

Poetry  
by Anne Sloan

William Wordsworth tells us that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Thomas Gray said that poetry is thoughts that breathe and words that burn. Robert Frost proposed that poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found its words. Poets from all the corners of the earth from time immemorial have blessed us with their overflowing emotions. From the gentle enigmatic Haiku to the thundering outpouring of poems such as Belloc's "The Congo" we have been inspired, depressed, chagrined, brought to Nirvana, fallen in love and sometimes left in a dream world.

The Haiku is a seventeen syllable poetic form that has been written in Japan for more than three hundred years. Haiku does not make a complete poem in our usual sense. It is a lightly sketched picture which we are expected to fill in from our own memories. Because the poem is short does not mean that it is simple. It is apt to be subtle and complex with hidden meanings. Some examples: first by a master, Oemaru:

First wind of the year  
The oil lamp in the washroom  
Shudders and is still.

Another by a poet named Ryuho:

I scooped up the moon  
In my water bucket and  
Spilled it on the grass

Love was and still is a favorite theme for poets. Well known is the great love of the Brownings for each other. Elizabeth in her "Sonnets from the Portuguese" wrote "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Robert, in Rabbi Ben Ezra, said "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be." Love poems can bring about a reverie. Memories of a true love, a lost love, unfaithful or unrequited love can resonate with all of us.

There are verses that make us wonder what torment some poets experienced such as Francis Thompson in his "Hound of Heaven" when he cries to God: "Must you char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?" The reader is inclined to pity the author and yet feel the fear of what his own consequences might be. There is a real sense of loss in some lines, such as Horatio's "Good night, sweet prince, flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

Poetry can stir any emotion in the heart and soul of a reader. There have been a few times when I felt a deep emotion that resulted in the composition of a verse. One occasion was the birthday of our first little granddaughter:

To Jessica on Her First Birthday

Marvelous little package of love,  
Exuberant, brilliant explosion of new life,  
Sent to brighten ours.  
Could such a tiny being,  
So fresh yet from God, have tied us all

In this single love knot?  
All consuming yet unaware,  
This gyrating new center of our universe  
Captures every heart.  
Then caught in a dizzy whirl,  
And bound by gossamer threads of charm,  
None can escape.