

Ants with a view



Selected Poems of the Mount Menoikeion Seminar

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1.

The wave of nostalgia
Covered with dark circles
and eye bags as big as the suitcase

The hotel was nice
A definite upgrade from the previous night
And a definite upgrade from the previous sight

Shower
Eat
Sleep

I even missed the meeting

The sun was blasting
Hades took control of weather
It was too warm
And too sunny

The climb and the walk was still
breathtaking

I became a tour guide for some
Retelling the same stories that were told
To me
Last sight

The grandeur
Extraordinaire
How advanced were these people

The temple
The church
The openness and greatness
The darkness and obscurity

That damn museum
Here we go again

The reuse
The reseen

The tastes
The hymns
The sounds
The smells
The hunger

A renewed nostalgia

2.

The mountains appalled me
It was too majestic
A perfect instagrammable moment
I was too focused on my music
And finally getting to see that
Monastery

I was still amazed
This is beautiful
The hymns
The chants
What a welcome

Unreal
This place actually
Exists
Holiness and beauty actually
Exist

The art
The icons
The figures
The canvas
Wrapped around
Every corner of the temple

I took another picture
And another
And another
And another
And another
Up
Down
Underground
Near the heavens
I took another picture
And another
And another
And another
And another
The same picture once

Twice
Thrice
Four times
Five times
A new cloud
Again another picture
A new sun
Again another picture

3.

protein
protein
protein

shake
shake
shake

I completely forgot about that

I actually wish I were back to the point where
I had completely forgotten about that

The food
The dishes
The care
The love
The flavors

The freshness
The mixture
The samples
The perfect
combinations of tastes

The food with a backdrop of the mountains
Was the best ever tasted in my life

The care and attention to every detail
The spices
The cooking
It was unreal
No words to explain, truly

I actually wish I could have a taste of it again
Right now
And forever

It was
so
so
so

so
so
so
so
so
too
too
too
too
too
too
Good

Like ambrosia

4.

These were real women
With real lives
With real stories
With real smiles

The laughs
The shy smiles
The genuine moments
The human spirits

Their warmth
Their essence
Was real
Their laughs
Their shy smiles
Their genuine moments

It was
Too motherly
Too perfect
Too heavenly to be real

I saw my grandmother in all of them
Their caring spirit
Their radiating love
Their tender concern

It was
Too motherly
Too perfect
Too heavenly to be real

5.

The swim team captain
Was back

Two year hiatus
Back in the water
Back in the waves
But no chlorine
But in the salt

It was an extraordinary feeling
The ripples
The movements
The free spirit and rapidity in the water
I felt a bit of my true self again
Which was lost in the years

Flip
Turn
Glide

The swim team captain
Was back

6.

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

I plucked the dead leaves, plucked the dead flowers

I picked the fallen weeds, picked any traces of rubbish

I looked here and there, scouted and looked deep in the soil

I felt the warm dirt, perceived the jewel insects search around

I grabbed the dried leaves, I saw the ants run about

I sensed a prick in my finger, I felt the warm blood rush

I had a view of the site, they all had a view

I looked at the mountains, they all had the mountains

The ants ran everywhere

Six

Seven

Eight

Nine

Ten

7.

I'm not sure if I admire
Or believe
Or took redefined my belief of lack of belief

I'm not sure if I found Him
Probably not
But it did change my perception of Him

I thought

I looked

I cried with those devoted to Him

I'm not sure if my explanation of things
Are simply my own interpretation
of a sort of Him

I'm not sure

But I am closer to finding
Myself

8.

That ocean city was hot

Fun

Talkative

Humorous

Historic

Interesting

Picturesque

Tasty

A bit cosmopolitan (can honestly do better)

But it was so hot.

9.

I'm touched.
How I'd love to be back.

Post-Trip Report for the Hellenic Studies department, worthy of including in this journal



This image encapsulates my experience in the seminar, specifically in the Timiou Prodromou Monastery. I think I could have posted scenic pictures of the Monastery, the mountains, or the ancient sites in Athens and Byzantine places of Thessaloniki. However, the emotions felt in the Monastery perfectly fit the small, detailed, and insignificant snail found in the floor of the hill going up to the door of the Monastery. Not only was this trip clearly academic, I truly think that its intentions went beyond that superficial scholarly outlook. The trip was spiritual, self-reflective, and metaphysical on the personal level. I came into the Monastic experience not knowing what to expect. I purposefully avoided searching images about it or

looking into the history of it because I wanted to be surprised and learn from the moment. Although I didn't do this intentionally, the feeling of entering the Monastery for the first time was ethereal, almost out of this world. It went beyond the 'perfect instagramable' moment but traversed me and made me realize that outer and inner beauty alongside sacredness and perfection do exist.

Being detached so much with religion and outspokenly being against it, this experience allowed me to look at things in a completely different way, and made me remember the importance of the small things in life. The care in which the nuns prepared our meals, the perfectly timed and absolutely delicious afternoon coffee break, the genuine intentions to talk to us, get to know us, us learning about their everyday lives and helping them with certain tasks, their smiles, serenity, joy, singing while they finished their kitchen tasks, devoted to their lives and devotion to God, the motherly care and want for perfection when doing anything with us or for us, it all made me realize a side of life that I had completely disregarded and forgotten about. No internet, no Instagram, no Snapchat, no toxic relationships, no anxiety about rather absurd things we worry about so much in the 'real' world, I sometimes wish I could still stay and live like that for the rest of my life.

Cleaning the gardens, picking the leaves, looking at the small ants walk around the soil, taking a small break and looking and the breathtaking mountains, or just sitting and thinking in the shade looking at the church and taking in the fresh air, are only small things that happened during this experience. This was a clear academic trip, but the personal, reflective, and spiritual change that has happened to me has permanently changed the course of my upcoming years. The focus and emphasis on the little things were something I had almost forgotten about. I have no words to truly describe my Monastic experience, but I am grateful beyond words to have participated in this Seminar for the summer 2019 term.