

BERLIN TIERGARTEN

Niki Marangou

translated by

Nicholas Kabanás*

Foreign land, dry leaves, a spell; like a breeze
I climb the stairs of Tiergarten station
Zo-o-logischer Garten says the loudspeaker
artificially enunciating the 'zo' and the 'o'
with unnecessary zeal, a guise,
as if the loudspeaker is spelling-out
a foreign alphabet
the wind blows on the stairs
leaves gather in the corners
it is night
each person on the train reads their book,
not a play in their stare,
like those you encounter going
from Piraeus to Omonia.
"I used to sew my clothes with a no.100 needle",
Konstantina from Grevená says to me,
"When I came to Berlin, I got rid of
the thick and dowdy clothes they used to wear,
neither did I know to go home
we wore silks, finely sewn
nor did I know how to hold a needle anymore;
it was like I found myself in a cloud, a black cloud,
it took me six years to recover
now I'm fine,
I'm coming for my pension".

* The translation was awarded the Niki Marangou Translation Prize in 2019.