

# MWWWI Newsletter

Muslim Women Writers Workshop-International Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 5

The Nurturing Pen

Safar 30, 1429 / March 8, 2008

Assalaam Alaikum! MWWWI welcomes you our readers to the fifth issue of our newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you! Your comments, contributions, info about upcoming literary events and of your writing endeavors are welcome.



**IQRAA! READ IN THE NAME  
OF YOUR LORD!**

**THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN  
THE SWORD!**

## RAK after the Rain



Have you ever ventured into the desert after the rain? The flowers begin to bloom and the very tiny grass begins to poke its head through the sand in search of the light it has long hidden from. The scorching sun has been dimmed by the clouds and cool air.

It has been waiting for this time. The winter, when the ground is soaked and the cool winds change direction and blow in from the sea, no longer heated by the desert sand. The desert, peering through your car window, appears to be splotched with a hazy green here and there. A closer look reveals the tiny grass and small creatures, here and there.

Not far from the grass is the wadi. It flows between

*Continued on page 2*

## Al Qalam! The Mighty Pen!

Some say a picture is worth a thousand words. Is a pen worth a thousand dirhams? A Million? And if you had a million dirhams would you even spend it on a pen? Luxury goods manufacturer Montblanc thinks so with the launch of a limited edition pen worth over **one million UAE!** The pen titled "Prince Rainier III Limited Edition 81" is dedicated to him who was the head of the smallest monarchy in the world. Since only 81 pens are available; the age of Prince Rainier when he died in 2005, only a few connoisseurs and admirers of noble writing instruments will be able to buy one.



The pen is made of white gold and superbly studded with 996 diamonds and 92 rubies totaling more than 8 carats. They form a fine network through which can be seen the inner workings of the writing instrument. What a charge! Not only to appreciate its beauty but to see how the pen works as you write! I would worry about the diamonds and rubies dropping off the pen from my over usage. Better yet for a select few who can afford it to use it judiciously or keep it in a curio cabinet for looking at and safe keeping.

*Continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 [Rak After the Rain, J.O.Y.](#)
- 1 [Al Qalam, The Mighty Pen!](#)
- 3 [The Poetry Corner: Haiku Cornucopia](#)
- 4 [The Ghazal: Turkish Ghazals](#)
- 5 [MWWWI Works in Progress /How Writers Write](#)
- 6 [Book Reviews/ MWWWI Calendar/ Exhibits](#)

the mountains, fed by the tiny droplets now, slowly leeching down the sides of the mountains like a giant two sided funnel. The tiny frogs and fish are emerging from the depths of an endless ecosystem, which seemed to be lifeless just a week ago.

If you have never ventured into the desert on a day like today, I urge you to do so. Take a lunch or a book and listen to the water flow.

J.O.Y. 

---

*“Books are not men and yet they stay alive.”*

*Stephen Vincent Benet*

---

#### **Continued from column 2 this page:**

The mighty pen is just that! But only for those of us who realize that the power is not *in* the pen itself but *in the* words that those who use it express. Alhamdulillah! Because of the power of words the instrument that produces them has come to be revered by connoisseurs who are willing to pay exorbitant amounts of money to collect the most beautifully designed pens.

Fortunately, its cost is a minimal expense since most of mankind is more concerned with the pen's function and not its value as a collectable item. What ever your preference, men and women have used pens to write since the development of language. And as Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an: "Read! And your Lord is most generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. ...96:3-4. The most worthy cause we can contribute to is to use it to write; adding to the pool of knowledge, pleasing to Allah (SWT).

**1 million UAE = \$300,000 US; 200,000 EUROS**

Zakia Iman Shahbaz 

But purchasing this pen is not for its worth and beauty alone. 51 percent of the sales revenue of each of the precious pens will go to the "Foundation Princess Grace" started in 1964 by Prince Rainier's late wife, Princess Grace, a former popular American movie actress who dedicated her life to many worthy wide ranging cultural and humanitarian tasks.

If writing is your passion, and you believe the quality and quantity of your literary performance is dictated by the value of your writing tool and you are wealthy enough to invest in a worthy cause than the Prince Rainier UAE 1 million pen is for you!

How many times have you heard a writer say that he must have a certain pen, pencil or writing tool to encourage the writing juices to flow? For instance some writers prefer the tactile feel of a felt tip pen as it flows on the paper. Others equally enjoy the smoothness of a ball point gliding across the paper's surface like a skaters' blade on a smooth pond of ice. And still many like the feel of a blunt ink pen point scratching on paper mimicking the etching of words onto stone.

Many writers of the modern technological era never use a pen during the whole writing process. Which leads one to ask, Will the pen ever become obsolete? Not according to writers like Umberto Eco:

*"As a writer I have discovered there are certain kinds of things for which I still need the pen, there are certain things for which I need the computer, certain things for which I need a felt-tipped pen. And the kind of instrument I am using is influencing my writing enormously."*

Allah (SWT) has named a whole Sura in the Holy Qur'an, Al Qalam! (68). HE tells us that the angels use pens to write about us! Of course it is probably not the pen as we know it. But the concept of a writing tool is conveyed.

*Continued this page first column*



## THE POETRY CORNER: Haiku Cornucopia

Haiku: 17 syllables, usually 5 in First line, 7 in second line and 5 in third line

### Deep Dress

Dotted Swiss lovely  
miss wears well its memories  
that yearn revealing

### Black

Rich textured beauty  
A tent that enfolds me fine  
without revealing

### Islam

Islam, bliss filled life  
Pain, joy, all a test  
For the life to come

### Soul-1

Its presence is felt  
We can't see it with our eyes  
But we know its there

### Soul-2

Soul, breath of long life  
If Allah (SWT) wills it to be  
Only He knows when

### Beauty-1

Love illuminates  
And casts beauty's perfect form  
But lights dim with time

### Beauty- 2

Laughter plumps up forms  
that chisel away youth's charm  
Smiles a close second

### Writing Difficulties

An obstinate dam  
A flowing river of ink  
Gushing nevermore Dec. 2007

### Hummingbird

Sipping the nectar.  
His wings beat rhythmically.  
Flower to flower

### Oman

Dolphins play amidst  
Depths of emerald green and  
Mountains soaring high Dec. 2007

### A Union

Lives intertwined  
Children and love together  
Bountiful fortune Dec. 2007

J.O.Y. 

### Untitled

The waves hitting harshly upon the rocks  
Cool breeze hitting the face on a windy day.

Palm trees swaying back and forth  
As the birds are flying without a care.

Then comes the night  
Tomorrow's another day

Zakia Iman Shahbaz 2006 

Sarah Farlow Feb. 2007 

## THE GHAZAL: Turkish Ghazals

The following are examples of early Turkish ghazals. It has been said that when the first Turkish epic poet Ahmedi presented to Sultan Bajazet's son his long epic history of Alexander the Great, the prince rebuked the poet's years of labor, saying that **one tiny, perfectly polished poem would have been worth more than all the epics.**

Hence it is chiefly to the polishing of tiny poems that the poetic genius of the Turks has been applied. They have a favorite form called the "ghazal," which I mentioned previously was likened to the English sonnet, except that this ghazal is by far more intricate. **It is, in fact, compared by the Turks to a flower with its petals constantly overlapping, forming a circle, and ending at the point where they began.** In rhyme, for instance, the ghazal opens with a rhyming couplet, and then through the whole poem the second line of each couplet repeats this opening rhyme.

### GAZAL

Faithful and kind a friend I hoped that  
thou wouldst prove to **me**;

Who would have thought so cruel and  
fierce a tyrant in thee to **see**?

Thou who the newly oped rose art of the  
Garden of Paradise,

That every thorn and thistle thou lov'st---  
how can it fitting **be**?

I curse thee not, but of God Most High,  
Our Lord, I make this prayer---

That thou may'st love a pitiless one in  
tyranny like to **thee**.

In such a plight am I now, alack! that the  
curser saith to his foe:

"Be thy fortune dark and thy portion black,  
even as those of **Mihri**!"

### Mihri Hatan, Ottoman Poetess

The following *untitled* ghazals in the next  
column use different structures; one is more  
like the Persian ghazal.

Knowledge is to understand  
To understand who you are.  
If you know not who you are  
What's the use of learning?

The aim in learning is  
To understand God's Truth.  
Because without knowledge  
It is wasted hard labour.

Do not say: I know it all,  
I am obedient to my God.  
If you know not who God is  
That is sheer idle talk.

Twenty-eight syllables  
You read from end to end.  
You name the first `alpha'  
What can it possibly mean?

Yunus Emre says also  
Let me receive what I need.  
The best possible thing  
Is to find perfect peace.

Yunus Emre (? 1238-?1320)  
Translated by Taner Baybars

O my God do not part me from thee  
Do not part me from thy sight

To love you is my faith and belief  
Do not part my belief from my faith

I've withered, become like the Autumn  
Do not part the leaves from the branch

My master is a rose, I his leaf  
Do not part the leaf from the rose

I, a nightingale in my love's garden  
Do not part his beak from his song

All the fish breathe in water they say  
Do not part the fish from the lake

Esrefoglu is the humble slave  
Do not part the Sultan from his servant

Esrefoglu (?-1469)  
Translated by Taner Baybars

## MWWWI Works in Progress!

This is a place to highlight **MWWWI** members' works in progress; writing in new genres and poetry forms.

### First Ghazal

*Thinking about writing, I want to write a ghazal.  
Searching for words hidden, I want to write a  
ghazal.*

*Words hide with subtle glee, behind walls I cannot  
see.*

*I search to write a ghazal.*

*I beckon them: Pass through, invisible veil of blue.  
I try to write a ghazal.*

*Each time they misconstrue, my well thought  
attempt to woo.*

*I pray to write a ghazal.*

*Finally words are set free; I say. 'Open sesame!  
I start to write a ghazal.*

*Zakia's words flow now. They obliterate her frown.  
She has to write a ghazal.*

**Zakia Iman Shahbaz**, Feb., 2008 

---

***"No fine work can be done without  
concentration and self-sacrifice and toil and  
doubt."***

*Sir Max Beerbohm*

---

MWWWI Thanks the following sisters for their  
contributions:

J.O.Y.

Sarah Farlow

Zakia Iman Shahbaz



***The Omani Book Fair opened in***

***Muscat on Wed. Feb. 27***

***And lasts until March 7***

---

## HOW WRITERS WORK



**Neil Gaiman, author**

Gaiman [writes first by hand, then second-drafts on the computer.](#) "One reason I like writing by hand is it slows me down a little, but it also forces me to keep going: I'm never going to spend half a day noodling with a sentence to try and get it just right, if I'm using a pen. I'll do all that when I start typing.

**Tracy Chevalier, author**

Chevalier writes longhand before hitting the computer, and suggests that writing can always be re-edited better.

### Interviewed in the Guardian:

#### Do you find writing easy?

It isn't easy! Every day I am faced with a blank page and I have that feeling to pull it out of myself. [But it gets easier. I have more faith in myself and when I get stuck I think, Tracy you've managed to do it before.](#)

#### How do you write?

During school hours, I try to write 1,000 words in long hand and then I edit it and type it onto the computer. Typing straight into the computer feels soulless. [There's something tactile about touching the pen that touches the ink.](#) Next day, I read what I wrote the day before and that jumpstarts me.

#### What good advice was given to you when you were starting out?

Rose Tremain,... said do all the research but then put the notebook away and just write the story. Try not to let the research take over the story or get in the way of the story.

#### What advice would you give to new writers?

Never think that what you've written can't be improved. You should always try to make the sentence that much better and make a scene that much clearer. Go over and over the words. and reshape them as many times as is needed.



## Muslim Writers Publishing: New Releases



**Sophia's Journal: Time Warp 1857** is authored by Najiyah Diana Helwani. *Sophia's Journal: Time Warp 1857* is an historical sci fi Islamic Fiction book that is sure to grab the attention of Muslim teens. The author researched historical types of food, clothing and the way of life in 1857 Kansas, USA. Readers will love learning about the way of life early frontier settlers lived. The book has a glossary and some unique recipes that are specific to the book's period in history. This book will be a welcome addition to any Language Arts reading and/or American History program.



**The Runaway Scarf** is written and illustrated by Corey Habbas. It is an Islamic fiction story that was inspired by the hadith...Sahih Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 58 Number 176. The creative story and colorful illustrations are sure to please and inspire young readers.

The new IWA Book Catalog provides a listing of books and magazines with details and locations where they can be purchased. The catalog is a free PDF download and you can get a copy at the IWA website at [www.IslamicWritersAlliance.net](http://www.IslamicWritersAlliance.net)

### Book Review: Fatawaa al-Mar'aat-il-Muslimah

(Hardback) Part One & Two, Pages 1008  
Daar Ibn Hazm

This is a combined two volume compilation of legal Islamic rulings for Muslim women. It contains rulings from many of the major Scholars of Islaam such as *ash-Shaykh* Muhammad bin Ibraaheem Aali-Shaykh, *ash-Shaykh* 'Abdur-Rahmaan as-Sa'dee, *ash-Shaykh* 'Abdullah bin Humayd, *ash-Shaykh* Ibn Baaz, *ash-Shaykh* Ibn 'Uthaymeen, *ash-Shaykh* 'Abdullah bin Jibreel and *ash-Shaykh* Saalih al-Fawzaan. Book one is 502 pages and contains hundreds of legal rulings for the Muslim woman such as *'Aqeedah*, *Tahaarah*, *Salaah*, *Zakaah*, *Sawm*, *Hajj*, etc. The second volume deals with many various rulings affiliated with the Muslim woman also. This is a very beneficial book with a lot of information that everyone can benefit from. The book is available in hardcover and makes for an excellent reference work.

<http://theglassvessels.blogspot.com/>

## Calendar of Events

Important *MWWWI* Meeting Dates!

Day: First Tuesday and Saturday of the month.

Time: Tues.: 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Sat.: 12:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Dates: Apr. 1 and 5;

May 3 and 6; June 3 and 7; July 1 and 5.

### SPECIAL EVENTS: *MWWWI* MARCH MEETING

Date: Sat. Mar. 1, 2008; Time: 12:00 to 2:00 P.M.

Venue: Luna Rossa Restaurant at Qanat Al Qasbah. Directions: [www.qaq.ae](http://www.qaq.ae)

**Workshop:** Presenter: Maryam Ismail, Writing for Children (Tues. Mar. 4, at Zakia's bayt; same topic as above.)

### *MWWWI* Annual Folio, 1429!

Don't forget our annual folio! The time has come for *MWWWI* members to begin writing or selecting from your writings what you want to submit to be published in the folio. All material, short stories, essays, poems, etc., are welcome!

### *MWWWI* Workshop Certificates

*MWWWI* has certificates for those who have participated in our workshops for the years 2007-2008. They are available for 5dhs at each meeting..

### Contributions:

Contribute to *MWWWI* Newsletter: Islamic information, poetry, short stories, book reviews and literary events are welcome. Submit to contact addresses or call:

*MWWWI* Editor: Zakia: 050 285 3808



### Must See!

**Arts of Islam:** January 23 to April 22, Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi

### Word into Art: The Beauty of Written

**Arabic.** Special Exhibition - February 2 to April 30. Dubai International Finance Centre

**Turkish artist Ismail Acar's** works are creative manifestations of his admiration for the *Ottoman civilization as well as Islamic culture.* Exhibition of his works is at the Meem Gallery in Al Quoz until March 26..