

# Sweetness and Light

Marjorie Evasco

Of all the things I love to do, reading poetry offers the most pleasure. Poems tell stories, paint pictures or scenes, and sing the spirit to a listening stillness. Moreover, they invite us to learn by heart and thereby teach us how to travel light. I carry some poems with me wherever I go. And in this adventure aboard Dickinson's "frigate," I would like to share the joy I continue to experience in ten poems I have learned by heart: poems any traveler can carry like a gourd of freshwater or a storm lamp.

We shall pass the time then telling stories of how lithesome these poems are. Of course, I would much rather recite the poems from memory instead of trying to wrestle with other words in order to pin the ten poems down on paper. Alas, the mystery in the beloved always slips beyond the lover's words!

Nevertheless, let me begin by saying that at different times in previous quests for sweetness and light, I met these ten poems that sang of wonders I have yet to fully understand. And I have since then been enthralled by the mysteries they continue to sing of.

These ten poems work their charm through their individual passionate *personalities*. To listen to each one is to know how truth and beauty and goodness can 'sound' through every part of a poem's being. A poem is a masterful way of singing the soul through a resonant body. Once one has listened to a poem well enough, one also becomes intimate with the poem's resonant presence. In the power of this kind of singing, words become flesh; indeed, new beings and new worlds incarnate. No part — bones, skin, flesh, eyes, ears, nose, mouth and tongue, intestines, liver, limbs, heart,

mind, and spirit — is left out of the music and power of the poem's felt-thoughts drawn in images and stories To know how a poem sings is to be brought closer to a singular experience of grace.

In the course of time too, I discovered that while each of these poems is different from one another, they have similarities of character. They all have strong voices capable of intelligent singing, tough minds and hearts able to see things and human situations with "unspeakable tenderness," and generous spirits eager to bestow the attentive with the boon of self-knowledge. Moreover, all of them have robust, wholesome constitutions that have enabled them to move worlds and live very long lives. Thus, if we can become very quiet in order to listen to them sing, tell stories, or draw out pictures of the many-layered realities we breathe and live in, we stand the good chance of also being shown how to sing with intelligence, see various forms of reality with depth and sensitivity, give and receive with grace, and be kissed on the forehead by beauty.

### **Daybreak**

[http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/galway\\_kinnell/poems/17853](http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/galway_kinnell/poems/17853)

*Galway Kinnell*

On the tidal mud, just before sunset,  
dozens of starfishes  
were creeping. It was  
as though the mud were a sky  
and enormous, imperfect stars  
moved across it slowly  
as the actual stars cross heaven.  
All at once, they stopped,

and as if they had simply  
increased their receptivity  
to gravity they sank down  
into the mud; they faded down  
into it and lay still; and by the time  
pink of sunset broke across them  
they were as invisible  
as the true stars at daybreak.

Like a good storyteller, the voice that sounds through the body of the poem, or the *per-sona* in the poem, begins with once upon a place (“on the tidal mud”) and once upon a time (“just before sunset”) when something astonishing (“dozens of starfishes / were creeping”) was experienced. It was an experience of complete wonder that the speaker wants to retell it. The poem’s *persona* imagines that out there, somebody actually cares enough to slow down the usual chaotic velocity of living, to stop the ordinary world, and listen to something wondrous.

This listener could be anybody who finds pleasure in the imagination — that human power to respond to words by creating pictures or images in the mind— and heeds the instruction of the poem’s beginning lines. Using the words of the poem, the imaginative listener relives in the mind the pleasure of getting one’s feet dirty and squishy with mud, smelling the haunting strangeness of the mudflats at low tide, and watching the sun go down. If you are this kind of listener and you sense (see, smell, taste, touch, hear in your head) the world the poem has begun to build, exactly in the way it says so, you have crossed the threshold of the poem.

Just as our bodily senses serve as the floodgates of the daily flow of stimuli we receive from the perceptible world, our re-cognition of the way our senses work with the poem makes us see, hear, touch, smell, taste, move in the world of our imagination

as vividly as we do in the perceptible world. Without our imaginative entry through the doorways of the poem, its world crumbles for us like so much dust in the mouth of the living dead.

After the first three lines, the voice of "Daybreak" moves deeper into this world and in its next complete utterance, the length of a sentence from lines 3 to 7, it uses the very things it has put into this world to build an elegant and complex structure of insight. We can try to see these structures as imaginary 'bridges' although somewhere else they are also called metaphor. In the Greek sense of the word *meta-phorein*, two dissimilar things are usually at each end of the equation and the mind's work is to transfer the qualities of one into the qualities of the other in order to arrive at similarities. In between the two unlike things is the abyss into which a weak mind can fall and be lost forever.

The poem's first bridge proposes this kind of work: "It was/ as though the mud were a sky" and the second bridge: "and enormous, imperfect stars/ moved across it slowly/ as the actual stars cross heaven."

It is never easy to make such crossings because things in themselves are never completely what they seem. Moreover, things in poetry are not anymore to be seen in isolation, but in relation to each other. Metaphors work as propositions through which the mind sheds light on the two dissimilar things in order to see each one more fully, and be able to make intelligent connections between them. The mind of the poem has found similarities within dissimilarities and wants us to see for ourselves these connections in that particular slant of light.

That the poem seems to have two pairs of eyes, is part of the difficulty. One pair never loses sight of the mud and starfishes, while the other pair in back of its head sweeps its vision from earth to heaven in one fluid motion spanning cosmic distances, It suggests that "mud" could be "sky" and "starfishes" might as well be "stars"!

The energy of the poem's "as though" is part of the process of building this world, and it implicates us in the game of imagining things anew. The link in the first metaphoric proposition appears to be in the "creeping" motion of the starfishes. The challenge is to think through the movements, shapes, textures, and other qualities of the mud-sky and starfish-star relationship to "see" and "know" what the poem is showing us. When we do, we would find ourselves joyfully delivered onto higher ground in the poem's world. This higher ground is the poem's work of completing the world it had set out to construct. It does this work by offering another keen observation of the starfishes: "All at once they stopped." This time it is the sudden cessation of movement that becomes the function of the conjectural "as if," echoing the pattern of the previous thought but with a subtle shift of emphasis. Beneath the stillness of the starfishes, the poem suggests the complexity of the world it creates. It points to other layers of reality, other kinds of motion: "increased...receptivity / to gravity," "sank down / into the mud," "faded down," "lay still," "pink of sunset broke...," "invisible as the true stars," and "daybreak."

The breathless speed of the poem's voice as it hurtles through the universe in its intuition of the truth demands our best and keenest hearing. Or else we muddle through and not see the way it gets to the heart of things. The clue the poem gives of the truly wondrous is in the phrase "receptivity to gravity," which joins the concepts *receptivity* and *gravity* in sound and sense. These concepts enable us to imagine interdependent forces that give ballast to all things, including the mud, sky, starfishes, and stars of the poem's world. This pull of gravity and this giving way to the pull, seen in the motion and motionlessness of the starfishes, is the same force that holds the universe together in its orderly rhythms from sunset to daybreak to yet another sunset.

Hearing the poem's story of the starfishes, seeing the images or word-pictures of its world, and listening to the music of its words, can wake us up to a magical experience: a glimpse of the mystery or a sense of its rhythms— that almost

imperceptible but constant whirling of the dome that enfolds our earth, filled with stars which are part of our universe, even if we don't always see them with our naked eyes because of a trick of light.

We can also surprise ourselves into knowing how wonderful it is to work actively with a poem in the shaping of a new world. The work gives us our just reward: a keener sense of the mysterious connections between things: at one moment we are in the deep joy of watching with the poem the "creeping" of the "enormous imperfect" starfishes, and in another instant we arrive, in the blink of an in-sight, in an even deeper joy of intuiting the eternal dance of the stars.

Things in motion and visibility; things in stillness and invisibility— all these concepts work together to transport us from the mud of the sea at low tide to the whirl of the stars in the heavens, from the contemplation of a small and ordinary thing to a cosmic and abiding principle.

No thing now is ever only what it seems. We know they will always whisper, *More! We have so much more to show!* And we shall begin to notice our world more carefully in a nuanced light, mindful that things may have more to say in the next reading and re-readings of the poem.

### **Is My Soul Asleep**

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/has-my-heart-gone-to-sleep/>

*Antonio Machado*

Is my soul asleep?

Have those beehives that work

In the night stopped? And the water-

wheel of thought, is it

going around now, cups

empty, carrying only shadows?  
No, my soul is not asleep.  
It is awake, wide awake.  
It neither sleeps nor dreams, but watches  
far-off things, and listens  
at the shores of the great silence.

*(Translated by Robert Bly)*

Translated from Spanish to English, we receive the story of this poem in a persona that poses a question to the soul or the inner self. The persona imbues the soul with eyes so that we can *see* the import of the question and *hear* the imprint of the voice asking “Is my soul asleep?”

The whole first stanza is made up of three questions that tumble one after another in urgent cadences. The urgency is best heard in the way the lines of the second and third questions are cut as enjambments or momentary pauses that invite the eye to the continuation of sense in the next word of the next line. The sound of these questions then, suggest the struggle of the persona to arrive at an answer. These questions build upon each other in intensity, the music of the Ines evocatively carried in the images of motionL beehives that work in the night and the waterwheel going around. However, the careful sounding of these questions brings to the inner ear a sense of the stanza’s undertow of fear.

The first question “Is my soul asleep?” seems to slide though the mouth in its sibilant way. The second makes us slow down because of its inversion. This slowing down is deliberate because it invites us to work with the image being formed in our imagination by the words: “those beehives that work/ in the night,” while at the same

time it asks us to consider that this image of activity is rendered in its negative sense: "have...stopped."

It seems easy enough to *see* in our minds the ceaseless activity in the beehives, or even the possibility that the activity has stopped. But it needs another act of mind to intuit that what the persona really suggests by these words is the unsayable. Bees work unceasingly to produce honey, and this *raison d'être* of the bees seems to be the mellifluous sense behind the persona's questions, except that it is rendered in the negative. What would one, indeed, do without sweetness? Moreover, if we have constructed, upon the instruction of the poem the bees and the hives, it is neither too farfetched nor too difficult to sense the fragrance of gardens in the poem's world.

The third and last question of the last stanza yokes the concrete picture of the waterwheel with the abstract words "of thought." It is a metaphoric connection that gives us the concrete, familiar picture to work with: "...is it/ going around now, cups/ empty..." We are asked to *see* and *hear* the movement of the mill as it churns the water with its spokes with the cups at each end. Once we see this positive picture, the voice continues: "...cups/ empty, carrying only shadows" and renders the picture in the negative, echoing and reinforcing the pattern of the previous question. The crux of the matter is couched in negative terms, or put in another way, the images' observe side is presented in its dark possibilities: the beehives stopping work, the cups of the waterwheel going around empty.

What we have then is the soul's world rendered in the chiaroscuro of questions and an answer, and the point of the inquiry is to hear and see the undertones of the persona's irreparable loss should the bees, despite their nature, stop their work to rest in the night, or should the waterwheel continue to turn its cups even if the watersource has run dry. The break between the two stanzas allows the eye and mind to rest and consider the whole emotional, intellectual, and spiritual import of the questions.



Thus, when the eye lights upon the second stanza's first line, the emphatic ring of the voice is unmistakably clear and jubilant. The persona arrives at a celebratory answer in the second stanza: "No, my soul is not asleep." It repeats the pattern it had set in the first stanza by showing how the soul "...is awake, wide awake./ It neither sleeps nor dreams, but watches,/ its eyes open/ far-off things." What these things are it will not say exactly, but leaves it up to our now-watchful imagination. The poem ends with the *how* of this watchfulness: "...listens/ at the shores of a great silence." The persona brings us to an almost overwhelming image of an ocean of great silence at the shores of which the soul can listen in its wakefulness. We stand, open and expectant as the poem stands, here, "at the shores of the great silence."

### **Psalm 23**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2023&version=KJV>

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;

those anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

This favorite psalm in the King James translation of the Holy Bible opens itself through the central image of the shepherd and his relationship with his flock. The

extensions of the metaphor into other images such as the green pastures or still waters, are within the constellation of the primary image. The imagery delivers one to the depths of the poem's music, which is primarily made of rhythms of thought: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

This rhythm of thought is also called parallelism and in this first utterance, the thought "The Lord is my shepherd" is perfectly balanced with the second "I shall not want," thus reinforcing the music of the poem's thinking. Psalm 23 speaks, moves, and breathes as a poem and therefore the thought is never cold and colorless in its rendering of truth. Rather, thought is felt as an articulation of longing, indelibly stained by the fervor for life and its appetites: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

Psalm 23 is a sung-poem where the mind of the poem is steeped in the colors of the heart. One cannot sunder the poem's living form and say, in the lesser and common practice of paraphrase: here, this is its head, or there, those are its feet, as if the poem's body were lying on the steel table and the reader simply a mortician cataloguing dead parts. The poem's images and its intrinsic music would resist such strategies of disembodiment. And it is only the reader who embraces the poem entire who is given the experience of being transformed: "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The moment of utterance of the poem's last line strikes deeper home: the poem offers itself up as a sanctuary where the spirit or the awakened consciousness may dwell: "Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

## Wild Geese

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv\\_4xmh\\_WtE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv_4xmh_WtE)

Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the

landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the river.

Meanwhile, the wild geese, high in the clean blue air are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—

over and over announcing your place

in the family of things.

This poem by American poet Mary Oliver also gives the reader a talismanic world where transformation in and through beauty is carefully rendered in images and the music of language. This world is built upon the premise: “You do not have to be good,” and proceeds to prove its assertion with sharply-drawn images: a penitent on his/her knees in the desert; the prairie; the trees; the mountains; the rivers; the blue air; the wild geese. The centripetal force that holds these different images together as integral parts

of the poem's way of thinking is the voice that asserts a way of being, different from the imperative of repentance for all-too-human sins: "You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves."

In the sounding of such an invitation, another human being's despair has its resonant place in the consciousness of the poem. The voice of the persona invites an *other*: "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine." The invitation is said with tenderness, as shown in the line's syntactic emphasis on the other, the two commas slowing down the end of the sentence into an attitude of deliberate and careful attention. We imagine the other opening up and the persona doing the same.

And yet, interested as we are, we do not overhear the detailed sharing of stories of despair anymore—the voices recede into the background. This is not the story the persona wishes to tell. Instead, the story seems to be about the way the world of nature inexorably goes on while the stories of human despair are being played out. Between the constancy of human despair and the immutable rhythms of the bigger world, the persona chooses to attend to the latter. "Meanwhile..." and points to the movement of sun and rain over the prairies, trees, mountains, and rivers. In yet another "Meanwhile..." the persona calls us to look up to watch "the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,...heading home again." The poem's heart-mind, as it were, invites us to ride with it on the wings of the wild geese heading home again, and be delivered, whole and renewed, "no matter how lonely" to that cosmic order where everything has a place in "the family of things."

### **Theatre Impressions**

<https://genius.com/Wislawa-szymborska-theatre-impressions-annotated>

Wisława Szymborska

For me the tragedy's most important act is the sixth:

the raising of the dead from the stage's battlegrounds,  
the straightening of wigs and fancy gowns,  
removing knives from stricken breasts,  
taking nooses from lifeless necks  
lining up among the living  
to face the audience.

The bows, both solo and ensemble—  
the pale hand on the wounded heart,  
the curtsies of the hapless suicide,  
the bobbing of the chopped-off head.

The bows in pairs—  
rage extends its arms to meekness,  
the victim's eyes smile at the torturer,  
the rebel indulgently walks beside the tyrant.

Eternity trampled by the golden slipper's toe.  
Redeeming values swept aside with the swish of a wide-brimmed hat.  
The unrepentant urge to start all over tomorrow.

Now enter, single file, the hosts who died early on,  
in Acts 3 and 4, or between scenes.  
The miraculous return of all those lost without a trace.

The thought that they've been waiting patiently offstage  
without taking off their makeup

or their costumes  
moves me more than all the tragedy's tirades.

But the curtain's fall is the most uplifting part,  
the things you see before it hits the floor;  
here one had quickly reaches for a flower,  
there another hand picks up a fallen sword.  
Only then, one last, unseen hand  
does its duty  
and grabs me by the throat.

*Translated by Stanislaw Barańczak and Clare Cavanaugh*

Nobel Laureate for Literature Wisława Szymborska writes poems that see very differently from the usual. We receive the gift of seeing differently in this poem from Polish into its translation in English. In this poem "Theatre Impressions," one may read the lines and sense at the background, like some soft music, the Shakespearean line that all life's a stage. But the poem does its work in another way, extending the insight and then turning it on its head, so to speak. And it does this by delineating at least two different loci of dramatic action: one on the stage itself, the other back of the stage. It also dramatizes the tensions on at least two levels: the level of the dramatic action on stage and off, and that of the audience's response to the tragedy in front of and behind the curtain. In the poem, the persona is part of the audience, but is seeing something heretofore unseen.

The poem begins with an idiosyncratic assertion by the persona of the utmost importance of the "sixth act" of the tragedy. The first line stops us in our tracks because we have to do a double take and ask: Sixth Act? Aren't there only five? This opening

move or strategy challenges our usual notions of what a tragedy is and what its parts are, since the “sixth act” is definitely something that does not belong to the usual conventions of tragic theatre.

The voice proceeds to catalogue the significant actions to familiarize us with the things which constitute this act: “raising of the dead...,” “straightening...wigs and fancy gowns,” “removing knives...,” “taking nooses...,” and “lining up among the living/ to face the audience.” These seeming uplifting miracles are possible because the persona is not where the audience usually is, but is elsewhere— that is, back stage. From this perspective, we stand at a sort of way station between the drama that has just ended on stage, and the other drama of ordinary life itself that seems about to resume for the actors.

Backstage, all the actors in the tragedy have been waiting, “without taking off their makeup/ or their costumes.” The persona asserts in the penultimate stanza that “the thought that they’ve been waiting patiently offstage” is more moving than the lines the actors have spoken in the tragedy itself. This signals a shift in perspective, from back stage to the audience’s point of view in front of the stage. We see the actors finally take a bow, and note with the persona how “rage extends a hand to meekness/ the victim’s eyes smile at the torturer/ the rebel indulgently walks beside the tyrant.”

The resolution of the poem in the last stanza starts with the line “But the curtains fall is the most uplifting part...” because it echoes our familiar notions of the effects of catharsis in tragic theatre. But, already oriented to the poem’s different angle of vision, we are ready to see what the persona sees at the last dramatic instance before the curtain “hits the floor.” The persona pushes our seeing to the edge of the ineffable: “here one hand quickly reaches for a flower...” or another “picks up a fallen sword.”

These seemingly self-indulgent gestures of the actors bring everything backstage, thus completing the cathartic experience of tragedy. But these gestures also leave the stage empty of any trace of the tragedy that was played. For the persona, then, this is

what the aftermath is like: "Only then, one last, unseen hand / does its duty / and grabs me by the throat."

### **Incantation**

<https://www.poemhunter.com/anthony-tan/>

Anthony L. Tan

one to whom I cannot write a verse cannot write  
is left along among her dress tatters left alone  
among crickets frogs and midnight birds  
on dew-wet bought under the white moon white

in a mound of stones alone she lies alone  
among presences who cannot hear nor tell cannot her  
birdsongs and nightwind creeping among the grass  
and sacred rumors of elves and gnomes rumors

with incense of candles and flowers with incense  
i propitiate the gods propitiate  
accept my homage o gods of night o gods  
that she may see the sun again the sun

day after day after day after  
i mumble my prayer like an idiot I mumble  
and my windblown words return to me return  
as screams in a dream as screams.



Written by Filipino poet Anthony L. Tan of Siasi, in the southernmost archipelago of the Philippines called Sulu, this elegy is both a lamentation and a prayer. Its title already signals the sound patterns of the poem, the incantatory quality heard in the device of repetition used all throughout the poem. It is also without any punctuation to give a clue of its notational pauses. Thus, one must rely on the marriage of sound and sense to know where the caesura or pauses are. These are important to locate in our reading because the grieving persona sounds the grief, not only in the words, but more so in the pauses or silences of the poem.

Let us sound the first line aloud— “one to whom I cannot write a verse cannot write”— and place a bar sign/ to indicate the pauses that the voice takes in saying the line: one to whom/ I cannot write a verse/ cannot write. The repetition of “cannot write” indicates the level of the persona’s grief and the manner of grieving, which is a kind of wordlessness. Moreover, the pattern set by the first line is continued all through the stanza:

one to whom/ i cannot write a verse/ cannot write  
is left alone/ among her dress tatters/ left alone  
among crickets/frogs/ and midnight birds  
on dew-wet boughs/ under the white moon/ white

Another thing we notice when we read aloud to hear the sound of the poem is that the pauses at the end of the line can be read as enjambments of sense which counterpoint the short pause that the ends of the lines indicate. This is especially true of the enjambments between stanzas, say from the last word ‘white’ of the first stanza to the first phrase “in a mound of stones” in the second stanza. Thus, while the pattern is seemingly regular, the counterpoints at every line and every stanza create the tension

which onomatopoeically suggests the raggedness of the breath of one crying in deep grief.

The penultimate stanza is the most poignant expression of this grief when the persona calls on the gods:

accept my homage/ o gods of night/ o gods  
that she may see/ the sun again/ the sun

But we already sense the answer to such a prayer as we read the final stanza:

day/ after day/ after day/ after  
i mumble my prayer/ like an idiot/ i mumble  
and my windblown words/ return to me/ return  
as screams in a dream/ as screams

### **Muyin Paru Ñinu**

<https://ivatanlaji.org/audio-lyrics/muyin-ka-paru-ninu/>

*Ivatan Laji Translated by Florentino H. Hornedo*

Whose face do I behold mirrored  
Upon the warm water I am about to drink?  
I dare not drink that the vision I may prolong.  
If I die, bury me not  
At the Cross of San Felix: bury me  
Under your fingernails, that I may  
Be eaten alog with every food you eat; that I may  
Be drunk along with every cup  
Of water you drink.

Coming to us in its English translation, this *laji* from the Ivatan peoples of the northernmost group of islands in the Philippines called Batanes, is a love song that uses the vocabulary of the visceral and primal, yoking desire and death in three complete utterances.

In the first line, the persona in the poem is wondering about the face he/she sees on the water he/she is about to drink. And because it is the beloved's face, the persona says: "I dare not drink that the vision I may prolong!" In the next lines, the persona addresses the beloved in a conjecture about death and how he/she wishes to be buried. The image is primal because the tomb is not the usual one under the cross in the cemetery of San Felix, but under the beloved's fingernails.

We can intuit the mind at work in the poem reasons that death is the event that separates the lover from the beloved. And with the separation can come the attendant forgetfulness. Thus, the image of the dirt or earth under the beloved's fingernails has to be tied with the daily acts of eating and drinking. In a culture where the pleasure of eating and drinking is done with the hands, this is perhaps the best way the lover sees of being kept alive beyond death in the beloved's life: "...Under your fingernails, that I may / Be eaten along with every food you eat; that I may / Be drunk along with every cup / Of water you drink."

### **Water**

<https://www.studymode.com/essays/Riddles-Of-Aeta-63909202.html>

*Aeta riddle*

When you cut it,

It heals without any scar.

## Waves

<https://tubagbohol.mikeligalig.com/index.php?>

[action=search2;PHPSESSID=m96i2v59nnlsc080ihu3f7nvlv](https://tubagbohol.mikeligalig.com/index.php?action=search2;PHPSESSID=m96i2v59nnlsc080ihu3f7nvlv)

<https://dumaguemetropost.com/tigmotigmo-agukoy-p10823-661.htm>

*Boholano riddle Translated by Marj Evasco*

Sigig lukot, sigig lukot

Walay linukotan

Always rolling, always rolling,

Nothing rolled.

These two Philippine riddles, the first from the Aeta people, and the second from the Boholanos, tell of the first experiences most Filipinos have with verbal games of the mind in order to point at the marvelous in nature. The poetic technique of the riddle involves using a metaphor to suggest the enigmatic. The game of riddling, then, is one that involves the poetic gift of drawing a sharp image in words and using this with wit and wisdom. Played among family members or friends, the joust is a contest of the quickness of one's mind that can catch the speed of another's imagination. Many a moonlit-night has been spent with laughter and thoughtful consideration of the images presented by the riddler. In the riddles as written here, the titles represent the answer. However, in the oral game of riddling, the answer is never mentioned; it is merely suggested by the images.

The Aeta imagine the element of water (in lakes) as a body very much like that of other entities of the natural world. However, it has its essential differentiating

characteristic. If anyone *cuts* water, it can *heal* without any sign of where the cut was made because it is in the nature of water.

The Boholano riddle, on the other hand, uses an image of motion to point to another characteristic of water. This time, though, it is not the waters of a calm lake, but the waves of the sea that is the subject of the riddle. The repetition of the words “always rolling” imitates the sound and motion of the waves running towards the shore. But when the waves reach the shore, the next image is drawn in the negative: “nothing rolled.”

Whether these two riles point to the paradoxes in life, the riddles don’t say. But the mind that clarifies each answer of the riddle can make sense out of the world and arrive at some elemental truths, also called wisdom.

### **Eating Poetry**

<https://www.uusmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Poems-by-Rumi-for-6.4.17-Service.pdf>

*Jellaludin Rumi*

My poems resemble the bread of Egypt — one night  
Passes over it, and you can’t eat it anymore.

So gobble them down now, while they’re still fresh,  
Before the dusk of the world settles on them.

Where a poem belong is here, in the warmth of the chest;  
Out in the world it dies of cold.

You've seen a fish— put him on dry land,  
He quivers for a few minutes and then is still

And even if you eat my poems while they're still fresh,  
You still have to bring forward many images yourself.

Actually, friend, what you're eating is your own imagination.  
These poems are not just some old sayings and saws.

*Translated by Coleman Barks from Persian)*

Sufi poetry traverses distances in time and space between Persia of the 13th century and our own place and time now. Its translation in English breaks the barrier of sound from one language to another, and proves that what remains vibrant with life is poetry of the highest order.

In this beautiful poem by Jellaludin Rumi, poetry itself is the subject, and the act of reading or hearing it, that of sustenance.

Rumi uses bread as the first metaphoric vehicle, and particularizes it calling his poems like "the bread of Egypt," at Passover, to emphasize the way he wants his listeners or readers to take his poems:

Gobble them down now, while they're fresh  
Before the dusk of the world settles on them.

From this level of pleasure of "eating poetry," Rumi next brings us to the heart of the process:

Where the poem belongs is here, in the warmth of the chest;  
Out in the world it dies of cold.

While it is possible to imagine poems like bread or poems belonging to the warm heart, it could take a little longer to imagine what poems would be like should “the dusk of the world” settle on them or should it lie there out in the cold world. Poems become stale, cold, and useless.

To bring the concept of poetry’s freshness even closer, Rumi shifts to another illustrative metaphor, now using the kinesthetic image “fish.” Once the fish is placed “on dry land,” it “quivers for a few minutes and then is still.”

From this point, Rumi’s poem takes the leap of faith in the reader:

And even if you eat my poems while they’re still fresh,  
You still have to bring forward many images yourself.

Eating poetry requires the reader’s imaginative work to complete the experience. The freshness of the poems would still be for nothing if the reader doesn’t know how “to bring forward many images” himself or herself. In the final couplet, Rumi’s poem makes a surprising assertion by shifting attention from the poem to the reader:

Actually, friend, what you’re eating is your own imagination.

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