



KIKI DIMOULA

LETHE'S ADOLESCENCE

TRANSLATED FROM THE MODERN GREEK  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

David Connolly

Kiki Dimoula writes: “Whenever I am asked to define what poetry is, I reply that you may as well ask wisdom of the ignorant. It is one of the most lofty and boundless mysteries, and it is only for the sake of gratifying similes that we say it is a concoction of sweet poisons in seductive gold cups, or that it is a temptation, the devil that suddenly enters the body of a normal person, provoking a creative madness, or that it is a form of euthanasia for the things, either unfulfilled or betrayed, that suffer within us. It is somewhat easier to define a poem, since this has submitted to the compromise of accepting a form, a shape, which is both the prison and the liberation of some message. A poem is perhaps the double life of words, their hidden eroticism and their lust for virgin images.

“I am practically a stranger to the poems I have written. I am linked to them in a blood relationship before they are written and while they are being written. Afterwards I cut them from me and I leave their existence, their substantiation or not, to the reader. In this way, I believe that I train them to face the dangers of rejection, training myself at the same time. Besides, it is only in this way that I can nurture and rear my new poems. So I thank you all, for by reading these poems you have assured them of a secure and privileged existence.”

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Kiki Dimoula is regarded as one of the leading poets in Greece today and is certainly one of the most widely read. Born in Athens in 1931, she worked for twenty-five years as an employee in the Bank of Greece and was married to the poet Athos Dimoulas. She belongs to the so-called second generation of postwar Greek poets and is one of a number of notable women poets of that generation. Her first collection, *Poems*, appeared in 1952. Since then, she has published a further seven collections and has twice been awarded the Greek State Prize for Poetry. Her work has been translated into numerous European languages, though this is the first book-length selection to appear in English.

David Connolly, lecturer in literary translation at the Ionian University in Corfu, was for several years head of translation at the British Council in Athens. He has written on various aspects of translation and has published translations of works by a number of major twentieth-century Greek writers, including Angelo Terzakis, Nikiforos Vrettakos, Odysseus Elytis, Nikos Gatsos, Nikos Engonopoulos, and Kiki Dimoula.