

LEAVES OF PARADISE

Poems by Renato Rezende

Coleção 100 leitores

I. Blue Light

I

I salute the Compassionate One—the Orange One
who passing her hands over my eyes
took away a thousand lives of illusion
and showered on me blue light.

Salutations to you
who awakened the fire of my hidden fire.

Please, accept this sacrifice
of words and light.

Once I looked at your picture
and felt I was looking into a mirror.
When I understood what had happened
I bowed –

You entered my body
and transformed it into gold.
How can I thank you? How?

When I first met you
you said “Write”
and so I’m writing.

II

Love is making me mad.
I'm going mad.
God, make me mad.
I'm dancing, I'm flying, I'm spinning.
If I endure this love
I'll attain everything.

III

When I found you within my heart
I felt I loved everyone.

I had so much longing
for life
I wanted to be everyone
and be everywhere at the same time.

I found my home inside myself.

IV

My heart is melting
like sugar melts
in water

Your love is extinguishing me
like a candle

It feels good
to become nothing

I no longer
have a life

V

It's merciless –
the sword of love.

Oh, God, crack it open.
Crack open this seed of love
or burn it forever –
Do whatever you please.

VI

Give me the strength to love
and the strength to bear so much love.
My heart is like a desert
My heart is like a fast running river
white water over stones

Your love is drowning me
killing me of thirst.

VII

God, I'm like a bird
with a twisted neck
dancing towards you
the solitary dance of death.

VIII

I'm nothing
for I think of nothing
and nothing
is inside
or outside

there is no inside
or outside

My mind stopped
when you looked at me.

I'm all
inside and out
side I'm all

a word

arises

II. About Love

ANGELS OF BEAUTY

How can a poet be weak
if he has to bear the angels of Beauty?

These angels destroy you
with a sword of light.
They blind you
to things on earth.
They cut off your senses.

What one calls weakness
is the strength
of holding on to these angels;

with one hand they pull you towards Heaven
with the other, the sword
separates you
from what you *think* you love.

LOVE LESSON

So many times
I drank
the wine of suffering.

So many times
I asked
for more.

Because once suffering is gone
it feels like nothing.

And I wanted to know
what exactly makes me suffer:

*To see the other
as an outside lover.*

GOLD

I tried very hard to be loved
by the people I love most,
but everything went wrong.

I suffered for a while
and then found out
I don't care
if I'm loved or not.

And even more:

It gives me joy to be considered low
by the ones I adore.
It gives me freedom.
It makes my love glow

like gold.

BLESSINGS

What a great blessing it is
to love and not be loved a bit.
What a paradox! What a blow
to the ego and to the laws
you carefully obeyed so far.
You act like a complete fool.
You compete with stray dogs
at the steps of her door.
You don't know what to do.
You want to die.

Then

You start to transcend.
You ask yourself,
What's this love for?
Who is the object of this love?
Who is the source? The body?
Whose? And what's
a body anyway but a shadow,
a mixture of fire and clay?
Who am I
after all? Who am I?

LOVE GAMES

Love is not a rare thing.
It's much more common
than we once thought.
But, also, alas, love is not
what we thought.

LAST NIGHT WHILE SLEEPING

Last night, while sleeping
I was still conscious,
in a nest of sweetness.

(I didn't remember or know
anything or anyone).
It proved to me once more
that love is really inside

and can only be realized
when one stops
the dream of his own life.

TO ALL THE UNWORTHY GIRLS I FALL IN LOVE WITH

There is something in you
that attracts me to you.

It's not your hair, or eyes, or mouth.

It's not your mind, neither is it your heart
although it lies deep within the heart, hidden
beneath your feelings
of unworthiness.

There

I see the most beautiful light
shining brightly, like a hidden pearl
of the finest blue.

My burning desire
is to offer it back to you.

TRUE LOVE

You left, and the love I felt for you,
lacking a form to hold on to

overflowed into the whole world.

You were gone.
My eyes were emptied

and then filled with the ability to see

you, inherent
in every creature.

The whole universe
was a mask you wore.

You left and offered me as a gift
this boundless reward.

WHERE?

If there is something else in this world
besides this shining light
where is it?

LEAVES OF PARADISE

In the silent garden
under a tree
twelve noon, I see
sitting under a tree
of green golden leaves
a little girl:
it's me.

*

Golden mangoes, golden avocados, golden birds
the girl speaks and her voice
is the first breeze ever to blow
those golden leaves.
She sings the sweet
music that flows
like water in a silent cascade
besides flowers,
silver water, shadow, a sacred sound
resonates within the Heart
like gentle blue rays
of a diamond, of a rose
of light -- What do I know?

*

I saw the child
under the golden tree
and asked,
"Who are you?"
The golden birds sang
answering,
"What we are
is not what appears to be.
We will not remain forever
in the form of this tree."

*

The whole universe
is created when we kiss.

SOMETIMES

There are times
when the pull of love is so strong
that among all things on earth
one can not find a single thing
to love alone.

III. The poet

CHILDHOOD

As a child
you opened the faucet of the bathtub
and for a second couldn't tell if the water
running through your feet, burning
was too hot or too cold:

Beyond the pairs of opposites,
There – somehow – you find yourself.

THE NYMPH

Last night I dreamt
of a nymph or mermaid – a woman I know
under a cascade
of water, her breasts
white and sweeter
than the sweetest bread.

As I watched her, between her legs
a fish grew into an enormous
prick; crooked, victorious, blind
and beautiful as a swan's neck
fighting, red, ready to fire.

She moved
only to show it to me.

When I saw her again, during the day, I was struck
because I didn't look down. I didn't have to.
About her, there was something I knew
which was very natural and intimate: my own.

DÖRTHE

You drove your bike across the *Englische Garten*
and I recognized you, my Yellow Butterfly, my Dear.

I was going to cry for you, but held back
and waited. I have been waiting for ten years.

Now something is happening. For some reason
you are driving on – as I'm writing this poem.

FAMILY FIELDS

One ancestor of mine
was a rich land owner, a *latifundiário*
in Brazil, about a hundred years ago.
His farms were like deep-green seas
of coffee trees, with golden beans.

One day a young Italian girl, an immigrant
came to work in his land.
He found her attractive and chased her
so much she fled back to Italy
with her outraged husband.

So strong was this ancestor's desire
that he felt no shame, left his family
and traveled three months over the sea
to reach the island of Sicily.

There something happened to this man, this ancestor of mine.
Maybe he realized he was just a man, humbled
by the world's immensity.
Maybe he was struck by their dignity, even though they were poor.

In Italy he left that girl in peace
and came back to Brazil, never again
to leave his family or fall prey to lust.

THE POET

The prince is in despair
for the love of a whore.
She doesn't care about him.
He is crazy about her.

HOLLOW AT HEART

Some people are born hollow.
It's a kind of handicap.
Like not having a leg or an arm.
Like being blind or speechless.

The hollow heart always feels it is less
and then lesser. Its hunger and thirst
can never be quenched. At the core
there is a deep cloud of numbness.

I'm a man empty at heart.
I would like to exchange this handicap
for that of a missing leg or arm.

THE BUDDHA OUTSIDE BANGKOK

Every year birds build their nests
on the enormous statue of Buddha
forgotten outside Bangkok.

Spiders create their webs
on the Lord's ears and hair.

Those spiders and birds, so close
and so far from God they are!

Amidst the busy jungle
oblivious to happiness or pain
the great Buddha rests in peace.

THESE PEOPLE

Glancing at a children's clothes
catalog (*Storybook Heirlooms*)
seeing perfect girls with balloons
smiling with their mothers in sweetness
apparently unaware that disaster
may strike at any time
I'm unsure of myself.
Do these people wear these things before
or after -- as we all one day --
meet the ground
kiss the wall
are violated by God and life?

DOGS

As the dogs do, in a corner
by themselves
when they are upset
so did I,
when I lost you
hid in a steam-room
and smelled the hairs of my ass.

LIKE A STONE THROWN INTO A POND

Decent girls should cover their limbs
because even the purest of men entertains thoughts
when he sees naked female flesh.
Why is that so? Why
is so strong the pull of sex?

Young dear, please, hide your dark legs.
I was perfectly fine, in peace
with my own self.
I wasn't even feeling lonely
when you arrived

Like a stone
thrown into a silent pond
at night.

BIRTHDAY

I will keep the sword.
I will add the crown,
the wings.

This is my kingdom.

The whole world
is my garden.

IV. Literature

THE STORY OF LILA IN THE YOGA VASISTHA

Immersed in this story I suddenly saw
the whole world as a tiny point of light,
pure mental energy, devoid
of space and time.

This brilliant point – the whole universe,
could fit in a millionth part of my fingertip.
I was in awe, and for the longest *time*
gazed at this light, unable to read.

And indeed, in the last page, the sage said
that Lila's story removes from our mind
the last, the smallest remnant of our belief
in whatever we usually think or perceive.

ANOTHER ODYSSEY

When Dawn with her fingertips of rose
broke the day after Odysseus's return to his hall
bathing the whole world with golden light:
the chamber where the patient hero lay with his wife
finally asleep in her soft white arms, and also
the open marbled halls of Olympus, where
the gods and goddesses live eternally in bliss;
Athena, the gray-eyed, opened her eyes first
and seeing down below the royal couple so
sweetly embraced, took pity on them, and decided
to erase from time the 20 years he suffered in exile.

When Dawn with her fingertips of rose
awoke with her gentle rays the sleeping king
for yet another day of a long life lived in Ithaka,
Odysseus, kissing his wife's hands softly, rose
and vaguely remembered a dream of a war
and many years of salty sea, under a blazing sun,
in which he was lost, and upon his return
he and his son, only a baby now, in his own hall
killed his mistress' suitors: his life-long friends' sons.

He, Odysseus, the hero of no war and no adventure,
pondered his dream, and realized, wrongly,
that he had done nothing
and now was afraid of growing old.

THOREAU

He writes that his cabin is next to a pond
and he knows this pond is everywhere,
on the side of a high mountain, for instance,
Olympus, or Mount Meru.

Thoreau, in his hut, reads the Vedas and the Gita,
fascinated, while the morning wind blows outside.

*The morning wind forever blows,
the poem of creation is uninterrupted.
Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.
Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains.
I would drink deeper....* He writes in his journal.

He lays down his book and goes outside
to draw water. There he meets the servant of a Brahmin
and their buckets grate together in the same well:

The Walden, the Nile, the vast Atlantic
-- other names for the Ganges.

THE FRENZY OF ORLANDO

If Orlando, the great Count
had then remembered God –
the God for whom he fought

When he read those Arabic
words of love, written (as if
with the ink of his own blood)

On the walls of a cave, he would
take the loss of Angelica well, and
aware of the real war, be saved.

THE KATHA UPANISHAD

Three times Nachiketa asked his father,
To whom will you offer me?
And his father offered him to Death.

From Death first he redeemed his father.
Then he learned about the sacred fire
which is the source of the world. This fire of sacrifice
received his name: Nachiketa.

Nachiketa asked the Lord of Death
that what he really wanted: knowledge of the Self.
Even the gods didn't know it, and Death
offered to the boy
women, empires, and eternity instead.

Man is not to be satisfied with wealth, he answered.

Solemnly, Lord Yama had to teach him
what he wanted to learn.

JNANESHWARI

The Ganges in the form of song
sweet
as mango
eaten by a golden boy
bathing in a river

one afternoon long passed
(*this* afternoon)
in India.

In this river of poems
we meet beyond centuries and seasons

Some Notes

Nachiketa is the young hero of the *Katha Upanishad*, one of the most beautiful of all Upanishads, the later part of each one of the four *Vedas* (revealed scriptures of India). Nachiketa achieves Self-realization by receiving the teachings of Yama, the lord of Death.

The *Yoga Vasistha* is one of the leading texts of Hinduism. Its insightful stories and teachings consist of the spiritual instruction given to young Rama (another incarnation of Vishnu, or God) by the sage Vasistha.

My edition of Thoreau's *Walden* is a hardcover published by Barnes & Noble Inc., 1993. The reference to Olympus and the quotes can be found in the chapter "Where I lived, and what I lived for". The story of the Brahmin's servant and the buckets of water is in "The pond in the winter". *Mount Meru* is a sacred mountain in the Himalayas.

Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (*The Frenzy of Orlando*) is a Renaissance epic that tells the story of the defense of Christendom against the advance of Islam in Europe. Orlando is a Christian medieval knight who loses his mind due to his great love for Angelica, a pagan princess who does not love him.

Jnaneshwari is a glorious commentary in verse on the *Bhagavad Gita* written by a fifteen year-old boy, Jnaneshwar Maharaj (1275-1296), one of the greatest saints of India. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the most spiritually rich fragment of the *Mahabharata*, the epic of India's ancient history.