

Daily Meditation 07/14/2023

M.C. Richards, Centering, and Fusion of the Opposites

Good morning.

I'm sharing with you this morning some of the story of M.C. Richards, who did the painting behind me here.

But she calls, and writes into it, "Birthing a New Cosmos" ...birthing a new cosmos. I see three seeds there, breaking open.

I alluded to the celebration we had, the 25th anniversary of her book, Centering. And one ritual we did was the ritual of pelting with flowers, which is a Native American ritual, where you pelt the leader with flowers. Everyone has a flower in their hand, or green leaves. And you want to circle and throw them at one another because they fall on the floor and you pick them up and throw them at someone else. It's a wonderful practice, highly recommended. And at the end, if you're honoring someone special, like they were honoring M.C., then at the very end there's a big surprise and people come up with two baskets of flowers to dump on the leader.

And the philosophy behind it is that we all need to be pelted with beauty; that's what life is about, but leaders especially need to be dumped on with beauty. And we did this to M.C. and totally surprised her.

So she wrote a poem about it: "The Power of Love Received in the Body."

*This was the Festival!
How we stood and faced one another
and we took hands
and the love came.
And all the flowers swarmed
about our heads:
deep deep the sting goes.*

*Let love be welcomed the moment it seeks us.
In my flesh I feel it still,
the surprise and awe, the joy,
warming and swelling in my limbs and belly,
O miraculous conception
O angels tumbling through
the air!
How real it is, the Christscript branded across our lips
that we shall love one another—as if the world
could ever be the same.
Over the edge, into the well, the abyss,
idiotically amorous,*

nibbling at the green fronds and flinging them!

*Pelted by beauty and peace,
a cellular reordering, each tiny vessel
lovecrazed, opening.
The fountain erupts, cascades,
and we wish to die in it, be other,
be one in an alchemy of eros,
that lad with the arrows who shoots blind.*

*Power of love is received in the body,
our first and primal home.
Not enough is made of incarnation,
the mysteries of birth.
The embodiments here like this
in one another.
Your eyes and my arched back,
our fingers softening.*

*Of course now we dance differently,
bowing and dipping
and turning to the delicate drum.
Of course we live now
in the dread of our disguises.
We know our body and our food,
we know our need and carry our begging bowl.*

*Now here with courage,
our own love dies,
the tender shouts of readiness.
Yes, I will, I do. Yes.
Let us receive into our bodies,
the divine pulse anointed with petals,
awake and go forth, changed.
Now truly every God's fool's
lilies of the field.*

*No thought for the morrow,
feeding strangers and comforting the fearful,
doing good to those who hurt us,
carrying blossoms to beat beauty
and peace into our bones.*

And she writes:

This poem was written on October 13, 1989, after a ceremony in which this ritual was performed. At its climax a huge basket of flowers was poured over the poet's head, engulfing her in that multifloreate rapture. It was she who was being celebrated in this ritual. And it was she therefore who had to be most deeply pelted, nay, pulverized by beauty. It was a magical ecstasy, moving as a poem sings through the body into a new behavior.

Thank you, M.C.

You'll find this poem in her wonderful collection, *Imagine Inventing Yellow: New and Selected Poems by M.C. Richards*. And here is a picture of her with flowers [on the back cover].

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.