

Li-Young Lee Poetry Review

By Elizabeth Rosales

Literature Editor

Weekly Contributor: Writing Scene

Despite writing about horrible poets, I can actually talk about amazing ones too! Li-Young Lee is a poet I'm often inspired by in terms of imagery and mood. Information about his personal life can be found on poetryfoundation.org, diving into his upbringing and history. The two poems I want to focus on are *From Blossoms* and *Eating Together*.

To save time and space, you can click the hyperlinks below to read these poems.

[From Blossoms](#)

[Eating Together](#)

From Blossoms

Finding meaning for poems can be tricky. Many people interpret poems differently. I don't usually dig for meaning at all unless they're obvious or not too tricky... instead of doing that, I'll be talking about what works.

“not only the skin, but the shade, / not only the sugar, but the days, to hold / the fruit in our hands, adore it,” (Lee, Lines 8-10)

There's a rhyme in those lines that makes it strong, familiar, and homey. When reading it aloud, you can hear the tenderness of the scene. Lee often makes his poems feel this way, a sense of comfort and beauty where a reader may feel welcomed and not intimidated by the setting.

“There are days we live / as if death were nowhere / in the background; from joy / to joy to joy, / from wing to wing, / from blossom to blossom to / impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom” (Lee, Lines 11-16).

This is the ending stanza. When I was learning about poetry, I learned how to be effective in endings. To make a strong ending, you must end on a final image. It can end on a new image, giving the poem more meaning, or simply strong words that show a strong visual. It doesn't necessarily have to be only those two things, but those often leave a reader wondering.

Repetition is often discouraged... unless someone can do it right. In this case, the repetition of the words, joy, wing, and blossom works because it enhances the poems. It creates more emphasis and sing-songy rhythm.

Poetry Tip

My high school creative writing teacher once told me about the difference between prose and poetry. She didn't often say much about their technical differences but more a poetic standpoint.

"Prose fills silence, while poetry is surrounded by it." Not quite her exact words but that's how I remember.

Poetry is quiet until it's not. Every word, every stanza, is surrounded by silence, and utilizing that silence is key. That's why there are poems with scattered words and lines... it's to create an image.

Eating Together

I read this one in high school, and when we had a discussion about it, we came to the (almost) conclusion that it was surrounded by the death of his father. The beginning is what I found most effective though.

"In the steamer is the trout / seasoned with slivers of ginger, / two sprigs of green onion, and sesame oil" (Lee, Lines 1-3).

These aren't the main lines that create that assumption about his father's death, but they're the opening lines. Having strong opening lines is as effective as a hook in prose. The beautiful imagery and the olfactory and gustatory create an important setting.

Final Note

Poetry is a beautiful form of art I hope many people can successfully do (yes, even Aliza Grace). It's an escape and writing it is tons of fun. Even learning how to write poetry helps gain a new perspective.

Li-young Lee is amazing in his figurative language and imagery. To see more of his works, you can go to poetryfoundation.org.

Editors

Angelina Lazzareschi

Gianna D'Arezzo