



The Unknown Good in Our Enemies: The Poetry of William Stafford and Poetry from the Middle East

Several years ago I saw a memorable PBS program on World War I, which included an account of what's come to be known as the "Christmas Truce of 1914."

The truce was not official, but on December 24, for reasons unknown, many thousands of German and British troops all along the Western Front spontaneously stopped their fighting, sang carols, shouted Christmas greetings to each other, and spent much of the night and the next day fraternizing with each other in "no man's land" between the trenches, exchanging souvenirs and small gifts of food, alcohol, and tobacco. In most places the truce lasted through Christmas night, but in some it lasted till January 1.

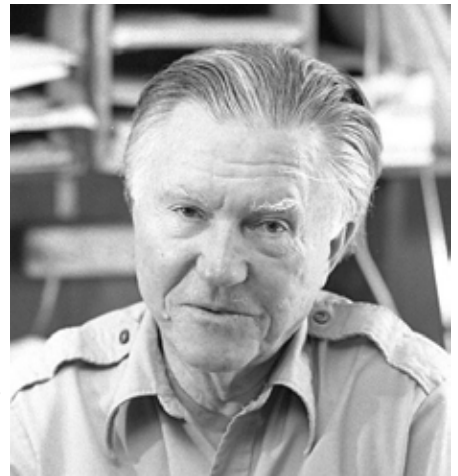
How could it be possible, I asked myself, for soldiers to recognize their enemies as human beings like themselves, to make merry together, and the next day return to killing each other?

More to the moment, what makes it still so hard—all around the globe—for people whose countries are at war with other countries, or threatening to go to war, or fighting within their own borders, to not imagine their perceived "enemies" as complex individuals who have parents and children, wives and husbands; people who fall in love and flirt and get jealous and laugh and cry and rage like anyone else? Equally hard: to distinguish those who have attacked us from the cultures which gave them birth.

One of our solemn duties as teachers of language and literature is to help our students keep, or to regain, the open minds they were born with. Whether or not we agree or disagree with choices made by our government, the future well-being of our children and *their* children depends on their ability to imagine a more peaceful world.

"Violence is a failure of the imagination," said poet

William Stafford, (1914–1993), a Conscientious Objector during World War II who spent three years in work camps in Arkansas, California, and Illinois, fighting fires and building and maintaining roads and trails.



William Stafford

The author of over 50 books of poems, and a professor of English at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, Stafford was Oregon's Poet Laureate for many years and served (1971–1972) as poetry consultant to the Library of Congress, a position now called United States Poet Laureate.

Winner of the National Book Award, and an enormously admired writer, he traveled thousands of miles each year to give readings and to encourage aspiring poets throughout the United States, Egypt, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Germany, Austria, Poland and many other countries.

An advocate of free expression in writing and speech, of peace and reconciliation, and of respecting human differences—in small, daily acts as well as those that make history—William Stafford's poetry is as disarmingly accessible as he was in person. And as thought-provoking.

Years ago I heard Stafford read one of his most

widely-anthologized poems, "A Ritual to Read to Each Other."

I was deeply moved by its eloquent plea for the need for community, clarity and insight as we interact with each other and the world. It's a poem I've learned by heart and often— in my visits to classrooms—recite.

A Ritual to Read to Each Other

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our
star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood
storming out to play through the broken dike.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,
a remote important region in all who talk;
though we could fool each other, we should consider—
lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give— yes or no, or maybe—
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

In another Stafford poem, "Five A.M.," the peacefulness of an early morning walk in his neighborhood leads him into imagining that his love of home and place is shared by unknown, peaceful people around the world.

Still dark, the early morning breathes
a soft sound above the fire. Hooded
lights on porches lead past lawns,
a hedge; I pass the house of the couple
who have the baby, the yard with the little
dog; my feet pad and grit on the pavement, flicker
past streetlights; my arms alternate
easily to my pace. Where are my troubles?

There are people in every country who never
turn into killers, saints have built
sanctuaries on islands and in valleys,
conquerors have quit and gone home, for thousands
of years farmers have worked their fields.
My feet begin the uphill curve
where a thicket spills with birds every spring.
The air doesn't stir. Rain touches my face.

The Friends of William Stafford is a not-for-profit organization created by Oregon readers and writers in the years immediately after Stafford's death. Its advisory board consists of nationally-recognized poets from around the United States.

The primary goal of FWS is "to raise common awareness of the power of poetry and literature by modeling the legacy, life, and works of poet William Stafford."

Its website, <http://www.williamstafford.org>, offers direct links to dozens of Stafford poems; to the new William Stafford Online Archives at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, with links to many more poems, to film and audio clips, to a bibliography of primary works; and to information about the annual William Stafford Commemorative Celebrations held each January (the month of his birth) for over ten years: in coffee houses, libraries, high school and college campuses, state and national parks, even bakeries, private homes, and a prison— wherever poetry can be read to appreciative audiences.

Different from most poetry readings, these popular "celebrations" often feature four or five local poets, each of whom reads a Stafford poem and one of their own written in the spirit of Stafford's work. Some events also include speakers or panels on a particular Stafford topic or theme. After the featured presentations, audience members are invited to read a favorite Stafford poem or to share thoughts and memories of the poet. This past January (2011) over 50 birthday celebrations took place throughout the United States and overseas.

As a lifetime member of FWS, I have for many years coordinated "birthday celebrations" in Eugene, Oregon, where I live. This year we did something new. The title of this year's program, like that of this article, was drawn from Stafford's poem "For the Unknown Enemy."

For the Unknown Enemy

This monument is for the unknown
good in our enemies. Like a picture
their life began to appear: they
gathered at home in the evening
and sang. Above their fields they saw
a new sky. A holiday came
and they carried the baby to the park
for a party. Sunlight surrounded them.

Here we glimpse what our minds long turned
away from. The great mutual
blindness darkened that sunlight in the park,
and the sky that was new, and the holidays.
This monument says that one afternoon

we stood here letting a part of our minds
escape. They came back, but different.
Enemy: one day we glimpsed your life.

This monument is for you.

Believing, with Stafford, in the need to banish myths and stereotypes, and that one way to glimpse our “enemies” is through the arts, this year we opened our Stafford celebration with eight Oregon poets and writers, reading poems (in translation) from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, prose from Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish’s *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, and poems from the forthcoming anthology *Before We Have Nowhere to Stand: Israel/Palestine: Poets Respond to the Struggle* (see “Resources,” on p. 6).

Whether the United States is technically “at war” with these countries was not the issue, though two of these countries, Israel and Palestine, have long been engaged in violent conflict with each other. What was and *still is* the issue with the other three countries is that the United States is engaged in military combat within two of them and has been contemplating combat in a third. What *is also* an issue: we have here at home a widespread *perception* of Muslims— the majority population of the Middle East—as *potential* enemies.

Despite what scholars of Islam tell us, many Americans believe that Islam is rooted in violence. That Islam advocates violence. That Muslims are not to be trusted. How many steps are we from the kind of thinking, during World War II, that sent 110,000 Japanese-Americans into internment camps throughout our Western United States?

Our hope for our Stafford program in Eugene was not to politicize our audience or to persuade them from dangerous generalizations. Our hope, instead, was to open doors to insights and new understanding; to create a program where all of us could for just one hour “be awake” together and be strengthened by it.

As an NCTE poetry consultant, my own hope is that similar moments of insight can happen also in our schools. That we can find ways to help our students experience firsthand—without our needing to preach or politicize—the hopes and fears, dreams and despairs, of people in and from the Middle East.

Perhaps—is it possible?—we don’t even need to create a “unit” of poetry from the Middle East, or even to announce that we’re doing something different. Is it possible to merely *include* poems such as those below, into our regular lesson plans on reading and writing poems, alongside poems we already know and love to teach?

Here are three short poems on the universal theme of love and one on the increasingly-universal theme of exile.

The other girls are starting with new loves,
But I am piecing the tatters of an old love together.

*

If you did not know how to love,
Why then did you awaken my sleeping heart?

*

My love, come quickly and appease him,
The horse of my heart has broken every bridle.

*

It is springtime, here the leaves are sprouting on the trees,
But in my land the trees have lost their foliage under the hail of enemy bullets.

These short, anonymous poems from women in Afghanistan are called *landays*. They are part of the oral literature of village people and conform to strict rules of structure: two lines of nine and thirteen syllables. An accurate syllable count is almost impossible to translate, of course. Could we ask our students to try *landays* of their own, counting syllables—or not? *Songs of Love and War: Afghan Women’s Poetry* (NY: Other Press, 2003) is full of examples.

The poem below is by a contemporary poet, living in Iraq:

Drawing

The teacher asked the students
To draw whatever they wanted.
The son of the principal drew
A new Chevrolet.
The son of the developer drew
A complex of markets and hotels.
The son of the party member drew
An armored car.
And the daughter of the school deliveryman
Drew a piece of bread.

Lateef Hel met, translated by Soheil Najm

Was anyone besides me startled to realize there are Chevrolets in Iraq? Would a similar set of drawings come out of classrooms in the US? For further inquiry: why are the first three Iraqi students “sons” and the fourth, a “daughter”? Could *our* students use this poem as a model, and write their own lists?

Turning to poems from *ancient* Iraq, Minnesota poet Cass Dalgligh gives us a vibrant, contemporary rendition, in English, of poems originally written on clay tablets, in cuneiform script, by the first poet in recorded

history to sign her name to her work, the first identifiable poet, Enheduanna.

“She was a real person,” says Dalglish, “one we know actually existed because of evidence in historical records and literary documents, and on archeological discs that include her image.” Four thousand years ago, in an age when women could be religious leaders, Enheduanna lived in ancient Sumer, the “cradle of civilization,” in the cities of Ur and Uruk, southeast of today’s Baghdad.

Humming the Blues is Dalglish’s book-length interpretation, in 41 parts, of Enheduanna’s song to Inanna, “the wild woman god who wanders through ancient myth on her way to hell and back again.”

In these remarkably lyrical prose poems, we see a passionate spirit in love with the mysteries of the universe, presenting in a first-person mix of narration and meditation—with a heightened use of imagery—the archetypal story of Inanna, whom she exalts, calling her “sister,” while presenting a sense of her own role as a poet and priest. (*Humming the Blues: Inspired by Nin-Me-Sar-Ra, Enheduanna’s Song to Inanna*. Corvallis, OR: Calyx Books, 2008.)

Sister

sometimes I think I ought to call you the Queen of the May—the way you toss light, like yellow dandelions out of a basket, here and there; or maybe I should call you god, the way you’ve wrapped the laws of heaven and earth around your waist like a belt, the way you skim over chaos like a quicksilver river. But I call you Sister because you’re like the rest of us, opening like a pale morning, swelling like a storm, clutching the torch of longing to your breast until you feel life at your throat, until you’re all dressed up in flames. Sweet Sister, you know it all. A woman’s desire is deep, and you’re the measure of it.

I’m the instrument

playing your mystical songs. I’m the priest, chanting your holy words. I, Enheduanna, the poet who writes this verse for you. I hold onto your words like treasure, I wear your words like precious stones. And when I cup them in my hands, they’re weightless, like petals from a dry rose, so I blow them to the north, south, east and west . . . and from my room high above the city your song drifts to people everywhere.

Here are some poems by Rumi, the renowned 13th century poet from Persia, an area now known as Iran, given to us in English by Coleman Barks.

The minute I heard my first love story,

I started looking for you, not knowing
how blind that was.

Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere,
they’re in each other all along.

*

When I am with you, we stay up all night,
When you’re not here, I can’t get to sleep.
Praise God for these two insomnias!
And the difference between them.

When first encountering Rumi, my response was something like when I first saw the PBS series “I, Claudius”: you mean people in Roman times made love? Had affairs? As our students might say, “Well, duh.” But am I alone in having been slow to grasp—really grasp—that people in ancient Rome, or in ancient Persia, or anywhere in our history books, were once young and passionate? And if we can admit this, think how much else we might come to understand.

A stunning new anthology titled *Before We Have Nowhere to Stand: Palestine/Israel: Poets Respond to the Struggle*, compiled by poet Joan Dobbie (the daughter of Holocaust survivors) and her niece, poet Grace Beeler, appears later this year from Lost Horse Press.

Many of the poets between these covers mourn and/or rage against the violence that continues between their two peoples; many work at trying to understand; still other poets offer cherished memories. Here are excerpts from a poem titled “Almond Blossoms,” by Dana Negev, Israeli-American:

I stumbled across a family
Who spoke not my language
When I was hiding amongst the trees,
They were having lunch
And I was running from
My own family who spoke only
Of everyday things
And couldn’t imagine
The secrets of the almond blossoms.

...

When I was older
I met my lover there
Under the almond grove
We came in spring
When the blossoms appeared
And covered my head and eyes
And white cotton dress
And bare feet.
My lover said I was like the blossoms
I gave him an orange. We danced
We heard the playing of a flute

...

If poetry helps us see ourselves in the lives of others, it also helps us feel experiences *not* our own. We in our country encourage pride and patriotism and love of our common heritage. Many of us cherish memories from a childhood identified with being American. Do young people in other countries do the same? What if we moved to another country and raised our children there, and someday someone from our beloved home country did an unspeakable thing? Such has been the dilemma faced by poet Naomi Shihab Nye, born in the U.S. of an American mother and a Palestinian father, raised to believe in the goodness in both cultures.

Blood

"A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands," my father would say. And he'd prove it, cupping the buzzer instantly while the host with the swatter stared.

In the spring our palms peeled like snakes.
True Arabs believed watermelon could heal fifty ways.
I changed these to fit the occasion.

Years before, a girl knocked,
wanted to see the Arab.
I said we didn't have one.
After that, my father told me who he was,
"Shihab" — "shooting star" —
a good name, borrowed from the sky.
Once I said, "When we die, we give it back?"
He said that's what a true Arab would say.

Today the headlines clot in my blood.
A little Palestinian dangles a truck on the front page.
Homeless fig, this tragedy with a terrible root
is too big for us. What flag can we wave?
I wave the flag of stone and seed,
table mat stitched in blue.

I call my father, we talk around the news.
It is too much for him,
neither of his two languages can reach it.
I drive into the country to find sheep, cows,
to plead with the air:
Who calls anyone civilized?
Where can the crying heart graze?
What does a true Arab do now?

The teaching of poetry is and always has been challenging. When we teach poetry from other cultures, the challenges are greater still. Sometimes it's only faith that keeps us going: faith that we are making a difference in our students' lives, whether they know it or not. Faith that the seeds of insight we offer will take root, grow,

and someday blossom into compassion and the courage to stand for peace.

It's happening. Just today I read this on Facebook, by poet Doug Anderson at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut:

"In case anyone's interested in what the Quran actually says about other monotheistic religions: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we Bow to Allah in Islam.' English Translation by Yusuf Ali."

And down below was this reply from Richard Lemin, a middle school history teacher in Edmond, Oklahoma:

"I just finished a chapter on Ancient Arabia with my sixth graders. Read them the passage you quoted, taught them the Five Pillars, and played a video of the Adhan (Call to Prayer) done by Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens). Then pointed out popular Arabian legacies in our culture, including the story of the Djinni from Arabian Nights, their invention of the guitar, and Arabic numerals. . . ."

Separately we go on doing what we do, each in our own ways. We are not alone.

There are people on a parallel way. We do not see them often, or even think of them often, but it is precious to us that they are sharing the world. Something about how they have accepted their lives, or how the sunlight happens to them, helps us to hold the strange, enigmatic days in line for our own living.

.....

here is a smoke
signal, unmistakable but unobtrusive — we are following what comes, going through the world, knowing each other, building our little fires.
(from "Smoke Signals," by William Stafford)

Bibliography: Works Cited in This Article

Anonymous Afghan women. Four *landays* in *Songs of Love and War: Afghan Women's Poetry*. Edited by Sayd Bahondine Majrouh. Trans. by Marjolijn De Jager. NY: Other Press, 2003.

Dalglish, Cass. "Sister" and "I'm the Instrument," from *Humming the Blues: Inspired by Nin-Me-Sar-Ra, Enheduanna's Song to Inanna*. Corvallis, OR: Calyx Press, 2008.

Helmet, Lateef. "Drawing," in *Flowers of Flame: The Unheard Voices of Iraq*. Ed. by Sadek Mohammed, Soheil Najm, Haider Al-Kabi and Dan Veach. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2008.

Negev, Dana. "Almond Blossoms," in *Before We Have Nowhere to Stand: Israel/Palestine: Poets Respond to the Struggle*. Sandpoint, ID: Lost Horse Press, forthcoming 2011.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. "Blood," in *19 Varieties of Gazelle*. NY: HarperCollins, 2002. Originally published in *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems* by Naomi Shihab Nye. Portland, OR: Far Corner Books, 1995.

Rumi. From the poem "Music Master," in *The Essential Rumi*. Coleman Barks, translator. NY: Castle Books, HarperCollins, 1997.

Stafford, William. "A Ritual to Read to Each Other," "Five A.M.," "For the Unknown Enemy" in *Every War Has Two Losers: William Stafford on Peace and War*. Ed. and with an introduction by Kim Stafford. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2003.

Stafford, William. "Smoke Signals: A Dedication," in *A Glass Face in the Rain*. NY: Harper & Row, 1982.

About the Author

Ingrid Wendt is a poetry consultant with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). She is the author of four prizewinning books of poems and one chapbook, co-editor of the two anthologies—*From Here We Speak: An Anthology of Oregon Poetry* and *In Her Own Image: Women Working in the Arts*—and *Starting with Little Things: A Guide to Writing Poetry in the Classroom*.

A popular keynote speaker and in-service workshop presenter, she has taught for over 30 years in arts-in-education programs in many states, at all grade levels, and overseas. Her next book of poems, *Evensong*, appears in late summer, 2011, from Truman State University Press.

Wendt's April 2011 keynote to the Oregon State Poetry Association Spring conference will be "Poetry in Times of Crisis."

You can see a Youtube video of a reading she gave at Portland State University in November 2010 at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY5cVpjn6Gw>

Resources

The amount and variety of publications of poetry

from the Middle East, in print and online, is enormous. Our 2-hour program could easily have been a week-long conference. As it was, one hour for five countries was barely scratching the surface.

I was looking specifically for poetry from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. Anthologists Joan Dobbie and Grace Beeler contributed poems from Palestine and Israel, taken from their forthcoming book (see anthologies). The resources below do not include works they consulted.

My search was for material that would work specifically for our program. It was not meant to be exhaustive or academic.

Below is a sampling of what I have found, with the help of friends in Eugene (OR), various search engines, and many Facebook friends and friends of friends who responded to my call for help.

Resources: Anthologies

Before We Have Nowhere To Stand, Israel/Palestine: Poets Respond to the Struggle, Anthology edited by Joan Dobbie and Grace Beeler. (Sandpoint, ID: Dark Horse Press, forthcoming 2011.)

Tablet & Pen: Literary Landscapes from the Modern Middle East (Words Without Borders), Reza Aslan, editor. (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010. See on Amazon.com.)

Literature from the "Axis of Evil": Writings from Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and Other Enemy Nations. (Words Without Borders: The Online Magazine for International Literature, 2006. <http://wordswithoutborders.org/issue/september-2006/>. This became a print anthology with the same title, published by New Press, 2007. See on Amazon.com.)

Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia, and Beyond, ed. Tina Chang, Nathalie Handal, and Ravi Shankar. (NY: Norton, 2008. See on Amazon.com.)

Flowers of Flame: Unheard Voices of Iraq, ed. by Sadek Mohammed and others. (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2008. See on Amazon.com or Michigan State University Press website.)

Songs of Love and War: Afghan Women's Poetry, Sayd Bahodine Majrouh (Editor), Marjolijn De Jager (Translator), Andre Velter (Translator). (NY: Other Press, November 18, 2003. See on Amazon.com.)

Poetry International, Issue 10, 2006. Poems from 20 Iraqi poets. <http://poetryinternational.sdsu.edu/10.htm>

Special Iran issue of the *Atlanta Review*, ed. Sholeh Wolpe. <http://www.atlantareview.com/iran.html>

Strange Times, My Dear: The PEN Anthology of Contem-

porary *Iranian Literature*, ed. by Mahid Mozaffari and Ahmad Karimii Hakkak. (NY: Arcade Publishing, 2005.)

Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: Iranian Women of the Diaspora, ed. by Persis Karim and Al Young. (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2006. See on Amazon.com.)

The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology, ed. by Nathalie Handal. (Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing Group, 2000.)

Resources: Poets, Writers, Editors, and Websites

William Stafford published over 67 books in his 79 years. For a complete bibliography, see <http://www.williamstafford.org> and follow the links. Among his best-known are the following:

William Stafford. *Down in My Heart* (based on his experiences as a conscientious objector, first published 1947 by Bretheren Publishing House. 3rd ed., with introduction by Kim Stafford. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1998.)

William Stafford. *Traveling through the Dark*, winner, National Book Award. (NY: Harper & Row, 1962.)

William Stafford. *Stories That Could Be True: New and Collected Poems*. (NY: Harper & Row, 1977.)

William Stafford. *A Glass Face in the Rain: New Poems*. (NY: Harper & Row, 1982.)

William Stafford. *The Darkness around Us Is Deep* (a wide selection from many books), ed. Robert Bly. (NY: HarperCollins, 1993.)

William Stafford. *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems*. (Minneapolis: Graywolf, 1999.)

From and about the Middle East

Website: **Radio Without Borders** at

<http://www.wpr.org/hereonearth/>

See the award-winning series "Inside Islam: Dialogues and Debates" at http://www.wpr.org/hereonearth/archive_ii.cfm

Mahmoud Darwish, one of Palestine's most celebrated poets, died in 2008. Look at *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems*. Trans. by Carolyn Forché, Munir Akash, Sinan Antoon, and America El-Zein (University of California Press, 2003). *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Mahmoud Darwish. Trans. by Ibrahim Muhawi. (Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, Nov. 2010.)

See **Reza Aslan** on the Colbert Report:

<http://wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/reza-aslan-talks-tablet-pen-on-the-colbert-report/>

Born in Iran, currently Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, and editor of *Tablet & Pen: Literary Landscapes from the Modern Middle East* (see above), Aslan makes important distinctions between most Muslims and the extremists. Reza Aslan's personal webpage: <http://www.rezaaslan.com/index.html>

Sholeh Wolpe is an award-winning poet, literary translator and writer. Born in Iran, she has lived in England, Trinidad and the United States. She is a regional editor of *Tablet & Pen: Literary Landscapes from the Modern Middle East* edited by Reza Aslan (see above), the editor of the 2010 Iran issue of the *Atlanta Review* and the editor of an upcoming anthology of poems from Iran, *The Forbidden: Poems from Iran and its exiles* (University of Michigan State Press, 2011.) She is also poetry editor of *Levantine Review*, an online journal about the Middle East. <http://www.sholehwolpe.com/AboutSholeh/index.html>

Poet Esther Kamkar, born in Iran, lives in Palo Alto, California. She sent writings by two Iraqi women living in exile. (*Flowers of Flame*, above, has few women poets.)

Marian Haddad lives in San Antonio, TX and works as a lecturer, manuscript consultant, and freelance writer. <http://www.marianhaddad.com/>

Raya Asee is an Iraqi refugee, now living in Scandinavia. In 2007 she had to flee Iraq without her son, now living with relatives in Jordan. She is an artist and writer. Her work is not online.

See Esther Kamkar's poems at

<http://www.estherkamkar.com/>

Kamkar is a featured poet on the website at

<http://iranianamericanwriters.org/>

Persis Karim, editor of *Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: Iranian Women of the Diaspora*, is an American-Iranian poet and professor teaching at San Jose State University, CA.

<http://www.persiskarim.com/index.html>

See samples and reviews of Karim's work at

<http://www.persiskarim.com/publications.html>

Expatriate poet **Saadi Youssef** was born in 1934 near Basra, Iraq. He is considered to be among the greatest living Arab poets. Youssef has published 25 volumes of poetry, a book of short stories, a novel, four volumes of essays, a memoir, and numerous translations. In addition to being imprisoned for his poetry and politics, he has won numerous literary awards and recognitions. He now lives in London.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saadi_Youssef

Palestinian-American poet **Naomi Shihab Nye**, born in Texas to an American mother and Palestinian father, is one of today's best-known poets. <http://www.barclayagency.com/nye.html>

Nye is the author and/or editor of more than 25 volumes, including seven prize-winning poetry anthologies for young readers.

The following sites are devoted to poetry from Afghanistan:

<http://www.afghanland.com/poetry/poetry.html>

<http://www.poetrytranslation.org/poets/filter/country/Afghanistan>

<http://www.afghan-web.com/culture/poetry/poems.html>

Films

William Stafford Documentaries

What the River Says, by Michael Markee and Vince Wixon, is a portrait-documentary, in which Stafford talks about his work, details of his life as a writer, and his beliefs about writing. TTTD Productions, 1989.

The Life of the Poem, by Michael Markee and Vince Wixon, presents narrative, journal entries, and poem drafts in the creation of three Stafford poems. TTTD Productions, 1992.

The Methow River Poems, by Michael Markee and Vince Wixon. This documentary takes the viewer from William Stafford at his desk through his commission to write a series of poems to be used as roadside signs along the Methow River on the North Cascade Highway in central Washington. TTTD Productions, 1997.

William Stafford and Robert Bly: A Literary Friendship, by Haydn Reiss. William Stafford and Robert Bly read their poems and talk about the art and craft of poetry. Magnolia Films, 1994.

Every War Has Two Losers, by Haydn Reiss. Based on the journals of William Stafford, this powerful film presents another point of view on warmaking and its ability to create security. It was shown recently on PBS. Includes Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, W.S. Merwin, Robert Bly, Naomi Shihab Nye, Michael Meade, Coleman Barks, and others. Zinc Films, 2009.

Haydn Reiss has also produced a film titled *Rumi: Poet of the Heart*, which has been shown on PBS. See <http://www.rumipoet.com/>

Feature Films: Drama/Fiction

This is just a sampling of films from the Middle East. Please screen for subject and age appropriateness.

Iran

The Color of Paradise (Nahud Majidi, director)

Children of Heaven (Nahud Majidi, director)

The Song of Sparrows (Nahud Majidi, director)

Israel

Broken Wings (Nir Bergman, director)

Walk on Water (Eytan Fox, director)

The Syrian Bride (Eran Riklis, director)

Another Road Home (Israel/Palestine)(Danae Elon, director). See also: Palestine and Arabs in America/Canada

Lemon Tree (Eran Riklis, director). See also: Palestine

Afghanistan

Kandahar (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, director)

The Kite Runner (Mark Forster, director)

Osama (Siddiq Barmak, director)

Palestine

Paradise Now (Hany Abu-Assad, director)

Wedding in Galilee (Michel Khleifi, director)

The Milky Way (Ali Nassar, director)

Lemon Tree (Eran Riklis, director). See also: Israel

Another Road Home (Israel/Palestine)(Danae Elon, director). See also: Israel and Arabs in America/Canada

Rana's Wedding (Hany Abu-Assad, director)

Iraq

Turtles Can Fly (Bahman Ghobadi, director)

My Country, My Country (Laura Poitras, director)

Marooned in Iraq (Bahman Ghobadi, director)

Arabs in America/Canada

Amreeka (Cherien Dabis, director)

Sabah: A Love Story (Ruba Nadda, director)

Another Road Home (Israel/Palestine)(Danae Elon, director)

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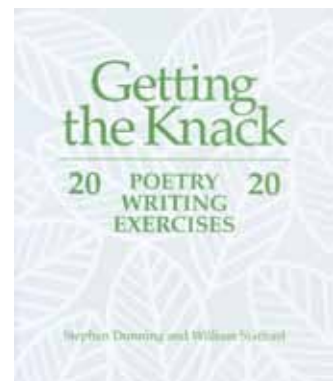
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