

Refugees

Yiorgos Chouliaras

On the other side
of the photograph I write to remind myself
not where and when but who

I am not in the photograph

They left us nothing
to take with us
Only this photograph

If you turn it over you will see me

Is that you in the photograph, they ask me
I don't know what to tell you

Translated by David Mason & the author

YANNIS RITSOS

Dean Kostos

Mouthing a skein of cigarette smoke,
you faced the Acropolis. It bled

a swastika. You scoured the blood
of ghosts,

wrote with blue that veins paper,
with rust that reddens soot.

When compass roses grew thorns,
maps darkened.

After Nazis emptied banks
& pilfered food, you boiled soup from stones.

Mouths mute as Philomela's
jawed. Curfews inflicted.

Because Archbishop Damaskinos forged
baptismal records: Athenian Jews fled.

Four years in a prison camp, you wrote elegies
with cursive fumes.

Goats' tongues shriveled
from thirst. Groves of olive trees burned.

When you tore a page,
poems hemorrhaged. Mouths

dimmed with rage. Sleeves
of knitted script unraveled.

Fists seized the syntax of smoke.
After 22 Nobel refusals, your papers

drank ink. On the grounds
that you were a Communist, lies

poured into veins. Civil war ensued,
children's eyes bandaged.

The Junta wiped blood from chalices.
Cracked lips swilled prayer.

When a pen knifed your brain
to the ground, you stained paper

with the imprint of your psyche.
Eyes winced.

As the Aegean exhaled,
you spat spirit from blood.

Mountain Kurds

Karen Melander-Magoon

Descended from Medes and Armenians
Kurds have inhabited the mountains of
Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia
For centuries
Jin, the women, have fought and led
Yet do not rule.
Jin, the work for omen and life
Saved the Yazidis
Massacred by ISIS
Creating a corridor of protection
Along a mountain pass
They know the mountains
As all Kurds must
Betrayed by every fickle friend
The Kurds embrace the mountain ally
Knowing they cannot be vanquished
In their mountain home
Knowing the hills
Will always embrace them.

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