

Text as Teacher: writings by participants

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A Reflection

It was the age of Lilibet the second,
to Chisholme's fair estate a group were beckoned

to come to read the *Masnavi*, the text
that teaches of this world and of the next.

Four women and four men from distant parts
arrived to read the text within their hearts:

a science teacher, mole-catcher proficient,
and engineer-designer on a mission,

and experts in all musicology,
and liberation's new theology,

and writers several from diverse nations,
and one who spent his life lost in translation.

To come to stay a week of eight full days meant
they'd read that text and fall into amazement

– amazement is the plundering of our being
which mounts the citadel of our *not* seeing,

and shines the light of insight into fears –
where shadows reigned, now loveliness appears.

No sooner had this group begun to start,
this *Masnavi* was opened in their hearts,

a voice was heard, the presence of the teacher,
delightful to the ear in every feature,

delightful to the eye and to the brain,
bypassing noses. Now, about the rain...

It did not dampen spirits, but of course
it lifted them to think about their source.

From clouds of their unknowing came the dawning
with golden light appearing without warning.

At first a distant light they saw of gnosis,
the gentle questioning of diagnosis

that asked of their experience and times
so fresh in springtime and so fresh in rhymes.

They read the stories and the mind relaxes
the secret's out, there is no prophylaxis.

Analogies aren't hard for you to find
the anaesthetic settles on the mind,
the *Masnavi* heart-lung machine is ready,
the scalpel in the surgeon's hand is steady,
the dialogue begins, and speeches flow
in '...Once upon a time and long ago
It was the age of Lilibet the Second
to Chisholme's fair estate a group were beckoned
to come to read the *Masnavi*, the text
which teaches of this world and of the next...'
They came, as I have said, from distant parts,
and with the surgeon's help they *read* their hearts.
The surgeon-poet cardiologist
is not a metaphor, you get the gist,
For Rumi operated all this time –
heart's blood's the proof in quantities of rhyme,
and cups of wine in honour of this union,
of tongue and ear in textual communion.
He takes you from the stories to discourses,
a moral tale, but not the tail of horses,
That swishes flies and strings up □cello bows
for music sweet in Bach's arpeggios,
sky-scraping stories higher than the skies
from which he takes off soon again to rise
to ecstasies and moments so exquisite
time stops, all rushes in, and now you visit
a moment's silence. It's too much for us.
And so, devoured, we leave it in hiatus.

Alan Williams

Another Reflection

If Rumi were a Scotsman,
as well he might have been,
Had he been born in Scotland
and his name been Charlie Dean,
One day he'd meet an Irishman,
a most un-Christian dervish:
"Who *are* you?", says our Moorlander.
Says Seamus, "I am Irish!
I'm from the city of Tabriz
[that's truly Tipperary]
Do you know what a *dervish* is?
I'll tell you. It's no fairy,
Nor Sufi mad, nor sprite, nor elf,
nor *jinn*, nor leprechaun,
But one who overcomes the self
and knows that he is born
Out of the Highest of the High
and lowest of the low,
Who's wider than the very sky
and further has to go,
Knows more than any word can tell
or any voice can sing,
More sweet than any rose to smell –
you must be wondering
Just what a dervish is. I'll teach
you if you follow me.
You'll have to sit upon a beach
and swing upon a tree,
And leave all of your devotees,
abandon all your friends,
And throw away your three degrees
for the Love that never ends!"
And Robbie Charlie Dean of Moorland
would've answered him with pleasure:

“We seem to have the selfsame goal”, and
“You are my *hidden treasure!*”
The two were now enraptured by
the discourse of love’s mystery.
We know their hearts were captured by
the truth. The rest is history.
No, Rumi’s not Iranian,
Tajiki, Afghan, Kurd,
Nor Turk, nor is he Scottish, man,
the idea is absurd!
To claim his nationality
and squabble over race
Denies that all humanity
can have a single face.
His universal poetry
expressed in Persian couplets
should not be stained by bigotry,
so let us clear this up, let’s
just read the *Masnavi* in Persian,
Turkish, Singhalese
or any faithful rhythmic version –
English, if you please.

Alan Williams
Chisholme, 17.06.2016

For Alan Williams

For days the sun was covered by a veil
no eye on earth could spy its radiance.
No mortal sight is able to discover
this Radiance which makes us see the cloud.

Our minds, composed of shadow and of light,
do not find here a meaning to uncover.
The Light which lights the light within our hearts
has never seen the cover of a veil.

O You, Who don't discover 'I' in me,
To Whom I do not count as 'you', and yet
You've dressed Your Love as 'You' to 'I', so that
I could resolve in You without a trace.

How could Light know of 'no trace', 'you' or 'I'?
Cover your lips! Don't speak of 'beyond Light'.

(Rokus de Groot, Chisholme, June 17, 2016)

Who am I?

Am I the symphony of the birds that I hear
whenever I wander among nature within and around us?

Am I this tree that come to my eyes
whenever I walk along the paths and roam over
the hills that surround us?

Who am I?

Am I the scent of wet land that I sense
when this body of mine steps out of the front door?

Is this smell the same that I carry within me
since childhood?

How can the scent of the south be
the same of the scent of the north?

Is it a sign that North and South, East and West
share the same essence?

Is it a sign that the “astrolabe of God's mysteries”
which interprets the stars that shine up high is
the same for the ones that shine within?

Who am I?

Am I the symphony of the birds, the tree, the scent of wet land
or the energy that shakes my heart whenever
I approach this place?

Am I this cloth that covers the kernel of my being?
What is this cloth made of?

Am I the layers of rust that obliterate the image
in the mirror of my existence?

Am I a part of the whole? Am I a whole within the Whole?

Am I the questions? Am I the answers?

Who am I?

What is this battered heart beating for?

Is it beating for the forms? Is it beating for the essence?

Can we find essence without
the helping hands of the forms?

What is this bruised being longing for?

Is it not longing for a lost scent of the core?

Is it not longing for the light that is hidden under
the meanderings of my soul that flow to the sea?

Is it not longing for the encounter of the rivers,
the Amazon, that exists within my being?

Is it not longing for the light within Light?

Is it not longing for communion with Thee?

Is it not longing for Silence?

Is this longing of mine... 'Yours'?

Who am I?

'You' know...

Awakening of The Heart

Light within Light
Light dormant
within
my Being
Light that asleep
Light that awakens
within
my Heart
and
shower
my Being
with abundant
Light
Transforming
the shell
into
Kernel
And
There is
only
Kernel
only
Light!

Luciana Lago, Chisholme 17 June 2016

The Bat and other animals

A fox out prowling one day's dusk
Glimpsed something move, a mouse perhaps
But his keen nose sensed something odd
This creature proved not earthly bound
But fluttered upward to his surprise

Who are you, quizzed the vulpine one
The bat's squeaked answer barely heard
As he circled onward overhead
But Fox already knew enough
A lowly beast even in ascent
No glistening coat, no bushy tail

Fox moved on, content to know
Of rank unassailed in this land
While Bat flew off, over wood and hill
No thought of fox, just dancing flies

A rooster leading his harem home
Used to the grace of swift and swallow
Was puzzled by a messy movement
Disfiguring the glooming evening sky.

What spastic bird attempts to haunt us?
He called out at the beating shape.
The near-mute answer was ignored
He puffed his plumage and untimely crowed
Ladies, behold my majesty yet again
Do not let base form pollute your eyes.

Night wore on, the heaven turned
In separate roosts slept cock and bat
Fox too slumbered dreaming meaty dreams
On empty stomach which yearned for prey.

As day came closer, cock awoke
Time to repeat his cock-sure glory
His call to praise roused dozing fox
Hunger sharpened by night-time's passage
He heard the ring of a mealtime gong
And rushed to answer its promising call

Crow dimmed to squawk to horrid silence
Fox trotted home, jaw clamped on food
Happy at the thought of certain welcome
And of feast to start another day

Nose filled with fresh blood odour
Mind now ahead of where he was
He neither smelled or cared for present danger
Nor did he hear the sure-fired shot
Or ever know what he was to be
Fur stole gift for a killer's lady

With the sun now high and world awake
Most animals did their best display
Indeed the swallow swooped, the falcon soared
Goldfinch flitted flashing colour
Sang sweet song to all and none

Who could ever tire of my tunes,
Not be awed by my shining brilliance?
They surely all demand still more of me
But dare not drown me with encore calls

Yet as the day moved and dipped again
A creature came that gave no homage
A pip-squeek, no song to mention
Drained of colour, yet seeming content

Briefly the goldfinch felt a hint of pity
For one deprived of nature's ranging palette
And deaf surely to symphonic scale
Pride soon erased all sympathetic traces
Spurned the finch to brasher song
And another flight of fancy hues

The falcon's sharpened sense of sight
Was barely needed to see this free gift
Ears stopped by its own refrain
Thoughts caught up with fine approval
It never heard the near silent swoop
Crashing unheeded out of arching sky

But bat sticking with his given task
No thought of melodies nor of notes,
Never missed the tuneful air
Never mourned lively colour bleached
Falcon though had time to sneer
I know you, you blind-eyed jerk
So far beneath me in the scheme
Unfit, unworthy to be a royal morsel

Alas keen eyes lack all aural skill
Focussed eyes and focussed mind distinct
So unnoticed the hunter took his aim
And brought the raptor down to earth

Did bat hear? He missed no beat
Simply sailed on guided by another light
Not sight, not sound, not scent nor sense
That the heliocentric pretend to live by.

The Old Olive Tree

The giant motionless dancer showed off with her wild, green and brown hair. She'd only surrender to the order of her instructor, The Wind, who had her own moody ways of teaching.

The ancient hair-shake went on and on until another order while I stood there mesmerized and thanked God for this mid-June summer dream.

*

This is the story of an ancient olive tree. She was already very old when the human-experts of Botany found out about her and her grove on a remote island. They immediately measured her, tested the strength of her arms, and calculated her age. It was decided that she was around 900 years old. They named her the Queen. They even held a press conference introducing her to the rest of the world and proudly posted a sign next to her trunk in English, which informed every passerby about her history. She became the symbol of wisdom and endurance. Tourist guides made sure to include her in their route and stressed her wisdom and proved her holiness by citing ayets from the Quran where the light of olive oil was mentioned. The Queen began to feel uneasy. She never felt this way before. She was considered a sage for centuries by the wild animals. They came to her for advice whenever they were in conflict. Birds arrived in flocks to pay their respect to her. She was their site of pilgrimage. She was the mother of the trees on the island. She was the sacred because she never considered herself as sacred. She delivered her baby olives every September with no screams. The villagers crushed them, squeezed all the juice until the very last drop. Her limbs were the most precious to warm the villagers up in winter time and to decorate their modest household with elegance. She was just who she was, working hard without knowing it. Thus she always felt young and fresh; immortal indeed. Isn't that the name villagers named her?: olmez agaci, the immortal tree. She overheard it many times. Now she was famous and was stuck with this posted sign next to Her, which dubbed her the Queen and with another Latin name, *Olea Europea*. She could hardly pronounce it! And her age: 900 years (+) with its plus sign. She was so old and royal all of a sudden.

One of the scholars in the team, a tall and handsome one with olive-colored eyes took a special interest in her. He kept staring at her, admired her day and night. In fact, he became obsessed with her. This form of love was of a different kind, the Queen thought. In 900 years, she was never loved in this strange manner. She had offered her fruits, her shadow and her huge trunk as shelter to all the living creatures and *in return* she received love and gratitude. This scholar was different. He was a scientist and a poet, the seducer by words, a dangerous combination for an old woman like herself. After circumambulating her for the 100th times, the poet-scientist sat at her feet and stared at her open trunk. He took out a pen and paper and wrote: "The dearest Queen, for 900 years, you and your court stood as sentinels in this grove. I cannot keep my mind from asking: which armies marched past? Who has eaten your fruits? King Richard? Sultan Ekber? You are to me a constant reminder of our hubris and slow massacre of non-humans and of our mortality. Yet how comforting it is to sit at the feet of a Queen."

Next morning when the birds woke up they found the Queen dead. Her silvery, dark green leaves were crisp and brown and her trunk was a giant charcoal.

Özlem Ezer

A teardrop returning to the river
(& other words)

A teardrop returning to the river

*

The birds, chattering
in all different languages
together, as one
all happy about the same sun

*

I pick a birch leaf
from a tree
a loss and a gift
all at the same time

*

The woodland path meanders
it is expecting me to do the same

*

Breeze
The leaves' shadows
bob gently away
on the ground in front of me
a collaboration between sun and tree
or the universe and me?

*

The room
the cleansing
the people
the zikr
the unity
and the community

*

I cannot speak outwardly
the language of nature
although it speaks to me
and I listen
and it understands

*

(We have been crying the same tears for millions of years)

Louise Adams

The Lonely Man and His Chickens

One misty, damp Monday morning, a man, an ordinary man by all appearances, walked with heavy footsteps down past the Walled Garden towards the Chicken Coops. He felt like he was carrying the weight of 10,000 chickens upon his broad muscular shoulders, for the chickens had not laid a single egg in weeks. The Happy Ones of The Big House were becoming tormented and demonic for the succulent flow of the yolk which was the colour of a hot summer morning's sun.

“O why, why, oh why, my feathered friends, do you peck at my wellies and claw at my bosom so? Have I not fed you since you were chicks on the finest of grain and wheat mixed. Have you not dined on the left-overs from the Table of the Happy Ones? Have I not achingly carried flowering can upon flowering can overflowing with sparkling Scottish rainwater to ease your thirst? The chickens came running over to the soulful lonely man and gathered around his feet. Every morning I hear you, Cockerel, calling over the sweet green fields and I am your servant who answers. Every afternoon the Royal Blue Food Bucket clangs and draws closer, so close I can stroke your feather-like feathers.

And you, little chicken hen, with your plume the colour of the desert sand.

And you dear chick chick, your feathers of egg white. WHY DOST THOU NOT LAYETH FOR ME?

For what is the egg but the embryo of life? For only you know for whom you lay. The passing of an egg we mortals cannot know, though I feel your agony, little one. To drop an egg on this heavenly earth would surely shatter his Universe. Since Adam was clay has man not asked himself – what comes first, the chicken or the egg? O sweet, sweet chicken, what mysteries lie beneath your wings?”

And as the ruggedly handsome lonely man gazed upon the coop, the clouds dispersed and the sun did shine, and fell softly upon the swaying thistles and

nettles. For such radiant light was a rare moment in Scotia. Light upon light reflected off the Sage's bald head (heid) and the chickens bowed.

At that very moment the songbirds ceased their joyous laughter and the breeze, which was heavy with the fragrance of cow manure, held its breath. Here, here, stood the lonely man, the lone wolf amongs the chicks. And in the time it takes to boil an egg, nay, the time it takes for the eye to blink, or even faster, Man and Chicken were one. In Unity, with no separation or yearning of togetherness. Oh, the ecstasy, the raptures.

Such clarity he has not seen since the last time he visited the opticians and the cleaned his glasses with one of those yellow shammy (chamois) things.

To Be Continued

Andy Forsythe