
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Poets on Craft: Gloria Macher and Cora Siré

Bunkong Tuon · Monday, March 14th, 2022

For this sixty-fourth post in our Poets on Craft series, we have Gloria Macher and Cora Siré.

Poets on Craft is a cyberspace for contemporary poets to share their thoughts and ideas on the process of poetry and for students to discover new ways of approaching the writing of poetry. In the face of a pandemic that is both viral and political, it is a resource for strength and creativity, friendship and beauty, love and rejuvenation. It is thus a celebration of the beautiful and eclectic minds of contemporary poets.

The format is as follows. I emailed poets these questions: “Generally speaking, how do you build a poem? How do you start a poem? How do you move from one line to the next? How do you know when to end a poem?”

With the exception of length requirement, poets are free to respond in whatever manner they find appropriate to their styles and concerns.

Access to Poets on Craft is democratic. Generally speaking, anyone can have free access to these posts. With that said, please consider supporting our poets by clicking on the links in their bios and purchasing their work.

This series is intended for educational purposes only.



International Award Winner, **Gloria Macher**, based in Montreal, has published seven books in Spanish, short stories and poems in English and French in several literary magazines in Canada and abroad. *Desplazamientos*, a poetry collection, is her latest published work.

Writing for me is an instrument of social-political and self-inquiry. I write to try to understand and share my sensibilities and worries about social, economic, political, and identity issues and to stress the importance of human values and dignity. Writing is about awakening consciousness and paving ways to better deal with our human condition. I believe in the power of the word. At least, in questioning and reflecting about life, if it is not possible to go concretely further towards real change.

My mixed European and Latin American family background, my life experience in the Americas, South and North, have soaked me into worlds of differences, inequalities, contrasts, just to mention a few dualistic nouns. They are the raw, unconscious, and conscious material that make up my prose and poetry. These two different writing spaces allow me to express my secret and deep concerns about our humanity. Prose is the place where I pick up my research and analytical instruments and mix them with the sentiments and the idiosyncrasies of my characters. Poetry is the space where I deposit feelings and emotions.

I prioritize free verse in poetry because I feel it gives me a more liberated intimate space. Lately, using periods is becoming a nuisance to me and I am tending towards experimentation in the layout of my words.

I start a poem with a definite feeling or idea I want to develop. Then, I usually imagine myself in a geographical location, it could be anywhere around the world. Normally a place I have visited, not necessarily lived. It is from this place in my head that I will write my poem. In writing novels, I imagine my characters physically and have them walk with me wherever I go. In poetry, I am the only one inside and ready to start a journey with the first line that I write which will take me to different scenarios, and even sometimes, I will finish in a different geographical location from where I started. I am free within the poetic space, not caring about acceptability, rules, or other kinds of constructed limitations. I follow my gut. The only limitation that I give myself is to respect the initial idea or feeling. I work to stay on track.

Even though I consider poetry a very intimate space, I write it intending to share it. I don't have a particular public in mind while writing poetry and I don't think about others before or after doing it. But, I share it because I like the idea of contributing to the human experience. I am aware that once I am offering it to others it is not mine anymore. Interpretations and reactions may vary. It takes a life of its own. It becomes a different child for everyone and I find this very exciting.

The challenge of writing poetry for me revolves around the chosen word. For me, each word weighs heavily in the total output when writing poetry. I feel I am in front of giants made of crystals that I can break or mistreat. I am naked inside a box filled with words. There's a process of introspection that might make me feel anxious until I choose the word. I guess this adrenaline rush is also part of my excitement when writing poetry.

Reviewing my poetry is so cathartic and important for me. The satisfaction of thinking I am done, even if I really think that I am never done, there is always something I can change, gives me a sense of fulfilment, and launches me to another poetic adventure.



Cora Siré is a poet, novelist and short story writer. She is the author of five books. Her latest collection of poetry, *Not in Vain You've Sent Me Light* was published by Guernica Editions in 2021.

In my poetry practice I try to be receptive to two layers of imaginative work – the *magic* and the *nitty-gritty*. Both require an opening up, a state of clarity, self-awareness, and sometimes courage.

The *magic* is when an idea comes to you. This can happen when you're doing something mundane. Or sometimes the idea bounces off the page of a book you're reading that resonates deeply.

This magical moment conjures an image, theme or opening line that emerges in response to some deeper emotion. Outrage, for example, can be a powerful creative fuel, or despair. Also, passion or the intense caring you feel about someone, a creature, or an idea.

If magic is the raw material, the *nitty-gritty* is the work. The careful process of crafting a poem, beginning with one word or two, an image or metaphor, then another, like walking to the end of the line, one step after the other.

Sometimes it's like jogging or running so that a poem pours out of me as a first, almost complete draft. Usually it's more of a wrenching process, trying to pull the right words out of the deeper emotion or vivid image that inspired them.

I read my first lines out loud, sense the sounds and rhythms, determine the shape of the music. Then I'll play with form. Should I go for a sonnet? Or do the words want to be a prose poem?

Along with this repetitive work comes compression. Can I reduce the words, make the lines sing without being wordy? That's a big challenge for me, because I often want to tell an elaborate story. I have to keep paring back, decide what's hidden and what's shown.

At some point, my thinking has to leap the hurdle of being in service to my intentions to being in service to the reader. I try to detach myself from 'I the poet' and become 'I the audience.' Poets are tricksters and I've developed various tricks to enable me to do this, like pretending I'm a critic tasked with reviewing the poem. What's working and what isn't? Then I ask myself, is this what you intended with that magic?

To illustrate, I wanted to write a poem about what it's like to be in a passionate relationship with someone from a different culture. How it can be intriguing and wonderful, but also challenging when you don't get each other's cultural background, jokes, or reference points.

The entry to the poem on the theme of *otherness vs. togetherness* came as a magical moment one night when I was playing the piano with my headphones on, while my beloved was practicing clarinet. I was playing Bach; he was playing a tango. I realized that our colliding melodies reflected our differences, while the fact that we were playing music at all connected us.

My first lines of my first draft were something like: *My hands on the keyboard of desire / follow the metronome of his breath*. I named the poem "This is Us" (way before the TV series came out), pretty sure that it had to be a sonnet.

After three years of drafting and redrafting that sonnet, I had a poem called "Unbearably Close and Distant" opening with the question that had originally haunted me:

*Raised in opposing north/south constellations
where do we intersect? At night in the orbit of desire...*

(Featured image by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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