

# Ενθύμια την ζωή

~ *Souvenirs of Life* ~  
(or Memories)



# **Expensive and Mass-Produced**

## Gate

~      *Pride*      ~

Midway on this, the journey through my life  
I fled the dappled path, and I was lost;  
The world had then succumbed to every strife.

I woke in grass that trembled like the ghosts  
Of water nymphs that once I had embraced  
Ahead I saw a frozen shade, at most.

In time my eyes the hopeless void replaced  
With a fearsome beast, gold-furred, gospel-mouthing,  
And a green bronze gate, before which it paced.

"Your manner and your words being so uncouth,"  
It spoke lowly, "I will show you the way  
To temper follies some mistake for youth."

"They called me Pantoleon in past days  
And claimed my place of birth was not their own  
Left me starving on this, the first of May.

Your Pride has led you here, you have been thrown  
To a lion's den - Fate expects I'll eat;  
Instead I'll water the seed life has sown.

And should your sins compel their own repeat,  
This journey ought to lessen that conceit."

## Tract

~      *Wrath*      ~

The gate gave scraping roar and came ajar  
And Pantoleon, with his tail, waved me through:  
"Quickly - our time is short, our distance far."

And through the door a cave, plastered in blue.  
With no sign or sigil to guide our path,  
Brushing past, my leonine guide breath drew:

"Before the Movement is the Tract of Wrath,  
Where the intellect stirs its slothful ire  
And broods on wrongs, as in a heated bath..."

Then I heard a river roar like fire;  
Clutched his tail as a climber would a cord.  
Black water thundered past, a raging mire.

"For what do you believe is hate? A sword,  
A knife or axe, which brings some bloody death?  
No. The back, head, and heart are in accord,

Their all-consuming scenes of final breath  
Come from the deep, twisted bowels of man  
Then turn to clever thought. And they are left,

Drenched in sorrow, cursing their life and clan,  
Washed clean of strength, without a further plan."

## Lungs

~      *Greed*      ~

Next came a chamber, spiderwebbed and red.  
"These caves, the Lungs, are where acceptance starts,  
The world is known and taken in one's stead.

Such is your sin," Pantoleon said. "Heart  
Breathing poisoned smoke, you've given in,  
Resolved to spite the world in whole or part!

Rightly desperate, each bishop and king  
Fights the Greed of others. And yet you're wrong  
To repay them in kind." And then, a ring

Ascended from the floor, hosting a throng  
Of pale souls. We stepped upon it in haste,  
Pantoleon continuing his song:

"Note the merchants by this new-templed waste,  
The wooden toys and trinkets mass-produced..."  
And there stood men hawking the goods we faced;

"It's not their greed that so their lives reduced,  
But that vice keeps them in this sorry state.  
By the promise of wealth were they induced,

And now they live as one the small the great  
On the corpse of their country; so says Fate."

## Stomach

~      *Gluttony*      ~

"Having conceived a Movement, now, these men  
Must put to action all the Tracts they know,  
And take their cues from all that which they ken.

An army marches on its Stomach, rows  
Of Resurging footmen must think alike;  
Among this lining, in these pools that glow

Stinking, septic, chaff of the psyche."  
And it was as Pantoleon described;  
Ahead the stomach bulged, without a dyke.

"More enters than comes out - it's fat," he jibed,  
And none could wait their turn to add their prose,  
Or add their gluttonous part - and their bribe.

"For 'patience is a bitter word for those  
Who lack a faith.'" I quoted then. "This place  
Will digest us, won't it, unless we go?"

"It would be best," the lion said, and faced  
The ceiling - where another fleshy lift  
Dripping came down and offered us its base.

"You understand, I think, this refluxed rift,  
So let's proceed by use of our host's gift."

## Nerves

~      *Sloth*      ~

"I don't understand anything," I said.  
"This body politic had its good days,  
Flowering intellects and laureled heads.

It seems to me a spirit's gone away,  
And all men here are listless, sleeping drones.  
We have no rules, or reason to remain."

The rooms through which the lion and I roamed  
A labyrinth of twitching circuits, pipes,  
And men languidly moving xanthous bones;

These systems slow and turgid, useless types,  
Continued in the absence of a ghost,  
A bloodless body all still thought was ripe.

"Now tidal time is rising on the coast.  
Would anyone still act?" My guide turned round.  
"The only efforts left are used to boast.

But something can be taken from the mound;  
When it's dispersed, a spirit must die first -  
A zeitgeist - and the body's run aground."

We salvaged what we could, and what was worst  
Pantoleon and I left to be cursed.

## Heart (or...)

~     *Lust*     ~

We came next to the door of four chambers.  
A pulsing wanting beast beckoned us in,  
It savoured all feelings, all remainders,

And seemed as though it wanted to begin.  
Passports, and guards, and searches through our bags,  
And an ancient city welcomed its kin.

Corralled, Pantoleon and I, with flags,  
With crowds and adulators and with song;  
And rhythmic drums; while robes replaced our rags.

My guide had shut his eyes and bore their prongs  
--For the people had shut him in a cage  
And dragged him off to revel in the throng.

And while I chased, I saw my sinful wage  
Had come to me, and I had stretched a hand  
To take reward, with weight I couldn't gauge.

A city's throbbing Heart turned stone to sand  
And taught a lesson I alone could know  
Throughout the body, turning every gland:

Ecstasy, a mystery wuthers, blows,  
Maturity that seems to come and go.

# Brain

~     *Envy*     ~

Now I should speak of souvenirs I found  
Materials and memories from this,  
My fatherland. The cord is now unwound:

Orators spoke, and birthed from an abyss  
Covens of beasts, of hunting things with claws  
With clever words, they named “Metropolis.”

And then Pantoleon had come--”was born”--  
From a half-known impression of a name,  
From a city whose life could match its laws.

This city, built on ruins of a claim,  
Lacked memory, until the vengeful years  
Of written time preserved in stone its shame.

Do you so envy ancient storied men,  
Who accidentally saw the first green world?  
Who'd nothing to compare themselves with then?

And you regret the passing of their curls,  
You say these artifices, for our age,  
For cheapened swine are wanton wasted pearls?

Some cynics take comfort in that,  
Knowing even their blood has become a memento.

**Cheap and Handmade**

# Feet

~     *Humility*     ~

Separated from the exhorting man  
Who started our journey through the fires,  
Civil works, and histories of the land,

I left it all, and strode upon the spires,  
Ten towers with the wind against my fur  
And life outside a glory to admire.

The city swallowed life, extending lures  
To capture natural minds within its snare;  
Escaping plastic traps and man-made burrs

I realise the eternal lesson there:  
You just don't know what you don't know. You know?  
And snakes come silent to the homes of hares.

Here momentum reigns in the shifting rows  
Of natural vegetation; frail stalks  
Cover mountains where anything can grow.

And round the mountain's ankle is a fork  
Two paths extend beyond this isthmus bed:  
The hard and honest road is where I'll walk.

And should it make poor difference, my tread,  
I'll count myself among the blessed instead.

# Nose

~ *Patience* ~

Should I go forth alone, or try to find  
The shade of some white Helen for my guide?  
Any muse I choose would act as a bind

For conversation obliges two sides.  
This is why I wounded myself before,  
For dialectics' sake; and now ask why

I acted as some nexus of trite lore.  
And now I come upon a forest, dark,  
And shining silver-green, a new bronze door.

It stands a threat, a brazen contrast, stark  
Against the tired, tough, self-begetting earth  
As something built with haste to make swift mark.

Though trees and vines have choked it since its birth  
And always try to claim their verdant right,  
To some this constancy won't prove their worth.

To be a tree, and overgrow old might,  
To wait, protecting hidden complex cove,  
And feed off only raindrops, and off light:

It seems this is my lesson from the Nose.  
A red sun rises bringing back my woes.

## Hands

~     *Charity*     ~

In rugged lands I saw a human form  
Walking along a cliff, Souliotic,  
The everlasting night broke by a worm -

White candle in her fist, so despotic,  
Knuckles of snow, and starving under folds,  
Obscuring what could have been erotic.

In any case, I kept the cub from cold,  
And weeks went by with silence for our king,  
And it was good. And one day she grew bold,

And clambered up a face as though with wings,  
And I followed and there I found a plain  
A stony ridge of hard white keratin.

Emboldened by the new, the girl would reign:  
She chose the paths from there, and I hung back,  
Protecting from the beasts and from the strain.

And soon, once strength had come, she too could hack  
At leafy ingrowths laughing in the mire  
And brought us both to kinder natural tracks.

At last, her eyes lit by her candle's fire,  
The waif expressed the following desire:

## Arms

~ *Temperance* ~

“Should anyone harm you I would kill them,  
Should anyone destroy your work, then, too,  
The fear and trembling I'd instil, a gem

To bring laments, and hopeless grief-racked rue  
To the most tyrannic of Persian Shahs.”  
And I did not believe her - “But it's true!

For this, my blade--with little jewel, my craft--”  
And then I lowed, “No crafts, or equine hordes.  
Not inventions, but the natural arts.

The morning sun serves for my flaming sword  
The water my raiment, the heat my trick  
To terrify and tire. I am no lord,

Who moves his armies round with wooden sticks.  
They come to aid me at the proper time.”  
At this she pinched her candle, snuffed its wick.

And yet in her blue eyes I saw, sublime,  
Her pleasure in the speech which I had made,  
And knew retreat to any mountain clime

Would bring her, too, willing and yet not bade,  
This warmaiden whose warlike thoughts would fade.

## Eyes

~ *Diligence* ~

We left the mountains by another way  
And came upon a pair of limpid pools.  
These flat grey eyes which reflected the lay,

The guardians of some hidden nodule.  
And while the waif stepped forth, meaning to swim  
And carve her crimson path, a vestibule,

I cautioned her: "These silver lakes may brim  
With danger unforeseen; their opaque veils  
Could hide a monster or its synonym.

Do not go in." And though the lilting scales,  
The glaucous surface under dawning air,  
Betrayed no more than junk and rotting sails,

I felt inspected by some sacred glare.  
Intrusion on these nexi of the soul  
Would violate a pure, intimate lair.

This mere look, however, at the twin bowls  
Compelled my eyes to turn toward the waif  
To see there reverence burning like coals,

So slow and dull and diligent; a wraith  
Absorbing nature's glory with her faith.

## **Groin (or...)**

~      *Chastity*      ~

In my position, I think, most men would take  
The place of some carbuncular young man  
And struggle to charm for mechanics' sake

Their traveling companion. Such a bland  
Obnoxious course opened itself to me  
And I knew - no. There was no foolish plan,

Licentiousness I thought redundancy,  
There was no risk of mixing heart with hands,  
No turbulent, storied incumbency.

A pale ring of skin for some other's band.  
A pale thing that waited by the fire  
For splashing water, and another grand

Pronouncement that old Time would never tire.  
Encouragement must fall into the dust,  
All joys masked by a vow with a liar,

A pledge one makes alone, with no more trust  
Than judges have that criminals could know  
The fear of their seat and of being 'just.'

Even now, a mystery wuthers, blows...  
Maturity that seems to come and go.

# Mind

~      *Kindness*      ~

A thousand years passed, and we both died  
Like nothing ever saw the sights we saw,  
Like no one ever sought the things we tried.

A thousand years passed and no one law  
Governed the earth in all its splendid spread,  
And flowers crowned the world without a war.

You told me aeons ago of the dead  
Who claimed this place was theirs, and left, and burned,  
And dare to try to tell me it's your bed.

Destruction of all labour, all that's learned:  
This is nature taking proper course, is  
Gaia working, mad and wild, never spurned.

“Αυτό το χώμα δεν είναι δικό σας!” \*  
Or mine. Or anybody's, to arrange  
Cities that will one day cause remorse. As

Unchanging nature's nature is to change,  
A nameless land assumes a thousand names,  
The normal fights for ever with the strange.

Such should be, for anyone interested in virtue,  
The genesis of kindness and of hope.

\* *"This soil is not yours!"*