

Nikos Gatsos
Amorgos
(excerpt)

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Wake up gargling water from the root of the pine-tree to find the eyes of the sparrows and to give them life by watering the earth with smell of basil and with lizard whispers. I know you are a naked vein under the tremendous look of the wind, you are a mute spark in the bright crowd of stars. Nobody takes care of you nobody stops to hear your breath but you, with your heavy walk in the haughty nature, you'll reach the leaves of the apricot-tree, you will climb on the lissom bodies of the small rushes and you'll roll from a beloved woman's eye like an adolescent moon. There is an immortal stone where once passing from there a human angel has written his name and there is a song which nobody yet knows, not even the most crazy children, not even the most wise nightingales. It is now closed in a cave of the Devi mountain between the dales and the gorges of my father's land, but at that moment this angel song opens and starts up against the wear and the time the rain will suddenly end and the mud will dry the snow will melt on the mountains the wind will chirp, the swallows will resurrect, the osiers will shiver and when having heard the bells ringing alone in their cracked bell-towers the people with the cold eyes and the pale faces will find feast hats to wear and garnish bows to tie on their shoes. Because then nobody will be kidding the blood of the brooks will overflow the animals will cut their reins in the mangers the grass will become green in the stables green poppies and Mays will rush totally on the tiles and at all the crossroads red fires will light an midnight. Then the scared girls will come little by little to throw their last cloth in the fire and to dance totally naked around it just like the time when we also were young and a window opened at the sunrise so that an absolutely red carnation would flower on their breast. Oh children, maybe the memory of the ancestors is a deeper consolation and a more precious company than a handful of rose-water and the drunkenness of beauty is maybe nothing different than the slept rose-tree of Eurotas [river of Sparti]. Well goodnight I see piles of falling stars rocking their dreams but I keep in my fingers the music for a better day. The travellers of India know more to tell you than the Byzantine chronographers.

It's only me who knows how much I loved you
 Me, who has touched you once with the eyes of the Pleiades
 Who has embraced you with the mane of the moon and we danced in the summer plains
 On the reaped stubble and we have eaten together the cut clover
 Black great sea with so many pebbles around the neck - so many coloured stones on your
 hair

A ship enters the sea a rusty draw-well groans
 A tuft of blue smog in the rose-coloured horizon
 Like the wing of the harrowing crane
 Armies of sparrows are waiting to say welcome to the brave men
 Arms are raising naked with anchors carved on the armpit
 Cries of children are mixed up with the song of west wind
 Bees are popping in and out in the nostrils of the cows
 Kerchiefs from Kalamata are waving
 And a bell far away is painting the sky with indigo
 Like the voice of a triangle travelling within the stars
 Gone since so many centuries
 From the Goth's soul and from the cupolas of Baltimore
 And from the lost Hagia-Sofia, the great monastery
 But who are the ones on the high mountains looking
 With the unwavering look and the peaceful face?
 This dust in the air is it the echo of which fire?
 Is it Calyvas or Leventoyiannis fighting?
 Is it a battle between the Germans and the people of Mani?
 Neither Calyvas is fighting nor Leventoyiannis
 Nor a battle has started between the Germans and the people of Mani
 Silent towers are guarding a haunted princess
 Tops of cypress-trees are accompanying a dead anemone
 Calm shepherds are saying their morning song with a linden reed
 A silly hunter shoots once turtle-doves
 And an old windmill forgotten from everybody
 Alone with a dolphin needle is sewing his rotten sails
 And he is coming down from the slopes with a fair wind
 Like Adonis coming down to the paths of Helmos in order to say good evening to Golfo.

Years and years I was wrestling with the ink and the hammer oh my tortured heart
 With the gold and the fire in order to create a needlework for you
 A harebell of an orange tree
 A blossomed quince-tree in order to console you
 I who has touched you once with the eyes of the Pleiades
 Who has embraced you with the mane of the moon and we danced in the summer plains
 On the reaped stubble and we have eaten together the cut clover
 Black great solitude with so many pebbles around the neck so many coloured stones on your
 Hair

During the semester of Winter 2008, Dr. Wipfler worked as a guest lecturer at the German Department of the Residential College at the University of Michigan where she taught the readings course 321 "Medieval Culture" and the language course German 291. She also attended Modern Greek 302 where she worked on this translation.