Questions for David Liss

REMEDIAL READING
by Wendy Barker

Report from
National Association for Poetry Therapy
Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio

Poetry helps us notice our own places.
What does San Antonio smell like? Jasmine drift.
Honeysuckle, mountain laurel.
When we have houseguests, they say, 'Your birds are so loud!' Or, 'Those trains at 2 a.m.!
How do you sleep?'
After all these years, they are our lullabies.

Naomi Shihab Nye

BOTANICAL GARDENS - 33 acres of formal gardens, pools, fountains, and natural areas; Native Texas Area, South Center Periscope.
CARVER CULTURAL CENTER - Center traces its historic roots back some 85 years. Facility is both a gallery for contemporary art exhibits and a theater for performing artists.
Jazz at The Landing - NPR's acclaimed radio show, Riverwalk Jazz, is produced in San Antonio at The Landing, one of the country’s oldest jazz clubs.
GUADALUPE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER - Dedicated to the development, preservation, and promotion of Mexican - American arts.
INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES - The institute is concerned with the people who produced Texas events - people who created the robust kaleidoscope that is Texas today.
LA VILLITA - Restored Mexican village captures charm of the past amid narrow streets, and authentic adobe houses with arts and craft shops.
MAJESTIC THEATER - Opened in 1929; closed in 1974; restored and reopened in 1989 as a performing arts center, the Majestic is said to be one of the finest "atmospheric" theaters ever built.
MEXICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE - Exhibits of contemporary Mexican artists.
McNAY ART MUSEUM - Works of artists who charted course of 20th Century painting, museum houses post-Impressionistic paintings.
Poetry Venues - Please see the Events section.
SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART - Six-building complex of renovated historic buildings opened in 1981 to house ancient art of the Americas collection, past and present.
SOUTHWEST CRAFT CENTER - Housed in restored 1851 Ursuline Academy, city's only remaining example of French Provincial architecture. Craft Center established alternative art school at site in 1971.
WITTE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE - Extensive exhibits covering natural history and natural science of Texas dioramas of Texas flora and wildlife. Rebuilt on grounds are four early Texas houses and furnished log cabin.

About Voices de la Luna

James Brandenburg
Co-Editor

Welcome to the fourth edition of Voices de la Luna: A Quarterly Poetry and Arts Magazine. The Board of Directors has voted to publish future issues of Voices in a ‘Publish on Demand’ version, that will permit readers to print their own copies, if they wish to obtain a hard copy version.

Dr. Mo Saidi and I are pleased to welcome P.C. McKinnon to Voices de la Luna as Technical Director. We also are pleased to welcome two new junior editors, Julia Hawkins and Jonathan Sanders, both students from Clark High School. Dr. Mo Saidi, Salome Salter, P.C. McKinnon, and I share a common vision to take poetry and arts into the community, to transform lives with our work, and to improve our city’s quality of life.

The City of San Antonio has been supportive of Voices de la Luna, especially our vision of using the arts for healing in the community. They paid for my trip to Washington, D.C. in April to participate in the National Association for Poetry Therapy Conference. This issue has a report about the conference and some of the innovative projects that are being done nationally in poetry therapy.

We are witnessing the healing effects of poetry and art in our community, as we bring various groups of people together. I see very clearly the difference that my poetry support groups make in young people’s lives at Clark High School and how my journaling course at San Antonio College impacts the lives of college students in a positive way.

In the fourth digital edition of Voices de la Luna we are interviewing Cyra A. Dumitru, senior at Clark High School, who dedicated her ISM Project to survivors of suicide and drug addiction and who made a positive impact on the lives of her peers.

We are also publishing poems which combine dream symbols with metaphors. Enjoy the quality of our prose and poetry selections from writers in San Antonio and from other parts of the country.
Voices de la Luna, 15 June 2009

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**A Message from the Chairman**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97iAQRWNbXE

**Flag Still There**  
*by P.C. McKinnon*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7AQslfpyeQ

**Cyra A Dumitru Reads**  
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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eoZ2iYUb2Y

**Julia Hawkins Reads a Poem, Devils in My Dreams**  
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**Poetry Reading at The Twig Book Shop**  
Robert Bonnazi  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd8bDOkCrl8

**Bryce Milligan**  
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**Marian Haddad**  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ue4maNo_rM

**Mo H. Saidi**  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvNa0E8brgo

**Marcia Roberts Reads from Cantu One:**  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkSVTWoKR_U

**W.S. Merwin Speaks**  
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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QQ1aCS6Pbw

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**About Dr. Harmon Kelley**

Dr. Harmon Kelley is a highly respected member of the San Antonio Medical Community. He has devoted his life to the practice of obstetrics and gynecology while dedicating his resources to the arts. He and his intellectual and well-educated wife Harriet have supported artists throughout the United States and collected a most significant collection of African-American paintings and sculptures. By accepting the chairmanship of Voices de la Luna, Dr. Kelley has embarked in advancing poetry and literature in San Antonio.
**Featured Poem**

**REMEDIAL READING**

Wendy Barker

The smallest classroom in the ninth-grade school. Yellow walls, and the ceiling seemed too high. Boxes lined up in bright colors on the tables, each a different level. This class for retards? This a toony class? The kids swaggered and straggled through the door, unwilling. To be seen here. Laminated cards, one at a time. Second-, third-grade skills for fourteen-year-olds. Mostly boys. I’d been assigned to help the reading teacher, her thick gray hair bunched and slipping along with hairpins and combs. Ruth organized field trips, took her own beat-up station wagon. Once she drove us up the coast to the great blue herons’ nesting grounds. We walked up and up until we could look straight down into the tops of the big trees. She showed us how to spot the saucers of nests resting in the branches.

I never got the kids to move beyond a level or two. Nobody stayed on task. Once I was pronouncing vowels with Lester Sims, light-skinned, freckled, a skinny little dude. Okra, Oakland, Coke. And o: butter, supper, dove. His eyes shone. He was standing beside me. “Doves,” he said. “We can talk about birds?” “Sure,” I said, and told him about the finches I was raising at home in as big a cage as I could afford. “Man, why didn’t you say you wanted us to talk about birds?” and he was out the door. Before the bell rang for the next class he was back. I was putting cards away in their boxes, red tipped ones in the red box, brown in brown, folding the lids closed. “You like pigeons?” he grinned. “I do, I do,” I said. He unzipped his jacket. I don’t know how many wings flapped out from him, ruffled my hair and fluttered all through that yellow room, a sound only feathers can make, as Lester told me every one of their names.

From Nothing Between Us: The Berkeley Years, forthcoming from Del Sol Press, and originally published in Ontario Review.

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**Poetry & Language**

“Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve the languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language.” Samuel Johnson, lexicographer (1709-1784)

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**Our Mission**

Our mission is to publish a quarterly poetry and arts magazine with international flavor and a commitment to inspire, educate, and heal community members through the arts.

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**Digital Media and E-Magazines**

Mo H. Saidi

Co-Editor

Last summer BusinessWeek stopped printing a hard copy and went solely digital, providing business information to its readers only online via the internet. With about 150 editorial staff members, and probably another 75 people on the publishing side, BusinessWeek was losing money for well over a year at an alarming rate and the income from the advertisement was declining due to the current severe recession. However, the reality of the matter is that the production of publishing paper magazines around the country, and the world, has become a losing business. The main reason for this devastating trend for paper media is the growth and popularity of digital media.

Digital media historically used to refer to electronic media that work on digital codes. Today, computing is primarily based on the binary numeral system. In this case digital refers to the discrete states of “0” and “1” for representing arbitrary data. Computers are machines that (usually) interpret binary digital data as information and thus represent the predominating class of information processing machines.

However, a newer meaning of ‘digital media’ is the dissemination of information online, using text, audio, and video. Florida’s digital media industry association, Digital Media Alliance Florida, defines digital media as “the creative convergence of digital arts, science, technology and business for human expression, communication, social interaction and education”. A few examples of digital media are cellphone, digital television, internet, World Wide Web, e-book, and e-magazine or online magazine. An online magazine shares some features with a blog and also with online newspapers, but can usually be distinguished by its approach to editorial control and more importantly by its focus on a specific area of coverage.

A quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine is devoted to regional poetry and arts. Online magazines that are part of the World Wide Web, that is, all or part of a web site, are also called webzines. Some online magazines may refer to themselves as “electronic magazines” to reflect their readership demographics, and more importantly to capture alternative terms and spellings in online searches.

Many large print-publishers now provide digital versions of their print magazine titles through various online services for a fee. The New Yorker provides the digital format of its printed magazines to its subscribers without extra charge. The most important part of their service is the availability of the past issues in digital reader format when one visits the archives of The New Yorker.

We at Voices de la Luna have striven to produce an informative, oneiric, and community oriented literary online magazine. We are converting past issues to pdf format and offer them in our archive, so they can easily be printed by our readers. The present issue represents our efforts toward achieving these goals. Please visit and enjoy the pages of the website and the archives section and help.
The mixed media format of video poetry, in which poem, image and sound interact symbiotically presents an exciting variation in poetry presentation. A well produced video poetry integrates poem, image and music into a unified work of art, with each factor enhancing the others so the synergy is more effective than poem or image presented separately. Where the poem is dominant the eye absorbs the image and frees the ear to follow the spoken word. If the image dominates the captions or voice over enhances the course of the moving picture, reinforces it and gives it articulation and direction. The music, of course, supports and bonds poem and image.

Voices de la Luna: A Quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine will provide video poetry as a regular feature of the magazine. Most of the videos are produced by our editors and edited in our laboratory. However, we are eager to hear from our readers and welcome suggestions. Please send your comments to main@voicesdelaluna.com.

United States Poet Laureates from 1971 to 1980

from http://www.loc.gov/poetry/laureate.html

1971-1973: Josephine Jacobsen
(1908-2003) Jacobsen, born on the shore of Lake Ontario, Canada, while her American parents were on vacation, was educated at Roland Park Country School in Baltimore. Her poetry, published in nine volumes, is known for its spare, elegant language on a broad range of topics. She also wrote short stories and literary criticism. Jacobsen generously advised struggling writers. She received the Shelley Memorial Award in 1994 and the Robert Frost Medal for Lifetime Achievement in Poetry in 1997.

1973-1974: Daniel Hoffman
(1923- ) Hoffman, born in New York City, was educated at Columbia, through to the Ph.D. He is the author of nine books of poetry, including “Hang-Gliding from Helicon: New and Selected Poems”; a verse novel, “Middens of the Tribe,” and “Brotherly Love,” a finalist for the National Book Award in 1985. His poetry is noted for merging history, myth and personal experience. He is Felix E. Schelling Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania.

1974-1976: Stanley Kunitz
The award winning author Davis Liss was born in New Jersey in 1966, grew up in Florida, and now lives in San Antonio. He has a B.A. from Syracuse University, an M.A. from Georgia State, and a M. Phil from Columbia University. He abandoned work on his Ph.D. dissertation at Columbia University to devote himself full-time to writing. All of his novels to date, with one exception, are historical novels: A Conspiracy of Paper (2001), The Coffee Trader (2003), A Spectacle of Corruption (2004), and The Whisky Rebels (2008). The Ethical Assassin (2006) is his first full-length work that is not historical. His newest novel coming out this year is The Devil’s Company.

Mo Saidi: It seems like you were on a roll, academically speaking, but then you abandoned your dissertation. How come? Davis Liss: I genuinely enjoyed the work I did as a graduate student, particularly the research and the regular engagement with serious critical thinking, but as time went on I began to suspect that I did not want to have a career as a university professor. I’d always wanted to write fiction, but earlier in my life I’d somehow decided that doing so was for other people, not me. One day I simply decided I would take a shot at it. My motto was that some people had their books published, and I might as well be one of those people.

You have won many awards for your novels; which one was the most important award for you as a writer? It is always pleasant to win an award, and I’d like to win lots more, but they don’t occupy a major place in my consciousness. Winning a literary award is not like, for example, winning a sporting event or a political contest. There is no clear empirical evidence of who should walk away with the prize. I’ve been on award committees, and I know how much wrangling and compromise goes on. For me, it’s far more important that I have readers who respond to and think about my work.

Most of your novels are built on a historical background. What is your fascination with history and how do you select the time and place of your novels? I began writing historical fiction not because I am fascinated by the genre but because my doctoral thesis was focused on 18th century Britain, and this was an subject I both found interesting and knew enough about to write a novel. That said, having written both contemporary and historical fiction, I have discovered that I genuinely like working with historical settings. I think for me the main attraction is a kind of intellectual excavation, going in and seeing what I can really learn and extrapolate from a distant culture. As for the subject matter, I usually have some kind of germ of an idea that comes on me randomly at one point or another, and then I simply follow up on it. There is usually very little strategizing.

Your recent novel, The Whisky Rebels, has been reviewed widely. What is your reaction to Walton Olson’s article in The New York Times Book Review that asserts a historical discrepancy: “the Whiskey Rebellion climaxed in 1794, too late for its leaders (even in a novelist’s fancy) to have instigated the Panic of 1792”? I’ve already public responded to this review, which was frankly absurd. Olson is a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank dedicated to the idea that no market must ever, under any circumstances, endure any regulation. I’ve written several books that examine the consequences of unregulated markets and irrational trade, and this guy clearly had a bone to pick. These are not happy time for advocates of pure libertarianism. This particular point, as with most of the points he made, demonstrated a poor understanding of the historical context and a lack of familiarity with the book he was reviewing. Yes, the rebellion climaxed in 1794, but the tax on whiskey was passed in 1791, sparking immediate outrage and reaction. My book does not purport to be about the Whiskey Rebellion itself but about the Panic of 1792 and how it relates to the whiskey tax.

In the period described in the book, coffee gained huge importance not just as an exotic substance from the Ottoman Empire, but as a valuable trading commodity on a par with gold or salt. What is your fascination with coffee? I do personally like coffee and take a great deal of pleasure in drinking it, particularly when I am working, but I used coffee as the commodity at the center of the novel because it made good historical sense. I knew I wanted to write a book about someone try to corner the market on a new commodity just as it was emerging, and coffee fit the profile nicely. Because I was already interested in economic history, coffee seemed like a great match because it became important in European culture in large part because it was embraced by men of business.

Your novel, The Coffee Trader, offers fascinating views of the people and issues in 17th Century Amsterdam. How and where did you research that period? I’d say that about 80% of that book was researched in libraries. I was living in New York City when I researched it, and I spent a great deal of time at the Columbia University library and the New York Public. Only once I had a very solid draft and knew precisely what I was writing about did I go to Amsterdam, where I did some library research, but mostly I did physical research – walking around, seeing as many things as I could from the period that were still around to day, trying to get a sense of how life would have been lived in the city at that time.
Have there been arguments with the historical premise for other books of yours? No.

Let's talk about you and San Antonio. Even though we have Gemini Ink, this city is not a hotbed of literary activity. How did you decide to settle in San Antonio? My wife is a professor at Trinity University. I'm portable, so when she was hired, we moved here.

San Antonio is a bicultural city; do you speak Spanish and what is your favorite Spanish-language writer? I have not yet learned to speak Spanish, but it is on my list of things to do. I don't have a favorite Spanish-language writer, but then I don't have a favorite English-language writer either. I've never been comfortable with the idea of favorites. When my daughter asks me what my favorite color is, I always tell her I like them all.

If you had to advise our new mayor on the literary arts scene in San Antonio, what would you tell him? I'm not sure the mayor is a good place to go with advice about the literary scene, which though small I think is already quite vibrant and does an excellent job of looking after itself. I've been very impressed since I've been here with the number of literary programs in this city as well as the number of high quality speakers who come through San Antonio. Literature is a very hard thing to promote in the public sphere because reading is, at its core, a quiet and private activity. Its pleasures, rewards, and challenges are things that individuals need to discover on their own. Even schools can only do so much.

Have you considered writing a novel based on some historical events in San Antonio? I do have an idea for a project that would be set in south Texas in general in the past, but I'm not sure when I am going to get to it. I have a draft of a novel set in contemporary San Antonio, tentatively titled San Antonio Douch Bag, but it still needs a lot of work and, let's face it, a new title.

Where do you go to eat a favorite Tex-Mex dish? I think the region's great contribution to mankind is the Tex-Mex breakfast. My favorite place to go these days is Café Salsita. Great clean beans, and possibly the best salsa in town.

Your next novel The Devil's Company is about to come out; can you tell us about the book and what attracted you to the subject? The novel is set in the 1720s in London and is about a pivotal moment in the life of the British East India Company. We tend to associate the Company with tea, but in the early part of the 18th century, it was known for its textiles. The importation of cloths and clothing produce by cheap labor was causing great hardship for the indigenous wool and linen-weaving industries, and my novel is set just as a law is to go into effect that will ban the import of cloth from the East Indies. In many ways the novel is a thriller about the uneasy relationship between business and government, and I like to think of it as a look at the 18th century origins of the modern corporation. With lots of fighting and chase scenes.

Mo H. Saidi: Thank you very much for your time.

The Only Arab Author Who Won Nobel Prize in Literature

Mahfouz, Naguib (1911-? ), Egyptian author, the first Arab writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature (1988). Born in Cairo, Mahfouz was educated at the Egyptian University (now Cairo University). His collection of stories, A Whisper of Madness, appeared in 1938. While employed at Egypt's Ministry of Religious Affairs from 1939 to 1954, Mahfouz wrote three historical novels, but after World War II (1939-1945) he turned to writing novels of social realism that examined Egyptian society and people.
Reviews & Books

Flowers for Lovemakers, Peace-builders, Godseekers
A Book of Poetry by Tom Keene
Reviewed by Mo H. Saidi

Death or dying has no place in Tom Keene’s poetry; however, if you want to read poems combining the all-important topics of love, peace, and god, you have an excellent chance of discovering those critical elements of life in Tom Keene’s newest book of poetry, Flowers for Lovemakers, Peace-builders, Godseekers. These poems are full of passion and concern for humanity and express a deep longing for ever illusive peace. Naomi Shihab Nye’s blurb on the back page encourages you to read Tom Keene’s poems, if you are lost in the chaos of today’s dizzying electronic life. Even death is not a tragedy, only the beginning of a new transformation as Keene emphasizes in the poem, “Resurrecting in Little Bear Canyon”:

Come Spring,
when the loose ends of this life
have been tied and trimmed,
scatter my ashes in Little Bear Canyon.
Scatter me,
to nourish the caterpillars and butterflies
that feed the robins and swallows
that I may rise in their songs.

Politics of war, deceitful acts of government agencies, and the loss of innocent lives are Tom Keene’s concern. Several poems remind us of the injustices committed by our government against the native people of South and Central America. In “Dear Ben,” Tom accepts his own responsibility for providing means for the government to purchase guns and assassinate peace-loving intellectuals such as Benjamin Linder in this confessional poem, “Letter to Linder”:

Dear Ben,
Last month,
like last year,
and year before,
I filed my income tax return.
As always,
it saved me
the hassle with IRS
and loss of my house
or prison for outright refusal:
     All in all, a bargain,
a paltry fee
for my liberty.
Last week,
you were the age of my children
when hired guns,
with a bullet to your head,
put an exclamation point
to your life:

Keene has been an activist, educator, and a theologian all his life, he serves his communities, and he writes emotionally brazen poems which skillfully describe the pleasures of the mundane and routine chores of daily life. On the one hand, he decries the massacre of people in El Salvador in “American activists”: “They called it low-intensity warfare. / Before it was over / we killed fifty thousand in Nicaragua, / Eighty thousand in El Salvador, / mostly, as usual, women and kids.” However, on the other hand, as in the poem, “Soup celebrates” he writes about the soup making:

The makers feel the urge of ingredients;
carrots call, “cut us,”
celery says, “slice us,”
beans and greens, “throw us in,”
rice and spice, “add us too.”
“Gather us, mix and make us,
plunge us in water, cook us with fire.
We hunger to be taken by hunger,
We live that our life be for life.”

After painting a bleak picture of how American government interferes and meddles in the neighboring countries south of our borders, emphasizing our government’s affinity to involve us in unwarranted wars, Tom Keen ends the book in a positive note. In “Celebrations,” he reveals his innermost faith in goodness, love, and peace:

Thank you, for receiving my words and meanings
when I tell you
I love you.
Thank you, for receiving my hands as they cup your breasts.
Thank you, for receiving my body as it enters you.

“May the Universe so graciously receive me when,
in dying, I bleed myself into the All.”

Keene’s courageous socio-political poems inspire us to state that there might be less bloodshed in the world, if only we had more poets like Tom Keene.

Echoes of Glory
A novel by Robert Flynn


. . . Continued
Robert Flynn Speaks about *Echoes of Glory*:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPWH9aqCtSo

**Memory Lessons: A Doctor’s Story**
*Jerald Winakur*

In *Memory Lessons* physician Dr. Jerald Winakur describes his father’s decline from Alzheimer’s disease. Abrahan Vergese, author of *My Own Country*, *Tennis Partner*, and *Cutting for Stone*, praises the book as a powerful and lasting treatise about the sickness.

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**Views & News**

**History of Waterboarding**

A Victim’s Description of Waterboarding
*from www.npr.org*

Source: Columbia Journal of Transnational Law, 2007

What does waterboarding feel like?
The CIA doesn’t discuss interrogation techniques, and those who may have been subjected to the technique aren’t exactly holding news conferences. The most detailed descriptions come from eyewitness accounts and court records from wars past. The following is a transcript of the 1947 court proceedings in the trial of a World War II Japanese war criminal: Chinsaku Yuki. He was accused of the torture and murder of Philippine civilians, and ultimately convicted and sentenced to life in prison. This exchange is between the American prosecutor, Col. Keeley, and Filipino lawyer Ramon Navarro, who was subjected to waterboarding.

**And then did he take you back to your room?**
When Yuki could not get anything out of me, he wanted the interpreter to place me down below. And I was told by Yuki to take off all my clothes, so what I did was to take off my clothes as ordered. I was ordered to lay on a bench and Yuki tied my feet, hands and neck to that bench, lying with my face upward. After I was tied to the bench, Yuki placed some cloth on my face. And then with water from the faucet, they poured on me until I became unconscious. He repeated that four or five times.

**You mean he brought water and poured water down your throat?**
No sir, on my face, until I became unconscious. We were lying that way, with some cloth on my face, and then Yuki poured water on my face continuously.

**And you couldn’t breathe?**
No, I could not, and so I, for a time, lost consciousness. I found my consciousness came back again and found Yuki was sitting on my stomach. And then I vomited the water from my stomach, and the consciousness came back again for me.

Where **did the water come out when he sat on your stomach?**
From my mouth and all openings of my face ... and then Yuki would repeat the same treatment and the same procedure to me until I became unconscious again.

**How many times did that happen?**
Around four or five times, from two o’clock up to four o’clock in the afternoon. When I was not able to endure his punishment which I received, I told a lie to Yuki ... . I could not really show anything to Yuki, because I was really lying just to stop the torture.

**Was it painful?**
Not so painful, but one becomes unconscious — like drowning in the water.

**Like you were drowning?**
Drowning. You could hardly breathe.

Image of a woodcut depicting waterboarding included in J. Damhoudère’s *Praxis Rerum Criminalium*, Antwerp, 1556.
Editors’ Poems

On the Day I Die
Mo H. Saidi

The unkempt room, dusty and disused
the exiguous perfume concealed in the books
the blinking of the alarm clock, cell-phone
the incessant sleep, the long gentle night

the hibernated machine waiting for a click
the dated OED flashing on the screen
the desk, cluttered, stacked with old prints
the black cat lies between your cold feet.

She knocks on the door; it is seven
but she hears not the cuckoo clock’s peal
an eerie silence fills the still room
the cat’s paws over the fallen quill.

She looks at a piece, the last short line
searches in vain for the right word, gives up
and puts the stack of papers in a dossier
the abyss of oblivion, the unfinished work.

The clotted arteries brings no life to the brain
thoughtless and cold, it is held taut in the bony
cage; totally vanished are the stored images
past memories, phrases and metaphors.

On the day you die your incomplete works
are your silent orphans; forlorn, they are
now deprived to be redacted or groomed
lacking the father, they are squashed in the files.

The cat enters the room again, robs the cold leg
pauses and looks at the chair, begs to be bribed
with nibbles, waits to hear your sonorous voice
your new work, mesmerized by the ashen face.

Hello Darkness Echoes
James Brandenburg

"Hello darkness
my old friend
I’ve come to talk to you again”*

Hello darkness
my old friend
I slip into your womb
the sound of silence
I feel your pulse
your rhythm
in my veins

No noise in the night
only icons of stillness
your holy embrace
if I but listen
if I but follow
you touch me
traces of sweet honey
on your tongue

Hello darkness
the song of silence
as I dance my dance
into light.

*Song by Simon & Garfunkle

Echoes
James Brandenburg

Will you remember me
by my verse?
My words walk
their solitary way
across pages
of black ink
and white paper
They echo on my heels
at night
Will you, too,
walk
that solitary path?
Will you hear the echoes
of my past
in the wind?
Will you remember me
when I die?
The National Association for Poetry Therapy’s 29th Annual Conference for the year 2009 took place from April 15-19 in Washington, D.C. This year’s theme, “Embracing Poetic Expression: Creative Pathways for Self, Community, & the World,” captured the attention of the participants. I heard participant after participant tell me that this year’s conference was the most exciting and most inspirational conference they had attended throughout the years.

One of the most inspiring moments for me was on Wednesday, April 15, when several NAPT members and I visited The Art and Drama Therapy Institute Inc. in Washington, D.C. I thought the Institute embodied and exemplified what service in the arts entails. It is the philosophical and transpersonal belief of the Institute that adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are in fact our spiritual teachers. We saw and heard the Inspirational Choir and Moroccan Ensemble perform. It was truly one of the most inspirational moments of my life. How could such a level of quality be achieved with adults who had intellectual disabilities? Part of the answer lies in the dedication of those working with this group of adults. The other part of the answer revolves around the fact that we should perform good deeds without asking for anything in return. We are responsible spiritually for what we don’t do. The message that people with mental retardation give us is to be who we really are—without the mask. Not one of this group is whole, but they love God. Dr. Sirkku M. Sky Hiltonen, Executive Vice President and Co-founder of the Institute, and Dr. M. “Muggy Do, Creator and Producer, told us that the mentally retarded knew who we were, before we knew who we were. They teach us a powerful lesson in patience. By teaching people of disabilities, we have to learn patience. They deepen our capacity to love. Dr. Sky’s dream was to work with people of disabilities; she added that we should do something everyday for our dream; procrastination is deadly. The workers and therapists at this institute were fulfilling their dreams by w The presenters included Ingrid Tegnér, MSW, CPT, M/S, Wendi R. Kaplan, LCSW, CPT, M/S, and Nancy S. Scherlong, LCSW, PTR, M/S. Each of the facilitators had the same poem and the same plan for the session. Working with adults who had severe disabilities.

After the Pre-Conference, the conference was launched on Thursday evening with onsite registration, the 4th Annual Newcomer’s Welcome Dinner and the opening event: The Washington Word Waggle. I was happy to see that The Triple Workshop-Experience Poetry Therapy has become an annual event. This three-part workshop (on all three mornings) is designed for those who would like a full experience of a poetry therapy group and provides participants a total of 4.5 peer hours. The presenters included Ingrid Tegnér, MSW, CPT, M/S, Wendi R. Kaplan, LCSW, CPT, M/S, and Nancy S. Scherlong, LCSW, PTR, M/S. Each of the facilitators had the same poem and the same plan for the session. Newcomers, trainees and all interested in group formation were welcome to be members of a small, developmental poetry therapy group and accumulate peer group hours towards certification. On Friday morning, the President’s Welcome was given by NAPT President Diane Alfordyce.

The President’s Welcome led us into the workshops, all revolving around the theme, “Embracing Poetic Expression: Creative Pathways for Self, Community, & the World.” As a participant, I always have a problem choosing which workshops to attend. I wish I could attend every single workshop. The titles always fascinate me. For example, on Saturday morning, how could one possibly choose among such fascinating titles as Using W.B. Yeats to “Hammer your Thoughts into Unity” (Presenter: Rob Merrit, PhD), Metamorphosis: Cocoon to Butterfly (Presenter: Ronni Miller), Awakening the Eco-Soul: Paths to Healing Self and Planet (Presenter: Mary Reynolds Thomson, CPCC, CAPF), Writing, Not Zanax: Poetry As a Side-effect- Free Prescription (Presenter: Marianela Medrano-Marra, PhD, LPC, CPT), The Universal Language of Dreams and Poems (Presenter: Charles Gillispie, MFA, LISAC), and Becoming Credentialed in Poetry Therapy (Presenter: Elaine Brooks, RNC, MA, PTR). Since I am a fan of W.B. Yeats, I attended Dr. Merritt’s workshop: Using W. B. Yeats to “Hammer Your Thoughts into Unity.” As in most of the workshops, we did lots of writing and integrated the poetry and ideas of Yeats into our own lives and into poetry therapy.

I also had the privilege of attending Workshop B-2, entitled “Poetry Behind Bars.” The Creative Righting Center, led by Director Dr. Sherry Reiter, PTR-M/S, in cooperation with the Indiana State Maximum Security Prison, conducted a unique experiment that lasted for two years. Twelve poetry trainees mentored twelve prisoners long distance, with the objectives of nurturing self-expression and enhancing emotional balance. The presenters included Director Dr. Sherry Reiter, Connie Banta, MA in English and MFA in Poetry, and Laura Santner, LMSW, CPT. What struck me most about this poetry session was the enthusiasm and energy of the presenters.

They offered us many details about their interaction with the prisoners and some of the issues they encountered. Workshop participants were asked to engage in a writing exercise playing the role of a prisoner. Two poems were read aloud, The Way It Is by William Stafford, The Thread by Denise Levertov, and a quote by Walt Whitman. The writing prompt consisted of the following: “Is there a thread or several threads that lead you/you follow you/push or pull you? Write about these threads. Describe what they do and the purpose they serve in your life.” We were all given a few minutes to respond to the prompt, and then the responses were distributed among the participants without names. In the second part of the exercise, we played the role of poetry . . . Continued
We closed the conference on Saturday evening with a talk by Gregory Orr in person. He is the author of ten collections of poetry and read from his most recent book, Concerning the Book that is the Body of the Beloved (2005). Equally impressive was the Keynote Address given on Saturday evening by Evelyn Torton Beck, PhD, who holds PhDs in both comparative literature and clinical psychology, and is Women’s Studies Professor Emerita at the University of Maryland. She has studied dance as a healing practice and was fortunate to have great poets address us and sign their books. The featured poet this year was renowned poet Linda Pastan, poet laureate of Maryland from 1991 to 1995, who has published 12 volumes of poetry including, The Five Stages of Grief, Waiting for My Life, Carnival Evening: New and Selected Poems, and The Last Uncle. Linda’s most recent collection is Queen of a Rainy Country. Poet Gregory Orr, who was the Featured Poet at the St. Louis NAPT Conference in 2005, shared some of his latest poetic ponderings and insights into the healing power of poetry. I was really impressed by his book on the healing power of poetry, Poetry as Survival, and after having read his book, I was just as impressed with meeting Gregory Orr in person. He is the author of ten collections of poetry and read from his most recent book, Concerning the Book that is the Body of the Beloved (2005).

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Poetic Collaboration
between Father & Son
James Brandenburg

P.C. McKinnon and J.A. Mac’s book, Anthem, is brilliant, unique, one of the best books of poetry on war I have ever read. When I read the book, I cried for my brother, who had fallen in Vietnam in 1968; I cried for Pete and his son; I cried for myself and my son; I cried for my wife and her son who just returned from Iraq; I cried for my friend, Hejo Müller and his losses in Nazi Germany; and I cried for all of us, who have been touched by the horrors of war.

In their dynamic collection of poems and journal entries, Anthem, P.C. McKinnon, father, and J.A. Mac, son, confront the reader’s denial of the obsolescence and stupidity of war, the reader’s support of a violent war machine, the necessity of a soldier to follow orders at all times and in all situations, and challenge the stereotypes of war and peace. Through this collection of journal entries and poems, father and son find a way to honor and respect each other, but, most of all, they find a way to heal through putting their thoughts and actions into words. In their healing, lifetime journey of individuation, father and son struggle on a path that turns inward and converts their outside warlike struggle into a struggle of psyche. Their exploration of the issues of war forces the reader into acute awareness of his/her own issues. The American anthem towers in the background of this collection, but father and son sing their own anthem through their poetry and find their way back to a special relationship of father and son, transforming the reader along the way.

A LESSON IN STONE
Joan Seifert

We never wailed aloud, but quietly wept, practiced coping, Spartan-like, accepted. We tried for dignity—that’s how we played it.

Did we mislead you? We weren’t strong alone. Each discerned some stab of tragedy, and we recalled the Emperor’s guard gasp proudly, No, not wounded Sire, I’m surely dead. *

It’s never clear why wins go to the brutal, yet we curbed rage. Did you not sense the effort? We struggled, struggled hard, to be like stone, holding taut, and hopeful of our lesson.

Yet, beneath the crust, a shift – imagined? As stone was grasped, a weapon was the promise. What irony. Our restrained achievement failed, slipped back to ancient urge. And stone struck stone.

* Incident of the French Camp, Robert Browning

Flag Still There*
P.C. McKinnon’s

They came like flags, wave after wave, smelling of salt, blood on their lips, they kill for a trophy – notches on the bedpost of politics.

We read about patrols – engaged – in newspapers, printed grains of sand; unquestioned truth for all those believers of unquestioned things.

Flags against flags, hearts against hearts, waves against waves, breath against breath, heaving, racing. Hearts, souls rubbed raw, hatred oozes, infiltrates all.

Aren’t we all proud – beaming for all children to see, learning hatred, learning how war resolves problems time after time, wave after wave?

*From his Book of Poetry, Anthem
Ahmed Ismail Khatib, you died,
but you have so many bodies now.
You became a much bigger boy.
You became a girl too—
your kidneys, your liver, your heart.
So many people needed what you had.

In a terrible moment,
your parents pressed against
spinning cycles of revenge
to do something better.
They stretched.
What can that say to the rest of us?

In the photograph your hand
Is raised to your chin—position of thought.
This was not your intention.
But people you will never meet are cheering.

Please keep telling us something true.

Because of your kidneys, your liver, your heart—
we must—simply must—be bigger too.

---

A Poet’s Thought

Solitude has but one disadvantage; it is apt to give one too
high an opinion of one’s self. In the world we are sure to be
often reminded of every known or supposed defect we may
have. -Lord Byron, poet (1788-1824)

One workshop entitled “Poetry Behind Bars” at the 2009
National Conference of Poetry Therapists reported on a
unique, two-year experiment. The Creative Writing Center,
led by Director Dr. Sherry Reiter, PTR-M/S, in cooperation
with the Indiana State Maximum Security Prison, had as-
signed twelve poetry therapy trainees to mentor twelve pris-
oners long distance, with the objectives of nurturing self-ex-
pression and enhancing emotional balance. The presenters
included Director Dr. Sherry Reiter, Connie Banta, MA in
English and MFA in Poetry, and Laura Santner, LMSW, CPT.

A Prisoner Profile had been prepared by Susan W. Fusco,
PTR. All prisoners were males, ranging from 17 years to
their eighties. They were serving sentences from a mini-
mum of 10 years to life; they had committed crimes such
as murder, rape, theft, gang crimes, and pedophilia. In
order to participate in the PBB Program, the men had to
manifest and continue to maintain “good conduct;” they
had to maintain a job which could be that of student and/
or working in an area of the prison’s physical plant. The
personality/character/attitude attributes of the Poets Behind
Bars met a wide range of characteristics, from eagerness to
share stories from outside/inside prison life to only sharing
in highly coded terms, from responding only to direct PBB
exercises/prompts to a willingness to write profusely, from
being keenly aware of their attitudes and feelings to offer-
ing no comments about self or no analysis of their situation,
and from being almost illiterate to being well-read, curious,
knowledgeable, and highly responsive to gifts of literature.

The enthusiastic presenters offered many details about
their interaction with the prisoners and the issues they en-
countered. For example, Laura Santner shared the fact that
her prisoner wanted to know her age, her profile, and more
about her personal life in general. Laura read a kind, pro-
fessional, and encouraging letter she had written
to her prisoner; yet, she managed to convey the idea that
maintaining boundaries was an integral part to the success
of the program. She kept those boundaries throughout the
program and had a successful interchange with her prison-
er. Not all of the prisoners were able to stay in the program
for two years, some of them because of the nature of the
prison setting, but those who did had a positive experience,
and the poetry therapy trainees seemed to meet their
objectives of nurturing self-expression and enhancing
emotional balance.

Workshop participants were asked to engage in a writing
exercise playing the role of a prisoner. Two poems were
read aloud, The Way It Is by William Stafford, The Thread
by Denise Levertov, and a quote by Walt Whitman. The writ-

Continued . . .
continued, Poetry Behind Bars

prompt consisted of the following: “Is there a thread or several threads that lead you/follow you/push or pull you? Write about these threads. Describe what they do and the purpose they serve in your life.” We were all given a few minutes to respond to the prompt, and then the responses (without names) were distributed among the participants. In the second part of the exercise, we played the role of poetry therapist and wrote a letter in response to the “prisoner’s” writing.

The writing exercises were an excellent way of bringing the work with the prisoners to a practical level, right into the reality of the workshop participants. Below are some samples from the workshop—both poetic responses and comment letters from poetry therapists. The role of prisoner is played by Doris M. Tennyson and the role of therapist by Willette Mary Hughes.

A - Thread of Prison

Workshop Participant Doris M. Tennyson
Taking the role of prisoner visited by spouse

He speaks the news
but I don’t know the words
He seems to speak
in Spanish

No formal hearing
for me yet
and I look up at him
from a hole of despair

On a second visit
I tell him wordlessly
that I am being
transferred
I don’t know
where to or when
or for how long
only that it will be far away
My hole of despair
deepens

I bid him goodbye
hand pressed to glass
with his hand matching
Tears stream
as I strain
to feel the flesh
matched to mine

He leaves
I turn to the wall
and place upon it
my untouched hand
I sink into
the Grand Canyon
of despair

I see no one
no light
not even the weak rays
from the bulb above me
I have died
All my life has run out
into the blacker than
black hole

Back in the circle
at the workshop
I learn my “spouse”
during this experience
knows no Spanish

Tears continue to flow.

B - Therapist Response

Workshop Participant Willette Mary Hughes
Taking the role of mentor to prisoner

You speak of a Grand Canyon
of despair. The metaphor is strong
and deep. You are being transferred
and feel powerless against it.
There is great sorrow in the poem
and hands matching against the glass wall and
matching tears streaking down bond you to your
husband.

You feel so alone with no light
to guide you. Perhaps the light
that may come from your words on the
paper will ease and cleanse & help
you through this alone time.
Please write of your feelings
again. Treasure your words
and your honest feelings.

Honoring Anthony
and that is a profession with the potential to make that kind of difference.

JAMES: Is it difficult to prevent the problems of others from affecting your emotions and your personal life?

CYRA: As a social worker, I want to make a difference in the lives of others, but the profession walks hand in hand with some of the saddest images, harshest conditions, and unsettling reality checks one can possibly think of. Even in grief therapy, especially when it comes to suicide, one sees people at their worst and, at times, life at its worst. Neither of these professions can be done effectively halfway; one must enter into them because one truly cares about others and wants to make something better in the world even if one gets little or no recognition for it. I have found that helping others has its rewards in a very profound spiritual manner that no salary can ever replace. I always receive much more than I give.

JAMES: It seems that working on this project has had a very profound effect on your life.

CYRA: This project was a major step in my life because I realized that even though I was uncomfortable doing or learning something, I did it anyway, strengthening my determination and desire to excel at what I am so very focused on achieving. I would like to thank my wonderful and patient mentor Michelli Gomez for her support and belief in me. I extend this gratitude to my parents who have raised me to think for myself and pursue my goals with passion and dedication.

During her work at the Children’s Bereavement Center and during her work on the ISM Project, Cyra read many poems written by drug addicts and potential suicide victims. Cyra wrote a response to the poem, Twenty-One, written by a now famous poet, Jimmy Santiago Baca, who at the time the poem was written, was severely addicted to drugs. I am including Cyra’s response as a poem in the next page.
Response to Poem Twenty-One
Cyra A. Dumitru

I held you in my arms
your body moved, breathed

Yet something was missing.

I spoke with you and was answered
we exchanged laughter, thoughts

but you did not sound familiar.

I held your eyes with my own
you looked away, hiding your emptiness
and shame at being so.

Where did the man I loved
retreat to?

To lose you to another
would be painful
experience assured me.

Yet to lose you to white powder
and syringes, this pain was nameless endless

You are beyond my responsibility
yet not my love
I hold your coherent moments close to my heart, precious
keeping something of you alive and safe
hoping that someday I can give it back to you.

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Select Poems
Part I

Blossomed Rose
Jonathan Sanders

Blossomed rose
Alone and sheltered in a world of hurt
Shielded by thorns
Only to give pain to others
You look so elegant
But your story isn’t so bold
You loose your peddles for a fault
Hoping that the missing peddles will blend in the soil
You look so real
But you feel so fake
Why can’t you just grow with honesty?
Instead with judgment and hate
Then maybe, just maybe
Your peddles can stay strong and intact

Spring Haiku
Don Mathis

Florets announce spring
As loud as colorful fire
As silent as fog
Manqué
Bryce Milligan

Black hair glinting
midnight and silver
like aspen leaves
in moonlight,
she reads alone,
sitting in the empty
September bleachers,
her slender waist
embraced only by
knotted sweater arms.

In school, she’s
out of school,
a shadow lounging
at the yellow
edge of a pool
of lamplight.
Away in the dark, my
hands ache to capture
her insouciance
in stone.

She Got So Old
Jo LeCoeur

She forgot her turquoise greens
and tawny oranges,
Forgot our names
and that she loved us—
woodland, basin, range.

Her poles had wandered.
Hilltops worn flat,
fast rivers slowed to silt.

Roots once tied red earth to cypress bark
and bone. She forgot the story.
Her clay dried out, the seams gave way,
Layers sliding,
colors failing.

The day she left, she slept all day.
All night she fed the fire her name.

We did not circle like the wolves.
To howl. Sit silent. Howl.

The day she left, we danced for her.
We shook the whitest shells.

POETRY
John Fox

She skates boldly onto
the page, tips one vulnerable foot
back and forth slowly, till finally
the edge of a toe
cuts a simple, sharp line
through the world’s cold resistance
and with that plain courage,
a statement of intention begins;
and you can’t turn back any longer
from the weight of feeling and letting go
into the flow that follows.
Poetry is a choice to feel it all,
not all at once but gradually to sink down
within ourselves, to give what fear
we hold behind our knees
to gravity and grace,
to discover what makes
our whole world turn;
the place our necessary weight
lifts to lightened joy.

BONDED FLIGHT
John E. Serna

As birds in flight bonding tight across the endless skies,
my love and I are ever bound and cannot fly while apart.
Like flocks of geese drifting with ease on others’ wings,
our lives clipped together flapping united with one heart.
Careening into life’s path which does most reckless seem,
and cast off into the breeze worried not tomorrow bring.
Soaring high above clouds amidst loud thunder’s screams,
until close to god hearing his choir of angelic songs sing.
Gliding far into empty sky no respite nor relief come by,
we tire and stagger off our flight plan dipping to ground.
Where danger lurks and evil’s fate all too eagerly awaits,
our downward plunge crashing below as together bound.
It’s best to disengage and each seek our private refuge,
but our souls are fused and can’t refuse each other’s cry.
So bound we stay in hostile skies thru danger’s deluge,
until one is hit falling to die while the other learns to fly.
A lone bird bearing fast with toil and effort sadly made,
aches and strains lifting its spirits high above the pain.
And flies away seeking a better world than of its mate,
meeting love in heaven’s scene fleeing death’s acclaim.
Reach
Catherine-Grace Patrick

There is pain, I say,
in growing tall,
to fit one's destiny---
yet, the fragile,
like the agile
are caught trying---
not denying perfumed Fate,
her cache of "what is meant to be"---
humanity, in its cryptic sea,
is suited for the swim!

And eyes, grown dim,
still recognize
what shines
on the shore-line's whole---
as weary limbs
pursue their goal
until the prize is won---
evocative of another time
when the child
stood tall, to walk:

Where there is breath,
there's purpose---
as the reaching soul
braves turquoise waves,
to rest, in time,
at its best.

The Feather
Maripat Munley

It hurts if I walk too far and
I can no longer run.
Yoga practice is a shadow of what it used to be.
Here in this frequently visited hermitage, a silent place,
my body is announcing the passage of time.
It surprises me to be this age – so unexpected!
"Acquiesce" the hermit says, "you cannot escape it;
another way will open"

With Pierre Tielhard, may I remember
that the fibers of my being are painfully parting
in order to hear the Inner Voice.
And with Hildegard make me a feather on
the breath of God.

My Sanctuary
Lou Taylor

The holy place
Where I find my voice
Poetry
Has become my sanctuary
When I think
No one is listening
No one is paying attention
From the depths of my soul
A poem arises
I'm not sure
Where it comes from
Or
Where it is going
But I know
There is
Purpose
**EULOGY OF SURVIVAL**

*Josie Mixon*

I painted a landscape of my life  
Darkness prevailed from every corner  
A rainbow glows peeking in through a crack  
In my darkened sky  
From a place  
Furthest from my memory  
Blinding the eyes who put me there  
A prism of light reflects  
In the eye of the scope  
Vintage dreams are brought to life  
Trading places with regret  
A eulogy of my past has been read  
Placed upon the wings of a phoenix  
Memories that will not be missed  
Lanterns glow in darkness  
Bringing hope to the table of survival  
Despair is written off in not so rhyming words  
Loosening the tongue of vengeance  
Awarding a certificate of hope and desire  
And last but not least  
Finally making me  
Ordinary

---

**Faces**

*Esther C. Alexander*

What’s to tell in a face  
Of what’s pure and what’s true  
The features may need verifying

The eyes that look hard  
Are the ones that are sad  
When the time comes for their dying

The noses that flare  
Might have tenderness where  
It was thought there’d be anger instead

The mouths that may smile  
Showing teeth all the while  
May be hiding deceit within

Prominent dimples  
May be deep in the skin  
Of the one whose character is unstable

Facts these may be  
Yet mistakes are still made  
By believing the stories that faces may tell.

---

**1973. East of the Berlin Wall**

*Marilyn Stacy*

The poem draws her inside truth again and again  
until she knows its every syllable and rhyme,  
its metrical phrasing of sounds.

With each word she is pulled deeper into the poet’s world until  
its clear metaphors and strong emotion permeate her being,  
lighten her burdened heart.

The words, connected as intricately  
as a Mozart sonata or a Beethoven symphony  
plant hope for peace deep within.

She folds the thin sheet of paper,  
with care, tucks it into her pocket,  
wants for the searchlight to pass, then races across bare earth  
toward the wall with the others.

*Dallas psychotherapist Marilyn Stacy, retired Richland College professor, is past president of the Poetry Society of Texas (PST). THIS POEM WON 2ND PLACE IN THE 2008 AHMAD SHAMLOO PST CONTEST. Stacy’s poems can be found in anthologies, journals, and in her books Along the Path and Dreams. Website is www.marilynstacy.com.*

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**Is writing a poem like praying?**

*Tom Keene*

When unknown meaning fills the air  
and we breathe the mystery of it,  
smell it,  
let our skin itch for it,  
let it salivate our cheeks,  
let it go to our heads,  
let it stab our hearts,

and we think,  
we have to tell this in words,  
and we think,  
are there words for this?

And we try anyway.

We be present  
to the presence of mystery  
and let the telling happen.
A Point
H. Palmer Hall

Suppose Eve was not naive.
Sly, cunning, yes, she knew

what she was doing as the first story says.
First you entice a snake and then the whole thing’s

easy. And then, it stiffens, points, rises in the direction of a rood fruit tree

and says, Take/Eat, the snake that is, not the tree. And so, she takes, eats and,

in that communion shares with the only other one who cares. Surely it is not

her fault. The snake, flaccid, all stiffness gone, trembles on the ground, whimper, knows they'll

joke of Eve and hunt him to his death.

For the Soldiers
Peter Holland

Another war was raging in a dry and dusty land.
Far from home farm boys stood the warriors wall defending the defenceless.
Fanatics took faith and state, twisting them to terror.
Far from home farm boys stood the warriors wall defending the defenceless.
Brothers bled for the hords of the helpless. Far from home farm boys stood the warriors wall defending the defenceless.
A light of liberty.
A fortress of freedom.
Far from home farm boys stood the warriors wall defending the defenceless.
Citizens standing solid.
Heartland’s heroic core.
Far from home farm boys stood the warriors wall defending the defenceless.
Willingly they will serve answering the clarion of duty.

A Woman Lost
Cynthia D. Villafranco

Ya no soy mujer
I am not a woman, my mother weeps.

That forbidden word
Not to be repeated in her home.

That wound remains open.
That scar has not healed.

The brown liquid oozed from her breast.
No, she begged, praying to saints that could not hear.

Fear grips her—tearing her heart.
Shame sets in and silently torments.

White, hot laser sears off the sick breast
Leaving behind a stream of tears and gone was she.

Ten years and cancer free.
She laughs, cries and remembers
The woman she used to be.
**Select Poems**

**Part IV**

**AT THE KAMIKAZI MUSEUM IN TOKYO 2009**

Poem in the style of a ‘haibun’

*Agnes Meadows*

Old men cry softly as they walk away,
Wipe eyes grown dim with memories of days
When defeat seemed unthinkable, waste
A word that could not be spoken
Aloud. Here blank walls are medaled

With photographs of stern-faced boys who
Had passed through life in a flash of flame
And heroism, their eyes empty of song
Or comfort, their faces like clocks the hands
Of time had touched but briefly.

No dust had settled in those corridors,
No poetry penned on the days before death,
No laughter heard scuttling cross lips
Unsoftened by love. Only the memory of sacrifice
Recalled in whispers by historians and old men.

They stood unsmiling
Honour a grim-faced reaper.
Ancients stand weeping.

---

**This Poem Is Not Controversial**

*Assef Al-Jundi*

it has no enemies
does not want to argue
defend one point
or attack another

this poem is at peace
it exists
past opposites
beyond contradictions

it has but love to offer
feels no need
to name
the nameless

between words
in the spaces around letters
this poem
shines

---

**Trees**

*W.S. Merwin*

I am looking at trees
they may be one of the things I will miss
most from this earth
though many of the ones I have seen
already I cannot remember
and though I seldom embrace the ones I see
and have never been able to speak
with one
I listen to them tenderly
their names have never touched them
they have stood round my sleep
and when it was forbidden to climb them
they have carried me in their branches

---

**Mother’s Daughter**

*Stuart Young*

They dance around each other
With joined hands
Each is reflected in
The other
One is truly daughter
For she came out of
The other
And is of the same substance as
The mother
The daughter catches uncontaminated
Wind of the sun
Fuel for our future
She nurtures our civilization
With precious treasure
Mother reaches out for her
With sparkling gossamer threads
Spider’s web covered
In shining dewdrops
Latticework of light
Along which crawls
The busy-ness of Heaven
Tierra Madre
La Luna
HOLES IN THE LINE
Loretta Diane Walker

“And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars.”
Paul Laurence Dunbar

At the kitchen table, I try to unravel the seam of mystery wrapped around my mother's life. I pull on the gray thread with casual conversation.

Cotton. I know you picked cotton when you were young and dreamed of becoming a nurse but tell me about your childhood.

She shrugs,
I was born during the depression and I have been depressed since.

Her answer leaves holes in my history.

I want to know the conductor who passed this baton of desire to make words breathe. She vaguely sketched her life, left me to embellish it with questions.

Pain. That's the word she does not use; it's the hole in the family line that keeps me from knowing. Somewhere in the swirling darkness there are answers.

I eat my chicken, drink my diet coke, do not press for any more clues. When I get home, I draw a smiley face around her past hang her strength from the first branch of the family tree.

A Condition for Being Alive
Sheila Moore

Trapped by traffic and schedules, I drum impatient fingers, out of sorts and out of sync with the slow beat of the radio's song and wonder why it's called rush-hour when we inch our way, one car length at a time, to a four-way stop.

Drawn like a magnet born of compassion, hearts and heads turn in unison to the Goodwill lot where a man, not old, seizes a break in the oncoming traffic to begin his slow, uncertain journey.

Shaking his head a stubborn "No!" to offers of help from stunned drivers, we watch as he passes, the right-front wheel of his motorized chair wobbling out of control as it crawls on down the road--leading an eighteen-wheeler in a forty-mile-an-hour zone.

Inaudible sighs resonate with our mortal apprehensions, and silent voices whisper well wishes to a fellow being who wants to be free--a condition for being alive--if just for awhile.

WHAT IS POETRY?
Jacob Benjamin Gamez

Poetry is my life line
It is the voice that calls me
It is the power of music
It is the love of my life
It is not something I can express
Or put into words
It is not something
I can just write
In a poem
Or a song
Or a piece of paper
It is quite simply a verse
A gift of life
It is love.

Brooklyn to Miami Beach, 1949
Bonnie Lyons

After five days in a beige Chrysler we found shreds and signs of our departed relatives: abandoned in a fancy wall-size cabinet a cloth doll imprinted with a cousin's face, next to the dryer another cousin's polo balls and dusty mallet, and in the kitchen a leftover live-in butler and cook. That first evening the butler served us dressed in tails. Next morning our mother found the couple eating lamb chops for breakfast and promptly fired them, trying to exorcise family demons --pretension and madness.
Polishing Prison Bars

Joan Seifert

It’s visitors’ day.
I must polish prison bars –
but with what?

Tears, would a poet say?
A waste of time;
tears dry so fast – the meaning and the sheen forgotten.

Or drops of soup from supper?
They leave such salty film
on lips and chin, and rust the lock.

Or sweat?
But they all know a nail file
never will effect the great escape.

Why bother then, to polish prison bars?

The heart demands completeness.
We take up hopeful space, and
…a man’s reach must exceed his grasp …
Isn’t that Bob Browning’s claim?
Though he was captured in another way.

And this, my prison—
not all that demanding, really.
My mind and heart are still free, after all.

Prove it, I heard the warden whisper…

Courage

Donald Jackson

Standing in the kitchen,
I decry, “Dad, look what you
are doing, you’re hitting me!”
The words uttered by some
unknown courage.
You turn and reach into the cabinet,
for the bottle of bourbon. Pouring a
glass, you sit with your elbows on the
table and say nothing, but your eyes
tell me everything.
Now years later, Dad, you no longer
hit me. Though I still remember that
gaze.

Urban Angels, Fallen

Rod Stryker

Splayed against
street columns, store fronts
and high rise office buildings,

these angels
cast odd shadows
between
mortals phantoms
and
plastic living.

We prop up
assignments
these seraphs
can never accomplish

and damn their
efforts at
the same time

all the while
shoving
their icons
down each other’s
throats.

And when they fall,
we gape at
such weakness

hammer the pins
to keep them grounded
here
with us.
We hunker down against the heat, 
close the curtains, shut the blinds. 
We live our lives inside: we say 
This can’t go on forever.

We eat too much, go on a diet, 
play cards, peruse the catalogues, 
pay bills, flip through old magazines, 
take sleepless naps. Late afternoon, 
when thunder shake the floor 
and sends a shiver down the walls, 
we huddle in bed and celebrate the cool, 
charged air, but when the storm is over 
we lie together in our pool of sweat 
more parched than ever. You turn the TV on, 
click past the latest Baghdad bombings to the local weather. I close my eyes.

You should know better, my sweet, 
then to keep hoping for a break in the heat.

—

A slow breeze through the leaves, clouds on the horizon, 
You wonder, “What’s that?”
Well, my friend, that is the tale of our fellow Wind.
See, Wind was once a calm fellow who enjoyed the light of day, 
But Earth was not fond of our fellow Wind. 
So he set a trap.
Yes! That is where our fellow Wind’s tale begins, 
For our fellow Wind had a fear. 
Of course! He was afraid of Cloud, 
So Earth sent Cloud to scare Wind. 
But Cloud is not so much a threat as is his servant, Thunder. 
For Thunder was forever cursed to flash when he blinked, 
And bark when he spoke. 
So, with the help of Thunder, Cloud went running at our fellow Wind. 
And to this day you can feel our fellow Wind, 
Running from the always fearful Cloud.

Juan Castro is 12 years old and attends 7th grade at Scobee Middle School.
**I Would**

*Eric Seibel*

I would
dig the earth
from between your toes
and bake it into a chocolate
brown amulet, a gift, an offering
to the walking spirits
I would
 carve your name
into the heart of a tree
taking care to leave
the tree alive
so that both your love, and the tree
would grow
It would
be comforting to hear
your sonorous snoring
beside me in bed
so I would always easily know
you live through the night.

You would
ask for my best
Valentine’s candy heart
filled with colorful treats: love’s rosy red, orange sunny joy,
saffron yellow sweetness, jungle green growth,
cerulean blue serenity, midnight indigo soul, lust moon silver
golden age patina, the black and white of truth, and, of course,
the cocoa brown between my toes . . .
tiny, tasty morsels
substantial enough to digest
over a lifetime
all for your slow enjoyment
I’ll give them
if you asked me to
I would

---

**it’s time**

*janna knutson*

dark clouds are rolling against blue mountains,
hugging them like down comforters
the autumn breeze is fresh and clean
i pack my gear, fill my water bottle,
toss it all in the jeep and head to the beach where
all is quiet except the breaking waves,
the seagull call, the crow in the bull pine

why do i smile?

I unload my kayak, barefoot and solitary
sunlight breaks through
casting autumnal colors across the bark of the trees
sparkles across the glistening wavelet’s
the far mountains are a misty blue -
sweet reminders of their presence

peace, she is my sister - peace, she is my soul

no one else is here this time of day
i climb in and settle, pushing off into taciturn waters
gently buffeted by a light wind
a nearby canada goose talks to me soothingly
the morning sun warms my face
paddles dipping quietly, I cross the waters ruffled plains
rhythm and peace rock my soul to the core
this is real, this is truth - i am home

---

**Cheating the Willow**

*Alexandria E. Garza*

Willow paces on a cloudy parking lot, cold shutters, cold day. Its reflections multiply, multiply.
Circling the possessed in its place, all sublime substrates are reduced to mere science, marveling at insipidness.
Transcendence attends only to coax out what the willow does not believe.

Ignorant math, inordinate equations, only swaying, not adding up.
Roots convince, roots yield what betrayal denies.
Why should I?
Why shouldn’t I?

The right branch, the left branch, they have never met. They wish to find a common ground,
but they only find what sets them apart.
Therefore they will always be apart from all things
that aid in the tangibles of identifying, cheating the willow its place among men.

To stroke the willow’s sorrow, outweighs the need for roots. But branches find it everywhere, even when it’s not there…
and mind you, it never is.
Poetry and Dreams

Poetry & Dreams

Poetry and Dreams have much in common in that both contain symbols and metaphors. On my journey to become a dream analyst, I am more and more fascinated by the use of dream material in poems. A client gave me permission to incorporate some of his/her dream images into a poem. The poem “Barbie Girl” particularly the second and third stanzas, grew out of images from a succession of dreams by the same client.

Barbie Girl
James Brandenburg

“I am a Barbie Girl
in a Barbie World”*
thin thighs
eyelashes and lipstick
makeup and hairspray
smiles and acknowledgements
walking a tightrope
reading the right (riot) act
watching my diet
dressing in style

A Barbie Doll
in a glass bubble
I escape
injuring myself
on the display case
a broken doll
bleeding
in pain
surrounded by
broken and bleeding dolls

Barbie in Wonderland
I fall into an empty cavern
trip over a laughing clown
in his red, white and black costume
he drags me through a circus
the merry-go-round stands empty
the tightrope flat on the ground
as schools of flying fish
smile down on me from the ceiling
I wake up
startled.

Quote from the song, I am a Barbie Girl in a Barbie World.

Fish Symbol
James Brandenburg

Fish are symbols of water, the element in which they live. Water is a symbol of the unconscious. Fish are associated with cyclical birth or rebirth. Fish are at one and the same time saviors and instruments of revelation. Christ himself is often depicted as a fisherman, Christians being fish since the waters of Baptism are their natural element, and He himself is symbolized as a fish. Fish are symbols of life and fertility because of their extraordinary powers of reproduction and the vast number of eggs which they lay.

Of course, it is important for the dreamer to find his/her own connections to the symbols in his/her dream. Very often, symbols contain polarities. For example, one of the sides of red is warmth, uniting (Venus), and renewing; the other side of red is burning heat, dividing (Mars, devil), and destroying. Again, symbols must be studied in the context of the dream and the analyst must consider the experiences and background of the dreamer.

Sample Writing Assignments
James Brandenburg

The following are writing assignments at both the high school and college level after reading and discussing Barbie Doll:

1) Respond to the poem, Barbie Doll. Respond for seven minutes. Don’t think too much about it. Just write from the heart. Try to find a metaphor and write from there. For example, On the verge of falling off, I live on a tightrope, I am a Barbie doll (Ken) in a glass bubble, trying to escape, I am a clown in an empty circus, or schools of flying fish smile down on me.

2) Create a poem (essay) from the following cluster of words: exploitation, blonde hair, beautiful dresses, Ken, fake, plastic, surgery, white, preppy, teens, kids conformity, makeup, pink, crickets, money, materialism girlie, and abuse.

3) Respond anyway you wish to the poem, Barbie Doll. Just write for seven minutes.
Julia Hawkins and Dreamwork
James Brandenburg

The newest member of our editorial staff is Julia Hawkins, Junior Editor from Clark High School. Julia has been in my poetry support group this year; her English teacher called her “a student with lots of promise and lots of talent.” This proved to be true. In addition, Julia has a great work ethic and discipline. Below is the amplification of a dream that Julia had when she was a child. C.G. Jung said that children’s dreams are often archetypal and also very honest. Children rarely dream nice things about their parents. Thank you, Julia, for sharing your dream and for amplifying your dream with this poem.

Devils In My Dreams
Julia Hawkins

I met them in hell
The hell of my home
We all burn together
Though I still feel alone
I hang from the ceiling
As gas seeps from every pore
Fire falls from my eye
And burns us to the core
The father with no eyes
And the mother with no soul
Face me with vengeance
As my dream takes its toll
It all started in the darkness
Not but pitch black
But the evil takes us over
And red shadows fill my back
I try to run from it
Find ways to escape
The dream always taunts me
The one my sick mind did create
Every time I wake from it
I’m flooded in my tears
But I should be used to this by now
It’s been happening for years

Poetry Support Groups

A Note about This Section
James Brandenburg

The poems in this section came from the poetry support group at Tom C. Clark High School. One topic was “Barbie Girl” and how students (especially girls) are forced into that perfect image—perfect hair, perfect weight, perfect height, sexy eyes, and a bubbly personality. The topic inspired several poems about relationships—true love and the superficiality of relationships. The students are looking for their true selves, genuine others, and relationships where one can be himself or herself. In many of the discussions the concept of freedom came up. One student misses her dead mother, another her lost love, another her father, and another student writes about our robotic society. Their writing assignments generated unusual perspectives, as the students were discovering their own voices.

Untitled
Sabrina Moehrig

I wish I could go back
Walk through life on different tracks

Mom, freedom doesn’t come free
Especially for me

Mom, I have committed many sins
But have not seen many grins
In my life, but I’ll be strong
No matter how long

Still have lots to learn
No matter how my heart burns

Mom, I’m sorry for the fights
Especially that lasted all night

Mom, I live in a shell
So many things I still can not do

Don’t know if you can tell
I’m not taking it very well

Mom, I wanted to tell you
I’m sorry for all the hell
I put you through
But just remember
I love you.
Take Me Away
Deyanira Huerta

Take me away
To a place where I can be happy
Take me to a place
where I can find myself
Take me to a place
where I can be okay
I'm hurt
I’m in pain
Please, just take me away
Take me to where I can be free
Where I can feel love
I'm tired of pain
Of tears in my face
Let me be free
A puppet, that’s what
I hate to be
Cut the thread from my life
Let me be free
Take me away
I want to be me
Let me breathe
Let me feel
Let me love
Just take me away
To that place where
I can see what life is.

Separated
Alesi Viramontes

I am blind without my father
living in a dark world
without eyes
I see nothing
I know nothing
all that beating
all that violence
separated us
from him
forced us to leave
he thought
he only hurt our mom
but he hurt us all
Still I worry
is he dead or alive?
Not knowing
tears my heart out.

Untitled
Claudio Alvarez

Baby, I see you
coming down the staircase
A dress around your waist
Your amazing, curly hair bouncing
Your eyes staring at me
Handsome, I think I am
Dressed all in black
You wear a crown
A true loyal princess
From those children’s books
that make me smile
Hearts beating as one
People waiting to see us
kissing since dawn
I say, “I do!”
You say it, too
We kiss
Then I whisper,
“I love you!”
We hold hands
We dance
Forever you belong in my arms
Never will I give up on you,
My love!

Robots In Disguise
Melvin Ohali

This is a mechanical façade
I'm a robotic fake, and
you're an alien fraud
automatons beep and spark;
tired of keeping
ture forms in the dark
from Corvette to jet,
we change
transform
free from chains
we're reborn.
For You
Cat Ruppel

I waited and waited
Like I had the time
I could never get you
out of my mind
I wanted to tell you
Oh, how I tried
It's so hard to confront
The love of your life
We got closer and closer
I finally tried
And with your response
I wanted to die
So, more time went by
And all was the same
I could tell you liked me
And I was through with the games
It was finally happening
My dream coming true!
The benefit I was longing for
Was finally coming through!
But from wasting all that time
And you barely making up your mind
You got a girl pregnant
And was no longer mine…
If only you had realized sooner
And I wasn’t so shy
Maybe we wouldn’t
have run out of time.

Inside of You
Jeremy Alaniz

You turned away
All that was left were words unsaid
You thought you knew
You were painting pictures in your head
How did you feel, in the moments you dared
To open up, and see how much you care

Did you realize?
How time stands still.
Did you realize?
You have free will,

You looked across
the path of human kind
You searched yourself
For answers you might find
Across the world
You remembered you knew
And found that love

Untitled
Jonathan Sanders

Newly upgraded
Fairly updated
Quicken the pace of the show
No time
Out of rhyme
To confuse the audience at the show
Playwrights please
Royalty fees
To earn a table of food
All the same, little honey
To earn your love with my money
To only want the mask of my show
Pretend to like
My self-image at heart
To give a speech of movie quotes
To earn my loath
Against your boast
Oh, how you used me as a toy
I may seem coy
But I’m not a boy
To fake your hidden lies
And cast away
For now we all know
What really I show

Stretching Out
Oliver Belmares

You see my feet on the ground, but I’m soaring.
I have to start swimming, because flying gets boring.
I’m trying to hit that brick wall going ninety,
So I’m flooring.
People are fighting wars outside,
I’m in here snoring.
I can’t stop growing; I’m the tree with the most leaves,
I told my preacher I’m going places,
Not even he believes.
F… it; I’m sure God would understand,
I just wish the Devil wasn’t trying to bury
my sad ass in the sand.
There was a shadow on my back every time I ran.
So I stopped my sprinting and took
as much black in as I can.
Now I’m working to prove I’m not worthless.
Trying to prove that Oliver isn’t worthless.
Trying to stay in love, and still have a mistress.
Trying to wake up in the morning and
not be discovered dead on my mattress.
That’s like following a rainbow, until I reach gold.
But I’m pouring out a soul that’s already been sold.
I’m repeating an old story that’s been told.
Trying to keep hot, cause everyone around me
has become so cold.
Spoken Word

Reading at The Twig

Selected Videos and Poems from the gathering of seven poets at The Twig book store on 27 April 2009 in celebration of Poetry Month. On May 23, 2009, seven poets read from the new anthology In These Latitudes: Ten Contemporary Poets, edited by Robert Bonazzi and published by Wings Press, San Antonio. A unique collection of diverse voices, this collection of 10 contemporary poets represents a wide swath of the American South--from Virginia to Texas. In this small anthology, each poet gives voice to the struggles and humors of enduring their middle ages. Poets include Assef Al-Jundi, Nancy Kenney Connelly, H. C. Nash, and Tony Zurio, among others.

A Poem by Nancy Connolly read by Robert Bonazzi
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd8bDOkCrl8

Nancy Connolly had lived in India when growing up, which had left a lasting impression on her work. "If you’re lucky," says Connolly, "you encounter in young adulthood an experience that shatters the complacencies into a thousand transparencies through which you see." Robert Bonazzi is the author of numerous books and is the poetry columnist for The San Antonio Express-News.

A Poem by Marian Haddad
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ue4maNo_rM

Marian Haddad was born in El Paso, youngest of nine children of Syrian parents, writes and more importantly recting poetry with a remarkable harmony and music. She speaks English and Arabic and “almost Spanish”.

A Poem by Assef Al-Jundi
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3hWc545cjo

Syrian born Assef Al-Jundi imigrated to the USA and was educated at the University of Texas, Austin. Assef Al-Jundi born in Syria represents the other side of equation in the Arb-Israeli dilemma and writes: “When was the last time / peace broke out because of a poem?”

Lee Robinson Opens the Reading at The Twig
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBlhvZDHFvE

Poetry & Painting

Spring Fed, 1967
Andrew Newell Wyeth (1917-2009)

Andrew Wyeth was a visual artist, primarily a realist painter, working predominantly in a regionalist style. Here he describes his painting, Spring Fed, a 1967 pestera on panel: I started this . . . because I was moved by the remarkable variety of sounds, surrounding the Kuerner farm. One day I became conscious of the sound of running water, trickling water---nature pouring itself out. The painting that emerged is about the clang of the bucke, the crunch of the hooves, the spilling of water. . . . Deep down, of course, the painting is about the brutality and the delicacy of life on the farm symbolized by that thin tin cup, the crooked faucet. . . . from Andrew Wyeth: Autobiography, 1995

Tempera Painting
Andrew Newell Wyeth

Tempera, also known as egg tempera, is a permanent fast drying painting medium consisting of colored pigment mixed with a water-soluble binder medium (usually a glutinous material such as egg yolk or some other size). Tempera also refers to the paintings done in this medium. Tempera paintings are very long lasting, and examples from the first centuries AD still exist. Egg tempera was a primary method of painting until after 1500 when it was superseded by the invention of oil painting. A version of tempera consisting pigment and glue size is commonly used and referred to by some manufacturers in America as poster paint.
The 2009 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry was awarded to The Shadow of Sirius by W. S. Merwin (Copper Canyon Press), a collection of luminous, often tender poems that focus on the profound power of memory.

W.S. Merwin was born in New York City and grew up in Union City, New Jersey, and Scranton, Pennsylvania. His father was a Presbyterian minister. He attended Princeton University, where he studied with John Berryman and R.P. Blackmur. Merwin spent a postgraduate year at Princeton studying Romance languages, an interest that would lead eventually to his much-admired work as translator of Latin, Spanish, and French poetry. After leaving Princeton, Merwin traveled to France, Spain, and England. He settled in Majorca in 1950 as a tutor to Robert Graves’s son. Graves, with his interest in mythology, would become a primary influence on young Merwin.

Merwin’s first book of poems won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award for 1952, selected by W.H. Auden, who remarked in his introduction on the young poet's technical virtuosity. That volume, A Mask for Janus, is formal, neoclassical in style. For the next decade Merwin would regularly publish collections of intensely wrought, brightly imagistic poems.

Out of the dry days through the dusty leaves far across the valley those few notes never heard here before

one fluted phrase floating over its wandering secret all at once wells up somewhere else

and is gone before it goes on fallen into its own echo leaving a hollow through the air that is dry as before

where is it from hardly anyone seems to have noticed it so far but who now would have been listening

it is not native here that may be the one thing we are sure of it came from somewhere else perhaps alone

so keeps on calling for no one who is here hoping to be heard by another of its own unlikely origin

trying once more the same few notes that began the song of an oriole last heard years ago in another existence there

it goes again tell no one it is here foreign as we are who are filling the days with a sound of our own


The Poet’s View about Poetry
M.S. Merwin
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QQ1aCS6Pbw
In that bleak winter, the weather turned frigid and unbearable, the days became darker than dusk, and the nights brought only misery, chill. A hazy veil covered the vast and densely populated city of Tehran. While freezing temperatures persisted for weeks, the skies over the city were overcast and filled not with heavenly clouds saturated with desirable moisture that could deliver much needed snow or rain to cleanse the air, wash the walls, and rinse filth from the streets and alleys; instead, they were loaded with smog that blocked the sun and cast a gloom over the metropolis. Like a thick shroud, this suffocating blanket hung over the city, swathed the broad valley from the slopes of the Elburz Mountains in the north to the town of Rey in the south, and blinded the eyes and minds of thousands of desperate people. It was a season of discontent, uneasiness, and lack of direction, a despicable era with ominous events. Moliminous clouds rained a toxic tincture that poisoned and altered the minds of the people of Tehran; that was the winter of 1978.

The smog originally developed from the exhaust of antiquated trucks, old buses, neglected cars, roaring military vehicles, and screaming combat jets. However, day by day it became thicker and fed on the diesel fumes from the factories and the plumes of smoke emitted incessantly by hundreds of tall chimneys at the brick kilns in the southern suburbs. As the mass of air mixed with smoke and moisture, it became stationary over the center of the city.

The waves of shuddering calls
the screeching shouts from the minarets
in the dawn of machination
awoke and shook the masses
from their perpetually soporose state.

Like throngs of ash spewed from a volcano the thick veil of gloom grew into a huge, dark mushroom that spread into the cardinal directions. This gray blanket invaded every subdivision and neighborhood; weighty, it swelled and lay on the foothills of the mountain ranges that encircle the city on three sides; there in the north, the high peaks of the Elburz Mountains; there in the east, the hills that stretch towards the industrial city of Karaj; and there in the west, the foothills of majestic Mount Damavand, which was totally obscured from view.

Like a tropical storm that strengthens over the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea, this virulent tempest grew insidiously and spread anxiety and desperation, sickness and fear among the people. Deadly wings of haze blocked the much-needed sun from reaching the land and deprived every living creature: human beings, animals, trees, and plants, of heat and light, and eradicated any hopes of a tranquil and peaceful life in the city.

During that gloomy winter which brought long months of bloody confrontation between haves and have-nots, between the old world and an agitated new generation, the city of Tehran was

firmly divided into two camps: One was in the center and the south of the city where the majority of poor and disenchanted people lived in meager hovels along narrow, crowded streets and alleys; where there was neither clean air nor bright sunshine; where young women had miscarriages due to excessive poisons in the air and children could not attend school because of the dangerously polluted atmosphere; where the government closed all universities, colleges and schools and advised people to stay inside their homes, away from the noxious air which permeated streets and public building like a venomous dragon; and where at night the confused people congregated in the mosques and listened to the tales of savagery and hopelessness, to the venomous verses uttered by mullahs; and where soldiers and policemen stayed in their barracks foolishly ignoring the surge of religious fanaticism in town.

The people pleaded for relief for rain, snow, and for strong wind the poisonous snakes crawled into the pulpits.

The other Tehran was located above the low-lying basin and beyond the reach of the smog, along the gentle foothills of the mountains north of the city. Narrow roads wound up the hilltops to sprawling villas owned by fortunate individuals who lived high above the dark haze. Here sparkling skies perched over posh neighborhoods; here people lived in houses with marble floors and white stone walls, surrounded by maple trees, mountain laurels, and fruit orchards; here pristine streams tumbled down from the mountains and meandered through picturesque gorges near the homes; here the members of this privileged minority breathed clean air, drank fresh spring water, and commuted in luxury cars between their well-protected offices in the northern suburbs and their mansions. They were the mighty, the wealthy, the high-ranking bureaucrats and military leaders that ran businesses and government agencies. Some were officers in the government security forces or importers of goods and appliances from Western countries. Many of them had been educated in the best universities in Iran, or in prestigious schools in Europe or the United States.

Further north above these lavish homes on the hillsides of the Elburz Mountain range, the houses were even more extravagant. Here in this mountainous area, these palaces housed the top ranking military and government leaders. Surrounded by well-tended rose gardens and fruit orchards, these two- and three-story marble-walled homes of the elite included covered garages for imported luxury vehicles, living quarters for housekeepers, cooks, Continued . . .
and private chauffeurs. Because of their perceived important responsibilities, these plump people, the arrogant elite believed they must be well-protected from the city’s pollution and live at higher elevations and away from the smog, common people.

The restive people were caught between conceited rulers and the mullahs. In the mosques, the poisonous snakes crawled into the pulpits awaited to strike.

These leaders put together a plan to overcome the suffocating conditions and to control the poisonous cloud by radical measures, tearing a big gap into the smog, a hole as big as or bigger than the ozone hole that occurs each Antarctic spring over the South Pole. They wanted to bring fresh air, new life, and clear skies to the city to alleviate the desolation of the population, calm their anger, soothe their frustration, and heal their wounds. They believed if their advisers and experts could expel the lethal haze from streets and squares, then the people would abandon the mosques and free themselves from the grip of those hostile and sinister mullahs. From their mansions high above the city’s toxic fumes, they would strategize how to reduce the smog. They hoped the people in the valley would eventually thrust aside those traitorous snakes and turn back to their leaders, seeking guidance and direction once again.

After a long day at work, these well-paid, well-educated, and well-fed individuals would drive to their luxurious and comfortable homes where they would relax and enjoy naps around heated swimming pools filled with crystal-clear spring water. In the early evening, servants would bring cocktails of imported beverages such as fine, aged malt whisky or Russian vodka and offer crackers with Persian caviar so they could regain some energy in preparation for their customary nightly parties. They would assemble in each other’s expansive reception halls under large European crystal chandeliers and debate how to end the crisis and how to pacify the struggling people’s strife. They believed they needed to stay healthy and alert, and they based their hopes to govern for the foreseeable future on the hopelessness and lethargy of the common people.

They slept in oblivion:
Sleep, dear.
Sleep, sweet harlot of the senses,
Delilah of the spirit.

---

The Priest and the Scientist in the Garden of Good and Evil
Robert Flynn

Now the serpent was the subtlest scientist in the garden. And the serpent said to Eve, eat of the tree of science and it will make available to you chemistry and physics, biology and geology and knowledge of things beyond your sight, beyond your hearing, beyond your understanding, beyond your dreams. Eve said, no, the priest said we could eat only of the tree of religion. And what has that given you? asked the scientist. And Eve replied, knowledge of love and hate, freedom and slavery, peace and war, forgiveness and retribution. Then eat of the fruit of both trees said the scientist.

When Eve told Adam what the serpent said, Adam said no. The fruit of the tree of science would make it possible to use knowledge of things beyond their sight, beyond their hearing, beyond their understanding, beyond their dreams to give love with healing and hate with horror, freedom to the powerful and slavery to the many, peace with prosperity and war with collateral damage, forgiveness with benevolence and retribution with catastrophe.

Now the eagle was the most powerful bird in the garden and the eagle said to Adam and Eve, you can have both religion and science. But you must accentuate religion and denigrate science and you must use science only for profit and power. By so doing you can use science to promote your religion. You can use science to dominate the world. You can use science to have power as no other religion has ever had. Others will kneel to you or you will destroy the garden.

But what will we tell the others in the garden that we dominate? Eve asked. You will tell them that you eschew science. There is no evolution but the evolution of weapons of mass destruction. There is no physics but the physics of nuclear fission. There is no chemistry but the chemistry of war. There is no life but the life that you allow.

But what will we tell the master of the garden when he sees the evil we have done? Eve asked. And the priest said, You will tell him you did it in his name.
Next!
Antoinette Winstead

She was of a type, attractive, beautiful even, but not extraordinarily so. Had she happened upon the scene ten years earlier, perhaps, someone would have taken notice. But now she was a type, the Eva Longoria type, petite, thin, ample breast, tight butt, large brown eyes, and long, straight, dark hair. Even having fled her native Texas for Tinsel Town did not negate the fact that she was merely a type.

Talent? She had talent, but so did the fifty-five other Eva Longoria types crowded in the waiting room with her.

Had she known that down every boulevard and around every corner, she would see her own reflection, mirrored on another’s face, usually — typically — younger, would she have rushed to escape her life back home? Rushed into this abyss of un-extraordinarily beautiful sameness?

Perhaps not, but then . . . Who knows.

Life, time, had caught up with her — forced her to rush ahead without consideration of other options — and at twenty-eight, already past her prime for an industry that considered anyone over twenty-four geriatric, the clock was ticking. The lines were beginning to show around her mouth, her eyelids, ever so slightly, starting to droop, as pointed out to her countless times by her agent and numerous casting directors. She found herself eating less and less each year to maintain a figure bound to expand east and west if she didn’t keep a firm reign on it. Like her mother and her mother’s mother and her mother’s mother’s mother (etcetera, etcetera) before her, she was destined for a thickened waist and squat square body, sooner than later, if her ever persistent boyfriend had his way.

He wanted children. Now! And if she didn’t find her niche, make her mark soon, she would have no more excuses for avoiding marriage and the progeny certain to follow.

She wanted marriage, children, but she wanted fame, notoriety more.

The former, rather than the later, seemed the better choice, had she not been a type, had she more brain than looks. But she hadn’t.

She was merely a certain type of beauty, in a land of beautiful people with the same talent and skill as those around her, with nothing more or less to offer.

“Next!”

She glanced up from her “sides,” taken from another television cop show for another audition for another role as a junky-hooker. And should she land the role, her beauty to be hidden behind a wig, gaudy make-up, and pimp bruises. She rose, flashed an Eva Longoria smile at the casting director’s male assistant, who jaded and un-phased by this type of beauty, merely checked her name off the list and led her down the narrow hallway to a sterile white room where in waited a table of bored individuals, who longed for anything but the same type of cookie-cutter, brown eyed, dark-haired beauty paraded before them, an endless, monotonous parade of interchangeable, Latina Barbies, differing only in name, and sometimes age, but then this is what the part required.

Had she been cognizant of her utter lack of difference, would she have been in such a hurry to trade on her beauty instead of her brain, a beauty like her figure destined by genetics for ruin?

Oblivious to even the suggestion that such a question could be posed let alone considered, she auditioned, delivering the same lines with the same passion and intonation as those before her, nothing remarkable or memorable, just another attractive Eva Longoria type in a long succession of a hundred others.

“Next!”
The Mirage Book Club started when Colleen Grissom moderated a book discussion at the home of Mo & Brigitte Saidi in January 2000. Since then the club has met monthly. In 2008 the Mirage Book Club read and discussed these books:

- **January**: The Ministry of Special Cases by Nathan Englander
- **February**: Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros
- **March**: A Spot of Bother by Mark Haddon
- **April**: The Echo Makers by Richard Powers
- **May**: The Gathering by Anne Enright
- **June**: A Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz

**Summer Break**

- **September**: The Girl Who Was Going to Die by Glyn Maxell
- **October**: Out Stealing Horses by Per Petterson
- **November**: Water for Elephants: A Novel by Sara Gruen

**MBC members comment on Out Stealing Horses by Per Patterson**

The book under review was Out Stealing Horses by Per Patterson, translated by Anne Born, a critic and historian who has translated two previous novels by the author. The author who has won the amazing European literary accolade and carries an impressive background, is considered the best contemporary fiction writer of Norway. Several members commented favorably on the description of being alone in the misty wooded site, but not being lonely; of the narrator’s beautifully described plunge into solitude to remedy his bereavement and to cure his alienation by visiting memories, recent or remote is striking:

And when someone says the past is a foreign country, that they do things differently there, then I have probably felt that way for most of my life because I have been obliged to, but I am not any more . . . . 

It was a weird sensation to be standing in the night alone, almost the feeling of light or sound through my body; a soft moon or a peal of bells, with the water surging against my boots, and everything else was so big and so quiet around me, but I did I did not feel abandoned, . . . .

**Physician-Writers**

1. **John Keats**: John Keats, one of the greatest English poets and a major figure in the Romantic movement, was born in 1795 in Moorfields, London. His father died when he was eight and his mother when he was fourteen; these sad circumstances drew him particularly close to his two brothers, George and Tom, and his sister Fanny. Keats was well educated at a school in Enfield, where he began a translation of Virgil’s Aeneid. In 1810 he was apprenticed to an apothecary-surgeon. His first attempts at writing poetry date from about 1814, and include an ‘Imitation’ of the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser. In 1815 he left his apprenticeship and became a student at Guy's Hospital, London; one year later, he abandoned the profession of medicine for poetry. Keats’s first volume of poems was published in 1817.

2. **Anton Chekhov**: Anton Chekov (1860-1904), Russian playwright and short story writer, considered one of the greatest dramatists of modern time. Among his many famous short stories is The Bet, about a man who bets a million dollars he can live in solitude for many years. Plays include: The Sea Gull (1896); Uncle Vanya (1899); The Three Sisters (1901); The Cherry Orchard (1904).

3. **Robin Cook**: Robin Cook (b. 1939). American author famous for medical thrillers, usually centering on some vile group of doctors or medical entrepreneurs. His most famous novel is Coma, also made into a movie. Cook was a Boston ophthalmologist before giving up practice for full time writing.


5. **Archibald Joseph Cronin**: Scottish novelist and physician, a prolific writer of best selling novels depicting the medical profession. Several of his novels were made into movies, including The Stars Look Down (1935; film 1939), The Citadel (1937; film 1938), and The Keys of the Kingdom (1941; film 1944).
Words of the Day

besot, v.

1 : infatuate, 2 : to make dull or stupid; especially : to muddle with drunkenness

Example sentence:

Long besotted with the pretty file clerk who worked in his office, Keith finally worked up the nerve to ask her out to lunch.

Did you know?

“Besot” developed from a combination of the prefix “be-” (“to cause to be”) and “sot,” a now-archaic verb meaning “to cause to appear foolish or stupid.” “Sot” in turn comes from the Middle English noun “sott,” meaning “fool.” The first known use of “besot” is found in a poem by George Turberville, published in 1567. In the poem the narrator describes how he gazed at a beautiful stranger “till use of sense was fied.” He then proceeds to compare himself to Aegisthus of Greek legend, the lover of Clytemnestra while Agamemnon was away at war, writing: “What forced the Fool to love / his beastly idle life / Was cause that he besotted was / of Agamemnon’s Wife.”

Waterloo, n.

a decisive or final defeat or setback

Example sentence:

The tense chess match between Jim and his father went on for most of the afternoon, until Jim met his waterloo shortly before dinner.

Did you know?

The Battle of Waterloo, which occurred on June 18, 1815, has given its name to the very notion of final defeat. Why? Maybe because it ended one of the most spectacular military careers in history (Napoleon’s), as well as 23 years of recurrent conflict between France and the rest of Europe. In addition, it was Napoleon’s second “final defeat.” He was defeated and exiled in 1814, but he escaped his confinement, returned to France, and was restored to power for three months before meeting defeat at the hands of the forces allied under the Duke of Wellington near the Belgian village of Waterloo. The word “waterloo” first appeared in casual use the following year, 1816.
Stewart Reuter exhibits several pieces of his latest work at Gallery Nord including Round Is Not Square.

Gallery Nord of San Antonio opened in 2006 focusing on contemporary art from local, national and international artists.

Address: Northwest Military Highway
San Antonio, TX 78213
Phone: 210.348.0088
www.info@gallerynord.com
Photos by Mo H. Saidi

The Globe Theatre was a theatre in London associated with William Shakespeare. It was built in 1599 by Shakespeare’s playing company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and was destroyed by fire on 29 June 1613. A second Globe Theatre was rebuilt on the same site by June 1614 and closed in 1642.

A modern reconstruction of the Globe, named “Shakespeare’s Globe”, opened in 1997. It is approximately 230 meters (750 ft) from the site of the original theatre. 

Exterior & Interior of The Globe
Photos by Mo H. Saidi
**Galápagos Islands**

Islas de Colón or Islas Galápagos are an archipelago of volcanic islands distributed around the equator in the Pacific Ocean, 972 km west of continental Ecuador. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site: wildlife is its most notable feature.

The Galápagos Islands form the Galápagos Province of Ecuador and are part of the country’s national park system. The principal language on the islands is Spanish. The islands have a population of around 40,000, which is a 40-fold expansion in 50 years.

The islands are geologically young and famed for their vast number of endemic species, which were studied by Charles Darwin during the voyage of the Beagle. His observations and collections contributed to the inception of Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection.

Photos by Mo H. Saidi

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**The Jewish Museum Berlin**

Jewish Museum or Berlin Holocaust Museum covers two millennia of German Jewish history. World-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind designed the museum, which opened to the public in 2001. The museum was one of the first buildings designed after German reunification.

Princeton professor W. Michael Blumenthal, who was born near Berlin and was later President Jimmy Carter’s Secretary of the Treasury, has been the director of the museum since December 1997.

Photos by Mo H. Saidi
Submission Guidelines

General Guidelines for Prose & Poetry

Voices de la Luna accepts English language poetry and prose submissions from anywhere in the world. Submissions are accepted only by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word or similar format for Mac users. Include your name, e-mail address, mailing address, and telephone number on each poem submitted, and on the first page of each prose manuscript. Youth poetry submissions should be clearly marked as such, and should also include the writer’s age, name of school, and grade level. Please note that youth writers must not yet have graduated high school and be no more than 18 years old.

Brief biographical notes are interesting to us and help us understand who we are reaching. However, contributors' notes will not be published (at least not in the print version), nor will they figure into the selection process. Work will be selected for publication based solely on literary quality and the way each individual piece of writing meets our current needs.

Simultaneous submissions are acceptable as long as we are informed by e-mail immediately (with title and submission date) if you need to withdraw the work from our consideration. Submissions may have been previously published, as long as the writer provides that information and currently holds the rights. If work has been translated, make sure to include the translator’s name for credit. In some cases, we may publish short poems in both languages side-by-side.

Readable, well-crafted, formatted submissions are expected. Submissions in “rough draft” form will not be considered.

We do not pay contributors. We contact writers only if work has been accepted, letting them know that their piece will appear in the up-coming issue. This notification will come immediately before an issue goes to print, not sooner. Writers from the San Antonio area can pick up free copies of the magazine at a very large number of convenient locations, which will be indicated on our website. Out-of-town and overseas contributors will be mailed a copy or copies of the issue in which their work appears, as part of our distribution list.

We have a small editorial staff and many submissions. We cannot provide feedback on submitted work, nor will we offer reasons why a particular work has not been accepted for publication. We may hold work over for a future issue, especially work that arrives when the issue we are currently working has already been filled. Please do not contact us about the status of a submission. If we’ve had your work more than six months and through at least two quarterly issues, and have not contacted you, it is unlikely we will be using those particular pieces. Just remember to withdraw your work in a timely manner if you surrender the rights elsewhere. Remember, you can send new work each month, while we are considering your previous submissions.

Prose

We are looking for short fiction pieces of up to 1200 words, works in which a heart struggles against itself, in which the messy, unmanageable complexity of the world is revealed in “sentences that are so sharp they cut the eye.” As Takashi Murakami puts it: “We want to see the newest things. That is because we want to see the future, even if only momentarily. It is the moment in which, even if we don’t completely understand what we have glimpsed, we are nonetheless touched by it. This is what we have come to call art.” Please submit fiction to Awinstead@voicesdelaluna.com.

Poetry

We are devoted to publishing mostly poems from unsolicited manuscripts. We do not base our selections on a writer’s publication or award history, but on the poems themselves. We will accept up to 3 original poems per month. To fit into the format of our magazine, please limit the length of your poems to 28 (or fewer) lines of no more than 60 characters each. We believe it is up to the poet to break longer lines in the way that s/he sees fit. Please submit poetry to Joans@voicesdelaluna.com.

Mrs. Marjan Switzer Presents Molly Gerold Human Rights Award at South Texas Counseling Association
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Poetry & Art Events
San Antonio Recurring Venues

DISCLAIMER: All venue information listed has been provided by third parties. These venues have not been verified. It is the sole responsibility of parties interested in attending these venues to verify the validity of the post.


Tuesdays 6–9 pm - Jazz Poet Society - Guadalupe Street Coffee, 1320 Guadalupe St. - (210) 573-5115. Bring poetry and songs and work with other poets and songwriters to present works on stage. A drum circle accompanies poets.

Tuesdays 7–9 pm - Sun Poets Society - Barnes & Noble San Pedro - 321 NW Loop 410, Suite 104, 210-342-0008 - Open mic. Host: ROD STRYKER

Tuesdays 10:30 pm - Puro Slam - The Heights - 9315 N. Broadway (just north of 410). Weekly open mic certified by the National Poetry Slam - Allows poets to deliver their work and get heckled. DJ Donnie Dee spins before and after the show. Sign up begins at 9:30 p.m. Slam begins @ 10:30 p.m. For more information visit www.purosiam.com.

1st & 3rd Wednesdays 7–9 pm - Barnes & Noble, Ingram Festival - 6065 NW Loop 410 (same side as Ingram mall) – Features and open mic. 210-522-1340. Host: Josie Mixon

Thursdays 6:30-9:30 pm - South Presa Bar and Grill - Open mic: poetry, music and story telling Host: Andi

Last Thursday of Each Month 7–9 pm - Laurel Crown Foundation - Features and open mic – Barnes & Noble, Northwoods - 18030 HWY 281N, Suite #140 (281 & 1604) - 210-490-0411. Host: FLOYD LAMROUX

2nd Saturday 7–9 pm - Gallista - Features and open mic. – Gallista Gallery and Art Studio - 1913 S. Flores – (210) 212-8606. Host: THOM E

3rd Saturday 2–4 pm – San Antonio Poets’ Association - Meets September thru May at Bethany Congregational Church – 500 Pilgrim Drive – Host: VALERIE MARTIN BAILEY - vbailey@satx.rr.com

Book Reading/Signings
The Twig
5005 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209
(210) 826-6411
http://thetwig.booksense.com

Art Museums & Exhibitions
http://www.sanantonio.com/arts/

San Antonio Museum of Art
http://www.samuseum.org/main/

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3801 Broadway
San Antonio, Texas 78209
(210) 357-1900
http://www.wittemuseum.org/about_the_witte/index.html

A Letter to The Readers
Thank you for your interest in Voices de la Luna: A Quarterly Poetry and Arts Magazine. Our dedicated staff volunteer their time to lend expertise in order to bring you a quality magazine.

With the release of this issue, we are taking Voices de la Luna to the next level - a printed magazine! Beginning with this issue, we are offering the magazine to you in hard copy. We will be hitting the streets to promote the magazine at different venues around town. If you are not already on our email listing to receive information, please email us at main@voicesdelaluna.com.

As our magazine grows, financial support is crucial. Voices de la Luna continues to apply for grants from national and local sources. While we continue to apply for grants, we still need and appreciate your donations.

The money raised through grants and community support goes back into the magazine and allows us to expand the scope of our offerings such as our latest efforts to add a printed version of the magazine.

Your investment in Voices de la Luna will ensure the continuation of bringing San Antonio’s poetry, literature & the arts to you. Your support is a worthwhile tax-deductible expenditure in support of artists’ exposure, which we believe benefits the community at large.

Please send your check or money order to Voices de la Luna and mail it to:
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The ARCHIVES page includes 15 September
2008, 15 March 2009, and the current issue of
15 June 2009.

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