

6 January 1986

Dear Dimitris,

Thank you for your charming & interesting letter of 18 December (just reached me after the great Xmas-New-Year pause), with the enclosed Crowing poem. So the Australian crow has got to you, too? They are especially minatory around Brisbane at present; and I once wrote a poem, after my fashion, about that self same call which has been impressing you. I enclose a copy. You will see at once the difference between us as writers of verse -- mine is a light parody of Poe and Wordsworth. My bird, you notice, also shat.

The crows have begun cawing just as I reach this line. Doesn't it always sound as if they mean something, and something not very nice at that? I begin to think of my secret sins---which they have somehow found out, and are broadcasting to the neighbourhood.

Yes, I do remember our times together with nostalgia---but that word comes from nóstos, and I hope you will return here some time. I think you might like it here now, as the weather is better (to my taste) than when you were around. It's hot, ma non troppo, and the swimming is marvellous... though I mostly swim in pools, I'm not a surfer.

I recently finished a piece of research on a theory of errors in fiction, and now that that's over I have some leisure. In fact, I'm having a very good holiday before I have to start worrying about next semester -- a holiday at home, where I can do so many things -- paintings downstairs, observing of planets and Halley's comet (I have seen that, though only in binoculars). I've especially been painting trees -- bottle trees, sweetgums -- and that sharpens your eye enormously to the wonderful structures of trees. I like the orderly ones with upswept branches. Hoop pines give me little raptures.

We had a quiet but happy Xmas, and a celebration of our 21st wedding anniversary on 30th December. Our quirk is never to celebrate New Year -- in fact we usually go to bed specially early on 31st. I don't see the point in celebrating the mere passage of time. Even birthdays I'm not too keen about, for the same reason...

I hope the troubles you hint at are at an end. Really, I wish you all the best for 1986; and may we see you!

I do like your corvine poem -- the metaphor become feather before your eyes.

Yours,