

## Three Poets from Greece: Tasos Denegris, Alexander G. Pop and Nanos Valaoritis

PANAYIOTIS BOSNAKIS

TASOS DENEGRIS

Tasos Denegris was born in Athens, Greece, in 1935. His poetry appeared in the Greek literary magazines, *Pali*, *Sema*, and *Tram*. He wrote the following books: *Death in Kanigos Square* (Athens 1975), *The Blood of the Wolf* (Thessaloniki: Tram, 1978), *Sulphur and Apotheosis* (Athens: Akmon, 1982), *The Instantaneous* (Athens: Ypsilon 1985).

### COSMOGONY

So when on the next evening after  
Christmas day  
with those hideous electric lights lit along the street  
I was observing people  
Far-off images came to my mind  
Images and sounds.

Basin cistern crucible  
Crater of a volcano  
The region a tangle of snakes.

Horizontal movement  
Fixed in chaos

Mussels and Tyrannosauruses  
cracks in rocks and all the time  
the others keep coming:

The caste  
The grazing and hunting  
The bull's horns and the crown  
The idyll in the forest  
The fame of the horse  
The tumult of the slaughter  
The monarchy of the passion  
laws that fell  
From heaven  
The various appeals  
To the king to the president  
To humanity, ethos, religion  
And the others keep coming.

People seem like bad copies to me  
Not real  
Not truly responsible  
For their evil fate  
As they go back and forth  
Among the fir trees left on the street  
Even paler than the electric lights  
Which piteously illuminate  
the next evening after Christmas Day.

*October 1972*

# IMPRESSIONS FROM A READING OF POEMS IN JAPANESE

Language of Asia from the larynx  
Violence through and through  
And vanity  
Not like a cat  
Who sees the blemishes of life and people

The host of weaknesses  
As stretched out on the tiles  
It has a complete view  
Nor like that woman  
The winter of '48  
Civil war  
Raining frogs and boards  
And the man's jacket tossed  
On her face old before its time.

Another sense of vanity  
Nothing sweet about it  
Death in advance  
Like the sword that suddenly strikes the shield  
And smashes it  
Or shatters its point  
— Neither matters —  
Only the clash  
Of iron and that deep despair  
This, Asian tongue  
Conveys.  
The trees stuck to the window panes  
An army dressed in rags roaming about  
Proclaiming the victory of winter.

*1 December 1975*

## ZEN

So let's surrender  
To emotions more ill-defined  
To a stroll in the sky.

Clouds stationary and self-contained  
Do not foreshadow anything  
But rather promise and affirm  
A day that started with smog  
Strain, self-interest, compromise



Perhaps will end  
 With an absorption with nowhere  
 With the head  
 Of the Black Beast  
 Who for your sake  
 Was transformed  
 Into a household pet  
 Smiling at you.

29/8/1983

## UGLINESS OF CIVILIZATION

Darkness fell.

My voice  
 A shot pilot.

Then again  
 Another  
 New scene  
 Near the sea  
 Late Renaissance  
 Plectrum  
 Feasts at bursting point  
 Preparing a great deception.

October 1982

## AFTER A SUDDEN RAIN

After a sudden April rain  
 The green of the leaves dazzles me  
 Burnished and newborn.

The abandoned garden  
 As if by magic  
 Gleamed.

In the house  
 Young and old  
 Are watching animated cartoons  
 While the skinny  
 Grape-arbor looms  
 Against the glassed-in porch  
 And makes things difficult  
 As their imagination jars with  
 The watching  
 Of the television program

I will carry on with my work  
 Encouraged.

27/10/1985

## DUBLIN

A caique turned over half sunk there  
 On the jetty at Howth  
 Exalibur SO 69 its name  
 And the rest of the particulars  
 Painted a cobalt green  
 The wood of the hull  
 Prey to the sea  
 Which chews it up with small grunts.

But the mast  
 Doesn't even care  
 About the water  
 That has come to roost  
 Because it  
 Will answer only  
 To the sky  
 only to the sky will it surrender.

31/8/1983

(All poems were translated by Philip Ramp)

## ALEXANDER G. POP

Born in Athens, Greece (1920-1990). Poet and journalist. He wrote in French, English and Greek.

## THE DAY WILL COME

The Day will come  
when, sitting on  
the Peak  
of the fabulous Himalaia,  
I will look around  
my Ectoplasm and  
say to Humanity  
how much I owe  
to God and Devil  
for what is  
lasting  
in the retrograde Mirror  
of the  
Ego's saturation.

The Day will come  
when, the laces of my  
worn-out shoes  
will change into an  
enormous Octopus  
to strangle the  
Desire,  
the Passion, the  
Myth of Self-control,  
the Disappointment and  
the Fame, the Glory and  
Sickness of  
Morbid  
Memory.

The Day will come  
when all Treasures of  
All Baba's Grotesque  
Cave,  
will not provoke in  
the Spirit,  
the Inevitable Envy of him  
who has violated  
the Laws of Friendship  
for the Lust  
of Richness and for  
the mediocrity of  
the Golden Crown.

The Day will come  
when I, in  
the Still of the  
starless Night, will long  
for  
Isolation,  
and See through  
White Eyeglasses  
the Formulation  
of the Empty  
celestial Dome.

The Day will come  
when,  
only Love of  
others will substitute  
the perpendicular self-loving  
Psychical  
Perversion,  
when  
You  
will be for  
Me,



The Universe  
and, by My Adoration,  
will understand why  
must I, stand Alone  
on the Peak of  
Fabulous Himalaia,  
looking around my  
Ectoplasm and  
seeing only  
Thee,  
my beloved, covered  
by Snow in form of  
a White Hair's  
Crown.

#### MY SHIP IS WRECKED!...

On the Bottom of the Ocean  
lies  
my wrecked Ship,  
dissolved by the Force of  
Waves,  
of Tempests and tropical  
Typhoons.  
The Captain, covered with the  
blue Veils of  
the calm Lagoon,  
stands amidst his  
crew.  
He stays petrified like a Statue from  
classical Ages.  
Corals are his Eyes and  
through  
fluid topaze Waters,  
a silent Fish, with gracious movements  
animates the Body of  
the Sailor

who died on duty  
in front of fulminating  
Waves, Tempests and  
Tropical Typhoons.  
My wrecked Ship is  
Ship no more although  
its wooden Frame with  
the mermaid's earnest Smile,  
in the Prow  
contradicts this  
point of View.

#### NANOS VALAORITIS

Nanos Valaoritis was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1921, of Greek parents. He has lived in Athens, Paris, and the United States. Since 1968 he taught comparative literature and poetics at San Francisco State University. He is trilingual author (Greek, English, French) and has written poetry, novels, plays and essays. One of Greece's most distinguished contemporary authors, he was twice awarded the Greek national poetry prize and once the Greek national essay prize. He has received many other distinctions and prizes. *Terre de Diamant* was one his earliest works written originally in French and published in Paris in 1958.

#### THE PALACE OF THE EYES

Two celestial bodies approach and hold themselves like a gigantic dragonfly to a flower of water, in a same distance, fragile and delicate one another. They have been created of a widespread substance in the infinite, the great Telesma. When she produces the splendor she calls herself light. This light is the common mirror of all thoughts and forms, she holds the images of all that they had been, the reflections of past worlds and by analogy the plans of worlds to come.\* It is the domain of the eyes, in its absolute multiplicity, where all is received, where nothing is lost, not even the



shadow of a doubt. The polarization is perfect. Those who are observed by this miracle can feel in themselves the releasing of a delicate mechanism, that makes all lived sensations, during a life, even the most fleeting, to be registered here, in the Palace of the Eyes. These omnivorous eyes, capable to assimilate the most unnoticeable things in their calmness and complexity, this retina of the world, the first reflection of the interior world.

\* Eliphas Levi, *The Key of the Great Mysteries*

#### AT THE THRESHOLD OF KNOWLEDGE

A pale blue light that transmits the astral moon and its two nordic quarters reveals the Palace of Knowledge, bathed in the millennial calmness and silence. It is the vision of a secret city, where the apparition coincides with the beginning and the end of the cycle of history. The ten-thousand years, a period of accumulation of wisdom and preparation for the knowledge, is reflected by the central eye, surrounded by a labyrinth without entrance nor exit. The two auxiliary eyes on the sides receive in their urns the residue of thoughts scattered in the world. This place without guardian, it will manifest itself, only at the beginning of the esoteric age, when the secret tradition will be revealed to the people, liberated hopefully from their enslavement to Princes of Power, to their avid power.

(Translated from French by Panayiotis Bosnakis)

## Six Poems by Yannis Ritsos

GEORGE PILITSIS

### *Νύχτωσε*

Κι ή αποψινή γιορτή αναβλήθηκε.  
Κι ούτε πού ξέραμε καθόλου  
τί θά πενθοῦσαν, τί θά γιόρταζαν.  
Μεμῆς ἀνάχαμε τά φῶτα κι ἔσβησαν.  
Ἄπ' τό παράθυρο εἶδαμε τούς μουσικούς  
πέρασαν ἄφωνοι τή λεωφόρο  
ἔχοντας στούς ὤμους τους  
τεράστια χάλκινα ὄργανα.  
Μεῖνε, λοιπόν, ἐδῶ,  
κάπνισε τό τσιγάρο σου  
μέσα σ' αὐτή τή μεγάλη ήσυχία,  
μέσα σ' αὐτό θαῦμα-τίποτα.  
Κωφάλαλα τ' ἀγάλματα.  
Κωφάλαλα καί τά ποιήματα. Νύχτωσε.

Ἀθήνα, 1.1.1988

### NIGHTFALL

Tonight's festivities have also been postponed,  
without our even knowing  
the reason for their mourning, the reason  
for their celebrating.

\* These poems from *Late, Very Late Into the Night*, were written in Athens and in Kalamos between January 1 and May 4, 1988. they were revised and rewritten in Krlovasi, Samos, between July 14 and 29, 1988. Fourteen poems were excluded. (Y. R.)