

Clepsydra
and Other Poems

CAMILO PESSANHA

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INTRODUCTION BY

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To the sound of the slow guitar—

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Clepsydra

1920

Inscrição

Inscription

Eu vi a luz em um país perdido.
A minha alma é lânguida e inerte.
Oh! Quem pudesse deslizar sem ruído!
No chão sumir-se, como faz um verme . . .

I saw the light in a lost country.
My soul is languid and defenseless.
Oh! To slide away in silence!
And vanish into the ground, like a worm . . .

Sonetos

Sonnets

Tatuagens complicadas do meu peito:
—Troféus, emblemas, dois leões alados . . .
Mais, entre corações engrinaldados,
Um enorme, soberbo, amor-perfeito . . .

E o meu brasão . . . Tem de oiro num quartel
Vermelho, um lis; tem no outro uma donzela,
Em campo azul, de prata o corpo, aquela
Que é no meu braço como que um broquel.

Timbre: rompante, a megalomania . . .
Divisa: um ai,—que insiste noite e dia
Lembrando ruínas, sepulturas rasas . . .

Entre castelos serpes batalhantes,
E águias de negro, desfraldando as asas,
Que realça de oiro um colar de besantes!

My torso's tangled tattoos:
—Trophies, emblems, two winged lions . . .
A magnificent passion flower
Between garland-festooned hearts . . .

And my coat of arms, with a golden
Lily on red in one quarter, and a damsel
In the other, her silver body on azure—
The lady who on my arm is like a shield.

My crest: megalomania, its claws upraised . . .
My motto: a moan persisting night and day,
Recalling ruins, shallow graves . . .

Between castles, battling serpents,
And black eagles, their unfurling wings
Gilded by a band of roundels!

ESTÁTUA

Cansei-me de tentar o teu segredo:
No teu olhar sem cor,—frio escalpelo,—
O meu olhar quebrei, a debatê-lo,
Como a onda na crista dum rochedo.

Segredo dessa alma, e meu degredo
E minha obsessão! Para bebê-lo,
Fui teu lábio oscular, num pesadelo,
Por noites de pavor, cheio de medo.

E o meu ósculo ardente, alucinado,
Esfriou sobre o mármore correto
Desse entreaberto lábio gelado . . .

Desse lábio de mármore, discreto,
Severo como um túmulo fechado,
Serenoso como um pélago quieto.

STATUE

I'd tired of looking for the secret
In your blank gaze—cold scalpel.
Struggling with it, I broke my gaze,
Like a wave on a jagged rock.

Secret of your soul, my exile
And my obsession! To drink it down,
I tried to kiss, in a troubling dream,
Your lips on terror-filled nights.

And my hot, delirious kiss
Went cold over the proper marble
Of those freezing, half-open lips . . .

Those reserved marble lips,
Harsh like a sealed tomb,
Hushed like an expanse of sea.

FONÓGRAFO

Vai declamando um cómico defunto.
Uma plateia ri, perdidamente,
Do bom jarreta . . . E há um odor no ambiente
A cripta e a pó,—do anacrónico assunto.

Muda o registo, eis uma barcarola:
Lírios, lírios, águas do rio, a lua.
Ante o Seu corpo o sonho meu flutua
Sobre um paul,—estática corola.

Muda outra vez: gorjeios, estribilhos
Dum clarim de oiro—o cheiro de junquilhos,
Vívido e agro!—tocando a alvorada . . .

Cessou. E, amorosa, a alma das cornetas
Quebrou-se agora orvalhada e velada.
Primavera. Manhã. Que eflúvio de violetas!

PHONOGRAPH

A dead comic performs his set.
The audience roars with laughter
At his stale act, which fills the air
With an odor of dust and crypt.

The record changes to a barcarolle:
Lilies, the lilting river, the moon.
Beneath Her body floats my dream—
A swoon of petals on a swamp.

Again it changes: chirrup—bitter
Notes of jonquil!—a golden bugle
Sounding, in due time, the reveille . . .

Silence. The cornets' gentle music
Falters, masked and soaked with dew.
Spring. Daybreak. A rush of violets!

Desce em folhedos tenros a colina:
—Em glaucos, frouxos tons adormecidos,
Que saram, frescos, meus olhos ardidos,
Nos quais a chama do furor declina . . .

Oh vem, de branco,—do imo da folhagem!
Os ramos, leve, a tua mão aparte.
Oh vem! Meus olhos querem desposar-te
Refletir-te virgem a serena imagem.

De silva doida uma haste esquiva
Quão delicada te osculou num dedo
Com um aljôfar cor-de-rosa viva! . . .

Ligeira a saia . . . Doce brisa, impele-a . . .
Oh vem! De branco! Do imo do arvoredado!
Alma de silfo, carne de camélia . . .

The hill descends in tender leafage,
In drowsy, blue-green tones,
Refreshing my scorched eyes,
In which passion's flame subsides . . .

Come in white, from the heart of the foliage!
Gently push aside the branches.
Come, and let my eyes be your mirrors,
Forever wedded to your virgin peace.

Peering out of the mad brambles,
How delicately the thorn has kissed your finger,
Marking it with a bright crimson bead! . . .

May the breeze lift your diaphanous skirt . . .
Come! In white! From your leafy den!
Camellia's flesh, sylvan soul . . .

Esvelta surge! Vem das águas, nua,
Timonando uma concha alvinitente!
Os rins flexíveis e o seio fremente . . .
Morre-me a boca por beijar a tua.

Sem vil pudor! Do que há que ter vergonha?
Eis-me formoso, moço e casto, forte.
Tão branco o peito!—para o expor à Morte . . .
Mas que ora—a infame!—não se te anteponha.

A hidra torpe! . . . Que a estrangulo . . . Esmago-a
De encontro à rocha onde a cabeça te há de,
Com os cabelos escorrendo água,

Ir inclinar-se, desmaiar de amor,
Sob o fervor da minha virgindade
E o meu pulso de jovem gladiador.

Slender and naked, rise from the waves,
At the helm of a brilliant white conch!
Breasts trembling, hips asway . . .
My lips are dying for a kiss from yours.

No vile modesty! Why should I feel shame?
Look at me: handsome, young and strong, chaste.
My chest gleams white—to challenge Death . . .
Let him not—oh, infamy!—thwart your passage.

Foul hydra! I strangle and crush it
On the rock where I still hope to see
Your head, your long, dripping hair,

To watch you lean back and faint from love,
Under the heat of my virginity,
And my young gladiator's pulse.

Depois da luta e depois da conquista
Fiquei só! Fora um acto antipático!
Deserta a Ilha, e no lençol aquático
Tudo verde, verde,—a perder de vista.

Porque vos fostes, minhas caravelas,
Carregadas de todo o meu tesouro?
—Longas teias de luar de lhama de oiro,
Legendas a diamantes das estrelas!

Quem vos desfez, formas inconsistentes,
Por cujo amor escalei a muralha,
—Leão armado, uma espada nos dentes?

Felizes vós, ó mortos da batalha!
Sonhais, de costas, nos olhos abertos
Refletindo as estrelas, boquiabertos . . .

After the struggle and after the conquest
I alone remained—a nasty business!
The island deserted, the ocean draped
All in green—green unto infinity.

Why, my caravels, did you go away,
Laden with all my treasures?
—Long webs of filigreed moonlight,
Diamond-studded maps of the stars!

Who destroyed you, wavering forms,
For whose love I scaled high walls,
—Armed lion, sword between my teeth?

O happy ones, who perished in battle!
On your backs you dream, eyes wide,
Reflecting the stars, mouths open . . .