

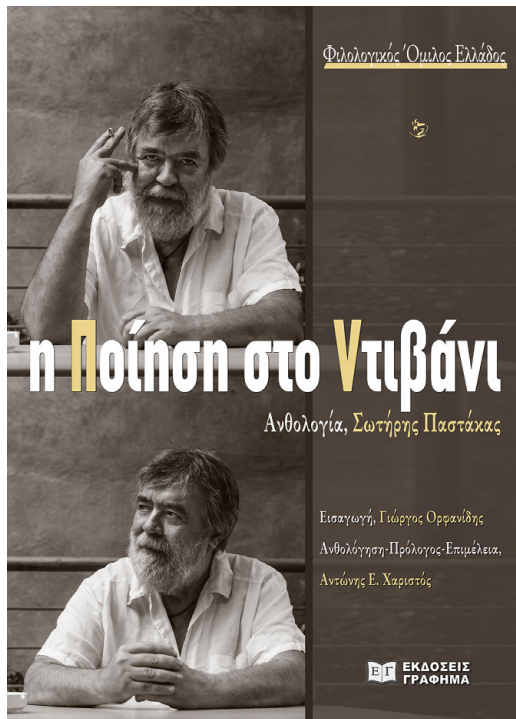


POETRY

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## Four Poems on Borders

Sotirios Pastakas



*Η ποίηση στο ντιβάνι: Ανθολογία, Σωτήρης Παστάκας*  
*Poetry on the Couch: An Anthology, Sotirios Pastakas*  
Grafima Publications 2023

Book cover photos: Dino Ignani  
<https://grafima.com.gr/?p=12445>

### Poet's Introduction

The poems presented here are part of the collection *Learning to Breathe*, written between 1983 and 1990, after the poet returned to Greece from medical studies in Rome, translated into English from the original Greek by Yannis Goumas.

### About the Poet

Sotirios Pastakas (Larissa, Greece, 1954), poet. He studied Medicine in Rome and Psychiatry in Athens. He has published 18 poetry collections. His work has been translated into 20 languages and has taken part in international poetry festivals (San Francisco, Sarajevo, Izmir, Rome, Naples, Siena, Cairo, Istanbul, Medellin, Caracas, etc.). Four poetry collections (*Corpo a corpo*, 2016; *Jorge*, 2019; *Monte Egaleo*, 2020; and *Isola di Chios*, 2023) are published in Italy, where he won the NordSud Prize in 2016, one in the USA (*Food Line*), and one in Spain (*Cuerpo a cuerpo*). The latest publication of his work is the Greek anthology *Poetry on the Couch* (Grafima 2023). In 2019 he donated his library to the Municipal Library of Rapsani. He is a member since 1994 of the Greek Writers' Society and since 2021 National Coordinator of the World Poetry Movement for Greece. He is the founder and editor of the international poetry blog [Exitirion.Wordpress.com](https://Exitirion.Wordpress.com).

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### TICKETS TO ITALY

The National Road from Corinth to Patras  
after a certain point leads  
to an unknown landscape. The traveller  
looks up amazed, ignoring  
the distance covered so far,  
as happens when with the corner of the eye  
we observe someone familiar  
as alien and a total stranger.  
For it to lead us afterwards to the soul's  
actual landscape, you cease  
knowing the way, if you are coming  
or going, if you are welcomed or  
if you are kissing goodbye to a part of your life.  
Alone at last on the quay,  
you look at the sea which you'd think  
swells, rolls and ripples just for you,  
until the waves surge, departure's  
blue becoming once again  
blue of death.

### THE CHAGRIN OF A REPATRIATED YOUTH

Many are the cars with foreign number plates  
this summer. Kilometres  
that didn't displace me. Years  
that'll become time, one-dimensional and final.  
I no longer run after foreign cars like a dog  
gone gaga. I growl.

## A TOAST

If Borges\* is ignorant of the existence  
of Larissa — a town well known  
to Sinópoulos,\*\* Sereni\*\*\* and Engonópoulos\*\*\*\* —  
it is because literature too  
has its own atlas,  
its own coordinates,  
with the colourful *-ism* states  
and their unassailable frontiers,  
as each voice holds forth  
from its strictly fixed position  
and admits of no interference —

jail and spell of poetry  
through meridians and latitudes.

\* Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986): Argentinean author

\*\* Takis Sinópoulos (1917-1981): Greek poet

\*\*\* Vittorio Sereni (1913-1983): Italian poet

\*\*\*\* Nikos Engonópoulos (1907-1985): Greek poet and painter

### **MIGRATORY PLANTS**

The pots we planted so patiently  
and devotedly now bloom and leaf  
on other balconies. When I look up  
at other people's houses, tall and removed,  
I recognize your plants: the bougainvillea  
and the lemon tree, the jasmine with the geraniums,  
the fern, the hydrangea, the oleanders.  
I recognize them all. Their  
nature and habits are known to me.  
If paradise is what we loved  
released from the threat of loss,  
then they'll follow us, you can be sure:  
not a single yellow leaf shall wound us  
when we live together again in a splendid  
penthouse with all our friends.