**Ithaki**

E.N. Loizis

I’ve had to relearn every word in my vocabulary

*Σπίτι* is *zuhause* is *hogar* is

*home*

*Μου λείπετε* I miss you

*Σας αγαπώ* I love you

*Πού είσαι;*

Where are you;

A semicolon in Greek indicates a question

I am fluent in dislocated multilingualism

I see my parents’ questions and think

they forgot to end the sentence

Sometimes I don’t switch between

the two punctuations systems

Like I don’t even know anymore

Where the question ends and

I begin ~ ~ ~

maybe my father’s love for mountain tops

and my mother’s fear of living

made this heart afraid of its own beating

yearning for the climb

maybe I put oregano on everything to feel

like I’ve climbed despite never setting off

maybe I like the taut imperfect roundness

of tomatoes, longing to bite

into my childhood skin

splash its insides everywhere

maybe I bake sweet bread every Easter

to remember to believe in resurrection

~ ~ ~

*you don’t get cold anymore*, my mother says

she’s always freezing–losing her warmth to the world

I call her once a week, she talks about the weather

what I made for dinner, if the neighbor stopped by for a visit

I don’t ask about Africa, hunting snakes with sticks

climbing trees barefoot in the jungle

about the goat she was gifted

that kept peeing on the roof

until her mother, tired of smelling piss

every time she entered the house

gave her up for slaughter—served her roasted limbs

with a heap of terror on the side

*Καλή όρεξη* enjoy your meal

the most vile words uttered in existence

how my mother tells the story

as if it’s normal for a mother to kill

innocence like it’s doing it a favor

~ ~ ~

my father planted a fig tree

sent me a picture of the first fruit

ever to grow on its branches

*I’d send it to you if I could*

I remember a tongue swollen with sweetness

cousins around a wooden table

picking honeyed fruit from a large bag

my belly pregnant with happiness

I mistook for fullness

Where did this hunger come from?

Is it possible to inherit a body

permanently starved for life?

My father was given to an institution

for months on end to be fed

his own family unable to offer sustenance

came back as thin as he left

they never figured out

the heart is hungrier than the bones