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## MYSTIC PASSAGE

BY MARIA LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

*Introduction by Apostolos Athanassakis*

Readers of Hellenic poetry will be taken to new unfamiliar groves of painful delight, new meadows of ecstatic liminality by the intense, at times unbridled lyricism of Maria Lampadaridou-Pothou's poetry. The title of the present collection, *Mystic Passage*, may, to some people at least, conjure up images of the contemplative, the serenely transcendent. This poetess, however, is made of unremitting action. Even when she weeps, she must dance, and dance her way to God.

Winter will find me naked

In a dilapidated room

With time welling up through the holes of the floors

Winter will find me stirring the ashes of my poetry

(#1)

Who is speaking? Is it the poet meditating on death? Is the voice that of a pagan, an Old Testament prophet, a Christian, a woman of our time? All of these, it seems, all of these in one. This quality of oneness is pervasive, not only because all things are connected, but also because they are there for all. I, poetry, and the self are all one. Thus even when the self appears it is almost without failure in a communal, sacrificial context:

I raise my poetry before

Garment stained with blood

I burn it to warm myself.

Maria Lampadaridou-Pothou's world is not one of the spirit, not in the English sense of the word. For her it is her soul that struggles to "loose the bonds" (#2), a soul that is always rooted in the earth, even after it goes beyond the "mystic passage." This is a soul that smells and seeks freedom from a body that carries with it the "odor of birth-blood."

## ΜΥΣΤΙΚΟ ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ

Μαρία Λαμπαδαρίδου-Πόθου

### ΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ ΠΡΩΤΟ

#### Η Αγωνία της Ύλης

Ο χειμώνας θα με βρει γυμνή  
 Σ' ένα ερειπωμένο δωμάτιο  
 Με το χρόνο ν' αναβλύζει από τα τρύπα πατώματα  
 Ο χειμώνας θα με βρει να σκαλίζω τη στάχτη από  
 την ποιησή μου  
 Μιά φούχτα λέξεις όπως άστρο ή αίμα  
 Όπως οδοιπορώ ή όρκος—όπως  
 “Αι ψυχαί οσμώνται”  
 Τις καίω να ζεσταθώ.

\*

Ο χειμώνας θα με βρεί ξυπόλητη να οδοιπορώ  
 Άνω και κάτω την άβυσσο μία  
 Το χώμα μαλακό βυθίζομαι  
 Λάσπη από άστρα παλιά  
 Θα περάσω, λέω  
 Στα χέρια μου κλώνοι του γαλάζιου  
 Και το δέντρο ιερουργεί το ασήμι της ερημιάς  
 Οσμή του απέραντου κενού  
 Η πονεμένη μου ύλη που κατοίκησα

Ορθώνω την ποιησή μου ενάντια  
 “Ίμάτιον ρεραντισμένον αίματι”  
 Το καίω να ζεσταθώ.

\*

## MYSTIC PASSAGE

BY MARIA LAMPADARIDOU-POTHOU

*Translated by Theony Condos*

### FIRST PASSAGE

#### The Agony of Matter

Winter will find me naked  
 In a dilapidated room  
 With time welling up through the holes of the  
 floors  
 Winter will find me stirring the ashes of my poetry  
 A handful of words—like *star* or *blood*  
 Like *I wander* or *oath*—like  
*Souls can smell*—  
 I burn them to warm myself.

\*

Winter will find me barefoot wandering  
 Up and down the one and only abyss  
 The soil is soft I sink into it  
 Mud from ancient stars  
 “I will get through,” I say  
 Branches of the azure in my hands  
 And the tree officiates over the silver of the desert  
 Odor of the boundless void  
 My pained matter that I inhabited.

I raise my poetry before  
*Garment stained with blood*  
 I burn it to warm myself.

\*