



Poetic Matrix



a letteR on the poetic experience
online letteR 10
Fall 2010/Winter 2011



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From the Publisher

We are late in getting this Fall 2010/Winter 2011 issue out. Partly it was because we were into a number of very fascinating projects that needed to be taken to completion. Excerpts from some of them are in this issue. Also, as you can see, the folks at Atomic8 have redesigned our website and we have redesigned the format of our letter. We hope you enjoy these changes and projects.

Since our last letter much has occurred at Poetic Matrix Press. Brandon Cesmat won the 2010 San Diego Book Award for Poetry for *Light in All Directions*, a very fine read. We completed a project by one of Korea's most influential poets, Mun Dok-su, who was nominated for the Noble Prize in Literature in 2010 and we hope will win the Award in years to come. His book, *The Postman*, is an extraordinary work reaching into the most difficult human moments (in his case the Korean War) and drawing out what is most essential to being human. Shadab Hashmi's book, *Baker of Tarifa*, shows what is possible when the three monotheistic religions come together in historical Al Andulus. So important in today's world.

Many more books produced this year including Vol. II of Art Campbell's three volume work TRIAL & ERROR with excerpts here. Innovative books by Lee Underwood, TIMEWINDS (excerpts here) and Adam Funk's, *Mindscape Unlocked?*. We've also complete two memoirs: poet and scholar Yearn Choi's *Song of Myself: A Korean American Life* and recently, poet Ruth Rosenthal's *Like Fallen Snow* (excerpts here). We also took on a unique project for us, a hiking guide detailing John Muir's first walk from San Francisco to Yosemite in 1868 by book artists Peter and Donna Thomas. Our second book on John Muir fits the intent of our press as John Muir was a gifted writer amongst his many other gifts. The guide details the walk, gives us Muir's words and the Thomas' description. With photos, drawings and maps it really is beautiful.

In this issue, besides the excerpts from recent publications, we have poets from many communities offering that unique look that poets have into the human condition.

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Sean Lause

Night vision

Driving home late on ice-bitten road,
my headlights probing like a blind man's fingers,
the night trembling with snow, my boy
blissfully asleep in his magic chair...

They appeared from the abyss
as if projected by the moon,
their legs flowing silently through the snow,
a herd of deer, fleeing remembered guns.

Leaping in plumes of electricity,
embracing us in soft brown flesh,
implicating me in my own breaths
and every snow that falls unseen.

Their eyes seemed to know me from long ago,
their leafy heads nodding as if in prayer.
We swung in one motion, relentless, pure,
then they curved beneath the night and disappeared.

When my son stirred, I could not tell
who had dreamed and who had been awake.
I only knew we were safe and blessed,
and I had never lived and would never die.

Sean Lause

Journey with no sound

A hand throws open
a library window
to release the silence.

Freed from words,
it hovers
between drops of rain.

It predicts the dance of leaves
and it is the patience
the grass keeps.

It comprehends a massacre.
Yet the dove, sleeping,
folds it in its cloak.

It outpaces
the most tightly wound
watch.

Between light and darkness
it expands and fills itself.
It exceeds the hidden wound.

Entering your house,
it inhabits your furniture
and mocks your personal philosophy.

It knows the end
of longing and misery,
and awaits your breathless surrender.

Stephen Steciw

M'Amelie,

your laughter is
my own child.

D'Amelie

Funny and often not so funny
how I've been thus far unable
to write about flocks of birds
likened to flung wedding rice against
slow-pulsing shades of sky,
or the marshing, mossing, and blow-drying of landscapes,
which could be weather, furrowing the earth into dire
concern
before stretching its face to pollinating hilarity...
It would be sweeter to think of things
in the traditional poetic of dominion, as if
all in the brattle bomb of squirming hatchery
or twitching famine could be stood over
and poured into crystal as bouquets of liquor.

Instead, we post notice that
we are the harvest, the meal, the compost
and inevitable sediment of everything else
as much as anything else;
and only by rippling in my fire for you,
and yours for mine, have we achieved
any legitimate intoxication to happily
invite death to our feast.

Stephen Steciw

2010:

Corporate farms have now modified the seeds in their produce, enabling them to self-destruct in due time; this, to avoid their being dried and kept-over for a new year's planting by independent farmers...

For over a decade the indigenous honeybees of North America have been extinct, covertly replaced with boxed swarms imported from Australia, where they have now also begun to die off. A volley of speculation chases tail in the corporate community as to whether the cause might be the noxious pesticides in which the invertebrates burrow during pollination... or some esoteric evolution of planetary design determined to wipe out 70% of our horticultural diet, [against which any struggle could only be considered atheistic].

Khembottra Oum

Divinity

A pain that grows
grows like no other...
Not like a flower that blossoms
from the ground.
More like a burning cigarette
in the night.

Heroes know well
what real love is.
Mannequins on display
are lucky...
They never have a fixed pose.

Truth is always attached...
to something that can't be seen.
Sad eyes that dream...
can dream
What no one else... can ever see.

I Wanted To Say

I saw her crying the other day
By herself and I wanted to say
Its okay, Its okay.

I wiped the tears off her face
A hand on her cheek, it fades
I'm right here.

I gave her a flower to hold
Orchids of green blue and gold
A beautiful laugh.

I saw her crying the other day
By herself and I wanted to say
Its okay, Its okay.

Hugo DeSarro

Almost

Genome,
chromosomes, genes,
high-tech razzle-dazzle;
the evidence is there,
one-sided; a fool
can not gainsay it,
and embarrassment, as well.
The riddle answered,
turned tender-belly up?
Not quite.
There is mystery still,
things undone remain:
a soul and virtue to dissect,
and still unfound, a reason.

M. G. Stephens

COGNATE

The world, at best, is dumb and beautiful,
At worst, an ugly mess. It knows nothing,
Is without a care, not being cogent,
Not even responsible for it all.

We humans, on the other hand, know just
About everything, and nothing at
All, yet ignorant or wise, it is we
Who are responsible to protect it.

The world, at best, is dumb and beautiful,
And we protect it from its predators,
Who are also us, so that we must be
Good cop and bad cop, or we will perish.

We humans, on the other hand, know just
Where the world is heading with us in charge,
And that appears to be our perishing,
Let me ask, where are we going right now?

THE MOON

The moon owes you nothing, is indifferent
to your problems, and you still love the moon.
Why do you expect people to owe you
debts of gratitude, so that you love them
in return? Why should they care beyond what
you care for them?

Why can't I love them as
Freely as I love the moon and the stars?
The moon owes me nothing, is indifferent
To these problems, and yet I love the moon.

M. G. Stephens

COTE D'AZUR

Croissant and coffee
Breezes off the sea

THE POEM

This is not a loading zone
This is not disabled parking
This is not a nursing home
This is not a place to loiter idly

This is a poem and there is no poem

THE TOMATO PLANT

1.
As the tomato plant yellows and withers
tomatoes turn from green to red

and come alive with taste the plant
dies whither go all of us one day

2.
There are sixty-
two tomatoes
on my plant

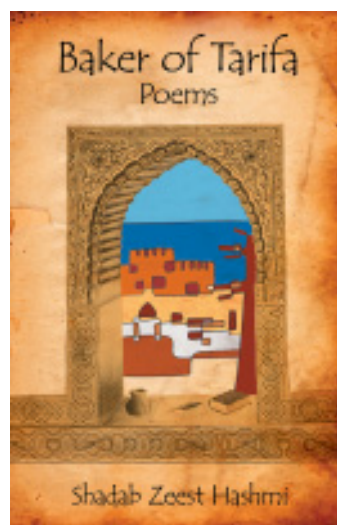
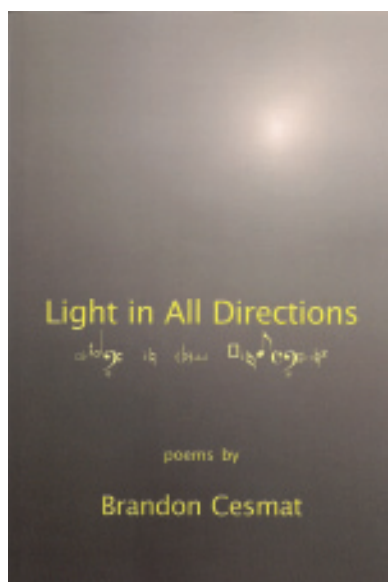
and I am not
even Italian

Madonn'

M. G. Stephens

PRESENT PERFECT

What we have—
the past is a point
behind us, is like the
future, an illusion—
we have, in the
present—now—
that is all we have



Excerpts from a new book by Shadab Hashmi.

Baker of Tarifa

Poems by

Shadab Zeest Hashmi

Of the two bestirred, sleepless nights, the first was spent in Cordoba's Juderia, yards away from the Mezquita – Catedral where the streets are narrow as capillaries. And the second was in the Alhamra where my room was a whisper away from the *Rauda*, the royal graveyard of the Nasrids. The ghosts of Al Andalus have clung ever since.

And so windows crack open. Under streetlights, ancient faces are embedded in pillars. Sketched in rust they bleed into each other. These ghosts of Al Andalus come on rich wafts of tannin ink and pomegranate pulp, or poised between *oud* strings – vibrato of a dream. They leap from a basin of mercury to the high, filigreed domes...

Some have a furtive way of surfacing in a note of the *ney* flute, slipping ever so lightly into the seam joining two breaths, while others place themselves stubbornly on my patio ledge in California, legs dangling, refusing to leave until I hear them out.

They are scribes and stonemasons, merchants, seamstresses, philosophers, gardeners and governors. They plant, they write books. They build, and make bread. One of them, a child known as Yusuf, Yosef and Joseph appears out of nowhere. Not found in history books, he is among the last fortunate ones to be cherished by the people of the three Abrahamic faiths. His home, Al Andalus, has seen a fruition great enough to inspire other golden ages in other places. But Al Andalus itself will fall, nearly a millennium after its birth. When it does, the Andalusí Muslims, Jews and Christians will part ways in bitterness. Yusuf, like the prophet in the Torah, the Bible and the Quran, will see the end in a dream. Three hundred years later, the end will come.

These ghosts, like fireflies, glow only for an instant. I have come to catch their light—

Al Andalus, Spain 711 – 1492

Samuel the Physician Becomes a Father
And Calls the Child Yosef

The night was shoveling its coal
sighing as darkness licked
my work table
piled with seeds
crushed citron leaves
twigs of olive and thyme
There were canisters of oils
Green walnuts
Bottles of ink and lime shrubs

I should have been happy
with all this life crowding my house
as I lit the candles
dusk pouring thickly over my roof

But happiness grows in the beams
of your eyes alone
It grows
And gives shade

You gaze
as if you have always been mine

That day
when Zoraya the Berber map-maker
brought you scratched by thorns and splinters
that day God made you my son

Yusuf Sees the Ghost
Of the Last Queen of Al Andalus

She dragged empty cradles
into the Alpujarras
while bells
rang with the sound of cannons

Neither Feasting
nor fasting was allowed

The house was filled
with pine nuts
soft cheese
and mint juice
It was as if we never ate

She said to bring the *muezzin*
to her child's ear
She said to draw
the curtains
on *Eid* day

The Stonemason's Son
Contemplates Death

Because my heart
became a kiln
I wished to die

The inscription on the tiles
made a prayer in butterfly script
crowning your well

May the water refresh your soul

The clanging of keys became loud
A soldier stood behind me pissing in the well

Someone sang in the distance
Couldn't tell if she was a Jew
Christian or Muslim

It was a devotional song

Return of Happiness

I was dough
Running away in a baker's dream
All honeyed
and rolling the morning

sun into clammy skin

The day was steep and over
Before I made it far
from the oven
Far from the one who chased
Long out of breath

And I hid
Under the concrete
Hid from the ants and the stray cat
until flowers grew out of me

Feel the minutes crawling
The whiskers of time brushing past?

I packed my heart in a clock for you.

New released by Charles Entrekin.

LISTENING

NEW & SELECTED WORK

CHARLES ENTREKIN

ALL PIECES OF A LEGACY

You receive the memories, the hunger,
 and the dreams shiny as the eyes of madmen
 before stately antebellum mansions,
 even for the poor more than they were,
 like lightning bugs stuck to a summer evening.

Patterns like footprints in the grass
 of a barefooted run with June bug
 on a string, like a child hugged in the arms
 of motherhood, tied to a solid, hard-backed green,
 the buzzing, broken as first sex in the back of a car.

And you remember the funny talk of poontang
 in barber shops before the hunt begins,
 the talk of the remorseless chicken thief,
 the hungry coon sought after in the night
 out beyond the chinaberry tree, the mimosa
 and crepe myrtle, out beyond even the dogwood

through the kudzu, hunted and smiling
 from the pine tree, smiling at the dogs
 pulled with chains from the moon-cut pine;
 you remember that trapped and smiling, high-up coon,
 you remember the hunger that would not cease, cease.

CASTING FOR THE CUTTHROAT

for Richard Hugo

He sneaks after some woman who could not love him,
 a woman from his school days, who would never love him.
 He knew it, snaking like a thief after the praise
 from her lips, like a fisherman casting
 only for the cutthroat, living
 out his years forever dumb
 before this woman who could touch him,
 thinking only the barrenness of Garnet,
 Montana, could cure him,
 this madness that could not be cured,
 his own special madness,
 the way the green of a river bank
 reminds him of her,
 the way she's always young as porcelain
 and he's grown old, his books
 like school houses ablaze in the snow.

FORT MASON BAR, SAN FRANCISCO
for Gail

She smiles just like before,
but not the same, the same but arriving
from a great distance. A storm's
heavy waves wash the wet dark pier
before us. I nurse a hot brandy.
Steam gathers in my glass.

It's that she leans into me now
with her smile, somehow centered forward,
a new lever and fulcrum balanced within
her, a new seed centering her universe.

And even as I see it in her,
I want to say, "Let's go now," but I don't.
Something remains sleeping within me,
a dream I haven't reasoned out,
and so we sit, time holding us suspended
like seals in the sea before us,
unable to go home.

Here are excerpts from the second in a three volume set on Freedom Law by Art Campbell. Forward and pages 12-16.

TRIAL & ERROR

The Education
of a
Freedom Lawyer

Volume Two:
For the Prosecution

by
Arthur W. Campbell

FOREWORD

by Jerry Coughlan, Coughlan Semmer & Lipman,
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney in Washington, D.C. and San Diego

In this second of his three-book series, Art Campbell colorfully describes courtrooms well known to lawyers who toil in the trenches of criminal law. I know. I was Art's colleague as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Washington, D.C. and had very similar experiences. Like Art, I spent several months in the misdemeanor trial courts at the start of my (what turned out to be) ten-year career as a prosecutor. Like Art, I lost my first two misdemeanor trials, and determined to learn from my mistakes. And like Art, I had to deal with convicting a man who I believed was innocent. This book reminded me, and will educate all readers, of the often bizarre but incredibly important role our criminal justice system plays in our country, despite its many imperfections.

From what at first may seem ordinary misdemeanor cases, Campbell unearths latent drama. He writes about the colorful and diverse ways defendants, witnesses and jurors act in a courtroom. He discloses "testilying" witnesses and his struggles to skewer them on cross-examination. He exposes strong-willed judges, determined to rule their courts at all costs. Art reveals how seemingly routine cases hide surprises that jurors may see but lawyers sometimes miss.

For a period of time our office assigned Art to try cases before the most eccentric, irascible anti-prosecution judge in the courthouse. Art's battles with Horace L. Bachover (with whom I also enjoyed more than one go-around) range from seriously constitutional ("A Jury of One's Peers") to ludicrously carnal ("Heads Up, Officer").

Reading these accounts puts you in real courtrooms, real trials, and the mind of a real prosecutor, not some fictitious media portrayal. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did.

WELCOME TO MISDEMEANOR TRIALS

*Experience is what you get when you don't get
what you want.—Randy Pausch*

Gods of scarce resources issued a decree that our office couldn't staff its misdemeanor trials with veteran attorneys. Lawyers with experience must be saved for felonies. That meant only battle-seasoned felony attorneys had the luxury of hands-on trial preparation weeks before a judge's hammer dropped.

In D.C.'s misdemeanor world, prosecutors who had never stood in court initially decided what crimes could be proved by colleagues who'd just joined the litigation squad. Result? The least experienced handed half-inflated footballs to the least prepared.

On the day a misdemeanor would be tried, a judge gave me five to fifteen minutes to prepare the prosecution's case. The stopwatch clicked when the arresting officer entered court and plunked our case file in my hand.

Deciphering scribbles in this file, I raced to formulate a strategy, compose an opening statement, sort through potential witnesses, and choose lines of questioning. Next I scanned the courtroom, checked what witnesses had actually appeared and—if time permitted—asked them to step forward and confer.

I loved trying misdemeanors. I learned more moves and got more rushes of adrenalin than any other time in court.

But only as a prosecutor did I learn that I was steered by something other than my pledge to freedom law.

My freedom lawyer searched for larger equities inside each case and tried to see them actualized. Like an imagined charger from my childhood, years ago he guided me to law school's doors. Now he gladly bore my prosecutor's duty to "do justice" where I could.

But I also had a fighter side. A horse bred just for war, he transformed every trial into a contest I must win. I rationalized his presence as the power for my prosecutor's other duty, "serve your client well." He muscled past each obstacle until he reached the victor's circle where jurors shouted, *Guilty, Guilty, GUILTY!*

Sometimes when a verdict didn't go his way, fighter's blinkers blocked his eyes from seeing freedom lawyer's larger view: that the government *should* lose trials where defendants' peers are not convinced beyond a reasonable doubt. Those times, instead of bathing in adrenalin from a hard-fought bout, warrior brooded self-indulgently upon "his loss."

Usually both parts of my nature pulled together like a well matched team. Thus I could live out boyhood fantasies and feel like a "champion of justice." At those times my thoughts were mainly tactical: how best deploy my instinct for the kill so it secured a proper win.

But other times I felt tension spring between my fighter and my freedom lawyer. A minor instance happened every time I introduced myself in court. As a defense attorney I had chafed when prosecutors boasted they were lawyers for "the government," "the people," or "the United States."

Imagine being the accused when a bailiff booms out, "The United States of America versus You." The image triggers terror: a collective father-figure facing down some miscreant. It raises prehistoric hackles of the human pack, pitting the community against an individual.

Yet when I became a prosecutor, warrior seized the chance to introduce himself this way. He shushed freedom lawyer's whispers that appeals to a jury's primal urges clobbered rationality and crippled a defendant's right to parity before the bar.

Once, near the end of my encounters in this book, warrior grabbed the bit and galloped to the finish line. In the process it stampeded a defendant who was innocent into a cage with steel bars.

After the event I dug into my soul and faced why it occurred.
But I still ponder that finalé, how it changed the course of
my career, how in retrospect each case on these pages
posted warning signs along the way.

* * * * *

My first trial for the government had a rousing title: "Assault
with a Deadly Weapon," shorthand "A.D.W. (Pipe)."

A supermarket manager had surprised a stranger in his
storage room. The intruder rushed the manager, waved a
two-foot pipe five inches from his face, then dashed outside.
He threw his weapon in some weeds beside the door and
ran into a cop.

What handicapped my case was zero presence of dramatic
evidence. No one thought to grab the pipe and nobody got
hurt. Still, warrior rode relentless through this empty valley,
confident that he could easily prove the legal meaning of
"assault." The D.C. Code asserted this meant *threatened*
harmful or offensive contact. (Real contact was called
"battery.")

Fighter brushed aside the power of common parlance to
frame outcomes of a trial. But in the world at large "assaults"
require contact. To D.C. jurors no harm meant no foul. "Not
guilty" was their call.

Ironically my warrior even helped the jury reach their
bottom line. The defendant took the stand and boldly
claimed he'd never had a weapon in his hand. On cross-
exam I hit him with three shots that should have blown
apart his credibility. I got him to admit he'd been recently
convicted of plain robbery, armed robbery, and assault.

But when I talked with jurors after trial, I learned this was
overkill. It persuaded them that he'd been through enough.
They gave my supermarket manager full marks for veracity,
but mere assault was nothing matched against defendant's
other crimes and sentences he'd face.

My second trial was another A.D.W. with morbid overtones: "Assaults with Lye and Knife." Once again the case was papered sans persuasive evidence: No prints on a merely brandished knife, no lye bottle, no lab tests, no scorched clothing, no photos of burned arms, no scars remaining by the time of trial.

Still, on the trial's second day, warrior—blinded by his will to win—felt he'd spanned this chasm of non-evidence with stout eye-witness testimony. Both male and female victims described in detail how defendant had attacked them in their home when she discovered she'd become one's jilted lover.

During his summation, counsel for defense unleashed a potent argument: "If the government's so sure that these assaults even occurred, why didn't Mr. Campbell show you fingerprints, a lye bottle, chemist's testimony, clothing, photos, scars..." etcetera.

As welcomed as a soup stain on my tie, I tried to downplay what I called this "desperate defense." I told jurors all they needed in this case was to believe our clearly truthful witnesses. "Surely you don't need to see all evidence that's *possible*, even the kitchen sink."

Twenty minutes after the presiding judge sent jurors to deliberate, they trooped back to let their foreman state, "Not guilty."

I felt like a boxer, confident until his losing score's announced, then suddenly aware his mind's not been following the real fight. Convinced of the defendant's guilt, I slumped in my chair until the final juror sauntered out.

So warrior lost his first two trials for the government. Always given to extremes, he pondered a remark from the once-vanquished Bonaparte: "Glory can be fleeting but obscurity's forever."

In a punky funk I shoved papers in my briefcase and trudged from court. Trying to salvage something useful from the wreck, my mind searched for lessons I could use another day.

Did warrior blind you to a D.C. jury's jaundiced views about the government? Did he mount his rhino of denial and charge past all those rocks of doubt?

Wait a minute! freedom lawyer shouted. Don't these wimwams of defeat arise from overlooking how our system is supposed to work? Has fighter totally forgotten his allegiance to due process and his oath to freedom law?

That question thrust a sword of irony into my gut.

Okay, I muttered to myself, Defendants should be freed unless their guilt is clear beyond a reasonable doubt, and doubts piled up inside those two trials like dirty dishes in a basement flat.

Yes, I still believe it's better that a dozen guilty folks go free than one blameless lout get tossed in Skookum House. But, damn it, warrior hates to lose!

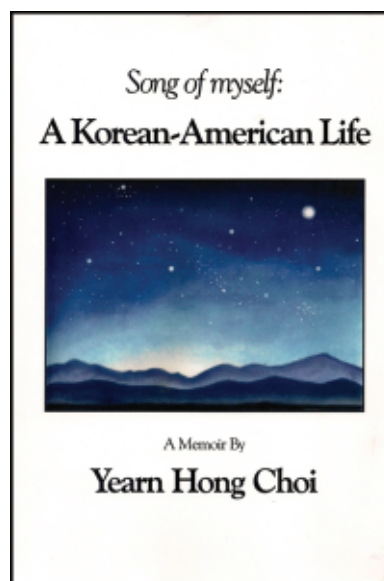
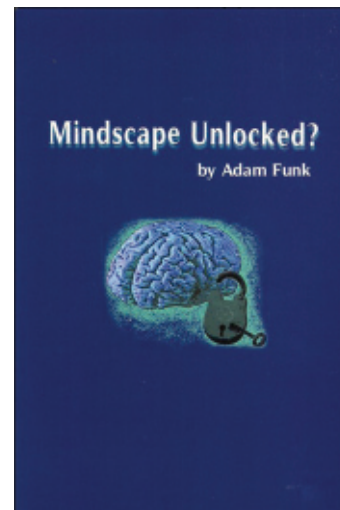
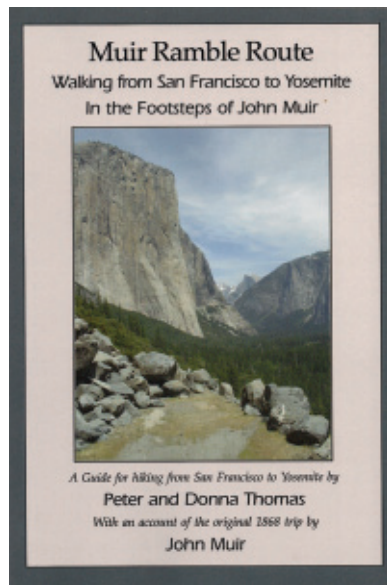
Although overall I relished misdemeanor trials, those losses on my fighter's pleasure scale ranked right below two mangled thumbs.

When I reviewed these cases with my boss, I wondered if he'd step me back to papering. Bankwood only grinned. "Don't worry, Art. Trying misdemeanors are how prosecutors cut their teeth. You learn to think fast on your feet and fight with what you've got at hand. It's the fastest way to hone your trial skills."

As I exited my boss's office, warrior added his own pep talk: *You haven't lost your courtroom skills. You only overlooked the way a D.C. jury views the prosecution's case. Next time blow away your mental dust and see what's really going on.*

However, I'd not realized how much my former boxer's will to win could warp my estimate of what I faced inside the ring. Nor had I plumbed how it could sometimes numb my loyalty to freedom law.

So, walking to my office, I felt fighter throwing back his chest: *Next time I'll make my case so strong it parries every fist of doubt.*



Recent release by Lee Underwood.

Timewinds

poems by

Lee Underwood

Owlish Wisdom

I hot-tubbed in California,
 Zazenned in Kyoto,
Climbed pyramids in
 Cairo, Mexico, Yucatan,
But I still don't fit,
 Don't know where the It is,
And constantly get lost in
 This ridiculously tangled forest.

Think I'll just relax,
 Won't even try to mold
Illusory self to other
 Ways, shapes or means,
Simply Owl-yowl it up,
 Big-eyed-watchful or
Feather-puffed dozing,
 Gently winking
When the rains come.

A Moment's Pause

What time is the world?
 Is "down" in China, "up" in Colorado?
 With all our knowledge of history,
 Why do we insist upon repeating it?
 How come technology evolves so fast,
 While we still carry clubs
 And walk on our knuckles?
 Waaaay out in space, where is southwest?
 What do they mean,
 "Edge of the universe"?
 Is there a line where everyplace stops?
 What's on the other side?
 Is no-place not a place too?
 What is a "highest number"?
 Can we not just double or triple it?
 If a black hole is God inhaling,
 Is the Big Bang when He sneezes?
 Will Spaceship Galileo encounter this God?
 Are we better advised to peek inside a volcano?
 Win what? Lose what? Fear what?
 If there is no time, just eternal present,
 Is the only essential a sense of humor?

Let me put it this way:
 Once we have seen the mountains sway,
 How can we settle for the nightly News?

Polarities United

I sit outdoors
In morning sun
Reading Jung, Campbell,
Rudhyar, Osho, Wilber —
From the kitchen,
“Lee, come butter the toast!”

I smile, arise,
Serene.

From a new Memoir with Poetry by Ruth Rosenthal.

LIKE FALLEN SNOW

Memoir with Poetry

RUTH ROSENTHAL

LOVE IS WHY WE ARE: MAKE THE MOST OF IT

My brother has been interviewed many times. His story is in several books and videos. This story is to share some of the “other parts” which have not been in print, or other media.

I can’t imagine what it must be like to be a prisoner. My brother Lou could tell you. He was a prisoner of war for over thirteen months during World War II in Germany. He enlisted in the United States Air Force the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941. He didn’t have to report for duty until December 26, when he left for Fort Dix, the day before my eleventh birthday.

Our parents, I say “our parents” with a chuckle and a smile, because Lou used to say, “My mother” or “My father,” even, “My parents” until I teased him relentlessly, saying, “Our father,” or “Our mother” ... you get the picture. He’s improving, and our little “family joke” gets us laughing at ourselves.

Our parents came to America from Kiev, Russia in their teens, around 1906. Mom was about sixteen and Pop a couple of years older. There were no birth records back then for them. They first met in New York City where they lived the difficult lives that immigrants did. No English, hardly any money, no government benefits, and to escape to the United States, they suffered—only able to afford the lowest deck aboard ships sailing to America, called steerage, enduring all the difficulties and discomforts that came with it.

Escape—Our mother shared too few words with me about her life. About forty years after her harrowing trip, she simply and unemotionally said one day, “I was escaping from the pogrom.”

“What’s a pogrom?” I asked.

She said, “The czar came into the village on his horse, killing people.”

*WHEN BOBBY AND BOBBIE
MADE MUSIC TOGETHER*

*He touched the strings.
His bass fiddle responded
to his touch like I do.
The notes were gentle
waves of his own
sense of humor.
She said fitting sounds
back to him
on the keys.
Their music pleased
and teased everyone
the way it played itself
through their fingers.
They communicated
in unwritten jazz riffs
feeling the moment
filling the room
with creative delight,
none of it taped
just into the air
like a loving prayer.*

SOME OF THE SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE

We sat listening to chamber music. There were five instruments: flute, oboe, clarinet, French horn and bassoon.

The soothing, pleasant feelings they evoked reminded me of other sounds and other times. One of the earliest times, I don't even remember, but it's no less a part of me, because it happened. When I was a baby, my brother, George, used to practice violin each evening. Listening, I would fall into a peaceful sleep.

George put the violin aside, forever, but his feeling for classical music stayed with him. When I was a teenager, I used to work in our father's shop sometimes, after school, and on Saturdays. George would be standing beside a pot of molten metal, pouring it from a long handled ladle into a mold, all day. He had the radio behind him on a station from which music soared beyond the steaming heat, which separated us, and out the always opened windows in back of him. I knew stirrings of emotions, provoked by sounds, that I hadn't known I had. Some sounds made me sad; others made me feel like I was soaring right out the window, too.

Someone told me that when he moved to the mid west, a new friend told him that one could hear the corn growing. The newcomer thought he was being kidded, but at the other's insistence, they went out one day, to the arid garden, and heard the sound of corn pushing its way up out of the ground. He was surprised to not only hear it grow, but to see it, as well.

I must have seen almost a thousand movies as a child before I was conscious of the moods designed by background music to create effects.

When my friend decided to finally see "ET," she bought the sheet music and played it before going to the theatre. When I visit her and she sits at her piano to play, she seems to be in a state of total delight.

Once I saw a film in the Mill Valley Library about the sounds of water. It was a short film with only the sounds that moving water makes, when it's running or dripping, a film of waterfalls and waves that break near shore. For once I enjoyed the staccato of a dripping faucet. It was a concert unto itself.

When I first moved to Mill Valley, I thought I'd never sleep past daybreak again. Across the street, every early morning, a rooster broke the dawn. After a few mornings, I slept right through it.

When I met Eve and her husband, she told me, as she drove her car that the only sound she could hear was a siren. Their children both learned to read when they were two years old because Eve and her husband were deaf. She smiled and said, "My children are my ears."

One of the most soothing sounds in nature, I think, is the rain, when it falls softly. I like the sounds of water dripping from the eaves.

I loved the sounds of my husband's bass fiddle. He made his own music. And that is what matters to me.

RL Greenfield

Heaven On Earth

I have sung beyond
the spoons of madness
& made my bed
in a pineapple lounge
on an island so succulent
the trees weep in green
murmurs reiterating the
magic impulse.
The grand radiance
surrounds us
a symphony of flowers.
The Goddess came
to my table wearing
pure silk & glass heels.
She was already laughing
in her own deep silent heart.
It was her dark
omniscient eyes
so full of kindness
I dropped my façade
of prestigious learning
& heard myself lose my sorrow.
Everything was raining honey.
Her lips pure Paradise
announced my beginning.
She set her ten fingers
on my shoulders
& that transfigured me.
We sat inside the soft light
watching the blue sky travel:
Heaven on earth.

RL Greenfield

Life

This day is Supreme. I repeat.

We language-users describe our lives in dizzy daily redundancy.

We are particles of dust occasionally rising to a brief liquidity:
a tiny drop of water changes our status.

And we laugh or cry.

Then we return to the desert of slowness & aridity.
For an instant
we felt lucky to put on these bones & wear the thrilling cross of sexuality.

Then the desert sun wrote our names in stone & commemorated our moment of sparkling juice.

And we became the breath of the world.

RL Greenfield

Postmodern Innuendoes

can't dance there is no floor no auctioneer

calling the tunes there is no cynosure mere fragments

reification: things themselves endlessly shattered

the signs point only to other signs

Reality went for a walk one Friday night to buy a loaf of bread

& disappeared while O.J. was carousing with Marcia Clark on CNN

that was before Anderson Cooper took over the world

brought things to heel & restored our world of magnanimous accord

now we can watch 92 wars being fought simultaneously

on parallel television screens

between the reds the blues & the grays

there aren't any real people dying because there aren't any real
people left---

the news media said Ken Lay of Enron died of a heart attack

before he could serve his prison sentence

that's code language for: was sent to Afghanistan to do hard time

in the Bin Laden Family Factory making vanilla wafers

for kindergartners who converted to The Market

Thoreau said he never met a worse man than himself

that should give us pause: does anybody read Thoreau

I mean absorb his art not memorize a few phrases

to pass the great all-American Bullshit Quiz

Athena Kashyap

crossing black waters[1]

Once she stepped outside, her skin
dissolved. She struggled to stay

afloat but as years distanced her
from the caress of the Ganges

that once swept her plains,
holy hum of her hidden

Himalayan caves, she grew weak.
Just when she started to drown,

webs of seed, teeth, and hair
unraveled to release her,

let her float away, guided
by loose, unkempt stars.

[1] Until early this century, Hindus believed that if you crossed the oceans, the “black waters,” by leaving the physical boundaries of India, you would lose your identity and become an outcaste.

Himalayan dreams

Of all the seeds planted
by great-grandfather in Lahore,
only trees remain,
run amok in the garden.

Athena Kashyap

wedding night offering

for Lajja Savara

1940. You wear the red sari that will hang
in your Godrej cupboard for 63 years.

A veil of jasmine covers your eyes,
you try to recall your betrothed's face.

Gold weighs down your slight body
pound for pound.

You hear the clatter of silverware,
laughter shrouded in organza.

Girl cousins giggle
behind shy smiles.

Seven lives, deaths knotted together—[2]
you follow him seven times around fire.

Don't give up all of yourself, I whisper
but you don't want to hear me

as you spread body, heart, and mind
amidst orange flowers.

[2]

Athena Kashyap

reunion in Bangalore

After thirty years away, my heart
time-trampled, to finally
return!

The smiles we shared under
trees dripping
with tamarinds and mangoes
where we guarded
our lunch boxes lest monkeys
swoop down like meteors
to snatch our food away.

Father's arms like branches
that fastened us to ground, let us
embrace sky.

Father dead long-since, the few
remaining trees, soot-stained
by hooting auto-rickshaws,
buses and cars
that clog the arteries
we once cycled,
encircling the city.

The earth has spun as it must,
the skies are not the same,
yet we insist—

Our hearts know
each other, this patch
of land, father looks
over us, and our smiles
still hover amidst
wind-battered leaves.

Rene Laliberte

A Kiss

A long time in waiting
That first kiss swept over me.
It was the middle of summer in East Orleans.
I was sitting with my friends, warming a chair.
Suddenly she appeared from a swirl of dancers.
We all looked up in awe at the magic of this beautiful girl.
Some of my friends were older, taller or wiser
But it was me she asked to dance.
Can a person be terrified and thrilled at the same time?
Her name was Barbara and her hair had captured the sun.
I was such a young boy.
Sixteen just turned, and never been kissed.
Outside sitting on the wall
Full of anticipation, fright and excitement
She kissed me.
Such softness had only been an abstract concept until this moment.
If heaven should be so sweet and inviting,
Life would have been worth it.
It is the beginning of something new.
It is the leaving behind of something old.
Life for me changed forever.
An eternity has passed without time.
How precious our passions are when
We live our fondest dreams.

Biographies

Sean Lause teaches courses in Shakespeare, The American Short Story and Composition at Rhodes State College in Lima, Ohio. His work has appeared in The Minnesota Review, The Mid-American Review, Upstart Crow, The Beloit Poetry Journal, European Judaism, The Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry, The Xavier Review, Arsenic Lobster and Frog Pond.

Stephen Steciw: “I was born in Worthington, OH but now, after a near-untellable amount of roaming, live partly in Paris, France, partly in the U.S. (Ohio), and partly in Sambreville, Belgium. Further, I have very long hair and am grateful for my life.”

Hugo DeSarro: “I’m a former adjunct college instructor in English. I’ve published in a variety of literary journals here and abroad, including Oklahoma Review, Colorado Review, Current Accounts, Poesy, Pulsar, Splizz, and others.”

M. G. Stephens: “I have published 18 books, half of them poetry and prose poems, including Alcohol Poems, Paragraphs, Tangun Legend, Circles End, Translations (from Korean), After Asia, and Jigs & Reels. I have also published the novels Season at Coole and The Brooklyn Book of the Dead, as well as such nonfiction works as Lost in Seoul and Green Dreams, which won the AWP award for creative nonfiction and was selected by Joyce Carol Oates as one of the notable nonfiction books of the 20th century in Best American Essays of the Century (2001). I live in London.”

Khembottra Oum: “Student, Poet, and Romancer.”

Charles Entrekin is the Managing Editor of Hip Pocket Press (www.hippocketpress.com), Charles is also the author of four books of poetry from which this collection was drawn:

In This Hour, (BPW&P, 1990); *Casting for the Cutthroat & Other Poems*, (BPW&P, 1986); *Casting for the Cutthroat*, (Thunder City Press, 1978); *All Pieces of a Legacy*, (BPW&P, 1975).

Lee Underwood moved to Oakhurst, CA, in 1998. Underwood co-hosted a radio show for two years with Preston Chase, *Between the Lines: Poetry to Take You Home*. Underwood has given numerous readings throughout California, and has published poems in *Light of Consciousness*, *ZamBomba*, *In the Grove*, and *The Central California Poetry Journal*. Whenever possible at his readings, he plays original solo piano music.

Ruth Rosenthal taught creative writing, and established a poetry group for psychiatric patients at Marin General Hospital, merging with the art director's class. Amazing changes came about as patients, some who had never written before, expressed their deepest feelings and discovered their own hidden joy.

Art Campbell lives in San Diego, and is a tenured professor at California Western School of Law, and authored the country's definitive treatise on criminal sentencing. Married to the best-selling novelist Drusilla Campbell, they raised two sons and now enjoy large dogs and horses.

Shadab Zeest Hashmi has an MFA from Warren Wilson. She graduated from Reed College in 1995. She has been on the editorial board of *The Poetry Conspiracy*. She has also been the editor of the annual *Magee Park Poet's Anthology* since 2000. Originally from Pakistan, she lives in San Diego, California.

RL Greenfield: “Two book reviews of mine appear online in Gently Read Literature, on Charles Wright's littlefoot, 31 January 2009 & Russell Edson's See Jack 1 December 2009. I have an essay on Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* in November, 2010 also in Gently Read. Poems upcoming in *The Denver Quarterly*. I received an NEA fellowship in literature for 1995 for an ms. of poems. My poems & prose have appeared in more than 50 literary reviews & quarterlies. I've lived in Los Angeles & Southern California since 1962 & I am an Angeleno.”

Athena Kashyap “I am an Asian-American Writer (of Indian descent). My poems have been published or are upcoming in *The Fourth River*, *Quiddity*, *Spork*, *The Noe Valley Voice*, *Asia Writes* among other journals. They have also been anthologized in the *Voices of Asian Americans (U.S.)* and *Same Difference (Vaani)*. I currently reside in Bangalore, India.”

Rene Laliberte “I am a graduate of CSU, Chico in Chico, CA. I have been a flight instructor, elementary school teacher and am now retired as a disabled Vietnam Conflict veteran. Although I have been writing all my life, I now use my time to write on a daily basis as healing process. Poetry has come to the forefront of my writings and it is how I can best express myself.”

