

# Sol Magazine

## Spring 2010



**Mexican Plum Tree**  
**Photo by Leo F. Waltz**

## Featured Poets

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## On Castlerock Strand

Some moments are like ornaments  
on a Christmas tree—  
when you are done enjoying them,  
you take them down carefully  
and wrap them up,  
wrap them in soft gray tissue  
and tuck them in a safe corner  
in the attic of your mind.  
You wrap them softly in neurofiber,  
lay them soberly in a temporal lobe,  
to fend off time's offspring—  
forgetting.

Here is one: a slate-colored glass globe,  
seafoam striped, mottled green and blue,  
the colors of the water at Castlerock  
that Thanksgiving Day. Lost—  
Missing homemade cranberry sauce  
sweet potatoes, the wholesome feast—  
I hurl hymns  
at the Irish Sea.

*flowing water, pure and clear,  
Make music*

and it does, and it seems a gift,  
offering up a harvest  
of stillness.

And I know I want the memory to stay;  
not like the scuff of shoes in wet sand,  
not like the seabirds who feed and move on.

I cup this sphere between my palms,  
will the sea to seep into my mind,  
steep my eyes in strand and brine.

Now, almost a decade gone,  
the delicate ornament deliberately packed  
is dust and shards, hopelessly cracked  
and missing several pieces.

So. I take each fragment, shape a word,  
craft the words till they take form,  
and—surprise—find slivers hiding:  
the cottage near the strand with thatched roof molding  
the coconut smell of yellow furze buds  
the full rumble of waves under paper clouds  
the rolling hills of wheat shafts and grass  
the mist, tiny globes that glint like crushed glass.

# Dayna Patterson

## Newborn - for Madeleine

I take a picture with my mind:  
he plops you on my abdomen  
a tangle of angry limbs, eyes  
puffed and wide take me in

blood and vernix streaks your skin  
hot and quivering from the strain  
I hesitate to touch you then  
till they return you wrapped and clean

your mouth a hungry little 'o'  
searches for my breast, and then  
you teach me what a Mother knows:  
love is fierce; I am undone.

## Nursling

Small fingers sweep  
from armpit to breastbone,  
brushing the full  
curve of her breast.

She knows the milk  
is sweet and rich  
from the focus  
of his face.

In a moment that feels  
something like sin,  
curious,  
she tastes her own milk.

In the shower,  
dripping and warm,  
it pools in her open palm  
white rainwater on a leaf.

In that crude cup  
she dips her tongue like a cat—yes,  
sweet,  
thin like skim.

It leaks from the corner of his lips  
turned up in a crescent moon  
and sweeps his eyes  
with spilled stars.

## Slugs

Over the sea floor, though the sea was grey ...  
across the sloping sea floor ... and although  
the desert came down in grey gravel slides  
towards the cold shore ... Humboldts  
cold sea-current bottom ... and although  
the sky was level, shingle-coloured,  
moving murkily across the sea  
bed ... even though the wavering  
monotonous roadway swung towards  
the bouldered ocean boundary... Anyway  
along the colourless sand bottom crawled ...  
although the wind invaded cane  
slat shanties with its gritty load...  
a thing some way alive across the grey  
sea's sloping sandy bottom, unintelligibly goes;  
for in the shivering shacks among the chink  
of sticky-bottled pastel gaseosas,  
oily among rice grains on a gritty bottom  
of enamel plate they served him :  
shriveled, savourless, like leather, sea-slug.  
All the while the waves, beyond the shelter  
in the pewter fissure of horizon crawl their way.

## On the Page

To my surprise I found them, all three,  
in the garden of those died, hands swinging linked,  
and couldn't make my mind up, should I be in agony  
and howl out? Stand there stunned ? Disdain the bare  
decease of sentience? Or was I now extinct  
myself? Within the sheet of paper's privacy:  
The cloister opened and re-entered by the stairs  
of rhyme; the doorway unlocked with a pen -  
and in the last resort, its perfect hiding place  
behind the gates of fire; the secrecy of words  
at various moments salamanders and chameleons;  
in such a sanctuary the bullying voice of Death  
is no more disconcerting than the smoking birds  
of nightfall: the suggestion that the day may not be given  
for your ordinary pleasure, or allowed the breadth  
of an important project; and that those whose dying  
would most affect them, rarely warn the living  
of their hasty parting, and they cannot answer the inquiries  
afterwards of any emptiness they leave behind -  
All, softly, without anguish or foreboding -  
all compose themselves within the guiding freedom of the lines  
at times surprising, but in every figment, blithe or shameless,  
innocent inside that sheltered place. And not excluding  
even Death, there need be nothing nameless.

# Nicholas Messenger

## Taken by Flash

Men, dogs, birds, butterflies,  
their shadows all there is, not bleached  
the instant like an aeon ere they vaporized,  
are printed on the pavement; and the girls  
who walk away wear fabric  
patterns : birds, bees, bursting  
star shapes - any dark thing  
scorch-imprinted on their naked skin.  
Whoever comes back by the coffin door  
with tales of hell fire,  
do not look for how the flesh fell off -  
to bare your bones is rather commonplace  
in the enormity of horror;  
do not look for fire storms  
in the sockets of their eyes, still boiling.  
By the printed shadows of the fall  
of petals, and of cotton dresses  
you will know the infinitely subtle matter  
of their agony - the tangible inferno.  
Then you will believe eternal dying.

when I see the sign posted to the bark  
I stop dead in my tracks  
yes, the trunk is a dangerous slanted gate  
to the front door  
yes, the roots are beginning to lift the  
ground at the base; true, there  
are microscopic jaws chomping their way  
through the leaves

there are things that are wrong, things  
to be fixed, nothing a little  
fertilizer couldn't cure or some fresh mulch  
alive and forgiving

what about all the things that are right?  
like when I'm smoking and  
thinking at the third floor window – there  
is no company  
like the presence of those branches scratching  
at the screen as if they're  
tapping my shoulder saying *see how everything  
just works out?*

or what about in the late afternoon when  
(like a prophecy of relief to come)  
a thin breeze causes a hubbub through the leaves  
before it hits me  
I guess some things are just not worth  
the trouble of saving  
soon enough something else will fill the hole  
(the stubbed roots)

will shrivel like a raw memory over  
time and become a part  
of the mass of earth that we walk on and  
park beside everyday)

I draw my finger over the metal  
that holds the cardboard  
to the cryptic, crumbling flesh I'm  
so used to

I hear myself think  
how unkind it is  
to put a staple there where softness and  
care are required  
the sign reads, "diseased: scheduled for  
removal thirty days from date  
of posting" (they came today –  
day sixty-three)

### The Rescuer

we've been gone for two weeks -  
up the stairs now (and away from a paradise  
that was sticky sweet) this

hits me heavy as luggage:  
*I completely forgot to have someone  
water the plants*

how humble and whipped they look  
uncertain as a sudden stop, a  
bubble blown through

a tiny plastic wand  
(there is always the question of how long  
it will last

before exhaling its end)  
I water them furiously, repot  
them, find some old

fertilizer under the sink  
(they receive it shamelessly)  
all the while

I'm thinking:  
am I trying to save  
them, or us?

### Eraser

I am almost invisible, a word that no longer matters, covered  
with pink rubber lint, acrid to the nostrils. I must have been  
misspelled, revealing something unintended - a scream - you  
blow the pieces away, not realizing.

Some things are so easily vaporized – only a faint impression  
remains.

I let this happen. (Yes, I know why.) Tomorrow, when I  
reappear, our delicate balance of author and alphabet will be  
upset, (don't you love me anymore?) and I'll start erasing all  
over again to keep from hurting you.

# Gary Lehmann

## Picasso & Gertrude Stein

When Picasso decided to paint a portrait of his friend,  
Gertrude Stein, he selected his colors very carefully.

*Gertrude can only be painted in shades of brown, he said,  
set against patches of black, all somber and intellectual.*

Her body was large, corpulent, and heavy set,  
but her mind had to be portrayed for its lightness and agility.

The problem emerged when he began depicting her face.  
He couldn't get anything right. It looked too big.

Then it looked too small. 99 times she sat for him.  
Very patient she was, but it just wasn't working.

Finally, Picasso despaired. He feared he was about to fail.  
So, he picked up a brush and started painting from memory.

He sat down when Gertrude Stein wasn't there  
and portrayed the her he knew to always be there.

Her present absence was made up for by her constant presence.  
He drew the essence of her face in the shape of an African mask.

She was blunt. *I don't like that* she told him upon first seeing it.  
*You will*, he replied smugly. *You will*, ... and she did.

## Libertarians in Paris

When Benj. Franklin welcomed John Adams  
to the French Court in 1778, he warned him,  
*You need a little decadence to get along here.*

Franklin himself was getting on fine.  
He had several prominent mistresses  
and was the toast of all the Paris salons.

Adams looked and felt like an outsider.  
All that silk and all that openly flaunted  
flesh worried the old Puritan's morality.

As the two Americans entered the Court,  
they both saw immediately that every  
female head in the room turned toward them.

Adams recoiled visibly. *The horror!*  
Franklin stepped forward and wet his lips.  
*Oh to be 70 again*, he languidly sighed.

## The Aftertaste of Dinner

A lawyer friend asked me to help out at a charity party held on the lake.  
I found out the owner of the house was a gangster,  
a real mean killer, a drug dealer, and a man who runs women in the city.

*Don't get all bothered*, my friends said, *he abuses people who aren't like you.*  
*They live in the city and want to be whores. They hate their children.*  
*They live in poverty, because they can't control themselves.*

*Have a good time. Enjoy yourself. Don't let the taste linger in your mouth.*

The party started, and I did have a good time. I played with the children  
and set up games for the adults. The gangster asked me to join him for dinner.  
He has a charmingly normal family, pretty wife and lovely daughters.

He sat on his deck in his pin-stripped suit, black shirt and white tie -- laughing.  
They talked about old films and how they fell in love. I found I liked them.  
What else was I to do? I ate with him and laughed at his jokes.

## Cat-O'-Nine Tails

Like sworded sentries,  
They defend the water's edge.  
Their verdigris spears,  
Corroded by January's rust,  
Bulwark its crystalline glaze.  
Come springtime,  
Their cotton-candy-stuffed  
Velvet-cylinder infantrymen  
Will awake from their  
Under-frozen-earth catnap  
And complete nature's cyclic  
Changing of the guard.

## Not Quite the Same

Through paneled glass I spy the very same  
Fragment of the sky I glimpsed with you.  
Centenarian maples mat the clouds in frame  
Through paneled glass I spy the very same.  
Their leaves aflutter, whispering your name,  
Flood long-lost memories back into view.  
Through paneled glass I spy the almost same  
Fragment of the sky I glimpsed with you.

## The Sound of Silence

No children laughing in the streets,  
They hide their heads in fear  
From those who kill the innocent  
Yet vow they fight for peace.  
No blackbirds flying in the fields,  
The living creatures scarce  
Chased by random bombing machines  
Who think they own the land.  
The sound of war will soon die out  
With silence in its place.  
They'll raise their flags in victory  
But what will they have gained?

# Kathy Kehrli

## A Seasoned Affair

On summer days carefree and temporal,  
We danced the passion dart of fireflies.  
Tucked safe beneath the arbor of umbral,  
Love barely blinks before it chokes and dies.

Yet autumn dawned; you breathed a hue of hope,  
To tinge my jaded heart a fiery gold.  
And to your hinted promises I groped,  
Clinging as if one last desperate hold.

Like winter flecks of frosty flakes of snow,  
My icy innards stirred then crystallized.  
Blinded by the tempting prismic glow,  
Too late your deceit finally realized.

As spring unfurls its annual debut,  
I too must yet again begin anew.

## Silence

Goodbye I whispered  
Through gut-wrenching tears of grief  
You never answered

## Le Son de la Silence

Aucuns enfants riant dans les rues,  
Ils se cachent les visages dans la peur  
A quelqu'uns qui tuent les innocents  
Mais font encore le voeu qu'ils luttent pour la paix.  
Aucuns merles volant dans les champs,  
Les créatures vivantes sont rares  
Chassées par les machines perdues de bombes  
Qui pensent qu'elles possèdent la terre.  
Le son de la guerre disparaîtra bientôt  
Avec la silence à sa place.  
Ils leveront leurs drapeaux en victoire  
Mais qu'est-ce qu'ils auront gagné?

# Justin Roberti

## The Rock and the Plow

What happens to hands in a lifetime of service  
Do they belong to their owners anymore?  
Do they rust like old rakes in their children's garden shed?  
A stone becomes a garden not through peaceful negation  
But a merciless breaking down, pulverizing piece by piece  
Till the softened thing becomes an adequate  
Nest for tender buds that inhabit it  
So with people  
Smooth and sleek youths  
Limbs like serpents  
Strong and supple  
Heads like a rock  
Marching towards that inevitable course  
The crush laid out by nature  
In its inestimable bounty  
My hands have furrows of dry skin  
That crack under the pressure of tiny drops of water  
And itch and scratch from plow lines  
Drawn from end to end  
Whatever doesn't kill us  
Makes us deeper furrowed  
More ready for the plow  
More ready for the rain  
An island is a rock  
A man is a field  
Our earth churns and rotates  
Squeezing the last of our nutrition  
Till we blow away like dust  
Making room for new bounties

## Electric Things

Turning down the volume,  
from 30 to 11 to 1 to 0  
Like a pantomime  
A deliberate, inexorable striptease  
Wooden floors naked  
The soft buzzing of things electric  
unknown at different frequencies  
The heat registers tick and echo to each other  
A languid conversation from wall to wall  
in some primordial animal language  
The shadows roll over in their sleep and  
throw a restless arm across your waist, dreaming  
You're alone  
But the silences have each other  
And they have you  
Soft static clings like cotton candy and crackles  
A change of posture enough to make it flit away  
Like lunar moths up to an empty dark ceiling

## The Rose Cutters

In the end, it's the clip of the crop  
Sheared scissor-like in a metallic beak  
Snatched away by long denim hands  
Laid to rest in a ten-gallon bucket  
Sloshing dazed and half alive  
Your head just above water  
Bobbing with your sisters  
Like shipwrecked ladies at seas  
Billowing in their petticoats  
Full round heads red looking for a savior  
  
But a rose in her element  
Never thinks about the end.

## About the Poets

**Dayna Patterson** currently resides with her husband Charles and their two daughters Madeleine and Lily in Nacogdoches. She earned her MA in Literature from Texas State University-San Marcos and teaches writing at Stephen F. Austin State University. Most recently, her poems have been published in *Persona* and *Words Work*; “Nursling” first appeared in *Dark Lady Poetry* <http://darkladypoetry.com/>.

**Nicholas Messenger** makes his home in Hokitika, New Zealand. His first poems were published in when he was a schoolboy. He won the Glover Poetry award in the 1970’s. In recent years he has had work published in a good number of online magazines. He has written plays for children, fairy tales, short stories and novels, and for a long time made his living as a teacher of science, art, and languages in New Zealand, and of English in Japan. Volumes of his poems from his *Mole’s Garden* collection are available through *Academy Books* at [www.academybooks.co.nz](http://www.academybooks.co.nz)

**Amy Beth Kirsten** currently lives in New Haven, CT. Her poetry has previously been published in *Red Wheelbarrow: National 2008*, and in *The Avatar Review: Summer 2009*. She is also a composer whose most recent honor includes receiving a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center. She currently is completing her dissertation (*Becoming Medusa: taking the current pulse of gender equality in music composition*) at Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore; she teaches music at the University of Connecticut. [www.amybethkirsten.com](http://www.amybethkirsten.com)

**Gary Lehmann** resides in Penfield, NY. Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, his essays, poetry and short stories are widely published – over 100 pieces per year. Books include *The Span I will Cross* [Process Press, 2004] and *Public Lives and Private Secrets* [FootHills Publishing, 2005]. His most recent book is *American Sponsored Torture* [FootHills Publishing, 2007]. [www.garylehmann.blogspot.com](http://www.garylehmann.blogspot.com)

**Kathy Kehrli**, from Factoryville, PA, is a freelance writer and editor who owns and operates TheFlawlessWord.com. Although her professional pursuits usually entail business and technical wordsmithing, her first writing love is poetry. Her poems have been published in several publications, both online and in print, including *Sol Magazine*, *Trellis Magazine*, and *Spellbound*. “Cat-O’-Nine Tails” earned first place in Sol Magazine Project’s January 2010 “30 Days of Writing Prompts” competition and “A Seasoned Affair” garnered first prize in the recent *Trellis* sonnet contest.

**Justin Roberti** resides in State College, PA. He has been writing for over 20 years and has had numerous publications and productions of stories, plays, poems, documentaries, and videos. He has a Master of Fine Arts degree in Playwriting from Rutgers University and works as a writer and marketer. His poem, “The Rose Cutters”, was previously published by Amphibi.us <http://amphibi.us/tag/rose-cutters/>