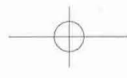




Ευφορία low PEN
για low Σ. Πασιαντά

literary profiles: 39

elli peonidou





literary profiles: 39

elli peonidou

Written and edited by
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foreword

The Cyprus PEN Center, in accordance with its policy of using all possible ways and means to promote Cyprus Literature to the international reading public, in addition to its Anthologies and biannual Reviews - published chiefly in English, but also in other languages - has begun to issue a series of brief volumes in English, dedicated to recognized Cypriot authors, under the general title Literary Profiles.

Our intention is to publish four such volumes annually for as long as we can obtain the necessary funding for such an ambitious venture.

Our ultimate aim is the presentation of all contemporary Cypriot authors of note, working in verse, prose, essay or theatrical writing, whether they be member of PEN or not, whether they be living or dead.

A select team of Literary critics and researchers has undertaken to edit the series. The translation has been assigned to an equally select team of translators. Others have given us permission to use already translated work.

We warmly thank all who collaborate with the Center, and all who contribute in any way to the publication of the present volumes.

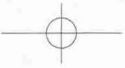
We also owe special thanks to the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and to the Publications Advisory Committee for the grants they so willingly gave us, and for their promise to continually support our efforts.

Administrative Committee
CYPRUS PEN CENTER



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introductory text

THE POETRY OF ELLI PEONIDOU*

by Chrysoula Alexandrou

"If you wish to satisfy all the senses that flock inside you - logic, imagination, sight, and a myriad other things that psychologists have yet to name - write a poem. Give them rhythm and bring them together into a harmonious whole." The words of the writer Virginia Woolf seem to be realized in the concerns, worries, sensitivities, needs, and artistic sensibility of the poet Elli Peonidou.

Born in the village of Vassa Kilaniou, and with clear and uninhibited thinking, Elli Peonidou calls attention to the confusion, compromise and slapdash excuses that lead to alienation and the debasement of all that is sacred within us.

Like a balm on the internal corrosion, which has left its mark of the eras, the poet's artful pen spreads the freshness and purity of the soil of the countryside, the mystery of the sea, the scent of pine, of the vineyard and of the fig tree, the magical call of the lemon tree and of the myrtle.

Voices heard through the entire collection *Soil of Cyprus* are allowed to invade in an effortless way, at times rising against the loss of purity, dignity and truth that resist leveling, at other

* Presentation of the work of Elli Peonidou at an event organized by the Cyprus PEN Centre in her honor.



times acting simply and tenderly as encouragement, serene shelter, and nostalgia at the twilight hour.

With an offhand excuse we covered up
the sacrifices of Iphigenia and Isaac
and transformed you
into a commercial exchange.
page 5

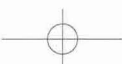
You struggle, like a heroic runner,
to hold on to the baton of dignity
Pine, pine of Cyprus, like its soul
that struggles to hold on to truth.
page 7

Myrtle of Cyprus, sound of Cyprus
snakes, birds and heartbeats have found
in your roots brotherly shelter.
page 13

In the same collection, the poem entitled "Lament of Aphrodite for the dead Adonis" is imbued with tenderness and sensuality for that which we have loved and lost, for that which always is present.

"What I love is always born, what I love is always beginning."
- Odysseas Elytis

Through its memory and presence, before it transgresses the limits of the tolerable, pain gives meaning to the senses and awakens all that is human within us. It is transformed into creativity and life...





We were walking on the beach and it was raining lightly
and next to us a story was being written.
We were walking barefoot in the dream and in silence
Finally we latched onto a slice
between land and sea.
And now I, eternally thirsty sea
And now you, eternally moist land.
...And I with your head resting on my knees
Will write songs.
page 21

...out of the blue, I wish for wings to pursue you
over white sands without end
and without margins.
page 25

And later in the same collection, the poet's mature and contemplative language, using irony as discrete as a light caress, continues to furtively penetrate our emotions and thoughts.

The same tone raises questions, the same acrid taste of the debased imprisoned reality, which does not allow itself to be dragged along by navel-gazers and cowards...

We are called to reclaim the courage of Theseus, of Prometheus, and the greatness of the Hellenes, to rise against the powerful and against the outlandish.

Creon played his hand correctly.
Now Athena is crowning him
With olive branches according to custom.
Just around the corner Prometheus is preoccupied





With his wounded liver.
Hesitate no more!
Seize the torch of the white-garbed virgins
And burn once and for all the temple of Pythia
Who gets drunk like a modern day whore.
This way at least you will do justice to the myth
of the Minotaur that pursues us so.
page 42

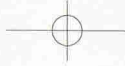
The rain is welcome and harmless.
Guilt we have squeezed, however,
Like we often squeeze poetry
Into a corner, next to crystal vases.
page 29

Nearly all the same motifs recur in the collection *The Circle of Accusation* where Elli Peonidou - with simplicity, maturity, clear-sightedness and lyricism - brings together myth, nature, people, history and memory, elevating them to symbols and conferring rights upon them. They cry out in accusation about the hubris brought upon our island, and about the injustice that continues to torment it.

Arodaphnousa, who still embroiders in the colors of needlework of Lefkara, the daughters of Salamis and of Engomi - bowed women who look without seeing, inhale without breathing - are baptized in sorrow and in silence on a daily basis. They have no names and no faces; they are the bitter fate of Hellenism.

The name is Margarita and sorrow and Silence...
page 20





My name is Margarita, and Sappho and Storm
at Seas that forgot their name
in women that forgot the face of dawn
and wander from thought to thought, from peak to pebble
dragging behind them in twos, in threes
the fetuses they never bore, and will never bear.
My name, my name, written in three editions of death,
Margarita.

page 21

The sun, the wells, the lark, the stars and Taygetos experience
the scent of wounded dignity, the fire and the fatigue, while
transforming the ashes into new power and life.

The others, outside the wall, forgot the color of the lark
and the scent of wounded dignity
while pinning their gaze on the black trunks of cypresses
on whatever remains of the fire and the fatigue.

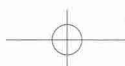
page 26

And then spoke the soul of the most distant star.
It dusted the old healing laments
that you buried along with your beautiful language
due to absurd modesty.

page 35

When all that is of man runs out, sensitivities dry up, and people
indelibly offend, art purifies the unconfessed and - with the ver-
dict of the people - pronounces "this is an island..."

I unfold my verses a wide bed sheet





to cover the triumph of my people
lest evil fate sees and envies it.
Today my people have reached a verdict
The olive tree and the cedar are undying.
page 44

The scents and colors of nature continue to infuse the ponderings
and questions of the next collection, *Songs of the Lost Mint*.

The structure, technique and form employed in this collection -
with its brief and dense verses packed with meaning, with its
defiance of grammar and the absence of capital letters - render
the absence, the impression that something is missing, that
something is incomplete, even absurd. They suggest something
that is broken in two: the divided land, our divided soul.

The mint stands for man; it remembers the bitterness that the
invaders have brought. It hurts, but refuses to compromise. It
stands against the terrible reality, and insists on the land of Mor-
phou and of Kyrenia, still smiling and singing.

both smiled in the photograph
(the photographer could tell a good joke)
for years they smiled, embraced on the wall
until ruin came, until the strangers entered.

now their photograph thrown on the street
(his hand upon her shoulder protectively)
the photograph is no more, torn, stepped on
but how that smile still persists...

page 6





In the same collection, with her delicate sensibility, the poet continues to express her understanding of the world, striking sensitive cords, and helping us look past our individual perceptions. In this way, we commune with the pain of the mother of the missing person - pain being, perhaps, the only thing she has left, the only thing she can still protect, lest it be marred by the eyes of strangers.

There is no soul, there are no people; the people have left like the wind, as Seferis would say. All that remains is the petrified silence of the pillaged thyme, of the frayed sea, of the shattered dreams of the refugees living far from home...

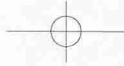
three years she seeks him, her heart made of lead
on the fourth she bows to her fate, like so many others.
but at the table, you will see, she sets a place...
"for my émigré son..." she says to you, looking elsewhere.
page 7

...the queen petrified. Who is there to speak to?...
page 13

In *My Cards to Sight*, Odysseas Elytis emphasizes that the youth of the soul remains untouched by time, and says that every day he feels one more wrinkle on the face, and one less wrinkle on the soul.

Through the pen of Elli Peonidou, war - the insufferable sculptor of these people - indelibly stains the dreams of young girls, the flutter of love, and the white travels, which were being formed with such strength and certainty.





How she waited for you, love, with open arms.
She adorned you in her sleep with stars and lemon blossoms
Look at her now, a rotting ship, not knowing where to dock
An Old Woman, just having turned sixteen...

page 16

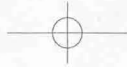
Life is made of hours: hours in the brevity of a day and in the
expanse of the centuries; hours, which slowly and secretly unrav-
el through symbols of all eras and types to declare - with eroti-
cism, simplicity and sensitivity - the poet's concerns, worries,
ponderings, questions and contemplations...

Actual hours that liberate in the collection with the same title,
Hours... Hours whose work begins at 6am and ends at 5am...

The poet stubbornly refuses to compromise with time that
relentlessly and selfishly moves on. She philosophizes about the
existential voids of daily life, about isolation and the unavoidable
submission to it, about death and darkness. It was only natural
that the eternal and open-ended subject of fate, which was
touched upon in antiquity by the tragic poets, would find its way
into the verses of Elli Peonidou, along with the bitter disappoint-
ments of daily life, with emptiness and with the unsatisfied and
unexploited simple moments, with suspicion, but also with hope,
beauty, playfulness and charm.

We have sealed the secrets in the Attican amphora.
No more complaints, no more thoughts...
At this hour the souls are liberated.
Ouzo and olives from Mytilene
And on the gramophone a quiet weeping.
page 36





How long can Adonis last
One spring
One squeeze of the hand
When you are sure, it will be too late I'm afraid.

Muses and nymphs and Hours and Nereids.
Dark rivers, branches and stars.
Caress of the moon and quiet cries of leaves.
Threads of rain on the steps, made of water and silver,
A presence and a wasteland. I sink.
page 42

The sunflowers turn their heads
and whisper prayers of submission.
Master and servant to the same passion,
God help those who have made it their purpose
To have no purpose at all.
page 26

The mountain sleeps and the sea sings a lullaby
And you remain sleepless, measuring
the patience of the Ursa.
You caress the locks of night
And the vine leaves shudder
And the nightingales make love in the sky
And the lizards are heavy with offspring.
page 46

Midnight and the weeping of Sappho
slices the darkness.
The lemon blossom seeks its mate.
page 48





How long does this moment last
Eternally
And immediately the doorstep of tomorrow.
page 48

I lost my mind to your flirtation, dawn.
...
Aroma of basil and of mint
One moment, I will open my door at last.
page 56

Diamonds of dew hang from pine needles.
Persephone leaps over the night.
The pebbles moist, sleepy
Lighthouse guards are the rocks.
The orchestra on stage. Everyone in position.
First violin, and second, the viola.
Soon the conductor will appear.
The palms open for applause.
Ready... Let's go!
page 58

Nearly all the poetic motifs coexist in the collection *Hourglass*. The title suggests a confrontation with time once more, but a more serious and dynamic one this time, since the poet has her feet firmly on the ground and with memories, visions, love, country, logic and light sets her seafaring coordinates.

In a tone that is playful, and with delicate humor, she endows with the hues of resistance all that is gone, and measures the depths of the past to nurture the present and the future.





Take my hand and let us continue.
Two bright lighthouses ahead of us
And serpents behind us
 let them crawl
 on our imprints.

page 9

May my mirror not be transparent
but may it, equal to equal,
direct its gaze at me.
And when I open my mouth
may my voice be my own
not the voice of my forebears and of my successors
of the dead.

page 16

Our Country, a small nail on the map
Lend a hand to keep it there
For if it falls with it we will be lost.

page 17

Do not insist, then, that the source has dried up.
Have your fingers forgotten how to dig, perhaps?

page 18

That's what they say. Love
breathes life even into marble.
Could that be
why our marble slowly dies?
Could it be because
we have forgotten how to love?

page 32





In *My Cards to Sight*, Odysseas Elytis declares that he prefers an eye that remains innocent even though well-traveled, to an innocent eye that has not traveled at all. Elli Peonidou underlines something similar in this collection:

That kiss you did not give her is
a thousand times more sinful
go ahead, try to catch and punish it.
page 46

The verses we did not write in adolescence,
barricaded behind the traumas
of the tender country,
conspire and seek revenge.
page 64

We are the incorruptible prosecutors, defenders and judges of
our own actions. From ourselves we can never escape:

I will walk barefoot. From my wounded heels
silently and relentlessly
the tetanus of logic will pervade.
It will flow through the branches and side branches of the
nerves
Sealing very pore of contact with the exteriors
And so the sentence comes from within.
page 52

Her poetic journeys and quests continue in the next collection as well, fittingly entitled *Journeys*, which is a stroll down the pathways of memory; simple, without excess, and with a subtle sense of bitter humor once more. An elegant plunge into the world of





beloved persons, such as Nikiforos Vretakos and the Cypriot painter Adamatios Diamantis, gives color and new perspective to the passage of time.

Elli Peonidou explores the soul's diverse, realistic and unexplored landscapes to arrive at its essence, and to prevent its fall to decay and futility, so she can end up at the 'poetic life' and its deposition in our lives. This 'life', with its cosmogenic power, yields an intellectual pleasure that leads us - according to Elytis - to the natural Light that is the Logos, and the Unbuilt Light that is God.

Using dream as her yarn, the poet weaves poetry with sighs, voids and meanderings, with fossils, mysteries and failures.

To weave words with the yarns of dream
aid me Sappho
for you possess knowledge of the mysteries
of night and of time.

Fossils of involuntary sighs
Sounds of linen and of dew
Chimes in the pale blue night
Gordian paths of memory...

page 9

Each time I take a path
it leads me back to the mouth of the river
we have given our lives for the bland
we have taken our lives from the foreign.

You, pilgrim, who have not bowed





To the three hundred pieces of silver or to the tyrants
You may trip on my footstep one day
I will no longer be but I will be.

And again Poetry will pass crowned.
page 15

Loneliness is bitter and painful in a world of exchange and alienation. The poet's following verses remind us of Seferis in "each one separately dreams and does not listen to the troubles of others," and of Vrettakos "...she has nowhere to leave her child." page 20.

You were born alone. The light painful
the first seal of loneliness.
page 20

Happiness is composed of simple moments, everyday moments, specs in time, and that is why we must experience them as if they were our last. This approach leads us very timidly to notions of Epicurean philosophy.

Say that each morning is your last.
Drink up the cup of the sun
to the its last drop.
....

The Magi follow a deceitful star.
page 17

The last poem of the collection "Inventory" emanates of Kavafi-
an responsibility and of Seferian guilt. It speaks of the post war





commercialization of relationships, of the questioning and confession about all that remains and all we have allowed ourselves.

The newborn peach fuzzed shyly.
The first leaf squeezes the vine
with its tender grasp.
March already.

They auctioned my life at an open market
and I, pathetic viewer of tedious
and unholy exchanges in third class seating.

Now, belatedly, I claim smiles
taken from me with counterfeit coins
(amalgam of faith and discipline).
I shall return a typical debtor,
dissolved years, paper wings,
spineless words and guilty pleasures.

page 69

The poetry of Elli Peonidou is a deposition of soul on all human truths. Delving into her poetic space, one communes with the mystery, magic, pain, quest, ugliness and struggle, to emerge - at the end - into the light, which is also the salvation.





excerpts from reviews

IN GENERAL ABOUT THE POETRY OF ELLI PEONIDOU

The poems of Elli Peonidou are extremely mature. They are solid. They possess the necessary simplicity, clarity, and density that characterize true poetry.

- Yiannis Ritsos

Poetry that is flawless, robust and contemporary. This was the first time that my fingers were actually touching objects while reading poetry. The sense of touch is intense; these verses caress everything, even our thoughts.

- Notis Perialis

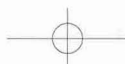
I have already told you how much I like your poetry. I like its simple and sharp expression, which resembles a stitch on a Lefkari-tiko embroidery. It has something of the simple and unpretentious conversation of our countryside, something of its poetry.

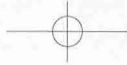
- Costas Montis

Your poetic language is simple and modern, without rhetoric. It unravels unhurriedly, and becomes one with the subject matter of your poems that has moved away from old and worn-out poetic themes and aims - with images, renewed symbols, and new expressive means - directly at the reader's sensibility.

- Nikos Kranidiotis

I have been following the poetic work of Elli Peonidou nearly from her first steps, from her first shy and reserved brushstrokes,





her first youthful attempts to express the wealth and restlessness of her inner world. Now a mature and distinguished poet, we see her continuing along the same lines, subject matter and intentions. Her intentions are not dictated to the reader; always filtered, they emerge from the conscious realm. Writing for her is not a pose, but a true spiritual need. She uses expressive means that are simple and crystal clear, and does not succumb to the mania of seeking out rare words - something that ends up overshadowing the aesthetic result.

- Theodoros Stylianos

One of the most well-known poets of Cyprus, and one of the most promising female voices on the island, Elli Peonidou records our time with her own way. She marries yesterday with today, fully aware of her ability to set the stage, of the simplicity and in-depth awareness of the place, and of the characters that have the lead roles in her poetry.

- Yiannis Korides

.

About the collection THE SOIL OF CYPRUS, 1971

The new poetry collection by Elli Peonidou that is illustrated by Minos Argyrakos is divided into three parts. In the first part, we come across the familiar style (from previous collections) of the poet, whom we could describe as the "poet of simple things." The moments and things that compel her to transform her emotions into verses are the same moments and things that move us all. Hence, the poet's emotional responses indirectly affect us as





well. The smile of a child, a Sunday morning, bidding farewell to a friend... And in this collection, we also see that her deep love for her homeland has been transformed into song...

- Kika Olympiou

Despite the hectic pace of our banal daily lives, I have found time to read these tender verses. Verses that study "the small plans and our small days, and the sensitivity of touch, like a student studies an insect or a caterpillar"... With her work in poetry, Elli Peonidou contributes to "the longevity of the species" as Seferis would say, so that poetry becomes "rhythm and breath." Some of her verses have left me with a taste (please forgive the parallel) of Theocritus...

The expressive subtlety that characterizes the poetry of Elli Peonidou is preserved in this collection as well. The social act takes place in the successive levels of historical and social experience, and in the attempt to look deeply at the roots.

- Sophianos Chrysostomides

.

About the collection THE CIRCLE OF ACCUSATION, 1977

A cry of accusation from Cyprus, a lament that is quiet and, therefore, even more heartbreaking, voiced in the language of poetry, of a poetry of noble descent, rich and vibrant with sincerity... *The Circle of Accusation* is a portrait of the passion of Cyprus, carved with the verses of Elli Peonidou and with the drawings of George Skoteinos at the most intense moment of pain.





This book is a monument, an everlasting reminder of the debt that we all carry. This book should sit on our desks at all times. It is an embroidered "I will not forget" on our pillowcase, a bitter salutation...

- Victoria Theodorou

.

About the collection SONGS OF THE LOST MINT, 1979

This pure aromatic herb, which keeps its fragrance even when dry, stands for the tattered beauty of the island, like the memories that follow those who have been uprooted day and night... The tragedy of our homeland is described in the poetic emotion that pours out of every verse, moving us to our core. These are simple, bold and painful verses that contain no excess, composed of words that directly touch the soul.

The poet's fighting spirit is intertwined with her feminine tenderness, and expressed in verses that make a lasting impression. In a single word or image - and this is the mark of true poetry - the allegorical meanings unravel in all their expanse and depth. At times they become journeys back into history, and references to ancient names and events, all of which are tied into the fate of the land, to its Hellenism and endless struggles.

- Chrysanthi Zitsea

.

About the collection HOURS, 1983

The latest collection of poetry by Elli Peonidou is a unique 'string





of beads' comprised of twenty-four small poems, one for each hour of the day, where colors and their constant changes - along with everything they suggest about the succession of hours - are at play. The poet's contemplative eye, and the lyrical wealth that accompanies her every step, yield a new perception in these jewels. Therefore, the *Hours* take on a life of their own and become infused with Man and his passions.

- P. Kyprides



About the collection HOURGLASS, 1987

The title of this poetry collection by Elli Peonidou introduces the idea of time as an experiential dimension, which becomes disorganized and reorganized through the work, suggesting a diachronic but also an individual autobiography. To a great extent, the poet attempts to render a diachronic, individual experience of her relationships with space (homeland), love, Art, and especially with poetry.

The concentrated sensuality of these verses is expressed in the parallel drawn between poetry and the erotic act. This relationship leads to the expression of intense emotions, which are expressed with the relevant vocabulary. With adolescent naivety and tenderness, with verses that play a game of declaration and negation, and with expressions and images that declare a caring, playful and childlike egotism, the homeland is outlined in the longest poem of the collection.

- Dr. Yiannis Ioannou





About the collection JOURNEYS, 1997

In this book by Elli Peonidou I recognize, once more, a concern that has been present in her work over the last few years: the passage of time. *Hours*, *Hourglass* and *Journeys* - even the titles of her last three collections highlight this concern.

And I say concern - even though at the core there is agony - because the poetic language performs such a successful exorcism that it turns the agony about the transient state of our existence into a concern that palpates events past and present, as well as our personal lots in life. In other words, this concern wanders and changes.

Without exaggeration, I would say that the poems about New York claim an undisputed place in the literature of Cyprus, since they render genuine observations about life and humanity, which is also rendered with authenticity. Every time they are read, they will evoke a genuine pleasure and emotional response in the reader.

Demetris Gotsis





anthology

From the collection SOIL OF CYPRUS

CYPRESS OF CYPRUS

We'd like you to accompany the moments of tranquility
but you cast your fruit like little stones
on the goats that frolic at dusk.
A silent protest to the slashing of a dream
that now takes up too much space.

V

I lit the fire and placed figs and chestnuts into the basket
and sat looking out at the street.

And the road was straight and long
like the nostalgia for childhood years.

It does not matter that we have dug so many wrinkles
weaving our doomed masts.

It does not matter that we have lost ourselves in the many
details of masts.

What is important is that I have lit the fire tonight
to warm a non-existent presence.

Come, anyhow, I will get you hot coffee and cigarettes,
and whatever else deceives the silence.

Maybe even a book, or a Gioconda.

Just do not rush to rest the ticking of the clock
upon your dead memory.

Because tonight, a Revelation will take place.

.

From the collection SONGS OF THE LOST MINT

refugees

who could have imagined: two kinds of people



on one strip of land
who could have imagined: one escape
the seal of a lifetime.

rain 1978

thick drops fall on limassol
the same on kyrenia, perhaps?
surely. the clouds do not know that only half
the land is thirsty

the dog that was left behind

forgotten, in the confusion of the flight
- there was no more room, in any case, -
the brown dog was left behind
a useless guard of its deserted land.

by the third year, people forget plenty
daily struggle and custom become one
but dogs, when desperate,
remember and seek, what if they tremble or they are hungry.

and so the brown dog took the road
smelling its way step by step,
its heart had laid out a confident thread.
and found them. and broke the law of division.

monologue of desdemona in famagusta

i open my window and i see
my face inside yours.
the clothes petrified on the terrace



three years without the warmth of a body.
 the cats remembered their generation
 when the empress had kept them for the serpents.
 i open my window to speak to you.
 confined in the stone castle
 i used to talk to my horrific shadows.
 i would embroider baby shirts
 to pass the centuries.
 our role not validated by the poet,
 women, you see.
 do not fear the ghosts because they keep us alive
 until the time comes.

.

From the collection HOURS

6:00

The knee bends in an island dance
 the Dawn high on Erechtion
 and the eyelid of Daylight shivers.
 The secret voices sink to the deep while
 the day raises her freshly washed veils. Good morning.

9:00

One by one the secrets unravel,
 and you think that everything that sparkles belongs to you
 But try to imprison
 the mirrors of water, why don't you,
 hour of morning in May.
 Green butterflies, yellow birds
 and a cherry idea in your glass





17:00

White sail and the ship set out.
Heavy your shadow, you can no longer carry it.
Jasmines in the vase. A rose tablecloth.
A childhood song and an open window.
Images that stuck around your heart,
noose and shelter.
But to come once more, you cannot.

22:00

Fields of lavender on silk sheets.
On your pillow unite the heads
of Hypnos and Words spoken and unspoken.
Cypris, Cypris, your breath a flower of mint
your chest is dough for wheaten bread
a rainbow around the earth your arms
Your mouth a hot fountain.
A ray of sun rests in your palm.

.....

From the collection HOURGLASS

APHRODITE - ADONIS

Better like this, one thousand times better.
Could you imagine him eighty
years old, a little old man, with gout
behaving like a child
and her forever in bloom
fluttering around him?





One thousand times better like this. In any case,
her tears have turned into poppies.

ORPHEUS-EURIDICE

Anyone in his place
would have turned his head
why do you condemn him?
The rustling of her veil
and her breath
 full of aroma
exactly as in
our secret dreams
that we conspiringly fold
in the bed sheets in the morning.
At least he knows
that losing her was his fault.



PHAEDRA-HIPPOLYTUS

How it is possible then
that unsuspecting he crossed
the fiery path
with his feet frozen?
The man - the poet did him justice, of course
but her apology
a magic concert of nightingales
every spring.

.....

From the collection THE CIRCLE OF ACCUSATION



LIFE IS

The rain glides from the windowpane to the wound
as they pull out the blade from me
I sleep and the words
keep vigil on my pillow. I awaken.
The nightingales tangled around my feet
images that at the age of thirty five
I had forgotten, buried as I had been up to the neck
in my small stifling hole in the ground. Life is.
Grab her by the hair, because she still owes me
the childhood smile she has stolen from me
for thirty five years, hidden as she was in the deep
wounds of my land.

Varna, 1976

THE WALL

Hill to hill you would pass
with a smile of prosperity that smelled of must.
Once in a while you would stop
to check your compass and your heart.
The altimeter was suitable for both.

You could, if you wanted, sit next to the fire at night
and recall old secrets that weigh heavily upon you
no one will notice the tiny butterfly in your eyes
only the flames will take an imperceptible turn like
a broken record
at that moment of loneliness you may fix
another rock on the wall you built around yourself and around
your small world of insects
around yourself and around the complex of unknown voices.



Just two meters away the breath of the grass
just two peaks away the vision of the city with the heroic
ghosts.

.....

From the collection JOURNEYS

FOUR GIRLFRIENDS ON A CARRIAGE RIDE

Four girlfriends got together to celebrate
fifty years from their graduation.
Lunch at Tavern on the Green
with Beaujolais and French hors d'oeuvres
fabulous meals full of cholesterol.
For the end they agree on a carriage ride.

Rose chooses a young dark cabbie
who reminds her of her first date
in a carriage in Manhattan.

"Oh, Johnny, you promised me
eternal love but were swallowed
by gin's bottomless pit."

Jane recalls the hero
her husband of only six months
in a carriage with white horses
very gently and comfortably laid
on the red, white and blue.

Betty who married seven times before she understood
that it was probably her womb that could not produce a
child
glares at the nannies on the benches.





Diana, forever a coquette, and a spinster
shows the lace chemise
but not the varicose veins behind her knees.

Four girlfriends out on a carriage ride
with a dark Sri Lankan cabbie
who recounts in perfect Harlem slang
his terrible kidnapping by a black man
for he is of noble birth.

New York 1992 | Limassol, 1996

VASILIS FROM LIMASSOL

He crossed the Great Sea pursued
by rigorous ghosts.
Not enough time to fall in love with Kantara, Salamina
or the horses of Engomi.

His leg had grafts, it rooted.
It erected houses and tore down mountains.
Friends run around bringing children
to be blessed by the blessed.

But he every night
a ghost that chases shadows
his secret neighborhood
a faithful bicycle
a curly lock, a furtive glance
through the women's quarters of Agia Triada.

Dreams covered with gold dust become insupportable.
And the Golden Autumn already bids you farewell.

New York, 23.9.1992 | Limassol, 9.2.1996





AS THE DAY BEGINS

The wind bites. In my gut
the poem is the leaven and it rises.
Yesterday's verse, the one that escaped me flutters
toward the peak of the skyscraper..

Take a double dose of Advil
for your headaches, a simple solution
sick jobless homeless alcoholics
leftist Africans.

Proudly Liberty raises her stature for us
arrest the impudent who crowned her
with a wreath of thorns.

New York, Spring, 1992 | Limassol, Spring, 1997

YOU ARE RETURNING

You are returning, poetry, I can feel you
a frothy sea you sway around the rock.

Humiliated by the insignificant and the grey
you used to find shelter in my dreams.
Sometimes you would send me secret messages.

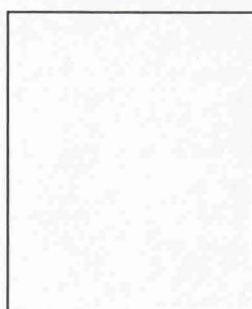
You are returning uninvited as always
but always welcome, but I fear
the place will no longer suit you.
The soul has grown grass. At fatty
swamplands innocence is an excess garb.
Your tender heels will bleed.

Wear the sandals of Calypso for better or for worse.

New York, October 1991 | Limassol, January, 1997

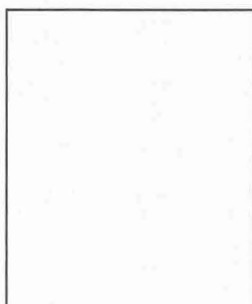


biographical notes



Chrysoula Alexandrou studied Greek Literature at Ioannina University, and currently teaches in Secondary Education. She writes poetry, drama and literary criticism. She contributes to periodicals, and collaborates with various literary and theatrical organizations, especially with the Cyprus PEN Centre. She has presented the work of Klitos Ioannides, Mimis Iacovides and Elli Peonidou at events

organized by the Cyprus PEN, and *July 9th*, the poetic work by Vasilis Michaelides, as well as *Romiosyni* by Yiannis Ritsos at events organized by the Limassol Stegi Grammaton kai Technon. In 1994, she received the First State Prize in Cyprus and the Carolos Koun State Prize in Greece for the student production of the comedy *Clouds* by Aristophanes. Poems she has written have received three pan-Hellenic prizes, and one international prize. She is currently preparing her first collection of poetry entitled *Dewdrop at Dusk*.



Elli Peonidou was born in the village of Vassa Kilaniou and studied Home Economics in Athens. After teaching for a while, she dedicated herself to Journalism and creative writing. She has published approximately 30 books: poetry, prose, children's literature, criticism, chronicles and drama. She has also translated foreign poetry to Greek, and edited anthologies of Cypriot poetry published in Slovenia and Hungary.

Among various distinctions and awards, she has received four Honorable Mentions from the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as the State Prize for her children's books *Two Brothers and the Black River* and *The Sirens of Manhattan*.

cyprus pen publications

in english:

- *27 Centuries of Cypriot Poetry*
- *Contemporary Cypriot Poetry*
- *Cypriot Prose Writers up to 1950*
- *22 Contemporary Cypriot Prose-Writers*
- *Five Short Essays on Cypriot Literature*
- *Cyprus PEN Review Nos: 1, 2, 3 & 4.*
- *International Writers' Seminar (4-8.11.1985)*
- *The Cultural and Spiritual Values of the Mediterranean World: Minutes of the Seminar, 1999*
- *Literary Profiles Series.* Monographs/Self-contained Volumes on the following prose writers, poets and essayists: Costas Montis, Pantelis Mechanicos, Kypros Chrysanthis, Klairi Angelidou, Nayia Rousou, Theoklis Kouyialis, Klitos Ioannides, Lina Solomonidou, Niki Ladaki-Philippou, Iacovos Kythreotis, Panos Ioannides, Costas Proussis, Achilleas Pylotis, Yiannis Katsouris, Andreas Christofides, Rina Katselli, Christakis Georgiou, Yiorgos Philippou-Pierides, Vera Panayiotidou-Korfioti, Nikos Orfanides, Yiorgos Moleskis, Mona Savvidou-Theodoulou, Sofocles Lazarou, Andreas Cl. Sophocleous, Nikos Nikolaides, Nikos Kranidiotis, Eugenia Paleologou-Petronda, Emilios Chourmouzios, Dina Katsouri, Panicos Peonides, Yiannis Papadopoulos, Roula Ioannidou-Stavrou, Glafkos Alithersis, Petros Stylianou, Michalis Pashiardis
- *In Focus*, quarterly magazine on literature, culture and the arts in Cyprus

in greek:

- *Short stories from Hungary - an Anthology*
- *The poems of Liliana Stefanova*
- *Six Poets: a Presentation by Mona-Savvidou-Theodoulou*
- *Literary Profiles: Vols i, ii, iii, iv*

in hungarian:

- *Short stories from Cyprus - an Anthology*