

LONELY SHIP.

Do not weep, for your weeping draws blood from me, lonely ship.
 I rested my hand delicately on your mast
 and my veins became heavy, as if honey-flooded.
 I put my forehead to your sorrow--seagull-white half-circle
 obsessed by fear of darkness.
 A naked El-Greco Madonna crucified on a sea-port's chair.....
 ---the child slipping into slumber's further reaches.
 Your stern a nightmare of timber; ~~the ship~~
 your prow deep-sunk in a fishes heart
 which quivered in a last oxygenless paroxysm.
 Lonely ship, deep-delved in the midst of thought,
 twice-treble dreams of the old mariner
 at Garibaldi's cape off Brindisi----tales
 of the boy from Rhodes, at fourteen a sailor, at sixteen
 a seasoned seaman, and at twenty
 a ship's officer already *and*
 who, at sixty, still searches for those shoots
 which were somehow, somewhere, severed.
 Sit you down beside me and let us drink to Rome's health
 ---without the statues.....and, why not? to that other Rome
 the one of the so many statues and multiple masks,
 that Rome which knows no sleep and whose smoking, embracing crowds
 make fun of her Colosseum, selling Caesar's heads,
 as Salome did that of the Baptist, upon platters accompanied
 by small bottles of Benedictine.
 Lonely ship, lonely soul, rip apart the ocean
 ---perhaps in it's deepest depths you will find some companion soul
 flooded with the answer to your log's bitter call.

Embracing
 or
 sensual

ELLI PEONIDOU

TRANSLATED
 FROM GREEK: JOHN CORBRIDGE
~~TRANSLATED~~

add word
 'snobbish'
 to give
 full
 meaning?

ELLI PEONIDOU

APHRODITE'S MOURNING FOR THE DEAD ADONIS

A

This land, like a bitter-mouthed Madonna
reluctantly half turned towards the Mediterranean
and undecided
cradled and gathers still my sorrow
like a sheep's bleat or the cicadas lullaby.

My feet a headrest
my lips a breath
and my sunsheilding hair...
o joy, o bitter joy.

Thus as the flying fish slice the water
gently yet sure of their element
I pass my hands through your hair.

On your upper lip three drops
of sweat still glisten;
at your fingertips I am sure
a small forgotten vein
still pulses in duty's habit.
And I am here, like the Earth, forever suffering.
How priceless to the immortal Gods
is the gift of Death.

B

We walked under the fine rain on the sands
and beside us a story begun to unfold.
Barefoot we walked within silence
and the dream caught up somewhere
between land and sea.

Now I tirelessly thirsting sea,
now you forever yielding, receptive earth.

Back there - man will construct temples
and destroy them
children be born
only to be slaughtered.
And I with your head resting upon my knees
will give birth to song.

C

I search, like some sun-struck Pithea
one by one for the ocean's suns;
I sit and count the points of our contact.
The pebbles I count
the sand-grains
my pores.

I lay down on the soft earth and said to you:
I desire a son to give life to my dormant breast.
I lay down under the pomegranate tree and said to you:
I need a veil your shadow to conceal.

Now I tirelessly thirsting sea,
now you forever yielding, receptive earth.

D

And men build new temples.
The cranes fly up and down
like the flutter of hearthbeats--
I never understood these men
yet I studied their shadows
embracing at dusk
the delicacy of their touch I studied
and the narrowness of their vision.
Their puny dreams I studied and their small days
just as a student scrutinizes an insect or a caterpillar.
Then suddenly I tired of sitting
and became desirous only
of two wings with which to follow you
over the boundless, neverending white shore.

E

I lit the fire and put figs and chestnuts in a basket
and sat down to watch the road, the road which was
as straight and long as the nostalgia
for children's flown days.

No, it is of no consequence
that Time has so many wrinkles carved
on our faces whilst we spin our webs
which are condemned to become dust.
It is of no consequence that we lost our way
within so many details-
details of these same webs.

Only the fire matters, which tonight I light
so as to give warmth
to an invisible presence.

But come, I have coffee and cigarettes to offer
and whatever else may be useful
to keep this silence at bay...
a book perhaps... or even some intriguing artifact.

Only do not hasten
to lend the clock's beat to your dead memory
for this night a revelation
will be made.

F

It is to you I speak, Moon, whom
they have adulterated shamelessly in public places.
Abandon for once your humble course
as this Earth's satellite.
Now they have shamed you; gone is your silver light
So, what is left now other than to become a Man
and take again the road; for tonight
a revelation is at hand.

G

I put my sandals on
and descended the ruin-scattered path...
empty windows all about me, and ivy.
At the spring two naked snails were making love
silently and methodically.
A little beyond a few men
with their many creeds
and then at last the dogs.

The ash-covered road was mercilessly soft
with its so many crosses
and interrogatives.

At dawn (before the crowing of the cock)
I sat on a rock and wept bitterly
like a mortal.

Translated from Greek by John Corbidge.