



May-2003

Poetry

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Recommended Citation

Lee, Donna J. G. (2003). Poetry. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(3), 206-207.

Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol4/iss3/16>

Donna J. G. Leeⁱ

Afternoon in *Paleó Fáliron*

I determine the number of
blocks, decide to walk
to the *kafenion* on the coast.
I know there I will have the option
of crossing the highway, putting
my face to the sea. If the gods
agree, I will feel a breeze
poised with salt and an eager-
ness to continue. But more than
likely, I will choose a table
on the corner of town, where
the policeman watches as if he
expects something to happen.
The offhandedness
of single women keeps him
alert—and newly married
women, like me, who
don't know the rules.

Poseidon cracks a wave
against the jetty so hard
I can hear it shatter like glass,
my tiny cup of Greek coffee calm
in the concrete village. Chairs
screech; the officer approaches
once again to ask why
I am here, where I live,
what time my husband usually
comes home.

Up the Mountain

On a steep cobblestone street, a woman
who wears winter on her face
sweeps her doorstep once again, returning
the dirt outside. She cannot straighten
from years that have found their home
in the sinews of muscle
and bending bone.
She remains where the shadows fall,
in the black part of her house, which cuts
into a street in a rush with tourists.
Her sons and daughters
in Athens. Their pictures dusted

over doilies in each silent room.
Vacation, the domain
of those who can leave.

Sunset's shadows settle
in the castle ruins, send the
old fishermen out with nets as tourists
sip frappés on pendulous balconies.
Woman of the mountain, how many
mornings have you kneaded
bread? Beneath your
callused fingertips,
years of crocheting unravel.
The sea wild
with white caps.

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