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Poetry Salon

April 11, 2023

Dame la Mano

Dame la mano y danzaremos;

dame la mano y me amarás.

Como una sola flor seremos,

como una flor, y nada más...

El mismo verso cantaremos,

al mismo paso bailarás.

Como una espiga ondularemos,

como una espiga, y nada más.

Te llama Rosa y yo Esperanza:

pero tu nombre olvidarás,

porque seremos una danza

en la colina, y nada más...

Give Me Your Hand

Give me your hand and give me your love,

give me your hand and dance with me.

A single flower, and nothing more,

a single flower is all we'll be.

Keeping time in the dance together,

you'll be singing the song with me.

Grass in the wind, and nothing more,
grass in the wind is all we'll be.

I'm called Hope and you're called Rose:
but losing our names we'll both go free,
a dance on the hills, and nothing more,
a dance on the hills is all we'll be.

The Stranger

She speaks in her way of her savage seas
With unknown algae and unknown sands;
She prays to a formless, weightless God,
Aged, as if dying.

In our garden now so strange,

She has planted cactus and alien grass.

The desert zephyr fills her with its breath

And she has loved with a fierce, white passion

She never speaks of, for if she were to tell

It would be like the face of unknown stars.

Among us she may live for eighty years,

Yet always as if newly come,

Speaking a tongue that plants and whines

Only by tiny creatures understood.

And she will die here in our midst

One night of utmost suffering,
With only her fate as a pillow,
And death, silent and strange.

Anniversary

And we go on and on,
Neither sleeping nor awake,
Towards the meeting, unaware
That we are already there.
That the silence is perfect,
And that the flesh is gone.
The call still is not heard
Nor does the Caller reveal his face.
But perhaps this might be
Oh, my love, the gift
Of the eternal Face without gestures
And of the kingdom without form!

Decalogue of the Artist

I. You shall love beauty, which is the shadow of God over the Universe.

II. There is no godless art. Although you love not the Creator, you shall bear witness to Him creating His likeness.

III. You shall create beauty not to excite the senses but to give sustenance to the soul.

IV. You shall never use beauty as a pretext for luxury and vanity but as a spiritual devotion.

V. You shall not seek beauty at carnival or fair or offer your work there, for beauty is virginal and is not to be found at carnival or fair.

VI. Beauty shall rise from your heart in song, and you shall be the first to be purified.

VII. The beauty you create shall be known as compassion and shall console the hearts of men.

VIII. You shall bring forth your work as a mother brings forth her child: out of the blood of your heart.

IX. Beauty shall not be an opiate that puts you to sleep but a strong wine that fires you to action, for if you fail to be a true man or a true woman, you will fail to be an artist.

X. Each act of creation shall leave you humble, for it is never as great as your dream and always inferior to that most marvelous dream of God which is Nature.

The Alpaca

She is harnessed for a long journey; on her back she carries an entire store of wool. She walks without rest, and sees with eyes full of strangeness. The wool merchant has forgotten to come to get her, and she is ready. In this world, nothing comes better equipped than the alpaca; one is more burdened with rags than the next. Her sky-high softness is such that if a newborn is placed on her back, he

will not feel a bone of the animal.

The weather is very hot. Today, large scissors that will cut and cut represent mercy for the alpaca.

When something is lost in the park, to whom do we look but this ever-prepared beast which seems to secretly carry all things?

And when children think about the objects they have lost—dolls, teddy bears, flying rats, trees with seven voices (they can be hidden in only one place)—they remember the alpaca, their infinitely prepared companion.

But look at those eyes, those astonished eyes without knowledge; they only ask why she has been harnessed for such a long trip and why no one comes to relieve her.

The high plateau is to blame for this tragedy—the mother alpaca incessantly stares at it. The mountain was also casting off burdens, and so its summit became clear, and filled the eyes of the mother alpaca.

She was taken down from the plateau and situated near a nonsensical horizon, and when she turns her neck, she continues looking for the older alpaca, for the one who sheds a pack on high, and returns to the sun's radiance.

"What have you and I done to our Andean cordillera?" I ask the alpaca.

The Song You Loved

Life of my life, what you loved I sing.
If you're near, if you're listening,
think of me now in the evening:
shadow in shadows, hear me sing.

Life of my life, I can't be still.
What is a story we never tell?
How can you find me unless I call?

Life of my life, I haven't changed,
not turned aside and not estranged.
Come to me as the shadows grow long,
come, life of my life, if you know the song
you used to know, if you know my name.
I and the song are still the same.

Beyond time or place I keep the faith.
Follow a path or follow no path,
never fearing the night, the wind,
call to me, come to me, now at the end,
walk with me, life of my life, my friend.

[*Analysis by Margot Arce de Vazquez:* "At times, there is almost an excessive idealization of the absent one in these verses; it is almost deification. The phantom presence of Juan Miguel plunges

her into moments of agony that exhaust her; it impels her to break the barriers, to do violence to fate.”]

Song of Death

Old Woman Census-taker,
Death the Trickster,
when you're going along,
don't you meet my baby.

Sniffing at newborns,
smelling for the milk,
find salt, find cornmeal,
don't find my milk.

Anti-Mother of the world,
People-Collector —
on the beaches and byways,
don't meet that child.

The name he was baptized,
that flower he grows with,
forget it, Rememberer.
Lose it, Death.

Let wind and salt and sand
drive you crazy, mix you up
so you can't tell
East from West,

or mother from child,
like fish in the sea.
And on the day, at the hour,
find only me.

In Praise of Salt

The salt, in great mounds on the beach of Eve in the year 3,000,
seems squared off in front and squared off in the back,
holding no warm dove nor living rose in its hand,
and the salt of the rock salt that gleams,
even more than the seal on its peak,
capable of turning everything into a jewel.

The salt that bleaches the seagull's belly
and crackles in the penguin's breast,

and that in mother-of-pearl plays
with colors that are not its own.

The salt is absolute and pure as death.

The salt nailed through the hearts of good people,
even the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, keeps them

from dissolving in piety.

Children's Hair

Soft hair, hair that is all the softness of the world:
without you lying in my lap, what silk would I enjoy?
sweet the passing day because of that silk, sweet the sustenance,
sweet the ancient sadness, at least for the few hours it slips between my hands.

Touch it to my cheek;
wind it in my lap like flowers;
let me braid it, to soften my pain,
to magnify the light with it, now that it is dying.

When I am with God someday, I do not want an angel's wing
to cool my heart's bruises;
I want, stretches against the sky, the hair of the children I loved,
to let it blow in the wind against my face eternally!

Poems of the Mothers

I was kissed, and I am othered: another,
because of the pulse that echoes the pulse in my veins;
another, because of the breath I feel within my breath.

My belly, now, is as noble as my heart ...

And now I feel in my own breathing an exhalation of flowers:
all because of the one who rests inside me gently,
as the dew on the grass!

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ART

I. Beauty

A song is the wound of love that things open in us.
Coarse man, the only thing that arouses you is the woman's womb,
a mass of female flesh. But our disquiet is continuous;
we feel the thrust of all the beauty of the world,
because the starry night was for us a love as sharp as carnal love.

A song is a response we offer to the beauty of the world.
And we offer that response with an uncontainable tremor,
just as you tremble before a naked breast.

And because we return, in blood, this caress of Beaut,
and because we respond to Beauty's infinite calling through the paths,
we walk more timorously, more reviled than you:
we, the pure.

The Sunflower

"I know for certain it is he, the one up above. But the little plants don't see him,
and they believe it is I who warms them
and licks them all afternoon."

I – whose stem is hard, as you can see – I never answer them,
not even with a nod of the head.

It's no deception on my part, but I let them deceive themselves,
because they will never reach him, who would burn them in any case.
As for me, on the other hand, they hardly even reach my feet.

It's a form of great servitude to be the sun.
This turning towards the East and towards the sunset,
constantly attending to his position,
tires my neck, which is not so limber.

And they, the little grasses, they continue to sing down there:
"The sun has four hundred golden leaves,
a great dark disc at the center, and a sovereign stem."

I hear them, but I offer them no confirming sign with my head.
I keep quiet, but as for me. I know for certain it is he, the one up above.

Bread

Vice of habituation. Wonder of childhood,
magical feeling of raw materials and elements:
flour, salt, oil, water, fire.
Moments of pure vision, pure hearing, pure touch.

Consciousness of life at one moment.
All the memories revolve around bread.

It carries an intense sense of life, and also,
though I don't know what internal association,

an equally strong sense of death.
The thought of life turns banal from the moment

it isn't blended with the thought of death.

The pure essentials are superficial giants or little pagans.

The pagan paid attention to both.

What You Loved

Life of my life, what you loved I sing.

If you're near, if you're listening,

think of me now in the evening:

shadow in shadows, hear me sing.

Life of my life, I can't be still.

What is a story we never tell?

How can you find me unless I call?

Life of my life, I haven't changed,

not turned aside and not estranged.

Come to me as the shadows grow long,

come, life of my life, if you know the song
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