

## Poems by Nikos Engonopoulos

*Selection from THE CLAVICEMBALOS OF SILENCE (1939)  
by NIKOS ENGONOPOULOS (1907-1985),  
translated by David Conolly*

### THE LIFE AND DEATH OF POETS

Sinope  
is the name  
? the official one ?  
of the "Cloud-City"  
also called "City of Fires"  
which  
lies somewhere over  
in  
South America

this watery  
and most likely Hellenistic  
city  
hangs in the skies  
like a baton  
and is placed with certainty  
by the experts  
at times exactly in the middle  
of a straight line  
drawn between Maracaibo  
and Valparaíso  
in Chile  
and at others  
between Maracaibo again  
and  
Elbassan

there  
as the houses are all made of fires  
the inhabitants live in the flames  
are burned constantly  
and reborn constantly  
from their ashes  
unaltered like  
the phoenix  
bird

there in this very place  
was born ? as is well-known ?  
the great Greek poet of  
antiquity  
Alector

during the course of excavations  
there was found among the ruins  
a strange poem

? from that time ?  
written on ordinary paper  
with alternate  
iron and bronze joints  
and ink from tears

the said poem was as follows:

"follow the firs of Fatius  
to see the swimmer?s swirl"

because of the presence of the word  
"swimmer"  
the poem was attributed  
? initially ?  
to the great  
Isidore Ducasse\*  
who happened to originate from  
those  
parts

after ? however ? due consideration  
it was attributed finally  
? and now  
irrevocably ?  
to some woman called  
Fair Lady  
probably better known by  
her foreign  
name  
Bella donna

-----  
\* comte de Lautréamont