



Our Interview with Novelist and Poet

Richard A. Capogrosso



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is capture a moment in time. And that can be a thirty-minute jog
on a cold winter morning, a week in American Suburbia
during the summer of 1972,
or a year in the life a Generation Xer trying to figure it all out.**

Sally from the Norwalk Public Library: Thanks for joining us on the **Poetry Page**, Richard. I only know two poems of yours. One—"Not Today"—was printed in our 2019 **Art & Text** exhibit booklet.

That poem is so lovely in how we can really see how the jogger is reminded of— and frightened by—his own mortality, as he jogs past a graveyard on a winter morning. He is running from his own demise, isn't he, by keeping fit? Trying to? At the irritation and amusement of the residents!

Richard: Hi Sally – Thanks very much for inviting me to take part in the Norwalk Public Library's **Poetry Page**.

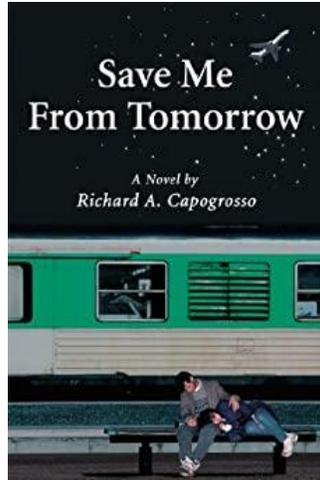
The poem "Not Today" has very humble beginnings. It came to me out of the blue one day as I was taking a jog through my neighborhood. Pretty much the whole poem was in my head by the time I got home, so in between drinks of water, I started to write it down. I have always thought that the runner was both trying to hold death at bay, while at the same time acknowledging that no matter what you do, in the end you cannot outrun death.

Sally: I think that comes across nicely in the poem.

Aside from writing poetry, you are an accomplished novelist! Your most recent novel was published in the fall of 2020, I believe. That's wonderful that you found inspiration during this time of the pandemic, and are continuing to write and publish.

Please tell us about your novels, and what inspired you write them.

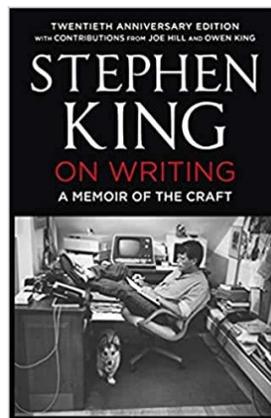
Richard: I wrote my first novel, *Save Me From Tomorrow*, about twenty-five years ago. Like many first novels, it is a bit autobiographical. The plot is loosely based on when I lived in London as a student, and then, after I graduated college, on a work exchange program between the United States and Great Britain (you were able to get a six-month work permit and get a job anywhere in the UK). I didn't find a publisher, so it sat for many years in my desk.



In the meantime, I went to law school and started practicing law. In 2004, I decided to go back and look at the novel with fresh eyes. I published the book in 2005.

After *Save Me From Tomorrow*, I wrote sporadically over the years, but nothing that grew into another novel.

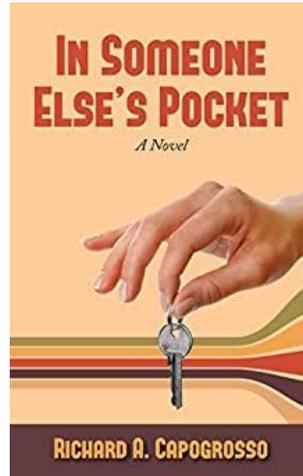
Then about three years ago, I committed to a daily writing schedule, six or seven days a week. I read **Stephen King's memoir, *On Writing***, which is a wonderful book for any aspiring writer (and/or Stephen King fan), and it did help me focus on both writing consistently and having a goal of getting to the finish line on a novel. I completed a rough draft of *The Blue Zone*, and while I was getting ready to begin editing that, the idea for *In Someone Else's Pocket* popped into my head.



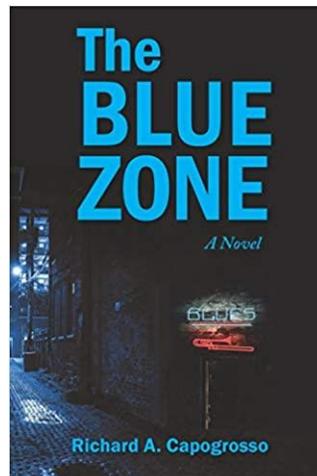
At first, I ignored it, thinking I had to finish one novel before moving on to the next. But the ideas kept coming, and growing. So much so that I couldn't think of anything else. I would wake up in the middle of the night with ideas about the plot and characters.

After about one week of this, I decided I had to start writing it all down. Once I started, it continued nonstop until I wrote “The End.”

Now I had rough drafts of two novels and had to decide what I was going to do. *In Someone Else's Pocket* was shorter— and I felt would be easier to edit—so I published that one first, in the Fall of 2019.



Then I dove back into *The Blue Zone*, which I published in the Fall of 2020.



The subjects of my novels vary. I like to think of *Save Me From Tomorrow* as more of a nostalgic story, a story about Generation X abroad set in the 1990s. *In Someone Else's*

Pocket is a tale of adults behaving badly during the summer of 1972. And *The Blue Zone* is a crime story set to the beat of the Blues.

Sally: Do you use an independent publisher, or self publish? In regards to self-publishing, one must remember that in 1855 Walt Whitman self-published his initial *Leaves of Grass*!

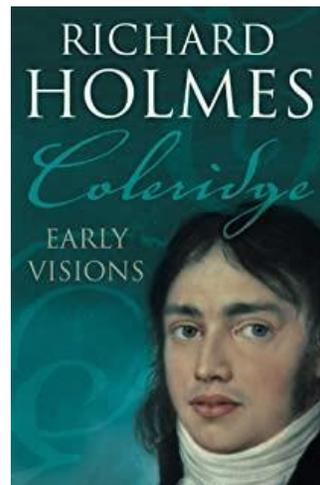
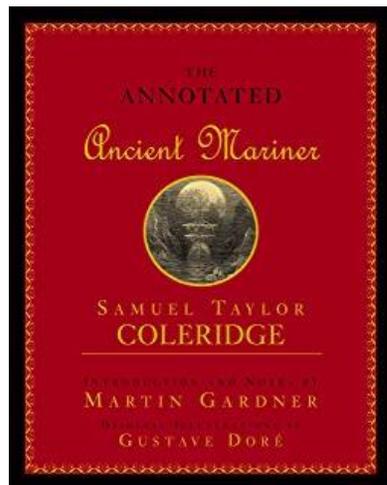
Richard: All of my novels have been self-published. My first book I published through a company called [iUniverse](#). My last two have been through [Amazon's KDP program](#), which is very author friendly.

Sally: That's so informative, and good for our readers to know, Richard. Your book jackets look great, and so professional.

Please share with us your life as a poet.

Did you grow up enjoying poetry? Can you recall a favorite poet from your childhood?

Richard: The first poem I can recall from my childhood is “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” My dad would read it to me. For some reason, he really liked that poem.



Sally: Did you create poems and stories as a child, or did this creativity come to you later in life?

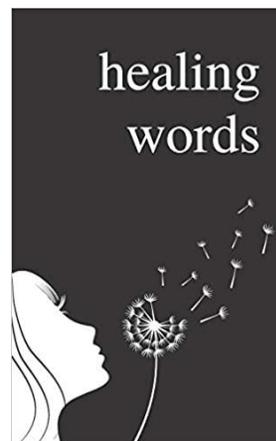
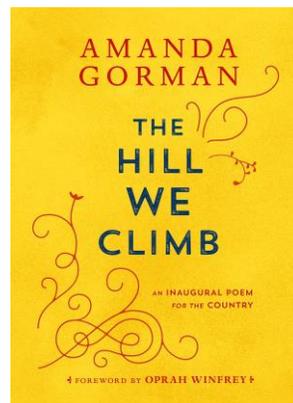
Richard: It really wasn't until high school that I started writing poems, and it was generally sporadic. I had a wonderful Creative Writing teacher my sophomore year of high school, and he had us write a good amount of poetry as part of the class. That was probably when I started writing poems on my own.

I have always enjoyed writing fiction. When I write a poem, it is usually because it just pops into my head unexpectedly.

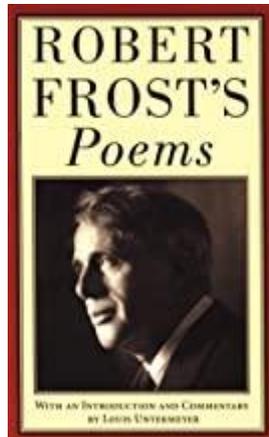
Sally: Poetry seems to work that way, doesn't it?

Who are your favorite poets currently? What are a few of your favorite poems, and why?

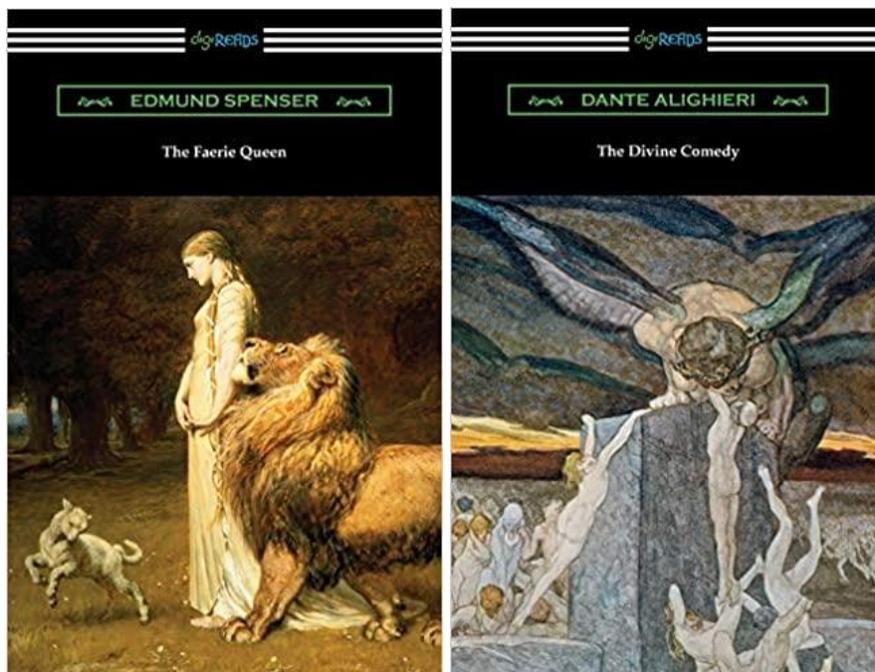
Richard: I can't say that I have a favorite poet, but I was so impressed by **Amanda Gorman** at the Presidential inauguration that I do plan to read her poetry.



I think my favorite poem is “**Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening,**” by **Robert Frost**. The imagery of that poem is still so hauntingly beautiful.



And maybe because my first memory of a poem is “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” and I like a good story, I have always been drawn to the epic poems, like “The Faerie Queen” and “The Divine Comedy.”



Sally: Do you find a recurrent theme crops up in your poems? If so, please elaborate.

Richard: I’m not sure I have a recurrent theme, but what I have always tried to do with all my writing is capture a moment in time. And that can be a thirty-minute jog on a cold

winter morning, a week in American Suburbia during the summer of 1972, or a year in the life a Generation Xer trying to figure it all out.

Sally: You are a graduate of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and PACE University School of Law. That’s an impressive education. Please tell us about that!

Please share with us the career path you took, what you do now, and how writing fit—and fits— into the picture.

Richard: I graduated from Syracuse with a degree in film/television production and English, so after graduation, I moved out to Los Angeles with some friends and gave Hollywood a try.



After about seven years, I moved back to the East Coast to be closer to family, and also so I could attend law school.

I have worked at several law firms over the years, and am currently a solo practitioner, working mostly in the area of corporate law.

I find writing early in the day works best for me, so I try to set aside time each morning. If I can write between one and two thousand words, that’s a good day!

Sally: That’s shows incredible discipline!

Did you have formal training as a writer?

Richard: I majored in English in college, but have never had any formal training as a writer. I have read a good amount of advice given by other writers, and most will tell you, “Keep writing!”

Sally: Do you attend workshops, or prefer to work independently and privately?

Richard: I have attended a handful of writing seminars over the years. I think they can be very helpful for meeting other writers, providing tips and giving you inspiration.

There are also a lot of online writing courses you can now take through various providers, like [edx](#) or [coursera](#).

Sally: Thanks!

You have published fiction, but do you also seek publication for your poems? Are you in poetry magazines or journals, or do you have a collection of poetry?

Richard: I have never published any poetry in a magazine or journal.

I am member of a website called www.medium.com, which is specifically tailored to writers. It allows writers to post fiction and non-fiction tailored to specific genres or subject matter. I have published poetry and some short stories on that website.

Sally: Please share with us your thoughts on publishing in general. What advice would you give to other writers on publishing? How important is publishing to you?

Richard: I spent a lot of time researching the publishing industry before publishing my second novel, and it was a little disheartening. It can take quite some time just to get an agent, and then it can take years for a book to find a traditional publisher, if it ever does.

At the same time, it has never been easier for a writer to publish their own work through [Amazon's KDP program](#), [IngramSpark](#), [DRAFT2DIGITAL](#), and similar services.

The trade-off is that with self-publishing you have to do everything yourself, from editing to marketing, and every step in between. If you decide to go the self-publishing route, there are plenty of resources available to guide you, and most will tell you—at a minimum—to hire an editor and a cover designer. Doing that will go a long way to give your book a more professional look.

Sally: Outside of writing, what else in life do you enjoy? Family? Running?

Richard: I do enjoy both of those: spending time with my family, and getting in a good run. Though, lately it's been more of a robust walk. I'm also a bit of a film buff, and love watching movies and television drama series. And of course, diving into, and reading, some good writing!

Sally: Thanks for joining us on the **Poetry Page**, Richard!

Richard: It was a pleasure. Thanks again!



Now, three of Richard's poems...

Not Today

Jogging past a graveyard
On a frigid January morning
Can be very motivating

Your pace quickens as
The dead glance over at
Your smooth strides slicing through the winter cold

“Show off,” one mutters from his tomb, while
another boasts, “I was like you once,” as
You feel your heart beat faster

The dead begin to recede from view
But their gaze is still upon you, as
You breathe deep the icy air

As the final admonishments of the dead
Build to a crescendo of
“You’ll still end up here”

You sail past death
As the sun rises on the frozen earth
Thinking to yourself
not today
Not Me
Not Today

Richard A. Capogrosso

Reading Confucius in a Graveyard

I read Confucius in a graveyard
Let his ancient wisdom sink in
As the dead looked on and on
I suppose that makes me deep
I suppose that makes me an artist
It makes me neither

I read Confucius in a graveyard
In an effort to break a malignant streak of writer's block
Another time, I ate nothing but pretzels and yogurt
For two days straight
I'll try anything during these times

I read Confucius in a graveyard
As a flock of geese relieved themselves upon former residents of my town
They seemed enamored by a Mr. Singer,
Who must have looked up from his eternal slumber,
And thought, not for the first time,
What was the point of it all?

I read Confucius in a graveyard
As the skies opened up and rained upon me with Biblical fury
Then I ran soaking back inside to my computer
To stare at the three sentences I had written

And wait for the inspiration that may or may not ever come.

Richard A. Capogrosso

Some Haiku for a New Year

A New Year Begins
As we Struggle with Dark Fear
Searching for the Light

What are the items
That we Decide to Carry
When the World is Lost

An Election is
the Ultimate Decider
of a Nation's Fate

A Cold Winter Wind
Reminds us of the Promise
That Life will Renew

A mask on your face
Keep your distance, stay away
Life as we know it

Will Green Shoots of Spring
bring the Hope we all Need Now
or will Darkness Stay?

A shot in the Arm
Is what we all need right now
And we will need two

Sunset on New Snow
Blinds us with a Harsh Beauty
That We May Forget

When the Gray Fog Lifts
and the Darkness Starts to Fade
What will Normal Be?

A New Year Begins
and Light will Banish our Fear
If we let it in...

Richard A. Capogrosso

