

Constantine Cafavy (1863-1933)

1. VOICES

*Ideal and beloved voices of those who are dead,
or of those who are lost to us like the dead.
Sometimes they speak to us in our dreams;
sometimes in thought the mind hears them.
And for a moment with their echo other echoes return
from the first poetry of our lives like music
that extinguishes the faroff night.*

2. DECEMBER 1903

*And if I cannot speak of my love,
if I do not speak about your hair, your lips, your eyes,
Yet your face that I keep within my soul,
The sound of your voice that I keep within my mind,
The days of September that dawn in my dreams
Mold and color my words and phrases
In whatever theme I get into, whatever idea I utter.*

3. FAR OFF

*I should like to relate a memory but it is so faded now
Scarcely anything is left because it lies far off, in the years of my early youth.
A skin as if made of jasmine that night in August, was it August?
That night I can just remember the eyes, they were, I think blue,
Ah, yes, blue, sapphire blue.*

4. WHEN THEY ARE ROUSED

*Try to guard them, poet, however few there are that can be kept,
The visions of your loving. The visions of your loving.
Set them half-hidden in your phrases,
Try to sustain them, poet,
When they are roused in your mind at night, or in the glare of noon,
Try to guard them, poet,
The visions of your loving.*