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**Editor’s Note**

Our decision to focus on poetry for this issue of The Blue Guitar was spurred by several factors, among them an overflowing abundance of exceptionally good poetry submitted, as well as a couple of other things:

1) I received a letter in the mail from The Poetry House in New York the other day, asking for a donation. I asked myself why the East Coast continues to corner the market on all things poetry.

2) During a recent spirited discussion at work on how to handle the spelling of E.E. Cummings’ name (apparently he did prefer uppercase and periods), one colleague (I hope tongue-in-check … for his sake), said, “No one reads poetry anymore, anyway,” which was met rightfully so with a loud chorus of boos, hisses and “No way!”s. “There’s plenty of good poetry out there,” I argued, to which a wiser colleague added, “And bad poetry, too. I know, I’ve written my share.”

The point is, poetry as the most poignant and most potent expression of the human heart will never go out of style.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, poetry is alive and well here in Arizona.

And for proof, I give you Exhibit A: the fall issue of The Blue Guitar.

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**Editorial Staff**

Editor in chief: Rebecca Dyer
Publisher: Elena Thornton
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www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org
Seven Poems By Michael Gregory

When It Rains in May

© 2010
Behind a thin overcast left from yesterday’s shower, the moon, not quite full, seems thin too, translucent, disappearing in the growing light as nighthawks thrum like small engines in the distance, cactus wrens chatter, and quail start their territorial calling. The air is cool, the morning gentle for a change.

When it rains in May, it probably won’t in July when it’s supposed to, so yesterday’s sprinkle, though a relief from the record-breaking heat, was a reminder of summers when by August, despite the pumps, the pears had lost most of their leaves, the apples and peaches were half normal size, the cottonwoods down by the wash had turned yellow, and cattle out on the range lay down thick-tongued in the dust to die.

Up at the university, scientists read rocks and tree rings and shrinking polar icecaps. Up on the rimrock they decipher unanswered prayers. Down here the message goes round by word of mouth. Hasn’t been this dry in twenty years says Tom. Since the fifties says his dad, and his dad says Not since McDonald’s well went dry after the war. Nacho says his grandad said his grandad said. . . Not since the last time says Jack and that’s God’s own sweet truth.

Everywhere the Story Was Told

© 2010
she revealed her mysteries
- Hymn to Demeter

1
Everywhere the story was told it was agreed she had mated with the sea who came to her in the guise of a horse.

In Phigaleia her black stone statue holding a dolphin in one hand in the other a dove was worshiped.

Elsewhere the story ends with her giving birth to a foal but there they say she also gave birth to a daughter they honor in secret and refer to only as The Mistress.

2
The great Iambe a limping virgin of some years brought a smile to the lips of the mother grieving her daughter by telling her lewd stories the old wet-nurse in attendance upon them mimicked with lascivious gestures.

Michael Gregory’s most recent poetry collection is “re: Play” (Pudding House, 2008). His poems have appeared in a wide variety of periodicals and anthologies in the US and abroad, including recent issues of Anon (Edinburgh), Avocet, Blue Mountain Review, Mirage and Caveat Lector. His poetry has won a number of awards, including a Tucson Poetry Festival award and an Arizona Commission on the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship.

A widely-recognized toxics activist, he is the author of several studies on US-Mexico border environment and numerous papers and monographs on local, national and international pollution issues. He has taught writing, literature and history at several colleges and universities.

One of the originators of the renowned Bisbee Poetry Festival, and founding director of the Central School Project cooperative community arts center in Bisbee, since 1971 he has lived off-grid in the Sulphur Springs Valley ten miles north of the US-Mexico border, where he raises organic fruits and vegetables. Email aztoxics@gmail.com.

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In the Orchard

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Suppose these trees and grasses
this sky we breathe
down here where what we see above
as blue has gone transparent
were sand and rocks, all the clouds and fruit
solidified as hope
come to nothing;
and the form love takes when twisted by fear
or clenched in remorse
were fingers touching bruises left by mouths,
insect or bird,
open without sound, too hungry
to sing — or by wind,
the skin torn, insides damaged by the fall,
here where we lie
looking around at what we have to offer
each other now that the stars we counted
on have disappeared,
the figures we took for meaning
dissolved, the warmth
we were given to understand as something
of a compensation
escaped into shadows,
certain parts suddenly secret
no matter how much we know or knew
or thought we did
before we began
to feel with our eyes in this broad daylight
the walls around this garden flaming to life
at a single word,
your tongue a sword against my throat
this amazing solitude
within which one disintegrates,
breaking up, breaking down,
the tension that held us
as the soul is said to hold the body
unraveling,
the lines of force letting go,
our constituent assembly
dissolved, articles of incorporation
disavowed in favor of particles
independently engaged
in the business of losing ourselves
in the inner workings
of things that crawl in holes, in darkness,
in various states of decay.
The Soul of the Dry Regions Before the Heart

The soul of the dry regions before the heart
(feelings consciousness intelligence
the motivating force impelling to action,
inspiration hard to tell from the breath)

precedes the belief that the heart decays last
(is itself the seat of sentience)
which comes into fashion even later
than the belief that the soul in the head

(life itself: almost synonymous
with mind except for those mental functions
still carried out as they thought in the chest)
kept fresh by the cooling cerebro-spinal fluid

survives bodily death in some semblance
of the human being it used to be
(though such a notion as individual selves wasn’t the norm until later yet).

© 2010

a god breathed into my lungs
- Penelope

The Blue Guitar Magazine

Fall 2010

Wireless

If you think it, how can it be far?
- Pound

a cold wind out of the north north west,
pairs of white-crowned sparrows in the bare mesquite,
the blue seas of the waning moon emptying
into the same blue of the late morning sky,

walking the dog where you always take her
out the pipeline road to and from Mexico,
at the sign warning of danger underground
I try to reach you over on the coast

but the signal is too weak, the solar flares
or winds between here and there too strong or something,
so I fold up the phone and put it back in my pocket
keeping my hand there around it out of the cold

on our way back toward the relative warmth of the house,
avoiding stickers and burs along the narrow path,
stepping on the prints the three of us have left,
scattering sparrows through the brush as we go.
No Longer Feeling Themselves

© 2010

an essential connectedness
- Dalma Heyn

No longer feeling themselves
in relationship
but playing a role in one
in order to keep each other.

No longer feeling equal
powerful free from having
to feel on demand
to please another

who won’t make the effort
to romance or seduce
as if forever after
one and only one

weren’t a fairy tale
wanting to be treated
for a change they said
like a grown-up.

He Had Given Up He Said

© 2010

Thus do old men love
- Ovid

He had given up he said
believing or looking for

(a distinction not without
differences) escape from death

fairly early on (not
long after he first in fact

paid attention to it) in favor
of trying to find out how to make

the best of the situation.
Dancing bears came into his mind

polar bears in polar seas
keeping the pieces of ice floes

underfoot as long as they can
in the warmth of mating season.
© 2010
The keystone: already a metaphor
of importance, we find the block
in beauty, in the buildings we love

and print on all of our postcards.
I will send one to my mother,
my aunt too; the women in my life

love the small efforts, pictures
of churches where my feet shuffled
past the arches to rub St. Peter’s
disappearing foot. The arch: we balance
our whole body on one, we assume
we will not be crushed walking under

one. Our bodies seem nothing more
than an architecture textbook: become
familiar with the important parts

and a body might too be art. Living
makes us think we will live forever,
like drinking espresso from a tiny

porcelain cup is all of it. When we
returned to the hotel room, you said,
*a woman’s back is beautiful*

and I pointed to my scar. I am not
beyond imperfections: these can
remind us of dying. And we will,
you know. It is just that everyone’s
trips to Italy are the same. But we will
still take many pictures: the women

in our lives love the stories
of the pictures, even more
if they can be turned into postcards.

For me, it might be more than metaphor,
living in my body like a building.
Scientists have found that a woman’s

back will bend with a weight differently
than a man’s does. It is for children:
so the keystone of an arched back

is really a keystone. My spine, the place
a child has already claimed—my body
no longer mine. You said,

*a woman’s back is beautiful*

and I fell down to bed with you,
with your rod-straight spine,
your condemned body, your Italy.
The Hum of Salt
© 2010
For a woman given this lot, to look back
is really the only option. Looking back

on plum-dyed wool, smoke from a constant pot,
daughters. Yes, the city of hers—to look back

is a promise, her one life grown from dust.
The desert air, dry and brittle-looking. Back
when she was small, the sand was her best playmate.
Her mother’s meats seasoned with salt. The looks back

keep her solid, keep her wanting only the life she has
known. Mornings: plaiting her hair, she looks back

at her reflection in the well, then covers
her head to avoid getting neighbors’ looks. Back

home by the afternoon, the grain might need crushing,
the loom looking after, or, looking back

at the pot, the stew needing some stirring.
By evening, the sun reminds her to look back

towards the road leading to town, her soon-to-return
husband, maybe with a lamb or coins; looking back,

something always needing seasoning or saving.
No, she was never chosen, but the looks back

warm her like the desert wind or the unceasing hearth,
like a man might. Her body begs: look back.

She is a shadow on the sand, a laurel
crowned wife, a woman-tower looking back

at the city, in love.

Writing About The Desert From Memory
© 2010
And once you have grown
used to the absence of water,
it will rain
in ways unimaginable. The earthy smell
of dust giving up, allowing itself to turn
to mud, relenting to water (most things do).

And once the ground has soaked
its fill, the starved plants drunk,
you will grow
used to its liquid limbs, liquid ways you can
be convinced to tell stories you never tell,
convinced to shed clothing
like a weight. Without rain,
the earth still spins
and rivers flow, though less so.
You need the rivers. You need
the rain for an excuse. You can hide
in greenery, admit nothing
beyond that you are living, you –

once, when you heard the mourning song
of cellos across the lips of dry rivers,
say the word, let it roll from your tongue – *arroyo,*
arroyo – you swore you would not forget.
If the rain – no, when the rain
makes you forget what you were
or could be, anything you had
wished to be,

you will think of me. Water from my hands
touching your skin, your scars,
water from my mouth to clean you, lick
you to purity, the taste
of water from my skin, the damp
from my hair like the last rites.
This Harvest

© 2010

Call me autumn, for I have turned red
with promise, budding, and I have fallen,
etearth trodden, compressed for a next life.

Though pause to call me autumn.
Give me a full season to fall,
my movement towards ripening.
And keep those shoulders straight
as moonlight, my body knows
enough to hesitate between the blades,
to linger, stay. Or maybe, you’ll find,
I choose to drift. I am an equinox; one night
burning, the next not so warm,
the change like forgiveness,
like when we pretend we have not known
other seasons. When I return,
always, it seems, the next year,
you lay the quilt on the ground,
get covered in cockle burrs.
You might have known, the ground
softer, smelling of tree bark. You often
want to fall asleep under my reddening
leaves. If you remember me, know me
by my tilt:

 here, place your hands
on my tilt. Let me soak
to the outer edges of your memory,
so by winter, you can think back
and say autumn. I will be spoken, autumn,
and I will slide in—red, earthen, moving.
A Poem for my Grandmother, Who Keeps Her Life On Her Lungs

© 2010
My grandmother, the one with pincushions for lips, no longer breathes with the ease of a young woman, and I sit here, feeling self-conscious for all my shallow little gasps of surprise, my gulps of laughter, my pickled yawns at morning. And worse for the pleasurable hiccup breaths, caught, as secrets usually do, in the throat, or in the folds of wrinkled sheets. I never taste my breaths, but neither does she—doctors have said the pulse of constant oxygen kills that sense quickly. The last years, an ordering of losses: husband, breath, taste, balance, heartbeat. Lemon meringue reminds my grandma of her tasting years, and now I watch her empty lips—tongue-licked, puckered, skin hanging like molasses. I imagine my hands like her lungs:

this is where the scar tissue is growing, this is where I loved a man with a side-tipped hat, this is where I had twins come from my body, this is where I remember apple orchards behind my father’s house, this is where I was taught to read, this is where I was taught to keep secrets, this is where I am drowning, this is where I am tired of waiting to die. It grows tiring to say so many times: I love you. We never pray when I am in the room, though I cannot say if she does when I am gone, or when I am sitting here, burdened by the weight of breathing, or not praying.
Three Poems By Esther Schnur-Berlot

Ars Neurotica

© 2010

Ars Neurotica
gave birth to a blur
of jumbled words
flailing
in a spasmodic dance
with flurries of guttural
yelps running wildly
on a Tabula Rasa landscape
spewing blather before
meaning is stitched
on rhythmic vocal sounds -
unsure
befuddled by perfection
of placement and pauses –
should it be
here
there
where?
the dilemma meter races

high
to
low

as my emotional scale
hides
behind a gauzy scrim -
of a deceitful metaphor

but then he came along
spouting his smooth lyrical
sestina as he glides
into a pantoum of quatrains
leaving me unsympotica -
as I slant towards
neurotica

Esther Schnur-Berlot is a transplant from New York City where she worked behind the scenes in TV commercials and then on to California where she taught wearable art. Now living in Tucson, she devotes her time to writing poetry. Esther’s poetry has been published in the California State Poetry Quarterly, the Sonoma Collective and Desert Voices. E-mail lberlot@msn.com.
Is It Destiny...
© 2010

I gulped down growing pains
as Cousin Marcia giggled
in my ear whispering
her teen crushes.

We kiss tested our braces –
pressing lips on back of palms
I rehearsed my pucker poses
seen on Cover Girl
and hid under Max Factor
pancake – hair topped with
screaming Egyptian henna.

Marcia never practiced
the ballet of trying to please.
She wore her clean freckled face
and wash and wear do.
Her gap-toothed grin
enhanced her openness.

The first time he – unbuttoned
my blouse his rummaging hands
pierced my painted armor. I choked
on the fear of being abandoned
while Cousin Marcia - chased, lassoed
and married the most popular boy.

The rhythm and flow of our lives
did not alter our relationship.
Her contagious laughter still ripples
across time and a continent
to cheer my brooding moods.

Baba*
© 2010

The chipped door creaked
hello as I skipped over
the threshold kissing Baba’s
brow below her covered head.
Friday afternoon every mismatched
chair waited its turn to be polished.

Baba’s golden hands commanded
the yeast of her braided challah** to rise.
The stove sat patiently waiting
as I tucked the pale dough into darkness.
Shortly it reappeared in amber splendor-
kissing the air with its delicious fragrance.

A threadbare tablecloth rested all week
before it fluttered and landed
on the Sabbath table.
Crossing a stormy ocean,
Baba’s branched candlestick survived
and glowed at sundown.

I lit her candles and fearfully watched
arms fly above flames. She covered her face
as she blessed the light
swaying and murmuring her closing devotion.
Her apron strings clung to my palm
In blind love Baba’s hand reached down
to find my head.

*Baba – grandmother
**Challah - Braided Bread
Three poems By Tamara Mikell-Choudhury

Khan el-Khalili

© 2010

Until you have experienced Khan el-Khalili
Smack dab in the center of Al’Qahira, Cairo you have not lived
The heat in the summer and the excruciating bone cold of the winter
Your fingers damp and cold to the touch in December and January
And still sweat dripping from your forehead on those July days
Situated at one corner south to Bab Zuwayla and west to Azbakiyyah
Bordered on the south by al-Azhar and on the west by Muski Market
The original courtyard lying midway between Sikkit al-Badistan
On a narrow street, you will find el-Fishawi, the Cafe of Mirrors
And you too shall see a reflection of yourself
A meeting place for local artists,
Frequented by the Nobel award-winning Naguib Mahfouz
You should shop in the area north of al-Badistan and to the west, where prices may be lower
Better deals for gold and silver to be found west of the Khan
And you will find brass and coppersmith markets
Khan el-Khalili, souk, old city Cairo
Dating back to 1382
Many coffeehouses, much street food, Turkish coffee, shisha (water pipes)
In mango, peach, apple, vanilla, lavender
Smoking on the streets in those coffee houses, on pillows, with friends
Al-Hussein Mosque, not far away
You praying with the many, with the hundreds
Bent in prostration, head on concrete
Many heads on concrete, with black marks
Black, grey and smoky tinted circles embedded on those aged foreheads
Al-Azhar University, for Qur’an and Islam
Midaq Alley, a novel by Naguib Mahfouz set in an alley in Khan el-Khalili
A target for terrorism
Contemporary and historic
Smells adored, colorful, cramped
Shopkeepers calling you
Spices, papyrus, oils, gold

Continued on page 14
A tourist trap—indeed,
   Cartouches of your name, fabric, pots, household needs
Deep shadows and bright sunlight, cold and heat
   Winding alleyways, groups of men huddling, maze-like
A bizarre Bazaar
   A warren of winding, twisting, battling stalls and carts
In the heart
   And of your heart
Bargain shamelessly
Fixtures for sale, mosaics and brass, oriental carpets, perfume shops with floral rose
scents
Jasmine and Neroli
   Soothing, relaxing, deep and warm
   For your soul
You with a scarf, sweat slowly starting to build under the fabric
   Slowly losing the fabric, the pain, the warmth
Watching the other women, some with and others without
   You still with
Is it time?
   To watch as the fabric slides down
   Off of your head
   And into your backpack
This scarf
   Your scarf
   A keeper of your warmth
   Your protection
Dear Khan el-Khalili
   Answer her
In your maze
   Give her direction
Do not lose her dear Khan el-Khalili in your deep and unforgiving labyrinth
Dar ‘al Hickma— a commune outside of San Antonio, Texas between Austin and the River Walk— sat beside a little town named Blanco, which means white in Spanish (and this town lived up to its name); the average customer at the corner store had white skin, freckles, red hair, and wore a cowboy hat; there was only one restaurant on the dirt road that ran through the middle of town and it happened to be Italian, run by Mr. and Mrs. Angelo; I had my first waitressing job at this dimly lit family food place, but I had problems— I could not serve alcohol because my religion told me so— each and every time a customer came in and ordered a glass of Chianti, I would have to run and find Mrs. Angelo and ask her to serve my wine; Mrs. Angelo was not happy about this, she was not happy with me—she did not like the rag I wore on my head (it was really a scarf) but she chose to refer to my religious covering as a tablecloth, cloth napkin, AND a rag—she did not like this thing I wore on my head, and she would tell me, no, really mock me about my hairless head; she often made comments such as, “I bet you don’t have any hair under there”, or “Go buy yourself a brush”; the cook beside the hot stove was also intrigued by my style (maybe more so than Mrs. Angelo) and he would also tease me, asking such questions as, “How long is your hair really?” or “Is it brown with blonde streaks?”, and then he would say to me, “Tamara, would you like to go out with me tonight?” and he would suggest we go to the bar (that was located a quarter of a mile from Angelo’s Italian Restaurant), even though he knew I could not drink, because he too helped carry my drinks on many Friday nights; each time he asked, I would refuse him, and each time I refused him he became more insistent and more intrigued: every Saturday night I would go home to our hill named Dar ‘al Hickma; Dar ‘al Hickma rose above this white town, it was gloriously colorful in contrast to the monotone landscape; this hill could not be accessed by anyone except our community members (it had huge towering walls and a coded entry gate) and Mrs. Angelo would ask me, “What do you do up on that hill?”, and I would look at her while still wearing my paisley-faded scarf and say nothing, but she would ask questions persistently, because she wanted to know what happened on THAT hill— this was possibly the reason she kept me around and let me work at her restaurant: she had never met anyone who lived up high, and for years she had wondered who, who had lived up THERE—and she consistently inquired if they all looked like me, if they were all covered up wearing funny looking rags (that sometimes didn’t match their outfits), but I kept our secret, I didn’t tell them we stayed up all night and prayed until the sun came up, nor did I tell them we fasted from sunrise until sunset during the month of August; and I certainly didn’t tell anybody what else happened on that hill.
Locate me in my tub. Pink, enamel and deep. By myself. Me, an unlucky 13. I could say I’m here soaking healing my Poison Ivy but I’m not. I’m here counting, popping and blowing white foamy bubbles into the air. One bubble, two bubble, three… How I love thee. Clap. One bubble down. I’m still filling my tub. I add more berry-scented liquid. I could say I have a lot of stress and need the warm water to melt it away but I don’t. Why would I? I’m 13.

My mother worries. She worries for both of us. She worries about my dad, friends (if I’ll ever get any), boyfriends (she’s praying for a miracle) and if one day I’ll live happily ever after. Yuck!

“Leila” she says, “A girl of your age should be out having fun.”

Having fun to her is watching as me and a cheerful blond watch Twilight together and stay up all night giggling and fantasizing about our life with Edward Cullen, the seventeen year old lead hunk.

My father worries too. He worries that I’ll get boyfriends, have too many friends, wear shorts to school and forget to pray.

“Leila” he says, “Have you prayed Maghrib yet? “

Having fun to him is chanting the names of Allah and reciting Qur’an.

Having fun to me is looking up at the sky and watching the clouds pass.

I stay floating face up in my tub. I don’t want friends, boyfriends, don’t want to recite Qur’an and surely I’m not interested in chanting all night. Not yet. Now I belong in a tub. So here I am, popping bubbles. Darn, I missed the one that just skidded my nose!

My father walks into the kitchen in the evening. He hasn’t come from far. Only from his office. He doesn’t leave the house much. He writes books about Islam, the Muslims in Spain and about Heaven and Hell.

“Leila” he says, “Do you want to go to Hell?”

Hell to him is a fire. Big and red. Hot and thorny. He says, “Hell is forever”.

Hell to me is leaving my house, going to school and definitely listening to those bubbly blonds chit-chatting.

Hell is also praying, praying, praying. Gosh, I almost forgot Maghrib!

“Or do you want to go to Heaven?”

Heaven to him is a fire. Big and red. Hot and thorny. He says, “Hell is forever”.

Heaven to me is leaving my house, going to school and definitely listening to those bubbly blonds chit-chatting.

Heaven is also praying, praying, praying. Gosh, I almost forgot Maghrib!

From time to time my dog walks in. He is what they call a Yorkie-WaWa. Really a designer mutt. He puts his claws up on my baby-pink tub and whimpers. He likes baths too. A bubble lands on his nose and he scurries away. He doesn’t like bubbles.

When you lie in a bath for 2 hours, you remember a lot. You close your eyes and listen to your mutt’s long nails scratch hurriedly against the enamel and think of who you are.

You think of you at six, sitting on your huge teddy bear that is bigger than two of you put together and remember the day your dad said he had decided he was going to go to Heaven and left. He told you he found a group of Muslims that were going to lead the way. You believed him.

When you lie in a tub for hours, you remember a world you lived in not too long ago. Not one you read about in Anne of Green Gables.

You are a woman standing in your kitchen. The kitchen your mom had probably dreamed for you. With a dreamy husband too (she finally got her way). You remember your dad as you cut the celery for your barley soup. He with a moustache and a beard. “Very Islamic” he would say. “Just like the Prophet Muhammad.”
You are a girl memorizing Qur’anic passages, one by one, two by two and ever so quickly. You want to go to Heaven.

You fear Hell.

When you lie in a tub for hours, lunch comes before you notice. Suddenly the smell of your mom’s quiche is wafting from the small yellow kitchen to your pretty-in-pink tub.

It is time to get out.

In the kitchen, your mother is still frying the potatoes and onions. You look into the skillet and grab a half-done slice and pop it into your mouth. You could say to mom, “Don’t worry”.

But you don’t. Instead you grab another organic-extra-virgin-olive-oil fried potato and sit down on a stool in the kitchen next to her.

I could say,

Roses are red,

Violets are blue.

When I grow up

I don’t want to be a Muslim

Or a Jew

I don’t though. It hurts too much.
Born in 1974, Marcela C. Lubian is a self-taught artist who delights in the independence and flexibility of her eclectic education. A resident of southeastern Arizona for the last seven years, Marcela’s work is born out of pure joy, and ranges from pragmatic to whimsical. Contact her at Lubian61@hotmail.com.

I approach every new work without expectations or preconceived notions but rather let the painting come to life on its own. My favorite medium is acrylics, because I love the broad color spectrum available. The work embraces the use of thin layers with opposite colors to create shadows and texture. The final result is the bright and bold color characteristic of my paintings.

— Marcela Camarena-Lubian

“Merry Christmas wherever you are”
Acrylic on masonite
One Poem By Sean Medlin

Toast
© 2010
Let’s toast to the world that bathed me,
Baptized me in worldly worship and dried me off with comforting sin,

Let’s toast to my mother and father
Who gave me the best perfectly flawed love they could give,

Sacrificed themselves for my defects
Giving me the greatest upbringing I could ever beg for,

Let’s toast to every friend who calls themselves my brother,
Because we all know the anger and joy that comes with brotherhood!

Let’s toast for every angel I’ve left heartbroken,
Whose lips graced mine,
Your strength showed me the fault lines in my structure,
I pained you, and in turn you shoved me,
Now I feel as if I might break!

Let’s toast to the believers,
The families, the lovers,

Let’s toast to pride,
Immaturity, and selfishness,

Drink in honor of my sexism and racism,
Let’s drink until we all know my true colors
And you ignore your own distorted coloration

Because when you’re sober you hate yourselves
But never question me,

So consume and guzzle until you crucify me
And forget that I am Human,
Drain bottles and cups without notice or consciousness,

Forget that you too have natural-born bruises that won’t wash off of your skin

Toast to my misused privileges,
My accidents,
My wrongs,

Continued on page 20
Then hate me as if your mother never taught you what forgiveness was,
Don’t spit out the anger just chase it with vodka!

Let it rumble and quake in your belly,
Strike me down because I deserve it
And my misguided actions look so much worse when your vision is blurry…

I just wish,
That you would actually love every single one of my blemishes and tragedies,
Because I’m trying really hard,
To love you for your fuck-ups too.

About The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a Non-Profit Organization approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008.
We now have 501c3 tax-exempt status. We are all volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.
The Arizona Consortium’s vision is to create a multicultural arts center, where children, teens and adults will become inspired, to develop their creative abilities, in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting. Please visit www.artizona.org or www.theblueguitar magazine.org for more information about becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting to The Blue Guitar magazine.

www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org
3 Poems By Christyne Moraga-Cisterna

Stolen Innocence

© 2010

The young girl attends a birthday party
To share good times with good friends.
An early afternoon gathering to laugh,
Dance & experience the joy of teenage life.

Childhood friends & family members there;
Watch over her to insure she has a good time.
The 45 drops on the turntable with a slow jam
But no one asks her to dance.

A bit of an outcast because she is prim & proper,
Never wanting to be the topic of whispers & gossip.
The girl watches as others pair off to snuggle & kiss.
Feeling dejected & out of place; she makes her silent exit.

She walks down the street to call Mom for a ride,
A familiar face stops & offers to take her home.
But before he can, he has to pick up his date.
No reason not to trust, after all, he is no stranger.

He takes a route towards the outskirts of town as
His date awaits him in the nearby foothills.
The sun peeks over the mountains as dusk approaches.
Little did she know, this would be her darkest day.

The late model Ford takes a low dirt road.
His nonchalance gives her no cause to suspect
the plan he has devised to take her innocence.
This young passenger has entrusted herself to him.

As he brings the car to a stop, there is no house in sight.
She’s helpless, caught off guard & frozen in disbelief.
Like an animal, he overpowers his prey, hand over mouth
Straddling her, unable to breathe or scream, she fights.

It is unknown how much time had passed
For his act & offense to be accomplished.
She bleeds on the front seat of the car,
He stands tucking his shirt & zipping his pants.

He offers no apology, but chuckles at his surprise.
Never guessed she was a virgin & that he would be her first.
His ego is so great that he fails to recognize the damage
He’s done to his cousin, whose innocence he has stolen.

He admits there was no date & I should have known better!
And hopes this will teach me a lesson in trust.
The ride home is long & the shadows of night
Are unable to hide her shame & dishonor.

Childhood lost, womanhood forced upon her,
She hides in plain sight as she enters her home.
A polite exchange with mother, as she rushes to
Seek refuge in a bath of hot & sterile water.

In the solitude of her emotional prison,
Only God can hear her whimper & cry.
She finds no words or thoughts of absolution,
Only anger & the wish that she could die.

In the final hours of that terrible day,
Her life was changed forever.
Forgiveness will always be a stranger
And a stolen innocence never to be regained.

Christyne Moraga-Cisterna was born & raised in Globe, AZ, a first generation Mexican-American. Writing has been her emotional outlet, escape, refuge and companion. Christyne started writing in early adolescence, got distracted with life and began writing again over the last 12 years. Her desire is for the reader to feel her words, allow them to speak to their own hearts & listen with an open mind. Contact her at cisternaz@msn.com.
Thick Thighs

I... am a real Woman...
Not who you see on a billboard.
Not considered the “acceptable” norm; but,
All me, for you, all Woman.

Soft & sensual, feminine & full!
All that a man desires.
But you deny yourself my hidden treasure
By thinking on what my hips measure!!

I... am a Rubenesque Woman,
With thick thighs & sexy curves;
I can turn your head, rattle your nerves;
Or send you away with a smile!

Don’t be afraid to go for what turns you on.
Worrying & wondering what others might think.
Baby, just come get me while you can
Or before you know it, I might be gone!

Know this! I am all Woman,
Ready & able to please,
If I let you ease
Into...
My... wide... thick thighs!

So forget what you may have heard
My Man, and
Experience for yourself
My shelter, my warmth,
Holding you...

Within...
My...

Thick Thighs
In the Shade
© 2010

Like a gentle breeze,
I blew into your world.
Soft, warm & refreshing.
You opened your heart,
Smiled & I was lost
In the warmth of your aura.

In the shade,
I hunger for you.
Yearning & seeking;
Lusting & longing
To feel your body
Pressed against mine.

The morning sun
Brightens the day.
I open my heart
To welcome you.
I am tender,
Kind & generous.

In the shade,
A torment of emotions
Whirl through my mind.
Fantasies are the power
That generates my being
Creating my strength.

In the light
We shine, We trust, We love.

In the shade,
Private, Pulsing, Perfect.
You & Me
3 Poems By Joshua Hunter Hensley

Boredom On Birthday

© 2010
Avoiding words
Like I’m avoiding my cat
Because she sheds very much
Is a terrible opening for any written performance
That’s what poems are
Little plays
Miniscule movies broadcast in your mind
A little alliteration, beauty, and ugliness
And you’re fooled that it’s good and worth your time
I guess
The letters are the players
Each one spelling out its purpose
I just don’t feel like writing right now
But I’m going to continue to do so
Because I know it’s terrible to spend my time
Watching movies so I do not have to maintain
Intelligent thought
If that’s what THIS even is
Better to drink myself into a stupor on paper
Or computer or whatever
Than to be nullified
Pacified
Yes, even stupefied
By some multi-million dollar production
Telling me what the nature or reality is
Or
Distracting me from it
I feel better already

Art truly is a wonderful thing
I can see myself saying that to a blonde woman on the street
Not that I have a thing for blondes
But as soon as I thought up that “Art Wonder” thing
That image came to my mind
I must be more arrogant than I thought
She will smile and tell me that’s worth at least a buck
Than walk away with my poem, in her hand, her lovers’ hand
in the other
To end up where I have no idea
At home
In her cupboard or her child’s schoolbooks or on a wall
Maybe even in the trash
I really do wonder what happens to the poems I sell to people
I’ve written this
I’ve pet my cat
Art is so great
Because it can even be a terrible poem

Joshua Hunter Hensley works as a landscaper for the fascist banking system. He lives in Phoenix, AZ and is constantly being surrounded by strange things. He is 24 years old.
Some People
Look Like Stitches
On A Couch

© 2010
This vast spaceness a meaninglessness of words
I’m alone among close allies
With what I feel called to

No one will listen

So solitude
Envelopes me like Salvia

I’m put out like a cigarette
Cashed like a bowl
Spit

Like the bottom of a forty
Nothin’ left but for
The dead friends

Who am I to talk for?

If my computer decides to perchance
Crash
In a cacophony of pretentious
Hypocrisy
Then so be the circumstance
I let be written
Into existence

Words are bound to fail
If that’s what I think

The hard part is

Being who and what
You want

…selfishness?

---

Pain

© 2010
This blank page
Helps me
Let me see into my soul
All my intricacies
Psychoses
Multiple personalities
Pain
Joy and the art of suffering
Hardens
Crystallizes
The spirit that is within me
That is me
Towards what I hope
Is a clearer understanding
Of what it means
To be
Whatever it is we are

Whoever I am
Heard or read or not
I speak and I act and I hurt
Very deep inside
That feeling of
…whatever it is
The pain
Proves to me that the
Soul
Exists

I’ll always be strange
You might not understand me
My brother nor father
Suppose if you have sensed or
Experienced
Similar feelings of alienation, disillusionment, apathy
The desire to be hurt
To feel anything at all
And blah blah blah
Read my palm

Stab me in the master gland
Your thoughts
Betray me

The crying prophet the hapless clown the singing grave digger
I
Think I concern you all
You all concern me
At least

Night night before I go

This tearing
Is putting me together
Six Poems By David Chorlton

Monsoon Views

© 2010

I
On a lightning-pale branch
of a dying juniper

against a deep grey storm
gathering over Silver Peak

a hummingbird sits
pressed like a wet leaf on the atmosphere.

II
In the time it takes the black-tailed rattlesnake
sliding through the grass
to ease itself beneath the empty house
with the weeds, Silver Peak
fades from green
to washed-out grey and as the last
scales slip out of the rain
even the contour
disappears.

III
Last light is washed away
in a downpour

and in each flash of thunder
the mountain reasserts

its mass in the electric rain.

On a lightning-pale branch
of a dying juniper

against a deep grey storm
gathering over Silver Peak

a hummingbird sits
pressed like a wet leaf on the atmosphere.

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The Missing Pines

© 2010

The view from the cabin deck always had
two pines in the foreground
from which the descent
into the valley
was an easy roll down
until the road wound to the invisible side
of the next hill
and reappeared on the one after that
before it ran too low to see. Far off

through the haze
lay the higher ground and the mountain
held sacred with its
eternal highlight of snow at the peak.
The pines held the view
in place,

tall and leaning slightly
with a drop of sunlight on each needle
and a cloud pulling free
of their crowns. It became logical to think
of them as holding
up the sky. They stood
as pillars for a storm and formed
a portal through which the calm

that followed would pass. Then beetles
came in the drought
and now there’s nothing to hold
the slopes in place;
just granite and mist
and the glow
of tail lights on the road.
Some Storms

© 2010

I
Along a line of leaning fenceposts
the wire sags and trails
in the red earth
as a first raindrop falls
from the black half of the sky
with a slap that provokes
a downpour’s
indivisible response.

II
All distinctions disappear
between the mountains and the clouds
gathered above them
in a moment when gravity
fails to hold the land down
and a curtain of rain
blows through the space
between Heaven and Earth.

III
The mountain at the border pales
behind a line of cottonwoods
and a tangle of mesquite
that runs to the country’s edge.
Dark clouds move up from the south
and the rain inside them stutters
as it feels for a language
in which to fall.

Repeat Exposure

© 2010

The first time you look
out of the cabin window you see
a wide green shadow
arched across the stream. The next time
it seems more earth than leaves
and drier than you thought.
You go back a third time
having come to love the sounds
that rise at night
from the undergrowth
and the long notes of the owls
waiting in the dark.
It becomes a highlight
of the year to open the door
and watch the birds loop
after flies. Everything is
familiar now, from the smooth rock
on the right bank
to the tree roots holding
to the left, and the mesh
of fine branches as the oaks recede
behind the sycamores.
One time in spring
light breaks from the ground
and in winter
there’s a pale glow
to the chill. Now it’s summer once
again, the redstarts
come and go, and the evergreens
open up their secrets
to you, whom they have eventually
learned to trust.
Late Night at the QT

© 2010

We’re under a canopy floating on the moment
with its electric red stripe and a name
where numbers roll
showing how many gallons and how
many dollars
flow into the tanks
of our cars.

The gas station glows
like a theatre stage
set down in the city
where we come to fill up
until familiarity makes
QT a comfort.
From patch to patch
of brightness we traverse

the approach to the convenience store
appearing to be extras
in our own lives, while the paving
is exhaling the heat
it took in all day, a circumstance
that softens the way
we look at one another
and briefly bonds the violinist with the tattooed
man and the executive
with the biker. We exchange

a few words in passing,
and offer advice
on making the air machine work.
It’s barely conversation but it’s friendly
even though we’ll go into the night
in all directions, away

from where the light is cold and the snacks
have a shelf life of forever.
“Lyudmila’s Boutique”
Watercolor with pastel on paper
30 x 40 inches

“These scenes are versions of what I recalled when I painted them years after leaving Europe. Memory strips away the unnecessary and leaves the atmosphere, hopefully, intact. I’d visited Moscow (in 1971) and experienced Central Europe’s many moods during my time in Vienna (1971-78) and these were the basis to my painting done in sunny Phoenix. I suspect I lived out my dream life in that form, as I seem mostly to dream with settings in Vienna! Anyway, the paintings are never of specific streets, but of ones that might have been had anyone thought to build them that way. These streets are now as much a part of my memory as the actual ones were, only quieter.”

David Chorlton
David Chorlton
Phoenix Artist

“Night Market”
Watercolor with pastel on paper
30 x 40 inches
“Turning Point”
Watercolor with pastel on paper
30 x 40 inches
Three Poems by Charles Watts

A Late Valentine
© 2010
it has been five months now
and the snow is only real
snow on the mountains
here, in this town I whisper
is only rain, a constant fall

and I will think of you
when spring begins to caravan
north through the valleys
kissing each grain and thistle
into flower, oh you are truly
gone now wait

and in autumn I will be
with you, the cool night coming
down from the hills
to celebrate the harvest
here, in this room I whisper
is only one of us

An Object
© 2010
fog is a lace curtain
across our camper door
I peer out on the maples
frame the morning darkness
try to image the view
of the ancient trees

I saw you yesterday
kneeling beside a stump
capturing the flow of it
in the deformity of its burl
and hoped someday
that I might be such

an object
perfect in your eyes
in the autumn mist

Early in his career, Charles Watts had an underground play ("Visigoths") produced in Los Angeles, which led to script writing contracts for several TV series, including "Kojack" and "Here Come the Brides." He soon fled Hollywood, got an MFA in poetry, and went to Iran to teach literature at several Universities. For five years, he edited "Seizure," a magazine of poetry and fiction. Do not worry about his sanity; he has done many other things. Publications so far this year include two stories and six poems in lit journals, and ten poems in "Karma in the High Peaks," a new anthology from Ra Press. Contact him at charles@envisionist.com.
Vacation on the Big Island

© 2010

long time

since I’ve been in an occupied third world country

it started at the rental counter, a slack key here she be and get the hell out of my face, white boy, there’s the road rain to the north sun to the south

North past the mountains and the cargo shorted figure in the mist with a bow with a dead boar over his shoulder and then the rain again the rain but sun puddles between for the civilized piss stop and photo op, some typhoon took it out bay some jungle of rambutan breadfruit banana strangler fig frog always a dog at always a shack at always the end of always the butt stub of town on the side of the hill that falls into the sea when the floods Come of lava of rivers of mud of wind sucking bones from the cemetery crumbling under the curled edge of that wave
The earth is a broken crust of bread
With yeast at core
Raising the stakes
Of seismic anarchy.
She shudders and settles
In a bewilderment of seasons,
Pewter fog,
Hoar ice dazzle,
A lozenge of light
Circling the wolf moon.
Clouds arrange themselves
Over the Catalina Mountains
While moonlight in fibrillations
Brings a gust of comprehension.

Poems are
Tiny acquisitions
Of understanding
Come in a sudden
Convulsion of wings
From a thousand geese
Lifting from the Wilcox salt playa,
The unraveled skein of light tangled in clouds,
A beveled spectral sunset layered
And shot through with throb
Like too ripe persimmons,
A bloody pumpkin smear on the horizon.

A drowned western diamondback
Rises up out of a flooded hole
Like hydra’s hair,
A Gila woodpecker flicks its checkered tail
On saguaro’s crest.
The sunset is bronze,
The sky is aluminum,
The wind is steel
And poems are the smooth stones I collect
In my wild heart’s
Pockets
To hold me
To the uncertain earth
Of blood and salt.

© 2010

Terra Infirma

Kaitlin Meadows is an artist, poet, storyteller, mask maker, clay worker, and founder of “Manic Expressive Arts,” a rural collective of feminist artists “dedicated to making art that makes a difference.” Her passions include archaeology, paleontology, and poetry. Kaitlin is a committed member of Sky Island Alliance (Friends of the Jaguar), Great Old Broads For Wilderness, WomanKraft Center For The Creative Arts, PaperWorks (The Sonoran Collective for Paper & Book Artists) and is an Arizona State Archaeological Site Steward. She has been widely published and has four chapbooks: Lost Tribe Chronicles, The Indigo Kimono, Russet Tweeds, and Red Dragon Moon. Contact her at paloma@dakotacom.net and www.kaitlinmeadows.com.
Foretold on big stone blocks
Hauled up to temple tops
Gone to ruin now,
Smothered in jungle tangle,
Or etched as Nazca lines
On barren hilltops
Seen best with the raven’s eye.
The admonitions are clear,
Terse curses,
Wise warnings.

Listen.
There are frequencies,
Pulsations,
That ancient things emit
Messages that hold
Alluvial comprehensions.

Listen.

Birds lecture the lizards
On the peril of winged things,
The lit crystal orb
Tells its prophecies.

Listen.

The moon is decanting its light
And our memories have forgotten us
While we are dying and killing
For copal and cochineal, oil and milk.

Listen.

The sun is blind
In an aureole of heat,
The wind is vesperal
Chanting its ancient litany of
Push and pull.

Listen.

History is the plaintive incantation
Of a black widow spider
Teaching the air
Between a mesquite
And a cholla
The sacred art of
Web weaving.

Listen.
8 Poems By Kelly Nelson

Ogham Stones
© 2010
Where else would we write
we had just wood and stone.
And what else could we say
but me and mine. We’d not
imagine things you call crypts
beneath places called museums
where our names would stand
where we’d never set foot.

Can you imagine
tasting a tree
and knowing its name
and twenty others more?
Can you imagine
a predator’s breath,
a battle where you touch
everyone you kill?
Can you imagine
our world without magic?

There were things we didn’t need to say.
You’ve far more words
and far more time
to scratch your claims
front to back, edge to edge.

---

A Page from the
Book of Babur
Memoir of a 16th century emperor

© 2010
A perfect filigreed frame.
The precise feathers of blue and red birds.

Elegant blooms on bending stems.
A pea hen, in a garden, mid-stride.

Mystical swoops aligned in neat rows
pronounce the best ways to eat a mango—

skin and bite it
mash and suck it.

---

Kelly Nelson lives and teaches in Tempe. Her poems have appeared in Bellowing Ark and nibble. One of her poems has been nominated for a Pushcart. She’s currently writing a memoir about living without a car in metro Phoenix. Contact her at Kelly.Nelson@asu.edu.
The wind blew rocks onto my roof. I was sleeping or not at home. It didn’t care. I’d find them or I wouldn’t.

I have spent three thousand eight hundred seventy-five dollars killing termites or trying to. They have eaten their weight in wood five hundred times over. The queen has spawned four thousand nymphs. I’ve invited them to stay.

This house uncooled creaks beached, cracks lengthwise. There will not remain a wall of stones when it disappears sooner than Chaco.

The fort looming over Lisbon has giant stone stairs built for the likes of him.

You gave me your old, worn sneakers to drop at the Nike store in the mall to be recycled but I’ve kept them next to my sneakers – how much bigger yours look, how much smaller mine have become.

Mikhail does not believe in marriage. Or god. Why bother imagining something immense and unseen when right there, knowable, touchable, are the feet of a statue.

A man whose left leg will never be straight tells me garza is their word for heron though he calls them perros. I protest but they are so beautiful, thinking he means dogs like people say pigeons are rats. He names off the bones the car crushed: tibia, fibula, femur, patella healed into a parenthesis, a crutch and a horse to get around. His glassy-eyed friends by the lake call to him. They are hungry. They want lunch.

And he has their only knife. He writes Rubin in wobbly letters on my map to show me where he lives. He says he’ll take me riding.

My last night, standing water’s edge, a heron flies off and lets out a sound that would best be called a bark.
Dublin Crab Kill

© 2010
Flight! Claws scrabbling for ground. Sounds of wings and wind and morning commuters.

The river used to be wider till we penned it between concrete walls.

Smack! Shell down on a sidewalk. Dryness and wrongness, belly up, exposed.

The deer with one red parent, the other fallow—we call them mutants.

Flipped! Tossed! Water is nowhere. Shell scritch on cement. Now one leg’s missing.

We brought hares here for supper. When they over multiplied we drugged them.

Strikes from the gull’s beak. The body fights less, goes still. A woman watches.

In Guadalajara

© 2010
it’s easier to find a bust of Beethoven than a vegetarian restaurant. Easier still a six-cent mango, cops with rifles, big-bottomed mannequins, wedding dress shops, chairs in the street, photos of naked miners, a man juggling melons at a red light while his boy plays on the sidewalk.

The Only Way

© 2010
I could learn Spanish is through immersion, says one gringa living in Mexico to another. Meanwhile, un hombre que habla Español weeds the garden beside the patio where the two women drink coffee and talk.

I greedily eavesdrop. I understand every word without staring at their mouths, without paying full attention, without asking what does that mean? I am conversation starved, vowed to subsist on half-remembered textbook lessons. At the market I jot food names: calabaza, aveno, durazno, merron. On the street I venture a conversation. He asks, is your family here with you? No, same word in both languages, yet he doesn’t understand.

In a tiny plaza too small for guide books there’s a woman who looks like me. She lowers blue eyes, no invitation. I might be loud, I might break the spell she moved here for. We pass without even a buenas tardes.
6 Poems by Richard Fenton Sederstrom

A Ducky’s Uncle
© 2010
For Robert Pack

It’s part of my Sunday effort to be
As unavailable to productivity as I can be,
And that delicate effort has led me to sit here
By the lake, reading a few poems by Robert Pack.

It is Bob’s reminiscence about having been,
In his forming years A “mother duck”
That has me returning to my day job,
The pad here in my lap under my pen,

Itself dragged from its idle sabbath.
I’ve gone back to work for a few moments
Because, in an earlier period, not an hour ago,
I had waded out for a quick cold swim,

And I was met by the five baby goldeneye ducks
We have been watching since they were tiny.
I commented behind my back, to Carol, something
About how they were almost grown, “all bigger now.”

Then as though to show off to this waddling old uncle,
One of the five suddenly took wing, splashed
A competent take-off and flew out across the lake.
I would not boast to Bob that I would ever be

A good mother anything; a moment
Of accidental uncledom will suffice.
Still, it is good to think like a fellow
Old poet for a moment, and, for a moment,

To share a gentle look into passing lives
Over the garden fence between our stories.

God’s Fool
© 2010

He sits, shoulders foursquare and solid,
Feet spread, firmly sure on the concrete,
Without which solemnity of human touch
Perhaps this slick arrogance of pavement

Might slide like fragile tectonic plates
From its assigned place of base utility
Above our liquifacted desert Earth.

He sits erect atop his ruptured suitcase,
By presence and sign blessing us despite
Our sad misattention, against the burn
Of our ultimate slide netherward.

He stretches his arms with priestly grace
Toward the sun it seems, maybe to shield
His eyes and ours from that outer magma
Of our volcanic firmament.

He gestures, not wildly.
He caresses the sky.
This is no brain-fried wilderness prophet.

God’s jongleur, another Francis,
He composes some harmony within himself,
For us, and we
Who stop for the grace of his ceremony
Merely at the cold invitation of a traffic light,
Are soothed into his gentle control
As he conducts the music of this busyness.

He gathers the air itself,
Embraced in those graceful arms into his beauty,
Composes an ordered music from the disharmony of traffic

And thus becomes the momentary savior
In our gas-fired universe, of all who stop for him.

Richard Fenton Sederstrom lives in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico and the North Woods of Minnesota, the places in which he was raised. “I am fortunate to have retired from all respectable pursuits, especially teaching. Now I return to the classroom as a visitor, where, instead of teaching out of pedagogy, I teach out of confusion and into it, the way teaching should be done.” He has published poems regularly in Big Muddy, The Talking Stick, Red Owl, and Saint Anthony Messenger. He has also been published in Tar Wolf Review, The Tule Review, English Journal, Plainsongs, Mother Earth Journal, and Ruminate, among other journals and magazines. His book of poems, “Fall Pictures on an Abandoned Road” came out last December, and his new book, “Disordinary Light,” has just been published. Contact Richard at richard_sederstrom1221@q.com.
Grays

© 2010

My assignment is alignment
Of too much for too little,
A composition of

A single large iron heaven blue ocean,
Uncontrollable Atlantic breakers rolling in to cold sand,
Immoveable shore:

Two eyes,
Three nervous pinto ponies, brown and white
Against the moving gray waves

Under this unmoving leather gray sky,
The flickering mind settled behind
The patient lens of a camera:

Human vibration contrapuntal
To the stateliness of waves
The gentle waltz of ponies finding their places,

Time patient like the lens in its wait
For the perfect position of waves and horses
Eyes and tide.

The ash gray moon enters this picture
Only from so deep beneath the horizon
That the only picture possible

Will miss neither the ponies nor waves nor sky
But will expose the invisible moon
And all the fire and gray basaltic Earth as well.

The horses move again,
Move Earth and tide toward one shutter
Snap.

---

Her Black Hair

© 2010

I’m lying on this cold streambank
With my neck arched way back, blank eyesockets
Aimed at the midday sun,

And I can’t hear the water any more,
Rushing away from this finality of injury.

No, that can’t be right,
Because I am very much alive, lying in the midmorning sun,
And the wound in my leg really doesn’t hurt much.

I caress the bubbling glare of the clear stream
Flowing me away from my moment of folly.

So I am lying on my left side then, maybe leaning
On my left elbow so that my pulpy right leg
Lies not touching the rough sand.

But that can’t be right either because
Then I couldn’t see her on the edge
Of the higher bank that rises in the shade.

So maybe that leg is bleeding away into the creek sand
And down stream
Where I need not admit to the sureness of need

Because I can see her and she asks,
Who probably can’t see the blood anyway –
Is so much of the demand of our manhood always
To conceal the blood? – asks, Are you all right?

And I – am I only eighteen here in this story? –

I say Sure and I add Thanks to her caring face,
And I want, oh I want those lips to ask again,

And I can tell the real and helpless truth
Over and over and maybe forever.

But she leaves my adolescent need forever instead,
And forever turns her fine young head of black hair trimmed short,
And maybe says OK then, and I always hear that,

And always she vanishes down stream.
And I will be helped before long, but only up and out.

I only ask her in winter now,
And only when the old scars begin to itch or throb,
That old scar on my leg, the scar on my heart.
Las Golondrinas (The Swallows)

Colonia Ranchito, Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico

© 2010

That cardon stood in the sun long before, maybe a century before
I picked up this shard of old pottery,
The one in my hand with most of a purple blossom fading,

Or the piece of green bottle glass,
Washed by so many of the so infrequent rains
That its cutting edges are only as rough now as working hands

To my investigating touristical soft fingers
That touch the dry air in the direction of the children
On the edge of the arroyo,

Who stare at me ready to smile again.
I will wave.
I will pick up a bit of old pitcher,

Part of its lip still attached.
The flowers on it are yellow under scratched glaze.
I wave again. Children wave back.

I have forgotten to bring candy.
That matters. But they wave back anyway.
That matters, to all of us, much more.

That is a scallop shell,
Lying on the pink sand beside a wine bottle bottom,
Symbol and tool of centuries of pilgrims,

Las golondrinas, las poemas discalzas, turning,
Returning, turning, like centuries of furrows of unshod poems.
Candyless, the children wave some more,

All pilgrims, they from their plywood chabolas,
Me from somewhere north, they know.
My being here pleases them more than it pleases me,

No, pleases el norteño in me less than me myself.
I ask if I can keep the bits and pieces.
The children smile and wave,

Las golondrinas also, las golondrinas del Poverello.
Someone, who only might have been me, or anyone else,
Has offered them something they can give back.

Junk matters here, or the many colors of junk,
The broken elements of such permission as they are blessed to offer.
The cardon stands by in the sun.

It will stand almost as long as the junk I leave behind.
Las golondrinas will fly away when they sense food
Somewhere else, and return to the barrio

Or they will flop broken winged here in the dump
With the many broken flowers, desiccating
In the fractured beauty of shards.
Haruah

© 2010

We were on our way out,
Me, the inexcusable draft of a stalled poem
and two new acquaintances,

The woman who, in what context I do not remember,
Nor need to now, said the word.
The other was the word she said—

“Golondrinas,” the word we casually asked into the car with us.
“It means ‘Swallows’ she said,” and I think
She explained why she said it. I think,

But I drove away from the meaning, and I think I will never know,
Because Golondrinas became the ruah,
The imperceptible rush of wings,

The still small voice that took over from me, and
While I had nothing more to do with writing my poem or my mind
Than drive, became the voice, not mine,

But the voice of the poem, of the birds, of the children
In the poem, propelled on the flashing wings
Of the swallows, and their own unstable plumage.

And I can become and remain
The still small shadow of invisible Elijah,
A swallow shadow, and the passing silent voice of

The returning golondrias, or the children themselves,
An ineluctable axial whisper of quick
and quickly passing truth.
Fatima & Maama: A 10-Minute Play
By Asher Wyndham

© 2010

TIME
Present day. Winter.

SETTING
A small apartment in Ypsilanti, Michigan, near Ann Arbor. A kitchen table. Three chairs. Cutting board on the table with zucchini and eggplant. Also, a mug and a bag of little marshmallows.

CHARACTERS
FATIMA HALAWANI, 15. An Iraqi American. Not bi-racial. At the start of the play, she is wearing winter wear. Over her hijab, a winter hat. She wears big geeky eyeglasses. Can be played by someone who looks young.

MAAMA, her mother, late 30s-40. She is in the uniform she wears at the gas station. She is disheveled and tired. She wears a hijab.

NOTE
A slash / in the dialog indicates when the other character should start talking, creating overlapping speech.

Choose a song that is a chart topper but also a song that is appropriate for krumping.

***This play (or any future, corrected or revised draft) can be produced by anyone, anywhere, royalty-free. Before you produce it, you must email the playwright at asherwyndham@yahoo.com ***

1 Translation from Arabic: No, no.
2 Eggplant.
3 Female suicide bomber.
4 Slut, whore.
5 See the Koran, Chapter 17: Verse 23.

A few years after high school, I traveled to Syria for two and a half months. One Sunday morning on a crowded sidewalk in Damascus filled with bearded men walking caged songbirds, Bedouin beggars, and shoeshiners, I saw a young girl walking hand-in-hand with her mother. Her mother was covered head to toe in black, while her daughter wore a hijab and Nike pumps. And over her hijab, a Miss America-like crown. The image of the daughter and mother has stayed with me for a long time. This ten-minute play is actually based on the first scene from a full-length play that I have not completed about an Arab-American girl who wants to be Homecoming Queen. In this play, the girl doesn’t want to be Homecoming Queen. Maybe one day I will complete the full-length play. This is my first Theatre for Youth play. I would like to thank Doug Hill, my director, and the other artists who worked on the play at ACTF in Utah. And Judith Williams, my director, and the other artists who worked on the play at ATHE in Los Angeles.

– Asher Wyndham

(MAAMA, late 30s, stands at the table cleaning a brown stain on her gas station uniform shirt with a kitchen rag. She wears a hijab. She sighs. FATIMA, 15, enters, shivering. She wears big geeky glasses, winter clothing and a hijab. Her backpack is over her shoulder. She bangs “snow” off her boots. MAAMA watches FATIMA bang her boots clean even when they are clean. FATIMA kicks off her boots and whips off her hat.)

FATIMA: I am like a Popsicle with a hijab on! Arabs shouldn’t move so close to the North Pole!

MAAMA: Shush. You were born here. I have hot cocoa with little marshmallows! Sip it and warm up!

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Continued from page 43

(FATIMA slouches in the chair. She takes off her winter wear and puts on novelty slippers (bunny?) during:)

MAAMA (Cont.): ...So uh. How was school?

FATIMA: Oh, the usual. Gretchen, this Barbie doll wannabe, accidentally spilled her Sloppy Joe all over my hijab.

MAAMA: I am glad it was an accident.

FATIMA: And after she said, “Oh, I am sooo sorry, shit Shiite.”

MAAMA: Ohhh, Fatima, my baby… You okay?

FATIMA: …Yeah… So what did you spill on your uniform?

MAAMA: Root Beer slurpee. No time to scrub it clean because it was busybusybusy at the Fuel Shop.

(MAAMA puts on her apron and starts chopping zucchini.
FATIMA unzips her backpack and takes out Cosmo Girl magazine and reads.)

MAAMA (Cont.): For dinner shish Kebab, okay?

FATIMA: How ’bout French fries or / Easy Mac?

MAAMA: La, la.¹ Genuine Iraqi cuisine tonight.

FATIMA: Fffine.

(MAAMA chops. FATIMA sips hot chocolate and eats marshmallows and reads.)

MAAMA: Cosmo Girl? The Fuel Shop sells that. It’s the girl version of that slutty magazine. Give it to me!

FATIMA: No!

(MAAMA takes the magazine.)

FATIMA (Cont.): It’s harmless!

MAAMA: Why are you staring at skimpy dresses?!

FATIMA: …There’s a…a dance.


FATIMA: Homecoming, it’s just one night a year.

MAAMA: I never went to dances when I was your age.

FATIMA: Hey, give it back!

(MAAMA rolls the magazine up and stuffs it in her apron pocket.)

FATIMA (Cont.): I bet you danced on your bed when you were fifteen. I want to dance not just in my room. I want to dance on the gym floor at Homecoming. C’mon, Maama/aaaa.

MAAMA: Your hot chocolate is getting cold.

FATIMA: Everyone is goin’ now. Everyone from the Math club and the Manga club. Even the Goth kids and the wheelchair kids. Even some Muslims.

(MAAMA’s face reads “Really”?)

FATIMA (Cont.): Yeah. My Syrian girlfriends Raneen and Zana are going.

MAAMA: You’re not Syrian.

FATIMA: I wish I was instead of I-raqi!

MAAMA: Fatima!!

FATIMA: It’s gonna be like The Event. The theme is Feelin’ Groovy!

MAAMA: Feeling groovy with a guy!? You have a date!?

FATIMA: No. Salam likes Zana. No boy likes Fatima Halawani…

MAAMA: Good. Then you don’t have to go.

FATIMA: Maama! I neeeed to go! I have to show off…

MAAMA: Show off what?

FATIMA: My…my killer dance moves.

MAAMA: Killer dance moves…?

FATIMA: (Takes out a DVD from her backpack) I got this DVD

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at Goodwill. Just five bucks. I’ve been practicin’ when you’re not home. Hardcore for like six months.

MAAMA: Buck Wild: A Crash Course on Krumping. (?) You’re spending your allowance on ghetto dancing videos!?

FATIMA: Watch me get my groove on!

MAAMA: Good Muslim girls don’t get their groove on!

FATIMA: Watch me take it to the streets!! Yo, DJ, hit it!!

(Dance music plays. FATIMA starts krumping!)

MAAMA: Fatima, stop stomping! Fatima!! Neighbors will bang on the walls!! Fatima, stop!!!

(MAAMA stops FATIMA from dancing. Music stops.)

FATIMA: I’m buck, right?

MAAMA: Buck??? No, you’re Fatima. Sit down and chop baadenjaan.¹ Respect your Maama. Good and dutiful. Always. Slices way too thick!

FATIMA: AHHHH! I WANNA BE — BE NORMAL!

(FATIMA stabs the eggplant and just misses her MAAMA’s hand!)

MAAMA: Let go of knife! You almost killed maama. Fatima. Listen. Listen. You’re perfect the way you are.

MAAMA (Cont.): way you are.

FATIMA: Perfect? O-M-G! I wanna be da bomb!

MAAMA: Da bomb!? Like a shahida² blowing herself up at a Beirut discotheque!? / That is not funny!

FATIMA: Whoa! I didn’t mean like that! I wanna be an Explosion of Awesome Beauty — like Miss America, Rima Fakih…

MAAMA: My baby girl wants to look like a sharmuta!³ … Allah, where did I go wrong?!

FATIMA: (Takes the magazine out of the apron pocket) Let’s go to the Mall in Ann Arbor and find the perfect dress.

MAAMA: Maama isn’t an ATM machine!

FATIMA: Pleee/eeez.

MAAMA: You don’t listen — when you should! I’ll finish preparing dinner! Again! Look what you did to the eggplant… Fatima, Fatima. You silly girl. Go to your room.

FATIMA: Where am I!? Guantanamo Bay!?

MAAMA: That is not funny!

(FATIMA starts to exit — MAAMA takes the magazine. FATIMA grabs it. Tug-a-war!)

FATIMA: Hands off! / Hands off!!

MAAMA: It’s going under the sink with wet trash!

FATIMA: SOOO UN-FAIR! AAUUGH! …You, you’re so not like regular moms — normal Moms who, like, let their daughters do what-ever they like!

MAAMA: Don’t make me get out the broom and sweep you to your bedroom.

FATIMA: They let them go to Joe’s Pizza, eat atomic wings and French Fries. Gimme more freedom. Don’t, don’t put me in another brace. The scoliosis brace was bad enough…

MAAMA: Good Muslim children never chide their parents. My Lord! Bestow on Fatima thy Mercy even as she cherished me in childhood.⁵

FATIMA: My spine’s fine now. So I wanna showcase my moves, my knowledge. I don’t wanna be the “Paperbag Princess from A-rab-Land” anymore!

MAAMA: I will call the school and demand to speak to Principal Pavlovich!

FATIMA: Again?! Nothing is going to change. After lunch, Continued from page 44

"Continued on page 46"
when I was getting the Sloppy Joe off my hijab, this rich snob named Tina asked me in the restroom if I ever gave… (Tears up) Osama bin Laden a, a…blowjob.

MAAMA: (Comforts her daughter and then after a moment:) Gretchen and Tina, they’re just jealous of your straight As.

FATIMA: It’s not just a few white chicks! There are a lotta people that tease me! …They’re right when they laugh at me.

MAAMA: Nooo!

FATIMA: Look at me! Ugh. I need a dream make-over, like, now! These geeky glasses — I don’t want to wear them anymore!

MAAMA: You want those Ray-Bans so you can look like a Hollywood celebrity?

FATIMA: I want you to get me contacts! And Neutrogena / for my face! Big zits!

MAAMA: You want a lot of things! A dress. An iPod. Pink Yeti boots?? Augh. Fatima. Don’t we all want a lot of things to color our lives? But we can’t have everything. We can’t.

FATIMA: I’ll clean my room! I’ll do dishes every day for a month! I’ll give you more back massages!

(MAAMA masses FATIMA’s back.)

MAAMA: I want to give you…more like an i-Pod, give you things that other parents give, but I, I can’t. I’m sorry. …Fatima. Times are…hard. Sooo hhhard. For me. For the both of us (A hand on the back of the third chair) since…Baaba…died. His Chrysler pension / is not enough.

FATIMA: Is not enough, I know.

MAAMA: Ypsilanti may be cheaper than Ann Arbor, but not much. And I’m trying to pay rent before deadline again and pay off billsbillsbills.

FATIMA: I’m sorry I was born with a spine like a question mark.

MAAMA: Fatima.

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Continued on page 47
MAAMA: Yes. I. Do. (Sighs) …I’m supposed to be the stronger one…

FATIMA: What’s wrong, Maama? …Maama?

MAAMA: I didn’t spill slurpee on myself. Some trucker threw slurpee on me. He called me… something really…awful and told me to go back to where I came from.

FATIMA: If Daddy was here, he’d show up and make sure no one picked on us.

MAAMA: He’s not here…

FATIMA: So you get hurt sometimes. And I’ll get hurt too.

MAAMA: Yeah… (After a moment:) Hey! How about I be your chaperone at the dance?

FATIMA: I am almost sixteen, hello!

MAAMA: I’ll serve punch.

FATIMA: (Flat, like on life support in a hospital) Uh…I guess it’ll be all right, if you came to the dance…

MAAMA: Great. (After a moment:) We’ll get through this, okay? We’ve gone through it for two years. Fatima and Maama. One insult at a time, okay?

(FATIMA nods “Okay.”)

FATIMA: Yo, DJ, gimme some muzak!

(FATIMA krumps. Music under the following:)

MAAMA: Why are you dancing if there is no music?

FATIMA: I hear music — in my head!

(FATIMA continues krumping. After a moment, MAAMA mimics FATIMA. She’s clunky. FATIMA laughs.)

FATIMA (Cont.): Muslim girls shouldn’t get their groove on!

MAAMA: We’re going to have to get our groove on, if we’re going to be invincible in Michigan!

(They get buck wild!!! They have fun, they start laughing, but then they get serious. Music gets louder — so loud it would shake the walls of any small apartment. Strobe lights flash like in a dance club. After a moment, END OF PLAY.)
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A Call to Writers for Spring

The Blue Guitar magazine will accept literary submissions for the Spring 2011 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 15. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

A Call to Artists for Spring

The Blue Guitar magazine will accept art submissions in all mediums for the Spring 2011 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 15. The art entries, which will be selected by a jury for inclusion in the spring issue, must follow the theme of “Nature Images.” Any artists who work in any visual art media and are 18 years or older and are Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

The Blue Guitar magazine is a nonprofit project of the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.
Richard Dyer of Mesa, production editor for The Blue Guitar Magazine, and a continuing-education student at Mesa Community College, created and donated his original steel sculpture “The Welders” of three welded figurines on an I-beam to the college, 1833 W. Southern Ave. The sculpture and a plaque are to be set in concrete as a permanent addition to the college’s outdoor art collection. Each of the three figurines took more than five hours to sculpt, using a metal inert gas wire-welder. The sculpture was designed as a tribute to the Welding Technology Department, its instructors and students. Richard has been taking metal sculpture welding classes at MCC since the summer of 2004. The sculpture was unveiled in the college’s BP-GC Courtyard as part of an open house Oct. 28, 2010, celebrating new landscaping and shaded sitting areas for students and the remodeling of the BA business building.

Some final words from the editor

Reading
Denise Levertov

© 2010
For Jim Green

Suddenly
there was this unfolding
the time-lapsed opening
of a flower inside
deep inside
and while I
felt it in me growing
I kept it to myself,
kept my mouth
shut for fear
it would explode
and the I
and the me of
me
would trickle out

— Rebecca Dyer
"Things as they are changed upon the blue guitar."

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