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ARTICLES

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Once Upon a Time in a Coffee Shop: Maureen Sherbondy

As a university student, Raleigh poet Maureen Sherbondy didn't study poetry since she didn't think she could be successful as a writer. Now after many unrelated jobs, a husband and three sons she is enjoying the publication of a second work of poetry. In addition to her poetry, Maureen has written and published short stories and just completed her first novel.

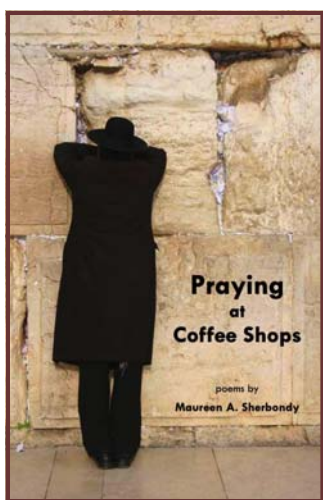
Maureen began writing poetry when she was eight years old and loved it, but only took a few literature classes at Rutgers where she earned a degree in psychology. After college, she took a job working with the elderly and then moved on to sell workman's compensation insurance while living in California. Maureen says that these experiences helped her understand the human condition generally but working in sales was especially helpful as it taught her to handle the rejection she faced while seeking to get her work published.

Rejection, although a continually struggle, is not something that appears to apply to Ms. Sherbondy's poetry now. Included in



her awards are the Charlotte Writer's Club Poetry Contest, the Lyricist State Wide Poetry Contest, and recently Kent State's Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest in 2007. Her first book of poetry, *After the Fairy Tale*, picks up where some of our most memorable story book characters left off. The poems in this collection range from evocative and poignant to witty and farcical, but they are always thought-provoking and clever. Aimed for the adults who

once read fairytales, we meet an inebriated Alice seeking refuge in another sort of looking glass, the good witch Glenda rebelling from a life of rules and service as well as the consequences of that abandonment, and ponder the worlds awakened to a Sleeping Beauty. Her soon to be published, *Praying at Coffee Shops* is a very different anthology from her first, where we leave the fantasy realm and enter the realities of life for a Jewish woman, wife, and mother of three. We glimpse the painful choices and sacrifice found in Maureen's Jewish heritage, empathize with a child's immobilizing fear brought on by mischievous brothers and a religion of ritual, and feel the stress in the dreams of a mother as she plans a Bar Mitzvah with love and concern for her son. Several of her upcoming poems can be found in this newsletter and at the Main Street Rags' website (see left).



Praying at Coffee Shops is available for presale directly from Main Street Rag
<http://www.mainstreetrag.com/store/ComingSoon.php>
(ISBN: 13:978-1-59948-108-1)

The poem Tashlich is inspired by a ceremony during High Holy Days, during which Jews throw bread crumbs into a body of water symbolizing the casting out of sins.

The German Doctor reflects on Ms. Sherbondy's heritage. Her grandpas, a physician, had to escape from Germany when Maureen's mother was only two years old. Hoping to make it to the United States and earn enough money to get his family out of Germany before the massacres occurred, he left behind two sons, a daughter, and his wife.

Tashlich

I cut the fish,
lift fleshy pink
sliver to my lips.

How many sins
have you swallowed
dead salmon.

Jews toss
transgressions
into the water.

Breadcrumbs of infidelity
Pebbles of lies
Pocket dust of indifference.

I chew and swallow
hope my body
stays free

from what
I have
eaten.

How do we live
with our sins
that return -

a small pebble
caught in the back
of our throat.

Maureen Sherbondy

The German Doctor

There is a country I have never seen
with its uch's and other guttural
sounds. I try to imagine it,
old buildings, towns, dirt roads
leading to the past, I picture him -
Opa. Juden. Creeping secretly in the black
night, his dark medicine bag in hand -
forbidden journey from patient
to patient. Listening to coughs,
palpating parts, delivering babies
who screamed out in the night,
when no one else could or should.

What did it take to lift that visa
from his brother's hand, to leave
a family of wife and kids behind.
What did he abandon
there, did it drift, a flotsam
of remorse, follow him to the port,
to New York. Or, was it left
in concentration camps in the
ashes and piled bodies of his
brothers, nieces, and nephews.

If I visit that faraway country today,
will I see his stocky figure-ghost
walking freely through the streets
of Germany. Will I feel guilt
hanging, feel grieving in the air, or will I
hear
his deep voice saying softly, simply
I wanted to live, I wanted to live.

Maureen Sherbondy

The motivation to return to writing poetry came to Maureen after having her third child. With a newborn, one-year old, and two-year old, she decided to get back to her love of poetry to fight off what she terms the "brain mush" sometimes associated with primarily caring for and conversing with young children. Maureen enjoyed the universality of fairytales and began by writing titles that might follow the life and times of interesting fairy tale characters. She focused on her poetry and her first published book of poems "After the Fairytale Ends" became the result. In the following poem, Maureen empathizes with the plight of the aged Giant from Jack and the Beanstalk.



If the Giant Retired and the Beanstalk Was Intact

When the Giant retires
 he climbs down the beanstalk
 sway from that big house
 in the sky. It is no easy task shimmying
 down, the stalk nearly reaks
 beneath the burden of his weight.
 His hands are arthritic, his
 heart enlarged.

What does he find
 when he reaches land?
 No pension or social security check,
 no grandchildren to take him in,
 just Jack who grew into a man,
 held grudges, turned the Giant away,
 shuts the door in his big face.

He lives on oranges, lemons, avocados.
 Needs pills to remedy his ailments,
 pills that only grow large enough
 in Wonderland, but Alice
 grew up and Wonderland cracked
 asunder in an earthquake.

He hears about a Wizard, but can't
 find Oz on any map, only a mouse
 and duck-crazed place called The Magic Kingdom.
 He settles in Florida but feels out of place,
 doesn't fit in with other retirees who play
 bridge, golf, shuffleboard.

He towers over mangroves and palms,
 no nursing home can accommodate his height
 and girth. He reclines alone across the sand at night,
 listening to the ebb and flow of soothing ocean waves,
 he stares at the black sky, wishing on every shooting star
 that things will work out in the end, that the legumes
 he keeps in his pocket will turn into magic beans
 and give him what he needs.

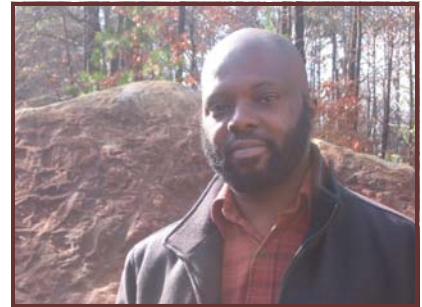
Maureen Sherbondy

West End Poetry introduces three local voices from Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough. See if their musings about town can inspire you to write your own poetry. We encourage poets of all ages, including children and youth, to submit. We would even love to publish poems in different languages, as long as you can provide a translation into English alongside.

Submissions can be sent to Allie Hansen at
 athletics@ci.carrboro.nc.us

Robert Kwami Jackson

A North Carolina native, Robert is a human services worker for persons with mental illness. He is also an artist who works with oil and acrylics. Currently living in Carrboro, Robert is best known to friends as "Kwami".



Kwami was thinking about water as a natural resource when he was inspired to write "Made for You." With the current North Carolina drought, this poem is especially relevant.

Made for you

As you turn it on it brushes against the flesh
 Then falls into creeks and streams
 Put it in a cup as it ravel down the throats many
 Where? Ashes spread, guns are thrown, and decomposed bodies float aside.
 Thrown garbage in the sea lies here
 Where piers are guilt for you and me
 A mother in a unexpected place. Water breaks!
 As drops of rain falls for growth.
 It is most of the body. Human, mammal or animal.
 At times it can be frozen
 Materials were made to repel because of it.
 Some beds have it
 You could not clean dishes without it.
 Nothings can live without it
 You brush your teeth and wash your face and then turn off the water.

Robert Kwami Jackson



Chelsea Dyreng

is the daughter of a fireworks salesman and Miss Malibu. She is the mother of a ballerina, a butterfly and a ladybug. She is the wife of the paragon of animals. Chelsea is a musician, a singer, a budding artist and poet. Chelsea lives in Chapel Hill.



Downstairs front corridor in the Orange County Courthouse. Photograph by Henry H. Mitchell, MitchellsPublications.com. Use permitted.

Five months pregnant with her third child, Chelsea Dyreng was called to Jury Duty at the Orange County Courthouse in Hillsborough. She watched countless citizens attempt to be excused from the case, taking mental notes as she waited patiently for her turn. Every day for two weeks and up to 8 hours a day, Chelsea listened to attorney's question potential jurors. When one of her twin girls fell down the stairs while being cared for, Chelsea asked to be dismissed . Although she was unable to serve as a juror, by this time she thought it would be interesting and Chelsea did return home to take care of her children and write this poem.

Jury Selection

Here we are, 200 strangers
 Summoned for our civic duty
 We file into the court room, muttering
 When is lunch?
 How long will they keep us here?
 Where are the bathrooms?
 Do we really call him "Your Honor"?
 We sit on the narrow wooden benches, harder than church pews.

The judge looks down at us from his lofty seat.
 His glasses hanging for their lives at the edge of his nose
 His black robes draped around him like a king.

The lawyers look at us, smiling eagerly.
 Their ties are straight, their shoes polished and their teeth whitened.
 Their sharp, beady eyes scan our faces, looking for the convincibles.

One man alone seems to regard us without salivating.
 His desperate eyes but hopeful face gives his identity away
 The steel encircling his wrists confirms our suspicions.

We look at the judge, the lawyers, and the man with the desperate eyes.
 We look at each other. Short, Fat, Old, Goatee, Glasses, Pink Hair, Crutches, Tank Top Dressed Up, Dressed Down.

The judge gives his estimation of our civic commitment: Four Weeks, maybe Five.
 And for one moment our desires and the desires of the defendant align like planets in the sky. We think: How can I escape?

Continue on p5

Short comes before the judge and says he has a business trip in Hong Kong.

Fat says he is a communist

Goatee says the defendant looks guilty

Old can't hear anything

Glasses says she has a sister who is married to the judges nephew's cousin

Pink Hair says she has uncontrollable urges to shout obscenities in public places

Crutches says he has a trial of his own to attend

Tank top says no habla ingles

Dressed up is high

Dressed down is drunk

One by one they are excused,

One by one triumph flashes across their faces

Much like the face of a boy who has once again

Lied to his mamma.

And each walks out

passed the judge,

passed the lawyers,

passed the man with the desperate eyes and silver bracelets,

Free to carry on with their important jobs, habits, trips and booze.

Chelsea Dyreng

Gilbert Neal

is a local singer/songwriter whose latest CD, "Drink the Beast with Me" has been highly acclaimed. He lives in Hillsborough and at gilbertneal.net.



Gilbert's poem, Fair Trade in 3/4 was inspired by Tuesday morning visits to Carrboro. His weekly ritual begins with morning coffee at Weaver Street Market. Afterwards, Gilbert spends a couple of hours at the Century Center for Toddler/Pre-school Playtime watching his twin sons and making many friends and acquaintances.

Fair Trade in 3/4

we basked in the sunshine, we gave the man change,
 we break brittle boundaries and say what we feel,
 we twitch like a cat at a firing range,
 my twins are my weapons for long looks to steal,
 and long conversations with nouveau nubility,
 plumbing the depths of my facile ability,
 able at once to be caring and crippled,
 hoping that some of the well-rehearsed ardor might
 stick to the walls of an unprepared partner,
 discourse left dangling, time a loose end,
 Fair-trade organic Peruvian blend
 My twins and I float to a once-a-week party,
 I watch the door for an old friendly face,
 Or maybe a neophyte shakes off the cold,
 so i practice my alchemy on our acquaintance
 and remake this leaden discourse into gold,
 my twins lurch around as if boxers on opium
 spinning toward the next noise, the next light,
 and looking to me as their morbid mahatma,
 sanctified, seething, and barely upright
 dispensing bon mot to an unamused audience,
 got to get into that vague innuendo,
 got to claim victory over the sane,
 got to march on against hints of uneasiness,
 got to rebel against boundaries hard-won,
 got to have tales to relate to the others,
 should this last best shot at transcendence fail,
 always another next week, little friend,
 Fair-trade organic Peruvian blend

Gilbert Neal

More sophisticated than your average rhyming poetry, the sonnet is sometimes considered to be the most accessible of classic forms.

In its basic definition, a sonnet is a rhyming poem of fourteen lines with ten syllables per line, generally written in iambic pentameter—meaning there is the rhythm ti-tum; ti-tum; ti-tum. Although there are many different varieties, the two most common variations of sonnets are; the English sonnet- popularised by William Shakespeare, and the Italian sonnet- or sometimes referred to as the Petrarchan sonnet due to the first major practitioner Francesco Petrarch.

Below is the example of an English sonnet, written by Shakespeare.

Sonnet 130

| | |
|---|---|
| My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; | A |
| Coral is far more red than her lips' red; | B |
| If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; | A |
| If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. | B |
| I have seen roses damasked, red and white, | C |
| But no such roses see I in her cheeks; | D |
| And in some perfumes is there more delight | C |
| There in the breath that from my mistress reeks. | D |
| I love to hear her speak; yet well I know | E |
| That music hath a far more pleasing sound; | F |
| I grant I never saw a goddess go; | E |
| My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground | F |
| Any yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare | G |
| As any she belied with false compare | G |

As can be plotted in this example, a sonnet follows a traditional structure:

- A proposition is set out
- The proposition is then developed
- Either a conclusion is reached, or there is a thought-provoking finale



Pablo Neruda

To Discover Famous Poets & Their Famous Love (or lack there of) Sonnets, Try . . .

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Elizabeth Barrett Browning | • Samuel Daniel |
| • Pablo Neruda | • Edmund Spenser |
| • William Shakespeare | • Edna St Vincent Millay |
| • Francesco Petrarch | • Mary Darby Robinson |



Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Moving on to the Italian sonnet, the same conventions are followed, but the stanzas follow a different structure. The first stanza is composed of eight lines, and the second of six lines.

Below is an example of an Italian sonnet by William Wordsworth.

The World

| | |
|--|---|
| The world is too much with us; late and soon, | A |
| Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers: | B |
| Little we see in nature that is ours: | B |
| We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! | A |
| The sea that bared her bosom to the moon; | C |
| The winds that will be howling at all hours, | D |
| And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers; | D |
| For this, for everything, we are out of tune; | C |

| | |
|--|---|
| It moves us not- Great God! I'd rather be | E |
| A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn: | F |
| So might I, standing on this pleasant lea, | E |
| Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn; | F |
| Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea; | E |
| Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. | F |

Here the proposition is put forward and developed within the beginning eight lines, and the solution/reconciliation is within the final six lines.

Selection from forwardpress.co.uk

- **The 2008 North Carolina Poetry Society Poet Laureate and Adult Contest Awards** offers a wide range of awards for poets in many categories. Entries must be mailed in and postmarked by **January 10, 2008**. Please visit www.ncpoetrysociety.org/ for complete details.
- **The 2008 Student Poetry Contest** is sponsored by the North Carolina Poetry Society for students of North Carolina schools in Grades 3 through Undergraduate. Entries must be postmarked by **January 10, 2008**. Visit www.ncpoetrysociety.org/ for full contest guidelines.
- **Main Street Rag's Annual Poetry Book Award**—Deadline is **January 31, 2008**. The Reading Fee is \$20, \$25 if you want to receive a copy of the winning book. Notification in April for Winter 2008/2009 publication. Visit <http://www.mainstreetrag.com/PoBkCont.html#anchor284395> for full details.
- **The National Federation of State Poetry Societies** conducts many contests each year. Each submission must be postmarked no later than **March 15, 2008**. For details on each contest's requirements please visit http://www.nfspd.com/poetry_contests.htm
- **Press 53 Open Awards Writing Contest for Young Writers** ages 13-17. Youth may submit may submit 1 story up to 5000 words or 3 poems by **Mar. 31, 2008**. Reading fee included. Go to <http://www.press53.com/Contests.html>
- **2008 Robert Watson Poetry Award**—Submissions must be received by **April 2, 2008**. <http://www.springgardenpress.com/contests.html>
- **Main Street Rag's Annual Poetry Chapbook Contest**—Winner receives \$500 and 50 copies of chapbook. All entries receive a copy of the winning manuscript and are considered for publication. Entries must be postmarked by **May 31, 2008**. \$15 reading fee. Details at <http://www.mainstreetrag.com/ChapCont.html>

Poetry Live!

Poets Open Mic
Open Eye Café,
Carrboro

February 5th and March 4th

7-9pm Free

This event provides a casual and comfortable setting for people to celebrate, share, encourage, write, read, and listen to poetry.

Recommended for ages 15 and up unless accompanied by a parent.

For these and other events contact:

Carrboro Recreation & Parks Department

919-918-7364.

Or visit:

www.townofcarrboro.org/rp

Pick up our latest Winter/Spring Brochure.

Registration begins January 7th.

“When power leads man towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the area of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses.” - John F. Kennedy



Round About

First Friday Reading

*Borders-North Lake Mall,
Charlotte*

Friday, January 4, 8pm

Co-hosted by *Main Street Rag* and *Iodine Poetry Journal*. Featured reader to be announced followed by an Open Mic. Those wishing to participate in open mike need to be signed up by 8:15. Details: 704-573-2516.

Poetry Open Mic

*Percolator Coffee Shop
Raleigh*

First Thursday monthly
7:00 pm

Located at the intersection of Falls of Neuse and Millbrook Road in Quail Corners

Hosted by local poet Maureen Sherbondy.

Main Street Rag's Poets' Night

Owen's Bagels, Charlotte

Last Friday of each month. 7:30pm

Sponsored by Main Street Rag & hosted by MSR Associate Editor S. Craig Renfroe. A featured reader followed by an Open Mic. Sign up to read by 7:45. For details call 704-573-2516 .

Poetry Reading with Salman Akhtar, M.D.

Quail Ridge Books and Music, Raleigh

Friday, February 29
7pm Free.

Dr. Akhtar is a psychoanalyst, lecturer, award-winning professor of psychiatry and a published poet. The reading will be followed by discussion.

Literary Open Mic

*McIntyre's Book Store at
Ferrington*

Every first Thursday night at 7:00pm monthly.

Ferrington Village in Pittsboro.

For more info call 919-542-3030. Sign up upon arrival.

Friday Noon Poets

Amity United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill

On the corner of Estes and Martin Luther King Jr. Rd. (aka Airport Rd.) .

Contact David Manning for more info at 919-462-3695, or dbtm@mindspring.com

Publisher's Corner-

Coming out in the Spring of 2008-

Night Huntress
by Joanna Catherine Scott

It is a collection of narrative prose poems written during a intense grief for a young friend killed in a drunk driving accident, and follows the arc of shock, loss, mourning and recovery.

Publication by Main Street Rag (www.mainstreetrag.com)

Poetry On Your Plate

*April 3, 10, 17 at the
Carrboro Century Center*

Noon to 1:00pm.

Cosponsored with the Carrboro Cybrary

Celebrate National Poetry Month with a menu of local poets reading their works. Bring your lunch, enjoy coffee from the OPEN EYE CAFÉ, and feast on poetry.

For more info call 919-918-7372.

Created and Issued by: Carrboro Recreation and Parks

- We welcome any comments or suggestions for future programs, articles in the newsletter, or the West End Poets' Weekend.
- Do you know of anyone that would like to receive this newsletter? Email us.

100 North Greensboro Street
Carrboro, NC 27514

www.townofcarrboro.org
www.westendpoetsweekend.com

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