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POEMS OF LOVE

Viviana Hall
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BOOK REVIEW

A collection offers English and Spanish love poems that explore nature.

This volume opens with both English and Spanish versions of Walt Whitman's "Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd." Hall then segues into bilingual poems about absence, be it in the form of love for a stranger or a country no one has visited. "Summer" describes an intimate encounter in the hottest of seasons, while "Down River" traces the speaker's nature walk as she reminisces about her lover: "Every day at dawn, / I recover in my arms / the original caresses when / our bodies rediscovered one another." "Poem of Love" details how the whole world and even the stars seem to worship the speaker's beloved. She considers the power the moon has over lovers in "You Stole the Moon From Me" and mourns the dual losses of a birch tree and a partner in "Farewell." In "Anticipation," she imagines a future life, full of family, food, and laughter, with her love interest. "Love in the Time of Coronavirus" wonders about what humanity has learned, if anything, from the Covid-19 pandemic. The poet concludes with "That Man," which evokes spiritual, if not blatantly biblical, imagery as it imagines a deity walking along the ocean's shore, "deciphering the human enigma." Hall has mastered brevity; as Whitman himself might say, her poems contain multitudes even when they span as few as seven lines. Her poems drip with desire in verses like "To voice your name, / my lips hunger, and / savor every syllable until I've said it." Her descriptions of the physical world are vivid and entice the senses, as when she writes of a garden where "white flowers perfume the air, / hummingbirds nibble nectar" and recalls "the heart of a rose beating in / the palm of my hand." Her translations are not only grammatically accurate, but also aptly convey deep emotions in both English and Spanish. If there is a flaw in this collection, it is that some of the poems could have been further fleshed out; the author often leaves readers wanting more.

A masterful volume of poems that captures the sensuality of love in two languages.

(dedication, index)

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