

Narrative Excavations

Voyaging with Erhard Schüttpelz



Sources:

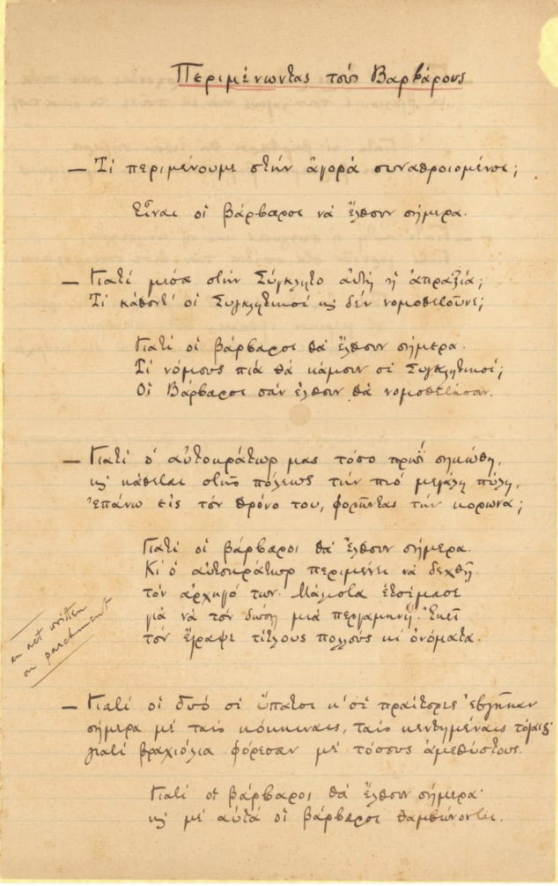
Riddles of the Sphinx. Directed by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, UK, 1977, 92mins.

Sphinx Realty Company on Fairfax Avenue in Los Angeles, courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, https://laist.com/2016/11/25/sphinx_realty_egyptomania.php (23.02.2021)

Three men sitting at the summit of one of the pyramids to watch the Zippelin's flight over the site. Source: Library of Congress.

Marcel Broodthaer, A Voyage on the North Sea, 1974.

Courtesy of the artist, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg1fkhLxa14> (23.03.2021)



Περιμένοντας τὸν Βαρβάρου

— Τι περιμένουμε στὴν ἀγορὰ συνασπισμένοι ;
 εἶναι οἱ βάρβαροι νὰ ἔρθουν σήμερα.

— Γιατί μὴς στὴν Σύγκλητο αὐτὴ ἡ ἀπραξία ;
 Τι νάβωλ' οἱ Σύγκλητοι ἕως εἰς νομοθετοῦν ;

Γιατί οἱ βάρβαροι θὰ ἔρθουν σήμερα.
 Τι νόμος πᾶς θὰ ἔχουν οἱ Σύγκλητοι ;
 Οἱ βάρβαροι πᾶν ἔθελον θὰ νομοθετοῦσαν.

— Γιατί ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ μας τόσο πρὸς σμῆθος,
 ἕως κούβειε στὴν πόρτω τὴν πρὸ μεγάλη πύλη,
 ἔπαινε εἰς τὸν θρόνο του, φορεῖται τὴν κορώνα ;

Γιατί οἱ βάρβαροι θὰ ἔρθουν σήμερα.
 Κι ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ περιμένει νὰ δεχθῆ
 τὸν ἀρχηγὸ τῶν ἑλλήνων ἰδοίμεσ
 μὴ νὰ τὸν δώσῃ μὴ πέγαμνη ; εἴτε
 τὸν ἔραφι τῆζους πογγῶνς μὴ ὀνόμαθα.

a not written on parchment

— Γιατί οἱ δὲ οἱ ἔπαλοι ἡ οἱ πράξιες ἔβησαν
 σήμερα μὴ ταῖς κούμιναις, ταῖς κούμιναις τῆζους
 γαλί φραξίονα φορεῖσαν μὴ τὸς αἰρεθίστους.

Γιατί οἱ βάρβαροι θὰ ἔρθουν σήμερα.
 ἕως μὴ αὐτὰ οἱ βάρβαροι θαμῶντοῦν.

Waiting for the Barbarians

C. P. Cavafy, 1863 - 1933

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?
 The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything going on in the senate?
 Why are the senators sitting there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.
 What's the point of senators making laws now?
 Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early,
 and why is he sitting enthroned at the city's main gate,
 in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today
 and the emperor's waiting to receive their leader.
 He's even got a scroll to give him,
 loaded with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today
 wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?
 Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,
 rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?
 Why are they carrying elegant canes
 beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today
 and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators turn up as usual
 to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today
 and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden bewilderment, this confusion?
 (How serious people's faces have become.)
 Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
 everyone going home lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.
 And some of our men just in from the border say
 there are no barbarians any longer.

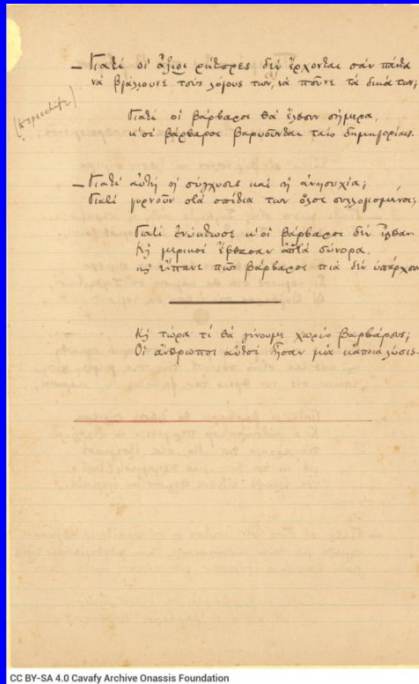
Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
 Those people were a kind of solution.

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C. P. Cavafy, "Waiting for the Barbarians" from *C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems*. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard.

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