

Greek predicament drives poetic creativity

'Land that lost its rights' 'Have you seen the Grexit?'

Günter Grass, the German Nobel literature laureate, has written a poem about Greece and its predicament, published in German newspapers on 25 May.

Prof. Lord Desai, chairman of the OMFIF advisory board, has done the same (with apologies to Dr. Seuss).

We publish the verses here, in the hope that these texts may be a useful contribution to the EMU debate.

by

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Europe's shame

By Günter Grass

Locked in chaos, victim of an unjust market . Country that was your cradle. Now far-off land.

We searched for Greece in our souls, and found it there. We find it anew, rusting, sold as scrap.

For this country, we once gave eternal thanks. Now a debtor, arrayed naked on the pillory, suffering before us.

Condemned to poverty. Doomed land, wealth went abroad to beautify museums with the loot you kept.

Uniformed men with arms who violated land and sceptr'd isles. They carried poetry in their knapsacks.

You once saw the colonels as partners and allies. Now they are fallen, abjured, forsaken.

Land that lost its rights. Its belt tightened, tightened anew by the powerful and secure.

Antigone defies you, wearing black. The people whose guest you once were stoop, in mourning shrouds.

All that shines with gold lustre in your vaults, hoarded now, beyond borders, by successors to Croesus.

Drink up, drink up! cry the Commissioners, charmlessly. Socrates, enraged, passes you the cup, full to the brim.

You wished to steal the gods' Olympus. They curse you now in chorus, and you will not prosper.

O Europe! You were invented by Greek minds. Without its spirit, you will grow rotten.

A Euro-poem

By Meghnad Desai

It came upon us I don't know I swear When it did or from where It was hardly a speck But it's made us a wreck O have you seen the Grexit?

There were ten of us hardies But along came the tardies We tied them down with Treaties Bought their bonds like sweeties O have you seen the Grexit?

Happy did we travel They were never any trouble We admired them a lot Till it all went to pot O have you seen the Grexit?

How did they join our club? Why did we them not snub? Their budgets are bloated With debts overloaded O have you seen the Grexit?

They neither work nor pay their due They spend and spend without a clue Why can't they be like us Save and suffer without fuss? O have you seen the Grexit?

And now it's come to this They'll go bust with bliss They've queered our pitch And left us in the ditch O HAVE YOU SEEN THE GREXIT?

Original verse

by Günter Grass

Dem Chaos nah, weil dem Markt nicht gerecht, bist fern Du dem Land, das die Wiege Dir lieb.

Was mit der Seele gesucht, gefunden Dir galt, wird abgetan nun, unter Schrottwert taxiert.

Als Schuldner nackt an den Pranger gestellt, leidet ein Land, dem Dank zu schulden Dir Redensart war.

Zur Armut verurteiltes Land, dessen Reichtum gepflegt Museen schmückt: von Dir gehütete Beute.

Die mit der Waffen Gewalt das inselgesegnete Land heimgesucht, trugen zur Uniform Hölderlin im Tornister.

Kaum noch geduldetes Land, dessen Obristen von Dir einst als Bündnispartner geduldet wurden.

Rechtloses Land, dem der Rechthaber Macht den Gürtel enger und enger schnallt.

Dir trotzend trägt Antigone Schwarz und landesweit kleidet Trauer das Volk, dessen Gast Du gewesen.

Außer Landes jedoch hat dem Krösus verwandtes Gefolge alles, was gülden glänzt gehortet in Deinen Tresoren.

Sauf endlich, sauf! schreien der Kommissare Claqueure, doch zornig gibt Sokrates Dir den Becher randvoll zurück.

Verfluchen im Chor, was eigen Dir ist, werden die Götter, deren Olymp zu enteignen Dein Wille verlangt.

Geistlos verkümmern wirst Du ohne das Land, dessen Geist Dich, Europa, erdachte.