



EIGHTEEN SHORT SONGS
of the
BITTER MOTHERLAND
by Yannis Ritsos

These “slender” songs by Yannis Ritsos, one of Greece’s most prolific living poets, have already established themselves prominently alongside the best known works of “freedom literature” sung or written by Greeks during the last two hundred years. Be they klephtic ballads, hymns to liberty or literary essays and debates, at some point they all dealt and continue to deal with the question of individual and national freedom.

Ritsos’ songs, written during the period of the recent military rule (1967–1974) in Greece, were primarily intended to be sung, not published or translated. Thanks to Mikis Theodorakis who put them to music, they have been sung all over the world. But contrary to the poet’s original intentions, the songs are now in their fourth edition in Greece itself and have been translated in various European languages.

This bilingual edition has been authorized by Yannis Ritsos.

Amy Mims is a poetess and translator residing in Greece and Cyprus. Her own poetry appeared under the title *The Book of Amy* and her translations include *Nikos Kazantzakis: A Biography based on His Letters* by Helen Kazantzakis.

Theofanis G. Stavrou is professor of Russian and modern Near Eastern History at the University of Minnesota. He also teaches courses on the intellectual and cultural history of modern Greece through the History Department and the Humanities Program at the University of Minnesota. His publications include *Russian Interests in Palestine 1882–1914*, *Russia under the Last Tsar* (ed.) and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *A Lenten Letter to Pimen, Patriarch of All Russia* (ed.). He is presently collaborating on an English translation of Nikos Kazantzakis’s travels to Russia.