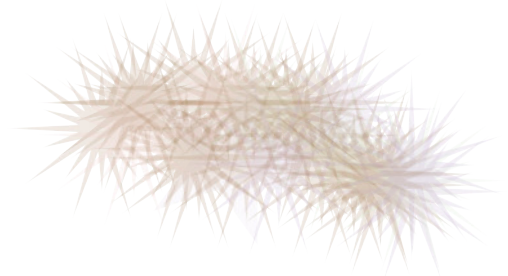


Sol Magazine



**2005
Poet
Laureate
Special
Edition**



August 2005

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Welcome to the 8th annual awarding of Sol Magazine's Poet Laureate

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**SOL MAGAZINE'S
2005 POET LAUREATE**



HEATHER JENSEN
CHEYENNE, WY, USA

SECOND PLACE



CAROL COTTEN
GALVESTON, TX, USA

THIRD PLACE



SHARON ROTHENFLUCH COOPER
PORTLAND, OR, USA

FOURTH PLACE



AVONNE GRIFFIN
GREER, SC, USA

HONORABLE MENTION

APARNA BELAPURKAR, LONDON, EG, GBR
WARNER D. CONARTON, ZEPHYRHILLS, FL, USA
MARYANN HAZEN-STEARNES, ELLENVILLE, NY, USA
JEANETTE OESTERMYER, ROSWELL, NM, USA
KATHY PAUPORE, KINGSFORD, MI, USA
GILLIAN WILKINSON, SAXONWOLD, RSA

POET LAUREATE 2005

HEATHER JENSEN, CHEYENNE, WY, USA



Heather Jensen

Heather Jensen became a member of *Sol Magazine* in 2003. Her poetry has appeared in *Sol Magazine*, *High Plains Register*, *SheMom*, and *Butterflies.com*. She is both freelance writer and poet, and lives with her husband, three beautiful children and two freeloading cats in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She says, "I write because I'm still breathing, and it'd take an abrupt alteration to that situation to make me stop."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

This ambitious selection of poetry from Heather Jensen is diverse in topic as well as form. Word choices and placement are well thought-out and thought provoking, and draw on poetical techniques of meter, metaphor, image, lyricism, narrative, alliteration and other effective literary tools. A nice variety of imagery and forms in these poems. Humor, irony and compassion mark this poet's work, ranging wide in these six not-so-easy pieces. Each piece may stand, but still connects to the other work by three threads braided into a single, fine, frayed strand of yesterday, today and tomorrow. A sound solid presentation. A subtle feel of irony seems to slide through the poetry, which is both playful and insightful. The poet has a masterful grasp of language, and flexes the art of words in every line; no word is wasted, and many times a word serves more than its original sole purposes within the song of a poem's whole. Dizzying at times, diction weaves and bobs through varied thoughts that, somehow, perfectly splice together at the end to create a cohesion that is, in and of itself, beautiful. Excellent writing. This poet is well deserving of the title of *Sol Magazine's* 2005 Poet Laureate.

Battling Autism

**Pure sodium is rare and beautiful
To see it though requires a sculptor's art
You have to slice the oxidized and dull
To glimpse the silver shimmer at the
heart**

**easing
blade across
son seeking
shimmers**

**My son's pure soul is rare and tremulous
Corroding in the atmosphere of words
I gently slice remember as I do
Pure sodium is rare and beautiful.**

© 2005 Heather Jensen

COMMENTS: This is a fine example of a well-crafted Dorsimbra that flows well from a stanza of Shakespearean sonnet, to a stanza of free verse, to a stanza of blank verse. This poem has a mysteriously compelling quality and tone. Written in a strong voice, first searching, then grasping exactly, exquisitely crafted with sound echoes and metric measure. Interesting tapestry weaving elements in nature and attributes of human nature creates a striking poem that leaves lingering thoughts. Heartfelt, expressed well, with good use of assonance and consonance. This piece has the reader catching breath and holding it so as not to disturb the fragile spell it casts. The poet uses both science and faith to give the reader a slice of what it is like to deal with autism. The metaphors are crisp and compelling. Rare and well-chosen words create an atmosphere of aching beauty, which supports the sensitive subject matter in a perfect way. The sole introduction of personal ache - "my son" - is so simple, yet lends so much power to the poem.

Playing Bass

**There's nothing like playing bass.
Canoe yanked hither and yon
Easing out 30-pound test
Making fine tension adjustments**

**Canoe yanked hither and yon
Altering the pitch of the bow
Making fine tension adjustments
Reeling, awkward with anticipation**

**Altering the pitch of the bow
Introduce the music, bow to the audience
Reeling, awkward with anticipation
There's nothing like playing bass.**

© 2005 Heather Jensen

COMMENTS: Excellent play linking sport and music in this well done Pantoum. Precise phrasings and particular word choices couple to create a compactly constructed portrait, as recurring lines weave in and out of one another in unexpected and surprising ways. Good metaphor of a canoe for a bass fiddle. Good use of reiteration with alternating beats of word music brings the reader on stage, as the rhythm mimics that of a boat on the water. Full of clever, well thought out, humorous ambiguity. This poem is a joy to read again and again. This poet can take bow (bend from the waist) while bowing (pulling ebony and rosined horsehair across wire strings) in the bow (the forward part) of the canoe - no mean feat in itself. Delightful. The poet is clever and playful without losing control of the form. Yet the form recedes into the background as the poem unfolds. What a treat for the reader to find the metaphor of a dance in the last stanza. Conversationally casual tone belies a deeper, almost psychologically interpretative struggle. Classic battleground of man versus nature takes on different facets under the skillful language creating an analogy between bass fishing and playing a musical instrument. Very well done.

Primitive Culture on Toast with a Side of Pork

**A Joint Chiefs solution
Denies absolution
So onward and upward they glide;
They're taking few chances
In vast blue expanses
The current so giddy they ride.**

**Attack's grim convergence
Caused native disturbance
Some flinched at the dots on the sun;
While others, enchanted
(And younger still, granted)
Pursuing the flicker did run.**

**Brave fighters? I wonder
Each dishing out thunder
On people too startled to scream;
They formed a pilaster
And then they flew faster
To drown out the mote and the beam.**

© 2005 Heather Jensen

COMMENTS: Successful movement throughout. The poet employs effective use of structure to help move the eye along. The complicated subject delightfully melds into a pattern of a good consistent rhyme that accentuates mood and tone. Off-beat witty poem on today's society, filled with twists and turns to entertain readers. Nice use of end-rhyme. The title is a poem by itself. Here the poet gives us ironic humor using blatant external rhyme in near-limerick or perhaps "drinking song" format. The poet holds up a mirror in which the reflection points its accusing finger at us all. Well done. This poem has rhyme and meter that both pleases the ear and lends an ironically light tone to an otherwise serious commentary. Wry title belies the sensitive and deep nature of the words which follow. Excellent rhythm and rhyme, without becoming pedantic or repetitive.

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**Thumbprint smears
under-polished brass,
icy latch sinks, clicks.
Neon reflections warp, rebound
cower beside grimy mullions
Please-don't-rob-me chimes
tinkle pitiful welcome.**

**Dishwasher-Wanted placard
crowding out the OPEN sigil
swings, signing this way, this way,
this way to the kitchen
A whiff of airborne grease
decides me.**

**Don't blame me
if you can't hear purpose
ambition, maybe,
in die-cast metal
clattering down silky soapsud sluices,
can't find nirvana
in the drying element's
heat-dark eyes.**

**(the city's
blue collars live &
dye in bubbles
each translucent film
camouflaging
ennui with cheap
iridescent swirls)**

© 2005 Heather Jensen

COMMENTS: Shrewd division of words and phrases with effective use of word sounds.

This poem offers the reader intricate descriptions along with a vivid portrayal of the working life. Connects through an impressive combination of images, alliteration, and assonance which add magic to the work. Engaging title brings the reader right into the work. Clear picture of the plight of the dishwasher and other blue-collar workers. Exceptional imaginary throughout, filled with original contrasts such as rob vs. welcome, onomatopoeia enhances the poem, clever ending. Poem bubbles like a steaming iron skillet as it provides a feast for the eyes and ears of the reader. Striking analogy of hope, aspirations and failure. This poem invites the reader to use every sense, as the excellent word selection puts sound and imagery into this poem. The poem ends with a strong metaphor. Gorgeously lush language to describe a deceptively simple time and place. Wonderful attention to the most cryptic and often overlooked details.

**blackbird trills
alights on snowy bough
icicle snaps**

© 2005 Heather Jensen

COMMENTS: Strong visual impact in a multi-dimensional scenario that begins with one thing, and ends with another. Concisely stitched, revealing color, season, and sound, each an element of a well designed haiku. Lovely contrast of colors between blackbird and snow. Clear, sharp sights and sounds. Crisp, vivid images. This haiku shows duality in the lively blackbird singing and alighting on the still snow and ice, reminding the reader that spring breaks the grip of winter and death. Very nice contrast between the jet of the blackbird and the purity of the snow. This simple haiku says so much with just a few words; the idea of the bird snapping the icicle brings to mind so many other, fresh scenes: perhaps a deer startling in a nearby meadow, or the bird itself startling at the sound it created and flapping off into the woods. Very well-done.

**pure sun rises
muddy dandelion opens
dusty leaf unfurls**

© 2005 Heather Jensen

COMMENTS: This clear nature haiku displays splendid craftsmanship as well as stunning imagery. Interesting poem with an unexpected juxtaposition of moist and dry to surprise the reader. Nice summer image. Good word selection and usage as in: sun = dandelion. A beautiful picture of the unsullied sun bringing life to the downtrodden flora. Good use of duality in high and low, pure and sullied. Nice use of the word "pure" as a descriptive of the sun; wonderful contrast between the pure of the sun and the mud/dust of the dandelion, as well as implying the democratic nature of the sun - it will shine on pure and impure alike.

SECOND PLACE

CAROL COTTEN, GALVESTON, TX, USA



Carol Cotten

Carol K. Cotten teaches literature and creative writing at Texas A&M University at Galveston. She has been a member of *Sol Magazine* for three years, where one of her poems won Favorite Poem of 2004 in a reader's poll. Her poetry has also appeared in *Avocet*, *Edgar*, and *Bayosphere*. She lives in Galveston, where she is co-editor of *Spiky Palm*, a poetry review. In her words, "When I want to write a poem, I go for a walk certain that I will come back with some small detail that will spark an emotion, bring back a memory, or help me see nature in a fresh way."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

Carol Cotton has distilled her talent and skill into a fine set of poems within which she moves metaphorically from image to image, thought to thought. The poet graciously offers readers a mouthful of delicious words and phrases. Particularly pleasing content as well as use of form reveal this poet's adeptness and skill of wordcraft. A sheer pleasure to read. Melodic and lyrical, a strength of rich compassionate intelligence is experienced throughout this poet's uniquely presented and vividly descriptive poetical expression. The poet's work is simply filled with imagery. The poet splashes lines with colorful words that sing of prismatic colors found in everyday life, and the use of such language imbues each poem with its own colorsong, a theme of sorts, that lends a wholly separate life to each word. Masterful grasp of just the right phrasing to capture an emotion, a thought, a scene. This poet's writing reads as if each poem is chiseled from white quartz, resulting in a sculptured masterpiece. A poet with well crafted metaphors and imagery. Carol Cotten's poetry is rife with energy. Good observation and imagination yield an interesting array of pictures and emotions. The reader is swept into the poem from the first word and is always satisfied at the conclusion.

Lament

**When in summer I cannot bear
love's loss another minute,
when I want to cry Help me!
to every passerby,
I think of the narcissus bulbs
beneath my shuttered window
each a swollen teardrop
cupped in a dark pocket of earth
forced to bear its burden alone.
I remember how each spring
they lift sore shoulders,
thrust green heads and hands
above the ground and for a few
short weeks toll thimble-sized
white bells proclaiming their faith
in the world, before I cut them
down, imposing yet another
year of silence.**

© 2005 Carol Cotten

COMMENTS: Effectively sustained use of personification throughout. Intimate selection of words and double meanings enhance this poem. Language is direct and clear with reliance on emotional content and a harmonious mix of assonance with alliteration. This poem is full of lovely, yet some quite sad, imagery, metaphor and personification. The only word that springs to mind immediately upon finishing this poem is "aching," for it weeps with melancholy and heartbreaking purity. Beautiful uses of phrases such as "lift sore shoulders" to personify the narcissus, which, as in Greek mythology, has a life of its own and a meaning far deeper here than the initial read-through yields. The cadence of this poem allows reader to experience pain plus nature's mystery. Sober closure completes the cycle of all things living. This poem shows passion and intensity under control. Hyperbole and paradox set the tone. Fine word selection providing excellent imagery, invoking frustration and a strong sense of loss at the knowledge of a futile, ongoing struggle into the face of an anticipated final result. The poet's struggle is metaphorically mirrored by the "swollen teardrop" and "sore shoulders" of the narcissi. Well done.

Like big black boats

**grackles sail into the harbor
of my yard late afternoon
and drift like unorganized fleets
in the shade of the palm.
They follow while I mow,
ruffle their feathers, dip
oily wings to the grass like long
seaworthy coats, spread their tails,
once rudders, into wide skirts,
and strut like swashbuckling pirates.
I ask, What do you want?
Why are you here?
but they keep their distance.
I can only wonder what faraway lands
these noisy clacking sailors
of the blue seas have conquered.
I can only wonder where these sleek
magnificent ships have been—
full keels bulging,
eyes spilling gold coins.**

© 2005 Carol Cotten

COMMENTS: Eloquent images create a superb movement in this poem. Fine use of counterpoint employed. Visual metaphor fuses logic and meaning in a subtle and exact fashion. The extended simile of the grackles like big black boats is well done. Wonderful analogy between the brash strut of the grackles and the equally brash swashbuckling of pirates of old. The imagery is inspired and unique. Glorious writing. Dramatic personification, poet ingeniously uses words to transform birds into sailors. Delightful simile. The poet sustains the comparisons beautifully to that surprising and rich last line, "eyes spilling gold coins." This poem is a self-contained metaphor in itself. It is peppered with fine word selection giving us such wonderful alliterative and onomatopoeic imagery as "strut like swashbuckling pirates" and "noisy clacking sailors" capped by the very fine last two lines. A poem to read and re-read for the sheer joy of it.

JUDGE'S NOTE: On the ocean front in Cartagena, Colombia, where pirates and privateers from the Spanish Main at one time did indeed swash and buckle, there is a monumental steel sculpture of the ubiquitous grackle, its gold doubloon eye keeping watch for the pirates' return.

Black Dogs

**Black dogs lived beneath her house.
They thumped the floor with thick black tails.
Nobody knew. Massive jaws. Red eyes.
Beneath the white cottage by the sea, they**

**thumped the floor with thick black tails.
Never slept. Growling twisted knots.
Beneath the white cottage by the sea, they
scorched her soul with rancid breaths.**

**Never slept. Growling twisted knots.
They gnawed her will to live.
Scorched her soul with rancid breaths,
haunted her dreams like ghostly specters.**

**They gnawed her will to live,
beneath sun and moon and stars. They
haunted her dreams like ghostly specters
until she paced from door to door**

**beneath sun and moon and stars. They
grew blacker, stronger, day by day
until she paced from door to door.
She did not pray or eat.**

**Nobody knew. Massive jaws. Red eyes.
Black dogs lived beneath her house.**

© 2005 Carol Cotten

COMMENTS: Line breaks are perfectly positioned in this form, a clear demonstration of skill. Lavish images and cadence from start to finish. Bravo! Original version of the pantoum filled with imaginatively startling visual effects that evolve interestingly and naturally within the form. The strict traditional form of this pantoum only adds to the haunting, rather sinister tale painted by sordid details and imagery. The tragic ending works well. Eerily reminiscent of a child's fears, this poem aptly captures the perpetual fear all humans have of the unknown, or of what they imagine to be there. Readers are left wondering - what do the black dogs represent? what is inherent to everyone: the unspeakable. Effective use of repetitive lines, building anxiety in the reader caught in a debate, is it fear or pain or both? Ending unanswered as most events in life. Intriguing and rhythmic poem. Powerful! A difficult form yields to the deftness and creativity of this poet. A compelling, memorable metaphor is made even more haunting with the repeated lines -- a pantoum is an excellent choice for this poem. The use of enjambment with the word "they" sustains a building tension and agony. This fine poem oozes mystery and malevolence. Excellent word selection and placement such as "growling twisted knots" and "they gnawed her will to live" keep tension at an elevated level from first to last line, leaving it to our imagination to find an end - or not. Very well done.

**red-winged blackbirds bend
pine tree boughs peaked with snowfall
cones scatter below**

© 2005 Carol Cotten

COMMENTS: Quick turns of phrase and adept use of precise language marks this as well-crafted. True to the haiku form, this beautifully involves one central image. A still painting. From the contrast within the very first three words of the poem to the lovely use of "peaked," this haiku is simple, yet powerful. Good word choices. Excellent picture as if painted by a word brush. Striking contrast of color and duality of sky and earth, action and reaction. Fine imagery in this well constructed traditional haiku.

**cottonwoods rustle
leaves drift through dappled sunlight
lime popsicle melts**

© 2005 Carol Cotten

COMMENTS: Refreshingly vivid use of unique descriptions enhance this haiku. The all-important last line has a good twist that really grabs the attention of the reader. A perfect captured moment from a sultry summer day; easy to see the dapple of the sunlight, feel the dripping of the popsicle. Well-chosen words evoke various sensations. Reader can hear, visualize and almost taste this Haiku. Delicious to eyes and mouth! High summer in a traditional haiku setting. Excellent last line.

THIRD PLACE

SHARON ROTHENFLUCH COOPER, PORTLAND, OR, USA



Sharon Rothenfluch
Cooper

Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper has been a member of *Sol Magazine* for three years. Both writer and poet, her work has appeared in many Internet journals and magazines worldwide. MAG Press will soon publish Sharon's chapbook, *Reach Beyond*, which won their 2005 International Chapbook Competition. She says, "I feel that all life experiences need a venue to express the joy and the pain of living."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

The poet approaches language with natural speech rhythms and interesting harmonic sounds that enrich comprehension. The poet used many interesting active verbs, especially in the first poem. Good control of imagery. Nicely constructed, with well-planned and specific word choices. This poet shows real skill in covering a broad range of emotions. Explicitly clear language invites the reader to come fully into the poem; then, unique and delicate song-like imagery creates a world that the reader never wants to leave. Beautiful word choices convey a true love of the English language, while the clarity of the thought process leaves nothing lacking. Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper seems to experience everything with a poet's senses, for she carefully sends out words and pictures that resonate with the reader.

Raindance

**She strides confidently,
forehead angled to receive
damp falling mist.**

**Whimsical air shatters,
rhythmic sound washes over her.
Rain speaks in enchanted dialects,
beads her pony tail
with gentle insistence,
settles on sooty lashes.**

**Sweet-water showers
moisten her warm lips,
coax a questing tongue.
Spiked branches are adorned
with bits of magic,
leaves tattooed with liquid luster.**

**Puddles flow into
a stream of chocolate,
braid gravel channels,
spill willy-nilly into
the river, merrily ripple
in blended hue.**

**Fresh-faced laughter
bubbles upward as she
experiences nature's cleansing.**

© 2005 Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper

COMMENTS: Syntax appropriately conveys the poet's proficiency. Pleasantly crafted well presented work. Controlled figures of speech stimulate a fresh reaction. The onomatopoeic sounds suggest the action of the river. Good choice of active verbs. This playful poem is woven into an entertaining tapestry that pleases all senses. Wonderfully kinetic, splashing onto the page just as the drops onto her forehead. Excellent word choices to give the poem a sense of constantly moving forward, never settling into a stoic stupor. Pure experience. The poet uses vivid images as in "puddles flow into streams of chocolate," personification as when the "rain speaks in enchanted dialects," and musical alliteration.

**March To Oblivion
(For Refugees Everywhere)**

**We carry nothing,
have nothing,
expect nothing,**

**no beginning or end
in the trek to nonexistence,
only constant movement.
One step shuffles, then another,
hopelessness not even
a conscious thought.**

**Hungry children
follow our pace,
weaken and perish.**

**Silent shadows
in our minds
grieve their loss,
but escape becomes
our blind purpose.**

**In the muddle of the deranged,
we advance
towards obscurity.**

© 2005 Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper

COMMENTS: Deft use of caesurae (pauses in lines of verse dictated by sense or natural speech rhythm rather than by metrics) throughout. Direct language paired with enjambment move the reader's eye straight through to the conclusion. Skillfully arranged and well organized expressions of emotion and tension are brought forward to the following lines. The poem ends with a powerful climax. This poem has an emotional trend, becoming quite poignant toward the end. A somber journey into life's darker moments. The real or imagined is left to the reader, allowing the realization that perhaps they are the same. Asks to be reread several times. Skillful writing. Conversational style proves to be a stellar treatment for such a sensitive topic. The method of telling this story gives it a sense of interweaving present and past experiences into a cohesive whole that all of mankind must experience and endure simultaneously. This poem opens with a strong first stanza and sustains the tone of hopelessness throughout. There is an ironic juxtaposition of strength and helplessness in such lines as "our blind purpose" and "we advance towards obscurity."

**silver pierces sky
forms dramatic silhouettes
marbled snow rakes land**

© 2005 Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper

COMMENTS: Compact form and clever word placement sets a mysterious tone. Recognizable yet striking visual content. Beautiful. A new perspective of nature in winter. Unique word choices are excellent. Nice use of "dramatic" and "marbled" to create a heightened sensation of clarity. This piece shows a vast picture of sky and land, silver and shadows, and the still action of marbled snow raking the land.

**drops splash concrete
hawk soars through twisted alleys
agility tested**

© 2005 Sharon Rothenfluch Cooper

COMMENTS: Vigorous imagery enhances the form. This succinct piece reflects the drama in nature, while its skillful description of urban life may be summed with three words (concrete, twisted alleys). Visually strong yet lovely. Beautiful contrast between the free-wheeling hawk and the "concreteness" of the concrete contrasted with the falling drop. Implied parallel between the drops falling and the hawk struggling not to fall. Excellent last line. A humorous convergence of nature with a manmade obstacle course!

FOURTH PLACE

AVONNE GRIFFIN, GREER, SC, USA



Avonne Griffin

Avonne Griffin has been a member of *Sol Magazine* since March of 2002. Her work has also appeared in *Emotions*, *Le Mewz*, *American West*, *This Hard Wind*, *Writer's Quill*, *Times Ex*, and the Austin International Poetry Festival's 2001 *a-di-verse-city-odyssey*. Originally from Southern California, Avonne currently lives in South Carolina. About writing she says, "I write because life is too full and too glorious to look at with naked eyes. I need metaphors for a lens and cadence for my stride or I'll lose my balance."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

This poet's contribution to this competition is a refreshing delight that demonstrates talented craftsmanship and skill with forms. This poetry is clearly written from the heart. The recurrence of duplicate sounds at predictable intervals elaborates the narrative verse, emphasizing its melodic quality. Avonne brings mystery as well as nature to her poetry. Extreme care in word choices is obvious in this poet's writing; very specific words are used to convey very specific emotions. Unique twists keep a reader guessing.

Sweet Sorrow

**How grudgingly I help you pack your bag,
accept small gifts you sense I have admired --
then stop and note a certain selfless lag
when underneath performance you grow tired.**

**But still you greet each day with eager eyes,
transcend my abject greed for more of you --
pretending not to hear my stifled cries
admitted when I think it's true, it's true!**

**Simplicity extends to reach the heart,
profoundly moves to dole emotions slow.
From you I've learned that leaving is an art;
each gesture paints a thousand words I know.**

**How willingly I sit here by your side --
so humbled by your life, so filled with pride.**

© 2005 Avonne Griffin

COMMENTS: Well crafted English Sonnet sporting unforced cadence. The poet implements precise use of rhythm and end rhyme. Nicely done. The rhyme scheme melds individual lines into a pattern, influencing and intensifying from stanza to stanza. The poem paints numerous conjectures of the situation for the reader. This is a poignant piece nicely presented. Nice use of very specific adverbs to clearly illustrate feelings, such as "grudgingly." Heart-aching portrayal of the unconquerable, with a clear-eyed look at the endings of things as we know them.

**tree snake drooping
below scarlet sumac leaves
cardinal nest**

© 2005 Avonne Griffin

COMMENTS: Vigorous use of colorful images added to this trim presentation make this haiku a rare treasure. The twist in last line of this poem changes peaceful to dangerous, not only a great attention getting technique, but also a way of pointing out the duality of nature. Thoughtful, clear, ingenious writing. Beautiful contrast between the imagined green of the tree snake, the scarlet of the leaves, and the red of the cardinal standing out from the dark brown of its nest. A dizzying array of contrasting color that all combines to create a lovely instant snapshot.

**apple blossom floats
down gutter into drain hole
alligator blinks**

© 2005 Avonne Griffin

COMMENTS: Skilled use of duality. The unexpected turn of the last line is charming. Photographic imagery. Well textured haiku moves from soft to rough with few words. Precise word-choices make this succinct piece memorable. Interesting contrast between the delicacy of an apple blossom and the concrete reality of a drain. The end has a startling twist. Good use of contrast, both in color and imagery.

HONORABLE MENTION

APARNA BELAPURKAR, LONDON, EG, GBR



Aparna Belapurkar

Aparna Belapurkar is a poet, musician and writer. Currently living and working as a clinical specialist physio-therapist in London, Aparna became a member of *Sol Magazine* in 2003. Her work has been published in local magazines and newspapers in India, and online in poetry magazines such as *Sol Magazine*, and in *Still* literary magazine's 1999 Autumn Anthology. Her poem-cum-slogan on Euro received 2nd place in the BBC radio 4 on-the-spot contest. She says, "I write because I love the sound of words on pulp that sing with the rise and fall of happiness within me."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

This poet presents engaging word management enhanced with enriching phrases. Beautifully envisioned poetry. In this collection the reader experiences form, shape, pattern, glowing images and delightful sound. The poet has made use of both structure and idea, incorporating fresh and interesting, alive and exciting tonal quality, intensified by alternating accented and unaccented rhythms. Aparna Belapurkar relishes in the sights and sounds of nature. She seems to weave her words in awe and wonder.

**Dark silent sky
Vast earth with weeping willows
Crickets rub legs**

© 2005 Aparna Belapurkar

COMMENTS: This poem invites the reader to listen as well as visualize, as it comments on a subtle mood of nature. The poet paints a large, quiet canvas, then allows the sound of little crickets dominate the scene!

**Coloured daffodils
Invading still esplanades
Human traffic jams**

© 2005 Aparna Belapurkar

COMMENTS: Outstanding word play on the tongue when read aloud! Stellar craftsmanship. Vivid imagery. A pleasant picture of stillness and activity -- both immediate and over time.

Nature Whispers

**I love the sound of words on pulp,
Those cling and curve a graceful rise and fall
My feelings swing on spring of syllables
And dreams now wake to a soulful call.
The golden silence is fragrant with voice,
A voice with strings and heart that beats aloud
(Like) A bird awaiting pulse to fly in poise,
Sure loves the sound of flapping feathers proud.
The rising greens that paint the crown of dawn,
Fills colours full of chirps and whispers keen
In cavorting flora are purples born,
Those with the magic wand of skies cry and sing.
So sound is everywhere you turn your heart,
In morning light that follows cloudy start.**

© 2005 Aparna Belapurkar

COMMENTS: Fine end-line oblique rhyme. The excellent first line immediately grabs the reader's attention. Composed with sensitivity, the poet has varied the iambic pentameter occasionally which adds interest to the sonnet form. Sporadic use of internal rhyme creates an elevated tone. A totally delightful poem to be read again and again. A sweet sonnet singing the praise of the sounds of nature. The poet uses slant rhyme and pleasing meter to sing her praise. Nice use of Synesthesia in "the golden silence is fragrant."

HONORABLE MENTION

WARNER D. CONARTON, ZEPHYRHILLS, FL, USA



Warner D. Conarton was first published in 1936 in the Willow Street School's Anthology in Lansing, Michigan; his was the only kindergarten entry. For the past three or four years, he has published much work in dozens of anthologies and literary magazines, some at *Sol Magazine*, where his poetry has several times been selected for the honor of Editor's Choice. He has been a member since 2000. In his words, "I write because if I didn't, I would be somebody else and not as pleased with myself."

Warner D. Conarton

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

Ah, what a breath of fresh air this poet brings! Charming, fresh approach to writing that puts the fun back into poetry. Assonance with alliteration throughout create delightful passages and whimsical, yet meaningful, ideas and images often hyperbolically expressed. Warner D. Conarton's poetry has a laid-back and appreciative-of-all-around-him quality. Even the small things take on worthy proportions under his care. Tenderness, irony, and spell-binding metaphors are woven throughout his poetry.

**sitting still by pond
motionless while life resumes
bug on tip of nose**

© 2005 Warner D. Conarton

COMMENTS: Quaint vignette written tightly, yet not taken too seriously. A hard combo to beat! Creates a strong visual connection. Humorous and surprising slice of life where stillness is interrupted by intruding life!

**viewing dirty streets
frog on window quacks like duck
cleansing rain comes soon**

© 2005 Warner D. Conarton

COMMENTS: Whimsical snapshot portrayed in excellent form. Paints a clear scene. This poem shows one of the cycles of life, dirty then clean then. The poet writes with a touch of distracting irony that causes the reader to smile.

Dandelions

**When I was a child there were dandelions
Yellow... yellow... yellow...
with claw-green
leaves**

**to laugh and smudge girls'
chins with
or blow and watch the wingéd seeds
lift away like angels.**

**Dandelions were spring... and assured
Yes - the world was still alive
Yes - Yes
and would go on and on-**

**-As each downed angel
lifted its slim giraffe neck
and
sucking sky
and earth
spread to duplicate the sun.**

**When I was a child there were dandelions
-bursting like green balloons
on hairbrush lawns**

**shouting
yellow...yellow... yellow
mocking grown-ups, intruding
to kiss each child's eyes
with sunshine kisses.**

**When I was a child, there were dandelions
-show me dandelions now.
Show me-
Show me dandelions.**

© 2005 Warner D. Conarton

COMMENTS: The child-like quality of this poem communicates the narrator's nostalgic longing for simplicity. Vibrant use of repetition, especially in the challenge of the concluding stanza. The poet has used vivid images metaphorically, which add a delightful magical quality to the poem as it reflects the world as seen through the eyes of a child. Delightful! The nostalgic tone and fresh, vivid metaphors transport the reader back to childhood and cause her to say with the poet at the end of the poem, "Show me dandelions!"

HONORABLE MENTION

MARYANN HAZEN-STEARNs, ELLENVILLE, NY, USA



Maryann Hazen-Stearns, author of *Under the Limbo Stick*, has been a member of *Sol Magazine* for five years. Her poetry also appears in many international print publications and in 400+ electronic publications. She is Associate Editor of *MindFire Renewed*, and member of the Woodstock Poetry Society, and Poets & Writers. She says, "I write poetry because I love poetry; I am not a performer or an actress. I became so concerned over performance and physical appearance, that it robbed me of the pleasure of sharing my poetry, so I stopped making appearances. So far, no one has complained."

Maryann Hazen-Stearns

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS: An expressive presentation of lyrical and melodic, effectual and descriptive language. Mary Hazen-Stearns is a sensory poet whose fine poetry sizzles under a controlled intensity and is marked by rich and compelling metaphors. This is a strong writer, whose complex ideas are well worth sharing with a greater audience. Memorable work meant to be read aloud and then read aloud again. Writing that touches the inner core of us all.

**snow crystals melt
cardinal song rises on mist
seeds fall**

© 2005 Maryann Hazen-Stearns

COMMENTS: Contrasting images refer to this poem's theme. This picture of hope shows the duality of falling seeds and rising songs, melting snow and forming songs. Lovely writing. Beauty expressed in sight and sound. Exquisite.

**barrio steams
blacktop sprouts telephone poles
oil slick rainbows**

© 2005 Maryann Hazen-Stearns

COMMENTS: Vivid description. Although this excellent poem has the feel of nature, all its elements are manmade. A delightful paradox of images. Thoughtful urbanscape that forces the reader into the picture. Well done!

When One Does Not Return

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us." - -
Ralph Waldo Emerson

**The dead red leaves rest in a pile.
There will be fresh bacon for breakfast
and new brown eggs. The table is set.**

**Jimmy is gone, Nellie is sleeping.
Sap drips from the maple's veins
slowly into the pail.**

**Acorns fall, monarchs fly.
This morning a male cardinal
sits on the white fence.
He is clearly waiting.
When I glance again, he has vanished.**

**Nellie tends the fire beneath the iron pot,
stirs the sap as it simmers.
The very air about us sticks
to our flannel sleeves and jeans,
sweet with possibilities
and the drunken dance of wasps.**

© 2005 Maryann Hazen-Stearns

COMMENTS: A touching narrative matter-of-factly sets the world a stage where feelings seem to have been withheld. Despite the "silence" the reader is aware that the title reveals the something that is happening. Fresh, poetical images enliven a lovely setting. That which is not said is instead felt. This poem is rife with sensory detail: the colors and pictures, the taste and smell of bacon and eggs; the sound of bacon cooking, maple dripping, acorns falling; and the feel of flannel sticking to the skin. The foreshadowing in the stanza with the cardinal is poignant. Much lies beneath the surface of this poem. Great storytelling.

HONORABLE MENTION

JEANETTE OESTERMYER, ROSWELL, NM, USA



Jeanette Oestermeyer

Jeanette Oestermeyer has been a member of *Sol Magazine* for two years, and has taught several poetry classes at Roswell's local adult center. Her poetry appears in *Candlelight Poetry Journal* and other magazines. She is both poet and writer, and serves as President of the New Mexico State Poetry Society, is a member of the Haiku Society of America, and lives in Roswell with two tabby cats and her husband. Jeanette says, "I write to release the stories that dwell inside and to paint scenes with words that capture the images and beauty that surround me to share with all who care to read, listen and enjoy."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

Jeanette Oestermeyer's contemplative poetry is filled with wonder and appreciation of nature, who shares her love of words and nature with the reader, a generous gift indeed. Descriptive poetical voice speaks expressively, examining details that provide a vivid impression of the living presence of beauty. Strong and well-chosen words create images that are often quite unforgettable. The diction is elegant, without being condescending, and analogies are often veiled, yet not obscure. Exceptional ability to turn ordinary events into extraordinary word pictures. This is an "outdoor" poet who uses careful word selection and well planned word placements to take us where she goes, allows us to see through her eyes. This creative and talented writer's work is unforgettable.

**each raindrop
on lake surface
small round pool**

**© 2005 Jeanette
Oestermeyer**

COMMENTS: Tranquil setting courtesy of the poet's careful word choices, as she paints a pretty watercolor using comparison as the brush. Composed in the true spirit of haiku. Deceptively simple. This evokes images of the circuitous and never-ending ripples that a single raindrop can initiate. Soothing. Brings the action of rain to the reaction of the lake, and the result is both lively and serene.

Nature's Mysterious Modes

**She is elusive – keeps
her children concealed,
yet not obscured
as to never be found
in the earthly scheme of life.**

**Do her young emulate
a scene in the garden
hiding themselves,
ashamed of their nakedness?**

**Mating of her young is cunning;
they hide the primitive impulse.
It is not veiled to conclusion,
only the excitement and flurry
of final rituals remain obvious.**

**Demure seedlings
covered gently in soft humus
left to germinate alone
break soil as sunlight --
like a magnet –
forces the grasp for freedom.**

**Her seasons enter and leave
with stealth, elusive hints
of changes to come.**

**Nature's cognizant eye
her miraculous realm innocent
of original sin,
teems in pristine elegance.**

© 2005 Jeanette Oestermeyer

COMMENTS: Attention to detail and nuance as well as consistent illustration dramatically portray Mother Nature at her finest. Strong visual content gleams with consciousness, interconnecting past, present, and future in its search for truth. A lovely example of personification without over-description. Lyrically pleasant to read. Strong images and beautiful language create an ethereal scene of Eden. Creative presentation of Mother Nature and her children. Good flow throughout. Shows a strong control and a pleasing cadence. Beneath the feel of wonder lies a clear, observant and questioning tone. Well thought out word selection and placement backed by subtle use of alliteration take us above and below ground into Nature's secret places. Well done.

**sparrows chirp at dusk
sounds echo from high branch
mockingbird**

© 2005 Jeanette Oestermeyer

COMMENTS: Good balance of form mixed with a playful quality. Vivid, concrete images, with a nice emphasis of the echo with the revelation of its source. A charming snapshot of a quiet twilight moment. Intriguing twist in last line cunningly turns echoes into mockingbirds. Nicely done! Pleasing to the ear. Well thought out - we clearly hear the sounds in this non-traditional haiku.

HONORABLE MENTION

KATHY PAUPORE, KINGSFORD, MI, USA



Kathy Paupore

Kathy Paupore has been a member at *Sol Magazine* since 2002. Her poems are published at *Sol Magazine*, *Amaze: Cinquain Journal*, and *Writer's Hood*. A Registered Nurse specializing in Ophthalmology at an Ambulatory Surgery Center, Kathy lives with her husband and children in Kingsford, Michigan. In her words: "Writing is an escape from the hectic pace of modern life, a way to record those moments that would otherwise be forgotten."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

This poet's boxes are not empty, but are filled with her well chosen tools, her words, and a small dollop of creamy humor tucked into a corner, then packed with extraordinary visual interest and intellectual and emotional stimulation. Remarkable results achieved by use of contrast. Touching multi-dimensional scenarios skillfully avoiding over-sentimentality. Well crafted. The Haiku here are done well and in the prescribed form. Skilled writing of concise scenes that allow the reader to view each event in person as if peering into a shadow box. Kathy Paupore's poetry, poignant in the subtle delivery, is peppered with compelling contrasts, and we wish we could hear more, and more and more.

**stray snowflakes
early green dragonfly
flight delayed**

© 2005 Kathy Paupore

COMMENTS: Vivid revelation of nature. Wistful tone combined with deft handling of diction provide the reader with a delightful vignette. Perfect form. The closing line sums it up very well. Concise poem noting colors, movement and season, resulting in a masterfully done haiku. Good use of contrast in the white, airborne snowflakes against a still, green dragonfly.

**hungry raccoon
rattles full garbage can
restaurant closed**

© 2005 Kathy Paupore

COMMENTS: Good use of sight, sound, sense in this beautiful mini-portrait with an amusing conclusion; well done. Nicely done subtle twist in third line. The poet's humor is at work here - we can clearly see the frustrated customer. Clever solution, whimsical poem. Dramatic contrast. Fine writing.

The Putting Away

**It starts with boxes full
of empty boxes.**

**Arts and crafts ornaments
wrapped in yellowed tissue,**

**glass balls, delicate cells
of purple or silver
stacked in plastic containers,**

**strands of colored lights
twisted in double-helix knots,**

**packed in cardboard boxes
or festive popcorn tins.
Dry pine needles vacuumed up,**

**she wants to pack away the threat
of cancer. Wrap it carefully
in lab slips and consent forms,
store it in a box full of empty
boxes, duct tape it shut.**

**Hide it in the attic
covered with cobwebs
of normal test results.**

© 2005 Kathy Paupore

COMMENTS: The poet shows an intensifying sensitivity to the plight of the subject of this story. An immediately understandable eye opening look at common household items contrasted with the need for life. Opening line invites the reader into the poem. The poet's extraordinary use of juxtaposition and symbolism is well developed. An excellent poem, where the reader is pulled directly into the story in the first stanza. Consonance and imagery works well. A poignant good ending. The stark clinicality (if there is such a word) of this poem's subject is leavened by the poet's careful word selection equating vagrant cells with holiday ornaments and snarled wiring of festive lights with DNA gone awry - all to be tucked away and dealt with later, if there is a later. Well balanced contradiction along with word placement make this an excellent metaphorical piece. Very well done. Poem takes the reader by surprise with a flowing description of a mundane event becoming a life shattering revelation. Has the ring of a universal truth. We are unprepared for the unexpected yet still it comes. Well-crafted chilling piece. A striking metaphor. Internal rhyme and irony of full and empty adds a poignancy.

HONORABLE MENTION

GILLIAN WILKINSON, SAXONWOLD, RSA



Gillian Wilkinson

Gillian Wilkinson is an educator and currently Director of Community Services at Kingsmead College, a private girls' school in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she taught for many years. She has long written for pleasure and has enjoyed *Sol Magazine* for nearly four years. Her work may be found in school magazines, but the bulk of her published poems appear in *Sol Magazine*. In her words, "I write because it is a way of expressing the emotions I feel when I look around South Africa. I write because my heart calls me to share ideas and thoughts that rise in response to the beauty, sorrow, hope and joy that permeate the world. I write because sometimes the words just come off the end of the pen."

EDITORS' & JUDGES' COMMENTS

Intensely expressive and mysterious language embodies several elements of creativity that combine with poetical devices such as imagery, personification and alliteration. Skilled use of form marked with emotion and grace; a remarkable quality. Good command of imagery, meter, rhyme, both internal and near, personification and alliteration in these three pieces. This poet enlists the senses with descriptive verbs. Assonance helps set the tone and pace of the poetry. This poet chooses the most unusual analogies, yet ones that make perfect sense in a "Why did no one else see it that way before?" way once a reader experiences one of the poems. There is an obvious love of the English language in the careful way lines are constructed, rather than written, and each poem has an air of having been born, as opposed to created.

HIV

**I enter silently passing Pleasure's door
Secretively, invisible to the eyes
Of Passion dreaming, longing for more
And more of Sensuous' soft silky cries;
I pass dulled Reason sleeping sonorously
Drowsed by street prepared powdery potions,
With Judgment absent, I creep easily
Into the pounding pulses of people's lives.
I slide joyfully down plastic lines
And dive deep into Life's restoring blood,
Passing waiting Death to where Immune shines
My way to a cell, my waiting abode.
A decade passes, Illness sets me free,
I rise, challenging World to conquer Me.**

© 2005 Gillian Wilkinson

COMMENTS: Imaginative introduction creates an intensely moving perfect realization of vision. Sonnet-like rendering with a haunting undercurrent of pain and forgiveness. Successful use of alliteration and cadence. Refreshing meter that makes use of a slight change in number of syllables throughout. Consistent unforced rhyme scheme. Personification creeps into the lines rather than being intrusive. The poignant theme of the poem carries well throughout, nicely combined with unique imagery. This poem immediately calls to mind Shelley's great metaphorical pieces such as "The Cloud" and others. Careful word selection and placement and good use of alliteration bring the terrible affliction that stalks almost every country and every culture subtly yet starkly to life. A very well done piece. This poem is an engaging approach to a worldwide critical issue. The poet's unique approach gives voice to the virus allowing readers to view unexpected facets of the disease. Each intriguing line attracts, repels and frightens simultaneously. A profound piece. Skillful end-rhyme that makes the poem flow. A sensory sonnet. The snakelike hisses of "s" and the 'plosion of "p" effectively underscore the insidious and devastating intrusion of HIV. An amazing analogy, and one that is scintillating in its clarity. Beautiful word choices create an almost ethereal air, and the Dickinson-esque use of capitalization has the interesting side-effect of personification in the same breath. Closing lines are an open challenge - but also a plea. Beautifully done.

**waterlogged clouds
pelt raindrops pocking parched earth
summer thunder storm**

© 2005 Gillian Wilkinson

COMMENTS: Well-rendered mood. The poet links a picturesque snapshot moment with strikingly artistic phrases to grab the reader's senses. Excellent haiku with a slight twist of thought in third line. Captures a moment in time. Nice imagery rendered by good use of alliteration and near rhyme. Reiteration of p sounds turns summer rain into music. A well written poem by a skilled poet. Nice image and use of consonance with pelt, pocking, parched. This scene enlists the senses of the reader. The sight of heavy clouds and the feel and smell of rain on a parched earth are delicious! Marvelous alliteration in the second. Nice repeated sound in the final line, as well, with "summer thunder."

**hawk feathers drop down
onto city draughts rising up
swirling them away**

© 2005 Gillian Wilkinson

COMMENTS: Opposition of movements work together to create natural harmony. Application of gentle imagery coupled with delicate word choice creates an engaging duality. Excellent imagery, like a photo. Good word selection gives the reader a well presented contrast in this haiku. Allows reader to rise and fall as free as the poet's featured feathers. Unique image, nice contrast and duality of high and low then swirling feathers provide a delightful visual treat! In just a few lines, the poet has captured the struggle of Nature with the steadily encroaching cities and mankind's creations. The final line has both the air of something just happening and the air of something inevitable and intensely, incredibly sad. May this poet never stop writing!

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