

## *A Prophecy*

*for Richard Howard*

I shall have beauty underground.  
Poppæa was once in my tumbrel, you see.  
So were blithe Helen and white Iope  
    and Liane de Pougy.

And I shall have conversation.  
Lord Byron will ask for me.  
I was the richest kid in my class,  
    the richest in Missolonghi was he.

But what if I'm not an *ariosto*?  
What if *their* hearts are bleeding for *me*?  
Ninon whispers behind her fan,  
    “What's his pedigree?”

And so I don't get to meet Oscar Wilde  
(an inveterate reader like me)  
And hear from his lips the story that ends  
    humilié et anéanti.

# *A Wreath*

*after Yannis Ritsos*

The leaves hid your face.  
I cut them, to get near you.  
When I'd cut the last one, you disappeared.  
Then I made a wreath.  
Who to give it to? No one.  
So I put it on.

## *Paola*

When I was a boy, a gentleman raised  
his trousers a little before sitting down.  
That was to preserve the crease.  
But when you stepped out of the patio pool,  
I sat down hard without thought of the crease,  
you being so brown-skinned and wet,  
so blackhaired and wet. And that, I suppose,  
gives meaning to "I was quite taken aback".