

Journal 2014



The Society of
CLASSICAL POETS

Journal 2014

Society of Classical Poets

Copyright © 2014 by Evan Mantyk

Cover Art: “Dislodged,” oil painting, by Yuan Li

Description: Countless many of China’s Falun Gong, such as the young woman depicted here, have been rendered homeless and destitute as a result of relentless persecution by communist authorities. (Courtesy of Falunart.org)

Layout Editor: Diana Hubert

Inquiries and Membership: submissions@classicalpoets.org

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
I. Bruce Dale Wise	5
II. Evan Mantyk	12
III. Damian Robin	19
IV. Reid McGrath	36
V. Betsy M. Hughes	43
VI. Michael Curtis	47
VII. Gloria Li	54
VIII. Jim Dunlap	57
IX. Khalid Mukhtar	62
X. Bronwen Hudson	69
XI. Rama Devi	72
XII. Alan Nordstrom	75
XIII. Don Shook	78
XIV. Michael Rovner	82
XV. Andrew Gelinas	86
XVI. Robert Woods	90
Essayist Poets	
I. Leland James	96
II. Douglas Thornton	101
III. Clinton Van Inman	108
IV. Ben Grinberg	111

Introduction

We first formed The Society of Classical Poets in 2012, setting out to create and publish poetry that cherishes those traditions left to us by millennia of poets, such as meter, rhyme, and alliteration, and traditional forms such as the sonnet, villanelle, and haiku. We have succeeded in doing that. The result is probably the best collection of new English poetry being produced in the world today.

Yet, we are only beginning. Our poets and staff are not being paid and the overall state of poetry itself continues to be one of thinly veiled putrescence. The result of which is that poets continue insisting on creating free verse that is mostly vacuous and unappealing to the human race at large; meanwhile, people have lost almost any use for poetry outside of the classroom and have grown a general antipathy for any literary works that are not fed to them in the crudest and shallowest of packages.

There are other classical or formal poetry venues, both those that came before the Society and new ones, that are emerging as the world aches for a cultural awakening. Their guiding principles are similar to those of the Society, as described above: cherishing those traditions and traditional forms left to us by millennia of poets. Yet, there is a crucial component to good poetry that many of these venues are missing and that holds them back: a good and clear theme.

It is not enough to merely mimic those good traditions from the past externally and then jam them full of the moldy meat of modernism and post-modernism; the change must come internally as well. Classical poetry, at its best, is about building character and cherishing

Society of Classical Poets

virtue. The traditions and traditional forms are meaningless without a good and clear theme.

For example, if we turn back the pages of time, we can find that some of the greatest poetry in the English language may have lacked what we now consider classical form but contained a good and clear theme. Easily one of the greatest English poems is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* from the 14th century. The poem does not have formal lines with meter but it does have exquisite themes of moral and spiritual purity (as well as deft use of alliteration). Similarly, translations of many great poems from Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai and other great Chinese poets have a standard number of characters in their original language, but in translation usually have lines with no formal organization. The translations without any poetical form are no less great than great classical English poetry. Why? It is because of the great meaning, or theme, that is behind the translated poetry.

The Society usually rejects submitted poetry that is not formal in structure (ie. having a regular meter or syllable number per line); but this is not an absolute rule. If a poet has an outstanding theme, but bad form, then exceptions can be made. Simply put, good theme and good form generally occur together, but not always. Theme trumps form.

It is somewhat common for poets to submit formal poetry to the Society that seems to have no interest in the improvement of character or the cherishing of virtue. Such poetry often relishes darkness, cynicism, crudeness, and shallowness. This formal poetry, which may be skillfully metered and rhyming, is actually no better than what is typically produced in a free verse poem.

Poets who truly want to create great poetry should pay attention to creating poetry that is refined in both

body (form) and soul (theme). When it is refined in both body and soul, it is the most beautiful, accessible, and useful to our fellow man. Just read this journal and experience it for yourself!

Finally, looking at the exquisite cover illustration (there is a description of it on the page preceding the table of contents) and reading through this journal one will find a number of pieces dealing with the evil deeds of the Chinese Communist Party, particularly its persecution of Falun Gong, the peaceful and ancient meditation practice that spread widely in China in the 1990s only to be outlawed in 1999. One of the major roles of poetry is to discuss the biggest issues of the day and this one is the most significant.

While America and the West in general conduct free trade with China, which is the world's largest nation and number two economy (filling our shelves with "Made in China" products), the communist regime that benefits from this trade, or directly owns the companies involved, is systematically arresting, torturing, and killing spiritual believers of high moral fiber. They have even slaughtered Falun Gong practitioners and sold their organs on demand! Meanwhile, modern travel, technology, immigration, and trade have shrunk the modern world to the extent that China is no longer a distant relative in another state who we can claim no knowledge of; China is our housemate and business partner. We are just as responsible for the Falun Gong practitioner tortured to death as we are for the African American lynched in the South and the Jewish person killed in the Holocaust.

Falun Gong is representative of the vast segments of humanity oppressed in our "trading partner" China: from Democracy advocates, human rights lawyers, and free-thinking bloggers, to Tibetans, Catholics, and Uighurs.

Society of Classical Poets

Standing at the foothills of a looming new century and millennium, we must take an active and visionary role by speaking up!

Thus, we have much work to do. The only factors limiting us now are resources such as manpower and capital. If you are interested in donating your time to write for or promote the Society, or if you are interested in donating money to the Society please contact me at submissions@classicalpoets.org.

Evan Mantyk, March 2014

Bruce Dale Wise



Bruce Dale Wise is a poet living in Washington State. He often writes in anagrammatic pseudonyms, as you will see. He is winner of First Place in The Society of Classical Poets' 2014 Poetry Competition.

One Has To

One has to keep on striving even when
no one believes in what one is doing,
nobody cares what one has achieved—then!
One must go on scheming and construing.
One has to keep striving all the time,
when one's spirit flags, when one's doubt rises,
when one seems so distant from the sublime,
even in the midst of one more crisis.
One has to keep on striving when even
the whole world disregards all that one does,
including passing away and leaving.
At just one moment before what one was,
as long as there's one second of living
left to do, one has to keep on striving.

A Herder Near the Sea

By Uwe Carl Diebes

A dream, a dream, is our life on the Earth here.
Like whitecaps in the surf, we lift our eyes and peer.
Like shadows on the waves, we drift and disappear.

We measure out our dragging steps by space and time,
and are (although we know it not) in the sublime,
as round us rolls eternity's amazing mime.

Journal 2014

Late Summer Tweet: 2013

By Li "Webcrease" Du

Poet Fu Ying,
of Liaoning,
labeled wrong
for practicing
Falun Gong,
was arrested
in Shenyang,
molested
again
for daring
to believe in
Zhen-Shan-Ren.

Note: Zhen-Shan-Ren can be translated from Chinese as "Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance." These are the three main principles of Falun Gong.

To a Fellow Traveler

By Wu "Sacred Bee" Li

I came upon the Shrine of Incense Stored,
below that gorgeous valley's tow'ring peaks,
along the hidden tracks of men, and poured
my spirit to that beauty each soul seeks.
Deep in that ancient wood I heard a bell
and woke to find a waterfall's harsh voice
there in the mountains—oh, I cannot tell.
I was not sad, but I did not rejoice.

Society of Classical Poets

I saw some larches line a lake's round rim
and sunlight sparkles on the surface shake.
I knew that only meditation's dream
could tame the deadly dragon in that lake,
who stirred beneath its surface, wan and gray,
as if to say, "You now are on the Way."

Haiku

By "Wired Clues" Abe

As I drive my car,
an eagle flies overhead.
How far have I come?

A man's eyes tear up.
He is eating hamburgers
with sliced white onions.

A robin pauses
atop a neighbor's link fence,
a moment's respite.

Mount Saint Helens was,
in my youth, as perfect as
Mount Fuji now is.

The Queen of Night *Aria*

By Ewald E. Eisbruc

The aria of Mozart's *Magic Flute* Queen
of Night is beautiful; but horrifying too.

Journal 2014

She sings of hell, revenge, death and despair. The fiend,
then launches into bloodcurdling, bird-call abuse.
But hear, hear, hear. The music is so beautiful
it carries one away with its high-flying view
of th' human voice. How can a shrieking be that full—
a mother's curse and filled with so much loveliness?
It seems unreal, unfathomable, crude but cool,
a powerful arpeggio of vile vengeance,
as if all bonds of nature had been broken free
forever and were left in utter emptiness.

The Ring

By Basil Drew Eceu

"My precious." —Gollum, *The Hobbit*, J. R. R. Tolkien

I only knew but one tall dude who had a ring
with magic powers. He had one large, silver ring.
Although still visible when he put on his ring,
it gave him strength. I know, because he used the ring
on me. I was at peace, not thinking of a ring,
when he burst in all tough and macho with his ring.
He pushed me down and shoved me flat with his round
ring,
and slammed me hard again, again! with that damn ring.
I fought. It hurt. Oh, then my ears began to ring.
But he continued on—two fighters in a ring.
It left a scar. I would not soon forget that ring,
oh, even now some decades past, remembering.

Nobody in Particular

I wonder if I'll ever see
a banished piece of Poetry
of mine in print. I hope and pray
and squint; but yet, I have to say,
that I may not live long enough.
The Frogs are ugly, stark and gruff.
The Bog is ominously steep.
To step inside one has to creep.
The Scum upon the pond, like gauze,
does cover all with Ooze and Oz.
It's filled with so much Muck and Sludge,
the wonder is one dares to trudge.
Perhaps someday, when I decay,
my Corpse will see the Light of Day;
but till that time, I wonder still
if I will seep into the Swill.

Hernán Cortés

By Edwe Bleca Ruís

Hernán Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico
and founder of the colony New Spain, was born
in Medellín, Estremadura, long ago,
like 1485. He left law and his home
in order to become a colonist abroad.
He served Diego Velásquez in uniform
to conquer Cuba. Later on, he was ordered
to lead an expedition to the Yucatán,
investigating rumoured, rich discoveries.

He gained Tobasco, founded Veracruz, and planned,
and executed daringly, though not alone,
the conquest of the Aztecs and Tenochtitlán.

A Vision at the Portal of Elysium

By Ed "Bear" C. U. Lewis

I saw him standing at the gate of heaven. It
was in a dream, but seemed so real I was in awe.
Behind him in my vision all was white and lit.
Dear reader, though hard to believe, I truly saw
this most magnificent of men. He was all shine
and smiling, like he was inviting me to draw
close, come. His costume draped upon his body fine.
He was so beautiful he blazed from head to toe.
He seemed so good, o, dark of skin, but pure, divine.
I wondered what it was that made his body glow.
I longed to enter in that lovely infinite.
I wanted so to join him there in all that glow.

Evan Mantyk



Evan Mantyk is President of The Society of Classical Poets. He is a poet, writer, and English teacher in the Catskills region of New York, where he lives with his wife and two children. He previously edited and wrote for The Epoch Times and maintains a blog with the international newspaper.

Journal 2014

Teachers

I.

The greatest writers are the teachers;
The paper is their pupil;
Each sheet defiantly stretches
With a stark blank, diffused will.

But, the teacher writes a story
To fill minds, however plain,
Crafting a rich tale of glory,
Inspiring from the mundane.

So their wills are all together
Unified in a story arc,
Pleasing and sturdy bound leather,
The future craftsman's bench mark.

II.

The greatest writers are the teachers,
Humbly yielding to blank page,
Quietly in the void searches
For future artist or sage.

Seeking the predestined story
That is waiting to be told,
Focusing what now seems blurry,
Sifting the mud from the gold.

Their students are the great heroes
In the future's giant plot;

Society of Classical Poets

Letting go of their large egos,
Teachers know what they are not.

III.

The greatest writers are the teachers,
They, themselves, are each a book;
The students are the apt readers,
At each word they take a look.

The teachers' thoughts, views, and morals
Are the underlying theme;
How they maneuver life's pitfalls,
What they deem a lofty dream.

If their tale is moving, captures
Their students' imagination,
Then the final scene is rapture
And helps guide future nations.

Haiku

The Persecution of Falun Gong

Meditating group,
One clear crisp day at Shanghai
In earth's sunny loop.

What is Zhen-Shan-Ren?
Truth-Compassion-Forbearance,
Refiner of men.

Journal 2014

Police arrive there,
Frosted breath flies from warped mouths,
Evil spirits flare.

The days, weeks, and months
Spent making dolls for export
With smiles on their mouths.

Torture in damp dark,
Floods of blood and brainwashing,
He floats on faith's ark.

Communist thinking,
Godless junk and filth piled high
Leaves morals sinking.

He floats to a shore
Where the soft sands of heaven
Disrupt his sweet snore.

Awake half-dead now,
Joyous that earth's red demon
Didn't make him kowtow.

The majestic sun
Behind a wall of gray smog
On a day soon done.

A Catskill Mountains Trek

Trees infused with mist
Enchant those just awakened
Before their breakfast.

Society of Classical Poets

A new mountain trail
On soft leaves of late autumn
Seems destined to fail.

The deer hunter's tent
I thought I saw was a rock
Without an intent

From the mountain's peak,
Two pagodas stand like Gods
Who we humbly seek.

At Heaven I peek—
A feeling, a subtle glow,
A name I can't speak.

Virtue's lofty peak
Amidst unknown wilderness
That seems un-unique.

Descending the cliff,
A sheer drop to the bottom
Scares me tired and stiff.

Debris crumbles off
As I look for a new way
And try not to scoff.

The narrow path leads
Down to a long shining lake
That reflects our deeds.

A Psalm of Christmas

What the heart of the young activist said to the psalmist

After Henry Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life"

Tell me not in boring numbers
About today's economy,
For our consciences grow numb-er
And become our own enemy.

Money's not real! It's an ideal!
It's a value agreed to give;
It's a home, clothes, and a meal
It's a means, not an end, to live!

Not an end after won elections
Not an end after more degrees!
But to awaken populations!
And find something greater to be!

Money is built on more ideas
Like on what it means to live well;
Does it involve clean air and trees?
Or does it make someone's life hell?

Do we care that our Christmas lights
Are made by prisoners of faith,
Tortured and deprived of the rights
We value, or so we sayeth?

What about discrimination
That occurs outside our borders

Society of Classical Poets

In a trading “partner” nation
From which our shelves are mail ordered?

The Falun Gong practitioner
Is the world’s silent elephant
Crucified with modern horror
That we all knowingly permit.

We can’t not buy “Made in China”
But we can speak loud our brave minds
And let ring a meaningful change
That makes our lives a bit sublime.

Let us then speak out loud and strong
With words of both truth and cheer:
“Merry Christmas, free Falun Gong,
And have a prosperous New Year!”

Watching Shen Yun Performing Arts

How they fly now through the air
With such poise and splendid flair
With a grace and force unique
As if fueled by pure mystique!
What’s the tale that they unfold
Costumed bright and bravely bold
Backdrops grand of landscapes vast
From what milieu was this cast?

When I leave the brilliant show,
I can feel a soft light glows,

Journal 2014

Lifts my feet each step I go,
Carries me upon its flow.
What lifts them up lifts me now;
Art is real, I don't know how.

Portrait of a God

God of men who's dressed in white,
Beard on face of long brown hair,
Halo pattern traced in light,
Nimbus flowing through the air.

Glowing skin with mercy shines,
Ancient toga wraps His frame,
Fabric rich and much more fine,
Than what mortals give a name.

Eyes of keenest vision sit;
Each a crystal ball that holds
Any deed that we commit,
Whether it be base or bold.

Hands and arms that move in sync,
Like the Milky Way they flow,
Steering hidden wheels that link
Weather, wellness, wars, and woe.

Giant scroll in hand, He swoops,
Down to where His people are,
Like a king to battling troops
Speaking hope in lands afar.

Society of Classical Poets

Words on whispers wafting through
Some can hear but others can't
"Just the wind, it's nothing new."
(Blindly grope an elephant.)

Others hear the words resound
Holy message from the past
Shaping future, so profound:
"Virtue, virtue, to the last!"

Portrait of a Goddess

Goddess sleek and draped in white,
Flowing wisps of long brown hair,
Halo hat of holy light,
Cherubs floating everywhere.

Beads around her long thin neck,
Each a world for which she cares,
Gazing down at each small speck,
Seeing each one's special flare.

Arm extends and points the way,
She is leading quite a crew,
Rushing fast without delay,
They are building something new.

Angels come alert, aloft,
Some that soar are seraphim,
Wings of six, they whirl and waft,
Waiting Her most worthy whim.

Journal 2014

Planting pillars rising high,
There the splendid arches meet,
Ceiling opens up to sky,
Birds with banners softly tweet.

Flowers fill the flying hands,
Each is put in proper place,
Sweet aroma's fill the land,
Bridging heaven's time and space.

Enlightened guests gladly go,
To the place that she prepares
Brilliant banners let them know:
Someone out there truly cares!

30 Riddles

Have a try, who am I?

I.

My mirror image is never that far,
I have five different points like a star,
While I have no mouth that I can employ,
I do make a loud sound when filled with joy.

II.

I'm an acrobat and a chatty chap,
I travel with friends but I need no map,
I feed my children the milk of the sea,
And in France, I'm considered royalty.

Society of Classical Poets

III.

Father of a large noted family,
I made ends meet by fixing people's keys;
A local man of esteem when alive,
Eighty years after my death I arrived.

IV.

I am so very dark and moist inside,
My round structure may crumble on all sides,
Yet people love to visit every day,
And they often take a drink on the way.

V.

The most powerful thing that can be worn,
Yet I require little strength to be borne,
My rarity has increased up to now,
In England, I still make some people bow.

VI.

I'm among the world's most unwelcome guests,
I crash whichever party I like least,
And am known as an dirty reveler,
Though, I am a beautiful traveler.

VII.

With a saint for a ride, I almost failed,
Not so sure about the shape of the trail,
But I pressed on as the road ahead curled,
Surprised to find what seemed like a new world.

Journal 2014

VIII.

Like a rainbow I'm gone in a short time,
And my bow shape leaves only a moist slime,
But unlike a rainbow, less of a blur,
And, at least outside, only one color.

IX.

Turn me upside down and I'm right side up,
Empty my glass and you fill up my cup,
I'm always on time and I'm never late,
I never go backwards at any rate.

X.

A loud sound of joy comes out of my mouth
Or a loud sound that could cause someone's
 death,
Or a loud sound that could start a contest,
Or a loud sound that lays someone to rest.

XI.

I am the most expensive fruit on earth,
Though from a plant I did not come forth,
I traveled a long way from the Far East,
One on your desk is enough for a feast.

XII.

A composer of the English Baroque,
Although it was German that I first spoke

Society of Classical Poets

And I wrote operas for Italian,
Of language and fireworks, I was a fan.

XIII.

Sink this ship last or the war is for naught,
All other enemies should be first caught,
This one's the evilest looking of them,
Shaped like infinity is its emblem.

XIV.

Fifty years after my country's grand birth,
To the very day when its stars came forth,
And the same day the third president died,
Would you believe I also died? No lie.

XV.

I started a great war in ancient Greece,
And since then my great fame has never ceased,
A body part, drink, company, and tree,
All get their names just from little old me.

XVI.

I was found in a lake, but stuck in stone,
So mighty that others I have outshone,
Helping to create a future country,
A timeless symbol or just a story?

Journal 2014

XVII.

How come an insect enlarged would not fly
Yet saints from East and West rise in the sky?
Why does an apple fall down from a tree?
It is because of me, not gravity.

XVIII.

They call me the sun, for my great kingdom
Has something better than plebeian freedom
It has a planet-like path bound to me
And the epic vision for France I see.

XIX.

My face is on a U.S. bill you've spent,
But I am not a U.S. president,
My skin is fairer than most that you've seen,
I got a bad burn in 1814.

XX.

I am a fruit and I'm also a bird,
And a people's name, does that seem absurd?
At least all three me's are from the same place,
A big island you can pick out from space.

XXI.

I am the master of the four seasons,
I can turn the summer storm off or on,
Deftly pulling strings and blowing the winds,
Such power, three hundred years couldn't rescind.

Society of Classical Poets

XXII.

My favorite is a hot summer's day,
When you take a break, I go on display,
Just don't look close at my dark ugly spots,
If you wait too long I might start to rot.

XXIII.

Did I go blind from seeing Heaven's light?
Did I glimpse paradise and lost my sight?
When I wrote it all down in human verse,
Was I in human suffering immersed?

XXIV.

An auspicious gift or a deadly plot?
If you were standing there, right on the spot,
Would you sense the fall of a great city?
I gallop over sin, without pity.

XXV.

I am a net for catching intruders,
A weapon for a cold blooded murder
An elegant plate for eating supper
And a mode of transport that is super.

XXVI.

A Columbia University drop out,
I had British troops to think about;
I'm the founder of the U.S. coastguard
And the nation's first financial steward.

Journal 2014

XXVII.

Right, left, up, down, backwards, and upside
down,
There's no direction that I have not flown,
Don't expect my two legs to fly in war
The sweet life is what I am living for.

XXVIII.

Some claim that I'm nothing more than a dream
Fiction more powerful than any cream,
In fact, age is first a state of the mind,
Just ask Ponce de Leon what he did find.

XXIX.

An Italian who made the flat world round,
I made a meal that today still astounds,
And is subject of countless replicas,
But contains no spices from America.

XXX.

I used to fly poorly, but now I swim,
Sometimes I would cross the road on a whim,
I'm medicine for the sick, stuck in bed,
Even though I, myself, float around dead.

ANSWER KEY: I. Hand II. Dolphin III. Bach IV. Chocolate Chip
Cookie (Chocolate Cookie also acceptable) V. Royal Crown VI.
Meteor (or Comet) VII. Christopher Columbus VIII. Banana IX.
Hourglass X. Gun XI. Apple Computer XII. Handel XIII. Eight Ball

Society of Classical Poets

XIV. John Adams XV. Apple XVI. Excalibur XVII. A Molecule
XVIII. The Sun King or Louis XIV XIX. The White House XX.
Kiwi XXI. Vivaldi XXII. Watermelon XXIII. John Milton XXIV.
The Trojan Horse XXV. A spider web XXVI. Alexander Hamilton
XXVII. A Hummingbird XXVIII. Fountain of Youth XIX.
Leonardo Da Vinci XXX. The Chicken in Chicken Noodle Soup

A Godly Painting

On “Cimabue’s Celebrated Madonna is carried in Procession
through the Streets of Florence” By Sir Frederic Leighton

A godly painting held over their heads
As they process through a street in Florence,
Each face is free from manic glee or dread
And transcends with a tranquil tolerance;
They are transformed by the art’s deep meaning,
The ideals that they uphold in their lives
Of what is proper and what is demeaning;
Are those mere humans or Gods who walk by?

The cloud’s shape mimics the foreground’s alignment,
Forming a passageway from ground to sky
That leads out of our human confinement
Beyond a life bound to be sick and die.

But, none truly traveled it, none were Gods,
It is we who must this new way now plod.

Damian Robin



Damian Robin is poet living in England. He works for an international newspaper and a bilingual magazine. He lives with his wife and three children. He is winner of Second Place in 'The Society of Classical Poets' 2014 Poetry Competition.

A Message from China in the Halloween Decorations

(Based on a True Story)

Compressed and clandestine, the Chinese script small,
The paper slip's flimsy "Will it get out at all?"

He's hidden it under a base plastic tray
In Halloween décor, some Westerners display.

Will anyone find it and what will they say?
"It's a hoax, a bad joke, go throw it away."

He's scared of these thoughts as they ice up his head,
"Will a guard find the pen?" still packs him with dread.

He's locked to a workload he cannot not do,
Keyed to more workers, a forced-work-fed crew,

For when this run's finished a million or ten,
Another one's started, they'll still be worked then.

Exchange

On the Harvesting of Organs from Falun Gong
Practitioners

Journal 2014

They go to
take the heart of you,
mark your skin & cut you through.

With silk knives,
their sharp skill connives
to stroke apart flesh & lives.

In surgic-
al masks, they'll unpick
the atoms gods had made stick

until your
profitable or-
gan is isolated more

& taken
to a precise en-
trance in another human.

From large batched
statistics they've matched
your good part to be detached.

You've been chos-
en: & when thread sews
you shut & again blood flows

through your heart,
your heart will restart
as a stranger's body part

Society of Classical Poets

& where your
heart was will burn/cure
in an incinerator.

Manifesto

Clouds skip away from the full shine of the full moon
The palace is lit up
The maestro lifts his stick
Majesty begins
The richness of kings
at least in human terms

How quick things are
Violins gone from the ballroom
Metal heartstrings crushed at the crowded dance floor bar
A slow-paced miss-matched lovers' tryst
empties a club
A crowd vomits onto the kerb
A moist eye mirrors a fist
There are boot prints on the face of the moon

The perfect is undone
—or perhaps never was—
but culture carries on
answering the question
“why?” with a loose “because.”

So, we can say curtly:
“This age will make a mark.
Let it be light, not dark.

Journal 2014

An artist's calm duty
is to make clear beauty."

Straining to Photograph a Distant Lake and Trees From a Moving Train

The lake cradles symmetries of spring trees.
The sky sries the membrane of wide waters:
unseen breezes, like me, are passers-by
somehow touching the lake, trees, reeds, clouds, sky.
My eyes focus on these without shutters,
curved lenses, flat prisms, mirrored degrees,
or a cam'ra.

Time is ev'rywhere. Chances come and go.
Human measures don't hold change; they're certain
to follow the universe and The Way:
birth, stasis, degeneration, decay:
and the core of Falun Gong: Zhen-Shan-Ren*.
Our image of the cosmos moves so slow
it's like a photo.

The lake acts still. Rests at perceived bound'ries.
A discrete life. Its thoughts float and stir,
share vast heavens, multi-universes,
worlds' peripheries, karmic reverses –
images appearing out of nowhere,
or trays of developing chemistries
in a darkroom.

Society of Classical Poets

My smartphone can't pin down this transience.
Digitalised snaps are surface soap suds,
their skins can't cope with what's seen from the train.
Though other unseen dimensions retain
this spring moment, I strain to see buds.
Yet I know they're there – hiding their essence
like pixels.

Note: Zhen-Shan-Ren can be translated from Chinese as "Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance." These are the three main principles of Falun Gong.

Preparing for Winter and Spring

An English Autumn's Coming

Indoors, a crisp leaf skates on smooth floorboards,
gunned by silent puffs from our gapped doorway –
A fragile scout in advance of damp hoards
soon to glut local pavements and roadsides
with the soaked, soft sprawl of urban decay.

Winter Weight—A Present Hallowe'en

Keep close; after what's fallen has rotted:
the cold—old feelings that dropped forgotten—
the stony dead loss that was put to bed
and warmed a little—begins to rise unbroken

in black and Christmas-caked with crumbed earth
human beings are stitched with fixed grins

Journal 2014

screen-printed to party for all they're worth
not knowing what this mimicking begins

a close. After what's fallen has rotted.
A cold. Good feeling lost, unspoken.
A dead loss. Beaten. Put to bed.
The Soul, bandaged, laughed at, left for dead.

The Last or First Season

A Being Beyond Belief makes a stir,
The Cosmos lit by His Ability.
Multi-sunned choirs inspire the air,
peel earth's walls to take The Light To Be
while Others fall beside eternity.

Reid McGrath



Reid McGrath is a poet living and working in the Hudson Valley. He is winner of Third Place in The Society of Classical Poets' 2014 Poetry Competition.

Metamorphic Rock

Pressure is what the dirt feels when, buried
And dis-tracted, it cannot function right;
When it cannot access the rain and light;
When it, by a hellish heat, is harried.
When it is not prepared, or preparing,
To produce, what it was meant to produce;
When its physical makeup is not loose;
When it's sick and tired of temporizing.
For what it wants is to produce good fruit;
To rise like cream out of that sub-terrain.
But who we are is never absolute;
And via all the pressure and the pain,
Solidified like some rare earth-bound loot,
It settles by becoming rock again.

Juxtaposition

Here is a blonde-marked maple tree:
Stands by the road so stolidly
While mourners make their floral shrines
And in the night a taper shines;
But soon the taper will burn out
And yet the tree will remain stout;
And it will stand for years to come
Spreading its leaves beneath the sun.
And in the Fall will drop them too
And with some Springs its bark renew.

Us mourners, we, will go to bed;
But where can a tree lay its head?

Society of Classical Poets

It does not budge or cringe or cry;
And does not ask the question: Why?
It's just a token that young man
Was done in by his own élan.

Stopping by Courts on a Sunny Morning

One nightcrawler out on this sparkling court,
Dried-up and shriveled, overdone, not red,
Neglected to take heed, or to report
'twas all mirage, to turn around instead.
Followers, these, in the benighted hours,
Had wriggled out to nab a bit of wet,
Who in the sun wilt faster than flowers.
This holocaust is something to regret.

If one was living: I was curious.
I paced the court off with an eagle eye.
The cocky sun was sure, was luminous.
But near the fringe hap'ly did I espy
One writhe (or throe); his pain would I allay.
I threw him in the woods and went away.

Who Needs a Chinese Tractor?

Because he gave up life in town
To graze the old undulant farm

Journal 2014

They called him a provincial clown
Who did not get all up in arms.

They said, rashly, he did not care
About the evil ways of men.
But seeing evil everywhere
He'd made it a point not to sin

(As much as he could); so he went
Back out into the countryside
And all his energy was spent
On living simply with his bride.

Their arms were plowshares, pruning hooks.
(Though there was a gun 'hind the door.)
He saw the Chinese tractor took
The job away from John next-door.

The trinket's cheap, but it's bloody,
Splashed by slaves on gulag lines!
One is voting with one's money:
To buy foul things is to make binds.

His mode of life: 'To hurt no one—
Was bold and brash and hard to do;
And doing it, one could be dumb,
Not preaching, but, practicing too.

The couple commenced to work hard
And be subversive in their way:
To plant potatoes in their yard
And turn the salesman back away.

Society of Classical Poets

Lawns are a friv'lous waste of space.
Land is a resource one can use.
The less one buys the Chinese race
Is that much less hurt and abused.

So every time they went shopping—
Which was a rare occurrence—it
Was a good chance to go voting
With the pennies in their pocket.

Rushing to Get the Hay In

The Farmer's Wife

He may as well be sitting on a piece
Of junk john-boat out on some open lake.
The field is shorn, divested of its fleece;
The hay is tedded and the rusty rake
Is resting now beside the tree-lined wall
Next to the tedder, stilly looking on,
Like two quaint collies waiting for a call;
While there, in wagon, stacking, is my son.

While there, cat-black, looms a portentous cloud,
White-veined with light, or crackled, like a glass;
And there, my husband, donkey, that's too proud,
Endangers himself and my son, alas.
But then again if we don't have the hay:
We prob'ly won't last winter anyway.

Journal 2014

The Farmer

Oh press on honey we are almost there.
Most faithful tractor that I've ever owned.
Pulling a baler that pulls up the hair
Of Mother Earth which she has kindly loaned;
Which we in turn will feed to hungry kine,
And store in mow where dust shines down in slants;
And feed it out right through the wintertime.
The cows will spread it like some active ants.

I am not worried; I believe in you.
No rain will touch our sun-dried, fragrant hay.
My wife's a wart who doesn't have a clue.
No lightning will touch down on us today.
My son, too busy, cannot count the gap
Between the lightning and the thunder's rap.

The Farmer's Son

I cannot think; it's sad; I haven't time.
The bales come quick the quicker that he goes.
My hands are creased and cut from the harsh twine.
We bounce along over the humpbacked rows.
I bounce and jerk and blist with hands quite numb,
The field like some flag striped without the stars,
My body scratched and broiled by the sun,
We war with Nature yet we love these wars.

Lo and behold I see the dark thing too
Out of the corner of my mote-fraught eye.
I cannot look and yet I know the blue
Is flagging to the black that's coming nigh.

Society of Classical Poets

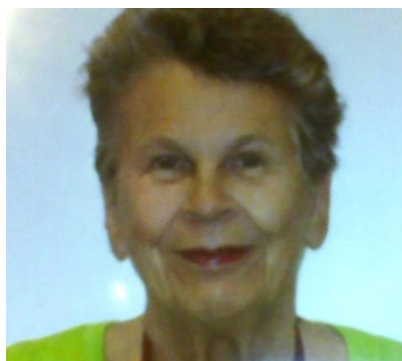
As long as I'm his son: I cannot quit;
No matter if, with lightning bolt, we're hit.

What He and Michelangelo Know

*'There on the scaffolding reclines
Michael Angelo.'* —Yeats

The Hudson's sunk in this great vale of blue.
The Catskill's hackle bristles in the sky.
The setting sun transforms the clouds into
Earthlike layers that Time does stratify.
This is no Rome, nor would I wish it be;
This is no dome that demigods do paint.
This is a whitish church under a tree;
And the man painting it is not a saint.
The soffit is a place that's hard to reach;
So I stretched out my hand to brush the trim,
Funambulist-forethoughtful lest I reach
Too far, and fall into the Obscure Dim.
Thus this, at least, we have in common now:
I've felt the paint that's burned me 'neath the brow.

Betsy M. Hughes



Betsy Hughes graduated from Vassar College with an A.B. in English and an abiding love for poetry. She earned her M.A. in English from The University of Dayton and taught high school English for 30 years at The Miami Valley School. In retirement she has moderated courses in literature and creative writing for The University of Dayton Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Her sonnets have appeared in The Ohio Poetry Association Anthology "Everything Stops and Listens" and in several literary journals. Betsy is the 2013 winner of the Stevens Manuscript Competition sponsored by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, with her book entitled "Breaking Weather" to be released in the spring of 2014. She won an Honorable Mention in The Society of Classical Poets' 2014 Poetry Competition. Her primary interests revolve around her (retired) professor husband, two children, and four grandchildren.

Ballet Lesson

The flow has ebbed and left a tidal pool.
A little tern wades in with webbed feet
So delicate they wobble in the cool
But keep the balance of this athlete.
She moves her slender body, takes the stance
Of ballerina on the sandy floor,
Performs her birdlike steps in daring dance
Just inches from the deeper waters' shore.
Encore! Petite danseuse with such esprit
That you forget the dangers of the flood,
The predators that spoil your fantasy,
The squalls and all that make you quickly scud.
Oh graceful swallow, from you may we learn
Through time and tide to turn and turn and turn.

Interruption

A golden silence reigns — a holy time
When on this autumn day of burnished leaves
And fruitful harvest in its perfect prime,
The quiet permeates the air and weaves
A web of wonder in my soul. But then!
Such sudden piercing, penetrating scream!
A handsome hawk appears within my ken
And, swooping down, it interrupts my dream.
This keen-eyed predator is on the hunt,
So swift to strike with strong and seizing claw
That my complacency is an affront,
I must respond respectfully with awe.

Journal 2014

For there is beauty in this bird of prey,
In nature's moment, drama for the day.

Runes

The reason why I pocketed this stone:
It beckoned from the bottom of a pool,
A shallow in the lake — It was alone,
My own — I felt it round and smooth and cool.
Another day I found a driftwood piece,
An ugly form which waves rejected, beached.
This long proboscis was a strange caprice;
Exposed to sun, the nose was pocked and bleached.
My favorite souvenir might be this shell
Upon whose enigmatic face an eye
Stares up at me inscrutably. Its spell
Has fateful powers known to signify.
Inspired, I worship texture, shape, design;
Inscribed are notes of nature's underline.

April Earth

Beneath us sleeps a secret, patient world
Of fertile earth and plantings — bulbs and seeds
In moistened soil, safely tucked and curled,
Receiving rains sufficient to their needs.
The ground is soundless. Underneath, the mood
Is active waiting, purposeful, and pure —
Anticipation cooled with quietude

Society of Classical Poets

Until a sure emergence is secure.
Then urgent stems must make their run to light,
They push through pathways in the loam, upswing –
Up! Up! – toward a place where all is bright,
They burst into the warmth and fire of spring.
New shoots from tubers, bulging buds give scope
To subterranean harbingers of hope!

Michael Curtis



Michael Curtis has 40 years of professional experience in architecture, sculpture, and painting. He has taught and lectured at universities, colleges, and museums including The Institute of Classical Architecture, The National Gallery of Art, et cetera. His paintings and sculptures are featured in over 300 private collections; his many public statues can be found in The Library of Congress, The Supreme Court, other public buildings and squares.

Society of Classical Poets

Professional experiences include Archivist of State Art (Michigan); guest curator, The Detroit Institute of Art; founder of art galleries; widely published poet; founding director of The National Civic Art Society, et cetera. He won an Honorable Mention in The Society of Classical Poets' 2014 Poetry Competition.

The Sculptor to His Apprentice

Instruction

The tales of Ovid are a theme that suits
The Prince, but will not do for your repute.
Avoid lust. Clients of the better kind
Desire the tales that beautify the mind.
You may display the human flesh with taste
Discreetly in the hands and face. Be chaste:
Show in your theme what suits the moral best;
Put in the good and true, leave out the rest.
And yet, even the clergy like their jewels
To glister Heaven and to glimmer Hell,
And every congregation comes to see
Angels above when they are on their knees.
Put in the awe invention can devise
For art should be a feast for human eyes.

Envision

Allow the man to know the ecstasy,
Let him participate in what he sees,
Incise the swollen tongue to make him feel
The taste of agony: Make it real.

Journal 2014

Press in the broken skin, paint on the white
Of eyes the drops that glisten and excite
The senses of the man; draw out the knife
With precision to lend the martyr life.
Overflow the canvas, make the picture breathe
With color and with light, show all things seeth-
Ing, swelling, feeling force of the divine
Presence of our God. Make your painting shine
And shimmer, draw him upward heavenly
To let him be the picture: Make him see.

Imitation

Seek in your art the grandeur of the Greek,
The noble calm, the sweet simplicity.
Question Nature, conceive Her, look beyond
Into Platonic Forms, hold them, respond
With measured lines determined logically,
Like angels sing, purely and exactly.
Balance the essences, leave out the rest,
Choose for your model summits of the best.
Restrain your brushes and confine your hues
To form an object of abiding truth—
That skill of art which is most rarely won
Is found in things lavishly underdone.
Think to know and know then what to feel.
The greatest art is art which is ideal.

Genesis

All men and nations move, as move they will
Compelled by storms some purpose to fulfill;
Never knowing where they go, nor why;
They live, they do some things and then they die.

Society of Classical Poets

The artist stands apart, he stands alone:
Seas swirl, leaves blow, he keeps his place like stone,
Some great stone standing buffeted by waves,
He and his thoughts heroic hold their place.
He looks into the tempest's wild rage
Calm and sure, the Caesar of his age
He marshals men unborn to do his will,
Time breaks, reforms, his purpose to fulfill.
Like Nature to its functions, God in awe,
The feeling of the artist is the law.

Realigned

The essence of the line restricts, contracts,
It is by nature a defining act.
The line contains an image in the past,
It draws us back, it binds, it holds us fast.
The vastness of the brain will set you free,
Just close your eyes and let the painting be;
Be free of concepts, free of old régimes;
Let go your will, allow the brush to dream.
Yet master, line can hold a thing in place;
What harm will happen to an unlined face?
If we erase, what horrors might we reap?
Monsters will roam the earth when reason sleeps.
If we by breaking lines break with the past,
What law of art allows an art to last?

Journal 2014

To Falun Gong

A little hurt,
a little grime,
a little dirt,
a little crime

on Falun Gong.

A little smell,
a little sale,
a little cell,
a little nail

to Falun Gong.

A little fit,
a little fist,
a little hit,
a little slit

on Falun Gong.

A little brute,
a little kick,
a little boot,
a little stick

to Falun Gong.

A little breath,
a little skin,

Society of Classical Poets

a little death,
a little sin

on Falun Gong.

A little Dé,
a little song,
a little luck,
a little gong

to Falun Gong.

Note: Seven lucky gongs, a sign of togetherness. Dé (pronounced “dub”) translates to “virtue.”

Novice

Young knucklehead: Today you'll bruise your thumb
To harden you to pains to come;
The sun will burn; the heat will cause you sweat;
Dust will choke before the sun is set.
When you are good for more than sweeping floors,
In five or six years—maybe more—
Then you may carve in stone your first design,
Perhaps broad lace-work, or a vine.
Should then the master see that you are good
At carving in both stone and wood,
He may allow a job and you your tools:
So, stand sharp, don't seem the fool.

Journal 2014

The master comes. Look how he moves with ease;
A measured grace and force in harmony.

Gloria Li



Gloria Li is a junior in high school and an aspiring marine biologist living in Florida. In her free time, she likes to draw, paint, sing and make movies with her friends. She is the High School Winner of The Society of Classical Poets' 2014 Poetry Competition.

Homo Aestheticus

Art: ephemeral human perfection,
fueled by practice and whetted by taste,
petals blossomed from seeds of reflection,
a speech—undelivered—scrawled in such haste!

And still, tales woven by the painter's brush,
history in the eyes of stone long carved,
strike so lucid, overpowering a rush,
into the hearts of men for ages starved!

Oh, rapture that endures the test of Time,
shine light into eyes blind for far too long,
and they, civilizations in their prime,
shall immortalize their artists in song!

How low you are, humanity, how flawed—
and yet in your beauty how like a god!

Taste of Utopia

I've walked the streets of decades decadent
idyll unto my idle heart bequeath—
spied angst upon faces, lady and gent,
but felt an intimate joy underneath.

I've walked with the destitute of our world,
small children's feet stained with the dirt of life,
yet seen the sun on their faces unfurled
as they laughed through many a starless strife.

Society of Classical Poets

I've walked to the edge of the cliff and stared
down at a world of ephemeral kind;
the bittersweet breeze caught me unprepared
as greatness tickled the back of my mind.

For every man or woman's paradise,
lies not in front, but behind their two eyes.

Toussaint's Imprisonment

An Overture to the Present

Gone now were those passion-filled days,
when calm discourse fell victimized
to gunpowder shouts and rebellious craze
while battles raged past ideas unrealized.

Gone now were those young boys' faces,
names and bodies forever to juggle
in his mind as they moved to greener places;
shameless reprieve, away from the struggle!

Now was the time of iron-clad bars,
risen in front of him like the looming gate
that conceals a land of velvet-kissed stars
and pleasures, pleasures of the human state!

Thought he to himself, in the darkness of night,
cursed is the world that lets the glorious fade,
the ones who before sang with war-seasoned might,
and now are on the edges of coffins displayed.

Jim Dunlap



Jim Dunlap's poetry has been published in print and online in the United States, England, France, India, Australia, Switzerland and New Zealand, over 90 publications, including The Society of Classical Poets, Potpourri, Candelabrum, Plainsongs, Sonnetto Poesia, and the Paris/Atlantic as well in numerous anthologies. He is an Admin Controller for www.facebook.com/PoetryLifeTimes. He was the co-editor of Sonnetto Poesia, Associate Editor for Poetry Down Under (Now Numbat Poetry Journal), Chief Proofreader for the On Viewless Wings poetry anthologies, Queensland, Australia, and was newsletter editor for seven years with the Des Moines Area Writers' Network. He's also been in the Writer's Digest top 100 in unrhymed and rhymed verse and the literary short story.

Faery Dust Anarchy

With winds awhistling through the trees
and air sprites dancing on the breeze,
you'll hear the pipes from Éirinn's lands -
mayhap a leprechaun might sneeze
at swirling faery dust – like bees
that swarm in clouds of floating strands.
Minutest drops of molten gold
soon fill the air a thousand fold -
and glittering, these tiny specks
may whisk you high and break your hold
on gravity – these tiny flecks
may still your breath till you grow cold.
Will O' the Wisp, slight airborne grams
dance to the tunes of faery bands -
and when it's done you'll fall asleep
while counting reams of golden sheep.

Note: Éirinn refers to Ireland.

The Pulchritude of a “Will O’ the Wisp”

Beauty cannot be nailed or pinned down,
or even defined as restrictive at all.
It can flash by, erasing an ugly frown,
or lift you up when life's begun to pall.
It can come on a breeze chill and crisp,
or shine through a pane with morning sun.
Sometimes evanescent, a will 'o the wisp,
it can pass like a frantic hare on the run.

Yet it does have a salient quality:
it can brighten the most tragic of lives,
turn cold dread to pure frivolity,
or surprise in the hardy way it survives—
despite life's cruel attempts to subdue it—
clasp it to heart and you'll never rue it.

Contemporary Chinese Holocaust

Imprisonment, torture, pathetic wrong -
begat from a people of age-old culture,
wit, classic beauty, artistry and song:
practices akin to hyena, vulture,
or other sadistic depravity -
such is the state of Red China today.
Subject to degrading atrocity,
Falun Gong, spiritual bouquet,
bright light of hope for millions worldwide -
is persecuted - thought easy prey -
even its very existence denied,
wrought by ideologies of foul decay.
This vile evil's a despicable taunt.
to human dignity - an affront.

L'Agneau et le Papillon*

Like tiny jewels they flutter by,
brightening many a dreary day—
on a time I saw a butterfly
perched on the nose of a lamb at play.

Society of Classical Poets

Stock-still stood this tiny sheep,
fair cross-eyed as he strove to see,
this small blue marvel; not one peep
he made—so enthralled was he.
I stood entranced to watch the show,
and wondered what the lamb would do
when the butterfly would rise and go—
and when at last the insect flew
the lamb stood dumbly, legs akimbo;
then he bucked in feisty play
and gaily gamboled on his way.

**The lamb and the butterfly*

Bon Soir au Château de Chillon

Isolated on an island it sits.
Le Château de Chillon subtly preens,
former dank dungeon of dark cells and pits.

A maudlin gloom closes in these bleak scenes.
Some say the castle's haunted, but seeing
phantasmagoric phantoms, history leans

backward recalling primal forests, fleeing
soldiers, marching armies, bronze age men
encamped upon this very site, their being

frozen by the mists of time; every glen
and outcrop of stone belies the bright flame
that burnishes these walls bereft of sin,

Journal 2014

of sunset etching palattes' hues, acclaim
from a myriad of hosts ... chronicled fame.

All the While and All the When

If leaves in summer failed to fade,
they'd garner nary an accolade
when autumn brushed the hills and dales,
and Jack Frost whistled storms and gales.
Ice Kings would genuflect in awe,
while vainly winter's storms would claw,
and flowers withering would fold
in anguish from the bitter cold -
yet all the while and all the when
the earth would tuck its bowers in,
embellishing this brilliant scene
with landscapes swathed in Irish green.

Khalid Mukhtar



Khalid Mukhtar lives in Bolingbrook, a suburb of Chicago, with his wife and four children. He was born and raised in India and emigrated to the United States in 1998. He works as a software engineer in Deerfield. He is an avid enthusiast of traditional poetry styles and that is where most of his poems fall. Khalid's poem titled "A Spark and a Fire" was recently placed first in a competition conducted by Highland Park Poetry to mark the centennial celebration of the Ravinia Village House. Some of his other works have also been recognized and showcased by Highland Park Poetry on their website (highlandparkpoetry.org). He contributes regularly to his blog at khamuk.com where he solicits feedback from his gradually growing online readership.

Journal 2014

Made (by Imprisoned Falun Gong) in China

It's "Made in China" everywhere I look,
From toys of plastic hope to airplane parts,
And after all the livelihood you took,
You're pressing mass production upon hearts

By binding hands that never meant you harm,
And feet that never trampled on your dreams,
As tears part from eyes in cold alarm
To join the pools of blood beneath the screams.

But know...

A heart's a forest flushed by hope that springs,
And though you burn down every single tree,
The waters gush and split the seed that sings
The song of life proclaiming it is free

To ever serve the faith to which it clings.

A Spark and a Fire

I often set to wonder why
We take the stands we take;
What makes us rise from where we lie,
And stirs our hearts to wake

Society of Classical Poets

When forth, the ever silent, speak
To light a tiny spark
That burns a flame by which we seek
To drive away the dark;

Like planters of the olive tree,
They never taste its fruit,
Which, like the one who eats from it,
Knows nothing of its root.

I think the answer might well be
The courage of a few
Whose grit, resolve, tenacity,
And other virtues too

Deliver us to light again
This fire that will burn
In honor of their service then,
An honor we return.

Winter Submission

Float, little snowflake,
Come, rest on my hand,
Soft as the mercy
That sends you to land;

Tree, tall and mighty,
Surrender your leaf,
Bare all your branches
To frosty relief;

Journal 2014

Meadow and hill, spread
Your carpet of white,
River, shine diamonds
In silver moonlight;

My heart is silent,
Asleep with the grass,
Patient submission
Till spring comes to pass;

Wake me to sunshine,
Eternal and sweet,
Winter is over,
My spring is complete.

Hidden Order

As I indulge the prairie, sipping tea,
I spy my book in insect company,
For trudging through the plain of open page
Is but an ant an eye can barely see.

I wonder how the letters must appear
To one who is to them so very near,
Like patches of the earth about the snow,
Irregular and varied in area.

But crawling so, my little friend can't tell
That every page is framed in dual el,
All bound into submission by a spine,
All born and cut from one material.

Society of Classical Poets

I swallow all this prairie with my eye,
These golden, yellow flowers swaying by
A stream that seems to stop, then flow again,
To mirror well the canopy of sky

Where floats a fleet of clouds upon a breeze,
Some gray, some peach, some white of foamy seas,
Some left behind a soaring eagle's flight
To humbly bow and kiss the tops of trees.

I find my crawling friend is much like me,
Admirer of versatility:
He cannot see the order that I do,
And someone sees an order I can't see.

On Sonnets

To forge a sonnet is an art supreme;
It begs a certain clarity of thought
To court a shy yet unrelenting theme
And groom it in apparel that is brought

By aptitude and skill with written word;
To gaze into suspended space and time
And trap a flight of fancy in a bird
That preens its wings to alternating rhyme:

Three quatrains, then a couplet at the end
To tenderly and mercifully wean
You from the shady branches that extend
A dozen roses from the fertile green

Imagination of a sonneteer,
More captivating than the subject here.

One-Dream Child

My son, he thinks he sees a dream
Each night, always the same,
It does not change, not ever; so
Is his sincere claim.

It starts out with a slowly growing
Darkness, vast and dense,
That swallows up his sight as well
As every other sense;

There is no place where he is at,
And no time he is in,
There is no company without
And not a soul within.

Then as it comes, does it recede,
This darkness, vast and dense,
And wakes him up to wonder
Where it goes, or came it whence.

He tells us of this dream he has
At breakfast every day,
Relating every detail in
A most fantastic way.

Society of Classical Poets

Someday he'll know his nightly dream
Is not a matter deep;
We just don't have the heart to tell
Him all it is is sleep

Bronwen Hudson



Bronwen Hudson is a poet and student at the University of Vermont. She will graduate in May 2014 and is currently writing an honors thesis on “Poetry as a Complex System.”

Bounty

When apples hang untouched on branches' bottom,
Or beans lie grounded, neither grown nor dead,
Or bulbs down-nestle into earth of autumn,
Then let them lie! Don't hurry them ahead.

Or when it's only six o'clock at night
Do not despair that no one's at the door:
Your party starts at eight! It's quite all right!
Just wait. And let the moment ripen more.

All grapes will swell if left upon the vine;
All waves will crash when ocean heaves release;
All rain will fall when pressure fronts align
And words will come when muses hear your peace.

Be patient. Let the budded rose unfurl.
The ancient oysters yield more lustrous pearls.

In Prison Cells

Rondeau for the Falun Gong

In prison cells our aching calls
go nowhere but around the walls,
and bruising hands repress our cries,
replacing truth with frigid lies.

We are the lost. For in these stalls
no life can reach. No thought recalls
the world outside. We fear to die
in prison cells.

Journal 2014

In jaws of silence, we are small.
So you who thrive outside these halls:
share our tale and we will rise,
with all eyes aimed at peaceful skies,
from prison cells.

The Voice I Heard On Visiting John Keats' Grave

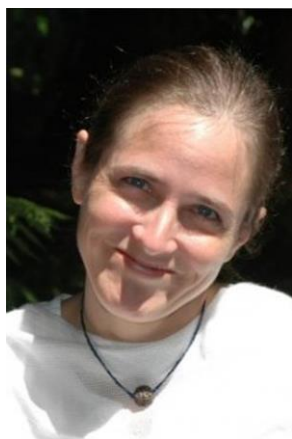
I felt, as trembling instinct led me near,
My posey-pounded heart alive with sound
Drumming a sanctity into my ear:
'Remove your shoes!—You Stand on Holy Ground!'

Yes, there were those who passed without a thought
And some who paused, and looked, but did not see,
But all their gazing quickly came to naught,
For in my brain there buzzed an anguished glee.

What noises bless that resting place of yours?
The wind, all wat'ry, haloes you as king,
But unheard tones, you know, tell us far more,
As from stone strings your glowing silence sings.

The others left content with it as such,
But I alone stayed on and thought too much.

Rama Devi



For over two decades, Rama Devi Nina has pursued her spiritual path in an ashram in India, where she also engages in volunteer service and writes a lot of poetry. Since the age of twelve, she has been serving as a counselor-chaplain for critically sick and dying patients at Amrita Institute, a charitable super-specialty hospital in Cochin. She is involved in diverse creative activities: poet, writer, musician, healer, spiritual counselor, coach, editor, writing consultant and graphic designer. She has been published in a number of anthologies and journals, most recently in *Pieces of Her Mind* Omega Publications 2012 and *The Yoga of Poetry Volume I*; November 2011.

Metaphorical Meditation Musings

My thoughts, like waves of ocean's surface swells
that roll repeatedly, then crash on shore,
neglect to find how silent treasure dwells
in depths of calmness closer to mind's floor,
where winds cannot whip frenzy nor implore
illusion's masterful inventions be
explored, like coral reefs I must adore
or shells inscribed with artful mystery.
But no, to taste life's nectar I must quell
ideas and dive deep inside stillness—reach
where insight rings a peal upon truth's bell
with potent realization none can preach.
The art of meditation has no word—
describing it is utterly absurd.

Eyes Cast Upon the Sun-glazed Sea

Eyes cast upon the sun-glazed sea,
I sip the sweetness of Your song
with cadenced heartbeats. Harmony
breathes through all life that sings along
in silent rapture's ecstasy
as rhythmic waves percuss, enforced
by whistling wind. The melody
seems scented by a sweetened source
voiced right from light, as if the notes
hold golden hue; and now I merge
into the sky—my spirit floats
in blissful peace, with tunes that verge

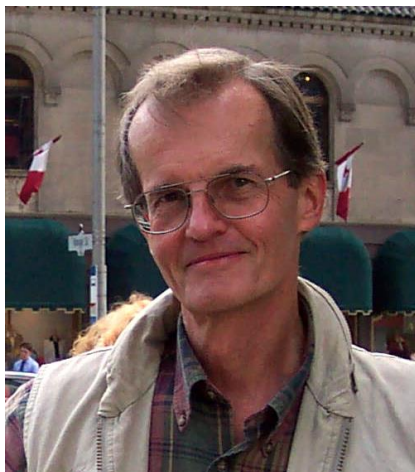
Society of Classical Poets

upon the rim of radiance.
I sense vast emptiness so rich
with deep, uncertain brilliance,
which hums a tune at highest pitch
beyond perceptibility
of mind, and yet I hear its tone;
it leads me in acclivity
to reach a mystic truth unknown.

Insight's Garland

Sweet spring bouquets bring sensual scent's allure,
vivacious as a childhood's cheerful blooms
unburdened by the wounds old-folk endure,
still pure and yet to enter all life's rooms.
Though beauty lives in nascent buds of youth,
the finest wine matures upon the vine
entwined around illumined poles of truth
which shine in those who've made their hearts a shrine.
Such wisdom ripens strong in autumn years
adorned by aster and chrysanthemums—
like lotus in the mud, not ruled by fears
of winter's sleep, where sacred silence strums.
The ones who harvest insight recognize
a mystic glory garlands spirit's prize.

Alan Nordstrom



Alan Nordstrom is a Professor of English at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. Professor Nordstrom's area of specialty is the English Renaissance, and his teaching includes Shakespearean and Renaissance literature, major English writings, Adventures in Great Verse and personal essay writing. His publications include *The Good Life*, *According to Me*; *Come, Spirit*; *Ped-Antics* and *Soul Search Sonnets*. He won First Place in 'The Society of Classical Poets' 2013 Poetry Competition. He won in 2013 the X. J. Kennedy Parody Contest, sponsored by Measure poetry journal. His blog of poems and essays resides here: <http://alan-nordstrom.blogspot.com>.

Uni-verse

Implicitly the Cosmos has design,
Just as I hold the pattern in my mind
Of how this sonnet's feet and rhymes align
With where some latent motive is inclined.
One cannot see the sonnet's form until
It's filled with what at last grows manifest,
Expressing clearly its inherent will
Confined till then within its covert chest.
In fact just as this poem's lines emerge,
The universe at large evolves in time
When motive, mass and energy converge
As readily as reason does with rhyme.
Consider then the universe as verse
Writ large; or this the universe, but terse.

Mind Matters

That out of chaos order comes is wrong—
As if a hurricane might sing a song,
Or if, in a tornado's furious path
Up sprang a house of mortar, brick and lath.

Mere randomness and accident can't make
A cube of ice or even a snowflake
Without some laws of nature implicate
That fashion their components meet and fit.

Just so it is this poem takes its form
Because within the elements that storm
About within the poet's beating brain

Journal 2014

Is something formative that shapes a train
Of thought by which the poem is designed:
Implicit in all matter there lies mind.

On the Beam

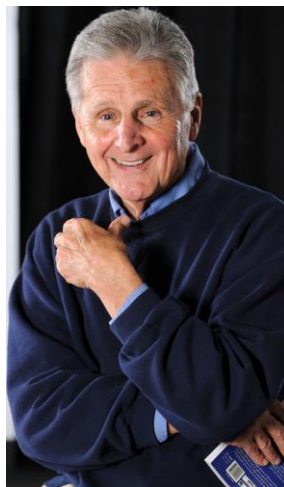
At times when my roiled brain becomes serene,
I may achieve a state of clarity
In which intuitive insight grows keen,
As if it were a beacon beckoning me,

And then I sense the guidance of that beam
Aiming to lead my wayward footsteps home
While causing my dull intellect to gleam,
And in this state sometimes arrives a poem.

But now I sense more benefit awaits
Than merely turning verses in the night:
That staying on this vital beam creates
A life replete with wisdom and delight.

To skeptic souls such visions merely seem,
Unable as they are to live a dream.

Don Shook



Don Shook, past president of the Fort Worth Poetry Society and founder of The Actors Company, is a writer, actor, director and producer who worked with such stars as Dick Clark, Cybil Shepherd, and Debbie Reynolds. Formerly with NBC, he has performed in theatre, film and television across the country including opera at Carnegie Hall, New York and as resident performer at Casa Manana Musicals in Fort Worth. Author of a recently published novel “Bluehole” and three poetry books, he was selected 2009 Senior Poet Laureate of Texas. Don Shook Productions offers entertainment ranging from murder mysteries to one-man dramas.

Chicken Frost

The chicken crossed the road I heard.
Which was so silly, so absurd,
Especially for so dumb a bird.

But when she started to come back
She met an eighteen-wheeler Mack
That smacked her with a great big whack!

Then squawking, flapping in the air
The chicken cried out in despair,
“Why did I journey over there?”

The moral is if where you’ve been
Is safe and sound, remember then,
Stay there and the road not take, hen.

I Think Therefore

“I think,” said Descartes, “and therefore I am.”
declared many years ago, way before spam.
It predated Facebook and Twitter and tweet,
when only the lonely thought thought was a treat.
Today there is seldom an unspoken thought;
a trait to forsake for the misery it’s brought.
We rarely do think before voicing our quotes,
instead simply living with unthoughten spokes.
So if you must speak before finding the grave,
remember Descartes and the wisdom he gave.

Society of Classical Poets

If thinking is being the am I have got,
I therefore must think I'm no am I am not.
Then thinking I'm thinking I think is a sham,
and thinking I'm not is not thinking I am...
I think. Oh rot!

Sheep Got Teeth

Sheep got teeth.
They's on the bottom.
On the top
They ain't got'em.

I like sheep,
They's wooly neat.
I shearly like their
Two-toed feet.

They got good ears,
They herd a bunch.
And sheep can bleat
While munchin' lunch.

But somethin'
Baaathers sheep a lot,
It's flossin' teeth
Which they ain't got.

And that is why,
When you can't sleep,
You never count a
Smilin' sheep.

Four Hundred Squirrels

Four hundred squirrels ran up the tree
And on its branches leapt.
Four hundred squirrels ran over me
Below them as I slept.
Four hundred squirrels laughed noisily
Where solitude had been;
Four hundred squirrels shot off the tree
With Daddy's old four-ten.

Michael Rovner



Michael Rovner is a poet and musician living in a suburb of Chicago. His first published work, "Nursery Rhyme for the Ugly Truth" can be found in Motif 2011. He has had multiple plays produced, the most recent being, "Best Served Cold" at the Western Springs Theater. His current project is working with the Village of Brookfield, Illinois to produce a 10-minute play festival in November of 2014.

Ode to Alexander

They say he cried, the great king, when
He marched upon his journey's end.
To live but once, and yet to know
There's so much further man could go.

I'm sure 'twas no one could console
That mighty, strong, and broken soul.
When worlds and worlds he gazed to see,
And knew at once what could not be.

If he'd fallen upon his sword,
Our mighty, strong, and broken lord,
Would any dare to give him blame?
To lay a curse upon his name?

Do we not walk beside him now?
Our dreams falling like leaves from boughs?
Is hope that's crushed not hope that dies?
Should tears then come as a surprise?

I would weep as the man so great,
Knowing at last what was my fate.
Greatness wanes and heroes do cry.
Dreams fade when you open an eye.

I Travel Alone

I travel alone. I walk through the streets.
No man is my master, no one I meet.

Society of Classical Poets

My feet carry me through the cool night air,
With my companion who's not really there.
How wondrous the nature, how blessed man,
That body and mind can walk hand in hand.

We walk through the town, my ally and I.
With each step I take I let my mind fly
To faraway places, faraway lands,
By oceans with beaches of pure white sands.
Never quite stranded, the two of us are,
A fanciful mind can take one quite far.

How sad it must be for beasts of the land
That they have no one to take by the hand.
Can man be alone with this wondrous prize?
Do other minds drift and take to the skies?
I cannot perceive, and I may never
know if there's others who are so clever.

But this I'm assured, no man walks alone.
No woman, or child, or babe leaves home
without one beside them all of their life.
To be there through good times, bad times, and strife.
How wondrous the nature, how blessed man,
That body and mind can walk hand in hand.

Sleipnir

Ride on, ride on, majestic steed.
Greatest of all amongst your breed.

Journal 2014

Woodman's steed and child of lies,
Leading the hunt that never dies.

One wonders how you even run?
Thee brilliant beauty, noble dun.
Legions of legs propel you still,
You do avoid a hapless spill.

Oh horse of horses, colt divine,
Galloping on, god on your chine.
Much forgotten, fading away.
Few there are who want you to stay.

Stay for me Sleipner. Be my guide.
Bend low your back so I can ride.
Carry me Sleipner, lo I plead.
Let me be master and you steed.

Note: Sleipnir is Odin's eight-legged horse in Norse mythology.

Andrew Gelinas



Andrew Wayne Gelinas was born on December 14, 1981 in Nashua New Hampshire. At the age of five his family moved to Brighton Plantation in rural central Maine. Andy attended Athens Elementary, Madison High School, and The University of Maine. At the age of two he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, although his disability would prove to be very challenging with many obstacles to overcome it as ultimately made both him and his family stronger. He is a writer and a self-taught poet who has been compiling notebooks of creative writing and poetry for over 15 years. This is his first publication. (Photo courtesy of Andrew McNeaney)

Unbroken

If I should break myself today
Unchanged from every burden bare
Determined unafraid to say
That I shall find the strength to wear

Whatever fortune great or small
My maker has bestowed on me.
By chance wherever I may fall
I forge alone my destiny.

Then I may find the eyes to see
Beyond the trembling darkness
My will shall not yet conquer me
Until I have shown my greatness.

I will not yet abandon you
My heart, my soul, my memory
I will struggle and stagger through
Until at last I shall be free.

Oh Slow My Setting Sun Depart

Oh slow my setting sun depart
As time is far too fast
Bereft my broken beating heart
So more my will outlast.

So more my will outlast my pride
Like fleeting fields of frost

Society of Classical Poets

As shadows fall asleep inside
My dreams are never lost.

My footsteps fade and wash away
So tangled with the tide
These trampled tears shall not dismay
My strength shall not be tried.

My strength shall overcome my fear
And mend my beating heart
As yet this time shall disappear
Oh slow my setting sun depart.

The Mistress In The Mist

A True Story of North Haven Island, Maine

Have you seen the mistress?
The mistress in the mist
Resting on a fallen spruce
Longing to be kissed...

She walks down to the shore
And up the dirt drive way.
She wanders here forevermore
Like it was yesterday,

The many men who knew her
All have slipped into the sea.
While many years have passed her by
In lonely misery

Journal 2014

She has been held captive
By the moss and by the mist
She searches hopelessly in vein
For a love she cannot resist.

For a love she has forsaken
When her dream, she was denied
Though her soul was never taken
With the tears she never cried.

Even mighty men will fade away
As iron turns to rust
The mistress in the mist is lost
With no one left to trust.

With no one left to talk to,
With no one left to love.
She walks without a shadow
Beneath the stars above

And somewhere in that forest
Smelling like a summer rose
The mistress in the mist was found,
Still sleeping as she froze.

Still sleeping as she passed away,
On a quiet moon-lit night
She chose to stay among the spruce
Turning away from the light.

She chose instead to wait for love
If choosing love is wrong
The mistress in the mist, shall wait
Forever, far too long.

Robert Woods



At 62 years old, Robert Woods is a retired physician, having practiced psychiatry and neurology, both pediatric and geriatric. He is new to poetry and his other hobbies include music (piano and concert harp—47 strings, 7 foot pedals), and gardening (especially camellias). He lives on ten acres with a lake and a pond, in Zephyrhills, Florida, (about 15 miles northeast of Tampa). Over the past 31 years, he has been blissfully married to a physician, board certified in internal medicine and hospice and palliative medicine, which she practices full time.

The Rainbow

A wave of color binds our sentiments before it fades.
For each emotion, is a subtlety in hue expressed,
And through life's noble journey, may we add these tints
and shades
To vivid cast a rainbow in prismatic lightbeams blessed.
Ephemeral are the tones of life bestowed on halcyon
skies,
When heralded by the rainbow arched above its golden
eyes.

Progression

The United States with world hegemony
Confronts such countries, vile with exploitation
Diffuse, intense, from sociopathy
Internal bred mid death, severe privation,
Shackling of free will, as liberation
Like a phantom cloistered in the mind,
Episodic stirs o'er desolation,
Inciting wrath and overtones defined
As democratic voices, rapid suppressed, maligned.

Throughout history, empires sudden rise
Yet rule imperious with a common fate
Of fragmentation, ultimate demise.
Allegiances, ephemeral, dissipate
Within a stoic, totalitarian state
Like China, bleak in economic plight
When organized insidious to create
Assent, robotic unity and might
That militarily reigns, a dictatorial blight.

Society of Classical Poets

Pollution, poisons, proliferation in arms
Resound mid human rights atrocities,
And weekly coal-fired nuclear plant that harms
Environments across all lands and seas.
Rapacious decimation by Chinese
Officials, rending world resolve and trade,
Is evil, manufactured as disease:
A bankrupting, computer hacking raid
O'ertakes the free world's jobs, with ethics quick waylaid.

Through trade, production grows toward specialization
As oversight and focus on detail
Allow consumption with diversification
When cultures, intermingling, quell betrayal
And forge a trust to overcome travail.
Humanity as species must assure
That through exchange and mutual timescale,
A compromise, upsurging, would endure
With quality assurance toward expenditure.

Nordic Summer

The hues of heaven enfold on glacial tiers
In iced serenity from summer clime,
Whose glow through arctic midnight perseveres
Profuse with splendor born in nature's prime,
And wafted through nocturnal fields of time.
Transcendently is beauty veiled, like dreams,
O'erspreading images of life sublime
Which, glassed within the purity of streams,
Find tones of passion opalescent in sunbeams.

Journal 2014

The fjords and skies are mirrored in deep marine,
And islanded by clouds which buoyant sweep
O'er rocks and matrices of mountains green,
Precipitous above the fathomless deep
Where shadows interfuse, cascading steep
From palisades amid the silver height.
And flowers entranced with dews and fragrance weep;
Yet unto morn a love may blooms requite
While blessed by breezes drying tears with soft delight.

Mid spaciousness does solitude bear truth,
A comfort through the lone, and mechanistic,
Observation defining mankind's youth.
Derived from love, with passions idealistic,
Contrasting is maturation, whose artistic
Motifs are moored by wisdom to the shore
Of discovery—moulded by the synergistic
Interplay of inspiration, and lore,
Exuberant with life, though humbling evermore.

Where days must yield to dark, there is illusion
When solar wind impacts with gaseous glow;
Auroral luminescence prompts suffusion
As arcs fantastically entwined o'erflow,
And shimmering sprays and waterfalls bestow
A visionary kingdom in the night,
With vaporous stairways serpentine below.
Effaced by morn, the realm of folding light
Departs with stars suspended in diurnal flight.

The Sunbow

Along the torrent's perpendicular
Cascading through mists, rises a vast sunbow:
Imbued with passion, this myriad beamed lodestar
Of vigor, reflecting like an afterglow,
Airy spans the azure undertow;
And dividing in radiance, ever soaring higher,
A polychromatic archipelago,
Islanded in water and light and fire,
Dissolves mid vapors, shadowed in a mystic gyre.

Upsurging with the sunbow, is contemplation
Forceful, impassioned in primeval splendor
As colors changing hue shape inspiration—
Oft serene, immeasurable and tender,
Or spiritual with a vision to engender
Beauty, expansiveness, divine as sun
Enrobed in meridian majesty, to render
A consummation of dreams, love, hope when spun
As life's rich sunbow, whose tones harmonic blend as
one.

Essayists

Leland James



Leland James has been published over 100 poems worldwide in over fifty journals and magazines, including *The Society of Classical Poets Journal*, *The South Carolina Review*, *New Millennium Writers*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Aesthetica*. He has published two books of poetry, *Inside Apples* and the forth coming *This is the Way the World Ends* from Finishing Line Press. He was an International Publication Prize winner in the *Atlanta Review* poetry competition, winner of the Portland Pen Poetry Prize, and runners up for Society of Classical Poets, the Fish International, and the Welsh poetry prizes. He received the Franklin-Christoph Merit Award for Poetry in 2008. He lives in a cabin in the woods in northern Michigan with his wife of 40 years. You may see more of his poetry at www.lelandjamespoet.com.

A Rose for Ezra Pound

“He strove to resuscitate the dead art/Of poetry; to maintain ‘the sublime’/In the old sense. Wrong from the start ...” —Ezra Pound, “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly”

“Adolf Hitler was a Jeanne d’Arc, a saint.” —Also Ezra Pound

An immigrant Jew, an old woman,
her tattoo peeking from under
a billowed sleeve, her face in shadow,
behind her the Statue of Liberty: she
holds up an American Beauty.

Juxtapose *your* rose, make it ersatz
—Williams’ broken glass—or devolve
to H.D.s “Sea Rose,” and tell me dear Ezra
again how the traditional rose is worn
out, a trite symbol, deserving derision.

Tell me once more how we *must* make it flash,
poetry new in *your* image, a dagger’s moustache.

Commentary

“A Rose for Ezra Pound” is in its essence a polemic standing against the Modernists, and by implication the Post-Modernists, who have dominated poetry (particularly American poetry) since the early 1900s when

the Modernist movement began. Ezra Pound was the principle spokesman and leader during the movement's early days. The Modernists, particularly the "Imagist" variety of the Modernist movement, where the movement began, stood against nearly everything The Society of Classical Poets stands for.

"A Rose for Ezra Pound" is full of allusions, many of them meta-poetic, poetry about poetry, a well-established tradition, perhaps most famously employed by Alexander Pope in his "Essay on Criticism" (a poem about meter, published in 1711). The first allusion in "A Rose for Ezra Pound" is quite obvious: "American Beauty" at the end of the first stanza alludes to the American Beauty Rose, and in its context symbolizes the history of America's sheltering of immigrants, particularly those abused by foreign powers. The old woman in the first stanza is ironically, perhaps sarcastically, holding up a rose for Ezra Pound, a well-known anti-Semite, to see. Even better, perhaps, offering it to him. Mocking him, forgiving him, just setting things straight, all three, you choose.

The rose was often attacked by the modernists, derided as an obsolete symbol that had no place in modern poetry. William Carlos Williams' poem, "The Rose is Obsolete," is a glaring example. Hilda Doolittle, who wrote under the pen name H.D.—a, alluded to in the second stanza of "A Rose for Ezra Pound—in her poem "Sea Rose" is another example. The reference to "broken glass" in the second stanza of "A Rose for Ezra Pound" alludes to Williams' poem "Lines" in which he lifts up a piece of broken glass as an example of how modern poetry should depict and elevate concrete images and things *not* traditional in poetry; in this case adding an element of the man-made versus nature in modern

poetry. The battle cry of the modernists was “Make it new!” The word “ersatz” in the first line of the second stanza of “A Rose for Ezra Pound” alludes to this.

The latter part of “A Rose for Ezra Pound” mocks the modernists by addressing Ezra Pound, the movement’s leader, pointing him back to the first stanza in which the rose is used as a symbol in a modern poem. The intended irony of the rose being employed as a symbol in a modern poem (the Modernists eschewed symbolism) refutes the Modernists’ prohibition against the rose in particular and symbolism in general. An additional irony is that “A Rose for Ezra Pound” is indeed “making it new,” but by using symbolism to refresh not repeat the image of the rose. The trope turns the rose to the purpose of irony and sarcasm instead of romance, while at the same time serving as a symbol of America. William Blake did something similar in “The Sick Rose,” where the *sick* rose was a metaphor for a turning away from God in general and for the rampant syphilis of his time in particular. Poets have been “making it new” for thousands of years.

The rhyme scheme in “A Rose for Ezra Pound” (the Modernists also eschewed rhyming in general and end-line rhymes in particular) employs slant or imperfect rhyme, exact rhyme, internal rhyme, and end-line rhyme. “Flash” in the final couplet (there is nothing a Modernist would hate more than a couplet) alludes to the Imagist’s desire to render in a poem a perfect, unadorned image, as in a photograph. The final metaphor (the Modernists also eschewed metaphor) is a final barb. It is a complex metaphor equating Ezra Pound to a dagger—in the heart of poetry—with a moustache, in keeping with the time-worn practice of drawing mustaches on posters and

Society of Classical Poets

pictures. Pound's own dagger-pointed mustache
personalizes the dagger, pointing directly to him.

Journal 2014

Douglas Thornton



Douglas Thornton is a poet and English teacher living in France.

A Short Defense of Formal Poetry

Though we all sit upon a complicated and varied mind, one which takes inexplicable events and draws meaning from them, we do not always find it useful to administer this, and prefer the inexplicable to remain as is. We perhaps believe that by holding ourselves in some sort of skepticism we may advance slowly and over time reach a better understanding; but then we are farther from the event, and if proper insight gained, we have not proper evidence. My intention here is to prove with proper insight that formal poetry is more modern and intuitive, by cognitive standards, than our more recent offshoot, modern poetry. I hope to show even more, that modern poetry, if taken out of time, is but a precursor of formal poetry, and those who partake in modern poetry only scratch the surface of human existence. Our clearest definition of modern poetry is something that uses neither form, nor rule, nor category: from this we may start our analysis.

We may admit that all poetry is highly ego-centric, but modern poetry more nominally enumerates first-hand experience, adding, as its base, details and complexities only known to the author himself. Although this approach appears at first multi-dimensional, in which the poet may invoke a variety of scenes one after the other to promote the ever elusive memory or subject, it is merely a summary of things unseen, there is no depth; for the poet searches to underscore the one-dimensional reality he or she has evoked. The problem with this, which expresses its more shallow evolutionary process, is in its picture-like reproduction of events based on the mechanical processes of the mind; the reason for this being that there

is no impetus for reflection in modern poetry. One poet has defined this attitude thus:

*But sometimes everything I write
With the threadbare art of my eye
Seems a snapshot,
Lurid, rapid, garish, grouped,
Heightened from life,
Yet paralyzed by fact.ⁱ*

The exact rules of formal poetry are the generating stimulus for creativity, and push the poet to inquire into his imagination, to use all his powers to overcome them, in the general way that they seem meaningless, as in these lines:

*light is where the landless blood of Cain
Is burning, burning the unburied grain.ⁱⁱ*

These last two examples explain the huge distance between modern and formal poetry: the difference is in their depth: *light*, in the second example is creator, signified as *burning*, but also destroyer, as well signified by *burning*, but this is set only as a background to *the landless blood of Cain*, wherein we have the image being neither created nor destroyed, something inhuman. Light in the first example, as qualified by *the threadbare art of my eye*, is only *paralyzed by fact*, which is to be much deplored. What is achieved in two lines of formal poetry is still imperfectly said in six lines of modern poetry; and yet both of these examples come from Robert Lowell, who, as his life went on, ceded to the fad of modern poetry and the *lurid, rapid, garish, grouped* snapshots of life. But let us go even deeper and analyze these lines of Robert Frost:

Society of Classical Poets

*Some halfway up the limestone wall,
That spot of black is not a stain
Or shadow, but a cavern hole,
Where someone used to climb and crawl
To rest from his besetting fears.ⁱⁱⁱ*

Though Frost was known for his use of simple and rustic language, the use of meter here saves him by a quick turn of thought: *black is not a stain or shadow*, and finally relieves the rhyme with: *to rest from his besetting fears*. For it is this which wakes the reader from the languid opening, and gives balance and meaning at the same time—something that is so inconceivable in modern poetry that the lines would end up sounding like this: “the limestone wall, spot of black, stain, shadow, cavern hole, climbing, crawling, besetting fears”—all are one-dimensional thoughts, but Frost, the poet, gives them meaning.

Recent research in the cognitive sciences has proven that humans have a natural propensity to create order, and with this order we try to represent or define the meaning of life. The first human was no doubt a poet in his or her own right, but modern only in the sense that he or she connected A to B to C, etc. When he or she could form meaning to these connections through awareness, he or she ultimately became the archetype of formal poetry: for the mind creates meaning through order, just as poetry creates meaning through reflection. It is here we may see that modern poetry is rudimentary, in that from all our sense-perception it creates not a meaning based on order, but a simple enumeration, mostly with conclusion devoid. This insensitivity of pursuing the reader with shallow or morphed detail removes us not to higher realms, wherein we may capture a hidden moment, but

returns us to the very beginning of our existence. How foreign, or far away from ourselves, do we feel after these lines:

*But I too announce solid things,
Science, ships, politics, cities, factories, are not
Nothing,
Like a grand procession to music of distant bugles
Pouring,
Triumphantly moving, and grander heaving in sight,
They stand for realities—all is as it should be.^{iv}*

Each thought in poetry must be an appropriation of itself, wherein it always moves and is never stagnate; thus, poetry is human only by an evolutionary process, and once we make an effort to pass its first means, and realize that those words used to represent the subject can only be possessed by relative meaning, then we see its artistry and depth, as in these most beautiful lines:

*Image of many a dream, in hours long past,
When life was in its bud and blossoming,
And waters, gushing from the fountain spring
Of pure enthusiastic thought, dimmed my young eyes,
As by the poet borne, on unseen wing,
I breathed, in fancy, 'neath thy cloudless skies,
The summer's air, and heard her echoed harmonies.^v*

Both of these examples come from poets of our early American literature; one is a minor figure, the other the father of modern poetry. Though Fitz-Greene Halleck has fallen into obscurity, the beauty and movement of his *echoed harmonies* are incomparable to Whitman's *all is as it should be*.

Society of Classical Poets

Whether a minor or major figure, the poet is the shaman of ancient times; he has learned to find the meaning between his thoughts. Those who rely solely upon the boorishness of sense-perception give us but a false idea of ourselves. We lead a multi-layered existence, all thought does not reside in the relation of events, but the distance from them, and all knowing is but the obliteration of self. Thus it is that poetry only exists as we are human, and this human form that we hold in common is the awareness of our musings to each other whereon our minds have given the proper order.

Douglas Thornton is a poet and English teacher living in France.

i Excerpt: Epilogue by Robert Lowell

ii Excerpt: Children of Light by Robert Lowell

iii Excerpt: A Cliff Dwelling by Robert Frost

iv Excerpt: As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days by Walt Whitman

v Excerpt: Wyoming by Fitz-Greene Halleck

Clinton Van Inman



Clinton Van Inman was born at Walton-on-Thames, England in 1945 and graduated with a BA from San Diego State University in 1977. Currently, he is teaching high school in Tampa Bay where he lives with his wife, Elba.

‘Twas the Night after Rhyme...

Editors who reject classical styles of poetry in submissions usually respond with, “I hate meter, rhythm and rhyme.” It is no secret that free verse dictates the modern world with little room for classical styles that are considered as antiquated as grandmother’s dollies. There are a few here among us who still believe that poetry without meter, structure, and especially end rhyme is not poetry but prose. Robert Frost when confronted with the question why he wrote poems with end rhyme stated bluntly “writing poetry without end rhyme would be like playing tennis without a net.”

One of the earliest poems we all remember from childhood is Clement C. Moore’s “The Night Before Christmas,” which most of us can recite from memory. Here is the first stanza:

*‘Twas the night before Christmas
When all through the house
Not a creature was stirring
Not even a mouse.*

Few words are needed to show the almost magical impact this has upon us. But let us examine how this would be written in modern verse:

*It was Christmas Eve in our house
Everywhere was silent nothing stirring*

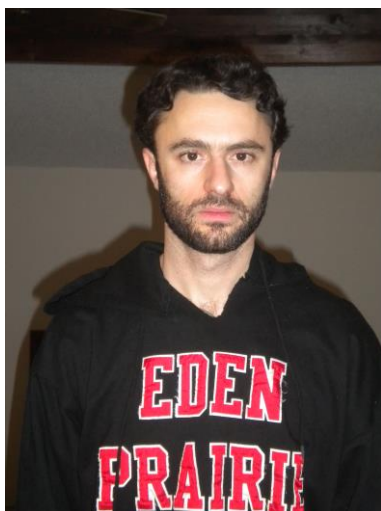
The difference between the two is easily apparent. Poetry moves us and jogs us towards memory. This is why the first poems, like the *Iliad* were not written but were

Society of Classical Poets

recited through memory. This is essential in our education. Since time immemorial, third and fourth grade students had to memorize a poem. I did almost reluctantly, but I still remember Longfellow's poem about an arrow shot into the air ("The Arrow and the Song"). My children do as well. But today Longfellow is scratched from the curriculum along with other essential, spirited things like hand prints in clay in kindergarten classes; they're replaced by standardized rapid reading exercises and math drills.

So let's stand up for classical forms in poetry and keep poetry from being on the outskirts of academics. Keep classical poetry alive! Submit your classical style of poetry to The Society of Classical Poets and other poetry journals. Don't give up the cause!

Ben Grinberg



Ben Grinberg is an ethnically Jewish poet born in the Soviet Union, Chisinau (Moldova) and living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He practices Falun Gong. He studied at Boston University, at campuses in both Mexico and Taiwan, and received a self-designed B.A.: "Three Approaches to Reality: Philosophy, Psychology, and Chinese Religions." His colorful history includes wrestling, professionally acting, organic farming, yoga instruction, and time in a U.S. Army boot camp.

Fixing Pablo Neruda's 'Lost in the Forest'

As the New Renaissance approaches and people realize that free verse is a dead end, we look back and revise those salvageable works from the modern era, giving them classical form. Here we provide the original first and then the revision.

Lost in the Forest By Pablo Neruda

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,
a shout muffled by huge autumns,
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood—
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

Journal 2014

Lost in the Forest

A Revision by Ben Grinberg and Evan Mantyk

Lost in the forest, I broke a dark twig
and lifted its whisper to thirsty lips:
maybe 'twas the voice of the rain crying,
a cracked bell, a torn heart, a life's tear drip.

Something from far off yet present it seemed
deep and secret, hidden by the thick earth,
a shout muffled by huge autumns that once teemed,
by the darkness of crinkled leaves on the path.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there,
The hazel-sprig sang through my breath of air;
Its fragrance climbing through my conscious mind
as if suddenly roots I left behind
cried aloud, the lost land of my childhood—
I found it as light streamed into the wood.

The Meaning of Poetry

By Ben Grinberg

Existence entails a system. Human beings have bodies. We live in reality. We have a heart and a mind. All these are systems. Language and poetry are also a system. They reflect reality in their order and structure. Poetry exposes the mechanics of language. How language actually works. It exposes the hidden layers of language. Any language. All the forms of poetry are ways of doing this. If language

offers a way to communicate truths, poetry is a way to use language to communicate truths more directly. It is a subliminal, refined use of language.

Traditional poetry that has rhyme and meter utilizes the full range of mechanics that exists in language. Free-verse poetry only utilizes some of the mechanics that exist in language. Therefore, it does not reflect reality as it truly is. But rather, it reflects a kind of primitive and often chaotic form of reality. As such, it is an inferior form of communication and art.

The excuse goes: "We like free verse because it uses the very basics of language and thus it gets to the very heart of language by doing away with all the unnecessary refinement of technique." In truth, people like free verse because they don't understand the significance and beauty of refined poetry and because it is very easy and feels "liberating," the same kind of liberation a child might feel from not having to learn. The result is that the child will stay ignorant and will be unable to experience or understand the different facets of existence that are available to those who are educated.

Still, some people feel that being under the system of meter and rhyme limits word choice. It thus limits the ability of the writer to get the message across. This is impossible. In fact, utilizing the systems of rhyme and meter will bring order to the message and will get it across more precisely. There is not a shortage of rhyme-words. The reason for this is that human beings, language, and poetry are all part of the universe, they all arise within the universe. As such, like all systems that exist in the universe, they reflect the order that exists in the universe. The universe is a system which is fundamentally ordered and structured. Therefore, everything that comes of it reflects this self-contained

order and harmony. Any system that comes from the universe is capable of achieving perfect order and harmony. At the very least, the underpinnings of any system will reflect the truths that exist in the universe. Therefore, each language has the ingredients within it to fully express everything that can be grasped with the human mind.

Of course, the quality of the poem is reflected in the words used. However, that quality is based on the refinement and skill with which they are used. Just like a recipe, superior ingredients will determine the quality of the final product, but if they are not ordered into a harmonious system, there will be no quality to speak of. You take random foods of the highest quality and throw them together, all you get is a mess. Only through some kind of reasonable combination and order can you get a sensible outcome.

The difference between traditional and free-verse poetry is the difference between randomly reciting letters of the alphabet and speaking. It's a toddlers scribbles versus the Mona Lisa. Sentences all jumbled together or verses sewn together without craft and refinement. What kind of reality is that? If this truly reflected the system of reality that the universe has created, we would either live in a freakish reality or a primitive one. Perhaps our bodies would be haphazardly formed. Perhaps we would not have the full range of intelligence that humans possess. Non-traditional art, such as free verse poetry, is a reflection of this altered state of reality. But it doesn't reflect reality as it truly exists because it doesn't utilize the full range of complexity/harmony that exists in reality. It doesn't utilize the full range of mechanics that exist in language. This is why traditional poetry, which utilizes all of the systems within a language, reflects the system of

language fully. It fully reflects the underpinnings that structure the universe. It is thus an accurate representation of reality and the truth.

At their peak, systems represent a kind of harmony. This manifests among people as beauty. Take the system of nature for instance. Art reflects this. Therefore, art that reflects the full range of complexity of reality reflects the true harmony of reality. It thus reflects the truth and true beauty. Poetry at its peak, like all forms of communication and thought, is ultimately beautiful and speaks of the ultimate truth and reality.

Beauty, as manifested in the human world, is the harmonious functioning of the systems that exist around us, sustain us, and make up reality. Ugliness, the disruption of these systems, is nothing but the manifestation of death, chaos, and suffering. This is the world we live in today with the prevalence of modern “art,” modern music, free-verse poetry, and so on. It can be said that these things mirror the hideous manifestations in society of violence, social disarray, modern illnesses, environmental decay, and the threat of human self-annihilation. To survive, we need to regain the traditional norms of humanity. The manifestation of this other than being nobly-behaving creatures are the norms displayed in traditional, classical art. That which is completely devoid of these norms is demonic abandon, hedonistic distraction, selfish self-delusion. It leads to self-destruction and pain.

Poetry

To exist in the world
there must be harmony.
When no harmony shows
it all ceases to be.
Everything falls apart,
There is chaos, despair.
Something no being can want.
It's pain beyond repair.
Without a harmony pure
No happiness remains.
This cannot be endured.
Through harmony we gain
Some measure of comfort
That can lessen our pain.
Harmony is the word
That can happiness save.
A structure is the world
A harmonious whole.
So to is the cosmos
So to is every poem.
Every poem reflects this
Ever-present order
That in all forms exists.
That gives forms their borders.
Poetry is a way
To harness harmony.
In the words that poems say
The cosmos is revealed.
Poems that don't have meter.
Poems that don't have rhyme schemes
Do not bestow the reader
With this great harmony.

Society of Classical Poets

Their harmony does not
Reflect all the expanse
Of the Great Harmony
That the universe has.
This great harmony is
Reflected in all forms.
Only when we desist
To pursue grace's norms
Does harmony depart
from sustaining our life.
Human life falls apart.
Only darkness, no light.
Humans may wish for dark
But it comes at a price:
Misery and pain stark
that cannot be surmised.
It cannot be endured
With all happiness gone.
So all beings are allured
By a structure and song.
Then in art, poems and life
We must act with sweet grace
To preserve the warm light
That sustains our race.
As the cosmos' structure
Is ordered and precise.
All the architecture
Of reality lies
Within goodness, order
Harmony this defines.
Perfect art these borders
In its notes, paints, and rhymes.
Utilizes to break
Through the human confines

Journal 2014

And become infinite
In the beauty it shines.
It becomes limitless
Without borders or lines.
It becomes border-less
Ultimate Truth it finds!