

Morphine, Pearl Harbor

Category: Poems

written by Ann Neuser Lederer | December 10, 2010

Ann Neuser Lederer

They do not scream. They keep their hands steady as they shoot the shots.
They run from one to the next, on their rounds without walls.
The troops of well trained girls patrol the troops, their wards.

And they make them to inhale their brew
of Friar's Balsam, tincture of tree resin:
Pines and cooling mountain breezes in the steaming, smoke filled chaos.
Pliable amber beads, shrines for prehistoric bees,
crumbs for tuneful fiddles lull like opium beds
on the dark, explosive rocks

And though they run around, the nurses are careful.

They inscribe the letter M on the foreheads of those they have dosed,
They make their gentle mark on foreheads doomed or wounded,
under dust and thunder.

About the poet:

Ann Neuser Lederer was born in Ohio and has also lived and worked in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Kentucky. Her poems and creative nonfiction can be found in journals such as [Brevity](#), [Diagram](#) and [Hospital Drive](#), in anthologies such as [A Call to Nursing](#) (2009) and [The Country Doctor Revisited](#) (2010) and in her chapbooks *Approaching Freeze*, *The Undifferentiated* and *Weaning the Babies*. She has earned degrees in anthropology and in nursing, is employed as an RN and is certified in oncology nursing and hospice and palliative nursing. For samples and more links, see her [website](#).

About the poem:

This poem was inspired by a passage in [The Writer's Almanac](#) describing a scene from Pearl Harbor Day: "The nurses ran around, administering morphine, and to prevent overdoses, they wrote the letter M on each treated man's forehead."

Poetry editors:

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro