

## **Rose Mary Boehm – Two Poems**

### **Singing their dead**

*(It has been estimated that nearly 70,000 people have died in the internal conflict in Peru which started in 1980 and lasted until 2000, reaching into the present.)*

Today they are singing with high voices, holding pictures of their husbands, sons, brothers, remembered as they died: full of vigor and youth. Hauled from their houses by men in uniforms before the sun rose on the Altiplano. Farmers, artisans, students, male children-- but mostly young men dangerously full of testosterone.

Military or terrorists—they created their own monsters, says one woman. The women want closure for the most important mystery of their lives.

They are singing in small voices surrounding the mass grave discovered only a few months ago. Swaying skirts on sturdy bodies, ponchos, long braids and black hats, gnarled hands. There are no men left in the villages. Tears running down dark-skinned furrows. Empty eyes search the mountaintops, the *Apu* where God used to live.

### **Saudade**

The moment passed like  
a paler shade of Spring,  
like the knowledge of an inevitability,  
the vague promise of repeat.

The echo of something  
which never was, a butterfly wing  
may have brushed your cheek.  
Dreaming of indolence.

Expecting the first rains on dry fields,  
not quite hearing the last lark before  
the autumn winds, the first smell of snow,  
the never-ending final summer dance.

Softest touch of his hand on yours,  
the death of an infatuation.  
Your evanescent youth.

A strange bliss in your longing,  
fear of fulfillment. Praying  
for the becalmed sea of inertia.  
Celebration of absence.

You carry a sharp, merciless  
switchblade made of stainless grief.

A German-born UK national, Rose Mary Boehm lives and works in Lima, Peru. Author of two novels and a full-length poetry collection, *Tangents*, published in 2011 in the UK. More than 150 of her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in two dozen US poetry reviews as well as some print anthologies, and Diane Lockward's *The Crafty Poet*. She won third prize in the 2009 Margaret Reid Poetry Contest for Traditional Verse), was semi-finalist in the Naugatuck Poetry Contest (2012/13) and has been a finalist in several Goodreads poetry contests, winning in October 2014. Her new poetry collection is earmarked for publication in 2016 in the US.