

Poems by Manolis Anagnostakis

*Selections from THE TARGET (1970) by Manolis Anagnostakis (1925-)
translated by David Conolly*

POETICS

- You're betraying Poetry again, you'll tell me,
Man?s most sacred expression
You're using it again as a means, a pack-mule
For your sinister objectives
In full knowledge of the damage you're doing
To the young through your example.

- Tell me what you have not betrayed
You and your kind, for years and years,
Bartering your possessions one by one
In international markets and common bazaars
So you're left without eyes to see, without ears
To hear, with lips sealed and you say nothing.
For which of man?s sacred rights are you arraigning us?

I know: preaching and rhetoric again, you'll say.
Well, yes! Preaching and rhetoric.

Words have to be hammered like nails.

If they're not to be lost in the wind.

THESSALONIKI, DAYS OF 1969 A.D.

In Egyptou Street -first turning right-
There now stands the Transaction Bank Building
Tourist agencies and emigration bureaus
And kids can no longer play with all the traffic
passing
In any case the kids have grown, the times you knew have
passed
They now no longer laugh, whisper secrets, share trust,
Those that survived, that is, as grave illnesses have
appeared since then
Floods, deluges, earthquakes, armoured soldiers;
They remember their fathers? words: you'll experience
better days
It's of no importance in the end if they didn't experience
them, they repeat the lesson to their own children
Always hoping that the chain will one day break
Perhaps with their children's children or the children of their
children's children.
For the time being, in the old street as was said, there stands
the Transactions Bank
-I transact, you transact, he transacts-
Tourist agencies and emigration bureaus
-we emigrate, you emigrate, they emigrate-
Wherever I travel Greece wounds me, as the Poet said
Greece with its lovely islands, lovely offices, lovely
churches

Greece of the Greeks.

YOUNG MEN OF SIDON, 1970

Actually, we shouldn't complain.
Your company's good and congenial, full of youth,
Fresh young girls - stout-bodied lads
All passion and love for life and action.
And your songs too, good, with meaning and substance
So very human, so moving,
About infants that die in other continents
About heroes killed in former times,
About revolutionaries, Black, Green and Yellow ones,
About Man's grief in his overall suffering.
It's especially to your credit that you involve yourselves
In the issues and struggles of our age
You directly and actively make your presence felt - in view
of which
I think you more than deserve
In twos, in threes, to play, to fall in love,
And unwind, for sure pal, after such exertion.

(They've aged us prematurely Yorgos, do you realise?)