

Cypriote Literature/Litterature Chypriote

VASSILIS MICHAELIDES

The Nereid

In the country where I was raised
and still kept on growing
when I started to palpitate a bit
then I wasn't frightened
of the ghosts and didn't hide
I ventured out for a walk.

At a river's crossing
I perceived a lisson girl (a beauty)
would this moment be curse!
I was caught as a lamb in the trap
poor wretch
while in the pasture-land.

When she looked at me the place lit up
my mind was dazzled
and a luminous world appeared.
When she smiled at me
paradise appeared
before me and I could not move.

At once I got in bewilderment
the world I forgot
and remained gaping silent.
She told me, come, follow me
and from the bottom of my heart I felt the pain
and I followed her, poor fool.

Hills, plains and mountains
together we traversed
full of flowers and thorns.

The street was endless
but we didn't get tired
it was a joy for us.

She was trembling lest she might lose me
and I was trembling lest I might lose her
and at the idea to speak to her and lest she speak to me.
I had thirst for her and was burning
I was trembling at the idea to touch her
lest we both turn into lightning.

Then we arrived to a mountain
Straingt up to heaven
Resembling a paradise
There we wept
Together and laughed
in the mountain's pugent musk.

She told me if you are brave
if you like this life
from now on stay without me
and she burst into laughter.
Immediately I felt my heart
nearly to crack.

She said and she vanished
and disappeared
as a passing wind.
My heart cracked
I lost my wits
since then I remain ecstatic.

The troubles that were gnawing me
haven't yet been revealed
even to the birds when they are gazing
Since then whenever I see the nereids
I tremble
and I turn down to avoid them.

Le rêve de Romios

Durant le mois de Mai quand tout fleurit et les plaines embellissent
et où tu ailles et d'où tu passes les fleurs exhalent une odeur suave,
un Mardi à l'aube des bateaux apparurent
venant de Dardanelles en assez grand nombre;
ils avaient le vent du sud-ouest à la poupe
et le vent du nord-est à leur proue
et du bruit que faisaient les vents à travers leurs agrès,
« Elli » rebondit de son rivage
avec deux étoiles au-dessous de la ligne de ses sourcils
et sur les vagues se tint debout et comme une fille d'amazone
emit un grand cri qui secoua les montagnes:
-Viens, mon plus beau, viens célèbre du monde,
depuis lors, depuis lors mon rivage t'attends;
que tes bateaux l'ornent de nouveau comme avant
du temps des premières richesses.
Dit et se coucha dans son tombeau aqueux
et se recouvra jusqu'à la tête de vagues.
Les bateaux arrivèrent déjà dans leur rivage
et Dieu d'en haut les voyait et les protégeait
et les vagues écumeuses couraient à leur côté.
Soudain les gens de Constantinople se murent
et jusqu'aux cieux leurs grands cris ont été entendus:
Il arrive, il arrive, parce que les voilà, sont apparus les premiers soldats
les rues brillent et resplendissent.
Voici notre plus beau, le voici, guidé par son aigle
bicéphale tout noir qui lui trace la route;
battant souvent les vents avec ses grandes ailes
et le tout Constantinople aux rues enneigées le voit.
Le soleil avançait dans sa route et midi arriva
et notre plus beau entra dans Constantinople avec ses troupes
et son aigle noir s'assit sur le dôme de l'Eglise Sainte Sophie
et un grand séisme secoua aussitôt la ville
et les morts se levèrent,
des tombeaux sont sortis.
et se mêlèrent aux gens qui couraient avec lui.

Et un bey aussitôt apparut le premier devant lui,
et après l'avoir salué avec sa grande courbette
dit ces deux mots du fond de son cœur:
-Sois le bien-venu, grand Roi Constantin
avec ta belle jeunesse, avec tes nouvelles troupes.
C'était moi qui te livrais bataille et à la Porte de Romanos
tu t'es couché et t'es endormi et le sort de Constantinople changea;
et le destin voulait que Dieu te réveille le temps venu,
que l'Orient et l'Occident te voient de nouveau
leur Roi comme antan,
avec tes richesses d'antan, avec tes premières gloires.
Que Dieu fasse que la paix règne pour toujours dans ton royaume.
A-t-il dit et disparut.
Dès lors les bateaux ont commencé à faire leur apparition
et de toutes parts
on a vu et entendu ses éclairs et tonnerres;
et tu entendais aussi bien dedans que dehors la trompette grecque
et partout à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur l'aigle battait de l'aile;
et Constantinople a compris ainsi que le rivage et ses montagnes,
grâce à la volonté de Dieu la ville est devenue comme avant;
et les cloches sonnèrent et les églises ouvrirent leurs portes.
des millions de nymphes s'amassèrent alors
et s'unirent désirs, espoirs et destins tourmentés,
les portes de l'Eglise Sainte Sophie s'ouvrirent
Constantin y entra et commença à célébrer la messe.
Et sur le dôme de Sainte Sophie firent leur apparition
le Christ et la Madone;
et un nuage d'encens en émana
aperçu et senti par les gens qui s'y trouvaient et ceux au dehors
et montit au-dessus recouvrant le tout Constantinople et s'arrêta
puis continua dilué et disparut haut dans les cieux.

THODOSSIS PIÉRIDES

Rue Beloyannis

Quand le bateau ivre qui me mène de ça, de là,
me fit débarquer dans ce port
d'innombrables rosiers s'assemblèrent sur le quai
pour me souhaiter la bienvenue au nom de la cité des roses.

Puis je partis dans les rues – mon élément de flâneur actif.

Ces quelques lettres sur fond bleu accrochées au mur
faisaient une fenêtre qui s'ouvre du côté du soleil
faisaient un sourire qui s'ouvre du côté de la vie
faisaient une fontaine qui jaillit des profondeurs de la mort
faisaient un œillet gigantesque
que la cité des roses avait piqué dans sa chevelure
un jour où elle était en larmes.

C'est à partir de ce moment-là
que le poète errant
a fait sienne la cité des roses.

Prague sous le Soleil

Cette ville réconcilie l'éclat de la lumière
et la tendresse des collines verdoyantes.

Elle réconcilie les flèches gothiques et des cheminées d'usines
les châteaux princiers et l'écusson de la république socialiste.

Ses vieilles ruelles sont des tunnels creusés dans le roc de l'histoire
pour déboucher dans le présent.

Et le présent est un port porteur de voyages vers l'avenir.

Egalité

Un clocher gothique et un peuplier.

De loin je n'arrivais pas à en faire le partage.
C'étaient deux petits détails aériens
qui s'efforçaient de compléter le paysage.
C'était aussi un but informe et neutre
arbitrairement fixé à ma promenade.

(Car ce poète toujours pourchassé, toujours errant,
veut – ô vanité – se fixer toujours des buts
il veut que même sa flânerie soit active).

Me voici maintenant arrivé au but.
Et les voilà qui abandonnent leur neutralité
deviennent identiques à eux-mêmes
en affirmant leur personnalité
de clocher gothique et de peuplier.

Identifié a la Vie

J'ai connu la grande poésie mise en vevre qu'on appelle le vin.
J'ai connu le chant suprême qu'on nomme femme.

J'ai vu les bateaux arriver et partir
habillés de leur rôle plus légère que plumage de cygne.

Je me suis multiplié dans les hommes, je me suis senti millions et millions.
Arrive au seuil de la vieillesse et de la solitude
j'ai senti comme miens tous les enfants des hommes
y compris le petit négrillon qui vient de naître dans village d'Afrique.

Et je fus aussi feuille, goutte de pluie, rocher au bord de l'océan
comme je fus grain de poussière sur la route
ou grand vent sur les hauteurs hurlantes.

Je vis la Révolution me sourire
comme si elle était ma soeur ou mon amante.

Elle me donna même, de temps en temps, une bonne fessée
tellement j'étais entré dans son intimité
tellement elle était ma mère et moi son enfant –
son galopin d'enfant pris en faute.

J'ai vécu dans le passé mordu par les couleurs de l'enfantement
j'ai vécu dans l'avenir scintillant des pierreries du bonheur
J'ai vécu dans le présent
et je fus arc tendu à chaque instant, à chaque bataille,
ou coulée d'acier dans le haut-fourneau du monde bâtisseur.

Et j'ai chanté, chanté à perdre haleine.

Maintenant je peux partir.

Le mort ne peut plus m'avoir.

Puisque je me suis identifié à la vie.

Sélection: Yannis Ioannou

COSTAS MONTIS

Instants (1958)

Qui nous a la continuité sectionnée ?
Qui nous a les heures fragmentées ?
Qui nous a les instants scindés ?

Le ressort s'est brusquement cassé
les aiguilles divaguent par l'avant et par l'arrière
l'heure s'est démontée.

Nos poches naguère pleines
d'amandes (les amandes, on est si paisible quand on les pèle
en descendant
lentement
la montagne)
sont maintenant pleines d'effroi.

Les temps sont passés où nous prenions le cœur par la main
et allions à l'église le dimanche matin.
Tout ça est maintenant entré dans un miroir,
tout ça maintenant, des photos jaunies.

On nous a désaffecté les signes de ponctuation
et nous galopons sans virgules, sans points, sans exclamations.

Leurré par la fenêtre ouverte
l'oiseau entra.

Non. Ces rides creuses
nous les avons reçues comme un fait accompli
et les avons faites nôtres.
Pour rien au monde ne laisserons
de nouvelles espérances
se tapir derrière ces digues
maintenant que résolument le visage nous nous aspergeons.
Ma prunelle perçut une esquisse de soleil dans la rue
pendant que le camion me broyait la tête
mon oreille saisit une voix d'enfant.

J'ai à dire à la mer.
Emmenez-moi le matin auprès d'elle, où elle est seule.

Quand donc ai-je possédé tout cela ?
Quand donc fus-je dépossédé de tout cela ?

(MICHALAKIS KARAOOLIS¹)

Hier encore l'Évangile a été sanctifié par un enfant
de dix-huit ans
qui l'a gardé entre les mains
s'est accroché à lui
au dernier moment.

Comment t'es-tu dressée dessus la montagne obscure,
ô ma sœur, et m'as-tu parlé,
un enfant inconnu et sans nom dans les bras ?
Et ces yeux de non-recevoir,
et ce visage si fermé,
que me disais-tu que je ne comprenais pas,
ô ma sœur que voulais-tu de moi ?

J'ai mis un dimanche matin à ma boutonnière
et à mon revers une banlieue de Nicosie.

Notre regard ne devrait peut-être pas porter si droit, sans dévier
quand l'horizon, circulaire, lui barre la route.

Ah ! ce disque qui tourne
et moi qui dois y lire l'écrit !

Inversée en nous, l'orthographe
des bons vieux mots de nos livres de lecture.
Et il n'y a même plus de nouveaux mots

1. N.d.T : Michalakis Karaolis, né en 1933, a été un membre actif de l'EOKA (Organisation nationale des combattants chypriotes) bras armé de la lutte pour la libération du joug anglais (1955-1959). Arrêté et condamné à mort en 1956, il a été exécuté par pendaison après un procès sommaire.

en grosses lettres noires
pour les écrire au tableau
et les précieusement
avec application
nettes et bien liées
recopier dans nos cahiers.

Le printemps ? Le printemps aussi nous débite les années.

Au-delà de toi, je choisis dans le néant,
Nul pas au-delà de toi, Eersie.

Ce n'est pas grave si
le petit oiseau gazouillant
la gentille queue remuant
s'envole du saule luxuriant.
C'est grave s'il quitte
le vieux platane et sec
sur lequel il s'est posé inopinément.

(PENDAISONS à NICOSIE)

Ce jour-là commença la nuit,
l'aube vint porteuse de roses noires,
et parmi les oiseaux, seules les chauves-souris s'éveillèrent.

Le poêle a ramené son tuyau
les murs se sont mis à écraser les portes
à biffer les fenêtres.

Rentrons enfin.
Le temps a fraîchi
et la voile blanche
que nous observions au large
a disparu.
Rentrons.

Complément aux Instants (1960)

Pourquoi tant de Monuments au Soldat Inconnu
et pas un seul à l'Homme Inconnu ?
Où est-ce qu'on déposera nos couronnes, nous ?

Je dis quand pourrai-je sortir
dans les prés du soleil et les criques de l'amour,
quand pourrai-je gagner le séjour des grands instants
cueillir des asphodèles de souvenirs d'enfance,
condenser lumière, cœur et sang de première main
pour la balance que nous allons dresser dans le fort de la plaine?

Je dis quand pourrai-je sortir
dans la rumeur de la ville
enregistrer les vibrations inflexibles de la bonne graine

qui gît sous le poids de l'ordure
et commenter les Quatre Évangiles ?

Je dis quand pourrai-je sortir
reconstituer le voyage de retour,
distiller les larmes des hommes
afin de les négocier avec Dieu ?

Je dis, quand ?

Mensonge que les instants sont des instants.

Quel était cet instant
qui instant n'était
qui l'étalon du temps n'était ?

Pourquoi nous la donner blanche, la lumière
et attendre de nous qu'elle soit analysée ?
Pourquoi nous l'avoir donnée blanche
pourquoi nous avoir par le blanc dupés ?

Rendez-moi ces jours
où l'amour écrivait sa première voyelle
et ouvrait les bras de son accent.

Lorsque je l'eus dit, je ne pus plus le dire,
lorsque je l'eus écrit, je ne pus plus l'écrire,
lorsque je le fus, je n'existai plus.

Je ne sais comment nous sommes arrivés sur cette tribune
(c'est donc ça, une tribune?)
Non, il est hors de question que nous parlions
Excusez, on descend.

Traduction: *May Shehab*

PANTELIS MICHANIKOS

Ode to a Murdered Boy

Stetson!
you who were with me in the
ships at Mylae!
The corpse you planted last year in the garden,
has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

This lush verdant plain stretched out before me
adorned with the yellow of the daisy
the red of the poppy
the smile of the violet
this plain
open beneath the warm
bright rays of the sun
this plain
gently caresses our soul
showing us the road of spring

on this plain
that praises the Lord and the soul of man
praises the body
and murmurs the song of mankind
on this plain
lies
dead
a Turkish boy

a convulsed face
caught in the midst of pain
a bloated
youthful mask
carved out in eternity asking
if the place was really too narrow

in the festival of spring
asking
if there are nations among the peoples of the daisy
and of which nation is the green grass
The sun warms the roots and the earth
Love overflows like dew
among the leaves and flowers of the soul of man
in the open sincerity of the plain
and a bloated terrible mask of a child
who moves his lips
under the bright light of the sun
and speaks: "I thank you
You brought me to this road and to this end. I thank
you kin and strangers"

Earth, Lull him into a
sweet sleep. For you

this year once more
the poet's voice
asks the oil traders
and the colonizers of corpses
asks Stetson:
"that corpse you planted last year in your garden,
has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?"

Translated by Stephanos Stephanides

THEODOSIS NICOLAOU

Art Exhibition

The visitors wander around the room
They look at the images on the walls
They comment and converse

"The craftsman must give flesh and blood to visions
Death's horror is totally absent from the works
What place do birds, trees, idyllic landscapes have
When brute violence treads us down?"

But when at night the guard turns off the light
And bolts the door
The birds open their beaks
And the empty room echoes with a wail
As if they are all mourning Andrianopolis.
And when the wind rises in the night
It does not ignore this room. It blows
And in the paintings shakes the leaves and trees
A sigh is heard within four walls
Just like the lament of Hecuba
Who, with the other Trojan women, sought
After their children in plundered Troy

It seems that meaning is in How not What.

Translated by Stephanos Stephanides

Memory

When we were children we were told to remain silent
So that grownups could be heard
Discussing serious issues.

We were told not to speak on the phone
Because phone is not a child's toy;

It too is necessary for grownups
And for very important things.

Several other things we were told
That narrowed the world's immensity.
Sobbing lowered heavy the eyelids
While sleep dried on the cheek a stamp of tears.

Later we spoke on the phone when we learned about sound;
That the sky is just another sea
With waves breaking or fading too on hearing.
We spoke when at the other end of the line
There could be no wolf
Nor bear, nor prince
Nor Santa Claus with the fragrant stick
And partridges in love with white pigeons
Knitting their singing.

Now that we learned what grownups talk about
Since now we are grownups too,
We also now understand why the world cannot
Rest for a single moment.
And it's now indeed the time to cry
If the springs of tears have not already emptied by then.

Translated by Stephanos Stavrides

Warm Day in Winter

All colors are beautiful
And all colors are pure.
Seasons rotate exposing
The earth's paintings
Made of flowers.
The black look of poppy
Through its guards' red veils,

The sea of wheat
Unfolding its yellow waves
In the summer.
And the other, the other great sea
Of white and blue in blue
Up to the copper scream
Left by the leaf of the carob tree
Refreshing the head of humans.
The bow in the sky undertakes
And classifies
Those washed by the rain.

Yet, affection for white
Does not derive from the Angels'
White wings and white uniform.

We once sat by the river of Albion.
There we neither cried, nor laughed
We were not asked, nor did we answer.
The water in the river flows
But a grey stillness reaches the eye.
One perceives motion only
By the sails of passing ships
Or when a body is carried away
And you consider that this body
Might be your own body.

And where there was nothing
Other than a desert
And you alone, naked in the desert,
Where the four winds were blowing in fury,
Carrying frost on their wings,
Echoed
Sweet, beloved, familiar
A voice.
"Your eyes still preserve the mud
And you cannot see the rivers of mercy around you

You cannot see the rain of love.
Take my clothes and hide your nudity.”
Then from the sky
Immense white dresses unfolded and expanded –
The earth was covered with snow.
The snow climbs on the trees
Climbs up to your heart
Which is warmed by the warmth of love.

Thousands of white butterflies
Climb on the rusty branches of the almond tree.
Thousands of flowers white like the snow
Shoot on our rusty soul.
Here in the state of death, life sparkles
And the vision of an almond tree in bloom
Calms the winter and your spirit.

Translated by Stephanos Stavrides

NICOS NICOLAIDES

The Suckers

The story is not very old, but in those days it was so rare for a troupe, along with a Singer-Dancer, an Acrobat (come phony Hercules) and a slapstick clown to travel to our island, that when it did it was considered an extraordinary event. The largest coffee shop was transformed into a show hall, where family showings were held, and if the Danceress* - the pride of the company-knew how to hold her own, a lot of money was to be made.

One such 'troupe' – with the addition of a magician who swallowed flames and produced ribbons from paper- had given two daily showings for almost two months, when suddenly one afternoon, when the hall was almost packed and without known cause, an inconceivable and most importantly tawdry rumor began to spread from table to table until it was known to the entire show hall. The youths ignited like a match, speaking in hushed tones and reserved gestures on account of the 'families' sitting nearby- regardless of the fact that the same rumor was being discussed among them also. However, within the universe of the small provincial town's show hall, the family unit is the exceptional constellation.

Soon enough one family man stands and gestures to his wife and daughters to leave. It was not that he had heard something which upset him but his nerves were strung from the agitation of the others and his ability to guess the topic of their discussion. He had something to add as he too was one of the 'suckers,' but you see, he was a family man which meant that he couldn't.

The youths kept on ordering more drinks and extra meze...Their nervousness made them big spenders. The circle continued growing, some joined from outside and others who could no longer bear sitting alone, dragged their seats closer and together they gathered muttering the same phrase: "Hey brother, what's this?" All replied with a shake of the head, opening their mouths to express that: "Yes, brother, we too are also in shock about it."

Yet another family man stands and drags his family outside.

* "Horeftra" in the original [correct form: Horeftria] meaning a female dancer possessing seductive qualities. The term Danceress [rare form of "female dancer"] has been chosen in order to retain something of the oddity of the original's term.

– The show, this once, will not be given..., he said in justification.

He too had stared for a long time, his eyes fixed on the stage curtain – a curtain made of cheap red calico – which had become heavy and unliftable tonight, imagining the dressing room of the Danceress. He too had once climbed up the ladder in the yard ‘with a small gift’ in hand only to walk back down duped.

– Young man..., one of the same...extra meze....

– Right away...

A third family man stands, with panicked movements, getting his family to rise. (He had also been suckered by the Danceress and for a long while, like a bad merchant who pours over his bills when his business fails, he had reflected on ‘just how badly he had miscalculated.’ Closing his eyes for a moment, making the darkness the mother of imagination, he saw himself inside the dressing room with the sweaty fleeces and undergarments hung all over and shook himself fearfully lest his wife be able, by shutting her eyes, to see him in there so degraded!)

The departure of the third family took with it all the rest.

– The show will not be given.

– But why did he beat her?...the poor thing..., said a small girl feigning innocence (cheeky thing, so small, yet knowing as much as the others).

Now that the show hall was empty of families, the voices changed tone and the conversation narrated the ‘incident’ candidly:

– ...He beat her and relished her....

– He beat and relished her...Well done to him!... A mother’s son...

They laughed maliciously, they laughed smugly, as though they were now completely avenged – as though they were tossing away all of the fooling and bitterness the Danceress had laden them with for so long. They boasted the achievements of the other man climbing alongside him to the seventh heaven of his triumph!

– Costas Chloros... a shoemaker from the upper neighborhood ..

– Who knows him?...

Nobody.

– A tough guy surely...

A tough guy. He did it well. Suckered once, suckered twice... He also paid for... the hope that she gave him (as, in truth, that woman knew how to

ignite passion and sell hope at a high price), but tonight he demanded the goods... Shaking her head from side to side she had said: "A song?! ...Here's a little song,..." and she started to sing softly... She would stop suddenly, in order to add to her performance, and then she'd continue as though she truly believed that was enough of a payback!... She spied him through the mirror. At times he'd half shut his eyes, then open them wide... and his cigarette: often it came close to going out, smoking up through his fingers whilst at other times, clasped tightly between his lips, it would near being spent in long intakes of breath. Watching her, he slowly lost awareness of her humanity, her weakness, feeling only the bestiality of her sex. "Come... my sweet, go to the town square," she said to him, "and I'll send you a kiss, secret from the families, but obvious to the youths, which will make them all burst... come my little one... go," and she smiled at him that unique smile, so feminine it blunts masculinity. He placed his hand upon her – perhaps he only wanted to touch her... perhaps to draw her to him – he himself could not even say what he wanted because his head started to fog and two dominant emotions awakened within him: He must not remain a sucker and he must not miss out on the pleasure he had prepaid for. She pulled back suddenly. "What is it?" she said with something evil, poisonous and proud in her voice. The young man rose and made to speak, but he just stood there smoking silently and smiling with a look of concentration. "Your behavior is inappropriate... you don't pounce upon a lady like that..." she said after a while fixing him with a wild stare while she started to laugh and sway her body. In a tone which perfectly contradicted her words she told him she was not the type of woman anyone could lay a hand on! A surge of impatience swept through the youth like a wave upon the beach. "That's called rape...", squealed the Danceress. "Rape is always a hideous thing...", the youth was able to think to himself but the Danceress made the mistake of adding: "I have an evil beast that protects me," and with a theatrical gesture she pointed to Hercules. A tasteless lithographic poster showing the phony Hercules took up one side of the dressing room. "Think it over." With that, the lion which slept within him woke: "Ah!... take a look at the scarecrow!.." he said scornfully, and the Danceress, having faced similarly unpleasant situations in the past and not wanting a repeat, felt she was done for and so threw herself into the corner as though to be protected by Hercules who stood ready to punch, kick, stomp, bite and even headbutt... "Do not resist as I will beat you..." he told her. "It suits you... you are the type of person who makes one want to beat you first... and then grab you..." and... wham, he delivered the first slap...

– But where is the lad now?!...

Each of them felt that if ‘they’ were to have “both beaten and relished her,” they’d have come back here to boast! “Ah! Why couldn’t it have been me?” each of them thought. “Why didn’t I think of it? It was so simple...”

Very simple indeed. Like the Egg of Columbus.

Just a minute the stage curtain – the one made of cheap red calico- began to jiggle, part a little and the head of the clown protruded. A whistle drew him back in and the red fabric merged as though it were liquid but moments later, whilst the entire room still laughed, his head appeared again, along with one arm which gestured his desire to speak.

– Back inside! Oooh... oooh... back inside...yeeha...! The entire room seemed to shout.

But the clown- or we should say: the man who impersonated the clown every night- emerged.

He was not made up or dressed as the clown. He moved forward...and among the throng which stood he gestured: “He beat her and relished her...”

The room broke out in applause asking if he beat her good...

“He beat her... he beat her... he beat her..,” he said in a gloating manner.

“Did he also relish her?...”

“He both beat and relished her,” he answered in an expressive pantomime.

Descending the small ladder, a longstanding sucker to the Danceress himself, he too joined the others.

-Young man... one of the same... and another...

Translated by Helen Stavrou

COSTAS MONTIS

A Dog Amid Two Villages

He is a big black dog, bony and unclean. His reddened eyes look around distrustfully. On one or two occasions he may have been fooled into believing that true friends exist but he won't be fooled again.

– No one, no one.

His tongue, hanging out, allows saliva to drip in threads to the ground. His breaths are shallow and hard. Without doubt he is hungry and very thirsty.

I don't know how, but today, the dog finds himself on the treeless road which joins villages N. and T. The scorching midday heat of August stings and ignites the white dust.

He walks with his head hung low without meeting the gaze of the passers – by trying to pull in his tongue a little so as to make them believe – in hope of avoiding a stoning- that he is neither hungry, nor thirsty and that he has something to do, that he is not a stray mutt.

– Gentlemen, a dog is passing: *comme il faut* with his master, with a name. He is passing by as he has a job to do down in the village.

A job? Where did he find a job? (– I have one). Where did he find the master? (– I have one).

Perhaps the only truth is that he is sure to have a name. It makes no difference that no one knows it anymore, that the streets have destroyed it. He may even meet an old acquaintance, who will call out to him, let's say Fox.

– Fox, Fox.

He will hesitate, of course, to believe that they are calling out to him, but in the end it will be proven that indeed they are.

In any case, it seems that he does not have a lot of faith in his own façade as he observes the passers-by from the corner of his eye and as soon as he picks up a suspicious move-a raised hand-he runs. He is then exposed for good but the stoning no longer reaches him.

However, this is not the case with everyone. There are some who can smell from a mile away that he is nothing but a mutt. However, he knows it too; he guesses that they are on to him. It is then that a game begins; they pretend they do not suspect him, looking away while he approaches, and he, as he is

forced to pass by them, plays dumb. They fool each other until the right moment comes for a hand to lift and throw the stone which is ready, and then the dog runs.

He runs just enough to distance himself. He does not have much strength to spare. He then slows his pace again and walks, head bent without looking at the passers-by.

– Gentlemen, a dog is passing by: *comme il faut*.

At some point he stops. One, two three tiny steps (steps taken as a reflex, steps which are made unconsciously and represent a will not a forced decision) then he stops. He stops as the houses of the village T. are visible. What is it exactly that he is going to do down in the village?

– You'd mentioned something about having a job to do?

– Lies.

– You'd mentioned something about a master?

– Lies. All lies. The name is a lie too.)

Yes, he has nothing to do down in the village. No-thing. He can't even go down to the village. His reddened gaze seeks something. So, must he go back? Even though the decision to return is a difficult one to make, it must be taken at some point. So he returns. He returns wondering how to deal with the passers-by he passed on his way. They now know that he is nothing but a stray mutt. And he knows them as well. They will all play with an open hand. The best for him to do would be to bravely hang his tail between his hind legs and try to escape the stoning by running.

– Yes, I'm a stray mutt. Do what you may and I will too.

And so it was. However, as he was running a stone hit him in the back. It hurt and he let out a yelp. Behind him he heard the sound of people laughing but his eyes did not redden, they could not redden more. Everything has its limits.

Of course, in spite of the fact that he has distanced himself considerably, this time he does not slow his pace. He runs to fool, to escape, not the passers-by but his own self.

To fool himself? The road will end soon. It already has. Here are the houses of village N., they've appeared.

He stops. These houses are not for him, they don't want him. He must go back again. Back? No. He is returning from 'back', there is no more 'back'. And there is no 'forward' either (How is it that there is suddenly no 'back' and no

'forward?') He looks at the houses again. The flaming sun beats down on him.

And so? And so nothing. No-thing. He fondles this 'nothing.' He fondles it for one, two, three minutes. Then he accepts it.

The passers-by approach but the dog no longer thinks about how to escape. In fact he takes no notice of them. He stands like black filth on the white road. Just like filth.

Translated by Helen Stavrou

GEORGE Ph. PIERIDES

Dementia

On the way to work yesterday I passed, as I did every morning, Thomas' kiosk to pick up the paper and ask my usual question:

“What news, Mr. Thomas?”

Thomas had his own way of looking at the daily news. An authentic man of the people, benevolent whilst at the same time crafty, he'd seen a lot in his sixty years of life, the last twenty of which he had spent laid back within this here uptown kiosk at the entrance to Nicosia along the road to Ammochostos. We neighbors and regular customers, called him stationmaster on account of the fact that by rule, the buses and taxis going to Ammochostos stopped in front of his kiosk to pick up any final passengers.

He also had his own unique way of commenting on the news. With a sense of realism and placidity, this almost unschooled man, was able to target the essence of what lay behind the exaggerated and contradictory newspaper headlines commenting on it with a type of humor which left nothing standing.

Recently however, Thomas' instinctive humor turned into a half-cry. It is the only remaining means through which he can comment, whilst staying true to himself, on the news which came like the onslaught of a tornado and swamped us, along with the bombings. The news which drowns us even now within the gulf of pain and uncertainty we are found, with the Turkish invader lurking a small distance from our neighborhood, behind the lines which divide our island in two.

Yesterday morning then, when I picked up the newspaper and asked the usual question, Thomas looked at me in a sorrowful manner, his gaze pointing me in the direction of a woman standing in front of the kiosk in the spot where passengers waiting to go to Ammochostos had once stood.

“Do you see her?” he says. “She's been standing there two hours.”

I hadn't noticed her, as she was not standing to the side but almost in the middle of the road. She stood unnaturally rigid. Her face was not visible from where I stood, only her back. Her lanky frame, the way in which her grey hair was cut, the unkempt yet good quality suit she wore, the black leather bag she held, revealed that she was from a wealthy environment.

“She is waiting for a taxi to Ammochostos,” continued Thomas.

I shivered.

“Amochostos?!”

“Yes. At first, after waiting a long time to no avail, she came and asked me why the taxis were delayed. I thought she was joking, but as I noticed the look in her eyes I realized that she was delusional.

‘There are no longer any taxis to Amochostos, my lady’, I say to her.

‘Of course there are,’ she says, ‘I’ve taken one from here many times. I need to get home, my dear man. How do you propose I go, on foot?...’

I tried to explain. Nothing. She stands there and waits, as you can see.”

At that moment a car coming at great speed became visible. The driver honked for her to step aside, but the woman did not move other than to raise her hand to signal him to stop. The driver, either because he didn’t realize or because he didn’t feel like taking her, avoided her with an abrupt turn and carried on his way.

Her hand stopped midway, and then she lowered it, revealing her impatience with a shrug of her shoulders before returning to her rigid stance.

“Perhaps she’s been hit by a car,” said Thomas.

“It would be wise,” I said, “for you to call the police for it appears that she is staying near here with friends or relatives and they will be looking for her about now.”

I left without turning to look at her face. I don’t know why I felt she would be hurt by my curiosity.

November 1974

Translated by Helen Stavrou