

MODERN GREEK STUDIES

(AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND)

Volume 11, 2003

A Journal for Greek Letters

*Pages on C.P. Cavafy*

Published by Brandl & Schlesinger Pty Ltd  
PO Box 127 Blackheath NSW 2785  
Tel (02) 4787 5848 Fax (02) 4787 5672

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ISSN 1039-2831

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Typeset and design by Andras Berkes

Printed by Southwood Press, Australia

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MODERN GREEK STUDIES  
(AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND)

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MEMBERSHIP TO MODERN GREEK STUDIES ASSOCIATION

plus ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION for two issues

Individual: AUS \$45 US \$35 UK £25 €35 Institutions: AUS \$70 US \$65 UK £35 €45 (plus postage)

full-time student/pensioners: AUS \$20 US \$30 UK £20

(includes GST)

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*The periodical welcomes papers in both English and Greek on all aspects of Modern Greek Studies (broadly defined). Prospective contributors should preferably submit their papers on disk and hard copy. All published contributions by academics are refereed (standard process of blind peer assessment). This is a DEST recognised publication.*

Το περιοδικό φιλοξενεί άρθρα στα Αγγλικά και τα Ελληνικά αναφερόμενα σε όλες τις απόψεις των Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών (στη γενικότητά τους). Υποψήφιοι συνεργάτες θα πρέπει να υποβάλλουν κατά προτίμηση τις μελέτες των σε δισκέτα και σε έντυπη μορφή. Όλες οι συνεργασίες από πανεπιστημιακούς έχουν υποβληθεί στην κριτική των εκδοτών και επιλέκτων πανεπιστημιακών συναδέλφων.

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## GEORGE SARANTARIS

## POEMS

1933

(selection)

Translated by Katherine Cassis

**Caressed Beauty**

Caressed beauty!  
Your shadow lengthens in memory  
you disperse  
and the soul  
in vain smells the withered flowers.

2.1.1933

**I surrendered to oblivion**

I surrendered to oblivion;  
It will cover my soul like a wave  
(sleep smells of interminable sea),  
and feel the azure of dreams and my life.

12.1.1933

**Light is your memory**

Light is your memory  
like a veil suspended over oblivion  
when I ruminate;  
and yet with melancholy  
with a certain sharpness  
almost sensual  
like lips of death  
or untouched by kisses.

13.1.1933

**A dream it is**

A dream is beautiful love  
which sprouts beside eros  
as our sweet soul discovers  
when it remains on the shore  
and wind and wave are silent

18.1.1933

**Invisible, imperceptible monotony**

Invisible, imperceptible monotony  
immortality hides  
and her presence makes  
shiver with excitement  
the troubled smiles of nature.

27.1.1933

**Forest**

Unadorned  
the trees,  
the scattered leaves  
not mournful;  
and yet mute  
lethal;  
I gather as I walk  
golden silence

1.2.1933

**Honey-coloured pleasure**

Death does not attract, rather it captivates;  
it possesses neither beauty nor charm;  
it only kindles our invisible diffidence,  
lending it ephemeral pride  
to commit the absolute sacrifice  
to feel its supreme, honey-coloured pleasure. . .

5.2.1933

---

**Religion**

As people die they encounter pleasures  
perhaps sent from God  
certainly from nature.

20.2.1933

**The sky is never absent**

The sky is never absent.  
Without it life would vanish  
miracles would fade away.  
The earth would stand still.  
The sky is hardly afraid of  
eternity;  
but its light does not show it;  
the distrust of time  
our distrust  
nurtures suspicions  
and reveals doubts,  
form of a cloud  
form of rain. . .

19.3.1933

**From books**

The life which you feel leaving  
when you open the windows  
for a little air for a glance outside. . .  
your own life and that of others.

[22.3.1933]

**When they are heard. . .**

When new days are heard  
we feel it from afar  
from the glory of the skies  
and delicately mysteriously  
from the internal whispering  
within untouched rooms  
within distant feelings. . .

[22.3.1933]

**Far from the noise...**

Far from the noise  
within the uncertain continuity  
within absence  
with the voiceless song of hours  
the scent of time I breathe.

2.4.1933

**Sun**

The mountains need breath to breathe  
they want unforgettable songs;  
and they request them  
from the clouds that sway  
within the languor of the sky.

14.4.1933

**Crystal clear**

To the point of pleasure  
to feel your presence  
I desire, consciousness;  
untainted delight I feel you  
crystal clear.

14.4.1933

**My consciousness migrated...**

My consciousness migrated to a noiseless  
distant country  
where past sufferings sank into a torpor  
were forgotten  
and unknown blossoms are beginning to sprout  
and are already yearning  
for incorporeal consciousness.

22.4.1933

**The swooning gardens**

Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines  
**Baudelaire** (Moestra et errabunda)

The swooning gardens  
you must remember, even  
if you regret every love  
in vain, even  
if you embark  
on long journeys;  
the swooning gardens  
may they die with you  
when you begin to feel the burden of complaint  
and life is being finally expiated, unhappy.

22.4.1933

**I exist**

I exist by way of a vestment  
an elusive vestment  
within the chaos  
which beings in vain  
fashion.

The chaos  
noise which lies  
beside me  
aims at something  
but does not persuade me.

I exist  
doubtfully hidden  
outside chaos  
and perhaps I've longed for  
chaos. . .

3.5.1933

**Non-existence**

The sea (there go sorrowful years)  
has died; around her weep lands  
and horizons.

3.5.1933

**I lean towards dreams**

Existence immersed in slumber  
I lean towards the dreams  
which caress  
within pleasures  
which do not rest. . .

3-4,5.1933

**Nightfall**

Disappointed is the day  
and consciousness suspects it;  
from all the windows it sees  
the charms the colours  
which are vanishing  
and the voices  
which have begun to hide. . .

7.5.1933

**Calmly from the past**

Calmly from the past  
the night of dreams is blowing  
ancient like ruins  
it is sweetened by a light the colour of honey  
quiet like a dead scent  
on a dead body  
(I gather it in my arms  
because it only caresses me  
And I – where is my mind? – I'm thirsty...)

9.5.1933

**The stranger**

From silence to silence  
the sky traverses  
the years;  
like a person  
we met when children  
whom we had forgotten  
we met again  
no more.

13.5.1933

**Mes contemplations**

The loves that reposed far away  
on rivers  
resemble cloud dreams  
and stars.

13-14.5.1933

**Dream of death**

Final songs of life  
the air sends  
from an invisible island;  
in the mist  
sink the night  
and the seashore  
where I placed the body  
it's cold. . .

15.5.1933

**Pensive clouds**

Pensive clouds numb the soul  
which weary dreams softly bemuse.

21.5.1933

**Solitudo**

The earth becomes a poem  
within my vision  
now that I have withdrawn  
the gods beside me become silent  
no other being no other poem  
captivates my imagination.

21.5.1933

**From the desert**

The spirits yearn for the world  
... and if they reach the world  
forgotten blossoms they leave behind  
scattered by their presence

27.5.1933

**The swans of the garden**

A desired memory  
they hold from a lake  
solitary hidden,  
where the days reclined  
tender  
above the water  
above the verdure

May of 1933

**I don't see the face of infinity**

I don't see the face of infinity;  
far from the eyes it is fashioned  
beyond the sea  
the sky  
and the usual light  
luminous infinity!  
I consider my bareness  
its bareness  
perhaps they are a match perhaps they will be a match!

5.6.1933

**Airy, fine, light**

I remember. I want to remember  
Recollection, with nurturing,  
airy fine becomes pleasure;  
tortured, it captivates its tears  
with smiles; it is  
and feels itself pleasure  
airy fine light. . .

June of 1933

**Burlesque**

The world without an I  
to look upon it  
to reproduce it  
has no meaning scent or colour  
it isn't at all a world!

2.7.1933

**La belle au bois dormant**

In the forest which became madness  
from the nightingales  
the pained love awakens  
it breathes  
it asks the nightingales  
where dreams hide  
the golden visions of sleep,  
it sleeps again within the songs. . .

17.7.1933

**The view of the world**

Time, unseen, corrupts  
the view of the world;  
man is distracted  
and doesn't look,  
and if he looks  
he sees nothing;  
until death

he is tormented by an elusive longing  
while he is corrupted by  
some force  
more elusive than time.  
20.7.1933

### **The noise of the world**

The noise of the world wounds the self  
which longs for a life prudent  
around the wonders of time  
and wants existence whole  
until death  
whose possibility already grieves it  
troubles it  
disturbing its life  
beneath the calm thought  
that flows. . .  
20.7.1933

### **Idiot**

To my friend Dimi Kapetanaki

Nothingness awakens the soul  
when it reflects with passion  
over the dead and blessed past;  
idiotic nothingness in this abrupt way  
maddens the soul. . .  
6.8.1933

### **The melancholy of matter**

Irreparable death  
with its strong hands  
will take the soul  
(which we held dear over the years)  
before it exhales the spirit;  
our soul will withdraw  
death will pull it away  
perhaps we will remain dead. . .  
7.8.1933

**Crossing**

Infinity  
feels nothing more  
from time  
than the colourless crossing.  
14.8.1933

**Frisson dans l'azur**

Unseen sky  
depth  
touches like a spectre  
the external  
(the most visible)  
I;  
the subterranean I  
is amused.  
30.8.1933

**Epic**

Tree-leaf  
Bird wings  
wind  
afterwards sea  
waves  
azure time  
horizons supreme  
and before us,  
the Sky.  
3.9.1933

**The thought of you**

The thought of you  
trickles poison  
into me;  
melancholy poison  
monotonous and voluptuous  
dispersing the smoke  
onto my presence  
there, in the past.  
5.9.1933

### Beloved intuition and experience

Beloved intuition and experience  
 beauties die

beauties are scraps and scents

1.10.1933

### Sensualism

The woman I love pre-exists  
 but she is only now appearing  
 and she traverses the hour  
 enthralled with love  
 imponderably delivered  
 from an uncertain sin;  
 to an ineffable mirage  
 her glance crosses the space  
 her very body dissolves,  
 and she is dying  
 as she leans upon my lips,  
 lost, her breasts  
 in my palms.

4.10.1933

### The soul wants death...

The soul wants death celestial  
 just as the heavens narrate  
 while it dreams by the windows of light...

15.10.1933

### God

Poetry    The world is sea    My mind  
 invisible it suffers  
 My mind    I    wants to receive body  
 consubstantial  
 blossom on the surface of vision  
 susurration upon the flux  
 The sun    song    relieves the sea

it fashions the clarity of its waves  
I feel everywhere:  
I see the sea  
the sun  
nothingness perhaps  
I'm dreaming of a human being  
18-21.10.1933

### **The soul**

Consciousness epiphany of feeling  
you deride existence

The loves of time  
frequent your landscapes  
you quiver to the very heart of being  
you replete the universe  
you ignore the meaning of escape  
you long only for journeys

On your back the world flutters its wings  
the sun bathes you incandescent  
20.10.1933

### **Concern**

My existence, abyss and song,  
roams the valley of phenomena  
time receives it with enthusiasm  
within its serenity  
and offers as chimaeras  
the unexpected views of the earth  
and a real panorama,  
the sky  
21.10.1933

### **The sky remembers the years**

The sky remembers the years  
 the ineffable years of the world  
 which are always going far away  
 and which perhaps no-one records  
 or watches, where they are going.

19.11.1933

### **Life**

J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans  
 Baudelaire (Spleen)

People die slowly  
 and fall asleep in the sky  
 from the frequent remembrance of time

27.12.1933

### **Time's vertigo**

Man wonders  
 when he will die  
 and all the dead of the world  
 united by the vertigo of time  
 burden him.

27.12.1933

### **My desire to die...**

My desire to die is a bizarre feeling, which I often sincerely comprehend, but as soon as it passes I cannot recollect, or feel it to the point where no other feeling can penetrate my soul so as to divert my attention from it or to shed a coolness or a humorous light on death, which, for all my concern, will be estranged. I understand that this inability to recreate the image of death emanates from the return of vital forces, which, it seems, become somewhat dormant if I seek refuge in certain thoughts and which, as they awaken, rush upon me disturbingly like waves. If, however, I don't know how to recollect the feeling of death as a unique feeling and as a whole experience, and if, precisely because of this, thoughts and forces exclude me, humble me, force me to smile at myself, the belief, the certainty that I faced death in its entirety pulsates inside me, paradoxically deeply founded and every juxtaposition with the ever-present vital experience, so fragmentary, so incomplete, only magnifies it.