

Translator's Note

I was attracted to Sachtoúris' work after a conversation that took place in Thessaloniki. My aunt had arranged for a young graduate student to take me for a walk around the city shortly after I arrived there—it might've been a date, I can't be certain now. She was studying philosophy and we stopped in at a bookstore and I looked into the poetry section. She—I've forgotten her name; you can see how important it was—stood beside me and judged the poets I called out at random from the covers of their books. Her response, when I said Sachtoúris, was "He's macabre". I remember that this happened in June, just before I did some travelling. We made plans to meet again but never did. I can't remember her face, but her voice saying "macabre" resonates and it was that French word that brought me back to the bookstore in early August to buy the book. Sachtoúris' poems were short and with my limited Greek the exercise of translating him with a dictionary would serve a double purpose—to engage in translation and to increase my vocabulary. Short but severe I learned quickly, and never simple. His *topos* is both local and unsuitable-for-human-living, utopia and nightmare, wish and counter-wish, so that these things become confused and the poet continues living by melding a Romantic longing with his strange and murderous surroundings.

My Greek has since improved, but my translations develop from the same straight-forward method—a one-two approach. First I make literal translations and then I make them pretty [author's note: by "make pretty" I mean to oversimplify]. The finished product is a poem in itself that carries the meaning and intent of Sachtoúris' original in English, but that can, of course, never do that.

—Evan Jones