

Rev. Jan 14, 74

## TORERO

Savage ~~Incarnadine~~ dawn came before Santos slept.

Day of the corrida!

A dark mountain sprouting red and yellow flowers, and  
Reverberating thunder waited behind his lids. He must  
Strike lightning into a certain crater between  
The ridges before thunder passed him through.

Early to the ritual of preparation, steeped in the vow  
To avenge his brother Miguel. Early and long bent before  
The Virgin. Hot laughter with his comrades, fear encased  
In embroidery, superstition buried in colors of scorn.  
He had even looked at his bulls and learned  
One was kin to the hooking, horn-wise  
Router of Miguel's soul with splintered bayonet.

Last notes of La Virgen de la Macarena flared out of trumpets,  
Eddied into his heated head, followed by shrill corkscrews  
Pulling the cuadrillas into the circle monster,  
Into its round eyes. A thousand prisms on his shoulders  
Ignited. ~~Something~~ <sup>high</sup> breeze, perhaps, pitched to the cornets,  
~~Missed~~ <sup>He heard</sup> his name through clamped jaws.

The two flashing semaphores flanking him  
Were silent, fierce-smiling their aficionado faces.  
His name wound back in the bell of a horn or the wind's mouth.

The musicians played with too much pathos <sup>at times</sup> ~~today~~.

It was better when they blasted, ponderous & bawdy,  
Like pompous heralds of Caesar.

"Dios, we have a gale," growled an assistant,

"We ~~will~~ have to drown the capes!"

"Please, Santos, do not work so close,"

His banderillero pleaded, "do not <sup>cover your belly with</sup> get bulls' blood

On your ~~belly~~. It is enough you are here."

Layers of eyes probed Santos's pores. "They must be given  
Their money's worth today," he answered.

<sup>core admitted</sup> His ~~hearing stopped~~ <sup>blocked the</sup> ~~oles~~, <sup>shut out</sup> ~~hoofs~~ <sup>turned off</sup>

Pulverizing sand, sounds of the watered cape.

His bull was ~~good~~, a giant, an armed freight train.

Santos heard only wind instruments, then the racking thrust

Of his will transmitting <sup>opening</sup> care across the ring,

Into the pic, <sup>entering</sup> ~~finally~~ the God-lonely bugle

Retiring the picadors, playing the man-animal <sup>mean</sup>

Of all who ever lived awhile in the center <sup>of the centrifuge</sup>

He placed his own banderillas, planted them close,

Claimed only shallow blood & flesh enough to hold.

<sup>Cork pair blossomed in thunder, Clung to the windy ridge</sup>  
The centrifuge roared, the pitch climbed.

He took the sword & muleta, <sup>for</sup> A pase de la muerte,

<sup>Upon</sup> The last act ~~began~~, the faena.

Wind snatched the cardinal cloth, exposed his hiding.

But this toro promised greatness. Waited. Shared.

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But this toro promised greatness. Waited. Shared.  
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 Of ~~corise wing~~, silver pivot, <sup>block</sup> ~~brown~~ muscle, <sup>causing using</sup> turning,  
 Winding. The wind held its breath, gasped  
 Short gusts between each series. Again  
 Santos heard his name. The brute smeared by,  
 Redding his spangles, honing his senses on horn,  
 Stench, bone-rattling sideswipe.  
 And the bovine voice of another avenger.  
 For seven years of bulls only Santos spoke, his fluent muleta  
 Commanding the charges, punishing the pale-hearted,  
<sup>insulting</sup> ~~Persuading~~ the valiant ones of ~~their chances~~  
 To paint their points. Telling them when/to bow their heads  
 And offer the benediction spot. Veronicas ago  
 Santos would have laughed. Or branded it a trick  
 Of weariness or aire. Did Miguel's bull  
 Call his name? Does the final Toro tell <sup>it</sup> ~~himself~~?

He spat dust out of his mouth. He must not  
 Succumb to overawe of the toro de bandera <sup>on worthy morning</sup>  
 Every true bullfighter bred in his hopes, measuring ~~the man~~,  
 His courage ~~and~~, his art, measuring his own rage <sup>a man</sup>  
 To the end. The matador could <sup>not</sup> ~~not~~ do less.

Nostrils and eyes streaming grit, Santos sculpted  
 The short cape, made it vault, caress, made it flow.  
 Coca-Cola signs shredded off arena walls. Santos defied  
 The blowing, the brass song in his brain.  
 Perfect parones, spinning, People-thunder. Pase de pecho,

Perfect. Bull dancer and minotaur from Greek tapestries.  
 Time raced, stumbled, coiled. Santos sighted down his sword:  
 A bull to take recibiendo—ultimate tribute and risk—  
 Waiting like a figurine, committed to that stand, waiting  
 For the deified charge to sink the espada,  
 Holding down the <sup>block</sup> triangle mass with serge on a stick,  
 Leading the gross headdress past his sledging chest,  
 Trying to remember the kill must be for Miguel.  
 The cloth swung forward, beckoned.  
 The bull came. Santos leaned ~~in~~ over the horn with a name cry,  
 Rescued his lungs by a sequin. Perfect execution except  
 Bone and steel collided. <sup>with bone,</sup> The blade bent and sprang  
 Out of its hot sheath, out of crazed thunder. The bull stood.  
 Santos ~~refused to~~ <sup>cess of</sup> heed his wrist, <sup>hundreds of</sup> advice to descabello,  
 Retrieved his sword, cursing.  
 The centrifuge ~~screamed~~ <sup>whirled</sup> and silenced unheard; the air churned  
 Rabioso. The bull turned toward his voice, "Come Diablo,  
 We must finish as we began." Santos made himself calm  
 In his bowl of sweat and whiplash chill. "Come, Diablo!" <sup>He created a new</sup>  
 A bugle in his head, an aviso, <sup>you will not</sup>  
 Sun-flashes along the edge of the estoque, rolling images <sup>drop the like</sup>  
 In his eyes, icons of the Virgin, <sup>bag of ballast beneath</sup> face of his brother, <sup>the blooded cross.</sup>  
 The bull his brother. <sup>you will die on</sup> He profiled very close and went into his target. <sup>my point at the</sup>  
 A red swatch of last Sunday's poster of Miguel <sup>peak of your last attack.</sup>  
 Spiraled into the matador's face. <sup>Come B. you have a</sup>  
 Triumphant horn raised and <sup>charge left!</sup> arched from death to death.  
 Santos heard the huge wind, heard them fall, heard time unhinge.