

**SIX POEMS BY LILLIAN SCIBERRAS:
“TO CONSTANTINE CAVAFY AND THE WORM WHO SPARED
HIS WORKS”, “SONG OF THE EARTH”, “SONG OF THE
MINISTER’S WIFE”, “IN YOUR EYES OF DARK AMBER”,
“MIGRAINE THERAPY” AND “NOW”¹**

Lillian Sciberras²

To Constantine Cavafy and the Worm Who Spared His Works

“But how the life of the artist has gained”

The only copy of your work
in our library
was, years ago,
visited by a humble worm
who gnawed its way
into the spine
but who,
retreating from the pages,
spared the book.

Maybe it felt disgust

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² Poet, writer of short stories, gender and political activist, and researcher. Her poems, in Maltese and English, have been gathered in several books: *The New Poetry* (1971), *Wara ir-repubblika* (1979), *Cross Winds* (1980), etc. Her short fiction can be found in many periodicals, anthologies and in a collection, she entitled: *Happenstance: Tales of Circumstance* (2012). Among her non-fiction books, her seminal works *Women and Maltese Politics* (1975) and *The Maltese Woman: A Bibliography of Recent Literature* (1975) are also worth mentioning, as they provide very useful information for those who want to do some research on feminism and gender in Malta. At present, she is working on an autobiographical work of recollections, on a novel, and on collecting her unpublished poems for publication. She is a chartered librarian by profession and was, prior to her retirement, a senior lecturer in library and information studies at the University of Malta; ✉ lillsciberras@yahoo.com.

at the prospect
of mutilating
your fine words,
your testament,
the distilled moments
of your life.

And having reconsidered
its vulgarity
turned away nobly,
a hungry but
enlightened worm,
deserving thanks
by those of us who,
through its generosity,
can still enjoy
Cavafy's poetry.

Song of the Earth

In a sceptical mood

So we travel constantly
in lines of space and time.
I wonder, are they parallel lines,
do they intersect,
or are they one?

Maybe they're not lines at all,
and travelling may not really be the word,

but anyhow, a convenient one.

Not having a clue why,
not having a recollection of ever having started;
a feeling of being cheated out of a beginning.

The only end discovered on this trip so far
is one of chemical decay, and of urges for reproducing
matter for further chemical decay.
Will this dead matter become a cosmic heap some time,
with no more brains left to conceive its own condition?

A talent picked on the way is doubt;
it is possibly the only gift.

Song of the Minister's Wife¹

Let your lack of thinking stop!
Welcome, friends, to this Big-Top.
When the music starts to play
hear well what it has to say,
for we'll tell about events
never told in such big tents,
and, should you all but care to wait,
we'll reveal secrets of State.
Of such dealings we will tell

¹ This poem is an integral part of the short story *The Minister's Wife*, published in *Happenstance: Tales of Circumstance*. Malta: Horizons, 2012.

(only if you listen well)
that will leave you without breath
and stay with you till your death.
You will hear of plunder and theft
as committed by the Left,
tales of poverty and spite
as committed by the Right.
and not to leave her in the lurch
we'll tell the sins of Mother Church.
All of this we promise you –
dirty linen, Red and Blue.
Stay with us, Old Age and Youth,
enjoy this Carnival of Truth!

In Your Eyes of Dark Amber

In your eyes of dark amber
I know I must journey
through virgin lands unbounded,
on voyages with maps undrawn.

And light and darkness shall shape
the path of finding, of discoveries
undreamt in daytime, in twilight
or in sleep.

And love shall nourish the virgin land,
and feed the journeying and dreams to be,
and love shall give them breath,

and limbs and heart.

Then towards the journey's end
when time is done and life is all but spent
I'll pray the source of all beginnings
to lead me by the hand,
back to those amber eyes,
perchance to walk the path again.

Migraine Therapy

As in a café I wait
for the hour
to see my therapist
hoping he may find ways
to ease those aches
inside my head,
or maybe
inside my soul,
I know that time,
in due course and
by its own design,
waits for me,
as it does for all,
inexorably to arrive
with little or no commotion
at the end of allotted space,
and completed time.

Now

A potted geranium
the colour of salmon
sits almost still
savouring its own fragrance
listening to an agitated sea
break in waves upon the jetty
beneath a balcony
that watches
the town as it goes by
attending to daily things
under a sky of cloud
that casts a glare
on journeying cars
and people ambling by
in both directions, i.e.
some to the East
some to the West
most not looking up so
missing the seagulls that
after an absence of weeks
return this afternoon
(to my delight)
I wish they'd span my
little patch of sky
all evening and maybe
even stay the night.