

Modern Greek Minor Peter Hasiakos Wins a CFC Translation Award for 2006

We wish to congratulate Peter Hasiakos, Physics Major and Modern Greek Minor, for being the first-place winner of the University of Michigan's Context for Classics Undergraduate Translation Prize for 2006. Below you will find Mr. Hasiakos' winning submission.



The poems by Yiorgos Chouliaras in the original Greek are included in his *Roads of Ink* (Dromoi tes melanes, Athens: Nefeli, 2005). This retrospective poetry volume is available from www.greeceinprint.com.

REFUGEES by Yiorgos Chouliaras

On the other side
of the photograph I write to remind myself
not where and when but who

I am not in the photograph

They left us nothing
to take with us
Only this photograph

If you turn it over you will see me

Is that you in the photograph, they ask me
I don't know what to tell you

[Click here to download a PDF of the Greek version as well as Hasiakos' English translation of REFUGEES.](#)

DEFENSELESS CITY by Yiorgos Chouliaras

My wife was not born in Missolonghi.

Later, she would go down alone to the water
perfectly smooth, waveless
ever ready to accept the sun
when it finally decided to soften

its colors upon the lagoon
shamelessly reddening the edges
of a horizon without perspective.

Where were they going, those who saved themselves
escaping to the embraces
of the girls from the city where
the crippled poet died, having brought
all that money for the revolution?

Late in the day, thousands of nights ago in London
as we took the dogs out for a walk
we realized that the historian would
have been much harder on the Greeks
or at least with us, had we not been his guests.
We paid dearly for Byron's money.

Those were the years of another revolution
as they used to say in Greece, and the English
philhellene held accountable only
the descendants of those who were saved in the exodus.

I have also seen the salt from a distance
getting drier and thirstier
while the neighboring water so carelessly
flaunts its glaring wetness
to the dead poet's countrymen
while the sun sets ever so slowly
tracing the cenotaph of the empire.

At a reception in England Don Juan
for those who consider every poem autobiographical
overheard or was told of a woman
who sternly warned her daughter:
Don't look at him. He is dangerous
when you look at him.

I live to make you happy
I didn't say to her, because, if it's impossible
I prefer you to be unhappy is what they'd say
those who like straight talk
and die talking to themselves
in little, everyday revolutions.

Marriage is a difficult story.
Marrying history is difficult.
Shelley's wife, Mary, bore
a monster of our own.

We are all Greeks, her husband used to tell her
just like I still hear from his countrywomen
who would prefer that I were English.

Solomos, without ever having taught
at an English school like Kalvos did,
decided not to become an Italian poet.
His mother's language a domestic servant
and in fragments survived
as if he were an ancient author.

Across the water, the two of them keeping company
in the Zakynthos square greet the tourists
taking a little plunge
into the murky waters of culture.

You would have to be there, she tells me
at the exodus festival of today -
three days and nights of drinking and
making rounds on horseback
from tavern to tavern while in front
the drums are played only by Gypsies.

Missolonghi was a city before the birth of Palamas
and Athens was a village
and the capital of the kingdom.
In days of democracy a former successor to the throne
gets married to a little princess
of an American dynasty and their kid
must dance as Greeks do
just like Anthony Quinn.

A friend came to see us
in New York where we live
not too far from the water.
We buy Greek salt.
We plan the exodus every year.

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