 Civilization,
 Prosperity.

Fraternity
And unity
And compassion
Are our salvation.
 Happy is he who will be present
 When this day comes.

When Albania
Will be radiant
And misfortune
Will be banished
 Forever
 From her sight.

For Albania,
Joyous days
Are at hand.
The darkness is receding.
 Happy is he who will live
 To see her reign!

For the Albanian
And his language
Are at one
With Albania.
 Happy is he who will
 Behold her soon!

Knowledge
And progress,
Goodness
And humanity
 Will arise,
 Never to stray.

Qerbelaja

We believe in the true God
Who is the universe itself,
Without him there is no place,
He is the beginning and the end.
Wherever we look,
We see his face,

He is everything in this life,
He is the true God!
The blossoming flowers
Betray his beauty,
He is the rose,
He is himself the nightingale,
And when the true God
Wanted to reveal himself to the world,
He then created man.

Migneni

Autumn on parade

Autumn in nature and autumn in our faces.
The sultry breeze enfeebles, the glowering sun
Oppresses the ailing spirit in our breasts,
Shrivels the life trembling among the twigs of a poplar.
The yellow colours twirl in the final dance,
(A frantic desire of leaves dying one by one).
Our joys, passions, our ultimate desires
Fall and are trampled in the autumn mud.

An oak tree, reflected in the tears of heaven,
Tosses and bleeds in gigantic passion.
"To live! I want to live!" - it fights for breath,
Piercing the storm with cries of grief.

The horizon, drowned in fog, joins in
The lamentation. In prayer dejected fruit trees
Fold imploring branches - but in vain, they know.
Tomorrow they will die... Is there nowhere hope?

The eye is saddened. Saddened, too, the heart
At the hour of death, when silent fall the veins
And from the grave to the highest heavens soar
Despairing cries of long-unheeded pain.

Autumn in nature and autumn in our faces.
Moan, desires, offspring of poverty,
Groan in lamentation, bewail the corpses,
That adorn this autumn among the withered branches.

Suffering

For some time now
I have seen clearly
How from suffering my eyes are growing larger,
The furrows in my face and brow are growing deeper,
And my smile has grown bitter...
...and I have come to realize

That the coming days
Will no longer be constructive ones
Of energy and work, but simply the passing
Of a waning life.
With time, I have come to see
How this treacherous life
Has singed
Each of my senses,
One by one,
Until nothing remains
Of the joy
I once had.

Oh life,
I did not know before
How much I dreaded
Your grip
That strangles
Ruthless.

But helpless now,
I gaze into the mirror and see
How from suffering my eyes are growing larger,
The furrows in my face and brow are growing deeper,
And that soon I will become
A tattered banner,
Worn and torn
In the battles of life.

Σύγχρονη αλβανική ποίηση

Flutura AÇKA

Frightful succession of seasons

On the sidewalks of sadness
The rain began to fall,
As if to remind me that
Autumn was nigh.
A voice
From the abode of the day drew near:
After me comes winter,
And winter will freeze you numb.

Monotony

In that same street,
With those same steps,
Under those same trees
We meet,
With the very same expressions

On that most monotonous and
Most genuine of mornings.
Grey hair,
The only change
In the heavy air of time.

Oblivion

I have forgotten how to sing of love
Since that moment when
It betrayed me
With its silence.

Lindita Arapi

Memory

The aging stations of memory
Drip in the rain
So far away, like the lonely.
The walls have lost their colour,
For the weather has turned cold.
Images of time gone by rusting on open platforms
Unattended.
Memory,
Holes in my head,
Empty
Sad-looking trains,
They leave the stations, but never arrive.
Only their lights quiver in the distance.
Relieved of the weight in my head,
That unearthed ancient skull,
Only echoes
Resound.

Walls

And if a wall, long and thick,
A high wall
Should rise in front of you....
What would you do?
I would close my eyes, I would crouch
And rest my cheek against it,
I would find peace in its cool serenity.

And if this wall were death...

Belief

The broken vase
Grows cold
A solitude of petals

Opened in glass
Have withered in my hands,
However much the splinters of glass may weep
I still don't believe in the sincerity of bloody hands,
Silence is a grave
From which the truth will sprout.
I believe only
In the broken vase.

Dritëro Agoli

The Foundations

Here are the foundations of my old house,
The house I left once upon a time,
And here too is the old doorstep,
More than a doorstep - a stone.
Tender grass has covered both the doorstep and the foundations,
And above the grass, apple trees wave their branches,
Trees unknown to me when I was a child,
Apple trees that friends planted the day of my departure.
Under the grass together with the chiselled doorstep
Sleep old verses from school notebooks.
They sleep and the dense grass grows over them,
The apple blossoms cast their petals.
Visions of these one-time verses come alive
Whenever the road brings me back here,
And they rustle with the grass and apple leaves
And flutter past...
Then I sit down under a tree and talk to myself,
A blade of grass between my lips:
It is true that I have written poems in the city,
But deep down inside I am a farmer...
And I need not blush at having hung onto this lifeblood,
Lifeblood of good dreams,
Upon which I have built other dreams,
Beautiful, delirious dreams...

The Heart

Mountains, mountains, mountains,
Full of iron, heroism and grain!
No measure can contain you,
Only my heart, that has room for everything!

Martin Camaj

A Bird Languishes

The Canon of Birds says:
Every bird shall stretch its wings and perish on the grass,

Punishment for having plied the forbidden border
Between heaven and earth.

A bird languishes upon the lawn, at death's door,
The leaves in the trees are
Unreachable birds and companions
Frolicking in the sunlight.

In the distance are two millstones pounding
At one another, as is their wont,
Silently.

To a modern poet

Your road is good:
The Parcae are the ugliest faces
Of classical myths. You did not write of them,
But of stone slabs and of human brows
Covered in wrinkles, and of love.
Your verses are to be read in silence
And not before the microphone
Like those of other poets,

The heart
Though under seven layers of skin
Is ice,

Ice
Though under seven layers of skin.

Fragment

The worker sets off in search of work abroad
With a piece of sky in his arms
And sea salt in pinewood boxes.
In his hand he holds a slingshot,
And river pebbles in his mouth
Instead of bread.
The road before him is lit
By his eyes' glowing embers.

Ismael Kadare

And when my memory,
And when my fading memory,
Like the after-midnight trams,
Stops only at the main stations,
I will not forget you.

I will remember
That quiet evening, endless in your eyes,

The stifled sob upon my shoulder,
Like snow that cannot be brushed off.

The separation came
And I departed, far from you.
Nothing unusual,
But some night
Someone's fingers will weave themselves into your hair,
My distant fingers, stretching across the miles.

Poetry

How did you find your way to me?
My mother does not know Albanian well,
She writes letters like Aragon, without commas and periods,
My father roamed the seas in his youth,
But you have come,
Walking down the pavement of my quiet city of stone,
And knocked timidly at the door of my three-storey house,
At Number 16.
There are many things I have loved and hated in life,
For many a problem I have been an 'open city',
But anyway...
Like a young man returning home late at night,
Exhausted and broken by his nocturnal wanderings,
Here too am I, returning to you,
Worn out after another escapade.

And you,
Not holding my infidelity against me,
Stroke my hair tenderly,
My last stop,
Poetry.

(Yalta 1959)

The cataracts

The cataracts cascade downwards
Like spirited white horses,
Their manes full of foam and a rainbow of hues.

But suddenly, at the edge of the gorge,
They fall on their forelegs,
They break, oh, their white legs,

And die at the foot of the rocks.
Now in their lifeless eyes
The frozen sky reflects.

Rita PETRO

To a poet

How did you catch my eye so suddenly,
Together with the wind, the flowers, the trees,
Together with the song, the river, the sea,
Together with hope, pain and laughter?
You caught my eye so suddenly,
Or were you there from the start?

ΡΩΣΙΑ

Anna Ahmatova,

In the Evening

The garden rang with music
Of inexpressible despair.
A dish of oysters spread on ice
Smelled like the ocean, fresh and sharp.

He told me: 'I'm a faithful friend!'-
And lightly touched my dress.
How different from embraces
The touch of those two hands.

That's how one strokes a cat or bird
Or looks at slender lady riders...
Just laughter in his quiet eyes,
Beneath his light gold lashes.

And the despondent voices of the violins
Sing out beyond the hanging smoke:
'Give blessings to heaven above
At last you're alone with your beloved.'

Lying in me

Lying in me, as though it were a white
Stone in the depths of a well, is one
Memory that I cannot, will not, fight:
It is happiness, and it is pain.
Anyone looking straight into my eyes
Could not help seeing it, and could not fail
To become thoughtful, more sad and quiet
Than if he were listening to some tragic tale.

I know the gods changed people into things,
Leaving their consciousness alive and free.
To keep alive the wonder of suffering,
You have been metamorphosed into me.

Solitude

So many stones have been thrown at me,
That I'm not frightened of them anymore,
And the pit has become a solid tower,
Tall among tall towers.
I thank the builders,
May care and sadness pass them by.
From here I'll see the sunrise earlier,
Here the sun's last ray rejoices.
And into the windows of my room
The northern breezes often fly.
And from my hand a dove eats grains of wheat...
As for my unfinished page,
The Muse's tawny hand, divinely calm
And delicate, will finish it.

Memory Of Sun

Memory of sun seeps from the heart.
Grass grows yellower.
Faintly if at all the early snowflakes
Hover, hover.

Water becoming ice is slowing in
The narrow channels.
Nothing at all will happen here again,
Will ever happen.

Against the sky the willow spreads a fan
The silk's torn off.
Maybe it's better I did not become
Your wife.

Memory of sun seeps from the heart.
What is it? -- Dark?
Perhaps! Winter will have occupied us
In the night.

Celebrate

Celebrate our anniversary – can't you see
tonight the snowy night of our first winter
comes back again in every road and tree -
that winter night of diamantine splendour.

Steam is pouring out of yellow stables,
the Moika river's sinking under snow,
the moonlight's misted as it is in fables,
and where we are heading – I don't know.

There are icebergs on the Marsovo Pole.
The Lebyazh'ya's crazed with crystal art.....
Whose soul can compare with my soul,
if joy and fear are in my heart? -

And if your voice, a marvellous bird's,
quivers at my shoulder, in the night,
and the snow shines with a silver light,
warmed by a sudden ray, by your words?

White Night

There will be thunder then. Remember me.
Say ' She asked for storms.' The entire
world will turn the colour of crimson stone,
and your heart, as then, will turn to fire.

That day, in Moscow, a true prophecy,
when for the last time I say goodbye,
soaring to the heavens that I longed to see,
leaving my haven't locked the door,
Nor lit the candles,
You don't know, don't care,
That tired I haven't the strength
To decide to go to bed.
Seeing the fields fade in
The sunset murk of pine-needles,
And to know all is lost,

That life is a cursed hell:
I've got drunk
On your voice in the doorway.
I was sure you'd come back.

You Will Hear Thunder by Anna Akhmatova

You will hear thunder and remember me,
And think: she wanted storms. The rim
Of the sky will be the colour of hard crimson,
And your heart, as it was then, will be on fire.

That day in Moscow, it will all come true,
when, for the last time, I take my leave,
And hasten to the heights that I have longed for,
Leaving my shadow still to be with you.

Sunbeam by Anna Akhmatova

I pray to the sunbeam from the window -
It is pale, thin, straight.
Since morning I have been silent,
And my heart - is split.
The copper on my washstand

Has turned green,
But the sunbeam plays on it
So charmingly.
How innocent it is, and simple,
In the evening calm,
But to me in this deserted temple
It's like a golden celebration,
And a consolation.

The Sentence

And the stone word fell
On my still-living breast.
Never mind, I was ready.
I will manage somehow.

Today I have so much to do:
I must kill memory once and for all,
I must turn my soul to stone,
I must learn to live again--

Unless . . . Summer's ardent rustling
Is like a festival outside my window.
For a long time I've foreseen this
Brilliant day, deserted house.

I Don't Know If You're Alive Or Dead

I don't know if you're alive or dead.
Can you on earth be sought,
Or only when the sunsets fade
Be mourned serenely in my thought?

All is for you: the daily prayer,
The sleepless heat at night,
And of my verses, the white
Flock, and of my eyes, the blue fire.

No-one was more cherished, no-one tortured
Me more, not
Even the one who betrayed me to torture,
Not even the one who caressed me and forgot.

You Thought I Was That Type by Anna Akhmatova

You thought I was that type:
That you could forget me,
And that I'd plead and weep
And throw myself under the hooves of a bay mare,

Or that I'd ask the sorcerers
For some magic potion made from roots and send you a terrible gift:
My precious perfumed handkerchief.

Damn you! I will not grant your cursed soul
Vicarious tears or a single glance.

And I swear to you by the garden of the angels,
I swear by the miracle-working icon,
And by the fire and smoke of our nights:
I will never come back to you.

Alexander Pushkin

The Dream

Not long ago, in a charming dream,
I saw myself -- a king with crown's treasure;
I was in love with you, it seemed,
And heart was beating with a pleasure.
I sang my passion's song by your enchanting knees.
Why, dreams, you didn't prolong my happiness forever?
But gods deprived me not of whole their favor:
I only lost the kingdom of my dreams.

The Flower

A flower - shrivelled, bare of fragrance,
Forgotten on a page - I see,
And instantly my soul awakens,
Filled with an aimless reverie:

When did it bloom? the last spring? earlier?
How long? Where was it plucked? By whom?
By foreign hands? or by familiar?
And why put here, as in a tomb?

To mark a tender meeting by it?
A parting with a precious one?
Or just a walk, alone and quiet,
In forests' shade? in meadows' sun?

Is she alive? Is he still with her?
Where is their haven at this hour?
Or did they both already wither,
Like this unfathomable flower?

A Little Bird

In alien lands I keep the body
Of ancient native rites and things:
I gladly free a little birdie
At celebration of the spring.

I'm now free for consolation,
And thankful to almighty Lord:

At least, to one of his creations
I've given freedom in this world!

Remembrance

When the loud day for men who sow and reap
Grows still, and on the silence of the town
The unsubstantial veils of night and sleep,
The meed of the day's labour, settle down,
Then for me in the stillness of the night
The wasting, watchful hours drag on their course,
And in the idle darkness comes the bite
Of all the burning serpents of remorse;
Dreams seethe; and fretful infelicities
Are swarming in my over-burdened soul,
And Memory before my wakeful eyes
With noiseless hand unwinds her lengthy scroll.
Then, as with loathing I peruse the years,
I tremble, and I curse my natal day,
Wail bitterly, and bitterly shed tears,
But cannot wash the woeful script away.

I loved you once

I loved you once: perhaps that love has yet
To die down thoroughly within my soul;
But let it not dismay you any longer;
I have no wish to cause you any sorrow.
I loved you wordlessly, without a hope,
By shyness tortured, or by jealousy.
I loved you with such tenderness and candor
And pray God grants you to be loved that way again.

The poet

Until he hears Apollo's call
To make a hallowed sacrifice,
A Poet lives in feeble thrall
To people's empty vanities;
And silent is his sacred lyre,
His soul partakes of chilly sleep,
And of the world's unworthy sons
He is, perhaps, the very least.

But once Divinity's command
Approaches his exquisite ear,
The poet's soul awakens, poised,
Just like an eagle stirred from sleep.
All worldly pleasures leave him cold,
From common talk he stays aloof,
And will not lower his proud head
Before the nation's sacred cow.
Untamed and brooding, he takes flight,

Seething with sound and agitation,
To reach a sea-swept, desert shore,
A woodland wide and murmuring...

The Name

What is my name to you? 'T will die:
a wave that has but rolled to reach
with a lone splash a distant beach;
or in the timbered night a cry ...

'T will leave a lifeless trace among
names on your tablets: the design
of an entangled gravestone line
in an unfathomable tongue.

What is it then? A long-dead past,
lost in the rush of madder dreams,
upon your soul it will not cast
Mnemosyne's pure tender beams.

But if some sorrow comes to you,
utter my name with sighs, and tell
the silence: "Memory is true -
there beats a heart wherein I dwell."

An Invocation

O if it's true that in the night,
When rest the living in their havens
And liquid rays of lunar light
Glide down on tombstones from the heavens,
O if it's true that still and bare
Are then the graves until aurora --
I call the shade, I wait for Laura:
To me, my friend, appear, appear!

Beloved shadow, come to me
As at our parting -- wintry, ashen
In your last minutes' agony;
Emerge in any form or fashion:
A distant star across the sphere,
A gentle sound, a puff of air or
The most appalling wraith of terror,
I care not how: appear, appear!..

I call you -- not to speak my scorn
Of people whose ill-fated malice
Has killed my friend, and not to learn
The secrets of the nether-palace,
And not because a doubt may tear
My heart at times... but as I suffer,

I want to say that still I love her,
That still I'm yours: appear, appear!

Solitude

He's blessed, who lives in peace, that's distant
From the ignorant fobs with calls,
Who can provide his every instance
With dreams, or labors, or recalls;
To whom the fate sends friends in score,
Who hides himself by Savior's back
From bashful fools, which lull and bore,
And from the impudent ones, which wake.

Vladimir Mayakovsky...

Call To Account!

The drum of war thunders and thunders.
It calls: thrust iron into the living.
From every country
slave after slave
are thrown onto bayonet steel.
For the sake of what?
The earth shivers
hungry
and stripped.
Mankind is vapourised in a blood bath
only so
someone
somewhere
can get hold of Albania.
Human gangs bound in malice,
blow after blow strikes the world
only for
someone's vessels
to pass without charge
through the Bosphorus.
Soon
the world
won't have a rib intact.
And its soul will be pulled out.
And trampled down
only for someone,
to lay
their hands on
Mesopotamia.
Why does
a boot
crush the Earth — fissured and rough?
What is above the battles' sky -
Freedom?

God?
Money!
When will you stand to your full height,
you,
giving them your life?
When will you hurl a question to their faces:
Why are we fighting?

Past One O'Clock

Past one o'clock. You must have gone to bed.
The Milky Way streams silver through the night.
I'm in no hurry; with lightning telegrams
I have no cause to wake or trouble you.
And, as they say, the incident is closed.
Love's boat has smashed against the daily grind.
Now you and I are quits. Why bother then
To balance mutual sorrows, pains, and hurts.
Behold what quiet settles on the world.
Night wraps the sky in tribute from the stars.
In hours like these, one rises to address
The ages, history, and all creation.

Marina Tsvetaeva

You who loved me with the falseness

You who loved me with the falseness
Of truth - and the truth of lies.
You who loved me-beyond
Anything!-Over the edge!
You who loved me beyond
Time-Right hand, wave!
You love me no more:
The truth in five words.

Little World

Children - are staring of eyes so frightful,
Mischievous legs on a wooden floor,
Children - is sun in the gloomy motives,
Hypotheses' of happy sciences world.

Eternal disorder in the ring's gold,
Tender word's whispers in semi-sleep,
On the wall in a cozy child's room, the dreaming
Peaceful pictures of birds and sheep.

Children - is evening, evening on the couch,
In the fog, through the window, glimmer street lamps,
A measured voice of the tale of King Saltan,
Mermaid-sisters of seas from tales.

Children - is rest, brief moment of respite,

A trembling vow before God's eyes,
Children - are the world's tender riddles,
Where in the riddle the answer hides!

Girlfriend

"I will not part! -- There is no end!" She clings and clings...
And in the breast -- the rise
Of threatening waters,
Of notes...Steadfast: like an immutable
Mystery: we will part!

V. I. Ivanov

Poets of Spirit

The snow is clothed in dawn
In the high desert,
We are oaths of Eternity
In the azure of Beauty.

We are splashes of scarlet foam
On the pallor of the seas.
Renounce your earthly chains
To sit among the kings!

Don't imagine we are dissolving in the sky,
Cut off from the earth: -
A holy path leads
Beyond the clouds into dreams.

Lermontov

Prayer

At life's most testing moment, when
the grieving heart's replete,
a prayer that is most potent then
I call up and repeat.

There is a power, suffused with grace,
when living words combine,
a breath beyond the commonplace,
that holds a joy divine.

Like dead-weight slipping from the brain
now fades my unbelief -
I trust again, shed tears again,
and such relief, relief...

Σύγχρονη ρώσικη ποίηση

Regina Derieva

A Poem

A poem—
is just one more
scrap of paper
that has sailed off the table
in a bottle
with a cry for help.

All My Life

All my life
I sought
an angel.
And he appeared
in order to say:
"I am no angel !"

I Don't Feel At Home Where I Am

I don't feel at home where I am,
or where I spend time; only where,
beyond counting, there's freedom and calm,
that is, waves, that is, space where, when there,
you consist of pure freedom, which, seen,
turns that Gorgon, the crowd, to stone,
to pebbles and sand . . . where life's mean-
ing lies buried, that never let one
come within cannon shot yet.
From cloud-covered wells untold
pour color and light, a fete
of cupids and Ledas in gold.
That is, silk and honey and sheen.
That is, boon and quiver and call.
That is, all that lives to be free,
needing no words at all.

Andrei Voznesensky

THE SONG

Sailor, my dear, my heaven-made spouse!
There is one thing that I beg of you, man:
Kiss any strangers, and give them your flowers,
love many women. But, pray, don't love one.

These are the words that I send with my letter,
piercing land after land they will moan;
stay there as long as you wish, and you'd better
love all the countries, but, pray, don't love one.

Give me a whistle -- when tired of roving.
Held in sweet bondage, or about to drown,
play with your life as you wish, when you're roaming,
but don't ruin ours because it is one.

SERGEI ESENIN

THE BIRCH-TREE

Just below my window
Stands a birch-tree white,
Under snow in winter
Gleaming silver bright.

On the fluffy branches
Sparkling in a row
Dangle pretty tassels
Of the purest snow.

There the birch in silence
Slumbers all day long
And the snow gleams brightly
In the golden sun.

And the dawn demurely
Going on its rounds
With a silver mantle
Decks again the boughs

ΕΛΛΑΔΑ

Constantine P. Cavafy

Ithaka

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon-don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon-you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind-
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.
Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

The City

You said: "I'll go to another country, go to another shore,
find another city better than this one.
Whatever I try to do is fated to turn out wrong
and my heart lies buried like something dead.

How long can I let my mind moulder in this place?
Wherever I turn, wherever I look,
I see the black ruins of my life, here,
where I've spent so many years, wasted them, destroyed them totally."
You won't find a new country, won't find another shore.
This city will always pursue you.
You'll walk the same streets, grow old
in the same neighborhoods, turn gray in these same houses.
You'll always end up in this city. Don't hope for things elsewhere:
there's no ship for you, there's no road.
Now that you've wasted your life here, in this small corner,
you've destroyed it everywhere in the world.

The Windows

In these darkened rooms, where I spend
oppressive days, I pace to and fro
to find the windows. -- When a window

opens, it will be a consolation. --
But the windows cannot be found, or I cannot
find them. And maybe it is best that I do not find them.
Maybe the light will be a new tyranny.
Who knows what new things it will reveal.

Walls

Without consideration, without pity, without shame
they have built great and high walls around me.

And now I sit here and despair.
I think of nothing else: this fate gnaws at my mind;

for I had many things to do outside.
Ah why did I not pay attention when they were building the walls.

But I never heard any noise or sound of builders.
Imperceptibly they shut me from the outside world.

LONG AGO

I'd like to speak of this memory...
but it's so faded now...as though nothing is left—
because it was so long ago, in my early adolescent years.

A skin as though of jasmines...
that August evening— was it August?—
I can still just recall the eyes: blue, I think they were...
Ah yes, blue: a sapphire blue.

Kiki Dimoula

Unexpectedations

Lord what's still not in store for us.

I'm sitting here and sitting.
It's raining without raining
just as when a shadow
returns to us a body.

I'm sitting here and sitting.
Me here, my heart opposite
and still further away
my weary relationship with it.
So we might seem many
whenever emptiness counts us.

Empty room blowing.
I hold tight to the way
I have of being swept off.

I've no news of you.

Your photo stationary.
You stare as if coming
you smile as if not.
Dried flowers at one side
incessantly repeating for you
their unadulterated name semprevives
semprevives—eternal, eternal
in case you forget what you're not.

I'm asked by time
how I want it to pass
exactly how I pronounce myself
as edging or ageing.
Foolishness.
No end is ever articulate.

I've no news of you.
Your photo stationary.
Just as it rains without raining.

Just as a shadow returns to me a body.
And just as we'll meet one day
up there.
In some lush sparseness
with shady unexpectations
and evergreen rotations.
As interpreter of the intense
silence that we'll feel
—developed form of the intense
intoxication caused by a meeting
down here—will come a void.

And we'll be enraptured then
by a passionate unrecognition
—developed form of the embrace
employed by a meeting down here.
Yes we'll meet. Breathing fine, concealed
form attraction. In a downpour
of heavy lack of gravity. Perhaps on one
of infinity's trips to ad infinitum;
at the ceremony for loss awards to the known
for its great contribution to the unknown;
guests at destination's starlight,
at cessation's galas on behalf of dissolving
causes and the skies' farewell
importances once great.
Expect that this company of distances
will be somewhat downcast, cheerless
even if non-existence finds cheer from nothing.
Perhaps because the soul of the party will be absent.

The flesh.

I call to the ash
to disarm me.
I call upon the ash
by its code name: Everything.

You'll meet regularly I imagine
you and the death of that dream.
The last-born dream.
Of all I had the best-behaved.
Clear-headed, gentle, understanding.
Not of course so dreamy
but neither worthless or mean,
no toady to all and sundry.
A very thrifty dream,
in intensity and errors.
Of the dreams I raised
my most loving: so I'd not
grow old alone.

You'll meet regularly I imagine
you and its death.
Give it my regards, tell it to come
too without fail when we meet
there, at the loss awards ceremony.

Love me as long as you don't live.
Yes yes the impossible's enough for me.
Once I was loved by that.
Love me as long as you don't live.
For I've no news of you.
And heaven forbid that the absurd
should show no signs of life.

Yannis Ritsos

Necessary Explanations

There are certain stanzas – sometime entire poems-
whose meaning not even I know. It is what I do not know
that holds me still. You were right to ask me. But do not ask me.
I do not know, I tell you:

Two parallel lights

from the same center. The sound of water
falling in winter from an overbrimming drain pipe,
or the sound of a waterdrop as it falls
from a rose in a watered garden
slowly, slowly on a spring evening
like a bird's sobbing. I do not know
what this sound means; even so, I accept it.

Whatever I do know, I've clarified for you. I've not been
neglectful.

But these, too, add to our lives.

I would notice,
as she slept, how her knees formed an angle on the bedsheet-
It was not only a matter of love. This corner
was a ridge of tenderness, and the fragrance
of the bedsheet, of cleanliness, and of spring supplemented
that inexplicable thing I sought –in vain again- to explain to
You.

Nikephoros Vrettakos

Without You

Without you doves
wouldn't find water.

Without you God
wouldn't switch on the light in his fountains.

An apple tree sows its blossoms
in the wind; in your apron
you bring water from the sky
the glow of wheat, and above you

a moon of sparrows

Andreas Embiricos

Winter Grapes

They took away her toys and her lover. Well then she bowed her head and almost died. But her thirteen destinies like her fourteen years smote the fleeing calamities. No one spoke. No one ran to protect her against the overseas sharks which had already cast an evil shadow over her like a fly staring with malice on a diamond or a land enchanted. And so this story was heartlessly forgotten as always happens when a forest ranger forgets his thunderbolt in the woods.

AUGMENTATION

It sometimes happens that one kisses
The hand of a morning reflection
In the silence of a landscape
Standing motionless with sealed mouth
Before the city awakens with a thousand fountains
And with the unfettered bathing voices
Suddenly released in the sudden sun
By the street-cleaners of the morning.

And so our pains have not gone for nothing
They lift their veils and reveal
Their mighty arms swelling
To reach into the heart of the city

Like the Magi of the East, and to raise
The fingers of the sleepers one by one
Toward the row of boats that sail the streets
Laden with perfumes
With treasures and provisions
From the remote lands, like the glance
Of a woman daydreaming.

Odysseus Elytis

Laconic

Ardor for death so enflamed me that my radiance returned to the sun,
And it sends me back into the perfect syntax of stone and air.
Well then, he whom I sought I am.
O flaxen summer, prudent autumn,
Slightest winter,
Life pays the obol of an olive leaf
And in a night of fools once again confirms with a small cricket
The lawfulness of the Unhoped-for.

THEY CAME

dressed up as "friends,"
 came countless times, my enemies,
trampling the primeval soil.
 And the soil never blended with their heel.
They brought
 The Wise One, the Founder, and the Geometer,
Bibles of letters and numbers,
 every kind of Submission and Power,
to sway over the primeval light.
 And the light never blended with their roof.
Not even a bee was fooled into beginning the golden game,
 not even a Zephyr into swelling the white aprons.
On the peaks, in the valleys, in the ports
 they raised and founded
mighty towers and villas,
 floating timbers and other vessels;
and the Laws decreeing the pursuit of profit
 they applied to the primeval measure.
And the measure never blended with their thinking.
 Not even a footprint of a god left a man on their soul,
not even a fairy's glance tried to rob them of their speech.
 They came
dressed up as "friends,"
 came countless times, my enemies,
bearing the primeval gifts.
 And their gifts were nothing else
but iron and fire only.
 To the open expecting fingers

only weapons and iron and fire.
Only weapons and iron and fire.

Giorgos Seferis

DENIAL

On the secret seashore
white like a pigeon
we thirsted at noon;
but the water was brackish.

On the golden sand
we wrote her name;
but the sea-breeze blew
and the writing vanished.

With what spirit, what heart,
what desire and passion
we lived our life: a mistake!
So we changed our life..

Σύγχρονη ελληνική ποίηση

Dimitris Varos

Mind Games

I am a waterfall in the desert.
A rain from a cloudless sky.
A well known but unborn child.
An insistence experience
that you never had.

I play mind games with your brain.
When you strike the keys and remember the sea
I come as indefinable memory.
When you look at your watch
and the time has passed
you feel me like a fleeting hallucination.

I play mind games with your brain.
I'm nesting behind your eyes.
I'm ranging through your dreams.
You are finding me in all of your desires.
In all of those are absent from you.

I play mind games with your brain.
I stand in the places that you cannot reach.
I exist where you cannot touch upon.
But I am what you always waiting for

I'm what holds your life on.

I play mind games with your brain.
But I swear this is not a fun.
I feel unbearable loneliness.
Because I do not have a body
And you, that you have, refuse me yours.

Manolis Anagnostakis

13-12-43

Remember me telling you: when the boats whistle don't
be in the port.
But the day that was leaving was ours and we didn't
want to ever let it go
A bitter handkerchief will greet the tedium of return.
It really was raining a lot and the streets were deserted
With a delicate, vaguely autumnal flavor
Closed windows and people so forgotten
– Why did they all leave us? Why did they all leave us?
I was clasping your hands
And there was nothing strange in my cry.

. . . One day we'll leave noiselessly and we'll roam
Through roaring towns and over desolate seas
With but one desire burning on our lips
It is love that we sought and they denied it to us
You forgot about our tears, our joys and our memories
Greeting while sails rippling in the wind
And maybe there's nothing else left for us to remember.

The anguished Why heaves up in my soul
I suck in the air of loneliness and desertion
I knock on the walls of my damp prison and I don't
expect an answer
No one will ever touch the extent of my affection
and sadness.

And you're waiting for a letter which doesn't come
A far-off voice revolves in your memory and fades away
While a mirror gloomily measures your face
Our lost ignorance, our lost wings.