Kimon Friar

Karen Van Dyck

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Literature between Languages and its Lessons for Translation

Karen Van Dyck

like a curviform alphabet
that defies

decoding, appears
to consist of vowels, beginning with O, the O-
mega, horseshoe, the cave of sound.
What tiny fragments
survive, mangled into our language.

Olga Broumas

For much of the 20th century, the study of literature has been organized around national literatures written predominantly in one language: American literature in English or Greek literature in Greek. Over the past few decades our views of literature have begun to change to accommodate the many multilingual texts that do not fall neatly into one or another national literature. The case of countries such as India or Canada that produce literatures in two or more languages is relevant, but I am thinking of a more pervasive phenomenon that has received little attention: writing that though written ostensibly in one language is influenced by and draws on another. The works of Conrad and Nabokov come immediately to mind as examples of this multilingual literature. The poetry of Olga Broumas is another interesting case. In her collection *Beginning with O* she describes how Greek is present in her English "like a curviform alphabet/ that defies/ decoding." "What tiny fragments," she writes, "survive, mangled into our language."

Literature that is written with more than one language in mind is not only important for how it challenges our assumptions of national and ethnic literature, but also for how it offers translators modes of mixing languages in their literary translations. Multilingual writers from Nabokov to Broumas are often translators as well. Their work makes a double claim: if literature isn't completely at home in one language and literary tradition, then translations also need not aspire to a seamless fit. They too can experiment with the way languages interact and alter each other.

In the texts of Diaspora authors, syntax, sound patterns, and

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vocabulary often seem to come from somewhere else. Greek vowels enter into the English of Broumas's poetry, while literally-translated Greek folk sayings turn up in Irini Spanidou's novel *God's Snake*. Untranslatable Greek words like *ksenitia* are taught to the reader in Elias Kulukundis's *The Feasts of Memory*. By borrowing the rules from one language to operate another, this literature between worlds reinvents what counts as standard diction. Rather than sounding awkward, the smuggled-in Greekisms are a significant part of what makes their writing literature.

Translations, however, are usually judged on the merits of their fluency and invisibility. What passes as avant-garde in a literary text is likely to be written off as incompetence in a translation. Multilingual literature, therefore, can be useful in providing examples of how translations might combine languages more persuasively, how they can create a logic for borrowing. The Greek-English of Broumas's poetry, Spanidou's novels or Kulukundis's memoir show us specific ways of bringing Greek into English. By supplementing rather than replacing one language with another, these texts offer a theory of translation in which the goal is not to reproduce the same, but to match up differences.

In my work on Greek Diaspora literature I explore how multilingual literature provides templates for literary translation.[1] Though my research focuses on Greek American literature (writers such as Broumas), the category of ethnic literature doesn't adequately describe what I am doing.

[1] For articles that are directly related to this topic of Greek-English see my "Greek Poetry Elsewhere," Gramma: Special Issue on Contemporary Greek Poetry, eds. Michalis Chryssanthopoulos, Ekaterini Douka-Kabitoglou, Lizy Tsirimokou, Vol. 8,2000, 81-98 and "Διασπορά, μετάφραση και η γυναικεία λογοτεχνία"/ "Diaspora, Translation, and Women's Writing, "Ελληνίδες συγγραφείς της διασποράς / Women Writers of the Greek Diaspora, Dec. 19-20, 1998 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 2001), 49-65, 187-200. On the multilingualism of Diaspora literature more generally see my "Tracing the Alphabet in Psycharis's Journey, "Ο Ψυχάρης και η εποχή του: ζητήματα γλώσσας, λογοτεχνίας και πολιτισμού, ed. Georgia Farinu (Institute for Modern Greek Studies, Manolis Triandafillides Foundation,2005),135-151;"Greek Literature, the Diaspora, and the Sea," Following the Nereids: Sea Routes and Maritime Business, 16th-20th Centuries, eds. Maria Christina Chatziioannou and Gelina Harlaftis (Kerkyra Publications, Kekyra, 2006), 234-243; and "The Language Question and the Diaspora," in The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797-1896), eds. Rodney Beaton and David Ricks (Ashgate, 2008), 189-198.

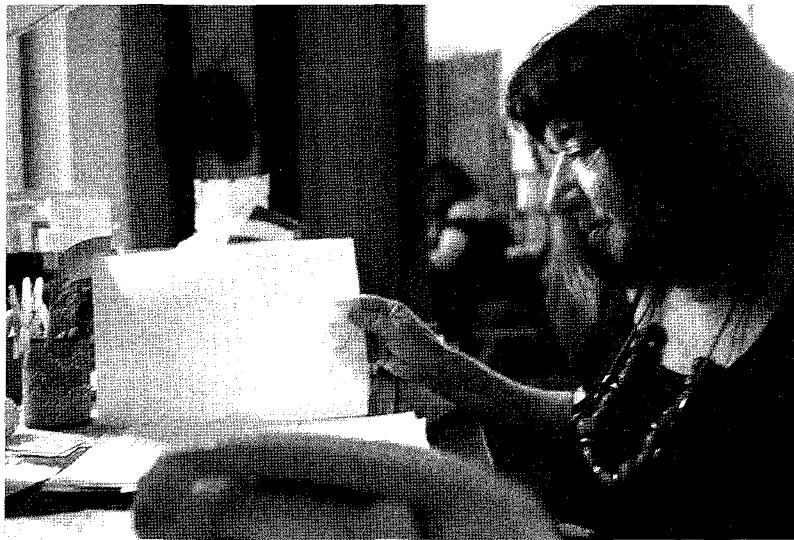
The object of my study is not Greek American literature *per se*, but rather literature that is structured by the relation between the Greek and English languages. I discuss texts not only by Greeks writing in America, but also by Greek writers living in Greece who write about America (I am thinking of Alexandros Papadiamantis, Thanasis Valtinos or Soti Triandafillou) or who choose to write in English (Kay Cicellis, for example, although her only connection to America was that her books were published there). I also look at the work of American writers who lived part of their lives in Greece, such as James Merrill. I even include the work of Greek writers who don't write about America or in English, but whose language-world seems indebted to English (like Margarita Karapanou and Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke).[2] Ultimately the phenomenon that concerns me is not only the "weird English" of Greek American writers, but also the "weird Greek" of Greek writers influenced by English.[3] My argument is that to examine the hybrid language of Diaspora literature in separate contexts as literature of the new land, the homeland or the ethnic community (in my case, America, Greece or Greek America) is misleading. We need to look at this literature in terms of how it moves between languages and cultures.

As I considered a lecture topic that would honor the translator and ambassador of Greek letters Kimon Friar, I found myself pondering the collection of translations I was editing of Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry.[4] Friar was Anghelaki-Rooke's first translator into English and a great supporter of hers, especially during the difficult years of censorship under the Colonels (1967-1974). Her poetry fit into the last category: Greek literature that isn't about America, but that somehow registers

[2] At the end of this essay I have included a short bibliography of texts I have found particularly engaging when it comes to thinking about multilingual literature and its lessons for translation with regard to the Greek case.

[3] For a general conceptualization of what hybrid literatures offer English, see Evelyn Nien-ming Ch'ien, *Weird English* (Harvard, 2004). For an approach that is more attentive to how English and other languages interact, see Hana Wirth-Nesher's study of the languages of Jewish American literature. The title of her study *Call it English* (Princeton, 2005) underscores the multilingualism of immigrant writing by invoking Henry Roth's novel *Call it Sleep*, a rich portrayal of New York city's lower east side in the early 1900s.

the pressure of English. Editing her work I was struck by how easily her Greek translated into English. At times it seemed as if her poetry had been thought-out in English. In honor of Friar I want to address the relation between Greek and English in Greek poetry, in particular the case of Anghelaki-Rooke. How might her poetry, situated at the edge of Greek and always in conversation with English, help us see the possibilities that multilingual literature has to offer translation?

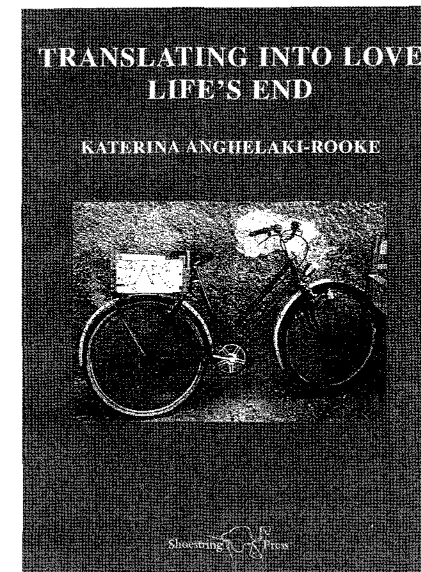


The poet Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke at her desk in Aegina

[4] This volume published as *The Scattered Papers of Penelope: New and Selected Poems by Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke* (Anvil, 2008; Graywolf, 2009) is the first full retrospective collection of Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry in English. To date she has three volumes of collected work in Greek: *Poems 1963-1977* (Kastaniotis, 1997), *Poems 1978-1985* (Kastaniotis, 1998), and *Poems 1986-1996* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1998) as well as quite a few uncollected books also from Kastaniotis. In English she has five chapbooks: *The Body is the Victory and the Defeat of Dreams* (Wire Press, 1975), *Beings and Things on Their Own* (BOA Editions, 1986), *From Purple Into Night* (Shoestring Press, 1997), *The Angel Poems and Other Writings* (The American College of Athens, 1998) and *Translating into Love Life's End* (Shoestring Press, 2004). Translations of Anghelaki-Rooke's poems are mine. Page numbers refer to the Anvil edition of *The Scattered Papers of Penelope.*

THE ENGLISH-GREEK OF ANGHELAKI-ROOKE'S LIFE[5]

My collection of translations of Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry came into its own at a pivotal moment in her career. When I arrived in Aegina a few summers ago I found the poet's own English translation of her collection, *Translating into Love Life's End* (Shoestring Press, 2004) on her desk. Was this supposed to be a sign that my work was over? Did she no longer need her English translators? Why did she choose to translate her poems into English and not Russian or French, the other languages she knows fluently? Did this have something to do with fact that English was the language of her husband and her daily life?



Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke's own translation of
Μεταφράζοντας σε έρωτα της ζωής το τέλος

[5] This section borrows and expands on my introduction "The Island of Return" in *The Scattered Papers of Penelope: New and Selected Poems by Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke* (Anvil, 2008), 9-21.

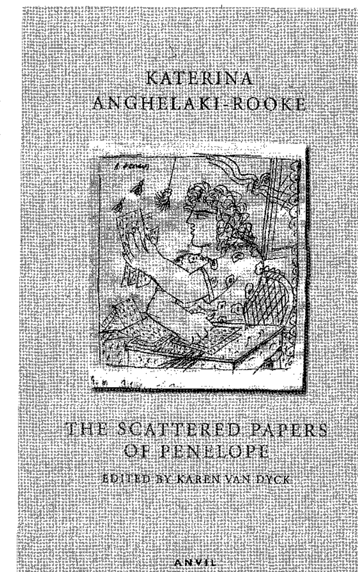
Might this explicit turn to English be related to "translating into love life's end," both her husband's and her own? Was it a prescient way of working through her husband's death the following Fall?

Though a Greek poet writing in Greek and living in Greece, Anghelaki-Rooke's everyday life is saturated with English. Around her table in Aegina there are always visitors from England and the United States. By her own account her years at the Iowa Writers' workshop and teaching at Harvard were some of her most formative. From a very young age she was an avid reader and translator of English, Irish, and American poetry: Seamus Heaney, Sylvia Plath, Derek Walcott (with the Greek American poet Stephanos Papadopoulos). English is a language she has inhabited through friends, family and poetry on a daily basis.

Her remarks and jokes invariably turn to the topic of Greek-English and what Americanization means to Greece today. "Hear that?" she says pointing to the television. "You can't say *that* in Greek: 'Να έχετε μια ωραία μέρα' (Na ehete mia orea mera). It's a word-for-word translation from the English 'Have a nice day!' Or what about those jokes we have where a Greek phrase means something else in another language? The one for English is: Να η Σπάρτη! (Na i Sparti!) (Here's Sparta!) The point is that in English it sounds like 'Nice party' (Ni-ceparty) which is funny because parties are not exactly what Sparta was famous for. America and Greece, English and Greek are so implicated in each other that it is impossible to think the one without the other.[6] As we talk a documentary on Greek America begins to air. The topic is Gringlish idioms like Φτάσαμε τα μπελοζέρια (Ftasame ta belozeria) (We've

[6] On Greek and English as mutually incomprehensible and yet dependent on each other, see my discussion of a comment Anghelaki-Rooke made and another joke she told that explicitly takes up this issue in my epilogue to my book *Kassandra and the Censors* (Cornell, 1998), 259. More generally on language jokes, see Kyrkos Doxiades's examination of the cultural anxiety they reflect ("Ρηχά είναι ρε, bitte: Χιούμορ και ιδεολογία στα ελληνοξενικά," unpublished paper delivered at the Ermoupolis Summer Seminars, Ethniko Kendro Erevnon, 2006).

arrived at the below-zeros, meaning it's freezing). In this example the English phrase "below zero" is turned into a Greek plural neuter noun "ta belozeria." Anghelaki-Rooke's world is Greek, but Greek at a time when the language controversy in Greece is no longer about the struggle between two different linguistic registers, *katharevousa* and demotic, but rather between two different languages, Greek and English.



Karen Van Dyck's collection of translations of Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry

The English-Greek of Anghelaki-Rooke's Poetry

It is fairly obvious how Anghelaki-Rooke's lived experience of English and her life as a reader and translator of American poetry enables her poetry to be more in conversation with American poetry. There are references to

American poets and poems and to places she lived in America.[7] There are even moments when an English word appears in her Greek. Her poem "Writing" concludes with the phrase στο φουλ (sto *full*) which means "at full speed": Η δημιουργία βρίσκεται στο φουλ (Creation's in full swing) (Anvil, 2008), 46. These kinds of influences can be accounted for. But it is more difficult to explain how this understanding of language as ostensibly bilingual shapes her own poetry and makes it come across more easily in English translation.

Like Cavafy's, the poetry of Anghelaki-Rooke's has always struck me as a poetry indebted to English. The British poet Auden once wrote that Cavafy's tone of voice was unmistakable in English translation. No matter who made the translation, the poem was clearly Cavafy's. I have always thought this was related to the fact that Cavafy wrote his first poems in English. Early on he found an English equivalent that hovered near his Greek long after he abandoned writing in English. Anghelaki-Rooke's poems also seemed pressured by the English language, though not so much English English, but American English. In my translator's note to an anthology of Greek poetry I explained that though the editors had wanted to translate all sorts of Greek poems, we inevitably favored poems that were already in dialogue with the Anglo-Saxon tradition.[8] These poems found good translations in English more readily. They had a temperament, a tone of voice, a look, a line-length that worked in English. Cavafy's and Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry featured prominently in that anthology. So, yes, I can feel the English in her Greek, but how exactly does this intermixing of the two languages work and what might it teach us as translators?

Most readers agree that Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry is first and foremost about the body.[9] As the title of an early poem declares, "The Body is the Victory and the Defeat of Dreams." But as her poetry has matured, language

[7] Her series "Springtime for Yiannousa," for example, records the activities of the squirrels in Princeton when she was a fellow in Hellenic Studies in 1987 (Anvil, 2008), 70-77.
[8] *A Century of Greek Poetry: 1900-2000*, co-edited with Peter Bien, Peter Constantine and Edmund Keeley (Cosmos, 2004), xxvii-xxviii.

has become a more and more central issue. It is no longer only the means of writing the body, but, increasingly, the topic of her poems. We see her experimenting with a plethora of new forms from the prose poem to the journal entry. This shift to a more self-conscious awareness of language is clear when we compare two poems she wrote about an imaginary place of sadness called "Lipiu." If the first Lipiu poem is concerned with the actual place and the people that inhabit this place, the second one is interested in the language that is spoken there:

> Διαβάζεις τα δέντρα, τα βουνά στο πρωτότυπο.
> Λες: Τι έχω εγώ να πω σ' αυτή τη γλώσσα; [10]
>
> You read the trees, the mountains in the original.
> You ask: What do I have to say in this language? (107)

But what is interesting for our purposes is that this shift to a concern with language is not simply about the Greek language. The language she refers to is riddled with the sounds and syntax of other tongues. In fact when the poet describes her new attention to language she refers to both English and Greek. "All my life I've been saying that I serve poetry. Lately I have begun to see that what I am really doing is serving language.... I have an almost religious attachment to language. I believe that when I say a phrase in English, I live and perceive reality in a different way than if I say the same thing in Greek. In English when you hurt yourself and you feel pain, you say 'Ouch,' whereas in Greek you say 'Ach.' For me these are two different kinds of pain."[11] Whereas

[9] Her first selected collection was entitled Όταν το σώμα: 1963-1988 (When the Body). Susan Bohandy addresses this focus in her article "Defining the Self through the Body in Four Poems by Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke and Sylvia Plath" in the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* (Vol. 12, No. 1, 1994), 1-37.
[10] Η ύλη μόνη (Kastaniotis, 2001), 32.
[11] "A Conversation with Panos Stathogiannis and Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke," *Helios: The Voice of Three Seas, Special Issue on Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke* (No. 6, June 2004), 13.

her earlier poems tried to capture different kinds of pain and pleasure in poetry, over the last decade it has been the actual translation of this pain and pleasure into language that interests her, and though it is clear she is serving the Greek language, she can't express this without referring to another language, English. In fact, her new consciousness that she is serving language seems born of an acceptance of her multilingualism.

But what is it that English gives her? What is it about this other system of expression that influences her Greek? Certainly there are emotions and ways of interacting and even words that come more easily in English, but I think there is also something about the very structure of the language that affects her use of Greek, however subtly. Of all the languages Anghelaki-Rooke knows, English, especially American English, is the most differently organized from Greek. If we line up her languages along a spectrum we see that English is less inflected than French, which is less inflected than Greek, which is less inflected than Russian. At one end we have American English with its relatively fixed word order, while at the other end we have Greek and Russian with their freer word order. In Greek we can say 'So-and-so translates so-and-so' by rearranging the sentence in at least four different ways. We can say 'Η Βαν Ντάικ μεταφράζει την Αγγελάκη-Ρουκ' (I Van Dyck metafrazei tin Anghelaki-Rooke), but we can also say 'Η Βαν Ντάικ την Αγγελάκη-Ρουκ μεταφράζει' (I Van Dyck tin Anghelaki-Rooke metafrazei), 'Την Αγγελάκη-Ρουκ η Βαν Ντάικ μεταφράζει' (Tin Anghelaki-Rooke i Van Dyck metafrazei) or even 'Την Αγγελάκη-Ρουκ μεταφράζει η Βαν Ντάικ' (Tin Anghealki-Rooke metafrazei i Van Dyck). Each of these word orders keeps the basic meaning intact, though, of course, with slight variations in emphasis. But in English inverting word order completely changes the meaning of the sentence. It is one thing if Van Dyck translates Anghelaki-Rooke and quite another if Anghelaki-Rooke translates Van Dyck. Meaning in English relies on keeping words in their

places.[12] If in Greek the high degree of inflection at the morphological level is related to a freer word order, then in English the low degree of inflection is related to a stricter word order. It is this difference that seems to appeal to Anghelaki-Rooke and to seep into her Greek.

Let me briefly show how English can be seen as putting pressure on an early poem of hers. I will then come back to this question of word order in the last half of my piece when I discuss the title poem of her more recent collection *Translating into Love Life's End*. I am not interested in linguistic seepage as an end in itself, but as a way of exploring more generally how the movement of people and words are mapped onto each other. In "Penelope Says," one of the few Greek poems that can rival Cavafy's poems for the number of different English translations in print, Anghelaki-Rooke makes clear from the start her indebtedness to English and its method of organizing words on a page. She begins the poem with an epigraph from a poem by the English poet Daniel Weissbort:[13]

> *And your absence teaches me*
> *What art could not*

Then, her ensuing poem, though in Greek, has whole swatches that can be brought into English word for word. I am thinking particularly about the second stanza where sentences follow the subject-verb-object word order of English:

> Σβήνω, σχίζω, πνίγω
> τις ζωντανές κραυγές

[12] Sure, the semantic emphasis of different word orders in Greek can be indicated by the voice in spoken English, '*Van Dyck* translates Anghelaki-Rooke' versus 'Van Dyck translates *Anghelaki-Rooke*,' but it is less usual to register this in writing.

[13] Daniel Weissbort taught for thirty years at the University of Iowa and was founding editor of the journal *Modern Poetry in Translation*.

«πού είσαι έλα σε περιμένω
ετούτη η άνοιξη δεν είναι σαν τις άλλες»
και ξαναρχίζω το πρωί
με νέα πουλιά και λευκά σεντόνια
να στεγνώνουν στον ήλιο.[14]

I erase, I tear up, I stifle
the living cries
'Where are you, come, I'm waiting for you
this spring is not like other springs'
and I begin again in the morning
with new birds and white sheets
drying in the sun. (25)

In her retelling of the Penelope story as a parable of women's writing rather than a woman waiting, the predictable order of words (subject-verb-object) lends her Greek a mesmerizing tone. Like the movement of Penelope's shuttle, the repetition of this word order supports her claim: Odysseus is beside the point. The real work is getting the poem down on paper -- word by word, line by line, row by row. It is as if Greek's usual tendency to flip objects and subjects wouldn't provide the internal structural rhyme and consistency that English does.

In a sense Anghelaki-Rooke's embracing of the fixed aspect of English's word order should come as no surprise if we think of her general preoccupation with place and placement. The majority of her poems are about Aegina and her big red house with its pepper tree, its pistachio grove, its cats and dogs ("The Suitors," "Aegina I" and "II," "The Red Moon," and "In this House Settling Time's Accounts," to name but a few). Again and again she returns to this island and this house

[14] Ποιήματα 1963-1977 (Kastaniotis, 1997), 207.

in her life and in her poems.[15] Her interest in place is also reinforced thematically through her attention to the act of placing things. Some of her more abstract poems address what happens when things are moved around ("Beings and Things on their own," "Matter Alone," "Fluffy Things"). Matter out of place it turns out is no small matter. As she muses in "Matter Alone":

Παίρνω ένα πράγμα και του αλλάζω θέση.
Δεν ξέρω γιατί, ίσως κάτι δεν μ' αρέσει.
Δευτερόλεπτα μετά
το ύφασμα, το χαρτί
βγάζει έναν ψίθυρο-κραυγή
καθώς αλλάζει στάση η ύλη.[16]

I take a thing and change its place.
I am not sure why, but it bothered me.
Seconds later
the cloth, the paper
lets out a whisper-cry
as matter shifts. (104)

In Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry we find an economy with regard to movement both at the level of topic and tone. Like people, words sit in the same chairs, sleep in the same beds, take the same walks, and stop at the same olive trees to rest on the way home from the sea. English's immobility seems to provide a model for this. It helps her create a poetics of place that matches

[15] Her piece "Aegina: A Place of Return" is a short meditation on this. See my *Insight Guide: Greece* (APA Productions, 1989), 176-177. To readers of English and American poetry this attention to place and home is familiar. Postwar poetry on both sides of the Atlantic dwells on the local. But I should note that such a preoccupation with one's island, village or city is also the regular fare of 20th century Greek literature. If I had more space I would explore how the "Englishness" or "Americanness" of a Cavafy or an Anghelaki-Rooke resides not only in their bicultural lives and bilingual poetics, but also in their ability to connect different literary traditions by focusing on issues that happen to be common to both. Cavafy's way of referring to his homosexuality or Anghelaki-Rooke's descriptions of daily life fit into both the Greek and Anglo-Saxon traditions.
[16] Η ύλη μόνη (Kastaniotis, 2001), 11.

her own need not to move around too much.[17]

Anghelaki-Rooke's emphasis on staying put becomes clearer if we view her poetry in a larger context. On the whole the Greek language thrives on the freedom that inflection entails. Words are rearranged to emphasize who is doing what to whom. Rhyme comes more easily since the endings of words in an inflected language can be changed around to agree with each other. Keeping a fixed meter is also a simpler matter since words can shift to fit the pattern.[18] Sentences often run on for a full poem without confusion, while compound nouns and adjective-as-nouns (the invisible, the red) are plentiful since, unlike in English where such constructions are confusing, the article before the word makes it clear that it is indeed a noun (<u>the</u> invisible, <u>the</u> red). But Anghelaki-Rooke's Greek doesn't pay much heed to these issues. She is sparing when it comes to inverting objects and subjects or using rhyme or meter. She rarely uses long sentences, and only employs compound nouns or turns adjectives into abstract nouns sporadically.[19] Her project can be distinguished from that of much Greek poetry that privileges Greek's complexities and idiosyncracies. Hers, for example, is not the intricate punning of Kiki Dimoula, who treats the Greek language like an acrobat balancing whole metaphysical arguments on a part of speech. How is it possible to translate into English the second person singular imperative of Dimoula's title Χαίρε ποτέ? Greet neverness? Hail never? "Mine," Anghelaki-Rooke clarifies, "is different. If you don't get the

[17] The importance of place and set routines can also be related to her own difficulty moving. About her childhood illness and limp see my introduction (Anvil, 2008), 13-15.

[18] Even in 20th century Greek poetry, where rhyme and meter are not often used, one finds a 15-syllable line woven internally into the fabric of a verse. See Vassilios Letsios' dissertation "'The ghost behind the arras': transformations of the 'political verse' in 20th century Greek poetry" (Kings College, London, 2003).

[19] Anghelaki-Rooke often compares the ease with which rhyme and meter can be translated from Russian to Greek, both inflected languages, and the difficulty when translating from English into Greek, an uninflected and an inflected language. The structural correspondences between Russian and Greek are particularly palpable in her rhyming translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin,* whereas in her own poetry she tends to shy away from rhyme and meter. For a comparative example of the challenges of translating differently-structured languages I found Susanna Braund's discussion of Ted Hughe's Seneca translation, and in particular his way of recreating Latin's compound words ("his hair beard face" "a mash of mud brains blood"), enlightening. This was a paper given at *Translatio: Translation and Cultural Appropriation in the Ancient World,* March 3-4, 2006, Columbia University.

pun, you don't lose much. I am not interested in distorting reality when I play with language."[20] While Dimoula focuses on what isn't translatable and what is only possible in Greek, Anghelaki-Rooke emphasizes what is translatable, especially into American English. By examining Anghelaki-Rooke's Penelope poem I have suggested that the English language feeds into her work from early on, but let's turn to her recent collection that takes translation and the interrelation of Greek and English as its theme in order to show what lessons her poetry offers the translator.

"Translating Life's End into Love" in English-Greek

Though dedicated to her husband, and about how coming to terms with death is not unlike falling in love, her collection *Translating Life's End into Love,* and particularly the title poem, are also about the challenge of translation. This is the first and only collection she has translated by herself into English. I will analyze the poem first in Greek, then in her own translation, and finally in mine.[21] I think it is useful to try to trace a path from Greek to English since what I want to show is how my translation learns from both her multilingual original and her multilingual translation. Looking at three versions of this poem provides a test case for how translations can learn from literature that draws on more than one language. Anghelaki-Rooke's Greek is like English in the original. Her English is like Greek in her translation, and, following her

[20] Conversation with the author, Aegina, June 11, 2001.

[21] The order here is not as clear as it seems because Anghelaki-Rooke and I worked on a draft of a translation together before either of us produced our own version. This explains certain similarities.

lead, my English is also like Greek in my translation, only in different ways. Her poem imagines a translation practice that creates texts that are not simply in one language, but reflect a relationship between languages. The hybridity of her language suggests a way of translating that is open to the foreign, without being so foreign that it is unintelligible to the reader.[22]

Anghelaki-Rooke's poem uses the vocabulary of the translator to describe how we fathom someone we fancy. The not knowing and wanting to know about another person we desire becomes a way of describing the not knowing and wanting to know about the end of life. Imagining death is likened to falling in love, and both are likened to the work of translating a difficult poem. Here is the poem in Greek. (Readers can go to the back of this publication for a fold-out of the original side by side with Anghelaki-Rooke's translation and my own.)

Μεταφράζοντας σε έρωτα της ζωής το τέλος

Επειδή με την δική μου γλώσσα
δεν μπορώ να σε αγγίζω
μεταγλωττίζω το πάθος μου.
Δεν μπορώ να σε μεταλάβω
και σε μετουσιώνω
δεν μπορώ να σε ξεντύσω
και σε ντύνω με αλλόφωνη φαντασία.
Στα φτερά σου από κάτω
δεν μπορώ να κουρνιάσω
γι' αυτό γύρω σου πετάω
του λεξικού σου γυρνώντας τις σελίδες.

[22] For an overview of how theories of translation traditionally break down into opposing camps - those in favor of making the translation feel at home or foreign - see Lawrence Venuti's chapter "Canon" on the history of translation theory in *The Translator's Invisibility* (Routledge, 1995), 43-98.

Πώς απογυμνώνεσαι θέλω να μάθω
πώς ξανοίγεσαι
γι' αυτό μες στις γραμμές σου
ψάχνω συνήθειες
τα φρούτα που αγαπάς
μυρουδιές που προτιμάς
κορίτσια που ξεφυλλίζεις.
Τα σημάδια σου ποτέ μου δεν θα δω γυμνά
εργάζομαι λοιπόν σκληρά πάνω στα επίθετά σου
για να τ' απαγγείλω σε αλλόθρησκη λαλιά.
Πάλιωσε όμως η δική μου ιστορία
κανένα ράφι δεν στολίζει ο τόμος μου
και τώρα εσένα φαντάζομαι με δέρμα σπάνιο
χρυσόδετο σε ξένη βιβλιοθήκη.
Επειδή δεν έπρεπε ποτέ
ν' αφεθώ στην ασυδοσία της νοσταλγιάς
και να γράψω αυτό το ποίημα
τον γρίζο ουρανό διαβάζω
σε ηλιόλουστη μετάφραση.[23]

This poem tells us a great deal about the act of translation, particularly of translation between Greek and English. In the same way that what we look for in another (the fruit he loves, the smells he prefers) reveals our own erotic preferences, what we choose to carry over from one language to another in our translation provides a blueprint for what we think is important in the original. I would argue that this is true generally, but also specifically of Anghelaki-Rooke's translation of this poem. The flip-flopping between Greek and English word order turns out to be a central component that she retains, whereas the

[23] *Μεταφράζοντας σε έρωτα της ζωής το τέλος* (Kastaniotis, 2003), 7.

figurativeness of language, its puns and play, is something she doesn't seem to consider as important.

First let's see how two different systems of ordering language are juxtaposed in the original. To begin with we can look at the title. Using a word for word translation, in English the end of the title would be convoluted -- Μεταφράζοντας σε έρωτα της ζωής το τέλος, Translating - into love - of life - the end. We would say "the end of life" not "of life the end." As we have seen, such inversions, though regular practice in Greek, are less frequent in Anghelaki-Rooke's poetry. It therefore is striking when we find this kind of word order in a poem of hers. Scrambled word orders crop up repeatedly throughout the poem interrupting the more fixed, conversational "American-English" style we are used to. In her poem in fact they appear in every passage that has to do with the work of the translator: turning the pages of a dictionary, putting books on bookshelves, reading. The poet herself has noted that this poem is the first time her profession as a translator has interfered with writing poetry.[24] But what is noteworthy for our discussion is that translation is present not only as a topic, but as a strategy in the poem. The order of the title is then contrasted with the first and second lines that are easier to bring into English: "Translating -into love -of life -the end" versus "Since -with my tongue/ I cannot touch you."[25] This contrasting of Greek and English ways of ordering words is repeated throughout the poem. I have underlined the lines that rely on Greek's freer word order:

[24] She made this comment at our reading in Oxford in May 2006.

[25] I am underlining the lines in which a high level of reorganization is required, for example where two or three different parts of a phrase need to change places (του λεξικού σου γυρνώντας τις σελίδες) and it would be impossible to translate word for word without some confusion. I leave simple flips (στα φτερά σου άπο κάτω) that still make sense in the same order in English, and lines in which the pronoun "you" or "my" or the negative qualifier "not" comes before a verb rather than after as it would in English (<u>Δεν</u> μπορώ να <u>σε</u> αγγίξω), since this seems to me to be unavoidable.

<u>Μεταφράζοντας σε έρωτα της ζωής το τέλος</u>

Επειδή με την δική μου γλώσσα
δεν μπορώ να σε αγγίξω
μεταγλωττίζω το πάθος μου.
Δεν μπορώ να σε μεταλάβω
και σε μετουσιώνω
δεν μπορώ να σε ξεντύσω
και σε ντύνω με αλλόφωνη φαντασία.
Στα φτερά σου από κάτω
δεν μπορώ να κουρνιάσω
γι' αυτό γύρω σου πετάω
<u>του λεξικού σου γυρνώντας τις σελίδες.</u>
Πώς απογυμνώνεσαι θέλω να μάθω
πώς ξανοίγεσαι
γι' αυτό μες στις γραμμές σου
ψάχνω συνήθειες
τα φρούτα που αγαπάς
μυρουδιές που προτιμάς
κορίτσια που ξεφυλλίζεις.
<u>Τα σημάδια σου ποτέ μου δεν θα δω γυμνά</u>
εργάζομαι λοιπόν σκληρά πάνω στα επίθετά σου
για να τ' απαγγείλω σε αλλόθρησκη λαλιά.
<u>Πάλιωσε όμως η δική μου ιστορία</u>
<u>κανένα ράφι δεν στολίζει ο τόμος μου</u>
και τώρα εσένα φαντάζομαι με δέρμα σπάνιο
χρυσόδετο σε ξένη βιβλιοθήκη.
Επειδή δεν έπρεπε ποτέ
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και να γράψω αυτό το ποίημα
<u>τον γρίζο ουρανό διαβάζω</u>
σε ηλιόλουστη μετάφραση.

Her attempt to bridge her native tongue with a foreign one is acted out as a struggle between word orders that are more or less Greek.

"Translating into Love Life's End" in Anghelaki-Rooke's Greek-English

Now let's look at Anghelaki-Rooke's translation to see how it calls attention to this Greek-English tension and how it also achieves its own blend of the two languages. Here we need to turn to the second column of the fold-out:

Translating into Love Life's End

Since I cannot touch you
with my tongue
I translate my passion.
I cannot communicate
so I transubstantiate;
I cannot undress you
so I dress you with the fantasy
of a foreign tongue.
Under your wings
I cannot nestle
so I fly around you
turning the pages of your dictionary.
I want to know how you strip
how you open up
so I look for your habits
in between your lines
for your favourite fruit

your favourite smells
girls you leaf through.
I'll never see your punctuation marks
naked, I work hard on your adjectives
so that I can recite them in the susurrations
of another religion.
But my story has aged
my volume adorns no shelf
and I imagine you now with a rare gold leather binding
in a foreign library.
Because I should never have indulged in the luxury of nostalgia
and written this poem
I am reading the gray sky now
in a sun-drenched translation.[26]

Anghelaki-Rooke's translation wants the word order of the title to remain intact where a native speaker might not. She translates the title as "Translating into Love Life's End," not "Translating Life's End into Love." The typography of the title on the cover makes the meaning clear:

Translating into Love
Life's End

Nonetheless in the poem itself the order is slightly confusing. An English reader might think that this was a poem about the end of one's love-life, not life's end. There are a few other places where literal translations make the English sound a little off. She dresses you "with the fantasy" whereas we would probably say "in the fantasy." She looks for your habits "in between your lines" whereas we would probably say "between the lines." Her translation retains certain sound patterns and grammatical

[26] *Translating into Love Life's End* (Shoestring Press, 2004), 3-4.

constructions from Greek: the English word "susurrations" to recall the alliterative Greek word "λαλιά" and the more archaic-sounding "my volume adorns no shelf" to mimic the Greek "κανένα ράφι." Again I have underlined them.

Translating into Love Life's End

Since I cannot touch you
with my tongue
I translate my passion.
I cannot communicate
so I transubstantiate;
I cannot undress you
so I dress you with the fantasy
of a foreign tongue.
Under your wings
I cannot nestle
so I fly around you
turning the pages of your dictionary.
I want to know how you strip
how you open up
so I look for your habits
in between your lines
for your favourite fruit
your favourite smells
girls you leaf through.
I'll never see your punctuation marks
naked, I work hard on your adjectives
so that I can recite them in the susurrations
of another religion.
But my story has aged
my volume adorns no shelf
and I imagine you now with a rare gold leather binding

in a foreign library.
Because I should never have indulged in the luxury of nostalgia
and written this poem
I am reading the gray sky now
in a sun-drenched translation.

These examples of Greek-English are barely noticeable and might not seem worthy of our attention. Cumulatively, however, they remind us that Greek and English – especially in the bilingual contexts of the lives many of us lead – are never pure, discrete entities. The Greek-English of her translation – an English that is not only English – underscores a certain English-Greek already at play in the original – a Greek that is not only Greek. The title's word order in her translation reminds us of the difficulty of bringing one language into another. The possibility and impossibility of trying to learn about this other person we are attracted to and of coming to terms with death is mirrored in the back and forth of a Greek that can and can't be English.

Although the inflection of Greek is present in her English, her translation on the whole focuses on what can be translated, the way Greek and English match up. The word order of the first few lines, for example, comes so easily into English.

Επειδή με την δική μου γλώσσα
δεν μπορώ να σε αγγίζω
μεταγλωττίζω το πάθος μου.

Since I cannot touch you
with my tongue
I translate my passion.

And perhaps most strikingly she doesn't worry about the figurative

language that is impossible to carry over in a translation. This is clear in the way she ignores the puns and double entendres: the verb μεταγλωττίζω, which means translate or transliterate, but also contains the word for tongue; the verb μεταλάβω, connecting gender (φύλο) and page (φύλλο); the σημάδια and δέρμα, which in Greek are both marks on the body and on the page, both human skin and the leather-binding of a book. These don't really matter to her. We can remember what she said about how her poetry differs from Dimoula's: "If you don't get the pun, you don't lose much. I am not interested in distorting reality when I play with language." What belongs purely to Greek and is untranslatable is not as important as what connects Greek to English and is translatable. Or to paraphrase the poem: If you can't get the punctuation marks right, you should concentrate on the adjectives.

At the end, when she admits that such fantasizing is a nostalgic indulgence, her consolation is the very practice of translation. Although translating Thanatos into Eros is near impossible, acknowledging the co-implication of the one in the other by translating English into Greek and Greek into English is something we can do. If she can't fully know the other, she can find a certain communion by joining two languages together. Translation is a way of overcoming the limitations of the body. It may be impossible to translate life's end into love, but by putting his book in a gold binding in a foreign library, it is possible to read the gray sky in a sun-drenched translation.

Her translation shows us the kind of English she would like her poetry to be dressed in, but there is no dogma. This translation is only one of many possible translations. Greek-English, Anghelaki-Rooke's or anyone else's, is not so much an answer as the question that makes translation necessary. Greek-English teaches us that translation should call attention to the way two languages supplement rather than replace each other. It is a privileged arena for working out how differences can cohabit. In showing its preferences it makes us aware of what the critic Walter Benjamin in

his famous essay "The Task of the Translator" called language's "mode of signification." For Benjamin the issue is not whether a German word such as *brot* means the same thing as the French word *pain*, but whether its mode of signification, that is the relationship of *brot* to bread in Germany and that of *pain* to bread in France match up. Translation is a translation of equations: how *this* over *this* is equal to *that* over *that*. Meaning resides in the crossover, in the relationship between how two different languages make sense. And in a poem about translation the *this* and the *that* are already meta-equations. We are not talking about the relation of Anghelaki-Rooke's Greek to her or my English, but about the relation of her English-Greek to her and my Greek-English. If the poem asks us what can be taken from English and used in Greek, then the translations ask what can be taken from Greek and used in English, and how different modes of doing this match up with each other.

"Translating Life's End into Love" in my Greek-English

My translation tries to take on board the modes of signification that Anghelaki-Rooke's poem identifies – its wish for English to be like Greek and its attention to the literal over the figurative, but not always in the same ways or places. If her translation keeps English closer to Greek, mine pulls it slightly in the other direction, making it more English. Instead of trying to bring over the word order of the title that I find confusing, I keep the places where word order can be preserved easily, the middle portion of the poem, for example:

γι' αυτό μες στις γραμμές σου
ψάχνω συνήθειες
τα φρούτα που αγαπάς
μυρουδιές που προτιμάς
κορίτσια που ξεφυλλίζεις

That's why I search
between the lines
for your habits
the fruits you love
the smells you prefer
the girls you leaf through. (111)

I match her Greek-English with a Greek-English that sounds more plausible in English to me. I reinforce and even overdo the English word order I find in her Greek in my English. I limit my internal alliteration because English is chintzy that way. Without the common endings of an inflected tongue it is hard to repeat sounds as frequently without sounding precious. I keep the repeated re in recite and religion, but forgo the s's in susurrations. I add in a repeated "because." I also replace the ubiquitous continuous of Greek "I am reading" with the English's preference for the simple "I read." All this is risky since in a sense I am only making the English more English, rather than showing the contrast between Greek and English, but it is the ability to turn Greek into English that I feel is the point of the poem. I then make up for pushing in this direction by restoring the Greek meaning of μεταγλωττίζω (to transliterate). I honor Anghelaki-Rooke's distaste for puns (Don't distort reality when you play with language!), but I distinguish between μεταφράζω (translate) and μεταγλωττίζω (transliterate),

since transliteration is an important strategy in multilingual literature, especially women's.[27] Μεταγλωττίζω is not simply to translate, but more specifically, to re-tongue. Like a French kiss it involves crossing over and sharing the space of the other.

Again as we read through my translation let me underline the bits that I feel make Greek English. I want us to listen for the way it has learned from Anghelaki-Rooke's Greek-English, but also how it differs. We can compare versions on the fold-out.

Translating Life's End into Love

<u>Because</u> I cannot touch you
with my tongue
<u>I transliterate my passion.</u>
<u>Because</u> I cannot take your communion
I transubstantiate you.
<u>Because</u> I cannot undress you
I imagine you in the clothes
of a foreign language.
<u>Because</u> I cannot nestle
under your wing
I fly around you
turning the pages of your dictionary.
I want to learn how you bare yourself
how you open yourself up.
<u>That's why I search</u>
<u>between the lines</u>
<u>for your habits</u>
<u>the fruits you love</u>
<u>the smells you prefer</u>
<u>the girls you leaf through.</u>
<u>Because</u> I'll never see

[27] For an analysis of the differences between translation and transliteration, see my article "Διασπορά, μετάφραση και η γυναικεία λογοτεχνία" /"Diaspora, Translation, and Women's Writing," Ελληνίδες συγγραφείς της διασποράς/ Women Writers of the Greek Diaspora, Dec. 19-20, 1998 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 2001), 49-65, 187-200.

your punctuation marks naked
I work hard on your adjectives
so I can recite them in another religion.
Now that my story's old
and my book's no longer on the shelf
it's you I imagine
in a rare leather binding
with gold lettering
in a foreign library.
Because I should never have given in
to the luxury of nostalgia
and written this poem
I read the grey sky
in a sun-drenched translation. (111-2)

What we learn from Anghelaki-Rooke's original and her translation is that the goal of bringing two languages closer together is not achieved by trying to carry over all aspects of one language into another, but by picking a few and establishing a logic of exchange. In her translation she juxtaposes a more literal and less literal way of bringing Greek into English. In my translation I emphasize the English word order of her Greek and let the issue of transliteration and literalness resurface at the level of content. If her translation comes down on the side of how difficult it is to fathom the other language, person, or death itself, mine puts this poem among her more upbeat ones and imagines translation as a way of gaining access to the other. Both interpretations are there in the original and make sense in the context of her larger oeuvre. Both are pieces of a larger Greek-English inter-linguistic puzzle.

MULTILINGUAL LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION

Literature that is structured by the relation between different languages is important for what it teaches us about the limits of national literatures and cultures, but also about the possibilities of translation. In trying to understand this I like to think of the image of the shattered urn that Benjamin gives us in his essay on translation. For Benjamin the urn is language with a capital L and the shards are all the pieces in all the languages that make up this greater language. His point is that translation is not about finding two similarly shaped shards, but rather about the interface between two differently shaped ones. The work of translation is about putting the pieces together. He writes:

> Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel.[28]

A translation and an original do not replicate each other, but fit together along a broken edge. The accidental jaggedness of the break is an integral part of the process.

We might imagine literature by authors who live and write between languages as situated along this break. Their writing inhabits a space

[28] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations* (Schocken Books, 1986), 78.

just inside the perimeter of the piece of pottery, near the broken edge, but at a safe-enough distance to be able to hold fast, a little further in than a translation since a translation is always at risk of falling into the abyss of no language at all. Texts, such as Broumas's and Anghelaki-Rooke's poems, positioned inside national literatures but near the border, near where the familiar meets the foreign, suggest ways of making translations indebted to other languages without losing them to that other language. They offer us a workshop for practicing how to match different languages and cultures "in the smallest details" without giving in to the temptation of making them the same.

What I want to suggest in conclusion is that languages and cultures are brought together, not by trying to reproduce meaning, but by importing aspects of one language or culture into another. This is the lesson that such literature has to offer translators. Translations that try to give us the foreignness of the original too often fail because they are unwilling to take on board the selectivity of the strategies that literature between languages uses. To succeed and not appear awkward, a translation, like a poem by Broumas or Anghelaki-Rooke, must prepare its readers by giving them the chance to learn the new rules so that they can understand and even speak the new hybrid tongue for themselves. To go back to the letter and begin "with O, the O-/ mega," to re-tongue or "transliterate our passion" means coming up with ways to unite languages and literatures by acknowledging the dynamism and creativity of interlingual spaces. National literatures are only as strong as their borders are weak.

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Μεταφράζοντας σε έρωτα της ζωής το τέλος

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δεν μπορώ να σε αγγίζω
μεταγλωττίζω το πάθος μου.
Δεν μπορώ να σε μεταλάβω
και σε μετουσιώνω
δεν μπορώ να σε ξεντύσω
και σε ντύνω με αλλόφωνη φαντασία.
Στα φτερά σου από κάτω
δεν μπορώ να κουρνιάσω
γι' αυτό γύρω σου πετάω
του λεξικού σου γυρνώντας τις σελίδες.
Πώς απογυμνώνεσαι θέλω να μάθω
πώς ξανοίγεσαι
γι' αυτό μες στις γραμμές σου
ψάχνω συνήθειες
τα φρούτα που αγαπάς
μυρουδιές που προτιμάς
κορίτσια που ξεφυλλίζεις.
Τα σημάδια σου ποτέ μου δεν θα δω γυμνά
εργάζομαι λοιπόν σκληρά πάνω στα επίθετά σου
για να τ' απαγγείλω σε αλλόθρησκη λαλιά.
Πάλιωσε όμως η δική μου ιστορία
κανένα ράφι δεν στολίζει ο τόμος μου
και τώρα εσένα φαντάζομαι με δέρμα σπάνιο
χρυσόδετο σε ξένη βιβλιοθήκη.
Επειδή δεν έπρεπε ποτέ
ν' αφεθώ στην ασυδοσία της νοσταλγιάς
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Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke

Translating into Love Life's End

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Under your wings
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I want to know how you strip
how you open up
so I look for your habits
in between your lines
for your favourite fruit
your favourite smells
girls you leaf through.
I'll never see your punctuation marks
naked, I work hard on your adjectives
so that I can recite them in the susurrations
of another religion.
But my story has aged
my volume adorns no shelf
and I imagine you now with a rare gold leather binding
in a foreign library.
Because I should never have indulged in the luxury of nostalgia
and written this poem
I am reading the gray sky now
in a sun-drenched translation.

Translated by Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke

Translating Life's End into Love

Because I cannot touch you
with my tongue
I transliterate my passion.
Because I cannot take your communion
I transubstantiate you.
Because I cannot undress you
I imagine you in the clothes
of a foreign language.
Because I cannot nestle
under your wing
I fly around you
turning the pages of your dictionary.
I want to learn how you bare yourself
how you open yourself up.
That's why I search
between the lines
for your habits
the fruits you love
the smells you prefer
the girls you leaf through.
Because I'll never see
your punctuation marks naked
I work hard on your adjectives
so I can recite them in another religion.
Now that my story's old
and my book's no longer on the shelf
it's you I imagine
in a rare leather binding
with gold lettering
in a foreign library.
Because I should never have given in
to the luxury of nostalgia
and written this poem
I read the grey sky
in a sun-drenched translation.

Translated by Karen Van Dyck