

Letting Go Poems

by Robert Collet Tricarò

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Reviewed by Steve Glines

Most of the poems in this book are not thematically connected to letting go, at least not that I could tell, but there were just enough hints of the catharsis of “letting go” that forced me to read this volume from that point of view.

Letting go includes mourning past loves as well as past loved ones. The title and the first few poems got me thinking about the nature of immortality.

Our collective conscience knows everyone alive today and we remember many of what could be loosely called the last generation. We no longer have a collective memory that includes what it was like to be at the battle of Gettysburg, to pick a spot at random. Our collective conscious let go of those memories with the passing of the last Civil War veteran. We do have descriptions of events, many poetic, of the people and places of that era. The catharsis of letting go involves the emotional draining of the swamp of past relationships. For a writer with the talent of Robert Collet Tricarò, letting go creates the immortalization of places, people and events. That is what I take to be the meaning and purpose of this little volume.

The book opens with a commentary on life:

Carousel

Faro seems bigger than the others,
harness and reins bejeweled with ruby
and sapphire glass, mane dusted
with gold. His eyes are
the wildest of all.

Children stand in his stirrups flailing
the air, shouting to a crown struck
by Faro's glitter, as this magic carpet
whirls to the tune of the Wurlitzer.

Faro travels at great speed going
nowhere. Perhaps the wildness
in his eyes is really terror, having
learned that no rider can pull him out
from the centripetal rut he is in, as
he is rushed toward
an open distance he'll never reach.

To immortalize someone gives them life beyond the grave.
Plato gave immortal life to an otherwise miscreant character
named Socrates. So to Tricaro gives life to an otherwise
unnamed Irish cleaning lady:

The Irish Cleaning lady

Eyes gray as industry.
She'd boarded a ship in Cork
a city on her beloved isle,

but where living was hard,
to seek a better life.
Now she wears the starched

pink uniform that her school

kitchen job requires, which
passes for maid's garb

when she cleans houses
late into the night. This lady
who speaks the brogue

of broad a's
has work to do,
and a clean house it will be.

Poor in the sense that cars, rings
and fashions are of no
interest to her. Rich

in that cards, rings and fashions
are of no interest to her.
Resourceful in that she can

sew a silk purse from a sow's ear,
but there's be nothing in it
a friend, beggar, or thief could want.

Weak tea with a half slice
of marmalade toast for breakfast, thin
Mulligan stew with soda bread

for supper, perhaps
a pear, suit her well.
Her husband has but a small pension,

so she cleans houses.
With no child
of her own, she nevertheless

puts her deceased sister's children
into their callings – white
turned-around collar for the boy,

nurse's pin for the girl.
For decades, crouched
under the lash of moral obligation,

could her life have been more
spare, less giving had she

not left her emerald star
in its sky of sea?

We have all known them the little old ladies with a sad story to tell but a story largely kept to themselves so as not to trouble the grandchildren. We secretly wish for divine intervention, a lightning bolt of luck that transforms that losing lottery scratch ticket we all know to be in her purse into a winner capable of transforming her life into "Queen for a day," a week, a month, just long enough to make her forget her past and smile the broad grin of someone inhaling life for the first time with the appetite of a hungry child. Alas life rarely works out that way and the poet is left with immortalizing a life that would otherwise be forgotten, a life that, without the poet, would cease with its passing.

Mrs. Dory's Teacups

When her husband was alive a porch was called
veranda, Later,
the New York Times became her seat on the stoop
of a four-story, run down walk-up.

Lines in her heavily rouged face, if placed end to end
could mark distance greater than the dimensions of
her world –
the stoop and one room just inside the building's front
door.

The closest thing she came to activity was watching
UPS deliveries and girls playing hopscotch near the
curb.

Her neighbor Todd ran errands for her. She's offer him
coca in one of twelve teacups she and Mr. Dory
brought
from their native England. Matching plates were sold
to pay for her husband's cremation,
so she used saucers to serve her home-made scones.
Todd would run his fingers along the cup's
fourteen-carat rose petals and smile.

She's sip tea, her little finger extended, speak with
clipped
eloquence about children she couldn't have, her
favorite nephew,
slightly older than Todd, who roomed in Greenwich
Village
with a friend. She'd ask Todd why he blinked his eyes
so often.
Why at almost eighteen, he'd never dated.

When Mrs. Dory died some months later, her building
super
gave Todd a box and a note. Ten teacups were
exchanged for
scattering her ashes over Sleepy Hollow.

Two cups were for Todd. The note
included her nephew's number.

And so it goes. This is a beautiful book of poetry. I
recommend it to all.