

Poetry Pairing | 'To My Dear and Loving Husband'

By Rebecca Ruiz November 17, 2011 10:03 am

Times Selection Excerpt

In an About New York column with the headline "Bound by Love and Disability and Keeping a Vow Until the End," Jim Dwyer writes:

At age 7, Edwin Morales met Noemi Rivera. Three decades later, sitting in a Szechuan restaurant on the Upper West Side, he slipped a ring on her finger. Both families opposed a marriage, and nature itself seemed lined up against them. They used wheelchairs because of cerebral palsy and needed help taking care of themselves. Still, Mr. Morales said, "We made a promise we weren't going to leave each other again."

They eloped and were married in the city clerk's office on a Tuesday afternoon in 1996. Their honeymoon was a day at Coney Island. His family got over being upset; hers remained estranged.

The other night, Mr. Morales, now 53, sat near his wife's coffin at a funeral home on St. Nicholas Avenue and discussed the days of a life that people around them had found amazing — the cooing and the squabbling, the midnight changes of adult diapers, the audacious rocking and rolling through the streets of New York.

They went to the circus every year and had a memorable outing to a salsa concert at Madison Square Garden, and Mr. Morales ventured as far as Flushing, Queens, to cheer on the Mets. They watched videos of "The Little Mermaid" and "Cinderella," and never missed a televised wrestling match. "Two hours before it came on, it was, 'Hon, we got to get the snacks,'" Mr. Morales said. "She'd curse me out for something, and then, 'Oh, hon?'"

... On Thursday afternoon, at a cemetery in Hackensack, N.J., Mr. Morales sat in the warm autumn sunshine, surrounded by generations of the family that spirited him out of Willowbrook half a century ago. He wept.

"Gracias," Mr. Rivera said, and hugged him.

"I kept my promise," Mr. Morales said. "I took care of her."

A white-haired man steered with a cane across the gantled ground. Mr. Morales looked up at him: Ismael Rivera, the father of Noemi. It had taken him years to get over his daughter's departure.

Poetry Pairing

Name: _____

Read and annotate "To My Dear and Loving Husband". Read and annotate the Times article, "Bound by Love and Disability, and Keeping a Vow Until the End".

Answer the following:

- 1) Why do you think this poem was paired with this article?
- 2) What does the pairing say about life today? Do you think someone looking at it in 25 years from now would "get" the same meaning? What about 100 years?

Writing Assignment: Write a dialogue between the poet and the journalist discussing their works.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

Anne Bradstreet

If ever two were one, then surely we,
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can,
5 I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,^A
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.¹
Thy love is such I can no way repay,
10 The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere²
That when we live no more, we may live ever.^B

A FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Reread lines 5–7. How does the poet use hyperbole in these lines to emphasize her feelings for her husband?

B CLARIFY MEANING

Use conventional word order to restate the inverted syntax in lines 11–12. What relationship do the lines suggest between earthly love and eternal life?

Analyze Visuals ▶

Many Puritan women stitched samplers like the one shown here. The samplers often depicted nature scenes or stories from the Bible. What values are suggested by the subject matter of the sampler?

1. *recompense* (rĕk'om-pĕns'): payment in return for something, such as a service.

2. *persevere*: in Bradstreet's time, *persevere* would have been pronounced pĕr-sav'ĕr, which rhymes with *ever*.