

I first read Constantine Cavafy's Ithaca in the early 1970s as an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota, high on spring, new fields of knowledge, fascinating classes and charismatic professors. It was one of two modern Greek poems that inspired Mythical Journeys, my duo for flute and guitar. Now I have set the text again, in honor of my Russian history professor, Theofanis G. Stavrou, on his retirement. The music is in 6/8 and 9/8, the traditional meters of voyaging. The voyage has been one of adventure, of instruction, and I have entered into ports seen for the first time with much gratitude, much joy.

### *Ithaca*

*When you set out on your journey to Ithaca,  
pray that the road may be long,  
full of adventures, full of knowledge.  
Laestrygonians and Cyclopes,  
angry Poseidon, do not fear them,  
for such things you will never encounter on your way  
if your thought remains lofty, if a noble  
emotion touches your spirit and your body.  
The Laestrygonians and Cyclopes,  
fierce Poseidon you will not encounter,  
if you do not harbor them within your soul,  
if your soul does not raise them up before you.*

*Pray that the road may be long.  
May the summer mornings be many  
when with intense pleasure and joy  
you will enter harbors seen for the first time;  
stop at Phoenician market places,  
and buy good merchandise,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
and pleasurable perfumes of every kind,  
abundant pleasurable perfumes, as many as you can;  
travel to many Egyptian cities  
to learn endlessly from the learned.*

*Always keep Ithaca in your mind.  
Arriving there is your ultimate purpose.  
But do not hurry the journey in the least.  
Better that it last for many years,  
and that finally you anchor at your island old,  
blessed with all that you have gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaca to give you riches.*

*Ithaca gave you the splendid journey.  
Without her you would not have set out.  
She has nothing more to give you.*

*And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.  
Wise as you have become, with so much experience,  
you must have understood already what Ithacas mean.*

Constantine Cavafy; trans. Theofanis G. Stavrou