



A Tribute to Tea

A selection of the poems on a theme of tea, read at the Wall of Tea, River Market, New Westminster on Saturday, July 16, 2011

Great Wall Tea

Oh, the stories your hear at the Great Wall Tea
In New Westminster B.C.

A wall of teas from many countries, a World Poetry
delight.
Friendly teas, loving teas, macho teas, exotic flavors and
wonderful tastes.

At night when all is quiet, the teas stage a big escape,
socialize, flirt and dance, argue and prance.

Oh, the stories your hear at the Great Wall Tea
In New Westminster B.C.

At 5 am, the teas pop back into their places, looking
innocent.
“Shush, not a word, wait until tonight” they say.

Oh, the stories your hear at the Great Wall Tea
In New Westminster B.C.

Ariadne Sawyer © July 19th, 2011.

Ode to my Mother

As I grew up
and got a scrape or broke a toy
My mother would always say
Don't worry, there's nothing a cup of tea can't fix

Could this be true? Could it really work?
Then on the radio the ad I heard
Mother, there's a crocodile in the pool
The refrain, don't worry, there's nothing a cup of tea
can't fix

Then as I grew older and had kids of my own
When they had problems
Just guess what comfort I gave
Don't worry, there's nothing a cup of tea can't fix

My mother became old and frail and even dementia kick
in
I would look at her with concern in my eyes
Yet she still knew to say
Oh, Don't worry, there's nothing a cup of tea can't fix

Soon it will be my turn
to become old and frail
I hope I will also have the courage to say
Don't worry, there's nothing a cup of tea can't fix

Heidi Mueller © July 12th, 2011.

An Englishman's Drink

We English stole it
traded it and then become it

Drunk by our own drink
brunched by our own beverage
swallowed by our own
liquid thievery

It has become me

I slap it on as war paint
smear it on as
aphrodisiac over the
bloated estate
of my naked body
as I Morris Dance

I don't do emotion
I do tea.

The cure
for embarrassing incidents
of any dimension,

for acne or genocide,
gas problems in front of the vicar
or awaiting nuclear apocalypse
I cry

"anyone for tea"

In the desert or the jungle
my head boiling like a baboon's bum

phew... "anyone for tea"

For those sex education talks
with my teenage kids
er... "anyone for tea"

In the snow
wresting with yetis
planting the union jack on Everest

"anyone for tea"

My head is made of it
Just add water and I percolate

My brain brews up
across three centuries
from China and to India

with the drink
that stewed the soup of Empire
forged the clinking
tea cup chains of slavery

made the toast
to common bonds
of fought for liberty.

The drink
that my ancestors waddled to war on

imbibed for every ill

marinated themselves in
for every celebration
every death, every birth
for every excuse,

to spin the caffeinated
wheel of life.

As for me- I have drunk it all

three kg per year
since age 11 -and I'm now 46
that is 138 kg or 304 lbs of it

which is over all of me
expect the acorn brained
primate part where
I think about sex and sport.

Dry me-turn me to leaf
brew me up and set me free
turn me back in to the world.

Alan Hill © July 12th, 2011.



The Tea's Tale

by lin wang

i was born
in the wild fields and plains of the far east
buds and herbs and leaves
patiently plucked
by weathered hands
then grounded and brewed
into a pool of tranquility

from my birth place i drifted
into imperial palaces and courts
into medicine cabinets of old canton
locked away with recipes
before finally being passed
from master to student
from father to son

then strangers visited
carried me down the silk road
along with satin and spice
across land and sea
on the backs of slaves and camels
in the cargos of caravans and trade ships

i entered street markets and stalls
of western empires
i accompanied trays
of finger sandwiches
in dainty british parlours
i decorated the shelves
of grocery stores and coffee shops
rested on metal countertops
and temple altars

i journeyed for three thousand years
red, yellow, green, white, and black
flowing in water skins
styrofoam cups
and porcelain mugs hand-painted
with swallows and blossoms

i am a gift to you and him and her
a tribute to princes and lovers and gods
i am the heart of solemn rituals
and family gatherings
containing grains
spilling secrets
curing the homesickness of
wanderers.

The Tea Master and the Way of Tea

The Tea Master waits...
patiently
quietly -

On the verge of Zen Meditation -

For the perfect bubbles to rise up
from the hot mineral stones.

He knows, from the ancient craft he practices,
just how much the minerals
change the flavour of any Tea.

The hundred year old Pure Tea
rests – leaf upon leaf,
in the tiny mineral pot.

He pours the sacred water once,
into and then over the tiny Tea pot.

He pours the sacred “one time”...
out onto the Tea Table...
the amber liquid flowing perfectly
through the gaps of the sacred Tea table.

He pours the sacred “second time”...
and moves the magical liquid
around in the magical pot.

It does not take long.

He heats the tiny Tea cups
with the sacred hot water
and lets the water
flow out again from the tiny cups.

He pours the magical vintage liquid into four cups -
tiny splashes for tiny cups.

“Now we are ready”, he says.

We sip and savour and sip and savour
in slow motion...
the liquid rolls around in our mouths...
It cleanses us.

All eyes are closed,
But all senses are aware.

For This
Is
The Way of Tea.

By: Selene Bertelsen © 2011

Senryu

A senryu is a three line Japanese poem structurally similar to haiku. It is unrhymed and the subject is based on human nature. It is usually satirical or ironic.

A haiku similar to senryu but based on nature

Tea bushes terraced
to the hilly horizon
two leaves are picked

sipping tea
bone china cup
fly drops in

grand-dad slurps
tea from saucer
moustache drips

By: Jemma Downes © 2011

Memoirs of a Geisha

When you looked at me
The teapot acquired a mind of its own, and
It pushed away my rigid fingers
Broke free from my trembling hand
That was yearning for the side of your face
And something to hold onto

All of a sudden I could hear nothing
Nothing at all, nothing
But shards of porcelain-screams
Smothering my heart in monstrous bites
Its blood, the blood of the teapot
As brown as the bark of a tree,
Trickled down my palm and
Carried away the little, frantic pulses as it passed over
my wrist and
Splashed ruthlessly onto my kimono
A hot stain branded onto an unfortunate nightingale
Slashing its neck with its liquid, careless brush

I could do nothing as it reached
For the soft-pink cherry blossom trees
Making them wither
I could do nothing as it ruined
A perfectly stitched world
And took away its stillness with an alien colour that was
both
Permanent and destructive
A colour that matched your attentive eyes
Noticing every single move that I made

I apologized for my clumsiness
Bowed away the heat that was burning my hand
My onesan, my older sister, my mentor, dramatized my
silliness
By stressing that it was my first time entertaining a group
of men
As an apprentice geisha.

“Why, Chairman, look what your charm can do to a
girl!”

You only smiled, that generous smile that gave me hope
So many years ago, when I was just a little girl
As much hope as a thousand paper cranes could carry
Into the sky
I listened as I wiped away the spilled tea from the table
with a cloth
Drying the mess on my hand
As a maid came in to do the rest

And I blinked, and snuck glances at you
I wondered if it was possible that
You figured out my sister’s protective lies
Flung out skilfully, jokingly into the air
Lies that were spread elegantly on the tatami floor
Half-shining with a golden hue that both sickened me
and frightened me

I wondered if you knew that behind the painted paper
fans
A geisha put on a smile like she put on makeup
Affections might as well be frustrations and disgust
And the kinds of persons we geisha allow you to see us
be
Were as real as any illusion on a hot summer day

And I wondered that despite all this—
If it was possible for you to have the slightest suspicion
Just the tiniest bit of doubt that
Those words, spoken by my sister
In her act of mending the discourteous
And ridiculous gesture I conducted—

“Why, Chairman, look what your charm can do to a
girl!”

Had it ever occurred to you that
Those words, coming out from a mouth of a geisha
Could actually and accidentally been the truth?

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