

August 2, 2014

Letter 4: Dirty Love

Dear D.Q.,

This morning I heard the beginning lines to a poem that once, years ago, touched my soul, they are:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

This is one of our most famous poems by one of our most famous poets, *Song of Myself*, by Walt Whitman. He wrote it originally in the mid 19th century, but changed it again and again. This version is from 1892.

I love these lines. We are the same. We are everyone. And we are for everyone.

He writes again and again about this universality, with depth and humor. He says, later in the poem, while speaking to his soul—in a nearly erotic tone—

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke-weed.

The *kelson* here is the center part of a boat, that directs it under water, gives it direction. This is after your time, as are most of my references. Nevertheless, this is timeless—maybe that means forward and back.

It is about love. Love is what governs us, what makes us transcendent and what dirties our hands. He goes way up into the sky and way down into the earth.

I thought of you when hearing this poem again after so long. I thought of you because of your love. Your life was ruled by your love for Dulcenea. Your sense of right and wrong was unequivocal, so long as the guiding light of your love shone ahead. But you also felt the sameness amongst people—you had boundless compassion for the fallen knight, innkeeper, merchant or slave. Yours was a deep knowledge and understanding of your path with the *kelson of the creation*, love.

I am in love. I am in love with a man for the first time in a long time. I look into his eyes and I forget my words. I lay in his arms

and I want only for them to wrap me entirely. I hear his voice and feel its tone resonate through the cage of my heart. I want to exalt him the way you do Dulcenea. I want for his happiness. And when I feel into my love for him, that is all I want for, his happiness. I want to believe in this kind of love: the kind without fear, without doubt, with kindness and oneness and solidarity.

For you, love makes the world go round. (You know the world goes around, right? That was before your time...I think...finally). Love is the fuel in the engine of the Knight of the Sorrowful Face. Is that the same for the artist? For me? Is that enough? Or, if I go into it, will I find out I am asking the wrong questions entirely—that it is beyond enough, it is abundant and plentiful and there need not be any other reason to live. I will make work hoping to understand the nature of love. Will I?

All the sages say this is it. L O V E. Whitman even. And if love isn't the target we are aiming for, are we misguided?

Yours truly,

Cara