

Song for the Phonemes of Joy

I ask permission for some things.
First to air
This love song publically.

It happens that I only know how to say love
s when I divide the blue branch of stars
that has flowered in my chest since childhood.

I ask permission to pronounce,
in the alphabet of the Pernambucan sun
the word ti-jo-lo¹, for example,

so I can see that inside the word live
walls, nooks and windows
and discover that all the phonemes

are magical signals beginning to open
a constellation of sunflowers pollinating
in circles of love which suddenly
explode as flowers on the floor of the house.

Sometimes not even a house: just the floor
um But who rules over the floor now is a new
[man
a different one, recently born:

because uniting pieces of words
o, bit by bit he's going to unite clay and dew
sadness and bread, yoke and hummingbird,

and ends up by uniting his own life,
which cut his piecemeal heart like a knife,
and finally discover in a flash of light

that the world is also his, that his work
is not the punishment he pays for being a man

it a way to love -- and to help

the world be better. I ask permission
to give notice that, as Jesus desired,
this reborn man is a new man:

he crosses the fields spreading
the good news, and calls his companions
to fight the fair fight, face to face,

against the four-hundred-year-old beast
whose tremendous bitterness cannot resist
Forty hours of total tenderness.

I ask permission to finish
pronouncing the song of rebellion
that exists in the phonemes of joy:

r song of expanded love that I saw grow
in the eyes of a reader learning to know.

1 Tijolo, one of Freire's 'generative words', means 'brick.' --PL

Thiago de Mello

Santiago de Chile, summer of 1964
translated by Peter Lownds, LA, 12/14/03

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From: Faz Escuro Mas Eu Canto -- Porque a Manhã Vai Chegar/It's Dark But I Sing – Because Morning Is Going To Come (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1965).