



Constantine Cavafy
(1863 – 1933)

REMEMBER, BODY

Body, remember not just how much you were loved,
not just the beds where you have lain,
but also those longings that so openly
glistened for you in the eyes,
and trembled in the voice – and some
chance obstacle arose and thwarted them.
Now that it's all finally in the past
it almost seems as if you gave yourself to
those longings, too – remember how
they glistened, in the eyes that looked at you;
how they trembled in the voice, for you;
Remember, body.

(Translated by Daniel Mendelsohn)

I HAVE GAZED SO MUCH

At beauty I have gazed so much
That my vision is filled with it.

The body's lines. Red lips.
Limbs made for pleasure.
Hair like something taken from Greek statues:
Always lovely, even when it's uncombed,
And falls, a bit, upon the gleaming brow.
Faces of love, exactly as
My poetry wanted it . . . in the nights of my
youth,
Secretly encountered in my nights . . .

(Translated by Daniel Mendelsohn)

COME BACK

Come back often and take hold of me,
Beloved feeling come back
and take hold of me—
when the memory of the body reawakens,
and old longing once more passes through the
blood;
when the lips and skin remember,
and the hands feel like they're touching once
again.

Come back often and take hold of me at night,
When the lips and skin remember . . .

(Translated by Daniel Mendelsohn)

HIDDEN THINGS

From all I did and all I said,
let them not seek to find who I was.
It stood an obstacle in my way this, altering
my actions and my way of life.
This stood an obstacle in my way, stopping me
all the times I wanted to speak out.
My most unnoticed actions,
discreet writings, those most disguised—
from these alone they'll understand me.
But maybe it's not worth so much care,
all this effort just to know what and who I am.
A long time from now—in a more perfect world—
some other made like me will appear
and, to be sure, he will act freely.

(Translated by John Chioles)

VERBORGENHEDEN

Laat niemand uit wat ik deed en zei proberen af
te leiden wie ik was.
Er was een belemmering, die vervormde de
daden en de wijze van mijn leven.
Er was een belemmering, die weerhield mij vele
keren als ik wou gaan spreken.
Mijn meest onopgemerkte daden, en mijn
meest verhulde geschriften—daaruit alleen zal
men mij begrijpen.
Maar misschien is het niet zoveel moeite,
zoveel inspanning waard om mij te kenen.
Later—in een volmaakter samenleving - zal
stellig iemand anders, zoals ik geschapen,
verschijnen en handelen in vrijheid.

(Vertaald door Hans Warren & Mario Molengraaf)