

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/4

### **Poena Damni**

Z213: EXIT

Dimitris Lyacos

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translation: Shorsha Sullivan

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*Review by Irene Koronas*

Lyacos's trilogy, *Poena Damni*; in reverse, *Z213: Exist* is the completion of the trilogy. If the translations of the poems are exact, these poems are light years beyond our contemporary poetics. It reads like Homer, in that it is an epic poem taken from the sea in other words almost forcing a perpetuated history, each poem connected by heritage. The poems connect without a consistent use of punctuation; it all reads like an epic and the epic is intellectual as well as experiential imparting:

"these names and that's how they found me. And as soon as they brought me I stayed for a while and then they took me it was a building of four wards large yards and rooms the rest of the people were there four wards separate not far from the sea. And we would eat together sometimes and in the middle a log with cut branches on top over it an opening for the smoke, and ashes spread out on the floor black stains and ashes. And from the pores in the walls a little water would come and sometimes you could ask go upstairs and visit somebody else and when sometimes in the evening the power was out and we were sitting silent in the dark..."

And these references:

"This is continuity, you travel, perhaps in your mind, a paper world real, God reeling up and down landscapes and buildings, knocks down, opens new roads, doesn't like it, changes again, but there isn't a seam, His world is onefold and you perceive neither seam nor contradiction, continuity only..."

Some of Lyacos's poems carry cultural inclinations:

"The slow bells from the church which must be near me I stopped for a while and waited and now they were chiming again. And here where I sat, like stains below the slabs as if blooded. Who was there ringing, guesses confused not made clear, who was there ringing the bell waves going down the dome, the echo of an ocean that licks on it and drips here. And the flashes through the window from the one to the other like a searchlight turning around seeking me out. Here, in a flooded

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pit full of bodies, branches that cover and float leaves that float on faces unknown funerary gifts on the side, phrases by him and the Writ mixed on this page, and further down sea tombs and then something between the frozen palms..."

With the exception of a few poems the poems read like quick fiction enjambed with little punctuation, "Or other marks, or his own parts that you were reading"

The poets' contemporary writing position is fused with or steeped in oral tradition and tradition is not a dirty word it is a knowing or an unknowing, a passing on, where influences come, even when those influences may come from a lending, or continental cafes, Lyacos is a master craftsman steering his way through tons of immediate information or any candle lit for the dead or the coffee house philosophers or mothers' dire warnings, "This too for a pillow, on top of the bible." or "Remember to write as much as I can. As much as I remember. So that I can remember."

I love this book, the bringing together, the collage of differences, the intense focus, the separation of pages, "And then stone yellow gleam the stones that light up, matches flare again in the room." Every page inspires a conundrum of thoughts.

Get this book for all your up-to-date-friends who read experimental poetry or read the master writers. I strongly recommend!

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