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Editor's Notes

Theo Hummer's "Embalm," which first appeared in *Sentence 3*, has been reprinted in *Best New Poets 2006*, from Samovar Press.

"Gathering," by Peter Conners (*Sentence 2*) has been translated into Arabic and published in *Mosaica*.

Four poems from *Sentence* have been selected by Heather McHugh to appear in *Best American Poetry 2007*: "Comma of God," by Milton Kessler (#3); "See Jack," by Russell Edson (#3); "Language Police Report," by Denise Duhamel (#4); and "A Voice from the City," by Louis E. Bourgeois (#4).

"Cemetery at Montparnasse," "Event," and "July" originally appeared in Kazim Ali's *The Far Mosque*, from Alice James Books.

Sentence 6 will include a special feature on "The Prose Poem in Italy," curated, introduced, and translated by Luigi Ballerini and Gian Lombardo.

Corrections

In *Sentence 4*, we misspelled Roxane Beth Johnson's name. Also in *Sentence 4*, we misprinted the title of Laura Chester's "Free Rein." We apologize for these errors.

Sentence Feature —

THE PROSE POEM IN EAST-ASIA

Introduction by Steve Bradbury

*Edited by Steve Bradbury, Andrea Lingenfelter, Jeffrey Angles,
and Don Mee Choi*

Baudelaire and his followers may have been the first to have “dreamt of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhyme, supple and muscular,” but the prose poem has been a familiar feature on the East-Asian literary landscape for more than three-quarters of a century and has flourished in recent decades. It is a Western import to be sure, but for some awfully good reasons, not least of which is the fact that the typographical convention of lineation, upon which formal distinctions between poetry and prose, on the one hand, and prose poetry and free verse, on the other, so literally and decisively turn, was not widely adopted in any of the East-Asian cultures until the beginning of the last century. Even more influential in militating against a natural evolution of the genre was the absence of any general terms for either poetry or prose; there were only specific verse forms or groups of forms (and very diverse ones at that) and a raft of more prosaic genres, many quite poetic, that were never thought of as constituting an all-encompassing whole, much less one in binary opposition to an as-yet-unformulated general concept of “poetry.”

It was not until the middle of the great revolutionary decade of the 1910s that prose poetry was introduced. The first prose poems were quite naturally

translations—Turgenev and Tagore were all the rage—but by the end of the Twenties, which roared in East-Asia as well as in the States, avant-garde poets in China, Japan, and Korea were making notable contributions to the genre; and Taiwan, which was then still a frontier colony of the Japanese Empire, lagged but a few years behind. Wars and revolutions, both cultural and political, often blighted the ground for decades at a time, but eventually the prose poem took root and finally flourished.

If early practitioners of the prose poem tended to view the genre as “a little poem in prose,” to paraphrase the French term, contemporary practitioners have embraced the more open-ended idea of a text that plays out or exploits the often arbitrary distinctions between poetic and prose genres. With so much time and terrain to cover and such a wealth of poems to choose from, our survey of the development of the prose poem is necessarily somewhat scanty, but I think we’ve struck a good balance between the canonical and the cutting-edge. To ensure our offering includes the best poems and translations available, we have included a few translations that previously appeared in print elsewhere. Acknowledgments can be found at the end of our feature.