

CON BRAZOS LLENOS

(ARMS FULL)



A collection of poetry
by

Rebecca del Rio

IN BLACK

(De Luto)

The day they started bombing (they, not we
Because we do not have bombs), I put on black.

I folded away red, yellow, rage, and
Hope. I tucked greens, blues, anticipation
And desire in a neat corner
And I put on black.

The day they started bombing (they, not we
Because we do not have bombs) I stacked olive, tan,
Quietude and rest in the cabinet.
And I put on black.

The day they started bombing (they, not we
Because we do not have bombs) I watched orange
Shower up in spectacular sparks like
A desert bonfire. I put away my scarves, silver bracelets,
Amulets and laughter.
And I put on black.

The day they started bombing (they, not we
Because we do not have bombs,) I felt
The air being sucked out of me
In great gulps of teal, fuchsia, pained
Shades of purple. I felt the air wheeling over as
I put on black.

The day we started bombing (we because no matter
How I refused, they used my name anyway)
I folded up joy, like a Bedouin's tent, bright,
Fringed and billowing and put on black.

De LUTO

(In Black)

El día que lanzaron el bombardeo (digo ellos,
porque nosotros no tenemos bombas,
me vestí de luto.

Doble y metí en un pliegue el rojo, el amarillo, la ira y puse
La esperanza en su lugar. Almacené el verde, el azul, la anticipación,
Y el deseo en un rinconcito lindo.

El día que lanzaron el bombardeo (digo ellos,
Porque nosotros no tenemos bombas,
apilé el verde oliva, el marrón,
La serenidad y el reposo en el tocador
Y me vestí de luto.

El día que se lanzaron el bombardeo (digo ellos,
Porque nosotros no tenemos bombas,
me fijé mientras el naranja estalló
en estrellas espectaculares, como chispas de
Una hoguera del desierto. Almacene mis bufandas, mis pulseras,
Los amuletos y la risa.
Y me vestí de luto.

El día que se lanzaron el bombardeo
(digo ellos,
Porque nosotros no tenemos bombas,
me absorbió del pecho
El aire en tragos tremendos,
tragos turquesa, fucsia,
De doloridos tonos morado.
Lo sentí cuando el aire giraba encima y
Me vestí de luto.

El día que lanzamos el bombardeo
(digo nosotros porque
Por mas que me rehusé lo hicieron en mi nombre)
Doblé la alegría como doblaría una tienda de campaña de los Bedoin,
Una carpa reluciente, de flequillo,
que ondula en la brisa del desierto
Y me vestí de luto.

CON BRAZOS LLENOS

(Arms Full)

Agradecimiento es el aparecer en la puerta de la vida,
el umbral de amor, vestido como payaso,
el nariz de goma, zapatos gigantescos zarandeando.
Agradecimiento aparece con los brazos llenos de flores silvestres,
recitando McKuen o lo peor de Neruda.

Hablar de gratitud es ser tonto
en el mundo del cínico.
La gratitud es la pesadilla del orgullo,
la admisión de humildad ante algo
regalado sin expectativa ni esperanza.

Agradecimiento arranca la camisa
de auto-importancia, esparce los botones
por los pisos lustrados de la indiferencia fingida,
ignore el obvio y se ríe fuerte.

Aun mas, la gratitud se desnuda sus senos, separa
sus costillas y se muestra el corazón desnudo, divino.
Que sea si el corazón sagrado no tiene que ver con el sacrificio?
Imaginase que es la alegría, descalza y temeraria,
algo no solicitado, algo no merecido.

Supone que el ritmo que escuchamos cuando por fin nos callamos
es simplemente esto:
Gracias. Gracias. Gracias.

ARMS FULL

(CON BRAZOS LLENOS)

Gratitude means showing up on life's doorstep,
love's threshold, dressed in a clown suit,
rubber-nosed, gunboat shoes flapping.
Gratitude shows up with arms full of wildflowers,
reciting McKuen or the worst of Neruda.

To talk of gratitude is to be
the fool in a cynic's world.
Gratitude is pride's nightmare,
the admission of humility before something
given without expectation or attachment.

Gratitude tears open the shirt
of self importance, scatters buttons
across the polished floors of feigned indifference,
ignores the obvious and laughs out loud.

Even more, gratitude bears her breasts, rips open
her ribs to show the naked heart, the holy heart.
What if that sacred heart is not, after all, about sacrifice?
Imagine it is about joy, barefoot and foolhardy,
something unasked for, something unearned.

What if the beat we hear, when we are finally quiet
is simply this:
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

A POEM FOR YOU

For Raven (born 10-8-02) Nathan (born 11-06-02) and Zoë (born 6-18-03)

Between these lines is a poem
The words are, by turns, wise, foolish and always beautiful.
They are the instructions you need
To live this life.

Between these lines is a poem.
It describes your first memories:
The sound of branches groaning in the wind,
The smell of your father's shoes,
How tears tasted. And snot.

Between these lines is a poem.
It is a story of tragedy,
Of hilarity, the telling of your first kiss,
Your first betrayal, the first time
You felt different. And why.

Between these lines is a poem.
It contains the first dream you thought worth writing down,
The first verse you committed to memory,
A list of the lies you told to get out of trouble.
It explains what animal you chose
For a totem and how it chose you.

Between these lines is a poem.
It relates how your parents failed you
And why it never mattered.
It lists all your teachers, beginning
With the one you could not charm who taught you the most.
It names the birds at your grandmother's feeder

And describes the sound of your grandfather's snoring.
It counts the times you were forgiven
For ignorance, malice and sheer stupidity.

Between these lines is a poem.
It lists the countries you visited and underlines
The ones you went back to see again and again.
It names the friends you had and kept. First names and last.
It names the trees that surrounded your house.
It numbers the times you wished you could touch
Your mother's cheek one more time.

Between these lines is a poem.
It describes the smell of your child's hair,
How her hand felt in yours when you slept in the same bed,
And the first sentence he uttered about the moon.
It numbers the times you wished you could still
Hold her in your lap or caress his hair without rejection.

Between these lines is a poem.
It is at times comical, at times confusing,
But it is yours.
I started it for you. Now it's your turn.

Love, Nani / Great-Aunt Rebecca

HOW SHE WORKS

(Como Trabaja Ella)

for Donna

She is Persephone with no
Demeter to rescue her. Above
is always winter. Inside the cave
she calls her office,
she is a schizophrenic talking
to the voices that enter her head.
Disembodied voices chatter in her ears,
she chats to the bodiless. Her disembodied
voice climbs into their ears wherever
they might be in their caves
they call offices.

She is hungry for more
than pomegranates, craves poetry,
oysters and oxygen.

At night she dreams
if she sleeps.
She dreams of something she cannot
imagine and so it has no name.
Tight ripe buds push like crowning
babies birthing into bright, electric air.
Thin shoots of palest green
wiggle and thrust through dark, amazed
earth. Because she is blind
she cannot name the colors. There are
so many, no one could name them.

She dreams of Spring.
She dreams of breathing.
She dreams her mother is searching for her.

COMO TRABAJA ELLA

(How She Works)

Ella es Persephoia sin la madre
sin Demeter quien le rescataría
Encima siempre es el invierno.
Dentro la cueva que
ella se llama su oficina,
es una schizafrenica que les habla
a las voces que se entran su mente.
Voces sin cuerpo plactican por sus oidos.
Ella se les plactica a aquellos sin cuerpo.
Su voz sin cuerpo

MEN GARDENING

Men gardening, knees bent as if
In prayer to something forgotten, trying
To be remembered.

Men gardening, centuries of civilization
Dropping off them like husks, shadows of
Stalks, leaves, laying across them
Like tribal tattoos.

Men gardening, brows muddy
Painted with sweat, soil, swirling designs of
Passion and desire.

Men planting, knees bent in submission
In some remembered act of insemination
Some means of participating in a miracle.

Flowers spring forth from frustration of
Days in offices, from days behind the wheels of cars.
Vegetables growing, plumping from the pain of
Days arguing in court rooms and nights
Pouring over accounts.

Men gardening, knees bent as if in prayer,
For something better, for something different.
Praying for something forgotten
And trying
To be remembered.

MUNDANO (Mundane)

Todos queremos vivir en un nivel magnánimo,
Discutir muy elocuente, tener siempre
intenciones elegantes.

Nos imaginamos la vida como si fuera un guión,
escrito perfecto, con salidas lindas.

Al contrario, doblamos la ropa, lavamos el coche.
Unos días, hay que aguar las plantas.
El gato necesita sus vacunas. Hay que desherbar
y podar. Luego todo
a comenzar de nuevo.

Hoy encontré la tierra de ayer, tierra necia
todavía enterrada, contenta bajo mis uñas.
Mis dedos están manchados del tanino
de los nomeolvides persistentes,
nomeolvides quitados constantemente,
y constantemente rehúsan a ser olvidados.

Porque me molesto con La Cuestión Grandiosa,
La Respuesta Elegante? La tierra, la ropa
doblada con cuidado o dejada sucia en la cesta,
estas hojas en blanco, entonces llenas—
son las fronteras de mi vida que componen
mis salidas--- salidas distinguidas o simplemente salidas,
Corrientes y suficientes.

MUNDANE

We want to live life on a nobler plane,
More eloquent arguments, more elegant
Intentions. We imagine ourselves living
scripts, perfectly written, great exits.

Instead we fold clothes, wash our cars.
Some days the plants need water.
The cat needs its shots. There is weeding,
Then pruning. Then everything
All over again.

Today I found yesterday's dirt, stubborn earth
Still lodged contentedly beneath my fingernails.
My fingers are stained with tannin
From persistent forget-me-nots plucked
Constantly, who constantly refusing to be forgotten.

Why bother myself with the Big Questions,
The Big Answers? The soil, the clothes folded neatly,
Or lying dirty in the basket, these pages
Blank then filling--these are the
Boundaries which contain my exits,
Great or just exits. Commonplace and enough.

FINDING HER MOTHER MURDERED

The daughter returns from school
Burning with adolescent concerns,
Like so many suns, all self.
How was it to find her mother
Drained, a cold moon, dead calm
Night, never again to soothe
To smooth what once was
important.

WHAT THE PRESIDENT DREAMS

The president dreams his hand is the size
of the moon, of Jupiter. It is weighty
as the ocean pressing on its willing bed.
heavier than darkness, heavier than
the burnt out star in the heavens, mourning.

He dreams its reach is like the Amazon, long
Familiar and benevolent. It is wider
than the Mississippi where it swallows
the Delta whole. Longer than the python
who swallows the pig whole
converts it to snake skin, snake scales, fangs
longer than an old woman's memory.

The president dreams his fingers are thicker
than the trunks of redwoods, thick as glacial
ice. They wrap and wind and slither
around the sweaty necks of sinners.
His fingernails sharp as sabers,
pluck out the infidels like seeds, propel
them in perfect arcs like crescent moons.
The people applaud.

The president dreams his Father
is the sky. His father contains everything:
daylight, minutes, rose petals, the footprints
of children in Gaza's dust, diamonds
buried in mundane stone, the eyes of
the jaguar and the downey hair of a newborn.

He dreams his Father holds his hand, guides
it to its targets, to towers, tunnels, children's
fingers tinier than a centipede's leg, shorter

than the last breath of a hummingbird. His Father
guides him with the wisdom of Mars
who stands back, sees the earth spinning
and staggering and knows best.

The president dreams he has no grandmothers,
no mother, no sisters; he has no wife, no daughters. He dreams his hand
is the warm deep comfort
he seeks.

About the Author



Rebecca del Rio is a long-term activist, writer and mother. She is a graduate of the Creative Writing program at the University of Arizona, with an emphasis on poetry and non-fiction writing.

Her poetry has appeared in *The Crazy Child Scribbler*, *The Loop*, Poetsagainsthewar.org and Voicesinwartime.org.

To see more of Rebecca's work, visit
www.rebeccadelrio.org

All works © Rebecca del Rio 2005.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 543 Howard Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.