

Barbara's Poems

Greece 1991

POSEIDON OBSERVED

Splendid you stand - unfolded
Clouds packed into your hollowed shoulders.
Leaving blue passions behind you
You leaped from the sea
To stand in serious and singular resolve,
Erect, your muscled prowess flaring,
Rage, ripple, and liquid
Churning in your arched body.
Your mind a fortress now
You bid your will to plow the wind
And race into the bronzen mold.
No shout, no siren's chant would reach you now,
Nor the companionship of lesser gods.
You are complete. In subtle play
Your limbs find ease.
Your trident high and calmly
Resting in your hands
You hesitate.
Already wreathed,
You single out the worthy one among the best
To die his certain and exquisite death,
The doomed one,
Who going down, will be a thief
And snatch from you your flaring grace.

Bronze statue of 460 BC,
found in the waters off Euboea, 1937.
Athens, 4 September 1991

FOLEGANDROS

Stella's high shouts slipping away from us
We skirt the crest and walk into dry shrubs,
Into the green of stone, agave, sage, and fig.
The heat is stretched across the hills
Like a dense net.

We amble on in our archetypal gait -
You up ahead,
I, by myself, behind.

How is it that I sense your heart aloft your throat,

Your mind between your teeth,
Your body heavy,
Slung around your soul? -
I love you still - and yet -
And so I will.

A soothing wind - the bells of Pan.
We linger, then descend
Into the whipping blue below.
Hot-footed we arrive
On chinks of stone and
Walk into the salty web of sea.

Refreshed - your soul leaps back
Into its proper house and all your senses
Weave about your fingertips,
And I behold a splendid picture: I see you,
From my distance,
See a chuckle rising in your throat
And spill across your lips.

And word goes out and summons
All the lovely maidens on this beach.
The piper's tune arouses them.
And from their lazy sprawl
They stir and stand and
Walk into Poseidon's
Lapping garden at your feet.
I love you still - and yet -
And so I will.

What multitude of curve and mound
And hues of honey, peach, and pearl!
Their sleek, encrusted hair entangled
And dressed in salt
They crowd around you,
Touch and stroke you, hang on your lips -
Then settle down about your feet.

It is your laughter that makes them stay,
It is your eyes which promise them that
You will touch them and love them well.

I love you still - and yet -
And so I will
When they are gone.

For Rolf on his birthday
Folegandros, 9 September 1991.

DELPHI

At Delphi the Great Goddess
Still sits with her mountainous thighs
Splayed wide across the hills,
Her heels splashed by the sea below.

Waters are gushing from her womb
nourishing the valley she holds between her legs.
Rejoicing in her abundant gifts,
Nature has draped a rich mantle over her.

Her ankles are ringed with curling foams of sea,
Her calves are sheathed with rippling leaves of olive trees.
Her rocky knees adorned with slender cypresses,
Her thighs are studded with curly oaks and purple figs,
And at the mouth from where all life has issued,
A dense profusion of yellow grasses grow.

Wild bees hang from the hollows of her knees,
Birds nestle in her armpits.
Around her neck she wears a necklace of ripe pomegranates,
And on her ample breasts a multitude of
Butterflies are feasting on her fragrance

Her perfumes are of thyme, sage, and oregano.
And when she stirs,
Flocks of swift birds alight and twitter.

Men have bounded from her loins and ever since have
Tried to flee from her all-embracing
Voracious generosities.
Myths still nestle in the shadows of her wooded thighs,
Her mountain folds and rocky valleys.
And at the center of her vaulted cleft
Pythia once lay coiled and
Guarded the Omphalos -
The navel of the world.

Men moored their ships below
In the blue sea and
Scrambled up her legs and
Longed to hover near her mysteries.

Fickle priests guarded her shrine and
Hungry for praise,
Stuffed riches into her fleshy mountain flanks,
Encrusted her loins with gems and armor and
Woed her with songs of praise and dread.

It was Apollo, man's friend and poet,
The god of words and virtuous beauty
Who wrested the coiled snake from her crotch and

Caged the oracle below
So men could build him temples and
Free their mind to soar.

Delphoi, 9 October 1991

AMORGOS

Für viele Jahre folgtest Du der Spur,
die ein Gott in Dir verlegt,
als Du mit Lust der Welt entgegenfuhrst.
Du suchtest und fandest die Naht,
die er als Laune mit kühnen
Stichen in Dir verkreuzt,
das schwarze Auge Chaos, Schönheit, Widersinn,
das Zwiegestirn aus Lust und Leid,
des Herzens Blume, die verschwenderisch
erblüht und dann entblättert,
die pralle Frucht, die Neues birgt und birst.
Unbekleidet gingst Du mit scharfer Klinge
Übers Land - allein - voraus.
Auf steilem Grat brachest Du
Funken aus rohem Stein zu neuer Form,
zertratest, was Du schufst.
Du legtest Feuer unter den Menschen,
griffest ins Rad der Welt,
schufest der Trauben Übermass
und triebst sie durch die Kelter,
nahmst ihre Säure zu neuen Taten mit.
Und dann trat Dir ein Freund ins Haus,
Du suchtest seine Nähe in
stürmischem Verlangen nach der beseelten
Rede, die er in sich barg und
Dir im Feuer des Erkennens entgegnetrug.
Und wie ein Schmied sein Eisen in die Glut
und zischend dann ins kühle Wasser legt,
so legte der Freund die Hand
Dir auf den Arm und lockte Dich,
der Fülle Form zu geben,
die Ernte, gebündelt, einzubringen und
in Worten Gestalt zu geben.
Am Kreuzweg Deiner selbst
schob er Dir LOGOS in die Spur.
Und als Du trüchtig mit des Freundes Rede,
ins Blau der Insel stiegst,
da riss ein Wind den Vorhang auf
und unter Dir, am Ufer
sahst Du aus Marmortrümmern
kreuz und quer verkeilt
des Gottes kristalline Beute, verlockend,
Dir vom Wasser angeschwemmt -

antike Pfeiler - Lettern gleich -
die aufzurichten zu
transparenten Worten ein
ungestümes Sehnen Dich überkam
und ein Verlangen, vom
Monolog zu lassen und mit dem Freund
in Worten Dich zu üben -
im Dialog.

Für Rolf und Jürgen
Amorgos, 11. September, 1991

APOLLO TEMPEL ZU BASSAI

Die herbe Säure schwarzer Beeren noch im Mund,
das gebannte Bild des Tempels im Innern
stiegen wir an, als im Flimmern
der hohen Stunde,
in der Wende des Weges
ein Segel uns entgegenglitt.
Ein Fächer fiel durch die Zeit
Und l'schte das antike Bild.

Ein Schiff lag auf dem Heiligtum verankert
auf hoher See im blauen Dunst der Berge -
fünf Segel steil gebl,,ht.
Und wie ein reicher Fischfang
schäumten wesse Kiesel
in einem starren Netz
um das gespannte Tuch.

Wir tauchten ein in die Verfremdung
und fanden Apollos Fracht verschnürt.
Was einst Vollendung
stand schütter, im Sturz gefangen,
fest in Stahl verstrebt.
Und siehe da - in dem gezähmten Licht,
gebunden in die neue Zeit,
begann der Stein zu sprechen
von dem was war.

Bassai, 12. Oktober, 1991