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A Poetic Tradition Dating Back thousands of Years

A Review of Eliza Griswold, *I Am The Beggar Of The World*
By Carol McMahon

Eliza Griswold's *I Am the Beggar of the World* is a wonderful look at a poetic tradition that dates back thousands of years, as theorized by Pashto scholar Jens Enevoldsen, to when Aryan caravans likely brought landays to Afghanistan. What is most intriguing is that these poems are created by a mostly illiterate population, the twenty million Pashtun women who reside in the borderlands between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This poetry, typically shared through radio program broadcasts or in women only gatherings, is the only form of education allowed women

in this dangerous and repressive environment, a fact which makes the sharing of these poems even more culturally and historically important.

Griswold explains that this poetic form has few formal properties but is typically non-rhyming and contains twenty-two syllables. These are divided between two lines; the first with nine syllables and the second with thirteen. In the Pashtun language these poems end with

a ma or na sound. Although typically non-rhyming in the native language

Griswold posits that

the landay's lilting lullaby-like quality, which is meant to be sung, is actually best captured by allowing the poem to rhyme when translated into English. She also notes that this aural quality of landay poetry **believes the sharpness of their content, which is distinctive not only for its beauty, bawdiness, and wit, but also for its ability to articulate a common , homeland, and war.**

Continued on Page 2



A Poetic Tradition Dating Back thousands of Years

By Carol McMahon, Webster, NY

Continued from page 1

There is much that could be said regarding the cultural significance of these poems, from their taboo nature to the ever-evolving poetic characterizations of a culture in flux. Most significantly, Griswold finds that among the Pashtun women, **death and song are still the two forms of rebellion and self-determination readily available.** Song, although it is considered licentious, as an expression of deeply held beliefs and feelings, and suicide as a way to escape a near total lack of autonomy and control in their intensely subjugated lives.

As these poems are informed by the historical, political and cultural parameters within which these women live, it makes sense that the poems will directly reflect the nuances of the particular time period. While the subject matter: love, war, grief, homeland, have remained stable the society has not. Consequently the repeated characters and situations morph from British soldiers to Soviet to American; from meeting at the water well to Facebook assignments. The following landay translation a perfect example of this transition, **Daughter, in America the river isn't wet. / Young girls learn to fill their jugs on the Internet.**

One thing that is unchanging is the incredible discrimination and abuse that the Pashtun woman faces. Seen as the personal property of the dominant males in the family women are sold for a bride price, beaten for writing poetry and murdered for falling in love. The suffering of the Pashtun woman is palpable, **You sold me to an old man,**

father. / May God destroy your home; I was your daughter. Yet loyalty among the women, whether to country or family, can be fierce, **When sisters sit together, they always praise their brothers. / When brothers sit together, they sell their sisters to others.**

This loyalty to country is tainted by years of war and the abject poverty caused by it. The brutal control exerted over the region by the Taliban has multiplied the misery of its female population. Still, foreign forces are not to be trusted as they have contributed to the environmental destruction of this once fertile area. Especially loathed are the terrifying American drone bombings that have taken many innocent lives. Even so, the Pashtun woman knows that her future is even more unstable once the Americans leave the area and they are likely cast back into the dark ages of Taliban rule. These mixed feelings are apparent in the landays, **Without the Taliban, / Afghanistan would be London.** and **Leave your sword and fetch your gun. / Away to the mountains, Americans have come.** Most poignant though are the landays that speak to personal grief and suffering such as, **My love gave his life for our homeland. / I'll sew his shroud with a strand of my hair.** and **May god destroy your tank and your drone, / you who've destroyed my village, my home.**

Though their suffering is great Pashtun women are not without humor and wit and many landays demonstrate those qualities. This poetic form, which is forbidden as it implies free will and the subsequent dishonor associated with that, is even more scandalous when women use it to skewer their men for cowardice or lack of sexual prowess. Nothing more needs to be said, **Making love to an old man / is like fucking a shriveled corn-stalk black with mold. Crudeness is not shunned. Send my greeting to my lover. / If he's a farter, I'll fart louder. and the bawdier the better, Unlucky you didn't come last night, / I took the hard bed-post for a man.**

This simple poetic form, sung by an illiterate population of marginalized women over thousands of years, passed down from generation to generation in a rich oral tradition, carries much more cultural weight than its slight twenty-two syllables belie. These syllables unite the women by giving them a common voice with which to express their longing, fears, sorrows and joys, when such expression as an individual could be costly, if not deadly. One only has to view pictures of this war torn land, its women robed in burkas, its men heavily armed to understand **iContinued on page 4**

Book Review of Jonathan Harris's Chapbook

Dream Drive

By Kitty Jospé, Rochester, NY

This chapbook of poems with a cover photo by Jeffrey Alfier of a sleek red and blue fender with a hood ornament, opens with the first three lines of

Arienne Rich's poem, *Dreamwood*.

Divided into four sections, the first *The Book of Us*, feels the most biographical. The *clear and simple telling ranges from ordinary moments that yield great joy to the shadows intimating madness and death*. In the poem, *The Readers*, we learn that in *The Book of Us*, we chase our tails, and are the characters, *slender children of the grass,/heads bowed, bellies growling*.

Indeed, Harris includes the reader, especially in the second section, *The Book of Others*, drawing on a wide net of characters, many with mythic names. The humorous tone adopts different flavors ranging from bitter, menacing, to heartbreaking. Who would not love Alessandro, so able to spell out what is missing from work, or the child with the mysterious snake at show and tell in the Catholic kindergarten? **Continued on page 6**

Dream Drive



poems by

Jonathan Harris

slender
children of
the grass,
heads
bowed,
bellies
growling.

The King of Pacific Grove

by
Ralph X Marbach
[Ralphmarbach](#)
[@comcast.net](#)



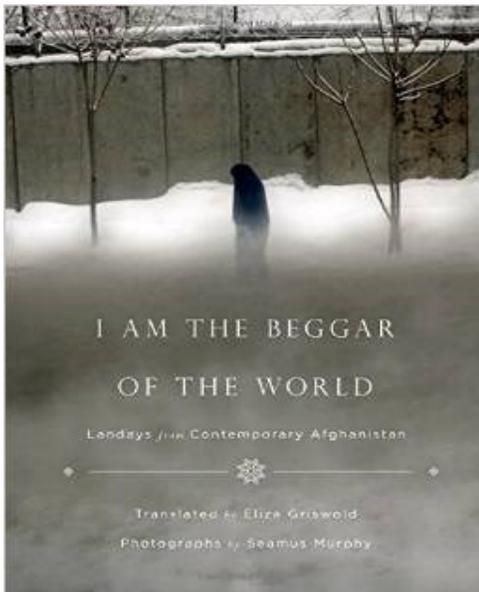
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A Poetic Tradition

By Carol McMahon

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implicitly the landay which bears in part the title of Griswold's powerful book, *In my dream, I am the president. / When I awake, I am the beggar of the world.*



Am the Beggar of the World: Landays from Contemporary Afghanistan by Eliza Griswold.

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(April 1, 2014)
Hardbound Copy :160 Pages
ISBN-13: 978-0374191870
Retail :\$18.00
(Paperback due out March 17, 2015)
Retail \$11.00



Author Spot-light

Emery L. Campbell is a writer of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. His first book, titled *This Gardener's Impossible Dream*, a collection of his poems and translations of French poetry, came out in 2005. His second book, *Selected Fables and Poems in Translation*, appeared in 2010. His work has also been published in countless journals, anthologies, and on the Internet. He has won awards from the **National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Georgia Writers Association, Georgia Poetry Society**, and many state poetry societies. In 1999, he won the honor of **National Senior Poet Laureate** awarded by the *Diplomat*, edited by Wanda Parrot, Monterey, California. Born in Monroe, WI in 1927, Mr. Campbell has a BA in French from the U. of Wisconsin plus two years of post-graduate work in France. He, his wife, Hettie, born in Holland, and their two grown sons live in Georgia, USA. He served as a US naval aviator for four and a half years during which he acquired about 900 hours of flight time in various types of military aircraft.

To learn more about Mr. Campbell's work, Read the following article *One Way to Do It* explaining how he goes about his craft.

One Way to Do It

By

Emery L. Campbell

Many editors will not even give me the time of day, but *mirabile dictu*, Linda Ames, our admirable **Georgia Poetry Society's News** editor, actually asked me to contribute a piece on how I write poems and where I get *that sense of humor*.

So, let's see, I type my stuff on the computer rather than writing it out long-hand. As I write rhymed and metered verse in traditional forms for the most part, the tools on which I rely heavily are a rhyming dictionary, a thesaurus, and a regular dictionary.

My poems are constructed, not inspired. By that I mean that they usually start from an ill-defined idea based on a phrase or an interesting word or perhaps a rhyme, or even a title that comes to me. Then I put them together by selecting words depending on how their meaning, their syllable count, on which of their syllables the accents fall, and their sound or rhyme fit the meter with which I choose to work. I often find that iambic pentameter suits me best. A happy succession of vowel sounds is another effective element.

As I proceed, a theme that I might have had vaguely in mind may begin to take shape, or one that interests me may simply emerge as I go along. When such a trend arises I try to guide the flow of words in that direction. I also start to think about the form into which I want the poem to

Continued on Page 5.

A Gallery of Goodies *continued on page 6*



Blues In Sanity's Key

Mixed Media Art

By **Chad M. Horn**

Harrodsburg, KY

chad@kentuckylit.com

One Way to Do It

Continued from page 4

to develop, i.e. sonnet, villanelle, pantoum, or sometimes simply a narrative that does not correspond to any particular defined form.

As the project advances I have to start planning how to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion. This is particularly important when working with a form that comprises only a certain number of lines or stanzas.

The following piece is about as close as I could come to illustrating what I've set out above:

Synthesis

*It comes about like this: a curtain
Parts
just long enough for fleeting glimpse*

or rhyme or phrase, and then the process starts.

A path may open briefly, then it's blurred;

retracing steps, you give a mental shove,

in hopes that bit by bit you'll find the way

to match the hand you're using with a glove whose fingers fit. You cast about and pray

that fickle flares will flash and flash again

from murky, roiling plasmas where they lurk,

thus jogging laggard Muse, pro pelling pen

to scribble further bits of verse that work.

You'll see your lines advancing, row on row,

though seldom can predict just where they'll go.

Regarding humor, if such there be in my creations, I suppose the basic elements are an amusing concept, deliberate exaggeration or, on the contrary, understatement, word play, alliteration, parody, and often a surprise ending. It's hard to arrive at a definition of humor that will satisfy everyone. Aspiring efforts that strike some readers as hilarious may leave others quite unimpressed. Here's an example:

Lenore

*Intertwined with the dusky Lenore
I was certain I'd chalk up a score.
I thought, Now's my chance,
as I unsheathed my lance,
but she sprang up and quoth,
"Nevermore!"*

All I can add is, this is what works for me.

This article was previously written for the Georgia Poetry Society, 2008.

There Is Such a Thing As Justice After All

What I thought was hard rain was bees smacking on my window. Did the bees think it was a gateway to the Beyond, away from this world?

No; the neighbor was gassing them, causing instant death, then he kicked their nest like it was a football.

Bee corpses sizzled on the lawn, twitching like Christmas lights going out. When the neighbor turned the outside spigot to wash his hands, stinging bees flew out.

*By Martin Willitts, Jr.
Syracuse, NY*



The Gift

No one would deny the Tiny Tot stapler was cute, the ideal size for tucking in a purse or tote, useful for a teacher grading papers. But the look on Mom's face, when she opened the jewelry-sized box and hurled the stapler at Dad was what held that Christmas fast in family memory.

From *Running Counterclockwise*
by Alarie Tennille
Kansas City, MO

Dream Drive Review

Continued from page 2

Already in the first section, we know that betting on horses configures in the arc, but with the section title Horsies, the shift to this childlike register only holds seven poems which sketch real stakes and real names of horses, and a reminder of Pascal’s wager.

The final section, *Portraits of Earth* starts with a violent and unnecessary death of a young Liberian boy. From there, Zeno, Gaia, Adam hold corners of a mirror – shiny as the Dodge on the cover. **Dream Drive** will leave you with haunting reflections, and an urge to join in participating in a *Book of Us*.

Dream Drive

By Jonathan Harris
 Staple Bound: 60 pages
 Publisher: NightBallet Press (2014)
 ISBN-13: 978-1940996653

Sister

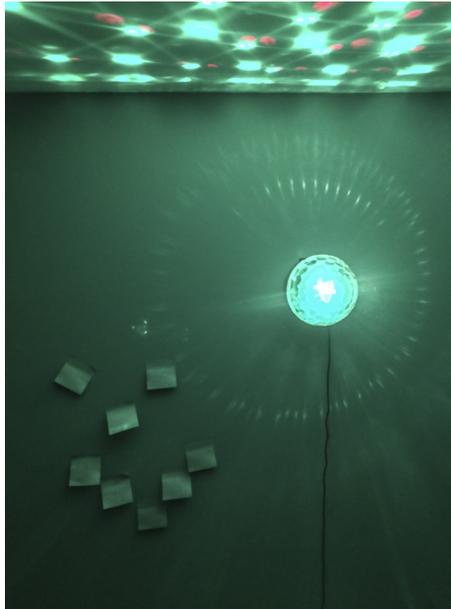
Early,
 barely dawn,
 fog still rides
 the innocent waves,
 still blurs
 the edges of things.

Carolyn, what a surprise!
 You are the shape
 at the water’s edge—
 tall, sea-grass slender.

Once at the ocean
 where you lived in the sand,
 no food in the house,
 we shopped for each meal.
 Husbands, children came and went.
 All is replaceable
 but you,
 bare feet dancing in the waves.

I did not expect to find you
 at Lake Michigan.
 But there!
 the early sun
 traces your fiery footprints
 in the water.

By **Barbara F. Nixon**,
 Rochester, NY
 First published in *The Woman in the Mirror*
 (Palettes & Quills 2004)



Study in Green

Photograph by **Steve Deridder**
 Alviso, CA

Chocolate

Tranquil, like a January farm
 Pond—
 country ice is colder.

Breaths loiter, then freeze
 to windspeaking woodpecker
 echoes. Families & gladsongs
 covey in hoarfrosted hedgerows.

I recall spider monkeys on trick
 ponies, the innocence of things
 unknown, that ‘Tootsie Roll Kid’
 in cowboy boots with play-
 ground
 bully butterflies—
 cottonmouths.

Rapture, like a silver maple
 flashdance. The sanctity
 of old-growth sycamores—
 post-rain halos.

The one-boy treasures in camp-
 fire
 ashes, shared poems &
 Cracker Jack.

By **Kevin Heaton**
 Aiken, SC

Maisie

a slender reed of grace
 stands above my darkened bed
 tiny ringlets of hair
 styled
 to dance with smooth black skin

resounds
 its southern past
 rings out from distant soul
 and song of drum

her legacy still coercing night
 into a space of light

I hear bells of laughter
 my gentle night aide’s beauty
 touches pale threads of white
 breath
 I sense her rhythm for living
 we watch through night and laugh

by **Wynne McClure**
 Henrietta, NY

First published in *Common Intui-
 tions* (Palettes & Quills, 2005)

*Heap on the wood!
 The wind is chill;
 But let it whistle as it will,
 We’ll keep our Christmas merry
 still.*

—**Sir Walter Scott** (1771-1832)



A Gallery of Goodies *continued from page 6*

Criticism

I woke up to the first
snowfall of this winter.
A thick line of snow blanketed
the coiled razor wire atop
the galvanized chain link fence.
A thick white line which divided
the ground from the sky,
the underbrush from the leafless trees,
the no longer lush green lawn
from this no longer clear blue sky.
This snow hazy day locked up alone
to sit with nothing on my mind
after my cell mate, pulled off to court
left the never silent all the more silent,
and even though everyone in here
bears the burden of their own crimes,
My mother's last letter hurt more than
the gallows when she said:
*Not only should you be ashamed of your
self,
you're not really being punished because
you have a roof over your heads,
a warm bed and three meals a day,
a change of clothes and a radio.*
Her criticism, frozen like the snow,
biting like this frost, silence in volumes,
melted somewhat by the last words
of her eloquent, caring last letter,
Have you made any new friends?"

by *Wayne Ray*
London, Ontario, Canada

Pencil Marks

is a monthly newsletter that
encourages submissions of
poems, prose, and artwork.
We seek submissions on an
ongoing and open basis. How-
ever, our **deadline for select-
ing material for the January
2015 issue will be December
15, 2014.**

Submit to
palettesnquills@gmail.com
and note Pencil Marks in the



Reading Aloud to Dad —For Jiggs

Reading aloud—
my daughter often asks for Mommy to
read,
a sorry-Daddy smile in my husband's
direction—
I am good at this.

I managed to sit for hours reading to
you,
even after excuses,
assuring you that my brother,
a good reader himself,
was more than willing.

I could not completely beg off this
time
together,
such little pleasure left for you—
though the words droned on
like steady artifact
interrupting my relentless need.

You paid such close attention,
sometimes asking me to repeat a
sentence,
nodding or smiling appreciation
for an anecdote of Leonard Wolfe's or
a bit of verse by Milne. Your books

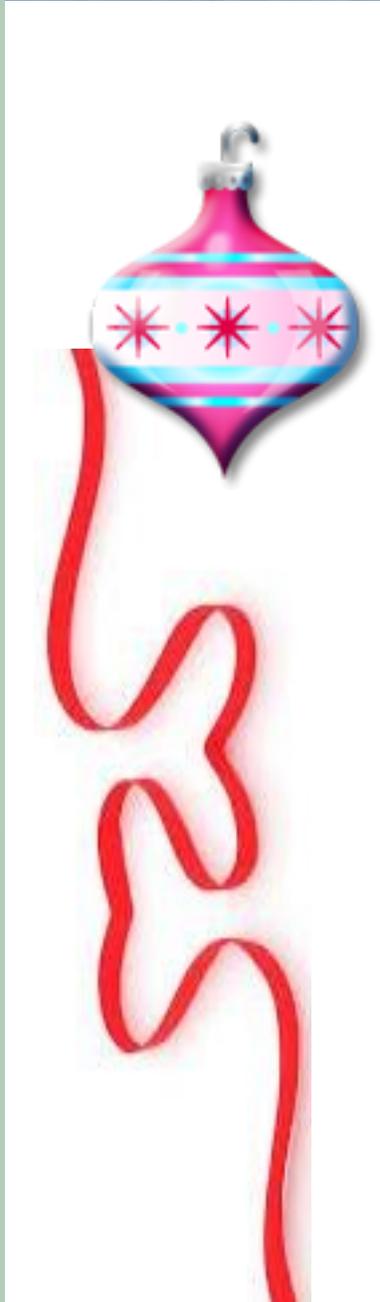
could have held me at any other
moment.

Just then, those final weeks together,
I needed mostly to read you,
to turn page after familiar page,
to palpably mark whole chapters we
have lived.

Not wanting to finish, of course,

Just to hold you—
so worn and loved.

By *Lise Kunkel*
Rochester, NY



Origami and Photography

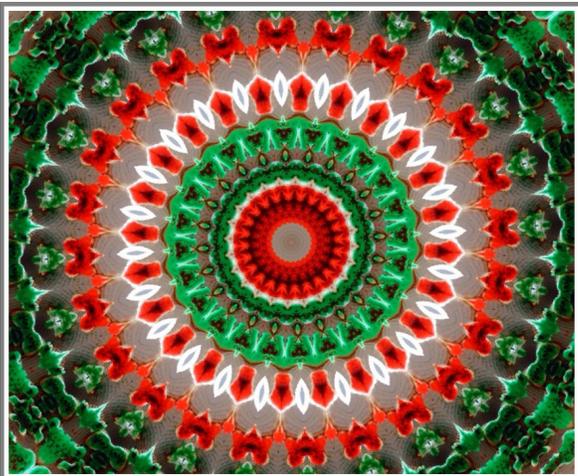
by *Marian Cameron,*
Rochester, NY

I created the festive red and green star shown below from origami double pyramids arranged in a star format and then photographed.

I made the material for the pyramids from photos I took with a kaleidoscope lens. So, each of the points of the star was from a different photograph and then I folded



Below is a a kaleidoscope print of one of the section of the star.



BLUE JAY FEATHER

Blue jay feather the size of a picnic fork, singed along its withers, falls into the middle of my dream→→→ somehow this feather, having nothing to do with the dream, holds the key to my future.

By Alan Britt,
Reisterstown, MD



Blue Jay at Lone Cypress

Photograph by
Ralph X Marbach

Ralphmarbach@comcast.net

Danni's Aura

I heard you coming
over the cobbles
and light broke open
the egg of morning,
leaving you suffused
in a yellow glow.

As we drew closer,
your aura darkened.

By David Michael Nixon
Rochester, NY



December Calendar of Events

Due to all the upcoming holiday festivities, have received information for only one only one event this month: Tuesday, December 9th at 7:30 PM .(come at 7:00 PM for refreshments and mingling) Writers & Books Genesee Reading Series: Hosted by Wanda Schubmehl. Featured readers will be David Delaney and Kitty Jospé. The reading is held in the second floor performance area of Writers & Books, 740 University Avenue, Rochester, NY. \$3 for WAB members/ \$6 for general public.



GENESEE READING SERIES

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

Writers and Books

740 University Avenue

7:30 pm, \$3 members; \$6 public



Kitty Jospé

Kitty Jospé enjoys all the arts, and combines her humanities approach in lectures, classes and tours. In addition to her weekly sessions of poetry appreciation held at the Pittsford and Rundel libraries, she also offers courses at Writers and Books, is a docent at the Memorial Art Gallery, and enjoys collaborations such as the Women in Music festival and connections with area artists and dancers. Her poetry appears in numerous journals, anthologies and in four books: *Golden Smoke* (to be published at the beginning of 2015, Foothills) *Cadences*, (Foothills) *Mosaicq* (Finishing Line Press, semi-finalist, 2012) and companion *Gathering Lines*.

Contact info: kjospe@gmail.com



David James Delaney

David James Delaney, of Canadian Irish decent, grew up in a blue collar neighborhood in Rochester near East High School. Much of his writing wrings out the philosophical and metaphysical complexities of a "so much world for so few."

Pulitzer Prize winner and 2011 Poet Laureate Philip Levine once said of Delaney, "He's got talent, material and sensitivity..." David's poems often echo Levine's themes of poverty, beauty even in harsh upbringing, and themes of the common man, the union worker, and the person you pass on the street, that "someone" Studs Terkel might take an interest in.

He is a board member for Just Poets, currently acting as an editor for *Le Mot Juste*. He has published in several college anthologies, LMJ as well as the Democrat and Chronicle. He also had a play selected and performed at Writers and Books (Two pages/Two Voices). Recently he was invited to speak, and read his poem about unions "Four Over," for the United Autoworkers, Local 1097. David lives in Rochester and Pompano Beach, Florida and is currently at work on his first book.



Palettes &

**Donna M. Marbach,
Editor/Publisher
1935 Penfield Road**



Founded in 2002, Palettes & Quills is devoted to the celebration and expansion of the literary and visual arts, offering both commissioned and consulting services. It works to support beginning and emerging writers and artists to expand their knowledge, improve their skills, and connect to other resources in the community. Further, Palettes & Quills seeks to increase the public's awareness and appreciation of these arts through education, advocacy, hands-on program assistance, and functioning as a small literary press.

Phone: 585-383-0812

E-mail: palettesquills@gmail.com

For the Love of Writing and the Arts

Freshening Up

By Donna M. Marbach
Penfield, NY

Poets are supposed to be fresh and original, but that is difficult. After all, poets have been writing for hundreds of years and have already taken many of the really good ideas. Why do you think that the expression “white as the driven snow” is so popular? Because it is an excellent simile, written by the master himself, William Shakespeare in *The Winter’s Tale*. Unfortunately none of us is Shakespeare and this phrase has been around for 400 years. It is no longer fresh and original. It has become cliché.

As good poets we need to come up with phrases, images, metaphors, and similes that are not clichés. We need to think outside the box. If we want to describe something as white, how else might we do it? What other things are white? Milk, cumulus clouds, a blank piece of



of paper, the foam at the top of a beer, hospital sheets, and the sands on the beach in Puerto Rico. The list is endless. The next time one of those perfect poetic phrases pops into your head, like “My love is as sweet as a red rose.” Stop! Ask yourself, have I heard this before? Yes you have! The poet Robert Burns wrote “My love is like a red, red rose” in 1799 and may have stolen it from an even earlier street ballad. Love as a rose has been done before and it is a cliché. So let’s all practice thinking outside the box (a bit of a cliché itself) and try avoiding clichés and stale images. Here’s a couple of exercises to help you practice:

Exercise #1: finish the following

We’re on the Web

www.palettesquills.com

phrases with as many new expressions as you can: dumber than a, mad as a, meaner than a, hotter than, deaf as, stubborn as. Keep going if you think of more clichés that need freshening up. **Exercise #2:** Think of some new ways to describe love using fresh similes. Love is (color) like, is hot like, is cold like, sounds like, moves like, smells like, looks like. If anything on your list sparks an idea for a poem, write it down. Maybe even send it in to **Pencil Marks!**

