

**YANNIS RITSOS**

*Persephone – final stanzas*

Translated from the  
Greek by Nikos Stangos

*It's lovely when autumn comes. I can breathe. The sun loses  
its supremacy, its awful superiority. Everything becomes  
tame;  
everything returns to itself, so much so I wonder  
if it isn't death that is our true self. The morning star  
rises much higher up, crystalline, translucent; it glimmers  
auspiciously over the dark forest, like the minutest  
drop of purest water, shimmering  
close by, as if it were stuck on the window pane and all at  
once  
immeasurably far,—a white gleam, a tear,  
diluted, all transparence, independence and joyful vanity—  
a silent, deepest certainty of the end, of everything.*

*That is the time to return to him, almost redeemed,  
or rather to redeem myself in his shadow. Pull the curtains.  
Look,  
a bee has paused on my ring,  
it's even buzzing—can you hear it?—a ring-stone of sound.*

*So, pull the curtains shut. I can't endure it here.  
The light pierces me with a thousand needles,  
it blinds me. I can't endure it. I'm telling you, pull shut the  
curtains.*

*(Her friend got up to draw the curtains. But she jumped up from the sofa. Her wet handkerchief fell on the floor. She reached the window in two steps. She took hold of the cord. She stopped, her hand raised. And, suddenly, she opened the shutters wide open. She stood there, in the blinding light, like a statue slowly coming to life. She moves her hand. She waves out of the window. A boat full of young swimmers is going by. They are calling out. They wave. On the road by the beach, which shimmers in the heat, runs a big black dog (that one perhaps!) carrying in its teeth a basket with different fruit of all colours. It's looking around vaguely, as if it were blind, towards the window. A handsome, tanned swimmer, passing the dog by, kicks it with his bare foot in the belly. The girl in the window laughed. The dog went on. The young girl turned inside the room. She rang the bell. A servant, wearing a striped black and grey pair of trousers, very tight (perhaps those trousers of her uncle), appeared at the door. 'Prepare the table,' she told him. He left. The two friends opened the balcony door and the other two windows. The room was flooded with light. The flowers in the baskets filled the air with perfume. The voices from the sea were heard even louder, mixed with the sound of plates and cutlery down in the dining room. The moist handkerchief remained on the floor like a small, clever, white bird, pretending to be tame and obedient. Little by little the handkerchief dried up, steaming.)*

*Athens, Eleusis, Diminio, Samos,  
December 1965-December 1970*