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The Sound of the Earth

Ioana Cosma

From the blue bellies of ocean floors
and vanilla lagoons of visceral calling
there comes a sound that sails through
the living like a subtle graze of the lover's hand.

It traverses heart-shaped wings and Elfin ears
the first entry of the hoe, with a crunch, in the
knotty earth, by the eternal man who hears
his wife's prayers every night and the smell of herbs.

From the shuffling of semantic sands that become
honey, the sound of crystal glassworks like
a memory of stars being born, kissing the sea
upon the encounter between the eye and the eve.

The pounding feet of elephants echo the throbbing lava
and magma dressing the earth like a god that's to be married
to the bluebells and gardens of Flora, to the
swallows that fall in the zenith of muted feasts.

My tears they ran with the force of a mountain river
in spring, a deluge to take to the sea my small and frail home
just like the clouds gather every time they are called
by the trumpets of more mirror and smoke.

Starry Night

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Enfolded, entombed and enamored
night speaking night, day only speaks,
the starry roof of Seraglio where harem girls
tie their hearts to the Oriental moons.

She emerged beautiful and dazzled from this
canvas, the Shekinah like an icon that shines
drawing to its gold all the small syllables
that make up a house or a world.

She was night's first-born to be followed
by the long-lashes of the lily brothers
who painted night into moonlight and stars
into summertime sands like wine.

Then came the builders of the cloud castles
whose heads touch the treetops supporting
the heavens their long arms embracing the
sun their dark hair the agonistic dusk.

The tiniest of all, a seraph in spirit and gaze,
came with a hundred candles to light the
mysteries of slow dance and tempestuous
auditions: the night turned into day.

The night folk always search for each other
but their hands never meet, their distance and longing
is like galaxies that subside in the aftermath
of big bangs and collisions – as long as the night speaks night.

“Suitable Symmetry”. Correspondence, Alliteration and Simile(tude)

“In faith/My sight is sound”

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At first, my affinity with Robert Duncan’s poetry was related to the recognition of a similar indebtedness and admiration for Modernist poetry, its symbolism and play of correspondences. The more I advanced in my understanding of Robert Duncan’s poetry, I realized there are several other facets of our poetry that belong to a world of symmetrical dialogue: the correspondence between cosmology and ecology, the musicality and importance of sound in our poems (stemming from a rhythm that comes from the combination of cadence and a sort of majestic tone combined with the casualness of today’s discourse) alliteration, in my case what I’ve noticed as the use of (unintentional) asymmetrical rhyme, an overall irregularity in organicity; gnostic and theosophic influences; not in the least, the presence of strong and defamiliarizing artistic imagery.

To begin with, my poems are also indebted to Modernist (symbolist poetics) in the vein of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine. But, like Duncan, I play heavily on religious motifs and themes to de-center them, to awaken the “dead metaphors”, to give them new meanings. For instance, in my poem, “The Church of Glass”, I use the metaphor of salt which is positively connoted in the Bible to hint at a darker aspect of it: “the lot of the children of salt”. This is precisely what Duncan does in “After a Passage in Baudelaire”: “what light is port-holes”- by pairing the positive metaphor of light with the negativity of the concave space of port-holes.

Secondly, there is a very interesting correspondence between ecology and cosmology which relates to the Gnostic tradition, the Zohar and other less known esoteric texts. These references are conspicuous in the following stanza from *The Sound of the Earth*:

The pounding feet of elephants echo the throbbing lava
and magma dressing the earth like a god that's to be married
to the bluebells and gardens of Flora, to the
swallows that fall in the zenith of muted feasts.

Thirdly, there is a great musicality in Robert Duncan's poetry and I like to think there is in mine too: it has something of a river, at times tempestuous, at times sedate, it "flows" freely and irregularly, coming from an (organ)ic well that gives the poems unity in their difference. Of course, the rhythms in our poems are not the same and just like Robert Duncan's musicality is not the same as Baudelaire. But we both seem interested to preserve this legacy of sound which has become less relevant in postmodernism.

Therefore, one of the aims of my poetry is to keep alive this tradition of beauty, knowledge and poetic skill that Robert Duncan was interested in preserving too and managed to do so admirably.