Voices de la Luna
A Quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine

Tuesday 15 December 2009
Volume 2, Number 2

Questions for Bridget Drinka
A Tribute to Cynthia Harper
“How Shall I Tell You?” by Carmen Tafolla
“Are We Friends?” Flash Fiction by Naomi Nye
“Aging Gracefully” by Voices Editors
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Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio

When power leads man towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man’s concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. For art establishes the basic human truth which must serve as the touchstone of our judgment.


BOTANICAL GARDENS—33 acres of formal gardens, pools, fountains, and natural areas; Native Texas Area, South Center Periscope.
CARRVER CULTURAL CENTER—Center traces its historic roots back some 85 years. Facility is both a gallery for contemporary art exhibits and a theater for performing artists.

Jazz at The Landing—NPR’s acclaimed radio show, Riverwalk Jazz, is produced in San Antonio at The Landing, one of the country’s oldest jazz clubs.

GUADALUPE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER—Dedicated to the development, preservation, and promotion of Mexican-American arts.

INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES—The institute is concerned with the people who produced Texas events—people who created the robust kaleidoscope that is Texas today.

LA VILLITA—Restored Mexican village captures charm of the past amid narrow streets, and authentic adobe houses with arts and craft shops.

MAJESTIC THEATER—Opened in 1929; closed in 1974; restored and reopened in 1989 as a performing arts center, the Majestic is said to be one of the finest “atmospheric” theaters ever built.

MEXICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE—Exhibits of contemporary Mexican artists.

McNAY ART MUSEUM—Works of artists who charted course of 20th Century painting; museum houses post-Impressionistic paintings.

SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART—Six-building complex of renovated historic buildings opened in 1981 to house ancient art of the Americas collection, past and present.

SOUTHWEST CRAFT CENTER—Housed in restored city’s only remaining example of French Provincial architecture. Craft Center established alternative art school at site in 1971.

WITTE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE—Extensive exhibits covering natural history and natural science of the Texas dioramas of Texas flora and wildlife. Rebuilt on grounds are four early Texas houses and furnished log cabin.

McNay Art Museum—The mission of the McNay Art Museum is to maintain an art museum on the premises of the estate of Mrs. McNay for the advancement and enjoyment of modern and early art for the educational advantage of the public.

Web: www.McNayArt.org

Poetry Venues - Please see the Events section.

Letter from the Editors
Mo H. Saidi and James Brandenburg

We welcome you to the second year and the sixth issue of Voices de la Luna: A Quarterly Poetry & Arts Magazine. Starting with the 15 June 2009 issue, our magazine was published in four formats: webpage, digital reader, eMagazine, and hardcopy. The printed version of the magazine is creating new visibility for us with a growing number of paid subscriber-members. The number of copies printed is determined strictly by existing, prepaid demand from subscriber-members, contributing editors, board of directors, and advisors.

In the early morning hours of Friday 9 October, President Obama was awakened with the news that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize for “extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between people.” He was only the third sitting American president to win the award. The President’s hometown did not fare as well; ten days earlier, the International Olympic Committee had awarded the 2016 Games to Rio de Janeiro, where nearly 50,000 people converged on Copacabana beach and celebrated in exuberant Carioca carnival fashion.

Around the same time, in October, Mo H. Saidi and his wife Brigitte traveled to Brazil, where they visited Iguassu Falls, toured two favelas in Rio, experienced the unique cityscape of 1960’s moderne style Brasilia, and trekked into the heart of the Amazon. While the Saidis visited one favela, 2,000 police operatives were hunting in another favela for the drug kings allegedly responsible for a sudden outbreak of violence that has, so far, claimed at least 14 lives and seen a police helicopter shot down. The violence began in the Morro dos Macacos favela on the city’s north side, not far from the world famous Maracanã football stadium, one of the venues for the 2014 Soccer World Cup, and perhaps the site of the main festivities of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. We are presenting an essay, a photo album and two videos obtained during the tour, including coverage of the favela visits in this issue.

Voices de la Luna makes a perfect holiday gift for friends and family. Just fill in the subscription/membership form from our website and mail it with your tax-deductible check to our office.

Our Mission

Our mission is to publish a quarterly poetry and arts magazine with international flavor and a commitment to inspire, educate, and heal community members through the arts.
**Featured Poem**

**How Shall I Tell You?**  
*Carmen Tafolla*

After listening to the world news, the U.S. attack,  
the firing in the Persian gulf, and wondering... if...

When no soul walks the softened green  
and no foot beats the pulse on crumbling brown  
and no one lives to sing to rain  
or soak to sun the spirit of its golden gown  
to weave the many colors of the after-arch  
from sky to human skin to wooded wealth  
in fiber fabric beads and tusks and seeds  
all leading up in rows of beauty drumbeat to black  
neck, like venison in stealth

When no one lulls the child to sleep  
or takes the wrinkled story’s hand  
or listens to the news - a wired sound  
of tribe on tribe - stet now - man on man  
how shall I tell you that I love you then?  
how shall I touch your fingers tip to tip  
and say that we were blood and human voice and friend?

*Carmen Tafolla is an internationally published poet and writer, whose ancestors washed clothes in the San Antonio River, gathered mesquite beans by the Medina River, wore Confederate and Union uniforms beside the Blanco River and danced on both sides of the Rio Grande.*

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**About Us**

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CFO & Prose Editor  
Mo H. Saidi

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**The Phoenix Award**  
by P.C. McKinnon

When Phoenix, a mythical bird, feels life is at an end, it builds a nest, sets it on fire, and is consumed by the flames. From the ashes, a new Phoenix springs forth to live again. Like the Phoenix, an abused woman must rise from the ashes of a violent relationship to find life again. This award will be presented to four members of our community who have worked to change the consuming effects of domestic violence.

On October 22, 2009, The P.E.A.C.E. Initiative (Putting an End to Abuse through Community Efforts) hosted their eleventh annual Phoenix Awards honoring women and men who have contributed to ending domestic violence in San Antonio and Bexar County. Five individuals were selected for their dedication and endless work to bring awareness to our area’s domestic violence. They are not household names, yet they have contributed so much and their efforts have been tireless. This year’s Phoenix Awards recipients included:

Joe & Calie Avila, who through their own personal lives have known the journey of abuse. Joe was a victim of child abuse, and as an adult, abused drugs, alcohol, and his wife Calie. Together, they were able to find the strength to deal with and to recover from this situation.

Elaine Center. After two marriages to abusive men, she found herself single and deeply concerned for other victims of domestic violence. She created “Shadows to Sunshine”—a program that helps battered women by providing them the much needed support to survive an abusive past.

Josie Mixon is a victim and survivor of sexual abuse and domestic violence. She is a strong advocate bringing community awareness to these issues. As an author, poet and speaker she offers not only heartbreaking testimony, but healing methods and advocacy for change.

Roseanne Samaniego is a protective order advocate with the Bexar County District Attorney’s Office assigned to the Community Advocate Program through the Family Justice Center. Roseanne takes her services out into the community where she visits with individuals who have been battered. Her vast knowledge of the legal system allows her to best represent her client’s needs.
Gustave Flaubert was born in Rouen, France, on 12 December 1821. His father was a surgeon, and the family was one of the most respected in Rouen. He was nonplussed about the prospect of leaving Rouen for to Paris to go to law school. He wrote to a friend: “I’ll go study law, which, instead of opening all doors, leads nowhere. I’ll spend three years in Paris contracting venereal diseases. And then? All I want is to live out all my days in an old ruined castle near the sea.” Although he enjoyed Paris for its brothels, he didn’t like much else. He failed his law exams and ended up collapsing, dizzy and then unconscious. It was the first of many such episodes throughout his life, probably epilepsy, and Flaubert gave up on law, left Paris, and moved to a house in Croisset, near Rouen.

He worked hard on his first novel, The Temptation of St. Anthony, and he thought it was a masterpiece. He spent four days reading it aloud to two friends, and he wouldn’t let them comment until the end, at which point they suggested that he burn it. So he stopped working on it although it was eventually published in its finished form more than 25 years later, and even then, he considered it his best novel.

Flaubert traveled for a while, and then he started a new project, a novel about a doctor’s wife named Emma who tries to fill her empty life by having affairs. He wrote carefully, working long hours, agonizing over each word. He wrote to his mistress, the poet Louise Colet: “Happy are they who don’t doubt themselves and whose pens fly across the page. I myself hesitate, I falter, I become angry and fearful, my drive diminishes as my taste improves, and I brood more over an ill-suited word than I rejoice over a well-proportioned paragraph.” But after five years of work, he finished his novel, which he published in installments in 1856, and it was Madame Bovary. In 1911, The New York Times reported that Madame Bovary had been voted by the French as the “best French novel.” In 2007, editor J. Peder Zane published a book called The Top Ten, in which he asked 125 contemporary writers to name what they consider “the ten greatest works of fiction of all time,” and Madame Bovary was number two, after Anna Karenina.

Gustave Flaubert, who said, “I can imagine nothing in the world preferable to a nice, well-heated room, with the books one loves and the leisure one wants.”

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Junior Editors
Julia Hawkins and Ellaire Yantis
Even though the majority of words in English have Latin or Greek origins, why is English considered a Germanic language?
Aha! You’ve been reading my final exam for the History of English class. An excellent question. We may have acquired the ability to use numerous French and Latinate forms (there are seven of them in the first part of this sentence, for example), but in everyday life, we still dwell largely in the realm of Germanic: we still use old Germanic terms to refer to family members (mother, father, sister, brother), to count (eight, hundred, thousand, which means a “swollen hundred”), to describe all our basic activities (eat, drink, walk, run, sleep, as well as gulp, sneeze, snore), and to “cuss” (all the four-letter words are Germanic). We also use our old Germanic forms as the indispensable “glue” words—the, is, about, and, etc.

It has been shown that children by the age of seven can easily acquire mastery of another language. Do you have any advice for middle-aged or elderly foreigners who want to speak fluent English?
My advice would be not to fret about having an “accent”—the phonological traces of your first language will surely persist if you haven’t learned your second language by puberty. But no worries—English is a language practically free of morphology, and that makes parts of it easier to learn. We used to have a huge array of case, number, and gender markers—Proto-Indo-European, the ancient mother language of English, Hindi, Farsi, Greek, Russian, Irish, etc., had a rich collection of word endings to mark these things, as Russian still does, for example. But English is down to eight now (thanks partly to the language contact with French mentioned above, and other reasons). So, at least there’s that bit of help!

Joseph Conrad, a non-native English speaker, wrote many classics of English literature, e.g. Heart of Darkness. How did he acquire his mastery of vocabulary and sentence structure?
I suppose that Joseph Conrad’s feat of writing Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, and other works in his third language, English, (his first language being his native Polish and his second being French) seems more monumental to us in our largely monolingual society than it would in other places where bilingualism or multilingualism is a way of life. Still, it’s quite an impressive accomplishment, which must have required remarkable discipline.

The majority of contemporary American writers and poets are English teachers. Do you write poetry?
I love poetry desperately, but really feel a bit too humble to try my hand at it in a serious way. I love Shakespeare’s sonnets, but could not aspire to emulate them. I think my relationship with poetry is to appreciate the creations of others (poema means “creation” in Greek, after all), and to find ways to see and bring to my students what the language is doing in a poem, how the poet is producing a certain effect by the careful shaping of the words, structures, and sounds.

How do you evaluate English as a language for writing poetry?
Continued . . .
What's new when it comes to English grammar? Are we going to get rid of irregular verbs?
We've been losing those irregular verbs steadily for years, but also gaining a few—do you say “She dove into the water or she dived?” OE had both, but the former was lost, says the Oxford English Dictionary, before 1300. But “dove” has undergone a sort of comeback in the US. Will we lose all our irregular verbs?
It's interesting that the things which are most frequent are often shielded from change, however irregular they are, and some of the irregular verbs are remarkably frequent—like “to be.” The paradigm of this verb is patched together from three different ancient verbs: is, are, was / were. Irregularity is tolerated, more than we think.

You are about to teach a course that questions a well-established assumption about gender differences in language use, “Do Men and Women Really Talk Differently?” Well, do they?
Well, I’m about to lead a conversation on this topic at the “Great Conversations” dinner, at any rate! It’s a fascinating topic—and the research does indicate that men and women do tend to speak quite differently. Women tend to construct conversations together, supporting each other as they build up a consensus. Some regard women’s tendency to apologize and to cede the floor as a sign of weakness, but other researchers claim that these are techniques for building a bond, to show that we are all on the same level, the same wave length. A number of studies have shown that men tend to use their language more competitively, to dem-

Do you have an MFA program in your department?
Not presently, but it’s under discussion. Our Creative Writing Program has grown phenomenally over the past few years, with many signs of success: the Creative Writing Reading Series, the expansion of our student-run, award-winning journal, Sagebrush Review, the establishment of a Creative Writing Certificate for our graduate programs, and the support of so many wonderful friends in the community—all of these successes portend a great future for Creative Writing at UTSA.

Are you happy with your medical insurance coverage; and should we institute the British public option method to solve the healthcare crisis in this country?
I have a story to tell about this. My daughter was playing professional volleyball in Denmark, and she tore her ACL. She received outstanding medical care there, including surgery on her knee and physical therapy and was not charged anything, even though she was a foreigner and hadn't purchased insurance there. I was completely impressed. While I don't know if we can afford to be so generous-minded in this large, capitalistic society of ours, I will never forget how grateful I felt that this system of socialized medicine was there to catch her and protect her. I hope we can do a better job in the US than we have been doing so far.

As a professor and linguist, how would you categorize the senator’s outburst “You Lie”?
Self-defamatory. Embarrassing. Ridiculous. President Obama deserves all the respect our nation can muster for taking on the challenges that he has shouldered, and this outburst was utterly insulting. I’m glad that the President seems capable of taking it all in stride—no inflammatory outbursts from him, but only the thoughtful considerations of a wise, articulate leader.

Mo H. Saidi: Thank you very much for your time.

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About Wings Press
627 E Guenther
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http://www.wingspress.com/wingspress.cfm

Wings Press attempts to produce multicultural books, chapbooks, CDs, DVDs and broadsides that, we hope, enlighten the human spirit and enliven the mind. Everyone ever associated with Wings has been or is a writer, and we know well that writing is a transformational art form capable of changing the world, primarily by allowing us to glimpse something of each other’s souls. Good writing is innovative, insightful, and interesting. But most of all it is honest.

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About Pecan Grove Press
Phone: (210) 436-3442
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http://library.stmarytx.edu/pgpress

Pecan Grove Press is a part of the Louis J. Blume Library of St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas. A poetry press, its founder was Karen Narvarte of the university’s English Department and it has been directed by H. Palmer Hall since 1992. The press is headquartered in the Louis J. Blume Library of St. Mary’s University and is a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses [CLMP]. During 2008, the press published its 100th book.
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Crime novelist extraordinaire Jay Brandon weaves his novel *Milagro Lane* like a fine jacquard cloth that could only be created in San Antonio. Written for the daily newspaper audience, *Milagro Lane* is steeped in intrigue from first page to last. He recruits Tejanos as the warp that runs with the city’s history and shuttles the members of German and Anglo families in Central Texas like a weft back and forth across the Tex-Mex roots.

Part mystery, part insider roman à clef with characters delightfully recognizable to locals such as state senator Jeff Wentworth and U.S. representative Charlie Gonzales. *Milagro Lane* takes the reader on a stroll through the diverse neighborhoods of San Antonio, from the elegant homes of King William and Olmos Park to the backyards of the west side barrio. The lives of his characters intertwine at exclusive parties and at public events, while romance blossoms and mystery unravels in the streets of one of America’s unique cities. City Hall and local media get involved in the action, scripted with some tongue in cheek by this knowledgeable author, and the final denouement comes with some delightful twists.

*The Savage Detectives*

by Roberto Bolaño

Reviewed by María Eugenia Cossío Ameduri

In 2003, we lost Roberto Bolaño, one of the most important Latin American writers of the last century. Born in Chile and a long time resident of Mexico and Barcelona, Roberto Bolaño wrote poetry and many original novels, some that are now being translated into English (By Night in Chile, 2666, Distant Star, Amulet).

*The Savage Detectives* is a tour de force. Although the plot of this book can be succinctly summarized as the search for a disappeared woman poet Cesárea Tinajero, what the text is about is much more complicated to explain. Multiple narrators tell their story, each one describing how their personal life intersected at a precise point in time and space with the protagonists of the novel, the “Visceral Realists,” poets Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima, who are searching for that mythical poet Cesárea Tinajero.

Robero Bolaño is such a masterful storyteller that the reader, in spite of the many voices and the constant shifting of time and space, never gets lost. With the brush of a pointillist painter, Bolaño, painstakingly and methodically, “applies” the dots that compose those poets’ existence, describing who they were and what their lives were about. With the vision of a Cubist painter, Bolaño gives us skewed fragments of their personality, depicting them from a multitude of viewpoints. It is the task of the reader, the true detective, to put them together and reassemble those poets’ personality and biography.

In telling their own story, each narrator contributes some point¬ers and provides clues about Lima and Belano’s lives and character. Since the narrators’ points of view often contradict each other, the reader is not presented with whole and complete figures but with a series of facets superimposed on one the other. In order to reconstruct the protagonists’ true identity, the reader has to analyze and reassemble those temporal moments of the poets’ lives. At the end, nothing is certain. We do not really know anyone. Even if we think we do, we are only speculating, and certitude about who the others are is impossible to achieve.

*The Savage Detectives* is also a big mural, depicting life in Mexico in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, among poets, writers, and stu¬dents. The novel is full of inside jokes and allusions to real writers that will escape most readers not acquainted with them. However, what is important is that each chapter is full of suspense and intrigue that capture the reader’s attention, making the book hard to put down. However, this novel suffers from a lack of empathetic characters. Most of them are losers. They are mysterious, baffling and intriguing, but not likable. And even though there is some humor here and there, Bolaño’s vision of the world is dark.

*The Savage Detectives*, a demanding work of art, asks its reader not only to pay close attention, but also to savor nuance and ambiguity. For those readers who accept that our lives are not a continuous narrative, but a multifaceted and often contradictory series of narratives, who relish searching for meaning and appreciate an original and intricate novelistic structure, psychological complexity, and indeterminacy, this novel is a treat and a most rewarding experience.

Maria Eugenia Cossío Ameduri is a former director of the National Autonomous University of Mexico in San Antonio and of the San Antonio Public Library Foundation. She writes book reviews for The San Antonio Express-News.

*A Year in South Texas*

A Chapbook of Poetry

by Peter Holland*

Congratulations to Peter Holland on his first book of poetry, *A Year in South Texas*, published in 2009 by the Pecan Grove Press. His book of poetry is available on Amazon. Com. For information click: http://library.stmarytx.edu

*Peter Holland is a native San Antonian. He has been writing poems and stories since high school. Over the last decade or more he has been a regular at many local open mike readings. He is an active member of Unlimited Horizons Writer’s Workshop, San Antonio Poets Association, and Alamo Area Poets Association. He is a member of the Poetry Society of Texas. He has been published in several local anthologies, the local newspaper, and The Poet. He holds a Bachelors in History from UTSA.*

Peter Holland
News & Views

In Praise of the Lowly Chapbook

*The Editors*

Adapted from an editorial published on the http://www.publishingperspectives.com

In a recently published editorial, Bryce Milligan* discusses the shift of direction from the printed to the digital media and ponders the long term effect of the change. He writes, “I have been wondering what will become of the physical book in this brave new digital world.” While his “paper-and-ink” sales are declining, his ebook sales are increasing.

He says that one of the few bright spots left in printed media may be the production of the cheap book, the chapbook. “Up through the 19th century, the latest poems, political tracts, learned monographs, all came out in this form. It never went away, but it did evolve into a plethora of forms that are still with us. The most enduring is the literary chapbook, often a limited edition signed by the author.” Wings Press runs the Whitebird Chapbook Series, an annual poetry competition that draws a few hundred submissions. Wings also publishes periodic chapbooks when the right material comes along—a single essay, such as Robert Flynn’s *Burying the Farm*, a collection of related poems like Donald Hall’s *Winter Poems from Eagle Pond*, or a collection of flash fiction, like Ana Castillo’s new *Bocaditos*. He predicts that the chapbook format may gain more significance as a literary artifact and may become the sole surviving physical publication of his and many other literary publishing houses.

*Bryce Milligan is the author of several books for children and young adults, as well as several volumes of poetry and numerous essays and reviews. He is the publisher/editor of Wings Press in San Antonio, Texas.

Who Is Ardi?

*From Wikipedia: A Free Encyclopedia*

On October 1, 2009, paleontologists announced the discovery of a relatively complete A. ramidus fossil skeleton. The fossil is the remains of a small-brained 50 kg (110 lb) female, nicknamed “Ardi”, and includes most of the skull and teeth, as well as the pelvis, hands, and feet. It was discovered in Ethiopia’s harsh Afar desert at a site called Aramis in the Middle Awash region. Radiometric dating of the layers of volcanic ash encasing the deposits revealed that Ardi lived 4.4 million years ago.

The fossil sheds light on a stage of human evolution about which little was known, more than a million years before Lucy (Australopithecus afarensis), the iconic early human ancestor who lived 3.2 million years ago, and which was discovered in 1974 just 74 km (46 mi) away from Ardi’s discovery site.

Researchers infer from the form of her pelvis and limbs and the presence of her abductable hallux, that she was a facultative biped: bipedal when moving on the ground, but quadrupedal when moving about in tree branches. A. ramidus had a more primitive walking ability than later hominids, and could not walk or run for long distances. Please see the related video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5c5yi0124.

Healthcare around the World

*From http://www.news.bbc.co.uk*

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<td>% of Asians</td>
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Healthcare in Texas

*From The Express-News: Web Posted: 11/18/2009 12:00 CST*

A recent report by The Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health Systems ranked Texas an embarrassing 46th overall in health care out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Even more disturbing, we were dead-last in health insurance for adults and children, with 30 percent of adults and 20 percent of children in Texas uninsured. Texas has a health-care system that has the highest number of uninsured adults in the country, quality of care that falls far below what we know can be achieved, and millions of adults suffering, and sometimes dying, from things that could have been prevented if they had timely access to health care.
Editors Poems

Dancing into Darkness
For Maecia
James Brandenburg

It is time
to begin a new dance
the dance in the caverns
to greet the darkness
a time of renewal
for only in darkness
does light seep through
on the other side of the mirror
where there is no reflection
only what is true
what is real
what is beautiful
what lasts
what is me
I can sing
I can dance
I can cry
I can laugh
I am
who I am
the other side
of my face
my heart
dances my beat
intensifies
blending darkness
in the light.

Purpose
P.C. McKinnon

The green john-boat, its
ribbed bottom basking, its
long shadow from the
sun’s final hours, stretches
east up the small rise.

I never analyzed the
simple act of sitting until
your reflection on the pond
reminded me why the boat
was there in the first place.

Thanksgiving Leftovers
For Rebecca Brown
Mo H. Saidi

It’s three days later and in the evening
she reheats the mashed dressing; the dark
meat gets juicy after I add mushroom broth
and instead of having the noisy football game
on TV, we hear the soft classical music.

Tomorrow we will clean the guest bedrooms
pack the grandchildren’s toys
redact the son’s updated resume
add two more places to the list for him to apply.
Tomorrow we will join the crowd in the mall
we will buy a few trinkets for a daughter
whom we haven’t seen for three years
and a chess-set for the grandson who
at eight practices the endgames, and
an illustrated book for the granddaughter.

A scoop of vanilla ice-cream melts over a slice
of pecan pie. She reads “The Week in Review”
I “A Reporter at Large: Nightmare Scenario.”
Outside, the dark night has obscured
the live oak trees, the yellow pansies.

Meet Me on the Pier
Joan Seifert

I savor salty sea winds!
I feel the splash of waves that pull my line
then gently end here from some far shore
and stroke this trusty pier that holds such sea tales!

A hungry pelican caws, flippant,
hoping for the small fish I caught
to be cast skyward for his easy lunch.
The bird and I both laugh—Maybe so!

Up I toss it; then on kindly winds
my mind soars on toward open skies
asking no permission—
(Well, no one’s but yours.)

And so, John, what of us?
Will we revel here together
in the roving breeze,
our tender riddles capering in the waves?

The pelican has flown,
now sated with his tiny gift.
So, will you meet me on the pier?
Together, we may catch a keeper!
San Antonians Harmon and Harriet Kelley began collecting African American art in the 1980s. Since that time, their collection has grown quantitatively and qualitatively to become one of the finest such collections in public or private hands in the United States. Every room of their home is full of museum-quality paintings, drawings, and prints illustrating the rich history of African American art from the late 19th century to the present. The Harmon and Harriet Kelley Collection of African American Art: Works on Paper, featuring nearly 100 prints, drawings, and watercolors, is a wonderful introduction to the riches of their collection and also a remarkable and unique survey of more than a century of American art.

The McNay Museum presents an exhibition of rarely-seen Old Master paintings entitled Reclaimed: Paintings from the collection of Jacques Goudstikker from October 7, 2009 through January 10, 2010. Reclaimed reveals the extraordinary legacy of Jacques Goudstikker, a preeminent art dealer in Amsterdam, whose vast collection of masterpieces fell victim, and was almost lost forever, to the Nazi practice of looting cultural properties. For more information about the Kelley Famil Art Foundation, please see the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxeFVKljX4w

Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker was organized by Peter C. Sutton, Executive Director and CEO of the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, who also wrote the accompanying catalogue. Karen Levitov, Associate Curator at The Jewish Museum, has served as managing curator for the New York City and traveling versions of this exhibition. Published by the Bruce Museum and The Jewish Museum in association with Yale University Press the lavishly illustrated 257-page catalogue is available at the McNay’s museum store and bookstores everywhere.

**Jenny Browne Reads Poetry at The Twig**

The URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXWw96Qeumg.

Jenny Browne’s most recent book of poems, her third, is The Second Reason; Nick Flynn says of it, “. . .wild and beautiful and surprising. In this poet’s hands the seeming mundane is transformed into the nearly sacred, the elemental reveals its inner mysteries, and scraps of overheard language dissolve into song.” Her two previous books are At Once and Glass. She is also the editor of Provide and Protect, Writers on Planned and Unplanned Parenthood. She’s a former Michener Fellow at the University of Texas at Austin. From www.jennybrowne.com.

**A Poem from Voices Associate Editor**

No Ordinary Picnic

Valerie Martin Bailey

No basket filled with sandwiches or cold fried chicken, no paper plates or plastic forks—this is no ordinary picnic.

Flowering shrubs—one pink, one purple—bursting with fragrant blossoms provide a serve yourself buffet for golden honey bees, dancing butterflies, and two hummingbirds—tiny iridescent green jewels flashing backward, forward, hovering—wings beating in a blur, soda-straw beaks sipping sweetness from the flowers’ delicate hearts.

Having no slender beak or proboscis, I can only watch the airy repast from the window as the dainty creatures flit from bloom to bloom to nip quick snacks. I am a fascinated spectator enjoying the breathtaking beauty of winged picnickers drinking a sugary nectar feast.

***Vassar Miller (July 19, 1924—October 31, 1998) was a writer and poet. Miller was born in Houston, Texas, the daughter of a prominent architect. She began writing as a child, composing on a typewriter due to the cerebral palsy which affected her speech and movement. She attended the University of Houston, receiving her B.A. and M.A. in English.***
Clinical trials may determine whether “treating the disease rigorously can positively affect cognitive health and possibly slow or prevent the development of AD.” At the very least, we already know that physical activity, intellectual stimulation, and nutritious diet can help people stay healthy as they grow older.

We know that exercise strengthens muscles, improves heart and lung function, helps prevent osteoporosis, and improves mood and overall well-being. Animal studies have shown that exercise increases the number of capillaries that supply blood to the brain and improves learning and memory in older animals. Higher levels of physical activity or exercise in older people are associated with reduced risk of cognitive decline and reduced risk of dementia. One clinical trial showed that older adults who participated in a 6-month program of brisk walking showed increased activity of neurons in key parts of the brain.

Research findings published in 2003 show that dancing is among the best forms of movement to give the brain a workout, as well as the body. The increased blood flow from dancing helps keep the mind sharp, as does the opportunity for social interaction. Meanwhile, more clinical trials are underway to expand our knowledge about the relationship of exercise to healthy brain aging.

There are also some intriguing findings about how diet may help preserve cognitive function or reduce AD risk. For example, there are specific foods that are rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties and may affect age-related changes in brain tissue. One study found that curcumin (a bright yellow spice used in curry) can bind to beta-amyloid and prevent oligomer (beta-amyloid peptides that react with receptors, thus affecting their ability to function) formation. A study in mice found that diets high in DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) a type of healthy omega-3 fatty acid found in fish, reduced beta-amyloid and plaques in brain tissue. Other studies show that old dogs perform better on learning tasks when they eat diets rich in antioxidants, such as vitamin E and other healthful compounds, while living in an enriched environment (one in which the dogs have many opportunities to play and interact with people and other dogs).

A study of nurses found an association between participants who ate the most vegetables (especially green leafy and cruciferous vegetables) and a slower rate of cognitive decline compared with nurses who ate the least amount of these foods. Researchers speculate that the beneficial effects may result from the high anti-oxidant and folate content of the vegetables.

In addition to healthier diets and physical activity, intellectually stimulating activities and social engagement are associated with reduced AD risk. Various studies of animals, nursing home residents, and people living in the community have suggested a link between social engagement and cognitive performance.

One study specifically tracked how often a large group of older people did activities with significant information processing, such as listening to the radio, reading newspapers, playing puzzle games, and going to museums. A comparison of the group participating most in various stimulating activities with the group least engaged in stimulating activities found the risk of developing AD was 47 percent lower in the most active group.

One study found that healthy older participants had regularly spent more time with mentally stimulating activities during their early and middle adulthood. Older adults who have a full social network and participate in many social activities tend to have less cognitive decline and a decreased risk of dementia than those who are not socially engaged. Intellectually stimulating activities and social engagement may protect the brain in some way, perhaps by establishing a cognitive reserve. These activities may help the brain become more adaptable and flexible in some areas of mental function so that it can compensate for declines in other areas.

A final aspect of aging gracefully is the attitude of the aging person toward his/her entering the Golden Age. A negative attitude—an attitude that says, “I am old. I have nothing to contribute to society. My mental, physical, and social skills are declining, and I need to circle the wagons and just let old age happen.”—can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Why not enter the Golden Age with a different attitude? Why not say, “In some ways I am growing young instead of growing old? I am growing into death rather than being destroyed by it?” If the aging person can embrace the aging process, can embrace his/her dark side, and can find a way to use his/her wisdom and experience, there is an opportunity for him/her to find the balance that will promote a sound aging process.
**Poetry & Art Therapy**  
**Poetry & Painting**

**Maripat Munley, Certified Art Therapist**

Dorothy Bothe celebrated her 96th birthday this year. Samples from her work are published on this page. She is an amazing artist at the young age of 96.

**Notes to Myself**  
**Dorothy Bothe, 80th Birthday, Summer 1993**

Wine may become excellent and valuable simply by aging. Life is not like that. It isn’t easy. Unlike wine, aging is not enough. Once faced with failure, discouraged, and in my middle years, I said “I’ve got to grow up before I grow old.” Since then the race has been nip and tuck all the way. Now it seems I have been granted overtime. To stay on track, I’ve jotted down these notes to myself.

Keep an open mind to the ceaseless changes in my inner and outer world. Be informed. Have confidence in my own thoughts and risk stating them. Healthy thoughts through convictions are fun and hasten groundedness.

Recognize my need to be creative, knowing this neglected side may possibly, even at this late date, have buds waiting to bloom.

Become more conscious of my prejudices and biases. Know my dark side so I may decide what to do about it before it decides what to do about me.

Walk in the cleansing rain and let the tears fall as I forgive myself for all that I so passionately wish I had done differently.

Remember that love sometimes comes as a blessing, more often as the result of hard work and personal growth, and, sadly at times, not at all, no matter what.

Be present in the moment, learn to live in the now and be aware of the world around me--the sunlight filtering through the trees, the ruby red of the dianthus outside the window, the scrubbed cup returned to its rightful place.

Accept that there will be no graduation ceremonies and no arrival at a final destination with bands playing. Be still and feel the interwoven kinship with all life.

Keep in mind that even at the last there is no coasting; difficulties, sorrows, and defeats continue along with times of contentment and moments of joy.

Life is an unfinished business. My task is to work toward becoming as I give thanks for these extended days.

**What is Left**  
**Dorothy Bothe**

I feel like I’m dying.  
It used to be that I could tell a difference in myself  
In five years, then a year, and now a month.  
We think somehow we will see forever, then find we can’t.  
My vanity becomes apparent to me  
Every day when I want so much  
To keep my looks  
Which I’ve counted on too much all these years.  
It’s brought out the need to evaluate my priorities.  
It tells me who I am.

Losing ability to see, hear and move  
Brings home that what I have valued is disappearing.  
When we lose our faculties, use of our body,  
What is left is closer to who we really are.  
I am trying to teach myself to take joy in what is left.  
I can still talk and have communication with dear ones,  
Which brings me joy.

Life will have comfort and meaning with what is left till the end.  
When my outside diminishes, it tells me who I really am.  
What I can count on, in all its richness,  
Will be waiting for me there.

**Client and Therapist**  
**Maripat Munley**

Using your art, dreams, poetry and prose  
You are unwinding and rewinding your life  
Integrating it through memories long held  
Reworking your sense of self, resolving old conflicts  
Detaching from others unsolved  
Touching people long dead, renewing contacts with the living  
You are considering the mystery of death  
While living an abundant inner life.  
You have the courage to self explore in your 10th decade  
Examining joys and sorrows, past and present  
Learning from physical diminishment truths that matter.  
You are becoming your own healer finding your own strengths  
To carry you forward into the unknown  
Wondering what it will bring and if you are up to the task.

And me, your companion, a helper, I hope.  
Listening in awe to a life well lived.  
Astonished to know a woman who watched the Lindberg parade!  
You have had as teachers famous authors I have only read.  
What web in the Universe stretched to bring us together?  
In our interchange, who is changing more  
The client or the therapist?
**Music & Poetry**

**Ode to Joy**
By Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven was completely deaf when he composed his ninth symphony.
Lyrics adapted from Schiller’s poem, An Freude

From Wikipedia

Please visit our Webpage to read German original and view the two video clips.

**English Translation**

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen,
und freudenvollere.
Freude! Freude!

Oh friends, not these tones!
Rather, let us raise our voices in more pleasing
And more joyful sounds!
Joy! Joy!

Joy, beautiful spark of gods
Daughter of Elysium,
We enter drunk with fire,
Heavenly one, your sanctuary!
Your magic binds again
What custom strictly divided.
All men become brothers,
Where your gentle wing rests.

Whoever has had the great fortune
To be a friend’s friend,
Whoever has won a devoted wife,
Join in our jubilation!
Indeed, whoever can call even one soul,
His own on this earth!
And whoever was never able to, must creep
Tearfully away from this band!

Joy all creatures drink
At the breasts of nature;
All good, all bad
Follow her trail of roses.
Kisses she gave us, and wine,
A friend, proven in death;
Pleasure was to the worm given,
And the cherub stands before God.

Glad, as His suns fly
Through the Heaven’s glorious design,
Run, brothers, your race,
Joyful, as a hero to victory.

Be embraced, millions!
This kiss for the whole world!

---

Brothers, above the starry canopy
Must a loving Father dwell.
Do you bow down, millions?
Do you sense the Creator, world?
Seek Him beyond the starry canopy!
Beyond the stars must He dwell.

Finale repeats the words:
Be embraced, you millions!
This kiss for the whole world!
Brothers, beyond the star-canopy
Must a loving Father dwell.
Be embraced,
This kiss for the whole world!
Joy, beautiful spark of gods,
Daughter of Elysium,
Joy, beautiful spark of gods

---

**A Girl from Ipanema**
by Jobim/Gimbel/DeMoraes
From Wikipedia

Tall and tan and young and lovely
The girl from Ipanema goes walking
And when she passes, each one she passes goes - ah

When she walks, she’s like a samba
That swings so cool and sways so gentle
That when she passes, each one she passes goes - ooh

(Ooh) But I watch her so sadly
How can I tell her I love her
Yes I would give my heart gladly
But each day, when she walks to the sea
She looks straight ahead, not at me

Tall, (and) tan, (and) young, (and) lovely
The girl from Ipanema goes walking
And when she passes, I smile - but she doesn’t see
(doesn’t see)
(She just doesn’t see, she never sees me...)

---

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Thanks!
Poetry Workshop

Poetry & Arts Heal Ailing Minds
The Workshop Presented at
Bihl Haus Arts
Saturday 14 November 2009
Mo H. Saidi and James Brandenburg

Introduction
Poetry and arts improve our lives while they also indicate our mental status and wellbeing. We know of poets' happiness, bereavements, and longings through their poems. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge said: “…Great poets are also great philosophers, not because they say more in fewer words than prose writers, but because good poetry comes from the deepest and purest instincts of mankind; not because poetry is the product of premeditated literary collusion, but because it is free of greed and vice, it's the honest reflection of human mind.” Poetry will not make you wealthy and famous; instead, it may enable you to express yourself in beautiful ways.

Poetry with its rich meaning and music can be enormously therapeutic in the aftermath of personal and collective tragedies. After devastating events, poetry can save lives when it enables individuals to face the loss of dear ones, or when it helps a whole nation to survive during calamitous times. It is helpful to write poems about tragedies because by writing about them people purge themselves of some of their pain and suffering and transport painful events from the present into memories of the past. To write an elegy about the loss of a dear one, the poet immortalizes that person and the memory of that person acquires beauty and love.

Poetry adds meaning to music, makes the wind cool and pleasant, and colors the sunrise. To enjoy the smell of a rose more deliciously, to see the colors of the rainbow more vividly, or to hear a wren's lullaby in the middle of the night more intensely, simply read a description of them in poetry, and then go out and smell again, look again, listen again; everything will have gained immeasurable depth.

This Love
Rumi
From http://www.khamush.com/

This is love: to fly toward a secret sky,
to cause a hundred veils to fall each moment.
First, to let go of live.
In the end, to take a step without feet;
to regard this world as invisible,
and to disregard what appears to be the self.

Heart, I said, what a gift it has been
to enter this circle of lovers,
to see beyond seeing itself,
to reach and feel within the breast.

Shores
Assef Al-Jundi

Seagulls surely love this salty sea
Just as eagles must love
Endless sky

This southern breeze
Gentle roar of the waves
Is how my spirit feels
Earth giving
Its love

And I—
What am I without this sand
Under my toes
This mist filling my lungs
This lover I see
Everywhere
I look...

One Tiny Moment
Assef Al-Jundi

Exactly the way I want to feel
Like the trunk of a live oak

I confess my love for you
Discover my love for myself

High on the nectars of our spirits
Suspended in the intensity of this passion

I shed all but this moment
Fully in it

Fully in you
Deep in your blue canyons

Books Read at the Mirage Book Club
2008

1. January: The Ministry of Special Cases by Nathan Englander
2. February: Carmelo by Sandra Cisneros
3. March: A Spot of Bother by Mark Haddon
4. April: The Echo Makers by Richard Powers
5. May: The Gathering by Anne Enright
6. June: A Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz
7. Summer Break
8. September: The Girl Who Was Going to Die by Glyn Maxwell
9. October: Out Stealing Horses by Per Petterson
11. Holiday Reading
Questions for Poet Annie Parker
Interviewed by James Brandenburg

James Brandenburg: Tell our audience about yourself. What is your passion in life?
Annie Parker: I am a student at Rice University, where I am majoring in both English and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology; I will graduate in 2013. Whether is it through the scientific method, through my ears, through my eyes, or through emotional responses, observing (and in observing understanding) is my greatest passion.

When did you become interested in writing poetry? How old were you when your first poem was published?
I first became interested in writing poetry as a middle school student, when Marian Haddad came to give a presentation and a writing exercise. It was for this assignment that I wrote my first poem, “Geneseo Road,” which appears with few alterations in my book of poetry, *Remembrance of Rain*. I first had a poem published during the fall of my junior year of high school, when I was sixteen.

What does writing poetry mean to you?
Poetry is listening. It is hearing and communicating the beauty (albeit a sometimes savage or unpalatable beauty) found not only in great events, but also in the small series of necessities which tie moment to moment. Why do I write? I write because I cannot not write. I cannot not bring to others’ attention the way trees seem to sigh and stretch in the sun, or how the deafening power of a jackhammer is also like the sound of a heartbeat or the shoes of a Spanish dancer chattering across the floor. It is a healing and centering process to perceive the world, as I like to call it, “integratively.” Placing things in context assures me that all things are not separate from, but a part of each other.

What poets have inspired you most?
I was first inspired by, and continue to be inspired by the great Romantic poets—particularly Shelley and Keats, and that last great Romantic, Yeats. I also particularly love the work of Hafiz, Basho, and Mary Oliver. I do not try to imitate any particular poet, though I am often influenced by what I read. I believe my style and my voice is truly my own.

When do you write, and what inspires you to write? Do you have a special place for writing?
I am inspired by love of nature, words of people, and (of course) reading to write. Any quiet, clean, well-lighted place will do.

Do your peers accept your passion for writing poetry? Do they read your work and comment on it?
So far I have been lucky to have a very supportive groups of peers; however, I don’t usually volunteer that writing poetry is my main extracurricular activity. It sometimes takes a while before a person finds out I write poetry. Too much feedback, especially from an untrained ear, can complicate the emergence of a poem.

Do you like the way poetry is taught in schools? Is there something you would change?
In many ways I do like the way poetry is taught in schools; it is important for students to know literary devices and have an appreciation for the craft involved in writing. But there seems to be an unfortunate lack of emphasis upon what I would say is a far more essential part of poetry, indeed the art of poetry, and that is experiencing it—living through the poem into the moment or event the author describes and through this, coming to a deeper understanding of one’s own perceptions. Students are trained to concentrate so much on the dissection of rhetorical devices that they often miss the real beauty of a poem. The experiential aspect is not taught, and it needs to be.

What advice would you give to young poets who are starting out?
Be deeply honest in your writing. Let nothing that is not true to your perception seep in, because, especially if the rest of your work is good, it will sound out like a false note in a symphony—at best a humorous distraction, and at worst ruining the whole experience for the reader.

*A Week Before the Summer Solstice*

Annie Parker

On thick June air the scent
of grilling sausages fills
my mouth and makes it wet
with want of salt.

Around, low clinking sounds
of voice and tongue and teeth speak
a counterpoint to liquid notes—
a mockingbird bobbing bold
upon the fence.

Evening swells—first fruit
of the warm slow tree, gold
among the gingham tablecloths—
the sun, a peach ripe to pluck
as it hangs just above the dim
basket of the hills.
On an Afternoon in Late April  
Annie Parker

The clear cadence of rain quietly falls upon the upturned contours—face untouched by December cold—only summer sun had left his footprints; freckles, scattered small across her cheeks, the bridge of a nose—the braids soon heavy and wet, the bows now trailing—half undone. The small girl stands beneath the trees as she, resplendent in too-big boots and mud and crinkles of leaves reaches down to pick a round moss-covered stone—the earth still wet and clinging. Carefully she smoothes away the dirt—her hands dexterous, slow—but quick as she slips the stone in her pocket filled with ordinary things; a lacy leaf—pale, thin and papery—a blue jay’s lost, and muddied feather, bright and weightless wings of a long dead Monarch—a butterfly. She pats her pocket, moving through a small minefield of puddles—figure flitting from island—to island—with slow serenity.

When light overcomes darkness…  
Dario Benividez

Truth, the only truth, is in consciousness --Jeanne de Salzmann

The beasts are in the field. It is just us creating

Our world. The angels are in the words.

It is just us holding up the world.

Darkness permeates light.

It is only us comforting ourselves, no one else.

Discernments
Tom Keene

What is the difference between desire’s rage, captivating though it feels and stark appreciation’s profundity?

Is one a want to grasp while the other just letting be?

Is it knowing that in possessing we can be possessed and that by letting go we fly free?

Or that by dying to having we are born into being?

five-fingered people
lianne elizabeth mercer

Lianne wrote this poem while camping in Canyon de Chelly shortly after her mother died at the age of 97.

five-fingered people have left red or white hands on canyon walls from sandstone these hands touch me they planted corn birthed children gathered flowers chipped arrowheads found holes in rock walls that sent them higher they tatted snowflakes planted zinnias brought caring and cake held my hand crossing the street fragile hands hollow flying, bones leaving their prints on the ceiling of my heart
Select Poems–Part I
Youth Poems

Beauty is
Emily K. Pratt

Beauty is a rainbow after a light spring rain.
The caterpillars form their cocoons, and next spring
they will break away and be beautiful as can be, butterflies.

The birds will serenade us in a beautiful tune as the frost of
winter melts away.
Flowers bloom and fields of fresh green grass go on for miles.
Beauty is the salty ocean water glistening at sunset.

Colorful fish swim gracefully through the bright blue water.
Dolphins glide through the busy ocean
and their children jump and play throughout the sea.

The peaceful ocean waves crash on to the shore,
leaping, as if to say hello to everyone on the beach.

Beauty is the Earth.

McDonald’s
Andres Sustraita

Yes, I am a concerned customer
and I was wondering,
if your employees don’t
fry their burgers to cook them, and
they steam them hot, is it hazardous
to our health? And since you buy
older potatoes, will they give us
food poisoning?

Identity Crisis
Alex Flores

look at me now,
look deep in my eyes.
one side is truth
the other is lies.
you are me and i am you
were not for this glass,
this one would be two
this one would be two,
effectively the same
in both heart, mind, and name.
is it you in the mirror
is it me,
is it both
which ones alive
which ones the ghost
so mirror, mirror tell me true
is it me, or is it you.

Extinction/Separation
Jacob Gonzalez

No florescent colors
No tacos
No tamales
No language that I could never understand
This isn’t what I am
This isn’t who I want to be
No Tejano music
No church
I won’t be generalized
The only escape is suppression
No culture
No mosaic tiles of the Virgin Mary
Give me a choice
Bring me something new
Hide everything else
Voices de la Luna, 15 December 2010

Select Poems—Part II
Youth Poems

I Am Me and You Are You
Paloma Esparza

Chinese?
Mexican?
White?
No! No! No!
You have it all wrong.
Don’t judge a book by its cover.
Don’t judge me by my cover.

I am ... and you are you.

Born in El Paso but
Raised in San Antonio.
Which is better?
Family here and there.
Friends here and there.
Where do I fit?
Home is what I want.
Home is what I need.

In Love
Jasmin Jimenez

in love
just in his prime
his family young

his hands
covered with evidence
of a welder, hands
that could make iron succumb to his will

could hold a child so gently
could caress a love’s soft cheek
these hands so strong
yet sweet

he was my father
now he’s deceased

Habitat
Marcie Elias

in the pattern I see a face that
breaks off into the garbage can
sitting by her stove

the wise room has a vanity that
sees water that drips down from
the ceiling

wind flows in through the fan
mountains of gadgets and boxes
block out the light in the next room

then there are the ants that have
found shelter in his dinosaur
of a computer in the old den

the back door opens with a
long bird-like noise to a whole
new habitat

Snotty People
Shelly (Cecilia) Nerio

Snotty people, spoiled girls
Blond hair, blue eyes
Here comes the Mexican
Did you live in Mexico? they ask
Is it dirty there?
I got called wetback, beaner
Some even asked if I was adopted by a rich family
I just smiled and walked away with my friends
Lee, Denisha, Maria, Juan, Yoko

Whether we come from different
Places and speak different
Tongues, our hearts beat as one
**Prosthetic Flowers**
Marcie Elias

The vines grow on the tree outside my grandfather’s house, while the iron gate houses the flowers he has planted. The concrete pathway sees age marks when the grass sprouts. The porch gathers the cigarette ash that is my grandfather’s hair.

As you walk in, the birds chirp from the porch’s roof. The room is lit up with the sunny rays and flowers. Oh, those prosthetic flowers. Coffee bean aroma hits you like the sound of an old T.V. turning on. The window seals have housed the old flies that lurk around the fresh red fruit that sits on the old trunk table. I look down at the tile.

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**BRUSHES OF THE PAST**
Jordan Schaefer

sometimes it’s almost there again everything you thought was naught there and gone in a brilliant flash fleeting images of all you once had your imagined life of dreams and memories believing for a moment it may have been running through your head in a muddled cloud shattering, finally, fading into your mind this is it, this is the end of the whole mess still you allow yourself to hope against hope that you can take it all back at times you forget it could even have been the visions catch your surprise you can’t tell what meaning they have if any may be perceived at all your head is wrung out, pulled taut trying your best to decipher these things and sometimes you can, sometimes you do because sometimes, you know sometimes the world bleeds through

---

**Variety**
Jacob Gonzalez

Dear Satan,

Why are there so many Mexican restaurants? Even Hell must have more variety than this? Maybe I want a pizza place!

No one cares, though, because, “I only need tacos.”

That’s what they say and that’s all that matters, giving everybody what they want, according to statistics.

I probably don’t need to say anything. You’ll see them soon.
**Thermokarst**  
*Wendy Barker*

"Over thousands of miles in Alaska’s interior, patches of forest sink into thermokarsts and die as swamp water floods them. It is a frequent sight on the roadside: a stand of tamarack, gray, spidery, dead, rising from muskeg water."

--William K. Stevens, *The Change in the Weather*

Tamarack in old habit--firmness of permafrost’s hard layers beneath--till underground ice pockets thaw, and earth falls in, diagonal. The sky no longer up, and roots awash in bog. Melting causes spring, and health, and sex, we think, liquidities like mother’s milk, kindnesses that would be kindest if dependable.

When sudden flood befuddles us, how to find the bottom, or the stars.

---

**Catching Fire**  
*Darby Riley*

That being indoors is the cosmos itself; the energy of the first imagined emergence

Now, so long later, we’ve lost our way, await salvation from without

Start within.

---

**Down Under**  
*Mim Scharlack*

The Statue of Liberty has disappeared gone underwater.

A tourist witness the immersion torch raised, visitors on her crown yelling, “Help, help, help,” … glug.

She can’t swim… or won’t.

She sinks down deep among the denizens, friendlier, more honest than those above.

She has had her fill of greed war overspending overpopulation and has moved to a new neighborhood.

---

**Musings at Grape Creek**  
*Mary Earle*

What does the fish know? The underwater perspective is something I’ve always desired. The knowing that comes from hiding in the rock crevice, watching the surface for evidence of dinner. The flash of movement, resulting in a gulp, swallowing whole a wiggling fly. What does it feel like, that tickle in the gullet? What does the fish know, swallowing life whole?
Condensation Nuclei  
*Wendy Barker*

Sea salt, pollen, and smoke.  
Particles the air  
needs to form a cloud.  
A pebble in the palm.  
Phrase dropped on a plate.  
Your words I’ve collected  
and lined up like bowls  
of ash, or sand,  
stared at, and wept.  
Or like our lidded glass  
containers: oats, wheat,  
and opalescent grains  
we use to knead  
our bread, yeasty  
loaves with raisins.  
Rain, relief, the irritants  
washed back to loam.  
Saliva, the body’s  
juices that digest  
grit between our teeth.

---

Dulce  
*Margot Van Sluyman*

The ocean is a woman,  
And I am yours.  
She sends the spell of your deep blue eyes  
Near my wanting neck.  
You bend,  
I rise up.

You are as She deity supping on  
Dark dulce and green seaweed.  
Swallowing the scent of  
Seawater that laps upon  
Sandy shores, as you invite  
Behemoths to dance  
With you and the full moon  
In her splendour.

She feeds you.  
You feed me,  
Petal pulsating-pink, alive.  
You gaze as hazel-tinted sun rises,  
Underscore our pleasures.  
She wills only tenderness  
And you say one word: yes.

---

When the raven’s wing  
*Toni H. Falls*

lightly sweeps my body  
this tired mantle trembles, splits,  
sloughs away like a locust’s shell,  
taking the smoky shadow of pain and disease.  
The luminescence that is mine alone  
will be revealed and I shall know myself again  
but in a way unimagined,  
like the blind man, who snips  
threads sewn to eyelids,  
who slowly opens eyes long sealed and  
beholds himself for the first time,  
radiant in his wholeness.

The Divine dwelled in my heart  
as It lives in yours and promised me never to leave,  
giving me strength to live and love,  
Grace to hold my faith through this last, long journey,  
and courage to chapter my story until this body besieged  
grew weary and laid itself in the sweet heather of eternity.

I have not left you behind, Beloved,  
my spirit and our Creator reside now in your heart,  
and just as I was promised,  
I make this covenant now with you...  
though death may deny you my presence,  
it quails when challenged by the everlasting love  
God and I have for you.

*Published 2009*  
*Sustaining Abundant Life*

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East of Austin  
*Christa Pandey*

The April sky sends down a torrent,  
wildflowers hide in sheets of rain.  
This afternoon those ninety miles  
feel more like forty days.  
Eyes cannot bask in rural grace,  
glued to the road to find a guide,  
the faintly glinting center stripe.

Next day the bluebonnets look scrubbed.  
Their bluish pillows fluffed amid  
expansive sweeps of youthful green.  
Nearby a clapboard village church,  
a sandy cow, expectant egret congregation,  
an unheard sermon, ruminate and wait.
Select Poems
Part IV

Soul Work
Lou Taylor

1533
On that specific Pillow
Our projects flit away-
The Night’s tremendous Morrow
And whether sleep will stay
Or usher us—a stranger--
To situations new
The effort to comprise it
Is all a soul can do.
Emily Dickenson

A soul’s life
Is born in every mortal
Children know with all their being
That sleep does not stay
Night of complacency
Dawns day of new discovery
When we meet the stranger
We thought we knew,
The soul says
“Welcome, we have work to do.”

How Can I Hold You?
Connie Beresin

In tandem behind the loons
we glide along the water’s silent edge.

Your slender torso,
design a chart to where?

Among the lilies damselflies scatter
tilting at the sun’s rays stroking each petal
just.

Crossed stitches along your soft thigh stump.
Patches squared around your belly.
Gauze pieces in your side.

Where can I hug you without pain?

Months of artful etching
leave grooves and notches.
I taste your neck, trace a circle.

May I hold you?

The Favela
Kay Collier

Winding roads climb high.
Tin roofs, clay roofs touch and overlap.
People spill out onto steamy brick streets.
Tangles of wire steal electricity from main lines.
Bundled they climb stone stairs
side by side with residents.

Motorcycles, chains of gold, white paper packets passed.
   No photos here!

A teenage lad shyly sells his paintings—
bright colored houses in reds, blues, greens.
I turn to look at what he paints—
shacks of browns, blacks and dust.

 Clothes hang from poles, lines, railings.
Dogs roam.
A tourist asks, “Are they happy here—in this clutter?”
It is their culture. It is their home.
These are their families. They are safe here.

White paper packets change hands.
Motorcycles roar up the mountainside and down.
No photos here!

Teach them to read, to write, to resist.
To someday leave the Favela behind?

But no photos here!

Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast
for Lewis Wolpert
John Hammond

The room slowly returns to itself
in the ghostly dawn — a frame gives birth
to a picture, a gray shirt takes on color —
as the tilting Earth invites the sun
into our neighborhood,
and we do not fall off the planet.

I awaken just as last night’s dream
swims to the lightless reaches of my brain,
which knows more than it knows.

I make the bed with the cat on it,
moving her east and west
in our morning ceremony.
As I make my way
by heart through the puzzle
of furniture, a bird shouts,
“Me too! Me too! JudyJudyJudy!”
Select Poems
Part V

Courage
Donald Jackson

Standing in the kitchen,
I decry, “Dad, look what you
are doing, you’re hitting me!”
The words uttered by some
unknown courage.
You turn and reach into the cabinet,
for the bottle of bourbon. Pouring a
glass, you sit with your elbows on the
table and say nothing, but your eyes
tell me everything.
Now years later, Dad, you no longer
hit me. Though I still remember that
gaze.

New Brunswick
Kaycee Belcher

Isolated, sterile, solitary
iron adjustable bed; cancer
ridden man half sits,
with his belief, stronger
than any opiate, as I stand

back to witness a reunion
after flying across the country
to say goodbye, and see the Yankees,
hear Frank sing at the end of the ninth.
After brief introductions

the most unselfish man I’ve
met makes eye contact with
the stranger in the room
and says, “Now, tell me about you.”
In my mind, I un-age his face, put him back
behind the wheel in the driver’s seat of stories
told of his VW bus rambling cross country
into Mexico. We laugh, saying hello
and goodbye all in the same moment
before leaving the hospital, catching

a train. Not knowing what to say
I turn to my friend’s watery
eyes, not quite crying, staring out
the window, I have to ask,
“... you think we’ll make the first pitch?”

The Color of Hope
Clyda Coder

Ministry comes in many colors.
Oasis de Esperanza is the color of hope,
hope for relief from pain,
for eyes to see,
for stronger hearts and inner health,
courage to cope with daily ills,
someone to listen to cancer fears,
to lift the spirit and share the tears.
A nimble dentist pulls throbbing teeth,
pulling the pain into her soul.
Ministry comes in many colors;
Oasis de Esperanza is the color of hope.

Creation
Robert James Clark

Emotions
Tangled, warped, sold out
Where does it end?
All too well, we know the beginning.
Life flies by in agonized seconds.
Fleeing away from gnarled hands.
Eyes so tired
Watching life
Wearyed from the view.

Sleep
Glass and fragile, wind-spun crystal
Meld
To make what we call man
Laugh and weep
For nowhere is thy footstep
Laid

So clear

Eternity
The pale and shifting sands of time
Carve
From the mountain, just what it needs.
The pounding sea takes from the shore
All remnants
Of our lives
Are you really so foolish to think
Life

Won’t take from you
Just
What it needs?
Untitled

Jeff Atkins

I am walking in the snow
I see their tracks beside mine
one set on each side

Suddenly, my tracks are
alone

I am in the forest
I am in the white meadow
The beautiful snowfall this night
muffles my desolation
and fills in imprints of our past

My only companion now
is the crunching
Of my boots in the snow

The other creatures I encounter
the rabbit
the raven
the chipmunk
seem to acknowledge my aloneness

I cannot turn back
I cannot bring them back
I have to keep walking
in the falling snow

Yet, I feel
as if an avalanche
might
sweep me away
at any moment
into eternity.

Kingly

Hejo Müller

Royally
the trees rise up
as if they knew all along
that one day
from one of them would hang
the King of the world

Ode to the Christmas Season and Electronics

Jeff Atkins

Oh, Television.
Oh, LCD HDTV screen.
Oh, Plasma 1080P resolution screen (Oh, what the heck does 1080P mean?)
Oh, I-pod...I-pod Touch...I-pod phone,
and the great corporate APPLE. (We bow down to you, we love you, we must have you, we cannot be without you, God Bless APPLE).
Oh, digital camera
Oh, SLR digital camera (Single lens reflex)
Oh, film printer
Oh, printshop in my own home now
Oh, thousands and thousands of photos to manage.
Oh, cheap junk,
Oh, elephant gift
Oh, $10 gift card
Oh, $25 gift card
Oh, $100 gift card (!)
Oh, money, money, money
Oh, more and more money,
Oh, even more money
and more and more and more and more and MORE (More! More! More!)

Poof!
Gone!
Like Santa up the Chimney,
Like a team of reindeer against a dark sky.
Let there be a North Pole.

Oh, WONDER...where art thou?

When We Are Away from Our Own Creations

Thom the World Poet

Narcissus rests upon Parnassus,
contemplating mountain tops
Deserts breathe again, sans chainsaws and cigarettes
Even cities wash their streets down from the heat
of work and wars
Aloneness fills starlit skies with huge distances
Angels of rare beauty appear in dreams
with more reality than any stranger Paradise
One may walk upon a moon--returning is all
To name a sky is trespass upon our dreaming trails
My father is gone. We watch as elders turn
into the dust of stars
Contemplation clicks the clock of midnight/to stop
unblock the detritus of this day/unload emotions
release all we feel and say/a dream away
one cloud below one moon. One night. One life.
from one cloud below one Moon. One night. One life. One line
that stretches horizons until they dilute all distances
and we can fit more in this Ark of Evening
sailing stars towards interrogatory glare of morning Sol
Quiet now. You are a cloud. Moon is still.
ABOVE!

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Shakespeare’s Soap...Ad Infinitum
Valerie Martin Bailey

Not much has changed since Shakespeare penned his “soap” for Nothing is still causing Much Ado and convoluted tales of vanquished hope, forbidden love, suspense, and ballyhoo are scripted by the bards of commerce to be broadcast to the waiting eyes and ears of those who live to wallow in the stew of passion, angst, deceit, and hopeless tears of All My Children—Young and Restless ones whose lives are tangled in a parody of life, who move as planets round their suns in endless, pointless, mad hyperbole...

A soapy, mindless drama marathon—Ah, roiling sea of nothingness rage on.

C-Nile Virus
Catherine-Grace Patrick

They call it “C-Nile Virus,” This Senior-cursed infection, The one that counts us down—then out, When we try recollection! For when, in life, this stage is reached, We gain the predilection, To hear (from our own children), Their need for our correction.

Then, once again, we try, of course, With focused (?) introspection, Sorting through synaptic strands, Misfired with small affection, To learn where that one swift right turn, Went by, without detection, Sending us to laugh (why not?), At our own imperfection

A café in our romantic tradition Where we tasted exotic ideas Wood floors polished by light Shadows marshaling oily legions Sharpening our instincts Laughter a last wilderness Listening for decades to quartets Knowing and not knowing Music arrives in us Yet we hesitate to sing

Transformation
Stuart Young

In eons past Hurtling Orpheus Dealt me a glancing blow Leaving behind His core of iron Rings around My pockmarked head Coalesced into your radiance As you retreated You slowed my spinning thoughts And stilled my wobbling Now I can breathe And all my life Dances to your rhythm.
XV
Mike Alexander

To catch a snapshot of the virgin’s face
her mother scans the missing persons files,
the girls who’ve disappeared without a trace,
the beatific eyes, the vacant smiles.

She’s learning a new catechism, trials,
reprieves, a grief that cannot be controlled,
her daughter held by godless pedophiles
somewhere where innocence is bought and sold.

The days grow shorter, slowly turning cold,
as she exhausts the casebooks, one by one,
the trees outside the station turning gold,
then brown, & barren, until the day is done.

The roses by her bed refuse to bud;
She wakes to find her mouth half-full of blood.

Keeping Company
AKA
Dear Old Cat
Judy St. John

Dear old cat, lanky, dusty with age
Come, sit with me and remember.
Do you take pleasure now in my company?
Do you still listen for her return?

Do you recall the happy days when she raced in
Calling your name, holding you high,
Delighted with your squeaky “meow”
And your jaunty left ear?

Now, old cat, it’s just you and me.
You, curled snuggly on a fine velvet chair,
Hand-quilted pillow at your back,
Me nestled empty-lapped in my Grandmother’s rocker.

Keeping company, you and I, with our wise looks,
Warm purrs and soft wispy memories.

Still Life
P.C. McKinnon

It’s the orange and yellow leaves
on the grass,
wet with dew against the green mat,
that create
a picture-perfect fall morning.

Through the lens its subtle beauty,
natural,
like the smoothness of river rock,
on the bank,
still like bowls of grapes on canvas.

Now, Voyager
Joan Seifert

1942 Warner Bros. Movie
“Don’t let’s ask for the moon, Jerry; we have the stars!”

Remember candy cigarettes?
As kids decades ago, we’d hold them,
gazing dewy-eyed just like in the movies;
we were Bette Davis and Paul Henreid
tracing our destinies in the heavens
with such wit and elegance.
Jerry and I just knew we could compete
with that lofty movie star sophistication.

I could never make my “cigarettes” last,
taking in the sweetness with leisure.
I liked to chew them quickly
into crackles of syrupy delight.
Jerry lingered, though, with style and class,
even mixing a little Bogart
“Here’s looking at you, kid” into his act.

When we last talked, he had that wit and charm still,
We were like the stars once; God!
do you remember when it was just candy?

Crows Keep Company
Margot Van Sluytman

I, too, sing the body electric,
Celebrating that fine, fading scar
On your belly, to the right of your navel.
The lavender scent
Of your long white hair, shaping wisdom
As you pack your meal for your midnight
Shift. As steady as bracing winter morns,
You go to those men whose lives are
Strewn with versions of chaos and turmoil, the last
Days of their sentences. You sit with them
Gliding onto their trusting souls, as you
Shave their endless concerns with a
Glimting razor’s edge of knowing: “I can’t
Make it out there alone.”
“Yes. You can.”
In the hours after the sun has risen, and
You come to my door, tired, filled
With longing, your fingers stroking
My hungry neck, your mouth reaching
For my naked nipples, my sheets welcome
Us, while coffee brews, fat carrot muffins
Thaw, and wild, curious crows sing the praises
Of my gracious Knight who ever dallies
Where my fire rages, eager to taste
His reaching fingers.
Poetry & Dreams

Dreams & Symbols
Voices Editors

Poetry and Dreams have much in common in that both contain symbols and metaphors. Certain Big Dreams contain images from the unconscious that reflect archetypes since the beginning of time. On my journey to become a dream analyst, I am also more and more fascinated by the use of dream material that can be amplified into poems.

Slinky and Aging – A Dream
James Brandenburg

The dream starts out in an unknown country. I am in the basement of an old house. I see what looks like a snake or a ball of hair. It is about a foot in diameter. I don’t touch it. I leave it and go to bed. When I wake up, I know that I have swallowed something. I vomit up a mass and discover that it is neither a snake nor a ball of hair, but a fuzzy-looking, metal slinky. I put it down and it slinks on its own. I follow it outside, into a damp, jungle-like area with lots of undergrowth. I lose the slinky, and I see the tail of something that is not moving. It is a rather long alligator, about five or six feet long, lying on its back. There are wounds in its stomach, and flies buzz around it. It appears to be dead. Something or someone has killed it.

The dream shifts to a conference in a public place, like a school or university. I sign in at the desk for a workshop. Women of all ages crowd the place. I am the only male. We mingle and exchange small talk. A younger woman who does not notice my presence, says old men are sometimes incapable of doing anything productive. I pick up on her tone and feel I have to respond, since the other women know I overheard the remark. I announce rather loudly, “I am old and active.” My comment breaks the tension and everyone laughs. The woman who made the comment comes over and gives me a hug. Several other women also hug me. I felt vindicated and happy. The dream ends.

How to Become a Suicide Bomber
Adapted from BBC News
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8357011.stm

A 14-year-old boy in the tribal region of Bajaur, in north-west Pakistan, says he was detained by Taliban forces who tried to turn him into a suicide bomber.

There were five people who came after me from a place in Bajaur. They tricked me. They told me they were going to behead my father.

I went with them but my father wasn’t there. They tied me up. They said: ‘You have two choices. We will behead you, or you will become a suicide bomber.’ I refused.

There were two more guys of my age. They were also training to be suicide bombers. If we refused they would tie our hands behind our backs, blindfold us and start beating us.

They brainwashed us and told us we would go to heaven. They said ‘there will be honey and juice and God will appear in front of you. You will have a beautiful house in Heaven.’

We used to ask them to let us out to pray. They would reply, ‘you are already on your way to heaven. You don’t need to pray.’

They beat me hard for five days. I wasn’t given any food. While they were beating me I agreed to become a suicide bomber. They separated me from the other boys.

Mosque mission: They took me to a dark room and started giving me pills. I was handed over to Maulvi Fakir [the Bajaur Taliban commander]. After all this preparation they said I was to go and do the job in a mosque.

It was an ordinary mosque but the cleric there used to talk against the Taliban, and they declared him their enemy. They told me the cleric was a non-believer, a non-Muslim.

In the second dream about 30 females surround the male dreamer. Females represent anima figures in the life of the male. There is a lack of differentiation in the plurality of females, except for the young female who blurts out the comment about old men. It is noteworthy that the young lady is unaware of the dreamer and has a definite attitude about age. The dreamer picks up on the negative attitude and issues his own assertion. That comment breaks the tension, the females laugh and the young female and other females hug the dreamer. The dreamer feels vindicated and happy.

In dream psychology, two or more successive dreams on the same night generally arise from the same source. The dreamer should try to examine how the two dream segments reflect a single complex. In the first dream, the alligator (a symbol of something ancient or prehistoric) is killed by an intruder. Perhaps this murder represents society’s attitude toward aging. The second dream echoes the same theme when the young woman blurts out her comment. The unconscious offers the dreamer some compensation in the form of an archetypal symbol—the alligator. We all need to find a place within ourselves that transcends age and connects us to the idea of timelessness or eternity, a step in the process of individuation in Jungian Psychology.

Dream Interpretation
James Brandenburg

I was working on issues of aging for this issue of Voices de la Luna when I had these two dreams on the same night. Both deal with the unknown. A major symbol in the first dream is the slinky, a mechanical snake-like object, that is first assimilated and then vomited back up. As a toy it takes the dreamer back to his youth when the dreamer played for hours by himself, taking on various personas. Once vomited up, the slinky takes on a life of its own and leads the dreamer outside to a dead alligator, victim of a senseless killing. The alligator is a survival of ancient times. Something ancient has been lost in today’s society. Perhaps the dreamer himself is a living fossil.
An Old Friend (Death)
James Brandenburg

I can’t ignore you
smiling
in that hidden cavern
inside me
where the bare walls
once enclosed the depths
of cave dwellers.

I hear water
dripping
down the
stalactites
of my existence
splashing
into that large pool.

The bell tolls for me
in that colonial village
atop the mountain;
cobblestone streets
lead upward,
and I know
how slippery they are.

You greet me where
they drag the dead bull
across the arena.
Then we seat ourselves
in the center
at the roundtable
of the ancients.

Nearness of You (A Dream Image)
Josie Mixon

Along the corridor
Of my thoughts
I found you
Not waiting for me
Like I wasn’t looking for you
Still, here we are

Last night I bathed in moonlit waters
Thinking of all that is
All that has been drives me here
Further than I have ever been
But still the oceans depth calls out to me
Just a little further out
Where I feel the temperature change
The only rage lived within me
Not in the waves
They twirled, turning and spiraling
Wrapping their arms around me
Like the arms of an octopus
A welcomed invitation
Fear crept in but anger was stronger
So I stood my ground
Even with mother’s hands
Wrapped around my ankles

The nearness of you held my hand
As you felt me fading into tomorrow
Measuring the distance between us
I knew your love was stronger than my hate
So I chose to stay
Within the nearness of you

UNWANTED (A Dream Image)
Josie Mixon

Between the cracks and the smaller spaces
I could see you
A momentary pause gave me time to look around
And there I was
I saw myself standing there
Just standing
Just looking like a tourist in a foreign land
I am an outcast on familiar ground
Yes I see myself
A stranger to all
With miscellaneous rules
To keep me stable and unwanted
There is competition within myself
As who I am fights for who I want to be
Secretly my autobiography
Has now become my eulogy
As I stand back and let the winds take hold
Surrendering me to my destiny
Book Review

The Magic Seashells
by Kay Briggs
Reviewed by the Editors of Voices

The Magic Seashells, a memoir on child abuse and healing through journaling by Kay Briggs, is a riveting book of childhood abuse and the author’s coming out of darkness into the light. Rarely do I find a book that I cannot put down once I begin reading it; The Magic Seashells is such a book. After Briggs was sexually abused by her father, her grandfather, and her great uncle, and suffered abuse at the hands of her mother, she suppressed those memories for many years. In college, she became depressed and went to see a psychiatrist, who prescribed pills for depression. The pills took care of the symptoms, but 20 years later when her life fell apart, she finally went into therapy. The therapist introduced her to journaling, and it was through writing her thoughts down that she connected to her inner voices and was able to recall her suppressed memories. Connecting with those memories was healing, and she is now able to lead a normal life.

Briggs gives back to the community by speaking and reaching out to those who have suffered from abuse. At every presentation, she hands out seashells to her audience and asks them to create a story with their seashells. That is what she did on a beach many years ago; she placed several oyster shells on an old battered log, lined them up, and found that they spoke to her. Combining the seashell stories with her journaling helped propel her toward healing. It is this experience that she shares with her audiences as she hands out seashells to everyone present. Her book offers hope and solutions that can help the reader lead a more joyful life. She writes: “We are all wounded by the world. The key is to recognize our wounds and heal the--then wear our scars quietly like discreet badges of honor.”

Depression
Joyce Collins

Like a knock on a door
I cannot refuse to answer,
It arrives and I dread its coming--its weight
For there’s no carrying this load
Only bearing it--Upright
Then falling to my knees,
Till finally prostrate
And still it stays and weighs
Heavy on my back
Then goes--unannounced
Quietly
As it came

Three Poems Untitled
Joyce Collins

I long for the world where souls mate for life
and breathe unmitigated truth
Whose speech is unfettered by faces that lie
and life is not jaded by fear

Alone in the desert,
I long to be free and scream out the pain
But when I think of it, I hold myself in
The burning sensation will only get worse
If I let myself feel it--the depth of my thirst

We walk the fence of self-esteem,
Our faces toward the sun,
But never leaping there
It’s all we can do to keep our feet on the beam,
Avoid the shadow’s lair

Ode to a Seashell
Florida Auger
Tenebra Floridana
Lou Taylor

Spiral reaching
To the depths
And returning

Always moving
Never ending

Returning and
Leaving again

Then returning
To the same place

Ever deeper
Ever wider

Joyce Collins and Repressed Memories
Voices Editors

For many years, Joyce Collins suppressed the sexual abuse in her life. She was depressed, but she did not realize why. In her first book of poetry (when she was still repressing the abuse), there were allusions to sexual abuse, but she did not pick up on those allusions until after she realized that she was a survivor of sexual abuse. Below are sample poems that contain allusions to sexual abuse.
Participants in poetry therapy groups often write poems about their demons. Although on first glimpse, these poems appear to be very dark, a deeper reading of the poem can reveal that poets are actually acknowledging their demons, are accepting them, and are willing to live with them. These poems can serve as a type of catharsis. Writing about their demons can be healing and can aid poets in accepting their dark side. Teenagers often dwell on their dark sides, but this process can be very cathartic for them. On the other hand, therapists and teachers have to be on the alert for the difference between something cathartic and something that reveals suicidal tendencies and may need immediate attention. Anything dark has to be taken seriously and must be examined very carefully, along with having a discussion with the poet. The dark themes can eventually be redirected into more positive themes.

Death Head
John Serna

There were no nights of darkness nor cries unheard and evil demons never once arose, nightmares were then as now only mostly forgotten as tempers heated and hearts froze.

There was no sacred banner nor dishonored fields where lost spirits fueled ritual fire, and drum rolls thundered glory’s march to shame as dreams awakened by barbed wire.

There was no apocalypse of horsemen gone insane as mercy’s pleas above raised arms, were disallowed for hatred played mindless game and sirens blared with false alarms.

There were no death heads spilling chosen blood and bodies burned in final scheme, black ghosts did not parade with twisted crosses singing songs with words obscene.

There was no night of long knives ushering doom as shrunken skulls attracted flies, lying in shallow graves awaiting spread of lime gaped open mouth screaming lies.

There was no death heads ... no Kristallnacht no holocaust...only memories dead.

Emptiness
Robert James Clark

The hour is late, and I am all alone
With thoughts far-fetched-wind-blown!
It’s all about you and all about me
The story about us, you see!
It’s you
It’s me
Stars shine down on the silent Earth,
Weighing each principle’s abject worth!
Cold, barren a pace
Vast, empty sighs
Reflect within the depth of your eyes!
It’s you
It’s me
Where did the love we had flee to?
Leaving warm hearts, so sterile, so blue!!
Oh, where did it go, my love of old?
Bartered and bargained finally sold!
It’s you
It’s me
Sadly
It’s all of us.

Demons
Julia Hawkins

I’ve grown bitter and angry
The demon in my head
has completely overtaken me
I can’t eat, can’t sleep
I’m sick to my stomach
and all my heart can do is weep
I was doing okay when I was holding it in
But the monster grew too strong
and broke the levee for my sin
You can see it in my eyes; the devil lurks behind them
He’s waiting to seize his moment
and burst into my oblivion
This bitterness and anger
replaced my once depression
And figuring out the reason why
is far from my obsession
Because I’ve given up all hope
on destroying my wretched demon
I’m not fighting him anymore;
I know he’s not just leaving
So I’ve come to terms with dying inside
Come on, take me for your sick ride
At least then, I will finally be free
Free of this world that’s overtaken me.
Spoken Word
Poems Written & Read by the Authors

Grisel Y. Acosta Recites Her Poetry

Grisel Y. Acosta is an instructor at The Writing Center at the UTSA. She studies Latino literature; poetry; oral tradition/songwriting and folktales; language and identity; intersecting cultures and identities; education reform. Her publications: House of Walls, in Private International Photo Review; Pressure Mix, in Check the Rhyme: An Anthology of Female Poets and MCs; Cubanita, in After Hours Literary Magazine; Chica!Go! (Part I), (an excerpt) by Urban Life Center. Her hometown: Chicago.
Info from: www.utsa.edu.

Cubanita
(excerpt)
Grisel Y. Acosta

To read the full version please visit the Website:
www.Voicesdelaluna.com
to see the video at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0xqRRX8G0U

Being Cuban is hot
You are assumed to represent
The genius of Afro-Cuban jazz records
The flavor of the finest cigars and coffee
The juice of puerco asado
The passion of revolution
The fire of mambo
And the talent for talking the most mess
Yes, they love Cuba
Being Cuban is hot
Yeah, sure it’s hot
Hot like the burning words
My uncles would write to
My mother out of frustration
Because she wasn’t sending them
Enough money
And their excellent Cuban educations
Were useless
On a jobless island
Being Cuban is hot
Like the acid in my
Grandfather’s tears
When he saw me on videotape
Telling him I wanted to meet him
I still haven’t met him
He died last year
Being Cuban is hot like the
itchy skin my cousins must
Withstand because they have
No lotion
No soap
No vitamins
To keep their skin from developing disease
I am reminded of this every time I buy lotion
At the dollar store

Marian Haddad Reads Poetry

Marian Haddad & Marian Aitches recited poetry at B&N Ingram Mall, San Antonio, Texas on 4 November 2009.

The video below shows “Driving from El Paso to San Antonio” by Marian Haddad, M.F.A. Haddad is a poet, essayist, visiting writer, manuscript and publishing consultant, private writing mentor, creative writing workshop instructor, public speaker, and artistic event coordinator. Her works have been published in various journals and periodicals including The Texas Observer, The Rio Grande Review, Sin Fronteras/Writers Without Borders, Bat City Review, and Mizna.
Info from www.marianhaddad.com; and see the video at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ugvJrLHY-M

Marian Aitches Reads Poetry

Marian Aitches, a native of San Antonio, Texas, grew up in Victoria Courts, one of the country’s oldest subsidized public housing projects. An award-winning professor, she is currently a senior lecturer in the department of History at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Info from www.wingspress.com.

San Antonio Summer
Marian Aitches

1.
Before the rain, just before the rain—
a hummingbird lingers at the red mouth
of August. A south wind moves
silver-green sycamore leaves—bees
and butterflies on hot pink penta clusters.
Ginger blooms in high sun; gold esperanza
full against the chain-link fence.

Storm-clouds in from the west—
metal-roof, watery-notes play orange
hibiscus music, riff on yellow lantana,
wash over gardenias and blue
plumbagos, as they push down the drive
to Mission Street—rush south
to the river.

2.
Trapped sixty years in this dead place,
Survived a seven-year drought. The 50s.
Damned if I won’t spend the rest of my life
in one. Ignoring the frown on my face,
he explains: Eighty-three now, might make ninety—
that’s seven years before I die.

This morning, rain spills over the gutter,
splashes off ginger, ripples
down bricks on its way to the river.
I phone my Daddy
a few miles away, ask if it’s raining—
though I know it’s not.

See the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piZokg3EDeG
According to this published document from the Iranian Interior Ministry, which is copy-pasted below, Mr. Ahmadinejad was the third in the number of votes received in the Iranian presidential election or only 13.55% of the total votes, thus ineligible to participate in the run-off election. He was declared the winner by the election commission only three hours after the closing of the voting hours. The commission claimed Mr. Ahmadinejad received 63% of the total votes everywhere even in the hometowns of other two candidates, Mr. Musavi and Mr. Karoobi.

**A Summary of the Document**

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Mr. Musavi’s votes</td>
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<td>Mr. Karoobi’s votes</td>
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<td>Mr. Ahmadinejad</td>
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<td>Mr. Rezai</td>
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<td>Cancelled ballots</td>
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The document is obtained and translated from the Iranian Students Website

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**Who Wrote the Koran?**

By MOHAMMAD AYATOLLAHI TABAAR

*From the New York Times*

7 December 2008

For more than two decades, Abdulkarim Soroush has been Iran’s leading public intellectual. Deeply versed in Islamic theology and mysticism, he was chosen by Ayatollah Khomeini to “Islamicize” Iran’s universities, only to eventually turn against the theocratic state. He paid a price for his dissidence. Vigilantes and other government-supported elements disrupted his widely attended lectures in Iran, beat him and reportedly nearly assassinated him. In a country where intellectuals are often treated like rock stars, Soroush has been venerated and reviled for his outspoken support of religious pluralism and democracy. Now he has taken one crucial step further. Shuttling from university to university in Europe and the U.S., Soroush is sending shock waves through Iran’s clerical establishment.

The recent controversy began about eight months ago, after Soroush spoke with a Dutch reporter about one of Islam’s most sensitive issues: the divine origin of the Koran. Muslims have long believed that their holy book was transmitted word for word by God through the Prophet Muhammad. In the interview, however, Soroush made explicit his alternative belief that the Koran was a “prophetic experience.” He told me that the prophet “was at the same time the receiver and the producer of the Koran or, if you will, the subject and the object of the revelation.” Soroush said that “when you read the Koran, you have to feel that a human being is speaking to you, i.e. the words, images, rules and regulations and the like all are coming from a human mind.” He added, “This mind, of course, is special in the sense that it is imbued with divinity and inspired by God.”

As Soroush’s words spread thanks to the Internet, Iran’s grand ayatollahs entered the battlefield. In their rebuttal, the clerics pointed to the Koranic verses that state “this is a book we have sent down to you (O Muhammad).” They ask, Don’t these verses imply that God is the revealer and Muhammad the receiver? They also point out that there were times when Muhammad waited impatiently for the revelation to come to him and that in more than 300 cases the prophet is commanded to tell his people to do one thing or another. This demonstrates, the argument goes, that the commands are coming from elsewhere rather than from the heart or the mind of the prophet himself.

Soroush, in turn, responds by saying that the prophet was no parrot. Rather, Soroush told me, he was like a bee who produces honey itself, even though the mechanism for making the honey is placed in him by God. This is “the example the Koran itself sets,” says Soroush, citing the Koran: “And your Lord inspired to the bee: take for yourself among the mountains, houses . . . then eat from all the fruits . . . there emerges from their bellies a drink . . . in which there is healing for people.”

Soroush has been described as a Muslim Luther, but unlike the Protestant reformer, he is no literalist about holy books. His work more closely resembles that of the 19th-century German scholars who tried to understand the Bible in its original context. Case in point: when a verse in the Koran or a saying attributed to Muhammad refers to cutting off a thief’s hand or stoning to death for adultery, it only tells us the working rules and regulations of the prophet’s era. Today’s Muslims are not obliged to follow in these footsteps if they have more humane means at their disposal.

Soroush’s latest views have not endeared him to the powerful conservative wing of Iran’s establishment. Some have accused him of heresy, which is punishable by death. There have been demonstrations by clerics in Qom, the religious capital of Iran, against his recent work. But Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, unexpectedly warned against feeding the controversy. He said those who are employing “philosophy or pseudo-philosophy” to “pervert the nation’s mind” should not be dealt with “by declaring apostasy and anger” but rather countered with the “religious truths” that will falsify their arguments.

continued...
Who Wrote the Koran

continued . . .

In Iran today, many opponents of the government advocate the creation of a secular state. Soroush himself supports the separation of mosque and state, but for the sake of religion. He seeks freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. Thus he speaks for a different — and potentially more effective — agenda. The medieval Islamic mystic Rumi once wrote that “an old love may only be dissolved by a new one.” In a deeply religious society, whose leaders have justified their hold on power as a divine duty, it may take a religious counterargument to push the society toward pluralism and democracy. Soroush challenges those who claim to speak for Islam, and does so on their own terms.

Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar is an adjunct lecturer at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University

Mullahs Run Kidney Trading Posts

With an official kidney referral agency as the backdrop, IRANIAN KIDNEY BARGAIN SALE follows young Iranians through the organ trade process: from their first encounter to surgery and kidney removal. See the related video at: http://www.snagfilms.com/films/watch/iranian_kidney_bargain_sale/

The Sack of Jerusalem in 1099

from: The Writer’s Almanac

Pope Urban II, while on a speaking tour in France, called for the first Crusade to recapture Jerusalem from the Turks. There was no imminent threat. Muslims had occupied Jerusalem for hundreds of years. But Urban II had noticed that Europe was becoming an increasingly violent place, with low-level knights killing each other over their land rights, and he thought that he could bring peace to the Christian world by directing all that violence against an outside enemy. So he made up stories of how Turks in Jerusalem were torturing and killing Christians, and anyone who was willing to join the fight against them would go to heaven.

About 100,000 men from France, Germany, and Italy answered the call, formed into several large groups, and marched across Asia Minor to the Middle East. Nearly half of them died from exhaustion and sickness before they ever reached their destination. They began sacking cities along the way, and they fought among each other for the spoils of each battle. When they reached the trading city of Antioch, they killed almost everyone, including the Christians who lived there. By the time they got to Jerusalem, it had recently fallen into the hands of Egyptians, who were friendly with the Vatican. But the crusaders attacked anyway, killing every Muslim they could find. The Jews in the city gathered in the temple, and the crusaders set it on fire.

Select Prose

ARE WE FRIENDS?
Naomi Shihab Nye

A driver from a car service picked me up in a major American city. Where are you coming from? he greeted me. Turned out he and my husband once lived in the same Texas coastal town and attended the same high school.

I asked him, So, do you get back down to Texas?

I do -- but the whole coast is ruined.

Ruined? I thought he might be referring to smokestacks spewing residue, stretching suburbs, or the shrinking shrimp population…

He said, They’ve built 3 mosques.

What?

And they work in all the gas stations and quick shops too.

I’d been in his car less than 3 minutes. His meaning hit me. That unattended “they.”

You mean, Arabs? Muslims? Well, my dad was an Arab from a Muslim family and he was adorable. I think you might have liked him.

The driver swerved. Pulled over, took his foot off the pedal. I thought he might be readying to ditch me. He stared into the rear view mirror.

I’m so sorry! Please forgive me. Are you mad at me?

I’m not mad. Just sad. Haven’t you ever known any nice Arabs?

He drove in silence. I stared out the window at the chilly north.

Then he said, You are mad at me, aren’t you? I am really sorry.

I am not mad. I’m just thinking. It’s such a tragedy how acts of violence reverberate. Please remember we’re swinging a lot of weapons over the heads of innocent civilians ourselves.

I know, he said. My sons are in Iraq. They’re twins. They do everything together.

Wow, I said. You must worry a lot.

They’re only in it for the money, frankly. Third tour. Your dad was really an Arab?

Really. Great guy. Lived in Palestine till he was 22. A refugee. He loved traveling. Hated war. He was a journalist. Always reminding us to consider the sides of stories we DIDN’T hear.

continued . . .
We were never not friends, I said. I’m just keeping my fingers crossed you meet some really great Arabs soon.

He said, See, you’re still mad.

When we arrived at my destination, he jumped out to retrieve my suitcase from the back and said, The charge and tip are taken care of.

I know, I said. But I’m going to give you a little extra so you can buy some really good coffee from a nice Arab. And best wishes to your sons, hope they get home safely and soon.

He took the money. Stood there awkwardly, as if we weren’t done. He said, I wanted to tell you something else. My wife – is from Mexico.

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**Physician Writers**

*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Walker Percy, Khaled Hosseini, Robert Coles, and Seymour Gray*

1. **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (1859-1930). Doyle received his medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. Because his private practice was very slow he took up writing, and created British private detective Sherlock Holmes. Doyle named his detective after famed American physician Oliver Wendell Holmes, but modeled the fictional character’s deductive reasoning powers after his Edinburgh professor, Dr. Joseph Bell (1837-1911). Doyle also wrote poems, historical novels and short stories.


3. **Khaled Hosseini**. An internist practices in San Francisco. He has published four novels; the most successful one is *Kite Runner*.


5. **Seymour Gray**. *Beyond the Veil. The Adventures of an American Doctor in Saudi Arabia* (Harper & Row, New York, 1983). Dr. Gray’s account reveals something most doctors intuitively understand: culture and customs may differ, but patients’ needs and problems are pretty much the same everywhere.
To me he always has about him the powerful yet elegant air of the boxer. Stepping briskly through the sacristy door, Father Magielda moves quickly toward the marble study of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The statue itself appears to acknowledge the energy and grace of the priest. The large expressive eyes and outstretched palms thrust forward to display the stigmata give a visual representation of the biblical injunction, “Behold, the man” at Magielda’s approach. As he passes the figure, the priest turns slightly toward the congregation, his shoulders obscuring for a moment the inscription, “Mercy for My Lambs,” cut in dull bronze Black Letter across the statue’s pedestal.

The broad movement of his square shoulders and hips beneath the surplice and cassock suggests the strength of Magielda’s body. He seems to dodge and feint from side to side as he shifts his weight from foot to foot. With each step the skirt of the cassock dances about his heels. Magielda reaches the top step, rises to his full height, and spreads his arms outward above the edge of the altar shelf. He genuflects, rises again and opens the door of the tabernacle. The light of the tall altar candles shines upon the face of the box dances about him while a fetid odor sweeps back from the mass of eager parishioners as they swarm about the priest.

Dark red patches mottle Father Magielda’s face. The corners of his mouth bend lower and the wrinkles on either side of his chin become dark creases. His eyes grow wide. Raising himself up and away from the people pressing about him he thunders, “You people! Go back to your seats! I will not have this stampeding like cattle! You are in the House of God.”

All of Father’s energy is concentrated in the depths of his voice, terrible now with rage.

“I will not conduct this service for a mob of brutish louts!” Quickly and furtively the parishioners spread away from the priest. The old woman in the dirty scarf darts into the pew immediately in front of Magielda. One elderly man, his white hair streaked with yellow and grey, stands at the entrance to a pew, staring in Magielda’s direction. His small eyes set deeply into his florid face reflect a mixture of shock and uncertainty. Then he too slips into a seat. The altar boys stand stiffly at Father’s side, their eyes cast down, their red, hot faces betraying a mixture of embarrassment and fear.

My own face burns as though it has been slapped. Father Magielda now seems far down the aisle, yet his presence rises gigantically before the altar. As I look around, each face in the congregation seems shiny-eyed and ablaze in the violent light of the priest’s anger. For a moment I feel burdened by a terrible need to shape this event in my mind. But in an instant I feel my attention slip from all I have seen and I can only think of the faint salty odor of my own unwashed hair and the musty smell of my coat. A bead of sweat trickles slowly from the back of my neck downward between my shoulder blades.

The church is silent. After a time the priest’s deep voice, measured, deliberate, washes over the congregation.

“Now, if you can behave like civilized human beings, come forward.”

Slowly the people nearest Magielda stand and move hastily, kneeling along the gleaming brass altar rail. When my turn comes to receive the ashes, I kneel as well. A draft from the opened sanctuary door sweeps about me penetrating my thin coat and making me shiver against the clammy dampness of my undershirt. I feel only a gritty thumb press quickly against my forehead in a gesture of repugnance and dismissal.

My mother and I emerge from the church’s side entrance. A thin, tattered blanket of dirty snow lies about the yard between the church and the rectory. Through the holes just angry clumps of coarse-bladed grass, inky colored in the shadows. As we walk along the bare pavement, frosted-heaved and uneven, my mother quickens her pace. Lit by the purple light of the declining day, her face is a soft oval of opalescent white stained with the shapeless smudge of ashes on her forehead. Her hands are tucked up into her sleeves and her shoulders thrust forward as if she would jostle anyone who dared impede our way. Her eyes grow wide. Through pursed lips she spits out in a hoarse voice, “Hunh. Magielda didn’t have to have a fit! Even if he is a priest, he ain’t got the right to do that to the people.”

At the end of the concrete walk, I reach for the handle of the door to the subway, a covered wooden stairway that leads to the street above. I grasp the cold metal, but I cannot get enough traction on the ice-covered walk, and I slip as the heavy door resists my attempt to open it. Angrily, with a clumsy, twisting movement, I wrench the door so that it bangs open against the stop. Warily I follow my mother into the gloom of the unlit stairwell.

The End
Cyrus was waiting at the Lufthansa departure gate when he heard a loud announcement over the speakers: “This is a call for Dr. Cyrus Sohrabi. Please come immediately to the Airport Revolutionary Guard Office.” Cyrus was utterly surprised, but he figured the request came from one of his relatives with a last minute gift. He ignored the call and remained in the queue to board the plane. The passenger ahead of him was cleared and it was his turn, when the announcement came again, “This is a call for Dr. Cyrus Sohrabi. Please report immediately to the Airport Revolutionary Guard Office.”

Cyrus became alarmed. This had to be something more than a silly farewell gift from a relative. While he was still pondering what to do, two armed Revolutionary Guards marched up to the checkpoint and called out loudly, “Is Dr. Cyrus Sohrabi here?”

Astounded, Cyrus pocketed his ticket, approached the Revolutionary Guards, and introduced himself.

“May I have your passport?” one of the guards asked. Cyrus handed over his Persian passport. The guard had a list of passengers of the flight; Cyrus could see his name highlighted in red. The man leafed through the passport and compared the information in the passport with the list, while the other guard one kept looking suspiciously at Cyrus.

“Sir, you cannot leave the country,” the first guard announced, “We are confiscating your passport.”

The morning before, Cyrus’s brother-in-law Habib had driven him to the airline’s downtown office to confirm his return flight and get a seat assignment. “Dr. Sohrabi, your flight from Tehran to Frankfurt departs at 2:45 a.m.,” the Lufthansa agent told Cyrus. Cyrus did not mind the early departure time but he was surprised when the agent continued, “Please be there three hours earlier.”

“It will be a long night for you, Cyrus,” Habib said.

The agent shrugged; “Arrival and departure times of international flights are dictated by the airport office of the Revolutionary Guards. We have no control over the schedule.” He ignored Habib’s skeptical scowl and continued completing the ticket form.

“So I have to be there well before midnight,” Cyrus said.

“Sir, you have to go through several inspections before you can board the plane,” the agent said.

“Is this the Seven Labors of Rustam or what?” Habib asked jokily.

“No, sir,” the agent turned back to Cyrus, “First you go to the airport police office and stay in line to pick up your passport and the exit permit, which may take half an hour; then you walk to the secure zone and check in at the airline counter and get your seat assignment; then you go through customs inspection and security clearance.” The agent continued, “And finally you will be searched thoroughly by the Revolutionary Guards.”

“That is all?” was Habib’s ironic comment.

The agent ignored Habib and went on, “Assuming you encounter no trouble along the way, you can then go to the gate and wait for the call to go downstairs to the bus that will drive you to the plane. I caution you, sir, please, do not bring any political books or magazines with you to the airport.”

“What do you mean when you say political?” Cyrus asked.

“Anything that is critical of mullahs,” the agent explained, “and let me warn you, if they find something, you may be stuck in Tehran for weeks.”

The agent filled out more papers and stamped the ticket and the forms with deliberation. “The plane will fly non-stop to Frankfurt and you will have several hours before the continuation of your flight to Texas.” The agent said, “All international passengers are required to have a visa if they change planes in Europe, on route to the U.S. But I understand that you’re an American citizen, so you should have no trouble.”

The agent moved his face close and whispered, “May I advise you to keep your U.S. passport well hidden inside your breast pocket. Don’t mention it to any of the airport employees; otherwise they will confiscate it.” He added, “It should be safe in your jacket; they only pat you down for weapons,” he grinned, “and they usually don’t search passengers’ pockets.”

“Have they arrested anybody in the airport because of carrying an American passport?” Cyrus was getting nervous.

“I don’t think so, not for having an American passport.” the agent responded, “But if they get a chance, they love to seize foreign passports, especially those from the US; don’t give them any excuse.”

Cyrus spent his last afternoon in Iran in his room in his sister Maryam’s house, quietly packing and organizing his belongings. Going through his briefcase, he discovered his mother’s Persian passport in the top compartment and between its pages, her exit permit. His eyes were drawn to the exit permit and suddenly the image of her pallid face in the moments before she expired rose in his mind; then the white sheet had covered her body. He drew a deep breath; the awareness of her eternal peace set his mind at ease. He leafed through her passport and paused at the black and white photograph of his mother; all he could see were her aged, gentle eyes behind a pair of prescription glasses in a pale round face enclosed by a black chador. The signed and stamped permit to leave the country, folded twice, was held neatly between the last two pages of her passport. He sighed and pushed the documents back into his briefcase.

“I will look at her photograph one more time before I give the papers to Maryam,” he promised himself. Now immersed in childhood memories, he leaned back and idly observed the ceiling fan wheezing above his head. His nervous hand reached into his pocket and pulled out his wallet with the photos of his children. To his great surprise the face of five-year-old Amanda bore a striking resemblance to his mother’s face. He pushed the wallet back into his pocket, shut the brief case, and looked around. The packing was done. Now came the interminable wait.

His watch indicated there were four more hours before he needed to leave for the airport, time enough to catch up on some of his scientific reading. He went downstairs and settled in the living room with a medical journal. He paged through the table of contents, chose the penultimate article, and began reading the abstract; but somehow, he could not focus his mind on the subject. He looked again at his watch; was it twenty-two hours until he would be back home in Texas? No, eighteen hours of flying time; then the long stopovers in Frankfurt and at DFW; he came up with twenty-four hours. He would read, watch a movie, drink continued . . .
continued . . .

...drink a glass or two, eat, and nap between meals.

His eyes had just returned to the medical article when he was interrupted by a telephone call from his cousin. They chatted for a while. More farewell calls arrived from friends and family. After each call, his thoughts turned homeward, to his wife Emily and their children, to his garden, especially the herb section with different varieties of fragrant basil, thyme, mint, chive, and oregano, and to the flowerbed with yellow Texas roses. He could almost smell the mint and basil. Soon he would be there and clip mint sprigs and basil shoots, wash them carefully, arrange them next to a few slices of fresh sourdough bread, pour two glasses of wine, and sit on the patio overlooking the garden, next to Emily and the children, the wooded hill beckoning beyond the garden. Then he thought of the long journey home. His mind wandered further, to several complicated surgeries he had performed shortly before his trip, and he wondered how his patients had recovered. At home, he would have early breakfast with Emily before leaving for the morning rounds at the hospital; each of them would enjoy their glass of freshly squeezed Texas orange juice and a cup of frothy coffee sprinkled with cinnamon; they would amiably divide sections of the *New York Times* and read quietly. Then his thoughts turned to his medical practice, his group’s weekly meetings, and the patients waiting in the examination rooms; and he hoped everything was going well back home.

* * *

After cocktails and an elaborate farewell dinner with more than two dozen relatives and friends, Cyrus and his entourage were ready to leave for the airport. Cyrus hugged Maryam, then Habib, and then one by one all the others who had come to witness his safe departure. The men kissed each other on the cheeks, twice or thrice; the women politely stayed a foot away, but smiled and bade him farewell and sent many greetings to his wife; a few of them shook his hand. His nephew Jamshid picked up the briefcase, his older brother Parviz took one suitcase, and they followed Tooraj, his long-time Jewish friend from their first year of college and through medical school, who pulled the second suitcase. They got into the car and drove off.

Even at midnight, the roads in Tehran were crowded with passenger cars, pickups, motorcycles, and smoke-bellowing trucks. Sandwiched between slow moving vehicles on the unmarked road, Jamshid swiftly maneuvered through the chaotic traffic and pressed forward. Still, it took them over an hour to drive the eight miles to the airport.

Tooraj guided Cyrus to the airport police office and they joined the five other passengers who were already in line. The procedure seemed cursory and took little time. A bearded officer wearing a washed-out black shirt would ask each passenger for his name, locate the passport in a file drawer under his desk, and simply hand it over. When it was Cyrus’s turn, the officer opened a folder stamped with the first letter of Cyrus’s last name and immediately found the passport with the exit visa among the documents.

“Here you go,” he said, “You are cleared to leave the country.” And the officer waved them on.

“Lucky you, you are free,” Tooraj told Cyrus. Tooraj thought of the historical moment when Cyrus the Great liberated the enslaved Jews in Babylon some twenty-five hundred years ago and offered them the choice to return to Jerusalem or to migrate to Persia. “Now I am staying and Cyrus the Great is leaving to the land of the free.” They both laughed.

“But why don’t you leave?” Cyrus asked. He knew Tooraj hated the Islamic government and its oppressive policies, the lack of a free press, the religious police forcing woman to wear Islamic hejab.

Tooraj waved him off, “I like my patients too much. Maybe when I am ready to retire, I’ll join you in America.”

A popular pediatrician with a successful practice in North Central Tehran, Tooraj came from a highly literate Jewish-Persian family. Most of his relatives had emigrated from Iran to either Israel or the U.S., but he had decided to stay and continue his prosperous practice, while keeping an eye on his declining parents. Though the majority of Jews in Iran hesitated to enter political debates and stayed neutral during the heat of the Islamic revolution, they kept a close watch on social unrest; they were especially weary of the Islamic régime’s treatment of the Jewish Diaspora in the urban centers of Iran.

“If we don’t say anything, the mullahs don’t bother us,” Tooraj commented. In one of their discussions he had explained to Cyrus how the mullahs had become unexpected beneficiaries of the political vacuum induced by the Shah. While other political groups were severely restricted during his reign, the mullahs had total freedom to organize and build their political powerbase, using mosques as headquarters and religion as their shield.

Tooraj’s father owned a successful construction company as well as a security exchange agency in Firdausi Avenue. He had been among the first group of students who entered the Engineering College at Tehran University, the first Western style university in Iran which had been established in the year 1934 by Reza Shah Pahlavi, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty and the vanguard of modernity in Iran. Reza Shah sent groups of selected students to Western European countries for advanced education; upon return, they were expected to become mentors and expand higher education in Iran. Tooraj was proud of the fact that seven of the initial 75 students were Jewish, his father one of them. Although an astute businessman, his father had amassed one of Tehran’s richest collections of books on ancient Persian history and literature. He was an expert on the Achaemenid Dynasty and the history of Persian Jews during the Persian Empire, and loved talking about how Cyrus the Great captured Babylon and liberated the Jews from slavery, letting thousands of them return to Jerusalem and other thousands immigrate to the Persian Empire.

“Human rights were respected in ancient Persia,” Tooraj mused. Cyrus waved away his historical allusion. “Think about leaving Iran. You would do well in the United States,” he encouraged his friend.

“Human rights were respected in ancient Persia,” Tooraj mused. Cyrus waved away his historical allusion. “Think about leaving Iran. You would do well in the United States,” he encouraged his friend.

“If the situation gets worse for us, I’ll leave,” Tooraj said, “But remember, Cyrus, we were a very important part of the Persian Empire; twenty percent of the population of this country prior to Alexander the Great rampage were Jewish.”

continued . . .
“That’s all fine and good; however you are not living then. But what is the situation now, Tooraj?” Cyrus asked.

“They treat us as if we were non-Persian.” Tooraj said.

The swarm of passengers and their numerous relatives suddenly parted and made way for a black-turbaned mullah and his heavily armed entourage. They moved unfeathered ahead of Cyrus and his small party and quickly advanced toward the customs inspection area. Cyrus’s group attempted to thread their way forward, too, but the crowd hemmed them in and slowed their progress. Eventually, Cyrus pulled his luggage forward and broke through to the front; he shook hands good-bye. When he embraced Tooraj he received an unsealed package.

“It contains an envelope and a book. The book will keep you busy in the air,” Tooraj explained sotto voce, “It’s from Shirin. She is sending her best regards to you.”

“Is she all right?” Cyrus whispered.

“She is in hiding,” Tooraj replied, equally sotto voce.

Cyrus stored the package in his briefcase. He counted out the remaining Persian money from his wallet, added the change from his pockets, and handed all of it to Jamshid.

“Don’t you want to save a few bills as mementos?” Jamshid asked. Cyrus declined. “I’ll mail you a detailed account in a week or two,” Jamshid joked.

Cyrus gave each man another embrace, crossed between the guards and joined the inspection process. He rolled his suitcase toward the customs area and disappeared behind a heavy, gray wall where a row of custom agents was waiting for the passengers. The agent at the head of Cyrus’s queue would open every suitcase and bag, and flip through everything, looking for prohibited items such as expensive jewelry, gold coins, and censored books and magazines. As soon as he discovered Cyrus was a doctor, however, the agent did not even ask to see the briefcase and merely waved him through. Cyrus thanked the agent, pulled his luggage to the airline ticket counter, and joined a new queue.

An hour later and carrying only his briefcase, he took the escalator to the upper level of the airport and entered the second inspection area. Here a Revolutionary Guard behind a wooden counter perused his passport and his exit permit. The man raised his head and looked Cyrus attentively up and down, straight in the eyes several times, and compared his face to the black and white photograph, especially the well-combed hair of the photograph with Cyrus’s coarse hair.

Finally satisfied, the guard raised one eyebrow, grinned, and nodded. “You seem to be in a hurry to leave your homeland,” and returned the documents to Cyrus.

He waved Cyrus on to the final inspection that would include being patted down for gold, jewelry, and weapons. Female passengers went to a separate section behind thick curtains where female Revolutionary Guards would search them just as thoughly. Cyrus joined the long line of men of all ages and waited. It took quite some time to pass through this sequence of inspections and searches.

When it was his turn, the Revolutionary Guard did not check the inside of his pockets, nor the contents of his briefcase, nor did he ask to see his American passport, but he patted him down for concealed weapons and, finding none, instructed him to pass through the metal detector.

It was now after one in the morning and less than an hour before the scheduled departure time when Cyrus finally entered the assigned gate area where the other passengers were waiting. As he was looking for something to read, he noticed his mother’s passport and exit permit next to a medical journal in his briefcase. Now it was too late to do anything about them, so he decided to mail them to his sister from Texas. He settled in a chair, took out the book that Tooraj had given him and began reading the short preface. He moved on to the first short story and then the second one. That story was about a bearded student, who had been invited for dinner to a neighbor’s house and refused to eat anything after discovering they were Jewish, which left the hostess in tears. Cyrus was disgusted with the bearded student and recalled a few students like him in their class of 300 at Tehran Medical School. He moved on to the third story. He was on its last paragraph when the airline agent called for boarding and created a commotion in the waiting area. He shut the briefcase, joined the other passengers in the queue, and waited for his turn. A pleasant sense of anticipation flooded over him. Soon he would be on his way to fly to Texas.

WHEN YOUR BATTERY DIES
Joan Seifert

A Really Desperate Call for Submissions:
To nascent writers, college/pub crawl applicants, and television hostages:
Please submit a declaratory sentence with subject and verb agreement and unfumbled syntax. And in a few short weeks please, will you submit an original paragraph using the above rule?

Don’t want to participate?

Then twitter as you wish; text hours away with inanities. Take covert photos, too. Lay back; relax with scant brain urges from those who devised real language.

When you wake one morning and realize you can’t understand the day’s headlines because LOL and TTFN have preempted your knowledge of the English language…well, whoever said you would seek to read the morning headlines in the first place?

Who needs paper thoughts, you say? As long as the battery doesn’t need recharging…

Some day when your battery dies, might the scene be like that old movie “Planet of the Apes”? You might find something peeking out from the sands of time, a fragment barely readable, in simple words:

Our plans miscarried because we have no aim…Seneca
Or maybe
We are what we repeatedly do… Aristotle

Or maybe:
If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else…Yogi Berra

Feel free to insert your own idea here, about attention-fritter, drain of literary desire, pursuit of thoughtless, the anti-lesson of vacuity.

Don’t know what vacuity means?
Don’t blame us; go text… until your battery dies.
The Pharisee
Robert Flynn

Slomo O’Neill was a pharisee of the pharisees. He not only kept the Sabbath, he kept three Sabbaths, one before and one after to be certain he rested as much as God did. Not only did he avoid mixing meat and milk dishes, he did not eat milk products and meat products the same day. He retched when he passed Roman soldiers gnawing cheeseburgers and avoided publicans selling pig knuckles and beer.

To avoid being tempted by a woman, he walked the streets of Jerusalem with his head down in a prayerful pose, seeing only the cobbled streets and an occasional crusty foot, stubbed toe, infected toe nail. One day he grazed a shoulder against the stone wall as he turned a corner and before he could avert his eyes he saw a plump shapely toe with a perfectly rounded pink nail. Turning away he pounded his head against the rough stones to banish the image from his mind. His bloodied forehead inflamed his vision of the toe. He went to the temple and prayed loudly throwing heavy coins into the coin box. The toe remained as succulent and tempting as ever.

He fled the temple knocking himself unconscious when he collided with a donkey conveying balm to Gilead. He sat up, stars circling his head like those over Sisera. He looked down and there before him was the toe, as desirable as ever and surrounded by equally desirable sweet pink...no, no, not piglets, hams, er lambs, their downy bodies reclining on soft supple leather and smelling of incense--incense. What had happened to him? Not only did he lust, he lusted in replication.

“Away,” he cried. “Be gone, evil temptress.” And with a swish of cloth and a faint bouquet of woman, she was gone. Come back, his heart cried out, come back, but with one hand he gripped his mouth and with another his throat. He made his way home with lamentations and Song of Solomon (KJV). If her toes were so tender, who could endure the nape of her neck? The lithie, responsive arch of her foot?

The next day he grazed the stones of the same corner, removing the scab on his shoulder, and with his head bent in a prayer pose his eyes darted left and right in search of the delicious toes made even more luscious by his fervid memory. Up and down the crowded street he went without success. And the next day. And the next. His head was bloody but bowed yet the image of five perfect lilies remained. His cloak stuck to his skinned shoulder and each day his sanguine head rose higher and his eyes saw more. But not the object of his desire.

Then one day in the crowded market among the grapes, the pomegranates, juicy melons, fleshy figs he saw the toes of his discontent. There, among the throng, he knelt to study the grapes, to press the pomegranates, stroke the melons and feel up the figs. Unable to countenance what he was about to do, he closed his eyes as his mouth sought paradise and kissed . . . a hairy, crusty toe.

“Get up, you fool,” said a Samaritan camel driver, hoisting him by the back of his cloak and smiting him on both cheeks. “I have slaves for that.”

Remembering Cynthia Harper
From Palmer Hall blog: Pecan Grove Press and Me

Let me start with this when talking about Cynthia J. Harper: Cynthia was my friend. And with this: Cynthia was a fine poet. For more than ten years, we met almost every Wednesday for lunch and for talk about poetry and poets and almost anything else we could think of. We started our lunches at La Focaccia on the corner of South Alamo Street and St. Mary’s and then, when that Italian grill banned smoking, continued on the patio of the Blue Star Brewery. Every Wednesday, that is, except when it was too cold (rare in San Antonio) or rainy (also rare) or if one of us just had to be somewhere on Wednesday.

I first met Cynthia almost twenty years ago in San Angelo, Texas, where we were both reading at the Fort Concho Museum Press annual summer literary festival. I had just started editing Pecan Grove Press and Cynthia’s first shared book had been released by Plain View Press in Austin, Texas. The book was called How Many Moons and featured work by Cynthia, Elaine O’Brien, Mary Esther Frederick, Pamela Rutherford and Hazel Ward. When Cynthia read “Chickens,” a poem that is probably her most popular, I knew I wanted to do a book by her for Pecan Grove and included it in her first full length book, Snow in South Texas. The poem has very serious things to say but says them with wry humor:

Chickens

Grandma said chicken was the answer, especially if you could do the biscuits too, but for some reason it just didn’t stick. Mama said dip it in egg yellow and fry it hot. Your mother said watch out for hot spices, no surprises.

Fifteen hundred chickens, think of the enormity of that. Can you see them lying in a huge pile waiting to be fried?

If only someone had shown them to me the day I married you, but there they are, three chickens per week, twelve chickens per month, one hundred and forty-four per year, allowing a certain margin of error, fifteen hundred plucked, gutless chickens waiting for me with flour, paprika, all that grease; they outlived two electric skillets.
and wore a groove in a cast iron pan.

and you

just ate them one by one
over all those years with
hills of mashed potatoes until
you met a woman whose father
owned a Colonel Sanders
and you took to take out.

Cynthia visited my graduate poetry classes frequently over the years and was always a great hit though I think she got mad from time to time that I always requested the chicken poem. She was very pleased, though, that the Poetry Society of America selected the poem and made a poster of it to place in the Houston buses as a part of its Poetry in Motion program.

The Poetry Society also selected another of Cynthia’s poems (forthcoming in her posthumous Pecan Grove book, New and Selected Poems of Cynthia J. Harper) to place in the buses in Austin, Texas. That poem, “Hanging the Wash,” was also a great favorite with my students:

**Hanging the Wash**

Mama said you could always tell
the state of a woman’s love life
by the condition of her underwear.

Twenty ivory briefs
flapping in the wind,
not a lavender, pink,
or naughty black
in the whole sensible lot.
Four beige half slips like
neutral guards in a row.
No touch of scarlet or
little pink rosettes,
just clean drawers hanging
on a gray metal clothes line.

Oh, Mama, how did you ever learn so much?

Humor, serious stuff: a quality blend. When the Poetry Society of America selected poems from the buses to appear in a print anthology called Poetry in Motion, they selected “Hanging the Wash” for inclusion.

Here’s another of my favorites and another that my students loved. It’s from her Pudding House Publications chapbook, Crossing Borders:

**Lipstick**

On my mother’s fifty-fifth birthday she said, I’m over the speed limit.
I don’t need to be polite
to another snotty salesgirl
as long as I live.

The Estee Lauder
woman dripping rouge
her arms covered
in cheap gold bracelets
was the first hapless victim. No dear, she
said looking down her
long pointed nose,
that just isn’t you.

Mother plopped
her purse down,
looked right in
the old gal’s
eyes and replied,
I’ll make that
decision, dearie.
I’ll be wearing
it not you.

When one of
her friends asked
what shade it was
she simply said,
“Liberation Red.”

Cynthia was a fine poet and a good friend. She was a librarian in the New Orleans and San Antonio federal judicial libraries and taught English as an adjunct professor at Palo Alto College, at the university of the Incarnate Word, at Northwest Vista and UTSA, but always looked back most fondly to her students at St. Mary’s University where I work and direct Pecan Grove Press.

We are going to miss her.
See Palmer Hall reading Cynthia Harper’s poems at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ4Hsemimak

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**Laurel Crown Poetry Foundation**

Invites all Poets and Artists
(children thru senior adults) to participate in the

**AWAKEN THE SLEEPING POET FESTIVAL**

Saturday, April 10, 2010
San Antonio Museum of Art
200 W. Jones Avenue

Elementary program: 10:30 am
Middle/High School program: 12 noon
Adult program (includes college): 2:00 pm

Adults: $5 per entry (unlimited) – Students: No fee (limit 2 poems)

Generous cash awards and trophies
Winning poems and other poems of merit will be read at the Festival and published in the Dreamcatcher anthology
One art entry chosen for the anthology cover

In-Hand Deadline for Entries: JANUARY 25, 2009
Get the details and download entry forms at www.laurelcrown.org

Follow the guidelines and send poems and art to
Awaken the Sleeping Poet
2207 Parhaven Dr. • San Antonio TX 78232
The Amazon has a long history of human settlement. Contrary to popular belief, sizeable and sedentary societies of great complexity existed in the rainforests of this region. These societies produced pottery, cleared sections of rainforest for agriculture and managed forests to optimize the distribution of useful species. The notion of a virgin Amazon is largely the result of the population crash following the arrival of the Europeans in the sixteenth century. Studies suggest that at least 10-12% of the Amazon’s terra firme forests are “anthropogenic in nature” resulting from the careful management of biodiversity by indigenous people.

However, unlike most current cultivation techniques, these Amazonians were attuned to the ecological realities of their environment from five millennia of experimentation and accumulation of knowledge, with a strong understanding of how to manage the rainforest to meet their requirements within a sustainable capacity. They saw the importance of maintaining biodiversity through a careful balance of natural forest, open fields and sections of forest managed so as to be dominated by species of special interest and greatest use to humans.

The Favelas of Rio
Mo H Saidi

Please see the photos from favelas at our Webpage

A favela is the generally used term for a shanty town in Brazil. In the late 19th century, the first settlements were called bairros africanos, and they were the place where former slaves with no land ownership and no options for work lived. Over the years, many freed black slaves moved in. However, before the first settlement called “favela” came into being, poor blacks were pushed away from downtown into the far suburbs. Most modern favelas appeared in the 1970s, due to rural exodus.

Today more than three million people live in Rio’s favelas. These illegally erected shanty towns are scattered in the various parts of the city, most of them in higher foothills of the mountains overlooking the affluent neighborhoods and the beaches. Although the favelas have been infiltrated with narcotics and have become the dangerous and violent sites mostly void of police and government presence, they house thousands of working class and artists who cannot afford living in the regular residential areas.

Poetry & Art Events
San Antonio Recurring Venues

DISCLAIMER: All venue information listed has been provided by third parties. These venues have not been verified. It is the sole responsibility of parties interested in attending these venues to verify the validity of the post.


Tuesdays 6–9 pm - Jazz Poet Society - Guadalupe Street Coffee, 1320 Guadalupe St. - (210) 573-5115. Bring poetry and songs and work with other poets and songwriters to present works on stage. A drum circle accompanies poets.

Tuesdays 7–9 pm - Sun Poets Society - Barnes & Noble San Pedro - 321 NW Loop 410, Suite 104, 210-342-0008 - Open mic. Host: Rod Stryker

Tuesdays 10:30 pm - Puro Slam - The Heights - 9315 N. Broadway (just north of 410). Weekly open mic certified by the National Poetry Slam - Allows poets to deliver their work and get heckled. DJ Donnie Dee spins before and after the show. Sign up begins at 9:30 p.m. Slam begins @ 10:30 p.m. For more information visit www.puroslam.com.

1st & 3rd Wednesdays 7–9 pm - Barnes & Noble, Ingram Festival - 6065 NW Loop 410 (same side as Ingram mall) – Features and open mic. 210-522-1340. Host: Josie Mixon

Thursdays 6:30-9:30 pm - South Presa Bar and Grill - Open mic: poetry, music and story telling Host: Andi

Last Thursday of Each Month 7–9 pm - Awaken the Sleepy Poet - Features and open mic – Barnes & Noble, Northwoods - 18030 HWY 281N, Suite #140 (281 & 1604) - 210-490-0411. Host: Floyd Lamrouex

2nd Saturday 7–9 pm - Gallista - Features and open mic. – Gallista Gallery and Art Studio - 1913 S. Flores – (210) 212-8606. Host: Thom E.

3rd Saturday 2–4 pm – San Antonio Poets Association - Meets monthly at Bethany Congregational Church – 500 Pilgrim Drive – President: Valerie Martin Bailey—vbailey@satx.rr.com

Book Reading/Signings

The Twig
5005 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209
(210) 826-6411
http://thetwig.booksense.com

Viva! Bookstore at Viva Galleria
8407 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209
Tel: 800-826-1143
Fax: 210-826-8321
www.vivabooks.com

Art Museums & Exhibitions
San Antonio Museum of Art
200 W. Jones Ave.
http://www.samuseum.org/main/

WITTE MUSEUM
3801 Broadway
San Antonio, Texas 78209
(210) 357-1900
http://www.wittemuseum.org/about_the_witte/index.html

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**Monday 8 pm - Heartbeat of the Soul** - La Taza Coffee House, 15060 San Pedro Ave - (210) 494-8292. Weekly open-mike poetry. Free and open for participants. Host: Steve Johnson

**Tuesdays 6–9 pm - Jazz Poet Society** - Guadalupe Street Coffee, 1320 Guadalupe St. - (210) 573-5115. Bring poetry and songs and work with other poets and songwriters to present works on stage. A drum circle accompanies poets.

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**Art Museums & Exhibitions**
http://www.sanantonio.com/arts/

**San Antonio Museum of Art**
200 W. Jones Ave.
http://www.samuseum.org/main/

**WITTE MUSEUM**
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