

Sol Magazine

Autumn 2008



Featured Poets

P.C. McKinnon

Margo Davis

Kenneth A. Weene

Kay L. Cox

Jimmy Burns

Carol Dee Meeks

The Nature of Things

In night's air I ride
on the buzz of cicada songs,
holding reins of forest whispers,
tethered to lonely cricket cries.
I witness moonlit dances
of wilderness gods and mystic jinn
swaying to romantic rhythms
like lovers lost in the moment.
I smell the damp forest floor.
Its perfumed waters,
the mouth of thought.
Foliage fans out into unseen expanses.
I feel the pulse of silence beat
like dark, Whitman prairies;
naked campfire silhouettes
drifting off, drifting off.
I hear echoes against walls of
empty, homeless corridors
passing across helpless blankets,
gray hairs peeking into darkness.
In the night air,
rounding dawn's bend,
I release myself. There,
I linger,
in the nature of things.

Oh Say, Can You See?

See the flag, wavering
in the background,
proud,
waving to someone,
calling to a nation.
See the youngsters, marching
to the battlefield,
bloodied,
shooting at someone,
fighting for a cause.
See the leaders, smiling
to the cameras,
victorious,
shaking hands,
kissing babies.
See the world, suffocating
all around us,
dying,
waving hands,
drowning in flags.

P.C. McKinnon

Warriors in the Grass

I read once
that all that's left
of ancient warriors
is green grass and stories.

I thought of this as
I made a sandwich for lunch.
Years ago I would have searched
to wash it down
with brown bottles of horses
with hairy white ankles.
Now I only long for
the warmth of tea or coffee.

I thought of this as
I searched for slippers
to warm my feet
that once walked bare everywhere
– inside and out –
and a shirt to cover
my chilled chest and back
as I sat on the patio
in the company of birds' melodies.

I thought of this as I sat
and spoke with the elderly
whose sands of borrowed time
would soon run out,
as I have often
contemplated my own
borrowed mortality.

The green blades –
all ghosts of one
hallowed past or another –
now peacefully share
their stories of whispered breezes
upon which we,
the latest vicegerents,
smugly go about life.

We are the newest warriors
of a troubled land; and soon,
we will be triumphant –

as triumphant as seedlings.

Venturing off the Porch

This morning I recall
how honeycomb felt
on the tongue, raw honey dripping
down my chin, a bee caught
between my teeth.
Lost to thought, I nod
at a turkey not ten feet from me,
a flat nod one gives a minister
whose dull sermon leaves you
so cold you shiver home
to tea. As the ruffled preacher
gathers his flock, I reach
for the rifle I never bring.
That's when I observe how
he moves toward birch trees
like an overfed woman
leans forward from the waist
to shed her rocker.

Late Again

Last night for supper I ate
porridge with the last of the cream
and butter, then swept as if in morning
light, leaving my bowl and spoon
caked hard with all I cast aside,
a portion large enough for William.
At first light I lay awake
alone, befuddled. I stole
to the hearth midday for
cornbread, devouring it in bed,
rolled on crumbs one dare
not waste at table. Low hunger
grows unruly in our bed.

I find hunger

makes one petty. I will trap
that buck-toothed
hare before I grow too fond
and name it Robert,
after Will's younger brother
whose nose runs in cold weather
above tombstone teeth. If only Will
had shown me how to set a good
trap. What odor could lure a hare,
do they favor carrots?
How is it possible, I wonder,
to trick a rabbit into a pot?

Margo Davis

Cleaning Closets

Some shift and tremble as if
assembled for bonfire.
A canary yellow signals
from a haystack of dull suede,
dark patent leather,
autumnal grey, its supple mate
pinned in by some thick heel
angling to set the pace.
This hold-up must rankle him.
Will sling-backs hold back?
Each soul, right or left bank,
affects the whole. If I
single out even one from this
stacked slumber party, we fall
back to anarchy.

Stepping Out

I am not focused on those
I love the most, those who wait
and wait for a smile which I share
with those who may not care.
I am my mother, and strangers
are the misstep I might recover. I wonder
if Mother found it less traumatic
with newcomers. She meant no harm,
it seems now, because I don't.
I mean well— I mean, well,
to encourage those who reach out
or stumble on that first step.
After that we walk alone.

Season's End

He paces out the farm,
greeting different versions of himself,
each phase a season on his land.

I leave him where familiar ground
will give in to him. Heart willing, ear cocked
for the combine's trill, he remains

lost to thoughts of bailing
hay, our last kiss planted simply
for the thrill of tilling.

Kenneth A. Weene

Audience

Undocumented (Los Pobres)

We were whistling by in our oversexed SUV
And almost didn't see them on the shoulder
One bald tire cabbage salad
And a propane stove
Next to which she crouched
Dressed for her sister's wedding.
The children in eager reach of tortillas
Wipe greasy fingers on church best
Handed down again and again
And laugh with bleating sheep contentment
Playing tag while padre
Waves us passing gringos
And hopes a tire before night
He will accept a pickup crammed ride
To the next barrio and a day's work
In the stoop fields outside Yuma.
He will accept
Los pobres will always accept.

Do yellowed pages hold more truth?

Do yellowed pages hold more truth?
Is it enough to know
that time has won?

A child runs aimlessly about;
an arrow flies aimed direct
in plan—full death.

Will winter grass sustain?
Is it enough to know
that spring will come?

I write for an audience of one
never met,
isolate from the world,
outside of Concord,
she waits for letters,
the ones unsent
that will not come
even though she waits.

Weather-browned and years bent
a photograph
recalled and reminisced
a listener unknown
used without consent
as the street mime
regales the passerby
with all those lines unsaid.

I hear her laughter
feel her tears
watch her wring her gnarled hands
and most of all the scent
of lilac sprigs with which
she keeps my death at bay
as she awaits
the words I will not send.

Cemetery Visit

It's a good time of year to bring dead flowers.
The graves won't notice;
Soon they will be covered with leaves,
A blanket of brown preparing for white salvation.
Each year the letters wear away
Like memories eroded
As the earth reclaims her own
As dead petals blow in the wind.

The Space Between

The space between echoes of things unsaid
empty of emotion, caring
bare traces of once felt passion.
Memories of rumpled sheets and breathless moments
hearts crescendoing to fall together in a sweaty heap
are shadows on the threads.
Now the void,
like clouds and just as fragile,
lies among piles of unseen stones
guarding rawness,
feelings sensitive to the light,
secrets undeclared
broken by a tear.

Monster Monday

The big white jaw opens wide
as I stand nearby and ready
to feed the waiting monster.
One, two—green
One, two, three, four-white
One, two-pale blue
cough, sputter, wheeze
Breakfast of a champion:
water and a healthy dose of Tide,
cream followed by the sugar.
Ka-chug, ka-chug, swish, swish!
The dragon burps and bellows;
round and round he spins.
At last he swallows deep within his sweaty throat
lays still waiting the removal
of damp and steamy remnants of his colorful dessert.
With fear and consternation I approach,
lift the black rimmed mouth
to see what has survived.
One, two-green
One, two-black
One, two, three-white
Darn, the dragon wins again.
another sock consumed.
And so til Monday comes once more
I pray that laundry-eating monster
will have a tummy ache
and with a giant heave throw up a clean white sock.

Kay L. Cox

Birds on a Wire

I watch hoping for a glimpse,
a sign that the bird in front of me
knows my face, my smile, my hand.
But the bird isn't home today
sitting in her chair of wheels
among the birds on wire.
I see her flicker in and out
and wonder where she goes,
When will she be back?
Spaced so exactly that a stray wing
or one outstretched for flight
will not harm another
These birds pass the winters of their lives
with drooping wings and feet.
Only imaginary flights now
find freedom from the cold and lonely cage.
I envy this ability to leave it all behind,
to caw with venom without restraint
to laugh at hidden jokes
and yet I feel the dread of a coming time
when wings are clipped and I might rest
alone among the birds on wire.

Water Webs

Rainbow webs of light
shifting, fleeting
dance across the floor
beneath my goggled gaze.
Leaving chaos of the upper world
pressing waves before me,
trails of bubbles
rise from my fingers' path
as paint brushes on slippery canvas
held gently, like the soft caresses
of an understanding lover
across the membrane of my heart.

Sitting at edge of bed,
 record depression
 with blue ink on yellow
 legal pad.
 Pre-dawn struggle
 with self, lucid
 nightmares stream
 through blind slats
 eyes flicker like
 an arcane motion
 picture projector;
 feet dangle above
 forever plunge;
 access to jargon
 laden wheelchair limited;
 I dress in my retirement,
 loathing the ache
 of the tick-tock;
 missing the paranoia
 of employment;
 paralytic arm buffers
 the former from
 the present.
 A stranger on a cot
 juxtaposed across
 the fire lane
 screams, "I am angry!"

"Why are you angry?"
 I ask in response.
 He carps about being
 up all night at the station
 but his bus never came.
 "I want to choke someone,"
 he laments, then redacts
 his words with profanity
 I nod in bewilderment,
 I want to strangle him
 with my one, good hand.
 I am as disturbed,
 as angry, as anyone else,
 but the stranger
 demands more attention
 than I can pay.
 Second Amendment Poetry

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My neighbors write their poetry
 at the local gun range.
 They tap their figurative language
 with short bursts from blue steel
 rifles which belch metaphors
 of smoke and fog.
 Late at night I find their voice
 annoying, but as persuasive
 as any poem ever written.

Mass

Celebrating big bang; cosmic birth
 drags generic cigarette stub across
 tender parchment lips of a vein
 popped muscle encrusted stevedore
 dressed in pink tutu, head adorned
 with rhinestone studded tiara, sings
 opera composed by a fat lady, sings
 of new earth & future heavens, all
 jazz applied in pastels, meander
 scars from dead planets & electric
 cowboy laser beams, sings of demons
 practiced by mundane apparitions
 cum laude, graduation of metaphors,
 trite renderings of last millennium,
 the new beginnings reek of shallow
 Amen without purpose nor end. Amen.
 The more we know the less we learn.
 The less we know the more we learn.
 Antithesis purged from final Amens.

Breakfast at the Edge of the Gulf of Mexico

Clown make-up pantomime squeezes ambient improvisation,
 Yeats & Goya screw lavender plugs into overcast sky,
 antiquated Lord Alfred argues brusquely with burlesque
 dapple Ginsberg. Greek and Norse mythology hammers iron
 intersections with Latino daydreams drenched in Gringo
 nightmares; the festering gulf delivers added salt
 & gooney birds assault crisp skin sunbathers with after-
 thoughts from consumption of green corn. Surreal dirges
 churned from endless brown water, pronounce death of
 fish crammed into tepid bodies of translucent jelly
 while pubescent sharks meander harrowing abstractions
 tainted by the flounder of concrete configurations.
 Scrambled eggs made runny by hydrated powdered milk
 & burnt red pepper salsa; at dawn I speak in spicy
 tongues drowned in cheap sauces from lateral infinity.
 Only sharp cheddar & tart cucumber relish applied
 to leftover Irish stew offers both nourishment to
 an empty belly and contentment for a turbulent mind.

Bare Bones Desired

This craft---
writing Poetry
creating,
painting pictures for people
to read:
mental impressions
images
feelings from readers.

Draft I shows
wordy, whimsical works
like a breakfast omelet filled
with onions, bell peppers,
potatoes, and cheese
layered in bacon
sausage and ham---
flowery adjectives with ING'S,
adverbs running
in combinations
of morphologic
and syntactic criteria.

Draft II opts choices
decisions to trim down
soon---
after certain points are made.

Draft III & IV and any other,
sports a regimen
of calorie counting
watching weight---
concrete nouns
action verbs
sparse pronouns;
supports framework
like skeletons.

Carol Dee Meeks

Cherokee Youngsters' Rite of Passage

Buffalo
stampede in sudden startling panic---
rushing toward the canyon's valley
where railroad tracks
take travelers through towns,
away from the desert plains.

Inside the valley
and deep into the forest,
young Indian Cherokee boys
become men, braves.
It's there they're led by their dads
blindfolded, left alone.
Sworn to secrecy---
on a stump they stay
until a morning sun penetrates
the cover over their eyes.

They endured
the Coyotes' howl,
the howl which taunts and haunts,
humiliates the habitat,
as critters run and hide.

All night the youngsters sit as stone
become men with rite of passage.
When masks removed
their dads are near—
been by their sides through this ordeal.
They head for home
all men—hear the train's whistle.

Eyes of December's Midnight

Both hands point up,
touch midnight together---
see mirrored reflections
as 2008 days end,
2009 commence.

The year was stately
like a portal vein.
It was grand, imposing,
talks of freedom gained
in a land far away.

Two thousand eight welcomed;
with new turns, new twists.
Future works out history,
parts of the mystery---
tackling the unknown,
but Janus
sees
everything
together,
at the same time.

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About the Poets

Jimmy Burns is a Montgomery County, Texas, poet with many published poems. He writes from his rural home which he shares with his wife Vickey and two sons: James and Christopher.

Kay L. Cox, M.A., is a Native Texan, visual artist, poet and a retired art therapist. Her work has been published in anthologies and a chap book by Woman in the Visual and Literary Arts of Houston. She leads creative workshops in the U.S. and abroad after teaching art therapy in universities in Texas and Australia. She is a member of the Gulf Coast Poets, Poetry Society of Texas, Women in the Visual and Literary Arts of Houston, The Arts Alliance of Clear Lake, and the Galveston Art League.

Margo Davis has been a juried finalist in the Houston Poetry Fest, and her poetry appeared in several anthologies at Austin's International Poetry Festival. Margo holds a degree in Creative Writing from UNO. Her work has appeared in *New Orleans Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Maple Leaf Rag*, and *Passages North*.

P.C. McKinnon is a retired Air Force veteran. His first collection *If Only Yet The Fog* was released in 2004. He has been featured at the Austin International Poetry Festival and has several publication credits. He lives in San Antonio, Texas.

Carol Dee Meeks is retired. She has been several times appointed New Mexico Senior Poet Laureate, has poems in *Writer's Digest's* top 100, has Honorable Mentions in *Bylines*, and has placed poems in several national poetry society contests. She chairs New Mexico's bi-monthly contests. Among others, she's been published in *Potpourri*, *Hodgepodge*, *The Rag*, *The Diplomat*, *Under the Yucca*, *New Mexico State Poetry Society Newsletter*, *Poet Sanctuary*, *Bells Letters*, and *Litchfield Review*.

Kenneth A. Weene is a New Englander by birth, and psychologist and minister by training. He has worked as both educator and psychotherapist. His poetry has appeared in numerous publications, and a book of his writings, *Songs for my Father*, was published by Inkwell Productions. Now in semi-retirement, Ken and his wife live in Arizona. There he indulges his passion for writing. He studied with Ron Rash at The Wildacres Writing Workshop.

Prior Publication Credits

Jimmy Burns

Breakfast at the Edge of the Gulf of Mexico (*Zillah*, Autumn 2001)

Kay L. Cox

Monster Monday (*Tapestries, an Anthology of Adult Learners Writing*, 2008)

P.C. McKinnon

The Nature of Things (*Dreamcatcher Anthology*, Laurel Crown Foundation, San Antonio, Texas, 2007)

Oh Say, Can You See? (www.poetsagainstar.com 2/19/2006)

Warriors in the Grass (www.poetsagainstar.com 7/23/2005)

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