

# ***Ancient Love and Other Poems***

Rita B. Gadi

## ***Ancient Love***

---

Suddenly it is very late.  
Time hangs over the spirit at bay;  
the winds assail the ageing waters  
that fade out to the sea  
in waves of shadows, retreats of silence  
into the unknown world  
as deep as certain nights which wake  
the sleep from nocturnal death.

Light bends the secret words  
consumed there  
once uncertain, quite unknown;  
now leaning into the April road  
an early wishing for the rain  
perches on the mind  
about to fall.

Seek out, closed memory,  
an ancient love  
alone in the alley of swaying ghosts,  
in the late hour it searches  
rest. It must return  
home to the heart that has charted  
every star and corner of the earth  
to the last fleck of dust.

## Charade

---

I am performing a map of enormous madness  
as open as sky sees space in measured  
vastness without distances outward-gazed  
within a course of stars where sailors chart  
their journeys of waves and tides and shores  
for ever ebbing as the approach recedes  
behind the calm of lonely docks  
seeking dry-land after a weary voyage  
engaged in fog and steam and simple songs  
from simple folk who navigate the winds  
with simple signs like these I have here  
in my arms spread wildly wafting words  
I cannot speak sounds I cannot make  
to say I am the story of the world  
with all its mountains with all its seas  
with all its birds and flowers  
I am the cloud of the future fire  
and I am the dance of a sun-lit day aflame  
among the ruins of a stoney shrine  
where pilgrims pray to save their souls  
from the poison of the seeds they eat  
as they feast on the follies of the holy  
who shine like the heat in summer  
salt on their skins sun in their eyes  
and burning flesh as I assault a meaning  
in the silence I am sealed before  
the simulating similes spectators speak  
in the gestures of my hands now  
filled with dreams dissolved in magic  
mirrored movements of each life  
I live out of the mouths who make

the sign of the cross across their breasts  
invoking saints and angels to fumigate  
the spirits we oftentimes invite  
without expecting that their presence  
comes with the air we breathe  
though the rains wash the roofs of dirt  
and other waste that do not fall  
from the sky together with the dirt  
and other waste that comes from below  
our feet or by our beds or in the corner  
store where we meet the very old  
and the very young the pets and the police  
and the passers-by who ask directions or who ask  
the names of those who have gone  
to another street which does not have  
a corner store that gives instructions  
to those who have lost their way or lost  
some other thing we cannot find never  
will perhaps because it is the season  
to be mute with dumb gesticulations  
of this soundless game we have allowed  
to alleviate the sadness from the madness  
of this faceless laugh  
that entertains the energies I emote  
to show the fragments of a syllable  
sounding like another something not in any way  
resembling what I really have in mind  
at the tip of the finger like the tip of a tongue  
twirling thoughts like pieces  
of a picture puzzle half of which was left  
somewhere or forgotten in a box of what we call

the odds and ends that gather  
mold and dust and memories the way old clothes  
remember passion after passion the anonymous  
bodies they enclose with the scent of the original  
sweat beside a lover who may have pledged  
a timeless love and seasons of belonging  
while the moon lay like an orange in the sea  
and a single bird cried out in the darkness  
piercing the silence as it rested  
somewhere in the nameless night holding its breath  
over the shadows of the foaming waves as I shape  
a slice of air and carve a mouth that it may speak  
like water flowing from a mind at play  
inventing figures it has found along the way  
to be the image of a noun or verb  
a sculpted form that fashions joy or grief  
advancing or retreating or pretending  
there are rules that guide this make-believe  
to be the fantasies I mirror  
when I stare  
at all the eyes that look surprised  
how stories un-recited tell  
a tale without the letters being read  
a music without notes is sung oh  
melody you blush inside the tune ecstatic  
feeling out the writing in the air  
who begs for understanding weary with the weight  
of time I do not dare dispose of and trembling  
hesitate to end  
what never started from a beginning  
after all.

## **Godofredo Saturnino**

---

You have no measure  
and each day gleams with your new face.  
You are the first in my memory:  
slender as the youth on the track  
is aimed at the wind before the run,  
searing as the heat in summer  
changes the color of the skin,  
and from your depths is written  
the story of a hunter's strength  
in the wilderness of his predators.  
You are the velocity of light  
scathing the secrets in men's minds,  
exposing them to be weighed  
against the price of greed  
in a world devoured by avarice  
or ambition's rage.  
You have no equal  
in the conduct of truth and honor;  
un-stained by the infernal menace  
that lines the pockets of power  
and its surrogates.  
Of you there is the spirit of fire  
in its original purity, burning  
every fiber of the flesh to be  
the finest warrior worthy to be named  
the son of a god.  
You are the blood of celestial origins  
and the sound of your voice translates  
the language of eternity  
for the understanding of mortal ears.  
There is no heart you cannot touch  
enough with the message of your name,  
and the mineral of gold is your soul.

# The *B'laan* Mat Weavers

---

“When you tell your story on a *B'laan* mat, you speak what is true, what is authentic... we believe that the good spirits would then commune with the human beings; but one must keep faith, or it will not work ...

...and the hand-woven mat spread on the floor becomes a sacred place where disputes and conflicts can be resolved...”

The weaving begins with the colors and textures of their lives: forests, cornfields, the celebrations for births, betrothals, bountiful harvests, and all the movements the heavens bless between every dawn and day-end including the silence of the nights when their dreams continue to complete the tapestry that will be spread before or after a sorrow, a grief, or a strife, as the sacred ground and spirit-sanctuary on which all conflicts are to be resolved by the presence of ancestral wisdom and the rituals of incantations communing with those who are gathered in the present for lessons of the mat now summoned from every woven strand handed down to the women who alone are worthy to weave the stories of their tribe into the creations of their hands, until, one terrible day, the whole village was burned by an untellable war and there was no structure left to mark the territory of their hallowed past except the chapel of an alien church that taught them the commandment to love one another as a god loves them while their wailings wafted the sadness that spilled from their wounds,

to their hearts, to their mats as tributes to the truth  
that is written in their souls for the healing of their tears  
because the pain needs to be assuaged for as long as it takes  
to finish the weaving of their lamentations into the livid images  
and intimate portraits of the *B'laans'* insurmountable strength  
in the telling of their world as beautifully as they are.

## ***Cassandra***

---

(May 20, 1997)

The first of my flesh  
fathered by the infancy of love  
speaks without words  
a dialect audibly distanced  
from any language known  
except by the years she gathered  
sounds as strange  
as the mystery of her mind  
exploring every element  
in a world for ever un-defined  
within her soul.

Child of questions, child un-shaped,  
child of nature's playful tricks,  
a gift as rarely given as designed  
perpetually preserved in bliss  
and bathed in awe, afloat,  
un-harmed amidst the ripples  
that recede the innocence  
of youth.



She comes to me  
as though a decade had not passed  
between us  
her fingers crawling on my skin  
they seem  
to chart what breathes beneath  
what throbs with warmth inside  
the surface that she presses  
marking me to memory.

Her age is the beginning of the earth:  
immeasurable space spilling  
out of her eyes as they pierce  
all things un-created  
in her primeval thought,  
the vastness of her world  
instinct alone instructs  
contains no faculty for fear.