

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".