

Sentinel By Dennis Daly
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Review by Ed Meek

A Sentinel for our Times

A lot of poetry that falls under the heading of experimental today isn't poetry at all but prose written in lines of varying lengths. Nor is it very experimental. In fact, true invention in poetry is hard to come by and much of what fills our literary magazines sounds and looks the same, written in coffin like blocks with long sentences missing punctuation.

Dennis Daly, on the other hand, in his collection *Sentinel*, writes poems that are obviously poetry and good poetry at that. Daly's poems are usually metered and rhymed with varying patterns in quatrains. He revels in forms from sonnets to villanelles. He also loves old and rarely used words like flimflams and scallywag, bald-faced cahoots. And although he writes in conventional poetic forms, he brings new life to them with his content and language. *Sentinel* traffics in the events of our times. Daly like a character from a novel by John le Carre is, in a sense, spying on the spies. He's a double agent of poetry. Fortunately, he's working for us.

His concerns are many and the trouble lies deep. There are poems about drones, dead drops, sleepers, black boxes, moles, defectors, snipers, cowboys and carriers. Daly is out to decode this new world we live in under the eyes of the NSA and hackers from Russia and China, counterfeiters from North Korea, surveillance cameras wherever we go and, by the way, the guy on the train beside you may be taking a video of you now with his phone.

"Confession" a poem based on an interview with a former CIA Director, starts off like this:

*Believe me it's all here on the surface
No geopolitical strategy
Just mirrors blooming in the wilderness.*

Daly is outing these torturers and government agents who in our name and with our tax dollars commit atrocious acts.

One of Daly's Drone poems begins: "We never heard the drone's dreadful hum."

And ends: "In God we trust." There is a clear moral center in Daly's poems--something that hasn't always been a factor in our foreign policy or our post-modern poetry.

These poems then often concern themselves with issues we seldom see poetry take on and they do so in poems that are well-structured, exhibiting a conventional mastery, and using contemporary language and metaphor. *Sentinel* is stocked with weighty issues that beg our attention, housed in an aesthetic rarely evident today.

