

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Winter 2013

To our readers . . .

New Year's greetings to all our readers and contributors! We trust that 2013 will be a year of continued creativity and enrichment for each of you.

Speaking of enrichment, we would call attention to our regular feature, "Creative Quotations," on page 18. That's where we try to put in some intellectually stimulating commentary on literature and language — something to encourage thought at deeper than everyday level. If you have come across such a "creative quotation" in your own reading, you might like to call it to our attention.

One of *WestWard Quarterly's* contributors, James G. Piatt, informs us that he has published his debut book of poetry, "The Silent Pond." These poems take the reader on a journey through nature and the seasons, the feelings and memories that arise. The book issued by Broken Publications in October 2012, and is available through the publisher or through Amazon.

Our Featured Writer in this issue is Dr. Richard Luftig of California (formerly on the faculty of Miami University in Ohio). Please note that the several poems included with his article are continued overleaf on page 6.

We regret to have to say this again, but on page 28 we are reprinting Caryl Calsyn's poem "The Depression Key" that appeared in our last issue. Through a copying error we failed to print the entire poem. Sadly, this sort of thing has happened before; in handling as many submissions as we do, something occasionally slips through the cracks. But we always try to issue a correction when it does.

Shirley Anne Leonard, EDITOR

WestWard Quarterly

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WestWard Quarterly showcases the best work of upbeat writers and poets. Our magazine's philosophy is: "Adversity happens. Find the eternal purpose behind it." Reflect an uplifting, positive or gently humorous attitude in your submissions. Send all letters, requests for guidelines, queries or submissions to the address above. Send SASE for response.

Maximum length for poems is 40 lines. Shorter submissions have a better likelihood of being published. The Editor reserves the right to edit material. For more information on guidelines and how to send your submission, visit our web site, www.wwquarterly.com.

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Cover Image: Sapphire Pool, Yellowstone National Park, 2012
 Photo by Miriam Faith Silkebakken

Featured Writer . . .

Dr. Richard Luftig California



Right up until the first three decades of the twentieth century, poetry was a central part of the lives of everyday Americans. People owned and read volumes of poetry. Newspapers regularly published new and familiar poems which were eagerly read. Poets actually made a living writing and publishing poetry.

Then something happened. Poetry became obtuse, overly symbolic, esoteric and difficult to understand. Potential readers became “poetry scarred” and “poetry scared.” Children learned to hate poetry as it was taught in school and carried their dislike into adulthood. Poetry in America nearly died. Somehow, poetry became “guess me” and most people became too wary or put-off to hazard a guess.

But poetry did not die. Through it all, a small group of dedicated people kept their love of the form and a minority of poets continued to believe in and write poetry for general audiences. And while I don’t have any formal statistics to back me up, it seems to me that poetry is on the rebound both in the number of people who read poetry and those who write it.

I have spent most of my life loving, reading and writing what (I hope) is accessible poetry. I have never forgotten that I am guest in whatever magazine my poem appears. More importantly, I am a guest in the reader’s house. If my poem is snooty, bombastic, too difficult to read or understand or if it does not resonate with the life of the reader, then I have been a rude guest and have overstayed my welcome.

A poem works for me when it is so beautiful, relevant and surprising that it causes me to take a quick in-breath. It also works for me when it makes me smile or even laugh out loud. To my way of thinking, not all poetry has to be deadly serious. I hope I generate smiles in people who read my poems.

Readers sometimes ask me if I have an audience in mind when I write my poems. I do. She is a waitress in a diner, coffee shop or chili parlor in Ohio working either the breakfast shift or the lunch crowd. She is in her thirties and lives alone. Maybe, she is divorced or has never married. Nobody knows this about her, but when she gets off work, she goes home, pours a cup of coffee and relaxes with a small volume of poems that she bought with tip change at a second hand store. Even though she is alone, she still treasures love poems the most.

Although I and my wife of forty years now reside in California in order to be closer to our children, most of my adult life has been spent in the Midwest: Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. These are what people call “fly-over states,” the states people pass through on their way to somewhere else. When I travel to a foreign country, native people there know about New York City, Washington, D.C., Boston, and San Francisco. Virtually none of them have heard of Columbus, Indianapolis or Omaha. That’s all right. The only city I know of in France is Paris.

These are the types of places I write about: small towns losing their zip codes with their young people moving away and the folks remaining trying to carry on their lives. These are the things I know and feel strongest about. Although I write about many topics, if you asked me to categorize myself, I would probably answer that I am a poet of geography, both real and imagined.

I am grateful that *WestWard Quarterly* has been kind enough to publish a number of my poems over the years. Regarding my writing history, I have published poems and short stories in many magazines and journals in the United States and internationally in Japan, Canada, Australia, Europe, Thailand, Hong Kong and India. I’ve published three chapbooks and one of my poems and a short story were nominated for the 2012 Pushcart Poetry Prize.

But I am not sure how important all of that is. I read, write and think about poetry because life would be so much poorer without the art form. I write in order to share my vision of beauty, and about why those fly-over places and people are still important.

And I write in the hopes that the waitress in that diner in Ohio will pick up, read and be moved by one of my poems.

Poems by Dr. Richard Luftig

Announcement

It is March and I realize
that you nuthatches and martins,
towhees and longspurs
down in Florida have evidently
not gotten the memo about
the cheap rents available
in the Indiana trees
that can be had for a song.

But I am here, a self-appointed
proxy of spring, taking out ads
in the Miami papers and vying
for airtime on Tampa talk shows
just to clue in any random
waxwings that might tune in
that wooly hemlocks up north
are thinning stiff coats,

and shaking the snow off
their firs while the boxelders
and blackjack oaks are eager
to display their new pretenses
of leaves. But beware:
this Public Service Announcement
is first-come-first-served,
an Early Bird Special of sorts

no rain checks issued and made
on behalf of your cooped- up,
cabin-fevered, prairie friends
and neighbors who are still stuck
inside, frantically addressing
to you idyllic picture postcards,
filled in with pleading messages,
of *wish you were here*.

Baker, California

Halfway to Las Vegas, we get taken in
by the sign for the World’s Tallest
Thermometer, The Mad Greek Café
and The Bun Boy Restaurant.
We think okay, we’ll stay
overnight at Will’s Fargo Motel.
Hey, if it’s good enough for bankers,
it’s good enough for us. We eat
Alien Fresh Jerky for dinner and walk
to the abandoned Amtrak bus stop
at the rear of the Jack-in-the-Box.

“How can anyone live here?” I ask.

The next morning we drive through
the Mohave to the Cronese Mountains,
where zebra-striped Meadow Foams
and Blazing Suns grow among purple,
three-armed Bristle Blues that yield
to diadems of Mustard Flowers, each
four-petals a windmill ready to spin
in the high desert wind. A Vermillion
Flycatcher sings a trilled five note
dot-dash solo tune, then comes a duet,
a trio, until a full call-and- response
of an a cappella choir whistles across the road.
My wife turns, takes my hand and asks:

“How can anyone ever leave?”

(More Poems continued on page 6)

Poems by Dr. Richard Luftig

road trip

he aims the headlights
in any direction a life
needs to go, this drive
so laden with yields,
full stops and sometimes
detours, through towns
with tumbledown
houses, their backs
unseen, their sides
a shroud in bas-relief
that appears only
when the sun calls
it a day and no one
thinks enough to look.
the map on the dashboard
a biography of space
instead of time,
he points out to her
landmarks, mile markers
really, of all the best
trips of their past.

Autumn Elms

In late November
the young ones
bend under first
obligation of frost,
showing due respect
to their more
upstanding elders.
They huddle
and lean in hard
against hawk winds
that drop hints
of the months
to come and try
to warm themselves
recalling the best
of past springs,
all the while hoping
to hold off
their denouement
for just one more day.



Two Poems by Raymond J. Flory, Indiana

(Former Editor of Westward Quarterly)

Silver Shay

Twisting and turning,
rocking and rolling,
the silver shay pulls
logging cars
over rusty rails . . .
whistling through
the winter woods.

Winter Wind

The winter wind
twirls and swirls
farm field grass,
caressing frozen creek
with a cold kiss.

Algonquin Provincial Park, Canada Patrick Papaccio, New York

as the rain dries off a rock changing states from form to free
the eagle takes flight, its feathers caress the sky,
primaries adjust the wind to gracefully guide its course
a loon's solitary call for his mate across a lake that is solely theirs
a mournful sound, honed by winter months apart
life mates reunited anew each spring
this Barren river and canyon are belied in name
a region destitute of human is fervid with life
this fault in the earth's surface has unblemished beauty
the gneiss walls filled with such color that only an artist
or God could convey
the meandering river one hundred meters below
holds deep its understanding, of time, and of life
ghosts of the abandoned Canadian National railroad harbor here,
the men and diesels whose sweat and force cut a longitudinal
swath across this serene land, how grand it must have been
for the engineer to throttle up and be guided by wanderlust track
black bear and cub intrigued with whom takes rest on their ground
motionless I lay, mother tasting the air, an unfamiliar scent for sure
cub at her hip eager to approach and play, shunned back with a glance
my breath quickens and they are gone, quick as dreams
all knowing inside the black eyes of the northern raven
from his perch he derides me of his wisdom of which I will never conceive
winds pitch differs across red, white and jack pines in perfect tune
the west wind prevailing across this great expanse of land,
with bouts of calm and fury so fierce they are often indistinguishable
all this, part of the evenings apotheosis of which silence is at center stage
with accompaniment from the sun
it takes a while for the invective hum of the everyday to quiet in your head
and only then do you realize you are not worthy of being here.

A Quiet Illumination

Jane Stuart, Kentucky

Ice castles open, lakes of silver dew
gleam under stars, and dark shadows unfurl
to show us history upon time's walls
that shine with memory and love's rebirth
. . . in ancient legends told again by flowers
that bloom like jewels on a jade-green earth.
The mystery night that was is lost in tears
like sapphires falling into long-lost years.

Corona

Janet McCann, Texas

That old machine had a frightening shadow,
 You had to sneak up on it. And then
 You had to push the keys so hard
 They hit the roller with a snick.
 You had to slam the carriage return
 That went ding.
 And then there was the ribbon which
 Blackened your fingers, made you curse.
 You had to X through lines and words
 And the old words shadowed the new words.
 And you had to thread the ribbon properly
 Through the tiny metal obstacle course
 Or your page stayed blank.
 The keys smudged, they filled the e's and o's
 With blackness or cut them
 Right out of the page, leaving holes.

So why were we so happy
 With this unwieldy disobedient gift?

the "skinny" on the skinny poem

Vernon Waring, Pennsylvania

trim the fat	in an age of fast food
o weaver of words	and instant replay
lessen the intake	and speed dating too
of ponderous verbs	i'd just like to say
squeeze excess out	we're ready now
of every line	for a genre that's new
shorten the stanza	so fasten your seat belt
cut back on rhyme	here's its debut:
get to the point	the skinny poem's
don't aim for the epic	a fresh kind of verse
when a quatrain will do	low-calorie fat-free
avoid the septic	the verse that is terse
give us an ode	
that's short on length	
nothing so long	
it saps our strength	

November Snow

Gerald Bosacker, Arkansas

I loved winter's first snow, when I was young
 and I would run, mouth opened wide, to try
 and catch elusive icy feathers on my tongue,
 to taste those first ice kisses from November sky.

I felt so cheated when the million flakes I missed
 would vanish as soon as they touched the ground,
 but withered grass and forsaken leaves they kissed
 were soon blanketed beneath a snowy mound.

Come morning when all was white and snowfall done,
 they covered well the dead and sleeping plants.
 I would watch the sunbeams from the red-faced sun
 bounce off the crystal coverlet in sparkling dance.

Now old, I dread winter's first inaugural snow
 while watching through insulated window pane,
 shivering as I see the crystal icicles grow
 forming an impartial hourglass of Winter's reign

When new winter blusters out where widows weep
 over hidden plots where new sod lies browned,
 will I, too, be resting beneath that frosted heap
 when soft snowflakes whiten my hallowed ground?

Patterns

Elizabeth Howard, Tennessee

Where tree shadows crisscross the snow,
 careless juncos weave lacy patterns,
 not unlike the intricate design
 in Granny's dark shawl, knitted
 of wool from her own sheep.

Granny spun the wool by lamplight,
 dyed it in a kettle in the back yard,
 using roots she dug in the woods,
 and knitted it with diligence,
 following her granny's pattern.

Now, the spinning wheel and Granny rest
 by the hearth, Granny studying lacy
 designs in the ashes, the shawl draped
 over her shoulders, intricate patterns
 crisscrossing her darkening face.

His Healing Balm

James G. Piatt, California

He whispers in the ears of those who dream,
Touches hearts to transform wandering souls.

For those who listen, He sends a sacred stream,
For those who read He gives His sacred scrolls.

He covers all sins with his crimson dust,
Grants all humanity His forgiving love,

Weeps over those who cannot adjust, and
Forgives all sins, with the silence of a dove.

In the early morning where thoughts are clear,
He grants all absolution and a peaceful calm, and

Wonders why men are still filled with fear, and
Refuse to feel the coolness of his healing balm.

The Black Button

Richard King Perkins II, Illinois

It could become
part of a teddy bear or snowman
but it's held the portion of my coat
nearest my heart together for three years
and there's no reason
for major alterations at this time.

In the still darkness of morning,
I stand in front of her
as she sews the button back in place.
She grimaces when she sees
that the thread she thought
was black is instead brown.

She worries that the contrasting
blossom of thread will spoil
the polished elegance of my coat.
I kiss the top of her head
and remind her it's not
the color of the string that matters,
it's only the attachment that counts.

In the Corner of the Library

Kami McArthur, Utah

I sit among strangers,
and stare at the gray stretch of canvas
— placed there to block out distractions,
placed there so I can focus on my final project.
But I listen

to the clock ticking,
the leafing through paper,
the pop of a pen cap
the buzz of zippers.

Someone leans back in his chair,
and someone scoots her seat in,
I listen to someone walking,
the rustling fabric, the falling footsteps.
I listen to him shaking his mechanical pencil,
the lead rattling inside.

They punch buttons on their calculators.
She slams her book on the table, heaving
a sigh. I listen to erasers rubbing,
pencils scratching.

I sit there, still,
wishing I could stand on my desk
and tell them,
tell them all,
that I am here
that we are all one, with pumping hearts,
expanding lungs,
one,
with our desires, our fears, our goals,

but I remain where I am,
and stare at a gray stretch of canvas.

My Island Love

Gary Jones, Rhode Island

I see my love on a tiny isle
Near half a mile out to see
I cannot see her face too well
But night and day she calls to me

I have no notion who she is
Or what she calls to me or why
But day and night I gather rocks
To make a bridge twixt her and I

The stones drop down to unknown depths
And make a pile of unseen height
So I'm never sure how near I am
To ending both our lonely plights

I'm sure that devilish currents flow
And topple stones to keep the bridge low
And sea beasts do their level best
To keep the bridge below the crest

But no matter what may bar the way
Discouraged I can never be
For on the isle I see my love
Dropping rocks into the sea

See One of These in Me

Ginger Peters, New Mexico

The full moon's glow radiates light across the darkened earth.
Do I have a glow that radiates among my fellow man?
The sun's warmth stimulates all living things.
Do I have warmth that stimulates my fellow man?
Winter's breath cleanses the air all life breathes.
Do I have a cleansing breath to share with my fellow man?
Spring's arrival awakens the bounty of all nature.
Do I have an awakening nature to share with my fellow man?
Mountain's glorious mystique arouses the wonder of time.
Do I have an arousal of wonderment to give to my fellow man?
Ocean's mighty waves give power to the world.
Do I have a touch of power to give to my fellow man?

Glow, warmth, cleansing, awakening, wonder, and power:
See one of these in me.

Winter Yearning

Sandra H. Bounds, Mississippi

The wild geese haunt us in their graceful flight
as Autumn comes, season of letting go,
when a strange yearning piques and taunts us so
and summons dread of Winter's coming night.
We long for searching shafts of golden light
to warm the sullen winds that shriek and blow,
to chase remnants of dreary cold and snow,
and usher in Spring's ritual respite.
Then, like wild geese, we launch a fervent quest
for sanctuary from Winter's dismay
that soothes our weary souls with needed rest,
for those enduring Winter's icy test
will see the pleasures of a jonquil day
with hearts prepared and waiting to be blessed.

Tea and Sunbeams

Charles R. Schwab, Massachusetts

What could be more delicious, eh!
On a cold January day
Than the all-embracing teeming
Of that bright sunshine beaming
Through the windows' southern face
In my simple dining place?

Not a muffin filled with poppy seed
Although that's hard to beat, indeed,
Nor tea with a bit of ginger, nor
A hot bowl of potato chowder
With a touch of broccoli and cheese
(It's the little things that please).

The sun now rises in the sky
Higher than the month gone by,
And though the snow of some days past
Has vanished, oh so very fast,
Leaving bareness as before,
I expect at least one more

White blanket ere winter's grasp
Is broken beyond a final gasp.
So I sit sipping my tea,
Watching the sun slip away from me,
Waiting for the next big show
Of warming sunshine or comforting snow.

Systems of Belief
Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

Marching — all in step —
sleepwalking — kept
by rhythms not our own,
mesmerized by words we heard
somewhere in the past,
supposing that the chanting of them
made us good —
but good enough to last?

Marching — all in step —
sleepwalking — kept . . .
Would someone now break time,
disrupt the rhythm, halt the rhyme,
tear the blinder from our eye,
shout — “Yonder lies the pit
where we all march to die!”

Marching — all in step —
sleepwalking — kept —
chanting as we go, line by line . . .
Would someone stop — ask why
we’ve not been told the truth —
been told the lie?

We march — encased in molds;
we think the thoughts we learned
from books we read in schools.
We march — encased in molds;
we mouth the words we learned
to keep our culture’s rules.

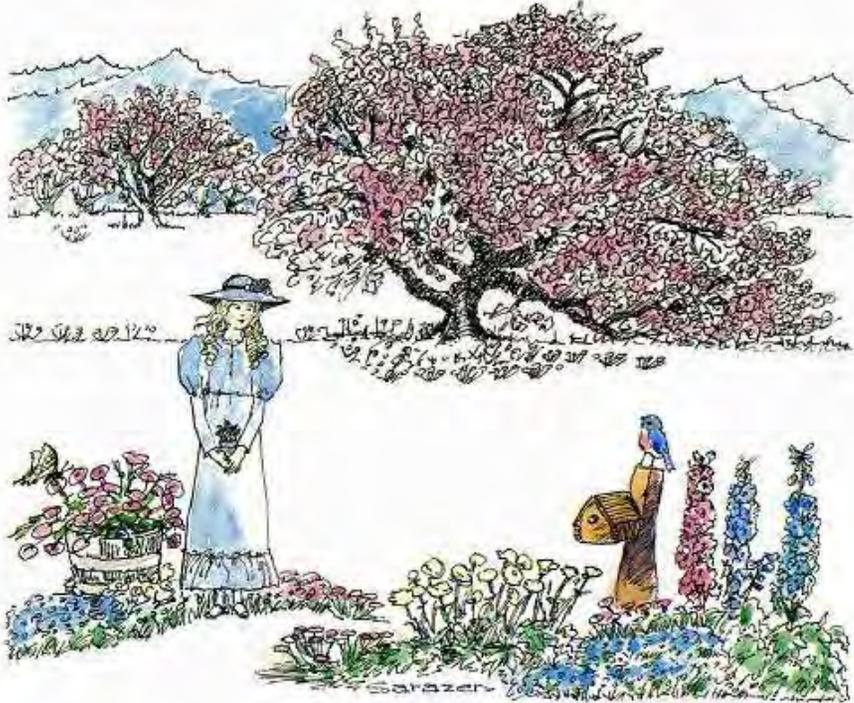
But wait — misgivings mock us as we go,
mouthing slogans that aren’t really so.
Would someone now break time,
disrupt the rhythm, halt the rhyme,
break ranks — expose the lies!
Let the truth be known,
and let a new song be our own.

Gignesthai
(Greek: “to be born”)
Joyce Bradshaw, Texas

“In the beginning . . .”
when the Garden was clean and peaceful
and there was no hatred, no war —
there was God;
when Man had not yet begun the search
for success, the ego trip —
there was God;
when intrapersonal philosophizing
about the meaning of life was new —
there was God.

“. . . God created the heavens . . .”
where the miracles of creation are
displayed in sun, moon and stars —
symbols of God’s glory;
wherein the elements of life are
contained in sky, clouds and rain —
symbols of God’s mercy;
whereby the smallness of Man may be compared
with enormous galaxies and endless space —
symbols of God’s greatness.

“. . . and the earth . . .”
with features forged through millions of years:
pulsating seas, plains and fiery mountains —
signs of His mighty power;
with living creatures to roam the world:
mammalian giants, crustaceans, birds —
fruits of His creativeness;
with Man made in the image of its Creator:
originally sinful, redeemed, chosen —
purveyors of His mercy.



Drawing by Patricia Sarazen

Spirit of the Garden

Patricia Sarazen, Pennsylvania

In a garden
where whimsy takes flight
to my delight,
such loveliness

Is found amid the joyous flowers,
such peace and transcendent powers.
They seem to express an inward rapture,
or an infinite moment they do capture.
They beset us with their fiery plumes
of tall phlox with lavish perfumes.

Tall blue delphiniums, heaven sent,
and dear daisies bring such wonderment.
It is here — down the flower aisle —
beauty beguiles our soul, for just a while,
For we are filled with an infinite peace,

As the angels hover
amid the blooms
This summer's day,
beside a garden bouquet.

From My Vantage Point . . .

by Chester the Cat



In your poetry writing, do you just “follow the leader” — writing verse that tries to imitate someone else’s work? Notice Calliope in the photo; she’s just following my lead — same posture, same expression, tail curled just like mine. What a copy-cat!

I’m flattered, of course. As Charles C. Colton said two centuries ago, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” (It would be nice if Callie would flatter me more consistently!)

But we’re not writing to flatter someone else. It’s good to follow the example of a proficient writer, whatever kind of writing we do. Certainly we can all profit from studying well-crafted models. But unless we can impart our own distinctive style and flair to what we write, why bother? There’s no need to say the same thing that’s been said before, in the same way.

So try not to just “follow the leader,” as the photograph illustrates. If you’ll notice, Callie’s followed by a stuffed yarn cat, just mindlessly trailing behind. And bringing up the rear is a stuffed penguin, even more of a birdbrain. We don’t want to write like that, do we?

I Use Words

Melody Meadows, New York

I use words. I make something
out of nothing. See these words.
I took them, shaped them,
breathed life into them.
They were formless, said nothing
until I gave them wings.
They soared into the heavens
and returned with particles
of infinity in their beaks.
I use words.

Poet’s Price

Shirley Anne Leonard

I look for words —
the more elusive ones,

Words that tell
the truth,
that make things clear,
words that some
don’t want to hear.

Words that ask more —
tell more,
come with higher price,
words that I
may have to eat —
small sacrifice!

Creative Quotations

The Difference Between Language and Speech . . .

F. de Saussure with his distinction between *la langue* (language) and *la parole* (speech) . . . marked the birth of the modern science of linguistics. By language Saussure meant the whole stock of words, idioms and syntax available, the potential, the common property of all users. By speech he meant any particular and actual use of language by a speaker or writer. Some scholars have since suggested that there is need for an intermediate term, idiolect or lexis, to designate the range of language within the competence and command of each individual user; but this is a refinement we shall not require. What we do need to note is that each user has complete control over speech but very little control over language.

Before Saussure this point had already been made less scientifically but more imaginatively by Lewis Carroll.

'There's glory for you!' 'I don't know what you mean by "glory",' Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knockdown argument for you!' 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knockdown argument",' Alice objected. 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master — that's all.'

Then, having explained the meaning of 'impenetrability', Humpty Dumpty goes on: 'When I make a word do a lot of work like that. . . I always pay it extra.' Our sympathies are enlisted on both sides, since each is standing for a valid principle, Alice, somewhat pedantically, maintaining the intractability of language, and Humpty Dumpty, somewhat cavalierly, asserting his mastery over speech.

In our attempt to analyse the meaning of meaning, we shall have to discriminate between the public meaning which is characteristic of language and the user's meaning which is characteristic of speech. One of the obvious differences between language and speech is that language consists of words (along with the syntax which holds them together), whereas speech consists of sentences. We need, therefore, one definition of meaning for words and another for sentences. The meaning of a word is the contribution it is capable of making to any sentence in which it stands. The meaning of a sentence is what the speaker intends to convey by it.

— G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (1980), 38-39

The Writer Needs the Reader . . .

The writer does want to be published; the painter urgently hopes that someone will see the finished canvas (van Gogh was denied the satisfaction of having his work bought and appreciated during his life time; no wonder the pain was more than he could bear); the composer needs his music to be heard. Art is communication, and if there is no communication it is as though the work had been still-born.

The reader, viewer, listener, usually grossly underestimates his importance. If a reader cannot create a book along with the writer, the book will never come to life. Creative involvement: that's the basic difference between reading a book and watching TV. In watching TV we are passive; sponges; we *do* nothing. In reading we must become creators. Once the child has learned to read alone, and can pick up a book without illustrations, he must become a creator, imagining the setting of the story, visualizing the characters, seeing facial expressions, hearing the inflection of voices. The author and the reader "know" each other; they meet on the bridge of words.

So there is no evading the fact that the artist yearns for "success," because that means that there has been a communication of the vision: that all the struggle has not been invalid.

— Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water* (1980), 34-35

"Snow"

Russell Koharchick, Idaho

At the top of the hill I watched
roses bloom beneath your
eyes and felt the sting of iced
midnight. Our laughter faded
into a passing flurry, leaving
only the green silence of trees and
the snowflakes that ballerina'd
before us — each one reciting
a waltz written specially for
you. Softening sound stacking
one,
upon one,
upon one.
The view was split by idle
black waters, the lower dotted
in white lights hinting city
shapes, while deep purple
clouds swam past our hillside.
Whaling and arcing,
rolling and floating. Spinning slowly
behind our drifting white veil.

Come Summer

Janet Goven, Pennsylvania

Anticipation . . .
of exhilarating warmth
with dawn's rising
in the cool midst of night's demise,
the longer days — the result of
earth's drawing closer to the sun —
culminate to perfect,
in the clearing of the skies,
the season known as Spring.
She carries all the promises
that confirm your trust
in the Creator who allows
the dark and dormant to be replaced
with life of vibrant color;
flower gardens, foliage-laced,
gentle breezes providing comfort
from sun's brightest rays —
evidence Spring keeps her promises
in golden Summer's glorious days.

Where Did Mrs. Hooper Go Wrong?
Curt Vevang, Illinois

My sixth grade teacher came from Great Britain.
We learned our manners, spoken and written.

She taught that two words must follow “thank you”:
always “you’re welcome,” no others would do.

But “thank you” today gets a strange retort:
“no problem,” *de nada*, or even a snort.

Waitress and catsup are heading my way.
It’s been a long wait, but “Thank you”, I say.

“No problem” she says, while taking her leave.
And under my breath I quietly grieve.

Of course “no problem,” it’s a routine task.
If I thought it were, I’d never have asked.

We live in an age where grammar’s for naught.
It’s all one can do to live as once taught.

Then one day last week, I heard a “thank you.”
How “no problem” slipped out, I haven’t a clue.

Decisions

Jean Calkins, North Carolina

Cold, snow
no place to go,
no grandchild after school.
Stretch, bike,
but all inside,
working like a mule.
Clean, cook —
the things I hate.
I’ve done them far too long.
Pay bills,
no thrills.
Put that in a song!
Mail out,
and more comes in.
Write a line or two.
Uninspired,
so call it quits,
Perhaps a nap will do.

Poems for the Nuclear Age: Light

Leonard H. Roller, California

I’m fast — in fact the fastest!
Despite some reckless boasts
I’m never passed.

I am a quantum,
waving as I go.

I bring enlightenment,
the enemy of darkness.

I’m measured all the time
and not found wanting,

Even Albert Einstein pursued me
but a step or two too slow.

Catch me if you can.

No Refunds

James Simpson, Missouri

The concrete walls look sturdy,
exactly like the model in the manual.
Non-perishables stacked, not quite
appetizing. Who would I even share with?
Even if —

What’s that? A rumble?

They said the siren would pierce the sky,
four horsemen leading. Time is burning,
minutes are ashing away.
My left foot ceases to tap.

Tap. tap. tick.

The clock, their mockery,
we’ll see who gets the last laugh —
I know I just felt the ground quiver.

Lightening will crack, sun
will roar, the Pacific shall pacify all.
Here it comes. I feel it. The beckoning hour
. . . tick . . . tick . . .
12/22/2012 —

My overhead light isn’t swinging, dust does not
fall. How, how can this be?
Nothingness from madness,
we were sure of it.
Curse these cans, where is the receipt?

Who Knows Better?

J. Alvin Speers, Alberta, Canada

A chap was criticizing our Maker,
Citing perceived incongruities of nature.
The pumpkin grows to great proportions
from vine of relative feeble stature.

On other hand, small walnuts grow
On large trees with branches stout and strong.
In opinion of this observing fellow
The design in these examples was wrong.

Pondering question he was raising,
The chap walked under walnut tree
When a nut fell, hitting him on head.
The smart from the blow made him flee.

This made him carefully reconsider:
What if that had been a large pumpkin?
He would no longer question God’s design,
Feeling he had acted like ignorant bumpkin.

“What Choices!”
Classey Y. Nehrke, Illinois

What choices do I have for breakfast? I asked myself today. My first choice was a nice Mars Bar, But what would Mother say?	It would not have been my first choice, But it sure would please my Mutter.
My second choice was Crunchy Nuggets, With raisins and a banana. It would not have been my first choice, But I knew it would please my Mama.	What choices do I have for dinner? I asked myself tonight. My first choice was a Chocolate Delight; But it would give my mother a fright.
What choices do I have for a tasty lunch? I asked my self today. My first choice was a Nestle’s Crunch, But what would Mother say?	My second choice was potatoes and ham, And, of course, a vegetable dish. It would not have been my first choice, But it gave my mother her wish.
My second choice was a slice of bread, With jelly and peanut butter.	When dinner was over and the table cleared, My mother gave me a great big smile. She said I could have my candy bar, For being such a sweet wise child.

Cold, Wet, and Temporary
Carly Gove, New Jersey

Snowflakes
So beautiful, so delicate.
Temporary.
They’ll all melt, someday.
Nothing can stop it.
But they’re pretty in the meantime
Let’s just enjoy them now, okay?
Don’t argue.
Just forget about the future
We’ll love them now.
And forget they’re doomed.
Our cold, wet, and temporary friends.

Please Do Write in Your Books
Charles Parnell, Pennsylvania

When I was young and went to school
The nuns would always say,
“Children, please don’t write in your books —
That’s your lesson for today!”

But now I’m grown and done with school
And I buy my books at stores.
And I scrawl and highlight many a page
In these books that my ego adores.

And later, when I reread the pages,
My eyes are drawn to my scrawls.
And then I remember what I earlier thought
Of the pages that my mind recalls.

So please *do* write in your books and revisit them
And keep them near at hand.
Those marks in the margins will always delight you
As the hourglass drops its sand.

Handmade
Joyce I. Johnson, Washington State

This precious heirloom from my grandma
is more than a little bit worn.
Sewn with infinitely tiny stitches,
it was much used before I was born.

She was just twenty-three when she sewed it,
her beloved was fighting a war.
Made — I would guess for her hope chest,
dated eighteen hundred sixty-four.

She had added her maiden initials,
so we know she was not married as yet.
I wish she had told me her story,
but my grandma and I never met.

It was passed down to me from a cousin
who had used it to cover her bed
without giving a thought that our grandma
had made it before she was wed.

I’ve handed it down to my daughter
who now gives it meticulous care.
This coverlet has long outlived its designer
but is elegant proof she was here.

Mood in Winter*William Beyer, Illinois*

From a high window
 I observe
 Sky,
 Increasingly dark,
 Cloudless,
 Extended,
 Leafless,
 Frozen fingers
 Of maple trees,
 The wide garden
 Below
 Is empty,
 Waiting
 For the first
 Small disc
 of snow.

Locked Away*Lisa M Drago, Virginia*

Stone-paved cloister
 Sackcloth-draped forms
 Women in love

 Light, slow footsteps
 Long, lit tapers
 Jesus, our Spouse

 All hidden, save
 Pure hands, faces
 Hearts keep vigil

 Moonlight filters
 Through white curtains
 Breathless, I stare

 Crisp autumn air
 Hovers above
 Woolen blankets

 I can't quite remember
 But I know
 This was centuries ago

Dreaming Music*Mark J. Mitchell, California*

Not hearing it
 But massaged by

 Vibrations. You
 Don't notice quavers,

 Time signatures.
 Instruments elude

 The sleeping sense.
 But one melody

 Rises lightly
 On another

 Until the fugue
 Completes itself

 On two whole notes,
 Granting rest.

Snow Leaf*Gerald A. McBreen, Washington State*

A northerner sighed a snow leaf
 a petite glimmer reflected in moon luster
 the first of that star-freckled night

 Twirling feather-like
 she settled on the rusty seat
 of an old discarded tricycle

 From there she beckoned
 snow-brides in waiting

 until the sky was full
 of their free-flowing flight

 swirling the wonder
 of winter delights

It's Too Early, Go Back to Sleep*Brian C. Felder, Delaware*

Our house is shrouded in fog today,
 warm spring-like air having come upon
 the still winter-cold earth around us.
 It is, alas, a tease,
 for this is early February
 and there will be more snow to shovel
 before we ever spade the ground for flowers.
 All the same, it's a sign
 — like the lengthening days —
 that the land is beginning to wake,
 this fog but the blanket that is pulled tight
 just before dawn intrudes and breaks the night.

A Collection of Poems: A Poet Dreams*Eve Jeannette Blohm, New York*

I

In evening dream,
 City lights glisten
 Like an evening star
 Twinkling overhead
 Asking for a dream
 Asking for a wish
 Asking for laughter
 To enter our hearts

II

Nature is an artist
 Painting in monotone
 Colors of gray, blue or brown
 Or a pastel kaleidoscope
 Or impressionist work
 Nature is never dull
 Always changes with
 Each passing day

III

Daffodils fill fields
 With color
 The spring countryside
 becomes yellow

IV

A candle flame
 And a forsythia bush
 Bring us the gift of hope
 In the midst of winter
 After the celebrations.

When the Electricity Goes Out

Julie Stuckey, New York

Sudden dark night forces change in routine,
a total plunge into blackness.

Here is where old demons dwell —
brought to life in quiet candlelight.

Careful to quell fears, we avoid noticing
their insistent rustlings
as we scurry away from the void . . .

Never having dwelt in lengthy darkness,
urgent lessons are ignored
and we cry in surprise
to find the edge of the abyss . . .

Yet it is here we begin to sense dim shapes —
blurred forms emerging out of blackness —
night vision evolving from blindness . . .
a newly-awakened discernment of light.

A Villain for Good

Angelo A. Grenci, Jr., New Jersey

The chasm exists
on the thinnest line,
takes residence between.

Pitted forces vie, seeking prominence —
and then skew the mean.

The ebb and flow of energy surges —
Providence? — recompense, per diem.

Without both sides,
the center'd not exist.

Then what should we seek?

The hour looms,
I revisit that line . . .

Power's restored to me.
The re-creation emerged,
a change of tides —
reality born from dream.

A new line drawn
upon a throne of words I'll reside;
an impossibility without my misdeeds.
written within the chasm,
the Messianic vision,
the good-villain shall succeed.

What Makes a Life

Stephen C. Phillips, Massachusetts

The sweetest song is often just a voice,
The grandest sight — a face,
That which makes your day — a touch,
Or lingers weeks — a fond embrace,
The greatest gift can be a kiss,
And what makes a life — the memories of all this.

Creating a Mosaic

Katherine Givens, New Jersey

Talents, hopes, and dreams
were once reduced
to broken shards.

The fragments lay
on the ground,
left to return to dust.

As days turned into months
and months turned into years,
the negligent mind
forgot the shards.

Then an act
of serendipity revived
the slumbering conscience.

The shards were gathered.
The talents, hopes, and dreams
were revived in the form
of a mosaic.

“Let’s Roll, Let’s Roll”

Vincent J. Tomeo, New York

Take down Flight 93
Save the White House
Keep it free

Let’s roll
Let’s roll

America
Land of The Free
Home of The Brave

Proven on Flight 93

Drama in Three Scenes

Annette St. Germain, Québec, Canada

Scene I:
The world’s shut down
In disarray.

The poet’s gone,
Truth’s locked away.

Scene II:
The men of God
are in a cell.

The world’s a stage.

Scene III:
Hell.

The Depression Key

Caryl Calsyn, Texas

Start with a small step, this may be as elemental as getting out of bed. You decide what the step should be and when you do it — congratulate yourself . . .

you've just picked up the key.

Then smile, even if it's phony. This is called— "Fake it until you make it." The simple act of turning up the corners of your mouth can give an uplifting message to your mind and body . . .

you've put the key in the lock.

Write an affirmation. Something like, "I deserve to be happy." You choose the phrase, but it must be positive. Write it over and over, day after day . . .

you've begun to turn the key.

Call someone — a friend, a pastor, a counselor. Share your feelings, worries, fears and tears. If either of you is uncomfortable, then call someone else . . .

you've bravely kept turning the key.

Change your self-talk. Repeating, "I am depressed" buries it deeper. Instead tell yourself that you are a capable, amazing person and can do whatever it is you need to do . . .

you've used your key to unlock the door.

Open wide the door — let in the light and know this truth—"He will make His face to shine upon you and give you peace."

Repeat any or all of these steps as needed. Then say two prayers and call God in the morning — or any time — day or night.

CORRECTION From Fall 2012 issue



OPINION a journal of thought

Stimulating essays and poetry, published quarterly free of charge.

Dr. James E. Kurtz, Editor

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Coffee-Ground Breakfast

(New Northwoods Journal)

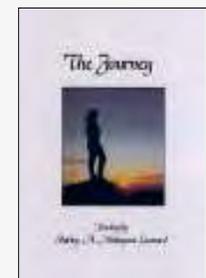
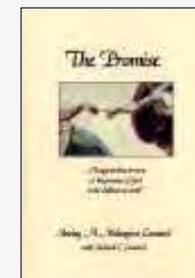
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Cory Meyer, Editor

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Shirley Anne Leonard, WestWard Quarterly's Editor, has published five poetry chapbooks. **The Compass** (revised 2011) meditates on the voyage through the seas of doctrinal dispute into the secure port of God's Kingdom. **The Promise** (revised 2011) celebrates God's historic work to bring about the restoration of His creation. **The Journey** (revised 2011) includes poems about the perils and joys of the journey from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of Light. **Creation's Song** (not shown below) brings together poems celebrating the beauty God has created in nature for our enjoyment. **Remembering Eden** (not shown below) is a collection of poems honoring Christ and recounting God's plan for the restoration of all things.



The Compass (52 pages) *The Promise* (52 pages) *The Journey* (38 pages)

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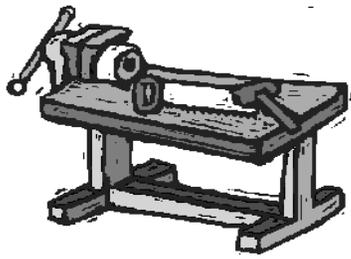
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Writer's Workbench

“The Pen Is Mightier than the Sword”



This quotation has been used in many cultures throughout the centuries, to make the point that words have power. No one knows exactly where it originated, but the Assyrian sage Ahiqar, who reputedly lived during the early seventh century BC, is said to have coined the first known version of this phrase.

The Bible, in the Letter to the Hebrews, states that “the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword . . .”

Thomas Jefferson in, 1792, ended a letter to Thomas Paine with this: “Go on then in doing with your pen what in other times was done with the sword: shew that reformation is more practicable by operating on the mind than on the body of man.”

So writers, poets — you have a mighty weapon in your hand. Be careful how you use it! Or should I say, take great care to use it effectively to carve out an idea or inspiration that will benefit your readers.

Writers though the ages have used their words in books or poems that changed the world. Some of the books we may be acquainted with are:

- The Bible, the most translated and the most frequently purchased book in the world, shows that we have been created for a purpose and that there is a natural law governing all life.
- *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* have taken hold of readers for hundreds of years and continue to play an important part of modern culture.
- *The Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine, 1791, states that the government’s role is to protect the rights of its citizens, and that when the government cannot do so it should be overthrown.
- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, 1843, illustrates the joy of giving rather than taking.
- *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriett Beecher Stowe, 1852, changed the nation’s views of slavery.
- *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, 1854, chronicles the author’s two years of reflecting on life in an isolated cabin on Walden Pond. It has become a source of inspiration for those seeking a simpler, more self-sufficient life and a better understanding of society.
- *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy was published in Russia in 1869. The realistic details of this novel and the depth of psychological exploration have contributed to this book’s frequently being included as one of the best novels of all time.
- *The Meaning of Relativity* by Albert Einstein, 1923, changed the nature of scientific discussion and ushered in the age of quantum physics.
- *1984* by George Orwell, 1949, describes life in a totalitarian regime that has stripped the people of their rights. The themes in this novel have become a major part of modern culture, as have terms such as “big brother” and “doublespeak.”

The list could go on and on.

And in poetry we have an even greater responsibility because we can shape someone’s thinking with just one poem. As a young girl I read poems that touched me to such a degree that I can still recite them today. These are some of them:

- “In School-Days” by John Greenleaf Whittier, about a little girl who was sorry she won a spelling contest over a boy she liked.

I ’m sorry that I spelt the word:

I hate to go above you,

Because,” — the brown eyes lower fell, —

“Because, you see, I love you!”

- “Compensation” by Sara Teasdale:
*I should be glad of loneliness,
And hours that go on broken wings,
A thirsty body, a tired heart,
And the unchanging ache of things,
If I could make a single song,
As lovely and as full of light,
As hushed and brief as a falling star
On a winter night.*
- “The Man with a Hoe” by Charles Markham:
*The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back, the burden of the world.*
- “Crystal Moment” by Robert Tristram Coffin:
*Once or twice this side of death
Things can make one hold his breath.*
- “In the Bleak Midwinter” by Christina Rossetti:
*In the bleak midwinter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron
Water like a stone . . .
In the bleak midwinter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.*

Certainly the times we are living in are growing more and more challenging. It’s time for writers and poets to seize their swords (pens) and become a force to make the world a better place. There are many themes and formats to explore to accomplish this.

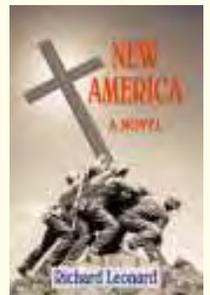
Poems of inspiration and vision come in many ways through life experiences and insights. As we say in our slogan for the magazine, “Adversity happens. Find the eternal purpose behind it.” Poets through the ages have shown their concern for the advancement of truth, beauty, courage, justice, love, a responsible society, and virtue.

Happy Writing — THE EDITOR

NEW AMERICA: A NOVEL by Richard Leonard

“If you save someone’s life, they belong to you forever.”

Russia might want its territory back. Should New America, the fledgling Christian nation on Siberia’s east coast, pursue a defense treaty with its decadent mother country? Sent to the United States on a fundraising mission for a New American presidential candidate, a young lawyer confronts a dilemma. A woman whose life as an abortion survivor is endangered by the Fugitive Fetus Law appeals for his help. There’s only one way he can rescue her, and that way will jeopardize his relationship with his New American girlfriend. Advance through time to the closing decades of the twenty-first century for a story of adventure and intrigue offering food for thought for today.



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