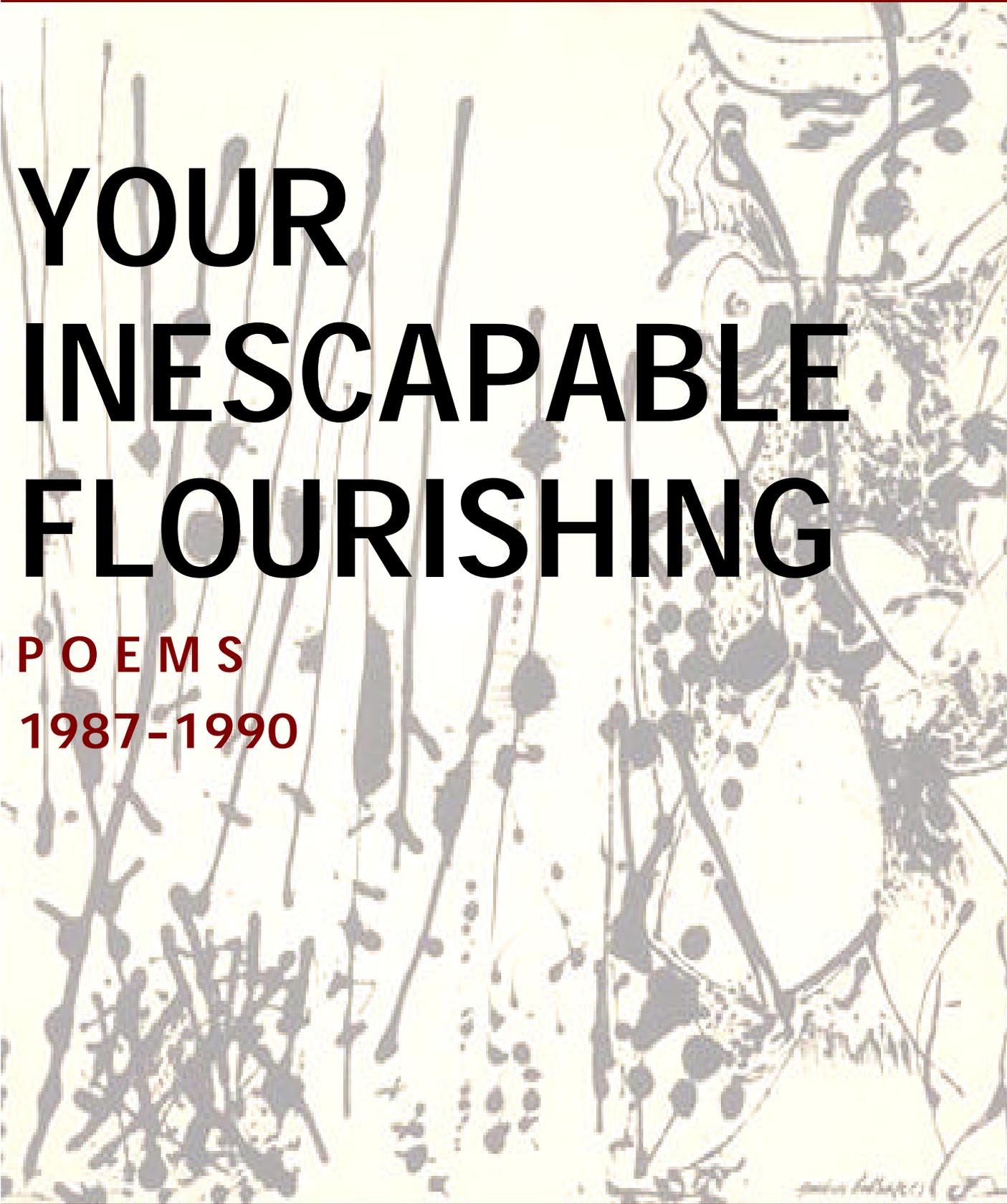


YORGOS BLANAS



**YOUR  
INESCAPABLE  
FLOURISHING**

**P O E M S**

**1987-1990**

Translated by JOHN C. DAVIES

Yorgos Blanas: *Your Inescapable Flourishing. Poems 1987-1990*

Translated by John C. Davies

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Y O R G O S   B L A N A S

**YOUR  
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P O E M S

1987-1990

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*...und die findigen Tiere merken es  
schon, daß wir nicht sehr verläßlich  
zu Haus sind in der gedeuteten Welt.*

R.M. RILKE

I

Your first winter has passed  
like a painting before my window:  
tears in my eyes, I await the spring.  
Outside it snows; a warm snow like flakes of wool.  
Behind the fences my unborn children chase around  
and the diaphanous birds of light  
strike against the windowpane, dipping to drink my tears.

||

Now, O Lord, I know that it was your form  
in the sweet yielding of the dying day.  
I recall my father standing in the gateway of the yard,  
with his ruddy hands rustling  
in his trouser pockets.  
He thinks of nothing in particular, perhaps  
that the roof needs seeing to  
now that the weather has cleared.  
Yet, something in that deep  
blue afternoon tells him  
that he has defeated death  
— something like a feeling of ease  
in his newly polished shoes.



The patience of the night holds me and I remain awake.  
My soul a slender branch in your hands  
struggles to frighten off all sleeplessness to come.  
The nights stand, white unmoving forms  
under the great patience of the stars,  
and the wind, like the deep  
sigh that struggled to fend itself from time,  
brings a morning sweetness that transfixes  
and a flood of ferment.

## IV

I do your bidding, O Lord, and bow to your sleep,  
flouting all that dazzling terror  
which fills the night with startling cries,  
with barefooted lamentation,  
with teeming homes; there' s always  
some broken drawer,  
a door that' s jammed,  
a tap that drips,  
always something small and trivial  
that refuses to acknowledge  
the power of death.

I do your bidding and know that you will stand by me —  
like the dog that lets itself  
sink obstinately into worship  
of the tomb of its loved one,  
choosing rather to take the unknown path to death  
than to accept the lonely surety of a stranger' s hand.

## V

You used to scatter delicious summer nights:  
the sky above, a magnificent hall of light,  
and all the light of the day forged  
into intoxicating perfumes.

Where has your old bountifulness gone?

What dark need brings you  
a beggar to the troubled gateway of memory?

Many-coloured ship

You sailed into my azure expectation.

Now I finger your body: silent.

I finger my hands: blood.

## VI

With what images, O Lord, do you test my blind heart?  
How may my feeble memory endure such light?  
With time — you know time well: silent wound,  
just as you think it has closed, it has passed,  
the memories start to fester —  
I sink into a naked ripeness,  
no branch to hold on to,  
no rock to rest on,  
and whatever I think I' ve grasped:  
a burning day whose heat repels me.  
And wherever I think I' ve stood:  
mute night swallows me up.

## VII

I abandoned myself into your wooden hands  
listening to time tick by  
greedily in the night' s heart.  
Small consolation  
your withered fingers and still less  
the hope borne in your few leaves.  
Yet it never crossed my mind  
that I might be lost in this world,  
wandering in a forest of self-slain hope.  
Yet I never thought that  
all the unrelenting toil of time might empty  
beliefs and certainties,  
forms and colours long-held.  
I abandoned myself, I didn' t think, but still I hope  
for your inescapable flourishing.

## VIII

Life is not the place  
for the one who accepted your outstretched arms.  
Whatever the day on which you tread, it sinks,  
whatever the hour on which you stand, it tumbles into ruins,  
leaving in suspense that  
self-evident alliance against time,  
emptying the space that others had filled inside you.  
Life is not the place  
for the one who, alone, returned from your embrace.

## IX

Grant that I endure to the end.  
I know, I shall walk the course of life —  
a trivial endeavour: just one hard night  
of breathless running and then all condenses  
into a trivial gesture,  
a fine trembling at the corner of the lips;  
so say that it was you who passed  
through this great lull of souls.  
But it isn' t this, it isn' t  
the uncertain course that disturbs me.  
I shudder at the thought that all this  
May be nothing more than an instant for you,  
a brief pause in the unending  
ordeal of your living absence,  
and I strive  
to smother your face within myself.  
Yet you, unhesitating,  
lead him who denies you  
through deaths inaccessible  
and frightful returns.

## X

How I have struggled to keep you within  
the limits of my own time;  
and there were occasions when I would rage  
at your childlike insistence  
on hiding yourself behind the shape of things,  
leaving me alone  
in frightful doubt  
over my passion to confine  
all my sight to one image,  
all my thought to one song.  
How I've struggled to call you, and yet  
I know that we all grow up some time  
— you included —  
transcending the shape  
of our gaze, the sound  
of songs that stir  
— tiny wee creatures —  
on our gigantic fingers.  
Yet I know that you have none other to watch you  
and listen to you  
than the wee creature that wriggles, beseeching  
the vast presence of your hands.

## XI

You are harsh, impassable, you don' t tolerate so much as  
the slightest gesture of sorrow,  
a door that closed  
with the unforeseen certainty of death,  
the steps — timorous and slow — of the despairing:  
as if he' s suddenly afraid of his rending,  
as if by giving in to his pain he will have to  
cross that limit beyond hope  
where life is indebted to death,  
the despair of nothingness —  
hoping in vain for an innermost collision  
with your harsh and impassable presence.  
You slide by, however, and move like a spirit  
to where your every angle seemed inviolate,  
standing sure between you  
and non-existence.  
You slide by, however, and move on, and from behind the light  
beckon another harshness that devastates your paternal love,  
and so I' m left with the fear of your far-off commands.

## XII

I fear you!  
How can I stand your power?  
If I could look at your face  
as I look at the absolute presence of a mountain:  
serene, and given over to whatever  
my gaze retains from the devouring hunger of the distances,  
I could fear death  
I could feel pain:  
certain of the life passion  
that looks at me now, licking  
its predatory lips.

## XIII

I am losing myself: I am afraid of  
every flutter of the leaves and every  
sigh of wind makes me tremble.  
Why is it that I lose my strength  
before the unflagging presence of time?  
I sow deaths in my dreams and struggle  
To keep myself from the impassiveness of plants.  
Suddenly you scream out the anguish of the beast  
and as the panic draws nigh,  
raging at rooms obstinately mute,  
you disappear through the half-open door of my days.

