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Poetry: P.S. for August

Nancy Donegan

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ELENI

by

Nicholas Gage
Random House, 1983

Nicholas Gage is an American of Greek ancestry, born in the Epirotic village of Leia, in the district of Thesprotia. In the autumn of 1947 the village was occupied by the "Democratic Army" of the Greek communist guerilla movement. Rumors abounded that the children of the village would be taken to the socialist countries, away from the dangers of war. Concerned villagers began to look for avenues -- or rather paths -- of escape for their children. But Nicholas' father was in America, and the decisions about the family had to be made by Nicholas' mother, who did not wish to have her children carried into the Iron Curtain. After long deliberation, she contrived the escape of three of her girls and her boy Nicholas. Her plan succeeded, but she herself was betrayed, captured by the communists, tortured and finally executed.

Eleni was her first name and *Eleni* is the title of the book written about her by her son Nicholas, following six years of painstaking and exhaustive investigation. Nicholas had to leave his job as a *N.Y. Times* correspondent in order to fulfill his life's ambition: to find the man responsible for his mother's death. He wanted to explore the depth of his family's tragedy -- to write about the love of a mother for her children and to describe the village milieu in which he grew up.

Nicholas interviewed upwards of four hundred persons who might have known something about Eleni's last days, traveling to the Eastern Block countries to gather whatever information he could from former guerrillas who had survived the civil war. Finally Nicholas located the "judge" who had sent Eleni to her death, in a small Epirotic town; by now he was old and toothless. Equipped with a gun, Nicholas walked into the judge's house, determined to kill him. But faced with a miserable remnant of a human being, Nicholas suddenly remembered the love of his mother who had

P.S. for August

*The cat left the carcass
of a rabbit on the porch
early this morning.
Its bloodless hind-paws
rigid as waxed leaves.*

*Forget-me-nots still glint
bright blue at the ledge.
Once I stencilled the borders
of our room, stippled paint
until my knuckles bled --
the color of your eyes impossible
to replicate.*

*Through the overhang of chokecherry
a spider's wire down.*

We don't talk anymore.

*I won't forget the sound
of a rabbit's light bones
sliding from my trowel,
a quenched field,
wordless ends.*

by Nancy Donegan

A resident of Brockton, Nancy Donegan taught English at Brockton High School before enrolling in the graduate school at Brown University, where she received the Master of Fine Arts degree in writing in 1984. Her first volume of poems is ready for publication.