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## ABSENT ANGEL

Luke Fischer

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*The angel —  
three years we waited intently for him ...  
We returned to our homes broken ... \**  
—George Seferis

How could art come into being  
without the angel's presence?  
Is absence enough a trace  
of having been there—it sets  
the search in motion—the footprint  
left in the littoral sand  
on the shore adjoining worlds,  
indistinct but not quite washed away,  
enough of a contour to render with a pen?

\* \* \*

A year it's been since I last wrote  
and again I've no precise idea  
of what I'm seeking, but I can almost  
remember how everything seems to make sense  
when it's found.

\* \* \*

I sit on an elevated balcony—  
to my right a north-eastern shore  
of the Aegean—in front of me  
mountains of Lesbos  
suffused with morning light,  
the highest summit almost translucent  
to the elusive blue.

\* \* \*

Had Cézanne lived here  
he would have painted this—  
resembling but taller than Victoire—  
a hundred times attempted to make visible  
wings concealed in ridges of stone,  
the Nike gazing across the sea  
as far as the isle of Samothrace.

\* \* \*

When through the sense of sight  
one can almost taste the dawn of the world  
and the shrill, inhuman cry of circling swifts  
almost sing it, why am I abandoned  
to the remains of youth's fire—  
an unburnt log, sodden  
and hollowed by termites?

\* \* \*

Can I learn from Daedalus,  
not to soar with his son's reckless  
ambition, but with focus to lift  
a few feet from the ground?  
Would this suffice to release  
the world's strings  
like a palm raised from the neck  
of a guitar, no longer dampening  
the music of nimble fingers?

\* \* \*

Two and a half thousand years ago  
Sappho walked here, Sappho  
who summoned the immortal beauty—  
the angel of eros—Aphrodite  
to ride her sparrow-drawn chariot  
down from Olympus.

\* \* \*

The summit is smudged by gray cloud.  
Must I erase what I've written?

\* \* \*

Cézanne spoke of how  
as his vision  
merged with the mountain,  
the horizon enfolded him  
in a second womb, his painting  
an emerging embryo.

\* \* \*

No art exists  
outside relation.  
But I must find a way  
to build the bridge. And  
if raised, whose light  
feet might step across  
its span of air?

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\* George Seferis, 'Mythistorema', *Collected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Princeton University Press, 1995), 3.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Luke Fischer is a poet and philosopher. His books include the poetry collections *A Personal History of Vision* (UWAP, 2017) and *Paths of Flight* (Black Pepper, 2013), the monograph *The Poet as Phenomenologist: Rilke and the New Poems* (Bloomsbury, 2015), and the co-edited volumes *Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus: Philosophical and Critical Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and *The Seasons: Philosophical, Literary, and Environmental Perspectives* (SUNY Press, 2021). He holds a PhD in philosophy and is an honorary associate of the University of Sydney. [www.lukefischerauthor.com](http://www.lukefischerauthor.com)

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