Cuentos 2009 (Vol. 2)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements
2. Dedications
2. Letter from Editors

Poetry
4. Shirin Madad
6. Mary Ann McYat
10. David Ni
14. Aimee Welsh
16-17. Pamela Kasenetz
22. Leigh Bornstein
23. Zayn Copeland

Prose
3. April Barbour

Paintings
Front cover
inside. Mary Reyes
14-15. Shari Flowers
17. Shari Flowers
18-19. Mary Reyes

Photos
3. April Barbour
4. Shirin Madad
5. Jahan Tavakoli
5-6. Homan Wai
7-9. Cody Benthin
8. Homan Wai
10. Shari Flowers
11. Jehan El-Bayoumi
12-13. Cody Benthin
14. Nitin Sardana
20. Shari Flowers
20. Homan Wai
21. Dost Sarpel
22. Mary Ann McYat
22. Jehan El-Bayoumi
23. Mary Ann McYat
24. Katrina Hawkins
25. David Ni

Front Cover
“Railay Sunset”
Railay, Thailand
Cody Benthin

Back Cover
“The Sky is the Limit”
Barcelona, Spain
Jehan El-Bayoumi
Dedications
We dedicate this edition to two special people who have touched our lives: Cheri Camacho and Joyce Pauig. We grew up with Cheri as co-interns, and we will always remember her smile and uplifting spirit. Joyce gave us a positive perspective with her generosity and laughter when we rotated on 4-South. We miss them both dearly.

Letter from the Editors
Transitioning from Sueños to Cuentos, dreams to stories, was seamless from our debut to this second issue. The talent from our attending and resident community is extraordinary. Enjoy the following stories from an amazing group of contributors!

-- Mary Reyes, Mary Ann McYat, Homan Wai, David Ni

The Editors thank the generosity of Dr. Alan Wasserman and Dr. Jehan El-Bayoumi for making this magazine possible. We also thank all the contributors for sharing their work with us.
This is an eight year old boy, Daniel, who I met in Montana Verde, Olancho, Honduras on a medical mission trip. I first met him in 2007, when I went to his village to do a health screening. I heard a heart murmur when I examined him and my heart sank. I knew there was no way he could see a specialist even if his family could afford to take him into Catacamas (the closest town with a clinic) because pediatric cardiologists don’t go to Catacamas. His family told me he had asthma and that is why he got short of breath when he ran, but I knew better. I took this picture last year when I went back to his village. He is still small for his age and so serious, as are most of the children in Montana Verde. He doesn’t understand what I say to him or why I pay so much attention to him, but I know he has a little piece of my heart.

-- April Barbour, M.D.
“Untitled”

Silver scale on paper thin skin.
Every moment leaves parts of him behind.
There’s no hiding the scales on his scalp,
But there’s some hope for the patches on his arm.
30ish and male – he’s come up with
creative ways to hide his scale trail.
Light colored shirts, longer hair at the nape of his neck.
“It’s hard to find a date when you’re worried about looking like a reptile”
he says as he leaves the office.

-- Shirin Madad, M.D.
"Untitled"

Sound of beeps - "Keep your arm straight!"
Noise all the time, "Honey, don’t expect to get peace and quiet here."
Yellow gowns that make my family look like Easter peeps -
"This is so that other patients don’t get MRSA."
Vampire phlebotomist, waking me up at 5,5,5,5,6 -
"This is a teaching hospital after all."
Finally, seeing my attending at 10 am for 5 minutes.
Then staring at the wall or
Watching Oprah every day.
Can someone get me out of here?

-- Mary Ann McYat, M.D.
"Untitled"

A sick patient's body...
A ship at sea, weathered, beaten, aflame.
From bow to stern,
Patchy areas of corrosion, oxidation and twisted metal.
Long abandoned by its crew, it is adrift-
Communication channels dead. Now radio silent.
What must have been a celebrated vessel at its launching...
A ship of the line proud, gleaming, port and polished.
Now obsolete, falling apart.
Salvage crews stumble upon it and examine the inner workings.
The generators barely function. This ship is taking on water.
Unfortunately, despite valiant efforts, it is simply too far gone.
An empty vessel- a relic- a reminder of an era long gone.
Perhaps it could be retrofitted but to what degree?
With each replacement, when does the old ship become a new one?
The fires have been extinguished but all that is left is a charred shell.
The salvaged reflect once more upon the once mighty vessel
Pays their last respects.
One last look before the ship disappears into the abyss.

-- David Ni, M.D.
Overlooking Railay Beach from Thawam Wall, Thailand
Bridging the Gap

If I tell you that you’re dying,
Am I contributing to your death?
Am I stealing your hope?
Or questioning your faith?
Will you appreciate my honesty
And make necessary preparations?
Or will you call into question my
Judgment and competence as a healer?
Can we agree to disagree
And move forward together?
Hoping for a miracle
But accepting we both have limitations.

-- Aimee Welsh, M.D.
Bridging the Gap

If I tell you that you’re dying,  
Am I contributing to your death?  
Am I stealing your hope? 
Or questioning your faith? 
Will you appreciate my honesty 
And make necessary preparations? 
Or will you call into question my 
Judgment and competence as a 
healer? 
Can we agree to disagree 
And move forward together? 
Hoping for a miracle 
But accepting we both 
have limitations.

-- Aimee Welsh, M.D.
Calling the Trauma

The path of staples
Gutted a crass and ribald familiarity
Of the decaying tracks where he battled
For one more howl against the knife.

Mama’s first born son
Relaxing in a lifeless drama
Of plastic tubes and tentacles
The horrifying vomitus emerging
Only to remind
In death
There is no gag
There are no pulses
And no data to suggest that
Eleven minutes of cardiac massage
Breeds miracles
Death is calm.

Someone wanted blood for blow
Simple, really
And there was sweat, wet,
In static beads suspended
Above cold and pliant flesh.

But the crowd still wondered
In the collective shadows of their faith
As one casually recalls a bedtime tenet
If G-d would understand
“a ruptured left ventricle, status post
penetrating trauma.”

They learned once
Youth could be funny
And serve a curious criterion for
resurrection
So into the heart of the trauma bay
Saviors poured
And descended.

So came the staples
To hide open indiscretions
From his Jesus, his Allah
Each push of the gun burned a new letter
Offered a false eulogy
While voices lost in logistics
Ushered him toward whichever heaven
Mourned him.

A knife again
Immaculate, conceived to open the cage
Close a broken pericardium
And redirect rivers through empty tributaries
Bathed in red, bathed in darkness
He might have seen the locusts
Through pupils fixed and dilated
Toward fluorescent skies.

-- Pamela Kasenetz, M.D.
On Considering Magritte’s “Le Empire De Lumieres”

We’ve been there before: in the spurious trance of alpha waves where electrical pulses fuel a sickly mustard glow others in life in Bayeux, perhaps, with the quiet rusted lamps that hide a trail of blood and thread

The eye tracks familiar glimpses of logic in shadows of comfort in corners until it catches an oily reflection slicked atop lost ripples we can not trust and the woven waves on canvas mimic palpitating hearts.

We have no choice but to turn to windows: diaphoretic and impossible they beat gaseous in vermilion dreams and we pray our sleepy psyche remembers Bayeux at its dusk

What light that highlights gesso raped the swords of breathless horsemen lost in madness and in darkness pushing taut toward the yarn…

Wincing at the Empire,
I resolve
the power of misplaced color in dreams in men crying promises of light as they charge the spears at their dark end.

-- Pamela Kasenetz, M.D.
“Untitled”

I am an 85 year old man who suffered an anoxic brain injury during a cardiac catheterization about 6 months ago. Before this happened to me, my wife suffered an event which led her to be in a coma for 3 weeks. She miraculously awoke. I had my children promise to never give up on me if something similar should happen. Now 6 months later I am unresponsive. I have had several infections in my blood, urine and lungs.

My breathing is controlled by a ventilator. Whenever my doctors try to take me off the machine, I fail their test. My kidneys no longer work so my blood is detoxified by dialysis. My body no longer works on its own. I am only being kept alive by artificial means. The neurology doctors have said I am brain dead and I am a risk for giving other people infections. My kids have not given up on me, but now I think I have changed my mind. How can I let them know?

-- Leigh Bornstein, M.D.
"S."

Shiny pockmarked discolored skin
Covers her sagging face
I have never seen her smile.
A toothless mouth
that ages this 50 year old woman
20 more years.
Her sagging breasts rest on her
bloated abdomen.
Her large swollen legs
are too weak to support her.
Her husband patiently sits in the
electric wheelchair.
He drove here just for her.
"Doctor, my hands are always
so cold."

-- Zayn Copeland, M.D.
“Hannah”
Katrina Hawkins, M.D.