

MIMNERMO

(Colofone, fine VII secolo a.C.)

FRAMMENTO 2

ἡμεῖς δ', οἷά τε φύλλα φύει πολυάνθεμος ὥρη
ἔαρος, ὅτ' αἰψ' ἀγῆις αὖξεται ἠελίου,
τοῖς ἱκελοὶ πήχυιον ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄνθεσιν ἤβης
τερπόμεθα, πρὸς θεῶν εἰδότες οὔτε κακὸν
οὔτ' ἀγαθόν· Κῆρες δὲ παρεστήκασιν μέλαιναι,
ἢ μὲν ἔχουσα τέλος γήραος ἀργαλέου,
ἢ δ' ἑτέρη θανάτοιο· μίνυθα δὲ γίνεται ἤβης
καρπός, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ γῆν κίδναται ἠέλιος.
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν δὴ τοῦτο τέλος παραμείψεται ὥρης,
αὐτίκα δὴ τεθνάναι βέλτιον ἢ βίσιος·
πολλὰ γὰρ ἐν θυμῷ κακὰ γίνεται· ἄλλοτε οἶκος
τροχοῦται, πενίης δ' ἔργ' ὀδυνηρὰ πέλει·
ἄλλος δ' αὖ παιδῶν ἐπιδεδύεται, ὧν τε μάλιστα
ἰμείρων κατὰ γῆς ἔρχεται εἰς Αἴδην·
ἄλλος νοῦσον ἔχει θυμοφθόρον· οὐδέ τις ἐστὶν
ἀνθρώπων ὧν Ζεὺς μὴ κακὰ πολλὰ διδοῖ.

Siamo come le foglie nate alla stagione florida
– crescono così rapide nel sole –:
godiamo per un tempo gramo i fiori dell'età,
dagli dèi non sapendo il bene, il male.
Rigide accanto stanno due parvenze brune:
l'una ha un destino di vecchiezza atroce,
l'altra di morte. E il frutto di giovinezza è un attimo,
quanto dilaga sulla terra il sole.
Ma come varca la stagione il suo confine, allora
essere morti è meglio che la vita:
il cuore sperimenta tanti guai; la casa a volte
si strugge e viene la miseria amara;
uno è privo di figli: li desidera, e scende
nell'aldilà con quell'accoramento;
un altro ha un morbo che lo strema. Non c'è uomo
che da Zeus non riceva guai su guai.
(Filippo Maria Pontani)

But we are like the leaves that the flowery season of spring springs,
as they are quick to grow in the rays of the sun.
Like them we enjoy the flowers of youth for an arm's length of time,
unaware of what comes from the gods, bad or good.
But the black Dooms stand just aside:
one holds an end of miserable old age,
the other, death. The fruit of youth is just for a moment –
as long as the sunlight that floods the earth.
But when the end of the season is over,
already it is better to be dead than live on:
many miseries arise in the heart; sometimes
the estate wastes away and leaves behind the painful works of poverty;
or another has no children and longs for them
more than anything, and away he goes to Hades under the earth;
another has an illness that destroys his heart. There is no human being –
none – who does not get many miseries from Zeus.

SAFFO

(Mitilene, fine VII – inizio VI secolo a.C.)

FRAMMENTO 16

οἱ μὲν ἰππῶν στρότον οἱ δὲ πέσδων
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖσ' ἐπ[ί] γᾶν μέλαι[ν]αν
ἔ]μμεναι κάλλιστον, ἔγω δὲ κῆν' ὄτ-
τω τις ἔραται·

πά]γχυ δ' εὐμαρες σύνετον πόησαι
π]άντι τ[ο]ῦτ', ἃ γὰρ πόλυ περσκέθοισα
κάλλοξ [ἀνθ]ρώπων Ἑλένα [τὸ]ν ἄνδρα
τὸν []στον

καλλ[ίποι]σ' ἔβα 'ς Τροῖαν πλέοισα
κωὺδ[ὲ] πα]ῖδος οὐδὲ φίλων το[κ]ήων
πᾶ[μπαν] ἐμνάσθη, ἀλλὰ παράγαγ' αὔταν
]σαν

[. . . . γν]αμπτον γὰρ [. . . .] νόημα
[. . .]. . . κούφως τ[. . . .] νοήση
. .] με νῦν Ἀνακτορί[ας ὀ]νέμναι-
σ' οὐ] παρεοίσας,

τᾶ]ς κε βολλοίμαν ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα
κάμάρυγμα λάμπρον ἴδην προσώπω
ἦ τὰ Λύδων ἄρματα κὰν ὄπλοισι
πεσδομ]άχεντας.

Chi dice uno stuolo di cavalieri, chi di fanti,
chi di navi sia la cosa più bella
sopra la terra nera. Io?

Quel che si ama.

Facile assai farlo capire a chiunque,
questo. Quella che superava il genere umano
in bellezza, e di molto – Elena – abbandonò il marito,
il migliore di tutti,

e se ne andò fino a Troia per nave,
e la figlia e i genitori amati
non ricordò per nulla; ma la sviò

...

... inflessibile ... pensiero

... vanamente ... pensi

... ora mi ha fatto tornare in mente Anattoria
che non c'è.

È il suo passo seducente che vorrei
vedere, e il bagliore splendente del suo viso,
altro che i carri di Lidia e i fanti
che combattono armati.

Some say an army of horsemen, others
say foot-soldiers, still others say a fleet
is the finest thing on the dark earth.
I say it is whatever one loves.

Everyone can understand this – consider
that Helen, far surpassing the beauty
of mortals, left behind
the best man of all

to sail away to Troy. She remembered
neither daughter nor dear parents,
as [Aphrodite] led her away

...

... [un]bending ... mind
... lightly ... thinks.

... reminding me now
of Anaktoria gone.

I would rather see her lovely step
and the radiant sparkle of her face
than all the war chariots in Lydia
and soldiers battling in arms. (Diane Rayor)

FRAMMENTO 58C

ἰοῦκ[ό]λπων κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες,
τὰ]ν φιλάοιδον λιγύραν χελύνναν·

] ποτ' [ἔ]οντα χροά γῆρας ἦδη
ἐγ]ένοντο τρίχες ἐκ μελαίναν·

βάρυς δέ μ' ὁ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γόνα δ' [ο]ὐ φέροισι,
τὰ δὴ ποτα λαίψηρ' ἔον ὄρχησθ' ἴσα νεβρίοισι.

τὰ (μὲν) στεναχίσδω θαμέως· ἀλλὰ τί κεν ποείην;
ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ' οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι.

καὶ γάρ πι[ο]τᾶ Τίθωνον ἔφαντο βροδόπαχυν Αὖρον
ἔρωι φ..αθρῆσαν βάμεν' εἰς ἔσχατα γᾶς φέροισα]ν,

ἔοντα [κ]άλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ' αὐτον ὕμῳ ἔμαρψε
χρόνῳ πολίον γῆρας, ἔχ[ο]ντ' ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν.

The gifts of the Muses are violet-threaded,
rare: follow their path, my daughters, pursue
the lyre's clear-voiced, enthralling song.
Once I, too, was in tender bud. Now old age
is wrinkling my skin and my hair is turning
from black to grey; my heart is weighted,
knees buckle where I danced like a deer.

Yet what else can I do but complain?
To be human is to grow old. They say
Eös, the rosy-fingered dawn, whispered,
of love to Tithonus, whirled him away
to the very edge of the world, beguiled
by his youth and beauty. Yet still he aged,
still he withered, despite his immortal wife.
(Josephine Balmer)

... i bei doni delle Muse dal seno di viola, o ragazze,
... l'amica del canto, la lira dal suono armonioso,
... il corpo che un tempo era ... ormai la vecchiaia,
e divennero bianchi i capelli da neri,
e l'animo mi s'è fatto pesante, non reggono più le
ginocchia
che un tempo erano agili a danzare, come cerbiatte:
così io piango, e spesso: ma che ci potrei fare?
Se si è esseri umani non si può sfuggire alla vecchiaia.
E infatti un tempo dicono che Aurora dalle braccia di
rosa
struggendosi d'amore, andò a portar Titono ai confini
della terra,
lui ch'era bello e giovane, e tuttavia lo colse
col tempo la canuta vecchiaia, benché sposa immortale
egli avesse. (Federico Cinti)

TEOGNIDE

(Megara, VI secolo a.C.?)

ELEGIA

Σοὶ μὲν ἐγὼ πτέρ' ἔδωκα, σὺν οἷσ' ἐπ' ἀπείρονα πόντον
πωτήσῃ, κατὰ γῆν πᾶσαν ἀειρόμενος
ῥηϊδίως· θοίνης δὲ καὶ εἰλαπίνῃσι παρέσση
ἐν πάσαις πολλῶν κείμενος ἐν στόμασιν,
καὶ σε σὺν αὐλίσκοισι λιγυφθόγγοις νέοι ἄνδρες
εὐκόσμως ἐρατοὶ καλά τε καὶ λιγέα
ἄισονται. καὶ ὅταν δνοφερῆς ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης
βῆς πολυκωκύτους εἰς Αἴδαο δόμους,
οὐδέ ποτ' οὐδὲ θανῶν ἀπολείς κλέος, ἀλλὰ μελήσεις
ἄφθιτον ἀνθρώποισ' αἰὲν ἔχων ὄνομα,
Κύρνε, καθ' Ἑλλάδα γῆν στρωφόμενος, ἠδ' ἀνὰ νήσους
ἰχθυόεντα περῶν πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρύγετον,
οὐχ ἵππων νώτοισιν ἐφήμενος· ἀλλὰ σε πέμψει
ἀγλαὰ Μουσάων δῶρα ἰοστεφάνων.
πᾶσι δ', ὅσοισι μέμηλε, καὶ ἐσσομένοισιν αἰοιδῆ
ἔσση ὁμῶς, ὄφρ' ἂν γῆ τε καὶ ἠέλιος.
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ὀλίγησ παρὰ σεῦ οὐ τυγχάνω αἰδοῦς,
ἀλλ' ὥσπερ μικρὸν παῖδα λόγοις μ' ἀπαταῖς.

I have given you wings with which you will fly,
soaring easily, over the boundless sea and all the
land. You will be present at every dinner and feast,
lying on the lips of many, and lovely youths
accompanied by the clear sound of pipes will sing
of you in orderly fashion with beautiful, clear
voices. And whenever you go to Hades' house of
wailing, down in the dark earth's depths, never
even in death will you lose your fame, but you will
be in men's thoughts, your name ever immortal,
Cyrus, as you roam throughout the land of Greece
and among the islands, crossing over the fish-
filled, undraining sea, not riding on the backs of
horses, but it is the splendid gifts of the violet-
wreathed Muses that will escort you. For all who
care about their gifts, even for future generations,
you will be alike the subject of song, as long as
earth and sun exist. And yet I do not meet with a
slight respect from you, but you deceive me with
your words, as if I were a small child.

(Douglas E. Gerber)

Ti ho dato io le ali con cui volerai sopra il mare infinito,
librandoti per tutta la terra,
senza sforzo. Sarai a tutte le feste, ai banchetti,
posando sulla bocca di molti,
e giovani attraenti canteranno di te melodiosamente
canzoni belle, squillanti, sulle note acute degli auloi.
E quando te ne andrai nel profondo della terra buia,
fin dentro al palazzo di Ade pieno di gemiti,
mai – neppure morto – perderai la tua fama, ma resterai nel
cuore
degli uomini: il tuo nome sarà per sempre, inesauribile,
Cirno. Andrai girando per la terra di Grecia e da un'isola
all'altra,
traversando il mare pescoso dove non si miete,
non seduto in groppa ai cavalli: saranno i doni splendenti
delle Muse coronate di viole a farti da scorta,
e per chi le ha a cuore tu sarai canto,
anche in futuro, finché esisteranno la terra e il sole.
Eppure da parte tua non mi viene nemmeno un po' di
rispetto,
anzi: mi prendi in giro a forza di parole, come un
bambino piccolo.

PINDARO

(Tebe, circa 520 a.C. – Argo, dopo il 446 a.C.)

FRAMMENTO 123

Χρῆν μὲν κατὰ καιρὸν ἐρώ-
των δρέπεσθαι, θυμέ, σὺν ἀλικίαι·
τὰς δὲ Θεοξένου ἀκτῖνας πρὸς ὄσσω
μαρμαρυζοῖσας δρακεῖς
ὄς μὴ πόθῳ κυμαίνεται, ἐξ ἀδάμαντος
ἢ σιδάρου κεχάλκευται μέλαιναν καρδίαν

ψυχρᾶι φλογί, πρὸς δ' Ἀφροδί-
τας ἀτιμασθεῖς ἐλικογλεφάρου
ἢ περὶ χρήμασι μοχθίζει βιαίως
ἢ γυναικείῳ θράσει
ψυχρὰν φορεῖται πᾶσαν ὁδὸν θεραπεύων.
ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τᾶς ἕκατι κηρὸς ὡς δαχθεῖς ἔλαι

ἰοῶν μελισσῶν τάκομαι, εὖτ' ἂν ἴδω
παίδων νεόγυιων ἐς ἦβαν·

Dovevi mio cuore nel giusto momento,
in giovinezza cogliere gli amori;
ma chi dalle pupille di Teosseo
scintillanti i raggi mira
e non tumultui nel desiderio,
nell'acciaio o nel ferro ha temprato

il nero cuore con fredda fiamma;
non l'onora Afrodite dagli occhi lucenti,
o con violenza si affanna nel lucro
o servo a impudenza di femmina
si trascina per freddo sentiero.
Ma per volere di lei

io mi struggo al morso dei raggi
come la cera delle sacre api,
quando vedo nelle fresche membra
dei giovinetti l'amorosa grazia.
(Bruno Gentili)

One should cull love, my heart,
as appropriate during youth,
but whoever has seen those rays
flashing from Theoxenos' eyes
and is not flooded with desire
has a black heart forged from adamant or steel

with a cold flame, and is dishonoured
by bright-eyed Aphrodite,
or toils compulsively for money
or with womanly courage
is carried in service to an utterly cold path.
But I, because of her, melt like the wax

of holy bees bitten by the sun's heat, whenever I look
upon the new-limbed youth of boys. (William H. Race)

COSTANTINO KAVAFIS

(Alessandria, 1863 – 1933)

ΓΚΡΙΖΑ

Κυττάζοντας ένα σπάλλιο μισό γκριζό
θυμήθηκα δυο ωραία γκριζα μάτια
που είδα· θάναι είκοσι χρόνια πρίν ...

.....

Για έναν μήνα αγαπηθήκαμε.
Έπειτα έφυγε, θαρρώ στην Σμύρνη,
για να εργασθεί εκεί, και πια δεν ιδωθήκαμε.

Θ' ασχήμισαν — αν ζει — τα γκριζα μάτια·
θα χάλασε τ' ωραίο πρόσωπο.

Μνήμη μου, φύλαξέ τα συ ως ήσαν.
Και, μνήμη, ό,τι μπορείς από τον έρωτά μου αυτόν,
ό,τι μπορείς φέρε με πίσω απόψι.

GRAY

While looking at a half-gray opal
I remembered two lovely gray eyes—
it must be twenty years ago I saw them...

.....

We were lovers for a month.
Then he went away to work, I think in Smyrna,
and we never met again.

Those gray eyes will have lost their beauty — if he's still alive;
that lovely face will have spoiled.

Memory, keep them the way they were.
And, memory, whatever of that love you can bring back,
whatever you can, bring back tonight.
(Edmund Kelley / Philip Sherrard)

GRIGI

Contemplando un opale bigiastro
ho ricordato due begli occhi perlacei
che vidi un giorno, forse vent'anni fa...

.....

Ci amammo per tutto un mese.
Poi se ne andò, a Smirne, credo,
a lavorare laggiù, e più non ci siamo rivisti.

Si saranno imbruttiti — se vive — i suoi occhi grigi:
si sarà sfiorito il suo bel viso.

Conservali tu, mia memoria, così com'erano.
E riportami più che puoi, mia memoria,
riportami stasera più che puoi di questo mio amore.
(Tino Sangiglio)

ΕΤΣΙ ΠΟΛΥ ΑΤΕΝΙΣΑ

Την εμορφιά έτσι πολύ ατένισα,
που πλήρης είναι αυτής η όρασίς μου.

Γραμμές του σώματος. Κόκκινα χείλη. Μέλη ηδονικά.
Μαλλιά σαν από αγάλματα ελληνικά παρμένα·
πάντα έμορφα, κι αχτένιστα σαν είναι,
και πέφτουν, λίγο, επάνω στ' άσπρα μέτωπα.
Πρόσωπα της αγάπης, όπως τάθελεν
η ποίησίς μου μες στες νύχτες της νεότητός μου,
μέσα στες νύχτες μου, κρυφά, συναντημένα

I'VE LOOKED SO MUCH

I've looked on beauty so much
that my vision overflows with it.

The body's lines. Red lips. Sensual limbs.
Hair as though stolen from Greek statues,
always lovely, even uncombed,
and falling slightly over pale foreheads.
Figures of love, as my poetry desired them
.... in the nights when I was young,
encountered secretly in those nights. (Edmund Kelley / Philip Sherrard)

MOLTO HO GUARDATO

Molto ho guardato la bellezza,
e ne è piena la vista.

Linee del corpo. Rosse labbra. Corpo voluttuoso.
Capelli come presi da statua greca:
sempre belli, anche spettinati,
che ricadono appena sulla candida fronte.
Visi dell'amore, come li voleva
il mio verso... nelle notti della mia giovinezza,
Nelle mie notti, nascostamente incontrati...
(Tino Sangiglio)

ELENA PENGA

(Salonico, 1964 –)

ΔΙΑΔΡΟΜΟΙ

Τα αγάλματα, οι ναοί, τα σπίτια, όλα στην αρχαιότητα ήταν χρωματιστά, ζωγραφισμένα. Η Δήλος ήταν πολύχρωμη. Ακόμη και τώρα, μετά από τόσες εκατοντάδες χρόνια, όταν ανακαλύπτουν ένα άγαλμα, αυτό έχει τα χρώματά του. Το βγάζουν από τη γη, και τα χρώματα αυτού μένουν στο χώμα, σα να βγάζουν το γλυπτό μέσα από γάντι.

Διάδρομοι. Και αρχαιολογία. Διάδρομοι και διαδρομές. Και μνήμη. Και ξενοδοχεία. Ωραία ξενοδοχεία γεμάτα αγάλματα και λουλούδια. Διασχίζεις διαδρόμους αθόρυβα περνάς έξω από πόρτες. Έχει ζέστη. Πολυτέλεια. Εξωτισμό. Μεγάλα σάρκινα λουλούδια σε μεγάλα πορσελάνινα βάζα.

Επιθυμείς να φτιάξεις μια σχέση με τις ωραίες εικόνες. Το προσπαθείς καθώς διασχίζεις διαδρόμους. Η ψυχή έχει τον τρόπο της να μεταβολίζει τις πληροφορίες που της έρχονται από το σώμα και τον έξω κόσμο. Έχω ακούσει πως υπάρχει η περίπτωση να καταστραφεί ολόκληρος ένας ζωντανός οργανισμός, ένα μωρό, ένας ενήλικας, μόνο και μόνο για να διατηρήσει μια παράσταση διαρκούς ηδονής. Απόλυτης ευδαιμονίας.

Διάδρομοι. Επιθυμείς να οδηγήσουν πέτρα. Έξω. Να βγεις και εσύ σαν το γλυπτό που βγαίνει από το χώμα στο φως, σα μέσα απο γάντι. Χρόνια μετά. Σε απροσδόκητη στιγμή. Θα βγεις άραγε; Στο φως; Εσύ που δεν είναι πέτρα, αλλά σάρκα, πού δεν είναι νεκρή, αλλά ζωντανή;

Και έπειτα είναι και τόσες άλλες αποστάσεις. Διάδρομοι εκατοντάδων ετών φωτός. Δρόμοι που διασχίζει μια πέτρα για να γίνει κυκλαδίτικο ειδώλιο, για να γίνει μια γυναίκα του Πικάσο. Και να μέινει έτσι. Γλυπτό που εκπέμπει τις συναντήσεις που είχε άλλοτε, όταν ήταν πέτρα, πριν γίνει γλυπτό.

PASSAGES

The statues, the temples, the houses, everything in Antiquity was colored, painted. Delos was multicolored. Even today, after so many thousands of years, when they find a statue, it is covered in paint. They pull it out of the earth, and the colors stay in the dirt like a sculpture coming out of a glove.

Passages. And archaeology. Passages and routes. And memory. And hotels. Beautiful hotels full of statues and flowers. You walk through the corridors silently. You pass by closed doors. It is hot. Luxurious. Exotic. Gigantic fleshy flowers in gigantic porcelain vases.

You want to find a way to relate to the beautiful sights. You try. As you walk through the corridors. The soul has a way of metabolising information that comes from the body and the outside world. I have heard that it is possible for a living organism, a baby, an adult, to self-destruct just because it is trying to keep the illusion of continuous pleasure alive. Of absolute ecstasy.

Corridors. You want them to take you further. Outside. So you can escape like the sculpture from the dirt. Out into the light. Like coming out of a glove. Years later. Completely unexpectedly. Are you coming? Out into the light? You who aren't stone, but flesh? You who aren't dead, but alive?

And then there are so many other kinds of distance. Passages hundreds of light years away. The roads a stone takes to become a Cycladic figurine, a Picasso woman. The lengths it goes to stay that way. Sculpture that still emits the encounters it had back then, when it was a stone, before it became a sculpture. (Karen Van Dyck)

CHLOI KOUTSOUMBELI

(Salonicco, 1962 –)

ΠΗΝΕΛΟΠΗ ΙΙΙ

Γνωρίζει πια η Πηνελόπη
πως δεν είναι οι υπερφίαλες Σειρήνες
που τον καθυστερούν
ούτε η γερασμένη Κίρκη
με τον καταχωνιασμένο πόθο
ούτε κάποια κακομαθημένη Ναυσικά
εγκλωβισμένη σε λάθος ηλικία
με άσπρες κάλτσες και φουστάνια παιδικά.
Δεν είναι οι Λαιστρυγόνες και οι Λωτοί
που τον κρατούν μακριά της,
ούτε οι συντεχνιακοί μικροθυμοί του τάχα Ποσειδώνα
και τα μπλεξίματα με τους παλιούς συντρόφους.

Είναι που στον Αρχαίο κόσμο
βραδιάζει πια νωρίς
η Γη δεν είναι επίπεδη
και οι άνθρωποι κάποτε χάνονται.

PENELOPE III

Penelope knows by now
that it is not the insolent Sirens
who delay him
nor aging Circe
with her funneled-down longing
nor some spoiled Nausicaa
hemmed into the wrong age
with white socks and school-girl skirts
It is not the Laestrygonians, nor the lotuses
which keep him far from her
and not the trade-union tantrums of, perhaps, Poseidon
and the mix-ups with the old companions

It is that in the ancient world
by now it gets dark early
the earth isn't flat
and men sometimes get lost
(A. E. Stallings)