

Classic Poetry Series

Rene Daumal
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Rene Daumal(1908 - 1944)

Born March 16, 1908, in Boulzicourt, Ardennes, France; died of tuberculosis, May 21, 1944, in Paris, France. French novelist, essayist, poet, short story writer, translator, and playwright. Daumal is known for his writings on spirituality and perception. He spent his youth in the company of several artists called simplists, who delved into psychological exploration and used drugs. Daumal's own use of carbon tetrachloride, though nearly fatal, later inspired him to write "Une Experience fondamentale" (title means "A Fundamental Experience"), an essay in which he traces the expansion of his consciousness from simple awareness to drug-induced intuition to a renewed consciousness in which his perceptions were rationalized.

Daumal continued to concern himself with spiritual matters and altered states of consciousness in *Le Contre-Ciel* (1936), a collection of poems which earned him the Prix Jacques Doucet. By this time Daumal, under the tutelage of Gurdjieff disciple Alexandre de Salzmann, had already established himself as a Hindu scholar with translations of several sacred texts. But his greatest achievement from the 1930's is probably *La Grande Beuverie* (1938; translation published as *A Night of Serious Drinking*, 1979), a satire on French society in which the author poses the ascendance of a higher spiritual plane as an alternative to superficial life. At his death Daumal left unfinished *Le Mont Analogue* (1952; translation published as *Mount Analogue*, 1959), a novel in which he contends that transcendental knowledge is attained through an understanding of reality and communion with others.

Last Letter To His Wife

I am dead because I lack desire,
I lack desire because I think I possess.
I think I possess because I do not try to give.
In trying to give, you see that you have nothing;
Seeing that you have nothing, you try to give of yourself;
Trying to give of yourself, you see that you are nothing:
Seeing that you are nothing, you desire to become;
In desiring to become, you begin to live.

Rene Daumal

Poem

One cannot stay on the summit forever -
One has to come down again.
So why bother in the first place? Just this.
What is above knows what is below -
But what is below does not know what is above

One climb, one sees-
One descends and sees no longer
But one has seen!

There is an art of conducting one's self in
The lower regions by the memory of
What one saw higher up.

When one can no longer see,
One does at least still know.

Rene Daumal

Skin Of Light

The skin of light enveloping this world lacks depth and I can actually see the
black night of all these
similar bodies beneath the trembling veil and light of myself it is this night that
even the mask of the
sun cannot hide from me I am the seer of night the auditor of silence for silence
too is dressed in
sonorous skin and each sense has its own night even as I do I am my own night
I am the conceiver
of non-being and of all its splendor I am the father of death she is its mother she
whom I evoke
from the perfect mirror of night i am the great inside-out man my words are a
tunnel punched
through silence I understand all disillusionment I destroy what I become I kill
what I love.

Rene Daumal