

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

John Tripoulas: Four Poems

John Tripoulas · Wednesday, October 28th, 2026

Sailing Past the Tumulus

Reminded once again,
as he sailed home past the Troad
and the mound of Achilles:
in the Trojan War he was
just the second best hero.

Only by arriving home,
adding nostos to kleos,
homecoming to glory,
could he match in renown
the great demi-god,

swift-footed Achilles,
fettered by anger and sorrow,
hallowed in song and lament,
for whose memory dirges were sung
by women at sunset and night.

Asleep on deck, Odysseus arrives
at his Kingdom's shore.
Rousing at dawn to daylight
after his ten-year journey's end—
he meets damned Achilles midway.

*

The Bookmark

A stub receipt
from an old postal order—
20,000 drachmas sent to me,
sender-signed by my father,

now page-holding
in a book never finished.

My father is gone.
The money is gone.
The drachma is gone.
Late on a sleepless night,
I try this book once more—
it's waiting on a shelf, holding
words written by my father.

*

A Spot at a Café

He swooned into my arms
at the onset of his collapse,
while shuffling back from the bathroom
after peeing in a cup,
returning to his gurney in the Emergency Room
under review for a motorbike wreck.

It happened years ago,
when I was the island's surgeon.
At first, I thought it was only
a face laceration, easily sewn,
until our dance together,
when I dragged him back to his bed
and noticed his low blood count,
ominous for internal bleeding.
Transfusions and vigilance
spared him the knife,
until his bleeding stopped
and he could return to his former life.

Scrawny, unkempt, probably alcoholic,
an auto-body worker,
insulted when I tried to pay
for his work on my car.
I would see him, now recovered,
whenever I walked past his regular spot,
an outdoor table, along the wall
of his favorite café. He would always
offer to buy me a drink,
and never forgot that I saved him.
Once he kissed my hand.

Returning on holiday to my old island,

often passing the haunt
where he would drink, expecting
to see him at his table, finally
asking his café cronies;
I learned that he died—
my patient who never forgot.
Now I remember him,
and our dance together whenever
I pass his spot along the café wall.

*

On a Greek Island

On the island where Icarus crashed,
at a spot along the seaside road
young Angelos lost control
of his motorbike, crashed and died.

Friends came to the roadside
where he was found, and placed
flowers, candles, plush toys.
All around the sorrow gifts

were rows of empty bottles
from the mourners' libations—
beer pored, then imbibed
as by their ancestors of old.

That night, after the ceremony,
a hard Norther blew in
and sounded a funeral dirge
over the bottle mouths.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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