Questions for John Phillip Santos

“Election Day, 2008” by Carol Coffee Reposa

“Nothing Between Us” by Wendy Barker

“A Place Called Sanctuary” by Edna Kovacs

Interview with Margot Van Sluytman
Poetry & Arts Places in San Antonio


BOTANICAL GARDENS—33 acres of formal gardens, pools, fountains, and natural areas; Native Texas Area, South Center Periscope.

CARVER 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.

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.

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.

LA VILLITA—This restored Mexican village captures charm of the past amid narrow streets and authentic adobe houses with arts and crafts 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.

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

MEXICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE—Exhibits of contemporary Mexican artists.

POETRY VENUES: Please see the Events section on page 44.

SAN ANTONIO OPERA—The opera currently performs at the Municipal Auditorium, while The Lila Cockrell Theater undergoes a renovation. For information visit www.saopera.com

SAN PEDRO PLAYHOUSE—Call the Box Office for tickets and more information: (210) 733-7258 or visit www.sanpedroplayhouse.com.


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.

A Letter from the Editors

Mo H. Saidi and James Brandenburg

The editors of Voices de la Luna believe poetry heals, and the arts advance our quality of life. Therefore we have encouraged youth and adults, keen on writing poetry, to release their untold feelings and emotions in this form of literary art. As Sandra Cisneros said in a recent interview to be published in the 15 June issue of Voices, “I enjoy writing poetry. When I am about to tackle the characters facing emotional and social issues, I write fiction. To debate social issues, I write essays, but poetry is more of a personal matter for me. I sit behind my desk, release my feelings and emotions, and write poems.”

Now we are reaching out to new audiences. We have gone to the Lighthouse for the Blind and interviewed some of their dedicated and proud blind workers, such as Ernie Arce, a 22-year-old who works as a general assembler. We have visited homeless people under the Commerce Street Bridge near the Bexar County Detention Center, including a 25-year-old pregnant woman. We have conducted a workshop for youth and senior citizens at Bihl Haus on Fredericksburg Road, where we highlighted the healing effects of poetry and the relationship between medicine and art. We continue to experience that poetry and arts bring soothing and encouraging results, even among underprivileged and deprived people and among those with disabilities and emotional problems.

The therapeutic effects of poetry, painting, and music are especially valuable after devastating events, such as natural disasters and wars. Writing poetry about their grievances, by expressing their grief in letters, and composing music helps people purge themselves of pain and suffering and thereby 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 sweet love. As Dylan Thomas says in his most popular poem, “Do not go gentle into that good night.”

We believe poetry and arts are undying elements of life, and by advocating these aspects and characteristics of the human soul, Voices de la Luna is serving an important role in the community. Even in the gravest of times, we celebrate poetry and arts in San Antonio and Texas as a way of eternalizing our human values.

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

Election Day, 2008
Carol Coffee Reposa*

Who would have believed
In Lincoln’s bloody land
Places where nooses
Hung from giant oaks
Like alien Spanish Moss
That such a thing could be?

Who would have guessed
Where sharecroppers in cotton fields
Lived and died on molasses and mush
While others froze in miles of crumbling brick
Broken glass and free-range rats
That such a time could come?

Who would have thought
So many could travel
Down paths worn smooth by night riders
Past burning crosses, water fountains
And polling places out of reach
To find a place in the front of the bus?

Yet on this day
A jubilee began: hymns rolled down like rivers
From the fire hoses, dreams rose
From the muzzles of rifles, flowers sprouted
Out of manacles
And all the police dogs
Bayed hallelujah
In a chorus no one will forget.

* The poems and essays of Carol Coffee Reposa have appeared in The Atlanta Review, The Formalist, The Texas Observer, Descant, and other journals. Author of three books of poetry, nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize, she teaches at San Antonio College.

About Us

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National Poetry Month
San Antonio
Happy National Poetry Month everyone!

National Poetry Month is a celebration of poetry first introduced in 1996 by the Academy of American Poets as a way to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry in the United States. It is celebrated every April in the United States and in Canada as well. Since 2000 Great Britain has celebrated a National Poetry Month each October.

National Poetry Month was inspired by the success of Black History Month, held each February, and Women’s History Month, held in March. In 1995, the Academy of American Poets convened a group of publishers, booksellers, librarians, literary organizations, poets, and teachers to discuss the need and usefulness of a similar month-long holiday to celebrate poetry.

Poetry Events in San Antonio during the 2010 National Poetry Month and many others too numerous to list:

April 1 – Gemini Ink NPM Celebration, Central Library/SAPL at 6:30 PM. Readers: Jesse Cardona, Vocab, and Jenny Browne.
April 8 – Poetry Workshop & Readings at Bihl Haus Arts, from 6–9 PM, sponsored by Voices de la Luna—Free to the community. 6 PM Poetry Workshop; 7 PM Open Mic; 8 PM Featured Guest. For more information, visit www.bihlhausarts.org.
April 9 – The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center and Writer’s Block present LENGUAS LIBRES at 7:30 PM – Free to all.
April 10 – Awaken the Sleeping Poet Festival at the 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.
April 10 – Poetry on the Move, Via Bus poets read at the Twig from 4–6 PM.
April 11 – San Antonio Jazz Poets Society/Jazz Poetry Jam at the Twig from 3–5 PM.
April 12 – Poetry as Singing Moment at St. Mary’s University/Ampitheatre at 6 PM – Students, Spoken Word poets, Music.
April 13 – Awaken the Sleeping Poet, new venue 2nd Tuesdays at the Twig, beginning at 7 PM, hosted by Floyd Lamrouex, featuring Alan Birkelbach (2005 poet laureate of Texas) and Dr. Jo LeCoeur.
April 14 – Favorite Poem Project at OLLU/Providence Hall, Blue Room from noon–1 PM. Read your favorite poem, your own or by your favorite poet.
April 15 – OLLU Creative Writing Faculty Reading at 4-5 PM, UWAC Conference Room. Hear some of OLLU’s finest creative writers: Antoinette Winstead, Yvette Benavides, Michael Lueker, and Nan Cuba.
April 24 – Awaken the Sleeping Poet for Kids—Northwoods Barnes & Noble, 5 PM. Kinder to 12th grade welcome to read. Also fun tips on how to win poetry contests. Parents welcome.
April 29 – Trinidad Sanchez Poetry & Arts Festival at Northwest Vista College, student readings at 5:30 PM.
Elizabeth Catlett’s compelling linocut, “Sharecropper, 1952,” depicts an African-American sharecropper woman, aged by the stresses and strains of years of working the cotton fields in the agrarian South. The woman’s face is shielded from the beastly sun by a straw hat, and her ragged clothing is held together by a large safety pin. Yet her demeanor reveals fortitude and a determination to create a better life for her family; she demands our respect and compassion.

The artist does not permit any other reaction. In a paeon to the courage and perseverance of her mother, Catlett often chose to portray the strong black female. A granddaughter of slaves, Catlett was born in Washington, DC on 15 April 1915, the youngest of John and Mary Carson Catlett’s three children. Both parents were schoolteachers, but her mother had to supplement the family income with menial jobs after she was widowed.

Catlett overcame many obstacles during her lifetime and persevered in astounding fashion. Denied admission to Carnegie Institute of Technology because of her race, she attended Howard University where she graduated cum laude. She studied with James Herring, James Porter, and Lois Jones. While at Howard, she became interested in the Mexican Muralist movement. After working briefly for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), she attended the University of Iowa, earning an MFA degree in 1940. Inspired by her graduate art advisor, Grant Wood at the University of Iowa, and by Philosophy Professor Alain Locke at Howard University, she chose to portray her own people in everyday roles.

A Julius Rosenwald Foundation grant in 1946 enabled her to study in Mexico at the Taller de Grafica Popular. Diego Rivera, Rufino Tamayo, and David Siqueiros became colleagues and friends. After divorcing artist Charles White, she married fellow artist Francisco Mora. At the National University of Mexico’s School of Fine Arts she rose from instructor to head of the sculpture department. She became a naturalized citizen of Mexico. National and international exhibitions won her well-deserved respect in Mexico and the United States. Her art brought dignity and respect to the two distinct and different cultures. Elizabeth Catlett continues to live and work in Cuernavaca and New York City, still an active artist.

†Cover art © Elizabeth Catlett/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY
*Mrs. Kelley and her husband, Dr. Harmon Kelley, are patrons and collectors of African-American Art. Image courtesy of the Kelley Collection. Copyright: Elizabeth Catlett/licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

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The Ten Best Movies of 2009

According to digital edition of The New Yorker Magazine: http://www.newyorker.com

1. “The Hurt Locker”: Kathryn Bigelow understands that an action movie has to be coherent in space—you have to know where the American soldiers are in relation to the bombs that they’re trying to defuse.
3. “The Messenger”: Oren Moverman’s affecting account of the lives of two very different soldiers—Woody Harrelson’s lifer and Ben Foster’s guilty war hero, easing back into civilian existence—who have to bring the bad news to the parents and spouses of soldiers killed in Iraq.
4. “Funny People”: Judd Apatow’s intricately woven portrait of a lonely and miserable comic actor (Adam Sandler, playing a nasty version of himself) turns into an examination of the specialness of comics and a funny-mournful lament over their distance from ordinary life.
5. “Adventureland”: Greg Mottola’s lovely memory of a misspent summer at a tacky Pittsburgh amusement park in the early eighties. Kristen Stewart turns those eyes on Jesse Eisenberg, a toothless non-vampire, as he struggles toward manhood.
6. “Up”: Pixar’s latest triumph. Touching, exhilarating, hilarious. Who can forget “the cone of shame”?
7. “The Last Station”: Christopher Plummer as Leo Tolstoy at 82 and Helen Mirren as Sofya, his wife of forty-eight years, fighting over the great man’s will.
8. “Me and Orson Welles”: Christian McKay is mesmerizing as the 22-year-old theatrical genius, a vaunting, bombastic son of a bitch who galvanizes the newborn Mercury Theatre company in 1937.
9. “Fantastic Mr. Fox”: The look of it is enchanting—intentionally creaky stop-motion with puppets posed against a crafts-fair mock-up of downtown Bath, England.
10. “Up in the Air”: The movie’s many ambitions (to be utterly cool and all heart) don’t quite mesh together, and the last third is actually a little boring.

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John Phillip Santos was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1957. He grew up in a middle-class white suburb listening to his grandmother and aunts tell stories about everything from Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution to their own family history. Following a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and literature from Notre Dame, he went on to a master’s degree from the University of Oxford as the first Mexican-American Rhodes Scholar. His literary work has been recognized with the Academy of American Poets’ Prize (at Notre Dame) and the Oxford Prize for Fiction. Santos has produced more than forty documentaries for CBS and PBS; two of them received Emmy nominations. His first book, Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation (Viking) was a non-fiction finalist for the National Book Award. After twenty years in New York City, Santos returned to San Antonio in May 2005, where he completed his new book, The Farthest Home is in an Empire of Fire, due from Viking in April of 2010. He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, where he co-directs the Global Media Project, a production lab and seminar focused on international political documentaries.

Mo H. Saidi: You have produced more than forty television documentaries and received two Emmy nominations. That is pretty successful. What draws you back to writing?

John Phillip Santos: I’ve always been a writer, beginning with poetry in the 1970s in San Antonio, later in newspaper journalism, and then television documentaries. My prose books are the latest manifestation of this shape-shifting literary dharma. I see writing as a living practice, the evidence of things seen and unseen, journeys, discoveries, the occasional epiphanies and chastisements in life. The light that practice brings can move everything from Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution to their own hometowns. But I’m also a child of Cervantes and de la Barca, Sor Juana and Carlos Fuentes, Borges and Ricardo Sanchez, and many other world literary mentors. I’ve written scant work in Spanish but I use Spanish throughout my English prose, reflecting the way I grew up hearing the two languages interwoven in everyday life in San Antonio.

What was it like to be the first Mexican-American Rhodes Scholar? Did you have any memorable experiences at Oxford University?

Who wouldn’t profit from a couple of subsidized years hanging out in one of the planet’s most ancient cities of learning? I’ve begun writing about more of my time at Oxford in the new book. It was life-changing—challenging teachers, incredible comrades from all over the world, amazing adventures, staggering visions and inspirational mayhem, some of which transpired outside the Bodleian library. We thought we would change the world, especially after a few pints at the King’s Arms pub, across the street from the Bod.

In the industrialized world most people are at least bilingual. Unfortunately in the U.S. it is still considered somewhat suspect speaking another language. What is your position on bilingual education and on teaching foreign languages in public schools?

I’m in favor of promiscuous proliferation of language instruction. The biggest error of my youth was thinking the world was perfectly fathomable with just English and Spanish. I can rough through Ancient Greek (no one speaks that) and bumble out a few phrases of German. My Executive Producer still reminds me she got CBS to pay for me to do an intensive Berlitz Arabic course, and I ended up going to Latin America to make a documentary on liberation theology. The more languages Americans speak, the more we have a chance to imagine perpetual peace.

In his inaugural speech President Obama said, “We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and Nonbelievers.” Which one of these categories fits you?

I’m practicing the (semi-un-observant) Christian (Aztec), Muslim (Hasid), Jewish (Sufi), Hindu (Zen Buddhist), Nonbeliever (Animist) faith. Everything is holy in this profane world.

Sandra Cisneros recommends that the Governor of Texas and the President of the United States read Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation. Do you know whether President George W. Bush read it?

He never showed any sign of having done so (cf. US/Mexico border wall, Roberts’ Supreme Court appointment, Afghan/Iraq wars, Abu Ghraib, etc.).

A number of flags have flown over Texas in her short history, including the Confederate Flag. Do you think our state still suffers from xenophobia and racism?

Mexicanos are descended from two millennial civilizations, hence things take a long time to transpire for us. My family appeared in these lands sometime in the 17th century; so my ancestors saw conquerors, nations and states come and go, like warm Gulf tides. I think of Texas as a land of ongoing
transformations. Our history, particularly with the violence and racism that have haunted us, is a reminder how much we still struggle towards justice and equality. The border is an abomination that will eventually go away. People in the future will learn about it in a museum, next to the exhibit on the Berlin Wall.

Let’s talk about San Antonio. What brought you back? First, it was love. I met my wife here, she was a Bejareña poetess, in 2003. I knew my time in Manhattitlán was over. But even after twenty-two years there, I was never a New Yorquino. I was always from San Antonio, in an extended exile. My work is about this world, its history, its future. I believe San Antonio could become a cultural capital of the Republica Cosmica that the United States is destined to become. I wanted to be here to play a role in helping to make that happen.

Most contemporary American writers and poets are English speakers; however we in San Antonio are blessed with remarkable Hispanic authors such as you, Sandra Cisneros, Naomi Nye, and Carmen Tafolla. Are you active in promoting literature and arts among Hispanic students in San Antonio?

I’m always eager to listen to young people of any origin, in San Antonio, Victoria, Austin, San Benito, full statewide. I teach a Spring seminar at Brown University focused on the theme of global media, using news, documentary and fiction media as a means of studying and interpreting international politics. The students there are always bringing ideas that cast a new light on matters I thought I had fully wrapped up. I love to use the classroom to bring all the hidden instabilities of our world to the surface.

You recently married a writer, Frances Treviño. What is your position on the two-writer marriage? I’m a believer. I love my wife’s work, Frances Treviño de Santos, the legend she’s already established, the amazing art that’s to come, including a screenplay she recently finished. Right now, she’s 24/7 on her greatest creation yet—Francesca de la Luz, our daughter who’s expected in mid-April.

In your mesmerizing family memoir, Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation, which was a finalist for the National Book Award, you write about your grandfather’s suicide; do you still visit his grave in San Antonio?

I do, but really, the whole city is a palimpsest of my family’s history, a landscape of memorials that commemorate moments in my life and my ancestor’s lives that live on in stories we have told to each other. We were all spread out, citywide. There are few parts of town where I don’t see places that conjure up a memory in me. Places where dear ones lived. Places where they died. Downtown. Old houses. Parks. The river and its creeks. Streets. And then always, eventually, cemeteries. It would take a couple of days to visit all of the local cemeteries where my ancestors currently reside.

Finally, what are you writing about in your new book, The Farthest Home Is in an Empire of Fire: A Tejano Elegy? Where Places was about my father’s family, Mexico, and the indigenous world, The Farthest Home is about my mother’s family, the hinterlands of Nueva España that became North Mexico and South Texas, and Spain itself. And the book ends with a journey to Israel and the West Bank. I wanted to tell the story of my mother’s family in a way that connected us to the whole human epic, remembered in deep time. Part of the book is narrated by an ancestor from the future, named Cenote Siete, whose tales perhaps give the book a certain hallucinated non-fiction sci-fi flavor. It was the only way to be true to our story.

Mo H. Saidi: Thank you very much for your time.
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Abu Dhabi Poetry Competition in camel beauty from http://www.middle-east-online.com

Sultan Al Amimi, Director of the Poetry Academy at the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH), announced the start of registration for the competition that sought the best descriptive poems of camels as part of Al Dhafra Festival 2010. The Festival was held under the patronage of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, from January 30 to February 8, 2010. The competition was open for all nationalities, but poets must have been over 18. The submitted poem, between 8 and 30 verses. For more information visit the www.voicesdelaluna.com.
Nothing Between Us
A Book of Prose Poems
Wendy Barker
Reviewed by Mo H Saidi

Prose poem, noun: A prose work that has poetic characteristics such as vivid imagery and concentrated expression; hence, prose poem is a brief composition that may contain all the attributes of lyric poetry but that is set on a page as prose. The form was introduced into literature by Louis Bertrand in 1842 and advanced by Charles Baudelaire in “Little Poems in Prose” in 1869.

From The New Encyclopedia Britannica; vol 9, p734.1008.

Seldom do I read a piece of modern literature that has such an openness and honesty as Wendy Barker’s Nothing Between Us. If Sappho’s lyrical poems survived to convey the depth of feminine romantic love, and Emily Dickinson’s to express her solitude, then Wendy Barker’s bravely written prose poems convey a woman’s sexual freedom and independence.

Against the background of the socially revolutionary 1960s in California, she explores human sexuality in practical yet poetic terms and tells us about an interracial earthy love affair. The scenes are set in Berkeley, the lovers are the narrative—a devoted teacher and discontented wife and a physically fit and attractive black colleague—and the story is as erotic as the love poems of ancient Rome or Greece. In well-crafted prose poems that fit no more than a page each, the narrator explains the seeding, birth, and growth of a love affair that is as physical and direct as pages from an anatomy textbook.

In the first few vignettes, the narrator introduces her town, her school with mostly black students, other teachers, her husband Greg—an open minded musician who is busy composing and completing his doctorate degree—and at last Ty, the African-American student who appears first in the poem, “Slow Dancing”: “And his cheeks and mouth against my ear. His fingers holding mine to his chest. And the unmistakable cylinder rising against my belly. All for you, he whispered.” We note the courageous simplicity of this poetic language, reminiscent of Sappho’s words in “Maiden Dancing in Moonlight”: “. . . / The well-loved spot danced round, / With lightsome footsteps treading / The soft and grassy ground.” Thereafter, we follow the erotic scenes of lovemaking, i.e., “The first time I’d gone to his second floor apartment—he’d been asking me for months—he said it was like a cherry.” In the encounters between the lovers every detail, even the little black coils of hair over the sheets become exotic.

With metaphors galore, e.g., “She showed us how to spot the saucers of nests resting in the branches” or, “I don’t know how many wings flapped out of me,” or “nipples like third and fourth eyes, looking straight out” and “a sound only feathers can make,” the lyrical prose poems trace a love affair that initially seems to be purely physical, until the last several pages when after months of gorgeously described erotic encounters, the narrator sings her morose songs: “And month after month, on his sheets with the brown stripes, furrows across his bed, we laid our two selves down, while around us on the streets, in the parks, the halls of the ninth-grade school we taught in, the students swirled like uprooted flowers, seeds with no good dirt to drop down into.”

The title of the book is a revealing indication of how the two relationships—the narrator and Ty, and the narrator and her mostly absent husband—are depicted throughout the pages and eventually played out. As told in the poem, “Last,” in the end nothing was left between the narrator and her African-American lover: “If the soil were packed down hard, solid clay like the earth around the old mildewed roses, no room for air, no sand or humus, maybe nothing more would grow through.” What is left in the heart of the narrator is not the comfort of love between Greg and her, but an empty lot: “Long after I had moved away, I found myself walking there during a visit back to see friends. The anise gone to seed. No one had been able to build on that steepness.”

Like her other work, Wendy Barker’s “Nothing Between Us” is a remarkable prose poetry work full of honest feelings and elegant poetic phrases. It’s a pleasure to read, and a helpful book to study.

The Translingual Imagination
Steven G. Kellman
Reviewed by Mo H. Saidi

Bilingual (bi-ling-gwal)
Adjective
1. a. Using or able to use two languages, especially with equal or nearly equal fluency. b. Using two languages in some proportion in order to facilitate learning by students who have a native proficiency in one language and are acquiring proficiency in the other: bilingual training; bilingual education.
2. Of, relating to, or expressed in two languages: a bilingual dictionary.

Noun
A person who uses or is able to use two languages, especially with equal fluency.

Translingual: from trans, prefix, and lin-gual, adjective
Trans: [From Latin trans-, from; trans, across, beyond, through.]
1. Across; on the other side; beyond: transpolar.
2. Through: transcontinental.
3. Change; transfer: transliterate.

Lingual (ling-gwal)
Adjective
1. Of, relating to, or situated near the tongue or a tonguelike organ.
2. Linguistics. Pronounced with the tongue in conjunction with other organs of speech.
3. Of languages; linguistic: lingual diversity.

Noun
Linguistics: A sound, such as (t), (l), and (n), that is pronounced with the tongue and other organs of speech.

According to Steve Kellman, who teaches English literature at UTSA, most inhabitants of our planet are bilingual, which means they speak or write in two languages. This is true for all but the
illiterate and minimally educated people of developing countries and the many monolinguals in the United States. The author focuses on literary translationalism, which occurs when an author creates literary work in two or more languages. One need not be equally fluent in those languages to qualify as translational. We don’t find the word “translingual” in ordinary and abridged English dictionaries, but as a professor of comparative literature and author of several acclaimed scholarly books, Kellman coined the word from the prefix trans and the adjective lingual.

Among the large number of translinguals mentioned in his book, he discusses in detail some authors known for their masterpieces in English, such as Samuel Beckett, Joseph Conrad, and Vladimir Nabokov. Meanwhile he does not ignore notable African, Japanese, Israeli, and Spanish writers who produced manuscripts in their native as well as adopted languages. In discussing how these authors mastered writing in second or third languages, Mr. Kellman even acknowledges Persian poets, e.g., Saadi, and Rumi, who wrote in both Farsi and Arabic with similar fluency.

The author’s research supports his position that several translingual writers found writing in English superior to writing in their native language. But he also identifies some authors, e.g., Senghor and Makine who make the same claim about French and others, e.g., Bialik and Tchemikhovsky who feel that way about Hebrew. One of many convincing examples cited in the book is Salman Rushdie, who used Urdu as a young reporter in Pakistan, but eventually elected to write his masterpieces in English.

While Kellman recognizes the challenge of creating respectable literary work in one’s first language, he postulates it must be even harder to do so in an acquired second or third language. Yet at the end of the book he provides a surprisingly long list of more than 200 translingual authors, and his readers recognize that when there is a talent and genetic disposition to acquire languages, the lucky author is able to write well in all of his languages.

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Some Will Play The Cello
Poems by Trey Moore*


* Trey Moore received a BA in American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. He has been published and reviewed in various national and international journals. A native of San Antonio and fourth generation carpenter, he teaches poetry in public schools and juvenile detention centers.

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Homeless People of San Antonio
Voices Editors

In early 2006, after then San Antonio Mayor Phil Hardberger and business and civic leader Bill Greehey met to discuss the serious and growing problem of homelessness in Bexar County, the mayor established the Community Council to End Homelessness, naming Greehey and then Councilwoman Patty Radle co-chairs of the effort. The council was charged with developing a plan to reduce homelessness in San Antonio. They came up with Haven for Hope, which is now under construction as a multi-million dollar campus offering a whole array of services tailored to the needs of homeless people.

Homelessness in America is rising at an alarming rate. Homelessness has not been given the recognition it deserves on any level: local, state, or federal. Government agencies turn the other cheek regarding solutions to homelessness. The media will not even acknowledge that homelessness and poverty are serious threats to our health and stability as a nation. On any given night in America, over one million people are homeless, according to estimates of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

In December 2000, the US Conference of Mayors reported that single men comprise 44 percent of the homeless, single women 13 percent, families with children 36 percent, and unaccompanied minors seven percent. The homeless population is about 50 percent African-American, 35 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Native American and 1 percent Asian. According to the 1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients, single homeless individuals in 1996 reported an average income of $348 during the last 30 days, about 51 percent of the 1996 federal poverty level of $680/month for one person. More statistics:

- 28% said they sometimes or often do not get enough to eat.
- 44% did paid work during the past month.
- 21% received income from family members or friends.
- 30% have been homeless for more than two years.
- 38% say someone stole money or things directly from them.
- 22% have been physically assaulted.
- 7% have been sexually assaulted.
- 66% have problems with alcohol, drug abuse, or mental illness.

Child homelessness in America is a growing problem. One in 50 children is homeless, and with more foreclosures and job losses expected this year, the numbers are likely to get worse. A recent report from the National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that between 2005 and 2006 roughly 1.5 million American children were homeless. Researchers included in their definition of homelessness, children living with their families in shelters, on the streets, or with other relatives. A similar study in 2000 found there were 1.35 million homeless children.

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Roosevelt Park by Trey Moore
Homeless People of San Antonio

In 2003, the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) surveyed 25 major cities to obtain estimates on the causes of food scarcity and homelessness as well as the capacity of local agencies to meet the demand. The report cites unemployment, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, a lack of affordable housing, and limited life skills as the key reasons for homelessness in San Antonio.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the poverty rate in Bexar County is 16%. The USCMR data indicates that nearly half of the homeless people in San Antonio are either mentally ill, substance abusers or suffering from HIV or AIDS. The San Antonio/Bexar County Continuum of Care 2003 Census data indicates that domestic violence was cited as the reason that 12% of the families were homeless.

Homelessness in San Antonio cuts across all segments of the population. San Antonio’s homeless population can be divided into four major subgroups: members of families with children, single men, single women, and unaccompanied youth. Tables 1 and 2 break down the homeless population into groups using data from the USCM Report. Nearly 50% of the population are families with children.

Homeless People in the San Antonio Area—Table 1

- Members of Families with Children: 49%
- Single Men: 28%
- Single Women: 13%
- Unaccompanied Youth: 10%

Homeless People in the San Antonio Area—Table 2

- Hispanic: 50%
- Caucasian: 33%
- African-American: 16%
- Asian: 1%

Other characteristics of the homeless people in San Antonio

- Mentally Ill: 25%
- Substance Abusers: 20%
- Employed: 15%
- Veterans: 6%
- AIDS/HIV related illness: 2%
- General Population: 32%

Of those surveyed, 44% had been homeless for more than one year. Many (35%) stated that they were homeless because they could not locate or secure affordable housing. It is apparent that the City of San Antonio (COSA) must find a way to increase options for the homeless as 79% of them stated that they intended to stay in San Antonio for more than a year.

Even as agencies in San Antonio/Bexar County continue to add new shelters, 28% of those surveyed through the 2003 CoC Census indicated that they had been turned away from a shelter because the shelter was full. Emergency shelter space for families is particularly needed. In 2003, the San Antonio Metropolitan Ministries (SAMM) also reported that they were turning away 40 families per month who were seeking emergency shelter. During periods of inclement weather, this problem is heightened.

References:
- Almanac of Policy Issues: http://www.policyalmanac.org
- Article: http://articlet.com/article
- jezebel.com/5167276/child-homelessness-in-america
- http://www.sanantonio.gov/comminit/HavenforHope

San Antonio Lighthouse

Established in 1933, the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind began with the vision of one individual, Dr. Henry Wyneken, to train and educate blind and visually impaired people. Initially the Lighthouse offered part-time work for five people at a North Presa Street plant sewing pillow cases. Since then, it has served the community and the nation during war and peace.

In World War II, the broom factory on San Fernando Street, the mop factory on Olive Street, and a new sewing plant at Lexington and St. Mary’s Streets produced vast numbers of laundry bags, mops, and brooms. Today the work is consolidated at a 60,000 sq. foot facility on Roosevelt Avenue, which employs more than 250 and manufactures more than 80 products, including highlighters, mechanical pencils, pens, helmet chin-straps for the army and marines, jackets for the navy, spill kits, and absorbent pads.

The history of the Lighthouse lights up with the generosity of community leaders who either donated land or gave their financial and business support to its success, from Dr. Frederic Oppenheimer, who donated the North Presa Street location, to G.S. McCreless and the Jewish community, who helped secure the current Roosevelt Avenue site.

While products and jobs may have changed over time, the Lighthouse’s focus on providing opportunities for people who are blind has remained steadfast. In 1978, the Rehabilitation Center opened for job counseling, technology training, Braille instruction and vocational evaluations. In 1997, the Lighthouse established partnerships with the army and air force by opening retail operations on 10 military installations across New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma. The military now depends on the Lighthouse to ensure that deployed soldiers are equipped with proper uniforms and gear.

Meet Ernie Arce: Ernie Arce has been married 22 years and is a General Assembler at San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind. By the age of three months, Ernie had lost all his sight to Glaucoma and Cataracts. Ernie has lived in San Antonio most of his life, with a brief sojourn to Schertz where his parents thought small town living would be best. The Texas Commission for the Blind visited with Ernie’s parents and convinced them to return to San Antonio so Ernie might receive the best education and services.

After graduation from high school in 1987, Ernie attended the Cole Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Austin, Texas, where he took courses in College Prep and Independent Living Skills. Ernie had worked at the San Antonio Lighthouse in a summer program during his junior year of high school, and they offered him a job after graduation. He loved the job where he met the love of his life, Barbara, who is also blind, and worked at the SA Lighthouse as a General Assembler. Barbara left in 1991 when she became pregnant and wanted to be at home to raise her children. Ernie is the proud father of two sons: Jesse, now 18 and attending Palo Alto College, and Sammy, 11. Visit Ernie at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmN2ciBUZwE.
Editors’ Poems

Donning the Mask
James Brandenburg

The flower projects its yellow
in the damp, green folds
of the cactus

Lady Dove coos at her little ones
under the sparkling rhombus
of the rising sun

Sated flies rest replenished
on a heap of
fresh cow dung

Bacon grease burns my tongue
but I relish
the flavor for hours

The old oak tree provides
a surface to ease the
weariness of my fingers

If I could only put this all together
to find meaning
to see, to hear, to smell
to taste, to feel
What is it?

Carousel
Valerie Martin Bailey

Up and down and round and round,
an endless dizzy dance;
four abreast and row on row,
the painted ponies prance.
Children mount flamboyant steeds,
whose happy wooden grins
hint at dreams to be fulfilled...
the magic circle spins.
Small pretenders ride away
to some enchanted land;
lifted by calliope—
its music loud and grand!
Cotton-candied memories
swirl with the waltzing tunes...
merry world of make-believe
and shiny red balloons.

Fifty-Five Percent
Mo Saidi

Most Texans believe we were created in recent times

On a tumultuous day, Adam landed elliptically
on a patch of quaggy land, and in the wee hours
of the next morning, Eve descended
with a flimsy parachute.

The First Couple attended the march of the creatures
using the OED, they named fauna and flora
they harvested the golden fields of wheat, captured
and slaughtered a young sheep and grilled its meat.

They filled their jugs from a cool spring, opened
the fridge and added ice to their drinks, drove
a new Silverado to a nearby shore; wearing masks
and fins, they snorkeled and filmed the colorful fish.

Anointed with sunscreen, they bathed on white sand
listening to samba, they danced, hugged and kissed
and made love and reproduced. In long 930 years
they gathered a flock of 10,000 offspring.

Millennia later they joined the Homo sapiens’ progeny
of East Africa, Indo-Europeans, sea-wanderers
the natives of the remote continents, and the builders
of ziggurats, ships, spacecrafts and pyramids.

They traded packages of virulent germs, religions,
contrasting myths, and arms. The houses were crammed
with stuff, the planet with the mounting garbage
scrapped metals, air with pollutants, toxic gases and smog.

When man arrived, he brought thousands of words
knew how to write, read, sing arias, love songs,
play piano, recite poetry he composed; and he resided
in a mansion with heated pool, cellars with wines galore.

Spiraling Down
Josie Mixon

Cold wind
Against my face
Brushing up
Against frozen tears

Faster, colder
Falling deeper
Forgetting nothing
Knowing

It will come again
Carousel turns
Faster, harder
My grip is loosening

Can’t stop the train
Of unforgiving thoughts
Can’t stop the end
From falling like rain

Voices de la Luna, 15 March 2010
In just a few pages in her book, *A Place Called Sanctuary—Writings From A Healing Garden*—by Edna Kovacs, PhD, takes us on the journey of a lifetime. In her book, she uses photos, brief prose pieces, and poetry to paint a picture of her sanctuary, a house and garden area purchased in the fall of 2000 in Portland, Oregon. “The house itself was built in 1949 on old Alpenrose dairy land. Sequestered within an orchard of pear, plum, cherry, and blueberries, it is surrounded by large elm, spruce, dawn redwood, and hemlock trees.” Through the exploration and construction of her outer sanctuary, she also creates an inner sanctuary through writing and journaling, where she reflects and comes to terms with a dysfunctional childhood, an abusive marriage, adopts two cats, and cultivates her garden.

While she cultivates her garden, she also sketches poetry and prose into her journal, pressing a plum blossom among a sequence of haiku; thereby tending to her inner landscape. Her gardening experience feeds into her writing experience and vice versa. They become symbiotic. Through gardening, she discovers “many layers within herself that need to be nurtured, weeded, fed, tilled, and sown; requiring fences, a wood shed, deck, a gazebo, even a drip irrigation system.” She deals with her shadow and rediscovers her feminine side, the side that allows her creative ability to flourish. As her inner sanctuary grows, so does her outer sanctuary.

By restoring her world, she attunes herself to the new buds and growth that abound in her work, friendships, and garden even in the most fallow of seasons. She quotes the following from Lauren Artress on page 22 of her book: “Unless you can create an inner sanctuary, a special chamber within where you can both be with yourself, slow things down, and direct your thoughts towards what nourishes your body, mind, and Spirit, you will be starving for meaning and purpose in your life.” Ghandi says that you must be the change you wish to see in the world.

Changing herself, Edna Kovacs ultimately transforms her world. As she creates a beautiful outer landscape—her outer sanctuary and inner sanctuary become one. Her prose pieces and poetry create that inner landscape of beauty and tranquility. While her writing turns some horrible experiences and hardships into a pattern of meaning, she encourages us, the readers, to explore our experiences and, in our own creative ways, to turn our lives into a narrative and explore its labyrinthine paths. This inner work makes it possible to help others heal. Edna Kovacs is, in fact, devoted to servitude in her community through the written word.

After reading her book, I found myself spending more time in my garden, my own outer sanctuary and putting my pen to paper. Her book is a must for therapists and healers and for those who are discovering their own healing process—perhaps who have not dealt with their pain. Dr. Kovacs thinks we can write our way out of most painful situations. Writing can turn horror and hardship into a pattern of meaning. Once we have meaning, we can live through everything. The book also contains several writing prompts—prompts that can take us down into our depths. Many of her poems are also appropriate for poetry therapy and writing sessions. The writing is at all times accessible, as she creates her narrative by integrating short prose pieces with her poetry.

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**Meditation with a Damselfly at the River of Golden Dreams**

*Edna Kovacs*

In the singing mountain passes, in a refuge surrounded by marshland grasses,

In the gentle quiver of wings, I am learning ways to breathe again.

I can’t undo the fact
I was able to tear the calendar into two

separating from daily distaff
so that I might live the life I care for.

It’s not easy to abandon the city.
It takes years to become as free as a wild bird.

What I want is to participate in

this buoyant breathing universe brushstroked in possibility.

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**The Garden**

*Edna Kovacs*

Trusting in green,
a part of me cares
for the pith of worms
bees astir in bonded work—
the camaraderie of callow shoots.
There’s something mending about a garden;
even when it’s wilted,
the earth frozen.
I like the tenacity of zucchini,
The piety of peas;
full-bellied tomatoes are laughing Buddhas—
It’s no wonder the starlings come to converse.
I bring my hands to the garden
and learn my place.
James Brandenburg: There are many places to begin such an interview with Margot Van Sluytman for Voices de la Luna. Where do I begin? Wow! Your life is one of many twists and turns, both from a personal point of view and a literary point of view. You live in Alberta, Canada. Talk about where you live and how you ended up there.

Margot van Sluytman: In three words, James, the mountains called. I was living in Ontario, after returning from living in Venezuela for about two years with my daughters. I started my micro poetry press, Palabras Press, and was sharing workshops on Expressive Writing, delighting in my city, Peterborough, yet conscious of a call to move West. To pioneer. I knew that to keep my Press and to be able to live my life as a poet that I had to have access to regular jobs. I chose Alberta because in 2006 its economy was thriving. I was not seeking a traditional career. I was seeking a manner in which to find work when necessary to support my habit: writing, facilitating Expressive Writing Workshops, and publishing poetry.

I was told that it was a foolish move. The main reason being that I am an artist and that Alberta is not a province that supports or nurtures art and especially poets and poetry. I did what I always do: I listened only to my instincts, and I chose to listen to the call of the mountains. The result is that beauty and exquisite growth and rich possibility have been my food since being in this province. I continue to write, to publish, and to expand the places that accept and welcome my Expressive Writing Workshops; places that include prisons, remand centres, homeless shelters, spirituality centres, and both colleges and universities.

It was in this province in 2007 that I received a Seeds of Joy Award from The National Association for Poetry Therapy, and from which I was invited to present one of my workshops at our conference in Portland, Oregon. It was at that conference that I met many kindred individuals, including you, Jim, and it was because of reading about that award and my work with Expressive Writing, which was birthed because of that loss, that the man, Glen Flett, who murdered my father, Theodore Van Sluytman in Ontario in 1978, contacted me, and my vocation continues to unfold. My poem, “The Voice,” speaks to the gift of listening to the mountains; speaks to how hope, healing, and forgiveness came to teach me.

My workshops are about individuals finding their voice and vision and trusting the process of their pen and soul’s yearning. My belief is that creativity is the soul’s very own nourishment. That it feeds upon and is fed by community that gathers to let our words mirror our complex and generous spirits. My workshops speak to the fact that each of us, no matter where we are, no matter who we are, is a poet, is a writer, is a storyteller. Even if we only birth two words in a homeless shelter, in a prison, or while sitting in our darkened living room reeling in the pain of loss from savage crime, or death’s untimely swipe, we birth our meaning. Each of us, upon picking up a stubby pencil or well-chewed pen, spins magic when we write. My workshops speak to my belief that no fancy formula is required, for we each own simple and abundant beauty. What I do is facilitate a way in which individuals, who want to pen their voice, can do so. I do not teach a thing that is not already there. I simply mentor participants to find what it is and how it is they wish to express. Writing together is prayer, is risk, is a simple response to life’s ever unfolding mystery.

“If I can stop one Heart from breaking
I shall not live in vain
If I can ease one Life the Aching
Or cool one Pain
Or help one fainting Robin
Unto his Nest again
I shall not live in Vain.”

Emily Dickinson
No. 919 (c, 1864)
Music & Poetry

George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*
from www.wikipedia.com

*Porgy and Bess* is an opera, first performed in 1935, with music by George Gershwin, libretto by DuBose Heyward, and lyrics by Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward. It was based on DuBose Heyward’s novel *Porgy* and the play of the same name, which he co-wrote with his wife Dorothy Heyward. All three works deal with African-American life in the fictitious Catfish Row (based on the real-life Cabbage Row) in Charleston, South Carolina, in the early 1920s.

Originally conceived by Gershwin as an “American folk opera,” *Porgy and Bess* premiered in New York in the fall of 1935 and featured an entire cast of classically trained African-American singers—a daring and visionary artistic choice at the time. Gershwin chose African-American Eva Jessye as the choral director for the opera. Incorporating a wealth of blues and jazz idioms into the classical art form of opera, Gershwin considered it his finest work.

The work was not widely accepted in the United States as a legitimate opera until 1976, when the Houston Grand Opera production of Gershwin’s complete score established it as an artistic triumph. Nine years later, the Metropolitan Opera gave their first performance of the work. This production was also broadcast as part of the ongoing Saturday afternoon live Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts. The work is now considered part of the standard operatic repertoire and is regularly performed internationally.

Despite this success, the opera has been controversial; some critics from the outset have considered it a racist portrayal of African-Americans. “Summertime” is by far the best-known piece from the work, and countless interpretations of this and other individual numbers have also been recorded and performed. The second best-known number is “It Ain’t Necessarily So.” The opera is admired for Gershwin’s innovative synthesis of European orchestral techniques with American jazz and folk music idioms.

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**Summertime, the Lyrics**

**Summertime,**
And the livin’ is easy
Fish are jumpin’
And the cotton is high

Oh, Your daddy’s rich
And your mamma’s good lookin’
So hush little baby
Don’t you cry
One of these mornings

You’re going to rise up singing
Then you’ll spread your wings
And you’ll take to the sky
But until that morning
There’s a’nothing can harm you
With your daddy and mammy standing by

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**Bizet’s Carmen**

*Carmen* is a French opéra comique by Georges Bizet. The libretto is by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, based on the novella of the same title by Prosper Mérimée, first published in 1845, itself possibly influenced by the narrative poem “The Gypsies” (1824) by Alexander Pushkin. Mérimée had read the poem in Russian by 1840 and translated it into French in 1852.

**The Lyrics**

**English Translation of Habanera**

Love is a rebellious bird
that nobody can tame,
and you call him quite in vain
if it suits him not to come.

Nothing helps, neither threat nor prayer.
One man talks well, the other’s mum;
it’s the other one that I prefer.
He’s silent but I like his looks.

Love! Love! Love! Love!

Love is a gypsy’s child,
it has never, ever, known a law;
love me not, then I love you;
if I love you, you’d best beware! ….

The bird you thought you had caught
beat its wings and flew away ...
love stays away, you wait and wait;
when least expected, there it is!

All around you, swift, so swift,
it comes, it goes, and then returns ...
you think you hold it fast, it flees
you think you’re free, it holds you fast.

Love! Love! Love! Love!

Love is a gypsy’s child,
it has never, ever, known a law;
love me not, then I love you;
if I love you, you’d best beware!
Poetry Workshops

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Every Second Thursday of the Month
Beginning on Thursday April 8, 2010, at 6 PM
Moderated by Josie Mixon, Mo H. Saidi, and James Brandenburg

The event is sponsored by Voices de la Luna, and the evening program is from 6–9 PM. Free to the community.

6 PM – Poetry Workshop
7 PM – Open Mic
8 PM – Featured Guest
For more information, visit www.bihlhausarts.org

Introduction
The poetry workshop will be a monthly exercise to write and discuss poetry. We believe poetry and arts improve our lives while they also indicate our mental status and well-being. 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.

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. In writing an elegy about the loss of a dear one, the poet immortalizes that person, and the memory of that person acquires beauty and love.

Foreign and Domestic
A Book of Poetry
By H. Palmer Hall

H. Palmer Hall’s latest book of poetry, Foreign and Domestic, was recently published by Turning Point Books and is available online as well as in local book stores. He is the author of five chapbooks of poems and essays, and his work has appeared in various anthologies and other literary magazines. He is the library director at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas. He will read from his new book of poetry and conduct book signings in the upcoming months.

Celebrating the Debut of Oasis in the Sky

Floyd (Michaud) L. Lamrouex, a local attorney who hosts the Awaken the Sleeping Poet venue at Northwoods Barnes & Noble and the Twig, announces the publication of his first collection of poems and stories, Oasis in the Sky. These powerful poems and stories center on his boyhood in Southeast Arizona and his battle with bipolar disorder. Alan Birkelbach, 2005 Poet Laureate of Texas says, “Lamrouex has written a courageous and raw story of overcoming huge obstacles—to find himself.” Dr. Wendy Barker says, “Lamrouex leads us through a journey from the chasms of physical injury and the abyss of depression through to the still waters of a faith that has not lost its sense of humor.” Available through his publisher at www.WordDesignStudio.com and Amazon.com.

The Writer’s Privilege

“It is his (the poet’s, the writer’s) privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet’s voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.”

from William Faulkner’s speech on receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature. December 10, 1950
Poetry & Art Therapy

David Drymala, Poet & Painter

David Drymala lives in San Marcos, Texas, where he paints and writes poetry. Painting and writing poetry are a therapeutic way for David to cope with schizophrenia and calm his voices.

I found a deeper sense of God inside
It’s not about religion
It’s about our testimony cried.

The Deeper Side
David Drymala

I’m seeking a pathway
A lonely divorce
I’m peeking past religion
Searching for a greater force
Deep inside the water
Deep in the depth,
Weeping is the Father
At his Son’s death.
The sacrifice is made
His gift of life compelling
Illuminates the glass
I see only my reflection
But that’s just a mask.
He is the only one who understands
He watched as the devil crushed me
With his hands.
I’m searching for healing,
I don’t ask why
And God is revealing
The deeper side.
I tumble through the vessel
I found the light
I held on to the question
And I did fight

The Abyss
David Drymala

I lay motionless
Body engulfed in a watery hell
I’m paralyzed
My shadow falls on the floor
It shrinks and swells
The current moves me through the storm
Unaware
Tumbles me against the current
Until my body starts to tear
Listen
You can hear the silence
Blaring in my ear
With an invisible violence
I grovel at God’s knees
To help me escape
But the force of the water
Does not break
My flesh is soggy—almost putty
My bones are crushed
Disfiguring my body
Am I forever to decay
In an uncertain spell?
Deep in the abyss,
The watery hell.
Good within the Bad

David Drymala

Who’s a greater fool,
The fool or the one who follows the fool?
In God’s workshop, who’s the worker,
Who’s the tool?

A child meditates in the middle of your war
Amongst the black sky a single shining star,
And it shines down on you and it will always shine down,
Reach the masses with a sign laced within a single rhyme.

Change the world with what you have,
Find the good within the bad,

As there is a yin to every yang,
Even from death can come a change.
Doesn’t every season end to begin another,
Couldn’t life be death’s brother?
Yes, life is a terrible thing to waste,
So much more death should be embraced.

A child meditates in the middle of your war,
Amongst the black sky a single shining star,
And it shines down upon you and it will always shine down,
And reach the masses with this sign laced with a single rhyme.

Change the world with what you have,
Find the good within the bad.
Select Poems—Part I
Youth Poems

Failure
Sakura (Sam)
Each scar is a reason
A warning never to go back
I promise myself,
I betray myself

Scars
Sakura (Sam)
Ashamed, I hide myself
Lonely, I weep
Loved, I face the world

Nature’s Gift
Clarice Young
I wonder how the world looks from the eyes of an eagle,
disappearing without a trace
I listen to leaves singing, above and around me
I see the blur of feathers from flying wings,
light bouncing off blades of grass
I feel the wind,
rippling the surface of calm waters
swirling my hair about my face
I am a fish, smooth and sleek,
feeling water slide past my scales
like cool silk
I wake from my long slumber,
breaking my cocoon and
emerging as jewel-bright color

My Guardian Angel
Dee Cervantes
My Guardian Angel, my sweet companion,
You did not tell me he was leaving.
Do not leave me alone,
For I will die
Just thinking of you I am desperate.
Going outside I see your
Smile up in the sky,
Crying, I notice
A shining star
And I think, it must be you
Taking God’s hand.
He says,
“Love of my life, don’t cry.
No matter what,
I remain always
By your side.”

Snowglobe
Ellairie Yantis
Pretty little girl
in a snowglobe world
shake it up and watch it fall
it’s not so beautiful after all
the glassy barrier separates me
from what is real, what I’ll never be
when everything settles the truth is clear
evidencing my greatest fears
you look in on me, see it’s fine
I can’t explain, I’m running out of time
break the globe and set me free
before I’m trapped eternally

Art Work David Drymala

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Voices de la Luna, 15 March 2010

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**Select Poems–Part II**

**Youth Poems**

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**Broken Chains**

*Samatha*

The white moon  
A cold breeze  
The heart flutters  
Doves fly  
My chains are broken

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**Changing Secret Moon**

*Quanie Glover*

As the moon  
I change  
Into deep depression  
Love I feel  
As I suffocate under pressure  
As I love  
You love  
The wind  
I float  
But I change in my own eyes  
I fade into what I hide  
I hide secrets  
Things that I can’t say  
But one day the world will hear me  
And they will say I change like the moon  
As my secrets change  
I change

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**Art Work David Drymala**

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**Birth**

*Cyra Dumitrue*

And when the words  
have built up inside me  
filling my body from my stomach  
to my mouth  
they spew forth  
though not immediately into sound

They are a dance  
of letters and numbers  
shaping  
into paragraphs and sentences  
a feast of images and emotions

When at last  
the pen is done with me  
when the page has taken  
all it can  
my eyes retrace the journey, the aftermath  
and I am humbled

for it was not I  
who created those words  
not I who gave them meaning  
but merely the vessel  
they grew in  
until fully shaped.

---

**Bulimia**

*Ellairie Yantis*

It controls me, owns me  
the only one that really knows me  
my Porcelain Prison,  
begging me to confess my Sins.  
I see my reflection, torn apart—  
The steady rhythm of my heart  
It’s not too late, I could still walk away  
No use, I’m forced to stay  
I see my past once again  
Greeting me sickly like a friend  
Here it comes, Yup—  
What goes down must come Up.
Auroras, Borealis and Australis  
Wendy Barker

The Vikings saw the Valkyries.  
Tiberius thought the port of Ostia  
on fire, while Ezekiel’s heavens  
opened to an amber, sapphire,  
ruby wheel, the word of God.  
Antarctic midnight, 1998,  
surveyors on the ice could read  
labels on their gloves, minuscule  
markings with no hint  
of the magnitude of tongues,  
the particles of plasma burst  
from inside the sun, electrons  
hurled down to us from space,  
colliding with oxygen, nitrogen  
molecules awhirl and causing  
pagers of detectives, pharmacists,  
even lovers to go dead.

Near-Earth Object  
Wendy Barker

They said a second moon,  
a bright new sphere  
orbiting our planet, another  
presence we can count on.  
Have you seen the moons tonight,  
we’ll say, they both are full!  
And suddenly our small  
circumference has swollen  
to the size of Saturn’s—first  
one moon, then two, in time  
we might have rings, a crown  
of moons all following  
the wisps of our transparencies,  
the clouds, the drifts of all our storms.  
But no—they’re saying now  
it’s the last stage  
of an Apollo rocket launched  
three years ago, returned from  
decades revolving round the sun.  
A boomerang’s ellipsis:  
a word we uttered once,  
flung back to us.

The Rain Came  
Scott Herren

The rain came  
in black clouds like great bruises  
sweeping down over the face of the mesas  
into the arroyo.

It scrubbed the air  
leaving it wet, moist.  
Painted in delicate gold film,  
cottonwood leaves suspend in air.

Tree bark blackens with dripping water,  
looking like braided rope hanging  
out of a mysterious canopy.

And the arroyo floor flows with quickened  
sand slowly moving downhill  
inching its way with every passing storm toward—  
toward what—that is the question.

The land drinks her fill  
earth worms surface, black birds wait.  
The alfalfa field becomes a banquet table.

The storm passes as she always does.  
The desert air takes its moisture back.  
We were only borrowing it.

The returning sun and a gentle breeze  
excite the cottonwood leaves  
as they spin off spikes of light into the drying air.

Earth breathes in the air from heaven.  
Heaven breathes in the air from earth.

Vantage Point  
Linda Banks

Sometimes  
I seem to be  
on the outside  
I looking in  
at myself  
my self  
like the viewer  
of a movie  
who doesn’t like  
the plot  
or doesn’t  
understand it  
and walks away  
shaking  
his  
head.
infinite horizon
Margot Van Sluytman

i prepare, yet again
to step into that infinite
horizon, where mystery
carves its willing voice
deep into each of our
present and sacred,
scarred, scared soulscape.
“we all matter,” in this
mystical communion
where living the questions
compels us to trust all that
is, was, and ever will be.
willing us to be brave,
to sing as exploding stars
ever entering unfolding
possibility. hope speaks.

I write as an escape
Jose Caraballo

My pen collapses
staining my sleep
hurting the chapters
of my exhausted solitude.
Falling schemes
of forgotten epigrams
asphyxiate my poetry.
Still some verses
shelter me from the cold
suffered by my soul.
I form a poem
become earth, trees, leaves, wind.
I fly between fervid
beams of a naked moon
but without my poems
I am shipwrecked,
sinking in seas of solitary ink.
Bored I resemble a speck,
absent shades in an absent house.
The fire of my imagination
nourishes my ideas
eases the pain in my fingers
with words: double-edged daggers
longing to be received
by sensitive souls.
I write to escape
a world of phrases
without meaning.

Select–Poems
Part IV

Famous Poets Trading Cards
Alan Birkelbach

These are the small packets
snuggled with slabs of gum
you will never find.

“I’ll trade you two Robert Frosts,”
(who is rather common), “for a Rilke
or an Auden.”
You can’t give away your Wordsworths
but your Shakerley Marmions
and Stephen Ducks are like gold
(even if no one knows who they are).
You always treat your Amy Lowells
and Emily Dickinsons with respect;
you have no trouble at all sticking
Carl Sandburg in the spokes of your bike.
Then there are the team cards
(the post modernists, the beats, the romantics, etcetera):
The faces are so tiny and you never really believe
Li Po wore his baseball hat backwards.
Of course, every card
has a library of information on the back:
how many double dactyls they wrote,
their sonnet sequences, their favorite topics,
their count of books published, their Nobels won—
all their metrical runs batted in,
how much they tinkered with classical forms,
how many times they rhymed Heavens to Dale Evans,
how often they alluded to
the connotations of chance.

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...
For Hejo, 5. July 2004

Kevin Power

Does that piece of wood
Called a violin
Still find its home
Under your chin?
I hope it does.

Does its melody
Celebrate the past
Enjoy the present
And face the future?
I hope it does.

We are alive
In the sounds of music,
Be they happy or sad,
Fast or slow:
Of this I am sure.

Memories deepen,
Things are at last understood
As the music celebrates
Our victories and defeats:
Of this I am sure.

Put that piece of wood
Under your chin
And make it sing
Of past and present days:
Believe me: we will hear you.

Sustenance

Lou Taylor

Thin trunk
Sprouts branches
And more branches
Until they touch the sky

Needles in abundance
Sharp points
Pricking the air

Together they shade
The porch

Together they are
Green refuge
From the heat

Gathering sustenance
For the tree
Returning life-giving oxygen

One Last Time

Hejo Müller

Dearest, come
Let us die together!

Our days
Are tired

And nights can’t
Stand it anymore;

Already they
Flutter

Like wounded birds
Struck down
In the wind.

Come, my Love,
Let us die together!

Let us greet each other
With tenderness
One last time

Clouds
Children
Flowers

And one last time
Listen to songs
Of crickets

My Beloved,
Come with me!

Life in Kasachastan

Hejo Müller

To live
each day
entirely without fears
and without chains

To choose
one another
each new day

To listen joyfully
to each other’s breathing
in the silence
of the night

And to know
it endures.
**Restless Muse**  
Joan Seifert

The muse is coming back—he hears her  
bumping gently to and fro against the walls  
reaching for the door knob, seeking a lost phrase.

He hadn’t craved her rhyme or meter anymore  
so the muse went on a sulk, ignored tempo,  
scorned syntax, bolted wordlessly.

(I think that they should better lose each other,  
and she stay away for good.)

Yet there was his murmur still,  
a pensive he-man, gleaning memories,  
wanting free from words that had displeased her.

He hadn’t even thought to cause a new song  
but that slight sigh did it—and she heard.

Heartrending! Just the setting for a muse!  
and in she swirled, flaunting newness,  
twinkle out a drama worth the telling.

That’s a muse’s call, of course.  
And when summoned, an ardent Casanova,  
to the bedding place he’ll go.

She’s tousled from the long trip  
back along untidy sentence paths  
and needs re-wording, and lots fewer commas.

She might rhyme once more, or not.  
She will care again, or not.

(She’s a restless muse, but after wine, and wine,  
they’ll most likely play capricious with their second stanza.)

**The Song of the Widow**  
Lou Taylor  

Men come to the temple  
For so many reasons  
To be seen  
To contribute  
To make sacrifices  
I come  
Because Love is here  
Others see law but  
Blessings abound

Deep mystery  
Is present  
Joy our possession  
My part is small  
God alone knows I am here  
My presence needed  
Two copper coins  
My fortune  
I throw with abandon  
Into the treasury*  
Giving all I own  
Is a small price to pay  
To be able to laugh  
At the end of the day

* Treasury refers to a container shaped like an inverted trumpet  
to protect from theft.

**Sweet Muse**  
Margot van Sluytman

I commit to you sweet Muse  
I beg you to guide this, my pen  
My fingers.  
I commit to the purpose—to write.  
To your presence too.  
To prioritizing my soul, my very self  
In a manner that embraces all that I am  
all that is me.  
I offer to faith,  
Mindfulness,  
Enduring trust.  
For it is as if my very being  
Is one with who you are, that I am.  
In believing that you are my guide,  
I open up.  
I soak in.  
I can, even when it is darkest, rejoice.  
Letting go.  
Giving in.  
Crying. Sobbing. Smiling.  
Arching in tender rhythm with my lover.  
Dancing a worthy dance.  
When each piece seems to break away  
And leave me stranded,  
You repair me. Patch me up.  
Embrace and rejoice with me.  
Sweet Muse,  
I am learning to believe that  
I am worth the time it takes to create  
Whatever I feel called to create.  
Birthing over and over again.  
Relighting a flame, daily.  
I commit to you
On The Passing of Herbert Blackthorne
Jim Heidelberg

The phone rang, I didn’t answer,
The phone rang again and again, it rang for hours, then I answered, it was news of blues and deep ochre smeared together to create sobbing and screams, it was an obituary reading voice humming in flat monotone.

On October 15, 2005, Herbert Blackthorne of the city left the planet by his own hand at the ripe young age of forty-seven years, he left no children, no current wife, but three former ones and a mother, a mother who planted the father of Herbert exactly twenty years before, on the same windblown barren stretch of west Texas where Herbert’s remaining parts were interred on October 19, 2005, all in a medium sized urn.

He rode the mustangs as a tall straight boy
He chased the girls across the plains again and again
He searched for knowledge, drank it in again and again
He drank the nectar of the grapes of wrath,
He drank the nectar again and again to stop the pain
He grew old too fast—he thought he was eighty-three, so time to flee

So why did you leave my darling young one? Why did you reach and draw and say today is the day and plant the silver bullet in your right temple, today is the day you were new and bright and hope gushed through fresh veins but today was the day your brain chemicals voted for death so you left—all of us.

Last Dance
Mim Scharlack

A Sufi leaf
clings to a spider thread
on the bottom
of slightly raised
garage door,
twirling and spinning,
spinning and twirling,
even in death dance.

Spider in the Moonlight
Valerie Martin Bailey

Dew-kissed silver strands
Shimmering in moon-iced grass
Spider’s paradise
Watering Silk Flowers  
Joan Seifert

Little Sarah didn’t know,  
and gave a drink of water  
to the vase of silken roses in Mama’s parlor,  
them wailed aloud  
when they soggied down to droopiness.

Sarah, three,  
had often watched the cure for too-bland soup  
in Mama’s kitchen,  
and when remedied,  
how faces would light up and smile,

so,  
gone a moment,  
then skipping happily back into the room  
and running to the troubled flowers,  
salted, peppered happily away.

‘Feel better now!’ she grinned to Mama.

And Mama, smiling, did,  
though she thought she heard the roses sneeze.

The Worry People  
Dario Beniquez

My friends worry obsessively.  
They worry about the end of the world, 2012,  
harmonic convergence, Mayan Cosmology, my retirement.

They persist on building bomb shelters, steel reinforced concrete  
basements,  
with a water supply to last ninety days or more,  
with canned foods, Goya, Del Monte, frijoles, habichuelas,  
10-pound bags of Mahatma rice, a shelter with a shelf  
with a small RCA transistor radio to pick up rogue radioactive  
communities.

They worry about me. Where’s my bomb shelter? Don’t I care?  
We can be attacked in any minute. Anthrax, biological weapons  
are everywhere, just around the corner; an earthquake can shake  
us off our feet anytime, or even a tsunami from the Pacific Ocean  
can send us scampering to the hills.

I could think I could be hit by a grand piano falling from outer  
space,  
right now, but I don’t.

They worry for me, my friends.  
I worry for them, the worry people.  
I carry them with me all the time,  
and at night I place them underneath  
my pillow and let them do the worrying for me.

As the Worry People  
Dario Beniquez

Well-Browned Senses  
Valerie Martin Bailey

I love the smell of brown...  
Fertile fields, freshly plowed,  
unrivaled earth perfume.

Coffee brewing, hot and strong,  
rich aroma of the dawn.

I love the taste of brown...  
Chocolate, senuously brown—  
dark, sweet pleasure on my tongue.

Brown bag lunches in the park—  
tastes of carefree summertime.

I love the feel of brown...  
Leather jacket, smoothly tough,  
warms me in a brown embrace.

Old worn yard shoes, caked with mud—  
comfort waiting by the door.

I love the sound of brown...  
Golden-brown, the crunch of leaves and  
acorns plopping on the roof;  
khaki sounds of marching bands,  
burnt umber tones of bass guitars.

I love the look of brown...  
Freckles on a turned up nose,  
Brown sugar kisses from the sun.

Vanillas turn their pale hides sunward;  
tan their white pride toasty brown.

Talisman  
Roberto Bonazzi

Smooth black stone encircled by a tan ring  
rests upon this notebook as an oval crown.

Amulet found in a clear stream, smoothed  
by supple waters, mineral intransigence  
in a tooth of time.

On fresh examination other aspects emerge—  
it is pitted, imperfect, common—  
ever a fetish item.

Dark thought cast into a dialogue of dying,  
eons shaped this hard sacred silence—

I praise it now, then hide it in a gentle fist,  
as our planet slowly dies on a back burner.
Tribal Tamales  
*Catherine Patrick-Newman*

As Time’s amaranthine eye revisits the ritual: our tribal gathering for the making of tamales, it’s las manos that strum at my heart strings, year upon passing year.

These are the wintered hands of Grandma Rojas Crafting tamales alongside my mother’s, whose fading autumn is yet held at bay. Beside hers, the patient hands of my sister; Then my wife’s long, thin fingers fly, lily-white. End of the line, there toils the swiftest of fingers. And red as August wine, these hands are mine.

This is constant, the sharing of food: mano a mano, hand to hand.

Tamale transmogrified to art. while heart coheres to heart.

Skillful shaping of things organic, delicioso, each as the other, blending colors, flavors, textures; Español coalescing Inglez.

Each hand tracks its faint lines of origin. Each origin is wrapped, totemic.

My hand unwinds from mi mama’s, Whose own slipped softly from Abuelita’s, Her palms were shaped by Costa Rica. And she, Costa Rica, informs each hand, 

las manos forming tamales that blend, that binds us. Familia. Flesh and bone.

---

Silk Road  
*Louise Cantwell*

The road is old, very old 
Silk, secrets of the forbidden world 
Passed these ways countless times 
Secrets of the hidden world 
Bought at risk of death and worse 
Crept along these ways 
Countless, countless times 
Winding slowly westerly 
Harboring webs of dark intrigue 
Dreams of wealth and fortune 
Cloaked in contraband cocoons

---

Portrait of a Guitarist: A Rondeau  
*(For Liz)*  
*Carol Coffee Reposa*

Bent into flamenco, he plays nonstop  
Pressing out the chords like wine, drop by drop,  
Above her piano. Ten years ago  
She saw him in a gallery, the glow  
Of his eyes, lashes thick as frets, that mop

Of charcoal hair. She brought him home. He hopped  
From serenade to ballad, sowed a crop  
Of melodies that made dark roses grow  
Bent into flamenco,

Or a sonata bright with a dollop  
Of strums. Sometimes she had to leave her shop  
To hear those sounds, and then his hands would flow  
Across the room to touch her face or throw  
A kiss before he took it from the top,  
Bent into flamenco.

---

Dragon  
*Roger Sedarat*

It’s like having to fight Rostam’s dragon  
Except he doesn’t die, this damn dragon.

“Don’t get too excited,” say real serpents  
At Chinese parades. They’re just sham dragons.

Have we even tried him? What if he’s good?  
He could be our “green eggs and ham” dragon.

Why is traveling serious? I mean,  
Why can’t the airport have a tram dragon?

Nobody told me there was a “kick me”  
Sign on my back. They let the gag drag on.

In Xanadu, an upscale supper club,  
Did Mr. Khan tip the cancan dragon?  
Perception matters. To us, it’s plasma.  
To you, it’s something more like jam, dragon.

You ate the princess and burned the castle?  
I suggest you go on the lam, dragon.

He’s a forgotten superhero. But  
He’d kick your ass. His name’s Shazam, dragon.

Don’t take me for a knight who will kill you.  
I don’t even know who I am, dragon.
I hold this rock in my hand.
It represents my life, its flow
carrying me into forever.
It knows where it is going,
but does not reveal dangers
up ahead, its secrets hidden
in rough, white-water veins.

I tighten my grip, numb fingers
searching for familiar sanctuary
in the rock’s worn hollow.
But I know I will never
worry this stone smooth.

We were lovers you and I living so intensely
deep within each other’s being,
existing solely for the time we spent together
blind as with only hearts seeing.
We were young wishing we had until forever
snuggled in our burrowed nest,
holding hands tight through life’s hectic run
delirious joy at pleasure’s quest.
We were lovers you and I lost in ourselves
believing we had endless fare,
romping and reveling in a hypnotic trance
stared past signs of age’s wear.
We were naively ignorant as reality awakened
changing mystic world to bleak,
reviving from delusion’s self imposed sleep
minds cast adrift in futile seek.
We were lovers you and I many years ago
thinking our lives be immortal,
assured we would live until eternity’s end
youth racing past time’s portal.
We were lovers ... but our love was mortal.

Some think I condone
the bombing of my children.
They must not know me.

You’re laid off, and right now you’re hurtin’.
But keep your chin up, ‘cause it’s certain
The war in Iraq
Means prosperity’s back!
Especially if you’re Halliburton.
Poetry & Dreams

Hacking and Burning the Monster

Dream – James Brandenburg

The dream takes place in unknown mountains in an old log cabin. There is a fireplace in the cabin. It is springtime and a bit chilly outside. There is a scientist in the cabin and a very ugly man with a huge nose. The man looks human but has a pre-historic look also. The scientist (around 55 years of age) is trying to control him. The monster refuses to listen, so the scientist chops off his feet. The monster gets around on his knees. The cabin turns into a kind of blacksmith shop with the scientist acting as a blacksmith. He makes the fire very hot and uses a branding iron to sizzle the monster’s flesh. He starts with the feet stump and burns off the monster’s flesh and bones all the way up to the waist. The house is ablaze from the heat in the fireplace. The monster is still alive. It has a redness about its body now. The monster is left with arms, a torso, and a head. The monster’s eyes are open, but it is in a state of shock. It is no longer speaking. The blacksmith asks me to assist in carrying the monster out into the garden, and we carry him outside and plant him in the garden, as though he were a tree. The eyes of the monster are still open. There is wind blowing across the garden. The monster’s eyes are still open. There are strange sounds generated from the garden by the wind. There are sounds like a teapot beginning to boil. The blacksmith and I watch from a distance. There is the red body attached to the earth. End of dream.

Dream Interpretation

James Brandenburg

The dream, Hacking and Burning the Monster, takes place in the depths of the psyche, represented by unknown mountains in an old log cabin. There is a scientist in the cabin who is 55 years old. If I subtract 55 years from my current age, that puts me at the age of twelve. When I first moved to Kentucky at the age of five, I lived in an old log cabin with fireplace. At the age of twelve, I was living in Kentucky on a farm. It was a point of transition in my life, for we moved from Kentucky to a small town in Indiana. It was a move from a more primitive setting to a small town. The move could represent a move to civilization. My life was turned upside-down. What is going on in this dream that is still unresolved?

Perhaps the dream ties in with my return from Puerto Rico after Christmas, since I have experienced renewed energy and am living more in the present. The dream takes place in the spring, which symbolizes a rebirth or a renewal of energy. I have experienced a different level of consciousness and appear to be living more in the concrete world. My inferior function is my sensation function, which I need to develop more as I grow older. Regarding my poetry, perhaps it is an opportunity to bring it down to a more concrete level. Returning to the primitive ties in with a more archetypal, a more pre-historic energy, an energy that is in the depths of the psyche.

The scientist represents the thinking function or the sensation function. What part of me does the scientist represent? The monster with the huge nose has both human qualities and qualities of something pre-historic. In the dream the monster is out of control, speaking irrationally. What part of me does the monster represent? The scientist turns into a blacksmith, who sizzles off the monster’s flesh up to the waist. Is there a part of me that is out of control? Is there a part of me that needs to be more in the concrete world? Do I need to balance my passion (the monster) with the scientific part of me? Do I need to use my sensation function more?

After the scientist burns off the monster’s legs up to his waist, we place him outside in the garden. “The monster is still alive. It has a redness about the body now. The monster has arms, a torso, and a head.” We plant him in the garden as though he were a tree. Perhaps that takes away my ability to move. The monster’s eyes are still open. There is a wind (represents the spirit world) blowing across the garden and generating strange sounds. With the sounds from the teapot, there is something bubbling up from below. There is a part of me that is attached to the nature of consciousness, so that it can grow in the unconscious. The monster’s eyes are still open, and I had the feeling in the dream that it was watching me.

The entire dream had a numinious quality about it. I think this dream represents a stage in my individuation from an alchemical view. The blacksmith shop, the branding iron, the color red, the blacksmith, and the house ablaze from the heat in the fireplace could be a part of alchemical processes. The blacksmith sizzles away the monster’s legs, and we plant him in the garden like a tree, thus grounding him but, at the same time, allowing for continual growth. My passion needs to be controlled and allowed a consistent and productive growth.

Judged (Synchronistic Dream Image)

Josie Mixon

Unexpectedly automatic
Dressed up
Wearing wolves clothing
Bashed and trashed
Whipped by your tongue
Thoughts run wild
Across borderlines
Possibilities unclear
Judged by your standards
Not mine
Have me soaking
In barrels of guilt
Coming out
Smelling like you
Again (Synchronistic Dream Image)
Josie Mixon

Foolish thoughts
Accompany me
Between
Folded anguish

Still sitting on the bed
Wishing I had a dream
To firmly step into

Crushed
Between the past and present
My reflection despises me
My pain is hilarious

Tagged by deceit
Face cracked
On impact
Heart melts
Into nothing
Nothing is left
Not even the ashes
Of nothing

Only sounds
Of laughter
Reminiscent
Of my foolish thoughts
Of wanting to belong

Get Off (Synchronistic Dream Image)
Josie Mixon

Metal elevator doors
Won’t open
I want to get off!
Don’t care where this is
Just let me get off!
These walls are closing in
Leaving me
Unable to breathe
Don’t want to be in here
You’re crowding me in
Step aside
Just let me go!
Of finally feeling
That this time
I am enough
Damn foolish thoughts

Turned Away
James Brandenburg

Years ago yet
you were there
last night was
it a dream or
were you really there
was I that unaware
when Icarus
fell it was spring
last night it
was cold it
rained I could
not turn away
you were in
my house or was it
yours rain splashed
through the broken
roof had Icarus
splashed into the
ocean in the same
way without notice
cries in the distance
or was it me
crying drowning
in my sorrow
still life goes on
in our house we
separated and startled
scratch our way
back into a
structure left empty
years ago.

Art Work David Drymala
Poetry as Therapy

Darby Riley’s Feedback Group
Reviewed by the Editors

James Brandenburg: You have run a poetry critiquing/feedback session out of your office for a number of years? How and when did this session get started? Who was in that initial group and what was the purpose of running a poetry group?

Darby Riley: A bunch of us (including Tom Keene, Jo LeCoeur, John Bachman and Charles Owsley) took a 6 week poetry writing course from Naomi Nye at Our Lady of the Lake in about 1990. At the end of the course Naomi encouraged us to continue with a format like the one she used—each brings a poem and the group comments on it. So we formed a group that has met at my office once a month for about 20 years.

How has the group changed over the years?

We’ve gotten considerably older. Tom, Jo, and I are the only regulars from the original group. We have had many excellent poets, delightful to read and hear, move through our group: Trinidad Sanchez, Sandra Williams, Vic Bull, Andrea Geoffray, Debra Innocenti, Vic Hummert, many more. Some have died. Many have moved on or away. Our current group of between 6 and 10 poets have been pretty stable for a while. The group is open to new people, and we regularly will have a new poet attend.

I have attended your group for a number of years, and the discussions about poems are always lively and constructive. In this group, the poet can always count on honest feedback. I have been impressed by the variety of the backgrounds in the group. This group is without a doubt a safe haven where one can critique and have his or her poems critiqued. Why do you think the group has evolved the way it has evolved?

Everybody likes poetry and we appreciate wide varieties of it. We have a poet writing an epic rhyme and others writing flash fiction. We’ve had a poet who performed country songs he wrote and one who would sing an aria that would make you cry while the windows rattled. We have educators and professionals and civil servants and retirees and social activists and business people and even a Republican.

Although this group is not a poetry therapy group, it sometimes has the characteristics of poetry therapy in the way that poets respond to lines and themes with their feelings. Can you comment on my impressions?

Poetry is ultimately about feelings. I have often found that writing a poem will clear my head and resolve anxieties. Most of our comments are aimed at craft but we usually get around to reacting to the poet’s expressed feelings, often at length.

Does poetry make a difference in people’s lives? Are we just an elitist group out of touch with our surroundings?

Poetry is good for the community, like all art. Our group is about as in touch as you can get. I wish more folks would write and read poetry—it would elevate our culture because it gets to what really matters about reality. Sometimes you wonder whether too many of us never get to what matters, being too busy and distracted; It’s compassionate, not elitist, to advocate a break from shallow consumer culture.

Why do you continue to write poetry?

I keep trying to find the words that will move people to do their part to save the planet from the devastation we are causing. I have a vision of a great poem, and I want to try to achieve it.

I applaud you, Darby, on keeping this venue going for such a long time and maintaining the quality of the feedback and discussions. Poets need honest, constructive criticism, and I always feel enlightened after I attend your sessions.

I’m honored to be interviewed and grateful for your work in doing Voices.

Passengers Come and Go in the Bus Bench across the Aisle
Darby Riley

Boy, three feet tall, head in young mother’s lap for afternoon nap, has to wake. It’s time to get off. Mama whispers her long slender thumb down his cheek, grabs his hand as his eyes blink open. He follows stumbling toward the door.

Two eleven year olds appear, boy and girl, cousins perhaps. She dazzles in silver rings and earrings, her silver shirt says Princess, her CD player’s plugged in. He hovers nondescript in T-shirt, sneakers and jeans.

Madonna, three children, teenage boyfriend big baby carriage crammed in the aisle; baby christ child with big eyes stares in tranquility absentely fingering a toy.

Next time I look they’re gone.
The two journal entries are in response to the following prompt: Write about an experience when you felt one of the following emotions: frustration or anger, fear or anxiety, sadness or depression. In the last part of the assignment, write what you have learned after writing and reflecting on this experience.

**Student #1 Entry:** There was a time when I was frustrated. As I described my emotions of frustration, I have learned much about the incident and about myself. I am still suffering the consequences of my actions, but as I think about it, I am lucky because I could have killed an innocent bystander or could have killed myself. As much of a rush as I got from street racing, I will never do it again. It is not worth the consequences, and, of course, it is very dangerous. When I raced, I just was not thinking. I was too caught up in the moment. I was being very selfish, and peer pressure was a factor, too. As I look back, when I felt frustrated for what I had done, I felt frustrated not only for what I had done, but for the pain I had caused my family.

It all started on a hot Sunday night. It was a Sunday night like every other Sunday, when I hit the street in my car. First of all, I would wash my car and have it sparkling clean. Then I would go out to eat. After eating, I was ready for the night. Ready to hit the street racing.

Street racing is what I loved to do. It was my passion, and I was good at it. When I began street racing, I had a pretty boring car, but after bolting a few things on and putting on some slick racing tires, I had a fast car and one that looked spruced up.

I went racing on a regular basis, but one night I didn’t go to the races like my friends. Instead, I decided to go home and watch a movie. On the way home, I drove by the car race, said hi to everyone and headed home.

On my way home, a car got next to me. I looked at him (one of my buddies), and he shouted, “War, Run, Thumb.” I shouted back, “On three. One, two, three,” and we were off and running. Like always, it was such a rush. It was such a rush that we drove by an unmarked cop car without even noticing.

The next thing I knew the police car was behind me, but I didn’t stop. Instead, I kept going faster. I was revving up every gear. I reached the speed of 145 MPH in a 45 MPH speed zone. The car I was racing cut me off and almost forced me to crash. I was revving up every gear. I reached the speed of 145 MPH in a 45 MPH speed zone. The car I was racing cut me off and almost forced me to crash. I was revving up every gear. I reached the speed of 145 MPH in a 45 MPH speed zone. The car I was racing cut me off and almost forced me to crash. I was revving up every gear. I reached the speed of 145 MPH in a 45 MPH speed zone. The car I was racing cut me off and almost forced me to crash.

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The next thing I knew the police car was behind me, but I didn’t stop. Instead, I kept going faster. I was revving up every gear. I reached the speed of 145 MPH in a 45 MPH speed zone. The car I was racing cut me off and almost forced me to crash. I went from 5th to 1st and blew my transmission. The car was dead, so I waited in my car to get arrested, and the next thing I knew, the cop had his gun drawn on me. At that moment, I knew I had really messed up. They took me to jail, and as a result of this incident, I have paid about $5,000 dollars in tickets and court fees. This sucks big time.

As I look back, something inside me on the night I was arrested told me not to race anymore, but I went against my intuition. I have learned that something like this that we think we are doing for fun ain’t so much fun for other people, and after I went to jail, I had to spend time there, and I had to pay lots of money that I did not have. In addition, all this disappointed my mom and made her very sad. This experience has been one of the most frustrating experiences of my life, but now I am able to turn my frustrations into more positive actions, and I can say without hesitation that I am on the way to becoming an adult and making adult decisions.

**Student #2 Entry:** I had just turned 14 when my father was kidnapped. I remember that not too much time had passed since everyone had gone to sleep and someone was knocking at the door. I was sleeping the bedroom with my grandmother, when we went out to see what was going on. Several men with masks over their faces had guns pointed at my father and were asking him lots of questions. They seemed very angry with him.

He was quite overcome, and he kept saying over and over, “No, no, I don’t have it.” I was so scared that I did not know how to react or how to help, but when they said, “We are taking you with us,” I screamed and shouted, “No, no, please don’t take him!” They pushed me away with the rifle, and mother screamed, “Don’t do anything to her.” They said, “Shut up, or we will take her with us, too.”

It was still dark when they left with my father, taking him away from us, and I followed them. I ran after them, and I screamed out loud, “No, no, don’t take him!” I don’t know how many times I shouted after them and begged them to stop. I went all the way to the patio, but they didn’t listen, nor did they understand my suffering. I screamed so much that I lost my voice. I was frustrated and angry because no one would help us.

My mother was very upset and waited for the sunrise to ask for help. She left home, and I felt very anxious, waiting for her to come back with news of my father. It was almost sunset when she arrived back home. There were lots of people in our house, and it all seemed quite chaotic to me. I wanted to see my father alive again, but I would never see him alive again. They had killed him. THEY KILLED HIM!

Later his dead body was returned to us. I looked at his dead body, and all these feelings rose up inside me. I touched his feet; that was the last thing that I did.

Writing about the death of my father is still difficult for me today. Some of those same feelings after his loss came back, as I wrote the journal entry. The loss of my father was a major loss in my life. There were so many things I wanted to do with him as a child that were taken away from me. I wanted to tell him how much I loved him. I wanted to hear from him how much he loved me. I wanted to grow up, spending time with him. I cried for him as a child, and I still cry for him today. I realize that today I still distrust many people as a result of what happened to my father; however, as I reflect on his death, it came to me that I still have wonderful memories of him. Every moment of my life is important. I need to focus more on the good memories I have of my father. I also need to work on being less distrustful of people.

**Emily Dickinson**

Hope’ is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—
The Shiny Estrella

Maria Gabriela Madrid

Luminaria is a place where turistas y transeúntes have the opportunity to experience all five senses of plentitude. When Teresita went inside the Convention Center, colorful paintings ignited her imagination. It was a night for her to vibrate to the sound of classical music, to imagine herself as a cuenta cuentos, or to allow the story to transport her to another dimension, where life and death share the same time and space. The seven stages of Luminaria embraced la esperanza and a willingness of artists to entertain anyone. Teresita was really amazed, and with her eyes wide open, she couldn’t wait to read all the poems on the wall, to dance to the beat of the merengue and to the beat of Mark Anthony, to imitate ballet, modern dance, hip hop or even bailar to her own ritmo. Every move and every cheer of felicidad were allowed within safe boundaries. Los policías uniformados were everywhere, giving people extra help.

“Wait, pasa por aquí,” or “no hablar español,” “But wait, es por ahi.”

For one evening, Teresita felt she was on stage all the time, and from the Alumbrada tents to las Pampas-Argentina, she couldn’t wait to see the tango dancers. By impulse, she ran with all her might, and with her adrenalina at the highest point, she passed long lines of people waiting for salty pretzels, hot dogs, hamburgers, and gyros, until a noisy roar in her stomach stopped her suddenly. Teresita was in front of tacos, chalupas, and carnitas, y necesitaba to eat in order to sustain her big belly. Hungry as she was, she couldn’t wait in those long lines, and counting her monedas, she realized she didn’t have enough money to buy a chicharo. Teresita had been desempleada for awhile, but now that she was distracted by the festival of green lights, her economic situation was not relevant anymore. Like someone with a premonition, she envisioned herself as Misia Teresita, the cook, and sin perder tiempo, she grabbed a white table cloth to cover her purple t-shirt, y amarró her hair in a long cola de caballo.

“Muchacha, where were you? We thought you would never come, and we need your ayuda. Hay mucha gente en fila. ¿Cómo te llamas?”

“Teresita.”

“Come on and start making chalupas. I will make more tortillas, and Chayito preparará los tacos.”

Time passed, and Teresita, behind everybody’s back, ate carnitas, chalupas, and tacos. Excited for getting paid and ready to walk down the streets, Teresita, without being noticed, folded her dirty sábana and slowly disappeared among turistas y transeúntes.

Luminaria was a magical festival, where for a short time, Teresita forgot about being desempleada, and went from common girl to performer and to a shiny estrella.

Spoken Word

Poems Written & Read by the Authors

Marian Haddad

Reads “The House of Children”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Aq6M2pq8NA

Marian Haddad was born in El Paso, youngest of nine children of Syrian parents, who writes and more importantly recites poetry with remarkable harmony and music. She speaks English and Arabic and almost Spanish. Marian Haddad’s first full-length book of poems, “Somewhere Between Mexico and A River Called Home” (Pecan Grove Press, $15), is definitive proof of her calling as a true poet in both the historical and literary sense. Haddad is an active participant in her family’s stories of love, grief, birth, death, identity, assimilation, unification and separation, yet, at the same time, she is an observer of the family, protector of their history, chronicler of their lives—objective in details, thoughtful in self-examination.

Carmen Tafolla

Reads Chicano Poetry

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSWUInZ2OfY

Long regarded as one of the masters of poetic code-switching, Carmen Tafolla often employs the bilingual idiom of her native San Antonio’s Westside in her poems. Tafolla’s dramatic talents make her readings both lively and touching. One of the most anthologized of Latina writers, Carmen Tafolla has published work for both children and adults in more than two hundred anthologies, magazines, journals, textbooks, and readers. Long considered one of the madrinas of Chicana Literature and a master of bilingual code-switching, Tafolla is the author of more than fifteen books, seven screenplays, and numerous articles and essays. Source of info: www.carmentafolla.com.

Bravo San Antonio

San Antonio Celebrated Arts

Luminaria is San Antonio’s annual celebration of art and artists. Held in March and overseen by San Antonio’s creative leaders, it is free of charge and showcases all art forms in an outdoor setting and various inside venues downtown. In addition, special arts events and performances throughout the city occur simultaneously and/or throughout the month in conjunction with Contemporary Art Month. Luminaria spotlights San Antonio’s cultural assets for local citizens and visitors alike and is made possible through the generosity of artists, arts organizations, volunteers, and public and
Art in the City

Paintings by Donna Simon

From Donna Simon Webpage, Gallery Nord

Voices Editors

Art review by Dan R. Goddard ~ Express-News:

Since retiring as an art teacher at Brackenridge High School, Donna Simon has been leading tours of local artists’ studios and galleries organized through her Website, Seeing Art San Antonio. But she’s also found time to return to painting in these large-scale works inspired by her early morning power walks on the River Walk Annex in the King William neighborhood.

Donna Simon responds to the shifting lights and patterns of the San Antonio River Walk in her latest abstract paintings…. A native of Pittsburgh and now living in San Antonio, Simon works in her gallery at the Blue Star artistic community. “It’s the best part of the day for me,” Simon said. “I enjoy looking at the variety of textures and patinas on the river walls. I also like the sunlight reflecting off the water onto the walls. I think I notice things that most people would overlook.”

She builds up layers and layers of paint on works such as River Walls, which have vague suggestions of geometric forms such as triangles and columns. Pink, yellow and orange are some of the light-hearted colors in River Light, which contains squiggly, energetic lines mimicking the interplay of sunlight and stone. Upbeat and uplifting, Simon’s lively, colorful paintings are more about how she feels on her morning walk than about depicting the usual realistic river vistas. Her popular series, River Walls/River Lights has been shown in local galleries including Gallery Nord, 2009 N.W. Military Hwy., (210) 348-0088, www.gallernord.com.

Water Color Painter Lesta Frank

Voices Editors

According to Jasmina Wellinghoff, Lesta Frank’s house in San Antonio is like a gallery for her work. Frank says, “I paint people and places, color-drenched in layers of metaphor.” Her love of painting started when she was merely four with fingerpainting. For her, the same excitement about making art is as alive as it was then. Frank conducts painting workshops and teaching at her home.

She says in her Webpage, “My paintings are my hearts’ connection with the world around me. The subject matter is myriad. Color and expression of emotion are the key components of my art. The paintings have recently expanded from watercolor to multimedia, with a new emphasis on combining more abstraction and texture with the traditional imaginary.”

She earned a bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art, and a master of Fine Arts degree from Rochester Institute of Technology. Her work is in permanent corporate collections of

1. Mastercard, New York, New York
2. The Palacio Del Rio Hilton Hotel, San Antonio, TX
3. The Marriott Rivercenter Hotel, San Antonio, TX
4. The Bexar County Justice Center, San Antonio, TX
5. The Soberina Westin Hotel, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico
6. The Marina Hotel at St. John’s Place, Jacksonville, Florida

References:

McNay Art Museum

6000 North New Braunfels, San Antonio, Texas 78209
210.805.1767
http://www.mcnayart.org

Exhibitions

At the McNay Art Museum

Jasper Johns at the McNay
Past and Present
March 24 - June 13

This exhibition marks an important anniversary in Jasper Johns’s career. In 1968, the McNay acquired the landmark suite of lithographs Numerals 0-9. The following year, the museum organized the first retrospective exhibition of Johns’s prints. The catalogue for that exhibition, written by the McNay’s founding director, John Palmer Leeper, was the first publication to list all of the artist’s prints to that date and is still an important work in the artist’s bibliography.
Tamales y Mas
Robert Flynn

Vernon, the county seat, was twelve miles from my father’s farm. In addition to the courthouse, it had two or three grocery stores, a library, three picture shows and “Snuff Street” where men met over and around tobacco products while the kids went to the library and then the picture show and women sat in cars and remarked about women who walked past on the sidewalk.

Whenever we went to Vernon I begged Mother and Dad to buy tamales to take home with us. A tall, slender, elderly African-American made tamales and stood on a street corner and sold them out of a steaming, red and white two-tone, two-wheeled cart. Tamales were my favorite food, even more than my mother’s fried chicken or fried steak with fried potatoes and fried bread.

Because my father grew corn, the tamale man sometimes came to the farm for shucks. When he did, he gave us tamales for the shucks. That was a special time, like Christmas morning without the presents but with the wonderful smell that promised tamales.

In the summertime I drove a tractor to make money for college. Since I was out in the country I had to take a lunch with me. I told my mother I wanted tamales. Every morning before hand-cranking the tractor I placed the tamales beside the manifold and by lunchtime the tamales were steaming. Mother asked me a couple of times if I wanted a change in diet! When I added catsup or picante sauce to the tamales I had the food pyramid for lunch every day. Bread, meat, vegetables.

When I went to Baylor a gang of us discovered Charlie Lugo’s, a wonderful Mexican restaurant in a former home, where you could buy tamales by the dozen. They may have had half-orders as well but I wasn’t a half-way kind of guy. I always ordered a dozen and one night won a tamale-eating dare by using my dozen as an appetizer and then savoring those my comrades had abandoned unshackled on their plates.

About a year after our marriage, my wife, Jean, became ill with what was then called stomach flu. I told her to go to bed, I would run the kitchen. I opened a can of chili and a can of tamales and offered to share with her. She said the stomach flu had ruined her appetite.

My wife and I lived in North Carolina, a couple of years, a place so removed from reality that the grocery stores had never heard of tamales, not even Wolf Brand. When we returned to Texas for occasional visits we loaded the car with tamales before returning to the third-world state.

When we moved to San Antonio, we found tamales, good tamales, but not the perfect tamales the tamale man made. Jean and a fellow-teacher, a friend I will call Celina Mullan, went on a quest to make the perfect tamale. And they did. Their tamales were so good their friends wanted some. Jean and Celina decided in the spare time they had from teaching, grading, after school parent counseling, bus-duty, hall-duty, teachers’ meetings and lesson planning, they would make and sell tamales. Each agreed to take orders from others. At the end of the day they had sold 174 dozen tamales. A whole hog’s head worth.

Making and selling the tamales, boiling the shucks, cook-
They told him drowning was peaceful. He told them he doubted it. Uncle Geoffrey pointed out that it was preferable to the awfulness of poison. Aunt Alison supported her husband’s opinion on poison. She went on to speak eloquently on the nastiness of throwing oneself in front of a truck and being scraped off the tyres in little pieces.

Nelson listened politely but was not convinced. “Yes,” he had said, “I know that I shall have to die, but I rather think you might leave the mode of death to me. After all, as I’m the one who’s dying, surely I should be permitted to enjoy that one small privilege.”

“Listen,” said his sister-in-law Laetitia in that rasping saw of a voice which terrified animals and humans in equal measure, “listen: the most important thing is that you get it over with tonight because we’re going to tell the police you did it. The other day I overheard the sergeant saying that there’s a new detective down here from Dublin; a man, said the sergeant, who could squeeze a confession out of the handle of the knife that cut the turnip.”

Nelson winced. “Don’t talk about knives,” he said. His mind replayed in full colour the moment in the kitchen when his wife Crintilia, Laetitia’s twin sister, irratated at the time he was taking to slice a turnip, rushed towards him with a rolling-pin in her hand. She had not seen the sleeping cat. She stumbled over the furry slumberer and fell forward violently and fatally. In raising his hand to defend himself from the descending rolling-pin, Nelson had inadvertently pointed the turnip knife upward, and that is why the blade penetrated Crintilia’s throat and contributed both to her noisy, messy death and the formulation of a fiendishly brilliant plan in her family’s collective mind.

Nelson Cranborne was an idealistic young poet. He had fallen in love with Crintilia’s icy blonde beauty. She, having checked his financial credentials and finding that he was in even higher league than her family, permitted him to kiss the lobe of her left ear. It was a match made in Switzerland, where they got married, opened a joint bank account and made their wills, leaving their entire fortunes to each other, thus guaranteeing that the surviving partner could mourn the loss of the loved one in considerable comfort.

Laetitia and Aunt Alison hurried to the Cranborne mansion on foot of Nelson’s panic-stricken phone call. On the way the two women considered the diamond-studded opportunity presented by Crintilia’s death. Nelson was, as has already been mentioned, an idealistic young poet who had thought his blushing bride to be as virginal as he himself was.

“A man who could be that easily fooled,” said Aunt Alison to Laetitia, as she rang the front door bell, “could, if handled properly, be made to do more or less anything.” It was, she reasoned, most important now to find the fatal flaw in his character that would drive him over the edge.

Uncle Geoffrey, who had been in Dublin on one of his mysterious business trips, was next to arrive at the house. He was much perturbed to see his niece’s body lying in a pool of her own blood. “Dear God,” he lamented, “what a dreadful sight! Still, it could have been worse. It could have happened in the living room. Imagine getting all that muck off the Persian carpet. Not to mention the depreciation in value after having to get it cleaned.”

“Yes, dear,” said Aunt Alison, “I’m glad to see you can be practical in a crisis. Now is the time for cool heads. If we play our cards properly we can get rid of Nelson and get our hands on his money in one fell swoop.” She lowered her voice. “Nelson has taken to his bed. Laetitia is being nice to him, dabbing his temples with eau de cologne. All part of the plan to soften him up, don’t you know. Here’s a bottle of brandy, Geoffrey. Go up there and make him drink as much of it as you can, and then...”

Half an hour later Geoffrey stumped down the stairs into the kitchen, stepped over his niece’s body, and grinned: “We’ve got him. He’s a dead man!”

“Well, out with it,” cried Aunt Alison.

“Nelson told me he’s claustrophobic and panics easily in confined spaces.”

“Perfect!” beamed Aunt Alison; “Leave the rest to me.”

And so it came to pass that Aunt Alison, Uncle Geoffrey and Laetitia confronted Nelson and accused him of killing Crintilia for her money. It was murder, they said firmly, dismissing his protestations of innocence. He would spend many years in jail. They felt sorry for him, they said, being cooped up behind bars twenty-three hours a day with every sort of riff-raff.

As intended, Nelson caved in completely. “I should go mad!” he exclaimed; “Dear God, it would be better to be dead!”

“Well, there you are, then!” said Aunt Alison crisply.

“What do you mean: there I am?” cried Nelson in consternation.

“It’s simple,” said Uncle Geoffrey, shaking his jowls at Nelson; “you say prison would kill you. Well, take the law into your own hands and kill yourself. That way the scandal will blow over quickly. You have no living relatives, so your money and property will come to our family through Laetitia. Crintilia designated her as her next of kin should you both suffer untimely deaths. Thus, dear boy, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your death and your money will compensate us for the loss of our darling niece.”

“Amen to that,” intoned Laetitia, stifling a snigger.

Befuddled by brandy and the natural confusion of mind that accompanies unexpected death, Nelson, who was after all a poet, could see some merit in the idea of taking his own life as a grand gesture of atonement for the pain and anguish he had unintentionally caused. And that is how, after a brief discussion as to the mode of his departure from this life, drowning was decided upon. The location for the drowning was confirmed and all that remained to be done was the deed itself.

Aunt Alison outlined the strategy. Careful timing was of the essence. The phone call to the local police reporting Crintilia’s death had to be managed in such a way that Nelson would have time to appear to have fled the scene of the crime, thus significantly increasing the weight of suspicion and, indeed, outright guilt that would attach to him.

As the effects of the brandy began to wear off, Nelson was less enthusiastic about his rash decision, but felt himself bound to honour it. “Let’s do it!” he sighed.

“Good man!” enthused Uncle Geoffrey.

“My hero!” purred Laetitia, pressing her ample breasts against him.

“No need for that with your sister scarcely cold!” admonished Aunt Alison.

Alone on the designated beach, Nelson found himself the victim of conflicting emotions. He had sobered up enough to realise that he had been totally outwitted by his in-laws and, through a mixture of stupidity, drunkenness and spinelessness, had himself become an outlaw. He had never felt so miserable and yet he had never felt such a keen appetite for life. It seemed therefore the perfect moment to end it.

He walked into the sea, noting how the flirtatious ocean lapped against his body. He decided to swim before letting himself drown. The thought accompanied unexpected death, Nelson, who was after all a poet, could see some merit in the idea of taking his own life as a grand gesture of compensation for the pain and anguish he had unintentionally caused. And that is how, after a brief discussion as to the mode of his departure from this life, drowning was decided upon. The location for the drowning was confirmed and all that remained to be done was the deed itself.

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Select Prose

Drowning

Kevin N. Power
...continued

"Come on," she said, "Let's go into town and have a drink to celebrate my survival!"

"I fear not," said Nelson and explained the purpose on which he had been embarked, and from which he had been diverted by her cry of distress, and to which he now had to return.

"But why?" she cried; "Why would you do a mad thing like that?"

The more she protested against his course of action the less Nelson felt like proceeding with it. This woman, Rosey by name and by nature, was warm and sweet; qualities he instantly appreciated after being subjected to Crinthia's chilly charms. And when Rosey made two excellent suggestions which would on one hand enable him to honour his word to his in-laws, while on the other hand release him from it, he knew he had found his soul mate.

A few mobile phone calls later Nelson had transferred his personal bank accounts from Switzerland to Beirut, leaving the joint account to be devoured by his erstwhile in-laws. The following afternoon he sat with Rosey on the hot shore of a warm foreign sea.

Rosey broke the restless silence. "Well, are you going to do it?"

Nelson sighed. "I suppose I should," he said; "After all, I told them I would, and I suppose one bit of sea is as good to end one's life in as another."

Rosey's face crinkled into a mischievous smile. "This sea is perfect. You're doing what you said you'd do for those weirdos. Go to it!"

After a short interval Nelson rejoined Rosey on dry land.

"There!" he said; "I've done it. Honour is satisfied. I'm a dead man. We have money and those vultures back in Ireland have money. There's no extradition treaty between the two countries, so everybody's happy."

"What a difference a day makes," said Rosey; "twenty-four little hours..."

...And the difference is you..." crooned Nelson. The sun beamed down on him and, liberated from the stress of the previous day, he laid his head in Rosey's lap and fell into a deep refreshing sleep.

"Writing again, Nelson?" The voice made him jump.

"I am. Or rather, I was until you interrupted me," snapped Nelson, thankful that Gobby was smaller, thinner and weaker than he was. He was also comparatively intelligent. That made life tolerable in the cell that was their home twenty-three hours a day. Best of all, with remission for good conduct they would be released within six months.

"You and your writing," laughed Gobby, not in the least put off by Nelson's sharp tone; "I don't know why you go on scribbling and scribbling. Who the hell is going to read it?"

"I'm entering it for a competition. That way somebody is bound to read it."

"Never say die, eh?" smiled Gobby. "No, never! Writing keeps me sane in this hole."

"Oh, is that right?" said Gobby; "I thought it was my charm and wit that kept you sane."

"Sorry, Gobby; writing is the one thing that keeps my head above water here."

"That and the visits from the redhead," said Gobby archly, picking up the pocket encyclopedia that lay open next to Nelson's copybook.

"All right, you win!" laughed Nelson, "Writing, the redhead and you keep me from drowning."

"Jay," said Gobby, whose attention had been caught by an item circled in the encyclopedia; "Listen to this: The density of the water in the Dead Sea makes floating easy but swimming impossible; drowning is out of the question. Imagine that!"

"Fact is stranger than fiction," said Nelson.

Gobby digested Nelson's remark. His mind worked hard to keep the crafty smile concealed behind his eyes. "Has that little nugget about the Dead Sea anything to do with your story?" he asked, trying to sound only vaguely interested.

"I never discuss work in progress," smiled Nelson; "You'll have to wait and read it to find out. Now shut up and let me get the damn thing finished." And he started writing.

The End

Persian Marchers: A Novel
Chapter Two—Part Two
Mo H. Saidi

Sirs, you cannot leave the country," the first guard announced, "we are confiscating your passport.

Cyrus was incredulous. "Surely you cannot be serious. I have already passed through all kinds of inspections," Cyrus said, "I really need to get back to my family now."

The guards merely looked at him askance and refused to elaborate.

Cyrus insisted, "If there was a problem, surely the police would not have issued my exit permit or released my passport."

The Revolutionary Guards ignored him. The one with the passport put a restraining hand on Cyrus's shoulder, while the other one approached the Luftwaffe counter and ordered the agent to take Cyrus's suitcases off the plane. The clerk demurred and phoned for a supervisor. Meanwhile all further processing was stopped at the gate. It took a while, but finally the supervisor arrived and held a hurried conversation with the Revolutionary Guards. Then he had the departure postponed until Cyrus's luggage could be retrieved. With more than two hours of delay the airplane finally left Tehran without Cyrus.

The Revolutionary Guards escorted Cyrus to their office in a one-story building north of the departure hall. One of them unlocked a cabinet behind the desk, deposited Cyrus's passport inside, re-locked it and put the key in the desk drawer. Then he pulled a typed form from a folder, filled in several spaces with a ballpoint pen, added a footnote, signed it, and placed the paper in an envelope. He sealed the envelope with red wax and pressed the official seal of the Airport Revolutionary Guards into the soft wax. On the front of the envelope the guard wrote, "Revolutionary Court No. 2." Then he copied an eleven-digit number from the list in his file onto the top left corner of the envelope and handed the envelope to Cyrus.

"Take this to Evin Prison punctually at seven o'clock this morning," he said, "You are free until then and can leave the airport and join your relatives."

Terrified, Cyrus returned to the departure hall. By now, it was almost four in the morning. The hall was quiet and deserted, except for a few cleaners who were mopping the marble floor. Cyrus marveled at his incredibly strange situation. On the one hand, they considered him so dangerous that he was not permitted to leave the country; and on the other hand, they trusted him to appear without fail at the most infamous prison in Tehran at the appointed time. He had heard about unusual arrangements of the regime before, such as when they condemned antiintellectual intellectuals to death and forced their families to purchase bullets at Tehran Bazaar, so the Revolutionary Guards could load their guns for the execution in Evin Prison. Although these thoughts shook his confidence, he held firmly on his belief that would not land in a similar predicament.

Cyrus found the public phone under a dim light in a corner of the hall, but when he picked up the receiver to call his sister, there was no dial tone. He remembered with a jolt that he had handed all his Persian money to Jamshid and now needed change for the phone. He looked around and saw a Revolutionary Guard watching him indulently. Cyrus approached the guard and asked to borrow a coin to make a call. The guard stared at him with pity. "Aren't you the passenger who was taken off the Luftansa flight?"

Cyrus nodded; the guard grinned, pulled a coin from his pocket, and gave it to him. "Good luck in Evin Prison," he said, "It is really not as bad as you have heard."

The phone call intruded into the hypnopompic condition customary of their early morning hours. It took a while before Maryam and her husband Habib became aware of the ringing. After the fourth ring, Habib reluctantly picked up the phone.

"Hello, sorry to wake you up but..." Habib cut him short. "Where are you, Cyrus? You can't be in Frankfurt yet."

"I am still at Tehran Airport," Cyrus explained. "Two Revolutionary Guards escorted me from the gate and confiscated my passport. They told me I cannot leave the country."

After a long pause pregnant with thought, Habib said, "I can't believe this. Why in Hell did they stop you?"
expressed sympathy for Cyrus while a few showed both fear and relief. By now Maryam was awake and realized there was a problem. “Is my brother all right?” Habib ignored his wife. “Are you under arrest, Cyrus?” “No, I’m alone in the airport with my suitcases. I am free for the time being, but they gave me a sealed envelope and told me to bring it to Evin Prison this morning at seven o’clock.”

There was a pause filled with horror on both sides of the line. “My God! Why Evin Prison? Get a taxi and come here right away,” Habib shouted. “I am sorry; I don’t have any Persian money left.” “Wait in front of the main entrance, one of us will come and get you.”

Tear-eyed and frightened, Maryam went to the kitchen to make a pot of tea, the first approach to any problem in Iran. Angry, Habib telephoned Jamshid, told him the shocking news and asked him to come over quickly. Now the lights were on and the water was boiling. Soon the two men were on their way to the airport. Tired from the long hours at the airport and disgusted at the delay, Cyrus was leaning against a light pole on the sidewalk in front of the main hall, the warm and smoke-laden breeze rubbing his face. Jamshid stopped in front of Cyrus, got out, hugged him, and tossed his luggage into the trunk; they drove off in a hurry.

The men implored Cyrus to tell them every detail. While Jamshid was apprehensive about Cyrus’s seven o’clock rendezvous at Evin Prison, “Let’s go home and discuss your situation,” he urged, “We may have a big problem on hand.” Cyrus had other concerns; what about his wife Emily, his family, and his medical practice back in the U.S.? “First of all, I must tell my Emily that I am not returning on schedule,” he said.

“Oh dear, I am sure your wife will not be pleased to hear this,” Habib said. “Let’s wait a few hours until we know more about your situation.”

Jamshid nodded. “Cyrus, you don’t want to worry her. Why don’t we find out how serious the matter is before you call home?”

Cyrus felt confused; he was suspended in a void, in a stygian abyss. “This is so unreal,” he sighed.

Jamshid took advantage of the light pre-dawn traffic to race through the dimly lit streets. A dusty gust loaded with filth and smoke roamed the street and hit the windshield. The trucks were churning out smoldering fumes that rolled against their windows.

It was dawn when they arrived back home. Terrified Maryam hugged Cyrus; she was unable to utter a coherent sentence and trembled with infinite fear. Habib muttered some curses against Revolutionary Guards, and added some more against those who were running the airport, and then he said, “They are stopping everybody these days. This country has become like a bloody Kavir, a lawless wasteland.”

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Cyrus handed his American passport to Maryam and embraced her, “Keep this in a safe place.” Then he followed Jamshid out the door. Maryam eyes welled. She didn’t say a word.

The car turned left, with Jamshid leading the way; Cyrus, Tooraj and Parviz were in his car. Two cars with assorted relatives and friends followed.

“They may not take you to solitary confinement right away. The process is very slow. They will keep you waiting for days before they interrogate you,” Jamshid predicted. A close friend of his had disappeared into prison a year ago and he had yet to hear from him. “Just keep your cool. They will try to wear you down with all kinds of intimidation and promises.”

Tooraj countered, “Why be so dramatic? Maybe this is a simple case of mistaken identity.”

“I know I have done nothing to deserve this. Somebody must be committing a bureaucratic blunder,” Cyrus insisted, outwardly cool; yet he was bracing for the worst. “But I am ready for anything,”

Jamshid quickly cautioned, “Just be careful, Doc. You are in the land of lawless revolutionaries where everyone is a chief with his own base of power. Do not dare to challenge anyone! They can pull the trigger on you without remorse or fear of punishment; nobody can stop them!”

The cars drew into the parking lot near the main gate of Evin Prison. The dusty gravel lot was already packed with cars. A large sign at the gate read, “Illegal entry into the prison area strictly prohibited! No visitors or relatives allowed inside! Approach the gate one person at a time!”

It was almost seven in the morning when Cyrus bade farewell to his entourage. An armed Revolutionary Guard called Cyrus’s name. Cyrus put the Koran back in its place and came, he meekly submitted the sealed envelope. The official stared at Cyrus’s face with distrust and proceeded to open the envelope with a knife. With slow and deliberate motions, he replaced the knife on his desk, drew out a sheet from the envelope, unfolded and read it. With a motionless face, not uttering a word, he turned around, pulled a thick red binder from the shelf behind him, and carelessly leafed through the pages. Cyrus observed the man, the red binder, the pages with their long, red columns, apparently lists of names. Dizzy with fear, but outwardly calm, he tried to control the racing of his heart. He could not decipher any words, but everything was in red ink and the book was thick and the pages were legal size.

Eventually the official found what he was looking for and turned toward Cyrus. He looked up with a shrewd smile, “Here you are! I found you in the book.” His right middle finger on the printed page and his left hand holding the letter, he compared both pages and announced with a frown, “You are going to be our guest for a while, until I find out more about the situation.”

“What is it all about, sir?” Cyrus asked in his most humble voice.

“That is what I am trying to find out.” The official called a Revolutionary Guard to escort Cyrus to the secure waiting area in Block One of Evin Prison.

“How long will it take you to investigate the matter?” Cyrus insisted.

Annoyed the official waved him off, “A few hours, or a few days, or perhaps a few weeks; or maybe even longer.”

The windowless cell in the secure area was dimly lit by two bare bulbs in a wire-covered ceiling fixture. Cyrus pondered his fate. Next to him, a young man was reading an old pro-clergy magazine, while a young woman in a long gray gown on the other side of the room kept anxiously looking at the door. A dog-eared, old Koran lay on the shelf near Cyrus’s chair. Suddenly the clamor of harsh shouts and heavy stomping in the hall broke into the quiet of the cell. An abrupt scream was cut off by the slamming of a metal door.

“They are beating the guy who came in before you,” the young man stated calmly, not displaying any emotion.

An interminable half hour later, two Revolutionary Guards opened the door and called to the woman, “Get up! Follow us!” When she hesitated, they grabbed her arms and roughly dragged her away. The door slammed shut again.

All of a sudden, Cyrus felt thirsty; his mouth was bitterly dry; he picked up the Koran and leafed through it. The text was in Arabic with the Farsi translation under each line. Cyrus was reading Chapter Two, The Cow, when the metal door banged open. An armed Revolutionary Guard called Cyrus’s name. Cyrus put the Koran back in its place and rose.

“They found what they were looking for,” the guard said. “Come with me!” Cyrus walked slowly towards the door. “Don’t be scared, Doc,” the guard assured him, “I am not taking you to a cell. No beatings for you today.”

Back in the administrative office Cyrus faced the same window as before, but this time the official waved the letter angrily in the air. “What a mess! These Airport Guards are idiots. They should have checked their instructions more carefully. They must be blind!” he yelled. A spark of hope rose in Cyrus. “They shouldn’t have sent you here at all,” the official continued. “They are beating the guy who came in before you.”

Suddenly the official turned jovial, “I bet you were scared to death.” He grinned at Cyrus, exhibiting a tooth missing in his uncouth countenance. Cyrus was stunned and annoyed by the official’s sarcasm.

The official lifted his chin and eyed Cyrus, “The problem is your name! The Shah had an aide who was a professor in medical school, a surgeon with a name just like yours. He served as Deputy Minister of Health for several years in the Shah’s last government. This thief embezzled millions of dollars and fled the country during the tumultuous first few months after the Glorious Revolution. We heard he has settled in
America and enjoys his ill begotten gains, and we are looking for him.”

“I can assure you that I am not that person, sir. I am Cyrus Sohrabi, son of Mehdi Sohrabi. I left this country ten years before the revolution. If you look at my passport, you’ll see the information and all the dates.”

“Look, don’t argue with me,” the official countered, “save your energy for the investigators.”

“But you should know the facts,” Cyrus insisted. “When I left this country, I was a newly graduated medical doctor with just a few hundred dollars in my pocket; barely enough to cover our living expenses till my first paycheck from the university hospital in the U.S.”

The official faced Cyrus without a shred of empathy. “It is not my first paycheck from the university hospital in the U.S., countryman, I was a newly graduated medical doctor with just a few hundred dollars in my pocket; barely enough to cover our living expenses till my first paycheck from the university hospital in the U.S.”

“The revolution was a catastrophe for me,” Cyrus insisted. “I am Cyrus Sohrabi, son of Mehdi Sohrabi. I left this country ten years before the revolution. I can assure you that I am not that person, sir. I am Cyrus Sohrabi, the son of Mehdi Sohrabi, who was a professor of Islamic law at the University of Tehran. I assure you I am not that person.”

“Look, don’t argue with me,” the official countered, “save your energy for the investigators.”

“Mr. Sohrabi, I am not allowed to release any information about this case,” the official said, “but I can tell you that we are looking for a person named Cyrus Sohrabi, who has been accused of embezzlement.”

“I am not that person,” Cyrus insisted. “I am Cyrus Sohrabi, son of Mehdi Sohrabi. I left this country ten years before the revolution. I can assure you I am not that person.”

“You should be very thankful that I am not keeping you here. I could have taken my time and ordered you interned for a few days before I proceeded. You might even have been thrown into one of those concrete pits, back there behind those hills.”

Cyrus was revolted by the officer’s casual threat. But the man stared at him with the cold eyes of a hyena observing a wounded deer. Cyrus bit his lips and kept quiet.

“You are being silly,” the officer continued. “Here they have treated you well and let you leave the airport by yourself and yet you are complaining. I have seen some bloody scenes, with broken arms and wounded faces. Anyhow, I promise you this, sooner or later, we will get this thief, dead or alive.”

Cyrus decided to swallow his frustration at such casual discussion of life and death.

“You are not going to be interrogated here. I am referring you back to the Justice Ministry—they should have sent you there in the first place.”

Cyrus took a step forward. “I beg your pardon, sir!” Cyrus said, “This is a routine matter, but it will take a few days to locate the original case file.” He returned to his reading.

Cyrus took a step forward. “I beg your pardon, sir!” Cyrus said, “This matter is quite urgent for me. I was pulled out of my return flight because of this confusion. I need you to resolve this today.”

The bearded man raised his eyes from the document in obvious resentment and stared at Cyrus without a shred of empathy.

Jamshid immediately spoke up in a conciliatory tone, “Sir, this physician came to Iran to visit his sick mother, and now he really needs to go back to join his family and his medical practice. Anyhow, it is obvious that he left the country long before the revolution, sir.”

He approached the official and whispered in his ear, “He’ll be very grateful of your prompt attention to this matter, and our family will also appreciate any extra effort.”

The bearded man nodded, got up without uttering a word, and went through a door behind his desk. The door remained ajar, so the three men could see him searching through shelves filled with rows and rows of folders. He stopped when he located a thick file on the penultimate shelf, high up above his head, almost near the ceiling. He dragged over a ladder, climbed up five steps, and scanned the numbers on the label. He pulled out the folder, slammed it twice against the shelf to dislodge the dust, and brought it down with him to his desk where he flipped through the pages.

A musty stink irritated their noses. Tooraj coughed. But Jamshid was pleased with the bearded man’s effort to find the relevant file and whispered in Tooraj’s ear, “This guy will expect a gift, not a mere handout but some gold coins, for his prompt action.”

Tooraj nodded and left the office. The bearded man noticed their whispers and Tooraj’s departure, but calmly continued with his work. Cyrus and Jamshid watched his every move with anxious anticipation.

Suddenly the official focused his attention on one page. He traced a long list of names with his pencil, till he stopped at a line and looked up, smiling with satisfaction.

“This is all about money,” He stood up and faced Cyrus, “A professor at Tehran University with the same first and last names as yours fled the country with millions of embezzled dollars shortly after the revolution. We are looking for this professor and for our money.”

He turned a few more pages and said, “I need to find the original court order against the professor. That’ll have all the details and then I can compare them to your passport information.”

He addressed Cyrus: “If I can verify that you are not that professor after analyzing all this information, I can write a letter to the Revolutionary Police in the airport. Then they will release your passport, and you’ll be allowed to leave the country.”

They settled in to wait while the bearded man went to the storage room again and again, bringing more folders and each time leafing carefully through the documents. More dust rose in the air. Finally he found the original decree that included a passport photo of the professor.

“This old photo doesn’t prove or disprove anything,” he commented dryly. He flipped through the subsequent pages. Suddenly he stopped and inserted a marker.

“Here it is! The arrest warrant for the university professor and the confiscation order of his assets,” he said, “dated October 1979, about eight months after the revolution. And here we have a complete description of the fugitive professor.”

He asked for Cyrus’s Persian birth certificate and compared it with the professor’s data.

“Doctor Sohrabi, you and the thief have different dates of birth. Your fathers have different names and different birthplaces. Now it is obvious to me that you cannot be the man the Revolutionary Court is looking for.”

Cyrus heaved a big sigh of relief. Jamshid smiled. “There can be no doubt about these facts,” the bearded man asserted, “I have cleared up the...continued
Continued

confusion.” And he looked up at the triumvirate as if expecting applause. “We are very grateful to you, sir,” Jamshid said with a smile. “But, sir, could you please certify your discovery that the whole matter concerning Dr. Cyrus Sohrabi was just a case of mistaken identity?”

“Well, sure, but the earliest I can write the release letter is next week,” the man said.

“Sir, this gentleman was kept from returning to his family by a bureaucratic error; so please, do it today,” Jamshid pleaded.

“My supervisor, the head of the court needs to approve and sign what I write,” the man retorted.

Cyrus got frustrated and sat down with a scowl on his face. Jamshid, however, did not give up, “Sir, please find a way to write the letter today.”

The man continued in a punctilious manner, “This letter needs to be typed and then signed by the chief justice of the court.”

Jamshid knew such a process could take days, and there was always the potential for it to get shoved to some back burner. He moved close to the official and whispered into his ears. Then Jamshid stepped back and continued in a normal tone, “We will greatly appreciate your help.”

The man sorted through papers on his desk and looked like he was keeping himself artificially busy.

Jamshid whispered in Cyrus’s ear, “I am glad Tooraj is already on his way to get us some gold coins.”

The man had overheard the comment; all of a sudden he exhibited some empathy and said, “I do realize how urgent Dr. Sohrabi’s situation is. Let me try and see what I can do. Please be patient and remain here.”

He left and returned an hour later with a typed letter which stated the situation and clarified the confusion about the names. He asked Cyrus and Jamshid to accompany him to the office of the Chief Justice of Republic Court No. 2 to get the required signature. There an officious secretary announced that the Chief Justice had gone to the city of Qum for a few days. But now they had an ally.

“This matter is really important,” the man instructed the secretary. “Look at this innocent doctor! He has been dragged from his return flight home to his family because of an administrative error. I’m sure his wife thinks he has been imprisoned because of a clerical mistake. I’m sure his wife thinks he has been imprisoned because of an administrative error. I’m sure his wife thinks he has been imprisoned because of an administrative error.”

The man handed the original document to Cyrus, “I am sorry for the confusion with your name. We simply have no any other way of preventing the escape of such criminals but to stop and verify the identity of everybody with a similar surname.”

The triumvirs drove through the crowded streets of Tehran toward the airport to deliver the letter to the Revolutionary Guard office. Thank God, that office was open 24 hours a day. It took more than two hours to get to the airport, and it was deep in the night before the trio finally returned from the airport to Maryam’s house where they exhibited their prize, Cyrus’s passport. Everyone was relieved that the matter was resolved so easily, so quickly, and with only a minor investment in gold. The phone kept ringing and the news spread like a firestorm and reached every friend and relative who had heard about Cyrus’s setback.

“Cyrus, your wife has already telephoned twice,” Maryam admonished Cyrus. “Habib talked to her but he did not tell her the truth; he told Emily that you were sick with food poisoning and had to postpone your trip. But it is clear she suspects something more serious has happened to you. Please call her right away and let her hear your voice.”

“I thought you had been arrested!” was Emily’s first response. Her voice was tremulous with joy when she heard Cyrus.

“There was just a small hitch; some mullah did not like my name,” Cyrus tried to minimize the delay; “That’s all. I’ll be home in a few days.” Realizing Emily deserved more details, he explained. “They thought I was one of the Shah’s aides, a university professor who embezzled a lot of money and escaped to the US. I had to run through lots of hoops to deal with their bureaucratic paperwork. Yes, I assure you it is all resolved. I’ll be home as soon as I can re-schedule my flight out of Tehran.”

Emily was still concerned but believed the explanation. “Please,” she begged, “get out of Iran as soon as you can and come home, my darling!”

“I’ll try, but it’s very difficult to get a booking right away.”

“Get one of your relatives to help. Don’t you have an uncle who is an Ayatollah?”

“My dear, I don’t need an Ayatollah,” Cyrus said. “Gold coins are the best way to break an impasse here in Iran. That’s what their Glorious Revolution has come down to.”
The early morning sky above Schoharie Valley hung heavy with storm clouds. Thick mist lay reaching the lowlands obscuring all but the silo of Kurtz’s small dairy farm. The fog bank rose high at the north end of the valley, its grey fingers reaching up to curl about the red brick clock tower of the Mariaville school. Gustav Kurtz pushed open the screen door of the kitchen, stepped wearily out onto the porch and into the wet blanket of thick air. In the June morning the barnyard below him was a brown sea of thick mud. Rivulets of water, silver ribbons against the chocolate surface of the nearly liquid earth, flowed from the bottom of the masure pile off to his right. He marveled at the rainbow colored streaks that dappled the surface as the rippling water caught the rising sun’s slanting rays. Stumbling down the stairs he set his boots nearly ankle deep into the muck.

Wind-driven rain had fallen heavily most of the night, but just after daybreak the torrent had stopped. Now the air was calm as Gustav struggled toward the barn imagining he could feel the warmth of the cows reaching out to cling about his face and bare arms. Then just outside the door he did feel their heat and breathed in the thinly sweet fragrance of hay before a heavier, sour stink descended on him. In the spring especially it settled heavily about the place, blighting the lush colors and delicate textures that blossomed at winter’s end. Cowshit and rancid milk burdened Gustav’s life. Try as he might, he could never completely wash those smells from his clothes and skin.

He stopped to stare at the manure rake propped against the rotting door jamb. He turned and looked back at the house, its white clapboards black-stained from the narrow eaves down to the broad planks that skirted the roughly laid fieldstone foundation. His gaze circled back to the barn. Years of weather and neglect had turned the red paint a mottled purple and brown. The whole building looked like a bruise on the brightening landscape. Instead of washing away the grime and excrement, the night’s storms had made the farm uglier, covered it with water come from the bottom of the mound. Rivulets of water, silver ribbons against the chocolate surface of the nearly liquid earth, flowed from the bottom of the masure pile off to his right. He marveled at the rainbow colored streaks that dappled the surface as the rippling water caught the rising sun’s slanting rays. Stumbling down the stairs he set his boots nearly ankle deep into the muck.

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At seventeen, Gustav was handsome and proud, with a square chin, pale blue eyes and a thick mane of nearly white-blond hair which he carefully combed into a sweeping pompadour. He was big for his age, already nearly a head taller than his father. He had a man’s voice to match his adult size and the way he greeted her. Too casual and she would know something was going on.

“Vas? Wer’s got th’ money tuh go tuh th’ damn doctor? You got it? An’ who th’ hell are yuh tuh tell me vat I should be doin?” The elder Kurtz started for his son, but then sat down abruptly, shivering as beads of sweat covered his forehead.

Gustav stared down and saw nothing. The sun was out full force now, and he felt he was inside an oven full of roasting meat. Grasping the rake, he caught sight of his hands. He kept his nails cut short, trying to make it easier to wash away the traces of manure. Gustav looked at his palms and fingers, each crease and split seemed filled with traces of light brown filth that he would never scour away. Always that sourness clung to his hands.

He tore his eyes away and looked off to the right beyond the barn past his mother’s garden. His gaze sought the wide mouth of the valley as it opened up to the freedom of the world beyond the farm. But all he could see was the clock tower jutting above the fog bank that still shrouded the school building.

He remembered bits of a conversation he’d overheard in the lunch line at school. It was last fall and he was standing behind two town girls that he’d been keeping an eye on. The one next to him especially liked to watch. The way her dark hair caught the light and her eyes flashed excitedly when she turned to look about the classroom never failed to catch his attention. He couldn’t look at her face now, instead fixing his eyes on the fine close weave of the thin red sweater that clung to her round shoulder. The girls were looking down at their trays, talking. Gustav strained to hear them over the noise from the kitchen and the shouts and laughter that echoed off the yellowed tile walls and floor.

“Oh, yeah, him,” said the one.

“What?” said the other. Then the first one said something that sounded to Gustav like “cute” or maybe “Kurtz.”

“Oh-uh, I don’t wanna git touched by shitfingers, that’s fer sure.” said the girl standing right next to him.

Her friend glanced up and saw Gustav. She blushed, lowered her eyes, and turning, moved quickly away toward the tables while the girl who’d been next to him hurried after, calling, “Huh? What? Where’re yuh goin so fast?”

Gustav threw the manure rake at the barn wall. Its long handle bounced off the planking and landed in the yard, throwing up brown splatters. Then he turned and ran toward the garden, his eyes seeking to take in as much as he could of the valley that was still hidden by the fog. Short of breath, Gustav stopped only when he reached the two line electric fence that kept the cows away from his mother’s vegetables.

He stood, his eyes tearing, his thoughts clouded with the impossibility of ever knowing one of the town girls, of ever breaking free from the farm, of ever washing away the shit smell that made him part of the vile earth that clung to his boots. He looked round desperately and his eye caught a burst of color against the bare ground in front of the chicken coop. Stumbling toward it, Gustav saw a toy wheelbarrow, once his, that his mother had planted with flowers she’d nurtured from seeds in late winter. Blossoms of white, pink, and dark violet nodded gaily above the bright red of the barrow’s freshly painted wood. Beyond, a few chickens, their snowy white coats bright and clean, moved cautiously about.

Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light. Gustav walked closer, staring at the wheelbarrow. Its surface was lustrous with raindrops; it shone with a diamond’s million points of light.
Milford Sound—also called Piopiotahi by the Māoris who are the native people of New Zealand—is a fjord in the southwest of New Zealand’s South Island, within Fiordland National Park and the Te Wahipounamu World Heritage site. It has been judged the world’s top travel destination in an international survey and is acclaimed as New Zealand’s most famous tourist destination. Rudyard Kipling had previously called it the Eighth Wonder of the World.

Milford Sound is named after Milford Haven in Wales, while the Cleddau River which flows into the sound is also named for its Welsh namesake. The Māori named the sound Piopiotahi after the thrush-like piopio bird, now extinct. Piopiotahi means “a single piopio,” harking back to the legend of Māui trying to win immortality for mankind, when Maui died in the attempt, a piopio was said to have flown here in mourning.

Sydney Harbour is the natural harbour of Sydney, Australia. It is known for its beauty and in particular, as the location of the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge. The location of the first European settlement in Australia, the Harbour has continued to play a key role in the history and development of Sydney. It is used during the New Year’s Eve Fireworks and the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Port Jackson: The land around Port Jackson was occupied at the time of European discovery and colonisation by various tribes including the Gadigal, Cammeraygal, Eora, and Wangal peoples. The Gadigal people are said to have occupied the land stretching along the southern side of Port Jackson from what is now South Head, in an arc west through to Petersham. The Cammeraygal lived on the northern side of the harbour. The area along the southern banks of the Parramatta River, west of Petersham to Rose Hill, was reported to belong to the Wanegal. The Eora people lived on the southern side of the harbour, close to where the First Fleet settled. The first recorded European discovery of Sydney Harbour was by Lt James Cook in 1770.
Voices de la Luna Proudly Presents
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Two quarterly poetry prizes of $100 each will be given to a poem in any form of no more than 28 lines, the first to an adult writer and the second to a middle school or high school student. The poems of the five finalists will be considered for publication in all four formats of the magazine. Please send your poem(s) only online as attachments with a short email that includes your full name, address, email, phone, and a short bio of no more than 30 words to louisebtaylor@sbcglobal.net. Please use PayPal link to pay the entry fee of $15, which entitles the participant to one hard-copy issue of the magazine. For more information please visit our website at www.voicesdelaluna.com.
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.


2nd Tuesdays 7–9 PM – Awaken the Sleeping Poet at the Twig, 5005 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209 – (210) 826-6411, Featured poets & open mic. Host: Floyd Lamrouex

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 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 PM. Slam begins @ 10:30 PM. 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 storytelling Host: Andi

2nd Thursdays 6-9 PM–Poetry Readings at Bihl Haus Arts, sponsored by Voices de la Luna from 6–9 PM. Free to the community.

6 PM Poetry Workshop: Host, Josie Mixon
7 PM Open Mic: Host, Mo H. Saidi
8 PM Featured Guest: Host, James Brandenburg
For more information, visit www.bihlhausarts.org

Last Thursday of Each Month 7–9 PM– Awaken the Sleeping Poet – Features and open mic – Northwoods Barnes & Noble, 18030 HWY 281 N, 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

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