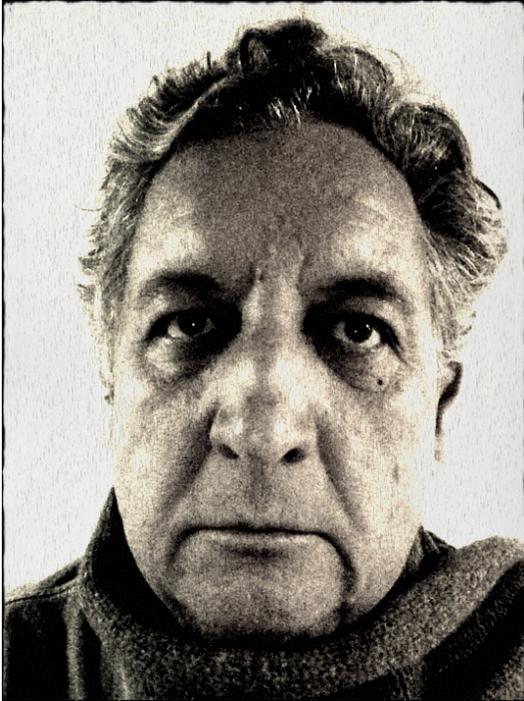


The Many Faces of an Artist

By Karen Flynn • Sept. 28th, 2017



C. Wade Bentley sinks into his chair in front of his desk, in a small office layered with books and some of his published work on the shelves. There are pictures on the wall of family, where he can see them while he works. He is a tall man, with a gentle and calm demeanor and quiet, but deep voice. Dressed business casual, he appears to be a traditional man, but do not be fooled, for Bentley possesses a youthful mind, with edgy, fresh and humorous tones in his poetry, as well as his teaching style. He is a respected and hardworking writer, and while he has an edgy side to him, he does not fall into the suffering, starving artist stereotype. He is a well-rounded family man. He leads a balanced life, with a simple philosophy, while always

making room in his life for his passions. One of which is writing.

Bentley earned his Bachelors and Masters in English at Brigham Young University in Provo – as well as a minor in French and a secondary teaching certificate. Now a published author and poet, with work in journals such as

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Rattle and Poetry Northwest, he has also had a collection of original poems published by Aldrich Press, called *What Is Mine*. To fund his passions, he is an adjunct English teacher at Salt Lake Community College, and also works for Concurrent Enrollment.

Ever since Bentley was a young boy, he had an interest in reading, literature and words. “There weren’t really books in my house when I grew up,” he explains. “When I discovered that libraries were a thing, I would go there every Saturday and get a stack of books.” He did this every week as a child, always grabbing a new stack of books. “That was when my love for words really took off,” he recalls.

Colleagues who meet Bentley now, are surprised when getting to know him and his work that he is not really what he seems. “I think they look at me as pretty straightforward, pretty straight-laced, pretty conservative,” he explains.

While much more colorful than he seems on the outside, Bentley is an introverted man. “I don’t think I try to let people know me,” he says, very matter-of-fact. But those who do know Bentley know him for his wit, creativity, and productivity. “What ties his writing to Wade as a person, is that he is very funny. He is very humble, and not pompous,” Lisa Bickmore, fellow poet, friend and colleague at SLCC, explains about Bentley. “He is one of the most productive poets I know.”

He was surprised to discover, given his dislike of social scenes that he actually enjoys giving poetry readings, likes to hear his poems read aloud. He is scheduled to be part of a reading sponsored by Rattle Magazine, in the near future, in L.A.

A dedicated writer, Bentley always finds the time for his craft. “He is always finding a way in the literary world,” Bickmore explains. In addition

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to his own writing and submitting, Bentley is also the editor of a poetry journal, Timberline Review. He also finds time to spark creativity in his writing students.

Bentley used to write short stories in college. A few of them were published but “It didn’t feel like my bag,” he explains. “For some reason, fiction editors wanted plot and dialogue. And I

was lousy at both.” He started to write poetry more seriously in college. One professor complimented his work, despite the fact that “it wasn’t entirely terrible, and I think we tend to follow the path where people say nice things about us,” he says. He used to put his work under his professor’s door, and in return, would get pages of notes and feedback on his writing. Bentley stuck with it long enough and started to improve in graduate school, where, “thanks to real poets like Leslie Norris,” he started to consider himself a better poet.

Then one day, while hanging out at his regular spot, King’s English Bookstore in Salt Lake City, Bentley was reading through a poet’s biography on the back of a book, when he realized, “Why haven’t I done anything with my own poetry? Why haven’t I taken this more seriously?”

After his epiphany moment, Bentley began writing and submitting work every single week. He would write several poems, submitting to at least two journals per week, religiously. He’d put them in manila envelopes and send them out in the big blue mailbox on the corner, working on more poems while awaiting letters back from publishing companies. He did this for an entire year and got “nothing but rejections. I got files of rejections,” he explained. Almost every week, he would be turned away. “It got to be pretty devastating,” he recalls, but he had committed to sticking with it for a full year. Finally at the end of that first year, he began to see success. “I got my first acceptance,” he said, “and naively thought it would be smooth sailing from then on.”

The first year of submitting his work gave him some valuable experience and insight on the industry. “It’s a harsh business,” he explains.

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–C. Wade Bentley**

Some places he sent to only accepted less than one percent of poems that are sent to them. And while Mr. Bentley has had some success, over the years, he says, “it still hurts to get rejections.”

Wade is family man. His face lights up speaking about his 4 children and 6 grandchildren. When something is going wrong with someone in his family, then something is going wrong for him. And while teaching is a hard job that doesn't pay much, Bentley explains that it's all worth it in the end, because, “It allows me to spend time and money on my grandkids.”

While Bentley used to write to get published, he now writes primarily because he enjoys it. He enjoys simply sharing his poems on Facebook, with friends. Some have commented on the rate at which he produces new work. Many artists today believe that artistry must be a grueling process in which we suffer over our product; Bentley doesn't feel he has to “suffer for the art.” “I love words. I love the sounds of words. I like how they go together,” he says. “I am never happier than when I'm in the

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middle of a new poem, especially if the magic happens.”

A true artist of today, C. Wade Bentley is always keeping it fresh and on the edge through his poetry and writing. While always driven by his passion, he manages to lead a personal life of a well-rounded, humble man, an example for his students, and most importantly, his beloved grandchildren.

