

***Eight Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, one by Rachel
Wetzsteon and a prose excerpt by Bruno Schulz***

1, The Apple Orchard

Translated by *Albert Ernest Flemming*

Come let us watch the sun go down
and walk in twilight through the orchard's green.
Does it not seem as if we had for long
collected, saved and harbored within us
old memories? To find releases and seek
new hopes, remembering half-forgotten joys,
mingled with darkness coming from within,
as we randomly voice our thoughts aloud
wandering beneath these harvest-laden trees
reminiscent of Durer woodcuts, branches
which, bent under the fully ripened fruit,
wait patiently, trying to outlast, to
serve another season's hundred days of toil,
straining, uncomplaining, by not breaking
but succeeding, even though the burden
should at times seem almost past endurance.
Not to falter! Not to be found wanting!

Thus must it be, when willingly you strive
throughout a long and uncomplaining life,
committed to one goal: to give yourself!
And silently to grow and to bear fruit.

2. Autumn by Rilke Translated by *Robert Bly*

The leaves are falling, falling as if from far up,
as if orchards were dying high in space.
Each leaf falls as if it were motioning "no."

And tonight the heavy earth is falling
away from all other stars in the loneliness.

We're all falling. This hand here is falling.
And look at the other one. It's in them all.

And yet there is Someone, whose hands
infinitely calm, holding up all this falling.

3. Childhood by Rilke Translated by *Edward Snow*

It would be good to give much thought, before
you try to find words for something so lost,
for those long childhood afternoons you knew
that vanished so completely -and why?

We're still reminded-: sometimes by a rain,
but we can no longer say what it means;

life was never again so filled with meeting,
with reunion and with passing on

as back then, when nothing happened to us
except what happens to things and creatures:
we lived their world as something human,
and became filled to the brim with figures.

And became as lonely as a shepherd
and as overburdened by vast distances,
and summoned and stirred as from far away,
and slowly, like a long new thread,
introduced into that picture-sequence
where now having to go on bewilders us.

4. Growing Old by Rilke Translated by *A. Poulin*

In some summers there is so much fruit,
the peasants decide not to reap any more.
Not having reaped you, oh my days,
my nights, have I let the slow flames
of your lovely produce fall into ashes?

My nights, my days, you have borne so much!
All your branches have retained the gesture
of that long labor you are rising from:
my days, my nights. Oh my rustic friends!

I look for what was so good for you.
Oh my lovely, half-dead trees,
could some equal sweetness still
stroke your leaves, open your calyx?

Ah, no more fruit! But one last time
bloom in fruitless blossoming
without planning, without reckoning,
as useless as the powers of millenia.

***5.. [Again and again, however we know the landscape
of love] by Rilke*** Translated by *Stephen Mitchell*

Again and again, however we know the landscape of
love
and the little churchyard there, with its sorrowing
names,
and the frighteningly silent abyss into which the others
fall: again and again the two of us walk out together
under the ancient trees, lie down again and again
among the flowers, face to face with the sky.

6. Moving Forward by Rilke Translated by *Robert Bly*

The deep parts of my life pour onward,
as if the river shores were opening out.
It seems that things are more like me now,
That I can see farther into paintings.
I feel closer to what language can't reach.
With my senses, as with birds, I climb
into the windy heaven, out of the oak,
in the ponds broken off from the sky
my falling sinks, as if standing on fishes.

7. [As once the winged energy of delight]

By Rilke Translated by *Stephen Mitchell*

As once the winged energy of delight
carried you over childhood's dark abysses,
now beyond your own life build the great
arch of unimagined bridges.

Wonders happen if we can succeed
in passing through the harshest danger;
but only in a bright and purely granted
achievement can we realize the wonder.

To work *with* Things in the indescribable
relationship is not too hard for us;
the pattern grows more intricate and subtle,
and being swept along is not enough.

Take your practiced powers and stretch them out
until they span the chasm between two
contradictions...For the god
wants to know himself in you.

8. Before Summer Rain

By Rilke Translated by *Stephen Mitchell*

Suddenly, from all the green around you,
something-you don't know what-has disappeared;
you feel it creeping closer to the window,
in total silence. From the nearby wood

you hear the urgent whistling of a plover,
reminding you of someone's *Saint Jerome*:
so much solitude and passion come
from that one voice, whose fierce request the
downpour

will grant. The walls, with their ancient portraits, glide
away from us, cautiously, as though
they weren't supposed to hear what we are saying.

And reflected on the faded tapestries now;
the chill, uncertain sunlight of those long
childhood hours when you were so afraid.

9, Sakura Park By Rachel Wetzsteon

The park admits the wind,
the petals lift and scatter

like versions of myself I was on the verge
of becoming; and ten years on

and ten blocks down I still can't tell
whether this dispersal resembles

a fist unclenching or waving goodbye.
But the petals scatter faster,

seeking the rose, the cigarette vendor,
and at least I've got by pumping heart

some rules of conduct: refuse to choose
between turning pages and turning heads

though the stubborn dine alone. Get over
"getting over": darks clouds don't fade

but drift with every deeper colors.
Give up on rooted happiness

(the stolid trees on fire!) and sweet reprieve
(a poor park but my own) will follow.

There is still a chance the empty gazebo
will draw crowds from the greater world.

And meanwhile, meanwhile's far from nothing:
the humming moment, the rustle of cherry trees.

10. "Being is forged in common" by Bruno Schulz

I need a companion. I need the closeness of a kindred
person. I long for some affirmation of the inner world
whose existence I postulate. To persistently cling to it
by my own faith alone, heave it despite everything
with the strength of its resistance--it is the labor and
torment of Atlas. Sometimes it seems to me that with
this strained gesture of lifting I hold nothing on my
shoulders. I would like the power for a moment to set
this weight down upon someone's arms, straighten up
my neck and look at what I have been carrying.

I need a partner for undertakings of
discovery. What for one person is a risk, an
impossibility, a caprice stood on its head--when
reflected in two pairs of eyes becomes a reality. The
world waits as it were for this partnership: until now
closed, confined, without further plans--to begin to
mature with the colors of a dahlia, burst and open up
inside. Painted panoramas deepen and open into actual
perspectives, the wall lets us into a dimension formerly
unattainable, frescoes painted on the horizon come to
life like a pantomime.