First Test

Resplendent orchids in the backyard

The fiery geometry of their petals

and the shape of the silence which supports them

I bring a lost heart and eyes terse from the brief epiphany

Every flower buds at the heart of silence

and to the heart of silence it rushes and dissolves

I remember Hardy going into the deep silence of the Greeks

Theorems as fresh
and significant
as when they were discovered

Two thousand years
have not written
a wrinkle
on their pure countenance
(Euclid
and the infinity
of prime numbers
Pythagoras
and the irrational
square root of two)

The mathematician’s
patterns,
like the poet’s must
be beautiful

Flowers
theorems
faint
in sudden
gardens
under fleeting
twilights
*Beauty is the first test
of mathematics*

*Translated from the Portuguese by Renato Rezende*

*Author’s Note:* Published, untitled, in the book *Meridiano Celeste & Bestiário*, in dialogue with the book of G. Hardy, *A Mathematician’s Apology*, from which the quotes in italics were taken.