



PREFACE

Excerpts from *The Tao of Poetry*

Ottone Riccio

We need poetry not only because it moves us, inspires us, makes us see and hear and taste and smell and feel, but, primarily, because life without poetry is unimaginable.

What makes the true poem vital is not due to which end or purpose it serves, but that it is a true poem.

What you find when you consider a fine poem are words, clusters of words, phrases, lines, sentences. You need to stop considering and instead listen to the poem. Do not concern yourself with understanding the poem. Listen to it, make it a part of you, become part of it, and you will come to know the poem.

Keep in mind the origins of poetry, when it was nothing more than vocal sounds (chants) and foot-stomping, accompanied by beating out a rhythm on a hollow log (dance). This is the heart of poetry. All else is adornment, necessary because you assume it to be. The essential poetry lies in the melody and the rhythm, made manifest by the chant and the dance.

Break down the wall between you and the poem.

You see a spark and assume it indicates the poem. Only when the poem is completed will you realize the spark is the poem.

The poem is energy. The poem is also matter, but primarily it is energy. A set of lines without energy remains a set of lines without energy.

The true poem is always in motion. If it stops for one instant it is an imperfect poem.

To be grasped at all, the poem must remain elusive.

Each image, metaphor, symbol, phrase, line, word illuminates every other image, metaphor, symbol, phrase, line word.

The poem does not teach us anything. The poem reminds us of what we already know. The poem does not promise us anything. The poem offers us only itself.

OUR POETS AND THEIR POETRY

Heather Campbell

A published Back Bay poet. One of her short stories was an
“An Official Selection” for SWAN Day Boston 2012.
She has done stand-up comedy which she describes as
Outward Bound for couch potatoes.

Another Day, Another Lockdown

Yes, we have been vaxxed.
Yes, we have been boosted.
And still.

You can read all those New York Times Science sections.

But we just had a lockdown.
So many already got Covid.

What do you mean people are getting it twice?

You'll have time for Solitaire – bump up your winning streak.

Staff must wear more PPEs.

You see so little of the person – it's all PPEs,
Like interacting with astronauts.

You did well on Facetime the other day. Try again?

So much handwashing.

Haven't we used enough soap?

We practically bathe in hand sanitizer.

There was that TV series you liked – *All Creatures Great and Small*.

Restrictions had lifted.

We saw family, we saw friends,

We could be out and about.

Perhaps angle your chair for a better view of the bird feeder

We've all graduated from

Dr. Fauci's School of Public Health.

More than we ever wanted to know.

With Kindle and large type, you can read ever so much more.

In season, we can meet outdoors.

How we've changed our definition

Of what's “in season”.

There's that phrase people use now – the new normal.

My Flowered Self

I am poppy red Amaryllis.
My six petals out loud bold,
Brimming with confidence.

I am Bleeding Heart Flower.
Each pink Valentine blossom
Holds a droplet of ache.

I am pure white Calla Lily.
The plant does not require attention,
And I have been neglected at times.

I am a red Rose.
Hopefully velvet smooth and fragrant,
Perhaps prickly at times.

I am an orange Trumpet Vine.
Reaching beyond hummingbirds,
To have my voice heard.

I am Canterbury Bells,
Clusters of purple, flower
Language for gratitude.

I am Daffodil or Narcissus.
Bright yellow, touch of orange,
Maybe narcissistic after all.

I am Chinese Lantern,
A light orange delicate hardy
Or is it a hardy delicate?

The Dinner Party

When concentric grandmothers were called "Nana,"
She called herself "Squeakie" and hosted dinners for twelve.
Downhill sheet cakes and pudding (strawberry filled)
Rolled off those stubby fingers long after company arrived.

Adults were there, and children in good grace,
Placed at three wobbly tables under the Tiffany lamp.
When the lamp dropped beads in the middle of dinner,
Proper guests soon learned she saved them.

Staunchly layered sandwiches, cemented with cream cheese
"Seconded" them all into a bulging surfeit.
Dishes forgotten, they flowed to the living room,
For coffee and cream mints, a night's conversation.

She'd lipstick stale cigarettes from the silver box beside her,
Poke the nearest guest for missed conversation.
And before the party ended, Sauternes and good food had
Seeded her lap to the couch for the evening.

Uncle Franz

Uncle Franz came to visit our house some days;
Six-six, dark hair – a Dutch Masters man.
His sallow, hollow eyes topped a perfect mustache.
The length of this man would scare me at times.

I recall the Dutch cookies at Christmas he sent,
"For the children," in a tin box as ornate as tin could be.
Brown sugar coating, melting too fast, brought
Visions of wooden shoes and windmill homes.

He died – hit by a truck he could no longer hear.
We were the only family to mourn,
To be guardians of a small legacy
From a barren, sterile hotel room.

His trunk, now mine, is leaved with labels:
"Italy" next to "Holland," "U.S. Lines," and "Customs."
They tell of travels long since ended and of
No more Dutch cookies or journeys to take.

Ed

Ed stands ill at ease at grandmother's grave.
Black suit, years old, unfitted white shirt;
His lips bitten raw because men never cry.
On other days, he tended the house.

He came with the dawn, though none ever saw;
The overalls and steel rims to put task.
Noon found hinges hinged, a swing in the yard,
And Ed gulping coffee, about to depart.

But death is a last house stone strong.
Those doors never swing another way.
The path could be smoother some have said,
But we follow it blindly nonetheless.



Adnan Adam Onart

A Turkish-American poet, lives in Cambridge, MA.
His work appeared in *Prairie Schooner*,
Massachusetts Review, among others.
His *Passport You Asked For* has been published
by The Aeolos Press. He is one of the winners of the
2011 Nazim Hikmet Poetry Competition.

When Did You Become An American?

Boston, MA, 2005

In 2004,
when the Red Sox won the world championship
and elated I jumped into the air
with my son in front of our TV
without understanding exactly
why the whole stadium roared
after one of our players
threw the ball gently to another
and I said:
*High time to learn
the rules of this silly game;*

when I woke up
after my surgery in Mass General
and asked my wife
about the election's results
before even finding out
the outcome of the operation
and I said:
O well, just another four years
— still under the influence of the sweet pain-killers;

when I got stuck in traffic on I-95,
while I was listening to a news report on NPR
about the Bartholdi Museum
in Colmar, France dedicated to the creator
of the Statue of Liberty
and an Italian tourist visiting the site,
in the most melodic tone said:
Libertà che illumina il mondo, ha!
Invaders, torturers, empire builders...
You are a country of darkness now;
you don't even deserve
the discolored copper of this beauty
— first it sounded like yet another
European highbrow haughtiness,
then I felt a dagger penetrating my belly.

Ramadan in Dunkin Donuts

Boston, MA 2005

From his asking about the time
and double-checking his watch,
I understood:
he was about to break his fast.
Selamün Aleyküm, I said,
the only Arabic I knew
for all practical purposes.
Aleyküm Selam, he replied.
He was setting his table:
two donuts, one Chocolate Glazed,
the other Boston Kreme
and a thick lentil soup
he had apparently brought
from the grocery store
across the street.

*Do you want to sit down
and share?*
I thanked him, no.
Aren't you fasting?
I explained:
my high blood pressure,
my medication.
He pointed to one of the donuts:
Still, he said, let's share.
The collapsing Twin Towers,
the beheaded hostages,
and the jumpy look on people's faces
hearing my name.
We already do, I said.

Morning Prayer

Boston, MA 1997

In a poor Istanbul neighborhood,
At the ground floor of our house,
My great-grandmother says:
It is time for morning prayer.

*If you pray, she says, pure as a child,
From this corner of the room,
An angel will appear.*

I am five years old closing my eyes.
Allahü Ekber.

Essallamü alleyküm ve rahmetullah.
I am fifty opening my eyes.

In Boston, Massachusetts,
In a not so poor neighborhood
At the top floor of our house
Praying my morning prayer.

From that corner of the room,
My great-grandmother appears.



Mary Collins

A former dancer, and comes from a family of musicians.
(Her father, Leo Collins, founded the Bach Cantata Singers.)

She has exhibited poems and artworks in the
Exhibit of Members' Art at the church for several years.

Words!

Their sounds, a symphony
Their rhythms percussive soothing
Words radiate, implicate other words
A shuttle weaving the first stars into the lavender twilight
Words move across the page,
whirling dervishes
enchanting the water-fairies to dance
Words positioned with care
Words end-stopped run-on
enough to make a love-song
Words punctuate, clanging goat bells
that celebrate, that repeat
that surround you, that make you feel their gravitational pull
tango moves
Words rhyme,
rise as one with the meter
I am bathed in form,
the tending
Jet streams of indigo
keep the world together amid leaning clouds
Join the echoing laugh
of catbird and sparrow
through hills that wait
Words!
Words satisfy
A meal of words
Words flow like wine.

Spring Altar

Ah, when I grow up,
with each breath of spring,
as blossoms form
in nature's temple,
coloring a pastel séance.

Chattering birds
announce his returning,
he who said so much by birth,
the golden star
shines on
because the other side of death
is life, is love.

In Summer

the hyperbole of the heart
races against the tortoise-paced sun
and concedes to the warmth
of lying on browning grass.

Night falls into darkness
Lemon-drenched dreams
redial daylight
and elongate the hours
of sun-dried euphoria.

You are the firefly.
You are the spark of surprise
that leads my eyes
across the fields of excessive sorrow
to wonder again.

Yellow Dress, White Car, Fateful Introduction

Yes, I drank you in with my eyes
And the kisses began
The way ripples form and expand outwardly
Reaching your lips
The taste of you
The inhaling of the sweet air of you
When you tossed back a look
Like a pebble
Into the pond that is my very soul

As reeds on the shore
Show up reflected in the clear mirroring water
I heard the echoes of that sweet sweet music
That has rung in my ears since childhood

I felt your hand
As though you could cup the heavens in it
Being drawn through cool water
As though you were floating, buoyant on a raft
Timbers of time roped together
Carrying you through this waking dream with me

My eyes blindered by years of choosing how to see
Correcting the incoming ecstasy of vision
With the pitter patter of an obedient heart

Kisses dulcet and delightful
As love is my master

Lullaby

Tethered to earth's grassy belly,
Milky clouds protecting overhead,
Go to sleep embraced by the love
Your forebears saw in glimpses,
Inhaled in gasps of ecstasy,
Exhaled into this world of wonder.

You, my sweetest thing,
Who comprehends in quantum leaps,
Who delights in the discovery
Of all your sentient faculties,
Settle into the embrace
Of this trippy timeless hour.



When I want to write something new
In the shine of the cold January air
In the sweep of the windy night
The streetlights spotting the stretch of sidewalk
Past the bar that the music with the driving beat
Wafts out of
Like a head of beer
Spilling over the sides of the mug
Making the handle wet to the touch
Mixing sensations so that all that's heard
Is come

I think of you
But you are gone
And it's all been written before
Over, on, and about your body

The "pillars of creation"
Plow forward like horsemen
Like dancers in the free-fall moment
After thrusting their bodies through space

And you are at the center
As the next moment hurtles past
I know you would snatch it up
With the deftness of a potter
Shaping clay

June Canticle

Summer's coming, summer gladdens.
Like the lemmings that we are,
we rush toward the lemon sun.
Like the lemmings that we are, we
charge into the ocean waves,
rushing toward a lemon sun.

We're swept in pulses to the shore,
cry again our birthday song.
As if our flesh shines wholly new,
charging into ocean waves,
we're swept in pulses to the shore,
crying out our birthday song.

As on the seventh day, it's good. As
creatures of the sea swarmed land.
New light fired us into being. As
on the seventh day, it's good.
New light fires us into being. Our
bodies give a shape to breathing.

Since we are rapture at the rib, our
bodies give a shape to breath. We
glisten in each others' eyes
as if our flesh shines wholly new. Since
we are rapture at the rib,
summer gladdens. Summer's coming!



Molly Mattfield Bennett

Active in the Boston Poetry Community. She has published two books, *Name the Glory* and *Point-No-Point* and her next book *Geography / Earth* is looking for a publisher. (This poem was in Wilderness House Literary Review 2022)

Geography / Earth

Where the land meets the sea
*Some read maps, complex instruments,
flights of birds
for the signs that tell of approaching storms.*

Woe

As the sky darkens wind and rain fall, and torment drums;
minds crumble before the onslaught.

Is there no one there, or do they refuse to see the hand
held out? Do the walkers choose the briar-

Filled path, do their eyes not see the blackberries?
Asleep or awake all is one.

They enter a cavernous room, wait on uncomfortable chairs
to be called in a precise and mysterious order

To stand and explain their grief. The arguments are complex;
the focus a flower seller hawking dreams.

Anger

Drives into town past the paper mill, past mountains of pine logs stripped clean of bark; the air is thick with sulfur.

Drives through other towns where rivers run past tanneries, past pig or chicken farms and the fish float.

When dreams crack, people gather on back streets; when voices or devices explode, the children hide.

Old town is a mill town on the river, and the water flows through the old lead pipes.

The families and the children wash and drink the water from the old river.

Courage

A small girl on the jungle bars talks to the boy who roars into roaring at monsters behind a wall.

The boy who keeps true to old friends and his dreams in spite of the flash of easy money.

A mother's cancer has returned, and the nine year old keeps house for the babies.

Anyone who yet again packs the car for a job somewhere far from all they've ever known.

The men and women who leap down to the tracks to save a stranger who fell as the train approached.

Hope

Sees the homeless who wait on the corner, pitch tents
by the train tracks and highway edges,

Sees the rivers and lakes disappear. Others weep
and begin to work their gardens. It is hard

To follow the cycle of wrinkled seeds to lush
flowers, ripe fruit to wrinkled seeds.

With nightfall they gather neighbors, friends
to remember. They eat and talk.

They talk of sun and rain, of what is and is not
as someone's baby or dog tumbles.

Joy

This singular moment, held in the present, as it expands in
delight to fill the infinite. Then

The whole self focused as if one were again a small child up
before the others on a forest path.

Barefoot on soft dust. Twigs and tiny pebbles. Ahead at
the turn a small browner-than-dirt bird

Whirls the dust in a shower of light as if in water, and the child edges
closer. Child and bird pause

On the path in dust and in sun. Soon
there are voices. The day begins.