

Photo by Lee Post

## **Tomas O'Leary – Five Poems**

### **Highstrung Dialogue**

for Z.S.

"Abandon rhyme," the rhymeless one  
commanded, claiming it pained his ear  
and skewed his acrobatics. The rhymer  
tossed his whole great bag of rhyming  
to the wind, tippy-toed boldly out on the  
rhymeless one's loosely strung notion of a  
tightrope, and somersaulted to the middle.  
There the two met and swapped elegant  
views as to absence of net and the lethal fall  
coaxing them towards a misstep, whether  
by rhyme or rhymelessness. Pretty good  
for a rhymer, the rhymeless one said, I can  
hardly believe you're still up here. There's  
nothing to it, the rhymer said, it just takes  
balanced observation of a bias against rhyme  
which I consider (with all due respect) rather  
witless. The rhymeless one cried blather,  
and down down down he went.  
You rhymed, yelled the rhymer: your tightrope,  
but my point.

### **Watermelons Exploding in China**

Chinese growers watch the market:  
Watermelon booming!  
Clever rookie growers say  
"Watermelon must grow bigger  
faster, like, today. . ."

So they take some forchlorfenuron  
(the growth hormone of choice  
if a humungous watermelon's  
what you want in quite a hurry)  
and they heap on way too much  
in a moment of the season  
which is wrong for such a dosing. . .

Oh the big fat watermelons  
bloat and gloat on happy farms,  
but (Holy Mao!) for hapless deeds  
they split their rinds and spit their seeds!

These watermelons that explode  
(mere symptoms of the mother lode  
of fruits and dreams exploding everywhere)  
move pundits to explore their toes  
in search of related phenomena:  
an 8-pound grape gone missing from  
its litter,  
a 12-pound strawberry straining to rhyme with  
slobbery. . .

That all this happens as we have dessert  
is so coincidental, we resent  
the implication we're complicit  
in the strange new ways of fruit.

## **Before Beginning**

Nothing -- (He said  
before beginning) -- tickles Me more  
than Upper Case pronouns

once Nothing's resolved into Something,  
the Bible well-printed. Just for now  
I am All, All is Nothing, what a hoot!

Watch out, you Nonexistence! I am  
God. I don't have to exist  
to blow the socks off

some lethargic infinity of

creedless emptiness. I simply spring  
forth from Myself, now Nothing now

Something, and ding-dong. Who's  
there, the Void answers, and I  
Who've come ringing reply:

"I am Something of Nothing.  
I love you well, Nothing.  
Let us be brides, grooms, whatever."

I confess my nostalgia for a marriage  
made in Heaven. We are Being and Not-being  
together. It's really exciting.

But hold it right there! I'm Singular.  
I'm All that Is and Isn't, yes I am.  
I am polygamy's monogamy,

monogamy's polygamy as well, but don't  
dwell on that. Just remember: Upper Case,  
and I'll stir my old crock pot and feed you

My grandmother's stew. She's a whole  
other story. Myself am eternal  
one day at a time. Help yourself.

## **I Thought I Was Thinking**

for Mel Kamira Bucholz

As I thought I was thinking  
I thought it rhetorically proper  
to practice the speech  
of the thought I thought I was thinking . . .

That is, I think  
I thought I was thinking it,  
though thinking it over now  
think perhaps my thinking so  
was solely rhetorical, mire or gyre  
of contractual symbols, squatter's agreement  
with some state of mind

wherein a thought is property  
and must be claimed as such  
by staking a seamless  
shroud of ownership  
all round its borders to cover fully  
the flat, far reaches of  
the spread I thought the thought  
to occupy . . .  
Sensing my thought  
in jeopardy at the sweeping  
whim of the aforementioned state  
unless I could prove with fluent constancy  
I was within a thinker's rights  
to maintain thus intently  
the delicate conceit This land is  
my land, that there land's yours  
or any such sagely metaphorical  
allusion to the constitution of  
the twice now aforementioned state,  
I thought, well, what . . .

The thought I thought I was thinking  
(Let's just say I think I thought  
I was thinking, don't quote me, I'm not  
all that sure about this, let's just say  
I think I thought I was thinking  
I thought I was thinking it) suddenly  
slapped my face, I don't know, the thought  
or the very speech of it, something, I  
don't know, and I think the thought  
found its way out of itself  
and into something sublimely else,  
something sublimely else being  
the precisely insubstantial phrase  
to feather the void of my saying so,  
so to speak, as I seem to be doing,  
and it dawned like a massing of locusts  
that the thought I thought I was thinking  
I thought I was thinking  
was not (with all warm regards  
to the thought itself) quite worthy of  
now or ever pursuing the very  
speech of it, said effort quite ceasing therewith,  
and I'm feeling much better already thanks  
yourself?

## Baboon Prayer

Should it fall within my choosing  
to resemble a baboon  
bent in prayer

would I follow well the image  
till I was indeed just that

or would I toss the cabana  
as I leapt for the banana  
more a prayer than any prayer

I'll not be answering this soon  
I'm just your average baboon

**Tomas O'Leary** strives genially to accommodate the very strange convention of a third-person bio note. His three books of poetry to date are *Fool at the Funeral* and *The Devil Take a Crooked House*, both from Lynx House Press, and *A Prayer for Everyone* from Ilora Press. His poems have also appeared in many journals. Although his hard drive crashed (a short while ago, as he makes these words) and swallowed to oblivion well over 100 poems of which he had only haphazardly scattered cursive scratchings, he is as always working on a new book, as well as on translations of the Cuban poet, José Martí. Maintaining his unlimited-space, single-paragraph format, O'Leary has an MFA in poetry from the UMass/Amherst writers' workshop and an MA from Lesley U. in expressive therapies. He taught for years at a range of levels: college, high school and little kids: literature, composition, creative writing and Spanish. For the past 15 years he has worked therapeutically/entertainingly with groups of Alzheimer's patients. Married, two grown sons, he lives in Cambridge, plays Irish accordion on his porch, receives occasional neighborly approbation in the form of a bottle of wine or a single long-stemmed rose with the thorns trimmed.