



SUPPLICATIONS:
Immediate Poems Of Loss and Love

Fr a n c o D ' A l e s s a n d r o

SUPPLICATIONS: Immediate Poems of Loss and Love
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Cover Art “Into Thin Air”
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~ Lacr imae Ponder a Vocis Habent ~

Tears and Words Have Equal Weight.

-Ovid (Horace, Heroides 3.4)

SUPPLICATIONS

This Collection of Poems is dedicated to my late Mother,
Mary Julia Grace D'Alessandro.

~ ~ ~

My gratitude to: Mary Cronin; Joseph Papaleo; Bruce Smith;
Olympia Dukakis; Gregory Abels, and Edward Albee;
wonderful teachers on my journey.

And to Michael; who has been the *respondeo* to many of my *supplicati*.

A Note

The poems in this collection are inspired by the work of several artists and the movements associated with them: the automatic writing theory as put forth by William Stainton Moses and later revised by Andre` Breton and Gertrude Stein; the haunted words of the poet Cesare Pavese; and the intricate dramas of playwright Edward Albee.

My poetry is written as intensely as a prayer might be offered, thus the title SUPPLICATIONS, as these poems are, in many ways, just that. Indeed, most of my poetic writing is an experiment in what should be called "immediate" writing; which is to say that they were all written rather completely in one brief sitting and then edited rather sparingly, if at all. I do not believe in purity in the ideological sense; as artists, by our very nature, we are constantly absorbing and interpreting everything that is around us. These poems may not qualify as automatic poems per se, but they are immediate because they were written and expressed with a due sense of urgency. The idea that a story lives for a long time in one's subconscious mind and then pushes its way to the conscious mind in a sort of literary birthing process; that it becomes harder to not write the play or poem than it is to write it, makes total sense to me. It is this third influence that is most notably at work in these immediate poems.

"*Avanti!*" (Forward!) has long been my standard salutation as I believe in living your life with a no regrets philosophy. Yet, I also have a Proustian love affair with the past. Loss is a major theme in many of these poems as I believe that much of our life is filled with and formed by negative space; and so the holes that are left by those missing in our lives become as important as the corporeality of those present. Our lives are not whole or solid in form but rather like a work made of mosaic tiles, a confluence of pieces that harmoniously blends presence and absence; love and loss.

Since the age of 15, I have written poetry as a form of catharsis; perhaps, a palliative for my own (at times tenuous!) sanity. The earliest poem here dates to 1990, so we are talking 18 years of life and growth. I am a playwright first, but lives and careers are funny things; they tend to evolve but, they also tend to come full circle. In 2000, while writing my play *Roman Nights*, I penned the lines: "We all need to have some secrets; a little piece of the soul's vast terrain kept wild enough for the caged heart to occasionally run free..." This is exactly what writing these poems was for me; I hope reading them will be a similar experience for you.

Franco D'Alessandro
March 2009

Foreword

Upon utterance, the title of this collection of poetry invokes both its Latin origins and a sort of plea. As D'Alessandro's title suggests there is the desire to be heard through the shared written language, but his collection's title also hints at the private, prayer-like request. Language, whose very function is to communicate, may transfer its speaker's thoughts and experiences from the realm of the private to the public. While language can be taken at face value, poets and students of poetry know that readers must also make sense of the poem by interpreting its figurative language. For instance, the collection's title suggests connotations of prayers, pleas, or requests, so we must ask, what are these entreaties? Perhaps the poet seeks a *correspondence*, similar to that of French Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire, between the earthly realm of human experiences to the interpretive realms of language. In the immediacy of its expression, Franco's poetry articulates both the palpable urgency to live and the pensive potency to reflect on the past and on what has been.

And so the title of this collection also hints at its author's depth of understanding of how we might make requests of ourselves (or of another being), and how, in hindsight, we might perceive the sacred in the shared human experiences. Memory and remembering are key themes in Franco D'Alessandro's poetry; they reflect an awareness of the fleeting and ephemeral. A sort of visual freeze-frame, created by verbal text, enables the writer to show how, even in a particular moment, life continues even when we are documenting it for later years. The remembered dialogue becomes an apostrophe in "Laying Us To Rest" wherein the narrator questions "you," and expresses a desire "to lay you to rest." Moreover, the threnodic "The Wake Too Soon" and the elegiac sonnet "Temporary Blindness" further convey the pain of losing someone too soon. While loss is often a component of love, love is complex and manifold. Adept with metaphors this poet, in a prose-poem, redefines cancer as "love abandoned and rejected." Meaning, as the poet reveals, need not be a passively inherited set of words, but can be an active, personal process. As "We Didn't Yet Understand" discloses this process of remembering and interpreting past actions. The poem's speaker has, however, come to understand the gaze, "[y]ou stared so sweetly; as if asking a thousand questions," but underscores the honest difference between knowing and understanding.

Several poems celebrate the beloved and loving maternal figure, the poet's mother, who is remembered by a child through the synaesthesia of summer "arms tournequetting around/ her slick freckled neck" in "First Swims." But the poetry's point of view is versatile. In "She's Leaving," the poem's narrator speaks with filial love and admiration for the woman whose "fingers still smell of garlic and basil" and with a profound sadness for "[e]scorting the woman out of the world/Who brought me/in." Not only is the mother-son relationship celebrated, but so is the relationship between partners and lovers. "Constancy" is playful in its syntax and extended metaphors of the beloved who is clearly appreciated and valued for being "so many things"—"direct and clear" and "smart and still." Often in the present tense, Franco's poetry celebrates the immediacy, the constancy, and the memory of love, all of which are anchored in the "here and now."

Perhaps this collection of poetry will encourage its readers to discover—if they have not already—the plays of this important contemporary writer.

Pamela J. Rader, Ph.D.

January 2009

Franco D'Alessandro is a native of New York and has studied and worked both in Italy (Rome and Siena) and New York City. D'Alessandro has had sixteen professional international, Off-Broadway, Off-Off Broadway and Regional productions of his work. His 2002 Off-Broadway hit "*Roman Nights*" explores the artist/muse paradigm, vis-à-vis the tumultuous and dramatic lives of stage and screen legends Anna Magnani and Tennessee Williams. This play went on to further critical and commercial success in London in 2004. It opened in Prague in 2006 where it has been sold-out for over three years and will go on to be produced in Rome, Madrid, Buenos Aires, and Moscow in 2010-11. D'Alessandro has also written the screenplay for a future film to be made of "*Roman Nights*". Franco is the author of several other plays: "*The Shattering*"; **Maximum Happiness**, featuring two inter-connecting two-act plays, "*Venice, Again*" and "*One Hundred Dollars Worth of Change*"; **The Museum Hours**, three one-act plays which examine the healing and transcendent powers of art. A new work entitled "*White Elephants Dancing The Flamenco*" is inspired by the work of Ernest Hemingway. By 2010 D'Alessandro's plays will have been translated into six languages and performed in seven countries. In addition to his work as a writer, D'Alessandro holds a Master's Degree in English Education and teaches drama, theatrical text analysis, and creative writing in New York City schools and several universities in the U.S. and internationally. He lectures and gives master classes on Tennessee Williams, Anna Magnani, Italian cinema, and American drama.

Franco D'Alessandro's poetry has been published in various literary journals and most recently has been featured two years in a row in *Balancing The Tides: Art and Poetry Journal*; SUPPLICATIONS is his first collection of poetry. In 2010 a collection of plays will be ready for publication that will cover 1995-2010, the author's first fifteen years.

Franco D'Alessandro is a **2001 & 2002 Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference Finalist**, a **1998 & 2000 Edward F. Albee Foundation Residency** recipient and **2000-2001 Cherry Lane Theatre Alternative Finalist** and **2001 Princess Grace Award Nominee**. A **2000-2001 NEA/TCG Playwrights Nominee**, a **1999 & 2000 Dorset Theater Colony Residency** recipient and **2005 New Frontiers Playwright**. Mr. D'Alessandro is a Member of The Dramatists Guild of America (1996) and The Cherry Lane Playwrights Alternative. He divides his time between New York and Newport, RI.

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What People Are Saying About...
SUPPLICATIONS

“D'Alessandro's poems possess what I value most -an emotional honesty and a keen wit.”

-**Olympia Dukakis** (actress)

“In the immediacy of its expression, D'Alessandro's poetry articulates both the palpable urgency to live and the pensive potency to reflect on the past and on what has been... (He) seeks a *correspondence*, similar to that of French Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire, between the earthly realm of human experiences to the interpretive realms of language.”

-**Pamela J. Rader** (professor)

“It is as though D'Alessandro has invested millions in life and squeezes every penny returned. The poet sits in the middle of his poem (as he does in his plays) speaking loudly about persons who matter. It is healthy to be exposed to such passion!”

-**Gregory Abels** (director)

D'Alessandro's poetry inhabits that precious middle distance between the spiritual and corporeal. While being present and reflective at once, he reminds us that we are all fastened to this earth, to each other, and to our collective condition.

-**Josh Joplin** (singer-songwriter)

“Franco D'Alessandro's poems are a rich well for any person (artist or not) to draw from. These are deeply moving poems filled with wonderfully exciting language. He is an important poet and playwright for our generation”

-**Suzanne Corso** (producer/author)



Franco D'Alessandro is an internationally produced and published playwright. Additionally, D'Alessandro is a professor of drama and writing, specializing in the analysis of 20th Century American dramatic texts. He divides his time between New York and Newport, RI. His website is: www.francodalessandro.com.