

Pantoum for C. P. Cavafy and a Translator

A task reserved for some mighty king of art,
for himself to find the most fitting language.
He'd be a poet for future generations,
his work never buried inside libraries.

For himself to find the most fitting language
in another is a task intended for a friend,
for work never buried inside libraries
gains a breath of afterlife from that touch.

To another was this task extended as a friend
who'd set it reaching for its fame and to
gain a breath of afterlife from that touch
as it passes from the once and future poet's lips.

He who set it reaching for its fame and
he who found it in a source of grandeur,
pass joined as once and future poets at the lip,
and together say, "Ionia, you own me, Ionia."

He who found it in a source of grandeur,
he'd be a poet for future generations,
and will always say, "Ionia, you own me, Ionia,"
in the task reserved for some mighty king of art.

--George Economou