

*Greek Passages*

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**PETER RILEY**

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**2002–2005**

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The whole work in a slightly different version, can be heard read by the author, slowly and with interjections, on the website *Archive of the Now*.

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there must have been children sleeping  
in sweet abandonment  
as the unknown sailed into the harbour  
and the world stopped

*Kelvin Corcoran*

**10 PRELUDES**  
**EXOMÁNI 2002**

There was no journey. The moment we opened our eyes we were there: / the colours across the bay / the red on the blue / Trinakrian Sea, its / turning islands, and all thought of betterment in the world / Bringing trouble. That lives here like a stone. / Bringing upright posture, anxiety, and longed-for repose. That live here like the flowers of the mountain.

•

At dawn, a white light on the top of a mountain / things  
start to move / an old woman side-flank on a donkey,  
at dawn / wobbling up the mountain, picking over the  
stones / a Mercedes glides past, the light there / in  
her eye ever shining // Slowness of the dawn beetle /  
western promise / worth goat-dung.

•

And at evening the sky falcon stands over the bay / sun  
sinking into meaning. The lights go on in the houses /  
A man gets out of a boat onto the stones of the shore,  
walks over to the bar / and is recognised / A jovial  
shout goes up / embracing everyone, our welcome / A  
treaty is caught in the moment, and brought on into the  
dance / Slim as pencils, the leaves / throw themselves  
at the music.

•

Thinking simple thoughts, like a dawn bird in my niche  
I / set forth, stepping lightly / walking the shoreline,  
testing the stability / of simple things, words, stones,  
against each other, the light radiating between sea and  
mountainside the air hot as blood / the very living  
blood that bears our histories.

•

Who was it, sailed from this harbour, who, / sailed out  
/ together / Kelvin tell me / from this small harbour  
that time / deep in the power / We threw all our money  
into the sea // And what became of that / thing they  
call love / what powers massed what quiet graves /  
carried that emblem to the sides of the earth // Sea  
surface tensed out, ultra- / marine against the white  
walls, the wind ready, the boat edging out at the gap /  
everything we ever owned / flung at eternity.

•

The sea noise ringing in our ears / the return a cadence  
of the departure or the song thus broken. Always at  
that opening to the whitechapped sea the spirit enters  
its turbulence, and / little owls on the electricity wires.

•

Something almost forgotten, making possible a dazzling  
sanity / A buzzard swoops over an abandoned monastery  
garden in the hills, like a jet passing. 'Whoosh!' /  
Keeping an eye on the fig tree // Gods came this way  
and scored the earth / with our amalgamated desires /  
each for all / and the stars, struggling all day to get out  
of the sea.

•

Caves in the coastal cliffs, pirate storage or homes of  
acolytes, now bricked up / Tortoises plodding around  
in the undergrowth below // The geology down the  
coast echoing / the treatises of light, waves of soft rock  
halting against the void // Swallow at the door, sun's  
red eye in the bay, compass leaves descending.

•

And such light I've never seen such light, all round  
us land and sea negotiating / over our blood, casting  
translucent banners across hard earth / Thin grey  
leaves fluttering, thunder in the hills, a new / wind  
across the harbour, the small boat setting out // The  
old women knitting in the alcove, keeping an eye on the  
mating rituals, threading the world into their harmony  
/ The world watches, the small boat moving out across  
the wind / prow set for the world's end / for a year and  
a day. / Small chirruping cries, echoed along the coastal  
cliffs.

•

Sweetly then / the whole thing / complete and / sailing  
away, singing: *Noë noë noë . . .* // Sings shouting: new,  
new born. // Welcome home, little turnip, welcome to  
the old song.