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"I'LL DANCE FOR YOU IN WORDS..."

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Halina Poświatowska in one of her last photographs

Halina Poświatowska is one of the most outstanding postwar Polish poets of love and death. She is also one of the first Polish women poets who dared to voice her enormous hunger for life, her erotic desires and her passion for freedom of self-realization. Poświatowska's poems evoke her encounters with death, the tragic loss of her husband, her struggle to pursue her interests, and her craving for love. Her poems are youthful, sensual, and delicate—like the poet herself, who died at the age of 32 of congenital heart disease, remaining forever young, lively, expressive, and springlike in the memory of her friends, critics and readers.

The key to Poświatowska's poetic vision and her aesthetic creation is the mythos of the Great Goddess and her consort, the Dying/Reviving God. The lyrical subject of Poświatowska's poetry is the poet herself, who embodies the figure of Luna in manifold configurations by intertwining the ancient archetypal figures with her personal biography and weaving stories of the great heroines of history and literature so that her mythos develops into a palimpsest. The figures are layered one upon another as, for instance, Gaea/Nekhbet/ Mary, Aphrodite/ Eve/ Madonna, Isis/ Demeter/ Cleopatra, Juliet/ Desdemona/ Isolde, Columbine/ Ophelia/ Carmen, or Psyche/ Hypatia/ Héloïse. Moreover, they model the lifelong quest for individuation or self-formation and project the poet's inner world, the inward image of her psyche (Neumann 89).

Poświatowska writes from the inside, from the spiritual space within herself. She finds the roots of her poetry, her own music, within herself. From the inner voice, hues and fragrance come, offering the riches of her poetic imagination. In her writing, as in dance, which constitutes a metaphor for her poetic creation, Poświatowska unveils her true inner self, her cravings and emotions, chanting her own tunes, prayers and incantations created from her heart's beat, her blood's rippling, her irregular breathing and her inner body, which turns into a musical instrument that sings of love.

Love, the greatest force, defined by Poświatowska as life, possesses a sacred aspect for the poet. Above all, love saves one from death. For the poet, love is like a flame, it nourishes spiritually, destroys, transforms and creates again. Love is the most valuable gift that one being can offer another because it evokes feelings of need, warmth, intimacy, intensity and rapture. In the dance of love, in its symphonic movements, a man and a woman become the Sacred One, the poet reveals: "my fingers entwined into the flesh of his palm/ my lungs singing with his breath" (*Oda* 59), "you are my hand/ I am your hair" (*Jeszcze* 134).

Song, music and dance are the expressions of Poświatowska's aesthetics. Music is the poet's soul and song is her body, the Logos made flesh. In her quest for magical and numinous power, the poet/ dancing goddess often proves her existence through dance, a ritual that has the power to heal one's soul and body. Dance, the symbol of *elan vital* and *panta, rhei* is a flirtation, an invitation to love leading to the knowledge of the other and the world. The poet, who favors a kinetic philosophy of cognition, promises: "you will gather your infinite knowledge/ closed in the rhythm of my dancing blood" (Hymn 68); and she warns: "if my lips are not light/ then you will live all of your days/ with your closed eyes" (*Oda* 54). In another poem, the dancing goddess assures: "my love/ I'll dance for you/ in words and among butterflies" (*Wiersze* 372-373). The dancing goddess glides in the joy of the moment: "on the tips of her toes her body dances" (*Dzien* 8), "her earrings are dancing" while "her bracelets sing softly" (*Jeszcze* 24), "red blood dances in the blue alleys of her body" (*Oda* 11). And she affirms firmly: "I want you/ and that is a dance/ in the blind alleys of my veins" (*Oda* 44). The desire itself means a movement toward knowledge, as the poet claims in another poem: "desire exists to know" (*Jeszcze* 214).

In the poem *Mokra Ofelia*, the Shakespearean figure is portrayed as a dancing Ancient Bacchante. Ophelia/Isis dances wildly, wearing the great moon. She performs her dance of love "once golden once saint/ she danced" (*Jeszcze* 26), or dance of adoration known as "alarippu" (bowers 48). Flowering out, she unfolds spiritually, like a rose worshipping her god in the madness of her creative powers.

The attributes of the Great Goddess constitute an image of the moon, a symbol of her luminous spirit. The Goddess has lips carved from the waxing moon (*Jeszcze* 122), her face turns into a waning moon (*Oda* 26), on her head she wears the great moon (*Jeszcze* 26), and she shines with the green moon (*Hymn* 28). Moreover, her words, her love and her yearning represent a desire that never dies and is renewed like the moon: "quick stream carries my words/ carries my words/ and all of them tell about my love/ my yearning/ my desire renewed like the moon" (*Jeszcze* 100).

In her dance of love, the poet undertakes a metaphysical journey within herself and into the "heart of darkness." Growing intellectually and spiritually, the poet conquers herself and turns into the Solar/Lunar God or the Dying/Reviving God who searches for the golden bough or the fern blossom, the gifts of omniscience and symbols of poetic wisdom and creativity (Bodkin 131-136, Greimas 115).

The perilous journey through her contemplation, studies and imagination leads the poet to the act of writing, the magical act of leaving a trace. The verses anchored in her psyche are hewn from her inner being. Poświatowska "writes herself" (Cixous and Clement 97) using the "script" of her own body, defined by Marija Gimbutas as "the language of the goddess" (3-64). Poświatowska's body becomes her logos, the language of her poetic creation. In her sacred dance of life, in her writing, the dancing goddess/poet unveils her body, revealing her true inner self, presenting herself naked, making herself heard.

The poet describes her emotions, cravings and experiences by speaking about her breasts, lips, hands, eyes, heart, belly and hair, the "primordial script," the language of her poetry. Her body is the instrument of her being, her existence, because she has nothing but her fragile, delicate body: "I only have my body/ and my body is soft/ and my hair is soft/ and my lips" (*Jeszcze* 147). Like Claudel, who carved women's bodies, especially hands, in marble with magnificent sensual detail, so Poświatowska creates beautiful, moving images with words, turning hands, arms and fingers into sunbeams, the wings of birds and tree roots. The lyrical subject/ the poet metamorphoses into Daphne/ Christ by presenting her vascular system as branches and roots, her inner self turning into a tree, the symbol of knowledge of good and evil, the metaphor of her poetics and her poetical tradition. Her ill heart, the light of her existence, becomes in metaphor an imprisoned, captured bird that is unable to fly, it cannot lead its life to the fullest possibilities, confined by its affliction.

In the sacred dance of love the dancing goddess/ the poet "writes herself," unveiling her body, casting rainbow veils of eternity: gold/ green, red/ gold, green/ red, violet/ gold, silver/ red, white/ green and green/ brown. The colors in double and triple configurations carry symbolic meaning. They reecho the different sounds of musical instruments. For instance, green and yellow invoke the music of violins, violoncellos and bass; red and gold recall horns and trombones; while violet suggests the music of flutes, clarinets and oboes (Gide 51-53). In addition, the colors evoke the fragrance of grass, trees, flowers, moss, wild strawberries and raspberries, resonating Baudelaire's "Correspondences" (20). The connections between colors, sounds and fragrance create a synaesthesia or a sense of refinement, complexity and harmony of all the sensations precious to the poet, who cherished life in its manifold aspects.

In writing as in dance, the poet creates her self-portrait while seeking herself. Writing signifies for her the eternal presence, the eternal dance of love with the readers of her poetry. Poświatowska's poems become paintings/ sculptures, evoking works of Frida Kahlo (Zamora 10, 77, 92, 112) and Camille Claudel (Paris 101, 109, 123). Poświatowska, like Kahlo and Claudel, depicts a woman's body in primordial archetypes, the symbols of the primordial unconscious, creating images prevailing in every culture throughout the millennia as one aspect of the great Moon Goddess, or the Eternal Feminine.

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